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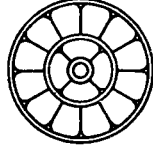
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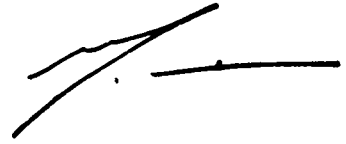
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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No. 1

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THE NEW YEAR

WEARY, for the world brings nothing new,
I waited for the New Year's light on the dew
The twelve strokes came to beat me down
With the tiring sense that only the old
Would deck itself with the glittering crown
Of a new name and fool into hope
Of a godlike halo the minds that grope
But something stirred in my heart as I stood,
And the pulse-throbs twinkled with magic blood,
For I looked above at the measureless dome
And knew the crown of the year that had come
Was old but oh so quenchlessly old—
The infinity-haunted starry gold!

Bombay, 1 1 1944

K D SETHNA

NEW HORIZON

A BAND of light is now the horizon's line
No more the old recession of the unknown—
But inexhaustible Truth goes goldening on
From depth to blissful depth of the Divine

Intimate vastitudes nō flesh can thwart
Drown the old poignancies of far and near
Wonderful waters widening everywhere
Pulse in each breast the whole universe's heart!

Bombay, 1 1 1953

K D SETHNA

THE GRACE AND GRATITUDE

THE MOTHER ANSWERS A QUESTION

What is the way to accept the Grace with gratitude?

AH! First of all you must feel the need for it.

This is the most important point. It is to have a certain inner humility which makes you aware of your helplessness without the Grace, that truly, without it you are incomplete and powerless. This, to begin with, is the first thing

It is an experience one can very well have. When, you see, even people who know nothing find themselves in quite difficult circumstances or facing a problem which must be solved or . . . an impulse which must be overcome or something that has disturbed them . . . and then they realise they are lost, they don't know what to do—neither their mind nor their will nor their feelings help—they don't know what to do, then it happens, there is within them something like a kind of call, a call to something which can do what one cannot. One aspires to something which is capable of doing what one can't do.

This is the first condition. And then, if you become aware that it is only the Grace which can do that, that the situation in which you find yourself, from there the Grace alone can pull you out, can give you the solution and the strength to come out of it, then, quite naturally an intense aspiration awakes in you, a consciousness which is translated into an opening. If you call, aspire, and if you hope to get an answer, you will quite naturally open yourself to the Grace.

And later—you must pay great attention to this (*Mother puts her finger on her lips*)—the Grace will answer you, the Grace will pull you out of your trouble, the Grace will give you the solution to your problem or will help you to get out of your difficulty. But once you are free from trouble and have come out of your difficulty, don't forget that it is the Grace which pulled you out, and don't think it is yourself. For this, indeed, is the important point. Most people, as soon as the difficulty has gone, say, "After all, I pulled myself out of the difficulty quite well."

There you are. And then you lock and bolt the door, you see, and you cannot receive anything any more. You need once again some acute anguish, some terrible difficulty for this kind of inner stupidity to give way, and for you to realise once more that you can do nothing. Because it is only when you grow aware that you are powerless that you begin to be just a little open and plastic. But so long as you think that what you do depends on your own skill and your own capacity, truly, not only do you close one door, but, you know, you close lots of doors one upon another, and bolt them. You shut yourself up in a fortress and nothing can enter there. That is the great drawback: one forgets very quickly. Quite naturally one is satisfied with one's own capacity.

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 6, pp 322-23)

A MANIFOLD ACHIEVEMENT

In anticipation of August 15, 1991, the 113th anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's birth, All India Radio Pondicherry brought together at 8 p m on August 12 five voices from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to broadcast enlightening words on the Master's manifold achievement. We are happy to offer their short yet significant speeches to our readers. Our acknowledgments are due to Shri Pradeep Sen who organised the broadcast.

SRI AUROBINDO THE POLITICIAN

SRI AUROBINDO's role as a politician was momentous since it was in the crucial initial period of India's struggle for freedom. Let me begin with its background. At the age of 7 he was sent to England by his father with instructions to his ward to keep him from contact with anything Indian. But at the age of 11, when still in England, he received a strong impression that great revolutionary changes would take place in the world and that he was destined to play a part in them. His attention was now drawn to India and at Cambridge he made revolutionary speeches at the Indian Majlis. To fulfil his father's wish he appeared successfully in the ICS examination except that he deliberately managed to fail in the riding test. This saved him from service to the British rulers.

Returning to India at the age of 21 he joined the Baroda State service. But secretly he formed a revolutionary organisation with its centre in Bengal. In a famous letter to his newly-wed wife he wrote that he adored India as a divine Mother-Spirit and to fight for her freedom was all in all to him. Resigning his lucrative post in Baroda he went to Bengal and joined Bepin Pal's journal *Bande Mataram*, writing fiery articles in it that stirred the whole of India. The Government arrested him. Poet Tagore wrote a poem to him beginning with words which, translated, mean: "Aurobindo, Rabindranath bows to you." He was released for want of sufficient evidence.

He now organised the Nationalist Party. To the dismay of the Moderates who then constituted the Congress he openly declared complete independence as India's political goal. After crushing the Moderates at the Surat Conference his party developed a programme of non-cooperation, passive resistance, boycott of foreign goods, Swadeshi, etc., with Bankim Chandra's song, "Bande Mataram" ("I bow to you, O Mother") as India's national anthem. Most of this programme was later taken up by Gandhi. The Government again arrested Sri Aurobindo. He spent a year in Alipore Jail as an undertrial prisoner. There he immersed himself in Yogic practice and had the realisation of Sri Krishna as present everywhere. Sri Krishna assured him that he would be released. And released he was, to everyone's surprise. It was also at an inner command by Sri Krishna that

he suddenly left Calcutta for Chandernagore in French India and then for Pondicherry. There he lived to the end and created his Ashram of Integral Yoga.

However, he never forgot his motherland and worked spiritually for her freedom. In 1935 I asked him whether in his future scheme of things India's independence formed a part. He replied that this was quite settled: his concern was with what would follow. To quote his words: "goonda raj or Bolshevic raj?"

During World War II he had insight into Hitler's evil designs and took the side of the Allies while Indian leaders launched a non-cooperation campaign. Then came the Cripps Proposals. Sri Aurobindo read in them a genuine prelude to independence. But the Congress rejected his appeal to accept them. Later several Congressmen regretted the refusal. Independence came in 1947—on August 15, a birthday of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo saw in it the Divine's sanction to his work for his country. The All India Radio asked for a message. After referring to the significant coincidence, he listed his five dreams: (1) a united unpartitioned India, (2) a resurgent Asia; (3) a world union; (4) India's gift of spirituality to the world, (5) a new step in evolution to a more-than-human Consciousness.

Q: Could you recollect the memories of 15th Aug. 1947?

A: I was not actually present at that time; but I heard that the Mother had come on the small terrace near her room [Dyuman's terrace] and devotees had collected below. They began singing *Bande Mataram* with Dilip Kumar Roy at the centre. Then in the end the Mother hoisted the national flag and the Ashram flag and cried "Jai Hind!"

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO THE PHILOSOPHER

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is unique in its originality in the history of spiritual thought. Its originality consists mainly in four ideas.

First, God has manifested the world in his own being by his inherent Conscious Force, but he is not manifest in it. Rather he is veiled in all the principles of existence including the most obscure, viz. Matter. God as Substance, Consciousness and Force has evolved from Matter as Life and Mind.

Secondly, man, the mental being, consciously seeks knowledge of and union with the supreme Reality. But all experiences and realisations of mental-spiritual man are partial, not integral as is evident from the tenets and values of the different religions and the strands of the various spiritual disciplines and their results. Sri Aurobindo emphatically asserts that the integral realisation is possible and will surely be attained.

Thirdly, the acceptance and commitment to life in the world not as it is now but as it will be as the result of a further unfolding of consciousness in the world

Fourthly, Sri Aurobindo says there will be a further evolution of consciousness to a still unmanifest level of itself. He calls this level of consciousness the supermind. Integral and comprehensive Knowledge, omnipotent and infallible Will and pure self-creative Bliss are the essence of the supermind. It is the divine Nature.

The evolution of mental man's consciousness will enable him to know, be and possess God in all his aspects both beyond and in the world. The ascent of man to the supermind and its descent into his being and nature will bring about a radical change within, a true transformation. His mind will not cling to particular truths but will open itself to the integral Truth, his vital life will shed its passions and attachments and enjoy God in all its experiences, Matter organised as the physical body of man will become fully conscious and arrive at God.

God has a purpose in the world. It is his unveiled manifestation on earth and in individual and collective life there. The supermind is the indispensable means of achieving that purpose. It will fulfil the intention of the Divine in his creation. The supramental spiritual being will live his life in Knowledge and from the Truth of the Spirit. The members of the community of supermen will enjoy a divine existence and their life will be the Life Divine.

ARABINDA BASU

SRI AUROBINDO THE POET

Sri Aurobindo was a poet on a grand scale, the scale natural to all the sides of his versatile personality. He has given us poetry of various kinds—several narratives, numerous lyrics and sonnets, half a dozen dramas, a substantial body of experiments in new metres and, to top everything, an epic of nearly 24,000 lines of blank verse, the longest poetic creation in English: *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol*.

This poem takes up the famous traditional story of a woman's love which manages to reclaim from the God of Death the life of her prematurely dead husband. Sri Aurobindo turns that Indian legend to his own spiritual purposes without depriving it of human interest. He transforms it into a symbol of conquering all the ills that attend on man's mortality. But the vision unfolded goes beyond a mere individual's perfection. A democracy of the Divine, liberating the human collectivity, is the goal as in that utterance by the story's main character

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart:

I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
My spirit's liberty I ask for all.

What is specially notable about Sri Aurobindo's epic is that it attempts to open up a new dimension of poetic expression. In English literature we have the Shakespearian accent of the thrilled rapid life-force, the Miltonic tone of the majestically thinking mind, the deep or colourful cry of the idealistic imagination as in Wordsworth and Shelley and, recently, Yeats and AE. *Savitri*, while taking into itself the whole past of English poetry, adds not only the Indian spirit it adds also in ample measure the typical intonation, at once intense and immense in its rhythmic significance, which the Rigveda, the Upanishads and the Gita bring. Sri Aurobindo calls it "overhead poetry" It is not what the common man may suppose: poetry that passes clean over his head! It is inspired verse with an illuminating power, hailing from secret regions of a more-than-human consciousness which lie above the mental level reached so far by earth's evolution. This poetry may be generally characterised, in Sri Aurobindo's own words from *Savitri*, as consisting of

The lines that tear the veil from Deity's face.

If you want to relish variously such lines which the Rishis of old called the Mantra, the supreme vibrant Word, I may offer a few samples In the exquisite vein you have:

A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.

The note of sheer sublimity is struck by

Our life's repose is in the Infinite.

A music goes home to our human concerns with the whisper of an ultimate assurance when Sri Aurobindo says:

All can be done if the God-touch is there

K. D. SETHNA

SRI AUROBINDO THE YOGI

Sri Aurobindo had many facets to his personality, but the most central one which holds the key to his life is that of a Yogi. His Yoga, as is well known, is a new approach to life: it includes all life in Yoga.

Q: Is the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo for the sake of humanity?

A: I would say Yes and No. Yes, because it aims at the fulfilment of God's intention in humanity. No, because its aim is not confined to the betterment of the state of humanity. It aims at raising the level of human life into a divine state.

Q: What has one to do to prepare oneself for Yoga?

A. First to fix an aim for one's life. Normally people carry on without any central aim; a central objective has to be fixed and then all the faculties of oneself have to be gathered and focused on this objective which in this Yoga is to realise the Divine Consciousness. In other words, one has to make an effort to raise all the movements of daily life to a higher level which corresponds to the requirements of a divine life.

Q: What are the main characteristics of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga?

A. It is this integral character. It concentrates not only on the health of the soul but also on the health of the mind and the life-energies and the physical body. It embraces the whole of life in its perspective.

Q: How is the present generation influenced by the Yogic life of Sri Aurobindo?

A: For the first time in Indian tradition, Yoga has been turned earthwards. It accepts life, seeks to improve and perfect life and not to reject life. It is this positive note in Sri Aurobindo's approach that has appealed to the rising generation in our country.

MADHAV PANDIT

SRI AUROBINDO THE EDUCATIONIST

What is the main objective of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education?

In the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, education is a discipline and a training that begin at birth and continue throughout one's life. They believe in the perfectibility of man, of his whole being, and thus education consists in the full and perfect manifestation of all the possibilities lodged within his body, his life, his mind. It should provide him with the ideal opportunities that will help him realise all his potentialities. "The human being," says Sri Aurobindo, "is a self-developing soul, and the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material.. The true secret is to help him find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within." Thus, education should not only bring out of the child the best and the noblest he is capable of, but also endow him with an understanding of the true aim and significance of human life.

Sri Aurobindo describes this in very simple words when he says "The children should be helped to grow up into straightforward, frank, upright and honourable human beings, ready to develop into divine nature."

