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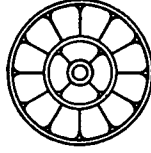
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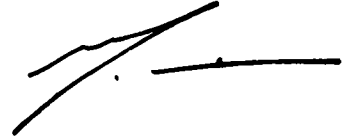
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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HELP TO PEOPLE, THOUGHT-FORMATIONS, CALL TO THE GRACE

A TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN

“Without conscious occult powers, is it possible to help or protect from a distance somebody in difficulty or danger? If so, what is the practical procedure?”

Then a sub-question:

“What can thought do?”

WE are not going to speak of occult processes at all; although, to tell the truth, everything that happens in the invisible world is occult, by definition. But still, practically, there are two processes which do not exclude but complete each other, but which may be used separately according to one's preference.

It is obvious that thought forms a part of one of the methods, quite an important part. I have already told you several times that if one thinks clearly and powerfully, one makes a mental formation, and that every mental formation is an entity independent of its fashioner, having its own life and tending to realise itself in the mental world—I don't mean that you see your formation with your physical eyes, but it exists in the mental world, it has its own particular independent existence. If you have made a formation with a definite aim, its whole life will tend to the realisation of this aim. Therefore, if you want to help someone at a distance, you have only to formulate very clearly, very precisely and strongly the kind of help you want to give and the result you wish to obtain. That will have its effect. I cannot say that it will be all-powerful, for the mental world is full of innumerable formations of this kind and naturally they clash and contradict one another, hence the strongest and the most persistent will have the best of it.

Now, what is it that gives strength and persistence to mental formations?—It is emotion and will. If you know how to add to your mental formation an emotion, affection, tenderness, love, and an intensity of will, a dynamism, it will have a much greater chance of success. That is the first method. It is within the scope of all those who know how to think, and even more of those who know how to love. But as I said, the power is limited and there is great competition in that world.

Therefore, even if one has no knowledge at all but has trust in the divine Grace, if one has the faith that there is something in the world like the divine Grace, and that this something can answer a prayer, an aspiration, an invocation, then, after making one's mental formation, if one offers it to the Grace and puts one's trust in it, asks it to intervene and has the faith that it will intervene, then indeed one has a chance of success

Try and you will surely see the result.

But, Mother, when one prays sincerely for the intervention of the Grace, doesn't one expect a particular result?

Excuse me, that depends on the tenor of the prayer. If one simply invokes the Grace or the Divine, and puts oneself in His hands, one does not expect a particular result. To expect a particular result one must formulate one's prayer, must ask for something. If you have only a great aspiration for the divine Grace and evoke it, implore it, without asking it for anything precise, it is the Grace which will choose what it will do for you, not you.

That is better, isn't it?

Ah! that's quite another question.

Why, it is higher in its quality, perhaps. But still, if one wants something precise, it is better to formulate it. If one has a special reason for invoking the Grace, it is better to formulate it precisely and clearly.

Of course, if one is in a state of complete surrender and gives oneself entirely, if one simply offers oneself to the Grace and lets it do what it likes, that is very good. But after that one must not question what it does! One must not say to it, "Oh! I did that with the idea of having this", for if one really has the idea of obtaining something, it is better to formulate it in all sincerity, simply, just as one sees it. Afterwards, it is for the Grace to choose if it will do it or not; but in any case, one will have formulated clearly what one wanted. And there is no harm in that.

Where it becomes bad is when the request is not granted and one revolts. Then naturally it becomes bad. It is at that moment one must understand that the desire one has, or the aspiration, may not have been very enlightened and that perhaps one has asked for something which was not exactly what was good for one. Then at that moment one must be wise and say simply, "Well, let Thy Will be done." But so long as one has an inner perception and an inner preference, there is no harm in formulating it. It is a very natural movement.

For example, if one has been foolish or has made a mistake and one truly, sincerely wishes never to do it again, well, I don't see any harm in asking for it. And in fact, if one asks for it with sincerity, a true inner sincerity, there is a great chance that it will be granted.

You must not think that the Divine likes to contradict you. He is not at all keen on doing it! He can see better than you what is really good for you; but it is only when it is absolutely indispensable that He opposes your aspiration. Otherwise He is always ready to give what you ask.

(Collected Works—The Mother. Centenary Edition, Vol. 8, pp 253-256)

AN INITIAL HELP ON THE PATH

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

As an initial help to set you on the path, I can tell you: (1) that on getting up, before starting the day, it is good to make an offering of this day to the Divine, an offering of all that one thinks, all that one is, all that one will do; (2) and at night, before going to sleep, it is good to review the day, taking note of all the times one has forgotten or neglected to make an offering of one's self or one's action, and to aspire or pray that these lapses do not recur.

