

MOTHER INDIA

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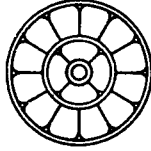
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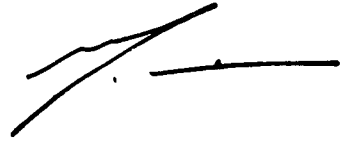
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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KARMA AND GRACE

FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER

You have said that we are "tied to the chain of Karma", but then sometimes when the Divine Grace acts, that contradicts .

COMPLETELY, the Divine Grace completely contradicts Karma, you know, It makes it melt away like butter that's put in the sun.

That is what I was saying just now. What you have just told me is another way of speaking. I was putting myself in your place and asking: There you are, if you have an aspiration that's sincere enough or a prayer that's intense enough, you can bring down in you Something that will change everything, everything—truly it changes everything. An example may be given that is extremely limited, very small, but which makes you understand things very well: a stone falls quite mechanically, say, a tile falls, if it gets loose, it will fall, won't it? But if there comes, for example, a vital or mental determinism from someone who passes by and does not want it to fall and puts his hand out, it will fall on his hand, but it will not fall on the ground. So he has changed the destiny of this stone or tile. It is another determinism that has come in, and instead of the stone falling on the head of someone, it falls upon the hand and it will not kill anybody. This is an intervention from another plane, from a conscious will that enters into the more or less unconscious mechanism.

So the consequences of Karma are not rigorous?

No, not at all. In all religions there are people who have said that, who have given such absolute rules, but I believe it was in order to substitute themselves for Nature and pull the strings. There is always this kind of instinct that wants to take the place of Nature and pull the strings of people. So they are told: "There is an absolute consequence of all that you do. ." It is a concept necessary at a given moment of evolution to prevent people from being in a completely unconscious egoism, in a total unconsciousness of the consequences of what they do. There is no lack of people who are still like that, I believe it is the majority; they follow their impulses and do not even ask themselves whether what they have done is going to have any consequences for them and for others. So it is good that someone tells you straight, with a severe look. "Take care, that has consequences which will last for a very long time!" And then there are others who come and tell you. "You will pay for it in another life ." That, however, is one of those fantastic stories. But it does not matter. this also can be for the good of people. There are other religions which tell you: "Oh! If you commit that sin, you will go to hell for eternity ." You can imagine! . So people have

such a fright that it stops them a little, it gives them just a moment for reflection before obeying an impulse—and not always; sometimes the reflection comes afterwards, a little late.

It is not absolute. These are still mental constructions, more or less sincere, which cut things into small bits like that, quite neatly cut, and tell you “Do this or do that. If it is not this, it will be that ” Oh! what a nuisance is this kind of life. And so people go mad, they are frightened! “Is it like that or rather this?” And they want it to be neither this nor that, what should they do?—They have only to climb to a higher storey. They must be given the key to open the door. There is a door to the staircase, a key is needed. The key, as I told you just now, is the sufficiently sincere aspiration or the sufficiently intense prayer. I said “or”, but I do not think it is “or”. There are people who like one better and others the other. But in both there is a magical power, you must know how to make use of it.

There is something very beautiful in both, I shall speak to you about it one day, I shall tell you what there is in aspiration and what in prayer and why both of them are beautiful. . Some dislike prayer; if they entered deep into their heart, they would find it was pride—worse than that, vanity. And then there are those who have no aspiration, they try and they cannot aspire, it is because they do not have the flame of the will, it is because they do not have the flame of humility.

Both are needed. There must be a very great humility and a very great will to change one’s Karma.

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 5, pp 91-93)

MISTAKES, KARMA AND DIVINE GRACE

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

So long as one repeats one’s mistakes, nothing can be abolished, for one recreates it every minute. When someone makes a mistake, serious or not, this mistake has its consequences in his life, a “Karma” which must be exhausted, but the Divine Grace, if one calls It, has the power of cutting off the consequences; but for that it is necessary that the fault is not repeated. One shouldn’t think one can continue to commit the same stupidities indefinitely and that indefinitely the Grace will cancel all the consequences, it does not happen like that! The past may be completely purified, cleansed, to the point of having no effect on the future, but on condition that one doesn’t remake it into a perpetual present; it is necessary that you yourself stop the wrong vibration in yourself, that you do not reproduce indefinitely the same vibration.

(1961)

THE AVATAR AND THE PURPOSE OF AVATARHOOD

SOME LETTERS BY SRI AUROBINDO

AN Avatar, roughly speaking, is one who is conscious of the presence and power of the Divine born in him or descended into him and governing from within his will and life and action; he feels identified inwardly with this divine power and presence.

A Vibhuti is supposed to embody some power of the Divine and is enabled by it to act with great force in the world, but that is all that is necessary to make him a Vibhuti: the power may be very great, but the consciousness is not that of an inborn or indwelling Divinity. This is the distinction we can gather from the Gita which is the main authority on this subject. If we follow this distinction, we can confidently say from what is related of them that Rama and Krishna can be accepted as Avatars; Buddha figures as such although with a more impersonal consciousness of the Power within him. Ramakrishna voiced the same consciousness when he spoke of Him who was Rama and who was Krishna being within him. But Chaitanya's case is peculiar, for according to the accounts he ordinarily felt and declared himself a bhakta of Krishna and nothing more, but in great moments he manifested Krishna, grew luminous in mind and body and was Krishna himself and spoke and acted as the Lord. His contemporaries saw in him an Avatar of Krishna, a manifestation of the Divine Love.

Shankara and Vivekananda were certainly Vibhutis; they cannot be reckoned as more, though as Vibhutis they were very great.

*

It was not my intention to question in any degree Chaitanya's position as an Avatar of Krishna and the Divine Love. That character of the manifestation appears very clearly from all the accounts about him and even, if what is related about the appearance of Krishna in him from time to time is accepted, these outbursts of the splendour of the Divine Being are among the most remarkable in the story of the Avatar. As for Sri Ramakrishna, the manifestation in him was not so intense but more many-sided and fortunately there can be no doubt about the authenticity of the details of his talk and action since they have been recorded from day to day by so competent an observer as Mahendranath Gupta. I would not care to enter into any comparison as between these two great spiritual personalities both exercised an extraordinary influence and did something supreme in their own sphere.

*

He [Ramakrishna] never wrote an autobiography—what he said was in conversation with his disciples and others. He was certainly quite as much an Avatar as Christ or Chaitanya.

*

Mahomed would himself have rejected the idea of being an Avatar, so we have to regard him only as the prophet, the instrument, the Vibhuti. Christ realised himself as the Son who is one with the Father—he must therefore be an *amśāvatāra*, a partial incarnation.

II

There are two sides of the phenomenon of Avatarhood, the Divine Consciousness and the instrumental personality. The Divine Consciousness is omnipotent but it has put forth the instrumental personality in Nature under the conditions of Nature and it uses it according to the rules of the game—though also sometimes to change the rules of the game. If Avatarhood is only a flashing miracle, then I have no use for it. If it is a coherent part of the arrangement of the omnipotent Divine in Nature, then I can understand and accept it.

*

I have said that the Avatar is one who comes to open the Way for humanity to a higher consciousness—if nobody can follow the Way, then either our conception of the thing, which is also that of Christ and Krishna and Buddha also, is all wrong or the whole life and action of the Avatar is quite futile. X seems to say that there is no way and no possibility of following, that the struggles and sufferings of the Avatar are unreal and all humbug,—there is no possibility of struggle for one who represents the Divine. Such a conception makes nonsense of the whole idea of Avatarhood; there is then no reason in it, no necessity in it, no meaning in it. The Divine being all-powerful can lift people up without bothering to come down on earth. It is only if it is a part of the world-arrangement that he should take upon himself the burden of humanity and open the Way that Avatarhood has any meaning.

*

The Avatar is not supposed to act in a non-human way—he takes up human action and uses human methods with the human consciousness in front and the Divine behind. If he did not his taking a human body would have no meaning

and would be of no use to anybody. He could just as well have stayed above and done things from there.

*

As for the Divine and the human, that also is a mind-made difficulty. The Divine is there in the human, and the human fulfilling and exceeding its highest aspirations and tendencies becomes the Divine. That is what your depression could not understand—that when the Divine descends, he takes upon himself the burden of humanity in order to exceed it—he becomes human in order to show humanity how to become Divine. But that cannot be if there is only a weakling without any divine Presence within or divine Force behind him—he has to be strong in order to put his strength into all who are willing to receive it. There is therefore in him a double element—human in front, Divine behind—and it is that which gives the impression of unfathomableness of which you complained. If you look upon the human alone, looking with the external eye only and not willing or ready to see anything else, you will see a human being only—if you look for the Divine, you will find the Divine.

*

It is true that it is impossible for the limited human reason to judge the way or purpose of the Divine,—which is the way of the Infinite dealing with the finite.

*

It is not by your mind that you can hope to understand the Divine and its action, but by the growth of a true and divine consciousness within you. If the Divine were to unveil and reveal itself in all its glory, the mind might feel a Presence, but it would not understand its action or its nature. It is in the measure of your own realisation and by the birth and growth of that greater consciousness in yourself that you will see the Divine and understand its action even behind its terrestrial disguises.

*

An Avatar or Vibhuti have the knowledge that is necessary for their work, they need not have more. There was absolutely no reason why Buddha should know what was going on in Rome. An Avatar even does not manifest all the Divine omniscience and omnipotence, he has not come for any such unnecessary display; all that is behind him but not in the front of his consciousness. As for the Vibhuti, the Vibhuti need not even know that he is a power of the Divine. Some

Vibhuti like Julius Caesar for instance have been atheists Buddha himself did not believe in a personal God, only in some impersonal and indescribable Permanent

*

Men's way of doing things well is through a clear mental connection, they see things and do things with the mind and what they want is a mental and human perfection When they think of a manifestation of Divinity, they think it must be an extraordinary perfection in doing ordinary human things—an extraordinary business faculty, political, poetic or artistic faculty, an accurate memory, not making mistakes, not undergoing any defeat or failure Or else they think of things which they call superhuman like not eating food or telling cotton-futures or sleeping on nails or eating them. All that has nothing to do with manifesting the Divine . These human ideas are false

The Divinity acts according to another consciousness, the consciousness of the Truth above and the Lila below and It acts according to the need of the Lila, not according to man's ideas of what It should or should not do This is the first thing one must grasp, otherwise one can understand nothing about the manifestation of the Divine

*

If the Divine were not in essence omnipotent, he could not be omnipotent anywhere—whether in the supramental or anywhere else Because he chooses to limit or determine his action by conditions, it does not make him less omnipotent His self-limitation is itself an act of omnipotence ...

Why should the Divine be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and serves better the ultimate purpose? What rigid primitive notions are these about the Divine!

Certain conditions have been established for the game and so long as those conditions remain unchanged certain things are not done,—so we say they are impossible, can't be done If the conditions are changed then the same things are done or at least become licit—allowable, legal according to the so-called laws of Nature, and then we say they can be done. The Divine also acts according to the conditions of the game He may change them, but he has to change them first, not proceed, while maintaining the conditions, to act by a series of miracles.

(All excerpts are from Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 22, pp 406-411)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

WHAT you write about Sri Aurobindo's poem, "The Death of a God" (p. 598 of *Collected Poems*), calls for serious consideration. You say.

"Am I allowed to ask from you a 'Clear Ray' ('Amal Kiran') to bring some light into a dull corner of my heart? See, every time I read 'The Death of God' I cannot avoid the feeling of listening to the voice of someone who is not only recognising his own defeat but even his own giving up the fight. Of course, I know that all this is by nature strange to Sri Aurobindo, but I fail to find in the poem something deeper, even something different. When did Sri Aurobindo write this piece full of pain and greyness in which one misses so much his natural joy and azure? What kind of tremendous crisis was he going through when he wrote it? And, finally, what does it mean? Is it the song of the hopelessness of this earth 'abandoned in the hollow gulfs' . . . for ever? Your Ray will be really a remedy for this broken corner of my heart."

The suggestions you are prompted to read in the poem appear to be most unlikely, if at all ever possible, at the date at which it was composed. As far as I can make out, the time was somewhere in the late 'thirties or early 'forties when the veriest shadow of failure seemed out of the question. Here I think we have to bear in mind that poetry—even lyrical poetry—can be "dramatic", the working out of a theme without any implication for the author's life. Of course, the way the theme is worked out depends on the author's temperament and style of imagination: they determine what particular note is stressed. Somebody wanted to trace biographical details in the love-poems in Sri Aurobindo's earliest collection, *Songs to Myrtilla*, which contained compositions during his stay in England. The love-poems mention two specific girl-names: "Edith" and "Estelle". But he remarked that a poet does not write always from his life-experience: his imagination can act creatively. In fact, even poems based on actual occasions have a play of the imagination taking the theme further in significance or adding new particulars to complete the posture of reality. I recollect that I myself, while looking at some of these early poems in the course of my first article on Sri Aurobindo's poetical work, "Sri Aurobindo—the Poet", read in two or three pieces the poet's depression and sense of frustration. Sri Aurobindo pulled me up, warning me against believing that everything a poet writes points to his own life-situation instead of a state it took his fancy to conjure and develop and express. The expression should not be regarded as "false". To avoid "falseness" in poetry, one requires not truth of personal experience but what may be termed "artistic sincerity". The imagination may be aroused by something happening yet not necessarily to the writer himself. "Artistic sincerity" consists in putting one's mind sympathetically in tune with

the theme in hand and drawing upon one's inner intuitive self who is in touch with the sources of inspiration so that the theme is treated with the right rhythmic response of vision and feeling and thought, which gathers what I may call associative lights on the subject. The archetypal practitioner of such sincerity is Shakespeare the "myriad-minded" dramatist, the creator *par excellence* of varied character and mood and attitude and circumstance by an ever alert sensitive imagination. Sri Aurobindo himself has been an able playwright with at least three productions which rank rather high in their own genres: the richly dynamic *Perseus the Deliverer*, the many-shaded complex of romance and comedy that is *The Viziers of Bassora* and the psychologically subtle *Eric* with its shifting interaction of hidden motives.

So it is possible that Sri Aurobindo was not writing prophetically in "The Death of a God"—or, if any streak of prophecy was there, it bore only on what *might* take place in a certain context of world-conditions. I believe that this poem is an intense dramatic creation in three vivid stanzas. Balancing it but with a more real life-contact and personal immediacy is "A Strong Son of Lightning" (p. 595 of *Collected Poems*) with again three stanzas. Here is an exultant and not a despondent picture. A play not exactly of despondency but of a painful fortitude answering to an actual life-situation is to be seen in the sonnet "In the Battle" which ends

All around me now the Titan forces press,
This world is theirs, they hold its days in fee,
I am full of wounds and the fight merciless
Is it not yet Thy hour of victory?

Even as Thou wilt! What still to Fate Thou owest,
O Ancient of the worlds, Thou knowest, Thou knowest

A corresponding statement of experience faces us in part of "A God's Labour":

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
And the Titan kings assail,
But I cannot rest till my task is done
And wrought the eternal will

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!
"Thy hope is Chimera's head
Painting the sky with its fiery stain,
Thou shalt fall and thy work lie dead"

But the god is there in my mortal breast
Who wrestles with error and fate

And tramples a road through mire and waste
For the nameless Immaculate

The last four lines remind us of the sonnet “The Pilgrim of the Night”, whose beginning and ending run:

I made an assignation with the Night;
In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous.
In my breast carrying God's deathless light
I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo .

I walk by the chill wave through the dull slime
And still that weary journeying knows no end;
Lost is the lustrous godhead beyond Time,
There comes no voice of the celestial Friend,
And yet I know my footprints' track shall be
A pathway towards Immortality.

