

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MARCH 1992

PRICE: Rs. 6.00

NEW RATES

INLAND

Annual Rs 60 00

Life Membership Rs 840 00

OVERSEAS

Sea Mail

Annual \$16 00 or £10 00

Life Membership \$224 00 or £140 00

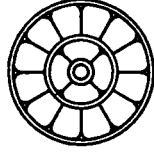
Air Mail

Annual \$36 00 for American & Pacific countries

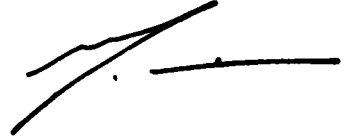
£26 00 for all other countries

Life Membership \$504 00 for American & Pacific countries

£364 00 for all other countries



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.



All Rights Reserved No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations

All correspondence to be addressed to

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

Editor's Phone 24782

Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor K D SETHNA

Published by DYUMAN

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002

Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLV

No. 3

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

<i>The Mother</i>	
A TALK TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 7 DECEMBER 1955	143
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
DIFFICULTIES AND PERPLEXITIES	
A LETTER	147
THE INTEGRAL YOGA AND THE PERSONAL DIVINE	
TWO LETTERS	149
ON SRI RAMAKRISHNA	
A COMPILATION WITH THE COMPILER SHYAM KUMARI'S NOTE	150
<i>Harindranath Chattopadhyaya</i>	
A PRE-PONDICHERRY POEM	
AND SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENT	156
<i>Amal Kiran (K D Sethna)</i>	
LIFE—POETRY—YOGA	
SOME PERSONAL LETTERS	157
<i>Anon</i>	
THE MAN OF WEALTH	162
<i>Nirodbaran</i>	
THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE	
A DREAM-DIALOGUE	
(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)	163
SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF "AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL"	
A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION	169
<i>Jayantilal</i>	
MYSTERY (Poem)	171
<i>Huta</i>	
LABOUR OF LOVE	172

CONTENTS

<i>Subrata Bhattacharya</i>	
HOW I CAME TO SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER	. 176
<i>Dinkar Palande</i>	
MIRACLE (Poem)	... 179
<i>Divakar and Sucharu</i>	
Cripps' Mission	.. 180
<i>Vikas Dhandhanua</i>	
QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE	... 193
<i>Nilma Das</i>	
SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	. 195
<i>Arvind Habbu</i>	
WORSHIP (Poem)	.. 197
<i>Wilfried</i>	
NEW AGE NEWS	.. 198
<i>Gautam Ghosal</i>	
ALTAR AND FLAME: K.D SETHNA'S CONCEPT OF LOVE AND BEAUTY	201
<i>P. Raja</i>	
SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD	... 207

STUDENTS' SECTION

<i>Speech by Rahul Deshpande</i>	
THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION	
TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 11 AUGUST 1991	
"OUT OF THE SEVENFOLD IGNORANCE TOWARDS THE	
SEVENFOLD KNOWLEDGE"	. 211
<i>Shraddhavan</i>	
MOTHER INDIA. INDEX 1991	

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 7 DECEMBER 1955

Mother, one can make an offering of oneself only when one reaches quite a high level, but when one is leading a more or less unconscious life, the self-giving becomes more or less mental, doesn't it? And it is not effective. What should one do? Can one begin from the very beginning by self-giving?

It depends on people, my child.

There are people in whom the psychic movement, the emotional impulse is stronger than intellectual understanding. They feel an irresistible attraction for the Divine without knowing, without having the slightest idea of what it is, of what it can be, what it represents—nothing, no intellectual notion—but a kind of impulse, attraction, a need, an inevitable need.

And these people who have that, if, I may say as a result of the Grace, they have a mind which does not trouble them, does not question, does not discuss, go very fast.

And then, what is quite miraculous according to ordinary ideas is that as soon as they reach that degree of consecration which identifies them through their psychic being with the Divine Presence, suddenly they become endowed with capacities of expression absolutely unknown to their nature

I had a case like this in France, a long time ago, of a young, very young girl who had never had any education so to say, any instruction; she was an Opera dancer, a very good one, and had been put to study there at the age of eight, as they are always put, that is, as a child; and she had learnt to dance instead of learning history, geography, mathematics and the rest. She almost did not know how to express herself, and her intelligence, though evident, was untrained. Well, she was attracted like that and felt an imperious need to seek the Divine, to consecrate herself to Him. And she began to dance in His honour at first, like the juggler of Notre Dame; and she truly danced most remarkably. And then, suddenly, she wanted to express what she was feeling: she began writing letters which were wonderfully poetic; she said surprising things and in a still more surprising way; page followed page, and she wrote all with an extraordinary facility.

It happened that, due to certain circumstances, she had some difficulties, there was something in her nature which pulled her back towards the old nature she had given up—which made her practical and materialistic, made her see things externally. And immediately she became incapable of putting two words together, she could not write a line without making numberless spelling mistakes

When she was in the state of inspiration she wrote without a mistake, like a

great writer; and as soon as she came out of that state and fell back into her down-to-earth consciousness—the needs of life, the necessities of each minute, etc —everything disappeared, she could not even write a single line without making mistakes and it was totally unrefined stuff

So you see, this proves that if one attains the true consciousness, there is no longer any problem to solve. What you have to be, you become. What you have to know, you know. And what you have to do, you have the power to do. And it naturally follows that all those so-called difficulties immediately vanish.

In the case I am speaking about, what pulled her down was not something in herself, it was in another person. And unfortunately that's what happens most often: one takes on in life the burden of certain responsibilities and they prevent him from advancing.

That is my story.

There are others who understand first, who are very intellectual, have studied, can play with words and ideas, who will give you brilliant lectures on all the philosophies, all the religions, all human conceptions and who, perhaps, will take years to advance one step. Because all that goes on in the head

Many things go on in the head. I have told you this already several times, the head is like a public square. Anything at all can enter there, come, cross over, go out, and create a lot of disorder. And people who are in the habit of playing with ideas are the ones most hampered from going farther. It is a game that is pretty, attractive; it gives you the impression that you are not altogether ordinary, at the level of ordinary life, but it cuts the wings

It is not the head which has wings: it is the heart. It is this ..yes, this inevitable need. Nothing else counts. That's everything. Only that.

And so, after all, one doesn't care a rap for obstacles and difficulties. What can that do to you?...it doesn't count. One laughs at time also. What does it matter to you if it takes long? For a much longer time you will have the joy of aspiration, of consecration, of self-giving.

For this is the one true joy. And this joy fades away when there is something egoistic, and because there is a demand—which one calls a need—which is mixed in the consecration. Otherwise the joy never disappears.

This is the first thing one obtains, and the last one realises. And it is the sign of Victory.

So long as you can't be in joy, a constant, calm, peaceful, luminous, invariable joy, well, it means that you have still to work to purify yourself, and sometimes work hard. But this is the sign.

It is with the sense of separation that pain, suffering, misery, ignorance, and all incapacities have come. It is with an absolute self-giving, self-forgetfulness in a total consecration that suffering disappears and is replaced by a joy which nothing can veil.

And only when this joy is established here in this world can it be truly

transformed and there be a new life, a new creation, a new realisation. The joy must first be established in the consciousness and then later the material transformation will take place; but not before

Truly speaking, it is with the Adversary that suffering came into the world And it is only joy which can vanquish him, nothing else—vanquish him definitively, finally.

(Long silence)

It is Delight which has created, and it is Delight which will accomplish.

(Silence)

Note that I am not speaking of what men call joy, which is not even a caricature, which, I think, is a diabolic invention in order to make one lose the way: the joy which comes from pleasure, from forgetfulness, from indifference.

(Silence)

I am speaking of a joy which is perfect peace, shadowless light, harmony, total beauty and an irresistible power, that joy which is the Divine Presence itself, in its essence, in its Will and its Realisation.

Mother, you say that for conquering, it is only joy which can conquer the Adversary But to attain the joy one must first conquer the Adversary.

Why no! One must go beyond him and ignore him.

There is one thing you must begin by doing, it is true, that is to free yourself from his influence. But there is a difference between freeing oneself from the Adversary's influence and conquering the Adversary. To conquer the Adversary is not a small thing One must have a greater power than his to vanquish him But one can liberate oneself totally from his influence. And from the minute one is completely free from his influence, one's self-giving can be total. And with the self-giving comes joy, long before the Adversary is truly vanquished and disappears

The Adversary will disappear only when he is no longer necessary in the world. And we know very well that he is necessary, as the touch-stone for gold: to know if it is pure

But if you, whoever it may be, become truly sincere—what I call sincere, you see, what Sri Aurobindo calls sincere, that is, when nothing in the being contradicts the aspiration and the will to consecration, nothing disguises itself to continue living its own independent life... The disguises are countless, they are

full of craftiness and malice, very deceptive, and unfortunately the human being has a very great innate tendency to deceive himself; and the more one deceives himself, the less one recognises the self-deception. But if one is *really* sincere, the Adversary can't even approach him any longer, and he doesn't try it, because that would be courting his own destruction.

Only, some people have in them a kind of fighting instinct and they are not content to liberate themselves and come out of the influence, indeed they think they have the capacity to go to war and fight with the Adversary. So sometimes, if they are not quite ready, they go and land in very bad situations, difficult predicaments.

These are saved only by their trust in the divine Grace. Because, even if they act foolishly and land in difficult situations, there will always be something which comes and pulls them out of the hole at the last moment. A little like the mother cat catching its young one which is going to drown because it has made a mistake and wanted to walk upon water—she catches it, pulls it, brings it out. A little like that.

But it is always said that one must not tempt God. One should not do something through—how to put it sweetly—premature boldness, with the idea: “Oh, it doesn't matter, the Divine will always pull me out of the difficulty.” This is not good. Because instead of helping the work, it complicates it.

There we are. Is that all?

You want to try to be silent for a few minutes? I mean inside. Yes?

(Meditation)

(Questions and Answers 1955, pp. 399-404.)

DIFFICULTIES AND PERPLEXITIES

A LETTER BY SRI AUROBINDO

DIFFICULTIES and perplexities can never be got rid of by the mind brooding on them and trying in that way to get out of them; this habit of the mind only makes them recur without a solution and keeps up by brooding the persistent tangle. It is from something above and outside the perplexities that the solution must come. The difficulty of the physical mind—not the true thinking intelligence—is that it does not want to believe in this larger consciousness outside itself because it is not aware of it; and it remains shut like a box in itself, not admitting the light that is all round it and pressing to get in. It is a subtle law of the action of consciousness that if you stress difficulties—you have to observe them, of course, but not stress them, they will quite sufficiently do that for themselves—the difficulties tend to stick or even increase; on the contrary, if you put your whole stress on faith and aspiration and concentrate steadily on what you aspire to, that will sooner or later tend towards realisation. It is this change of stress, a change in the poise and attitude of the mind, that will be the more helpful process.

As for details, the method of the mind concentrating on details and trying to put them right is a slow and tardy one; it has to be done, but as a subordinate process, not the chief one. If it succeeds at all, it is because after some period of struggle and stress, something is released and there is an opening and the larger consciousness of which I speak gets through and produces some general result. But the progress is much more rapid if one can make the opening the main thing and keep the dealing with details as something resultant and subordinate. When there is this opening, some essential (therefore general) progress can be made and, as you yourself say, “express and translate itself into details”. The mind is always trying to handle details and construct out of them some general result; but what is above mind and even the best powers of the higher ranges of mind tend rather to bring about some *essential* change and make it or let it express itself, translate itself in the necessary details.

I may add, however, that one can feel the essential change without its expressing itself in details; e.g., one can feel a wide silent peace or a state of freedom and joy and rest silent and secure in it without needing to translate it into sundry details in order to feel the progress made.

It is not a theory but a constant experience and very tangible when it comes that there is above us, above the consciousness in the physical body, a great supporting extension as it were of peace, light, power, joy—that we can become aware of it and bring it down into the physical consciousness and that, at first for a time, afterwards more frequently and for a longer time, in the end for good, can remain and change the whole basis of our daily consciousness. Even before we are aware of it above, we can suddenly feel it coming down and entering into

us. The need is to have an aspiration towards it, make the mind quiet so that what we call the opening is rendered possible. A quietened mind (not necessarily motionless or silent, though it is good if one can have that at will) and a persistent aspiration in the heart are the two main keys of the yoga. Activity of the mind is a much slower process and does not by itself lead to these decisive results. It is the difference between a straight road and an approach through constant circles, spirals or meanders.

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 24, pp. 1688-90.)

THE INTEGRAL YOGA AND THE PERSONAL DIVINE

TWO LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

A SADHAK of integral Yoga who stops short at the Impersonal is no longer a sadhak of integral Yoga. Impersonal realisation is the realisation of the silent Self, of the pure Existence, Consciousness and Bliss in itself without any perception of an Existent, Conscient, Blissful. It leads therefore to Nirvana. In the integral knowledge the realisation of the Self and of the impersonal Sachchidananda is only a step though a very important step or part of the integral knowledge. It is a beginning, not an end of the highest realisation.”

(“Old Yogas and Our Yoga” in Nagin Doshi’s *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo*, Part III)

Q You have written. “But obviously the impersonal is not enough—for surrender to that may be limited in result to the inner experience without any transformation of the outer being.” I do not understand.

A. It is rather surprising that you should be unable to understand such a simple and familiar statement; for that has been always the whole reason of this Yoga that to follow after the Impersonal only brings inner experience or at the most mukti—without the action of the Integral Divine there is no change of the whole nature. If it were not so the Mother would not be here, and I would not be here—if a realisation of the Impersonal were sufficient.

(“The Mother and Sri Aurobindo” in Nagin Doshi’s
Guidance from Sri Aurobindo, Part III)

SRI AUROBINDO ON SRI RAMAKRISHNA

A COMPILATION

Compiler's Note

SRI AUROBINDO summed up ages and sized up personalities like a well-known, oft-read text. Based on his spiritual intuition and on a knowledge by identity what he has written about individuals and collectivities lays bare their core and substance, their *raison d'être*, their total depths and absolute heights.

Here is a compilation of his writings about that great worshipper of the Divine Mother-Power, the sage and supreme devotee of Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna who was born on 18 February 1836

That Sri Aurobindo had a close rapport with Sri Ramakrishna is proved by the following incident of the Baroda days, where Sri Aurobindo joined some planchette-experiments of his brother Barindra Kumar. In one of these sessions the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna appeared and said,

“Make a temple, make a temple” (*mandir gaḍo, mandir gaḍo*). Sri Aurobindo dictated about this:

“At that time the idea of independence for India was dominant and so all believed that Ramakrishna had given his consent to the Bhawani Mandir Scheme. But the true significance of Ramakrishna's statement was interpreted by Sri Aurobindo years later 'as a command to make in ourselves a temple to the Mother, to effect such a transformation of ourselves that we become the temple of the Mother'.”¹

Later Sri Aurobindo said:

“This gave me the final push to Yoga. I thought: great men could not have been after a chimera, and if there was such a more-than-human power why not get it and use it for action?”²

Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple, “... Remember also that we derive from Ramakrishna. For myself it was Ramakrishna who personally came and first turned me to this Yoga. Vivekananda in the Alipore Jail gave me the foundations of that knowledge which is the basis of our Sadhana.”³

SHYAM KUMARI

¹ *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, by A B Purani, Fourth Edition, p 51

² *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p 59

³ *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 27, p 435

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE FUTURE OF INDIA

The teachings of Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna and the books written on him by others led us to believe that he had made no mention of the new spirit that is moulding the country, the ideas that are flooding the whole of India, that so many youths carried away by the waves of that spirit are spurning life and sacrificing themselves. How can it be taken as true that he has made no mention of that spirit? That the God seated in all hearts had not noticed it?

He who by his footfall brought down the Satya Yuga on the earth, at whose touch the earth was steeped in happiness, by whose advent centuries of inertia were dissolved, the little awakening of whose power reverberated through the length and breadth of the world, he who was full, the founder of a new era, the sum-total of all past incarnations, we could not put trust in the fact that he had no vision of the future of India or had not spoken of it. We believe that what he did not speak, he did in deed. He moulded the future of India, called to him the future representative of India and moulded him. The future representative was 'Swami Vivekananda'. Many hold the opinion that the love of the country was his own contribution. But viewed from a subtle angle, his patriotism was the gift of his revered Gurudev. He himself made no claim as his own. The way the world-teacher had moulded him he deemed the best way of moulding the future of India. For him no rule nor custom was binding. He had moulded him out and out in the spirit of a hero. He was a born hero, it was his birth-right. Sri Ramakrishna used to tell him, "Thou art ever a hero." He knew that the power he was infusing in Vivekananda would by its irradiation cover the country with the effulgence of the sun-rays. Our youths must be infused with the spirit of a hero. They have to serve the country careless of any peril and remember always the divine message "THOU ART EVER A HERO."

*

When scepticism had reached its height, the time had come for spirituality to assert itself and establish the reality of the world as a manifestation of the spirit, the secret of the confusion created by the senses, the magnificent possibilities of man and the ineffable beatitude of God. This is the work whose consummation Sri Ramakrishna came to begin and all the development of the previous two thousand years and more since Buddha appeared has been a preparation for the harmonisation of spiritual teaching and experience by the Avatar of Dakshineswar.

