

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JUNE 1991

PRICE: Rs. 5.00

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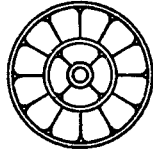
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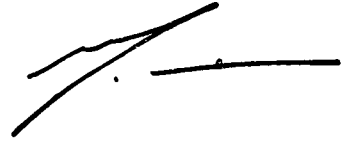


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Editor's Phone 24782

Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

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Published by DYUMAN

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002

Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No R N 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLIV

No. 6

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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TO DO SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

A TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 8 JUNE 1955

To do Sri Aurobindo's yoga is to want to transform oneself integrally, it is to have a single aim in life, such that nothing else exists any longer, that alone exists. And so one feels it clearly in oneself whether one wants it or not; but if one doesn't, one can still have a life of goodwill, a life of service, of understanding; one can labour for the Work to be accomplished more easily—all that—one can do many things. But between this and doing yoga there is a great difference.

And to do yoga you must want it consciously, you must know what it is, to begin with. You must know what it is, you must take a resolution about it; but once you have taken the resolution, you must no longer flinch. That is why you must take it in full knowledge of the thing. You must know what you are deciding upon when you say, "I want to do yoga"; and that is why I don't think that I have ever pressed you from this point of view. I can speak to you about the thing. Oh! I tell you a lot about it, you are here for me to speak to you about it; but individually it is only to those who have come saying, "Yes, in any case I have my idea about the yoga and want to do it"; it is good

And then for them it's something different, and the conditions of life are different, specially inwardly. Specially within, things change.

There is always a consciousness there acting constantly to rectify the situation, which puts you all the time in the presence of obstacles which prevent you from advancing, make you bump against your own errors and your own blindnesses. And this acts only for those who have decided to do the yoga. For others the Consciousness acts like a light, a knowledge, a protection, a force of progress, so that they may reach their maximum capacities and be able to develop as far as possible in an atmosphere as favourable as possible—but leaving them completely free in their choice.

The decision must come from within. Those who come consciously for the yoga, knowing what yoga is, well, their conditions of living here are... outwardly there is no difference but inwardly there is a very great difference. There is a kind of absoluteness in the consciousness, which does not let them deviate from the path: the errors one commits become immediately visible with consequences strong enough for one not to be able to make any mistake about it, and things become very serious. But it is not often like that.

All of you, my children—I may tell you this, I have repeated it to you and still repeat it—live in an exceptional liberty. Outwardly there are a few limitations, because, as there are many of us and we don't have the whole earth at our disposal, we are obliged to submit to a certain discipline to a certain extent, so that there may not be too great a disorder; but inwardly you live in a marvellous

liberty: no social constraint, no moral constraint, no intellectual constraint, no rule, nothing, nothing but a light which is there. If you want to profit by it, you profit by it; if you don't want to, you are free not to.

But the day you make a choice—when you have done it in all sincerity and have felt within yourself a radical decision—the thing is different. There is the light and the path to be followed, quite straight, and you must not deviate from it. It fools no one, you know; yoga is not a joke. You must know what you are doing when you choose it. But when you choose it, you must hold on to it. You have no longer the right to vacillate. You must go straight ahead. There!

All that I ask for is a will to do well, an effort for progress and the wish to be a little better in life than ordinary human beings. You have grown up, developed under conditions which are exceptionally luminous, conscious, harmonious, and full of goodwill; and in response to these conditions you should be in the world an expression of this light, this harmony, this goodwill. This would already be very good, very good.

To do the yoga, this yoga of transformation which, of all things, is the most arduous—it is only if one feels that one has come here for that (I mean here upon earth) and that one has to do nothing else but that, and that it is the only reason of one's existence—even if one has to toil hard, suffer, struggle, it is of no importance—"This is what I want, and nothing else"—then it is different. Otherwise I shall say, "Be happy and be good, and that's all that is asked of you. Be good, in the sense of being understanding, knowing that the conditions in which you have lived are exceptional, and try to live a higher, more noble, more true life than the ordinary one, so as to allow a little of this consciousness, this light and its goodness to express itself in the world. It would be very good." There we are.

But once you have set foot on the path of yoga, you must have a resolution of steel and walk straight on to the goal, whatever the cost.

There!

(Questions and Answers 1955, pp 200-203)

FOUNDATION OF INTEGRAL YOGA

THREE STATEMENTS BY SRI AUROBINDO

EQUANIMITY and peace in all conditions in all parts of the being is the first foundation of the Yogic status. Either Light (bringing with it knowledge) or Force (bringing strength and dynamism of many kinds) or Ananda (bringing love and joy of existence) can come next according to the trend of the nature. But peace is the first condition without which nothing else can be stable.

31.7.1936

*

This is not a Yoga in which abnormality of any kind, even if it be an exalted abnormality, can be admitted as a way to self-fulfilment or spiritual realisation. Even when one enters into supernormal and suprarational experience, there should be no disturbance of the poise which must be kept firm from the summit of the consciousness to its base; the experiencing consciousness must preserve a calm balance, an unfailing clarity and order in its observation, a sort of sublimated commonsense, an unfailing power of self-criticism, right discrimination, coordination and firm vision of things; a sane grasp on facts and a high spiritualised positivism must always be there. It is not by becoming irrational or infrarational that one can go beyond ordinary nature into supernature; it should be done by passing through reason to a greater light of super-reason. This super-reason descends into reason and takes it up into higher levels even while breaking its limitations; reason is not lost but changes and becomes its own true unlimited self, a coordinating power of the supernature.

(The Synthesis of Yoga, Part One, Chapter XIII)

*

What you say is right. Those one lives with have always some ways and manners that do not agree with one's own and may grate on the mind. To observe quietly and not resent is part of the discipline of life,—not to be moved or affected at all but to see with equanimity the play of one Nature in all is the discipline of sadhana.

THE ONE ESSENTIAL OBJECT

A REMINDER BY SRI AUROBINDO

A UNION with the Divine Reality of our being and all being is the one essential object of the Yoga. It is necessary to keep this in mind; we must remember that our Yoga is not undertaken for the sake of the acquisition of supermind itself but for the sake of the Divine, we seek the supermind not for its own joy and greatness but to make the union absolute and complete, to feel it, possess it, dynamise it in every possible way of our being, in its highest intensities and largest widenesses and in every range and turn and nook and recess of our nature. It is a mistake to think, as many are apt to think, that the object of a supramental Yoga is to arrive at a mighty magnificence of a supermanhood, a divine power and greatness, the self-fulfilment of a magnified individual personality. This is a false and disastrous conception,—disastrous because it is likely to raise the pride, vanity and ambition of the rajasic vital mind in us and that, if not overpassed and overcome, must lead to spiritual downfall, false because it is an egoistic conception and the first condition of the supramental change is to get rid of ego. It is most dangerous for the active and dynamic nature of the man of will and works which can easily be led away by the pursuit of power. Power comes inevitably by the supramental change, it is a necessary condition for a perfect action: but it is the Divine Shakti that comes and takes up the nature and the life, the power of the One acting through the spiritual individual; it is not an aggrandisement of the personal force, not the last crowning fulfilment of the separative mental and vital ego. Self-fulfilment is a result of the Yoga, but its aim is not the greatness of the individual. The sole aim is a spiritual perfection, a finding of the true self and a union with the Divine by putting on the divine consciousness and nature. All the rest is constituent detail and attendant circumstance. Ego-centric impulses, ambition, desire of power and greatness, motives of self-assertion are foreign to this greater consciousness and would be an insuperable bar against any possibility of even a distant approach towards the supramental change. One must lose one's little lower self to find the greater self. Union with the Divine must be the master motive; even the discovery of the truth of one's being and of all being, life in that truth and its greater consciousness, perfection of the nature are only the natural results of that movement. Indispensable conditions of its entire consummation, they are part of the central aim only because they are a necessary development and a major consequence.

(The Synthesis of Yoga, Part One, Chapter XIII)

POLITICIAN, STATESMAN, GREAT LEADER

AN EXCERPT FROM SRI AUROBINDO

...the ideas and schemes of the world's intellectuals who would replan the whole status of international life altogether and from its roots in the light of general principles, are not likely to find any immediate realisation. In the absence of a general idealistic outburst of creative human hope which would make such changes possible, the future will be shaped not by the ideas of the thinker but by the practical mind of the politician which represents the average reason and temperament of the time and effects usually something much nearer the minimum than the maximum of what is possible. The average general mind of a great mass of men, while it is ready to listen to such ideas as it has been prepared to receive and is accustomed to seize on this or that notion with a partisan avidity, is yet ruled in its action not so much by its thought as by its interests, passions and prejudices. The politician and the statesman—and the world is full of politicians but very empty of statesmen—act in accordance with this average general mind of the mass; the one is governed by it, the other has always to take it into chief account and cannot lead it where he will, unless he is one of those great geniuses and powerful personalities who unite a large mind and dynamic force of conception with an enormous power or influence over men. Moreover, the political mind has limitations of its own beyond those of the general average mind of the mass; it is even more respectful of the *status quo*, more disinclined to great adventures in which the safe footing of the past has to be abandoned, more incapable of launching out into the uncertain and the new. To do that it must either be forced by general opinion or a powerful interest or else itself fall under the spell of a great new enthusiasm diffused in the mental atmosphere of the times.

(S A B C L Vol 15, pp 362-363)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

PERSONAL LETTERS

QUITE a long life has been mine. For us in the Ashram length of living has value only inasmuch as it measures out a nearer and nearer approach to the Light of our Gurus. We are—in the depths of our beings—always at the Great Goal, but our surfaces have to trace in time and space a running golden reflection of that eternal Truth. When I look back I feel ashamed of so many opportunities missed, so many fallings-away. But Sri Aurobindo and the Mother never encouraged the backward gaze and the regrettings and sighings. I can hear them saying: “Turn your ear to the flute of the future. Its melodies are endless. Waste no hours on airs that have faded, wishing them otherwise. There is no real fading if you feel a fullness awaiting you in the days to come. Get caught up in its call and let the years beyond your 86 move like a Beethoven Symphony mounting to its *grand finale*.” (23.11.1990)

*

If one is really under the spell of what is called “black magic”, one would feel some kind of indefinable malaise. But such malaise is not necessarily a sign of being under black-magic influence. I think the best thing is not to have the impression of any influence of this kind. To be obsessed with the idea of it may prove harmful even if there is no black magic done. For, the mentality which lives under that obsession may put itself in touch with the low occult plane whose forces may themselves act as black magicians. Keep your mind free from fear. After all, real black magic is rare.

As a support to keeping the mind free from fear, I would advise you to repeat the mantra. *Sri Aurobindo sharanam mama* (“Sri Aurobindo is my refuge”) It is a master-mantra of protection, given by the Mother herself. One who is not an Aurobindonian may be advised to take the name of his Guru or his *ista devata* (“chosen deity”).

Finally, if indeed some black magic has been done, it is possible that some peculiar sign has been traced on a part of your house. Look for it and, if there is one, rub it off. Sometimes the work is done through a *young* boy or girl servant. In case you have any such servant, watch out for any peculiar behaviour on his or her part. Of course, all such servants are not mediums, and you need not sack them just because they are young.

At any rate, have faith in the mantra I have mentioned and be tearless. All will be well. (26.3.1989)

*

It's ten at night now. I am alone, but not lonely—for the Unseen is always there, and most on the point of visibility when one is by oneself. It is in such a condition that one is most able to help somebody who appeals for "a few words which will stimulate and gladden" his "aspiration". That is why I have kept this quiet in-drawn hour reserved for wishing you "*Bonne fête*". And what I mean by this wish is that you may never forget the constant source of happiness which is so near but which you mistakenly think to be "still so far away". You most probably know the story from the Mahabharata which I once recounted in a "Talk" of mine. Let me remind you of it.

Draupadi was dragged to the court of Duryodhana and threatened that her sari would be taken off. Strip-tease had not yet come into fashion and in any case she could never have been a strip-tease artist, so she was quite bashful. In full view of the court a henchman of Duryodhana's started pulling at her sari. Draupadi did not know whom to turn to. She thought of Sri Krishna the Avatar and appealed to him in her mind. She cried out inwardly: "O Lord of the highest heaven, come to my aid!" There was no response. The poor girl became more desperate. She sent again her cry: "O Master of the three worlds, help me!" No reply still—and more and more folds of her sari came out. Once again Draupadi raised her heart's plea: "O Ruler of the four quarters of the earth, rush to my rescue!" All in vain—nothing resulted. Draupadi was really at a loss. Then she cried out in a final intensity: "O You who are hiding deep in my own heart, come!" At once Sri Krishna appeared before her subtle vision with his hand gesturing *abhaya*—"Have no fear." The sari went on unwinding endlessly. Draupadi could not be stripped at all.

Later she chided Sri Krishna: "Why did you take so long to come?" Sri Krishna sweetly and coolly replied: "If I had to come from the highest heaven or from the three worlds or even from the four quarters of the earth, wouldn't it take some time? But when you summoned me from your own heart, there was no distance to cross. Naturally I came at once."

What you are going through is nothing strange. All of us have felt at some time or other that "life is a drudgery and so barren." A pessimist has said:

Year after year of living,
 Yet no difference from death
 Save the nuisance of moving
 And the tediousness of breath.

An optimist has offered the paradoxical consolation:

Keep on smiling—don't look glum:
 There is always worse to come.

But all these are bad jokes that can be played on us if we haven't come to the

Ashram. Once we are here, we have no need to despair. Even though things may look bleak, there is the assurance from *Savitri*:

Bear, thou shalt find at last thy road to bliss—
Bliss is the secret stuff of all that lives.

And I may tell you that the sense of nothing wonderful happening in our sadhana from day to day does not reflect any reality for us who have given ourselves into the hands of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Their secret Presence is ever with us and they are carrying us forward no matter if we feel we are standing still. At some moment what is being prepared behind the scene will break forth. Keep on hoping that it may come out soon. The best way to draw it nearer the surface of our life is to let a quiet smile play on our lips, confident in the faith, which I have underlined to people again and again, that there is no abyss so deep that the Divine Grace cannot lift us from it sky-high.