In this sonnet and in “A God's Labour” the note of hope is struck in spite of the difficulties envisaged. Though in the latter there is the hint that the labouring God's work would fail if death occurred, this bit of wishful thinking by the hostile forces is not openly accepted and we get the impression that anyhow the task undertaken will be fulfilled: physical death need not bar the final victory, but the expectation is that after a little while—“a little more”—“the new life” will be initiated. Nowhere except in “The Death of a God” is the prospect of failure entertained

The poem which the Mother declared to be “very sad” is “Is This the End?”, written on 3 6 1945. Barring “Silence is All”, which is dated 14.1.1946, this is the last short piece from Sri Aurobindo's pen, which is securely dated. The sonnet “The Inner Fields” is given a later date—14.3 1947—but there is a question-mark against these figures. Why did the Mother call “Is This the End?” an expression of sadness? No doubt, up to stanza 6, everything is said to terminate—even the finest and most lovable features of life dissolve. Then in this stanza comes the culminating point:

One in the mind who planned and willed and thought,
Worked to reshape earth's fate,
One in the heart who loved and yearned and hoped,
Does he too end?

The next two stanzas which take up the question are somewhat of a paradox:

The Immortal in the mortal is his Name;
 An artist Godhead here
 Ever remoulds himself in diviner shapes,
 Unwilling to cease

Till all is done for which the stars were made,
 Till the heart discovers God
 And the soul knows itself And even then
 There is no end

What is the exact import of the concluding phrase? Evidently, for “The Immortal”, there can be no termination. And the word “cease” in line 4 cannot mean the “end” bemoaned in the preceding five stanzas. It has the sense of “stop” And here the implication is that this “artist Godhead” will achieve his aim—the aim “for which the stars were made”, namely, the heart’s discovery of God and the soul’s knowledge of itself, and as a result there will be an “end” but on a note of triumph and not with a cry of despair So we have a paradox in the theme of ending. However, a further shade unfolds in the concluding phrase. The very paradox is turned topsy-turvy The spiritual achievement spoken of as a consummating and not a frustrating end is now denied Can we read sadness here as if a sense of still further labour were conveyed like a regret—like a lament that still more and more light has to be toiled after? I am inclined to read exultation—Sri Aurobindo laughing at the old compelled terminations and victoriously declaring that “the Immortal in the mortal” is not bound to halt anywhere—not even where the apparent goal of the cosmic scheme has been reached: peak beyond peak shines out for a further manifesto of mastery,

For the Divine is no fixed paradise
 But truth beyond great truth,

as Amal Kiran says in a sonnet

I hope you are not tired out by my own endless-seeming reflections apropos of your remarks on “The Death of a God” Looking at the theme of the Divine’s disappearance in this poem and at the theme of

Light was born in a womb and thunder’s force filled a human
 frame,

which animates “A Strong Son of Lightning”, I am tempted to quote a little piece of mine which is not in any grand style yet has a quality of its own and is relevant to the subject of a divine being’s advent and departure It weaves both the events into one whole of spiritual effectiveness Here it is:

A SON OF GOD

From heaven you came—
 Your soul a word
 Of airy flame,
 As though the white
 Wings of a bird
 No man had seen brought rumour of strange light.

Mortal you went,
 Your passage grew
 Within life's veil a rent
 Where suddenly broke
 The gold sun through—
 And out of every heart a god awoke! (5 8 1937)

Sri Aurobindo's comment was: "An admirable poem with a very strong point or double point of significance." (9.2 1991)

On August 8 when a friend who had wheelchaired me to the beach-road was bringing me back home at about 6.30 p m., we narrowly escaped a very serious accident. True, we were on the wrong side of the road, but that need not implicate us justifiably in a miśhap. Besides, we were very close to the kerb and therefore comparatively safe. A taxi came from the opposite direction and seemed to bear down upon us. Just by a hair's breadth it missed us. It went past almost grazing my wheelchair. My friend shouted and the car stopped a few yards behind us. He rushed to the driver and caught him by the arm. In the meantime several people, including some Ashramites, rushed to the spot. I turned my wheelchair round to see what was going on. A man came out of the car and said to me a number of times, "Excuse us," and shook my hand. I said, "All right."

If the taxi had not narrowly missed me, it would have caught me in an absolutely defenceless position. What chance had a wheelchair against a moving car? The wheelchair would have been violently knocked off and I with it. My friend too would have been flung away. I, because of my inability to move and instinctively manoeuvre as would an able-bodied person, would have been helplessly thrown down or aside with sufficient force to break my limbs and possibly kill me. Both my friend and I would have had to be hospitalised. The only good feature of the situation was that the Ashram Nursing Home was close by on the other side of the road.

One of the Ashramites who had rushed to our help said to me the next day

that he had witnessed the whole affair and surely it was the Mother's Grace that had made the car miss me by the fraction of an inch. No doubt he is right, but I have been asking myself why the terrible danger had at all come about and what might be the condition under which the Grace worked so successfully. Two points have struck me.

One is a strange soliloquy I had in the course of that very day. I had said to myself "Inner things are not moving to my satisfaction. I am not able to give myself to the Divine as much as I would wish. What then is the use of hanging on to life? Better to pass away than prolong an inadequate sadhana." The discontent was deep. But after a minute or two something within told me "Carry on in whatever way is possible. The inner flame will shoot up as before. In the meantime occupy yourself with various side-interests. Are you sure you are in a state of lack? Be humble. Do not scorn small mercies. What you term 'small mercies' may be torrential downpours for others. Let no form of death-wish persist." I replied to the voice. "I agree. I want to go on living."

What took place the same day in the evening seems to be a play of the opposite forces of death and life. The strong negative element in my consciousness gave a chance to such circumstances as would put me in deadly peril. But the positive end to the soliloquy appears to have been responsible for the narrow escape. It created the condition for the Mother's power to act in the nick of time.

My introspection has laid bare another factor too which would make for that power's spectacular success. I remembered that I was completely calm in the face of the danger. Not the slightest tremor was there. With unperturbed eyes I watched the car about to bear down on me and in the fraction of an instant miss me by a sort of miracle. Against the rushing monster was pitted a mass of utter peace. Even the flicker of an idea that there was going to be an accident was not present. I did not consciously appeal to the Divine for help, but I know that at all times something deep down in me is always open and the presence of the Divine is never far. Of course, in spite of the luminous proximity in some degree or other, one's spells of outer unconsciousness could let in the harmful agencies. That is why I had my femur-fracture on October 15 last year and yet under the peculiar circumstance that the ill-luck came at an hour when immediate assistance could be had. The friend who was coming every day to look after me, help me in my work and manage my food was on the spot. There could not have been a more auspicious time for the ill-omened event! Simultaneously with my failure to keep my wits about me was the action of the Grace. But now on August 8, though a wrong condition during the morning gave ground to the Hostile Forces to attack, there was along with the morning's ultimate stand against them the most naturally co-operative condition—absolute tranquillity—under which the Mother's protection could have most effect.

Perhaps a stricter analysis of the event would conclude that the actual prevention of the accident was due to the total peace. The positive attitude at the

end of the morning's soliloquy could not have prevented the accident it could only have ensured that the accident would not prove fatal. I would certainly live but with some damage—probably a good deal of it because of the heavy odds against me. At most we might say that the positive attitude helped the total peace to be so entirely an instrument of the Mother's saviour action.

I have always felt that peace is also a secret power, a silent incognito pressure on things. Furthermore, it could be a wide receptor, an unmoving holder and a smooth transmitter of the Divine's descending riches of light, knowledge, bliss, love and that charming omnipotence we call Grace.

(11 8 1992)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

HOUSE OF GRACE

CAN you hide your love
 From my tiny bosom
 That heaves for the wonder of your delight?
 Will you explain
 Your eluding the searchlight
 Of my questing self in grim night?
 Still a better fonder,
 A greater concealer I do not know.
 Maybe I have not yet
 Digested all the fire and gall,
 Not yet worked in the filthiest pit!
 I know not where to knock,
 For wall-less is your mystery-charged
 House of Grace, sky-wide and insistent,
 It is all open, vibrant with
 A seemingly ancient yet all-too-known
 Formless Presence, brimming with bliss-charm

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1992)

The Mother's Message

This is the
interesting story of
how a being discovered
the Divine Life



DAYS passed rapidly.

I sent to the Mother one of my paintings. She commented on 28 February 1961:

“Huta, my dear little child,

This painting is so nice—I like it very much.

I have started revising your ‘report’ and will give it when it is completed.

I read your letter and *understand* not only what you mean but also what you want.

With all my love and blessings.”

*

On 29 May 1961 I tried to paint a face—I left the half-done work and went to another room to fetch something.

One of my elder sister's sons who had come to Pondicherry to stay downstairs with Laljibhai and his family during his vacation was in my studio. In a split second he ruined the painting by applying black pigment on the upper lip to show a moustache and disappeared

I felt terribly bad. Now nothing could be done despite my trying to alter the picture. But late at night a powerful inspiration came like a streak of lightning. I rushed to my easel, concentrated and re-did the face on which I had been working earlier.

The following morning I sent the picture along with my note:

“My dearest Mother,

I wished to paint something beautiful but this picture I am sending has turned out otherwise.”

Her prompt answer ran:

“Well! I do not know what you wished to do, but I know what *you have done*—it is simply exquisite, charm itself and so attractive! There is here a very *real progress* that opens lots of possibilities for the future

With love.

Bravo!”

When the Mother and I met in the afternoon in her dressing room, her eyes were aglow with delight. She said with a smile:

“This morning as soon as I opened the box you had sent me with the painting, I saw the same white Divine Flame which I had seen last night and at once I knew what It exactly was.

You see, late last night I saw a light in your studio from my window, I was worried and wondered—whether you were all right. Meanwhile I was amazed to see the white Divine Flame around you, and I was much relieved, because you were safe in Its Presence.”

She also told me something about the new birth, which I failed to grasp. So

on 31st May 1961 I requested her to enlighten me regarding the matter She wrote:

“My dear little child Huta,
I shall see you on 5th June at 10 a m. When I speak of new birth I am always speaking of the birth of a New Consciousness This time it was the birth (that is the expression) of a *higher artistic consciousness*
With love and blessings.”

That night I pondered over the Mother’s letter My memory rolled back to the year 1956 when the Mother had begun to teach me painting from scratch During that period she had said.

“Here you must remember that the growth of consciousness is indispensable for your painting, because what you learn from books or from professors is useless—you have to get into the higher, true artistic consciousness ”

Later the Mother got the very painting blocked and printed She gave the significance

“Soul of Beauty ”

About her way with paintings the Mother told me on 21st January 1957

“I enter into their consciousness and find out their meanings, the truth and beauty behind each painting

Some paintings are indeed very nice to look at—they have pretty and gorgeous colours, but when there are no living vibrations and deep harmony then obviously the paintings are lifeless and without value But where there is a combination of the two—outward charm and inner vision—then they are real and can be considered as true art

In your paintings I have felt the living vibrations and that is very good ”

She added:

“A true artist never speaks of what he has done. ‘Oh! I have done a nice painting!’ Instead he thinks and says, ‘Oh! no I could not do it nicely, it is not what I wanted to do ’

“In fact, he is never satisfied with his work and he continues his effort until he paints masterpieces An artist puts the full power of his aspiration in his work to reach perfection.”

Not only was the Mother teaching me painting but also giving me lessons of life: how to be modest and persistent in my endeavour to reach perfection and develop into a true artist

None can beat the Mother's vision, conception and opinion. A pointer to her being and her ways may be found in *Savitri* Bk 4, C. I, p 406:

“And from her eyes she cast another look
On all around her than man's ignorant view.
All objects were to her shapes of living selves
And she perceived a message from her kin
In each awakening touch of outward things ”

*

On the morning of 7th February the Mother reassured me:

“I have received your nice letter

Yes, we are going towards painting that will be able to express the Supramental Truth of things

My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are always with you.”

In the evening she explained to me:

“I want you to do something new. You must try to do the *Future Painting* in the New Light.

There is a reason why I always ask you to paint mostly on a white background. It is an attempt to express the Divine Light without shadow in the *Future Painting*. But everything will come in its own time.

In the *Future Painting*, you must not copy blindly the outer appearance without the inner vision. *Never* let people's ideas influence your mind and impose their advice about the *Future Painting*. Do not try to adopt the technique either of modern art or of old classical art. But *always* try to express the true inner vision of your soul and its deep impression behind everything to bring out the Eternal Truth and to express the glory of the Higher Worlds

Truth is behind everything. For, the Divine dwells in flowers, trees, animals, birds, rivers as well as human beings—in fact, in every creation of Nature.

You must have the psychic touch to see and feel the vibrations, the sensations and the essence of the Truth in everything and that Truth is to be expressed in the *Future Painting*.

To paint perfectly well is not an easy thing. It certainly takes time. But by the growth of consciousness you can have inspiration, intense vision, delicacy of colours, harmony and subtlety of true beauty. Then you can surely express wonderful things in painting, otherwise painting will be a lifeless confusion.

The growth of consciousness is essential for doing marvellous paintings.”

I asked the Mother, “Without seeing the Divine Light how can I paint?” She laughed softly and said:

“Child, it will come.”

Now it was apparent that I had to learn numerous things from various angles in painting in order to step into the unknown domain of the secret and higher worlds where I could release lavishly, freely my imaginations, reveries and inspirations to express exactly what the Mother wished me to.

The play of colour—balanced distribution of light and shadow to bring out the perfect harmony of colour—the subtle infusion of light, the transcendent spontaneity, the magical changes of Nature—the Supreme Colourist’s realism and visions—all these I had to put on canvases with vibrant, various strokes of brushes.

I was perfectly aware that it was not going to be easy, but life now beckoned me along strange paths which I must tread. There was no turning back since I had committed myself to the spiritual life and the higher artistic sphere.

The Mother has stated:

“If you want art to be true and highest art, it must be the expression of a Divine World brought down into this material world.”

*

The month of August 1961 started

I was fed up with the monotony of life which I felt ambiguous and full of uncertainty.

There was no absorbing, creative work except that I read *Savitri* with Ambalal Purani. I also stitched the Mother’s dresses. Thus the time passed with anxiety for the future.

As day followed day, I groped in vain for a pattern to my life which was hazy, haphazard.

Most of the time I did nothing except eating, sleeping and reading detective novels. This was certainly not my aim and aspiration. I had been pulled down

and had found no way out. I thought that if such was life it was not worth living
Panic enveloped me.

*

On 1st September—my physical birthday—the Mother called me to the Meditation Hall upstairs and gave me a folder. When I opened it, I found my own paintings on either side—one was “Soul of Beauty” and the other was one of the Mother’s visions which she had seen in my heart and asked me to paint in 1957. Underneath the picture these lines from Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* were inscribed:

“This golden figure...
Hid in its breast the key of all his aims,
A spell to bring the immortal’s bliss on earth ”

The Mother looked at me for a few seconds. Then her eyes closed gradually. She slid into a profound trance which lasted more than ten minutes. On opening her eyes she said.

“I achieved in my tender age the highest occult truths. I have realised and seen all the visions set forth in *Savitri*.

Actually, I experienced the poem’s supramental revelations before I arrived at Pondicherry and before Sri Aurobindo read out *Savitri* to me early in the morning day after day at a certain period of the Ashram. I never told Sri Aurobindo all that I had seen in my visions beforehand... ”

She laughed softly, sweetly

Here is Amal’s letter dated 4-12-74 to me about the matter.

“Dear Huta,

May I make a request to you? You are free to say “No” without feeling any embarrassment. I remember that in your diary there is a statement by the Mother that before she came here she went through all possible occult experiences. She never told them to Sri Aurobindo but later she found them all expressed in his *Savitri*. I should like very much to publish this statement in the February *Mother India* Will you permit me and, if you do, will you please send me as soon as possible the exact words as reported by you? I shall be thankful and, of course, I’ll mention that they are from you.