This is a minimum, a very small beginning—and it should increase with the sincerity of your consecration.

UP AND DOWN MOVEMENTS IN SADHANA

SOME LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE up and down movement which you speak of is common to all ways of yoga. It is there in the path of bhakti, but there are equally alternations of states of light and states of darkness, sometimes sheer and prolonged darkness, when one follows the path of knowledge. Those who have occult experiences come to periods when all experiences cease and even seem finished for ever. Even when there have been many and permanent realisations, these seem to go behind the veil and leave nothing in front except a dull blank, filled, if at all, only with recurrent attacks and difficulties. These alternations are the result of the nature of human consciousness and are not a proof of unfitness or of predestined failure. One has to be prepared for them and pass through. They are the “day and night” of the Vedic mystics

As for surrender, everyone has his own first way of approach towards it; but if it is due to fear, “form” or sense of duty, then certainly that is not surrender at all; these things have nothing to do with surrender. Also, complete and total surrender is not so easy as some seem to imagine. There are always many and large reservations; even if one is not conscious of them, they are there. Complete surrender can best come by a complete love and bhakti. Bhakti, on the other hand, can begin without surrender, but it naturally leads, as it forms itself, to surrender.

You are surely mistaken in thinking that the difficulty of giving up intellectual convictions is a special stumbling-block in you more than in others. The attachment to one’s own ideas and convictions, the insistence on them is a common characteristic. It can be removed by a light of knowledge from above which gives one the direct touch of Truth or the luminous experience of it and takes away all value from mere intellectual opinion, ideas or conviction and removes the necessity for it, or by a right consciousness which brings with it right ideas, right feeling, right action and right everything else. Or else it must come by a spiritual and mental humility which is rare in human nature—especially the mental, for the mind is always apt to think its own ideas, true or false, are the right ideas. Eventually, it is the psychic growth that makes this surrender too possible and that again comes most easily by bhakti. In any case, the existence of this difficulty is not in itself a good cause for forecasting failure in yoga.

*

The reason why there are these alternations of which you complain is that the nature of the consciousness is like that; after a little spell of wakefulness it feels the need of a little sleep. Very often in the beginning the wakings are brief, the

sleeps long; afterwards it becomes more equal and later on the sleep periods are shorter and shorter. Another cause of these alternations, when one is receiving, is the nature's need of closing up to assimilate. It can take perhaps a great deal, but while the experience is going on it cannot absorb properly what it brings, so it closes down for assimilation. A third cause comes in the period of transformation,—one part of the nature changes and one feels for a time as if there had been a complete and permanent change. But one is disappointed to find it cease and a period of barrenness or lowered consciousness follow. This is because another part of the consciousness comes up for change and a period of preparation and veiled working follows which seems to be one of unenlightenment or worse. These things alarm, disappoint or perplex the eagerness and impatience of the sadhak; but if one takes them quietly and knows how to use them or adopt the right attitude, one can make these unenlightened periods also a part of the conscious sadhana. So the Vedic Rishis speak of the alternation of "Day and Night both suckling the divine Child." What you feel in the head is probably the first conscious descent into the body of the divine Force from above. Up to now it must have been working unfelt by you from behind the heart. If the concentration takes place naturally in the head you must allow it to do so, but the possibility of this has been prepared by the previous concentration in the heart, so that also need not be discontinued unless the force working in you insists on the upper concentration only. Aspiration can be continued in the same way until the conduct of the sadhana by the Mother's power is clearly felt and becomes to you the normal thing.

*

Yes, it is right. Everyone has these alternations because the total consciousness is not able to remain always in the above experience. The point is that in the intervals there should be quietude, at least in the inner being, no restlessness, dissatisfaction or struggle. If that point is attained, then the sadhana can go on smoothly—not that there will be no difficulties but there will be no disquietude or dissatisfaction etc. etc.

*

There is another thing which you must learn. If you are interrupted in sadhana... you must simply remain inwardly quiet and allow the interruption to pass. If you learn to do this, the inner state or experience will go on afterwards just as if nothing had happened. If you attach undue importance and get upset, on the contrary, you change the interruption into a disturbance and the inner state or experience ceases. Always keep the inner quiet and confidence in every circumstance; allow nothing to disturb it or to excite you. A steady inner calm

and quiet will and psychic faith and bhakti are the one true foundation for your sadhana.