For life is a process of evolution, an evolution of consciousness. This consciousness emerges progressively and can manifest itself through all the activities of the different parts of the being. The teacher helps the child to discover these possibilities within him. He is a helper and a guide who shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not teach, he only helps the child to discover the knowledge hidden within. Everyone has within himself something divine and the chief aim of education is to help the growing child to draw that out and manifest it fully, joyfully and harmoniously. "A free and natural growth is the condition for genuine development," according to Sri Aurobindo. The human personality is encouraged to grow and exercise all its capabilities, the physical, the vital, the mental and moral, the aesthetic and the spiritual. The evocation of this real man within is the right object of education, indeed of all human life.

The future clearly demands the development of the larger possibilities of the human personality. Our education looks ahead to the future. It seeks to break out of the arbitrary grooves of training and preordained and compulsory shaping of thought and personality. This aim is expressed in the Students' Prayer which the Mother wrote out in 1952:

"Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born against the past that seeks to endure, so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them."

To what extent are the students influenced by Sri Aurobindo's vision?

To assess the extent is rather arbitrary, for it is an opinion about their inner life, and unless I am identified with them and become them, I cannot really know what their experience is. But this much is sure that they are all exposed to Sri Aurobindo and His thought, their consciousnesses are stamped by His vision. All of them do not take to the spiritual life as such, after they have completed their studies, but they do develop a sense of values where each aspect of life—the material, the emotional, the mental and moral—is viewed in the light of the truth of the Spirit. They are all aware that theirs has been a living education, an education in which the process of growth is never over. They do not see themselves merely as living bodies with certain vital propensities, an ego and a reason that is trained to satisfy these propensities: in short, they do not see themselves as reasoning animals but as growing souls.

This process makes them more aware of themselves. Each of them is an individual, but behind the diversity they feel the oneness. One of the fundamental aspects of the teaching of Sri Aurobindo is the essential unity upholding

the diversity of the manifestation. Each is an expression of the All, and, as Sri Aurobindo explains, while each searches for perfection through the development of his powers, he also feels out, though more slowly, after a similar perfectibility of the race. Sri Aurobindo also adds: "The only true education will be that which will be an instrument for this real working of the spirit in mind and body of the individual and the nation." .. "It enables the individual to grow, the nation to preserve, enrich and strengthen its soul and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity "

JHUMUR

AN UNUSED PASSAGE FOR BOOK 6, CANTO 2 OF
SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

BUT hard it is for human mind to feel
Heaven's good in life's crash and the iron grasp of Doom
Or tolerate the dreadful mystery
Of pain and grief and evil masking God.
How can it seize the thousand-sided drive,
The single act pointing a million acts,
The mystic total of the magical sum
Or swept by the world-ocean's rushing waves
Sense mid the wash and spume and loud multitude
The one all-discerning Will, the touch, the tread
Of God's indivisible reality?
Man's thought is like a diamond cutting gems[,]
Man's will is like a labourer hewing stones,
He cuts into sky-strips the boundless Truth
And takes each strip as if it were all the heavens.
His knowledge chained to thought and led by words
Is gaoled in the divisions it has made.
He looks at infinite possibility
And gives to its plastic Vast the name of Chance;
He sees the long result of the all-wise Force
And feels the cold rigid limbs of lifeless Law.
The will of the Timeless working out in Time
In the free absolute steps of cosmic Truth
He thinks a dead machine, an unconscious fate
It is decreed and Satyavan must die;
The hour is known, foreseen the fatal stroke.
What else shall be is written in her soul,
But till the hour reveals the fateful script,
The writing waits illegible and mute.
Her mortal breast hides her immortal Fate
O King, thy fate is a transaction fixed
In long advance but altered and renewed
At every hour between Nature and thy soul[.]
Its items ever grow and ever change,
It is a balance drawn in Destiny's book.
Thou canst open with thy Fate a new account
Begun upon a stainless virgin page.
Thou canst dispute her formidable claim

With God as the foreseeing arbiter,
 Thou canst accept thy fate, thou canst refuse[.]
 Even if the Judge maintains the unseen decree
 Yet thy refusal is in thy credit written;
 Death is no end, Fate moves, it stands not still
 Its will unshaken by the bronze blare of Doom,
 The spirit soars up stronger by defeat.
 Its godlike wings grow wider with each fall.
 Its growth within is watered by its wounds[.]
 Its splendid failures' sum is victory
 Thy fate touches the abyss to leap at heaven.
 Thy fate is like an army's marching ranks,
 It has many fronts and stands on many lines
 Thy future's map is kept in planes unseen,
 Thy soul has planned its strategy with God.
 Thy body's fate comes first, a column pushed
 Through the forts of the present to a city unknown;
 Its march is marshalled by the wheeling stars
 That carry its cosmic consigns in their light.
 It sees not where it goes, but walks by faith;
 It smites its way through the world's opponent powers,
 Or, frustrate, longs and waits a happier birth.
 A second front is in a greater plane,
 Thence thy life-forces drive like rolling waves
 Its small or large formations towards earth's days
 And swell the might of thy terrestrial fate
 Or as the wind-gods' squadrons jostle in heaven,
 Trumpeting with breath of storm and thunder's call
 And their arrows like gold lightnings fill the sky[.]
 Such is their coming, such their clamour and charge[.]
 In armour bright the shining riders come[.]
 Leaders hurrying Destiny's tardy pace,
 Victors preparing grander shocks to come
 If the soul could rise into that greater plane
 And with its motions quicken man's petty life,
 Erasing the firm consigns of the stars
 Thy will could then give orders to thy fate.
 On the radiant skyline of a greater Mind
 The Ideas that Fate fulfils not yet are seen[]
 The secret Will has its headquarters there
 That planned the tactics of the things that are
 And behind them plans for greater things to be.

Thence gleam the reconnaissances divine[]
Thence come the prophet scouts, the observer seers,
The godlike dreams, the vast and wide-winged thoughts
That cannot yet take shape in earthly life,
But here and there small part-fulfilments dawned
And of their fragments is our present made
But if the soul could live upon those heights,
Then would his life be the plaything of his thoughts,
His mind could be the shaper of his fate.
Above all glows a supramental range
There is God's staff; there is his High Command[]
The Truth lives there which oversees the world,
Of which all things are the disfiguring robe[]
O mortal, even now couldst thou receive
Only some influence from that marvellous plane,
All then would change, divinity be thy fate.

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

I AM surprised that in Spanish the equivalents of the English “portent” and “portentous”—namely, “portento” and “portentoso”—can only mean “wonder” and “wonderful” and their synonyms but never anything to do with the suggestion of a significant sign, whether favourable or unfavourable. In that case, Calderon could have chosen for his well-known play “*Il Magico Prodigioso*” the adjective “Portentoso” to go with the noun. It seems that both in Spanish and in French there is nothing corresponding to the ambivalent epithet “foreboding” in the *Savutri*-line

The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone ..

where, so far as the meaning in general is concerned, “portending” could substitute “foreboding” though it does not have the same subtle appositeness of atmosphere and rhythm. A French friend of mine has “menaçant” which would make the mind of Night altogether a menace whereas it is itself more “menaced” than “menacing” Actually, here is not a question of immediate danger so much as of a vague peril felt in advance without being quite known as a peril The exact poetic shade is of a prevision touched with fear or with a faint feeling of menace “Menaçant” would be “forbidding” rather than “foreboding”!

It is news to me that Spanish, unlike English or German, does not easily remodel or coin words. You have implied that Italian also does not lend itself with ease to such practice. You have written:

“The word ‘ancilar’ (you may recognise in it the Latin ‘ancila’=‘she-servant’) is an adjective which conveys the meaning of ‘dependent’, ‘subservient’, ‘something which helps or supports from a humble position’. I do not know if all these meanings can be expressed so precisely and beautifully in Spanish by any other word. Nevertheless, this word is not recognised by the dictionary of the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española*, and I am sure many Spaniards would be spellbound if they read or heard it. It has been very much used, perhaps created, by Alejo Carpentier, the Cuban writer and I am certain that nobody would doubt that as a neologism it is a success.

“Take another example: Dante’s ‘insemprare’ in the line ‘se non colà dove gioir s’insempra’ (*Paradiso* X, 148)—‘there where joy can be forever’—where the preposition ‘in’ and the temporal adverb ‘sempre’ (‘always’) undergo a twofold process of coalescence and transformation in a verb to express in a single word what neither Italian nor Spanish could say with such poetic force and depth of meaning ”

Excuse me, but are you sure you have spelt the Latin for “she-servant”

correctly? The original is *ancilla* (double *l*) In any case, it is a pity that authoritative lexicons of Spanish don't list it. The common English derivation from the Latin is *via* the adjective *ancillaris* That is, we have "ancillary" meaning "subservient", but I can easily imagine an English poet writing

Ancillar to God's will is the world's work

Very interesting indeed is what you say about Dante's verbal innovation. I wonder whether in an English rendering we can incorporate a suggestion of his feat Laurence Binyon has a fine sensitive version

Save where joy tastes its own eternity,

Barbara Reynolds translates, just as creditably though less grandly, thus

Where ever-present joy knows naught of time

But the direct daring neologism escapes both the authors An English coinage should spring to the eye if the Italian innovation is to be caught What about an attempt like

Save there where joy lives self-eternalised?

You are welcome to visit India and me at your convenience and hold discussions on poetry Yes, both *Savitri* and *Iliad* which mould the English language with a technical as well as semantic mastery have to be carefully probed before they wear a non-English garb. *Iliad* is less chockful of audacities than *Savitri*, but some turns of phrase in it also need a bit of elucidation There is one not far from the start:

Even as fleets on a chariot divine through the gold streets of ether .

Here one should not link "on" with "a chariot" in the prepositional sense that somebody is on a chariot, fleeting the rest of the passage will fail to show who is fleeting charioted. The drift is "Even as a chariot divine fleets on " Just the chariot moving fast onwards is meant The next line's "Swiftly when Life fleets" shows that "Life" is compared to "a chariot divine"

Then there is the line a little later

Half yet awake in light's turrets started the scouts of the morning

The verb "started" does not indicate the scouts beginning to move or making a start of anything. It simply connotes "making a sudden involuntary movement

due to surprise” Please forgive me if I am sounding too schoolmasterish. Most probably I am telling you what you already know (10 8 1991)

*

Ups and downs of the sadhak in us are natural Don't worry about them. The progress towards perfection is never uniform until the whole of our being has been unified The unification takes long but it is certain if the central self, the innermost psyche, grows more and more aware in all our movements. It has the master-key to open every part of us to feel what Wordsworth calls

A greatness in the beatings of our heart

To aim at this unification is our immediate concern—the pervasive sense of the Divine within us. And as we move towards such pervasion an automatic concord gets created with our surroundings. But we must be patient. It takes long for the *grand finale* to be struck. With as much equanimity as we can muster we have to meet whatever wrong notes ring inwardly or outwardly. If we do this, they turn into stepping-stones towards the ultimate harmony Of course, our equanimity has to be, as a phrase in *Savitri* goes,

A heart of silence in the hands of joy.

For we are offering our unwounded poise to the Holy Feet that are leading our pilgrimage to the *satyam-ritam-brihat*—the True, the Right, the Vast—the ideal set before the world from the beginning of our history by the Vedic Rishis. And we are doing the offering with a rush of rapture born of love: “hands of joy.” Our equanimity is not of an intellectual Stoic: it is that of a spiritual Epicurean. An Eternal Face whose eyes are depths of immutable bliss and whose mouth is a moulder of ever-new beauty is our goal.

Don't tax yourself with the problem whether bodily divinisation will take place in this very life. Let all your inner self be a constant remembrance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and let that remembrance shape your outer life to a consecrated strength which is at the same time a dedicated sweetness Thus will you lay the foundation of a future, whether in this life or another, of a divinised body. (9.10.1991)

*

It is natural that those lines from a Christian hymn which meant such a lot to me should go home also to you. Indeed your condition is still worse than mine though mine has worsened since the time I quoted to the Mother, as fitting her

relationship to me, that poignant phrase from the hymn “help of the helpless ” I really admire the courage and calmness and composure with which you carry on. Surely it is your constant feeling that you are a child of the Divine Mother and that she is making the utmost possible of your soul’s embodiment—truly it is this conviction of yours which is the cause of the quiet smile taking you through all your difficulties from day to day.

Outwardly the hymn’s phrase applied to me forty years ago because of the defective left leg I had to put up with. I could not lead a normal safe physical life, fully self-helped. But there was also an inward relevance of those words. I seemed to lack a will powerful enough to push me through the spiritual life successfully. A call had come—but even there, as you know, the Guru had to come in search of me: the newspaper sheet covering the box of the shoes I had bought fell open at home in front of me revealing the article headed: “A Visit to the Ashram of Aurobindo Ghose.” Without this act of grace I wonder whether I would have entered Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram at the age of 23 years. I might have wandered into it after almost a lifetime of drifting here and there in quest of my soul. You will remember too that when I first went out of the Ashram for a visit to my grandfather after six and a half years of stay with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother my one appeal to the Mother was, in effect, “Please never give me up even if I myself tend to give you up!” The Mother granted the favour I had so intensely solicited and that is why I have been enabled to remain under her wings all these years.