The smile I speak of is surely within reach of you who are always full of humour—and it should be all the easier when you know that you have the love of everybody—and most warmly indeed of your friend who, in one of his poems has visioned a glorious moment of the God Agni's grace turning everything to flame and felicity:

Lo now my heart has grown his glimmering East—
Blown by his breath a cloud of colour runs—
The yearning curves of life are lit to a smile

(8 11 1987)

*

You have become an expert dreamer—not only getting fascinating dreams, not only remembering them perfectly, but also exercising your analytic faculty in the course of them! The secret whispered to you—“Here is the end of the earth”—carried a symbolic meaning. Evidently it did not imply the end of your earth-life in a physical sense nor the end of the life of the earth—and, of course, the earth being round, there could be no real geographical end of the earth. The vision of North Africa that stretched before you, making you wonder whether beyond that vast expanse there was sea or mountain, symbolised the cosmic Ignorance in which we are set. Haven't you heard of Africa having been called “the Dark Continent”? And don't you know your speculation about the “other side”—“sea or mountain?”—touched upon the liberation from that Ignorance? The sea represents the Universal Consciousness and the mountain the Transcendent Reality. These are the two states of being that terminate the inner darkness in which our ordinary life is enclosed.

Naturally the question is. “How are we to get out of the cosmic Ignorance?”

A suggestive answer was given in the next part of your dream-experience. You think that there was a “break”. But actually the interval indicates the void expectant hush which is the pre-condition of our getting the answer to our life’s problem. And what you term “the second phase of the dream” disclosed, again in a symbolic form, the answer: Nolini, “looking taller, bigger and fairer-complexioned” than in the outward physical aspect you had known. The tallness pointed to the Transcendent Reality, the bigness stood for the Universal Consciousness and the fairness represented the liberating light which would counteract the power of “the Dark Continent”, the “Africa” of the earth-life’s nescience. As Nolini had always struck you as the example *par excellence* of sadhana, it was inevitably his figure that you saw as the Saving Grace

(18.5.1988)

*

I have commented quite often on your dreams of Nolini which seem to be stepping-stones towards your own Noliniesque future—subtle contacts which are occasions for lighting up your consciousness with his own Mother-ward being. The adjective “Mother-ward” is of great importance, for we must not let the helpful friend of our heart be anything else than a cherished transparency—himself valuable in his own right of nearness and dearness to us but never ceasing to be a glimmering link between us and the all-luminous Presence who mothers his soul as well as ours.

The story of the meeting you had with Sri Aurobindo in a dream thrills me. The immediate answer by him to your ardent prayer before going to bed shows how close he is to you. The meeting started, you say, on the ground floor of the house. This indicates the subtle-physical plane. Then the contact moves to a place where the sensations are naturally intenser—the first floor, the vital-emotional with the psychic being adjoining it. The intimacy increases and culminates with his extending his hand towards you with a dish and wanting to fill you with food, a new life’s substance. This gesture is meant to give you a chance to fulfil your desire for the *divya sparsha*, the divine touch: the index finger of the hand you stretch to receive the dish can manage to touch his hand. Here is your soul’s pointer to a superhuman destiny for you. Indeed, as you exclaim, the Lord is both great and gracious.

The food-item in the dream brings me to your quotation from *Savitri*—the line which struck you while you were going through Book One, Canto Three ‘

On the tongue lingered the honey of paradise.

Food coming from the Divine symbolises essentially the mellifluous meeting between the Bliss of the Supreme Spirit and our human heart’s insatiate hunger—insatiate because all that it finds in its search for happiness falls short:

All is too little that the world can give.

What that line about the paradisaal honey is meant to convey most intimately is precisely the experience you were instantly reminded of on reading it. "During the early period of my stay in the Ashram .. sometimes I used to feel a sweet secretion on my tongue. This continued for a period." Here is a rather rare experience. Sri Aurobindo himself had it and has explained it when a sadhak wrote to him of having the same experience. The gist of the explanation is that the Divine Ananda, the Supreme Bliss, can manifest itself in terms of physical sensation and be felt as a sweetness dripping upon the tongue through the *brahmarandhra*, the subtle opening that can take place at the top of the head to the spiritual ranges of consciousness beyond the brain-mind. This sweet sensation, says Sri Aurobindo, the Rishis of the Rigveda named *amritam*, the nectar of immortality.

His explanation sheds light on the fact that the Rishis, who personified the Divine Ananda as the godhead Soma, spoke of Soma as if it were an actual material drink. Ordinarily, commentators equate it to a hallucinogenic decoction in the ritual: research now holds it to be a preparation from the plant Ephedra. The esoteric view takes this preparation to be a symbol for an inner or higher immaterial Reality. But Yogic experience in exceptional moments discovers that the decoction was merely a substitute in external ceremony for something which was also material, though in a secret way, something which was an authentic translation of the supraphysical Reality into a sense-delight directly within the body and separate from any preparation to be taken in from outside.

I have used the epithet "material" for the sweet secretion, but truly speaking the tongue reflects, as it were, a sensation in the subtle-physical body which is ours behind the gross-physical. Were the saliva with the Soma-taste to be chemically analysed, I don't think a special sugary element would be detected. All the same, "the honey of paradise" remains a fact of bodily consciousness, even if not of bodily substance.

It seems to me that this "honey" can come to us in various forms. It need not be confined to being a sweetness on the tongue. I consider it to be essentially present in what happened after the sudden pressure you felt on the middle of your forehead, the surface site of the Yogic *ājñā-chakra*, the occult centre where thought and will can open to the Supreme Spirit. You write: "The feeling was very soothing and peaceful. It was coming down like a thin stream on my nose, eyes and the cheeks under the eyes. At times this feeling was so sensitive and strong that I felt like wiping it off. It continued. Even when I went to the Dining Room on foot, it did not wane. At times there was a pressure on my head too. As a matter of fact all that area of the body was vibrant. This is not the first time—in the past too I had the same experience on occasion. At times it lingered for hours. Do you agree with me if I say that it is peace that descends?"

If I have compared this experience with that of a strange sweetness in the mouth—both of them a prolonged flow from the inner and the higher being of ourselves—I should believe that what is at play is at once peace and power, serenity and felicity, Sri Aurobindo's imperturbable Himalaya getting mirrored in the Mother's gleaming and laughing Ganges.

Perhaps this description could apply also to the prolonged flow of *Savitri*, at the same time a grandeur of sight and a subtlety of sound. I am not surprised that you are "totally seized by *Savitri* and there is no escape". Your reading the poem "slowly" is just the right thing. The reason you give is delightful, you read slowly "lest it might finish soon". But actually *Savitri* can never be finished—it has depth beyond depth and it is no wonder that it is not only giving you "immense delight" but also "shedding more light than it did in the past". Sri Aurobindo has himself said that to him *Savitri* was not a poem to be written and done with: it was a ceaseless experiment of using poetic language again and again from an ever-ascending curve of spiritual consciousness—an adventure of seeing how far the speech of human poetry could go along the path of more and more lofty Yogic realisation. Across the years *Savitri* grew not in length alone: it increased immeasurably in a detailed depth from the time in 1936 when the Master first confided to me passages from it day after day to the time when in 1950 he gave by dictation touch on finishing touch by way of adding scores of new passages bringing out still greater secrets than before. Most of the lines in *Savitri*, by being read slowly and audibly—with the ear no less than the eye inwardly on the alert—carry an endlessly widening aura and vibrancy of suggestion to the soul in us. With each novel shade of spiritual reality caught in the words, our soul adds a cubit to its stature, visions "an ampler ether", breathes "a diviner air". Whether or not we experience a supernatural sweetness on our tongues with the reading of *Savitri* always

Its tones of fathomless joy instil
A taste of the Ineffable.

(4 1.1991)

*

I like your calling me "Dadhikravan", the Rigveda's white horse galloping ever towards the dawn. As an inveterate lover of horses I cannot help feeling highly complimented. But what makes the compliment more desirable is that the animal of the Rigveda symbolises the purified life-force. The purification of the life-force is the rarest of rare achievements, and if I happen to be on the way to it nothing can be a better portent for my future. Without it neither the mind nor the body can be taken as totally given to God. The vital energy is the most effective element in us and it is the element by which the mind can have an impact on earth-circumstances and by which the body can carry out the mind's

dreams and designs as well as its own hungers. But it is our most intractable part: its lust for pleasure and power appears to be endless and it can easily dictate its desires to its mental and physical companions. In the Rigveda the ultimate goal, figured as the dawn, is the outbreak of the Divine Consciousness upon our ignorance. And the final problem of Yoga is the turning of the vital energy away from its own vigour—first to the ideals of the visionary intelligence and to the healthy poise our limbs seek, then to the adventure of the Boundless and the Omnipotent. This turning towards its own Archetype, the supernal origin of its strength, so that a strange new elevation is achieved, seems to be pictured in that far-seeing line of the French poet Rimbaud:

Millions d'oiseaux d'or, ô future vigueur!

which may be rendered:

Millions of golden birds, O vigour to come!

Mark the word “golden”. It points to an illumination from some high space of being, an alchemisation of the gross drive into a purified passion. Here the life-force has found a superhuman freedom, the eternal light has dissolved all limits, a multitudinous potency has touched it from a divine distance, a futurity of imperishable flame. In a different image we have here once more the stainlessly shining steed of the Rigveda, the uncheckable downward Dadhikravan

I have to confess that this glorious creature is not yet a full-speeder in me. The process of purification has still much to catch up with. There are times when the inner movement seems to echo that line of Virgil's:

Quadrupedante putrem quatit cursu ungula campum,

whose English version is Sri Aurobindo's

Horse-hooves trampled the crumbling plain with a four-footed gallop.

But the outer movement lacks the full resonance of the inner occasions. The psychic being, the inmost soul, has its say again and again in the region of the life-force no less than in the realm of the thinker and the domain of the physical doer. Perhaps I may even aver that in basic matters it has brought about the consent of the vital energy to self-conversion: the horse's head has been turned irrevocably towards the Spirit's glimmering East and there is no halt in the pacing in that direction. What I await is the sweeping up of the total physical consciousness into the rhythm of the Rigveda's unstoppable courser with its eyes a-lit for ever.

(2.2.1991)

AMAL KIRAN (K. D. SETHNA)

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of May 1991)

ONE of the young ones asked: "Why did you say that there was no direct relation between yoga and the powers that you acquired by doing Pranayama?"

"Well, can you say that to be a poet or to increase the poetic creativity, is part of yoga? That would mean that every poet was a yogi! Or do you consider that my acquiring a lighter complexion was a means or a result of having realised the Divine? These cannot be termed spiritual experiences or realisations."

"But you did have spiritual experiences too."

"Yes, but they happened before I really took up Pranayama, at a time when I hardly knew anything about Yoga. I didn't give them much importance then. In fact, I was not very interested in Yoga at all because it had no place in my field of work at the time. Besides, the experiences came with such a suddenness, without any prior notice at all—that's another reason why I did not pay them much heed. The moment I set foot on the Apollo Bunder, on my return to India, something marvellous happened. I think I have told you about it. Then again, one day, as I was merrily riding in a carriage through the streets of Baroda, the horse seemed suddenly to go wild, rearing and leaping and almost overturning the carriage! At that very moment I felt a Form emanate from me, luminous, vast, covering the whole sky. The horse was instantly calmed and I was saved."

"Yes, we have read the sonnet. It's called 'Godhead'. Did you write it in Baroda?"

"No, I wrote it here, in Pondicherry, many years later. Then there is the instance of the experience I had on the Himalayas when I visited Kashmir with the Maharaja. There, when I climbed the hill on top of which was Shankaracharya's temple to Shiva, I immediately experienced the Infinite, I saw an infinitely vast Emptiness covering the universe."

"The last of my spiritual experiences occurred in Chhandor where I had gone to meet the yogi Brahmananda. This place is on the banks of the river Narmada, both of which are dotted with innumerable temples, big and small. I entered a Kali temple and lo! it was not a figure of stone that was there, but Mother Kali herself. It is since then that I began worshipping the Divine Mother and my belief in the constant Presence of the Divine grew strong and sure. Until then I did not have much faith in the gods."

"Not even after all those powerful experiences?"

"They were not enough, none of them, to awaken a firm unshakable faith. Infinite peace, emptiness, stillness may bring some perceptions of supernatural truths but in order to believe with an absolute certitude in the Divine Existence,

one must have a direct vision. Such as I had when I saw the Mother in the Kali temple. After that, when I began doing Pranayama, I found my faith growing stronger leading me in the end to feel that I was merely a puppet in the hands of the Lord. Wherever He would lead me, there would I go; whatever He made me do, that would I do. There was no longer any free-will of my own. But even in this state of being, I found that I could not progress beyond a certain point. It was then that I realised that I needed the help of a Yogi who would show me the way out of this difficulty. I asked Barin to help me find one. It was the time when we were preparing for the Surat Congress, getting ready for a decisive battle with the Moderates. Barin had by then heard of Lele and sent him a telegram requesting him to come to Baroda. It seems that Lele, on receiving the telegram, felt that he was being asked to give initiation to a very special person. He agreed to help me on condition that I would give up politics temporarily to go and live with him. At that time our political activities were extremely hectic and I was one of the main leaders of the party. But on my way back from Surat, after our confrontation with the Moderates, I slipped away. My close friends knew what I intended to do, so they did not remonstrate, they kept quiet. For three whole days, I stayed with Lele, shut up with him in one small room in Baroda. What happened was absolutely extraordinary, unbelievable. He told me: 'Sit down! Do not speak. Just look, you will find all your thoughts coming into you from outside. Throw them away before they can enter you.' I sat down, asking no questions and looked. To my surprise, I realised that what he had said was indeed true. I saw and felt absolutely clearly thoughts trying to enter me through the head and found myself pushing them away as if they were solid objects. In this manner, within three days, my mind became free of thoughts and was filled instead by an eternal silence. That motionless silence is there to this day."

"This is the first time that we are told that our thoughts come to us from outside. It's so strange that if anyone else had said it, we'd never have believed it."

"I used to feel exactly the same way. But I believed him or rather I asked no questions. I only did what I was told. As if by magic, the mind became still, filled with a silence akin to the windless silence on tall mountain-peaks. From then on, the mind, as we understand it, has ceased to function. The Spirit of Mind, the being of universal Mind, he who, though he is completely free and all-wise, labours as a slave in the small factory of thought, was liberated, the treasures of the innumerable kingdoms of knowledge became accessible and I could freely draw whatever I wished from the worlds of thought and life. Even the consequences of this experience were extraordinary; I have referred to them in the poem 'Nirvana' Have you read it?"

"No."

"Yes, I have. But I didn't understand it."

"There is nothing to understand. It is only an exact description of the change my being underwent."

“But if you tell us something more about it, perhaps it will become clearer.”