The long ages of discipline which India underwent are now drawing to an end. A great light is dawning in the East, a light whose first heralding glimpses are already seen on the horizon; a new day is about to break, so glorious that even the last of the *avatars* cannot be sufficient to explain it, although without

him it would not have come. The perfect expression of Hindu spirituality was the signal for the resurgence of the East.¹

*

The East alone has some knowledge of the truth, the east alone can teach the West, the East alone can save mankind. Through all these ages Asia has been seeking for a light within, and whenever she has been blessed with a glimpse of what she seeks, a great religion has been born, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Mahomedanism with all their countless sects. But the grand workshop of spiritual experiment, the laboratory of the soul has been India, where thousands of great spirits have been born in every generation who were content to work quietly in their own souls, perfect their knowledge, hand down the results of their experiments to a few disciples and leave the rest to others to complete. They did not hasten to proselytise, were in no way eager to proclaim themselves, but merely added their quota of experience and returned to the source from which they had come. The immense reservoir of spiritual energy stored up by the self-repression was the condition of this birth of *avatārs*, of men so full of God that they could not be satisfied with silent bliss, but poured it out on the world, not with the idea of proselytising but because they wished to communicate their own ecstasy of realisation to others who were fit to receive it either by previous *tapasyā* or by the purity of their desires. Of all these souls Sri Ramakrishna was the last and greatest, for while others felt God in a single or limited aspect, he felt Him in His illimitable unity as the sum of an illimitable variety. In him the spiritual experiences of the millions of saints who had gone before were renewed and united. Sri Ramakrishna gave to India the final message of Hinduism to the world. A new era dates from his birth, an era in which the peoples of the earth will be lifted for a while into communion with God and spirituality become the dominant note of human life. What Christianity failed to do, what Mahomedanism strove to accomplish in times as yet unripe, what Buddhism half-accomplished for a brief period and among a limited number of men, Hinduism as summed up in the life of Sri Ramakrishna has to attempt for all the world. This is the reason of India's resurgence, this is why God has breathed life into her once more, why great souls are at work to bring about her salvation, why a sudden change is coming over the hearts of her sons. The movement of which the first outbreak was political, will end in a spiritual consummation.²

*

¹ *S A B C L* Vol 1, pp 799-800

² *Ibid* , Vol 1, pp 800-801

If we had succeeded in Europeanising ourselves, we would have lost for ever our spiritual capacity, our intellectual force, our national elasticity and power of self-renovation. That tragedy has been enacted more than once in history, only the worst and most mournful example of all would have been added. Had the whole activity of the country been of the derivative and alien kind, that result would have supervened. But the life-breath of the nation still moved in the religious movements of Bengal and the Punjab, in the political aspirations of Maharashtra and in the literary activity of Bengal. Even here it was an undercurrent, the peculiar temperament and vitality of India struggling for self-preservation under a load of foreign ideas and foreign forms, and it was not till in the struggle between these two elements the balance turned in favour of the national *dharma* that the salvation of India was assured. The resistance of the conservative element in Hinduism, tamasic, inert, ignorant, uncreative though it was, saved the country by preventing an even more rapid and thorough disintegration than actually took place and by giving respite and time for the persistent national self to emerge and find itself. It was in religion first that the soul of India awoke and triumphed. There were always indications, always great forerunners, but it was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and “mystic” without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him that the battle was won. The going forth of Vivekananda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer.¹

*

The Bengali has always led and still leads the higher thought of India, because he has eminently the gifts which are most needed for the new race that has to arise. He has the emotion and imagination which is open to the great inspirations, the mighty heart-stirring ideas that move humanity when a great step forward has to be taken. He has the invaluable gift of thinking with the heart. He has, too, a subtle brain which is able within certain limits to catch shades of meaning and delicacies of thought, both those the logic grasps and those which escape the mere logical intellect. Above all, he has in a greater degree than other races the yet undeveloped faculty of direct knowledge, latent in humanity and now to be evolved, which is above reason and imagination, the faculty which in Sri Ramakrishna, the supreme outcome of the race, dispensed with education and commanded any knowledge he desired easily and divinely.²

*

¹ *Ibid* , Vol 2, p 37

² *Ibid* , Vol 3, p 327

The original achievement of a Kalidasa accomplishing the highest in every line of poetic creation is so incredible to the European mind that it has been sought to cleave that mighty master of harmonies into a committee of three. Yet it is paralleled by the accomplishment in philosophy of Shankara in a short life of thirty-two years and dwarfed by the universal mastery of all possible spiritual knowledge and experience of Sri Ramakrishna in our own era.¹

*

Shankara's, great and temporarily satisfying as it was, is still only one synthesis and interpretation of the Upanishads. There have been others in the past which have powerfully influenced the national mind and there is no reason why there should not be a yet more perfect synthesis in the future. It is such a synthesis embracing all life and action in its scope that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda have been preparing.²

*

When the soul rises higher, it follows by preference its own ideas, experiences, opinions, temperament, Guru, *ista*, but it does not turn an ignorant and exclusive eye upon others. "There are many paths," it cries, "and all lead equally to God. All men, even the sinner and the atheist are my brothers in Sadhana and the Beloved is drawing them each in His own way to the One without a second." But when the full knowledge dawns, I embrace all experiences in myself, I know all ideas to be true, all opinions useful, all experiences and attitudes means and stages in the acquisition of universal experience and completeness, all Gurus imperfect channels or incarnations of the one and only Teacher, all *istas* and Avatars to be God Himself.

That is what Ramakrishna taught by His life and Sadhana and therefore is He the Avatar of the age, the One who prepares the future of humanity. But there is a danger of turning Him into the Guru of a sect, the incarnate God of a dogmatic religion, to stultify His own life and teachings by making Him the object of a narrow attachment, an intolerant reverence, a sectarian worship. That must be avoided. It is the great curse which attends the organisation of religion. Let us have done with sects and churches and worship God only.

The destruction of bondage, the realisation of freedom, the trampling upon our fetters, that is the first need of the future. It was to give *mukti* that Ramakrishna came, not to impose a new bondage. Therefore was Vivekananda His Apostle to the Gentiles, a man who in all things asserted freedom. The soul of Hinduism languishes in an unfit body. Break the mould that the soul may live.

¹ *Ibid* , p 338

² *Ibid* , p 344

Is it not the first teaching of Yoga to destroy the *dehātmaka-buddhi*, the blindness that identifies the soul with its temporary body? If the body were young, adaptable, fit, the liberated soul might use it, but it is decrepit, full of ill-health and impurity. It must be changed, not by the spirit of Western iconoclasm which destroys the soul with the body, but by national Yoga.¹

*

A light has been seen by some radiating from the bodies of highly developed spiritual persons, even extending to the emission of an enveloping aura and there has been recorded an initial phenomenon of this kind in the life of so great a spiritual personality as Ramakrishna.²

*

Thus said Ramakrishna and thus said Vivekananda. Yes, but let me know also the truths which the Avatar cast not forth into speech and the prophet has omitted from his teachings. There will always be more in God than the thought of man has ever conceived or the tongue of man has ever uttered.

What was Ramakrishna? God manifest in a human being; but behind there is God in His infinite impersonality and His universal Personality. And what was Vivekananda? A radiant glance from the eye of Shiva; but behind him is the divine gaze from which he came and Shiva himself and Brahma and Vishnu and OM all-exceeding.³

*

And in a recent unique example, in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, we see a colossal spiritual capacity, first driving straight to the divine realisation, taking, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence, and then seizing upon one Yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realisation and possession of God by the power of love, by the extension of inborn spirituality into various experience and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge. Such an example cannot be generalised. Its object also was special and temporal, to exemplify in the great and decisive experience of a master-soul the truth, now most necessary to humanity, towards which a world long divided into jarring sects and schools is with difficulty labouring, that all sects are forms and fragments of a single integral truth and all disciplines labour in their different ways towards one supreme experience.⁴

(To be continued)

¹ *Ibid* , pp 462-463

² *Ibid* , Vol 16, pp 23-24

³ *Ibid* , Vol 7, p 98

⁴ *Ibid* , Vol 20, p 36

A PRE-PONDICHERY POEM BY HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA AND SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENT

STRANGE

It is the strangest thing to be
Eternity.
And gaze
On small unnumbered days
Go by—
To be the silence at the end,
And then descend
Alone
Into a world of moan,
And cry.
It is the strangest thing to live
A fugitive
On this
Wild earth and love and kiss
And plan...
I, the immortal voiceless one,
To have begun
These coloured blossoms on the grave
Called man.

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

SRI AUROBINDO TO DILIP KUMAR ROY

I have always admired Harin's poetry... His language and rhythm are always beautiful, and he has grown in ease and mastery; his images also are fine and vivid. The thought is not always quite successful—there is sometimes an excess of exaggeration, sometimes a fall... This poem, however, is original in rhythmic movement and perfectly phrased and constructed in which there is no exaggeration or fall of thought anywhere.

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

THANK you for so prompt a letter of genuine sympathy after hearing from S about my fracture. But why do you say I have had repeatedly to cope with such accidents? In my life of 87 years and of at least 870 tosses, this is the first time I have broken a bone—though I seem to have counterbalanced my long immunity by breaking the biggest bone in the body, the thigh-bone! You may be interested to realise that the leg is the same—the right one—and the bone too identical—the femur—as Sri Aurobindo's in 1938. So in one sense I may be considered to have walked very faithfully in my Guru's footsteps. Unfortunately I have done it with a great initial disadvantage: having had infantile paralysis—fully in the left leg and partially in the right.

I have heard that when Sri Aurobindo had his fracture and his body was thus made somewhat abnormal he remarked. "Here is one more problem to solve." Evidently he had the subject of physical Supramentalisation in mind. So we may say that up to the end of 1938 there was no question of changing the range of his Integral Yoga. And the hope the Mother had earlier expressed of curing me by the Supermind's power was still a golden prospect. Even in 1950 Sri Aurobindo did not radically change his range; only, he for a purpose of his own gave up his body's fulfilment and left it to the Mother to fulfil the ultimate aim. Now that she too has abandoned it for her own reasons, the whole problem on which you have dwelt has arisen: "Will it be realised by any of her children in the near future?"

You have dwelt on it with two focal points in your letter to Nirod as well as in the letter to me. One is the question of postponement as declared by me. The other is whether anybody staying outside the Ashram and not in the intimate physical presence of our Gurus could be thought of as enjoying the privilege of getting physically supramentalised. In this connection you refer to a passage in Nirod's correspondence with Sri Aurobindo and you state your own case in which, in spite of your proposing to offer all your possessions to the Mother and settle in the Ashram, the Mother told you to carry on your yoga and your work outside the Ashram. Your query is whether by being told this you could be said to have been excluded from the possibility of becoming a supramental Swiss.

I have written out a reply in place of Nirod. He has read it and signed it as showing his approval. I am enclosing it with this letter of my own.

Let me end by again appreciating your concern for me and by hinting that paradoxically this terrible-seeming accident at so advanced a stage of senescence (though luckily not of senility) has brought an unexpected inner boon.

Reply in place of Nirod

As regards physical transformation, it is not only Amal who has written that it is postponed. Nolini also said the same thing.

Several doers of the Integral Yoga have wonderful experiences seeming to relate to the body. But these experiences are really in the subtle-physical and, in spite of them, the gross-physical remains unchanged. Neither Sri Aurobindo nor the Mother achieved physical supramentalisation though it can be inferred from certain statements of theirs that if their yoga had been an isolated one they would have finished it long ago.

After the supramental manifestation on February 29, 1956 in the earth's subtle-physical layer, the Supermind has become an active factor in the earth's evolutionary process. Slowly it will press into the gross-physical layer in the course of time. What our present yoga seems to be is a participation in a gradual process extending over a long span of time which would be more than our present lives. In other words what Amal has somewhere called the "revolutionary" phase of our yoga which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were carrying on with a view to achieving everything in one life is no more there. It has given place to an evolutionary phase.

I believe that without the close physical presence of our Gurus the final transformation, involving a lot of difficulty and danger, cannot be done. But this does not mean that those whom the Mother herself commanded to work and do yoga outside the Ashram were considered unfit for it. Even in the Ashram the time had not come for the final stage. So it did not crucially matter, in relation to the ultimate transformation, whether one was in the Ashram or away from it—particularly when one was outside by the Mother's wish. If the time had come for the final phase these people would certainly have been summoned to be here. To see the situation in terms of exclusion is unwarranted. There is really no inconsistency in what Sri Aurobindo wrote and the actual state of affairs as regards being in and out of the Ashram.

The Mother's wanting Ananta to be here while advising you to work outside is easy to understand. The only chance for him to progress was in the Ashram.

You have mentioned politics. The Mother was against politics as practised today, but surely she could not exclude from the Supermind's sphere any part of essential human activity. The same would hold in the matter of money-making.

To speak of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother failing is short-sighted. We can only say that they chose not to continue their work as at one time envisaged. We must remember that line in *Savitri*.

His failure is not failure whom God leads.

Also to be remembered are Sri Aurobindo's words to Dilip They called on him

not to have crude superficial ideas about the Avatar's work. Sri Aurobindo asked why the Avatar should not choose what looked like failure if such failure suited better his long-term strategy.

*

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have been to us both separate and one. Sri Aurobindo put the Mother forward in his spiritual work, saying that this arrangement was made not only for convenience's sake but because it was the right arrangement for an aim like earth-transformation, involving as it did the detailed play of the Shakti, the dynamic divinity.

In the matter of spiritual relationship, he declared that to accept the Mother as one's Guru was automatically to accept him. On the other hand, according to him, "if one is open to Sri Aurobindo and not to the Mother it means that one is not really open to Sri Aurobindo". This implied that one could seemingly open oneself to him without opening oneself to the Mother, but such a disparity would violate the full, integral doing of his Yoga. The Mother is the all-compassing figure in it.

After he had left his body, his oneness with the Mother and his approach to us through her became even more a dynamic truth than before. But one may not have realised it at once. I can tell you how it was driven home to me.

When, on her 80th birthday the Mother gave a message in which she referred to her body as "un corps transitoire" in French and translated the phrase into English as "a transitory body" I got a shock. It suggested to me that she might give up her body some time and, what was worse, its constitution was such that it could not be a lasting one—one which would gradually undergo complete transformation and become a spiritual physical instrument with an intrinsic permanence, a natural immortality, answering to the non-transitory character of her divine consciousness.

I raised a vehement objection to the word "transitory". I proposed that the right epithet would be one which would translate in English as "transitional". This epithet would mean that the Mother's present bodily state was part of a changing process—a phase among various phases of physical alteration leading ultimately to "le corps glorieux", the human body glorified into being divine.

When the Mother did not seem impressed by my protest and went even to the extent of saying: "All bodies are transitory", I impulsively blurted out: "If Sri Aurobindo were here he would never let you use the word 'transitory'." After a moment's silence absorbing this most extraordinary outburst such as no one could ever have been expected to make, the Mother remarked in a steady yet cutting tone: "You are being insolent. Do you know where Sri Aurobindo is?"

Suddenly I felt my eyes opening wide and seeing the truth. Surely Sri

Aurobindo was with her all the time, surely he was one with her and whatever she said came from him!

I answered "Oh, I am sorry, Mother. I know that he is centred in you and when you say or do anything, it is he who is working. Please forgive me." She smiled compassionately and blessed the fool in front of her. What "transitory" had truly meant remained unexplained. I lost all urge to pursue the matter further at that time.

In connection with this incident I remember an occasion when the Mother casually observed to a few of us present: "People are saying that now something of Sri Aurobindo's facial expression is coming into me. My smile looks somewhat like his."

My sense of Sri Aurobindo's immanence in the Mother came acutely to the fore on the occasion when the question arose of seating people during a certain special meditation. A number of disciples had come to be allowed to sit upstairs meditating with the Mother during darshan days when the larger group sat downstairs around the Samadhi in the Ashram courtyard. Nolini had made a list and I was given, along with some others, the supposed privilege of sitting in Sri Aurobindo's room. The Mother herself as usual would be in the Meditation Hall, the outermost of the three parallel rooms upstairs—the room at whose inmost extremity there was a small room where Sri Aurobindo and she used to sit and give darshan.

The moment I was told that my seat was in Sri Aurobindo's room I could not help protesting: "No, Mother, I don't want to sit there. I want to sit where you will be sitting." She gave me a knowing look, smiled faintly and told Nolini: "Change Amal's seat as he wishes." To me Sri Aurobindo's room was indeed very sacred—permeated as it was by the atmosphere of his stay there over 23 years. Like everybody I knew how intense this atmosphere was and yet the conviction was borne in on me that Sri Aurobindo must be most directly present where the Mother was. Now that he had left his own body his presence would be most powerful, most dynamically immediate in her body.

Of course, one cannot deny that Sri Aurobindo could be present at many places at once. His would be a multifarious omnipresence, and such would be a fact not only in terms of wide-spread infinite consciousness but also in terms of a concentrated focal point—a subtle body setting forward Sri Aurobindo just as he had been set forward in the years of his physical embodiment.