A clear sign of my sort of Yoga may be seen in the passage I chose when once the Mother asked the group of us, sitting with her in the evening in the “Prosperity Room” before the Soup Distribution downstairs, to mention what lines we cherished the most in her *Prayers and Meditations*. She had brought her manuscript with her and was cutting out of it whatever passage was our favourite and giving it to us after pasting it on a blank sheet of paper and putting her signature along with the date. My selection was from the prayer whose start runs in the English translation. “O Divine and adorable Mother, with Thy help what is there that is impossible?” The sense behind my selection must have been: “Even I who am an impossible candidate for the Integral Yoga can go on if the Divine Mother whom I can’t help adoring for her sweetness and light and strength takes me up and bears me towards whatever realisation Sri Aurobindo has in sight for the earth.”

It is noteworthy that the end of the prayer whose few opening lines I offered as an echo of my heart’s throbbings, as it were, brings us a statement which prophesied in general the consummation of Sri Aurobindo’s work and hers and which she turned into the present tense on March 29, 1956, making it run as a Message referring back to February 29 when the Supramental Manifestation had taken place.

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

I speak of a consummation in general because on the evening of February 29 certain aspects of the Supermind became in the inner or subtle layer of the earth a permanent part of terrestrial history. Here was a definite turn in the process of evolution. A breakthrough was achieved. Further manifestation of the Supermind was to be expected, leading ultimately to an emergence of the new consciousness in the outer or gross-physical layer of our planet and to a gradual transformation of not only the human mind and life-force but also the very body in which they function. In this great change the main motive-power is to be what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have called “the psychic being”, the true soul in us acting from the depths of what we may term the inmost heart behind the complex of emotional movements, the depth where what may be designated the emotion of the ideal—the intense urge towards the True, the Good and the Beautiful—is experienced directly as a one-pointed love for a Supreme Master or Mother of the world who is stationed at once on some secret altitude and in some arcane profundity. I am reminded of that invocation put by Sri Aurobindo into the mouth of his Aswapaty.

O radiant fountain of the world’s delight,
 World-free and unattainable above,
 O Bliss who ever dwelst deep hid within
 While men seek Thee outside and never find....

This invocation always sprang to my lips whenever in the early morning the Mother came to a first-floor balcony and gave *darshan* to the sadhaks and sadhikas gathered in the street below. Once she came with her hair unbound and partly falling about her face. The sight of her like that has inspired the beginning of a poem of mine entitled “Vita Nuova” (“New Life”).

Haloed by some vast blue withheld from us,
 Her pure face smiles through her cascading hair—
 Like a strange dawn of rainfall nectarous
 It comes to amaranth each desert prayer

What is sought to be conjured up is a picture of Divine Grace. The Grace is twofold—beauty and benediction. It hails from a height of spiritual consciousness far beyond our reach, but, wearing the transfigured form of a face like ours, it brings to us with its joy and compassion a radiance rising out of the Mystery

beyond and approaching us with its loveliness framed in loose-hanging hair, as if an unearthly morning were breaking through thin refreshing rain. This image evokes the suggestion of a transfiguring response from regions of immortality to the appeal of our human state, barren of true bliss. In Classical mythology we often find “fields of amaranth”—ever-living blooms in the Home of the Blest, a visionary after-death island-paradise. I have used the noun “amaranth” as a transitive verb—a poetic licence—to render vivid and forceful the transfiguration envisaged of the state, as of a desert, which is behind every human heart’s longing in a world of mutability, “this transient and unhappy world”, as Sri Krishna puts it in the Gita.

The memory of her appearance on that balcony is unfading—an “amaranth” I may call it, a particularly impressive one because those appearances were at the start of the day, giving the many hours to come a beatific stamp received when the outer eyes were most sensitive with the touch of the inner eyes after the night’s long withdrawal from the crowded siege of changing superficialities. Of course, the sense of that “morning glory” is not the only guide to me these days when we cannot have again and again as in the far past the physical delight of her body moving amidst us to trace for us a pathway to perfection, her countenance imparting to us a sweet strength which would enable us not to feel our pursuit of her onward and upward too tiring for our human frailty

At present I seek her help repeatedly by fixing my gaze on her photographs. One especially has a great power over me. I first saw it looking out at me from above the body of Lalita after Lalita had died. I seemed to hear it summoning me to a greater effort at self-transcendence. It is a coloured enlargement presenting frontally her face and a little portion below it of the body. It hangs on the wall opposite the chair in which, when I am not typing, I spend most of my time reading, conversing or else in-going instead of letting the inner become out-going. Her expression here is very serious and the eyes are most penetrating but in a strangely quiet way. They look stern and yet there is a warmth in them, a basic tenderness. They are not the eyes of the censor, the judge, warning me against the falsehood in my nature as with a hidden threat. They have a firm compassion bent on never letting me prove unworthy of her love—never allowing any insincerity to veil the soul in me who is her child and who loves her. She is in dead earnest to protect me from my own weaknesses, my own tendencies to diverge from the straight path on which she has at last put me with so much care. This explains the deep seriousness in her expression. At one and the same time I am guarded and enfolded, kept strongly within bounds with the unrelenting softness of a firm protective embrace

Enough about myself and my concerns! Now for your scruple about my use of the word “death” for Sri Aurobindo’s leaving his body. You have rightly guessed that the adjective “mysterious” should modify—at least partly—the

usual association of this word. But even if “mysterious” were not here, “death” would be the *mot juste* here in order to stress, as I have done, how really living in a most extraordinary sense was Sri Aurobindo when to all appearance life had fled. To drive home this sense a touch of stark “realism” was needed. In another earlier context the same touch was equally called for. You may remember my sonnet “Heaven’s Light and Mortal Doom”. There the last line of the octave and the first two of the sestet run

Heaven’s light vanishes—divine Aurobindo died
 But this one death where Heaven’s own self gave room
 For dire eclipse of its eternity. .

The Mother never liked the word “death” in relation to Sri Aurobindo. But when I showed her this sonnet, there was not the slightest demurring. She wholly accepted the usage as an inevitable part of the extraordinary thing I was visualising in the poem. Besides, from the standpoint of “form”—the rhyme-scheme and the metre—nothing else could replace it.

On palmistry I have nothing to say except to recount one incident of a long time back. I had gone to see a Maharashtrian Yogi—Devji by name—who had come to Bombay and about whose powers an article had come my way. This was before my visit to Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram and before even the article on it which decided my spiritual future. The man in whose flat Devji was staying called me to himself instead of directing me to the inner room where his guest was receiving people. I was in full English dress—necktie and all—with a felt-hat in my hand. I must have looked rather strange as a seeker of Yoga. The host asked me to show him my right palm. On examining it he shook his head. “What’s the matter?” I inquired. He said, “You are fated to have four children. Why are you bothering about Yoga?” I quickly countered, “But I don’t have a single one yet. Please let me go in.” With a disgusted face he waved his hand towards the door of the room concerned. I was tempted to steal a glance at his own palm thus fleetingly exposed. But, of course, I had no clue to where his reproductive power might be indicated. This whole curious incident took place about sixty-one years ago and I haven’t had even one offspring. So much for palmistry—at least in my life!

AMAL KIRAN
 (K. D. SETHNA)

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of December 1991)

A LITTLE girl, pointing to her friend, said: "She has a question."

"Oh? I hope it isn't a very difficult one!" remarked Sri Aurobindo, amidst general laughter.

"No, no, it's just that I wanted to know what the officials of the Government did when they found that you had disappeared from Bengal. Didn't they try to look for you? They wouldn't have known that you had come to Pondicherry!"

"How surprising! This was just what I had planned to tell you this morning. In fact, it's a very interesting story. You know, it wasn't very likely that Government officials, the Secretary of State for India, for instance, would rest by day and sleep by night after having heard about the disappearance of one whom they regarded as their biggest enemy! But they did not know where to begin looking for me, particularly since they believed all kinds of absurd stories about me. It was ridiculous how afraid they were. They considered my 'Open Letter to my Countrymen', which had appeared in the *Karmayogin* to be seditious and issued a warrant for my arrest. But since I wasn't to be found, they arrested the poor publisher instead and sentenced him to six months in jail. But when an appeal was made against that sentence and the court set the man free, the pride of the police and the Government received a big blow. Telegraphic messages criss-crossed the ocean between London and India.

'Where is Aurobindo? Has he been found? According to which law was the warrant for his arrest issued?' To which an upset Viceroy answered: 'No, Aurobindo has not been found. But he is said to be hiding somewhere in the city of Calcutta' Soon afterwards, the Police informed him that Aurobindo had probably gone to Pondicherry though this was not yet ascertained. So again, in a short while, they announced, 'Aurobindo is here in the City, getting ready to leave for Paris with Ajit Singh. Please send someone immediately to identify him'

"Really! How fantastic!"

"The Government believed it anyway. It did not matter that no such notion had ever occurred to me, nor did I have that kind of money. They had to prove that they were not sitting idle, that they were very busily looking for me. They were also afraid that if somehow I did manage to reach France, I would go out of their reach and would then find it much more convenient to carry on with my revolutionary activities from there. So this attempt had somehow to be foiled. Since every ship that sailed for France went via Colombo in those days, I was to

be arrested at that port. So they finalised the arrangements with the Colombo Police of arresting me at that city so that I might not be able to sail for France. Finally, they managed to discover the truth about everything, how I had left Calcutta under a false name, how too I had obtained the medical certificate, and all the rest of it. Only they believed that the name of my companion was Nolini and not Bijoy. But you see how well God had made all the arrangements for me. On the day the ship was to sail, the police were ready and waiting at the jetty to arrest the passenger J N Mitra, as I had called myself. But since I arrived late and then had to rush to the doctor's house for my medical certificate, they did not find me. They finally thought that I had decided to embark on another day in another ship. They discovered their error later when they found out that J N Mitra had indeed been a passenger on that self-same ship. They went to see the doctor with one of my pictures and he identified me. He also told them that he had been very impressed by my refined and elegant English. Since the police had no pictures of Bijoy, the doctor could not identify him, but the description he gave made them decide that it must have been Nolini who had accompanied me. This is the kind of mistake one makes when one thinks oneself to be too clever. Poor little Nolini!

“The wonderful discoveries of the police did not end there. Next, they came up with the theory that I was planning to go to Berlin, not Paris, to join the Indian revolutionaries who were already there. Actually, I had been supposed to leave on the 1st of April on a boat that belonged to the Lloyd Company, but I failed to find a free berth on it, so I couldn't sail on it. But someone must have made April Fools of the Police and told them that I had gathered Rs. 25000 and left for Berlin! Whereas all I had done was to come to Pondicherry, not crossed thousands of miles to reach Europe. They also believed that if I had not gone to Berlin finally, it was because I had not managed to get the required sum of money. The police commissioner therefore sent warrants for my arrest at all the three ports of Bombay, Madras and Colombo. You see to what length they would go to catch just one man, how many plots and plans they laid for me, while I had surrendered the entire responsibility of my life and security into God's hands, and was resting at ease in Pondicherry, sitting on the tip of their nose, as goes the Bengali saying. (*Laughter*)

“At length, however, feeling sorry for them, I sent a notification to *The Hindu* politely requesting that paper to make it known to all those who were extremely interested in me and my movements that I was residing in Pondicherry and that I intended to continue doing so. Since I had left British India to come to this French colony in order to do Yoga, I had broken all political connections, and so neither the Law nor the Government had any right of branding me a traitor and a rebel and having me give myself up into their hands. Naturally if I had still continued to be active in politics, then it would have been a different matter. But ever since I had arrived in Pondicherry, I had taken up a life of

spiritual seclusion, though there was nothing secret about it. A few French and Indian friends who visited me regularly could vouch for that, as would also the spies who moved around my house. Many people in Madras knew the facts about me, so did most of the Pondicherians. I ended my information to *The Hindu* by saying that it was almost against my will that I was contacting them but that some people were spreading rumours about me for their own selfish ends, saying that I was still living in British India. I insisted very firmly that after March, I had not set foot in British India, and did not intend doing so in future, at least not until I could go there freely and openly. If anyone at that time or at any time had anything else to say about me, then that person would be uttering an absolute falsehood. I made it very clear that for the time being I had retired from all political activities and that I could neither meet nor correspond with anyone about political matters. I ended by adding that I would prefer not to go into the reason why I had left British India until the High Court had given its verdict as to whether my writings in the *Karmayogin* were seditious or not. Did you follow anything of what I said?"

"Not all of it. But did the police accept the statement?"

"Ah! the police. Do they ever really believe the statements that are given to them? Particularly one coming from me was specially suspect. They had tried and tried, but had always failed to catch me. You may hear some day how they kept a constant watch on me, on the Ashram, even on the visitors and guests who came for the Darshans. Their spies used to hover around the Ashram building all the time, pester with questions the visitors who came here, bothering them at the Railway Station itself. One of the good things that the Congress Government did later was to free people from the oppression of the police.