(*Smiling*) “Well, it was as if the whole world seemed—I shouldn't use the word 'seemed', because there was no mind any longer that perceived—like a series of pictures on a cinema screen; moving in and floating out, unstable, transitory, without substance or truth, illusory in short. For example, here I am talking to you; well, there was no 'I' at all, there was nothing, no world. The only truth was a universal Reality, perhaps describable only as 'That'! No more were there any I or you or a room, the material world had been replaced by a universal Nihil, Nothingness, in which the only Reality was That. Do you follow?”

No answer.

“Was this why you said that you hadn't understood anything?”

(*Laughing*) “Yes.”

“Then perhaps you should take recourse to Imagination.”

“What you call 'Nirvana' is the realisation of Buddha. But it took him six years!”

“It took me only three days, and even Lele was surprised at the way it came about.”

“Why do you say that he was surprised?”

“Because he had not expected this to happen to me, perhaps he did not even want it to. This is the realisation of the Advaita Consciousness, the culmination of the Vedantic Path of Knowledge, and his was the path of Love and Devotion. Isn't it surprising that instead of Love all I perceived was a universal Nihil? I too was surprised, but for a different reason. If existence was indeed illusory, then the aims and ideals I had been struggling to achieve all those years, the freedom of India, the welfare of humanity, were they equally unreal and illusory?”

“Then why did you have such an experience, in the first place?”

“How am I to explain that to you? The will of the Lord does not follow our dictates and our standards; we cannot demand His obedience nor even His acceptance of our opinions. After all, He is much much wiser than all of us, is He not? (*Laughing*). Let us conclude therefore that perhaps the Path of Knowledge was more useful for me, in the work I was doing.”

“But was it possible to work at all after that kind of experience?”

“Though I told you that all in the manifested universe seemed nothing more than moving pictures on a screen I also knew that behind it there stood an infinitely vast immutable Consciousness or Being. Besides, I could hear God's commands to me, telling me what to do. He it was who was both Guru and Leader.”

“Not Lele? But I thought it was he.”

“No, no. I cannot quite call him my Guru. In fact, he appeared completely surprised, even overwhelmed, by all that had happened. He had never seen anything like my surrender to him, so absolute, so immediate and unquestioning. He told me (or was it the Lord who used his voice?) to offer myself with the same

absoluteness to the Divine dwelling within me, to put myself completely in His hands. You may be even more puzzled to know that when I met him again, two or three months later, and he inquired about my sadhana, he was positively frightened to learn about its progress and results. He had asked me to meditate three times a day, but I had not done it. Again he had advised me to follow the commands of my inner voice, but I obeyed the indications that I received from above. I did not sit down to meditate because I was in a state of constant meditation, very much like the poet-saint Ramprasad who was so continuously conscious of Kali's presence that he did not feel the need to worship Her at any of the times indicated for puja.

"Lele was so bewildered by what was happening to me that he decided that I was on the wrong path. 'The Devil has possessed you,' he announced to me one day and even wanted to undo all that he had done to me. I answered him inwardly by saying that if this was indeed the Devil who had possessed me, then I would follow his path and no other. That was the end of our relationship."

"But how could he make such a mistake?"

"His knowledge was limited to his sole path, you see. It was not deep and vast as was Ramakrishna's which is why Totapuri failed to understand the latter. But Lele had the evocative power, he could awaken the latent faculties in the individual and for this I shall always be grateful to him. In all other respects, for example as regards knowledge, wisdom, power, my being was more receptive than his."

"But all the same he did help you, when you needed it."

"Yes, indeed. He certainly had the power of evocation. Besides, a guru is an agent or an instrument. It is the Divine who does the work, through the guru, whoever or whatever he may be. If you are completely sincere, if your faith is strong and firm, then your call will certainly be heard by the Lord and His help will reach you through the medium of the guru. It is the first law that binds the guru to his disciple. It is again this that enables the latter to say that his teacher or guru is God Himself.

"This, in short, is the answer to your rather complex question. You began asking rather difficult questions. Do you have any more of the same kind?"
(*Laughter*)

One small, very hesitant voice piped up:

"I too find it rather incredible, this realisation of yours within just three days?"

"Are you Lele?" joked his friend.

"Why should I be? But I can very well be as surprised as he was, can't I? Although I'm not sure I understand the subject very much."

"It's natural to feel surprised. And though I said three days, in actual fact it took me just one day—which makes it even more unusual and unbelievable. Anyway, let me tell you a story.

“When I first came to Pondicherry, a certain young man (not a disciple, I didn't have disciples in those days!) came to see me. ‘How does one do yoga?’ he asked me. I told him to silence the mind. He did so, his mind became completely still and empty. At which, panic-stricken, he came running to me—‘My mind is completely empty. There are no thoughts. I am turning into an idiot.’ He didn't even stop to wonder where the words he was uttering were coming from, nor whether he would, in fact, become a fool! Well, anyhow, I was not so patient, in those days, so I let him go. He stopped coming to see me. He also lost the divine silence that had been given to him.”

‘Can't we get it?’

“If you did, you might become like him! (*Laughter*) It is really difficult for you, because you don't even have formed minds yet. First develop your minds, then we shall see. But let me continue my own story—what happened to me after my mind became quite empty. It was a state similar to that of the foolish young man; I asked Lele, ‘Here I am, with my mind completely blank, empty, free of thought. But how then am I to make the speeches that I am expected to make? All along the route, on my way back to Calcutta, at Poona first, then at Bombay, there will be meetings where I must speak.’ He told me not to worry. He said, ‘When you stand before the audience, with folded hands invoke God and wait quietly. You will find that your voice will be used to say whatever is necessary.’ Again, with complete faith in his words, I followed his advice. It was just as he had said it would be. I myself was astonished. My earlier speeches had always been carefully thought out, though thinking had never been very hard for me. But this was miraculous. It was exactly as if the Goddess Saraswati fitted the words to my tongue! All my speeches that followed, from the one at Poona to the one I made in Calcutta, all were spoken in the same way. Not only my speeches—my writings, my conversations, everything flowed down henceforth from above the mind. I could never have undertaken the immense task that I am doing with only the mind for my guide, could I?”

“On your return to Calcutta after the Nirvana experience, didn't you find it difficult to resume all your work?”

“Not at all! I had so many responsibilities—political and national—as well as the job of editing the *Bande Mataram*, addressing meetings, and so on.”

“But then, what about your sadhana?”

“You still do not seem to realise that work and sadhana are not separate from and incompatible with each other. The notion instilled by the earlier yogas are so deep-rooted in the race that they have influenced even your child-minds. But I for one do not find anything surprising or difficult in being able to continue with all my work, be it national or domestic, writing or teaching or while pursuing my sadhana most earnestly, because I consider work to be part of sadhana. In fact, this is one of the main characteristics of our yoga, here.”

“But if I were to attain the peace of Nirvana, I believe I would give up all my activities!” (*Laughter*)

“Vivekananda too had said something on those lines, to which Sri Ramakrishna had retorted, ‘But that makes you terribly selfish!’ As a matter of fact, after the Nirvanic experience, one does tend to withdraw oneself from the world, that danger is indeed there. But we are not doing the yoga for our own sakes. If that were so, there would have been no need to establish this Ashram, nor need I have come down into the world at all. However, my worldly activities did soon come to an abrupt end—the day God sent the police to me with a warrant of arrest and took me to the Alipore Jail.”

“God did that?”

“Since I had surrendered all my responsibilities to Him, since my patriotism was nothing other than His worship and I knew it was He who was guiding me at every step—why should I then not say that it was He who did it? The police were merely an excuse and an instrument. Of course, this knowledge became a certitude only after I went to prison.”

“But why did the Lord treat you so harshly?”

(*Smiling*) “What may seem harsh or cruel to us in its immediate appearance, often turns out to be extremely sweet, ultimately. In jail, He told me,—‘The bonds you could not break, I have broken for you. I have brought you here so that you may prepare yourself for the task I have chosen for you.’ In fact, a month or so before my arrest, God had indicated to me to give up everything, in order to be able to pursue my sadhana in solitary earnestness so that I might draw even closer to Him. But I was so attached to my country and my work that I could not accept His suggestion. And hence the arrest! God’s ‘cruel’ punishment to me!.. I will tell you more about this in due course.

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

(*Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali*)

SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF AN “EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1991)

The Astrologer

I SPOKE last time about a remarkable astrologer whose predictions about many events in my future life came true almost word for word. How did he acquire this power?

The story goes that after he had lost his young wife whom he had loved very dearly, he travelled to Tibet. There he spent many years learning the science of occultism and prophecy from a Tibetan tantric, Tibet being well known for this knowledge.

Then when he had become an adept, he returned to Bengal and began to use his powers to see into people's lives. At such times, it was observed that he would put one hand on a tiger's skull he had brought with him from Tibet and kept by his side. Simultaneously, his eyes would glow with a strange light. He would not charge his customers or accept any remuneration from them, and was particularly strict in this regard, as he was afraid that if he did, he would lose his power. It goes without saying that if he had taken payment he would have amassed enormous wealth. But ironically, he eventually lost his power for a totally different reason.

The astrologer's prophecy about not only my marriage but an incident concerned with it also turned out to be true. He had predicted that my uncle would come from a distant place to attend my marriage, even though that seemed a remote possibility. But he did in fact arrive, unfortunately not with happy results. On the occasion of the ceremony he suddenly blurted out, "When my Guru gave me permission to come, I asked him how he was allowing me to go, when it was against his principles. He replied, 'This is not really a marriage, so I am allowing you.'"

My uncle made this astonishing statement just when, in the course of the ritual, water had been poured into the vessel I was holding. No sooner did I hear him than I dropped the pot and burst into tears. All the assembled guests were as stunned as I was. "What does this mean? And if it has any meaning, is this the time to say it? Shame! Shame!" they shouted from all sides. But my uncle, true to his nature, could not have remained more nonchalant and unconcerned. He apparently had no inkling of what a grave indiscretion he had committed.

Later on, I turned on my mother. "Why have you arranged this marriage?" I demanded. The astrologer, who was present, answered for her, saying that

even though it would not be a happy marriage she could not avoid it. "Remember, I told you you have to be a mother," he added. In despair, I was left wondering whether that was why my uncle had said that it was not a real marriage. But then what was it? I asked myself utterly nonplussed.

On another occasion, the astrologer said that I would never be loved by anyone of my own age, only by a much older man.

Surprised, I replied, "But there is a man such as you describe. He does so much for me, yet he never expects anything in return. Could it be that he is the one who loves me?"

"No, no, he isn't the one," the astrologer protested.

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure. Take my word for it."

Many years passed, but the prophecy remained unfulfilled. Once again I reminded the astrologer of it after he had lost his power. But he would not go back on his prediction, and insisted, "I have spoken the truth—it came to me in a flash. He exists somewhere, and he will come."

In the end, I and my mother did meet such a person, but despite our many meetings he never gave any indication of his love for me.

The astrologer made still another disturbing prediction. He said: "You will fall seriously ill and be in danger of death. Then the Lord will come and ask you, 'Do you want to die?' And you will reply, 'No!' " This too turned out to be correct. After the birth of my son, I became so ill that my body raged with high fever for days, with no medicine having any effect. The doctor's verdict was that I had measles, but that for some reason the disease was being prevented from taking its natural course, it was suppressed, and as a result I was indeed close to death.

As my mother sat by my bedside gently caressing me, someone suddenly whispered in my ear, "Do you want to die?"

I shuddered and replied, "No, no, I don't!"

After this the measles' rash that had been suppressed erupted all over my body, and I gradually recovered.

I have already mentioned that the astrologer had taken particular interest in drawing up my horoscope, finding it most unusual. He reconfirmed this view one day when I showed him my hand saying, "Just look at my palm! How many complicated criss-cross lines there are!"

"That's why I'm so intrigued by it," he answered. "It's a veritable Chinese puzzle! Do you know why? Because you have registered the various vibrations of other people's minds on your hand, and that's what makes it rare. I've seen so many people's palms showing the same kind of life—marriage, children, illness, death—like a formula. But your hand is different, and by consequence your life is full of strange experiences, difficulties, sufferings and dangers. What obstacles and crises you will have to pass through! You must have seen the circus act where

the performers have to vault through a flaming wheel without getting burnt. Well, he who is guiding you will see you through the burning wheels of your difficulties in a similar manner."

Yet mine was not the only unhappy life the astrologer encountered. An extremely beautiful young relative of mine, though married, fell in love with a Muslim boy. She deserted her husband and went to live with him, even after the astrologer had told her, "Beware, give up your lover. Otherwise you will be ruined, I warn you." She paid no attention.

Soon after, the Hindu-Muslim riots before Partition broke out in Bengal. The Muslim youth was forced by his community to abandon the Hindu girl and flee to East Pakistan. Left unprotected, the poor girl suffered indescribably at the hands of goondas.

Though there are many other stories connected with the astrologer's predictions, I will end with one that he made when he had almost lost his power. At the time, I was extremely anxious about my impending divorce from my husband. "What will happen? What will be the result of the case?" I asked.

"Have I the power left to see?" he replied sadly. But after a few days, when I met him again, he astounded me with what he had to say. "A westerner will save you," was his prediction. "He loves you. He may be German, French, or some other nationality."

"A westerner? Love me?" I cried. "I don't meet foreigners, as you know—far from having a love affair with one!"

He was adamant. "Well, that's what I saw. There can't be any mistake."

Incredibly, once again he turned out to be right. There was no mistake in his vision, and how it came about was beyond imagining. I shall speak about it in the right place.

Meanwhile, I may record that the astrologer lost his power because he had gone astray. The lesson, as Mother says, is that occult powers are most dangerous and are best left alone, unless one can maintain a state of extreme purity.

NIRODBARAN

THE LAND OF MISTS

IN a moonlit landscape
Limned was the perfection of palaces,
Huts, trees and animals—
As if life had stopped in a fairy moment,
For movement there was none.
Sound had vanished; life, calm and hushed,
Marbled in an instant's immobile eternity
Under a silver cumulus, stood arrested—
Creation and its million objects.
There in soulful silences swirled
Divine ecstasies on silver wings,
Each tuned to new shades and hues,
Seven of the rainbow and many besides,
Colours of wonder invisible to the clipped vision of human eyes.
Colour with intense life and potency
Played there with colour, taking shape
In a strange creation of dynamic ether.
There stood resplendent in that Land of Mists
The liberated soul, the wayfarer on tracts unseen,
Eager for the Akash Brahman, clad in calm, awaiting the tryst.

SHYAM KUMARI

EDITOR'S NOTE

PEOPLE have been inquiring about the continuation and the end of "The Story of a Soul".