*

A quiet and even basis means a condition of the sadhana in which there is no tossing about between eager bursts of experience and a depressed inert or half inert condition, but whether in progress or in difficulty there is always a quiet consciousness behind turned in confidence and faith towards the Divine.

*

An occasional sinking of the consciousness happens to everybody. The causes are various, some touch from outside, something not yet changed or not sufficiently changed in the vital, especially the lower vital, some inertia or obscurity rising up from the physical parts of nature. When it comes, remain quiet, open yourself to the Mother and call back the true conditions and aspire for a clear and undisturbed discrimination showing you from within yourself the cause of the thing that needs to be set right.

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

You have written. “Am I right in thinking that given the defects of timidity, vanity, jealousy, shyness, possessiveness I am supposed to represent the exact opposite of these in my spiritual life? If it is so, I can draw some solace from the fact.” I suppose by “solace” you mean not being in the dumps, overwhelmed by one’s defects. It must never imply complacency, saying. “I have a great saintly future to be reached despite these shortcomings. Let me not mind them too much.” What is required is the refusal to be upset by them. Look at them steadily, without moaning and groaning—rather seeing through their thick hides the future glory which exemplifies the conquest of them instead of feeling them to be the devil’s indelible hallmark (hellmark). The devil would like you to regard them as a dark terminus: the Divine reveals them to be nothing more than a tunnel and across them the Divine shows courage and judgment and poise and generosity waiting to be realised in forms that are superlative by being the absolute reverse of these deficiencies. How are the superlative forms to be reached? The first thing to do is to step back for a moment when the troublesome movements occur so that their headlong course is broken. Then offer them to the Mother, while exercising some control over them. It is because of the offering act that through the tunnel the distant splendours make their presences felt. For you are appealing to the ultimate creative and transformative power to bring forth the truths that have got misshaped in the jumble and tumble of ordinary life.

You have raised the question of the ego and what you call the ego’s tangled web. The ego-nature is so clever that one can be fooled into an illusion of unselfishness while remaining subtly in that nature. Thus the urge to help people may have behind it the desire to appear good in their eyes or else a sense of one’s special capacity to benefit them. Not that the urge is always to be avoided, but a deep quiet self-consecration is to go along with it and the prayer to be the Divine’s instrument. Here my favourite formula—“Remember and Offer”—is very appropriate. So too is my emphasis on Equanimity. Neither blame nor praise should bring either down-heartedness or euphoria. Sensitiveness is another form of the ego’s activity. It will often create an impression that people are inconsiderate when really they are inattentive. Again, one’s constant criticism of people would be a sign of the egoistic feeling that one is superior to them. The Mother never supported passing judgment on people’s actions or motives, though a clear calm perception of what goes on was never discouraged: what was discouraged was getting excited over the faults of others. We must try to get into the minds of people before putting them into an unfavourable category. The best thing is to have no reaction. When it is pointed out to you

how mean towards you somebody has been, you should feel nothing. If any protective step needs to be taken, take it without the least upset or resentment. Your equipoise should remain unbroken. Absence of emotional reaction does not necessarily imply inertia or inefficiency in you. Emotion is not the sole motive-power. Man's characteristic in general is the intelligent will. And the intelligent will makes a dispassionate inquiry before taking whatever step may be required. Sri Aurobindo puts a stress on this part of our psychology when he wants us to practise "equality" and avoid the inner disturbance that stems from "desire." He says that people think we shall be inert if desire is lacking. This, to him, is a mistake; for desire is not the sole source of dynamism. man is a mental being and his typical activity is the *buddhi*, the intelligent will. *Buddhi* looks around, is far-visioned, tries to be impersonal, just and fair. Of course, beyond the *buddhi* is the immanent Divine, the ideal guide to be consulted and followed. But the intelligent will is one of the two passages towards that guide: the other passage is the devotional heart. Combined, they best carry you past the ego.

You have asked me whether you should consciously try to feel "vast", like the sky with its immense multitude of stars and its space beyond space without end. Certainly the practice of imaginatively widening yourself thins the sense of ego—if at the same time you can feel how infinitesimal you are at the imagined feet of the Divine. Or else your wideness itself should be pictured as offered to those feet. Perhaps the immediate need is to let your imagination break the usual sense we have of being confined within our skull, our rib-box, our pelvic cavity. Think that you stretch beyond your body and hold it in a subtle spreadout of consciousness rather than that you function consciously within its boundaries. Naturally, then, the all-too-personal reactions and responses will diminish. The idea that your mental capacity is poor will also fade away, for your mind will lose its identification with your brain and its supposed weakness and lumpishness. I say "supposed", because I have never had the impression that you are intellectually a minus quantity. You have a penetrative mind with a profusion of ideas and an expressive ability beyond the common. What seems lacking at times is a driving power, a vital self-confidence. Give up the feeling that others are better equipped than you and that you can't cope with the call to be a good M.D. in pediatrics. Besides, you have invoked the Mother's Grace and thus opened yourself to potentialities beyond your own. you are in contact with reservoirs of ultra-human forces and can tap them much more than those who are not doing constant sadhana.