Yours affectionately,
Amal

Later Amal gave the account of this matter in *Mother India's* issue of November 1982 and not in that of February 1975

Back to her conversation with me:

“I have seen the beauties and wonders of the higher worlds. Now I think of expressing them in painting by various colours—blues, golds, pinks and whites—with certain vibrations of the Light—all in harmony forming the New World

I wish to bring down upon earth this New World. Since I have no time physically, I will paint through you.

The World of Supreme Beauty exists. I shall take you there, you will see the things, remember them and then express them in paintings.

Yes, yes, my will shall be done—the Supreme Beauties exist. I will certainly take you there.

I see the butterfly ready in its cocoon. I do not wish it to come out soon, but gradually.

Then after emerging from the chrysalis you will have enough knowledge to reach your goal.”

Once again the Mother closed her eyes—a slight smile hovering on her lips. When she awoke, she said:

“I realised the Divine in my early twenties, your age!

You see, the Inner Divinity is Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence. This Divinity is constantly with me—guiding and inspiring me.”

I held her hands and said eagerly:

“O, I haven't yet realised the Divine.”

She smiled and assured me:

“You will.”

Further she added:

“For occultism one needs a Guru. But spirituality can be transferred (*she made a gesture moving her index finger from the middle of her chest on towards my heart*), like this.”

The Mother did not teach me painting alone but the hidden truths of spiritual life. The book—*White Roses* for which I got the National Award and the Tata Press where the book had been printed won the first prize—is only for the general reader, because it touches on subjects of universal interest. Apart from these letters the Mother has written many more personal ones which unfold unknown things.

Eventually all of them will appear in *The Story of a Soul* when it will be published in book-form.

The Mother gave her power of expression to write this *Story*. She wrote to me some letters in this connection.

Some time back Kishor Gandhi who is a man of few words told me as regards the *Story* appearing serially in outline-form in *Mother India*:

“Huta, Mother told me many things, but your *Story* is quite different. It is new. This *Story* will be a monumental work in spiritual history.”

In the *Story* nothing is out of focus—nothing is imaginative fantasy—everything is in tune with the Mother’s Consciousness. The Mother’s letters are there, and her conversations were tape-recorded by me. When the talks were not tape-recorded, I noted them down and they were later seen and corrected by the Mother.

The *Story* is a living experience.

*

Back to the year 1961:

There was no precise work. I had nothing to do. My life seemed like a husk—flying in any direction. There was no solidity in my whole being which was shaken to the core.

I was suffocated and longed to get out of my old self to achieve something higher, something new.

*

Now the month of October was here—slowly, like a benediction, hope and peace diffused in my whole being.

The Mother called me to the Meditation Room upstairs on 6th October 1961 in the morning to take up the work of *Savitri*-painting.

She and I exchanged flowers and smiles. Then I looked at her eagerly to show me how to do the first painting. I felt as if the doors of hidden worlds were going to open before me. From the Mother’s expression I gathered that now I would always be submerged in this wonderful consciousness from where I would

never come out. Ah, it is true so far!

The date 6th is auspicious—the number six according to the Mother signifies “New Creation.”

She was absolutely indrawn in sheer silence. After her deep meditation she looked at me unblinking. Then there was the sudden flicker of a smile in her eyes when she spoke

“Child, have you thought of painting the jacket of the Book which will be published after we have finished some paintings of *Savitri*?”

Once more she lapsed into a profound trance. She awoke, took a piece of paper and a pencil and drew a cover picture. She explained

“Show the descent of the Supreme Mother. A flash of white Light forming the feet which rest on the globe of the earth. Don’t forget to paint the outline of a lotus which must be mingled with the white Light ”

She also made me understand the colour-scheme.

Then she held my hands, pressed them in order to fill them with her Consciousness. She kissed my forehead.

With a blank mind I reached my apartment, sat on a chair in my studio where the Mother herself had sat when she had declared open my apartment on 10th February 1958.

There was the jumble of colour-tubes, brushes, palette, knives, distilled turpentine, linseed oil, rags

I put the canvas board on the easel and squeezed liberal quantities of pigments on a palette. The Mother had shown me how to arrange colours on the palette when she had started teaching me painting on 11th December 1956.

I finished the painting and sent it to the Mother that very morning. She returned it through Ambu who brought “Prasad” from her at midday along with this note:

“There is no need of changing anything. It is excellent.”

This was the beginning of our work

(To be continued)

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DYUMANBHAI

A TALK GIVEN BY VEDPRAKASH AT THE ASHRAM SCHOOL

ON 22.9.1992

DYUMANBHAI. Dyumanbhai, this is how I used to address him. I have been asked to speak about him, as if he is not here. But not for me. For me he is very much here. I say, "Dyumanbhai, please excuse my story about you—it may not come up to you."

I shall be a bit indulgent today about Dyumanbhai. Dyumanbhai, a great dreamer, a great worker, tossing on the ocean of life, he had a sweep wide across the calm skies. Dyumanbhai, an alchemist, converting any and every crisis into a blessing, into gold from heaven. Dyumanbhai, a great composer blending his own limitations, however harsh and shrill, into life's great symphonic movements. But my story is only a pale reflection of his great grand personality, a baby's babble. Children often do it among themselves when the mother is around.

In all humility I must say I know very little of him, only a fraction of a fraction, a drop of an ocean. Sri Aurobindo called him "The Luminous One" in 1927. He was more than the illumined, more than the luminous. He was "The Luminous One", all lights concentrated into Oneness. It is too dazzling for me to hold him. And for the Mother he was the wonderful, the most faithful to his ideal, the same Dyuman throughout his life, living and working with an undiminished luminosity. He was an extraordinary version of Integral Yoga, the luminous of the Lord and the worker of the Mother rolled into one. He was among the chosen few. His human version also, as a simple worker, is equally intriguing. His colleagues were great writers, poets and artists, whereas he hardly wrote, he hardly spoke anything in his whole life. He used to say, "To keep pace with my great great colleagues I must run, run fast, and go on running. No rest. Work, work and work. Let my life itself speak and speak Her Will alone."

He walked and he talked as others did. He was extremely simple. One could very well miss who he really was. But these very very simple ways of his had a rare touch, an intangible feel leaving many wondering at him. His reception wholehearted, his love spontaneous, his charm homely. I hardly understood either his luminosity there or his simplicity here. It is really hazardous for me to speak about him. And much more so when so many here know so much about him, love and admire him so much. I am going to give you only a small, very small but significant aspect of his personality—not a divine version nor a human version, but a Dining Room version of Dyumanbhai.

First I knew him only as a worker, going to market daily on a cycle in 1963. But very soon I discovered in him a terrible dreamer, a dreamer in his own right.

He would storm the sun for Her work. The Mother's will and work was his first love. Work from Her, work by Her and work for Her This was his dream, his passion, his life. Though a great dreamer and dreaming always of the sun, he was very much down to earth He walked over it barefoot, crawled over it barebodied to feel how it hurt him and where it hurt him—carrying as much load as he could. He struggled, suffered through it and throughout, single-minded, and often single-handed.

It was in 1960, for the Supramental Day, the Golden Day, that he dreamt to see the Mother all in gold, here on earth, right from crown to crockery everything golden all around, every curtain, every cushion, every corner, every piece of linen He wanted the air to smell and smile in gold. The Mother wondered at his dream and gave it a royal reception. He decorated Mother, the Mother of All, all in gold. When he narrated this story to me, he was an ocean pulsating with bliss. That was his vision of the Mother in the matter, even as a financial crisis was looming large on the horizon, acute, neck-deep, from hand to mouth, from finger tips to lips and in between,—real anxious moments The very existence of the Ashram was hanging precariously in the balance throughout the sixties. All the gold the Mother had, all the personal jewellery she had, even some precious personal family-belongings she had, had to be sold. The Mother asked Dyumanbhai to do it. And he did it If he had the golden heart of a dreamer, he had the iron nerves of a worker too. The Ashramites were going on merrily as ever, blissfully ignorant of all this I was new and knew nothing about it. But when Dyumanbhai narrated this story, one could hear the story behind the story, the story of his soul, of his luminous faith in Her, Dyuman the man, Dyuman the worker who went through the fire and came out purer, without any scratch, shining with undiminished luminosity. For me it was a sight to see, a miracle on earth.

How to overcome this crisis was a real tough task before him And he must dream and accordingly build a strategy Immediately he wanted more and more people to visit the Ashram, more and more funds to flow to the Mother And for him no opportunity could be as great and as timely as Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary to gamble with People called him a gambler and a gambler he was—a gambler in divine possibilities He was betting on the divine Horse himself. He wanted, willed 20,000 visitors on the occasion when we had hardly any arrangement worth the name to feed them. We were just toying with the idea of steam-cooking and hardly knew how to go about it—just a straw in the wind. But we did throw the dice. For many it looked real crazy We ordered a boiler in 1969 And a boiler did land in the Dining Room in July 1969, exactly on the day, exactly at the moment when man was landing on the moon. We heard the running commentary on the landing immediately after receiving the boiler. And as things unfolded themselves, it turned out that we too had landed on a moon of our dream—and safely Steam-cooking came to us as a boon; the Centenary a

blessing, a grace, a sunshine for all time to come. The gods must have worked very very hard to make the Centenary an all-time success. The Mother used to tell Dyumanbhai, "Ganesh and Lakshmi are your friends " Dyumanbhai planted his gambler's dream in the very heart of the crisis and from the ashes of the crisis there arose a reality far more real and much beyond his own dream. If the dream was his aspiration, the reality was the sanction from above. Since the Centenary, the Ashram has been without any financial worry Now the focus is on the future For that too he had his own dreams and has left a blueprint of them behind for us to follow

Next was a long drawn-out game of nerves when he dreamt of building up the earning capability of the Ashram by moving towards self-sufficiency in food. He turned to agriculture, the sector most risky, treacherous and suicidal of all. The Ashram had launched two great and ambitious projects, Le Faucheur and the Lake in the mid-fifties. But the problem of food persisted as precariously as ever. Dyumanbhai had no patience with the four walls of the Ashram. He went beyond and helped launch equally ambitious projects, The Beauty Land of the Sri Aurobindo Memorial Fund and Annapurna of Auroville. But these projects too ran into rough weather and soon sank for ever, unheard, unsung

It was the beginning of the seventies, just before the Centenary. We had no fresh milk, no vegetables. The Mother laughed at our agriculture and remarked, "Is it Supramental efficiency?" Dyumanbhai, bleeding with wounds, rather a bundle of bleached bones with a track record of near-total disaster in farming, he stood there all alone in that disaster, deserted, helpless, almost naked The only thing that could come to his rescue and cover his nakedness was that he must dream again. And he had the heart to dream in that heartless wilderness.

One day he took me to show me a piece of land, dry, thirsty, barren, hardly a blade of grass on it, lifeless if not dead Hardly had anybody walked over it, man or animal Hardly ever cultivated it through generations. Dyumanbhai stood there on that utter wilderness, on that dumb piece of land And to my great surprise he started whistling in the air with the music of his dream He heard something in the heart of that dumbness He picked up that tender faint yearning to offer it to the Mother. It was amazing In Dyumanbhai I felt a rare breath, a Vedic Rishi, invoking the Sun to bless that piece of land. When I recovered to normal, I felt the land below as cold as ever and my mind blank and puzzled at his dream But Dyumanbhai was all happy as if he had found a treasure. He referred it to the Mother "I have no money," She said emphatically. And after a pause, some straight searching questions. Anybody would have collapsed under that thunder of the Mother. But not Dyuman He stood like a rock of utter determination on the breast of Mother Earth The Kali relented, and smiled, "I give my blessing!" Oh, Dyumanbhai was an ocean tossing with joy as if he had got the measureless treasure of all time He was the wealthiest person of all time His face beamed with the seal of the Mother. Now he wanted

to carve out a new destiny from the Sun to plant it here on that piece of land which the Mother called "Gloria Land", the Glory on Earth. Whosoever heard of it hardly believed his ears, simply dismissed it as crazy, laughed at it "He is a madcap." Almost everybody said it and said it every day. That was the music he heard all along and for years. But he stood, sweated, struggled and suffered. He carried the cross, bleeding, all alone. For him every new leaf of that land was a prayer for the Mother. Lunatic as he was, daily he went to Gloria, rain or storm, even on Sundays, sometimes twice a day, year in and year out. It took really quite some time to prepare the soil, the strategy and the skill. At last things looked up. The soil and the soul of the land now gave an altogether new dimension to his dream. For him the soil, the soul and the sun had become one. He saw the Mother's message in it, for man and for the future. Organic farming was a mantra given to him by the Mother. He carried this mantra to Mother Earth, then to all the farms of the Ashram. Ashram food is now on a very solid footing. Ashram food is the cleanest and the purest anywhere on earth. Dreaming for Dyumanbhai was dealing with the Sun. He was the luminous one.

Himself never in crisis, his own life was a Mahabharata throughout. He was a great fighter, a great worker as well. But the Dining Room was a somewhat different story. It was a place for him to count and wipe his wounds. It was a place for him to relax, a cosy corner to narrate past dreams and forecast future ones. To the Dining Room he must come. He loved to do it. The two tall transformation trees at the gate, the silent walls, the expectant air around rejoiced when Dyumanbhai walked into the Dining Room like a child. Time greeted him daily at 6 o'clock in the morning. The anxious hearts and the curious eyes loved to receive him. Everything looked up and we all felt so different. On Darshan days early in the morning at 4.30, he would come and walk straight to the service counter, unveil the butter bread, feel it soft in his fingers, his heart melting, his eyes dreamy, he stood then like a statue, for a while, a piece of sheer gratefulness carved out of clay by divine hands. Suddenly he would jerk back into life, all in smiles. Wrapped in dreamy silence, his heart full, his whole being vibrant, he would walk to the boilers and give them a rare smile. Then to the stores, he would uncover this vessel or that, give the food a fond look, feel it as if invoking Her to bless Her children with plenty. He carried the same prayer and love wherever he went in the Ashram.

If I have seen sunshine in his face, I have seen dark clouds as well. Sometimes he would come and sit in a chair, sinking in the seat. Suddenly he would burst out, "Clouds, and a lot of clouds, Vedprakash." Again, "Pressure, some pressure, I have caught it from the air." Then a pause, a terrible pause. Another outburst, "I must do my bit, I must be sincere to Her. If I am not doing my bit, it would be a betrayal of Her." Dyumanbhai a betrayer? Impossible, unthinkable, unimaginable to me. I sat there shocked and aghast. Whenever he saw or heard anything insincere in the Ashram, it wounded him the most. He

suffered very much for others. But then the very next day his voice would have a ring of rare triumph. "Gone, gone those clouds, Vedprakash, gone. Clear, it is all clear." Sunshine would fill the whole air with divine cheer

Dyumanbhai had many jobs to do, government work, finance, forms, construction, a huge correspondence like a rising mountain, and a flood of visitors. He had inexhaustible energy. He was racing with time to finish all this work. No time for himself. Anybody could visit him at any time. His food must wait, his pen must stop—much too much for his body, now showing signs of strain. Lately he had to go to the Nursing Home frequently to recover. And every time his recovery was quick. "Make use of me as much as you can, after all how long. .?", he often remarked. Once the doctors insisted on a longer rest for him. To me he expressed his revolt, "No rest for this body,—either work or it must go." His body must obey him. He often said he would leave his body when he chose (इच्छामृत्यु *icchāmṛtyu*).

Death, again for him a part of work, on his schedule. He would time it like any other work. Jokingly, when asked whether he would like to be cremated or buried, he was quick to reply, "I have a lot of work to do. I must come back soon. I wish to be cremated."

He wanted to go and come back with the speed of light and fire. He wished to rush through the corridors of death. No time for rest, here or beyond. He wanted to be eternally active.