So Huta will give, in several future issues of *Mother India*, an outline of her life and work with the Mother under the title "Labour of Love", covering the years 1955-73.

The full account will be written as part of the book, *The Story of a Soul*, which will be published in 15 or 16 volumes in the course of time.

SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM IN THE ROMANTIC AGE

(Continued from the issue of May 1991)

UNLIKE Coleridge, Lamb and Hazlitt followed the native English tradition of empirical criticism and owed little to the new criticism from Germany. Both of them received something from the contact with Shakespeare and found scope and fulfilment for their own creative impulses.

Charles Lamb did not write much by way of Shakespearean criticism but the little that he wrote is worth its weight in gold. He initiated the movement of enjoying a work of art without caring for theoretical abstractions. E. M. W. Tillyard considers him the greatest master of applied criticism in English. A. C. Bradley called him "the best critic of the nineteenth century."¹³

Even in his *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) where he adapts Shakespeare's stories to the intelligence of uncritical children, Lamb's subtle intellect and unerring taste are visible. The following description of Polonius reveals the master-hand of Lamb: "a man grown old in crooked maxims and policies of state, who delighted to get at the knowledge of matters in an indirect and cunning way."¹⁴

Lamb's brilliant insights into some of the characters of Shakespeare are to be found in his *Essays of Elia* also. In the essay, *The Old Actors*, while paying tributes to certain actors, he neatly sketches Iago and Malvolio: "It was not a man setting his wits at a child, and winking all the while at other children, who are mightily pleased at being let into the secret; but a consummate villain entrapping a noble nature into toils, against which no discernment was available, where the manner was as fathomless as the purpose seemed dark, and without motive."¹⁵

"Malvolio is not essentially ludicrous. He becomes comic but by accident. He is cold, austere, repelling, but dignified, consistent, and, for what appears, rather of an over-stretched morality.... But his morality and his manners are misplaced in Illyria."¹⁶

Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare* (1808) reveals "a new and sensitive appreciation of the Elizabethans"¹⁷ His comparison of Fletcher with Shakespeare is worth quoting:

"Fletcher's ideas moved slow, his versification, though sweet, is tedious, it stops at every turn, he lays line upon line, making up one after the other, adding image to image so deliberately, that we see their junctures. Shakespeare mingles everything, runs line into line, embarrasses sentences and metaphors, before one idea has burst its shell, another is hatched and clamorous for disclosure."¹⁸

His essay *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, considered with reference to their fitness for Stage Representation* (1811) contains his argument that Shakespeare's plays are least fitted to be performed on the stage, because acting deals only with

the superficial things of passion, whereas Shakespeare reveals the internal workings and movements of a great mind. He argues that the practice of stage representation reduces everything to a controversy of elocution.

“But the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements, than any actor can be to represent Lear.”¹⁹

He goes on to say that everyone who sees Othello acted sinks his mind in his colour. There is something revolting to the mind in the courtship and wedded caresses. To read the witch scenes in *Macbeth* is to be spellbound, as Macbeth himself was; the witches on the stage become old women to be ridiculed. All spirits and fairies in *The Tempest* can only be believed, not painted.

Bradley echoed Lamb when he asserted that *King Lear* could not be acted. Granville-Barker has challenged this view and convincingly argued that the play can be successfully represented on the stage. But it should be remembered that part of Lamb's protest against the acting of Shakespeare is levelled against the kind of staging, acting, setting and costuming Shakespeare received in the theatre of his time. He might have qualified his view if the theatrical experience had been different.

It is true that Lamb was lacking in range, scholarship and knowledge of foreign literature. But when he is discussing certain works of art, he is able to bring the reader closer to them by some subtle means than any other critic can do. Lamb's recreative power, his capacity to identify himself with the object he loves and his power to make the poet he is discussing speak again cannot be underestimated.

The approach of Hazlitt is fundamentally different from that of Coleridge. If Coleridge is primarily a theorist, Hazlitt is an impressionist. Coleridge's vision is coloured by the views of the German critics, Hazlitt owes very little to the continental critics. Though he praises *The Lectures* of A. W. Schlegel, he disagrees frequently about details of the plays and rejects Schlegel's fantastic ascription of several doubtful plays to Shakespeare. On many issues he is nearer to Wordsworth than to Coleridge. “He is, like Wordsworth, rooted in the English empirical tradition, like Wordsworth he inherits the emotionalism and Rousseauism of the later 18th century. The Prefaces to *Lyrical Ballads*, though rarely referred to, are clearly basic texts from which much of Hazlitt's own theory is derived.”²⁰

Hazlitt defends what is now known as impressionistic criticism. “I say what I think, I think what I feel. I cannot help receiving certain impressions from things, I have sufficient courage to declare (somewhat abruptly) what they are.”²¹ “In a word, I have endeavoured to feel what is good, and to give a reason for the faith that was in me, when necessary, and when in my power.”²²

His concept of poetry is usually wide and varied enough to accommodate

different conceptions. He uses the word 'Poetry' to mean three different things: the composition produced, the state of mind or faculty producing it, and, in certain cases, the subject-matter proper to call forth that state of mind. Poetry must be passion and the best poetry must be objective passion. To him, the poet is the all-sympathizer, devoid of any individuality and absorbed in his objects.

His general treatment of Shakespeare appears in his lecture *On Shakespeare and Ben Jonson*. There he speaks of the universal quality of Shakespeare's mind: "He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be.... His genius shone equally on the evil and on the good, on the wise and the foolish, the monarch and the beggar.... He had only to think of anything in order to become that thing, with all the circumstances belonging to it."²³ In the same essay, there is a tribute to Shakespeare's language and versification. "He has a magic power over words; they come winged at his bidding, and seem to know their places.... His language is hieroglyphical. It translates thoughts into visible images. It abounds in sudden transitions and elliptical expressions. This is the source of his mixed metaphors, which are only abbreviated forms of speech."²⁴

In his *Lectures on the English Poets*, Hazlitt compares four writers—Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. Chaucer is a poet of manners; Spenser is a poet of romance; Shakespeare is a poet of nature in the largest sense of the term, and Milton is the poet of morality. Chaucer describes things as they are; Spenser as we wish them to be; Shakespeare as they would be; Milton as they ought to be. Imagination was common to all four. The characteristic of Chaucer is his intensity; of Spenser, remoteness, of Milton, elevation, but of Shakespeare, everything.

Hazlitt's rich sense of history is evident in his essay *On Modern Comedy*. He is aware of the fact that Shakespeare is first and foremost an Elizabethan playwright. "Shakespeare, with all his genius, could not have written as he did, if he had lived in the present times... and his age was necessary to him. It was this which enabled him to grapple at once with Nature, and which stamped his characters with her image and superscription."²⁵

On the Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (1817) is the first book of Romantic Criticism of Shakespeare in England. Though the title appears to be conservative, the ideas contained in it are strikingly modern. There is a preface, in which Hazlitt remarks that Shakespeare's descriptions are identical with the things themselves, seen through the fine medium of passion. It is in the preface that Hazlitt tries to account for Johnson's failure as a Shakespearean critic. There are individual chapters on each of the plays with the exception of *Pericles*, followed by the two entitled the "Doubtful Plays of Shakespeare" and "Poems and Sonnets." The plays are generally grouped by genre: tragedy first, then history, then comedy. The essays abound in quotations from the plays. In every fourth or fifth chapter, there is a discussion of some general topic or other. For

instance, there are discussions on (1) Shakespeare's heroines (in *Cymbeline*) (2) tragedy as a discipline of humanity (in *Othello*) (3) the aristocratic imagination and the republican understanding (in *Coriolanus*), (4) the difference between Chaucer and Shakespeare (in *Troilus and Cressida*) (5) the nature of Shakespearean comedy (in *Twelfth Night*) (6) Shakespeare as a moralist (in *Measure for Measure*).

His remark on the heroines of Shakespeare's plays is an excellent piece of criticism: they "seem to exist only in their attachment to others. They are pure abstractions of the affections. We think as little of their persons as they do themselves, because we are let into the secrets of their hearts... No one ever hit the true perfection of the female character, the sense of weakness leaning on the strength of its affections for support, so well as Shakespeare."²⁶

In his observations on Shakespearean comedy, he anticipates Coghill, who has written that it derives from the Christian rather than the classic pattern, focusing on forgiveness rather than punishment.

Shakespeare's drama, he observes, "is perhaps too good-natured for comedy. It has little satire, and no spleen. It aims at the ludicrous rather than the ridiculous. It makes us laugh at the follies of mankind, not despise them, and still less bear any ill-will towards them. Shakespeare's comic genius resembles the bee rather in its power of extracting sweets from weeds or poisons, than in leaving a sting behind it."²⁷

In his examination of Shakespeare's characters, his interest in acting and his experience as a playgoer stand him in good stead. He employs three devices: (1) evocation of a scene, action or actor (2) suggestive metaphor (3) personal reference. He finds Shakespeare's specific virtue in his character-creation and in the delineation of passion. Like many other critics of his time, he believes that Shakespeare made his characters live by identifying himself with them and becoming in turn everyone of them. In analysing the complex characters he finds full play for his knowledge of psychology.

Hazlitt very convincingly argues that Shakespeare traces, in his plays, not only the course and progress of passion but the intricate relationship between one passion and other passions and feelings. His examination of *Othello* and *Macbeth*, from this point of view, is quite interesting: "The movement of the passion in *Othello* is exceedingly different from that of *Macbeth*. In *Macbeth* there is a violent struggle between opposite feelings, between ambition and the stings of conscience almost from first to last: in *Othello*, the doubtful conflict between contrary passions, though dreadful, continues only for a short time, and the chief interest is excited by the alternate ascendancy of different passions, by the entire and unforeseen change from the fondest love and most unbounded confidence to the tortures of jealousy and the madness of hatred."²⁸

Hazlitt was one of the earliest critics to vindicate Shakespeare's masterful use of language and especially his mixed metaphors. He responds to Shake-

speare's poetry in *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *The Merchant of Venice*. While maintaining that *Macbeth* is done upon a stronger and more systematic principle of contrast than any other of Shakespeare's plays, he says,

"The whole play is an unruly chaos of strange and forbidden things, where the ground rocks under our feet. Shakespeare's genius here took its full wing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion. This circumstance will account for the abruptness and violent antitheses of the style, the throes and labour which run through the expression and from defects will turn them into beauties. 'So fair and foul a day I have not seen', etc. 'Such welcome and unwelcome news together.' 'Men's lives are like the flowers in their caps, dying or ere they sicken,' 'Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it'.... The description of the witches is full of the same contradictory principle."²⁹

Hazlitt is never hampered by the 18th-century habits and prejudices—prejudices in favour of clear statements and explicit moral conclusions and against verbal complexity and implicitness. He is at his best when he deals with complex characters. Even René Wellek who considers *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* an immature work concedes: "His character sketch of Iago is superior to Coleridge's description of his ' motiveless malignity' or to Tucker Brooke's recent attempt to sentimentalize Iago into a basically likeable good fellow."³⁰ His criticism of *Romeo and Juliet* is also superb. "Their courtship is not an insipid interchange of sentiments lip-deep, learnt at second-hand from poems and plays—made up of beauties of the most shadowy kind, of 'fancies wan that hang the pensive head', of evanescent smiles, and sighs that breathe not, of delicacy that shrinks from the touch, and feebleness that scarce supports itself, an elaborate vacuity of thought, and an artificial dearth of sense, spirit, truth, and nature!"³¹ Coleridge has also said much about *Romeo and Juliet*, but Ralli, another admirer of Coleridge, concedes that "the comparison would not be all in favour of Coleridge"³²

The chief excellence of Hazlitt's Shakespeare criticism is that he brings to Shakespeare the sensibility of a drama critic and the intelligence of a closet critic. At the same time, it is not easy to ignore his limitations. His indifference to the distinction between life and art, his blindness to the beauty of Shakespeare's poetry, his imperfect knowledge of the Elizabethan ethos, his political prejudices and his desire to flaunt his own personality are too evident at times.

(To be continued)

P. MARUDANAYAGAM

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BERNARD SHAW ON HINDUISM

A LETTER TO ENSOR WILLIAMS

I AM writing this in the Gulf of Siam after inspecting a remarkable collection of religions in Egypt and India. The apparent multiplicity of Gods is bewildering at the first glance; but you soon discover that they are all the same God in different aspects and functions and even sexes. There is always one uttermost God who defies personification. This makes Hinduism the most tolerant religion in the world, because its one transcendent God includes all possible Gods, from elephant Gods, bird Gods and snake Gods right up to the great Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, which makes room for the Virgin Mary and modern Feminism by making Shiva a woman as well as a man. Christ is there as Krishna, who might also be Dionysos. In fact Hinduism is so elastic and so subtle that the profoundest Methodist and the crudest idolater are equally at home in it.

(Feb. 1933)

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

A ROLLING stone gathers no moss

A mass of concreted earthy material perennially rotating on its axis will not accumulate an accretion of bryophytic vegetation.

Too many cooks spoil the broth

A superabundance of talent skilled in the preparation of gastronomic concoctions will impair the quality of a certain potable solution made by immersing a gallinaceous bird in ebullient Adam's ale

People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

Individuals who perforce are constrained to be domiciled in vitreous structures of patent fragility should on no account employ petrous formations as projectiles.

The early bird catches the worm.

That prudent avis which matutinally deserts the coziness of its abode will ensnare a vermiculate creature.

All that glitters is not gold.

Everything that coruscates with effulgence is not ipso facto aurous.

Waste not, want not.

He who does not dissipate his competence by hebetudinous prodigality will not subsequently lament an exiguous inadequacy.

A fool and his money are soon parted

An addle-pated beetlehead and his specie divaricate with startling prematurity

It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.

It can be no other than a maleficent horizontally propelled current of gaseous matter whose portentous advent is not the harbinger of a modicum of beneficence.

Look before you leap.

One should hyperesthetically exercise macrography upon that situs which one will eventually tenant, if one propels oneself into the troposphere.

To err is human, to forgive divine

Aberration is the hallmark of homo sapiens while longanimous placability and condonation are the indicia of supramundane omniscience.

ANON

FAMOUS POETRY CONDENSED

WORDSWORTH'S IMMORTALITY ODE

BABES see
God's plan.
Not so
Grown man.
Ripe sage
Half can.

MARGARET WOOD

KEATS'S ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

Lovers
on jug
never
can hug.
—Men rot;
pots not.