I recollect a talk with the Mother on this aspect of Sri Aurobindo's existence after he had passed away. An account had come of how on one occasion Dilip Kumar Roy, after he had left the Ashram, had been reading a long poetic composition of his. Indira, his chief disciple, who had many occult powers which had developed during her short stay in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram with Dilip, said that she saw Sri Aurobindo himself listening to the recital. I reported to the Mother what Indira had said. The Mother remarked: "It is true that Sri

Aurobindo had made an emanation of himself to accompany Dilip. And it is evident that he has not withdrawn this emanation. Indira with her 'second sight' perceived its presence. But it does not mean that Sri Aurobindo in his central reality in a subtle form was there. That reality is here in the Ashram, with me."

I may add that for many, after both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have withdrawn from the visible physical scene, their central reality, in a subtle yet recognisable form corresponding broadly to their previous physical manifestation, is in the Ashram and not anywhere else. That is the basic importance of this place where the two Avatars had physically lived. To the sincere soul anywhere, both of them are concretely its companions, but that is by way of emanation. The emanation is indeed no other than they, being essentially a gift of the Divine's Grace, yet there is always the centre of a circle distinguished from the radii carrying the effluence of this centre all around.

A famous definition of God's presence is: "A circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere." This is true of God in His eternal infinity, but when God has taken a physical form, when He has assumed Avatarhood and made Himself like us for our sake and entered into the chequered manifoldness of our human existence, the very fact of this earthly focussing of that eternal infinity not only conveys in general an extra power of Godhead to the earth; it also sets up a particular source of this power where the earthly focussing established its bodily self-expression.

We cannot ever forget how that self-expression glowed beatifically among us while it sought to spread its light and love and laughter to every corner of our long-labouring, grief-pursued yet immensity-haunted and mortality-challenging speck of a globe careering, secretly all-important among millions of galaxies, through endless time and space. (8.12 1991)

*

You have asked, "What is it to be an Aurobindonian?"

To me an "Aurobindonian" is essentially one who constantly carries on the practice of the presence of Sri Aurobindo and aspires to catch as much as possible the traits which we discern as typical of him. What are, in brief, the "Aurobindonian" traits?

A poised serenity of tranquil strength,
A wide unshaken look on time's unrest,

an immense patience allied to an untiring pursuit of perfection, a deep faith in an omnipotent guidance leading us through all, an up-gaze towards a plenary Truth by which every side of life can be transformed, a universal light in the out-looking eyes, a compassionate insight into human frailties, a joyous imaginative

response to Nature, both living and inanimate, a lordly sense of the supreme Self of selves, a simple heart ever adoring the Divine Mother and with profound humility facing always an Infinite still to be realised. (22 11 1991)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

THE MAN OF WEALTH

A HOLY man had reached the outskirts of a village and was about to settle under a tree for the night when he saw a villager running towards him.

“The stone,” gasped the man, as he drew near. “Give me the stone.”

“What stone?” asked the holy man.

“Last night I dreamt that a holy man would come to this spot and give me a diamond.” said the villager. “Give it to me.”

“I did find a stone on my way here,” said the holy man, opening a small bundle he was carrying “Ah, here it is Take it.”

The stone he was holding out was a diamond. It was as large as a man’s fist. The villager took it with a trembling hand.

“It must be worth a fortune!” he gasped, holding it up to the light. The holy man said nothing. The villager, confused, backed away from him and then abruptly turned and ran

The holy man lay under the tree and went to sleep. When he awoke the next morning he saw the villager, wild-eyed and dishevelled sitting a few feet away.

“Is there anything I can do for you?” asked the holy man. “Yes,” said the villager, quietly. “Give me the wealth which enables you to give away a priceless gem without batting an eyelid.”

ANON

(*The Hindu*, November 16, 1991)

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1992)

“WE have asked Nolinida, as you had told us to do.”

“What did you ask him?”

“Have you already forgotten? You said that if we wanted to know anything about Mother, it was to Nolinida that we should go.”

“Oh yes! Now I remember. So, what did he tell you?”

“Many things, very many things. All that you had said and more. You never told us that once, when Mother had to go to Karaikal, she was obliged to stay in a filthy, dark, termite-ridden room!” (*laughter*)

There is so much that I did not tell you! Which is just why I asked you to see Nolini. But now tell me your story.”

“We were a little afraid to go and speak to him, thinking that he wouldn't like to meet us. Everyone seems to be somewhat afraid of him. And, indeed, at first, he refused to see us. But when he heard that it was you who had sent us, he laughed loudly and called us in. We sat around him and he told us so many stories, all sorts of reminiscences of the olden days. We had never expected he would chat with us with such warmth and friendliness. He told us about Mother's first arrival here, what he and the others thought about her, what your life was like in those days, the food you ate—oh! all sorts of things. While he was talking, some of us felt at times that it was you!”

“All right then! Start reciting those old stories, one after the other, each of you. I have forgotten most of them anyway. Then they can be collected into a 'Reminiscences'.”

“Surely you are laughing at us!”

“No, no, not at all.”

“He said it was from you that he first heard about Mother. You told him that a sadhika of a very high order was coming from France to see you. He described to us, in very clear and simple language, the fear and nervousness that had filled him and his companions when they heard that. But to us it sounded very funny. He told us that since you had given them a great deal of freedom, they had gradually got accustomed to a mode of conduct and a turn of language that were far from being refined or courteous. They had almost ceased to care about all those socially acceptable details. It sounded very much like the complaints our elders make about us when they tell us that we have no manners and no discipline. They felt that if this French lady wished to visit them, she may do so, but her coming should in no way curb their freedom! Yet strangely enough, that attitude gradually gave way to one of friendship towards her,

intimacy even, until she became the Divine Mother. But that was possible because you were there, and because of Mother's own greatness. It was you who established her as the Mother. She taught them much, but there was one thing in particular which they learnt and never forgot. He said it was something very deep that you had told them about. We didn't quite understand what he meant. You had said that you had never before seen such complete and absolute surrender as you had found in her. And that women alone were capable of such total self-giving."

"Why should that be difficult to understand? When a woman loves a person truly, is there anything that she cannot do for him? Doesn't she lose herself entirely in him? Only to love and serve him and make him happy becomes the aim of her existence. In the same way, when we love the Divine, we offer ourselves wholly at His feet, just like the infant gives itself unquestioningly up to its mother."

"Yes, Nolinida said the same thing too. Mother surrendered herself to you with the absoluteness of a child, he explained. It was as if she had known nothing, had heard nothing until then. Everything would have to be learnt from the beginning. And yet she was already such a great scholar. In France, she had studied the Gita and the Upanishads and had even translated some of them and you have also told us how accomplished a musician and artist she was. Yes, and with you, she even studied Sanskrit and Bengali, didn't she?"

"There was, too, something quite unexpected and very interesting that Nolinida told us. It was about Mother helping to set up a shop! She actively encouraged and helped one from your group to start a shop. And on the day it was opened, you too were present there though I can't now recall what it was called."

"The Aryan Stores?"

"Yes, that's it. But why a shop? Were you in such dire straits?"

"No. But if she can start a school or a gymnasium or a place where you can learn music and dancing, why can she not set up a business? All money really belongs to the Divine, although at present the hostile anti-divine forces have their hold on it. You can see for yourselves what misuse money is being put to. But some day wealth has to be won back from these hostile forces and used in the service of the Divine. This is the deeper significance behind Mother's helping to start a shop. Do you understand?"

"A little."

"What else did he tell you?"

"Oh, many things, very interesting stories, but most of them happened much later, after Mother had come the second time, to stay here for good."

"Well, what's the harm in telling me some of them?"

"If we do the talking, then when shall we listen to you! At one point Nolinida made a joke: he said that Mother once did a special karmayoga with cats."

“Why should it be a joke?”

“Is it really true?”

“Some day I'll tell you how a cat used to come and sit with us during the Meditation.”

“Yes, that is what he said. At first there came a wild street cat which gradually grew gentle and tame and so pretty that you called her ‘Sundari’. (*Laughter*) Sundari had kittens, one of whom was named Bushy. It was Bushy who used to leave her little ones at Mother's feet, as if asking for her blessings. Two of them grew up to become Big Boy and Kiki, and Kiki was the one who used to attend your Meditations. She even had visions and experiences so that her whole body would begin to quiver. But Big Boy was not very impressed by all that and would often fight her and beat her.

“And the cats were so well looked-after, it was as if they were royalty! There was always milk as well as fish for them, and sometimes you would feed them with your own hand. Nolinida said that Mother had made a pact of friendship with the King of the Cats. In fact, all sorts of beings and spirits of the animal world and the vegetable world, as well as of the supernatural worlds, came to Mother to beg favours from her. It all sounded strange, and yet so wonderful! We go and see her so often, she always smiles sweetly and puts her hand on our heads—but we could never imagine these things happening to her! All we know is that She is our mother, and that is enough for us to be happy.”

“If you truly knew that, then it is all you need to know. Just be like the little kittens and trust wholly in her. That will see you through to the end. This is a spiritual truth.”

“Nolinida did not tell us anything about the spiritual life. Instead he said that another thing Mother had taught was Order. Always to keep all one's belongings in order. But that did not seem a very important teaching!”

“Didn't he explain?”

“Yes, he discussed with us how we keep our things, our clothes, our books and all the rest. Everything is mostly in a mess and when we need the least thing, we have to hunt for it in ten different places. So much time and energy are lost and temper too very often. He added that we hadn't learnt how to handle material objects, nor did we have any sense of neatness and order.”

(*Laughing*) “Isn't he right?”

(*Somewhat ashamed*) “Yes, he is. Just yesterday, it took me half an hour to find a book!”

“Just look at the difference between the untidy indisciplined student and the good one. The former throws down his books on the bed, hangs up his shirt on his chair, looks everywhere for his keys. He has his dinner any time before eleven o'clock, wakes up in the mornings too in the same unpredictable fashion. On the other hand the other boy's room is sparkingly neat, such a pleasure to the eye! Compare the two even further and you will find that they differ even in

their temperaments. The latter is quiet and patient, while the former is always restless. For you must remember that wherever there is beauty, harmony, order, there has Mahalakshmi stepped in ”

“Yes, Mother once said that she could tell what we were like simply by looking at the state our cupboards were in. She also told us something about you.”

“Is that so? And—”

“It was that though you did not keep your things absolutely spic-and-span, you always knew exactly where each thing was. (*Laughter*). The things that Mother uses always last long and stay beautiful, because she handles them not only with care but also with love. They have a life, a consciousness. One day she saw some flowers lying on the table. Nobody had bothered to put them in a vase, and they were wilted and dead. When Mother saw them she exclaimed ‘Poor flowers’, and straightaway put them in a vase full of water. She always kept her old things, it was as if they were her old friends. In this context, Nolinida told a funny story about you. One day, a sadhak, kicking at a door that refused to open, badly hurt his foot. When he let you know about it, you told him: ‘If you kick at the door, the door will naturally kick back at you.’ (*Laughter*).”

“But how can we know that Matter too has life, has consciousness?”

“Love it, the way Mother does. Treat things and handle them with affection, with care. Then they will respond, they will show you that they have life. Love can make them do that.”

“Nolinida told us so many lovely stories, we learnt so much from him. But he said he had many more which would take him days to tell us.”

“Wonderful, then go and see him again. He is one of our oldest disciples. He has seen and heard much, learned much from Mother. And now. . .”

“Now, please, resume your story. When did Mother come back?”

“Dates and figures! Do you really want me to remember those too?”

“I know!” cried out a little one joyfully. “In 1920, on the 24th of April. And that is why it is a Darshan Day.”

“That’s it!”

“So, how did you continue with your work during the intervening five years?”

“Well, ours was not really a work that was visible on the external plane. Except for the publication of the *Arya*, of course. After Mother left, I had to shoulder the full responsibility of the journal. Mother used to help enormously with its publication; she would keep the accounts, see to the printing, keep a list of the subscribers and so on. I would do the writing.”

“Which is something you do very easily! The moment you sit down to write, words pour out of your pen or your typewriter, like water out of a tap. Isn’t that so?” (*Laughter*).

“Yes, but unlike it they poured out quite noiselessly. (*Laughter*) Well, if it

had not been so, how could I have written so much, since for six years the *Arya* was filled with my writings only. And the subjects too were so difficult that they have earned me the title of 'philosopher', though I have never studied philosophy! Actually, whatever I wrote was the result of my yogic experience, though it certainly could not have been easy to write 64 pages every month."

"Really, it is so incredible, when one thinks about it. We always believed that a great deal of thought and study is required before one can write. But for you the words just came pouring down and page after page was filled. It was as if the melted snows came streaming down from the Himalayan peaks of knowledge (*Laughter*). I am reminded of a line from one of the poems of Nishikantoda.

"Words come, blown by every passing breeze.' "

(*Smiling*) "Exactly so. All Knowledge, Peace, Light, Force are gathered above your heads, waiting to come down. Between you and That, there is only a lid. Remove it, and you will see how everything comes rushing down." (*Laughter*)

"We really would never have believed this if it had not been you yourself who had told us. We have not heard of these things from anyone else before now... Besides writing, was there any other work that you did?"

"Yes, and a very great work, that of Sadhana, but I don't suppose you understood much about the subject. A part of that work was to prepare for Mother's coming, to remove all the obstacles that might hinder her coming."

"How could you do that, staying in Pondicherry? Isn't it very far from where she was?"

"When you are in difficulty or in danger or very sick, don't you call for our help? Don't even those who live in far-off lands? And doesn't the help reach you?"

"Oh yes, it does!"

"Help is of two kinds, the outer and the inner. The external help is often expressed by money, for instance. But in order to understand the inner help, you have to go within, because it is of a subtler kind. Haven't I told you that even when Mother was in France, she used to have the vision of many great souls who would help her in many ways? Such things and more are possible by the power of Yoga. For it was due to the Yogic force that several people here, who had no poetic abilities earlier, suddenly found themselves writing poetry! These are all complex matters, I will tell you more about them later."

"Didn't Mother write you letters?"

"Of course she did! But not very many. And they were all about her sadhana."

"Is it true that she fell seriously ill after she left Pondicherry? And that it was your Force that saved her?"

"Who told you so?"

(*Laughing*) "Our teacher."

“Then why did you ask me how I could send my help from here?”

“Yes, true, I never thought of that!” (*Laughter*)

Another child now broke in, curious to know:

“Did you really stay in your room all day? You never went out, even for a walk or a chat?”

“I used to go out. I used also to speak with others, but I never went for a walk nor did I chat in the way you do. I was invited to a few weddings in the early years, which I attended. I would also spend some time with my boys or meet whoever came from outside to see me.

“So this was how I lived during those six years. There were a few other things perhaps that I may have forgotten to tell you. If anyone of you would like to become a historian, maybe he would like to find out those details after doing some research. (*Laughter*) Have you read *The Pickwick Papers* by Dickens? There you may read all about the activities of an archaeologist! That may teach you something.”

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

(Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali)

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1991)

My Son

By the time I visited the Ashram with my child, my married life had already come to an end, though my husband continued to visit our house in Calcutta.

My child was my only preoccupation now—“the jewel of my eye,” as the Bengali saying goes. However, I had unfortunately learned very little about child-care, and neither had my mother, even after Sri Aurobindo enquired during our visit about his complexion, his speech and hearing defects, and other physical problems. The crisis came later when my son had a severe attack of diphtheria. As the condition became critical, I could think of nothing better than to telephone my husband and ask him to come to our assistance.

He was furious. “Why are you calling me now?” he demanded. “When I asked you to get the boy vaccinated against cholera, smallpox, diphtheria, polio and the rest, you refused point-blank. Now pay for it. But listen: diphtheria is extremely contagious. Take my advice and send the child to a nursing home to avoid catching the disease yourself.”

“What?” I exploded. “I shouldn’t nurse my own child? Since when is a mother’s life more precious than her son’s? How dare you sit at a safe distance and give me this fiendish advice? Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”

Despite this outburst, I did send for the doctor; my son’s condition was such that I could not do otherwise. He could scarcely breathe and his whole face had turned bluish. But by God’s grace the doctor was able to save him.

There was a kinder side to my husband’s nature though, which showed itself in the following incident. I was suffering from typhoid. The fever continued for days, but my doctor persisted with his treatment and giving me hope. My husband, somehow hearing of my illness, came to see me, even though I had told my doctor not to inform him or let him visit me.

As soon as my husband saw me he realised that the treatment was at fault, and that the doctor would have to be changed. Turning a deaf ear to my protests, he called in an eminent physician. The latter perceived at once that the treatment I had been receiving was indeed wrong. My brain had been affected, and had the correct treatment been delayed by two more days the damage would have been irreparable. So it was that my husband saved me, and that too at considerable financial cost.

When I had recovered, I asked him why he had bothered about me. He

knew full well that after my recovery, my attitude towards him would not change and my fangs would not spare him.

"I know your ingratitude," he replied. "But I couldn't let you die before my eyes." He said this even while our divorce case was still in progress. Such was our curious marital relationship.

My son was also to be a beneficiary of his care and generosity. Aside from his other disabilities, my child had locked knees and flat feet. He could not stand erect or walk straight. To balance he had to shuffle forward with his feet wide apart. One day his father came to visit us and saw his pitiable condition. He was greatly upset. "What have you done to the child?" he exclaimed, horrified. "Don't you know that if this defect isn't corrected now, the boy will be a lifelong cripple? I am taking him to a doctor immediately—his legs must be put in plaster."