Last 15th August Darshan, the long hours completely exhausted him. He struggled to walk down to his room, losing and regaining balance at each step. Next day he was in the Nursing Home, never to recover. On the 18th, Mansukh inquired about his health, "How are you, Dyumanbhai?" "I am not well"—an unusual and unexpected answer. He continued, "Some pressure." "What pressure, Dyumanbhai?" "Pressure, pressure of things..." It shook Mansukh to the roots. On the 19th, his health took a serious and unexpected turn. He developed some breathing trouble. Strict order of the doctor: Nobody should visit him or talk to him. It was 6:40 in the evening of the 19th. I stood by his side alone, he looking restless, his breathing erratic, his look different. He held me in his gaze for a while. "Did Mansukh tell you anything about me?" "Yes, he did," I fumbled. I was nervous. Irresistibly I moved up to him and started caressing him, his eyes almost fixed on me, strained and withdrawn. Our eyes met, my whole being shuddered. Soon his eyes melted into tears, strange tears, never ever seen before, such tears. His tears, fathomless, tears of love and of separation, tears of farewell and assurance, tears of adoration, tears of gratefulness, smiling over life and death. I did not know how to receive those tears of the Luminous One, tears of eternity, a painful bliss. I wiped those tears with fingers trembling, not knowing that he was withdrawing once for all. It was 7 o'clock. And at 8 o'clock he quietly and suddenly took leave of his body, the body that had served him so much, so long, so unsparingly, in utter obedience

through all seasons, a body an inscrutable link, a lot of magic on earth, a creation in miniature, an indispensable vehicle of the Avatars for their work, a body that even gods envy. He left it in the lap of Mother Earth, safely, softly and in all grace. His body is gone, but he is very much here. I wish him to speak to us through the prayers he wrote in 1949-50 in his diary.

21 8.49

My dear Mother,

Again a number of times I have heard from the air you speaking—I am safe in the Divine's hands

Dear Mother. May it be so, may it always remain so. We were always together, we are together, we shall be together in all happiness to fulfil our work till it is accomplished. We shall not rest. Day and night, night and day for all time, we shall be after the pursuit of our goal, the ideal, the descent of the Supramental Consciousness upon the earth. My dear Mother, all love to you, all consecration to you, entirely given to you.

4.12.49

Work, work, and work will be my motto. Ceaselessly to work, work for all time. It has no night, no day. To go beyond time and there to work.

Speech less, advice less, preaching of sermons less—but to work, and to act and to live up to the highest ideal

My dear Mother, all love to you.

7 1 50

Oh, how nice it would be if I get myself completely and totally identified with the Ashram. It will be a blessing indeed.

May the day come and come soon, O Mother, when I no longer exist, when I have nothing of my own. All will be of the Ashram, I of the Ashram.

Hasten the day, O dear Mother.

Dear Mother, grant me the simple love, love that loves you, gives itself entirely to you and its only life is absolute self-giving and the merging in you

Dear Mother

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1992)

INDEED Sri Aurobindo hardly had time to continue *Prānāyāma* in Calcutta when he explicitly plunged into three main preoccupations—educational, editorial, and agitational—and became considerably irregular in doing *Prānāyāma* and fell ill. So he was shifted to the house of his father-in-law (Bhupal Chandra) and stayed there for three months from October 1906. In December he went to Deoghar for a change but returned to Calcutta in time to attend the Congress Session which began on December 26th under the venerable and aged politician Dadabhai Naoroji. The Session was held at a tense psychological moment when an ideological battle raged between the Moderates and the Extremists in the political field for the country's future struggle for freedom. Regarding the selection of the presidentship for the Session, the choice of the Moderates was for Naoroji. In the Extremists' view, Naoroji was "the man of the past" while Tilak was "the man of the future." Sri Aurobindo wrote on December 26th, 1906:

"Two men of the moment stand conspicuously before the eyes of the public in connection with the present session of the National Congress. The advent of these two men close upon each other is full of meaning for us at the present juncture. Both of them are sincere patriots, both have done what work lay in them for their people and for the land that bore them; both are men of indomitable perseverance and high ability, but there the resemblance ends. One of them worn and aged, bowed down with the burden of half a century's toils and labours, comes to us as the man of the past, reminding us of a generation that is passing away, ideals that have lost their charm, methods that have been found to be futile, an energy and hope once buoyant and full of life but which now live on only in a wearied and decrepit old age phantom-like, still babbling exploded generalities and dead formulas. The other comes with his face to the morning, a giant of strength and courage bearing on his unbowed shoulders the mighty burden of our future. We do not know yet what will be the nature of Mr. Dadabhai's Presidential speech: it may contain Pisgah sights of the future, to a great extent it is likely to be the swan song of the dying past. From Mr. Tilak we expect no great speech and no sensational pronouncement, his very presence is more powerful than the greatest declamations, for it is not as an orator he stands prominent in spite of his clear incisive utterances, nor as a writer in spite of the immense influence which as the editor of the *Kesari* he exercises on the political ideal of Maharashtra, but as the man who knows what has to be done and does it, knows what has to be organised and organises it, knows what has to be resisted and resists it. He is pre-eminently the man who acts, and action is to be the note of our future political energies."

Sri Aurobindo pleaded for Tilak to be accepted as the leader. Eventually Naoroji became President and Tilak was present as the leader of the Nationalists who included Lajpat Rai and G.S. Khaparde. It is interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo constantly worked behind the scene. But he never failed to take part in major active private discussions. Indeed by dint of Sri Aurobindo's influence and pressure, it was decided that the Nationalists should pass a resolution adopting "Independence" as the goal of the Congress along with other planks, such as Swadeshi, Boycott and Education. The resolution came for discussion at the opening Session. A hot-headed opposition by the leaders of the Moderates like Pherozshah Mehta, Gokhale and Surendra Nath Banerjee rose on the issue of "Independence". Nationalists, or we may call them Extremists as their opponents did, walked out. The President realised their strength and saw that the resolution had wide support from Bengal and other provinces too. So he proposed *swaraj* as a compromise substitute for "Independence" and then the resolution was passed, although no doubt each party interpreted the word in its own way. Simultaneously other resolutions such as "Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education" were passed.

So the Nationalists emerged from the Session with increased strength on December 31st, 1906. Sri Aurobindo's strategy was fruitful. Though he was a private actor in the National Movement till that date, his diplomacy and political acumen had won the day. He wrote on 31st December about the result of the Session:

"To-day on the 30th, we can look back and count our gains and losses. The hopes of Anglo-India have been utterly falsified and the Anglo-Indian journals cannot conceal their rage and disappointment. The loudest in fury is our dear old perfervid *Englishman* which cries out in hollow tones of menace that if the Congress tolerates Boycott, the Congress itself will not be tolerated. The hopes and fears of Liberal England have been only partially fulfilled and partially falsified, the Congress has definitely demanded Colonial Self-Government and it has accepted the offered concessions of Mr. Morley only as steps towards that irreducible demand, the new spirit, instead of being killed by kindness, has declared in no uncertain voice its determination to live. The fears of the Moderates have been falsified; no strongly worded resolutions have been passed: neither has the Congress been wrecked by the rapid development of contending parties in our midst. Their hopes too have been falsified. Nothing was more remarkable in the present Congress than its anti-autocratic temper and the fiery energy with which it repudiated any attempt to be dictated to by the authority of recognised leaders. Charges of want of reverence and of rowdyism have been freely brought against this year's Congress. To the first charge we answer that the reverence has been transferred from persons to the ideal of the motherland; it is no longer Pherozshah Mehta or even Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji who can impose silence and acquiescence on the delegates of the nation by their presence and

authority, for the delegates feel that they owe a deeper reverence and a higher duty to their country. Henceforth the leaders can only deserve reverence by acting in the spirit of the chief servants of their country and not in the spirit of masters and dictators. This change is one of the most genuine signs of political progress which we have observed in our midst. The charge of rowdiness merely means that the Congress, instead of a dead unanimity and mechanical cheers, has this time shown lively signs of real interest and real feeling. It is ridiculous to contend that in a national assembly the members should confine themselves to signs of approval only and conceal their disapproval; in no public assembly in the world, having a political nature, is any such rule observed; and the Mother of Parliaments itself is in the habit of expressing its disapproval with far greater vehemence than was done in this year's Congress. It was due to this growth of deep feeling and of the spirit of independence that the spells on which the Moderate leaders had depended, failed of their power to charm. The lion of the Bombay Corporation found that a mightier lion than himself had been aroused in Bengal,—the people.

“For ourselves, what have we to reckon as lost or gained? No strongly worded resolutions have been pressed and we are glad that none have been passed, for we believe in strong action and not in strong words. But our hopes have been realised, our contentions recognised if not always precisely in the form we desired or with as much clearness and precision as we ourselves would have used, yet definitely enough for all practical purposes. The Congress has declared Self-Government on Colonial lines to be its demand from the British Government and this is only a somewhat meaningless paraphrase of autonomy or complete self-government. The Congress has recognised the legitimacy of the Boycott movement as practical in Bengal without limitation or reservation and in such terms that any other province which feels itself called upon to resort to this weapon in order to vindicate its rights, need not hesitate to take it up. The Congress has recognised the Swadeshi movement in its entirety including the adoption of a system of self-protection by the people; within the scope of its resolution it has found room for the idea of self-help, the principle of self-sacrifice and the policy of the gradual exclusion of foreign goods. The Congress has recognised the necessity of National Education. The Congress has recognised the necessity of a Constitution and adopted one as a tentative measure for a year, which, crude, meagre and imperfect as it is, depends only on our own efforts to develop by degrees into a working constitution worthy of a national assembly. All that the forward party has fought for, has in substance been conceded, except only the practice of recommending certain measures which depend on the Government for their realisation; but this was not a reform on which we laid any stress for this particular session. We were prepared to give the old weakness of the Congress plenty of time to die out if we could get realities recognised. Only in one particular have we been disappointed and that is the

President's address. But even here the closing address with which Mr. Naoroji dissolved the Congress, has made amends for the deficiencies of his opening speech. He once more declared Self-Government, Swaraj, as in an inspired moment he termed it, to be our one ideal and called upon the young men to achieve it. The work of the older men had been done in preparing a generation which were determined to have this great ideal and nothing less; the work of making the ideal a reality, lies with us. We accept Mr. Naoroji's call and to carry out his last injunctions will devote our lives and, if necessary, sacrifice them."²

Sri Aurobindo's political goal for India was nothing less than complete freedom from foreign domination. He poured scorn and contempt upon the limited demands of the Moderates, for the legislative bodies—Local Self-Government and progressive Indianisation of Indian Civil services, and tariff protection for Indian Industries. He felt that these minor administrative changes and economic reforms were by themselves utterly worthless.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* Vol I p 197
- 2 *Ibid* , pp 202-204

NOSTRADAMUS IN THE PROPER LIGHT

ORACLE TO THE COCK OF FRANCE

NOSTRADAMUS is a name which belongs to popular culture, to the world of the almanac and sensational forecasting. The main events of European history are supposed to have been prophesied in his riddling verses: the execution of Charles I, the French Revolution, the career of Napoleon, the rise of Hitler (Goebbels used the prophecies in his propaganda) I understand that even Nixon and the tapes were foreseen by Nostradamus! These extraordinary successes make all the more alarming the supposed prophecies as yet unfulfilled.

Though this strange prophet has been famous in sub-culture for 400 years, in itself an interesting phenomenon, there has been no modern critical edition of the *Prophéties* and no sustained attempt at putting this substantial body of French verse into historical context. The edition of the *Prophecies and Enigmas of Nostradamus* by Liberté LeVert¹ has now filled this gap. It contains all the quatrains in the 1555 first edition and others from the second and third series. They are printed exactly as in the original French, together with a new literal English translation. The critical commentary sweeps away all the nonsense that has grown up around the prophecies in their passage through the centuries.

The reader will derive a good deal of enjoyment from this lively commentary, which unravels the allusions as referring mainly to the events of Nostradamus's own times, not to ages yet unborn. The retirement of a great personage to a small place is not a prophecy of Napoleon on Elba but reflects the retirement of the Emperor Charles V, which had occurred not long before the publication of the prophecies. When Nostradamus speaks of "Bretagne" he means Brittany: hence political convulsions in "Bretagne" are not prophecies of the execution of Charles I and other sensational events in British history but are about happenings in Brittany in the sixteenth century. "Hister" is the river Danube, not a bosh shot at "Hitler". The prophecies are almost entirely concerned with sixteenth-century history, with particular reference to the French monarchy and its relations with other contemporary powers. When Nostradamus actually makes a prophecy of something which is to occur in the future, he is nearly always wrong, his most tremendous blunder being the presage of a glorious career for Henri II made shortly before that monarch's unexpected death in a joust.

The double task of providing for the first time a reliable text and translation of Nostradamus's poetry and of sweeping away the trashy interpretations with which centuries of low-grade exploitation have covered it, has at last unveiled the real Nostradamus and his work. As LeVert says, we have not hitherto known either.

¹ *The Prophecies and Enigmas of Nostradamus* Translated and edited by Liberté LeVert 257 pp Glen Rock New Jersey Firebell Books \$ 15

Michel de Nostradame (1503-1566) was born at Saint Rémy, near Marseille. On both sides of his family he was descended from converted Jews. He always proclaimed his adhesion to the Catholic Church, though he did not entirely escape Inquisitorial enquiry. He was grounded in Latin at the papal school in Avignon, then trained as a doctor at Montpellier, specializing in the plague. Rabelais was a medical student at Montpellier at the same time as Nostradamus; there is no evidence that these two unusual students knew one another. Nostradamus's education was evidently rather rich and varied (he always said that he learned to prophesy from his family) and there is no doubt that he was a learned man—he worked for a time with the great scholar J.C. Scaliger.

In 1555, Nostradamus published at Lyon the first series of *Les prophéties*, which attracted the attention of the French court. He was summoned to Paris; Catherine de Medici was deeply interested in the occult; Nostradamus, who was an astrologer (not a very good one according to LeVert), seemed a likely person to find favour at court and to be useful both as astrologer and doctor. He lived on the fringe of court favour though he was not fully accepted until too late. The misfortune of the untimely death of Henri II probably delayed his career.

From the standpoint of his accurately edited text of the *Prophéties* and newly directed examination of it, LeVert arrives at some important discoveries. He reveals Nostradamus, first of all, to have had a good knowledge of versification. Though his verse prophecies relate to the almanac world, they are by no means popular doggerel; as refined by a learned hand they become minor French poetry of the sixteenth century. LeVert analyses the versification closely and uses it to help with the riddles. Noting that Nostradamus observes the caesura strictly he finds this a guide in deciphering. For example, a worrying character called "Voldrap" disappears when it is noticed that "vol" comes at the end of the first half of a line and "drap" at the beginning of the second half; "Voldrap" was born of a printer's disregard of the caesura.

Second, LeVert offers a new interpretation of the prophecies in terms of the world in which Nostradamus lived. There were quite enough sensational events in the sixteenth century for a prophet to brood over without filling in with colourful allusions to Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, or Hitler. LeVert knows his way about in the sixteenth century extremely well, though he wears his historical erudition lightly and wittily. He does not force interpretations but simply leaves blanks where he cannot understand. He is amusingly aware of the cautious obscurity in which prophets from the Delphic oracle onwards have veiled their meanings. Through the dark sayings of the prophecies he traces events in the French invasions of Italy; the sack of Rome by the imperialists, adventures of well-known personages of the French court; the spread of new heresies from Germany and Switzerland; and the policies, victories, and defeats of the leading power centres of the age—the German Emperor, Charles V; the French King, Francis I and his successors; the Republic of Venice; and, of course, the Papacy.

