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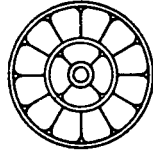
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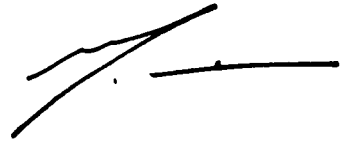


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

• The things that were promised are fulfilled



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All correspondence to be addressed to

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

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Editor K D SETHNA

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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THE MOTHER ON EGOISM AND EGO

EGOISM is a relatively easy thing to correct, because everyone knows what it is. It is easy to discover, easy to correct, if one truly wants to do it and is bent on it.

But the ego is much more difficult to seize, because, in fact, to realise what the ego is one must already be out of it, otherwise one cannot find it out. You are wholly moulded from it, from head to foot, from the outermost to the innermost, from the physical to the spiritual, you are steeped in ego. It is mixed with everything and you are not aware of what it is. You must have already conquered it, come out of it, freed yourself from it, at least partially, at least in some little corner of your being somewhere, in order to realise what the ego is.

The ego is what helps us to individualise ourselves and what prevents us from becoming divine. It is like that. Put that together and you will find the ego. Without the ego, as the world is organised, there would be no individual, and with the ego the world cannot become divine.

It would be logical to conclude, "Well, let us first of all become conscious individuals and then we shall send away the ego and become divine." Only, when we have become conscious individuals, we have grown so accustomed to living with our ego that we are no longer able to discern it and much labour is needed to become aware of its presence.

On the other hand everyone knows what egoism is. When you want to pull everything towards you and other people do not interest you, that is called egoism; when you put yourself at the centre of the universe and all things exist only in relation to you, that is egoism. But it is very obvious, one must be blind not to see that one is egoistic. Everybody is a little egoistic, more or less, and at least a certain proportion of egoism is normally acceptable; but even in ordinary life, when one is a little too egoistic, well, one receives knocks on the nose, because, since everyone is egoistic, no one much likes egoism in others.

It is taken for granted, it is part of public morality. Yes, one must be a little bit egoistic, not too much, so it is not conspicuous! On the other hand, nobody speaks of the ego, because nobody knows it. It is such an intimate companion that one does not even recognise its existence; and yet so long as it is there one will never have the divine consciousness.

The ego is what makes one conscious of being separate from others. If there were no ego, you would not perceive that you are a person separate from others. You would have the impression that you are a small part of the whole, a very small part of a very great whole. On the other hand, everyone of you is most certainly quite conscious of being a separate person. Well, it is the ego that gives you this impression. As long as you are conscious in this way, it means that you have an ego.

When you begin to be aware that everything is yourself, and that this is only a very small point in the midst of thousands and thousands of other points of the

same person that you are everywhere, when you feel that you are yourself in everything and that there is no separation, then you know that you are on the way towards having no more ego.

There even comes a time when it is impossible to conceive oneself and say, "It is not I", for even to express it in this way, to say that the All is you, that you are the All or that you are the Divine or that the Divine is you, proves that something still remains.

There is a moment—this happens in a flash and can hardly stay—when it is the All that thinks, it is the All that knows, it is the All that feels, it is the All that lives. There is not even...not even the impression that.. you have reached that point.

Then it is all right. But until then, there is still a little remnant of ego somewhere; usually it is the part which looks on, the witness that looks on.

So do not assert that you have no more ego. It is not accurate. Say you are on the way towards having no more ego, that is the only correct thing to say.

I do not believe that it has happened to you, has it?—not yet! And yet it is indispensable, if you truly intend to know what the supramental is. If you are a candidate for supermanhood, you must resolve to dispense with your ego, to go beyond it, for as long as you keep it with you, the supermind will be for you something unknown and inaccessible.

But if through effort, through discipline, through progressive mastery, you surmount your ego and go beyond it, even if only in the tiniest part of your being, this acts like the opening of a small window somewhere, and by looking carefully through the window, you will be able to glimpse the supermind. And that is a promise. When you glimpse it, you find it so beautiful that you immediately want to get rid of all the rest...of the ego!

Please note that I am not saying that you must be totally free from all ego in order to have a glimpse of the supramental; for then that would be something almost impossible. No, to be free from ego, just a little bit somewhere, in some corner of your being, even only a little corner of the mind; if it is the mind and the vital, it is well and good, but if by chance—oh! not by chance—if by repeated efforts you have entered into contact with your psychic being, then the door is wide open. Through the psychic you can suddenly have a very clear and beautiful vision of what the supermind is, only a vision, not a realisation. That is the great way out. But even without going so far as this beautiful realisation, the psychic realisation, if you succeed in liberating some part of your mind or your vital, that makes a kind of a hole in the door, a keyhole; through this keyhole you have a glimpse, just a little glimpse. And that is already very attractive, very interesting.

2 May 1958

(Collected Works of the Mother, Birth Centenary Edition, Vol. 3, pp. 240-242)

THE MOTHER ON SELF-DECEPTION

Aphorism 51—When I hear of a righteous wrath, I wonder at man’s capacity for self-deception.

Q. When one deceives oneself, one always does it in good faith. One is always acting for the good of others or for the welfare of humanity and to serve you—that goes without saying! How does one deceive oneself?

A. I feel like asking you a question myself! Because your question can be understood in two ways. One can take it in the same spirit of irony and humour that Sri Aurobindo has put in his aphorism, when he marvels at man’s capacity for self-deception. That is to say, you are putting yourself in the place of someone who is deceiving himself and you say, “But I am acting in good faith! I always want the good of others, etc.—the welfare of humanity, to serve the Divine, that goes without saying! And how can I be deceiving myself?”

But actually there are two ways of deceiving oneself, which are very different. For example, you may very well be shocked by certain things, not for personal reasons, but precisely in your goodwill and eagerness to serve the Divine, when you see people behaving badly, being selfish, unfaithful and treacherous. There is a stage where you have overcome these things and no longer allow them to manifest in yourself, but to the extent that you are linked to the ordinary consciousness, the ordinary point of view, the ordinary life, the ordinary way of thinking, they are still possible, they exist latently because they are the reverse of the qualities that you are striving to attain. And this opposition still exists—until you rise above it and no longer have either the quality or the defect. So long as you have the virtue, its opposite is always latent in you, it is only when you are above both the virtue and the defect that it disappears.

So this kind of indignation that you feel comes from the fact that you are not altogether above it; you are at the stage where you thoroughly disapprove and could not do it yourself. Up to that point there is nothing to say, unless you give a violent outer expression to your indignation. If anger intervenes, it is because there is a complete contradiction between the feeling you want to have and how you react to others. Because anger is a deformation of the vital power, an obscure and wholly unregenerated vital, a vital that is still subject to all the ordinary actions and reactions. When this vital power is used by an ignorant and egoistic individual will and this will meets with opposition from other individual wills around it, this power, under the pressure of opposition, changes into anger and tries to obtain by violence what cannot be achieved solely by the pressure of the force itself.

Besides, anger, like every other kind of violence, is always a sign of weakness, impotence and incapacity

And here self-deception comes solely from the approval given to it or the flattering epithet attached to it—because anger can only be something blind, ignorant and asuric, that is to say, contrary to the light.

But this is still the best case.

There is another one. There are people who without knowing it—or because *they want* to ignore it—always follow their personal interest, their preferences, their attachments, their conceptions; people who are not wholly consecrated to the Divine and who make use of moral and yogic ideas to conceal their personal impulses. But these people are deceiving themselves doubly; not only do they deceive themselves in their external activities, in their relation with others, but they also deceive themselves in their own personal movement; instead of serving the Divine, they serve their own egoism. And this happens constantly, constantly! They serve their own personality, their own egoism, while pretending to serve God. Then it is no longer even self-deception, it is hypocrisy.

This mental habit of always endowing everything with a very favourable appearance, of giving a favourable explanation to all movements—sometimes it is rather subtle, but sometimes it is so crude that nobody is deceived except oneself. It is a habit of excusing oneself, the habit of giving a favourable mental excuse, a favourable mental explanation to everything one does, to everything one says, to everything one feels. For example, those who have no self-control and slap someone's face in great indignation would call that an almost divine wrath!

It is amazing, amazing—this power of self-deception, the mind's skill in finding an admirable justification for any ignorance, any stupidity whatsoever.

This is not an experience that comes only now and then. It is something that you can observe from minute to minute. And you usually see it much more easily in others! But if you look at yourself closely, you can catch yourself a thousand times a day, looking at yourself just a little indulgently: "Oh! But it is *not the same thing*." Besides, it is never the same for you as it is for your neighbour!

January 1961

(*Collected Works of the Mother*, Birth Centenary Edition, Vol. 10, pp. 80-82)

CHAMPAKLAL

The ideal devotee-servitor of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Champaklal who had joined his Gurus permanently at the age of 20 in 1923 at Pondicherry, passed away around 8 15 p.m. on May 9 at Jantral in Gujrat. He was widely revered as a great sadhak of the Integral Yoga.

FROM JUNE 13, 1964
A MESSAGE BY THE MOTHER

NONE of the present achievements of humanity, however great they are, can be for us an ideal to follow. The wide world is there as a field of experiment for human ideals.

Our purpose is quite different and if our chances of success are small just now, we are sure that we are working to prepare the future.

I know that from the external point of view, we are below many of the present achievements in this world, but our aim is not a perfection in accordance with the human standards. We are endeavouring for something else which belongs to the future.

The Ashram has been founded and is meant to be the cradle of the new world.

The inspiration is from above, the guiding force is from above, the creative power is from above, at work for the descent of the new realisation.

It is only by its shortcomings, its deficiencies and its failures that the Ashram belongs to the present world.

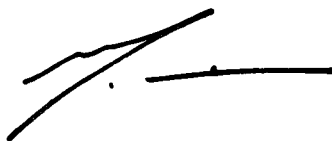
None of the present achievements of humanity have the power to pull the Ashram out of its difficulties.

It is only a total conversion of all its members and an integral opening to the descending Light of Truth that can help it to realise itself.

The task, no doubt, is a formidable one, but we received the command to accomplish it and we are upon earth for that purpose alone.

We shall continue up to the end with an unflinching trust in the Will and the Help of the Supreme.

The door is open and will always remain open to all those who decide to give their life for that purpose.

A handwritten signature consisting of several overlapping, sweeping lines that form a stylized, abstract shape.

SRI AUROBINDO ON REASON AND EGO

LOGICAL reasoning is useful and indispensable in its own field in order to give the mind a certain clearness, precision and subtlety in dealing with its own ideas and word-symbols, so that our perception of the truths which we arrive at by observation and experience or which physically, psychologically or spiritually we have seen, may be as little as possible obscured by the confusions of our average human intelligence, its proneness to take appearance for fact, its haste to be misled by partial truth, its exaggerated conclusions, its intellectual and emotional partialities, its incompetent bunglings in that linking of truth to truth by which alone we can arrive at a complete knowledge. We must have a clear, pure, subtle and flexible mind in order that we may fall as little as possible into that ordinary mental habit of our kind which turns truth itself into a purveyor of errors. That clarification, the habit of clear logical reasoning culminating in the method of metaphysical dialectics, does help to accomplish and its part in the preparation of knowledge is therefore very great. But by itself it cannot arrive either at the knowledge of the world or the knowledge of God, much less reconcile the lower and the higher realisation. It is much more efficiently a guardian against error than a discoverer of truth,—although by deduction from knowledge already acquired it may happen upon new truths and indicate them for experience or for the higher and larger truth-seeing faculties to confirm. In the more subtle field of synthetical or unifying knowledge the logical habit of mind may even become a stumbling-block by the very faculty which gives it its peculiar use, for it is so accustomed to making distinctions and dwelling upon distinctions and working by distinctions that it is always a little at sea when distinctions have to be overridden and overpassed. Our object, then, in considering the difficulties of the normal mind when face to face with the experience of cosmic and transcendental unity by the individual, must be solely to make more clear to ourselves, first, the origin of the difficulties and the escape from them and by that, what is more important, the real nature of the unity at which we arrive and of the culmination of the individual when he becomes one with all creatures and dwells in the oneness of the Eternal.

The first difficulty for the reason is that it has always been accustomed to identify the individual self with the ego and to think of it as existing only by the limitations and exclusions of the ego. If that were so, then by the transcendence of the ego the individual would abolish his own existence; our end would be to disappear and dissolve into some universality of matter, life, mind or spirit or else some indeterminate from which our egoistic determinations of individuality have started. But what is this strongly separative self-experience that we call ego? It is nothing fundamentally real in itself but only a practical constitution of our consciousness devised to centralise the activities of Nature in us. We perceive a formation of mental, physical, vital experience which distinguishes

itself from the rest of being, and that is what we think of as ourselves in nature—this individualisation of being in becoming. We then proceed to conceive of ourselves as something which has thus individualised itself and only exists so long as it is individualised,—a temporary or at least a temporal becoming; or else we conceive of ourselves as someone who supports or causes the individualisation, an immortal being perhaps but limited by its individuality. This perception and this conception constitutes our ego-sense. Normally, we go no farther in our knowledge of our individual existence.

But in the end we have to see that our individualisation is only a superficial formation, a practical selection and limited conscious synthesis for temporary utility of life in a particular body, or else it is a constantly changing and developing synthesis pursued through successive lives in successive bodies. Behind it there is a consciousness, a Purusha, who is not determined or limited by his individualisation or by this synthesis but on the contrary determines, supports and yet exceeds it. That which he selects from in order to construct this synthesis, is his total experience of the world-being. Therefore our individualisation exists by virtue of the world-being, but also by virtue of a consciousness which uses the world-being for experience of its possibilities of individuality. These two powers, Person and his world-material, are both necessary for our present experience of individuality. If the Purusha with his individualising syntheses of consciousness were to disappear, to merge, to annul himself in any way, our constructed individuality would cease because the Reality that supported it would no longer be in presence; if, on the other hand, the world-being were to dissolve, merge, disappear, then also our individualisation would cease, for the material of experience by which it effectuates itself would be wanting. We have then to recognise these two terms of our existence, a world-being and an individualising consciousness which is the cause of all our self-experience and world-experience.

But we see farther that in the end this Purusha, this cause and self of our individuality, comes to embrace the whole world and all other beings in a sort of conscious extension of itself and to perceive itself as one with the world-being. In its conscious extension of itself it exceeds the primary experience and abolishes the barriers of its active self-limitation and individualisation; by its perception of its own infinite universality it goes beyond all consciousness of separative individuality or limited soul-being. By that very fact the individual ceases to be the self-limiting ego; in other words, our false consciousness of existing only by self-limitation, by rigid distinction of ourselves from the rest of being and becoming is transcended; our identification of ourselves with our personal and temporal individualisation in a particular mind and body is abolished. But is all truth of individuality and individualisation abolished? does the Purusha cease to exist or does he become the world-Purusha and live intimately in innumerable minds and bodies? We do not find it to be so. He still individualises and it is still

he who exists and embraces this wider consciousness while he individualises: but the mind no longer thinks of a limited temporary individualisation as all ourselves but only as a wave of becoming thrown up from the sea of its being or else as a form or centre of universality. The soul still makes the world-becoming the material for individual experience, but instead of regarding it as something outside and larger than itself on which it has to draw, by which it is affected, with which it has to make accommodations, it is aware of it subjectively as within itself; it embraces both its world-material and its individualised experience of spatial and temporal activities in a free and enlarged consciousness. In this new consciousness the spiritual individual perceives its true self to be one in being with the Transcendence and seated and dwelling within it, and no longer takes its constructed individuality as anything more than a formation for world experience.

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(*Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 18, pp 366-368)

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SRI AUROBINDO ON JYOTIRMAYI'S POETRY

A PASSAGE FROM NIRODBARAN'S NOTEBOOK

WITH regard to a certain Bengali poem written by Jyotirmayi, Nirodbaran had this correspondence with Sri Aurobindo who used to see her poems and comment upon them.

Q: What do you say about the poem, Sir? I am damned if I understand anything of it. It is Blakish, Mallarmic or even goes beyond Methinks it exceeds both. Have you any *more* of these mystic members?

A: There is no necessity of going beyond Blake and Mallarmé. Their things are often more difficult than this.

? What is this mystic word. [This is in reference to my illegible word—"members".]

Q: Better find it out, please. At the rate she is going I don't know where she will end. Do you see the end?

A: Why should there be an end?

Q: I don't know if anyone will make anything out of it except your supramental self. The explanation that you gave of her last two poems, by Jove they were explanations indeed!

A: You mean they were more unintelligible than the things explained?

Q: I sometimes try to project my third eye into posterity and see reactions in its mind regarding the poetry. I at once withdraw, cover up the sight.

A: Is it your posterity that your third eye sees or posterity in general? Posterity has not had the reaction you speak of with B. and M.—their reputation improves with the lapse of time.

Q: They will say: "Sri Aurobindo gave explanations of this poetry—ha, ha! and praised it, gave Force to it! The poetess was undoubtedly queer, but the Guru?"

A: But do you then find that it is bad poetry? For at fine poetry, posterity will not say ha, ha, but at most "Oof! How difficult!" It is only contemporary opinion that is foolishly contemptuous of good poetry.

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

As you are yourself a painter I think you will be interested in knowing the background to the scene. Jayantilal has depicted of the Mother taking up the development of a number of budding artists in the early 'thirties' of this century. Jayantilal, a fine artist himself, deals in particular with his friend who was also my friend, the gentle and devoted Sanjiban, who passed away recently in the Ashram Nursing Home while I was there too, lying under complicated traction for a multiple fracture of the thigh-bone where it makes a joint with the shin. The article is well done and brings out effectively the right psychology of art in the Ashram and the Mother's way of fostering it. It is authoritative on the period with which it concerns itself, but it creates the impression that before the youngsters—"Anil Kumar, Sanjiban, Chinmayi and one or two others including Tajder", as Jayantilal lists them, seeming to forget the youngest, Romen—came under the Mother's wings the state of art in the Ashram was a howling desert.