"Since we have been talking about the police, let me say all that I have to say about the subject, before I close it—though it is not a subject that can easily be closed or put aside. Perhaps that is why we usually try to keep our distance from the police and the Law Courts. The name we had given the British Indian Police was 'The Red Turbans'. You will soon understand why we also considered them rather foolish. Even after reading my notification in *The Hindu*, the British Government still refused to believe that I had retired from politics. To them, the words "Yoga" and "spirituality" were simply screens behind which I would continue with my political activities in secret. You see, every one judges the world by his own standards, sees himself in his surroundings. They read their own meanings in the fact that I had made French India my home, for they believed that from here I could send advice and orders and even weapons much more easily and safely to my former friends. I was indeed like a nagging toothache for the old British lion!

"So they hit upon a plan. A local rowdy, who was both a political leader and very wealthy, was asked to kidnap me and take me back to British India in his motor car. But we got wind of this and my friends and companions started keeping watch over me round the clock. They even carried arms, for they had

every intention of putting up a fight if and when anyone came for me. Of course nothing happened in the end. In fact, a warrant of arrest was issued in the name of the same leader, on some charge. As a result, the man, afraid of being arrested, ran away to Madras. I was told that much later he repented for having made hostile moves against a saint and a yogi!

“The next attempt that the police made was more subtle and clever. Instead of force, they now took recourse to guile. They sneaked into the house of one of my friends and threw a tin box, stuffed with some forged documents, into the courtyard well. When the servant went to fetch water from the well, the box came up with the pail. The French police was informed. They examined the papers in the box and found them rather disturbing, for they seemed to implicate me and my companions in some conspiracy against the British Government. So the Chief of the French Police brought several constables to our house in order to search it thoroughly. While he was busy doing it, his eyes fell on some papers on which something was written in Greek. He asked me if I knew Greek. When he found that I knew not only Greek but Latin too and several other European languages, he exclaimed in admiration ‘Il sait du Grec! Il sait du Latin!’ (‘He knows Greek! He knows Latin!’) And with that, he reverently left.”

“But why?”

“You really are stupid,” exclaimed the little questioner’s friend. “Can’t you understand this much? Since he is such a learned and wise person, he obviously can’t stoop to such low tricks!” Sri Aurobindo was listening to this answer with a smile. Then he added.

“The French are truly different. They have a great respect for culture. The Police Officer not only apologised and left, he even politely invited me to visit him at his office, so that we may exchange views on life and literature.”

“Did you visit him?”

“Yes, of course, since the invitation had been so courteously extended. And it is useful too to be good friends with the Police. Naturally, this happened long before I became a complete recluse.

The third attempt by the British Police to capture me took the form of temptation. Word was sent to me informing me that the British Government would have no objection if I did decide to return to British India. In fact, they would be only too pleased to have me back and would let me live peacefully in a bungalow in Darjeeling, in the most picturesque surroundings. There I would be free to pursue my intellectual activities as I pleased, and sometimes would even be invited to visit the Governor when the latter would come up to the hills during summer (*Laughter*). But I refused this very kind offer with a clear ‘No, thank you.’ ”

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of December 1991)

A Fatal Utterance

My birthday falls on October 10th, and in 1991 I was very happy to be able to celebrate it in the Ashram. In the afternoon when Nirod-da came to greet me, he said, “You had the darshan of the Guru, I’m sure. Tell me about it.”

I smiled and replied, “Yes, I was blessed by him. I got up in the early morning as usual, finished all my chores, and had my bath. After I had dressed, I lit a few incense-sticks. Then I stood before his picture and prayed, ‘Won’t you bless me?’”

He gave me a broad smile and, stretching out both his arms, put his hands on my head as he used to do during the darshans of my childhood. I was happy beyond description. The whole day his smile and the gentle pressure of his hands on my head recalled to me those childhood memories. Two birthdays particularly stand out in my mind—those of 1932 and 1936.

On the first occasion, I was seven years old, and I had come to the Ashram with my mother especially for my birthday. In those days, the Mother used to come down to the Pranam Hall every morning except on Monday, which was her hair-washing day. As luck would have it, my birthday happened to fall on a Monday. Sahana seems to have written to Sri Aurobindo: “Today—Monday—Mother has not come down. Is it because of Non-Pranam day or because of Esha’s birthday?” He answered: “Yes, but because it is Esha’s birthday, not because it is non-pranam day.” (We don’t know what exactly Sahana wrote, but I have seen Sri Aurobindo’s answer in his own hand—Nirod)

Nonetheless, I was called to see the Mother at 10 a.m. Amazingly, she kept me with her for nearly two hours. In that time she played the piano for me while I sat at her feet, then showed me pictures of animals, told me stories in English—which I could not understand—and gave me chocolates, flowers, and a variety of presents.

On the second occasion—1936—too, I had a similar reception.

My next visit in November 1938 was the year when Sri Aurobindo met with the accident to his right leg. There was therefore no darshan. I too had to leave the Ashram for a different reason.

After that, the entire course of my life took an unhappy turn, putting an end to my visits to the Ashram until 1949 November. I stayed on to February 21 1950, when I had my last darshan of Sri Aurobindo.

A series of bitter experiences frustrated my married life and made me break off all contact with the Ashram.

On the 5th December, 1950, an hour or so after midnight, I had a most frightful dream. I dreamt that the entire world was shaken by a violent earthquake. My bed trembled, swayed, rose and fell. Darkness enveloped the earth and everything in it—men, beasts, cities, nations. All were laid waste by a massive destruction. In the midst of the holocaust, I found myself totally alone. Desolately and with a great effort I somehow climbed a tower and heard a voice whispering in my ear, "On this earth you now have no one left to call your own. Beyond, you have." The shock of this ominous utterance shattered me. My whole body trembled. I woke up dazed from the terrible dream, my head reeling "What does it mean?" I wondered miserably.

The next morning, I recounted my dream to one of my distant relatives. He was as puzzled by it as I was. Then, later, we heard the radio announcement that Sri Aurobindo had left his body. On hearing the news, I felt completely broken. My mind became a blank unable to accept the brutal truth, and then it dawned on me that the huge convulsion that had overtaken the world in my dream had been due to his departure. "What a tremendous person he must be!" I marvelled. My relative too was stunned by the news, even more so when he later received a letter from my uncle, Dilip Kumar Roy, who was in Benares at the time, describing a similar dream he had had the same night.

Five days later, while I was putting my child to sleep, I saw a figure standing at my door. At first I could not make out who it was. But when I looked closely, it became clear that it was Sri Aurobindo himself. He appeared exactly as he had been during that last darshan I had attended. Then he said in a low voice, "I have come to bless you." But when I stepped forward to do pranam at his feet, I suddenly found there was no one there. It was then that I felt my aloneness most acutely. I had no one left in this wide, strange world to call my own except my child. I was already estranged from my husband, while my mother lived in her own world and, rather than being a support to me, was herself in need of my help due to her constant ill-health. So it was that I found myself surrounded by misfortunes that came not one by one, but all at once as they always seem to do.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

lured—but no other proper verb is available. “Lured all life”—somewhat heavy too?

A: Can keep it

Q “Breaking and moulding day on slumberous day”.

A. Very fine line

Q: (1 5) I didn't myself like “while all around was.. ” “Tuned flute” he says is a very good expression

A. ?

Q. Your opinion, please This poem seems rather simple and not very original.

A: The sestet, especially after Amal's changes, is quite admirable Second part of octet very feeble, I have put some changes which give it, I think, a rhythm and a swing. First part of octet tolerable with our alterations shoots up into something.

Q. By trying English and Bengali poems at the same time, am I putting an obstacle in either's progress?

A No, it helps.

Q. When I read English poems written by English blood, I find it absolutely futile to attempt English poetry. So flat, watery, Indian-English. Don't see any prospect!

A. Some of your poems are not like that at all—quite enough “blood” in them. It is a certain awkwardness yet in the details of metre or language that is in the way still.

(Revised form)

A feeble lump of clay flower-unadorned
Nor kissed by Heaven's glimmering perfume-breath.
Like a lone nameless grave of wayside death
It passed through barren years, inglorious, scorned.

But the flute-tune of Nature lured all life
On a journey to some bright star-festivalled goal,
A deep cry rose from the gloom-buried soul
And ran through time like lightning, moment-brief

It echoed through the night and reached your heart.
Light-winged you came and took the lump of clay
In your white hands. Then with ineffable art
Breaking and moulding day on slumberous day

You shaped it to a beauty like your own
A full-mooned rapture from the blue Unknown

LABOUR OF LOVE

by

HUTA

(Continued from the issue of December 1991)

I CAME to the Ashram from East Africa in September 1958. Upon my arrival I was told that the Mother would come to my apartment at 4 p.m. My heart leaped with joy.

She came with white roses and said with a smile:

“Child, I have come to greet you.”

Her blue-grey eyes swept over me when she remarked:

“Oh, now you have become plumpy!”

She added:

“I heard that you wanted to get married ”

I smiled and answered: “Oh, really? To whom, Mother? Well, if I had wanted it, I would not be with you now. It was all rumours.” Her hand rested on my shoulder; she said with a nod:

“I know.”

An immense relief suffused me. I said to the Mother. “Will you please come into my bedroom? I have brought for you some offerings.” She sat on one corner of my bed stretching her feet on it and leaned against the pillows. I showed her all the things. She liked them. What she most admired was a musical powder-box which she played there and then with amusement I said to her that I would ask Dyuman to take those things to her apartment She agreed and said:

“Thank you, my child.”

I marvelled at her super-humility and appreciation.

After that we went into my meditation room. She sat in her special chair which is always there, ready.

I sat near it. We meditated about half an hour. During the meditation she

opened her eyes wide. They were full of lustre and power. She looked intently at the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and herself, which she had chosen, signed and given. They were surcharged with her Force.

Then we got up. She looked at me and reassured me.

“Sri Aurobindo’s Presence and mine are here for all twenty-four hours.”

She continued

“This is my apartment. You are a guardian. Take care of it.”

I will never forget the Mother’s last visit to my flat. I will cherish it for ever in my heart.

*

In my sombre thoughts I remembered those months I spent among my people whom I understood fairly well when I was frequently surrounded by them. Now it was like standing back and regarding an oil painting. Everything fell into focus. What I had been scarcely aware of at that time became very clear to me now. My attachment to them started losing its grip and the mother became the breath of my life—the very root of my existence. I was convinced of this fact.

Some part in me was not satisfied with only physical fitness or with what I had been doing or had achieved. Drawing and painting were not the final aim. I wanted to be self-reliant and free. Above all, I wished to express myself in the New Creation. Stereotype living simply bored me. My mind kept harping on these notions.

As always I went to the Mother in the evening. We usually meditated together.

Cards bearing her constant love and Grace, white roses and Prasad were daily gifts from her.

I worked a little in her private stores. But that was not enough.

The Mother saw the paintings I had done in Africa. She liked two of them.

I could not set my mind to any precise work.

*

Now it was October. Time slid away so rapidly that I lost count of it.

The month was full of Puja days.

My mother left for India just after I reached Pondicherry. My father and younger sister accompanied her. They invited me to celebrate Diwali—the festival of light—with them in Rajkot (Gujarat).

After taking the Mother's permission I joined my people. I expressed my idea to go to the U K. for further studies and gain self-confidence. My parents suggested to me to seek the Mother's advice

I came back to the Ashram. Countless thoughts shuffled and reshuffled in my mind. The main problem was the money to go abroad—such travel meant a lot of expense

I unburdened my heart to the Mother, disclosing my wish for further studies. She went into a trance for quite a long time She awoke, leaned a little forward from her couch, held my hands and affirmed:

“It is good—good for your welfare.”

Once again a rumour spread like wildfire that Huta was going back to settle in the ordinary world She had come just to inform the Mother about it.

I could only laugh. If I did not love the Mother and the spiritual life, there was no need to return to the Ashram even to report to the Mother

(To be continued)

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IF

If you could take off your mysterious veil
 And the gold of your sun-face disperse life's bale,
 Night will be pushed to extinction's verge,
 In each cell will bloom immortality's urge
 Mastery will leap into being's arms,
 Our becomings will wear a godhead's charms
 Freely may choose men's seeking souls
 A journey to one of the twin goals:
 The dark intoxication of a soft death
 Or the exhilaration of a new-born's breath.

SHYAM KUMARI

SRI AUROBINDO'S WORK

(A controversy cropped up in a Pondicherry paper a long time ago between Jay Holmes Smith of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and A Venkataraman who had been an Ashramite in the early days but afterwards lived in Madras as a journalist. To answer a remark of the former the latter came to K. D. Sethna for help. Sethna wrote out the following letter which was published under Venkataraman's name Jay Smith at once granted its point Its theme may interest the readers of Mother India. The letter is reproduced as it appeared originally in print)

To the Editor,
Pondy Observer.

Sir,—Shri Jay Holmes Smith has charged me with “serious misstatement” because my article on Sri Aurobindo said: “Sri Aurobindo’s work in Pondicherry has wholly been confined to the inner world ” Attention is drawn to Sri Aurobindo’s various references to transforming human society and to his messages as well as the Mother’s on several public issues. We are told also that Sri Aurobindo always followed current events daily by newspaper and radio.