Fully alive to political allegory, he gives close attention to the Eagle (the Emperor), the Cock (the King of France), and the Lion (Venice), in their constantly recurring appearances. With shocking disrespect he refers to these noble creatures as “the usual military zoo”!

It seems evident (though LeVert does not go into this) that Nostradamus’s favourite creature is the Cock of the French monarchy. The crucial prophecy is the one about Henri II which should have made Nostradamus’s fortune had it not been for that unlucky joust.

Au chef du monde le grand Chyren (Henri II) sera,
Plus oultre après aymé; craint, redoubté
Son bruit & loz les cieulx surpassera,
Et du seul titre victeur fort contenté.

(At the head of the world shall be the great Chyren. “Plus ultra” [is left] behind. [Great Chyren shall be] loved, feared, dreaded, [Chyren’s] fame and renown shall rise above the skies. And with the single title, “Victor” [he shall be] well content.)

As unriddled by LeVert this means that the French King Henri II (“Chyren” is an anagram of “Henric”) will be universal monarch, leaving far behind the German Emperor, Charles V with his famous motto Plus Ultra. Everyone at the time would have understood this as contrasting the French monarch with the German Emperor and claiming for the former the right to world rule, which the German Emperor claimed. The imperial device with its proud motto was very well known in France and was replied to by the device of Henri II, a crescent moon with the motto *Donec totum impleat orbem* (Until the moon [of French monarchy] fills the world).

Nostradamus is moving in the great world of “Imperial themes”, the themes of universal empire for French monarchy or German Empire, aspirations which lay at the root of the struggles of the age. Both the imperial figures claimed the aura of Roman Empire and the Trojan descent (to which the prophecies often allude). Naturally, Nostradamus weighted his prophecy on the French side.

In what light did Nostradamus see himself? How did he wish to present himself to his readers? The opening quatrains of the series make an impressive claim to divine inspiration. “Seated alone at night in serious study” he sees a flame appearing. “Wand in hand”, he performs magical rites and, in fear and trembling “sees the divine splendour”. In the following quatrains he sees what sound like visions of a universal monarchy and a weakened papacy, but very obscurely worded. The prophet takes care not to be too explicit. LeVert thinks that Nostradamus does not really believe in all this, but is aiming only at a conventional invocation of the muse. Yet these things were taken very seriously in the sixteenth century. The poet Ronsard made claims to inspiration by divine

furor and made prophetic statements about the times. He respected Nostradamus as a prophet.

What Ronsard says about Nostradamus (not quoted by LeVert) is revealing as to how a contemporary poet regarded him. For him Nostradamus is a prophet sent from God to warn France of danger, but these warnings have not been heeded. Ronsard asks whether Nostradamus's enthusiasm is inspired directly by the Eternal God, or by some good or bad demon or angel. But he has no doubt that the words of this sombre and melancholy prophet are inspired. He has read into the prophecies meanings which might relate to the wild prophecies of universal religious rule for French monarchy that were the theme of the strange Christian Cabbalist, Guillaume Postel, though Nostradamus was a much more hard-headed character than Postel. Yet it seems that contemporaries, like Ronsard, might read Nostradamus's prophecies as prophetic in the Hebraic sense, and relating to the religious destinies of France.

There is another side of Nostradamus which raises interesting questions. He was a writer who took a popular form, the almanac type of prognostication, and reexpressed it in terms of classical or humanistic versions of prophetic themes. As LeVert says, he is a kind of humanist, with some knowledge of classical texts on prophecy such as Marsilio Ficino was reviving. He is in a sense a humanist, related to the "élitist" Renaissance culture of Ronsard and the Pléiade. Yet he comes out of the popular almanac tradition, and it was in that tradition that his name survived. Nostradamus became a name used by popular almanac writers, but Nostradamus the minor Renaissance poet was forgotten. He is a curious example of how a popular form could be taken up for a while into an educated milieu, afterwards falling back again into sub-culture. Nostradamus's fellow medical student at Montpellier, Rabelais, shows a somewhat similar use of popular culture, in his case the French farce tradition, to convey weighty themes. One might say that Rabelais's name, too, survives as a farcical *bon viveur* rather than as the enthusiastic evangelical whom modern research has revealed.

The light-hearted style in which LeVert presents his edition of Nostradamus does not obscure the fact that he has done a serious and original piece of research in excavating this author and his work.

FRANCES YATES

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QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1992)

COPERNICUS AND HIS AGE

We have already seen that man at one time held a “geocentric” view of the universe, based on it was developed a near-complete cosmology with a highly advanced astronomy. We also saw how this view got incorporated in the Churchian doctrines. This presentation was followed by a short description of the assertive nature of the religious organisation and the cruel practices it adopted to impose its authority. It should be noted too that in this period the intellectual side of man did not take the lead in the social development—only the influence of religion and theology played a predominant role in the governing of society. Consequently, during this entire period we find no major original works appearing in the field of astronomy, cosmology, sciences, poetry, painting, arts, etc. In the millennium 200-1200, dominated by the religious-theological influences, the highly refined and developed world-views of the creative Grecian era receded into the background. Strangely we see again the revival of the very ancient semi-mythological Egyptian views of the earth being flat.

To take one specific example here—this is where Columbus had to fight against an enormous social pressure when he made the proposal to discover new routes to old lands. He hoped to reach the “Indies” from the West. The general belief which prevailed was that he would fall off the edge of the flat earth, or, even before that, he would be devoured by huge monsters residing in the oceans.

Columbus had set sail for his historical voyage in the year 1492. In that year Copernicus was just 19 and a university student. But before we begin to probe into his life and works, a few words about the time and age are essential.

These few centuries—starting with the 13th—marked the “time of flowering” of a new era—the blossoming of religious mysticism in art and literature leading to what we now commonly know as the Renaissance period. It is impossible to pinpoint the exact year or event that started it off in Europe, nevertheless, for our purpose it is sufficient to consider its beginning to have taken place sometime at the opening of the 13th century. It should be noted that the few centuries that followed were marked by major contributions in the fields of science and arts on one hand and eventful happenings in the political, social and religious life on the other.

Dante was an eminent figure of this era and his literary works distinctly stand apart from those of his contemporaries, the poetry he wrote is considered to be one of the highest quality which gave to Catholic Christianity “a supreme expression.” Along with other contributors he “discovered antiquity.” And, as a

result, philosophy, science, poetry, art began to be studied with a renewed creative interest.

Leading intellectuals at the same time had come to realise that second-hand translations and edited versions of the writing of the ancients—mostly done by the Moslems—were inadequate for their purposes. A growing need, in the field of astronomy, for accurate data and detailed information drove researchers to the original works of Ptolemy and others. These were directly translated in the various European languages.

It was around this time that a lot of new work was done in the field of practical and applied sciences too. The printing press, gun-powder, the compass, are just a few of the inventions that had a revolutionary effect on the society. The coming of the printing press can be considered as one of the significant events that played a key-role in this period of 're-birth', since it helped to spread news and—more importantly—knowledge faster and wider than ever before.

On the political front the concept of a "nation-state" was slowly replacing the old feudal monarchy. The "aristocracies of Church and landed nobility" were being challenged by changing economic ideas and a new commercial system. In confronting the authority of the Church "Luther and Calvin led the first successful revolt against the Catholic religious hegemony".

A new spirit of adventure set forth a number of voyages and people began frantically to explore the world by sea. The Portuguese and the Spaniards had landed on the south-west coast of the African continent in the middle of the 15th century. About that time three historical voyages made an indelible mark on Europe. In 1492 Columbus set sail from Europe in the *Santa Maria* along with two other ships, and on the 12th of October of that year became the first to land on the American continent. Within a few years of this, Vasco da Gama found the sea route to the Indian sub-continent; this would give rise to the trade industry and thus have an impact on the economic life of Europe. Megellan made the first-ever journey around the globe and sealed the long-standing and much-debated—often with violent and destructive consequences—issue of the structure of the world.

Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci are two of the many artists who, in some of the most wonderful creations of all time, sailed to new worlds of perfection. The sculpting of the Pietà clearly demonstrates the extraordinary skills of Michelangelo, the great care he took to bring out the tenderness of life blended in a delicate emotion out of marble, his artistic soul trying to reach something exquisite in the stone. Painting the Story of Man's Descent on Earth (as given in the Bible) on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was a challenging task, and *the* accomplishment of his life: Its creative grandeur and beauty speak for themselves.

Leonardo was not only an artist, although he is most remembered for his numerous paintings and, especially, for having caught the mysterious smile of

Mona Lisa. He was a complete scientist and, though his inventions remained concealed in his sketchbook for a long time, had made voluminous contributions to theoretical sciences.

Other than astronomy science was making rapid progress, particularly in the field of biology. A book expressing modern views of human anatomy was printed, in the same year of the publication of Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus*, and its results were revolutionary.

It should, however, not be interpreted that the Church remained silent to these issues leading to vast changes in the contemporary society. With an aggressive vehemence and ruthlessness it countered all activities that ran against the Biblical thinking or was damaging to its authority in the least manner. An anatomist was burnt for having "discovered...the minor blood circulation" in the human body; Columbus was brought back in chains; Bruno was burnt at the stake; Tycho Brahe died in exile; Kepler was persecuted; Galileo was made a prisoner... These are but a handful of examples indicative of the opposition of the Church; we can well imagine the detrimental effect it was having on a society tending to free itself from the clutches of religious doctrines and theological imperialism.

Born on 19 February, 1473, in the city of Torun (Poland), Copernicus grew up and lived the 70 years of his life in this milieu. He pursued an active political and intellectual life. As a man he had universal interests backed by an inquisitive mind; and this did lay the foundation for an intellect of the highest order. Today we best know him as an astronomer, but we should not fail to recognise him as a versatile genius, competent in a number of activities, a polymath.

After his father died in 1483, he was brought up by one of his uncles. Still in Poland, he spent three years at the university of Cracow (1491-94). After this he travelled to Italy where he continued an academic life at the universities of Bologna (1496-1500) and Padua (1501-03). Along with his mainstream studies in astronomy and mathematics, he studied the liberal arts, canon-law and medicine.

Later in the course of his life he wrote Latin prose and poetry and also acquired a status of authority on classical literature. He was a reliable physician and had attended to Dukes and Bishops all over Europe. In 1503 he was awarded a doctorate in canon-law. By this time he had already served for a few years as a canon in the Cathedral of Frauenburg. Between 1506-1512 he returned to Poland and worked with his uncle, the Bishop of Ermland, where his duties involved "complex diplomatic manouevrings...in the administration of the Cathedral's large estates." This is where he acquired a thorough knowledge of the working-ways of the Church. Elsewhere, he was a competent economist and had suggested currency reforms to the Polish government. He had also master-minded a war to successfully defend Castle Allenstein.

His interest in astronomy was probably aroused in Cracow (1491-94) by the mathematician W Brudzewski and "spurred on at Bologna by the astronomer Domenico Novara" When still at Bologna, in 1497, he began to make important astronomical observations which he would use in his major treatise later on *Alongside*, as he had learned Greek, he read the works of a number of ancient Greek authors. Plato, Plutarch, Aristarchos, Pythagoras, etc This is where he learned about the various views of the universe—earth-centred, sun-centred and others—and came into touch with the ancient spirit of learning. He also had a sense of aestheticity which, it is likely, he acquired by reading Pythagoras

By 1514 he was recognised as Europe's leading astronomer and was "asked by Pope Leo X to assist in the reform of the calendar", he declined to attend to this task, saying that the motions of the sun and the moon had not yet been sufficiently well determined. It is also believed that he had been developing his heliocentric hypothesis since 1512; for, in that year, he had circulated a report, a short outline of his treatise, amongst his few trusted friends The book that contains the detailed account of the heliocentric system is *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*. This book ultimately appeared in print in the year 1543 and, tradition tells us, that he held the first copy in his hands just a few hours before passing away, on the 24th of May It is important to recognise the fact that three long decades had gone by since Copernicus had studied the possibility of a sun-centred universe, had concluded on its validity, and had made a presentation of this major work of his life. Had one of his friends not urged him to publish this treatise, the hand-written manuscripts would have perhaps remained concealed from the world for a much longer period, if not lost forever. But an important question that we may ask is. Why was he so hesitant? We do have an idea of the answer; the presentation of the work involved great caution and tact. It is this we shall shortly study in closer detail In any case he had triggered off a revolution that would bring an enormous change in man's approach to thinking. Before we take up the assessment of Copernicus's work we shall first look into his heliocentric system in a somewhat rapid manner.

(To be continued)

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

AGONIST

WHEN life grates and all is hell,
The horizon is seen no more,
The inner compass is demagnetized—
The spirit, dead, remains an emptied shell

Wandering in a dark cloud-cage of louring sky,
The gloom presses into innerness,
No barrier resists the miasma,
The soul cannot fly

The relentless pacing of an imprisoned beast
Throbs in the tread, while a deadly Despair
Circles around for the kill.
This is the least

That can destroy us forever, the Iron Fist,
The Power that feeds on bloodied hope
Is at war against all our divinity,
The strength that is our empowerment, the deep Agonist

Whom even Death cannot lay to rest,
Who knows the Law of Struggle,
And uses its leverage
To ever pry out the best

From each difficulty, each danger, each quest,
The highest adventure always our reward,
Always the leading edge, always the unclipped flight
Outward from every nest

Into limitless wideness, the discovery of the Known
Disguised in the garbs of the Unknown,
The pure-seeking drop-distilled from the wine-press of living,
The searing Flame, naked, alone

ARVIND HABBU

RUSSIA AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE EARTH

PERHAPS the liberation from Communism that occurred in Russia recently will save humanity from a new world war; but unfortunately this country remains sufficiently dangerous to the world community. I don't refer to its economic instability or to the current political crisis, though these are the objects of attention all over the world. I refer, rather, to the special role that Russia plays as an ethnocultural formation in the progress of the Earth-Consciousness. I use the word "Earth-Consciousness" as it is used by Sri Aurobindo in his various writings.

It is obvious that Russia has long had an unusual role in history due to its geographical situation. At some moments its political interests tended to a rapprochement with Western, at others with Eastern civilization. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky points out in his *History of Russia*.

"The location of Russia on its two continents has had a profound impact on Russian history. The southern Russian steppe in particular served for centuries as the highway for Asiatic nomads to burst into Europe. Mongol devastation was for the Russians only the most notable incident in a long series, and it was followed by over two hundred years of Mongol rule ..

"Russia's location in Europe may well be regarded as even more important than its connections with Asia. Linked to the West by language, religion, and basic culture, the Russians nevertheless suffered the usual fate of border peoples: invasion from the outside, relative isolation, and retardation. Hence, at least in part, the efforts to catch up, whether by means of Peter the Great's reform or the Five-Year Plans. Hence also, among other things, the interminable debate concerning the nature and the significance of the relationship between Russia and the West."

As a result of all this Russia had a peculiar "third position" in regard to East-West relations. The country's large territory and the slow speed of communications promoted the strengthening of this position. But after the reforms of Peter the Great, Russia began to grow closer to Europe. The reforms of the 1860s laid the foundation of an economy on the Western model and in the years that followed Russia progressively became part of the European economic system. Stolypin's reforms at the beginning of the twentieth century seemed to determine Russia's future as a Western country in the economic and cultural spheres. The February Revolution of 1917 was a political expression of these changes.

Looking at the matter from a metaphysical point of view, one may say that a balance between Western rationalism and Asiatic spirituality has long been a necessity for the earth and is still a necessity. In my opinion if we want real spiritual progress for the Earth-Consciousness, we need both rationalism and spirituality, activism and quietism, otherwise disharmony is inevitable. Only

through the mental can we achieve the Supramental. Sri Aurobindo teaches that it is only through a development of the higher mental energies that the soul can rise above the mind and open itself to the higher planes of being. For this to be possible, we need to find the right balance between activism and quietism. It seems to me that certain "centres" have been created in the Earth's mental atmosphere to help bring about such a balance. Until recently Russia was one of the most important of such centres. And this seems to have been the cause of the tragedy of the Russian nation.