You don't appear to realise this edge you have over the general run of your fellows: you only wonder why people "more sattwic, balanced, intelligent and dynamic" than you, have not been chosen for Yoga. Here is a question we can never answer. The Divine does not act haphazardly, but our reason can't fathom His ways in this matter as in so many others. It is best to rest deeply grateful and set yourself in quiet rhythm with the movements of the Grace. It is also unwise to

ask yourself anxiously what would happen if what you take as another stroke of God-given good luck for you gets withdrawn: namely, my popping off suddenly one day as Dyuman did recently. In the September *Mother India* (p. 613) you must have seen how I inwardly stand *vis-à-vis* the possibility of my exit from the earth-scene: free from attachment yet never cut off from affectionate and helpful sympathy with those who hold me dear. Nor does the detachment involve any death-wish I am glad to live trying to be Sri Aurobindo's disciple and the Mother's child and the odds don't seem to be against my going on for an appreciable length of time. In any case you should allow no anxiety to enter your mind. One who has a background of the "fear-complex" must avoid any greying of his look ahead. Continue happily and confidently to fare forward. (15.9.1992)

*

In the life here one rarely has the sense of wasting one's time. Even if one does practically nothing, there is the feeling that something momentous is happening. For there is no end to the inner work which goes on—the Mother's refining, deepening and widening of one's consciousness. In a transfigured version I can repeat Mark Twain's famous joke: "O I love work. I can sit for hours watching it being done!"

Of course the super-Twainian state can be practised anywhere—its secret name is "meditation"—but here the atmosphere is conducive to it in the most natural way. One does not have to strain for spirituality: spirituality comes to one on its own. The only place where something of this Grace I have found is the hill-station of Matheran in Bombay's vicinity. My grandmother had a cottage there, almost on the verge of a precipice, and day in day out I had before me the spectacle of Matheran's sister hill—Purbal—with the valley stretching for miles and miles beyond with little villages dotting it and rivulets crossing it. At night, at the farthest end, I could see the lights of Bombay's suburb Punvale twinkling. At Matheran a vastness seemed to invade our being whether we asked for it or not. In Pondicherry there is the possibility of an inner Matheran all the time in a superlative degree.

It has been of great personal interest to me that the view of Purbal presented a long straight expanse of basalt rock terminating in a dip from which rose two companion peaks. I had the sense of an endless infinite presence projecting for our sake a pair of communicative summits which we know as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

What I have written above is of life here at its best and as it should be. There are difficulties and dry spells, but with a little inner opening, my picture tends to be realised

(3.10.1992)

*

My mention of some messages I feel I have received from the Mother should supply concrete ground for your compliment to me: "One thing I admire about you is that nowhere have you relied on messages received by X, Y or Z from Mother and Sri Aurobindo regarding treatment, etc. I wonder how far one can rely on such messages." Here is not a very simple situation. There have been cases where misguiding messages have been heard by people. I have come across some rather fantastic instances. A visiting sadhak who was very fond of eating ghee and who bore a striking resemblance on a slightly fat scale to H G. Wells and whom I had nicknamed H. Ghee Wells was found missing one evening at the Mother's Soup Distribution. His friends were worried and after the Distribution they went to the house where he was staying. On entering it they heard faint cries for help from him. After looking up and down they realised that H. Ghee Wells's voice was coming (appropriately I may say) from a well in the compound! With some difficulty they managed to haul him up. On asking him why he had jumped into the well, they got the answer: "I heard Sri Aurobindo telling me to do so, and I instantly obeyed." Although Sri Aurobindo was surely aware of the saying, "Truth is to be found at the bottom of a well", I can't believe he could have played a joke on my friend.

A still more queer case is of another sadhak in the early days of Sri Aurobindo's life in Pondicherry. He used to see a black Sri Aurobindo in his visions and get commands from him. When he reported them to the physically visible and not occultly visioned Sri Aurobindo, he was clearly told that he was being misguided. But he was so lured by the black Sri Aurobindo that he refused to believe what his not-so-black master told him. His strange conclusion was that the Master was jealous of the disciple because the latter was receiving direct messages from his Master and out of jealousy Sri Aurobindo was forbidding him to have extraordinary inner experiences of Sri Aurobindo!