MICHAEL WOOD

TENNYSON'S ULYSSES

Come back?
Might try
Wife's old;
Son's 'pi';
Push off—
Goodbye!

A.M. ROBERTSON

SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET-SOLILOQUY

Stuck life
Or not?
Life's strife,
Death's—what?
Hell's trick?
I'll stick.

A.M. SAYERS

POPE'S ESSAY ON MAN

First Cause
Made laws.
But why?
Don't pry,
Poor wight—
All's right.

A.M. ROBERTSON

AUDEN'S SPAIN

Past's done
—And how!
Leave plough,
Take gun.
Soon fun:
Fight now

MARTIN ROBERTSON

ELIOT'S FOUR QUARTETS

(East Coker)

Start—end
(Death's smart).
Hop, blend,
Birth, art
(Stuff penned),
End, Start—

J.A. LINDON

(The Dry Salvages)

God-ri-
Ver-sea-
Mado-
-nna-Kri-
Shna-pot-
Pourri.

MARTIN ROBERTSON

(From "New Statesman", 30 July, 1960)

PEPYS AND ANANDA RANGA PILLAI AS DIARISTS

CERTAIN diaries in French and English have been found to be of immense value to social and political historians. For a picturesque and realistic account of the reigns of Charles VI and Charles VII, we have to go to *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris* kept by an anonymous French priest from 1409 to 1431 and continued by another person to 1449. And the diary of Marquis D'Anjou covering the period from 1684 to 1720 highlights many historical events of the period. Jonathan Swift's diary called *The Journal to Stella* is a curious "amalgam of ambition, affection, wit and freakishness." The journals of Sir Walter Scott, Dorothy Wordsworth, Henry Crabb Robinson, Katherine Mansfield, André Gide and the five-volume diary of Virginia Woolf are of extraordinary literary interest.

But, according to English scholars, the greatest diarist of all is Samuel Pepys, with whom I think Ananda Ranga Pillai deserves comparison. This comparison is justified because Sir Frederic Price, an able historian, who has edited the first three volumes of the English translation of Pillai's diary has himself observed, "It stands unique as a record of the inmost thoughts and reflections of an extremely able, level-headed Oriental, and of his criticisms — which at times are of the freest character—of his fellows and masters. It is a strange mixture of things trivial and important; of family matters and affairs of state; of business transactions and the social life of the day; interspersed with scraps of gossip, all evidently as they came to the mind of the diarist, who might well be dubbed the Indian Pepys."

The careers of both Ananda Ranga Pillai and Pepys were characterized by industry, devotion to duty, unbending passion for efficiency and honesty. Both the lives were eventful and both were keen men of affairs who were involved in the chief events of their times. Both were learned men with varied interests. Born on March 30, 1709, Pillai enjoyed a meteoric rise in his career, becoming the Chief Dubash whom Dupleix consulted on many complex and controversial matters. His was a full life from 1709 to 1761, which happened to be a momentous period in the history of Pondicherry. As an enterprising businessman and as an honest diplomat, he came into contact with all the men who mattered and had a lion's share in all the events that shaped the destiny of this great city. Samuel Pepys, who lived from 1633 to 1703, was the son of a working tailor, acquired university education and rose to be one of the greatest men of his day, becoming England's Secretary of the Admiralty and serving as a member of Parliament, President of the Royal Society and Master of the Clothworkers' Company and a baron of the Cinque Ports and "the trusted confidant of Charles II from whom he took down in shorthand the account of escape after the battle of Worcester and of James II whose will he witnessed before the royal flight in 1688. As the administrative head of the Royal Navy, he made a bold attempt at stamping out the corruption that had paralyzed the activities of the navy. He

remained courageously at his post during the Great Plague and the fire of London. He was known to be "a conscientious administrator in an age of conscienceless venality."

Ranga Pillai's copious diary opening on September 6, 1736 and ending on January 12, 1761, is rich in details which are of historical, social, literary and linguistic value. The original Tamil version running to about 3000 pages records events of historical importance like the invasion of Nadir Shah, the fall of Delhi, alliances of Kings in Europe, battles in India as well as the customs and habits of the local people, their beliefs, fears and ambitions, weaknesses and the daily activities of the diarist and the arrivals and departures of ships. Pepys' diary giving a fascinating picture of the official and upper class life of Restoration London from January 1, 1660 to May 31, 1669 was written in Thomas Shelton's system of shorthand and fills six quarto volumes. It is "a record of crowded working days and of all the joys and cares—social and official, aesthetic and vulgar, domestic and extradomestic—that made up Pepys' life."

Both the diaries are authentic records of private life and public events. Dodwell, one of the editors of the English translation of Ranga Pillai's diary, has remarked "As regards what he has seen and heard, he seems to be a very reliable witness. I am not aware of any instance in which he himself is guilty of anything like bad faith." One of the entries claims, "I proceed to chronicle what I hear with my ears, what I see with my eyes" and he keeps his promise. He does not spare himself. For example, confessing his weakness for flattering people in power, he writes about one of his meetings with Duplex:

"I dwelt at length, and in highly eulogistic terms, on the address with which he administered the affairs of this city at so critical a time as the present, and on the tact with which he expended from his own purse two lakhs of pagodas to relieve the townsmen from embarrassment, and maintain them in prosperity such as though they were in times when trade and commerce were at their best. I remarked that the ability and success of the administration of his predecessors could not bear comparison with those of his, and that it was problematical whether any of his successors would reach the standard of his qualifications; and I averred that there was no man in India who could conduct affairs of state with the consummate skill that he had displayed at the momentous period of the threatened attack by the English on Pondicherry."

Pepys too beheld what happened around him with unerring eyes and recorded them sincerely without holding back anything essential to his account. Like a gifted journalist he can sum up a scene or a person in a few brilliant words. He calls his Aunt Jane "a poor, religious, good soul, talking of nothing but God Almighty." He does not gloss over his own weaknesses—his vanity, ill-temper, a fondness for fine clothes, good food and attractive women. Mentioning his interest in a new watch he writes,

"But Lord! to see how much of the old folly and childishness hangs on me in

that I cannot forebear carrying my watch in my hand in the coach all the afternoon and seeing what o'clock it is one hundred times."

Whatever is felt strongly in the course of the day is recorded in the journal faithfully and interestingly:

"May 1st 1669—up betimes. Called up by my tailor, and there first put on a summer suit this year; but it was not my fine one of flowered tabby vest and coloured camelot tunic, because it was too fine with the gold lace at the bands, that I was afraid to be seen in it; but put on the stuff suit I made the last year, which is now repaired; so did go to the office in it and sat all the morning, the day looking as if it would be foul. At noon home to dinner, and there find my wife extraordinary fine, with her flowered tabby gown that she made two years ago, now laced exceeding pretty; and, indeed, was fine all over; and mighty earnest to go, though the day was very lowering; and she would have me put on my fine suit, which I did; and so on we went alone through the town with our new liveries of serge, and the horses' manes and tails tied with red ribbons, and the standards there gilt with varnish, and all clean, and green reins, that people did mightily look upon us; and, the truth is, I did not see any coach more pretty, though more gay, than ours all the day."

Ranga Pillai also displays a fine sense of humour. For instance, when a Collector told him that Goddess Mariamman appeared to him in human form and threatened that there would be death and destruction if she was not given silk cloth, gold anklets and bracelets and a basket of flowers and a village, Ranga Pillai replied,

"I had only heard that the goddess had appeared in Arcot and those parts in dreams and not in human form as the goddess has appeared to you, you and the rest are indeed favoured thus to see her and pay her your respects. Henceforward I must regard you as divine."

Both the diarists excel in character delineations, in descriptions of festivals and spectacular scenes like the coronation, the reception given to kings and chieftains, of scenes of horror like the panic caused by fires and hurricanes. Both of them can select the vital details of a scene and describe them graphically enabling us to have a vivid mental picture of it. Through their realistic word-paintings they can make us participate in their lives without at any time creating a dull moment or forcing the reader to lose interest in what is being said. All this means that both of them were great creative artists without knowing it.

Such a comparison inevitably leads to the difference in the treatments the two diaries have received from posterity. Pepys's diary was transcribed with great accuracy by John Smith at the instance of the master and fellows of Magdalene College, Cambridge and a quarter of it was published in 1825, to be followed by many full editions, selections, adaptations and abridged versions including *Everybody's Pepys*, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* in 9 volumes, *The Illustrated Pepys: Extracts from the Diary*, *The Life, Journals and Correspon-*

dence and Miscellaneous Papers of Samuel Pepys, Samuel Pepys's Naval Minutes, The Tangier Papers of Samuel Pepys, The Letters of Samuel Pepys and His Family Circle, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Library of Samuel Pepys and The Spanish Books in the Library of Samuel Pepys

Numerous biographical and critical works about Pepys have also flooded the literary world. On the other hand, we do not have even a complete set of the volumes of Ranga Pillai's diary in Tamil. We have not drawn the attention of the Western scholars and critics to the existence of such a monumental work, even though certain parts of it relating to the French rulers have been translated into French.

There is a lot of scope for research and criticism involving the disciplines of Comparative Literature, Sociology, Politics, History and Linguistics where Ranga Pillai's diary is concerned. The Tamil scholar working for his Ph.D. may be entrusted with the task of editing one volume of the diary with a critical introduction and notes. Thus meticulously annotated editions of all the volumes of the diary may be made available to the expert and the lay reader. And it has to be examined as a historical treatise, as a sociological document, as a political record and as a linguistic source where we come across an effective use of the spoken Tamil of the Eighteenth Century. A full-length thesis can be written on the learning of Ananda Pillai who was well-versed in Tamil and French and had a working knowledge of Portuguese, Telugu, Malayalam and Persian.

Many western literary historians claim that "Pepys is the only writer of his kind known to history. There are many diarists; there is only one Pepys." Our endeavour should be to make them accept that there is one more from the southern part of India whose achievement is comparable to that of Pepys.

P. MARUDANAYAGAM

MEGHADŪTA: A STUDY OF THE INTERPLAY OF “DARK” AND “BRIGHT” IMAGES

Introduction

MUCH has been written about Kālidāsa and his works. The historians of Sanskrit literature have spent much time and energy in order to place him and his works on a sound historical basis. But history has to deal with documents which in the Indian context are very scanty. And therefore, the results obtained and the energy spent in such historical studies seem to be disproportionate.

However, literary monuments are not lacking. And, René Wellek says, “Literary study differs from historical study in having to deal not with documents but with monuments.”¹ While the historians have moved around these monuments trying to discover the missing or non-existent documents, critics and readers have tried to reach and view the monuments themselves. Still, most of the critical judgments have been made intuitively from an inherent sense of aesthetic value in the critic’s mind, through his insight. These critical judgments and insights have established Kālidāsa as the greatest of classical Sanskrit poets. And any reader with sufficient poetic sensibility and critical and aesthetic discernment will be able to verify for himself the truth of this judgment. We need not reconsider this opinion in any general way.

Moreover, our object will not be a total study either of Kālidāsa’s works as a whole or of the *Meghadūta* in all its different aspects. We shall focus our attention only on a particular detail, though an important one, of this literary monument which is *Meghadūta*. Continuing this image of monument we could also quote what the poet-critic Randall Jarrell says addressing the literary critic. “Remember that you can never be more than the staircase to the monument...”²

Meghadūta is recognized as one of the most perfect expressions of the Indian poetical mind. “Indian criticism has ranked it highest among Kālidāsa’s poems for brevity of expression, richness of content and power to elicit sentiment, and the praise is not undeserved.”³ Not only traditional Indian critics, but modern critics too have bestowed the highest praise on this poem. The admiration of Rabindranath Tagore is well-known, as is vouched by his articles and the long poem in Bengali, *Meghadūta*, inspired by Kālidāsa and constituting a glorious tribute to him.⁴

¹ René Wellek. *Concepts of Criticism*, 8th Printing (New Haven and London 1975) pp 14-15

² Randall Jarrell, *Poetry and the Age* (London 1973) p 92

³ A. Berriedale Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (London 1920) p 86

⁴ For a more detailed consideration of the relation between the two poems see, “*Rabindra-dṛṣṭe Kālidās*”, pp 92-133 in Prabodh Chandra Sen, *Bhārat-pathik Rabindranāth*, Calcutta 1962, and Birendra Kumar Bhattachārya, “*Meghadūt O Rabindranāth*” in *Kabi O Kabitā*, X, 4 pp 433-453. R. H. Assier de Pompignan in the introduction to his French translation of *Meghadūta* (Paris 1967) erroneously speaks of a Bengali translation by Tagore, p xxxii. There are several Bengali translations of *Meghadūta* but none by Tagore.

Like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo too has given unreserved praise to this poem. "Every possible beauty of phrase," he writes about it, "every possible beauty of sound, every grace of literary association, every source of imaginative and sensuous beauty has been woven together into a harmony which is without rival and without fault: for amidst all its wealth of colour, delicacy and sweetness, there is not a word too much or too little, no false note, no excessive or defective touch. the colouring is just and subdued in its richness, the verse movement regular in its variety, the diction simple in its suggestiveness, the emotion convincing and fervent behind a certain high restraint, the imagery precise, right and not overdone as in the *Raghuvamśa* and yet quite as full of beauty and power."¹

Here is then a wonderful monument of Indian poetry. Our task will be to throw some light on a particular façade of this monument, to discover some harmony of pattern, some justness of vision which has hitherto not been fully revealed. Critics have spoken of the Kālidāsian metaphor, *upamā Kālidāsasya*, the sensuousness of his use of colours, the vividness and intensity of the feeling for the object have been noted, single verses have been quoted and requoted in order to show the complex suggestiveness of the images, the happy blending of sense and sound. Yet we cannot say that the poem has been exhausted; there are still undiscovered regions, the exploration of which will certainly yield new insight into the poem for its fuller understanding and appreciation.