Why it could not have been so may be inferred from the fact that some preliminaries of perspective were shown to Romen and Anil Kumar by Amal Kiran! In the course of time either of them proved a much more competent artist than I could have ever developed into. But the fact remains that for several years before the Mother took up the artistic education of the sadhaks in Jayantilal's list, she concerned herself with the Parsi newcomer—23 years old when he entered the Ashram—in whom she detected the capacity to draw and paint

In the early days when I used to watch people meditate with the Mother rather than do meditation myself, I made a series of sketches of many of them and put short sentences below my pictures. I had seen Purani's neck grow twice its normal width when he had plunged into meditation. Something from above his head appeared to be descending into him with tremendous weight, as it were, and his neck had to bulge out all round most spectacularly in order to hold the descent. Later I came to know that the descent could be like a bar of steel entering the head and sending one dizzy at first. My witticism below the little sketch of Purani ran: "Purani trying hard to swallow the Supermind." I remember my picture of the old American Vaun MacPheeters staring grimly in front of him with fixed eyes and set mouth. He earned the comment: "Vaun hypnotising the Absolute into submission." Another cartoon that comes up in my memory is of the young Muslim Ishak, renamed Prashanta. He used to take a posture of absorbed self-giving, losing all grip on himself, the face bent as far as possible over his right shoulder as if it hung loose there. Below it stood the gloss: "Prashanta in a state of dislocated devotion "

My drawings were seen by Purani and a few others, but we were afraid of letting the Mother see them lest she should frown at fun made of so serious a

matter as spirituality. I did not know at that time how witty a person she was and how she would have marked the technique of what had been drawn well. I recollect the keen attention she paid to the way I had sketched the chair on which she used to sit during her lunch-hour. My wife and I wanted to present her with another such chair. So, with Champaklal, an artist in his own right, helping me with accessories, I had drawn the Mother's chair with due attention to all the niceties of perspective. There was welcome given also to a series I had done in ink after an injury to my left knee from a fall. I was partly immobilised with synovitis, but had recovered sufficiently to think of attending somehow a little concert which had been arranged in the Meditation Hall downstairs in the Ashram's main building, with the Mother presiding over it. My gurus were in doubt about my scheme. So to set their minds at rest I drew how I would get with a backward movement into the vehicle then in use called Push-push—and next how I would hold up straight with a hand the injured leg—and then start on my drive to the Ashram with my hair standing up with a bit of pain and my friend Ambu tripping ahead of the Push-push carrying my crutches aloft, each in either hand, while behind my vehicle would come with long strides the old big-built physician famous in the Ashram as "Doctor-babu", his right hand combing with its fingers his abundant white beard flowing down his bare torso. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were convinced of the viability of my plan. My sheet of drawing came back the next morning with a line written in Sri Aurobindo's small neat hand: "Seen and appreciated."

To return to the early days soon after my first plunge into drawing in the Ashram. One evening while the usual small group had gathered round the Mother in the Prosperity Room before the Soup Distribution downstairs a little later, the Mother suddenly asked me. "Will you draw and paint the various flowers I give to people every morning at Pranam?" I was rather surprised and replied: "Mother, how do you assume that I can do such a thing?" She answered: "I know by looking at your right hand. It is quite clear to me." I was happy to take up the work.

In parenthesis I may say that object-drawing was no new thing for me. I had been addicted to pencil and brush since my boyhood. I had even passed the so-called Intermediate Examination in Art with a prize for the memory-drawing of a huge gorilla! Indeed at one period of my life I was posed with a choice between developing as an artist and devoting myself to writing. The enthusiasm to be an artist was most intense when, at the age of 6, I was taken out of India by my doctor-father, along with my mother, for treatment to my left leg which had been affected by polio three years earlier. London was our destination but we had a halt in Paris where we visited various picture-galleries. In one of them I saw a number of artists on high ladders which took them to paintings hung on the walls. They must be either copying the paintings or touching them up where they had faded. The sight of these men, with berets on their heads and palettes in

their hands, fired my fancy so much that I could not think of a more romantic job when I would grow up. But in my middle teens I got the feeling that I would never do anything absolutely original and first-rate in painting, whereas there were fair possibilities of my growing into an effective writer. So I practically gave up the art-career which had seemed open to me, and yet I cherished the dream that towards the end of my life I would have a studio and paint away. One of the projects I had conceived quite early during my stay in the Ashram was to make a painting for each of the poems which had won high praise from Sri Aurobindo. Under the encouragement of the sadhika whom Jayantilal has mentioned as "Tajdar" I made two paintings, one of a poem called "Creators" and the other of a poem entitled "Two Birds", an old Upanishadic theme. Both the pictures were seen by the Mother several years later and she praised them for what may be termed their vivid symbolic and atmospheric suggestion. The rest of my poetic work remains un-illustrated. I am fairly old—87 years of age—but the vision of a studio is still unrealised.

After the Mother had appointed me the Ashram's flower-painter she presented me with drawing-books and a paint-box, as well as small drawing-pads she had brought from Japan, made by a firm styled "Bumpodo". Every week she would look at my work. I got an insight into her way of judging from the remarks she made. There were paintings which I thought I had done very efficiently. She did not pause over them. There were others which did not have what I could have called the finishing touch and yet she smiled happily at the sight of them and passed appreciative remarks. The fact was that when doing these pieces I had a special warmth and glow in my heart in relation to her while the others had not been surrounded with as much of an inner attitude. The former must have spoken to her directly while the latter took her as part of the world in general.

Here a side-story which has nothing to do with painting as such will not be out of place as it shows an aspect of the Mother and is apropos of an item connected with my paraphernalia as a painter. There was a tube of pink water-colour which had somehow come up for inspection. I unscrewed it and for some reason smelt the paint and exclaimed: "It has such an appetising smell!" At once the Mother seemed to recoil and sharp words came out of her: "Never talk to me of food and eating!" My wife and I were both taken aback. Then my wife picked up the tube from where I had put it down and started pressing it somewhere near the nozzle. The Mother at once took her to task, remarking: "I can see that you have never been taught painting." Obviously we were not under fortunate stars on this occasion.

Besides the daily painting of individual flowers, I was asked to combine several and paint them skilfully intertwined to match the sentences which the Mother had composed for the ensembles. Very carefully the Mother had collected the sheets—smaller in size than the ones in the standard drawing-books—and kept them with her wrapped in a silk handkerchief. I have no idea

where at present this collection may be.

Another job set me by the Mother was to prepare small-size paintings of individual flowers with their specific meanings typed below—paintings which were meant to be affixed to the walls of certain rooms. Thus a flower which looked like a rose but was not a rose had been dubbed “Falsehood”. Its picture was put up in the Reading Room where the daily newspapers used to be spread out on mats every morning. I must have prepared a number of such labels. I don’t remember any other label of room-significance except the one the Mother made me do for my own room. The flower she chose here signified: “Krishna’s Light in the mind.”

Some other jobs also came my way. I had to make designs for the bands round the Mother’s head—either when she wore a sari or when she wore just a “kitty-cap” going with *kamis* and *salwar*. Designs had to be prepared also for borders to the Mother’s saris. Vasudha and her companions made embroideries from them. Once I remembered to have been asked to draw a peacock on a large sheet of paper to serve as a model for a curtain. My official career for such work ended when Sanjiban and some others joined the Ashram and were available for various drawing and painting work. I may conclude my tale by mentioning that I did a few portraits too. Once in the evening gathering in the Prosperity Room it happened that both the Mother and I started sketching the face of Pavitra (Barbier St-Hilaire). She did the front face while I attempted the profile. I observed that she used swift bold strokes in contrast to my method of slow delicate lines. I seemed to be after precise resemblance, she cared more for general striking suggestion. Once I followed her way and sketched my own self—bearded at that time—and put some colour on the portrait. But, though people have liked it, I considered my own “masterpiece” to be a side-face drawing of a young Bengali girl named Savitri who was studying English under me. I called this picture: “Savitri on the verge of meditation.” Both the portraits have somehow survived the sweep of the tides of time, whereas it has left no trace of a sketch I did of a Gujarati friend—Girdharlal—who was quite a character. A calculating worldly-wise strain bordered the basic spiritual aspirant in him and I rather piquantly flashed it out without really submerging the latter. I imagine his sense of humour enjoyed the double disclosure. Along with the pair of paintings I did of two poems of mine, the sketches of myself and my student are the sole signs today of my life as the Mother’s earliest artist from a period when none of the sadhaks and sadhikas counted by Jayantilal had taken up pencil or brush and the one on whom the Mother as artist-moulder spent later the most time—Huta—was indeed a far cry. Huta whom the Mother assiduously taught and inspired to paint Sri Aurobindo’s epic *Savitri* belongs to the late ’fifties and after, but she happens to be perhaps the single friend in relation to whom the generally forgotten proto-artist of the Ashram has lingered in stray action on private occasions.

(9 3.1992)

Your note runs: "I am working in an office that is infested with cockroaches. The place has been sprayed many times by management but to no avail. We have been unable to get rid of these pests. They crawl about over our papers and documents and food. Virtually every day I am killing these creatures. What is the karmic effect of this? Will this hamper, obstruct and delay my union with the psychic being and with the Divine?"

The killing of creatures that are pests is unavoidable. By itself such killing cannot have adverse karmic effects. But the manner and attitude with which we kill must have significance. The manner has to be swift. Out of any hesitation we should not do the killing in an inept fashion, leaving the unfortunate creature struggling and suffering until a second hit puts it out of whatever pangs it may be capable of. A single skilful swipe should finish the job. As for the attitude, a bit of excitement of the hunt is unavoidable but if it has some exultation in it we lower ourselves. Our minds should be calm and, in the very act of killing, we should offer not only our act but also the being of the victim to the Divine Compassion. Then our consciousness is not caught up in the work of extermination although it is directed towards it and does not wander away, rendering the work a fumble or a mess.

In fact, all work and not merely this has to be related to our consciousness in the same way—the way basically of what the Gita calls Karma Yoga, which in the Gita's synthesizing sweep merges in its core with the fundamental movements of the Yoga of Knowledge, Jnana Yoga, as well as the Yoga of Devotion, Bhakti Yoga. The directed skill of the deed, the inner detachment, the surrender of the deed and of the object involved in the doing, to a supreme Being with the aspiration that this Being may make us the channel of his Truth-Consciousness—such is the full mode of the Gita tending towards the Aurobindonian sadhana. What would turn that mode into the latter is the further ideal of total transformation—the Lord not only acting through us but descending into us and remoulding all our parts in the image of their perfect figures already existing in the Truth-Consciousness. Here the central dynamism in us invoking and receiving the Divine is what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother term the Psychic Being, the Soul of us which is stationed in the inmost recesses of the heart-centre, the centre which the Gita seeks to activate through its Yoga of Devotion. The Lord Himself or the Divine Mother or rather the two together as a single Reality are secretly present most luminously with the amalgam of Child and Seer that constitutes the Soul. My whole prayer is to be one with this Seer-Child, the amalgam in which I conceive the true Amal is hidden!

You see how far afield your cockroaches have led us. I may add the remark that the Seer part of the Soul is as important as the Child part. For the archetypal Child is not just the *n*th degree of the toddlers we were. It is more like Wordsworth's vision of the Child in his "Immortality Ode". He has actually the verbal turn: "Seer blest." Of course, the ordinary child has a delightful

innocence, but it has too an amount of ignorance which is akin to the mind of the animals. What makes it worse than they is that the normal child often takes pleasure in killing creatures like cockroaches or even less pestiferous insects and animals. Thus tearing apart the wings of a moth with great glee is very common. Sympathetic identification with one's victim is extremely rare. Even the sight of butchering a living creature is a matter of much interest. Thus, when a boy, I used to enjoy a cook cutting the throats of hens and flinging off the screaming and fluttering birds into the sink. Grown up, I observed with admiration mixed with some amusement my little sister, junior to me by nine years, appealing to my father when he was cleaning up a nest of cockroaches: "O papa, please don't kill baby cockroaches!" I believe little girls are more sensitive than little boys, but by and large the innocence of childhood, though quite genuine, is not unadulteratedly psychic. And it is the play of the true Soul we need in every activity of ours.

I am tempted to go considerably beyond the topic you have brought up. For the subject of slaughter in general looms before me. First, there is the controversy between meat-eaters and vegetarians. There is the broad question: "Has Nature evolved man as a feeder on flesh or as an eater of vegetables?" One school points to the gorilla—a cousin of ours, according to Darwinism—and preaches vegetarianism to us. The other school points out our canine teeth as Nature's signal that we are historically meat-eaters. There is also the ingenious argument that all animals that drink by licking up fluids with their tongues—dogs as well as lions, for instance—are meat-eaters, whereas those that drink with their mouths—for example, horses and anthropoids—are vegetarians. Man is like the latter and has unnaturally taken to the "flesh-pots". All this is scientific or semi-scientific debate. There is also the moral question—Gandhi's *ahimsa* or non-violence and Schweitzer's "Reverence for life." But Gandhi went to the extreme of advising Britain not to fight Hitler if he tried to invade her and rather welcome him so as to melt his heart. Gandhi did not realise how Indian spiritual insight has distinguished human ambitions and fighting urges from preternatural forces that seek to act through human beings and even to possess them—forces distinguished as Asura (Titan), Rakshasa (Giant), Pishacha (Demon). Sri Aurobindo knew the distinction and declared his whole-hearted support to a nation against which he had once led a vigorous many-sided opposition in his political days. Nor had his opposition meant always to be non-violent. His ultimate plan was of an armed insurrection against British rule in India. But he always sought to bring an inner spiritual attitude everywhere. Even war without such an attitude was never ruled out by him: it is often a necessity in the drama of man's progress. Extreme pacifism would seem to be as mistaken as thoughtless war-mania. A wide and judicious outlook is the desideratum. Something of it in a different strain appears also to have guided Schweitzer. On one occasion he was faced with the problem of feeding an eagle which he had saved from death

and brought up as a pet. He decided to give it its natural non-vegetarian food. He fed it with fish from a river, saying: "The claims of higher life come before those of lower life."

What about issues like hunting for sport on the one hand and, on the other, animal sacrifices to gods? I find the latter gruesome and degrading, the former exciting but heartless. Then there is the question of vivisection. Darwin, the most gentle of men who would not deliberately hurt a fly, is on record as declaring that one who objects to experiments on living animals for medical research can never be a true friend of humanity. But I am sure Darwin wanted the vivisectioning friends of humanity to be as humane as possible in their experiments. In all matters where a necessity of taking life is involved the main object should be avoidance of cruelty and an invocation of some higher Being's care for the creature destroyed. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother always struck me as free spirits having no fixed notions, no faddism, in issues connected with life and death but always keeping above the level of ordinary psychology and acting in tune with a Consciousness and a Will that have no personal passion, no narrow motive or interest but act according to an inherent light and love. (16 3 1992)

AMAL KIRAN
(K.D.SETHNA)

ATONEMENT

SOME sacred sun must await my aeonic night,
 To crown with its rosy glow
 And to atone for this long meandering on alien shores
 That are strangers to all light.
 Though swayed by the many enticements of the mart,
 Yet I kept my gaze fixed eastward,
 To await that hoped-for promised dawn,
 Life tasted like a cake of chalk,
 Shadowy substance of a careless dark
 Only the faith in the approach of Thy peerless feet,
 That will incarnadine my east,
 Barely kept afloat my frail barge
 On these tumultuous seas of Time.

SHYAM KUMARI

A SONNET BY NIRODBARAN WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

Original Form

twixt (spheres)
I hover (between) two skies of roseate glow,
The Senses
(Senses are) stilled, all fret(s) of passion lost;
A divine draws down
(Divine) thirst (mingles with) a fiery flow
on
Of moon-intensities life's holocaust (.) , - .

Tidal slow
|| (Slow)-marching (tidal) waves of the Infinite,
Swift torrents from that shoreless
(Through) hyaline (streams of a full-gathering) flood
And
(Bring) new-born splendours of a God-ward flight(.)
And ies
(A) lightning-memor(y) in the tranquil blood.

Blank gulfs of space now live
(Space's deep crusts are filled) with golden clouds,
(Wide gulfs of Space)
And solitary
(Solitary) heaven's (empty) hours rejoice
Moved by a starry
(With) the (starry) music of (an angel's) voice(,);
From some bosom luminous mystery
(While a) deep (mystery in its bosom) shrouds

}. Conceited?

i. No; but starry
music, angel's voice
have both of them
become very old

wonder-
An everwidening vision('s mystic) thrills,
A the
|| (Whose) secret touch (heart's) lonely temple fills.

Fine poetry, but details imperfect.

Q: Guru, how will you find this, I wonder! First of all I don't find any link between the successive stanzas. Seem to have run riot!

A: The connections are not very visible. I have therefore tried to introduce a more logical building, connecting the ideas together by a new syntax form of the whole. The first two lines now state the necessary condition for the divine thirst to be effective and the rest expresses the things the divine thirst brings down; culminating in the wider vision and the secret touch.

Q: "I hover"—I have tried an amphibrac.

[Sri Aurobindo corrected the spelling of the last word *amphibrach*]

A: No objection but not necessary.

Q: Two skies? Should it be two clouds?

A: Nonsense! there are many skies in the spiritual regions. One can very well be between two.

Q: "My spirit flies in skies....?"

A: flies in skies! What a satisfying internal rhyme!

Q: The second line reminds you of your poem 'Nirvana'?

A: I don't think.

Q: Next two lines mean anything?

A: Nothing at all. Divine thirst (on the earth, of course, in life) *draws down* on life's holocaust the moon-intensities.

Q: What about the rhyme between "lost" and "holocaust"?

A: Damned by all rules, but modern poets, I believe, rhyme anything with everything.

Q: "A lightning memory" will simply disturb "the tranquil blood".

A: Not necessary; if it is the right kind of lightning it will simply illumine it.

Q: In the third quatrain I have bungled still more, I fear. Why sudden "space's crusts" or "solitary heaven" when one is speaking of oneself?

A: Because they are part of one's own experience, part of one's self—it is subjective experience; not referring to material but spiritual space.

Q: The couplet—If so many things happen, why "lonely temple"?

A: Man! all that prepares the secret touch which fills the lonely temple.

Q: In place of "whose" there was "God's".

A: Too damned plain—A secret touch, if you please—otherwise there is no mystery.

Q: I am afraid you will criticise it mercilessly—getting surrealistic.

A: Not at all—experiences quite real spiritual experiences.

Q: Is this the idea: because the senses are stilled and the divine thirst is there, the Infinite brings slowly the splendours etc. and crusts are filled up etc etc., thus a widening vision is created? Seems all right?

A: Yes, only it must be more clear.

Q: If you have time, I would like to have a few examples on trochaic inversion in the various feet of a pentameter. You said once that a trochee is

extremely difficult to manage. A book on metre says that usually a trochee is used at the beginning and in the 4th foot...

A: Quite right—though actually they are put anywhere—but these are the easiest places to put them without spoiling the iambic rhythm. A trochee in the last foot is quite exceptional and must not be used except to produce a special effect or else only when there is a full stop or clear sentence pause at the end of the iambic fourth foot e.g. Up towards the moon he rocketed; slowly

The full face of the planet larger grew.

Here the second foot is a trochee in the second line. The same rule for double trochees e.g. Slowly slowly the great star floated near.

(Revised form)

I hover twixt two skies of roseate glow,
The senses stilled, all fret of passion lost;
A divine thirst draws down a fiery flow
Of moon-intensities on life's holocaust,—

Tidal slow-marching waves of the Infinite,
Swift hyaline torrents from that shoreless flood
And new-born splendours of a God-ward flight
And lightning-memories in the tranquil blood.

Blank gulfs of space now live with golden clouds,
And heaven's solitary hours rejoice
Moved by the music of a starry voice;
From some deep bosom luminous mystery shrouds

An everwidening wonder-vision thrills,
A secret touch the lonely temple fills.