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" I retorted vehemently. "If his feet are put in plaster how will he walk? His life will become miserable—"

"Would you prefer him to be a cripple for life? What kind of misery will he suffer when he will see that can't stand up and move about with his friends? How do you think he'll feel then? Won't he curse both of us? I can't allow this—he's my child as well as yours. Though you have never listened to me in anything, this time I'm going to have my own way."

As my husband had predicted, the doctor had the child put in a plaster jacket from hips to toes. For about two years, my son remained imprisoned in his white sepulchre. When finally the plaster was removed and I saw the condition of his feet and legs I burst into tears. The skin had sloughed off and there were wounds everywhere. The child wept with pain as the injuries were treated with medicine and dressed. Slowly his condition improved, but the doctor was of the opinion that he would have to be put in plaster a second time. As the days passed, however, it became apparent that this would not be necessary—the boy could walk adequately with crutches. Little by little he started to go to school, and after a year he had dispensed with his crutches and could walk normally. What a joy for both father and son! It made even the ten thousand rupees he had spent on his child's treatment fade into insignificance.

Though my husband had many serious faults this one bright spot shone through. He could not bear to see suffering, either in his relatives, his servants, or even in total strangers. He would take up each case and bear the financial burden of the treatment. Such is God's creation! The varied combinations and contradictions of traits found in human beings are both baffling and amazing.

After my son's recovery, I again went against my husband's wishes and had him admitted in St. Xavier's School. He objected that missionary schools spoil the children's character by Christianising them and giving them a foreign mentality rather than allowing them to retain a love for their religion and their motherland. I replied that there was no alternative as no other good private or

government schools were available. My husband pointed out that he had not had a bad education himself even without attending a missionary school, to which I answered that he had been a brilliant student, whereas our child was not. That ended the debate, and for once I believe that my point of view turned out to be the correct one. I had to take my son to school and bring him back every day in my car. I followed this routine for years and came to know the Fathers at the school; a friendship grew up with them which turned out later to be most fruitful.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

MYSTERY

MOONBEAMS sing,
Deep shadows hear,
In the forlorn woods
Beside the dark waters.

Night is asleep,
A child in a lap,
Not knowing Sun
Or shade of sorrow.

Darkness is the home
Of distant flares,
Awaiting release
From nothingness,
To furrow the fields
Of life with light.

JAYANTILAL

LABOUR OF LOVE

by

HUTA

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1992)

I REACHED London and stayed there almost two years. There I studied various things like artificial flower-making, bead-work, flower-arrangement, painting and a secretarial course. Later I made the most of these things when I returned to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

I had gone through bitter-sweet experiences which gave me courage and confidence in my life. This was what the Mother wanted, because I led an exceedingly secluded life. I lacked self-reliance.

Upon my arrival in London, the Mother wrote:

1959

To my dear little child Huta

Bonne année!

At your arrival at London, I want you to find my best wishes for a happy stay and a good success in your studies.

Let this year bring to you the realisation of your highest hopes, and your most sincere aspiration.

With love.

*

I was not satisfied with my studies. Distress, despondency and desolation nagged me day and night. It was not easy to put up with anything. There was a pain woven with doubts about my future. My dolorous mood matched the depressing weather.

Many a night I could not sleep for the bitter chill—neither did I dare to get out of my bed. So I huddled under the warm blankets. Then finally a restless slumber took over and the next morning I woke up exhausted. I dragged myself out of bed, shivering. My teeth chattered.

Within my heart I knew that there was always the Mother and hope. I wrote a letter to her. She answered on 19th February:

I have just received your letter in which you are asking my advice about your studies. Of course, you must follow your inspiration and do full-

heartedly the work which you feel you must do. It goes without saying that whatever you choose you must do it steadily and persistently if you want to obtain a result.

In any case you can be sure that the Force will be with you to help and assist you

With my love and blessings.

She also sent the message which she would distribute to people on her birthday—21st February:

In the mind which is a creator of differential contradictions there is supposed to be a perpetual incompatibility between the transcendent and the cosmic states of the Divine—as also between the Personal and the Impersonal, the One and the Many. The supramental consciousness, on the other hand, does not raise these problems, for there the way of experience of the mental Ignorance is abolished and the basis of all things is an indefeasible unity—whatever expression is there cannot diminish or contradict this unity (which is essential and not numerical) but lives in it and by it, never losing the hold on the supracosmic Reality which it expresses. This difference between Supermind and mind is difficult to explain fully to the mind, for it contradicts the logic of the mind and substitutes a way of knowing which is SWAYAMPRAKASHA (self-revealing) and rooted in a knowledge by identity of which the mind at its best can only grasp a thin reflection or a shadow. But it makes an immense difference in the possibilities of consciousness, a difference which one can only realise, not by thought, but by experience.

Miss Doris Tomlinson was a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. She ran the Sri Aurobindo Study Circle in London at her own place. Doris invited me to be at the meeting on 21st February. People there appreciated the message the Mother had sent to me.

There were readings from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's books. Doris asked me to read from *Prayers and Meditations* this prayer:

O Divine Master, grant that this day may be for us an opening to a complete consecration to Thy law, a more integral self-giving to Thy work, grant that in a communion with Thee ever deeper and more constant, we may unite always more, so that we may be Thy worthy servitors. Remove from us all egoism and mean pride, all covetousness and obscurity, so that all aflame with Thy divine love, we may be Thy torches in this world.

O Lord, eternal Master, enlighten us, guide our steps, show us the way towards the realisation of Thy law, towards the accomplishment of Thy work.

O Lord, become the sovereign Master of our lives and dispel all the darkness which can still prevent us from seeing and constantly communing with Thee.

Liberate us from all ignorance, liberate us from ourselves that we may open wide the doors of Thy glorious manifestation.

While I was reading, my soul stirred and my eyes filled with tears.

They admired my reading. But I knew that it would take me years to read and speak like English people.

There was spiritual discussion followed by meditation.

Every fortnight there was a meeting which I attended invariably.

*

The English weather was moody, unpredictable. I had to keep my umbrella with me all the time. I had yet to learn much about the shifting scenes of this city's climate. Also I had to surmount all my difficulties.

The Mother's unfailing letters and messages warmed my heart.

I received her encouraging letter dated 10th March:

My dear little child Huta,

I have received all your letters. Do not be discouraged because of difficulties. Whenever one wants to achieve something in life, difficulties come. Take them as a discipline (tapasya) to make you strong and you will more easily overcome them.

My love, help and blessings are always with you.

*

Not a single day did I forget my goal. The flame of aspiration was burning steadily, softly in the depth of my heart.

The Mother had ways and means to develop my consciousness. So everything was shaping according to her Will. Her Force prepared me to face all kinds of experiences which were essential to make me strong and spirited.

*

Now it was April. The sun was out, the cold winds were replaced by the first breath of Spring. This was my happiest moment after the gloom. Moreover, the Mother sent me with her love and blessings the message of 4th April—the anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's arrival day in Pondicherry:

Let the new birth become manifest in your heart and radiate in calm and joy and take up all the parts of your being, mind and vision and will and feeling and life and body. Let each date in your life be a date of its growth and greater completeness till all in you is the child of the Mother. Let the Light and Power and Presence envelop you and protect and cherish and foster, till all your inner and outer existence is one movement and an expression of its peace and strength and Ananda.

My soul steeped itself in these luminous blessed words of Sri Aurobindo.

(To be continued)

Copyright © Huta D. Hindocha

HOW I CAME TO SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

I AM the 14th child, the 8th daughter of my family. My mother, Subala Debi, was a great "Sadhika". She was very familiar with the Theosophist Annie Besant and later Krishnamurty. My mother was an active social worker. She used to write in Bengali newspapers on women's rights and education.

My brother Sukumar Chatterji secretly joined the Gaddar party and was linked with the revolutionaries under Sri Aurobindo and his brother Barin

I was much fascinated by the revolutionary movement and had heard of Sri Aurobindo and his one year's imprisonment as well as his leaving British India on the strength of an inner command and afterwards giving up politics and practising Yoga in Pondicherry.

In 1938 I was in Sir Ganga Ram Institution at Lahore doing B T. On 15th August the Principal, Miss Mrinalini Chattopadhyaya, told me it was Sri Aurobindo's birthday and took me to her residence. She told me of the "darshans", and that the sadhaks themselves did everything, even building Golconde, but that everyone could not go to the Ashram and one had to be chosen. I asked her who else was there like Sri Aurobindo. She said that none was like him. She said too that there was a French lady who looked after the Ashram and was called the Mother by everybody. She showed me a locket she was wearing with embossed portraits of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

In 1943 I was married to Lt. G. L. Bhattacharya, then in field service. In June 1946, he, now a captain, returned from field service and we had our first home at No. 1 Queens Park, Ballygunge, Calcutta. The same year, 1946, in October, I went to my friend in Amritsar and looked up Miss Chattopadhyaya at Sir Ganga Ram Institution, Lahore, and again asked her how one could go to Pondicherry and see Sri Aurobindo. She told me that I could see him on 15th August. She asked me to write to the Secretary, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, for permission to visit Pondicherry.

In late June my husband said he was to go on tour to Madras. I insisted on accompanying him with my son Pradip and my cousin Nilima. I told my husband about my plan to go to Pondicherry from Egmore Station.

I reached Pondicherry and went to the Ashram and met Nolini Kanta Gupta, the Secretary. He gave us a dingy room with no fan. I saw Dr. Indra Sen and told him about the poor accommodation. He said these were the tests I had to pass.

That night due to heat and mosquitoes we could not sleep. We brought out our cots onto the footpath and spent the night there. The next day the Mother was to give darshan at 9 a.m. Dr. Indra Sen said that only if I could tell the Mother about my problem, could the room be changed. My cousin's friend, Minnie of Art House, said the same. Those days so small a child of a year was not allowed in. The Ashramites were surprised to find that Pradip also had

permission to stay in the Ashram. When the Mother was giving flowers as tokens of blessings, I told her how I slept on the footpath with my one-year-old son. She patted my head. Minnie was thrilled and said the problem would be over. I did not understand what there was to be so thrilled about at being tapped on the head. The Mother gave us a nice airy room on the first floor of a house just opposite the Balcony from where she used to bless the Ashramites every morning.

My husband unhappily left us and went back to Delhi. On 15th August 1948 at the Mother's Balcony Darshan when I and my cousin with Pradip in her arms were standing along with others, Sahana-di shouted, "ছেলে চুবি হয়ে গেছে" ("The boy's been stolen!"). Everyone knew Pradip because there was no other one-year-old child in the Ashram then. Turning round I saw his father laughing with Pradip in his arms. He had arrived on leave exactly on Darshan Day. Everyone began saying, "He is chosen. Even without his conscious desire or effort he had Sri Aurobindo's darshan."

I had bought all the books available at that time written by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. My husband said, "I shall take up religion when I am 50." My Mejda (Sukumar) had, however, prophesied at the time of our marriage, "You'll see, he will tie a flower to his top-knot and do puja ringing the bell." In the Ashram Library of that time my husband found a book by P. G. Wodehouse with Sri Aurobindo's signature within. He said, "The man who has read P. G. Wodehouse and is thereafter practising yoga—there must be something in him!" After Darshan he did not say anything about Sri Aurobindo, but was very much attracted to the Mother. He used to attend the Mother's Darshan at 10 a.m. He spent one month of his leave at Pondicherry and liked the atmosphere.

In 1961, while on duty on the East Pakistan border he was wounded and captured. There was no news whether he was alive or dead for two days. We used to get East Pakistan newspapers and I used to listen to Dacca radio news. Later I learnt that he had received a bullet-injury and was at Jessore Hospital. By 15 April S.I.B. Deputy Director, S. K. Sinha, came and said, "Be prepared for long separation. On 11 November he was tried and convicted to 8-years' R.I."

As he was in solitary confinement, I wrote to him, "This is your opportunity to find your *īṣṭa devatā* through meditation and yoga. Therefore read Sri Aurobindo—he found Vasudeva when he was in Alipore Jail in 1910." So I began sending him *The Life Divine* Part I in the form of sheets typed out by Pradip and myself and later the book through the lawyer Ghatak in the beginning of 1962. Subsequently, I sent him Part II, and the *Letters and Bases of Yoga*.

In 1964 he was operated upon for piles. He was not given medicines regularly. When I went to see him afterwards I found him emaciated. Later he recounted his experience of being detached from his body, looking down at it

lying on the operation table, and asking himself if he had to get back into it and not liking the idea very much. The same year, on 31 October, he was released and taken straight to Delhi.

In 1964 Dīwali, November, he came home. I cannot express my feelings of that time. I found him ruined in health. He could not handle money or drive the car which I had managed to keep functioning somehow. I found that he had practised *dhyāna* regularly every morning and evening and even at midnight

In December-end 1964 when he got three postings within 24 hours (to Jabalpur S.T.C , then to Delhi, then somewhere in Punjab) I actually gave him an ultimatum to choose between me and his beloved army. I refused to look after our sons and their education all by myself. Four years was more than enough. That is how he came to write to General J. N. Chowdhury and retired prematurely with full pension.

On 15 August 1967 I felt I must see Sri Aurobindo's eyes open in the photograph of him in "samadhī", and actually saw this happen in the Mahajati Sadan function. I and my cousin Nilima-di also saw a halo of light rising in steps around the photographs of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and coming down and again going up. In Sri Aurobindo's case it rose from the left like a staircase, first pale red, then golden, then blue. For the Mother it was first pale golden and then white. When Sri Aurobindo was being read out, I saw a small halo like a torchlight behind his head, which disappeared after the programme ended.

In December 1967 when my husband got one month's leave we went to Pondicherry. This was our second visit. Sri Aurobindo was no more, but I never felt that. I felt as if I had come home. During our stay at Golconde for a week, I shed tears all the time, I do not know why. The Balcony Darshan was on 28 and 29 December, I had the darshan with my eyes full of tears. On 3 January during Nolini Kanta Gupta's talk on *Savitri*, as he read and spoke, I could not see his face, but only a golden light. When we went to have Darshan of the Mother on 5 January 1968 and she spread her hands to take the flowers, I broke down and could not stop. I was continuously weeping and did not see anything, not even her face. Nolini said, "I saw Mother looking at you so lovingly." Next morning I woke up with the line from Tagore ringing in me, "ভয় হতে তব অভয়-মাঝে/ নূতন জন্ম দাও হে" ("Out of my fear I am born anew within thy protection, fearless") and feeling as though I had talked a lot the preceding night, although my husband said that I was lost in myself and had not spoken at all.

When he knelt before the Mother and looked straight into her eyes, he asked her to burn up all impurities, purify him and make him suitable for yoga. He felt a burning sensation inside and saw a small figure of Sri Aurobindo seated in the centre of his forehead (the *ājñā cakra* site) This was a unique experience for him. He had changed a lot in his views. His faith in God grew and grew to the last. During his second heart-attack in semi-consciousness, when I helped him to

sit up, he said, "Oh Bhagawan!" three times. When I told him this, he could not believe he had so much faith as to call on God even when not fully conscious. That was July 1988. On 4 September, 1988 he left forever.

SUBRATA BHATTACHARYA

MIRACLE

I DO not feel your Presence,
I cannot touch your hem,
Unseen tears hide
Behind dream-starved eyes,
There is unrest in the mind
And a dull ache in the heart;
An anguished cry from all the cells
Awakes something in deepest caves

A soft persistent chant
As if from different star-mouths
Slowly fills the inner sky.
O the sweet miracle,
The sound of your Name!

Horizon no more dark
Becomes a playground
Of gyrating blues
And pinks and purple-gold
That spread a laughing hush
Throughout my widened self,
Soothing the heart,
Calming the mind.
I find myself dissolving
In a soft dawn-glow,
From a blue fog of sorrow
Into a bright mist of joy.

DINKAR PALANDE

CRIPPS' MISSION

AN ANALYSIS

The month of March is memorable for what took place in it in 1942. The most thorough account of that significant event appeared last year in the October issue of the Students' Magazine, Vers l'Avenir, from the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, pp 22-25. We congratulate its authors, Divakar and Sucharu, and are proud to reproduce their work in our pages minus the short introductory paragraph.

At the end we have appended the famous exchange between Sri Aurobindo and Sir Stafford Cripps as well as some other relevant matter of importance not generally known.

IN this talk we are going to look closely at the period between 1939 and 1942 in India's struggle for freedom. This was the period when the whole world was at war and the Indian people were one of the few exceptions who refused to take part in the war effort. As a part of their non-co-operation movement against their colonial rulers, the Indian National Congress, the most influential party of that time, decided not to support the war effort. The British, on their side, were anxious to secure India's participation in the war, for that would mean more men and more resources, which were badly needed.

To solve this somewhat intransigent situation arising out of India's demand for immediate and total independence and the British unwillingness to trust the Indians with the rule of the country at this crucial time, Sir Stafford Cripps came with his enterprising proposals.

Today we will firstly ascertain whether Cripps' proposals could have at all been accepted. And secondly, had they been accepted, whether the trauma of partition and all the serious and complex problems that are plaguing the country today could have been avoided.