I never had the intention of denying Sri Aurobindo’s concern with the outer world. I know perfectly well that the Master’s Yoga was integral and embraced all the fields of earth’s life. A new step in human evolution on a collective scale was its aim with the help of a new divine dynamism which Sri Aurobindo called the Supermind. But does this mean that Sri Aurobindo dealt with the outer world as politicians, economists, social workers or even ethicists do? We may remember that Sri Aurobindo explicitly left the field of politics to concentrate on a spiritual work by withdrawing to Pondicherry. In a very striking sense, he put an end to his own participation in the outer world. This did not signify a rejection of that world. But it did signify an essential giving up of not only the common methods of dealing with that world but even his own methods before coming to Pondicherry. Henceforth he relied fundamentally on Spiritual Force, on Yogic methods, on a working from deep within, from the inner world. And what he fundamentally worked upon was also the powers and principalities, so to speak, of the inner world. With a root dynamism he acted on root causes which are wholly inner. It is in this sense that I wrote of his work in Pondicherry having been wholly confined to the inner world.

Such a pronouncement must not be misunderstood as implying a neglect of the great issues of “survival and collective fulfilment of the human family” But what may be called “Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual statesmanship” must be seen in its true light, and his burning concern with the outer world no less than with the inner must be saved from being superficialised and has to be explained in terms of its typical insight and its characteristic *modus operandi*

I do not allege that Sri Holmes Smith superficialises it. I am certain that he knows how Sri Aurobindo's basic action was from within upon individual and collective forces that are within. But he is overhasty in assuming for me an ignorance of the fact that Sri Aurobindo worked like this with the aim of changing all outer life through a radical inner transformation.

Thanking you, Sir, for your indulgence,

A. VENKATARAMAN

SOME CLERICHEWS

The clerihew is an even tighter form than the limerick—almost as tight, in fact, as a haiku. Here are four examples from "Clerihew Couples," by Roberta Simone, in "Light Year '87" (Bits Press), an annual of light verse and funny poems edited by Robert Wallace

ELIZABETH Barrett
Whispered over her claret,
"My father's a slob,
Get me out of here, Bob."

Robert Browning
Thought she was clowning
Till she rose in a rush
And handed him Flush

D. H. Lawrence
Viewed with abhorrence
The lay of the land—
That's why he was banned

Along came Frieda,
Who said, "Bert, you need a
Place where they don't act so prissily
Let's try Sicily."

ROBERTA SIMONE

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of December 1991)

DURING his stay in England Sri Aurobindo received word through his father's letters that a period of "upheaval" was occurring in India, that Indians were badly treated by Englishmen. He felt that a great revolutionary change was going to happen. By the time he attended Cambridge, Sri Aurobindo had made a "firm decision" that he would play a "decisive role" in the liberation of India, and he got involved in delivering revolutionary speeches at the college.

This revolutionary inclination was sharpened with Sri Aurobindo's interest in the "*Lotus and Dagger*" movement, an unsuccessful attempt of Indian students in London to organise and promise to work for the liberation of India.

Immediately after leaving England in 1893, Sri Aurobindo took up Baroda State Service and awakened to a "will for renationalisation which came after reaching India, by natural attraction to Indian culture and ways of life and a temperamental feeling and preference for all that was Indian."

During his first year at Baroda he refrained from direct political activity except for a few articles, published in the *Induprakash*, entitled "New Lamps for Old".*

In his later life in Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo spoke to his disciples about his writings in the *Induprakash*. "When I came to Baroda from England I found out what the Congress was at that time and formed a contempt for it. Then I came in touch with Deshpande, Tilak, Madhavrao, and others. Deshpande requested me to write something in the *Induprakash*. There I strongly criticised the Congress for its moderate policy. The articles were so slashing that M. G. Ranade, the great Maharashtra leader, asked the proprietor of the paper not to allow such seditious articles to appear in the paper, otherwise he might be arrested and imprisoned. Deshpande approached me with the news and requested me to write something less violent. I then began to write about the philosophy of politics leaving aside the practical part. But I soon got disgusted with it."

Deshpande reports in his introduction to Sri Aurobindo's series.

"We promised our readers some time back a series of articles on our present political progress by an extremely able and keen observer of the present times. We are very much pleased to give our readers the first instalment of that series. The title under which these views appear is 'New Lamps for Old' which is very suggestive though a metaphorical one. The preface will take us over to the next issue. The views therein contained are not those that are commonly held by our

* "This title did not refer to Indian civilization but to Congress politics. It is not used in the sense of the Aladdin story, but was intended to imply the offering of new lights to replace the old and faint reformist lights of the Congress." (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother* p. 27)

politicians, and for this reason they are very important. We have been long convinced that our efforts in Political Progress are not sustained, but are lacking in vigour. Hypocrisy has been the besetting sin of our political agitation. Oblique vision is the fashion. True, matter of fact, honest criticism is very badly needed. Our institutions have no strong foundation and are in hourly danger of falling down. Under these circumstances it was idle—nay, criminal,—to remain silent while our whole energy in Political Progress was spent in a wrong direction. The questions at issue are momentous. It is the making or unmaking of a nation. We have therefore secured a gentleman of great literary talents, of liberal culture and of considerable English experience, well-versed in the art of writing and willing, at great personal inconvenience and probable misrepresentation, to give out his views in no uncertain voice, and, we may be allowed to add, in a style and diction peculiarly his own. We bespeak our readers' most careful and constant perusal on his behalf and assure them that they will find in those articles matter that will set them thinking and steel their patriotic souls."²

Here are a few excerpts from "New Lamps for Old".

"I say, of the Congress, then, this,—that its aims are mistaken, that the spirit in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not a spirit of sincerity and whole-heartedness, and that the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders in whom it trusts, not the right sort of men to be leaders;—in brief, that we are at present the blind led, if not by the blind, at any rate by the one-eyed."³

"For by reflection or instinct to get a clear insight into our position and by dexterity to make the most of it, that is the whole secret of politics, and that is just what we have failed to do."⁴

"We lose in sincerity which is another name for strength."

"So long as this temper prevails, we shall never realise how utterly it is beyond the power of even an excellent machine to renovate an effete and impoverished national character and how palpably requisite to commence from within and not depend on any exterior agency."⁵

"To put it in a concrete form, Paris may be said to revolve around the Theatre, the Municipal Council and the French Academy, London looks rather to the House of Commons, and New York to the Stock Exchange."⁶

"The hour seems to have come when the Congress must encounter that searching criticism which sooner or later arrives to all mortal things; and if it is so, to keep our eyes shut will be worse than idle. The only good we shall get by it

is to point with a fresh example the aphorism with which I set out 'If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into a ditch?' ”⁷

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

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- 2 *Ibid*, pp. 40-41
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- 6 *Ibid*
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BEAUTY, THE VISITING DEITY

Dedicated to AK

BEAUTY that treads lightly with masterly gait
Over the soft bright sands in a happy morn
Kisses the child's forehead lying in wait,
A treat for the bystander's curious eyes,
A gesture of the ever-glowing Sun
Ever at work of giving shape to things
Her each twinkle is a miracle unfathomable
That has thrilled the hemispheres down the ages

She came this afternoon strolling, though with strain,
Beaming everywhil while with a smile of recognition,
Sounded the trumpet of the coming dawn,
Drew the veil over herself when ambushed,
Had merged in the seeker, in his body, mind and heart.
A visitant unwilling to bid adieu to the holy shrine
Meaningless is the farewell to the omnipresent Light,
She visits to marshal him, her human vessel, to his earthly home,
Nay—to nowhere or everywhere, a journey
From now to now, from here to here

A calm descended as a swan upon his fair visage
Enveloping him with its wings of iridescent bliss,
As he got up his carriage for the return journey,
His lips wore a rapturous smile of the indwelling Divine,
A nameless horizon opened its golden doors,
A bournless sea echoed his aspirations

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

I

THERE has always been a close but strange link, an uneasy love-hate relationship between literature and philosophy, each helping the other's growth, drawing upon the other, and at times attacking the other and claiming superiority over the other. Out of the four branches of philosophy—Logic, Ethics, Aesthetics and Metaphysics—the last three have vital connections with literature. Coleridge averred that none can be a great poet without being a metaphysician, a logician and a philosopher at the same time. Shakespeare is often praised for possessing a philosophic mind

The intellectuals associated with both the disciplines may be divided into three groups.

1. Writers who are primarily philosophers and have contributed to literary theory and literary criticism. Plato, Aristotle and moderns like A. C. Bradley are the outstanding examples

2. Writers who are primarily poets and have given poetic expression to philosophic concepts One of the obvious examples is the tradition binding the American group including Emerson, Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost.

3. Writers who are equally at home in both the disciplines and have, therefore, to be called philosopher-poets If Dante is the ancient example of this illustrious group, Sartre is one modern who deserves this honour

Literature's indebtedness to philosophy cannot be exaggerated Though Plato contends that the poet makes only copies of copies, that he is possessed by a madness when he writes and that his activity leads men away from truth and, therefore, should be banished from the republic, he does not consider it any insult to philosophy if it is transformed into literature, realized as poetry or drama and beautified with a pleasing style and literary devices. His philosophical writings themselves became a source of inspiration to generations of poets The place of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the history of literary theory is too well-known to need any elaboration. The first one to attempt a systematic discussion of genres, his approach is that of a classical biologist. He defends the poet against Plato's charge, pointing out that the poet is an imitator and a creator, who, through a peculiar sort of imitation, discovers the ultimate form of actions His ideas have influenced criticism from the Renaissance to our own day

The Neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus in his treatise *On the Intellectual Beauty*, rejecting Plato's charge that art is twice removed from reality, observes that the beauty of the artist's creation lies not in any physical object that it copies or matter that it shapes, but in what the artist imposes on his materials His remark that "the artist himself goes back, after all, to that wisdom in nature which is embodied in himself" is a precursor of the theories of Shelley and Keats

Beauty is central to his system as he claims that the more beautiful a thing is, the closer it is to God. His emphasis on the mind and activity of the artist and on artistic wisdom foresees Romantic theories of the imagination

Still the arts are not to be slighted on the ground that they create by imitation of natural objects; for, to begin with, these natural objects are themselves imitations, then, we must recognize that they give no bare reproduction of the thing seen but go back to the reason-principles from which nature itself derives, and, furthermore, that much of their work is all their own; they are holders of beauty and add where nature is lacking. Thus Phidias wrought the Zeus upon no model among things of sense but by apprehending what form Zeus must take if he chose to become manifest to sight

Boethius, known for his learning, agrees with Plato that there is an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry and that poetry is dangerous because it feeds the passions. He is with the Church Fathers in his suspicion of art. But his allegorical representation of the conflict between philosophy and poetry in *The Consolation of Philosophy* reveals that he is not averse to the use of poetic devices:

When she (Philosophy) saw that the muses of poetry were present by my couch giving words to my lamenting, she was stirred a while; her eyes flashed fiercely as she said: "Who has suffered these seducing wammers (actors) to approach this sick man? Never have they nursed his sorrows with any remedies, but rather fostered them with poisonous sweets. These are they who stifle the fruit-bearing harvest of reason with the barren briars of the passions, they do not free the minds of men from disease but accustom them thereto. I would think it less grievous if your allurements drew away from me some common man like those of the vulgar herd, seeing that in such a one my labours would be harmed not at all. But this man has been nurtured in the lore of Eleatics and Academics (two schools of Greek philosophy). Away with you, sirens, seductive even to perdition, and leave him to my Muses to be cared for and healed!

Thus rebuked, that band cast a saddened glance upon the ground, confessing their shame in blushes, and passed forth dismally over the threshold

Boethius would be turning in his grave if he came to know that *The Consolation of Philosophy* has gained a place in literary history but is not mentioned in Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy*!

The great theologian, Saint Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica*

raises two questions—(1) Should the Holy Scripture use metaphors? (2) May a word in the Scripture have several senses? His answer to both the questions is 'yes' but he seems to believe that the fourfold interpretative system involving the literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical levels is applicable only to the Scripture. Dante extends this to secular writings also. The system is a reflection of the fundamental idea that the world itself is a symbol subject to interpretation as the work of God. In the nineteenth century the French symbolists like Baudelaire adopted this principle without its theological implications. Northrop Frye, in his theory of symbols, makes use of the terms literal, allegorical and anagogic.

Mazzoni, a philosopher of the 16th century, in his *On the Defence of the Comedy of Dante* raises a number of theoretical issues. He is particularly concerned with the differences between the credible impossible and the incredible possible, and truth and falsehood in poetry. He observes that both iconic and fantastic imitations which Plato mentions are acceptable in poems and, like Aristotle, he prefers the credible impossible or fantastic imitation to the incredible possible. He is opposed to the concept of verisimilitude and argues for the freedom of the work from canons of realism. In Mazzoni's view, the poet imitates and makes an idol, which is particular, credible and verisimilar but not necessarily true. That it may be false does not matter. What is important is the illusion that has been created. "The verisimilitude which is sought by the poets is of such a nature that it is feigned by poets according to their own will." He anticipates not only the romantic rejection of verisimilitude but also the modern theories distinguishing poetic use from scientific and other uses of language.