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

My Son (*Continued*)

THOUGH I had come to Pondicherry for good, I would go from time to time to visit my son in Calcutta. As I have already mentioned, he had found a good job in which he was doing well, and had a wide circle of friends. At the time, he was still unmarried, and was living alone, as his grandmother, who had brought him up since childhood, had passed away.

A friend of mine asked me why I did not go to him more often. She herself went to see her children whenever a relation of hers would pay her fare, she told me.

I explained to her that my case was different. Whenever I asked my Thakur if I could go to see my son he would refuse. “You will suffer a great deal if you do,” he would tell me. I could never understand why. What was there that would make me suffer?

An occasion finally came, however, when my Thakur did give me permission to go. I was a little surprised, and had no inkling of what was in store for me. As soon as I stepped into my house and was climbing the stairs, I saw my son standing at the top waiting to greet me.

“Mummy, you’ve come!” he exclaimed. “I’m so relieved!”

“Relieved? Why?” I asked.

“Because I’m getting married!”

Now I was *really* surprised.

I interrupted him. “Getting married? To whom?”

He promptly invited me in to see for myself. The moment I saw the girl I was disappointed, and I told him so later. Then he explained that when he had been suffering from malaria and was running a high fever, she was the only one who had tended him, his grandmother no longer being alive. There had been no one else around aside from the maidservant to so much as give him a glass of water. So it was this girl alone, his prospective bride, who had saved his life. “Then what objection can you have to my marrying her?” he demanded. “You never thought of marrying me off to anyone!”

“What nonsense!” I protested. “How can you forget the number of offers we had? It was just that between you and me we didn’t like any of them. Then when I couldn’t wait any longer, I came away to Pondicherry leaving you to find your own match. Now that you’ve done it, who am I to say anything? My likes or dislikes don’t matter, so long as you are happy.”

Now at least it was clear to me why my Thakur had permitted me to come to

Calcutta. I discovered that the girl was Goanese. Though rather dark, she was both well educated and sweet-natured. Her family had settled in Bengal, and she had a job of her own in a firm.

The marriage was celebrated in royal style. My son moved in the high society of Calcutta. All his friends contributed to the glamour of the occasion. My relations also came forward and arranged an elaborate ceremony. I offered all my ornaments and jewellery worth several lakhs to the bride. I even gave her a gold sari I had been presented for my own marriage. Being entirely woven of gold thread, that too was worth a few lakhs. But the poor girl refused to wear it, as she was afraid to be seen in anything so valuable. Instead, she deposited the sari in the bank where it still lies safe, and wore something far less splendid and gorgeous.

Some time later, after turning me down many times, my Thakur again suddenly gave me permission to visit my son and his bride. On this occasion I was able to observe how the marriage was working out. I thoroughly enjoyed the company of the young couple. I found my daughter-in-law very charming and she took excellent care of me. But what was most striking about her—a characteristic not easily found these days—was her complete and self-effacing devotion to her husband. There was only one problem between them. I had mentioned once before that many of my son's friends who came to his house were drug-addicts. He had always claimed that he was unaffected by their unwholesome habits and that no one had a right to criticise their way of life. Not surprisingly, his wife did not agree. She told me how bitterly she resented these rich vagabonds coming to her house, so much so that her conjugal happiness was threatened. She even mentioned that one of them was married to a girl who smoked and was scantily clothed!

When my son heard her complaining to me about his friends, he was furious. He repeated all his old assertions about no one having any right to criticise his friends or their life-styles. I could do nothing to remove this bone of contention between husband and wife except to pray to the Lord to protect them both.

After spending several months at their house, I wanted to return to Pondicherry well before the August Darshan. But I was unable to procure a ticket. When only a month remained before the Darshan and I had still not been able to get a rail booking I began to worry. On no account did I want to miss the Darshan. I now approached a very good friend of mine, about whom I will speak later, in the hope that he might be able to exert some influence and arrange a ticket for me. This he was finally able to do, but still not as soon as I had hoped. I would arrive just before the Darshan with scarcely any margin to spare.

A few days after the ticket had been purchased, my husband died. Now at last I understood. I could not get the train ticket when I wanted because my Thakur knew I must be in Calcutta when my husband passed away. This was

mainly because my son, being estranged from his father's family and having no one else to help him, would not have been able to manage the funeral on his own. How embarrassed and bewildered he would have been knowing nothing of the rites and rituals that he would have to perform on the death of his parent!

Strange are the ways of the Lord. How many times have I not seen how he knows the past, the present and the future—in my own life and in that of others! And even so, I have so often failed to keep my trust in him. Such is human nature.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

LABOUR OF LOVE

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of May 1992)

Now I was in Gaizmore Hotel, a big building with rooms converted into bed-sitters. It had a good number of tenants.

My bed-sitter with cooking facilities was on the ground floor. A large window faced a small garden which was now gloomy without blooms.

Time kept slipping away. The Mother sent me the message of 24th April which I took to our spiritual meeting at Doris's flat. She read it out:

“The Formless and the Formed were joined in her.
Immensity was exceeded by a look,
A face revealed the crowded Infinite.
• Incarnating inexpressibly in her limbs
The boundless joy the blind world-forces seek,
Her body of beauty mooned the seas of bliss.
At the head she stands of birth and toil and fate,
In their slow round the cycles turn to her call;
Alone her hands can change Time's dragon base.
Hers is the mystery the Night conceals;
• The spirit's alchemist energy is hers;
She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.
The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God;
She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
The magnet of our difficult ascent,
The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,
The Joy that beckons from the impossible,
The Might of all that never yet came down.
All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.
All here shall be one day her sweetness' home,
All contraries prepare her harmony;
Towards her our knowledge climbs, our passion gropes,
In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,
Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our pain.”

*

In my spontaneous letter dated 21-9-59 I wrote to Mrs. Sarala Shah of Bombay:

“...During the summer I could not paint, although I have all the painting materials. As a matter of fact, this work needs a lot of time and concentration. But in my heart of hearts I know very well and feel sure that in the near future I shall have to spend several years in this vocation. For, I will express the whole of *Savitri* through paintings.”

My God, how could I write such a thing when I had not the vaguest idea as to what I would do in the future?

Now I am really amazed at who made me do so.

Sri Aurobindo wrote in *Savitri*:

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

*

Splendourous spring was in full swing. It was lovely to take a long walk in the different Parks.

One night before going to bed I turned the pages of the *Bulletin* of April 1960 the Mother had sent me. I came across this very interesting comment the Mother had given on an item in *Thoughts and Aphorisms* by Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“Hallucination is the term of Science for those irregular glimpses we still have of truths shut out from us by our preoccupation with matter; coincidence for the curious touches of the artist, in the work of that supreme and universal Intelligence which in its conscious being, as on a canvas, has planned and executed the world.”

Sweet Mother, what does “artist” represent here?

Sri Aurobindo here compares the work of the Supreme Lord, creator of the universe, to the work of an artist who would paint, with great strokes of brush, the picture of the world in his conscious being as on a canvas. And when by the fact of a ‘curious technique’ he superimposes two strokes of brush, that makes a ‘coincidence’.

Generally the word ‘coincidence’ suggests the idea of an unconscious meaningless chance. Sri Aurobindo wants to make us understand that chance and unconsciousness have nothing to do with this phenomenon; on

the contrary, it is the result of a refined taste and consciousness such as artists possess and it can reveal a deep intention.

I rose from my chair, opened the window and looked at the garden strangely lit by the crescent moon. The sky was cloudless and star-spangled. There was a warm breath of spring air.

Indeed the Supreme Lord was the perfect Artist who had created the whole Universe.

*

Spring merged into summer but still there was crispness in the air. The days were slowly growing longer, warmer and brighter.

I was longing to get back to India. My studies folded up sooner than expected. The courses of flower-making, bead-work, drawing and painting were about to close.

The examinations in L.T.C. were near. I was busy with my work.

On 20th June 1960 my examinations started. I did well in them. But during my paper in English literature I started having a terrible pain in my right upper wisdom-tooth. It grew by leaps and bounds—I felt as if hot needles were pricking me. I thought I would faint.

I left the paper and rushed to Dr. Phillip Wise, who had treated me previously. He removed the tooth and cautioned me that there still were two lower wisdom-teeth which needed extraction. But the operation could only be done in a hospital and I would have to stay there at least a week. For, the removal of these teeth would not be easy.

I refused, and said that soon I would be leaving England. He shrugged and said: “Well, suit yourself. But you must be careful. They will trouble you in the near future and they will be a most difficult case.” I thanked him and made my way.

I thought that I should not worry now since I had no complaint.

(To be continued)

TWO BIRDS

Two birds on a tree, one eating the fruit and the other watching him: this symbol is widely known and in India has been depicted in paintings, used in novels, films and poems and is recognised to have come from the Upanishads. Few remember the details. I feel many of *Mother India's* readers would like to have them easily available.

The Upanishads, in Sri Aurobindo's words, "...are the record of a powerful revival which took the sacred text (Vedas) and ritual as a starting-point for a new statement of spiritual thought and experience. This movement had two complementary aspects, one, the conservation of forms, another the revelation of the soul of the Veda,—the first represented by the Brahmanas, the second by the Upanishads."¹ As expected we do find the seed-thought of this symbol of two birds in the Rig Veda (1.164.20,21). These two *Suktas* are translated by Sri Aurobindo as follows:

"Two birds beautiful of wing, friends and comrades, cling to a common tree, and one eats the sweet fruit, the other regards him and eats not... Where winged souls cry the discoveries of knowledge over their portion of immortality, there the Lord of all, the Guardian of the world took possession of me, he the Wise, me the ignorant."^{2a}

The two birds, in symbolic language, represent the Eternal and the individual, as described in the Gita—XV 7,10, the translation of that verse by Sri Aurobindo being, "It is an eternal portion of Me that has become the living being in a world of living beings.... The eye of knowledge sees the Lord abiding in the body and enjoying and going forth from it."^{2b}

The symbol has been mentioned in two verses in the Shwetashwatara Upanishad but it is the Mundaka Upanishad where we find the full exposition of it in ten verses from Chapter Three, Section One. I give below Sri Aurobindo's translation first of the two verses from the Shwetashwatara Upanishad and then that of the ten verses from the Mundaka Upanishad.

In the Shwetashwatara Upanishad, Chapter 4, Verses 6 and 7 run:

6. "There are two birds that cling to one common tree, beautiful of plumage, yoke-fellows are they, eternal companions; and one of them eateth the delicious fruit of the tree and the Other eateth not, but watcheth His fellow "

7. "Man is the bird that dwelleth on one common tree with God, but he is lost in its sweetness and the slave of its sweetness and loseth hold of God, therefore he hath grief, therefore he is bewildered. But when he seeth that other bird who is God, then he knoweth that nothing is but God's greatness, and his grief passeth away from him."³

The Mundaka Upanishad, Chapter Three, Section One, reads

1. "Two birds, beautiful of wing, close companions, cling to one common tree: of the two one eats the sweet fruit of the tree, the other eats not but watches his fellow.

2. The soul is the bird that sits immersed on the one common tree; but

because he is not lord he is bewildered and has sorrow. But when he sees that other who is the Lord and beloved, he knows that all is His greatness and his sorrow passes away from him.

3. When, a seer, he sees the Golden-hued, the maker, the Lord, the Spirit who is the source of Brahman, then he becomes the knower and shakes from his wings sin and virtue; pure of all stain he reaches the supreme identity. (Or, pure of all staining tinge he reaches to a supreme equality.)

4. This is the life in things that shines manifested by all these beings; a man of knowledge coming wholly to know this, draws back from creeds and too much disputing. In the Self his delight, at play in the Self, doing works,—the best is he among the knowers of the Eternal.

5. The Self can always be won by truth, by self-discipline, by integral knowledge, by a life of purity,—this Self that is in the inner body, radiant, made all of light whom, by the perishing of their blemishes, the doers of askesis behold.

6. It is the Truth that conquers and not falsehood; by Truth was stretched out the path of the journey of the Gods, by which the sages winning their desires ascend there where Truth has its Supreme abode.

7. Vast is That, divine, its form unthinkable; it shines out subtler than the subtle (or, minuter than the minute,) very far and farther than farness, it is here close to us, for those who have vision it is even here in this world; it is here, hidden in the secret heart.

8. Eye cannot seize, speech cannot grasp Him, nor these other godheads; not by austerity can he be held nor by works: only when the inner being is purified by a glad serenity of knowledge, then indeed, meditating, one beholds the Spirit indivisible.

9. This self is subtle and has to be known by a thought-mind into which the life-force has made its fivefold entry; all the conscious heart of creatures is shot through and inwoven with the currents of the life-force and only when it is purified can this self manifest its power. (or, manifest its full power and pervading presence)

10. Whatever world the man whose inner being is purified sheds the light of his mind upon, and whatsoever desire he cherishes, that world he takes by conquest, and those desires. Then let whosoever seeks for success and well-being approach with homage a self-knower.”⁴

Finally I shall quote from the book *The Secret Splendour* by K.D. Sethna (Amal Kiran) a lucid and beautiful poem, aptly titled—“The two Birds,” (p. 70), which unravels the mystic symbolism of that phrase:

A small bird crimson-hued
Among great realms of green
Fed on their multitudinous fruit—
But in his dark eye flamed more keen

A hunger as from joy to joy
 He moved the poignance of his beak,
 And ever in his heart he wailed,
 "Where hangs the marvellous fruit I seek?"

Then suddenly above his head
 A searching gaze of grief he turned;
 Lo there upon the topmost bough
 A pride of golden plumage burned!

Lost in a dream no hunger broke,
 This calm bird—aureoled, immense—
 Sat motionless; all fruit he found
 Within his own magnificence.

The watchful ravener below
 Felt his time-tortured passion cease,
 And flying upward knew himself
 One with that bird of golden peace.

(26.9.1936)

Sri Aurobindo commented on the poem thus:

"It is very felicitous in expressing and taking The fourth stanza is from the intuitive, the rest not from the higher mind—for there a high-uplifted thought is the characteristic—but probably from some realm of the inner Mind where thought and vision are involved in each other—that kind of fusion gives the easy felicity that is found here. All the same there is a touch of the higher mind perhaps in the 2nd lines of the second and the last stanza."

As all my quotations direct us, there is no way but to adore and become one with the bird just above, to be always in a State of Grace, in a constant and ever-increasing quiet joy filled with the ever-fresh fragrance of the Divine Mother's presence.

DINKAR D. PALANDE

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1. *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 10, pp 10-11
- 2(a,b) *Ibid* , Vol 18, p 365
- 3 *Ibid* , Vol 12, p 368
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp 281-283

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of May 1992)

THE ideas of *Bhawani Mandir* worked as a great force in those days and went a long way in giving directions to the wandering revolutionary spirit in the country. *Bhawani Mandir* set fire to the youthful hearts and made them glow with adoration of the Mother. Sri Aurobindo outlined accordingly his plan for an order of monks devoted to Bhawani, and her reign of returning Light. The order was to act in four directions: Work for the people (public lectures, adult education, charity), Work for the Middle Class ("Various works of public utility"), Work for the Wealthy people (striving for a trusteeship consciousness among the rich) and General Work for the Country (foreign training for Indian youth to establish workshops and factories in India). The document certainly upset the British Rulers, for clearly it set idealistic young men on the path of freedom and sacrifice. The Rowlatt Committee's Report (1917) later pointed out that "*Bhawani Mandir* really contains the germs of Hindu revolutionary movement in Bengal". The Government of that time read the articles of *Bhawani Mandir* in order to know the further developments and happenings. The articles of *Jugantar* preached open revolt and gave instructions about guerilla warfare. Mr. Haridas and Uma Mukherjee have pointed out: "But even within the left camp further extremism developed by 1906 (the year after the composition of *Bhawani Mandir*) and it was taking the shape of terrorism. Of this new school in Bengal, Aurobindo was in a sense the spiritual father whose influence on Bhupendra Nath Dutta (Vivekananda's brother) and Barindra Kumar Ghose was considerable. Bhupendra Nath and Barindra Kumar were upholders of the cult of triumph through terror."¹

The authors further state: "The contemporary Intelligence Branch records reveal what an important place this anonymous political writing under the caption *Bhawani Mandir* (1905-06) occupies in the early history of the revolutionary movement in India. Mr. Denham, the Superintendent of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, in his confidential report on this pamphlet, observed. 'Bhawani Mandir was nothing but a gigantic scheme for establishing a central religious Society, outwardly religious, but in spirit, energy and work political. From this centre missionaries well-versed in religious-political argument were to go on their wanderings over India, to form fresh centres and gain fresh recruits. The argument in the pamphlet is ingenious and when examined shows that extraordinary adroitness with which its author has misinterpreted the Vedantist ideas for his own purposes, and to adorn his talk and point his moral' "²

"The pamphlet *Bhawani Mandir*", Mr. Denham continued, "is but a clear forerunner of the far stronger meat which was served up in the *Jugantar*. One can trace throughout the history of the *Jugantar* the cry of Shakti—the want of power

and how to obtain power.” In Denham’s opinion, the whole revolutionary movement in India was carefully thought out by the author of the pamphlet—*Bhawani Mandir*—and the move towards the attainment of Shakti, which was carefully hidden under a religious veil in *Bande Mataram*, was shown by the *Jugantar* articles in its nakedness.”³

As a matter of fact, there was neither a Mandir nor a Matha which came into existence “The idea of *Bhawani Mandir*,” said Sri Aurobindo later, “simply lapsed of itself.” The pamphlet caused a deep disquiet to India’s rulers. A visionary possibility had been projected and that was enough for the moment. It aimed at infusing infinite energy in every Indian.

Sri Aurobindo plunged into Indian politics directly during the tempestuous moment of partition of Bengal in 1905. It was a clear indication that he was looking and waiting for the best opportunity to serve the cause of his country’s freedom. Before 1905, however, the time for his active participation was not ripe. His involvement in Indian politics was a mere fraction of his life—a matter of three or four years. But they proved to be very important events and a landmark in India’s freedom struggle. In 1905, there occurred an event which at once galvanized the nation into a mood particularly suitable for the spread of radical ideas and caused a mass-resentment against the British. That was the partition of Bengal by the mean-minded Viceroy Lord Curzon. Lord Curzon, though gifted, was obstinate and decided in the teeth of opposition from the Bengalis for the partition of Bengal. The unprecedented mass-agitation that shook the whole nation in the wake of the partition of Bengal is now a part of history. It was a terrible hour. Sri Aurobindo in *The Hour of God* has shown that the ‘Hour of God’ had come demanding instant and total sacrifice from the patriot:

“There are moments when the Spirit moves among men and the breath of the Lord is abroad upon the waters of our being, ...when even a little effort produces great results and changes destiny.... Unhappy is the man or the nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment.”⁴

Sri Aurobindo graphically described how the Bengal-partition shook the nation into a new consciousness. He says: “We in India fell under the influence of the foreigners’ Maya* which completely possessed our souls. It was the Maya of the alien rule, the alien civilisation, the powers and capacities of the alien people who happened to rule over us. These were as if so many shackles that put our physical, intellectual and moral life into bondage. We went to school with the aliens, we allowed the aliens to teach us and draw our minds away from all that was great and good in us. We considered ourselves unfit for self-government

* Illusion, delusion, magical power—an important term in Indian monistic philosophy

and political life, we looked to England as our exemplar and took her as our saviour. And all this was Maya and bondage. . . It is only through repression and suffering that this Maya can be dispelled, and the bitter fruit of partition of Bengal administered by Lord Curzon dispelled the illusion. We looked up and saw that the brilliant bird sitting above was none else but ourselves, our real and actual self. Thus we found *Swaraj** within ourselves and saw that it was in our hands to discover and to realise it.”⁵

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

* Self-government

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- 1 Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, *The Origins of the National Education Movement* (1957), p. 74
- 2 *Sri Aurobindo and the New Thought in Indian Politics* by Haridas and Uma Mukherjee, pp. XXV & XXVI
- 3 *Ibid*
- 4 “The Hour of God” *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol. 17, p. 1
- 5 Sri Aurobindo, *Speeches*, pp. 50-51

A CORRECTIVE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE March issue of *Mother India* has provided some rude shocks.