It would not be altogether correct to say that India did not participate in the war effort. In fact, the war engaged officers and men of the Indian army which had a strength of 1 million. And every month there were 50,000 recruits who were volunteering to join the war effort.

At the utmost, what one can say is that the public opinion in India regarded the war with a divided mind. As for the Congress the word of Gandhi, the most popular leader of the time, was taken as a gospel and it received an almost mystical veneration. Although he did not occupy any official position in the Congress organisation, he was invariably consulted on important issues and rarely was his advice not followed. Now, Gandhi could never be "in the war", for war is the extreme example of the violence that he condemned. "An Allied victory," he once said, "will not make the world a better world."

But one of the most interesting features of the Congress policy since the outbreak of the war had been its mixed reaction to Gandhi's idealism. For the first 10 months, the Congress was apparently prepared to support the war effort but only on certain conditions. From the autumn of 1940 to the winter of 1941-42, under Gandhi's personal direction the party protested against the war effort. But due to the unpopularity of this campaign, the movement petered out in 1941. During this time, a majority of leaders led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajagopalachary made it clear that they could not commit themselves to "non-violence" in the face of a Japanese aggression

No party—the Congress or the Muslim League—favoured the Nazis; in fact the public opinion was very much against Hitler and was with the Russians. But, on the other hand, fighting in the war meant siding with the British.

It was at this time that international sympathy grew for India.

In fact the U.S. senate issued a message with a serious undercurrent of anti-British feeling. It said: "We should strongly demand that India be given a status of autonomy. The only way to get the people of India to fight is to get them to fight for India."

As I mentioned earlier, the Congress decided to join the war effort only on certain conditions and unless they were fulfilled, the Congress would continue its agitation of non-co-operation with the administration.

The two most important demands were.

- 1) That India be given freedom immediately.
- 2) And a new constitution be framed by Indians themselves

The attitude of the British government to these demands is known as the "August offer" of 1940. This offer promised India the right to form its own constitution and decide for itself whether it wanted to remain in the Commonwealth or not. But it said that this intricate business involved legislatures and this could not be undertaken then itself as the British were struggling for their existence. However, Britain would implement these as soon as the war was over. In the meantime, India should co-operate fully in the war effort

This offer was rejected out of hand by both the Congress and the Muslim League. The main cause of rejection was due to the distrust that had built up in the Indian Nationalists for 20 years against Britain. They could not trust her sincerity because all the promises were not straightforward but conditional. For example, they said that the new constitution must obtain the assent of the minority community. This evidently referred to the 90 million-strong Muslim community and Britain was taking advantage of the fact that the Muslim League would never approve of Congress policies and this would be an excuse for never setting India free.

From the "August offer" of 1940 to the famous Cripps proposals there was a lull in the political activities of both the British and the Indians. Though there were the Sapru proposals, which came after the "August offer", and a hectic

struggle in Churchill's War Cabinet regarding India and the extent of autonomy that must be given to her, no concrete proposals emerged until 1942. In March the same year Cripps managed to veer the War Cabinet into accepting his proposals.

But before we come to the Cripps proposals proper, I will just trace the origin and the evolution of the offer which was formulated as way back as 1938.

The genesis of the Cripps offer occurred at the beginning of Nehru's visit to England in June 1938. Nehru went to Cripps' country house, where among many others was Sir Clement Attlee. The party discussed the means by which the Labour government would transfer power if they were elected. Cripps unveiled for the first time a provisional offer which resembled very much the later more famous Cripps offer. It said that an assembly would be elected by the Indian peoples to form a new constitution. This assembly would have separate representation of the minorities and the princely states. However, the free Indian government would be required to enter into a treaty with Britain who would look after the interest of the princely states during this transitional period. Nehru saw this as a modest demand for the acknowledgement of India's right to freedom and as a pre-requisite to co-operation during the war.

During Cripps' first visit to India which was in December 1939, he showed his scheme only to Gandhi and Nehru. All through his visit in India Cripps discussed this rudimentary form of his offer with Nehru. From his first reactions Nehru seemed to regard it as providing "some sort of basis". After a lot of reflection Nehru confirmed that Cripps' scheme was "broadly...on the right line".

At this point, Gandhi too reiterated Nehru's views. He said that except for 1 or 2 matters in Cripps' scheme, it was an acceptable basis for negotiation and arrangement

Then the Second World War was declared and the Congress resigned from the 8 provinces where they were in power, as a protest against the British government's attitude of not consulting the Congress which was a major power then.

Zetland, an important official in the cabinet, wrote to the then Prime Minister Chamberlain in trying to look for a solution to the Indian impasse. He wrote: "The instrument is Sir Stafford Cripps." If Cripps were able to get the Indian leaders to agree to his plan, "we should find it very difficult on moral grounds alone to resist it."

But the coming of Churchill was a great setback to all the efforts of reconciliation. Zetland writes: "He (Churchill) did not share the same anxiety to encourage and promote unity between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Such unity was in fact almost out of the realms of practical politics, which if it were to be brought about, the immediate result would be that the united communities would join in showing us the door. He regarded the Hindu-Muslim

feud as a bulwark of British rule in India.”

Despite Zetland's intense effort at getting the cabinet to adopt his “constructive plan of action”, neither the cabinet nor the Viceroy from November 1939 to March 1940 was prepared to do so.

After the rejection of the “August offer” in 1940, the American and the world pressure forced Churchill to reconsider his hardline policy towards India. Churchill looked for a scheme that would be acceptable to the Indians and would appease the American discontent.

The War Cabinet set about drafting such a proposal amid hectic political lobbying from the hardliners on the one hand and the India-sympathizers on the other. At this crucial phase of the discussion Cripps sprang his surprise; and, to cut the story short, he deftly manoeuvred his proposals amid criticism and doubt and managed to get them accepted by the War Cabinet.

On March 11, Churchill announced that the War Cabinet had agreed unitedly upon some proposals which would solve the crisis in India. Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Privy Seal and leader of the House of Commons, would proceed as soon as possible to India to explain personally the solution agreed upon by the cabinet.

This startling announcement was well received in all political circles in India. That a cabinet minister should come out and discuss his government's policy face to face with Indians was in itself a proof of the seriousness with which the problem was viewed in London.

The object of the declaration was “the creation of a new Indian union which shall constitute a dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and other dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, and in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs, and free to remain in or to separate itself from the equal partnership of the British Commonwealth of nations.”

And therefore the declaration was as follows:

A) Upon completion of the war steps would be taken to set up in India an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.

B) The Indian states would be invited to participate in framing the new constitution.

C) His Majesty's government would accept and implement immediately the constitution so framed only on condition that:

i) Any province wanting to retain its present position will be allowed to do so, provisions being made for it to join at a later stage if it so desires. Such provinces, if they so wish, will be provided a new constitution equal in status to that of the Indian Union.

ii) The signing of a treaty will be between His Majesty's government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands. It will

make provision for the protection of racial and religious minorities, but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other Member States of the British Commonwealth.

Whether or not an Indian state elects to adhere to the Constitution it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new situation.

D) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows unless the Indian leaders in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of the war:

A provincial election will be held immediately after the war and the members of the Lower House of the Provincial legislature so elected will proceed to elect a constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about 1/10 (one-tenth) of the number of the electoral college.

E) But during the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's government will bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the defence of India. But the task of organising to the full the military, moral, and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India.

His Majesty's government invites the participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country. Thus they will be able to contribute to the war effort which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India. In England, though, Cripps' proposals received different reactions from the various quarters in the cabinet. Miss Agatha Harrison, who was shown the draft, said that she had no serious misgivings about the proposed arrangement. Cripps explained to her that within the Dominion status framework of the new constitution, India could break away from the Commonwealth, if it so wished, within 24 hours. He admitted the danger of Pakistan but argued that "even Gandhi said this idea should be among the schemes an assembly should discuss."

Linlithgow, the then Viceroy of India, regarded the proposals set forward by Cripps as a complete reversal of the British policy towards India, and threatened to resign. He said that Wavell regarded the declaration as disastrous and added that in his own view it was a calamity. But a prompt cajoling letter by Churchill dissuaded him from taking the extreme action; though Cripps would have been glad if that would have come about. There was also opposition among the ministers at the India office against the local option. By local option was meant the right given to the provinces to break away from India. After the meeting of ministers, one of them wrote: "...It would appear that the powers-that-are-to-be, are reconciled to the idea of a Muslim Confederation in the North. This means 2 India's and I am pressing for a central government."

The declaration soon became known as the Cripps offer. It was more concrete and constructive than the "August offer". It guaranteed India freedom immediately after the war and the option to frame its own constitution in the form of either a Dominionhood or of independence; and as soon as the constitution-making body was framed, the new constitution would take the place of the old one and the British government would leave the country.

The right of the princes to stand out of the post-war union of India was a further break from the no-freedom-without-unity policy. The provision for a treaty, whereby Britain would discharge her obligations to the dissident states and the minorities, set a time limit for the final transfer of power.

This evident departure in policy was the consequence of the overthrow of the formerly dominant Conservative party's influence in the War Cabinet. Wartime defeats and dependence upon the USA abroad and the Labour party at home made the pressures for changes irresistible.

In these circumstances Cripps became confident that Linlithgow could be displaced by a new Viceroy who would bring the Congress and the League together in a restructured Executive, acting as a National government. Cripps got everything that he wanted into the declaration except the replacement of Linlithgow, which later proved to be fatal.

On Saturday, 14th March 1942, Cripps set off for India. The only specific instruction from the War Cabinet to him was regarding the reconstruction of the Executive. It said that the Executive must not be more than advisory or consultative. Cripps could contemplate minor changes in the reconstruction of the Executive, but he could not negotiate away the Viceroy's statutory power and his special responsibilities.

Cripps arrived at New Delhi on the 23rd of March and immediately announced: "I have come here...because I want to play my part as a member of the War Cabinet in reaching a final settlement of the political difficulties which have long vexed our relationship. Once these questions are resolved, the Indian people will be enabled to associate themselves fully and freely...with our great allies, so that together we can assert our domination to preserve the Liberty of the peoples of the world."

From the 25th onwards, he began meeting the Indian leaders. The first to come was Maulana Azad, the Congress president. Next was Jinnah.

Cripps showed Azad his proposal for the new Executive. He told Azad that the present members would be replaced by men chosen by the Viceroy from the list of nominees furnished by the Indian parties. The Executive would be fully Indianized save for the Commander-in-chief. I quote Cripps here: "The system of government would not however be changed. The Viceroy would function as a Constitutional head like the King in the United Kingdom, normally accepting the advice of his council. The council would approximate to a cabinet in its operation."

Now, according to J. Moore who is a renowned historian and the author of *Churchill, Cripps and India*, "Azad misunderstood Cripps, believing him to say that the Viceroy's special responsibilities and veto would be withdrawn. Many felt that Azad's command of English was limited."

On his part, Azad came out clearly and stated: "I asked Sir Stafford what would be the position of the Viceroy in this council. Sir Stafford replied that the Viceroy would function as a Constitutional head like the King in the United Kingdom. In order to remove any room for doubt, I asked him to confirm that this would mean that the Viceroy, as a Constitutional head, would be bound by the advice of the Council. Sir Stafford said this was the intention. I asked again that the basic question was as to who would exercise power, the proposed Council or the Viceroy. Sir Stafford repeated that power would rest within the Council as it rests in the British cabinet... Our first interview thus came to an end on a note of optimism."

Jinnah had grown in political stature since Cripps had met him in December 1939. With the avowed goal of sovereign Muslim homelands he was increasingly accepted as the spokesman for Muslim Nationhood. Cripps explained to him the changes in his own views since 1939, when he had regarded Pakistan as a mere bargaining device. Jinnah on his part seemed rather surprised that the declaration went so far as to meet the Pakistan case. Cripps was impressed by his attitude.

Cripps met Gandhi for almost 2 hours on the 27th of March. Gandhi emphasized that he had "...nothing to do with Congress officially."

Cripps found him antagonistic towards the declaration, which he (Gandhi) expected the Congress to reject. Gandhi criticized the virtual invitation to the Muslims to create Pakistan. Cripps stressed that the declaration envisaged Indian unity and that non-accession would occur only if the constitution making body disagreed. Cripps told Gandhi that once the constituent assembly body was formed and Britain was out of the way, the Indians themselves ought to be able to agree upon a constitution for unity. In fact, when Cripps reminded Gandhi that the latter had gone through the Cripps plan in detail in Wardha in 1938 and had observed that the possibility of Pakistan should be included among the schemes an assembly should discuss, Gandhi said that he never remembered having made that statement.

Azad writes: "When Gandhiji met Cripps for the first time during his mission, Cripps reminded him of the aide memoir to which reference has already been made. Cripps said that the aide memoir had already been prepared after consultation with the Congress leaders including Gandhiji. The proposals he had now brought were substantially the same. Gandhiji said that he had no recollection of the aide memoir. All that he could remember of his talk with Cripps during his last visit were...some discussions about vegetarianism.

"Cripps replied that it was his misfortune that Gandhiji could remember his

talk on food, but not about the proposals he had so carefully prepared after consulting Gandhiji himself.”

On 28th Cripps met the most moderate of Congress leaders, Rajagopalachary, whose view was that something should be done as regards the redrafting of the last paragraph in order to make it clear that the Indian people were asked to defend their own country and that it was not merely the obligation of the British government. Cripps obliged and the last paragraph was suitably modified.

In the meantime Cripps met Jinnah and gathered that the League working committee had accepted the Declaration in principle. Later in the day, one of their senior leaders, Sikander Hyat Khan, confirmed this news, and argued that in order to win over the Congress some appearance of defence responsibility should be given to an Indian. Azad also accepted that His Majesty's government must control strategy and troop movements.

Nehru arrived in Delhi by train the next day, the 29th of March. He had been bed-ridden with fever for two days and was to remain unwell throughout the negotiations.

As Nehru had not yet discussed the declaration with his colleagues he and Cripps went off to the Congress headquarters at Birla house where Cripps remained for 3 hours. They were joined by Azad who took them to Gandhi. There was a good deal of banter, with Cripps trying to pin down Gandhi to admit that he had approved Cripps scheme in December 1939 after a line by line reading of it.

Gandhi finally acquiesced, explaining that he had dismissed the occasion from his mind as merely an encounter with one of the “globe-trotters” Their conversation further confirmed Cripps' impression that India's association with the defence portfolio was the key to Congress acceptance of the declaration.

On the same day Cripps released the Declaration at a press conference where for 2 hours he answered questions for a group of about 100 journalists. He explained the paragraph (E) at this press conference.

“The intention of this paragraph is to indicate to the Governor-General, who is responsible for the formation of a government in India, the broad lines upon which, in accordance with the scheme, that government might be formed... The object of the scheme is to give the fullest measure of government to the Indian people at the present time consistent with the possibilities of a constitution which cannot be changed until the end of the war. . You cannot change the constitution. All you can do is to change the convictions of the constitution. You can turn the Executive Council into a cabinet. . The leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people are to be invited to play their full and effective part which means to say that the intention of this document is as far as possible subject to the reservation of defence to put power into the hands of Indian leaders... We want the government to be fully Indianized ”

Sir Coupland, another noted historian, summarizes the reaction of the press towards the Cripps' proposals. He said: "As I watched the faces of the Indian journalists and observed the manner of the questioners I was quite certain that Sir Stafford's sincerity was never for a moment doubted"

The next day, Gandhi, who had remained in Delhi at Azad's request, vehemently opposed the Declaration and called it "a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank"

That night Nehru dined with Cripps and they talked until late in the night. Cripps notes that he had never known Nehru more serious and more worried. From their conversation Cripps drew the conclusion that while Nehru and Rajaji were "doing their best to secure acceptance, Gandhi was against it and with his pacifist supporters would probably obtain a majority of the working committee."

The great obstacle was "The non-violent outlook of Gandhi and his supporters, which obviously was opposed to the idea of mobilising effectively the armed defence of India", rather than "any particular provision of the scheme itself." Cripps imagined Gandhi to be (I quote Cripps) "actually desirous to bring about a state of chaos while he sat at Wardha eating vegetables."

For the first time Cripps took a dark view of the prospects of his mission. The following days witnessed a see-saw change in the fortunes of the mission. At one point the Congress working committee was 7 to 5 against the proposals. After further negotiations, the balance favoured Cripps at 7 to 5. This fluctuation continued until finally on the 10th of April, at 7 p m Cripps received a letter from Maulana Azad rejecting his proposals on the ground that the members of the Executive council could not act "as members of a cabinet in a constitutional government" In effect, what the Congress wanted was a national government which had to be a cabinet government with full power.

This meant a drastic change in the constitution. And as Cripps had already stated, "Everyone agrees that in these troubled times we cannot, here and now, set about forging a new constitution."

And so Cripps returned to England unsuccessful in the mission he once so successfully initiated, amid lots of opposition, for the people of India

In our post-mortem of the Cripps proposals, let us consider the possibility of the declaration being accepted Many historians maintain that the acceptance of this declaration would have still meant inevitably the partition of India, because the Muslim League, led by Jinnah, regarded the partition of India as the only possible solution. Therefore, if a choice was given to all the provinces, it seemed certain that India would be fragmented.