It is not surprising that the Communist experiment took place in Russia. Before 1917 the elements of spiritualism and materialism were in some kind of unstable harmony there. But as a result of the previous reforms and the February Revolution, Russia seemed destined to change into a European country with a Western mentality. This would have meant the end of Russia's "third position." At this decisive moment, the Marxist *coup d'état* was a necessity in the Earth's evolutionary process. I think the subsequent political, economic and cultural isolation of the country was not the result of Communist ideology only—it may have been a Higher Mind defence-mechanism.

But the Communist regime "sterilized" the consciousness of the nation. For what is the Communist ideology? On the one hand a declaration of atheism and materialism; on the other a hypocritical rejection of their common fruits: "bourgeois" hedonism, practicality, mercantilism, etc. The Communist ideology concerns itself with social theory and has nothing to do with spiritual progress.

Three generations of Soviet men and women passed their lives in some strange, almost mythical Void: without the Divine, without the Devil, knowing neither spiritual seeking nor the temptations of the Western way of life. To bring this about the Communist party of the Soviet Union had to direct its energy to the destruction of Russian culture and the Russian nation. As a result tens of millions of people were killed during the Leninist-Stalinist "inner war".

Now the Communist era has come to an end. This regime was always an artificial formation and its break-up was inevitable. The most important question now is this: what is Russia heading for? The situation is altogether unique. The spiritual vacuum in which people lived for seven decades gave birth to a nation of spiritual infants; their consciousness is a real *tabula rasa*—anything can be written on it. But Russia accumulated much during this period and now the released energy can have an enormous effect on the Earth. Unfortunately Russia is undergoing severe attacks of the adverse forces. The latter are trying to use the situation in their own interest.

I believe several centuries of the Earth's spiritual evolution depend on the future of Russia. I can assert that the present situation in Russia is very dangerous. The nation is absorbing the most obscure suggestions—the cult of money, power, violence, sensual pleasure and so on. In spite of its tenacious efforts, the Orthodox Church cannot exert much influence upon the country's

spiritual or mental atmosphere After many years of atheist propaganda, Christian standards and ideals are alien to the Russian people We see crowds in the churches, but it is just a new fashion, not a revival of Christian faith New cults, new teachings (some of them are obscure and harmful) attract people's attention There is a lot of Darkness, only a little Light

The psychological condition of the Russian nation may be described as follows: (a) confusion and panic as a result of the destruction of old mental stereotypes and the deep economic crisis, (b) the aggressive and violent mood of certain social groups that do not want to support the current changes All these reactions are very intense, because the people's vital impulses have been suppressed for a very long time Old people who spent their lives under the Communist regime want to defend their political ideas and their way of life A considerable part of the youth is full of primitive material desires; they want the "goods" of European civilization and are ready to obtain them at any price

Similar situations have existed (or exist) in other countries, but these may not have exerted such a strong influence upon the Earth-Consciousness. It may be that radical changes of the mental and vital atmosphere of the Earth took place at the time of the technological revolution in Europe and the United States This technological advance helped to determine the destiny of humankind The main difference between the situation in the West and in Russia lies in the speed of the process If some current trends are not reversed, Russia could change into an Asuric Land in a few decades

In Russia a great invisible battle between the Darkness and the Light is going on Certain people receive uncommon capacities—for instance, so-called extrasensory perceptions Now this is happening more often than before Divine forces and their enemies are intruding persistently into the country, looking for human instruments for their purposes.

One can draw one important conclusion Russia can be an active assistant of divine forces, but it can also be a dangerous enemy It is essential that the mental and spiritual atmosphere in Russia be cleansed, purified and transformed. The situation is not hopeless, there are people in Russia who sincerely wish for such changes The nation needs the help of enlightened humanity It needs a strong spiritual "injection" to change the consciousness of new generations in the country To fight Ignorance one needs Knowledge If we want to defend the Earth-Consciousness against Obscurity and Falsehood we must do our best for the spiritual stimulation of Russia

ALEXEY KSENDZIOUK

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

Where was Atlantis?

WHEN Plato wrote about Atlantis in his *Timaos* and *Kritias*, referring to the sage Solon as his source, he could not know how much this subject would capture the imagination of later generations. Historians, archaeologists, philologists and occultists have advanced the most variegated theses on the mythic island in the Atlantic. Many scholars consider it a mere fiction, while others locate the place near Crete or Thera or anywhere else in the world between Heligoland and South America. America's master seer Edgar Cayce, one of the best (and few genuine) mediums of all times, well-known for his many accurate readings and predictions, saw Atlantis near Bimini in the West Indian archipelago. Among modern esoteric circles, there is a belief that the Canary Islands (west of Africa) are remnants of Atlantis, which—as they say—perished because its inhabitants misused their material and occult powers. The most eager informants are spirits in channelling sessions who give all kinds of detailed descriptions. The literature on Atlantis comprises thousands of titles.

A new thesis has been developed now by the geo-archaeologist Eberhard Zangger in his title *Atlantis—Eine Legende wird entziffert* (Munich, Verlag Droemer Knaur). In some 300 pages he delves very deep into the historical core of the legend and arrives at a result which some of his colleagues have praised as inspiring, plausible and genial. The American archaeologist Curtiss Runnells believes that Zangger's work will have the same effect among scholars as Heinrich Schliemann's discoveries a hundred years ago.

So where does Zangger locate Atlantis? He says it is identical with Homer's Troy, the ancient metropolis which was defeated by 100,000 Greek soldiers and the ruse of Ulysses, probably in the 13th century B.C. Trying to prove his point, Zangger advances cogent and forceful arguments which cannot be easily dismissed. Especially important is the fact that Plato describes in detail things such as wash basins, canals, docks and buildings, floor coverings as well as religious rites. Some of the most relevant parallels discovered by Zangger are the following:

- Plato's city had 1200 ships; Troy, according to Homer, 1185.
- There is a warm and a cold fountain in Atlantis, and also in Troy.
- There is a strong northern wind in Atlantis—quite unusual in the Mediterranean. But it does exist at the stormy entrance passage to the Black Sea.
- The Atlanteans know (yellow) brass (*orichalkos*). In ancient times, this was only produced at one single place—in Edremit, 80 km from Troy.

— The diameter of Atlantis city is five stadia (900 m), exactly the size of Troy's palace precincts

According to Plato, the strategist and law-maker Solon (640-560 B.C.) had copied the account of Atlantis from a column in Egypt. Zangger believes that the original manuscript was owned by Plato's family and the philosopher used it in his report on the city. It is a fact that Solon actually visited the land of the pharaohs and that he was a relative of Plato's grand-grand-grandfather. A computer analysis of Plato's Atlantis report reveals that his style in those passages deviates from his other work, which suggests he had some source material at hand that formed the basis of his writing.

Plato says Solon had found written on the column that the Greeks had defeated Atlantis 9000 years ago (calculated from Plato's time)—a date much too early for historians to be acceptable. It does not appear possible that there was a highly evolved culture with iron axes, writing boards, etc. in the stone age. However, Zangger points out that there were three different calendars in use in Egypt from the 3rd millennium B.C., one solar and two religious moon calendars. If the moon calendar was used on the temple column—which is very likely—, then the figure should be divided by 12,37 which gives us the date 1207 B.C. The year of Troy's conquest, according to Greek chronicles, was 1200. Many other arguments of the same calibre are forwarded.

But what about Plato's reference to an island and to the Atlantic? Here too Zangger offers a surprising explanation. When Solon (aged 80) was standing in front of the column with an interpreter, he could not do any careful scholarly translation work. So a mistake occurred. A certain hieroglyph, translated by "island", mainly means "shore", "strips of sand" or "determining symbol for foreign regions outside the Nile delta". The latter meaning could be well applied to Troy.

A more serious mistake was made when the expression "strait" was interpreted as that of Gibraltar. Today we know with certainty that the very ancient Greeks, the Achaeans, did not sail to the Atlantic. For them, the end of the world was another strait—the Dardanelles. Zangger shows that they were indeed referred to and that the misinterpretation led generations of researchers literally in the wrong direction.

Finally, he also states a great number of topographical parallels. Atlantis, as Troy, was situated on a hill facing plain lands, surrounded by mountains and bordering the sea. Furthermore, Atlantis had gigantic harbour facilities, especially three circles of water around the central royal palace. In Troy too there is evidence of hydrotechnical installations, although only deep digging could determine whether it is irrigation ditches (which are only a few metres deep) or navigable canals, as Zangger believes. The German archaeologist Korfmann, who is currently in charge of excavations at Troy,* seems little enthusiastic about

* After fifty years of standstill, the Turkish Government authorized the German professor to carry out

facing the challenge of the new star on the archaeological horizon. Nevertheless, experts believe that Zangger's research is so well-founded and convincing that it cannot be ignored. If his hypothesis should prove true, Ulysses' wooden horse was rolled into ..Atlantis. Predictably, the spirits of occultists won't be very happy about that. Nor would human beings. As *Der Spiegel* (11-5-92) writes in its commentary, "Humanity would be deprived of a beautiful mystery. The paradisiacal legend of the lost continent would be totally dissolved." But before that happens, a lot of spade work would have to be done in Troy's ditches. If they are identical with the canals of Atlantis, they must reach 30 m deep into the ground.

this difficult work, which involves digging through twenty metres of debris containing remains of 47 settlements from nine epochs. The archaeologist is assisted by fifty experts from all over the world who apply advanced scientific techniques to their complicated task.

Korfmann tries to protect the region from industrial and tourism projects. "It's not only the ancient monuments that are to be protected. We have to preserve the spirit of the place where there was not only a clash, but also a meeting of [ancient] peoples. Troy was the threshold between East and West, and here were the cultural beginnings of Europe," he said according to *Bild der Wissenschaft* (Mai '92).

THE CHASM

LIKE fading leaves
Precariously we sway
From the tree of Time.
After a span,
Whenever we meet,
A few more wrinkles,
A deeper grey in the hair
Greet our sight.
But the autumn's yellow
And the winter's white
Vanish in a trice,
When across the chasm of age
A glad smile shyly steals
Into our eyes.

SHYAM KUMARI

“A GREATER DAWN”

A PERFORMANCE BY THE ADISHAKTI-GROUP

SRI AUROBINDO'S *Savitri* is the Veda of the present age, cryptic, beyond the grasp of the mind which is an instrument of ignorance groping in darkness for light and as such incapable of knowing the Truth. The Mother has categorically said: “*Savitri* is untranslatable” with due consideration even of the fact that it was being translated in Bengali by no less than Nolini—the pilgrim of the Supermind—and by many other competent minds in various other languages.

If, then, even to translate it in any other language is an impossibility without deforming the Truth contained within the poem, is it not audacious on the part of the Adishakti-group to try to give it a dramatic representation—through rhythmic movements of the physical body aided by chanting?

To this the reply is No, it is not! The solution of the riddle lies in the word “chanting”. We may remember that a dreaded bandit, a ghastly sinner like Ratnākara, who was incapable of even uttering the sacred name of Lord Rāma because of his sinful tongue and was given the mantra *marā* i e the reverse of Rāma in Sanskrit, gets transformed into a luminous one, the seer-poet—Adikavi Valmiki—of the great epic Rāmāyana. We may also bear in mind that a nearly illiterate brahmin who just managed to read the Gita in a very faulty and cumbersome way was given recognition as the true connoisseur of the essence of the Gita by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu with a divine hug when the former on being questioned by the latter admitted that he really did not understand the language of the Gita but whenever he read the slokas he saw before his very eyes Lord Krishna as the charioteer in the battlefield of Kurukshetra urging Arjuna to take up his *gāndiva* and fight the battle for the sake of Dharma, the sustainer of Truth. Then with a similar import of the word “chanting”, the attempt of Adishakti is not only worthwhile but a challenging necessity.

The whole of *Savitri* from the very first line—

“It was the hour before the Gods awake”—

to the very last—

“And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn”

is nothing but a living embodiment of the mantras of the Supramental Truth as seen and recorded by Sri Aurobindo himself—the Supreme incarnated as the Avatar of the Supermind. Even if our tongues are heavy with the inertia of inconscience, even if we utter the mantras faultily out of our limitless imperfections, there is a surety that if we start with genuine sincerity, aspire and attempt

to chant it, to translate it into audio-visual forms so to say, we are bound to gain and grow in consciousness and in the process we shall be able to look into the body of Truth more and more closely even though through a maze of ignorance. But if we are steadfast, persevering and, I repeat, genuinely sincere, the maze will surely wear out in time—slowly or rapidly depending upon the psychic status of each one of us. . . And a time comes when even the golden lid which the Isha Upanishad speaks of as hiding the face of Truth is removed and—

“...deathless eyes look into the eyes of Death.”

There lies then the justification of such a daring venture on the part of the Adishakti-group. At least for nearly a year and a half they concentrated, each one in his or her own way, on *Savitri*, even if in fragments, and repeated and got by heart the mantras which are the living embodiments of a Supreme Truth—its Light, Force and Consciousness—and each one, I am sure, must have profited by it, with some growth in each one’s consciousness, whether perceptibly or subtly. This same group, if they try to present this show again, will definitely find that something has to be changed, something is not up to the mark, this part needs to be reoriented, that to be reformed and so on and so forth, if they are not complacent and always yearning for a higher and greater truth. In this connection, I am sure, they will remember the golden words of the Mother: “Higher, always higher! Let us never be satisfied with what is accomplished”—because “each new dawn brings the possibility of a new progress” and in order “to be interested in what one does, one should try to do it better and better” and that there is no end or limit to perfection.

Opinions may differ, but sincere feelings tend to complement one another to arrive at a larger synthesis. One remarkable thing about this presentation of a fragment of *Savitri* by Adishakti is that they seem to have tried to efface themselves, i.e. their egoistic selves, in order to place before us Savitri and Savitri alone, in their own way according to their capacity. The programme starts with a gong ..to absorb all noise into silence...and immediately starts the chanting from *Savitri* and it flowed and vibrated till the final gong after about an hour. There was no formal announcement of the names and other so-called relevant things about the participants and the organisers either before the commencement of the programme or even after the final gong—which is so common even in our own functions arranged here by the inmates as an offering at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

With due consideration of the inevitable shortcomings of such an endeavour, it may be rightly said that the performers kept the whole of the jam-packed audience at the Ashram Theatre at least silent, if not spellbound or transfixed, for the whole period of one hour’s duration—even though the fans were off and we were sweating.

They have also shown a great respect for discipline and a readiness to correct their defects. The programme was repeated a second time to divide the audience suitably to provide for the necessary accommodation—on 25.8 92 for the members of the Centre of Education and the Department of Physical Education and on the 26th for Ashramites and visitors. On the first day, it started at about 8-10 p.m. i.e. about ten minutes after the notified time. It was brought to the notice of one of the organisers—rather the key-person behind all these—and it was agreed that the first gong must sound just at 8 p.m. on the 26th. On that day I got a seat near the stage in the foremost part of the gallery and was waiting for the first gong. All around me were remarks of all sorts: “Oh! It is only 7-35—surely to wait for another 40 to 45 minutes—yesterday it started late, today it will be the same... Oh! It is so hot and stuffy without fans... They cannot start on time. They will wait for the gallery to become full so that there is no chance of disturbing the silence once the programme is on...etc., etc.” At this I told the persons on either side of me: “It should start at 8 ’clock and I hope today it will.. ”

“Let us hope so”—was the pessimistic reply.

My heart leapt with joy as the programme started with the gong exactly at 8 p.m.