The influence of Kant's theory of aesthetics on later generations of literary theorists and critics is spectacular. It was he who first distinguished aesthetic judgments from teleological judgments. Since teleological judgments consider objects and their purposes they have to do with concepts and the categories. Aesthetic judgments do not consider the object with respect to an outer purpose. Aesthetic judgments are of two kinds—those of the beautiful and those of the sublime. Both of them are subjective. Feelings of pleasure and pain are distinguished from aesthetic judgments. The former are subjective and individual, while the latter, though subjective, are universal and disinterested. Each aesthetic judgment is singular. An object judged aesthetically cannot be judged in terms of an external purpose; then it would be judged logically by how well it succeeds in its purpose or conforms to some external standard. Kant contends that the aesthetic object has purposiveness without purpose, that is, internal purposiveness. The canon of accuracy implied in Plato's theory of imitation is, therefore, irrelevant to aesthetic judgment. All neoclassical external canons of beauty are of no value because they posit an external standard or purpose. In Kant's theory, the prime concern is with the internality of the work itself. Since no exterior purpose or exterior ideal of beauty is allowed, the work is supposed to generate its own standard, its own internal purposes.

Coleridge's distinction between the beautiful and the agreeable, Schiller's idea of art as play, Valéry's distinction between language as walking and language as dancing and much of the New Criticism in America are all derived from Kant.

Hegel's theory of aesthetics is an integral part of his organic philosophy. He believes that the Idea or the Absolute or Spirit is the all-inclusive infinite whole, an organic unity in which every part is dependent on every other part and on the whole itself. In *The Philosophy of Fine Art*, he observes that art must not be treated as a mere pastime in the service of pleasure and entertainment or in terms of any other ulterior purpose. It must be considered a mode, like religion and philosophy, through which the Idea is made available to consciousness. Art presents its matter in sensuous forms. The beautiful in art is the Idea carried into concrete form. There are three kinds of art—symbolic, classical and romantic. Symbolic art is similar to what many Romantic critics call allegory. It is an art in which objects represented are made to have arbitrary meanings. In classical art there is a much more appropriate relationship between Idea and embodiment. Romantic art transcends itself. Canons of appropriateness invoked with respect to symbolic and classical art are cast aside. Hegel associates architecture with symbolic art, sculpture with classical art, painting, music and poetry with romantic art. He makes his judgements on the basis of the distance each art is able to traverse in its escape from matter, mass and spatialization. Viewed in this manner, painting is more ideal than sculpture; sculpture is more ideal than architecture, music is more ideal than architecture, because in music objects are not represented and only a temporal order exists. The medium of poetry—words—is most free.

Though Hegel gives so much importance to art, he thinks that it is not the highest manifestation of the Idea since it is limited by its media and proves less satisfactory to man than religion and philosophy.

Nietzsche's account of the birth of tragedy and his examination of the value of myth have given him a place in the history of literary theory. The terms Dionysiac and Apollonian distinguish the primitive from the rational. This is how he describes the birth of Greek tragedy:

. . . art owes its continuous evolution to the Apollonian-Dionysiac duality, even as the propagation of the species depends on the duality of the sexes, their constant conflicts and periodic acts of reconciliation. . . It is by those two art-sponsoring deities, Apollo and Dionysus, that we are made to recognize the tremendous split, as regards both origins and objectives, between the plastic, Apollonian arts and the non-visual art of music inspired by Dionysus. The two creative tendencies developed alongside one another, usually in fierce opposition, each by its taunts forcing the other to more energetic production, both perpetuating in a discordant concord that

until, at last by the thaumaturgy (miracle) of a Hellenic act of will, the pair accepted the yoke of marriage and, in this condition, begot Attic tragedy, which exhibits the salient features of both parents

All the scholars and critics who later spoke about the ritual origins of Greek tragedy including Frazer, Gilbert Murray and Jane Harrison are indebted to Nietzsche

All twentieth century myth critics have only been echoing Nietzsche's view that "every culture that has lost the Dionysiac myth-making spirit has lost, by the same token, its natural, healthy creativity "

Santayana deals with the question of beauty and the nature of art in relation to the reader. He goes back to Kant for fundamental principles His observations on the nature of art recall Schiller's theory of art as play. Though the realms of aesthetics and morals are closely related, moral values are concerned with the prevention of suffering while aesthetic values have to do with the pursuit of pleasure, with play, with frivolity He feels that "to condemn spontaneous and delightful occupations because they are useless for self-preservation shows an uncritical prizing of life irrespective of its content "

Sartre attempts to describe the final goal of art in *Why Write?* He holds that the effort of art is "to recover this world by giving it to be seen as it is, but as if it had its source in human freedom " To give the world as it is reflects the attitude of phenomenologists the world is as we experience it To give the world as if it had its source in human freedom reflects the attitude of existentialists Sartre is of the view that the writer appeals to the reader and his freedom to collaborate in the production of his work He is primarily interested in the transaction between the writer and reader which is defined in terms of philosophical assumptions We do not produce the world; it is there. But we make it reveal itself, come into being. Art is a means of doing this, of enclosing the universe within man, as man collaborates with the production of a work of art By being present against a background of other things, the work of art draws those other things into its own being and becomes interpretable partly in their terms, just as they become interpretable partly in its terms There is at the same time a sense in which art is not interpretable at all and is, in fact, "a silence and an opponent of the word " This view indicates that Sartre is close to those who attack paraphrase and insist on distinguishing between poetic and other forms of discourse

(To be continued)

DR P MARUDANAYAGAM

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JUNG

JULY 26, 1975 was the centenary of the birth of C. G. Jung. Is it yet possible to make a reasoned assessment of his significance? Various circumstances combine to make this difficult. First, Jung died only in 1961, a date too close to allow historical perspective. Secondly, although Jung's "analytical psychology" has never become fashionable in the sense in which Freudian psychoanalysis became so in America, disillusion with the latter has spread to include all "depth psychologies", a swing of the pendulum which makes objective assessment tricky. Thirdly, the current preoccupation of the younger generation with Jung has tended to obscure his actual merits, for they have turned to Jung as they have turned to Zen, to transcendental meditation, or to psychedelic drugs, basing their idea of him not upon what Jung actually wrote, but upon a vague impression that he was a mystic with a predilection for Eastern religions and ESP together with unorthodox views on time and flying saucers.

In fact Jung was a creative individual with a powerful, original and unusual mind. Although his way of thinking and expressing himself is currently unfashionable and therefore seems out of line with modern research, there is little doubt that Jung will continue to occupy an honoured place in the annals of psychiatry.

Whether his ideas will live in a form attributable to their originator is less certain. Jung has been unfortunate in that some of his contributions have been taken over by others without acknowledgment, perhaps without realization of their origin. The so-called neo-Freudians, particularly, owe much to Jung, whose concept of individuation anticipated notions of "self-realization", "self-actualization", and so on; and "existentialist" analysts are similarly indebted. One reason for this lack of acknowledgment is the "paraphernalia"—a word used of Jung's writing by Jerome Bruner—in which his ideas are embedded. It takes time and patience to extract basic concepts from the Germanic jungle of his prose, and few people are prepared to tackle the collected works unless they are already disciples. Unexpectedly, Jung was a clear and fluent speaker; and the best introduction to his psychology is still the "Tavistock Lectures" which he delivered in London in 1935 (published as *Analytical Psychology: its Theory and Practice*, 1968).

When Jung started work in the Burgholzli mental hospital in Zurich in the year 1900 associationist theories of mental functioning held the field. Jung transformed the tool of word-association tests from a means of investigating contrast, contiguity, and so on, into a way of uncovering personal problems and emotional preoccupations. In using the tests in this way, Jung provided experimental support for Freud's concept of repression; for his subjects were often unaware that their hesitations in response to stimulus words revealed their inner life. It was this work which led to Jung's introduction of the word "complex" into

psychiatry. It also led to his correspondence and subsequent meeting with Freud, whose first surviving letter to Jung acknowledges the latter's paper "Psychoanalysis and Association Experiments"

This is not the place to recount the sad story of Jung's relationship and final parting with Freud, which may be followed in the recently published *Freud-Jung letters*. But, as the letters reveal, the differences between them were present from the beginning, and, although Jung for a time let his point of view be overborne by the older man, he quickly rediscovered his individuality

Since Jung's psychiatric experience, unlike that of Freud, was originally within the walls of a mental hospital, it was natural that his attention should primarily become engaged with the problem of schizophrenia. *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox* was the first major attempt to apply psychoanalytic ideas to the delusions of the insane. While some understanding of psychotic symptoms was possible in terms of the individual's personal experience, Jung soon concluded that the vicissitudes of early childhood were not enough to account for the profound disorder of schizophrenia, which he attributed in part to the effect of an as yet undiscovered toxin. But the fact that schizophrenia might in part be caused by organic factors did not prevent Jung from investigating the content and meaning of delusional systems, an attitude which might with profit be adopted by the biochemical researchers of today. What Jung discovered laid the foundation for one of his most controversial concepts: that of the "collective unconscious" Like many new ideas, this took time to reach its final form, but, with the advantage of hindsight, it is possible to summarize

First, delusional systems were explanatory devices which served to make sense out of the sufferer's experience and preserve his self-esteem. An obvious example would be the familiar type of paranoid system, which explains the individual's plight as the consequence of the machinations of others, thus relieving the sufferer from responsibility while attributing to him an undeserved importance

Secondly, delusional systems often contained material which resembled myth and to which parallels could be found in various forms of religious belief, even though the patient might never have encountered any such parallel From such observations Jung concluded that there was a myth-creating level of mind which, in both normal persons and the insane, served to make sense out of the individual's experience and to lend meaning to his existence. In later life, Jung concluded that the real cause of much mental distress was the fact that the individual had become alienated from this level of mind, with the consequence that he had lost any sense of significance in his life. In this way, Jung anticipated the point of view of the "existentialist" analysts. In a letter to Freud in 1910, discussing the possibility of joining a new ethical society, Jung wrote:

What sort of a new myth does it hand out for us to live by? Only the wise are

ethical from sheer intellectual presumption, the rest of us need the eternal truth of myth...2000 years of Christianity can only be replaced by something equivalent.

Jung's interest in the "meaning of life" problem reflected itself in the nature of his practice, which, when he had become established and famous, consisted largely of people who had already had some analysis elsewhere, who did not present conventional psychiatric symptoms, but who complained that life, for them, had become meaningless or futile. Such people were unable to feel at home with any conventional creed, but had, as it were, to create their own myth. And so Jungian analysis, instead of concentrating upon the patient's childhood, became an exploration of creative phantasy. Jung encouraged his patients to enter upon a state of reverie in which consciousness was not lost, but judgment was suspended. They were enjoined to write or paint the phantasies which came to them while in this condition, a technique which became known as "active imagination"

Jung found that not only was this beneficial in itself, as "art therapists" have later rediscovered, but that a process of psychological development could thus be started which led both to the resolution of inner conflict and to the discovery of a new meaning in existence. This process of development became known as "individuation" I have described this in my book *Jung* as "a kind of Pilgrim's Progress without a creed, aiming not at heaven, but at integration and wholeness. It was something to live by, and yet it was neither a schizophrenic delusion nor yet an orthodox faith. The end result of the process was becoming an integrated individual, a fully developed personality in one's own right" Most people did not become preoccupied with such problems until middle age, and so Jungian analysts tended to specialize in the treatment of people in the second half of life, unlike their Freudian counterparts.

I have purposely emphasized this aspect of Jungian psychology, since I believe it to be both undervalued and important. Most relatively well-adjusted people in whom there is not too wide a discrepancy between the inner world of their subjectivity and the world of external reality have no need to examine their basic assumptions; no need to recognize that they too have a "delusional system" or "myth" by which they live. However, given sufficient adversity, for example a natural disaster caused by earthquake or tornado, or the experience of living in a police state, anybody can come to feel that dislocation between subjective and objective which both compels re-examination of fundamentals and demands new, creative solutions. If anyone needs to be convinced of the existence of a level of mind which produces delusion, hallucination and myth, let them subject themselves to sensory deprivation, which will rapidly produce such manifestations in "normal" subjects. Observation of the response to drugs, reported in such studies as *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience* by R. L. Masters and J

Houston, also demonstrates that subjects produce collective, archetypal material of exactly the type described by Jung

Jung's work in this field presents two aspects which demand research. First is what one might call the content of the subjective. That is, when subjects are isolated from contact with external reality either by mental illness or by artificial means in the laboratory, how far is the psychological material they produce determined by the personal factors of their own childhood development, and how far is it "collective" in the sense implied by Jung? Judging from the monotonous similarity of much material produced by schizophrenics, a good deal could certainly be shown to be collective. Paradoxically, there is a level at which "subjective" and "collective" coincide. It is only in interaction with the external world that we demonstrate our individuality. Cut off from it, we revert to a basic level in which individual difference is largely lost.

The other aspect which demands research is the therapeutic effect of creativity. As Jung pointed out, many conflicts with which human beings are plagued are fundamentally insoluble. Yet reconciliation between the opposing aspects of our nature seems possible upon a symbolic level within the framework of religion, or of what used to be called philosophy, or art. How man uses the products of his imagination to make sense of himself as well as of the external world, and tries to bridge the gap between the two is a subject of fascinating interest towards which the psychology of Jung is implicitly pointing.