In the article “How I came to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother”, how on earth did my mother’s name get transmogrified from SUPROBHAT to SUBRATA, involving not only a change in gender but also in sense?

Moreover, on page 178 there are two major errors in editing:

(i) in line 20 instead of “When Sri Aurobindo was being read out” it ought to be “When Sri Anirvan was speaking”;

(ii) in line 31 instead of “Nolini said”, it should be: “My husband said”, as Nolini was not present in the darshan at all.

Would you kindly have the mistakes noted in a corrigendum?

One more request. The copy which you send the author at AD-64, Salt Lake City, Calcutta-700 064 should have at least her name correctly written both in the contents and at the end of the article (even if the correction is done by hand).

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

SANJIBAN BISWAS

THE MOTHER'S ARTIST

A Talk by Jayantilal at the Ashram School on 29.1.1992 at 8.30 p.m.

ON the eve of Sanjiban's birthday, which falls on 30th January, we are gathered here to remember him and pay respects to his memory.

He was a shy person who never came forward, so very few people know about him and the work which he did and all he achieved in and contributed to the general life of the Ashram. He was an extremely loving person and those young people who came in contact with him know it better than those who had only heard of him. He never sought the limelight and always remained in the background.

I want to stress two points before I say something about his life, how he came here and all that he did. These two points are very important for our life here. The first thing is the development of consciousness we achieve by going within or by the grace of the Mother. The other is the development of the inherent powers or the powers of the new consciousness we open ourselves to and their expression. It is these that make the life of this place vibrant, enduring and luminous. These elements you will see were present in Sanjiban's life. I will read at the end letters of Sri Aurobindo which have not been published, as far as I know, and also some of the statements which Sanjiban made about his own life.

There are certain quarters where Sri Aurobindo's name became like a mantra—one of these centres was Chittagong. When Sri Aurobindo took to the political life and revolutionary activities they turned to revolutionary movements. Then when Sri Aurobindo gave up that life and took to Sadhana most of them also turned to a life of sadhana. That is why in the earlier period we find quite a number of people from Chittagong here in the Ashram. Sanjiban was one of them, he came here in 1933. It seems when he was in college he heard about Sri Aurobindo from Hriday, the brother of the famous Chinmoy. Hriday, who was with him in Chittagong and they were friends. Sanjiban first saw the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's pictures on Hriday's table. He was inspired to live the life of which Sri Aurobindo spoke.

Once Sanjiban got a copy of a photograph of Sri Aurobindo, made an enlargement of it and touched it up, as artists used to do in those days, and under the photograph drew two hands offering flowers and sent the picture to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo must have made a remark or the Mother must have said something so that Nolinida wrote to him that "if you want to pursue art you will have to study art properly, study anatomy, study how to draw the figure", and Sanjiban was very happy to receive a letter like that coming as it did from Sri Aurobindo. Then it seems in 1933 Nirod, whom he must have known earlier, was

coming to the Ashram and Sanjiban thought, "Let me also go there", but he had no money, he had only about Rs 20 and it cost Rs 40 to come to Pondicherry. So it seems Nirod and other friends helped him and made it possible for him to accompany them to Pondicherry.

When he came here he was put up in the Budi House on the sea-front. The next morning when he got up and was looking at the sea, he had a certain sense of release, a kind of spiritual experience and he wrote to Sri Aurobindo about it. Sri Aurobindo confirmed it. Sanjiban, because he had done drawing and wished to pursue art,—(by the way, we were told by Sanjiban that his father could also draw and paint, perhaps he had imbibed it from him—)the Mother asked him to develop drawing and he was given the work of drawing flowers and preparing designs for embroidery work. But in those days it was not that you were confined only to a particular work that you had been given, or that you liked to do. You were also given some work for the common life here. So for some time he was working too in the book-binding department which was in the Guest House where we now have Table Tennis. Birenda, who also came from Chittagong, was in charge of it. Gradually the Mother gave Sanjiban more work of drawing and painting and so he gave up gradually his work in the bindery. The Mother used to send him flowers and he would draw them. But before that stage arrived he had to be trained. In the early thirties the Mother trained quite a few people; just as you teach children she taught them, what in Bengali they call *hathe khadi*. Just as you give a child a piece of chalk in his hand and, holding his hand, make him write letters of the alphabet, the Mother taught these people. There were Anil Kumar, Sanjiban, Chinmayi and one or two others including Tajdar. Those who were serious about art, the Mother used to instruct them and guide them. You will find it very amusing to hear today that she used to cut out pictures from newspapers and send them, to begin with, to put colours on them. On the result of this work Sri Aurobindo used to remark, perhaps as dictated by the Mother. And in one of Sri Aurobindo's letters we find that he was happy with the result and said how good they look when the pictures are painted with colours. In this way these people were not only encouraged but there was a force put forth so that they could develop their art more thoroughly.

Within a very short time Sanjiban was doing excellent work and painting flowers, designs and other things. You see his major work in those years was the painting of flowers which the Mother sent him. He used to make a proper study of it by making a good detailed drawing, then colour it from Nature and send it to the Mother. And the Mother would give significances to all these flowers and preserve them carefully in a chest of drawers. And it went on like that for years. Besides, the Mother slowly began to give him the work of preparing designs for the Embroidery Department. You have no idea about the kind of work he had done in preparing these designs with flower motifs. The Mother often used to give even the measurements for the designs of saris. She used to say the "pallav"

must be twelve inches, one border four inches and the other border must be only two inches and all this kind of instruction. So there is a very big collection of these designs which he did and some of them, I hear, are not in good shape today because they were used so often. The sadhikas who worked out these designs were a very devoted group in those days and some of them worked on these designs for 8-10 hours a day for 8 months to a year, or sometimes even for a year and a half. It is only if you have a chance to see these finished pieces that you will understand the amount of work that has gone into them. In the same manner with the paintings also. Sanjiban must have done almost 200 or more paintings of flowers and they are all preserved. Unfortunately they are all deteriorating because of the chemicals in the machine-made papers on which they were painted. We are trying to photograph them and see how far we can preserve the work, if not the originals.

These artists had gained enough confidence and after 1938-39, they began to go out for sketching from Nature because the Mother insisted that what they did must be done from Nature, although in the beginning, when they were learning, they were asked to copy certain things, but later on she insisted that they should go to Nature to learn to do painting and sketching. For years they would go after lunch to the surrounding country. Krishnalal, Nishikanto, Sanjiban, Anil Kumar and myself used to go out and a number of works were produced and most of them are preserved in the Art Gallery.

In those days for everything the Mother used to instruct them and show them the right approach. It seems when Sanjiban started colour work she pointed out that the colours have to be placed one beside the other and not mixed. That is a particular technique of painting, it is called pointillism. The Impressionists also followed this method and outlook. If you put in juxtaposition say yellow and blue it will give the vibrating effect of green. In the same way if you want a purple shade, you put blue and red or pink side by side to get the purple or mauve shade. What you get will be more living than what you get by mixing the colours. This is what she herself had done in some of her paintings, so she taught them this technique. It was a revolutionary approach to colour in painting which has produced in the early years of our century very fine works in Europe. Then one day she taught Sanjiban how to do oil painting. She did a portrait of Chinmayi and showed how it was to be done, how the portrait and the background should merge so that there was harmony. She taught these newcomers to art from the very beginning and the achievement, as we see it today, is remarkable. Remarkable because in the growing life of the Ashram the Mother wanted so many faculties, so many capacities, so many powers to manifest through the people what they had within them hidden or buried. This was done through the power of the Mother's consciousness which was supporting them from behind. She also helped them to awaken and bring out deeper aspects of their being, the wider and profounder aspects and their greater reality. Various

occult and spiritual experiences people began to have as they opened themselves to the Mother's force, of course to the extent they could open themselves. If there was depression at a particular time they would ask the Mother: "Why is there this depression in our nature?" In answer she would put forward her grace and the depression would disappear. Just as a mother brings up a child the Mother brought up those people in the old days in the 'thirties. They had a very great opportunity and they were very fortunate to have that kind of daily guidance.

Now it so happened, because of some family problems, that Sanjiban had to go out of the Ashram. He had very young brothers and sisters and something had to be done for them and his father was getting old, so he sought the Mother's permission and, although the Mother generally didn't easily give such a permission, he somehow got it. He remained out for nearly 10 years, not in one place only. He went to Calcutta and did some work and then to Bombay and it was only after quite some time that he came back to the Ashram. He was looking after the work of *Mother India* in Bombay and when the office was shifted to Pondicherry he also came here and continued to work for *Mother India* for some time.

After that he began teaching in the school and also started drawing and painting. One great capacity of Sanjiban's was a tremendous skill of hand. He could handle anything, everything that needed skill of hand. He tried various techniques of painting. When he was in Calcutta he took to commercial art and, as in commercial art you must have some knowledge of photography, so he took to photography. After he came back to the Ashram he did a lot of photographic work—enlarging and finishing the photographs. He did photographs of the Mother in various sizes and kinds and also painted them in photographic colours. He could do stencil work and also started batik work. You see, actually he was a child of Mahasaraswati, not so much of Mahalakshmi, but of Mahasaraswati. He had a sense of perfection and in one place he says: "I could not take anything to the Mother which was not properly done." And so everything he did, he did with this sense of perfection. If you see his early work in the field of commercial art we find that this faculty of being very precise came in very handy. Here is one of his important capacities and because of it his achievements are many, he could handle anything where sureness of hand and eye were required. He was also a good hairdresser; he was the first man here to whom people went for hair-cutting and he did it happily.

Later on, many of our young boys and girls used to go to him to learn painting. He taught them with great care and affection and a good number of them have benefitted from his company and instruction. Some of them have taken seriously to art and are endeavouring in that direction with great interest. After some time he gave up photography and took up batik work more seriously. His designs were meticulous, they were absolutely perfect in colour and drawing.

As I said, he was a child of Mahasaraswati. He, himself, in one of his statements said: "I have not created anything great but whatever I have done I have done with devotion and care and a sense of perfection." This is his contribution to the field of art-atmosphere that has been created in the Ashram.

These are the salient features of his physical life, but we have to see in the context of our life here how others have also worked and made the Ashram life what it is today—people with various other capacities, the capacity to organise, the capacity to write, the capacity to sing and, not the least, to serve in any given capacity. By the way, Sanjiban had also a very fine voice. He could sing well, he wrote some songs and poems too.

When we remember Sanjiban we should also remember others who are here or were here. We remember Birenda with whom he was working in the book-binding section. For over fifteen years he must have been associated with this department. At the same time often at night working on his drawings and designs. Sanjiban's work in the bindery and leather-craft was also of a high quality. So we see that it is in this field, this area of handiwork, that he achieved something admirable. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to him: "You have the gift and if you pursue and develop it you will go quite far, you have the skill of hand." And that was the most important element in his life. He could do anything, he could handle any handicraft and achieve proficiency.

- What I am trying to stress is that, apart from this work in which he contributed to the life of the Ashram, by developing his own skills and talents, he had also an inner life and had several experiences of a spiritual nature. As I said earlier, the first time he came here and looked out on the sea he had a certain sense of release. Another time he wrote to Sri Aurobindo: "Just before going to bed I am singing and suddenly I find that my consciousness widens and I find that it is very wide." Sri Aurobindo replied: "It is true, the inner consciousness is very wide." So what we have to see is that we are not here merely to develop skills in a particular field—they are the powers of our inherent nature and being, the powers which we have to learn to manifest but in the light of our increasing experience, the emerging life of our inner being. So unless both these elements of progress work simultaneously and help each other the general life cannot grow in the right direction. In one of his earlier articles in *Bande Mataram* Sri Aurobindo wrote that a *New Thought* needs a new centre of education. It is thus that collective life grows. In the same manner we can say—although he has not put it in this way—that a new vision of life needs a new centre of life and it is this new centre of life that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have tried to create in this Ashram. We have to go deep within, find the deeper aspect of our being, the wider aspect of our being and also, at the same time, develop the different skills and powers which are required to express what we have realised within us,—Sri Aurobindo always laid stress on both these things. He said consciousness and life, these are the two basic elements of his particular philosophy, his view and

vision of the world and he wanted to combine them for a greater realisation of a collective progress. Sometimes we become cynical and do not realise what this life means or what this life has contributed in a larger vision of human progress, what it has revealed, what it has opened up before us. Unfortunately this cynical turn makes us see only the physical aspect of things. But if we once begin to see rightly, if we stand apart and see, we shall realise how in its reality this place has grown from 1920, from the time the Mother came, how it has developed into an important centre—not so much as a social organisation, but as a centre of collective life where a new experiment of life-organisation has been attempted on a deeper basis. How men have tried to live within themselves, sound the depths and heights of their being and also to look after the various aspects of our physical existence and bring some new light into it! This is an attempt, it is not that we have already achieved something, arrived at a definite turning point. 70 years in the life of such an attempt is nothing; before at least 100-150 years one cannot even raise the question, you cannot know what it implies, what direction it is taking. But the truth on which Sri Aurobindo has founded this is so profound that none of us count here. It is sure to manifest in a fuller manner, whether today or tomorrow, whether it is here or elsewhere, in Washington or in Peking, we don't know, but it will find many receptive centres, many attempts will be made with differing ambience. That is my faith and I think that is the faith of many of us who are here today. The profundity of Sri Aurobindo's vision and the power that supports that vision, I think, have a tremendous future both for the individual and for the collective life where we are struggling to remain together in a united consciousness, even if it be nothing more than as decent people at our first attempt. But these things cannot be achieved by any educational method, by any universal education, such as is so much talked about, by any social reform, economic reorganisation, or any of these things. It is only if people have learned to see the essential point—that they are not the physical body, that there is a wideness, as Sri Aurobindo says, and as Sanjiban experienced, that there is a certain profundity, a basic unity, that there is a certain deeper reality behind our life and unless that motive is pursued and our ship is anchored there in a new harbour, away from the commercial routes human beings normally take, we will not feel a sense of inner security.

In reply to one of Sanjiban's letters Sri Aurobindo points out: "What you have experienced is very good, there will be many periods when this will disappear but it is sure to come again and again." So this is the long climb up the mountain path. All the detours and obstructing factors we shall have to face in life and the only sustaining factor is the certainty that there is a Power that is guiding us, that the Mother is behind every action of ours if only we shall admit Her light, admit the consciousness which She puts forth. This is the great element I would like to stress here that the Ashram is not merely a cultural organisation. Sri Aurobindo has laid sufficient emphasis on the cultural aspect

but it is cultural in the sense that it is an attempt to express the truth of a deeper reality.

So, like Sanjiban, as I said before, many people have contributed in this manner and many more people will have to contribute their best before this truth manifests itself more visibly and more evidently in the realm of our physical existence. I think this is a great contribution and all of us should feel grateful that we have had this opportunity of coming in contact with the Master and the Mother and make an effort. The effort may not bear fruit immediately, it may take several more lives, but each individual lifetime is only a step and, though important, it is significant because of its direction.

Now I will read out a few things which Sanjiban experienced and also some of the things he said about his own life and work. Many of these things are very revealing and very helpful for all of us:

Sanjiban (*in writing to Sri Aurobindo*): I tried to meditate for a time. Then I felt a descent of something like a force in me and my consciousness arose in a wideness and that depression and other things went away.

Sri Aurobindo: It was the descent of the higher force and wider consciousness that drove it out in your experience. It is by the descent of that force and consciousness that the vital will be converted and the attacks from outside decrease.

Sanjiban. The day before yesterday before my sleep I sang for a time and then I tried to sleep but I found that my consciousness was going deeper and deeper, I felt wideness. I can't express myself. I felt as if my self was very wide. The feeling lasted for a long time until my sleep when I grew unconscious.

Last night also before I slept I sang for a time. While singing my consciousness went deep and I felt I was in a stream of Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo: This is the going deep into the inner consciousness which is wide and in touch with the universal and can feel more easily the Touch or Ananda of the Divine.

Sanjiban: Yesterday and today I am very glad as I find some kind of new opening or something like that. I can feel very well the joy of surrender. My heart is all filled. I am offering myself entirely at Thy feet, oh Mother.

Sri Aurobindo. It is the psychic consciousness which you feel. Once it begins to grow it is sure, however often it may be covered, to return and fulfil itself at last.

You see, here is the advice which is so very precious to us

Sri Aurobindo: The Mother's work is not only confined to what is only directly done for her, but includes all work that she sanctions, approves or wants you to do. She wants you to develop your art (including the human form and all else) and to become her artist.

Sri Aurobindo. You have a skill of hand, but you must study regularly, copying things from Nature, observing how to do things, getting a firm technique and power of observation. Then the right inspiration may come.

The Mother: [*about mixing colours*] It is not expected that they should mix. The technique is to apply the colours by dots and short lines very close to one another but not to mix, it gives a much more *living* effect than the mixing and expresses well the play of colours and of light. you can make that way all possible shades.

Sri Aurobindo. You must be prepared to be unsuccessful many many times before you can truly learn. It is with the effort of many failures that you prepare a progress leading towards success.

Sri Aurobindo. [*about three landscapes*] They are so good—it is a pleasure to look at them.

Sri Aurobindo: [*about a sketch made of Romen*] To get the resemblance, one must concentrate so much as to be identified with what you see—then it comes.

The Mother: Open your hand and place it on your face, fingers up, you will see that a normal hand goes from the chin to the top of the eyebrows. I have marked on the standing figure the size the hand ought to have.

She was teaching the proportions of the human figure, so she said the palm of the hand and the face are almost the same size, the thumb and extended fingers touch from the forehead to the chin. This is one of the measures that people are taught in drawing figures. In the same way she taught him about the proportions of the human figure. "There are seven heads, you take this (the measure of head) as your common unit and repeat seven times then the full height of the person and the proportions will come correct. If you have it shorter then the man is shorter and if a little longer the man is tall." But these are the measures. On this particular figure that the Mother has drawn, a human figure, she has marked the seven divisions into which the figure is generally divided for a student to understand human proportions.