It is not physically possible for the whole world to come and settle here in Pondicherry. But it is possible for Pondicherry, the seat of sadhana of the Master and the Mother, to expand and extend its protecting arms of love up to the farthest corner of the globe. So, for all those who are open to the New Light, it is possible to carry “Pondicherry” i.e. the Living Presence of the Mother, with them wherever they go. Those who come and go back, do so to charge the battery so to say from the original source and return to resume their work. They are like living temples, at least they should be the living temples, being conscious of the Mother’s Presence in them. Will the Adishakti-group justify the name and become so many living temples? Being an optimist, I hope so—because they are open and sincere.

SATADAL

SATYAJIT RAY: AN ARTISTE

(Continued from the issue of October 1992)

THE special background of Ray's creations was his exceptional ingeniousness. Sometimes he would manage to trace school girls to their homes to find their guardians and contact them when the girls were found suitable for his cinema. Such was the case with Sharmila Tagore. Shabana Azmi would be regularly mentioned, praised by him to attract her attention. In most cases he found and created the actor and actress. Once they were selected he would not only be friendly and sympathetic with them; he would stop working with the picture if the actor or actress was sick, and wait till he or she recovered. But his ideas were sure and fixed. He knew very well his goal and knew how to tread the path. He was fastidious. Before working on a film the whole of it would be sketched by him with all sequences including the portion that the music would play. This aspect of his work resembled the work of Professor Isenstein of the Moscow Film Institute. Regarding his music direction, we understand from his long-time assistant Alok Nath Dey that before shooting he used to make all notations in Bengali wherever required and would not normally accept any change. He would be always present at the time of recording music which was done after the film was edited. Regarding his arrangement of music and musical instruments, his rules were stringent. He worked with great musicians like Vilayet Hussain Khan, Ravi Shankar and others. In case he did not like any portion of their music he would not say a word, but would later cut that portion which he had not liked. So was the case with his assistants and actors. Once Kanu Banerjee came with his hair neatly cut at the studio of *Pather Panchali*. Ray felt it was incongruous with the role of *Harihar*. It was immediately decided to stop shooting till the actor's hair came to normal. No wig, no make up would do. That was his way. No compromise attitude towards the reality he wanted to create. Deviations he made sometimes, such as in the case of *Kanchanjangha*, when shooting was in process at Darjeeling, he changed the script regarding a troop of passing asses. And a Nepali boy, newly discovered on the scene, was properly fitted into the subject

On the whole, we understand, he was sure and certain of the path to follow as per his pre-sketched plan papers. He knew how to play the organ, could sing also but never came out vocally because of his shyness. All other masters of music admitted his music-sense for which he was "prized" a number of times. Regarding his stringent ways and sure movements, they bring to mind an incident of his childhood. When he was taken for admission to his school, the Headmaster asked him, "Well, while coming you have seen many vehicles on your way. Which one did you like the most?" The reply was "The Trams". And when questioned for the reason, he replied, "Because the Tram runs through a

fixed line.” (From a talk by Dr. Suhrid Mukhopadhyay; *Desh*, 28 3.92) He was very fond of freedom and he could work with all freedom in this country. He lamented the loss of freedom of Directors in Soviet Russia.

Though Ray was very satisfied with his *Charulata* based on Tagore’s story, in our opinion his *Gupi Guyne Bagha Buyne* was the most outstanding creation, at least in respect of its music which was a mixture of Hindustani and Carnatik Classical music with folk songs. The voice of the ghost was his own, swiftly played through the tape recorder. Regarding sound taking also his indigenous way was praiseworthy. The movement of a train was caught in flute-sounds by his assistant in *Sonar Kella*. To record the stopping of an old motor car, the sound of its engine was imitated by dialling “0” on a telephone and recording the sound on a tape recorder whose speed was later adjusted. *Hirak Rajar Deshe* was a creation on the same theme as *Gupi* and *Bagha*. The trilogy of *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito* and *Apur Sansar* bagged 17 awards. These pictures depicted the stark reality of the then village life of Bengal. Apart from the former two types—fantasy and realism—*Jalsaghar*, *Sataranj Ke Khiladi* were pictures of decadence of feudal society. And he had some films on contemporary ideas. Apart from big writers like Bibhutibhusan, Rabindranath, Premchand and others, some of his films were based on his own stories, his grandfather’s story and novels by some contemporary writers were also taken for the purpose.

Excepting a few essays Satyajit Ray had not started writing seriously before taking charge of the children’s family magazine *Sandesh* established by his grandfather in 1913. Publication of the magazine was continued by Sukumar Ray from 1923 and, after him, his brother Subinoy Ray carried it through 1923 to 1925. Thereafter it was discontinued for some years. Satyajit’s mother cherished a wish for the re-publication of the magazine but the desire was seldom expressed. However, Ray on his own took up its publication from May 1961 jointly with the renowned poet Subhas Mukhopadhyay. Ray started writing rhymes, stories, fictions for children apart from translating Lewis Carroll and others. His books began to appear from 1965 onward when he was 44/45 years old. During this not very long period of creative writing he produced 38 fictional books, four books of translation and four edited books, mostly in Bengali. He also wrote his Memoirs and other essays on films etc., in English. The list is not exhaustive but it proves his high capacity to write. Otherwise he would have stopped after writing the cinema scripts. Here also Satyajit got the opportunity and help from one of the largest publishing houses and presses which took almost the entire charge of bringing out his works and giving them publicity. Some of his books were sold in large numbers. His stories of *Feluda* and *Professor Shanku* became very famous. Unlike his grandfather and father he wrote for the grown-up children, even big boys took great interest in reading him. He generally wrote detective, adventure stories, fantasy and Science fictions. His *Hunger of Septopas* is a story which evokes great interest.

Sukumar Ray is almost a legendary figure in the field of children's literature. Satyajit Ray's writings have their own qualities but certainly not of the type of his father's. We may say, Ray kept alive the tradition. Father and grandfather's influences were on him. For his literature also Satyajit received Akademi awards and other prizes

As a film master he is a legendary figure. We do not know of any other artiste in the world having been so honoured by so many national and international agencies of repute. A national daily of 25 April 1992, after the demise of the great artiste between 5-30 and 5-45 p.m on 23.4.92 at a Calcutta nursing home after protracted illness of the heart rightly declared, "Satyajit Ray put the Indian Cinema on the cultural map of the world. An artiste among the film makers, he went a long way in resurrecting and enriching this medium of expression" (*Economics Times*)

From the beginning of his career as a film-maker he constantly worked except during the period of his severe heart-attack in 1984 and afterwards. He came back to the field in 1988 and continued till the end to work despite illness. The world certainly would have had more from him to keep and enjoy as a cultural treasure, had he not left us so early

His creations cannot be compared to the popular cinemas of to-day whose mushroom production is eating into the health of the society. Even apart from sex-exhibitionism such pictures are full of incongruities. Some are rough and gross. Here we must not forget the contributions of Directors like Ritwik Ghatak, Tapan Sinha, Mrinal Sen, Utpalendu Chakraborty, Shyam Benegal, Raj Kapur, Aravindan and such others who have raised the level of the Indian Cinema. But the tallest among them, 6 feet 5 inches in height, Ray kept his head very high throughout his career and the banner of Indian Cinema, particularly Bengali Cinema, flying at top-mast. It is the Bengali language and culture, his medium of expression, which he loved most. He loved Calcutta and never left it for long. He loved his motherland. He created mostly in Bengali barring a few films in Hindi, Urdu or English. Though at first he was attracted to western films and music, he came back to his national field to raise it to an international status. But he was an artiste, not a statesman. He did not struggle to bring any change in the society. He rather sided with the ruling Governments, put forward their common ideas. He did not go into any controversy in order perhaps to secure his own success. A number of biographies and critiques of him have been written. Many documentaries, television programmes by National and International Agencies have been made on him. We hope more such works will come out to help enlighten the next generation of Directors and others in the field.

Though Ray's high creations are vibrant with realism, neo-realism or fantasy, it seldom tilts towards spiritual efflorescence which would have been possible for him had he possessed any inclination for it. Sahana Devi, aunt of the film maestro, lamented once, while talking with the present writer, that Ray

never came to the Ashram or to see her even when he had come near Pondicherry. So the Mother's expectation about the cinema is still to be considered a matter of the *Future cinema*. She said—"We would like to be able to show the children pictures of life as it should be, but we have not reached that point, far from it. These films have yet to be made. And at present, most of the time, the cinema shows life as it should not be, so strikingly that it makes you disgusted with life " (*On Education*, vol. 12, p 244)

(*Concluded*)

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

UNFORGETTABLE

[Life flows on towards the future leaving the past behind. Bimal is busy with the present. Still, at times, outstanding episodes from the remote past assail his memory. He can never forget them. A few of them are being recorded here.]

1. The Primary School

A GOLD-BRIGHT winter morning. Across the dew-soaked green fields a stream of students were heading towards a thatched house on a grass-covered elevated spot. This was the Primary School of the local children. Bimal, a boy of seven or so, was one of them. He lagged a little behind the others as he waited for a while to observe the grandeur of the rising sun. The beauty and vastness of the rural earth and sky enchanted him always. He was somewhat late to reach the school. The teacher, a middle-aged fat man, was already there, jotting down something on the blackboard. That finished, raising his right forefinger, he threatened the boys, "Beware, don't make even the slightest noise, I am going to the other class. In the meantime do the sum given on the board. I shall come back and check." He hurried to the other class through a door on the fence partitioning the house.

No sooner had he gone than some students started doing mischief noiselessly. The others, including Bimal, concentrated on doing the sum. Now in the whole class Billal Hossain was the oldest and most notorious boy. He went out tiptoe behind Bimal who was absorbed in doing his work. He wore a warm coat having two big side-pockets. Suddenly Billal Hossain thrust his hands from both sides into Bimal's pockets and strongly pressed his belly with ten fingers. Attacked unawares, Bimal could not but groan aloud without intending it. Like an angry bull the teacher rushed out from the other room shouting, "Who, who made the beastly sound?"

With an innocent air Billal Hossain promptly pointed out Bimal. Before he could open his mouth the teacher caught Bimal by the hair and pressed down his head. He then hit him on his bowl-like bent back with his massive fist. Satisfied with the performance of his duty, he went off to the other class.

At the impact of the blow Bimal suffocated. He could not take breath even with his utmost effort. As a result he fell down flat on the floor and could see nothing but all-pervading darkness. All on a sudden he visualised in the darkness the glory of the rising sun as he had witnessed it in the morning. Instantly he got back his breath and sat up deeply inhaling the life-giving fresh air.

Billal Hossain, on the other hand, sat and swung his feet and cast a threatening look at the boys who, for fear of him, dared not divulge the truth. This boyhood episode of irredeemable injustice left a permanent impression on Bimal's memory.

2. The Revered One

A class was being held in a pavilion in front of the Durga Temple of the Chowdhury family. Bimal, aged ten or so, was a student there. His teacher's name was Jalil Hossain, a good-natured elderly person. His dealings with the students were very cordial and sweet. He hardly punished any student whatsoever.

A number of corrected exercise-books were there on the table of Jalil Sahab to be returned to the students. So he called their names one by one and handed to each his note-book. Bimal's name was called and as he neared the teacher the latter said, "Bimal, your writing has been very good indeed but the expression here does not seem to be quite clear "

"Where, Sir? Let me see," he stepped forward to see, but in the hurry he trampled the toes of the teacher a bit. He was ashamed, stooped down forthwith and touched his feet in obeisance. The startled teacher exclaimed, "What have you done, Bimal? You are. ." Bimal replied briefly, "You are my teacher, a revered person. So..." Jalil Sahab remained silent.

He remained silent but the students did not. They started humming, discussing something in a low voice. Bimal was too concentrated on his writing to pay any heed to what they discussed.

Back home, he met his mother with an intimate smile as usual. But she did not reciprocate. She was grave and asked him seriously, "What have you done? Your classmates were complaining..." "What have I done?" Bimal repeated in surprise "Have you bowed down to Jalil Sahab and taken dust from his feet?" "Oh that! Yes, I have done that. But what of it?"

"What of it, eh? You are a Brahmin, don't you know that he is a Muslim?" "Yes, but he is older than me and a teacher at that, a revered person. You have advised and it is written in the books also that one should bow down to a revered person. ."

Awestricken and speechless, his mother looked at him for a while with wide-open eyes and then slapped him lightly on the cheek and left the place. Tears rolled down from Bimal's eyes, no, not for his mother's slap but for the reason of his not realising the implication of the mistake he had made. In fact up till then he was too simple to understand the social codes and customs.

*

3. Bhai Phonta

This was the occasion of *Bhatri Dvitiya*, the day when the sisters mark the foreheads of their brothers with sandalwood-paste, collyrium, etc., and pray for their long life. A finely woven mat was stretched on the floor of the central hall

of Bimal's family house. Beside it on a silver tray were kept all the items for the ceremony.

Bimal observed that one by one the brothers came and the sisters adorned their foreheads with marks and they, after having light snacks, went away happy and satisfied. Gradually all went away excepting Bimal's young aunt Subhra who waited for her "cousin-brother" to come from a different house. She was a little worried and restless as *dvitia*, the fixed period for the ceremony was going to end. Bimal also eagerly wanted to meet his ever-joyous uncle who, whenever met, used to fondle him, cut jokes and tell him interesting stories.

In fact he was an elderly and respectable man, the President of the Village Union Board. Like all others Bimal also respected him. Moreover, he liked and loved him but for his one defect: often he would be drunk, unbalanced, utter incoherent words and lie down anywhere half unconscious.

Tired of waiting, Bimal remarked, "Pisma, it is futile to wait for him any more. Perhaps he is drunk now and forgetting everything lying somewhere half unconscious." No sooner had he spoken than the uncle appeared from behind like an apparition. But oh, what an uncle! Totally different from the usual one. Grave and serious, he silently sat down for taking the mark with a lowered head. Bimal wondered if he had heard his remark.

That he had heard became evident after a few days. When he came across him he turned his head away from Bimal and bypassed him without a word. Bimal repented deeply for his impertinent remark. But how could he know that he would appear just then? However, with the passing of time his uncle's attitude became habitual to him and he did not bother any more about the affair.

After quite a considerable time Bimal heard that his uncle was ill and his illness was the result of his excessive drinking. Treatment went on regularly but without much relief. Even after months he kept on suffering and most of the time remained in a kind of swoon. So persons were needed to attend on him, particularly at night. Boys of Bimal's age offered their services turn by turn.

On the night of Bimal's turn he kept awake beside the sick-bed of his uncle who lay motionless with closed eyes. Midnight silence prevailed all around excepting the monotonous tik-tok sound of the grandfather's-clock which lulled him to a drowse. Suddenly his uncle's fidgeting alerted him. "Surely he must be thirsty," he thought. So with great care and affection Bimal held the water-pot in front of his mouth. Eagerly he opened his mouth to drink and just as Bimal was about to pour water he abruptly looked at Bimal with wide-open eyes. Instantly he turned his face aside without drinking. Bimal got terribly shocked, his heart felt squeezed with unbearable pain. He felt like weeping.

Oh, his uncle had not forgotten his inadvertent remark of the long past even on his death-bed and punished him in a way that he would never forget....

SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD

43. AS YOU SOW...

A husband in a village had a lot of affection and love for his wife. But the wife took his feelings for a weakness and made him dance to her tune. It is no wonder that everybody in the village called him 'henpecked'.

The couple had a ten-year-old boy and looked after him with great care. But the other member in the family—the husband's father, an octogenarian—was looked down upon. The wife felt that her father-in-law was a burden to the entire family and at times a nuisance to their privacy.

One day she abused the old man and told him: "You have no place in this house. Better go and occupy the *pyol*." The old man felt very bad because his son didn't in the least show any sign of disturbance at her words. As he thought that his son too had connived with her, he moved to the *pyol*. Had he been healthy enough to work and make a living, he would have moved out of the house forever. But poor old man! He had no way but to depend on his son and daughter-in-law.