In the popular mind, Jung is probably best remembered for his "Psychological Types", his introduction of the terms "extravert" and "introvert". In spite of the appropriation of this dichotomy by the experimentalist H. J. Eysenck it seems doubtful whether this particular categorization will survive.

It seems certain that Jung's further subdivision of types into "thinking", "feeling", "sensation" and "intuition" has already had its day. But it was from his study of psychological types that one of Jung's important insights came, which I think will remain valid. Realizing that everyone is a mixture of both introvert and extravert, Jung conceived the notion that neurosis was a matter of one-sidedness, and that health consisted in a balance between extraversion and introversion, reason and emotion, and so on. Therefore, neurotic symptoms were not merely misconceived patterns of thought and behaviour which originated in childhood, as Freud supposed, but compensatory attempts of the psyche to remedy its own lack of balance. This point of view is not only fruitful in clinical practice, but fits in well with physiological and cybernetic views of the organism as a self-regulating entity.

The implications of such a view are considerable. Freud recognized that "the delusional formation which we take to be the pathological product, is in reality an attempt at recovery, a process of reconstruction", as he wrote in his paper on Schreber. But he made little use of this idea in relation to neurosis, as opposed to insanity. Had he done so, his views on creativity would have been

different, and he would have appreciated that neurotic symptoms may contain the seeds of future adaptation as well as being relicts of the past.

The eighteen volumes of the collected works of C G Jung contain much that is dubious, much that is obscure, and much that will be washed away in the current of time. But throughout this huge, congested literary corpus are nuggets of gold, insights which will not be superseded, ideas which cry out for objective confirmation, flashes of wisdom which are the product of much learning and wide experience. In addition, Jung's writings display a deep humanity and sympathy with the manifold predicaments of human beings unmatched by any other psychotherapist.

ANTHONY STORR

(With acknowledgments to *TLS*, July 25 1975, p 830)

NOLINI SARKAR

A TRIBUTE TO THE HUMORIST

1

VERY few are witnesses of events, fewer still who can be reasonable recorders of them. Nolini Kanto Sarkar was one of those who had the fortune of being both of these; and more. He even participated in eventful matters. To mark his birth-centenary, the leading Bengali magazine *Desh* gratefully remembered him in its issue of May '89 as the humorist *par excellence*. He was not a man who had made history, but he was closely associated with those who made it. To give an example: even the old Tagore obliged him after second thoughts with a poem, a precious little composition, during his last days when he was not obliging others. Likewise quite a few celebrities and great souls had a soft corner for this unassuming, likable man.

Some remember him as a singer, others as a poet, some knew him to be a nationalist, others a satirist. But to his pals he was a man of the majlis, a frivolous newsmonger albeit in a creative sense. This happy-go-lucky attitude was probably what impressed his comrades and others most. He enjoyed, during his long life of ninety years, the company of many famous men, among whom Sri Aurobindo was his guru. The outstanding poet Nazrul Islam and the singer Dilip Kumar Roy were his bosom friends. A son of Nazrul was even born in his house. Nolini Kanto was the pilot of the then popular weekly called *Bijoli*; and he may be considered as almost the founder of the *Betar Jagat*, the programme journal of Radio Calcutta.

Such a man, after having lived long, looks back on his life in the book *Asa Jabar Majhkhane*. His memory and the collection of documents are amazing. In that respect this Bengali book (in 2 volumes) will remain as a worthwhile record in the history of Bengali literature. Furthermore, one finds in it the magic of his language, a language simple but not devoid of the artistry necessary for an orderly and evocative expression. There is a directness of thought, and an element of human interest. One does not find in it the monotony of the average autobiography, nor any exaggeration or overflow of emotions. One finds in it, rather, straight and simple descriptions of various incidents of life, interspersed with humorous and touching episodes. Written mostly in a matter-of-fact way, there doesn't appear to be any endeavour to deliberately produce a literary piece. Yet it has commendable literary qualities, since he was a true pundit.

There are some notes on the revolution against the British Raj. As is well-known, the struggle for freedom in Bengal drew into its vortex numberless men of different age-groups and callings. They were quite sure about their rights, and knew that the foreign rule would not last. Some of them, like Khudiram, Prafulla

Chaki and others believed in open rebellion against the rulers. Others, like Nolini Kanto, did their mite for the movement by working underground. From his books, which are actually compilations of various articles written by him, we learn something about these happenings. These were first published serially in some Bengali magazines. He chronicles the incidents of his own life and the troubled—as well as eventful—time of this unprecedented period of our country. A reader or researcher who looks for dossiers on great men of Bengal of that period, men who inspired hundreds and thousands with their patriotic, radical and other forms of writings, would find a wealth of information in his books. They open up not only an authentic chapter on British methods of surveillance, but also some forgotten or never-known inside-stories and subaltern studies of the freedom fighters and other notable men. It is certainly autobiographical and because of its unacademic or informal way of presentation, does not perhaps occupy the historical shelf. Yet the chronological order of events carefully maintained all along cannot be missed, and is worthy of merit considering that he depended much also on memory.

His mind's grasp was wide, and he speaks about a variety of things, starting from the reactions of people about the Halley's comet when it first appeared in this century, to the debate about the excellent national anthem of India. By the way, the argument that the said anthem was written by Tagore at the request of the congressmen who wanted to celebrate the visit of George the Vth in India in 1911, is rejected outright by the chronicler who reports that the man who had actually composed the 'Welcome' song for the king was not Tagore, but one Rambhuj Datta Choudhury. The song was written in Hindi.

Nolini Sarkar does not appear to be a dreamer, nor perhaps a visionary. But even though a very practical man in general, his views, for example, about the comets could probably be only superstitions. He founds his beliefs or fears about the comets from some stray negative incidents on the national or world stage occurring during their appearance which could well have been coincidental. The age-old tag attached to the comets must have moulded his opinions about them.

Another curious entry is the issue about the origin of the word 'Akashvani'—whether it was used for the first time by Tagore who applied it to Radio Calcutta. Sarkar admits that it is still debatable and open to the researchers' scrutiny.

An interesting point is the note on how he got initiated spiritually by Sri Aurobindo when he came from Calcutta for the first time to see the Master at Pondicherry. This is perhaps a rare if not the only act of initiation by the guru which is on record by the subject himself. He describes with feeling the descent of peace which he experienced then. Sri Aurobindo had only a handful of disciples around him at that time.

Thus we see that his books of memories are rich with the materials of his colourful life. Gifted with a clear style, his works are interestingly descriptive,

quite impressive and often brim with humour. They are the writings of a matured hand. He has also included in his memoirs some lamentable anecdotes which he does not dwell upon at length, but even in the short descriptions the realism and clarity draw one's attention. The beauty and smoothness of his language impress the reader. The mind is thrilled by the sound of his healthy laughter. Yes, his speciality was frivolities, gags and gimmickry, they were part of his style, both in singing and in writing. Not that he was incapable of producing serious stuff. His short articles or vignettes on some great souls and his other chronicles are written with all the sobriety they require.

Although he is particularly remembered for his humour and humorous songs and poems, that is not all there is to his talents. He was a man of versatility. A secret agent of the revolutionaries during the Agni-Yuga of the Swadeshi movement, the editor of a well-accepted magazine, a story-teller, a teacher of music, a professor of Bengali literature, a quiz-master, satirist, biographer, friend of great personalities and, above all, a lively gossip and connoisseur, his long and eventful life is clearly full of variety. Yet surprisingly the number of books he has written is not many, just five or six.

Born on 28 September 1889 at Jagtai in Murshidabad Jilla of West Bengal, a place which is almost on the border of Bihar, he spoke, as a child, a dialect quite distinct from the urban Bengali. He learnt the proper Bengali at the school. Nikunjabehari Sarkar and Raikamalini Debi were the parents of this 'queer fish' (as Tagore found him). The only reason why the poet laureate should consider him queer will be clear from the following incident. In his early youth he got to like music, mainly vocal music. He used to go to Shantiniketan, at Bolpur, three days a week to get tutored in the Tagore School of Music from Acharya Dinendranath Thakur, who was a pundit of the genre.

One day Tagore himself proposed to him that instead of taking the trouble of regularly commuting to and fro Calcutta, he might just as well stay at Shantiniketan for some time and prepare a repertoire of five hundred songs chosen from Tagore's own compositions which were then slowly gaining recognition

—“Five hundred songs!” ejaculated Nolini babu. “What shall I do learning so many songs?” he naively asked.

—“Why, you may yourself teach these songs and earn some money,” suggested the visionary but practical-minded poet very helpfully.

But inexperienced and somewhat ignorant as he was then, Nolini Kanto would not appreciate the idea. He did not take this wise advice. Earning money by teaching songs was against his grain.

—“Just as one earns money by teaching other academic subjects, or engineering, technology, etc., like that...”

But even this explanation would not move Nolini, and he turned down the poet's offer. He should have known better. For, later on he did take to the

profession of teaching music. In his book *Hasir Antarale* he relates with some hilarity his bitter-sweet experiences in this regard. There are many broadly comical anecdotes in it.

Even though parodies and other ticklers were his forte, and some of them were published as records, his performance in patriotic and devotional numbers was none the less moving. However, his listeners mostly enjoyed those of his songs which evoked laughter. But how in the first place did he come to be known as a singer, he who refused even Tagore's good offer? Thanks to another great man, Dilip Kumar Roy. It was at the advice of Roy that he took to vocal music as a profession. Roy's suggestion came in a timely manner. Nolini Kanto was then thinking of some extra income. Dilip Roy's suggestion therefore helped him in entering the world of music. In exchange for money he visited places to teach vocal music to students, single or in group. Not coy at making public appearances, he often sang on the dais at ceremonies and festivals. These performances gradually earned for him a reputation as a singer. His accompaniment on the harmonium (mostly) or the tanpura was an added advantage.

(To be continued)

DHIRAJ BANERJEE

(Translated by the author from his own Bengali article published in *Mahila Mangal*)

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

Secrets of the Soil

*Secrets of the Soil—New Age Solutions for Restoring Our Planet**, by the famous authors Peter Tompkins & Christopher Bird is one of the most fascinating books currently available on the subject of bio-dynamic, spiritual and esoteric farming. It offers a wealth of practical knowledge and informative reporting and makes good reading even for those who are not particularly interested in agriculture. You learn a lot about Rudolf Steiner's methods as practiced by U S farmers, such as reviving depleted soil with the "preparation 500", an alchemical potion made of cow dung put into cow horns which are buried in the earth. At a later stage the black 500 is poured into three gallons of rain water. A photo shows a farmer stirring the mixture with a stick, "creating the vortex to suck cosmic and planetary forces" into the water.

In fact, there are quite a number of amazing pictures in this book to prove that the described methods actually work. Thus we see Dr Webster standing with his outstretched left arm by the side of the "tallest sweet corn on record". He would require a ladder to reach the top of the plants, since they are 4.80 m high. His method is Sonic Bloom, a technique which I had already described in the issue of September '90. It is particularly interesting to learn in the respective chapter that a "cassette, using Hindu melodies called *ragas*, suitable to an Indian ear, and apparently delightful to both bird and plant, induced stomata to imbibe more than seven times the amount of foliar-fed nutrients, and even absorb invisible water vapor in the atmosphere that exists, unseen and unfelt, in the driest of climatic conditions." Although "Hindu experiments" gave the best results, other cassettes were prepared for American farmers since many of them felt irritated by the unfamiliar melodies (which actually are very familiar now to many Western listeners). Therefore, melodies from Vivaldi and Bach were chosen. "I realized that Vivaldi, in his day, must have known all about birdsong, which he tried to imitate in his long violin passages," an expert told the authors of this book. In a way, sonic bloom is a semi-artificial method required in a world with less and less birds whose chanting seems to inspire the plants.

In a chapter titled "Tuning in to Nature" we learn about the amazing research of Dr Philip S Callahan, formerly professor of entomology at the University of Florida. He discovered "that insects are well aware of what goes on around them because they communicate on the infrared band of the electromagnetic spectrum precisely as we communicate with radar, microwave, or radio, using a variety of antennas as sophisticated as any designed by man. With

* Harper & Row (The First Perennial Library Edition) New York 1990 Pp 444, \$ 14.95

these delicate and highly sensitive instruments, and the use of infrared light, they can electronically smell out—at quite a distance—meal or mate. Obversely, by the same infrared, they can be lured to an unexpected death.” Callahan has provided a convincing explanation as to why insects attack sick plants. A number of illustrations support his claim that insects carry minute antennas allowing them a special type of communication

Inviting the authors into his laboratory, Callahan demonstrated for them “in scientific terms an overlap between physics and metaphysics, validating the wisdom of the Vedas. Into the beam of his machine [an “infrared spectrometer”], Callahan intoned the basic sound of the Hindu mantra Aum, repeating it several times. He then pointed to the computerized printout, which clearly showed the effect of his mantra in the form of a group of spikes on the graph. (..) ‘All of this,’ he said, handing us the evidence, ‘proves the extraordinary power of the mantra. The more you recite it the more it clears your body of carbon monoxide (..) As the mantra vibrates the molecules of breath, they give off heightened rays of infrared .. The more you chant the more you experience an altered state ’ ”

SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD

Dear Readers,

Times are changing. Life to us is hardly more than a rat-race, competing with robots. Who ever has the time to read? We are bothered about our bank balance. And the smaller audience the writer's pen, however auriferous it may be, succeeds in luring complain that the so-called short stories are not quite often short enough.