One such field is the metaphorical texture of the poem made up of "dark" and "bright" images. We can see the whole poem as a metaphor. To this idea we shall return presently. However, before proceeding further we should try to grasp the structure of the poem and its different psychological movements so as to see the effect, the intensity and the changing significance of the metaphorical texture within the different parts of the poem

Divisions of the Poem

Meghadūta presents a greater unity than the *mahākāvya*-s, firstly because of the pervasiveness of one *rasa*, namely *vipralambhā śrngāra*, love in separation: secondly because of the uniform rhythm used throughout the poem. The *mahākāvya* presents more structural variety, as well as a greater scope for the interplay of different emotions. *Meghadūta* has therefore been called, by later critics, a *khandakāvya*, a poem which has no all-round complex development, which concentrates on and follows one single object.² It has also been called a *saṅghāta*, defined as the expression of one poetic object, *artha*, in one unvarying

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *On Translating Kalidasa*, in Birth Centenary Library, Vol 27 (Pondicherry 1972) p 106

² *Khanda-kāvyaṃ bhavet kāvyasyaika-deśānusāri ca Sāhitya-darpana*, 6 329 (ed Sālagrāma Sāstri, Benares 1956)

metre.¹ Indian poetics has spoken of two main literary genres, two forms of *kāvya*—*drśya* and *śravya*, which correspond to the two major kinds of genres, namely tragedy and epic as envisaged by Aristotle and Horace, who were also aware of the third major genre, lyric poetry “The three major kinds are already, by Plato and Aristotle, distinguished according to ‘manner of imitation’ (or ‘representation’): lyric poetry is the poet’s own *persona*: in epic poetry (...) the poet partly speaks in direct discourse (mixed narrative): in drama, the poet disappears behind his cast of characters.”²

Seeing the great range and overwhelming complexity of the literary phenomenon, modern criticism has rejected this clear-cut categorisation. In the same way when we approach Indian *kāvya* it will be vain to apply this genre-theory there, for neither Kālidāsa nor any other Indian poet worked according to Horace’s prescription “each particular genre should keep the place allotted to it”³

Nevertheless, we find that modern historians and critics of Sanskrit literature have brought in quite automatically this terminology of the literary genres in order to define *Meghadūta* as a lyrical poem in contradistinction to the *mahā-kāvya*-s which are termed epics.

Indeed, if we try to apply the genre terminology here the lyric will be the nearest description. But to the word lyric we have to give a greater flexibility of meaning: it will not be true to call this poetry “the poet’s own *persona*”, if by the poet we mean the historical person who composed the poem. But such a narrow definition of personality was discarded long ago, as is evinced by the following remarks of Hudson, “though the essence of lyrical poetry is personality, it must yet be remembered that the majority of the world’s great lyrics owe their place in literature very largely to the fact that they embody what is typically human rather than what is merely individual and particular, and that thus every reader finds in them the expression of experiences and feelings in which he himself is fully able to share”.⁴

Meghadūta can thus roughly or impressionistically be designated as a lyric. But if we want to understand its development and its structure better and also want to study fruitfully the metaphorical texture we should not rest content with this vague designation. In fact it has been noted that the purity of genre is artificial and unnatural to literature; “that every genuine literary work partakes of all genres, though in different degrees and manners, and that it is this

¹ *Yatra kavir ekam artham vrittenaikena varnayatī kāvye
śaṅghātaḥ sa nigadīto Vṛndāvana-Meghadūtādih*

quoted by Pārvaṭīcaran Bhattācārya, *Meghadūt Paricay*, 2nd ed (Calcutta 1376 A. B.) p. 11

² René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (Harmondsworth 1968) pp. 227-8

³ Vide, Ulrich Weisstein, *Comparative Literature and Literary Theory* (Bloomington—London 1973) p. 123

⁴ William Henry Hudson, *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*, 2nd ed. enlarged. (London 1917) p. 127

proportionate difference which accounts for the abundance of the historically evolved genres”.¹

From this wider standpoint we shall try to differentiate certain significant parts in *Meghadūta*. Some Indian critics and commentators divided the poem into two parts: Mallinātha for example calls them *Pūrva-megha* and *Uttara-megha*.² In this division we find that the first part ends with the description of the route that the cloud has to follow. The next part consists of the description of Alakā, description of the Yakṣa’s home, description of the Yakṣa’s wife and the message the Yakṣa wants to send to his wife. Kālidāsa himself indicates the two movements of the poem³.

*mārgam tāvāt śrṇu kathayatas tvat-prayānānurūpam
sandeśam me tad-anu jalada śroṣyasi śrotrapeyam!* [13]

Listen now, as I tell you of the path best suited to your journey: you will then listen, O Cloud, to my message most pleasing to the ear.

These lines, however, do not analyse the whole structure of the poem, because in the second part there is not only the message, *vārtā*, but there are also important descriptive passages.

Nevertheless, this shows us two significant parts of the poem. We recognize a description and a message. Now let us begin to read the poem: *kaścūt kāntā-viraha-guruṇā*... There is no doubt that it is neither a speech nor a description. It is a pure narration. Standing in the background the poet narrates certain events and actions which have taken place in the past of the event—this is marked by the use of the perfect, *parokṣe lit*, i.e. the perfect is used for the narration of actions and events not witnessed by the speaker. The perfect cannot but be the tense of narration. The use of the perfect in Sanskrit is a sufficient cause for a passage to be narrative, though it is not a necessary one.⁵

Following this criterion we can easily conclude that the first five verses are genuinely narrative, except for the second half of the third verse, and the last quarter of the fifth, where the narrator puts in a comment. This only makes the hearer feel the presence of the speaker who often assumes a didactic role. But these parenthetical remarks do not change the essential character of the narration.

¹ Quoted Ulrich Weisstein *op cit* p 113

² For other names of the parts see Introduction to the French translation of *Meghadūta* by R H Assier de Pompignan (Paris 1967) p XVI

³ Vide Pārvaticāran Bhattācārya, *op cit* p 70 Intr

⁴ The numbers written within square brackets denote the number of the verse according to the edition of E Hultzsch, *Kālidāsa’s Meghadūta*, edited from Manuscripts with the Commentary of Vallabhadeva (London 1911)

⁵ Vide, J S Spijer, *Sanskrit Syntax* (Leiden 1886) § 330 In the notes the author quotes some examples of perfect denoting actions witnessed by the speaker

With the fifth verse the poet breaks the flow of pure narrative and introduces a speech with the word *yayāce*, “asked”. Here follows the report, real or fictive, of the words spoken by the Yakṣa to the Cloud. The rest of the poem consists of this report, the poet’s presence is further dissolved, for we hear not the poet speaking, but the whole speech is attributed to one of the characters of the poem. And even the moral or philosophical reflections embedded in the poem are no longer those of the poet, they are expressions of the Yakṣa’s thoughts. For example

yāñcā vandhyā varam adhigune nādhame labdha-kāmā/ [6]

Better to pray in vain to one who is noble than to be heard by the vulgar

To all intents and purposes such remarks may coincide with the poet’s thought, but formally they belong to the Yakṣa’s

In the Yakṣa’s speech we distinguish two main divisions, one which is directly spoken to the Cloud and meant for him alone, another which is a message, *vārtā*, only entrusted to the Cloud but meant for the Yakṣa’s wife. The message is **emboxed** within the whole speech. The speech meant for the Cloud is further composed, except for a few verses of address, of eulogy, request and wish, for the most part, of description, which itself has four subdivisions, as we have already noted earlier the cloud’s route, Alakā, Yakṣa’s home, Yakṣa’s wife. When we compare the descriptive portion and the message we find a very significant difference. In the first the Yakṣa is almost absent it is true that he is the speaker but he is never in the limelight except in the passages of address and request. The whole tone is objective, there is no reference to the speaker. But in the message the speaker is in the forefront: the lyrical *persona* of the Yakṣa reveals itself and bursts forth into powerful feelings.

We thus see three steps in the composition of the poem:

- 1 Kālidāsa, the poet, narrates the events of a certain Yakṣa, who takes the poet’s place as the speaker,
- 2 the Yakṣa, as poet, describes the Cloud’s route, the city of Alakā etc. But he himself is absent, he is not an object of the poem;
3. the Yakṣa, as poet, becomes a part of the poem, a subjective lyric in which the “I” is the *persona* of the poet-Yakṣa. Grammatically, too, the first person singular pervades this section. The verses (101-109) are the lyric of the poet-Yakṣa, a love-lyric direct, natural, and simple, tenderly and magically appealing.

Poetry as *vikalpa*

The direct naming of an emotion is foreign to Sanskrit *kāvya*. Lines such as the following from the Yakṣa’s message are rather rare even in Kālidāsa.

*ittham cetaś catula-nayane dūrlabha-prārthanam me
gādhosmābhūh kṛtam aśaranam tvad-viyoga-vyathābhūh/ [105]*

In this way, O lively-eyed girl, my heart, while it conceives impossible desires, is overcome by the fiercely burning pangs of separation.

This is too evident, too abstract to say. Poetry has to be concrete; its task is not to state but to evoke, to suggest. Therefore Ānandavardhana, the Indian theorist who had the most genuine insight into the psychology of poetic creation, said that naming an emotion was not poetry:

*na hi kevala-śrngārādi-śabda-mātra-bhāṣi vibhāvādi-pratipādanarahite kāvyē
manāg api rasavattva-pratitir asti (Dhvanyāloka)*

“In a poem which merely contains words such as ‘love’ etc., but which is in fact lacking in those elements that help and create the proper atmosphere for real emotional experiences, there cannot be the slightest imaginative experience.”¹

How are emotions suggested? How is finally *rasa*, the imaginative experience, evoked in the mind of the reader? Here again we find the insight of Ānandavardhana rewarding. *Rasa* cannot directly be communicated by naming it; it has to be conveyed obliquely. In this process we can recognize several steps in the poetic creation which we may deduce from the following passage:

*vastu ca sarvam eva jagad-gatam avaśyam kasya cid rasasya bhāvasya
vāngatvam pratipādyate antato vibhāvātvena/citta-vṛtti-veśesā hi rasādayah/
na ca talasti vastu kim cid na cittavṛtti-veśesam upajanayati/*

“And all such things in the world will necessarily be the auxiliaries either of a given *rasa* or of a *bhāva*, (even if) finally as a causal factor (*vibhāvātvena*). For *rasa*-s etc are (only) particular mental states (*cittavṛttiviśesa*) and there is nothing whatever that cannot give rise to a mental mood.”²

From the above we see that *rasa* is a particular *citta-vṛtti*, mental state, which can be aroused with the help of *vastu*, an object, a concrete reality which is to function in poetry as a *vibhāva*, a causal factor, a poetical stimulus

We see, therefore, that *vastu* equated to *vibhāva* is the element with the help of which the poet has to convey *rasa*. A poet, however, does not deal with *vastu*, an object as such; he deals with language, *śabda*. In order to understand the relation more fully we can perhaps turn to Patañjali’s *yoga* psychology which

¹ Translation by J L. Masson in “Telling, Not Conveying—*svaśabdavācya*” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, II, 2, p. 146.

² *Ibid*, p. 151.

is suggested to us by the words *citta-vṛtti* and *vastu*. Patañjali says that the *citta-vṛtti*-s are of five kinds, one of which is called *vikalpa*, defined as follows.

śabda-jñānānupāti vastu-śūnyo vikalpah'

“*Vikalpa* is empty of real objects, *vastu*, and is a result of the verbal knowledge”.

This means that a mental mood can be activated with language only, even without a direct contact with reality.

This need not signify that objects do not exist. Words may be, and in the human world mostly are, substitutes of *vastu*. Poetry cannot handle *vastu* directly, although the poet receives the knowledge of the object by direct perception, *pratyakṣa*² and, therefore, the poet's *cittavṛtti* rising from that *pratyakṣa* is the *rasa* which he has to communicate, but he can only do so through the medium of language, so that the mental state which arises in the reader is a *vikalpa*, not the *pratyakṣa*. This idea corresponds to the concept of Susanne Langer who says: “The poet's business is to create the appearance of ‘experiences’, the semblance of events lived and felt, and to organize them as they constitute a purely and completely experienced reality, a piece of *virtual life*”³. The expression “*virtual life*” conveys the significance of *vikalpa*.

The poet then uses words, instead of objects perceived, to present an appearance of life, not to give an interpretation of life, nor a criticism. The presentation is, therefore, not the real but an appearance of the real. But the poet does not want to communicate an illusory *rasa*: what he wants to evoke in the reader's mind has to be real. From the above discussion, however, it would seem to be an impossible task. It would indeed be impossible if there were not the subtle go-between which Ānandavardhana calls *dhvani*, suggestion. The poetic power, *śakti*, the creative genius, *pratibhā*, of the poet, can use all the potentialities of language, both of sound and sense, *śabdālaṅkāra*, as well as *arthālaṅkāra* in order to suggest as strongly as possible the reality and the emotion contained in that reality, experienced by him.

Sanskrit poetics has delved deep into the problem of *dhvani* but it has always remained within the boundaries of single verses. In fact not only separate verses, but a poem as a whole—or a passage more or less long—can achieve “suggestion” through the interplay of certain sound-patterns or sense-patterns. Here we shall try to study one such complex metaphorical pattern and see how it can suggest to the sympathetic reader the emotion Kālidāsa wishes to convey.

(To be continued)

RANAJIT SARKAR

¹ *Yogasūtra* 1.9

² *Ibid*, 1.7

³ Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York 1953) pp. 50-51

“SATYAVAN MUST DIE”

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

(Continued from the issue of May 1991)

13: *The Last Wish*

THE very last wish of Satyavan comes with a helpless poignancy, breaking in a cry for the beloved's kiss. In it there is an expectation that it shall prove to be a solace for him in death as much as it was a joy in the intensity of his brief happy youth. If then this should have love's immortality in it, surely it would accompany him as the very part of his luminous person, surviving even the "shadow of white Death". Luminous Satyavan survived in Death's kingdom; so would have love's kiss because of its immortality. If separation is death then, by the might of this kiss accompanying him, death itself would have been abrogated, such was Satyavan's identity with the beloved, triumphing, as in life, in death too. So the last wish comes in the heart's knowledge of this unseverable oneness although in the human sense it has the pathos of the weak and the tragic. That is indeed what we witness in the Satyavan-Savitri love; it is not Adonis-Aphrodite's, bearing joys only during the summer months; in it the half cannot be more than the whole. An aspect of the transcendental, which no death can sunder, has taken on a temporal shape to impart to it its delight and immortality. With their marriage, the poet tells us, a new act begins and there is a dramatic change in the setting of the world; the united Two usher in a greater age.

In the silence and murmur of that emerald world
And the mutter of the priest-wind's sacred verse,
Amid the choral whisperings of the leaves
Love's twain had joined together and grew one
The natural miracle was wrought once more:
In the immutable ideal world
One human moment was eternal made.¹

In that marriage the bridge between the appearance and the truth is built and the mystic aim of the world discovered. There is something positive and nice in this natural miracle.