But on the other hand non-accession alone was the way by which partition could be avoided For, Cripps based himself on the profound psychological truth that one normally does not like to do what one is asked to do and by stimulating the Muslim's appetite for partition, Cripps hoped to keep India intact. Just as there was a chance of India wanting to stay in the British Commonwealth if she

was free to go out, likewise the best hope of a single Indian Union lay in assuring the people of the predominantly Muslim areas, that they need not join the Union unless they wished.

And moreover, if the Cripps proposals had been accepted, then the Congress and the Muslim league would have had to work together and at that time they could definitely have arrived at a compromise. They could have adopted a loose federation of the provinces with enough safeguards to take care of the minority interests.

In regard to the composition of the Executive council, it is important that the Indians in the council have effective power in the running of the government. Sri Aurobindo during the First World War, had proposed a set of guidelines which he felt must satisfy India in order to participate in the war effort. There he had specified that the Indian ministers in charge of defence should not have their responsibilities curtailed to the point that they run only hospitals and ambulances. The ministers in the cabinet must have effective powers. And this much was promised in Cripps' proposals. It would be ridiculous to accept the Congress' claim that the council should function as a cabinet, and military decisions reached by the ministers would be binding on the Viceroy.

Frankly speaking, there was none in the Congress who had the experience and the competence for running the defence ministry at a time when the Axis Powers had the upper hand in the war.

When Cripps had come to India, he had told a journalist that if he could reach an agreement with the Congress on the reconstruction of the Executive then his powers would be such as to enable him to overcome any resistance by Linlithgow. I quote Cripps: "I told Nehru that if they accepted my terms I should be such a tremendous figure in England that I could do anything." It was generally believed that if Cripps brought off the settlement, he would replace Churchill. And then from his position of power he could grant any concession, short of complete independence, to the Congress.

But the most important reason why Cripps' proposals should have been accepted is the same reason why the British government was anxious that India accept it. The Allies winning the war was crucial to India's future because in the case of an Axis victory, India's future would be doomed under the yoke of the cruel and ruthless Japanese and Germans. Therefore it was important that India joined the war and ensured the victory of the Allies. The British too were keen that India joined the war effort.

Cripps' proposals were therefore doubly beneficial to India. Not only was India offered an honourable opportunity to join the war but its independence was presented on a platter if India so agreed.

Even considering the possibility where the British would go back on their word and not give us our independence after the war, India had still to gain from an Allied victory. Moreover it would have been impossible for Britain to go back

on her word, for the whole world, and especially America, would force her to keep her wartime promises. Therefore it can be seen that Cripps' proposals should have been accepted by the Indian leaders.

Many of you must be disappointed that we have not mentioned Sri Aurobindo's name as regards this mission. We have acted thus for two specific reasons.

Firstly it is a well known fact (and therefore needless to mention), especially in the Ashram, that Sri Aurobindo openly supported the Cripps offer and even sent Duraiswamy Aiyar, as his envoy, with a message to the Congress leaders, suggesting to them to accept the proposals. Unfortunately the leaders of the time did not give the message their due respect, even though Sri Aurobindo had been himself a major political force and an established statesman in the early 20th century.

The second more important reason is that we did not want people to swallow Sri Aurobindo's opinion of the proposals merely on faith. We wanted them to realise that, if viewed rationally, the proposals corroborated Sri Aurobindo's point of view. We hope we have been successful in our endeavour.

DIVAKAR & SUCHARU

APPENDIX*

SRI AUROBINDO AND CRIPPS' PROPOSAL

Since coming to Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo had retired from public life. In his own words, "His retirement from political life was complete, just as was his personal retirement into solitude in 1910." There were two occasions when he had to take public action. The first in relation to the Second World War when, in 1940, September 10th he and the Mother made a joint declaration in support of the Allies. The second was his public support to Cripps' proposal.

On 31st March 1942 he sent the following telegram to Cripps: "I have heard your broadcast. As one who has been a nationalist leader and worker for India's independence, though now my activity is no longer in the political but in the spiritual field, I wish to express my appreciation of all you have done to bring about this offer. I welcome it as an opportunity given to India to determine for herself, and organise in all liberty of choice, her freedom and unity, and take an effective place among the world's free nations. I hope that it will be accepted, and right use made of it, putting aside all discords and divisions. I hope too that friendly relations between Britain and India, replacing past struggles, will be a step towards a greater world union in which, as a free nation, her spiritual force

* The information contained here has been compiled by Dinkar Palande for *Mother India*

will contribute to build for mankind a better and happier life. In this light, I offer my public adhesion, in case it can be of any help in your work." The above implies a successful end to the war and a united free India.

Sri Aurobindo envisaged two great perils facing the country, domination by Japan and partition of our Motherland, and according to him the way to prevent both of them successfully was to accept Cripps' proposal. He made this clear in his personal message through Duraiswamy Aiyar to the Congress Working Committee and in his telegrams to Dr. Munje, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, and to C. Rajagopalachari. In the telegram to Dr. Munje he asked if there was no way to accept cooperation, while resisting the partition of India, and arrive at a settlement with Britain in view of the grave peril facing India. He further suggested a combination of Congress nationalist and anti-Jinnah Muslims so as to defeat the League in the elections in Bengal, Punjab and Sind. His telegram to C. Rajagopalachari on the same day, namely 2.4.1942, reads, "Is not compromise defence question better than rupture. Some immediate settlement urgent, face grave peril. Have sent Duraiswamy insist urgency. Appeal to you to save India formidable danger new foreign domination when old on way to self-elimination."

Sir Stafford Cripps' reply of 1.4 1942 by telegram to Sri Aurobindo's message was: "I am most touched and gratified by your kind message allowing me to inform India that you who occupy unique position in imagination of Indian youth are convinced that declaration of His Majesty's Government substantially confers that freedom for which Indian Nationalism has so long struggled."

Arthur Moore, editor of the Calcutta daily *Statesman*, telegraphed to Sri Aurobindo on 1st April 1942 saying, "Your message to Sir Stafford Cripps inaugurates the new era. Nothing can prevent it. I am glad that my eyes have seen this salvation coming."

Amarendra Chatterji, Member Central Legislative Assembly, sent the following telegram to Sri Aurobindo on 9.4.1942: "Thanks broken silence pray come lead again. With [M.N.] Roy may yet save hesitant confused misled public." He also wanted Sri Aurobindo to lead a new party, even though it be from Pondicherry. A party called "The People's Progressive Party". Sri Aurobindo replied to Amarendra Chatterji telegraphically, saying that he was unable to leave Pondicherry. A similar reply was given by Duraiswamy on Sri Aurobindo's behalf to the Congress Working Committee.

The negotiations failed and the proposal was rejected. In his own words Sri Aurobindo gives the reasons why he supported Cripps' proposal. He gave his support "because, by its acceptance, India and Britain could stand united against the Asuric forces and the solution of Cripps could be used as a step towards independence. When negotiations failed, Sri Aurobindo returned to his reliance on the use of spiritual force alone against the aggressor and had the satisfaction of seeing the tide of Japanese victory, which had till then swept everything

before it, change immediately into a tide of rapid, crushing and finally immense and overwhelming defeat. He had also after a time the satisfaction of seeing his previsions about the future of India justify themselves so that she stands independent with whatever internal difficulties.”

In the first draft of his telegram to Cripps the last sentence had read: “I hope that in stating my adhesion I speak for the deeper soul of India.” He altered it to the form quoted earlier. Nirodbaran has reported: “When the rejection was announced, Sri Aurobindo said in a quiet tone, ‘I knew it would fail.’ We at once pounced on the words and asked him, ‘Why did you then send Duraiswamy at all?’ ‘For a bit of *nishkama karma*’ was the calm reply.”

、 (All the quotations from Sri Aurobindo are from pages 39-40 of Vol. 26 of the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*.)

¹ Disinterested work

QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

PART I

INTRODUCTION

IN the textbook, *Concepts of Modern Physics*, Arthur Beiser makes the following prefatory remarks to introduce the wave-particle duality in the domain of matter:

“In retrospect it may seem odd that two decades passed between the discovery in 1905 of the particle properties of waves and the speculation in 1924 that particles might exhibit wave behavior. It is one thing, however, to suggest a revolutionary hypothesis to explain otherwise mysterious data and quite another to advance an equally revolutionary hypothesis in the absence of a strong experimental mandate. The latter is just what Louis de Broglie did in 1924 when he proposed that matter possesses wave as well as particle characteristics. So different was the intellectual climate at the time from that prevailing at the turn of the century that de Broglie’s notion received immediate and respectful attention, whereas the earlier quantum theory of light of Planck and Einstein created hardly any stir despite its striking empirical support.”

Examining carefully this statement made by the author, we observe that during the first quarter of this century there has taken place a metamorphosis in the physicist’s psychology which has resulted in a fundamental difference in his entire approach to science. It is, however, important to recognise in proper historical perspective this radical shift in viewpoint to weigh its full implications.

If we enlarge this period of 25 years, say by 25 times, what we would notice is a sea-change in the social, scientific and intellectual climate of which this radical shift forms only a small part. We shall also observe that the change that occurred over the long period of three and a half centuries—1540s to 1890s—was slow and hesitant, quite in contrast to the one in modern times—1890s to 1980s—which is occurring at an extremely fast pace. The study of the changing thought patterns in the last few centuries will also serve as an eye-opener for the evolutionary progress of the human mind itself—a movement towards greater objectivity. When a new idea is proposed these days, physicists generally attend to it and do not throw it aside off-hand or ridicule it altogether, as was a prevalent practice of the overdetermined in the past.

It is in the light of this observation that our comparative study of the intellectual climates at the time of Planck-Einstein and at that of de Broglie would assume a pertinent relevance.

En passant we may also mention Einstein’s very revolutionary proposal concerning the space-time continuum which was regarded as an abstract philosophical system more than a scientific theory. But such was the intellectual

climate that serious efforts were made to verify its consequences experimentally. Here we are referring to Eddington, who “saw” the bending of light-beams in the vicinity of a gravitational object. Yet the question arises: Why was it at all necessary to subject this wonderful idea or theory of Einstein to any experiment if by itself it was true? Is it that a newer intellectual climate is making an entry in man’s thought?

In any case, when we focus our attention on the rate at which new ideas and theories are presently being thrown around, a doubt may arise whether these would really contribute to a deeper understanding of the world of matter—the very significance of its existence. But if that is the thrust of the seeking mind we may even consider the possibility of a free and liberated intellect transcending itself, assuming a new *fabric of thought*, one which would encompass ideas intuitively, more satisfying to the inner and deeper sense of the intellect.

PREFACE TO THE PLANCK-EINSTEIN ERA

In the quotation cited above, Beiser puts together Planck’s and Einstein’s quantum theories of light. But it is important to make a distinction between their contributions lest we should be misled.

Planck studied the energy emission from a black-body and arrived at his quantum theory of radiation. In his proposal electromagnetic radiation is considered to appear essentially in discrete packets of energy ($h\nu$) What he quantised was the energy. Einstein extended Planck’s idea of energy-quantum to explain the photoelectric effect. Here he made Planck’s quantum of radiation a particle of light. This aspect of radiation is immediately manifested in terms of its momentum, given by $(h\nu/c)$ To recapitulate the important developments: Maxwell’s electromagnetic theory was turned by Planck into packets of energy; these packets of energy became particles of light—photons—in the hands of Einstein.

In order to understand quantum theory, it is essential to outline the conceptual developments in the relevant fields of research—black-body radiation and photoelectric effect. Only then can we venture into its fuller assessment.

Similarly, we shall also review de Broglie’s contribution in terms of “matter waves” and their subsequent experimental verification. While Planck and Einstein introduced the particle aspect in the wave theory of light, de Broglie’s proposal brought that duality into the domain of matter proper.

After completing this ground-work we will be in a better position to comprehensively evaluate the nature of each revolution.

(To be continued)

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1992)

SRI AUROBINDO realised that a mass-upsurge was the need of the hour, not a series of closed-door meetings by well-to-do intellectuals. For the first time he gave the national movement a national character in the *Indu Prakash*. Sri Aurobindo's theme was the concept and content of national independence, and the key to its realisation. His language breathes fire. One is astounded by the eruptive incandescence of his English prose. It is really a surprise how this maturity of thought and style could belong to a mere 21-year-old person. The series of the *Indu Prakash* articles contained a direct and eloquent attack upon the British rule which caused a considerable sensation in the country. It is clear that the object in doing so was twofold: to strengthen the anti-British sentiment in the country and to break the almost superstitious view of British superiority.

Sri Aurobindo's criticism was in two directions: (1) By eloquent historical analysis, he sought to show that the British political organisation and system did not hold good for the true nature and Dharma of India; (2) Sri Aurobindo by his logical arguments tried to show that the political organisation and system was by no means the best that the West had to offer. He said that India must choose only what is the best in the West, and not swallow wholesale whatever Britain might try to force on her. In a very interesting analysis he compares the British system with the French. His analysis runs: "We in India, or at any rate those races among us which are in the van of every forward movement, are far more nearly allied to the French and Athenian than to the Anglo-Saxon, but owing to the accident of British domination, our intellects have been carefully nurtured on a purely English diet. Hence we do not care to purchase an outfit of political ideas properly adjusted to our natural temper and urgent requirements, but must eke out our scanty wardrobe with the cast-off rags and thread-bare leavings of our English Masters..."¹

The second point which is more obvious in the direction of Sri Aurobindo's criticism was towards British policies in India and the behaviour of their officials. The British rule led to the destruction of the Indian spirit, the cramping of her potentialities for development and the ruin of her economy. This is very clearly implied in his articles. He writes: "...the dark spectre of Penury draws her robe over the land in greater volume and with an ampler sweep."²

Regarding the British officials he satirically pointed out: "I grant that they are rude and arrogant, that they govern badly, that they are devoid of any great or generous emotion, that their conduct is that of a small coterie of masters surrounded by a nation of Helots. But to say all this is simply to say that they are very commonplace men put into a quite unique position. .. They are really very ordinary men,—and not only ordinary men, but ordinary Englishmen—types of

the middle class or Philistines, in the graphic English phrase, with the narrow hearts and commercial habit of mind peculiar to that sort of people.”

Sri Aurobindo is very severe in his criticism of the system of administration which the British had set up in India. He realised that it was not at all suited to the Indian people. He characterised the prevalent system of public instruction: “...our system of public instruction, the most ingeniously complete machine for murder that human stupidity ever invented, and murder not only of a man’s body but of a man’s soul, of that sacred fire of individuality in him which is far holier and more precious than this mere mortal breath ”

Sri Aurobindo was merciless in his contempt for the Indians who were “servilely English”. He poured scorn upon their type: “The Anglicized Babu sits in the high place and rules the earth for a season. It is he who perorates on the Congress, who frolics in the abysmal fatuity of interpellation on the Legislative Council, who mismanages civic affairs in the smile of the City Corporation. He is the man of the present, but he is not the man of the future ”

Before he turned to the positive activities of the political field the theory of them emerged in the early Baroda period. He helped Jatindranath Banerjee to join the Baroda State Army so that he could get military training in rifle practice. Along with Jatin, Sri Aurobindo began to encourage people to take up revolutionary activities and himself took the oath of the Revolutionary Party. In his own words, though he refers to himself in the third person: “First there was the action with which he started, a secret revolutionary propaganda and organisation of which the central object was the preparation of an armed insurrection. Secondly, there was a public propaganda intended to convert the whole nation to the ideal of independence which was regarded, when he entered into politics, by the vast majority of Indians as unpractical and impossible, an almost insane chimera. It was thought that the British Empire was too powerful and India too weak; effectively disarmed and impotent even to dream of the success of such an endeavour. Thirdly, there was the organisation of the people to carry on a public and united opposition and undermining of the foreign rule through an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance.”

It was in pursuance of this objective that he began writing in the *Indu Prakash* on political matters soon after he returned from England in order to awaken the nation to his ideas and his approach to the problem of Indian freedom.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 1, p 32
- 2 *Ibid* , p 9
- 3 *Ibid* , pp 12-13
- 4 *Bankim Chandra Chatterji* by Sri Aurobindo, p 26
- 5 *S A B C L* , Vol 3, p 99
- 6 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p 21

WORSHIP

YOUR Presence has filled me, O Universal Mother.
 Like a seed cast upon fertile soil
 God's Grace now remains unforgotten
 Even in the midst of this mortal toil.

What is the name of this deepest sacredness,
 So intensely turned ever inward
 That not a sound nor vision's light
 Escapes its all-centering touch? The word

Remains unspoken,
 The light in breathless worship
 Is still.
 Through the screen of arrested Time slip

And waft the magic fragrances
 From the gardens of the soul,
 And the silences of Truth
 When It makes Itself whole.

Never again can I see with dimmed eyes.
 Nor suffer the burden of human birth,
 For now I have this gratitude.
 Now I have this earth.

ARVIND HABBU

NEW AGE NEWS

WILFRIED'S REPORT OF HIS READINGS

I AM briefly presenting here five titles which formed part of my readings in 1991 and which I found remarkable, each in its own way. The topics cover a wide spectrum; sports, computer science, ecology, history and biology.