The daughter-in-law sent food to the old man on an earthenware pan through her little boy.

The boy was the only source of consolation to the old man. As the grandpa told stories of wit and wisdom, the grandson found delight in his company.

A week passed. Through stories, the old man made the boy realize the injustice done to his grandpa by his parents. The clever boy decided to teach his erring parents a lesson.

One day the earthenware pan was found missing. The husband and wife searched for it everywhere and finally asked their son.

"Oh, is it what you have been searching for, all these hours? I have kept it in my parents' house," replied the boy.

"Parents' house!... Where is it?"

"In the backyard. I have constructed one for you."

The couple went to the backyard and saw a doll's house made of cardboard. "Oh, this is only your doll's house!" exclaimed the mother.

"No! It's for you and father when you grow old. When I get married, my wife may not like you living with her in this house. And so I have built one for you. And as a precautionary measure I've safeguarded the earthenware pan for you."

The couple realized their mistake and called the old man back into the house.

*

44. DARKIE!

A landlord sold a few acres of his land and bought two dozen milch cows of high breed. To herd them to the meadows and back to their sheds, he appointed a young cowherd.

The cowherd was dark in complexion and so the landlord called him 'Darkie!' The cowherd took no offence for he was quite happy with the landlord who had provided him with food and shelter. The cowshed became his home. Hot porridge was served to him in an earthenware pan twice daily. He was contented with this way of life.

One day when the cowherd was grazing the cows in the meadow, he slipped and fell with a thud. With a tingling rear he rose up and in order to give vent to his misery, he kicked a heavy stone thrice as large as his head with all his might.

The stone moved a little. He-ho! He forgot all his pain and jumped for joy. Beneath the stone was a hollow in the ground which housed a potful of gold. He looked around to know if he was alone. But there were a few urchins playing in the shade of a nearby tree. Hence he pushed the stone back to its original position, and said to himself, "All mine. All mine."

Back home, the landlord didn't fail to notice the difference in the cowherd's gait. "Hei, Darkie! What is wrong with you?" he yelled.

Wagging his forefinger against the landlord, the cowherd said, "Never call me Darkie again... Call me Dark Brother." The landlord was taken aback.

That night the cowherd went to the meadow. After ascertaining that he was alone he dug out the pot and counted its contents in the moonlight. There were a thousand gold coins. He chortled to himself with delight. Keeping the pot back in its place and covering it with the stone, he went back to the shed. He spent a sleepless night, planning and planning his future.

On the morning of the next day when the landlord addressed him 'Dark Brother!' the cowherd frowned at him and said: "Dark Brother, eh?... Time is not far off when you will have to call me 'Dark Boss'."

The landlord smelt a rat. When hot porridge was served to him on the earthenware pan, the cowherd was heard to say, "Earthenware pan, eh? Time is not far off when I'll take hot porridge on a golden plate." The landlord began to watch his movements.

That night the cowherd as usual went to the meadow, unaware of being followed by the landlord. He counted the gold coins and buried the pot once again. "Oh, Gift from Mother Earth! Wait for two days more. And on the new-moon night I'll carry you away and put you to the best use for myself. Till then have patience."

No sooner did the cowherd leave than the landlord dug out the pot and carried it home.

A couple of days passed.

Finding the cowherd with a sorrow-laden face, the landlord said: "Dark Boss! Come and have your hot porridge on the golden plate specially made for you."

The cowherd clicked his tongue and said: "Dark Boss, eh?... I am not that lucky. Continue to call me Darkie. There is more joy in eating from the earthenware pan than from anything made of dream-stuff."

*

45. OH, WHAT A WORLD OF IMPOSTORS!

Whenever God felt bored in his Heavenly Abode, He visited the Earth to recreate Himself. Once he visited a tiny village on the bank of a perennial river.

The first human being He came across was an old woman who sat by the side of a cow-dung heap, rolled a handful from the heap into a ball and made cakes for fuel. Very near to her stood a lonely hut from where came voices whimpering and weeping.

God, in the disguise of a mendicant, asked the old lady what was going on in that hut.

"My grandson, a sixteen-year-old, is dying. He fell ill a week ago. The physician has tried his best to save him from the clutches of Death. But what use? The boy is dying. Look how foolish Lord Yama is! I am very old. Why should he not take me away and leave my grandson?"

The mendicant smiled and went to the hut. He saw a young boy lying on a coir-cot. His parents stood on either side of the cot and each was invariably heard wailing, "Why should not Yama take away my life and save my son?"

The physician in his late seventies sat by the side of his patient's head and remarked: "Who can understand the play of Fate? I have already one foot in the grave. If at all there is God, let Him take me along with Him and allow this young man to live."

Moving towards the coir-cot, the mendicant told the people around: "I can save this young man from Death provided one of you here is ready to die."

The weeping and wailing came to a halt. Everyone gulped down their spittle and looked at one another in panic.

"What about you, Physician?" asked the mendicant.

"Who? Me? I am the only physician in the village. And if I die who will save the people when they fall sick? Further the dying man is not in any way related to me," so saying he slipped out of the hut.

"Then what about you, father of the dying man?"

"Oh! This is not my only son. I have four more and two daughters born to my other two wives. I have to earn enough to marry off my daughters. But you can ask my wife here if she is ready to die for her only son."

The wife looked daggers at her husband. She then said, "O mendicant! If I die who will look after my husband and his child I am carrying in my womb? Perhaps that old lady there making cow-dung cakes will be ready to die for her grandson. She is my mother-in-law."

The old lady who overheard the conversation that was going on in the hut said: "Why do you want me to die, you slut? Who will look after the cows and make cakes out of their dung. And if I die, remember, you'll have nothing to feed the oven. Moreover, I am not that old."

The mendicant smiled and went on his way.

The dying boy opened his eyes, looked around and then at his parents. "Impostors! What a world of impostors!" Those were his last words

(More Tales to follow)

P. RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: Three Hundred and Sixty True Stories

More Vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Four Hundred and Twenty-One True Stories.

Author and Publisher: Shyam Kumari, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605002. Price: Rs. 48/- each volume.

WITH the brilliant oxymoron in the sub-title “True Stories”, Shyam Kumari, the incomparable compiler of Aurobindoyana, hits off the nature of her Vignettes—with at once a fairy-tale charm and incredibility and a factual truth they point to a Truth beyond all facts of life and the fancies of the fairy world. The various pictures of the divinity and the humanity of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their relation to their children thrill our hearts, elevate our minds and draw out our hidden soul to the surface.

The earliest vignette of Sri Aurobindo we have reveals how he looked when he was five years old. Mrs. Annette Beveridge recalls her visit to the school at Darjeeling:

The little fellow had a grey suit, very becoming,—& is greatly *aged*—grown tall and boyish. I was struck particularly by the broadening of his forehead.

The picture of Sri Aurobindo as a Professor as drawn by an old student is of special interest to us at a time when methods of teaching are much discussed though little understood:

Many of the students found him too difficult to understand. The reason was that he never posed or invited a question nor answered any. He seldom gave homework. He never prepared the students from the point of view of the examination. *But as he lectured he would throw light on the subject in an all-round way* (Italics reviewer's). I remember him once lecturing on the political philosophy of Burke. His exposition was so luminous that there was no need of questions and answers.

Apart from the remarkable qualities of Sri Aurobindo revealed in the vignettes of the Revolutionary days, a very touching incident recorded by Sudhir, the Spirit Indomitable, shows a side of the Master that never left him till the last, an unshakable serenity:

One day I had an acute attack of fever... I spewed into the typed sheets (of the translations from *Mahabharata* into English) lying near by. Sri

Aurobindo's serene face did not betray any sign of dismay at what had happened. Slowly he rose and was about to clean up all the mess...

There are a number of signs even in the Aurobindo Ghose of the Revolutionary days which point to Sri Aurobindo, the Seer and Avatar of Pondicherry. The experience at the Alipore jail—the vision of Vasudeva—links both the stages. The reminiscences of Dr. Radhakumud Mukherjee who asked Sri Aurobindo to accept the invitation to speak at Uttarpara after the release from the jail bring out this aspect:

At home, in the domestic sphere, at the college, I had rare glimpses of his innate spirituality which made him always keep calm and reticent. I used to sit by him and had the natural advantage of studying some of the remarkable traits of his spiritual life at close quarters.

It was in his early days at Pondicherry that his name was changed from A.G. (he was referred to by his initials then) to Sri Aurobindo and we read the exact circumstances in which the change was made. It was a Bengali disciple who used to meet him often—one Jaya Devi—who expressed her displeasure at the Sadhaks referring to the "Lord" as A.G. Immediately it was announced that he should be referred to as Sri Aurobindo thereafter.

Sri Aurobindo's consideration for animals—a cat for example, and children (once he advised the mother of a sick child to give it Horlicks), not to speak of others, are seen side by side his qualities as Guru and Avatar.

The compiler among other things has explained the circumstances that led to the Master giving to the world his own *Gayatri* Mantra. It is a pity a typographical error has entered in the printing of the Mantra in Sanskrit. ..

The Mother's personality has been brought before us in all its infinite variety. Her phenomenal memory, her keen observation, her abiding love for her disciple-children, her particular interest in the young ones and in women, her love for animals including the lizard and the donkey, her concern for minute details of life and the working of her Grace in the lives of individuals are brought out in the different vignettes.

One is delighted to read for example,

Before joining the Ashram the late Dr. M. Venkataraman, a renowned mathematician, used to visit the Ashram regularly. Generally he would arrive at 6 a.m. from Madurai and rush for the Balcony Darshan. Among the hundreds of devotees gathered for the Balcony Darshan the Mother would notice him and say to Pavitra, "Your friend Venkataraman has come".

How greatly we are moved to read.

An old servant in the Ashram narrated to me how the Mother gave him a bowl of milk each morning, holding it out to him with both hands ..!

Perhaps the most remarkable demonstration of the genius of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is in the achievement of an absolute life of harmony in the Ashram where caste, creed and community make no difference whatever:

Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have once told a devotee of Sri Aurobindo, "I am trying my best to overcome the problems of caste and untouchability, but the difficulties persist. I do not know what the Mother has done that in your Ashram this problem does not arise."

The two volumes not only give us valuable vignettes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother but of her distinguished children in and outside the Ashram as they experience Their Grace,—Amal Kiran, Nolini, Pranab, Udar and poet Bendre, Justice Vasishtha and Indubhai Patel

We feel highly indebted to Sadhika Shyam Kumari for the priceless pictures she places before us in the volumes.

K.B SITARAMAYYA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-first Seminar

23 February 1992

(Continued from the issue of 24 November 1992)

“HOW TO PREPARE OURSELVES TO BECOME THE TRUE INSTRUMENTS OF THE MOTHER’S GREAT WORK FOR EARTH AND HUMANITY?”

Speech by Kamal Shah

IN his great work, *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo has said.

“The greatest service to humanity, the surest foundation for its true progress, happiness and perfection is to prepare or find the way by which the individual and the collective man can transcend the ego and live in its true self, no longer bound to ignorance, incapacity, disharmony and sorrow. It is by the pursuit of the eternal and not by living bound in the slow collective evolution of Nature that we can best assure even that evolutionary, collective, altruistic aim our modern thought and idealism have set before us. But it is in itself a secondary aim; to find, know and possess the Divine existence, consciousness and nature and to live in it for the Divine is our true aim and the one perfection to which we must aspire.”¹

This is the Mother’s great work for earth and humanity. It is also the aim, the adventure, the objective she has set before us: to supramentalise the whole consciousness from the highest to the lowest level of the physical substance; to realise the Divine Consciousness in the physical life; to establish the Divine’s rule in this world and in all its movements.

Here I will quote a few words of the Mother in which she has stated very briefly what her great mission in life was. She says:

“I wish

- 1 personally to be eternally the perfect expression of the Supreme Divine
- 2 that the supramental victory, manifestation and transformation should take place at once.

¹ Centenary Edition, Vol 20, p 344

3. that all suffering should disappear for ever from the worlds present and future.”¹

All these aims have to be achieved here, in this world for the Divine. To do this we must prepare ourselves and be fit enough to collaborate in the Mother’s great work

According to Sri Aurobindo, to become a true instrument of the Divine Mother three conditions are essential: intense aspiration, complete rejection of all that opposes Her will, and a total surrender of ourselves to Her.

ASPIRATION

The aspiration must be “vigilant, constant and unceasing—the mind’s will, the heart’s seeking, the assent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature.”²

Aspiration “is the call of the being for higher things.”³ “It keeps the consciousness open, prevents an inert state of acquiescence in all that comes and exercises a sort of pull on the sources of the higher consciousness.”⁴

REJECTION

There must be “rejection of the movements of the lower nature,
— rejection of the mind’s ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind,
— rejection of the vital nature’s desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, pride, arrogance, selfishness, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large, strong and consecrated vital being,
— rejection of the physical nature’s stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy, pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, Tamas so that the true stability of Light, Power, Ananda may establish itself in a body growing always more divine...”⁵

Constant rejection is necessary for otherwise many defects and weaknesses would persist in the being and consequently hinder the advent of Light, Purity, and Power. Without this movement of rejection one remains always open to attacks and the Divine’s Grace recedes from you.

¹ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 13), p 42

² *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), pp 6-7

³ *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, Part I, p 106

⁴ *Letters on Yoga*, (Cent Ed , Vol 24), p 1172

⁵ *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), p 7

SURRENDER

“Surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti,”¹ is the next step in this great endeavour.

Surrender or *samarpana* “is from within, opening and giving the mind, vital, physical, all to the Mother for her to take them as her own and re-create them in their true being which is a portion of the Divine, all the rest follows as a consequence;”² only when the surrender is total can the Mother truly mould you.

Unflinching aspiration, complete rejection and a total surrender are imperative, but nothing can be done without the constant aid of the Mother’s force. The Mother’s force is everywhere and the more one has faith in it the faster one progresses.

Aspiration, rejection and surrender can be done most effectively if one remains open to the Mother’s influence. Opening means to be receptive to the Mother’s presence and her forces. To get this opening one has to aspire, remain quiet, widen oneself, and reject all that tries to shut oneself to the Divine Mother. When desire, disturbances and the ego cease to exist, true opening is achieved.

Along with this threefold discipline one should become more and more conscious of oneself. To be conscious of oneself means to become conscious of one’s inner truth, conscious of the different parts of one’s being and their respective functions.

In order to help humanity this becoming conscious of oneself is the first step towards perfecting oneself. Once you know and perfect yourself, you also know what you have to do to help earth and humanity. According to the Mother there is a fourfold discipline in the process of perfecting oneself.

Firstly, there is the psychic discipline. The psychic being is the truth of our existence, that which can know this truth and set it in motion. To know our psychic being is very important for once it is known, we know what exactly our aim of life is and where to direct our energies.

Next comes the discipline of the mind. The mind should be widened, made more supple and profound. When this is done, all its narrowness and rigidity in conceptions melts away and we begin to perceive things in their true light.

The vital discipline comes next and it is by far the most difficult portion of our being to master. Through patient and arduous work, through perfect sincerity and faith in the Mother’s work, the vital can be perfected. Once this is done, all else can surely be done for the vital is the source of all our energy, power and dynamism.

Lastly, there is the physical discipline. Through rational, methodised and

¹ *Ibid*

² *Ibid*, p. 273

discerning physical education the body has to be made strong, supple and powerful so that it becomes a fit instrument in the material world for the Truth-Force which wants to manifest through it.

The psychic, mental, vital and physical disciplines must be followed simultaneously. "Once we reach a certain degree of perfection we see that the psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind will be the vehicle of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and harmony."¹

To follow this fourfold discipline of self-perfection, along with true aspiration, rejection and surrender is the best way to prepare ourselves to become the true instruments for the Mother's great work.

¹ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 12, p 8