“When you want to do a certain sketch on a certain sheet of paper, you must first establish roughly the whole of it keeping in view only the *proportions*. For a whole figure it will make it easier to keep the right proportions by keeping in mind that a normal body contains seven heads including the head itself; less makes a short man and more a tall one.

“I am sending you the sketch of the man with the seven heads marked.”

We have it, this drawing that she has done, it is preserved.

Drawing the muscles is necessary because a student of art studies Anatomy, the muscles and bones and the entire structure of the body.

The Mother: The sketch has very much improved, but, I think, you can do something more; it is for the hair. So-called black hair is never black. Look at it attentively and you will see that in the shadows there are deep browns, deep blues and purples. The lights are pale blue if the hair is very black and reddish brown if the hair is less black.

Try to arrange that and you will see that it will improve the picture very much.

- This is how the Mother used to teach those four or five people in the 30s.

Sanjiban: I had no colours and so I wrote to the Mother. She sent me from the Prosperity Store a box of pastel colours, of which she had brought a large stock from Paris. But I could not blend the colours, so the Mother asked me to meet her. That was my first meeting with her.

The Mother was standing at the door of the Darshan Room for me. Then she went in and sat down on the sofa. “Have you brought any paper and pencil?” she asked me

“Yes, Mother,” I said.

Then she instructed me how to use the colours. Before I went away, she told me: “Look, people in the Ashram know that if I want to I can teach painting. But I cannot teach everybody. It seems you have some inclination. I will help you.”

I was very happy. Little did I know then that she herself was an accomplished artist from the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris.

Sanjiban: I wanted to do oil painting. The colours and brushes were ordered from Calcutta and paid for by Mother. She asked me to meet Her at 10.30 in the morning on Pavitra’s verandah. She had an old piece of canvas ready and called Chinmayi to pose for Her. Then She showed me how to take out the colours and arrange them on the palette. She gave me a

palette knife which she had used and asked me to keep it with me.

Then She painted Chinmayi—only her face, forehead, hair and the background. While She painted She talked. “Do not put directly dark colours on the head,” She said, “first put the facial colours and then the dark colours—this will give a better impression. If you put black directly, it will give the impression of a hole.” Then She asked, “Do you know how to do the background?” She took another brush and did the background. “See, the head is not touching the background. There is space in between.” Then She blended the edges of the hair with the background.

In one day She almost made me an artist.

These are some of the things from which those who are students of art will get a lot of encouragement.

MY LITTLE SENTENCES

My strenuous little sentences
 reflect many shades of darkness
 but little of truth.
 What I intend
 to put in black and white—
 the night of ignorance
 casts her gloom on it.
 In my earnest efforts
 to bring out
 something marvellous and unborn
 come out only some fragments.
 Thirsts of my eyes are not quenched
 to see the forms of my creations
 and my soul wonders
 what stands against my bona-fides!

SITANGSHU CHAKRABORTTY

QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

(Continued from the issue of May 1992)

THE REVOLUTIONS AND THE REACTIONS

BEFORE we witness the reactions to the quantum-hypothesis it is important to illustrate once again the difference in situations in the context of Planck and Einstein.

Both had set out to explain some unaccounted observations: in the case of Planck it was the *quantum regime* of the black-body radiation curve, in Einstein's the mysterious photoelectric effect. Each was successful in achieving his final objective. Planck's reasoning might have been erroneous but we cannot "deny the fact that his non-trivial curve admirably fitted the data." As for Einstein, the heuristic principle did account for the mysterious data in an equally wonderful and complete manner. But the photoelectric equation went on to make a number of strong predictions—something which was absent in Planck's work. The existing measurements, imprecise as they were, could not support these predictions, notably the linear variation of E & ν . The observed details could not indicate beyond the fact that E increased with ν and thereby left Einstein's work in doubtful waters.

There was more than just the aspect of prediction. While Planck's equation was *immediately* found to fit the data, empirical support in the case of Einstein was long in coming. Linearity of the photoelectric equation was to be proved true experimentally 10 years later.

Concerning the Revolutionary Ideas

Planck, who had modified the picture of radiation emission from continuous to discrete energy packets, was unaware that this would lead to revision of the classical concepts in a radical way. Conservative by nature as he was, he had operated entirely within the classical limits and never doubted the wave-nature of light; rather he defended it by saying that his hypothesis was true only at the instant of emission—that is, immediately after its emergence the energy packet loses its identity, just like a drop loses its identity when it falls in the ocean. In any case, his *quantization of the energy*, in spite of being considered an ad hoc explanation, cannot be denied the status of a revolutionary idea. It was he who had made the *first conceptual break* "that has made 20th century physics look so discontinuously different from the preceding era."

Let us now have a closer look at Einstein's heuristic principle. He started off by studying Planck's equation on the black-body radiation. After having found in

it a few reasoning errors, he examined the problem with a different approach. In this process he daringly tampered with Maxwell's equations and arrived at his light-quantum hypothesis. This hypothesis, like that of Planck's, was also taken by the physicists as nothing but a curious property of light without any physical consequence. However, when he extended this curious property of light to the interaction of light and matter, which forms the essence of the heuristic principle, it turned out to be a revolutionary step Einstein understood and realised, as Planck did not, that classical physics alone could not explain the ways of nature

The Reactions

Revolutionary ideas of any nature have seldom been received without any opposition and Planck-Einstein's were no exceptions. The initial reactions of the scientific community consisted of unease and scepticism mixed with mockery and reservation. This is well summed up in the two following quotations, the first by Planck in a letter to Einstein and the second by Pais.

I am not seeking the meaning of the quantum of action [light-quantum] in the vacuum but rather in places where absorption and emission occur, and I assume that what happens in the vacuum is rigorously described by Maxwell's equations.

...the physics community at large had received the light-quantum hypothesis with disbelief and scepticism bordering on derision.

In the first quotation we get an indication of Planck's firm belief in the classical notions, as has already been mentioned. This, however, was not only Planck's stance, but the view of most leading scientists of the day, as is perceived in the second quotation.

But why did all these objecting contemporaries plant such a firm foot in the classical Maxwellian notion? We have constantly maintained that these notions were held in high esteem because Maxwell's contribution in certain respects can be regarded as equivalent to those of Newton's. His electromagnetic theory is a beautiful piece of mathematical physics that unified two separate concepts—electricity and magnetism—into one; his genius lay in proposing the concept of displacement current which saved the classical idea of continuity. Theoretical predictions made on this basis were soon verified by Hertz in his most pioneering experiments on the propagation of electromagnetic waves. Maxwell was the first to accomplish the unification of two forces and the present-day success of combining the electromagnetic with the weak force has its *essential origin* in the field idea.

The indications that his work carried a measure of truth and that a work of

this calibre demanded respect are very clear. The contemporaries did recognise this and they did attribute a position of great respect and honour to Maxwell. But soon this position of respect and honour took on the colour of rigidity; his work began to be regarded as unchallengeable and to be defended against any new ideas entering into the scene with experimental foundations.

This extreme attitude towards Maxwell's work had, by the turn of the 19th century, got deeply rooted in the minds of the physicists. Therefore, when the electromagnetic theory showed that it had neither any room for modification nor any place for inclusion of the newly found "interaction between light and matter", they found it hard to liberate their thinking and accept the paradoxical quantum feature of Nature. This is clearly brought out in a statement by R.A. Millikan—an experimentalist of the finest calibre—which he made on the photoelectric equation. "I spent ten years of my life testing that [photoelectric] equation of Einstein's and, contrary to all my expectations, I was compelled in 1915 to assert its unambiguous verification in spite of its unreasonableness, since it seemed to violate everything we knew about the interference of light."

The Slow Turn

Ten years is a long time and, by not accepting the photoelectric equation immediately, Millikan indeed did yeoman service to the cause of physics. Experiments are there, theory is there; yet something new ought to be thoroughly scrutinized before passing it as an established principle. Certainly, this is not dogmatism but a great scruple in the professional domain. However, it is hard to believe that a Millikan would have pursued the study for such a length of time without any contemporary change in the attitude towards the quantum nature of light. And truly enough, the change was taking place, in a cautious and gradual manner.

Only after Einstein had presented his conclusions to the world in 1905 did it begin to dawn, and only on a few physicists, that a crisis was at hand. By 1909 the belief in the validity of Planck's hypothesis was being expressed—again by a few—but the reservation in accepting the light-quantum notion was yet to go. In 1913 Bohr successfully proposed a model of the atom based on the quantum-hypothesis and thereby added further weight to the work of Planck and Einstein. The scene changed yet again in 1916 when Millikan provided the much-awaited details to confirm the predictions of 1905. The scientific community was at last willing to come to terms with the quantum nature of light and accept the fact that "the quantum theory was here to stay." Six years later the transition of the scientific mind had reached its climax when Einstein was finally awarded the Nobel Prize for "his services to theoretical physics and especially for his discovery of the law of the photoelectric effect."

Indeed, 17 long years had passed between the proposition of a theory and its

world-wide recognition.

To summarize in two statements: the root cause of the enormous reactions to the light-quantum lay in the wave-particle paradox, as it “seemed to overthrow that part of electromagnetic theory believed to be best understood: the theory of free fields.” Secondly, it took 10 long years for the emergence of a detailed experimental support to the light-quantum hypothesis. The Compton effect put the final seal on it in 1923.

The events between 1905 and 1923 do indicate a slow turn of intellectual climate. This gradual shift in the intellect’s stance is crucial since it is the preparatory ground for de Broglie’s mind-boggling **suggestion of duality in the domain of matter** itself—our next subject of discussion.

(To be continued)

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

THE CHINESE WAY OF THE “REJECTION SLIP”

A NOTE FROM A CHINESE PUBLISHER

“WE read your manuscript with boundless delight. We swear that we have never dipped into a book of such overwhelming mastery. If we were to publish this book it would be impossible in the future to issue any book of a lower standard. As it is unthinkable that within the next ten thousand years we shall find its equal, we are, to our great regret, compelled to return this divine work, and beg you a thousand times to forgive our action.”

THE SATIRIC SPECTRUM

SATIRE IN *AS YOU LIKE IT*

(Continued from the issue of May 1992)

Satire on the Ideal World

EXCEPT for a few scenes, all the rest of the play takes place in the Forest of Arden, a world which is in many ways different from the 'real' world of the first few scenes. The Forest of Arden is likened to the imaginary world created by Shakespeare in his last play 'The Tempest'. Some hold the view that it is the immediate dramatization of the Sherwood forest of the legendary Robin Hood, while others compare it to the Ardennes of France, and yet a few hunters of sources are straining every nerve to argue that it is the re-living the world of Thomas Lodge's pastoral world on which the play has been based. A few English critics have gone so far as to identify the Forest of Arden with Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon. Each view has its own validity and ingenious interpretations which make one exclaim 'Here is God's Plenty'. In his critical study of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, which is one of the studies with penetrating insight, Gardiner comes very near the truth when he says that the Forest of Arden is an offshoot and fancy's child of the Bard of Avon. But at the same time it is an ideal world with blemishes as he says.

But Shakespeare is not a dramatist who caters merely to the cheap taste of the audience. Shakespeare wants us to see that this world which purports to be "Ideal" is not so ideal after all. It is not only a pastoral world precise but there is satire on it. It is also an attack on the literary convention which the poet has a fancy to imitate and at the same time laugh at. As C.L. Barber says:

Whereas the satirist presents life as it is and ridicules it, because it is not ideal, as we would like it to be and as it should be²⁷

Shakespeare, unlike the satirists like Pope and Boileau, goes the other way about. He presents or evokes ideal life, and then makes fun of it, because it does not square with life as it ordinarily is. Though the aim of the writer to satirize society is subordinated to his primary aim to amuse and entertain the audience, the satirical thrusts on the stage cannot miss their mark. This is Shakespeare's strong point. Shakespeare, as Tillyard observes, bites his lips at the expense of the Forest of Arden which formed the ideal setting in the immediate source "Rosalynde" by Thomas Lodge. Using several levels of artificiality, Shakespeare produces a satire on the pastoral world too. Le Beau exclaims:

They say he is already in The Forest of Arden, and many merry men with

him, and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young men flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world.²⁸

No doubt this passage is all praise for the Forest of Arden, the celebrated conventional world where the exiles found comparative comfort in preference to the corrupt life of the court—a place where there is pomp, power and wickedness which render life more than miserable. Here, Shakespeare produces satire combining two ideal traditions and hence different levels of artificiality

(i) Satire on the Golden World

The first is the concept of the golden world. The idea of the golden age has always exercised strange fascination over men of letters down the ages as an escape or as a striking contrast to the real world at large. This is the golden world where the concept of the golden world and conventional pastoral tradition act as a satire on the exiles themselves,

There was no conflict, no war, no weapons. Man's food was brought forth from the earth without his having to labour to get it. Perpetual spring, flowers sprang up without seeds, the rivers flowed with milk and wine, and yellow honey distilled from the oaks.²⁹

But this is neither Eden nor Elysium where things are ideal but a world which is created for the nonce for the temporary stay of the discontented lords. The forest is not without its blemishes. It is peopled with such unamiable characters as Oliver Martext. The weather is equally unkind as the Duke himself says:

“... as the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind”³⁰

Even here the wounded deer is abandoned, the duke goes hunting, killing the animals in their domain. It makes him shiver with cold and its breath is rude enough and snakes and wild animals abound. Jaques has abandoned the wounded deer and the Duke goes hunting and kills the native animals in their own den. Even some of the characters who find refuge in this world are not perfect either.

The senior Duke no doubt deserves our praise for fastidious sermons over the sweet uses of adversity:

Sweet are the uses of adversity
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous

Wears yet a precious jewel in his head:
 And this our life exempt from public haunt
 Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
 Sermons in stones, and good in everything.³¹

This is the very same Duke who has abandoned all claims to lands and bid farewell to the court life; but hardly the play comes to a close before he says:

And after, every of this happy number
 That have endured shrewd days and nights with us
 Shall share the good of our returnèd fortune,
 According to the measure of their states³²

Shakespeare is too quick to expose the shallowness of greenwood philosophy in the eulogizing words of Amiens:

Under the greenwood tree,
 Who loves to lie with me?

 But winter and rough weather.³³

And Jaques takes the opportunity to turn the tables on the exiles and parody Amiens' song:

If it do come to pass
 A stubborn will to please;

 Gross fools as he

 And if he will come to me.³⁴

(ii) Satire on Pastoral Love

The next tradition which is satirized is the literary pastoral tradition. Its origin dates back to the Greek Theocritus followed by Virgil both advocating rustic simplicity and wisdom in their works. Following these writers, the Renaissance poets cast their pastoral dream into literary forms. Sidney's *Arcadia*, Marlowe's lyric "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* are a few typical examples of the literary works in the pastoral tradition. Shakespeare was quite conversant with these works and made clever use of them in his treatment of pastoralism.

Besides the setting of the pastoral play, Shakespeare's satire aims at the fourth group of lovers Phebe and Silvius who belong to the pastoral tradition. They belong to the "eclogue tradition as stereotyped in the Renaissance and embodied in the plays of Tasso and Guarini"³⁵ According to the literary pastoral tradition the faithful love-sick swain is pining for the favour of the cruel mistress. This has been the subject of parody time and again. But Shakespeare overturns the literary convention by making Phebe fall headlong in love with Ganymede who is none other than the disguised Rosalind herself. Rosalind spurns the advances made by Phebe but persuades the besotted Silvius to carry a letter in which she will display a similar disdain. Then Phebe herself becomes the conventional lover when she quotes the oft-quoted line from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* "who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?"³⁶ and Silvius finds it difficult to gain her attention as she looks longingly after Rosalind. Therefore, Silvius and his love Phebe are the typical rustic lovers whose antics Shakespeare satirizes though gently. Besides, the main function of the rustic lovers is "to reveal how conventions and other artificialities of the Petrarchan love tradition (made enormously popular in England by Elizabethan sonneteers) may subvert an otherwise basically sound initial solution."³⁷

Such is satire in a small compass operating successfully on various levels—social, religious, literary tradition—and woven, as it were, so dexterously into the comic texture of the play that satire seems less prominent and is relegated to the background. Nevertheless, the discerning Elizabethan theater-goer and the common reader of the play with an eye for the Elizabethan life could not but be struck by the satirical elements "In fact Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is a happy blending of both types of comedy—Romantic and Satiric. Shakespeare does not have a tragic or comic point of view as separate and distinct things, but one set of assumptions and attitudes, one complex awareness of life .."³⁸ Besides, the study of satire in the play acts as a salutary "corrective to the romantic excess of the hey-nony school."³⁹

(Concluded)

N SANTHALINGAM

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WAITING FOR THE END

Ten years ago—June 1982—the prestigious Atlantic monthly of USA published the following article by William Martin. It is of interest and relevance even now because a substantial part of the world's Christian denomination is still strongly tinged with what is called Fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is a belief in the inerrant verbal inspiration of the Bible. It claims to go back to the scriptures themselves and to the very letter of them for every problem, ignoring not only all scholarly study of those scriptures but also whatever new trends of interpretation have arisen in the orthodox churches in the course of time, especially in the modern age.

THE world as we know it is coming to an end. Not because some general or madman will push a button and reduce our planet to poisonous ash. And not because the weight of a burgeoning population will cause it to lurch out of orbit. Rather, the end is near because God has had it planned that way for at least 1,900 years. It's all right there in the Bible, in Daniel and Revelation, with auxiliary illumination from other key portions of Scripture. Just as surely as he created a fully furnished universe out of nothing in six twenty-four-hour days approximately 5,986 years ago, so is he now about to bring it to completion in precise accord with the detailed blueprint tucked away in his Word.

Judeo-Christian history has seen numerous outcroppings of interest in biblical prophecy, usually in times of social upheaval, but few, if any, have been as widespread and influential as that now flourishing in conservative Protestant circles. No hard data are available, but millions of American evangelicals apparently believe that within the present generation, Jesus will return to lay the groundwork for a glorious thousand-year reign here on earth. Hundreds of Bible-believing preachers discuss the chronology of these latter days with confidence that what they are saying is as familiar and real to their congregations as the stories of Noah's ark and the birth of Jesus. The same themes are proclaimed by such leading television evangelists as Oral Roberts, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Rex Humbard, Herbert W. Armstrong, Kenneth Copeland, and Jack Van Impe, and on such lesser-known programs as *The Voice of Prophecy*, *The King Is Coming*, and *11:59 and Counting*. They are elaborated endlessly in travelling slide-shows and lectures by spokesmen from such independent ministries as Lamb and Lion, Second Coming, Inc., and World Prophecy Ministry, and are updated regularly in such periodicals as *It's Happening now*, *Bible in the News*, *Bible Prophecy Newsletter*, and *The Endtime Messenger*. They have been the subject of novels, stage plays, films, and cantatas, and are reflected in hymns, gospel songs, and bumper stickers ("Ready or not, Jesus is coming"). And the number-one nonfiction volume of the 1970s was not a

revolutionary diet plan or a manual on sexual fulfilment but Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (over 15 million copies sold), one of five successful prophecy books by Lindsey that led *The New York Times* to name him the best-selling author of the decade. The book was also the basis of a 1977 movie narrated by Orson Welles.