W, Timothy Gallwey, *The Inner Game of Tennis*. Bantam Books, New York 1989. \$ 4.95

T. Gallwey was captain of the Harvard University tennis team at his best times and once reached the finals of the American Junior Championships. His book presents something like Zen tennis with an alternative approach towards sports and winning. A key statement in his book is the following guide-line: "Winning is overcoming obstacles to reach a goal, but the value in winning is only as great as the value of the goal reached." Making the effort and overcoming the obstacles, says Gallwey, can be a more rewarding experience than reaching the goal as such. He advises playing with a silent mind, calming the nervous inner mentor ("do this thing, do that thing, don't. .") and getting in touch with the perfect player within ourselves who knows best how to play best. Like a tennis-Krishna, Gallwey tells his students: "The Inner Game frees the player from concern about the fruits of victory, he becomes devoted only to the goal of self-knowledge, to the exploration of his true nature as it reveals itself on level after level." Playing with "nonjudgmental awareness" is the ultimate realization of the alternative, detached tennis player. There is a good deal of repetition in the book, but nevertheless it has enthused American readers, who made it an all-time bestseller, with 13 re-prints since 1974.

J. David Bolter, *Turing's Man—Western Culture in the Computer Age*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 1984. \$ 12.95

Any reader would be astonished when examining the Index of this title. There are entries on Aristotle, Goethe, Herder, Herodotus, Virgil, Voltaire and Xerxes, side by side with Assembly language, Chomsky, Data base, PASCAL, or Programming language. All this is possible because the author has an unusual type of qualification: he is professor of classics at the university of North Carolina, but also holds a master's degree in computer science. With this background, Bolter can treat the subject with convincing mastery and present a very global outlook not easily found in the literature of the specialized computer experts. The title refers to A.M Turing, a mathematician and logician who in 1936 "set out the nature and theoretical limitations of logic machines before a single fully programmable computer had been built." Bolter calls all those "Turing's men" who follow the logician's views on man as "information processor" and nature as "information to be processed". His book offers deep insight into the subject and reveals not only the possibilities, but also all the

dangers and limitations of man in the world of high-tech programming. The German edition carries the more appealing title *The Digital Faustus*.

Karl Wilhelm Weeber, *Smog uber Attika—Umweltverhalten im Altertum*. Artemis, Zurich/Munchen 1990. DM 39.80

K.W. Weeber is also a classics professor, teaching didactics of Greek and Latin at a German university. The title of his book clearly outlines the topic: "Smog over Attica—Environmental Behaviour in the Ancient World." Unfortunately, whatever he reveals is more on the negative side, the devastating results of wars, of mining and deforesting for the sake of naval construction. But the book gives us many interesting details of life in ancient Greece and Italy. Some relevant quotations from famous classical authors, expressing concern about ecological destruction, enrich the text. Weeber shows that generally speaking people of those times were as reckless in their dealings with Nature as we are today. However, there was a significant difference: "The ancient world simply did not have the technical potential for straining, damaging or destroying the environment as it is possible today with the means of our civilization." At the end of the last chapter Weeber quotes Solon's poem on eunomy and interprets it rather freely as a call to a higher order of the *polis* not only in the political and social, but ultimately also in the ecological context.

K.D. Sethna, *Ancient India in a New Light* Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi 1989. Rs. 500

K.D. Sethna too could be aptly described as a professor of classics, although as a rule he has been sharing his wide knowledge through books and private talks, less often as a teacher in the class room or auditorium. The above title is his *opus magnum Indologicum*, certainly also the most voluminous book he has brought out in his long career as a writer. Its subject is the chronology of ancient Indian history, and K.D. S. rejects both the extreme approach of Indian traditionalists (blindly relying on sources such as the Puranas) and the commonly accepted dating of mainstream Indology, paving himself a difficult because new path somewhere in between. There is a lot of mathematics—fortunately not technically advanced stuff—in this work, along with a most detailed evaluation of archaeological and scriptural evidence. The reader would do well having a look first at "The New Chronology and a General Summary" right at the end of the text to get an overall impression of Sethna's dating. A key point in his argument is that king Sandrocottus, mentioned in reliable Greek sources, does not refer to Chandragupta Maurya, as commonly believed, but rather to the founder of the Imperial Guptas, who had the same designation and also ruled from Pataliputra. Chapter after chapter Sethna presents his case like a lawyer arguing before the Supreme Court of Indology, pleading to change the current chronology, and marshalling for this purpose a formidable array of substantial arguments. Some

time may pass, though, before we get a verdict, because the judges will have to go through 600 pages of exacting text, and accepting Sethna's view could mean invalidating numberless other studies and research papers of their own or of their colleagues. Basically, the situation here is the same as in science or medicine: If you develop a new line of thought, the experts may choose to ignore you, because it is safer to rely on the authorities. But Sethna does not hesitate to refer to those very authorities in several instances, showing that proper logic should have actually led them into the same direction.

Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past—Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature*. Vintage Books, New York 1988. \$ 10.95

With this title the British biochemist R. Sheldrake has established his reputation as the Capra of biology. He starts with a very long introduction to modern science which will be skipped by many readers who are more interested in his proper subject: the theory of morphic resonance, which he defines as "the influence of previous structures of activity on subsequent similar structures of activity organized by morphic fields. Through morphic resonance, formative causal influences pass through or across both space and time, and these influences are assumed not to fall off with distance in space or time, but they come only from the past." This theory explains, for instance, why birds such as blue tits learned to open milk bottles within a short time all over England, without the possibility of direct communication. Experiments have shown that it is easier for a layman learning the Morse code (which was already mastered earlier by a large number of people) than any other similar code created at random. Through the earlier efforts a kind of morphic field was formed which helps your learning today. With this thesis, which still needs more confirmation through detailed research, Sheldrake goes far beyond the scope of orthodox science, though not beyond the scope of yogic knowledge, as can be seen from the following quotation taken from Nirodbaran's *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*:

(Sri Aurobindo) Previous Yogis came down to the vital level, they did not descend farther... But if I too had left it there, the real work would have remained undone. Once the subconscious is conquered, things will become easy for those who come after. That is what is meant by "Realisation of one in all" (Vol I, p. 4)

In fact, this is the principle of avatarhood that the supreme path-finder opens the way on the consciousness level, creating favourable conditions for all those who have an inner affinity to his goal. It may be mentioned that Sheldrake spent four years of his career at an International Research Institute in India and could have drawn some inspiration from his stay there.*

* After writing this review, I learnt from a friend that she had met Sheldrake at a Congress in November '91 and asked him whether he knew about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, their writings and their theory of cell transformation. Sheldrake answered that he was fully aware of them and that he stayed occasionally in another

ALTAR AND FLAME: K.D. SETHNA'S CONCEPT OF LOVE AND BEAUTY

MOST of the poems in *Altar and Flame* came out after Sri Aurobindo's departure. Unlike the more characteristic work of Sethna, these are closer to us. They are also mystic poems, but the hyphen linking Matter and Spirit is quite charming because of a curious blend of the mundane and the ethereal. The rhetoric is curious and it is a bit unlike the rhetoric Sri Aurobindo uses in his later poetry. There is of course an influence of the Aurobindonian rhetoric, but tradition is so transformed in the context of a middle world that it is hard to trace the memory of Sethna's Master. By and large, this is a new rhetoric discovered in a fresh situation and coloured by an individual consciousness.

Rhetoric for Sethna is a way of "beyonding". One has the impression that the poet is involved in a process of purification, and unlike Tagore and Whitman Sethna is singularly free from the sexual connotations in his quest for the beyond. There is a conscious effort at discovering a purer aesthetics based on Mother-cult. The poet is possibly trying to imagine the beauty of higher planes and this sense of beauty comes only after a great purification. In trying to imagine, Sethna's eyes open to the magic worlds of beauty. There is a search for purer images. The mental poet has an inkling of the supramental weather. As a result there is a strange ecstasy flooding the lyrics. Sometimes there is an inspired sweep of run-on lines, and the wild profusion of metaphors and similes overwhelms us.

Changing the small fire's smile to a maddened blaze
That laughs like a golden wilderness of whips
And slashes the skies of secrecy hung between
Our groping sight and the mirrored unseen.
Thus only we drag down the Apocalypse!¹

There is an absolute air of spontaneity in his gesture of imaging the exact sight and feeling. This is no Johnsonese, as without this sweep of rhetoric the things cannot be expressed. Sri Aurobindo clarifies the point in a letter: "Truth first—a technique expressive of the truth in the forms of beauty has to be found, if it does not exist."² Elsewhere Sri Aurobindo says that the technique of mystic poetry cannot be taught.

In Sethna's poetry, especially in *Altar and Flame*, love is a thing of beauty maturing like the maturing moon:

Ashram in South India, but his theory was developed independently. "Could it not be a case of morphic resonance," my friend asked. However, Sheldrake did not give any answer to this second question.

We love, but scarcely know
 What they mean—
 The unsated kisses, the deep quiets
 Hung between.

Suddenly in our eyes
 A full moon glows
 And, quick with tears, the mind
 Feels that it knows.³

The poet is distinctly aware of the fact that mundane kisses are there only to make us more thirsty for an “aureoled kiss” (a phrase from *Psyche*). The second stanza of the poem indicates the mystery of sudden revelation in a man’s life. Throughout his life, a man talks of love, makes love in Hemingway style, lectures on love, writes on love and is blinded. Then one day a moment sees what ages have toiled to express. The moment of the full moon is the moment of love. The ‘tears’ indicate suffering, the thorns behind which blooms the deathless rose. The word ‘knows’ hints at realization. The inmost being, the soul, is always full of love and it struggles to come out to the front through the physical, the mental and the vital layers. When the psyche comes forward the drop of blood becomes a diamond tear. This is the beginning of knowledge. Hence the mind feels that it knows.

With the misconception that Sri Aurobindo is a monk, there has grown up another wrong belief that he is a platonic love-poet. In fact love is a many-branching mood in his poetry. K D. Sethna, Captain of the Aurobindonian School, starts from the mature Sri Aurobindo. He too depends on the sap of the earth and he too believes like his master that love cannot live by heavenly food alone. But, as we have said, Sethna has for his ideal a later Sri Aurobindo, he has left behind Sri Aurobindo’s early responses to the love of Urvashi and Priyamvada. In *Altar and Flame*—although the poet calls his products ‘mundane’ in an interview with the present writer—there is already a maturer sight into the mystery of love. With the process of purification going on, the concept of love is also growing. The images of tear, love, fire and the moon indicate a growth through inferno and purgatory. The controlled emotion, occasionally breaking into poignant utterances, indicates a quality of endurance achieved. There is ‘this hand on fire’ (*Out of My Heart*) Because Sethna is preparing to leave the animal behind, he has a foreknowledge of true love. Hence the line.

Foretaste of all-fulfilling peak.⁴

The poet is sometimes dreaming of a love which is to come, is coming, and his life is already full of the rays, “the prescience of a marvellous birth to come,” (in

Sri Aurobindo's words). This prescience or, to borrow Sethna's own word, 'foretaste' gives a strange colour to the love poems in this collection. The symbol of the moon becomes a key-symbol in Sethna's love poetry of the half-world.

The tree in the moonlight is dangerously amorous and it tears our heart and creates great music which spreads everywhere. In the poem entitled *After a Tuscan Saying*, the moon is not just a symbol of love but a symbol of beauty showing us where the Spirit has passed. This moon is the Wordsworthian moon seeking to open the golden doors in silvery quiet.

O trust no tree in the moon—
 Great arms will tear
 Your heart and make its tiny tune
 Spread everywhere.⁵

It is obvious that Sethna's pantheism has given birth to a poetry which is as poetic in its own way as Wordsworth's poetry of pantheism. Besides, there is an element of supernaturalism suddenly overtaking us with the violent image of 'tear' in the above stanza. Nature installs a cosmic violin inside us in a magic hour.

In *Altar and Flame* the woman is not an outcaste on the way. The woman becomes a co-walker on the path. The double adventure involves the fate of both the man and the woman. Even in mundane love the memory of the supreme love is not forgotten. In *Between us two* and also in *Fragments*, the poet speaks of an emptiness and an unquenched thirst in physical love. Unlike Faustus, he is fully aware that there is no immortality in the kiss of Helen. The insatiated thirst irresistibly drives him to the woman at Kailash. But, also, his mundane love is not a waste. In *Equality* the poet says: "Love's life is precious only if given whole." At the same time Sethna is living with the memory of the future, with the hope of discovering 'the shining secret' of a love unknown.

The double adventure is taken in the right spirit and once again it is beauty that lights the desperate roads of the pair.

The day floated for the last time on the sea.
 Twilight's blur, washing the horizon's edge,
 Made the immense waters loom infinite.
 Two lonelinesses linked by one far love,
 We came, earth-empty, but our small eyes sank
 In the grey distance flowing evermore.
 Our arms stretched toward the eternal shore beyond
 Which seemed divided by time endlessly.
 You, with lips quivering on the great Name
 Borne by the deep to this side of the unknown,
 Murmured of the human heart's poor faltering strength

But a faint touch of random spray on my brow
 Moved me to breathe suddenly of fathomless Grace
 That calls for nought save the surrendering cry
 And gives all to the dwarf soul given entire
 "How shall we cross the sea?" "The sea shall cross us."⁶

The 'far love' remains an eternal quest and the memory of the man and the woman is replete with 'the eternal shore beyond'. Prayer is poetry in the expression "with lips quivering on the great Name." One can always rise from every bondage. There is no bondage the moment you seek help from above. There is a consciousness of the Grace with the touch of the 'random spray'. Grace brings faith and faith is transformed into poetry in the last line of the poem. Sethna is more interested in the mountains than in the sea as we see in the poems in *Overhead Poetry*. But here his responses to the beauty of the evening sea reveal that like his master he has also an eye on the mystery of the waters. Very rarely, Sethna's concept of beauty is expressed in the idiom of the *Savitri* poet:

Our very limbs strain for the timeless smile.⁷

In almost all the poems of *Altar and Flame*, there is a quest for sacred images: *fragrant breath, pink sleep, aureoled kiss, shadow in the moon's white core, hidden honey, aura of unfading day, a foretaste of the all-fulfilling peak, homeless heart, pilgrim in my feet, stainless stars, flawless touch, flame and fragrance*, etc.

Throughout his life Tagore tried to feel and express the Divine in terms of an aesthetics which is not purely based on Indian tradition. In trying to find a purer aesthetics, Tagore sometimes depends too largely on the western romantics like Shelley and Keats, and he seems to have been neglecting a vital point relating to the Tantric cult. Not that he was unaware of the thrill of Mother-worship. In fact, some of his lines clearly indicate that he was bubbling over with the thrill of Her touch. But he was restricted by his own religious cult which is against idolatry. The same was the problem with a little-known Bengali poet singer, Atulprasad Sen, who belonged to the same religious cult. Both of them were thrilled inside, but the tongues could not utter the name. Aesthetics of the western kind has certain limitations, and yet in some of the western moderns we have clues to the Great Feminine to whom the artist bows his head. There's a strange poem by Stephen Crane in his *Black Riders*, where the Chattertonian is distinctly rejecting Christ and God in favour of Mother Mary who is often seen as a channeling grace.

Should the wide world roll away
 Leaving black terror, limitless night
 Nor god, nor man, nor place to stand

Would be to me essential,
 If thou and thy white arms were there.
 And the fall to doom a long way.⁸

This is a clue to the purer aesthetics taking shape at the beginning of the century through a western-educated Indian named Aurobindo Ghosh. It is curious that Sethna has a similar response to the Great Feminine in his poems in *Altar and Flame*. In an interview in October 1988 he informed the present writer that he had never read Stephen Crane's poem and that the similarity of imagery is just accidental. But then this is not an accident in view of Sri Aurobindo's claim that even the inanimate objects are dumbly praying to the Great Mother. The passion for 'white arms' is something like the collective unconscious. All Sethna's poems are characterised by a search for a purer aesthetics and in some of them in *Altar and Flame*, there are lines which are pure Mother-worship and pure poetry rolled into one.

Make me your nothing, my whole life
 I would drown in your vastnesses—
 A cry to be ruled by your flawless touch,
 Your will alone my peace.⁹

The mystery of being 'nothing' in the Mother's hands is the mystery of the ecstasy of surrender. The 'flawless touch' initiates a re-birth, as every Aurobindonian believes. This is the climax of aesthetics, a way to the soul of emotion. In order to judge Sethna's poetry, we have to keep in mind this quest for purification. The rhetoric of love and beauty indicates the great process going on inside the poet. Sri Aurobindo was not wrong when he named the Parsi guy from Bombay 'Amal Kiran' ('The Clear Ray'). Who is Sethna's dream lady? It cannot be an Urvashi or a Priyamvada. It must be the daughter of *Savitri* (*Savitri* means the Creator).