The belief that a short story must be "read in a single sitting" is old-fashioned and outdated. Readers who have time only for a short-short story believe that it must be "read in a single breath".

At home or in office people have a lot of other things to do. The only time they can afford to read is when they are travelling in buses, or waiting in canteens to exchange the token for a cup of tea.

Oh, what a busy world!

So the short-short story popularly known in the US as "sudden" or "microwave" fiction, is gaining vogue in many other parts of the globe too. But such a genre is not new to the world of Tamil folklore. If we tap the right source there won't be a dearth of such fiction.

The aged people, especially if they hail from villages, are full of stories, both long and short. It is a delight to listen to them. They are also overloaded with short-short tales that manage to trickle out along with their day-to-day speech. Such tales can be classified as "sudden" for they suddenly burst from the folks.

When the aged storytellers happen to step away from our world, I am sure, their "sudden" tales too will vanish along with them. And so is it not our duty to save them from oblivion's maw? No doubt, crores and crores of such uncollected "sudden" pieces of fiction can't be retrieved now. Cursed be the pen-wielders who failed to save the words of the traditionals for posterity.

But I'll not willingly let them die. And so here they are

Open Sesame:

1. LET'S MIND OUR BUSINESS

A Guru and his two devoted disciples were pilgrimaging around. They came to a temple city and decided to spend a week there.

The first disciple who, according to the Guru, was honest and clever, went to get buffalo's milk for his master.

After a few minutes' search, he came to a house where he saw someone milking a buffalo. What really attracted him was the two long horns that had grown sideways on the head of the animal.

"My God!" he exclaimed. Addressing the milkman he said: "You'll really have a tough time in getting its carcass transported out of the portals of your

house, when the buffalo is dead ”

Taken aback, the milkman hurled abusive words at him and drove him out

The second disciple who, in the words of the Guru, was sincere and wise, managed to find the milkman's house “You must pardon the fool, Sir ..the one who said something nasty about the horns of your buffalo . What if your long-horned buffalo dies? We can very easily saw its horns off its head if they refuse to pass through the narrow portals of your house That idiot, Sir, knows nothing about such useful plans. It really needs a wise man like me ..”

“Shut up,” interrupted the milkman. Calling him names, he threatened to skin the disciple alive if he continued to stand there The ‘wise man’ took to his heels.

The milkman was surprised to see a third man with a long flowing beard approach him with an empty vessel.

“Excuse the two stupid fellows who said something intolerable about the horns of your buffalo They are novices yet to learn from experience Forget about them and please give me some milk,” said the Guru.

The milkman passed on a small pot with milk filled to its brim to the Guru who thanked him profusely and said: “Forgive them for me They are foolish to the core What if your buffalo with long horns goes to its final sleep? What right have we to disfigure the animal shaped by God by sawing off its horns? If its horns stand in the way of moving it out of the house, it can very well be buried in the house itself.. It's all a matter of common sense ”

“Hei, you! Patron of idiots! what ominous words pour forth from all your mouths! You and your disciples have the devil's tail for tongues,” so saying the milkman caught him by his arm and snatched the pot of milk away.

“If you come to this side of the city again,” the milkman warned, “I'll bury you alive in my house, in this very same place ”

The Guru ran for his life

2. UNITED WE STAND

A pugilist emerging victorious in the first round itself took rest

The fingers on his right hand began to bicker about each one's superiority over the others

“Just think of a life without me, you fellows,” said the thumb “United you stand while I stand alone Yet without me you are all nothing but waste Recollect the story in the *Mahabharata*... What did Acharya Drona ask of Ekalavya? Little finger...eh! No. Not any other finger than the thumb And so who is more powerful and most desired? I. I .I ”

“So what? I'm the cleverest of the five,” said the fore-finger. “I'm the only privileged being on earth to point at others... Why! I can even do so at God I am also the only one who can accuse others You can only envy my boldness.”

“Stop it . Boast no more,” said the middle-finger. “I am taller than all of you and so I look down upon you. If you have sense, you can judge for yourself who is the greatest. Who else but me?”

The ring-finger broke into a guffaw. “Your height doesn’t spell any superiority over others... If you think that you are superior, that only shows your lack of mental maturity. People spend a fortune to make a golden ring and they trust none of you They make me the sole guardian of the golden ring. It is needless to tell you that only riches make a man great. And so among you I’m the richest Hence the greatest ”

“What are riches before god?...ephemeral before the eternal,” began the little finger. “When one prays to God saluting Him with both the hands, who actually stands face to face before God? Is it you? Or is it you? Or... Oh, it is a waste of time. I think you are not that much foolish.” Seconds later it added: “I may be small. But small is beautiful ”

While the verbal battle between the fingers was about to take a second round, the opponent of the pugilist, fuming with vengeance rushed towards him.

The pugilist who was always on the alert brought him down with just one blow. He then slumped into his chair to rest again.

The fingers, as if awakened from a slumber, looked at one another For the first time they realised that without the support of the one to the other, they were nothing more than a bundle of bones and flesh.

As realised beings they continued to live in harmony forever

3. WHO IS POWERFUL?

Once an invalid who made a living by begging from door to door, stood at the entrance of a house and cringed for alms

“Oh, mother, have pity on me, a cursed being, give me some food. God will bless you and your family.”

The mother-in-law who stood on the open terrace of the house, enjoying the cool breeze, heard the cry of the beggar. But she neither bothered to climb down the stairs nor opened her mouth to bid the beggar go away. She simply leaned on the parapet and looked over the street.

A minute passed.

Finding no one answering his call, the invalid repeated his words.

Out came a young woman. She looked mercifully at the invalid and said, ‘You have come at the wrong hour. I have no food to offer you now Go and seek in one of the neighbouring houses. . Perhaps next time, I may be able to give you some food.’”

The invalid scratching his head began to move.

The mother-in-law who was listening to the words of the young woman began to fume with anger. Hence she cried a halt to the beggar

The beggar stood looking up at the woman.

“What do you want? And why are you going away?” she asked.

“I came begging for alms And I am not offered anything. Hence I am going away.” replied the beggar.

“You should have asked me I am all-powerful here in this house. Without my permission nothing can move out of this house.. Stand where you are . I’ll be there in another second,” so saying the mother-in-law began climbing down the stairs

The beggar beamed with joy. He began to dream of some good food. With great expectations he awaited the arrival of the elderly lady.

In a few seconds the mother-in-law came to the threshold. Assuming a bossy stance she asked the invalid, “What do you want?”

The beggar was taken aback. He stood silent and after some time managed to mumble out, “Food. I asked for food ”

“Food!” yelled she. In an assertive tone she said: “You have come at the wrong hour .. Go and seek in the neighbouring house .. And when you come next, never ask my daughter-in-law. Ask me.”

The beggar looked askance at the elderly lady and moved away He decided never to beg from that house.

P RAJA

(More Tales to follow)

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventieth Seminar

21 April 1991

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

Integral Yoga and Buddhism (2)

Speech by Nandini Guthi

(Continued from the issue of December 1991)

I HAVE explained very briefly the fundamental tenets of Buddhistic philosophy as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo. Now, I shall try to compare them with the basic concepts of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Philosophy to show the important points of similarity and difference between them

First, I shall compare Buddha's view of the world and of the individual within it with Sri Aurobindo's view of them. According to Buddha, as I have already mentioned, both the world and the individual are only phenomenal processes fictitiously composed of *samskāras* with no permanent real self of their own. Life in the world is inevitably characterised by evanescence and suffering and the only way of deliverance from it is to dissolve it and to escape into Nirvana which is a state of supracosmic transcendent Permanence and not of a Nihil or Void as a later school of Buddhism maintains.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, the world or the universe is neither an illusion with only a static Self beyond it (as in Shankara's Advaitism), nor merely an impermanent phenomenal fiction without a real Self (as in Buddhism) but a real manifestation of the Supreme Self or Reality which is its source and support and which embraces and inhabits it as an all-pervading immanent Presence. The Supreme Reality or the Absolute, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not merely a pure, timeless, spaceless, formless and featureless static Existence (Sat) but also an infinite and eternal Consciousness-Force (Chit-Shakti) which by its creative power of Supermind manifests the universe in time and space and in multiple forms. Since the universe is thus a manifestation of the Consciousness-Force of the Supreme Reality, it is itself real and not either an illusion or an impermanent fiction. It is the same timeless Eternal rendered in time, the same spaceless Infinite expressed in space, the same formless and featureless reality revealing its

forms and features by its own inherent power. This is the fundamental affirmation of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy which he has termed realistic Adwaita or Integral Realism, as contrasted to Shankara's and Buddha's views which attribute reality only to the supracosmic Transcendent and deny it to the universe and the individual existence within it. As Sri Aurobindo has clearly explained:

“There is possible a realistic as well as an illusionist Adwaita. The philosophy of *The Life Divine* is such a realistic Adwaita. The world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore is itself real. The reality is the infinite and eternal Divine, infinite and eternal Being, Consciousness-Force and Bliss. This Divine by his power has created the world or rather manifested it in his own infinite Being. That is the central idea in the explanation of the universe put forward in *The Life Divine*”¹

In the same way Sri Aurobindo does not deny reality to the individual as the Buddhists do by considering it to be merely a fictitious formation of a bundle of *samskāras* which has no real self or soul and which has to be dissolved to attain liberation. The ego, of course, is a transitory formation of ignorant Nature and has therefore to be dissolved, but the true self of the individual is not the limited and separative ego but the Jivatman, which is an eternal portion of the Supreme. In Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, therefore, the extinction of the ego is not the extinction of individual self but the substitution of the ego-self by the true spiritual self of the individual. As He himself explains:

“But what do we mean by the individual? What we usually call by that name is a natural ego, a device of Nature which holds together its action in the mind and body. This ego has to be extinguished, otherwise there is no complete liberation possible; but the individual self or soul is not this ego. The individual soul is the spiritual being which is sometimes described as an eternal portion of the Divine, but can also be described as the Divine himself supporting his manifestation as the Many. This is the true spiritual individual which appears in its complete truth when we get rid of the ego and our false separative sense of individuality, realise our oneness with the transcendent and the cosmic Divine and with all beings. It is this which makes possible the Divine Life. Nirvana is a step towards it; the disappearance of the false separative individuality is a necessary condition for our realising and living in our true eternal being, living divinely in the Divine. But this we can do in the world and in life.”²

Thus, in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Philosophy both the world and the

¹ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 44

² *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7

individual are neither illusions nor phenomenal fictions but eternal manifestations of the Supreme Self or Reality and therefore themselves real. This is the basic difference between his Integral Philosophy and the philosophies of Shankara and Buddha. However, he does not deny altogether the truth of their standpoints. Rather he admits their partial and limited truths and, admitting them in his integral scheme, gives them their right and proper place in it.

In his yogic system also Sri Aurobindo admits the experience of Nirvana as a step towards the complete highest realisation. As he clearly says:

“ . for this Yoga (it might also be added, in the natural complete order of manifestation) the experience of Nirvana can only be a stage or a passage to the complete realisation.”¹

The same point he states again

“In our yoga the Nirvana is the beginning of the higher Truth, as it is a passage from the Ignorance to the higher Truth. The Ignorance has to be extinguished in order that the Truth may manifest.”²

The core of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga consists in its evolutionary view which includes not only a liberation or escape from the lower cosmic Ignorance by an ascent into the free and pure supreme Spirit but also a descent of the highest Truth-Power of that Spirit down into Mind and Life and the deepest inconscience of Matter so as to transform them and create a Divine Life upon earth. Neither Buddhism nor Shankara's Advaitism, nor even Tantra nor Gita, admit the truth of any higher evolution beyond mind which can transform and make our human life upon earth divinely perfect. The Eightfold Path of Buddha can purify and prepare human life for liberation in Nirvana but it cannot transform human life as envisaged in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

I conclude my speech by reading a passage from a letter of Sri Aurobindo in which he has very succinctly stated his evolutionary view because it is the most significant difference between his Integral Yoga and all other spiritual paths which do not admit any higher evolution but only liberation in the pure Spirit.

“In my explanation of the universe I have put forward this cardinal fact of a spiritual evolution as the meaning of our existence here. It is a series of ascents from the physical being and consciousness to the vital, the being dominated by the life-self, thence to the mental being realised in the fully developed man and thence into the perfect consciousness which is beyond the mental, into the supramental Consciousness which is the integral consciousness of the spiritual

¹ *Ibid* p 59

² *Ibid*

being Mind cannot be our last conscious expression because mind is fundamentally an ignorance seeking for knowledge; it is only the supramental Truth-Consciousness that can bring us the true and whole Self-Knowledge and world-Knowledge. It is through that only that we can get to our true being and the fulfilment of our spiritual evolution ”¹

(Concluded)

¹ *Ibid* p 47