Though its growth has occurred mostly within the past two decades, this movement, based on biblical prophecy, had its roots in the nineteenth century. The most widely held view of the end-time, however, was a pre-millennial theory (so called because it taught that Jesus would return *before* the Millennium) developed by an Englishman, John Nelson Darby, and incorporated into the Scofield Reference Bible, an enormously influential book published by the Oxford University Press in 1909.

The latest revision of the Scofield Reference Bible, a 1967 edition, has sold more than two million copies to date. In this book, C.I. Scofield printed interpretations of Darby's teaching on the same pages as the Scripture on which they were ostensibly based, thus creating an impression in the minds of many readers that the notes and their teaching were virtually of canonical status.

Though factions within the ranks of literalist fundamentalism disagree over the precise sequence of events, those who adhere to the Darby-Scofield version believe that the triggering action will be "the Rapture." This term, not found in the Bible, means "the catching up," and refers to the scene described in I Thessalonians 4:16,17: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

After the Rapture, a seven-year period of Tribulation will fall on those left behind. It will begin with the appearance of the Antichrist as leader of a ten-nation confederation. He will seem to be a man of peace and will side with Israel when it is threatened by a northern coalition which is now generally expected to be led by Russia and to include Germany, the Arabs, and Iran. His help will not be needed, however, because the coalition will be so devastated by earthquakes and pestilence that it will take seven months just to bury the corpses.

Realization that the raptured saints—the faithful who were caught up—had been prudent to believe in Jesus will cause 144,000 Jews and a multitude of gentiles to accept him as savior and messiah. These converts, together with two outstanding prophets, possibly Moses and Elijah brought back to life, will win others to Christ. Unfortunately, these new Christians will be marked for persecution by the Antichrist, who by this time will have begun to show his true colors. In a symbolic act so egregious that it will be known as the "abomination of desolation," the Antichrist will enter the temple of Jerusalem, cancel all worship services, and begin to use it as his political headquarters. In fear for their lives, many will seek refuge in the rock cliffs of the ancient city of Petra in Jordan.

During the Tribulation, the earth and its people will be visited by unprecedented inconvenience. Rising sea levels, hundred-pound hailstones, falling stars, and fires will devastate one third of the earth. The sun will become seven times hotter than normal, then grow dark. Oceans, rivers, and lakes will turn to blood. Scorpions, locusts, and boils will plague humankind. Stupendous earthquakes will level mountains and cities, and a two-hundred-million-member army from the East (probably from China) will kill half of those who manage to survive these disasters. The Antichrist will seek total control over humanity by requiring that every person wear a mark or a number (probably 666—the designated “Mark of the Beast,” Revelation 13:16-18) in order to buy or sell. Those who refuse to accept this Mark of the Beast will be slain or will risk starvation because they cannot buy food. Those who accept it will burn forever in hell.

At about this point, the Antichrist will be joined by the False Prophet, a religious leader associated with Babylon (a city called “the Mother of Harlots”) and often identified in prophetic circles as the Pope. As cities crumble and the perplexity of nations mounts, the army of the East will assemble in the plain of Megiddo, outside Jerusalem, for an all-out assault on the Holy City. At this, Christ will return in glory to the earth, touching down on the Mount of Olives and beheld by every human eye, probably by means of satellite television. He will join the battle of Armageddon and his armies perhaps comprising the raptured saints, will wreak such destruction that blood will flow as deep as a horse’s bridle for a distance of two hundred miles. The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be slain and cast into a lake of fire, and Satan will be bound in a bottomless pit, to remain for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3).

With Satan out of the way, at least temporarily, the saints will enjoy the marvellous Millennium, an age characterized by good weather, peace, an end to crime, advancements in knowledge, and the absence of fear. At the end of this period, in a kind of last sporting gesture, God will give Satan one more chance to work his evil ways, and the Prince of Darkness will tempt and win millions of people who became Christians during the Tribulation and the Millennium but who nonetheless remained open to his appeals. This army of backsliders will muster for one final battle with the faithful believers, at which time God will bring fire down upon the heretics, destroying them where they stand. Satan and all unbelievers will join the Antichrist and the False Prophet in the lake of fire, where they will be tormented day and night forever. The earth will be destroyed by fire and replaced by a new heaven and a new earth, which will serve as the eternal abode of the redeemed.

Since pre-millennial doctrine holds that deterioration in economic, political, domestic, and moral spheres will precede the Second Coming, many evangelicals, unsurprisingly, have felt that the end of the age is near. The most important catalyst of the current boom in prophecy studies, however, has unquestionably been the political restoration of the nation of Israel. Pre-millennial doctrine

presumes that the people of Israel will be in Palestine at the time of Christ's return. The 1917 Balfour Declaration, which permitted Jews to settle in Palestine, was widely viewed by pre-millennial fundamentalists as the fulfilment of Jeremiah 29:14: "I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile." This belief received an enormous boost with the formal establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, the date on which, according to Hal Lindsey, "the prophetic countdown began!"

In Jesus's discussion of the signs of the end, he told his disciples that "this generation will not pass away till all these things take place" (Matthew 24-34). He was apparently referring to the life-time of his hearers, but since biblical literalists cannot concede that Jesus may have been mistaken, they conclude that "this generation" refers to those alive when the unmistakable signs of the end begin to appear. Since they regard the restoration of Israel as such a sign, they infer that we are living in the terminal generation. The chief problem with this interpretation for several years was that Israel was supposed to be not simply in Palestine but in control of Jerusalem as well. When this came to pass, in 1967, at the conclusion of a six-day war that seemed almost miraculous even to many non-believers, expectation within prophetic circles grew feverish.

The difference between pre-millennial and mainstream scholarship can be seen in a comparison of their understanding of the Book of Daniel. To pre-millennialists, Daniel was a prophet of the Babylonian captivity who, in the sixth century B.C., predicted events that were to occur between 1948 and the end of the present century. Non-evangelical scholars contend that the book was completed between 166 and 164 B.C. and reflects the oppressive occupation of Palestine by the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who stopped the sacrifice in the temple in Jerusalem and set up a statue of Zeus on the altar of burnt offering, an act aptly described as "the abomination of desolation." The book is regarded as a standard example of apocalyptic literature, mistaken about a few historical matters that occurred four centuries before the writer lived, and wrong in its attempt to predict the future, but capable of inspiring faithfulness at a time of religious persecution. In similar fashion, the visions of Revelation are understood by non-evangelical scholars to be symbolic descriptions of the persecutions anticipated and experienced at the hands of Rome near the close of the first century A.D.

SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD

(Continued from the issue of May 1992)

15. Pilgrimage to Kasi

A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW began contriving many a device to send her mother-in-law away from the house once for all. But all her plans fizzled out for one reason or another. At last, after many a scratching of her head, she hit upon a plan.

Accordingly one day she asked her mother-in-law, "Is it true that all those who go on a pilgrimage to Kasi and die there, directly go to Heaven? I have heard someone say so "

"True. Kasi is said to combine the virtues of all other places of pilgrimage. Whoever dies within the compass of the city is transported straight to Heaven regardless of all his or her sins," lectured the mother-in-law all smiles.

"You are very kind and affectionate towards me, my dear mother-in-law! It is needless to tell you that I have more respect for you than I have for your son, my husband... As you have become old, I am afraid you will die any moment. But I am not quite sure whether you will reach Heaven after your death. And my sincere wish is that you should by all means reach only Heaven," said the daughter-in-law with all show of sincerity

The mother-in-law smiled and hugged her. Amidst tears of joy she said: "You are not my daughter-in-law but my daughter herself." After a pause she added: "Do you think that I don't have a desire to reach Heaven? For that matter who on earth does not cherish such a desire? But you see, only now you got married to my son. Like all mothers-in-law, I too desire to see a grandson or granddaughter... And after that I will certainly start for Kasi."

The daughter-in-law too thought that her desire was a reasonable one. It took less than a year for the daughter-in-law to give birth to a son. The mother-in-law was very much delighted to see her grandson.

A couple of days later, the daughter-in-law saw her mother-in-law pouring sweet nothings into the ears of the baby. "Now that your desire is fulfilled, should you have second thoughts in preparing yourself for the pilgrimage to Kasi?... I want to be sure of your seat in Heaven."

The mother-in-law smiled and hugged her. "Oh, my dear daughter! It brings me tears of joy whenever I hear you speak thus. But you see, only now my grandson is born. Like all grandmas I too desire to see him go to school. And then I'll certainly leave for Kasi."

The daughter-in-law thought that her desire was again a reasonable one and that it wouldn't take more than five or six years to send her son to school.

Years rolled by. The baby grew up to be a child. He was sent to a nearby village school.

“Shall I arrange for your trip to Kasi, my dear mother-in-law? You are getting older every day. I am afraid you may not reach Heaven if you die here,” politely said the daughter-in-law.

The mother-in-law shed tears of joy once again and said: “Yes, my dear! I must go to Kasi. It is time. But only now my grandson has gone to school. Like all affectionate grandmas I too wish to see my grandson getting married. That is my last wish. After that I will by all means leave for Kasi,” said the old lady. A few seconds later, she added with a wink, “And you too can accompany me for you would have also become a mother-in-law by that time.”

The daughter-in-law never again took up the topic of going on a pilgrimage to Kasi.

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16. Thief in the Attic

It was time for a Chettiyar to go to bed. As he and his wife made their bed, the former sensed someone crawling in the attic.

As the attic was made of wooden planks, the Chettiyar could easily see through the cracks someone sitting on his haunches there.

The Chettiyar didn't want to raise a cry immediately for fear that the thief might jump down from the attic and cut the throats of the couple. Hence he devised a plan to catch the thief giving him no opportunity to escape.

When his wife went to blow out the earthen oil lamp, the Chettiyar said: “No! Not now, my dear! I don't feel sleepy now. Let us chat for some time.”

The Chettiyar's wife who was pregnant sat by his side. “Our child will be born in a few days,” the Chettiyar opened the conversation.

“Yes,” replied his wife shyly and continued, “I wish to have a male baby. When he grows up to be a man he'll look after our shop and continue to maintain the business well... In our old age, he'll take care of us... And if my wish comes true, I'll name the baby Aiyandarappan, the guardian deity of all villages.”

“A boy!... No! Let it be a female baby. Girls are more affectionate towards their parents than boys. They feel proud to be in the service of the parents and answer their beck and call. If my wish comes true, I'll name the baby Kiliyambal, another name of Goddess Meenakshi, and affectionately call her 'Kili'.”

The Chettiyar's wife was unable to control her laughter. Hence she broke into a guffaw.

“Why do you laugh? Would you like to hear once again how I would call my little daughter?” so saying he raised his voice to its top pitch and called: “Kili! Kili! Kili!”

The Chettiyar's neighbour was perturbed. He couldn't understand why the Chettiyar was calling out the name of his wife at that odd hour. Yes! The name of

the neighbour's wife too was Kiliyambal. Suspicion rose in him. He held his wife by her hand and rushed to the Chettiyar's house dragging her all the way.

"Why did you call my wife at this hour?" asked the neighbour. His eyes were red with anger.

The Chettiyar said "I was just telling my pregnant wife what name I would choose for my baby daughter and how I would call her affectionately. Why should you be so angry over that?"

"No! I won't believe ..till you give me more proof," demanded the neighbour

Meanwhile a crowd had collected to have some fun at the expense of the quarrelling neighbours.

"If you can't believe me and my wife," said the Chettiyar, "ask the thief hiding in the attic. He was listening to every word of our conversation."

The neighbours understood the stratagem employed by the clever Chettiyar to catch the thief. They pulled the thief down from the attic, thrashed him black and blue, and handed him over to the village authorities for further punishment

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17. No More a Sinner

It was a small grocery shop owned by a stingy Chettiyar. To get rid of the mice menace, he brought up a cat. He never fed the animal, but allowed it to dine on the mice in the shop. Hence the cat looked very puny and had little strength left to chase and catch mice.

Once the Chettiyar was surprised to see the mice play while the cat was enjoying its siesta.

Gnashing his teeth in anger, he took a small weight from the balance, and hurled it at the cat to disturb its sleep and keep it on the alert.

Unfortunately the weight hit the cat on its temple. The animal bled profusely and miaowed till it fell down and died.

Desiring to atone for his sin, he called in a brahmin priest and rehearsed to him the circumstances under which the cat had breathed its last.

The priest closed his eyes and meditated awhile. Seconds later he said: "If you can present a cat made of gold to a poor-brahmin like me, your sins may be washed away."

"A golden cat! Where shall I go for money? It is beyond my means," said the Chettiyar.

"If not gold, how about silver?"

"A silver cat! No, I can't afford it."

The priest remained silent for a few seconds and then said, "Well! A cat made of brass too will serve the purpose."

“A brass cat! O, Priest! You must understand my difficulties... You must tell me something that is not beyond my reach.”

Irritated the priest asked, “Not beyond your reach! Well, then! Make a cat of jaggery and give it to me.”

“Ah! Yes. That can be done,” so saying the Chettiyar brought out a small cake of jaggery, the size of an areca nut, and carved the image of a cat with his thumb nail.

Placing the cake of jaggery on a plate, he offered it to the priest with all piety.

The poor brahmin priest too recited a mantra, all the time thinking of the jaggery he would taste in another few seconds. His mouth watering, he said: “You are purged of your sins... You are no more a sinner. If you continue to remain so, the gates of Heaven will not close on you.”

No sooner had the priest ascertained that the sins were washed off, than the Chettiyar plucked the cake of jaggery from the plate and put it into his own mouth.

Flabbergasted stood the priest. “Oh! What have you done? You have committed a sin.”

“Pardon me, O Priest! Let the sin of killing the cat go with you. And the sin of eating the cake of jaggery go with me.”

*

18. Playing Safe

A village chief had a beautiful horse of a high breed. He fed the animal with horsegram regularly supplied from the Chettiyar's shop.

A soldier from the king's army had an eye on that horse. One night he whisked the animal away to his home, cut off its bushy tail and kept it in his stable.

The village chief who was very proud of owning such a horse, was shocked by the sudden disappearance of the animal. He sent his men to different parts of the country in search of it. But soon he found out that his stolen horse was with a soldier of the neighbouring village.

The matter was taken to the king's court.

The horse in question too was brought there.

“This horse is mine. This soldier has stolen it from my stable, your Majesty! He has cut off the tail of the animal and claims that the horse is his,” argued the village chief.

“I belong to your army, your Majesty! Why should I steal somebody's horse when I am provided with one? And in order to distinguish mine from the others easily, I have cut off its tail,” said the soldier.

“What proof do you have to say that the horse is yours?” asked the king looking at the village chief

The village chief had no immediate answer. As he was deeply immersed in his thoughts, the king asked: “Is there anyone who is neither your friend nor a relative and who can say that the horse is yours?”

“Yes, your Majesty! The Chettiyar who personally delivers the horsegram can identify my horse,” pat came the reply.

The Chettiyar was summoned to the court. He looked at the horse. He was sure that the animal belonged to the village chief. He was also sure that if he revealed it, the soldier would hack him to death afterwards. And if he favoured the soldier out of sheer fear, the village chief would drive him out of the village. Hence under the pretext of viewing the horse from different angles he took his time in answering the king, all the time thinking of playing safe.

“Your Majesty!” began the Chettiyar. “Viewed from the front the horse is definitely the village chief’s. But from the back it doesn’t look so.”

The wise king understood the clue given by the Chettiyar. Hence his verdict was in favour of the village chief. The soldier received fifty whip-lashes on his back.

(More Tales to follow)

P. RAJA

ANNOUNCEMENT

We heartily congratulate Mr. P. RAJA, our regular contributor, for receiving the Ph.D. degree from Madras University for his doctoral dissertation on the short stories of Manoj Das. His thesis titled “PROBING THE PSYCHE. THE SHORT STORIES OF MANOJ DAS” will shortly be published by B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi.

A TRIBUTE*

THE bell rang and the college closed for the day. I hurried out of the class-room and rushed towards the tram-stop. Rushed, since to be a little late would cause me a lot of difficulty. Due to the heavy crowd and pressure of passengers, I would fail to catch a tram-car.

“Hello, sir! Rushing like a bull, can’t you see around you?”

I tried to bypass the man, a tram-car was more important to me than petty quarrels. But there was no way out, he pulled me back by the hand. Surprised, I stood still. In fact it was he who had dashed against me, perhaps intentionally. And instead of apologising he was showing me “red eyes”. Not only that, he even dared to catch and pull me by the hand.

It was really too much. Yes, I must teach him a good lesson. I faced him but instantly swallowed back the outgoing stern reply. A red-robed, bald-headed, fine-featured saintly man stared at me with dreamy eyes and the touch of a naughty smile playing on his lips.

Strange—such a man and so harsh a voice! I gazed at him puzzled for a while and then added gently, “Well, you dashed against me intentionally, whereas...”

“No, that is not the question. I mean, can’t you see and move, not even when you are dashed against?” The faint smile from his lips now spread all over his face. My eyes scrutinised him from head to foot and then a lightning flash. Oh, I knew him, yes, this smile was quite familiar to me but where. ? “If you don’t mind, aren’t you Satyapriya?” I asked hesitatingly.

“Oh no, I am Mithyapriya, a lover of falsehood,” he kept smiling as before.

“You naughty boy, you have remained still the same! The coloured robe hasn’t changed you a bit, eh!” As I recognised Satyapriya, my schoolmate, I asked him, “Well, Satyapriya, where did you hide yourself during these long twenty years?”

“Ha, ha, ha...,” he burst into laughter as in our school days, “Hid myself, eh? O K., but how can I disclose that to you in a moment in the crowded street?”

“Then I invite you to my place. Let me call a taxi.” Instantly he said, “Oh no, that’s not possible, I shall have to go just now.”

“Go? Where are you going?”

“To that college there,” he pointed to our college.

“I see, have you brought a message from Srīmat Chidananda? He has been invited to preside over the meeting in our college tomorrow.”

“I am myself Chidananda,” he turned round abruptly and hurried towards our college. Dumbfounded, I stood for a while and then sped to the tram-stop; I was already late. I tried to brush aside the thought of him but could not. It lingered with me all the time till I retired to bed at night. Next morning, as I

* To those who may be interested, it may be mentioned that this story is a sort of continuation, though complete in itself, of the story “Satyapriya” published in *Mother India*, January 1981—Editor

woke up, the memory of him assailed me. In fact, his sudden appearance had created a turmoil in me as it had done twenty years before when he had suddenly disappeared without leaving any trail behind. I was anxious to know about him as soon as possible.