A woman, white-veiled, crowned with olive, came—
 Under the shade of her green mantle, all
 Her body clothed in colour of living flame¹⁰

Finally Sethna's eye is on a woman who is a 'living flame'. The climax of the Aurobindonian aesthetics is in this spiritual romance between the Mother and the son. Our real being is thrilled by Her memories. Sethna has found what Ramakrishna Paramahansa calls the 'post': "Hold the post hard and run circling it." This is the new romance which Sri Aurobindo has revealed in *Eric, Perseus the Deliverer* and *Savitri*. Sethna as an Aurobindonian modern recreates the new aesthetics. To imagine is to walk ahead.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Amal Kiran, *Altar and Flame*, Aspiration, Charlottesville, Virginia 1975, p 1
- 2 K D Sethna, *Overhead Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, .
1972, Quoted at p 16
- 3 Amal Kiran, *Altar and Flame*, p 14 ("Fragments")
- 4 *Ibid* , p 12 ("God's Sleep")
- 5 *Ibid* , p 15 ("After a Tuscan Saying")
- 6 *Ibid* , p 33 ("The Sea")
- 7 *Ibid* , p 7 ("Life's Extremist")
- 8 Stephen Crane, *Prose and Poetry* The Library of America, 1984
- 9 Amal Kiran, *Altar and Flame*, p 40 ("Pranam to the Divine Mother")
- 10 *Ibid* , p 26 ("Dante Meets Beatrice in Purgatory")

SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1992)

8. USELESS MONEY

“NAME anything in the world, I can buy it with my money,” said a very rich landlord who was proud of the wealth he had accumulated.

No one in the village disagreed with him, for everyone thought ‘Money’ is the chief of all gods. “Don’t we buy gods themselves with our money to keep them in our pooja rooms? So there is a lot of truth in what the landlord says,” the villagers said to one another.

A sage who happened to pass through the village heard about the landlord and honoured him with a visit

The landlord was pleased. He said to the sage: “Name anything you want from me. I’ll give it to you. Even if I don’t have it, I’ll buy it for you. There is nothing in this world that I can’t buy with my money.”

The sage raised his hand and motioned him to stop prattling rubbish. “Are you so proud of the money that is of ephemeral value? There are several things on earth that your money can’t buy,” he said and moved away.

The landlord laughed in his sleeves and said to himself. “Look! The sage too is jealous of me. Foolish fellow! He does not know how omnipotent is money ”

That night the landlord couldn’t sleep. Wide awake, he ruminated over the words of the sage. He wanted to know who was right—he or the sage?

On the morning of the next day, a tom-tom was beaten in public and announced that anyone who could mention even one or two things that money couldn’t buy would be given a hip-pouch of gold

Just then the landlord saw his little son come crying towards him “My playmates say my mother is dead. But you have always told me that she has gone to the other world and would return at any time. My mother has not yet returned perhaps for want of money. Send her some money and ask her to return. Or else you go and bring her.”

“Surely there are things, my son, that my money can’t buy,” the landlord said amidst tears.

*

9. FATE IS MAN-MADE

“The enemy king is preparing himself to march on our country, your Majesty,” the spy said. He then cautioned, “He has a huge battalion ”

The king who hardly had a few thousand soldiers to fight for the country

didn't become nervous. He had a lot of confidence in them. He called in the Army General and told him the news the spy had brought.

"We are very few in number, your Majesty. If a battle is fought, none of our soldiers will return home. And the wise step we can take is to sur..."

"Stop it," yelled the king. "There is no such word as 'surrender' in the dictionary of warriors. Go and get ready for the battle. Come what may. Let's face it."

A couple of days passed. The spy came again and informed the king that the enemy with his huge battalion was marching towards the country.

The king sent word to his Army General to get ready to proceed towards the battlefield.

The war drums were beaten. The bugle was blown. The soldiers in their war attire fell in files.

The king came riding his stallion. He looked at the General and then at his soldiers. They all looked very gloomy. To instil courage into them, he started delivering his war speech. He concluded it by saying: "Never lose heart. To warriors like us, Death is a trifle. I have in my hand a gold coin. Let me toss it in front of you all. If it is 'heads' we win; 'tails', we lose. Let's have faith in ourselves. Let us believe in our fate."

The gold coin was tossed. The soldiers shouted in glee. The king joined them, for it was 'heads'.

With renewed vigour the soldiers faced their enemies and proved that quality was more important than quantity. The enemy king retreated with a heavy loss of soldiers on his side.

A party was thrown for the victorious soldiers to celebrate their performances.

"It's fated thus. We are destined to win. The enemy is destined to run in spite of his huge number of soldiers," said one in the banquet hall.

"No," retorted the king. "You soldiers fought for your victory. Without your will and skill we would have definitely lost the battle."

"If it is not 'fate' then what else is it, your Majesty?" asked another. "It's the gold coin that decided our fate."

"No," said the king smiling. He then threw the gold coin to the soldier and asked him to see both sides of it.

Astonished the soldier cried. " 'Heads' on both sides." Other soldiers too shared his astonishment.

"Bear it in mind," said the king. "Fate is man-made. It's only determination that decides our fate. Just to boost your energy I played that simple trick."

10. SAY 'DEAD' AND YOU DIE

Once upon a time a young princess fell ill. The king who had a lot of affection for his daughter called in the local physicians.

The princess' health started deteriorating. Losing hope with the local physicians, the king invited experts from many parts of the globe to attend to his daughter.

The physicians put all their heads together and tried their best to save the dying princess.

Every evening the king visited the princess' chamber and enquired about her health.

The physicians, both local and foreign, were not in a position to give him a hopeful reply.

The king became angry, for he saw the health condition of his daughter getting worse.

"You are paid handsomely from my treasury. The payment, I know, is more than what you deserve. And so I don't know what you will do. But I don't want you to leave my daughter in the hands of Death. Say 'Dead', you quacks! and you die."

The physicians started shivering in their sandals. They were quite sure that nothing in the world could save the princess from the hands of 'Death'. They were also sure that their heads would not be theirs if they declare her dead.

When all of them began to worry over their fate, one among them thought of a plan to escape from the butchering knife of the king.

A couple of days later the princess passed away leaving most of the physicians to weep over their impending disaster.

The clever physician, as planned by him earlier, advised them how to tackle the king. The faces of all physicians brightened up.

The king came to the princess' chamber.

"How is my daughter?" asked the king.

"Right from the morning she has not taken anything...not even medicine."

"Why?"

"She is resting."

"Has she opened her eyes at least once?"

"No! She is unable to see or hear."

"Is she having any breathing problem?"

"No problem at all. She has only stopped breathing."

Shocked the king cried, "Oh! Is my little daughter dead?"

"No, Sir! We only said that she has stopped breathing."

The king couldn't but wonder at the clever physicians who managed to convey the message without uttering the word 'dead'. He sent them back home alive.

11. THE SAGE'S CHOICE

A sage was on his death-bed. His philosophy of life was so powerful that he had long back established an ashram of his own. He had devotees from all parts of the country. His disciples lived with him in his ashram.

During the last days of the sage, he was troubled by the thought of who should be the next head of the ashram after his soul had left the body.

The disciples were many in number. He began to short-list them only to find that he couldn't discriminate among a score of his selected disciples.

"The decision must be made...that too by today itself," thought the sage. He called all the twenty disciples in. They stood surrounding his bed.

"Today is the last day of my sojourn in this world. I should like to find out who will be the fittest person to look after the ashram in my absence," said the sage.

The disciples looked at one another, not sure of how he was going to make the selection.

"I'll for a few seconds open my mouth wide...for you to see," continued the sage. "When I close it you can tell me what you have understood. Whoever gives the best explanation will be the next head of the ashram.

The sage opened his mouth wide. All that the disciples could see was the tongue. Not a tooth was seen inside his mouth.

"We came toothless to this world. And toothless we go out of it," said one disciple.

"The tongue is the destroyer of our life," averred another.

"We breathe through our nose. But out of the mouth goes the soul," philosophised yet another.

Several other disciples gave different answers. And at last one said: "The hardest part in our body is the tooth. The softest is the tongue. Your mouth makes it very clear, O Sage! that the life of anything that is hard is shorter than that of the soft ones. 'Teeth' the symbol of Cruelty disappear without any trace. 'Tongue', if properly controlled, is the symbol of 'kindness', and it lives longer and dies with us. A man's character is judged by his tongue and not by his teeth."

The sage was pleased with the last disciple's explanation. Before he breathed his last, he made the disciple the head of the ashram.

(More Tales to follow)

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Twenty-eighth Annual Conference

11 August 1991

“OUT OF THE SEVENFOLD IGNORANCE TOWARDS THE SEVENFOLD KNOWLEDGE”

Speech by Rahul Deshpande

FOR this Conference, I have selected a subject which is of paramount importance in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga because it relates to its central aim. Stated in most general terms, that aim is the evolution of man from his present state of Ignorance to the highest state of Knowledge. But we have to note that these terms 'Ignorance' and 'Knowledge' have a meaning in Yoga which is different from their meaning in common usage. Commonly by 'knowledge' we mean "right belief, right opinions, right information about oneself and things."¹ But in Yoga we mean by it "a consciousness which possesses the highest Truth in a direct perception and in self-experience; to become, to be the Highest that we know is the sign that we have the knowledge."² And by 'Ignorance' we mean "a partial, a limiting, a dividing and, very largely, a falsifying knowledge."³

According to Sri Aurobindo, the process of evolution from Ignorance to Knowledge has seven strands in it because both of them are 'sevenfold' in their nature. For this reason to a chapter in *The Life Divine*, in which he has elaborated his theory of spiritual evolution, he has given the title: "Out of the Sevenfold Ignorance towards the Sevenfold Knowledge." It is this title which I have selected as the subject of my speech and it will be my endeavour to present to you briefly what Sri Aurobindo has said in this chapter, largely in his own words.

Sri Aurobindo very briefly but clearly defines each item of the sevenfold Ignorance. He says, "We are ignorant of the Absolute which is the source of all being and becoming; we take partial facts of being, temporal relations of the becoming for the whole truth of existence—that is the first, the original ignorance. We are ignorant of the spaceless, timeless, immobile and immutable self; we take the constant mobility and mutation of the cosmic becoming in Time for the whole truth of existence,—that is the second, the cosmic ignorance. We are

¹ *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed., Vol 19), p 685

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid*, p 729

ignorant of our universal self, the cosmic existence, the cosmic consciousness, our infinite unity with all being and becoming; we take our limited egoistic mentality, vitality, corporality for our true self and regard everything other than that as not-self—that is the third, the egoistic ignorance. We are ignorant of our eternal becoming in Time, we take this little life in a small span of Time, in a petty field of Space for our beginning, our middle and our end,—that is the fourth the temporal ignorance. Even within this brief temporal becoming, we are ignorant of our large and complex being, of that in us which is superconscient, subconscious, intraconscient, circumconscient to our surface becoming, we take that surface becoming with its small selection of overtly mentalised experiences for our whole existence,—that is the fifth, the psychological ignorance. We are ignorant of the true constitution of our becoming; we take the mind or life or body...for our true principle...losing sight of that which constitutes them...and is meant to determine sovereignly by its emergence their operations,—that is the sixth, the constitutional ignorance. As a result of these ignorances, we miss the true knowledge,...we are ignorant in our thought, will, sensations, actions, return wrong or imperfect responses at every point to the questionings of the world, wander in a maze of errors and desires, strivings and failures, pain and pleasure, sin and stumbling, follow a crooked road, grope blindly for a changing goal —that is the seventh, the practical ignorance.”¹

Having thus defined each item of the sevenfold Ignorance, we can briefly elaborate on all of them. The crux of the sevenfold Ignorance is the constitutional which presents itself as an unawareness of our total self and of the true character of our becoming due to a limitation by the plane we inhabit and the present predominant principle of our nature. “The preoccupation of the mental intelligence and its powers with the material existence as shown to it through the senses, and with life as it has been formulated in a compromise between life and matter, is the special stamp of the constitutional Ignorance.”² But this preoccupation with life and matter can never lead us to our true happiness or our spiritual destiny for, as Sri Aurobindo says, “Our true happiness lies in the true growth of our whole being, in a victory throughout the total range of our existence, in mastery of the inner as well as and more than the outer.”³ So after laying down our first foundation in life and matter, we have to “heighten our force of consciousness, deepen, widen, subtilise it; we must first liberate our mental selves and enter into a freer, finer and nobler play of our mental existence: for.. we are mental much rather than physical beings ”⁴ Man presently uses mind for the satisfaction of the interests and desires of his vital and physical beings, as their servant and minister. He has to make his mind their sovereign and master.

¹ *Ibid* , pp 654-55

² *Ibid* , p 728

³ *Ibid* , p 729

⁴ *Ibid* , p 730

But mind itself is still an imperfect guide. Even the complete truth of material things, or the right use of our material existence cannot be entirely known with the mind. So we have to transcend the mind and enter into the spirit "For", says Sri Aurobindo, "what we are is spirit,—at present using mind predominantly, life and body subordinately"¹ Therefore, we have to heighten, widen, deepen our force of consciousness, extend our range of being and our field of action, and to offer our lower life to that higher Power—the Spirit—to transform it. Our labour of mind and struggle of life cannot come to any solution till we have learned to utilise our natural instruments by the force and for the joy of the Spirit. Only then shall we possess the true constitution of our being and conquer the constitutional ignorance

This conquest, however, cannot be dynamic until we have conquered also our psychological ignorance, which is intimately related to our constitutional ignorance. This psychological ignorance consists "in a limitation of our self-knowledge to that little wave or superficial stream of our being which is the conscient waking self."² We are ignorant of our other planes of being apart from the surface mental, vital and the physical—the subconscious, the intraconscient or the subliminal, the circumconscient and the superconscient.

The subconscious is below the level of mind and conscious life. It is unmentalised, unobserved and uncontrolled by it. The subconscious includes the dumb occult consciousness, which operates in our cells and nerves and all the corporeal stuff, adjusting and regulating their processes. The subconscious is the part that is most resistant to any change and is the most difficult to transform. "It sustains and reinforces all in us that clings most and refuses to change, our mechanical recurrences of unintelligent thought, our persistent obstinacies of feeling, sensation, impulse, propensity, our uncontrolled fixities of character."³

The intraconscient or the subliminal and the circumconscient, are more potent elements of our being; they include "the large action of an inner intelligence and an inner sense-mind.. which upholds and embraces our waking consciousness."⁴ Our waking self and intelligence are both mostly parts of the subliminal. It is also the mediator between the Inconscient and the larger planes of Life and Mind which have been created by the involutory descent and whose presence has helped to bring about the evolutionary ascent. The subliminal again forms an envelope around us and receives suggestions coming from the universal Mind, universal Life or universal subtle-Matter forces and turns them into formations which can powerfully affect our existence. By going behind the veil of our superficial existence and living within, in an inner mind and life, we can become fully aware of the subliminal and the circumconscient planes of our being

¹ *Ibid* , p 732

² *Ibid* , p 732

³ *Ibid* , p 735

⁴ *Ibid* , p 735

The superconscient includes the higher planes of our mental being as well as the native and ethereal heights of the Spirit. The primary indispensable step of an upward evolution is an ascent into this superconscience. Reaching and living in it, we could transfigure our lower life—the subconscious, the subliminal and the circumconscient—with its help. After this transformation of our life, we could rise beyond the mental into the supramental and acquire our supreme spiritual nature. Only then will our psychological ignorance dissolve.

Any such evolutionary change must necessarily be associated with the rejection of our temporal ignorance. For not only do we live from moment to moment in time, our life too is limited between a single birth and death. But this limitation of our temporal consciousness is intimately dependent on the pre-occupation of our mind with the material plane and life which is, as said earlier, the very stamp of the constitutional and psychological ignorance. If these two ignorances are conquered, *i.e.*, if the true character of our becoming is known and an opening into the subliminal and superconscient effected, and an ascent into the higher being made, we can realise our persistent existence in time, thus bringing about the conquest of the temporal ignorance and also the ignorance of our timeless existence. The fundamental sense of immortality is not the personal survival after bodily death but the eternity of our self-existence without beginning or end.

At the same time, we get rid of the egoistic ignorance. “For the ego is a falsification of our true individuality by a limiting self-identification of it with this life, this mind, this body.”¹ It shuts us off from the other individuals and prevents us from living as a universal individual. As our consciousness heightens, widens and deepens and approaches the spirit, the ego collapses and dissolves, being too small and feeble to resist. “The being breaks out of its imprisonment in a separated individuality, becomes universal, assumes a cosmic consciousness in which it identifies itself with the self and spirit, the life, the mind, the body of all beings.”² Thus, the egoistic ignorance is overcome.

By the very realisation of the Spirit and the dissolution of the ego, the cosmic ignorance is conquered. For then “we have the knowledge of ourselves as our timeless immutable self possessing itself in the cosmos and beyond cosmos: this knowledge becomes the basis of the Divine Play in time, reconciles the one and the many, the eternal unity and the eternal multiplicity, reunites the soul with God and discovers the Divine in the universe.”³

After this realisation, we can approach the Absolute as the source of all happenings and things. We shall see that He is the source and origin of His marvellous creation. Thus our original ignorance will be dissolved.

If self-knowledge is thus made complete, then our practical ignorance

¹ *Ibid*, p 740

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid*, pp 741-42

—which is a result of all the previous six ignorances—will automatically yield place to the right will of self-knowledge.

Thus when the sevenfold Ignorance will be conquered, life will be transfigured into the life divine. It will become a large and luminous movement of the divine living, union with God will be effected, unity with all beings will be achieved and life will flower into a complete manifestation of the Spirit.