The human moment made eternal by the alchemy of love survives death; it is that which Satyavan was soliciting of Savitri when he asked her to kiss him at the time of passing away. Satyavan carried it with him as though all love was the substance, and the mover, of his luminous soul—"Love that moves the sun and the other stars". But in between the stars there is the night in her terrifying figure of all-consuming darkness. Presently, Death is walking between the luminous Satyavan and the young bride-and-tapasvini daring the unattempted. This might-

of-love will have to assert her will and make Shelley's "He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he" a fulfilled earthly reality Satyavan had a premonition of it when he said:

Perhaps because thou touchest, death may pass.²

But this hesitant expectation had to come true in a different way. Savitri had pressed her kiss on the dying lips of Satyavan but his failed to respond Yet, by becoming a part of the luminous being, it grew bodiless and bare to stamp out the Obliterator of Love himself In a moment at once shorter than death and longer than all time, love became an almighty star conquering with its lonely splendour the skies of night. Satyavan's soul is that evolutionary possibility which has to be worked out here by Savitri That possibility is absent in the love of Adonis and Aphrodite. To Savitri Satyavan had come with the suddenness of a divine Advent and, by accepting all the danger associated with it, she saw it hastened in his death, death that could not touch her love.

Savitri has fought the fiercest battle of Love pitched against grim Death; she has borne wounds difficult to heal, the task being the upholding of the Absolute in manifestation against the all-devouring power of the Void; she has asserted the Will of the Supreme in the face of utter Negation. Victorious, she has now come back winning the soul of Satyavan; a "prophet moment" has cast into Time a diamond light and from the "undying Love" a might that shall change the world has leaned down Her victory is in the occult but its visible sign is seen in the Shalwa Woods. She has returned to the earth, the green emerald world of her dream, and with caressing hands is now stroking her sweet lover slowly awake They have become once again the earthly lovers.

She closed her arms about his breast and head
As if to keep him on her bosom worn
For ever through the journeying of the years.
So for a while they stood entwined, their kiss
And passion-tranced embrace a meeting point
In their commingling spirits, one for ever,
Two-souled, two-bodied for the joy of Time.³

The immortality of their kiss has turned out to be free of contingencies.

The long episode, Savitri's bringing Satyavan's soul back, must have taken something like six earthly hours to happen. The noon that had seemed like every noon has slipped into the orange-gold of the evening dusk. Satyavan has a vague memory of having travelled through strange mysterious lands, accompanied by Savitri. He wonders how they have together disdained the "gates of night" and tells her that heaven is insufficient for him without her. It is in that love Satyavan was wishing death to pass away. But now that she has brought him back, "love-chained", she appears to him unapproachably distant, "too high and great for

mortal worship” Yet he knows that here too she shall be the earthly keeper of his soul. It was precisely for her sake that he had consented to come back.

Hast thou not taken my heart to treasure it
 In the secure environment of thy breast?
 Awakened from the silence and the sleep,
 I have consented for thy sake to be
 By thee I have greatened my mortal arc of life,
 But now far heaven’s unmapped infinitudes
 Thou hast brought me thy illimitable gift.
 If to fill these thou lift thy sacred flight,
 My human earth will still demand thy bliss
 Make still my life through thee a song of joy
 And all my silence wide and deep with thee ⁴

It was as though the unfulfilled desire of life before passing away materialised itself and brought him back to make that life anew a song of joy. The last wish had in it these elements of love awaiting fructification. And, in an earthly endearment as love’s sweet token, more precious than paradisaical happinesses.

She clasped his feet, by her enshrining hair
 Enveloped in a velvet cloak of love, ⁵

the heavenly queen consenting to sweet joyous relations. She assures him that she is the “sovereign and the slave” of his desire and says

We have each other found, O Satyavan,
 In the great light of the discovered soul ⁶

This is the high gain of mortality that was abandoned both by Death and God. The mystery of Satyavan’s death lies precisely in this wonderful discovery of the great light of soul in mortal creation. Savitri, by whose soul’s unceasing fire burn, as she asserts, the great stars, has set ablaze undying Love in the bosom of the earth. What were until now only spiritual links joining indissolubly all to the One have found for themselves the one by which they are all tied together in the multiple play of some happy supreme Harmony.

In this mortal creation the twin souls ever in deathless oneness have been carrying on their tireless work through life and through death. Indeed, Savitri tells the great Demer of the Worlds that Love, to find its vast ineffable sense, must soar beyond the heavens and yet accept mortality to give to it its bright undecaying joy and sweetness.

It must change its human ways to ways divine,
 Yet keep its sovereignty of earthly bliss ⁷

This too is the assurance Savitri gives to the revived Satyavan. She had allayed

his fears when she appeared to him too great even to worship. Again, when Savitri had asserted her choice in marrying Satyavan, despite the terrifying prophecy that was made by Narad, it is this Love's role in the world she was actually envisioning:

If for a year, that year is all my life
 And yet I know this is not all my fate
 Only to live and love awhile and die
 For I know now why my spirit came on earth
 And who I am and who he is I love.
 I have looked at him from my immortal Self,
 I have seen God smile at me in Satyavan;
 I have seen the Eternal in a human face⁸

Savitri has firmed up her mind to have Satyavan as her husband. She sees in the mortal youth a secret divinity; love-at-first-sight is touched by the miracle of an invisible hand. It is the choice of the soul of Savitri and her outer nature has accepted it fully, notwithstanding sufferings and tribulations, even the worst calamity that would cut the loved one's life-thread short. For her the "eyes and lips that are not Satyavan's" are meaningless. A deep feeling surges from the ocean of her heart that it is only their twin eternities which can merge into each other, as if each were waiting for the other to become one. That oneness cannot be dissolved by Death, it is that oneness which the luminous Satyavan was carrying with him. Thus the heaven-born possibility of always loving had become for him the protectress in his half-day sojourn in the Worlds of Death. The wish to die in the lap of Savitri and the wish for the last kiss are but a human manifestation of these love's-twin ever remaining inseparable. And yet that human manifestation is not without a meaning. Heaven must complete the "earthly bliss". The arc must circle round in its multi-coloured splendours and the sweet voice of love pervade making the body's senses thrill with the joy of a pure flame. What we hear therefore is a high chant of the eternal love that triumphs in the ways of the world. Conjugal is not always carnal and can, indeed must, become spiritual, charged with the contents of the soul.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

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SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of May 1991)

1893—a memorable year in the history of India. Sri Aurobindo came back to her shore with the inspiration to fight for her freedom and release her imprisoned godhead. Is it not an occult phenomenon that Vivekananda in the same year sailed for America, carrying with him the message of Vedanta for the slumbering soul of the West?

When Sri Aurobindo left India at the age of seven, he was unaware of the heavenly fire smouldering beneath the sweet angelic exterior of a young boy, but when he returned he was a young man of twenty-one with a burning aspiration to realise a great dream.

These fourteen years were a very impressionable part of his life. They were spent in the heyday of the scientific civilisation of the West. We have already seen how his mind was nourished with the Western classical spirit and the varied culture of Europe. But his heart was untouched. Rather it overflowed with love for his motherland. Once he said that this love began to sprout when he was only fourteen and that it took firm root when he was eighteen.

How did India greet her son when he came back after a long absence? She bestowed on him one of the brightest gems of her immemorial heritage—a high spiritual experience: “a vast calm descended upon him and remained with him for long months thereafter”

He later told one of his disciples about the beginnings of his spiritual experiences in India:

“My own life and my Yoga have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life, but at the same time, since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me all is Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere.”¹

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCE

1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 26, p 98

A NOTE ON SRI KRISHNA IN THE MAHABHARATA

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF *MOTHER INDIA*

THIS is in connection with the paper, "Desire and its Fruits in the Mahabharata", in the January issue of *Mother India*. Here the author Shri Pradip Bhattacharya has tried to establish by an analysis of all the major characters that every desire has its opposite fruits. I would not like to enter into a detailed critical assessment of the author's analysis, but I may say that I do not agree with what he has stated about Sri Krishna.

Sri Krishna was not just any ordinary human being like us born in the cycle of births and deaths, subject to the laws of Nature. The Gita, which is an essential part of the Mahabharata story, repeatedly points out, and Sri Aurobindo consistently reiterates in his *Essays on the Gita* as well as in his *Gitar Bhumika* (Bengali), that Sri Krishna was the Supreme Lord, the Purushottama, Vasudeva present in the entire cosmos and the Lord seated in the hearts of all creatures, guiding their activities and the universe and yet transcending them all. He was acting from his supreme Nature, *Para Prakriti* which is one with his own Supreme Will. Thus his actions were not the result of desires subject to the three gunas of the lower nature. Though he had no need for any action, he was acting only for *lokasangrahartham* or *lokakshemartham* or for the common good as an example for the common man. *Yogakshema* was always inherent in all his actions. Being the Lord Incarnate, he was a *Jivanmukta* and as such he was not subject to the fruits of his actions.

Describing Sri Krishna in his Introduction to *Gitar Bhumika* Sri Aurobindo writes:

"Sri Krishna is the Avatar taking the physical, mental and spiritual characteristics of a man in a human body and he has played his lila accordingly.

"Sri Krishna of the Mahabharata is a hero of action, mahayogi, a great worldly man, founder of an empire, a politician and a warrior, a *Brahmajnani* in the body of a *kshatriya*. We observe the development of unparalleled *maha-shakti* and play of secrets in him. The Gita is the exposition of these secrets."¹

Sri Krishna was born towards the end of *Dwapara Yuga* and the beginning of *Kali*. He had come to change the old moral principles of *Dwapara* and establish the new spiritual principles for the new age in their place. At that time there were several dynasties in India, one gaining supremacy over the others, but there was no concept of one nationhood. Of course, the different dynasties were trying to bring about a unity in the country but their efforts were based on rajasic and asuric principles.

Sri Krishna's political aim in bringing about the great war of Kurukshetra

¹ Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 4, p 87

was to unify the different kingdoms in India and bring them under the rule of one empire. This he succeeded in establishing under the leadership of the Pandavas

It is not that Yudhishtira had to rule only over widows after the Kurukshetra war in which all the men-folk and warriors had been killed. It is a fact that all the wicked warriors of the Kaurava dynasty and their supporters were destroyed but the great war saved the *Kshatrateja* of the other parts of India, and Sri Aurobindo points out that the great war revived the supremacy of the Brahmateja in the country. Thus the *Brahmateja* would guide the *Kshatrateja* and the latter protect the former. The wailing of the widows described in the Striparva of the Mahabharata was only a partial social effect of the great war. It was not the whole result. Sri Aurobindo categorically points out in his *Gitar Bhumika*¹ that the unity of India as a nation and the empire that Sri Krishna established with the help of Arjuna lasted for more than two thousand years beginning with Yudhishtira and continuing with Parikshita. The political turmoil which began in India after two thousand years would have begun even then, had not Sri Krishna established the unity and integrity of India as a nation by bringing about the war of Kurukshetra.

As for the destruction of Sri Krishna's own dynasty of the Yadavas, Sri Aurobindo points out that it was purposefully engendered by Sri Krishna himself as a part of his political design for establishing the unity and integrity of India. As the Divine Incarnate, he was all-righteous and partial to none. He could see that the Yadavas were as powerful as the Pandavas and they would not have allowed the latter to rule over the country. They would have certainly fought with the Pandavas for gaining supremacy and the unity of India would not have lasted long, at least after Sri Krishna's withdrawal. Hence he cleared the way and destroyed all the impending dangers to the unity by allowing a part of his Narayani Sena (Yadavas) to fight for Duryodhana on the side of the Kauravas and get themselves killed. The remaining members of the dynasty indulged in self-destruction, as there was no other dynasty to destroy them.

As for Sri Krishna being killed by an ordinary Kirata we have to go to the Ramayana to trace the origin of this episode. After the destruction of Sri Lanka and Ravana with his entire dynasty Lord Rama found one day Angada, son of Bali, sitting with a mournful face. Lord Rama who was the Divine Avatar could come to know that Angada wanted to avenge his father's death. Lord Rama granted him the boon that he would be able to do so during Rama's next avatar-birth. This birth was as Sri Krishna who submitted himself to die with the arrow of Jara Savara, who was Angada reborn. Sri Krishna, though an Avatar and a *Jivanmukta*, had to exhaust his *prarabdha* for his deeds in his past life as Sri Rama. This phenomenon is explained by Sri Aurobindo in his writing on the Upanishads:²

¹ *Ibid*, p. 96

² *Ibid* Vol. 12, p. 42

Mukti prevents one's future deeds from creating bondage, but what of the past deeds which have already created bondage? The *Jivanmukta* is not indeed bound, for he is one with God and God is the master of His *prakriti*, not its slave; but the *Prakriti* attached to the *Jivatma* has created causes while in the illusion of bondage and must be allowed to work out its effects. otherwise the chain of causation is snapped and the whole economy of nature is disturbed and thrown into chaos. In order to maintain the world, therefore, the *Jivanmukta* remains working like a prisoner on parole, not bound indeed by others, but detained by himself until the period previously appointed for his captivity shall have elapsed

It was Sri Rama's boon again that allowed Lakshmana to be reborn as Balarama, the elder brother of Sri Krishna, and Hanuman to be reborn as Chandrasena and became the husband of Radha, who was none else than Sita reborn. But these are irrelevant to our consideration in the present context.

If we accept the author's thesis, can we not as well say that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sri Ramana Maharshi died of cancer as a fruit of their desire to help their disciples and even Sri Aurobindo passed through urinary trouble as the fruit of his desire for bringing down the Supermind on earth?

ACHARYA VIDYANANDA SARASWATI
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New Age Almanac

J. GORDON Melton is a "leading chronicler of religious movements in the United States" (Los Angeles Times) and author of the *Encyclopedia of American Religions Religious Creeds*, as we are told on the back cover of his *New Age Almanac*.* A first look at the Table of Contents reveals the vast volume of knowledge contained in this remarkable book which greets its readers with a very attractive cover. A second look at the Index at the end (in search of "Aurobindo, Sri") brings about the anti-climax: there is no index at all. But there is a very comprehensive "New Age Reading Room" with hundreds of titles and the authors' names given in alphabetical order. We find a reference to Sri Aurobindo's 30-volume Centenary Library and also to a booklet on Auroville.