I reached our college earlier than on other days. Still by that time the students had already decorated the lecture-hall in the style of Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan. Today was Rabindranath's birth anniversary. Amongst other things which attracted my attention most was a life-size garlanded portrait of Rabindranath placed on one side of the dais. There the eminent persons, poets, artists, musicians, etc., were gradually coming and taking their seats. I, from my seat in the audience, tried to locate Satyapriya, but could find him nowhere, neither on the dais nor amongst the audience. The atmosphere was subtly sacred, thanks to the fragrance of flowers and the burning incense on the dais and elsewhere. My eyes turned in all directions to look for Satyapriya but to no avail.

In the meantime our Principal mounted the dais with a respectable gentleman dressed all in white; even his turban and shoes were white, and introduced him as Srimat Chidananda. He said, "Friends, we are happy and honoured this time to have amongst us Srimat Chidananda of Self-Realisation Ashram to preside over our meeting." The honoured guest raised his folded hands up to chest-height without a word and took his seat silently. He seemed to be in a kind of trance.

Yesterday Satyapriya had said that he was himself Chidananda. Now I understood that he had bluffed me. Or was it his usual innocent joke? However, he seemed to be the same naughty and wayward self as ever. His red robe had not changed him a bit. By then the opening song started. That finished, the speakers stood up one by one and spoke according to their erudition, association and intimacy with Rabindranath as a person, poet, writer and artist.

Finally in answer to a polite request from our Principal, Srimat Chidananda stood up. All eyes were focused on the grave, white-dressed figure. He was found to hesitate for a while and then to our utmost surprise, instead of addressing the audience, slowly neared the huge portrait of Rabindranath and made obeisance by stooping his head. Suddenly we heard some feeble indistinct words. Someone hastened to place the microphone in front of his mouth. Just then the hall resounded with his deep emotional voice. Struck by sudden surprise I almost jerked up on my feet. It was Satyapriya's voice.. He had not only changed the colour of his dress but its pattern and style also. Perhaps his psychology also had undergone a thorough change. Otherwise why should he be present in and preside over a meeting relating to Rabindra Jayanti? Twenty years ago as a schoolboy he had declared to the Inspector that he did not consider Rabindranath as a lover of humanity like other spiritual figures of India. But now I heard him speaking:

“O great poet, lover of man and nature, I don’t know where you are at present, in which domain of beauty and bliss beyond time and space. But a time was when you were physically present among us. But how different you were from us, ordinary men! You were exceptional and uncommon from your very boyhood. The sublimity of your thoughts and ideas, the depth of your emotion and understanding placed you as one of the first-ranking poets and persons of the world. But for self-expression you had to adopt a medium of language, a language which adorned the lotus feet of the muse of Bengal. While the strings of our heart are also attuned to the lyre held by the same Goddess.

“So today when the world pulsates with a festive mood to celebrate your Jayanti, I cannot simply sit as a mute spectator. I also should join hands with those who have assembled to commemorate your birthday with music, poetry and speeches. But alas, I am not equipped like others. I have no knowledge, no scholarship about your versatile genius as have those who have spoken just before. So I have come just in front of your feet to offer my gratitude and confession for what you stood for me from my early childhood and what happened afterwards.

“O great poet, inspired with the knowledge and spirit of the Upanishads, did you know how your poetic words used to work on the budding consciousness of the boys of Bengal? As a mere child, seeing a very simple natural phenomenon you were said to have uttered your first poetic words: “জল পড়ে, পাতা নড়ে!” (Water falls and the leaves move.) Perhaps those simple words sowed the seed of poetry in a new way in the soil of Bengal. Because that was your destined life-work. That is why we hear you express your own philosophy of life in many of your poems. Particularly in the poem, পুরস্কার (“Puraskar”), your sincere confession was remarkable.

“শুধু বাঁশিখানি হাতে দাও তুলি,
বাজাই বসিয়া প্রাণমন খুলি,
পুষ্পের মত সঙ্গীতগুলি
ফুটাই আকাশভালে।
অসম্ভব হতে আহরি বচন
আনন্দলোক কবি বিবচন,
গীতবসধাবা কবি সিঞ্চন
সংসাবধুলিজালে।”

(... ‘Simply hand over the flute to me
And let me play on it pouring out my heart and mind!
I shall cause my songs to bloom like flowers
On the vastness of the sky.
Plucking words from the core of my being
I shall create a world of bliss

And sprinkle the savour of my songs
On the dust of the sordid earth.'...) [*Translation mine*]

“Your aspiration was fulfilled. You actually did what you had so keenly desired. The sweet essence of your poetry, the subtle suggestions of your thoughts and ideas, like earth, water, light and air, not only imbued the mind and life of Bengal, but also entered the subconscious region and mingled with her blood-stream to help develop and nourish her sense of beauty and poetic inclination

“In the cultural history of a race such instances are rare and carry immense importance and value. But for me to make its detailed assessment is out of the question and I shall not try to do that, either. As I said, what I intend to do is to make a confession and to indicate the place you occupied in my life. .

“As a child, when I hardly knew how to read or write, your poems, recited by the elders, used to infuse a flood of joy in me: “আজ আমাদের ছুটি, ও ভাই আজ আমাদের ছুটি” (“Today is our holiday, O brothers, today is our holiday”) These plain words used to create such a dynamism in me that I would rush out of the school with friends and roam about in fields and jungles or by the riverside reciting aloud the lines or singing other rhythmical verses by you. But then when I grew up and learnt how to read and write I used to bathe and bask in the water and sunshine of your creative works. In general that was the case with most of us for quite a considerable length of time, up to old age, so to say. But my case was different. Surprisingly there came about a change in my psychology before long. It crept up quite imperceptibly. Gradually I marked that your poems and other writings failed to impress me in the way they had done before. So far as I was concerned they did not seem to have the required beauty and fervour I wondered to find a different kind of yearning in me which wouldn't be satisfied by reading your work alone. But I was uncertain about the nature of it.

“One day the Inspector came to our school. He asked me about you. While answering, a new horizon opened to my vision, the spiritual sky of India with the galaxy of saints and Avatars flashed before my mind's eye. I became a victim to an unusual state of mind. I had never thought of God nor had I been inclined to any religious or spiritual pursuit. But now an unusual urge to be born anew, to know the cause of creation, to find its creator possessed me. A sense of something undefined devoured me. I lost attachment to hearth and home, friends and relatives. They all appeared to be meaningless and insignificant.

“I renounced the ordinary life and moved about from place to place as a mendicant seeking help and guidance from different saints and sadhus to attain the unqualified God or Brahman. I passed years performing diverse austerities but remained unsatisfied and far from my goal. The more I tried the more the object of my pursuit receded. Finally a time came when I was virtually on the brink of breaking down in despair. And to add fuel to the fire at this time I got a

terrible blow from an unexpected quarter. When at the impact of the shock, I was about to fall flat on the ground, a gracious hand lifted me up miraculously. It was the hand of a great spiritual figure. His name I knew but had never tried to understand him or follow his teaching.

“After that, a few lines of an unknown writer moved in my memory very often:

“ধিক সন্ন্যাসী, ধিক উদাসীন, ধিক হে মুক্তিকামী,
তুমি ঋজিতেছ আপনাব পথ ভাবিয়া তাদেব মায়া,
যাদেব মায়ায় মানুষ হয়েছ, যাদেব রঞ্জে কাষা।”

(‘Fie, O Sannyasin! Fie the listless and the seeker of liberation!
You strive on to find your own way out
Thinking those as illusion,
By whose illusion you have become a man
And whose blood made up your body.’) [*Translation mine*]

“The lines went on knocking at my consciousness repeatedly and as a result a curtain was removed from my mind’s eyes. The strings of my heart became resonant with the music of your poem as before.

“যে-কিছু আনন্দ আছে দৃশ্যে গন্ধে গানে
তোমাব আনন্দ ববে তাব মাঝখানে...”

(‘The delights of sight and hearing and touch
will bear thy delight.’) [*Translation—Rabindranath*]

“Not only the music but also the central significance behind the lines became crystal-clear to me. Much to the delight of everyone of my family and my friends I came back home. But did I gain anything from my mendicant-life? I was not aware of any achievement except that I regained my relationship with you in a more permanent way and could recite your following lines in tune and in perfect accord with you.

“...কে সে। জানিনা কে। চিনি নাই তাবে
শুধু এইটুকু জানি, তাবি লাগি বাত্রি-অন্ধকারে
চলেছে মানবযাত্রী যুগ হতে যুগান্তর-পানে
ঝড়ঝঞ্ঝা বজ্রপাতে জ্বালায়ে ধরিয়া সাবধানে
অস্তর প্রদীপখানি।...”

(‘... Who is He? We don’t know and have not ever known.
But this alone we know that through the darkest night

It is to Him that man goes travelling on—
Through storm and thunder throughout the ages long
Guarding with care the flame that burns in him...')

[*Translation—Prof. Humayun Kabir*]

“From the above it appears that you had not known God as the Avatar-like spiritual figures are believed or said to have known. But there can be no doubt about the fact that as a poet and lover of Nature you came in contact and communion with the God implicit in earth, sky, water, plant and trees. That was your deity, object of worship and love. That is why, so far as I know, we hardly hear you say anything about the direct knowledge of God and His transcendental powers. You always lived in a domain of beauty—wide, soft and unaggressive. Your expression was mostly lyrical, mingled with a deep feeling of love and aspiration towards your deity. The sight, smell and touch of the objects of nature brought home to you such joy, glory and gladness that you could not but be inspired with the thoughts and ideas of Infinity. And these bloomed like flowers in your creative works. The following lines will exemplify your intense love and yearning for oneness with the world around you:

“...ইচ্ছা কবিযাছে,
সবলে আঁকড়ি ধবি এ বক্ষেব কাছে
সমুদ্র মেখলা-পবা তব কটিদেশ...”

(‘...I have ever wished to draw you close and clasp your waist adorned with the wide sea as skirt...’) [*Translation mine*]

Again:

“...বাহু বাড়াইয়া ধেয়ে আসি
সমস্ত বাহিবখানি লইতে অন্তবে...”

(‘...I rush out with outstretched arms to absorb the whole outside within my heart...’) [*Translation mine*]

Then again we hear your words of despair also at not getting the cherished thing:

“...দুব কবো সে বিবহ
যে বিবহ থেকে থেকে জেগে ওঠে মনে
হেবি যবে সম্মুখেতে সন্ধ্যার কিরণে
বিশাল প্রাস্তব...”

(‘ . . O, cure me of the pang of separation

which assails me now and again,
As I look at the vast fields in front
bathed with the rays of the evening sky ..') [*Translation mine*]

Finally we hear your words of fulfilment:

“তখন, কৰুণাময়ী, দাও তুমি দেখা
তারকা-আলোক-জ্বালা স্তব্ধ বজ্রনীব
প্রান্ত হতে নিঃশব্দে আসিয়া; অশ্রুণীব
অঞ্চলে মুছায়ে দাও...”

(‘Then, O Mother of compassion, you reveal yourself!
Silently emerging from the still and starlit horizon of the night
You wipe away my tears with the border of your garment...’) [*Translation mine*]

•
“Needless to say that these expressions were not empty words or airy imaginations but your heart-felt sincere aspiration. On the one hand to extend oneself to the wide world and feel unity with all outside things and on the other to gather and experience within oneself the outside world are the central spirit of Indian thought from the ancient past. Your Santiniketan was a grand attempt to give a tangible and practical shape to this idea.

• “O world-poet, you loved India whole-heartedly, without any reserve or limitation. The spiritual treasures and heritage of her ancient past influenced you so much so that you prayed to the past itself for her full manifestation.”

“হে অতীত, তুমি গোপন হৃদয়ে কথা কও, কথা কও।”

(‘O Past, secretly in my heart
Speak, oh speak!’) [*Translation—Nagendranath Gupta*]

Again:

“যাহাদের কথা ভুলেছে সবাই
তুমি তাহাদের কিছু ভোল নাই...
বিস্মৃত যত নীবব কাহিনী স্তম্ভিত হয়ে বণ্ড।”

(‘Others have forgotten
But you never forget;
All forgotten silent records
You hold them all.’) [*Translation—Nagendranath Gupta*]

“Along with the deep longing for the past you had at the same time an intense seeking for the advent of a bright and novel future:

“হে কুমাব, হাস্যমুখে তোমাব ধনুকে দাও টান
 বনন বনন—
 বক্ষেব পঞ্জব ভেদি অন্তবেতে হউক কম্পিত
 সূতীর স্বনন।”

(‘O Hero! smiling strong at your bow, you pierce
 the heart’s very core,
 you enter with its noisy twang, till its echo dwells
 in each quivering cell.’) [*Translation—adapted from Latika Ghosh*]

Again:

“হে কিশোব, তুলে লও তোমাব উদাব জয়ভেবি,
 কবহ আহ্বান।
 আমবা দাঁডাব উঠি, আমবা ছুটিয়া বাহিবিব,
 অর্পিব পবান।”

(‘O Youth! from your high trumpet blow your call
 summoning all,
 till in answer we stand, till running we come
 to render our lives’ surrender.’) [*Translation—Latika Ghosh*]

“In your Gitanjali this idea and spirit of surrender have been expressed very often in such a soft and sweet sincerity that they need no explanation at all. One has simply to feel the sublime fervour in the silence of the heart:

“আমার মাথা নত কবে দাও হে তোমাব
 চবণ-খুলার তলে।
 সকল অহঙ্কাব হে আমার,
 ডুবাও চোখের জলে।”

(‘Hold down my head
 In the dust of Thy feet,
 Drown all my pride
 In the tears of my eyes.’) [*Translation—Nagendranath Gupta*]

“You heard the music of the limitless within the bounds of the limited and poured forth yourself in poetry, literature, dance, story and drama. We must

also listen to that melody and keep its stamp on our country's poetry, music and art. On this sacred day I am not equipped with the proper medium to offer my homage suitable to you. The charge and responsibility do not finish by simply praising you or preaching your name and fame. To you they have no longer any value or importance. You are supposed to be above all these. What would be most pleasing for you is to see us preserve your heritage, to enhance the creative urge and spirit you so lovingly infused in us. It is true that we are not fully capable yet to assess correctly your importance and greatness. That is why, perhaps the great seer-yogi Sri Aurobindo said, 'Tagore has been the wayfarer towards the same goal as ours in his own way... His exact position as a poet or a prophet or anything else will be assigned by posterity and we need not be in a haste to anticipate the final verdict.'

"We all know and I also have indicated Rabindranath's words of surrender in his *Gitanjali*, their depth, beauty and simplicity. In that connection, I think, it will not be out of place to mention here Sri Aurobindo's sonnet *Surrender*. But before that let us listen to the full text of the English translation of Rabindranath's *Submission*.

SUBMISSION

Hold down my head
 In the dust of Thy feet,
 Drown all my pride
 In the tears of my eyes.

Let me not proclaim myself
 In my own work;
 Fulfil Thy own will
 In the midst of my life.

I seek Thy final peace,
 Thy beauty in my soul;
 Stand thou on the lotus of my heart
 Hiding me from sight!

[Translation—Nagendranath Gupta]

SURRENDER

O Thou of whom I am the instrument,
 O secret Spirit and Nature housed in me,
 Let all my mortal being now be blent
 In Thy still glory of divinity.

I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,
 I have offered up my will to be Thy will:
 Let nothing of myself be left behind
 In our union mystic and unutterable.

My heart shall throb with the world-beats of Thy love,
 My body become Thy engine for earth-use;
 In my nerves and veins Thy rapture's streams shall move;
 My thoughts shall be hounds of Light for Thy power to loose.

Keep only my soul to adore eternally
 And meet Thee in each form and soul of Thee.

Sri Aurobindo"

Satyapriya, alias Srimat Chidananda, stopped and slowly returned to his seat. Utter silence prevailed over the whole hall. But I was restless and unquiet within, anxious to meet Satyapriya and know all about him. But how and when? Now he must be too busy to spare any time for me. Strange, our Principal had not said anything about where and in which province the Self-Realisation Ashram was situated. Will Satyapriya go back to his Ashram today itself? Thinking thus I forgot about time and place and could not know that meanwhile the whole hall had become empty, all had gone away.

As I grew aware, my eyes abruptly fell on the huge portrait of Rabindranath. But it appeared to me that it was not his portrait, but his living figure. It attracted me like a magnet. I stood up, slowly stepped forward and reached the spot where Satyapriya had stood. I felt that the figure was going to say something to me. I waited intently to hear the poet's words. Just then I heard the sound of a feeble laugh from behind. I turned round and found Satyapriya in an ochre robe, as I had seen him in the street yesterday

Startled, I asked, "Satyapriya, it's you! but where is your white dress?"

"That was my festive dress I feel at home with this dress I have been used to it for more than a decade."

"Well, Satyapriya, where is your Self-Realisation Ashram, in which province?" A familiar naughty smile played on his lips and he replied lightly, "Nowhere."

"Nowhere! What do you mean?" He assumed his boyhood gesture, "Nowhere means nowhere. Still if you insist on my telling you, it is here," he pointed to the centre of his chest

Awe-stricken, I stared at him mutely. He smiled divinely, came forward, placed both his hands on my shoulders and said, "You wanted me to go to your place, let's go now."

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE NEW AGE

A Review Article

WE have before us the second revised and enlarged edition of Dr. Kishor Gandhi's *The Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the New Age*.* The early edition appeared in 1965, and was hailed as one of the few most significant books that appeared during the year. It was basically a lucid introduction to Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle* (earlier called *The Psychology of Social Development* when it first serially appeared in the *Arya*), and transcending theoretical exposition clinched by the essay on Sri Aurobindo's own 'world-action'. In the present second edition with its thirty chapters in Five Parts (as against the thirteen chapters in Three Parts of the first), not only have the earlier essays been carefully revised, but other important contributions of the last 25 years have also been added, thereby giving weight, variety and cumulative authority to the volume.

It is, after all, no static world we are living in, and even as thinkers theorise and speculate about the future, it is already upon us, and a Master of Yogic Action like Sri Aurobindo is also involved in the ceaseless world-action,—especially the First and Second World Wars, the Soviet and Atomic revolutions,—and it is appropriate that Dr. Kishor Gandhi should evaluate the challenges posed by the flowering New Age and Sri Aurobindo's self-resolved responses as "Master-Maker of the New Age". Didn't the Mother say, at the time of Sri Aurobindo's birth centenary, that what he "represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation, but a decisive action direct from the Supreme"?¹ No question at all that the Message of Supramental change—as spelt out in *The Life Divine*—comes with a bang with its tremendous reverberations; the inspired Revelations of *Savitri*—notably the climactic movement from Eternal Night to Double Twilight and on to Everlasting Day—become a permanent part of our consciousness: but there is something more too of elemental power to charge and change the reader—it is Sri Aurobindo's Action, constant and potent, to translate the Agenda into action and progressive realisation. There were the three 'madnesses' of his younger years that he spoke about to his wife Mrinalini, and there were the five dreams of his life to which he made pointed reference in his Independence Day Message of 15 August 1947. He viewed India and fellow Indians as his Mother and brethren. But Mother India was in shackles, and had to be liberated. A free India should give a fillip to Asia's resurgence and Human Unity. Also, India's age-long spirituality should

* Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, pp. 413, 1991, paperback Rs. 140.