The *Almanac* starts with an introduction to the Emerging New Age, referring to the Theosophists, the homeopath S. Hahnemann, Mesmerism, Rudolf Steiner and many others. Chapter Four is dedicated to Yoga and has a section on Integral Yoga. Here we find Melton's notes on Sri Aurobindo. His brief biographical data are precise and well-chosen. As for the teaching, Melton writes, "Aurobindo taught that one should transform the material world by making one's own life divine. He claimed that he had realized the 'Overmind' in 1926, and was thus able to bring divine consciousness to the task of human evolution." There is no reference to the Supermind, but with the above remarks Melton has gone further than the authors of articles in several encyclopaedias which I had discussed in the issue of Jan 91. Introducing the idea of "transformation", Melton gives the impression of coming closer to the heart of the matter. At the end he refers to Haridas Chaudhuri, founder of the California Institute for Integral Studies as well as to Auroville and a Center in New York. However, there is not a word about the Mother in this article, certainly a serious shortcoming, although her biography is given in the section on Auroville.

The article on Auroville is found in Chapter Eight, titled "Worldview: Community Life, Education, Environment, Love, Peace, Planetary Consciousness, and Politics." The article covers a full page and begins as follows: "Auroville, A New Age planetary village in India, was inspired by the life teachings of Sri Aurobindo, after whom it was named, but was actually the conception of Mira Richards (1878-1973)." Next follows a good introduction to the Mother's life and her intentions regarding Auroville, all of it correctly presented. (However, Auroville's name was actually derived from the French

* Visible Ink Press, Detroit 1991 Pp 479, \$ 24 95

“aurore”, meaning “dawn”.) Again, many of Melton’s remarks are precise and substantial: “Auroville was the place for Aurobindo’s vision of a new world, where a new humanity with a new consciousness could take shape ” The technical description of the plan of the city is correct and even his commentary on the most complicated aspect of Auroville, the “difficulties”, is quite fair. Melton simply states that due to “intense internal problems” the city and the Matrimandir are “still a long way from completion.”

A third reference to Sri Aurobindo is found in a long article on the California Institute for Integral Studies, which “is unusual in that it is one of the very few fully accredited graduate schools in America at which it is possible to study non-Western and nonmainstream religions and philosophies from native practitioners who have recognized academic credentials (..) The Ph.D from the California Institute is considered to be far above average in quality.” There follow many details on the Institute of the late Haridas Chaudhuri who is presented as “a student of Aurobindo”.

At the end of this chapter we find a long list of Alternative Educational Institutions with accredited (fully recognized) and unaccredited programs. This is an extremely useful list also for foreign students wishing to study in the U S.

The *Almanac* has further chapters on meditation and reincarnation, health and healing, Ufos and astrology as well as many other serious and non-serious topics With its vast volume of knowledge and information it is likely to enrich any spiritual or esoteric research library.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Glossary and Index of Proper Names in Sri Aurobindo's Works compiled by *Gopal Dass Gupta* (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1989) Rs. 300/-

THIS work of encyclopaedic scope gives us some idea of the vast range of Sri Aurobindo's intellectual culture. It covers only his published writings, not reported conversations—for to include these would probably have at least doubled the size of the collection. From the twenty-nine volumes of the Birth Centenary Library, and the supplementary material which has appeared since in the journal *Sri Aurobindo. Archives and Research*, including the "The Record of Yoga" in full (that is to say also those parts of it which are still to appear in the journal), every proper name has been noted and researched and an explanatory note has been written, citing the source or sources of the information given, as well as reference as to where it appears in Sri Aurobindo's works. These explanatory entries are arranged in alphabetical order, so that they can be consulted as in a dictionary or encyclopaedia; they cover not only the histories and classical literatures of Europe and India, but also contemporary events all over the world—particularly, of course, in the awakening India which the Master himself did so much to arouse.

This means that now anyone who comes across an unfamiliar name or reference while reading in Sri Aurobindo can easily look it up and find some helpful information, as well as indications of where to look for further details. And this is bound to be useful to everyone who does more than just dip into the Master's writings, for, as the Publisher's Note points out, "The works of Sri Aurobindo abound in proper names. Their number and variety make it difficult for his readers to obtain a full intellectual understanding of his writings. A person familiar with Puranic mythology may know little about the geography of Ancient Greece. An admirer of Shakespeare may never have heard of Yajñavalkya. A student who had the time and the inclination to look up every unfamiliar name would need a full shelf of reference books, some of them difficult to obtain, and even then some terms would escape him."

Gopal Dass Gupta, a member of the staff of the Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research Library, was inspired to take up the immense labour involved in producing this useful work of reference. It has taken him many years, during which he has not only consulted many many books but also questioned innumerable people who had personal knowledge of the enormous range of subjects referred to. In his 'Acknowledgements' he mentions that a work of this type could never have been carried out by the efforts of a single individual, and acknowledges assistance from many people, especially from some senior sadhaks and from colleagues in the Ashram Archives and Research Library. But it is worth pointing out how very rare indeed it is, in these hasty and specialised days,

to come across a scholarly work of such wide range that owes conception, execution and completion primarily to the dedicated and persistent labour of a single researcher. In his prefatory note the compiler mentions, "As a first effort in a new direction, it is likely that this book will fall short of perfection in many respects. Readers are encouraged to send corrections and suggestions for future editions..."; but this praiseworthy scholarly humility should not make us overlook the very considerable achievement which this book represents

It is a considerable achievement in another sense too. The main body of the Glossary and Index is complemented by an admirably clear Introduction which outlines the criteria of selection followed, explains the methods followed in compiling it, and gives all information needed in order to be able to use it effectively, and by several useful tables and lists which further enhance its usefulness. And all this scholarly apparatus has been impeccably presented in the same format as the volumes of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, to which it forms a worthy pendant. This means that, unlike many undoubtedly useful and otherwise admirable tomes of reference, this one is a pleasure to handle and use, with very clear print on good paper and excellently bound. To achieve this has meant meticulous care on the part of the compiler and his helpers, and especially from the staff of the Ashram Press. That such a handsome volume, representing so much careful labour, can be offered to the public for less than the cost of an imported hardback novel, is amazing.

Of course, a book like this is not meant to be read from cover to cover for entertainment. But to dip and browse in it can be enjoyable as well as informative: Sarajevo stands next to Sarama, the Matsyas next to the Matterhorn, and Judge Jeffries beside the Emperor Jehangir, and everyone is bound to come across names familiar and totally unknown. Since each entry also gives an index reference, showing where the name appears in Sri Aurobindo's writings, the book can also be consulted to discover whether or not Sri Aurobindo has mentioned a particular name at any time, and if so where, and to facilitate this use, an appendix tabulates some variant versions and spellings. According to my calculation, from Aacrity, brother of Bhishmuc, on page 1, to Zuleikha (the biblical original, not Max Beerbohm's charmer) on page 355, well over 7000 entries appear. No doubt, people with special information and areas of interest will notice much that could be added—but for that the compiler's invitation stands open. He deserves our gratitude for opening a path where none ran before, and making a huge store of helpful information readily accessible to anyone seriously interested in deepening their understanding of Sri Aurobindo's multi-faceted writings.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Sixty-ninth Seminar

17 February 1991

HOW TO FOLLOW THE MOTHER'S SUNLIT PATH TO THE DIVINE LIFE?

Speech by Desikan Narasimhan

FIRST and foremost it is imperative for us to distinguish the "sunlit path" from the maze of other Yogic disciplines that are prevalent in India. What is unique in this path that the Mother and the Master have hewn for us?

Most of the traditional systems of spiritual philosophy and Yoga, although differing in their details and application, are unanimously agreed on one point: the world, according to them, is either an inextricable snare or a deceptive illusion. The only hope of salvation for man lies in turning his regard from the illusory life of the moment to the pure ineffable stillness of the eternal Spirit, as the great philosopher Shankara put it. The central theme of his philosophy may perhaps be best expressed in his own words. The famous shloka I refer to is:

श्लोकार्धेन प्रवक्ष्यामि यदुक्तं शास्त्रकोटिभिः ।
ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः ॥

I read also its translation in English:

"I shall tell you in half a verse what has been enunciated by all the shastras put together. Brahman alone is real, the world is false. The individual jīva is a portion of the Brahman "

Although Shankara's pronouncements take their start from a profound spiritual experience, they are, as Sri Aurobindo would want us to understand, partial in their scope and do not exhaust the whole of reality. We need not for the present enter into any lengthy discussion on this subject but suffice it to say that Shankara's theory of Maya places itself permanently at risk since it is riddled with several contradictions—a predictable fall-out none the less on account of its incompleteness.

The other great currents of Indian philosophy all merge and mingle into the

same ocean. Even the Gita which is considered to present the *summum bonum* of Indian philosophy, though effecting a synthesis of works, knowledge and devotion, despairs of life and Sri Krishna tells Arjuna.

किं पुनर्ब्रह्मिणाः पुण्या भक्ता राजर्षयस्तथा ।
अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम् ॥

In English translation this reads:

“Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world, love and turn to Me ”

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, on the other hand, includes and exceeds by the very majesty of its conception and scope all schools of eastern and western disciplines. It is only when we come to Sri Aurobindo that Life and Spirit are seen as twin aspects of that original creative consciousness, Chit-Shakti, of the supreme Brahman, the Omnipresent Reality

The object of Integral Yoga is “to be perfect as God in His being and bliss is perfect, pure as He is pure, blissful as He is blissful, and, when we are ourselves *siddhas* in Purna Yoga, to bring all mankind to the same divine perfection ”² This, in brief, is the programme for the sadhak of Integral Yoga

If we admit that such an exalted goal exists and is worth pursuing, we are inexorably led to the kernel of what constitutes the subject of today's seminar —“How to follow the Mother's Sunlit Path to the Divine Life?” An intellectual conviction, although necessary, is not sufficient to launch on this perilous adventure.

क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ।

(Sharp as a razor's edge, hard to traverse, difficult of going is that path, say the sages)

Yes, there are happy ways near to God's sun;
But few are they who tread the sunlit path;
Only the pure in soul can walk in light.¹

Do we possess this purity of soul? What then are the conditions we need to fulfil before we “can walk in light” in this arduous journey? If we imagine that the way is easy and straight for all who take to it we are certainly living in a fool's

¹ *The Gita*, IX, 33

² “Purna Yoga” (Cent Ed . Vol 17), p 61

³ *Savitri* (Cent Ed . Vol 29), p 448

paradise, for Sri Aurobindo has himself warned us unequivocally to the contrary:

“First be sure of the call and of thy soul’s answer. For if the call is not true, not the touch of God’s powers or the voice of his messengers, but the lure of thy ego, the end of thy endeavour will be a poor spiritual fiasco or else a deep disaster.”¹

Sri Aurobindo further adds. “Imagine not the way is easy; the way is long, arduous, dangerous, difficult. At every step is an ambush, at every turn a pitfall. A thousand seen or unseen enemies will start up against thee, terrible in subtlety against thy ignorance, formidable in power against thy weakness. And when with pain thou hast destroyed them, other thousands will surge up to take their place. Hell will vomit its hordes to oppose and enring and wound and menace. Heaven will meet thee with its pitiless tests and its cold luminous denials.”²

Sri Aurobindo is not an alarmist but a realist who has put the truth of the matter trenchantly since there are many who take a rather simplistic view of Yoga.

What then is demanded of the sadhak of Purna Yoga? What are the basic requisites which will turn the difficult and dangerous way of Yoga into a sunlit path? The directness of Sri Aurobindo’s answer drives me irresistibly to revert to his own words. He says:

“The effort demanded of the Sadhak is that of aspiration, rejection and surrender. If these three are done the rest is to come of itself by the Grace of the Mother and the working of her force in you. But of the three the most important is surrender of which the first necessary form is trust and confidence and patience in difficulty.”³

But what do we mean by surrender? Perhaps an analogy will help. Sri Ramakrishna illustrated the act of surrendering oneself to the Divine by taking recourse to a fact of everyday life. The baby-cat, unlike the baby-monkey which clings to its mother at peril of falling off, allows itself to be carried by its mother.

The symbolism is evident and we shall mean by surrender, “giving oneself to the Divine—to give everything one is or has to the Divine and regard nothing as one’s own, to obey only the Divine will and no other, to live for the Divine and not for the ego.”⁴ In response to this surrender the Mother too will give herself entirely to the sadhak and for him is assured “the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.”⁵

It is faith alone that will make this surrender possible. We must be prepared to be suspended in the air with nothing to support us except our faith. The

¹ “The Way” (Cent Ed , Vol 17), p 39

² *Ibid*

³ *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), p 135

⁴ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), p 585

⁵ *Ibid* , p 586

Mother puts it most poetically and I quote: "One must watch over one's faith as one watches over the birth of something *infinitely* precious."¹

At every stage in our sadhana we are bound to face obstacles since "the dread Law of the way is there and no one can abrogate it.."² But what is the nature of these difficulties and how can they be turned into opportunities for progress?

There is a wealth of material in Sri Aurobindo's works in this connection but we shall have to satisfy ourselves with only a few peeps and pointers for want of more time.

According to Sri Aurobindo, there are three fundamental obstacles that can stand in the way, they are:

- "1. Absence of faith or insufficient faith
- "2. Egoism—the mind clinging to its own ideas, the vital preferring its own desires to a true surrender, the physical adhering to its own habits
- "3. Some inertia of fundamental resistance in the consciousness, not willing to change because it is too much of an effort or because it does not want to believe in its capacity or the power of the Divine—or for some other sub-conscious reason. You have to see for yourself which of these it is."³

The natural question which now arises is: What power can prevail over the overwhelming might of the enemy? Sri Aurobindo's answer to this is final and decisive. He says:

"By remaining psychically open to the Mother, all that is necessary for work or Sadhana develops progressively, that is one of the chief secrets, the central secret of the Sadhana."⁴

It is only by psychically opening ourselves more and more to the Mother that we can grow in union with her. By making ourselves entirely plastic to her touch we shall be led by her swiftly towards perfection.

Our first objective will therefore be to discover the psychic presence within us which in the Vedas has been described as the immortal guest and the child of God in man. The effect of this discovery which will result in complete faith and surrender to the Mother can best be described in Sri Aurobindo's reassuring words:

"The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you. And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is it that can touch you or whom need you fear? A

¹ *The Sunlit Path* (1984 Ed), p 104

² "The Way" (Cent Ed , Vol 17), p 40

³ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 24), p 1665

⁴ *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), p 121

little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers, surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible. Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failures into success and weakness into unfaltering strength. For the grace of the Divine Mother is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible.”¹

Finally, I would like to conclude my speech with a few lines from *Savitri*, which I consider apt for the occasion:

Only were safe who kept God in their hearts:
Courage their armour, faith their sword, they must walk,
The hand ready to smite, the eye to scout,
Casting a javelin regard in front,
Heroes and soldiers of the army of Light²

¹ *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), p 10

² *Savitri* (Cent Ed , Vol 28), p 211