¹ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 13, p 3

duly inspire world humanity. But for all this to happen and endure in the truest and most efficacious form, an evolutionary leap from the mental to the supramental—a veritable leap of consciousness from the human to the Divine—was also on the Agenda.

After his few tempestuous years in Nationalist politics, when Sri Aurobindo came to feel that the prostrate nation was now fully awake and active at last, he shifted his vision from national to world action, and retired in April 1910 to Pondicherry as to a “cave of tapasya”. The years 1910-14 were a period of “silent Yoga”. We have, however, a clue to the nature of the *tapasya* with its seven fourfold limbs (*sapta-chatushtaya*) in his “Record of Yoga”, now appearing regularly in *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, a half-yearly journal sponsored by the Ashram. When he arrived at Pondicherry, he had already won certain spiritual realisations—‘Nirvana’ in Baroda, Omnipresent Narayana in the Alipur Jail, serried ascent of consciousness as indicated by Vivekananda—and, after a 4-year stint of intense tapasya at Pondicherry, he was in a position to formulate his findings in the language of philosophy. Thus when Mirra and Paul Richard met Sri Aurobindo in March 1914, he was able to agree to the suggestion that a Philosophical Review should be launched from Pondicherry. The Review was to issue a Call for a Change, a change in consciousness, a change in the life of individual man as also in the life of global humanity. What was to be attempted in the *Arya* monthly was “the complete intellectual statement” of the desired ‘changes’, the relevant issues and the results. This meant “a continuous thinking, a high and subtle and difficult thinking on several lines...”¹ And the first number of the *Arya* came out on 15 August 1914. As the Richards had to leave for France not long after on account of the World War, the burden of bringing out the *Arya*—which meant filling with his own writing most of the 64 pages of each monthly issue for 6½ years—fell upon Sri Aurobindo. It was mystic Vision doubled with multiple intellectual formulation, and the *Arya* was also luminous with lights from the scriptures (the Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita), as also prophetic comments on world affairs during and after the War.

What is the cardinal or quintessential Truth that is verily like a master-key to the mighty *Arya* sequences? It is the haunting old question: Appearance and Reality—which is which? Towards the close of *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo states that REALITY, the secret of Existence is truer and greater than its outer formations and manifestations. The Universe—Humanity—the Community—the individual—each and all of these, from one extreme (the macrocosm) to the other (the microcosm), transcend Appearance, and are in their essence the same one Reality, the ultimate Truth of Existence.²

At the risk of oversimplification it may be said that the basic manifesto, *The Life Divine*, explores the destiny of individual Man from his current Appearance

¹ “Arya’s Fourth Year” (Cent Ed, Vol 17), pp 399-400

² See *The Life Divine* (Cent Ed, Vol 19), pp 1048-49

as a body-vital-mind muddle to the sure possibility or even certainty of becoming a supramental being by realising the supramental Truth-Consciousness which is the supreme creative Power of the Brahman, the Illimitable Permanent, Sachchidananda. The possible route of ascent from Mind to Supermind—touching on the way Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind—is also vividly projected in *The Life Divine*. Man's self-transcendence to the supramental status is possible, and indeed inevitable in the unfolding future.

While some individuals will thus achieve the leap in consciousness from Mind to Supermind, how about the social group—the family, the rural or urban community, and other human aggregates forged by occupation, belief, and mutuality of interest? And how about global humanity as a whole? And how will evolution at the micro level affect the life of the Community or of human society in the shrinking Global Village? Sri Aurobindo's answers to these questions were formulated in two of the magnificent *Arya* sequences: *The Psychology of Social Development* from August 1916 and *The Ideal of Human Unity* from September 1915, and both series concluded in July 1918. The latter sequence appeared as a book in 1919, and again with a prophetic Postscript Chapter in 1950. *The Psychology of Social Development* came out as a book in 1949, and now carries the title *The Human Cycle*.

In *The Life Divine*, where the concern is with the destiny of individual man, the adventure of evolving human consciousness is from the reigning mental to the ultimate destined supramental through the intermediate steps, which Sri Aurobindo has called Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, and Overmind. Are there also steps of ascent of consciousness when we shift the focus of attention from the individual to the aggregate, the human group, family, society, community? Sri Aurobindo chanced upon the needed clue in the German theorist Karl Lamprecht's psychological theory of history and social development envisaging divers steps: symbolic, typical, conventional, individualistic and subjective. Although human history is "too complex, too synthetical of many-sided and intermixed tendencies" to permit such oversimplification, Sri Aurobindo still found Lamprecht's periodisation useful. Thus in the Indian context 'symbolic' might apply to our Vedic civilisation, 'typical' to the later four-fold caste-based division of society, and 'conventional' to the subsequent mechanical multiplication of castes and the inevitable confusions and absurdities. What next? As a reaction, it was now the age of individualism, reason and the scientific temper. But these too, while they may resist the falsities of the typical and conventional ages, will need none the less the correctives of the Light of the Spirit, the inner Vision, and the spiritual stance.

And this brings us at last to the present Age of Subjectivism. However, in the subjective age itself Sri Aurobindo marked three clear steps of social evolution: (1) the physical and vital subjectivism; (2) the mental and psychic subjectivism; and (3) the spiritual subjectivism, when the awakened self, soul,

spirit becomes, in Dr. Kishor Gandhi's words, "one in essence yet multiple in manifestation... the key of individual and social evolution as well as the touchstone of its progress" (p. 85). But for the evolutionary drive to be really meaningful—whether in respect of the individual or of the social aggregate—one should look beyond the ego to the self within, and one should hold fast to the truth that "we are in our life and being not only ourselves but all others". The microcosm *is* the macrocosm.

Dr. Kishor Gandhi's chapters on Marx's Dialectical and Historical Materialism, Theory of the Class-Struggle, and International Socialism (or Communism) may now be read with a new interest in the context of the recent collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union. In his *Evolution in Religion: A Study in Sri Aurobindo and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (1971), Dr. R.C. Zaehner stated that, as viewed by both Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard, the "only possible alternatives before mankind" are Vedanta, Christianity and Communism, the three 'religions' of modern man. Vedanta with the ascent to the Supermind as something decreed and inevitable and Christianity with Teilhard's Omega Point and the Cosmic Christ are certainly rival images of the future, though of course Sri Aurobindo's has a decisive edge in its favour. As for the Communistic principle of society, while in one of his 'aphorisms' Sri Aurobindo thought it was superior to the individualistic "as is brotherhood to jealousy and mutual slaughter", in actuality "all the practical schools of Socialism invented in Europe are a yoke, a tyranny and a prison".¹ Today after the demise of communism in the Soviet Union and the rejection of Nehruvian socialism in India, Marxism ceases to be a viable alternative way of life for modern man, and Sri Aurobindo alone seems to hold the key to the future Evolution of Humanity.

Dr. Kishor Gandhi devotes the 16 chapters in Parts III, IV and V to a perceptive consideration of Sri Aurobindo's life and visions, aspirations and realisations and also of his prophecies and projections in the context of the forthcoming Supramental Age in the evolution of earth-history. These papers were prepared at different times in divers contexts, and thus has resulted unavoidably (as admitted by Dr. Gandhi himself) in a few repetitions of ideas and quotations, and the lack of a tight argument. But the gain is in their informality, clarity and cumulative force. People used to ask in the 1930's and 40's what exactly Sri Aurobindo was doing, self-imprisoned as he seemed to be in his rooms in the Ashram. No doubt he wrote letters, revised *Savitri*, contributed special articles to the *Bulletin* (1949-50), and gave *darshan* on four days in the year. In 1945 Dr. Gandhi attempted a reply to the teasing question "What is Sri Aurobindo doing?", and it now figures as 'The World-Action of Sri Aurobindo'. It is indeed a very instructive essay on Sri Aurobindo's silent Yogic Action from behind the scenes, action that defied space and time, and made (and makes) him the "Master-Maker of Mankind's Divine Destiny". Again, in one of his articles

¹ *Thoughts and Aphorisms* (Cent Ed, Vol 17), p 117

to the *Bulletin*, Sri Aurobindo referred for the first time to a new level of consciousness called 'Mind of Light', and Dr. Gandhi's essay on the subject included in the present volume is most illuminating. There is a reference to 'Mind of Night' in the opening canto of *Savitri*, and later the heroine is described as being born already endowed with the Mind of Light. Dr. Gandhi rightly views the Mind of Light not as "a metaphysical concept invented by his (Sri Aurobindo's) mind but as a concrete fact of his spiritual realisation".

A categorical question concerning the future of humanity and the world cannot by its very nature admit of a ready answer. In his paper on 'Humanity at the Crossroads', Dr. Gandhi cites Sri Aurobindo's words spoken in September 1945:

"The present must surely change, but whether by a destruction or a new construction on the basis of a greater Truth is the issue."

Even so Sri Aurobindo disapproved chronic pessimism. In his Postscript Chapter to *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1950), he referred to the Second World War, the cold war following it, and the threat of nuclear doomsday, yet felt strongly that the indwelling Deity that has charge of the future of the earth would not allow such a sudden catastrophic end to earth-history. Now already the cold war is a thing of the past, and although the world situation is confusing enough, and the need to make the right choice between the "Truth" and the "Abyss" remains imperative still, it is equally true that "the Hour of God" can be even now, and the world and the New Man endowed with the Supramental Truth-Consciousness might yet fulfil the dreams and ideals of numberless past generations.

In the paper "The Master of Evolution", Dr. Gandhi refers to the links between a succession of Avatars and the corresponding spurts in Evolution. Sri Aurobindo was no doubt poet, critic, patriot, mystic, philosopher, prophet, Yogi; and he was also in the line of the Avatars with his own mission to advance Evolution. He admitted that his avatar-role was to bring down the Supramental Light and Force to the terrestrial consciousness. And the Power, the Avatar, that was Sri Aurobindo abides with us still (as the Mother has reminded us) as a decisive spiritual action direct from the Supreme.

There is more, much more, in the 30 chapters of Dr. Gandhi's book, but I must resist the temptation to refer to them. Dr. Gandhi is steeped in the Sri Aurobindo literature, and he brings to the discussions the mature thinking of a lifetime devoted to study, teaching and Yoga Sadhana. Dr. Gandhi is thus fully justified in his assessment of the role the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is playing in advancing the far aims of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother:

"The whole orientation of the Ashram work is towards the building of a luminous future in which humanity will be freed from its persistent problems and realise assuredly its long-eluding dream of a perfect life on earth."

And the appeal of the book is enhanced by the frontispiece-portrait of Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo, and the cover painting by Promode Kumar Chatterjee of the symbolic Flying Swans which the Mother has aptly described as “Heralds of the Supramental World”.

K.R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

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Aspiring Swan (Birthday messages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to Champaklal and Kamala)—Compiled and edited by *Roshan and Apurva*. Pub: Divyanand Kripandhi, 8, Sardarbag Society, Bardoli-394602. Pages: xxiv+148 Price: Rs. 75.

“My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot,
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit,
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea,
My heart is gladder than all these.”

so sang Christina Rossetti, one among the Pre-Raphaelite poets. What is the occasion for the poetess to sing in such a jubilant tone? Shall we read the rest of her poem?

“Because my love is come to me.
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me”

Hence Christina Rossetti suggests that a birthday is the most important day in one’s life. It is something special for it serves as “a gateway between old years and new, an opening into the future where one can get wider view and greater understanding as life unfolds itself before us,” as the editors put it in their ‘Preface’ to this book under review.

Roshan and Apurva who have done the commendable job of gathering the birthday messages between covers, have conveniently divided the book into three sections. The first section is devoted to introducing Champaklal and Kamala, the two blessed souls to receive regularly since 1940 birthday messages from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother till the Divine Beings left their bodies. Before we are introduced to Champaklal “who served Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for over five decades as their blessed child and faithful servitor”, and Kamala who “started her work of flower arrangement at 2 a.m. and finished by

4 a.m.” and had the early morning darshan of Sri Aurobindo every day, we are given a highly informative and thought-provoking essay on the birthday itself. We familiarise ourselves with the three discernible rhythms that are known to exist, and the significance of ‘Bonne Fête’. We are also told what we are expected to do on our birthdays. The essay by itself is a piece of literature.

The second and the third major sections are a facsimile collection of the birthday messages given to Champaklal and Kamala respectively. These messages, though in the real sense are pieces of advice, read like genuine poetry. Doesn't Polonius's advice to his son Laertes (in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*) and Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son read like genuine poetry? Advice if it is genuine comes from the heart; poetry too.

Let me quote just a couple of messages from the Mother:

•
2.2.1965

Champaklal, master of the “cards”, how to prepare a card for you?

Here is only some material for a card.

With full appreciation of you, your work and your devotion
and with blessings and love.

To Kamala she wrote:

•
11.2.1955

My dear child,

Let all the clouds disperse, all the attachments disappear, all the obstacles vanish, so that you can enjoy fully the peace and the joy of being here, so close to me, in the Divine's abode.

With my love and blessings.

Many a message here, be it from Sri Aurobindo or the Mother, reads like a mantra and the readers know how powerful mantras are if properly recited and meditated upon. The flawless printing, neat binding and admirable cover artistically done add value to the book. If you are racking your brain over what you should present to your friend on his birthday, well! why not present a copy of *Aspiring Swan*? I, for one, believe that the birthday messages of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have universal appeal.

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-first Seminar

23 February 1992

(Continued from the issue of May 1992)

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

Speech by Auroskanda Vepari

THE Mother’s work for earth and humanity is not merely to improve the present conditions of the world by some social, political, economic or mental, moral or religious reform but to work out a change of the present human nature which will be so radical that it will transform the human race into a new race of gnostic beings living a perfectly divine life. In this sense her work is “great”. It really means carrying the earth-evolution which has arrived at the mental stage to a yet higher level of consciousness which Sri Aurobindo has named “Supramental” or the “Truth-Consciousness”.

After a herculean labour (jointly with Sri Aurobindo) involving a prolonged struggle and battle with the resistances of earth-nature and of the asuric forces, the Mother brought down the first elements of the Supermind in the subtle layer of the earth in February 1956, from where it is now increasingly pressing to manifest openly in the outer life of humanity. But it can do so only if at least some individuals open the doors of their consciousness to it and let it work out in them the entire long and arduous process of transformation in a heroic spirit. This is the pressing need, the insistent call at the present moment.

What are the essential conditions to be fulfilled by those who desire to collaborate in this work of the Mother by undertaking the labour of transformation?

SRI Aurobindo has explained the conditions of transformation in a long passage which is so powerfully charged with His sublime Power that we should read it again and again so that we may keep the Flame of Aspiration to be the Mother’s instruments for her work vibrantly alive in our hearts. I read this passage here.

“If you desire this transformation, put yourself in the hands of the Mother

and her Powers without cavil or resistance and let her do unhindered her work within you. Three things you must have, consciousness, plasticity, unreserved surrender. For you must be conscious in your mind and soul and heart and life and the very cells of your body, aware of the Mother and her Powers and their working; for although she can and does work in you even in your obscurity and your unconscious parts and moments, it is not the same thing as when you are in an awakened and living communion with her. All your nature must be plastic to her touch,—not questioning as the self-sufficient ignorant mind questions and doubts and disputes and is the enemy of its enlightenment and change; not insisting on its own movements as the vital in man insists and persistently opposes its refractory desires and ill-will to every divine influence; not obstructing and entrenched in incapacity, inertia and *tamas* as man's physical consciousness obstructs and clinging to its pleasure in smallness and darkness cries out against each touch that disturbs its soulless routine or its dull sloth or its torpid slumber. The unreserved surrender of your inner and outer being will bring this plasticity into all the parts of your nature; consciousness will awaken everywhere in you by constant openness to the Wisdom and Light, the Force, the Harmony and Beauty, the Perfection that come flowing down from above. Even the body will awake and unite at last its consciousness subliminal no longer to the supramental superconscious Force, feel all her powers permeating from above and below and around it and thrill to a supreme Love and Ananda.

“But be on your guard and do not try to understand and judge the Divine Mother by your little earthly mind that loves to subject even the things that are beyond it to its own norms and standards, its narrow reasonings and erring impressions, its bottomless aggressive ignorance and its petty self-confident knowledge. The human mind shut in the prison of its half-lit obscurity cannot follow the many-sided freedom of the steps of the Divine Shakti. The rapidity and complexity of her vision and action outrun its stumbling comprehension; the measures of her movement are not its measures. Bewildered by the swift alteration of her many different personalities, her making of rhythms and her breaking of rhythms, her accelerations of speed and her retardations, her varied ways of dealing with the problem of one and of another, her taking up and dropping now of this line and now of that one and her gathering of them together, it will not recognise the way of the Supreme Power when it is circling and sweeping upwards through the maze of the Ignorance to a supernal Light. Open rather your soul to her and be content to feel her with the psychic nature and see her with the psychic vision that alone make a straight response to the Truth. Then the Mother herself will enlighten by their psychic elements your mind and heart and life and physical consciousness and reveal to them too her ways and her nature.

“Avoid also the error of the ignorant mind's demand on the Divine Power to act always according to our crude surface notions of omniscience and

omnipotence. For our mind clamours to be impressed at every turn by miraculous power and easy success and dazzling splendour; otherwise it cannot believe that here is the Divine. The Mother is dealing with the Ignorance in the fields of the Ignorance; she has descended there and is not all above. Partly she veils and partly she unveils her knowledge and her power, often holds them back from her instruments and personalities and follows that she may transform them the way of the seeking mind, the way of the aspiring psychic, the way of the battling vital, the way of the imprisoned and suffering physical nature. There are conditions that have been laid down by a Supreme Will, there are many tangled knots that have to be loosened and cannot be cut abruptly asunder. The Asura and Rakshasa hold this evolving earthly nature and have to be met and conquered on their own terms in their own long-conquered fief and province; the human in us has to be led and prepared to transcend its limits and is too weak and obscure to be lifted up suddenly to a form far beyond it. The Divine Consciousness and Force are there and do at each moment the thing that is needed in the conditions of the labour, take always the step that is decreed and shape in the midst of imperfection the perfection that is to come. But only when the supermind has descended in you can she deal directly as the supramental Shakti with supramental natures. If you follow your mind, it will not recognise the Mother even when she is manifest before you. Follow your soul and not your mind, your soul that answers to the Truth, not your mind that leaps at appearances; trust the Divine Power and she will free the godlike elements in you and shape all into an expression of Divine Nature.

“The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness; for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit. But that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is needed the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above. The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother. The Mother’s power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal’s Ananda.”¹

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ *The Mother* (Cent Ed , Vol 25), pp 36-41