Apart from such aberrancies, it is not always easy to decide whether to depend or not on one's messages, leave aside other people's messages. But with a bit of sincerity and humility one can distinguish between genuine stuff and stuff which is simply wishful. As for other people's voices bearing on one's problems, there could be occasions when something meaningful may come through, especially if somebody is genuinely concerned about one or about some acute situation of one's life. By and large, one should prefer to go by the guide in one's heart. When no guidance is found from there, one may seek the advice of whoever one trusts the most.

What Nirod meant in his article by referring to the occult significance of physical problems affecting the older sadhaks—problems like my fall and femur-fracture and his own operation for an enlarged prostate—I have no precise idea. I may guess that the hostile forces are eager to get rid of the sadhaks who had a direct prolonged contact with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and so carry some of their light more substantially into the present period than those who did not

enjoy such Grace. These forces perhaps believe that the removal of the old-timers would affect the Ashram's future. But they overlook the fact that several of those who were children in the past had significant contact with our Gurus and carry the aroma of the Divine Presence into their adult life today. After their generation has passed, what would happen? I would say that the Gurus have charged the Ashram's atmosphere in such a way that they subsist subtly amongst us—especially with their double Samadhi serving as an occult radiating centre. I have also the conviction that even beyond the Ashram there is a strong magnetic Aurobindonian milieu. After all, the Supramental Manifestation of February 29, 1956 is a universal phenomenon and is now ineradicable part of the earth's future evolution. We need have no fundamental fear of our Gurus' work fizzling out under any circumstances.

The question of anybody getting physically supramentalised in our own time is a different matter. In one of the recent issues of *Mother India* I have amassed sufficient pronouncements of Sri Aurobindo to show that such an extreme change cannot take place in the absence of his physical presence or the Mother's, in our midst. The revolutionary transformation of individuals once hoped-for in our own day is now out of the question, but bodily supramentalisation is assured in general for the race in the course of its evolution through the coming centuries.

The experience I record on p. 613 of the September *Mother India* and which you admire and envy so much is a settled affair. Although it seemed to come suddenly I am sure it was prepared in a subtle manner over a space of time. The habit of as much equanimity as possible and of continual "remember and offer" laid the ground for the wonderful freedom it brought in the individual life-sense. Mind you, there is no death-wish associated with it nor is there a docile contentment with things as they are. It may have something to do with the "hiatus" in my life which I declared the moment I had the fall on October 15, 1991. It snapped some inner attachment but it has not curbed the old adventurous spirit

I am extremely sorry to read your list of bodily troubles. The sleeplessness on top of everything must indeed have been awful. Perhaps the nausea came as a side-effect of the sleeping pills not taking effect. We don't know why all these troubles occur. I am glad you pray to Sri Aurobindo, irrespective of whether your troubles lessen or not. To keep in touch with his divine glory is its own reward. We may also remember what the Mother has recorded on his Samadhi—the suffering he underwent for the world's sake. He has himself written to Dilip that it was only divine love that made him go on and on working for the world without weeping and lamenting—so great was the suffering because of his struggle with what he called the Abyss. Without the suffering being less real, it is the inner consciousness that keeps one's life sweet. And we have to find the Aurobindonian glory somewhere in us and carry on as best we can.

I am glad your Eco-cardiogram finds your heart in good condition. But as it also shows a past silent attack you can't be quite nonchalant about the ticker.

You are asking me how I "cope up" with my infirmities. Well, first of all I simply "cope" without the "up". "Coping up" is an Indianism we must avoid. Mention of Indianism reminds me that at the end of the para before the last you must have raised your eyebrows on reading my "as best we can". You may have muttered: "The old fogey is slipping up. He has forgotten the necessary 'as' after 'best'." The "old fogey" is not yet too "foggy". That "as" would have been an Indianism. If I had written "as well" instead of "as best", an "as" would certainly have been necessary if Nesfield was not to get shocked. But with "as best" nothing more is called for. It is equal to "in the best way". Another Indianism universally prevalent is to take "vouchsafe" as equal to "vouch". Actually, it means "condescend to give or to do". Finally, I have heard even Oxford-educated Indians say: "May I take your leave now?" It is the person about to go who is leaving. He can take his leave and not that of the person who is sitting at home. I believe the mind here mixes up two locutions: "May I have your leave for me to leave?" or else it means "May I take leave of you?" Let me end with a final shot. Everyone here says, "I'll go to your house." If the owner of the house is expected to be elsewhere than at his own place, you can "go" there, but if he will be at home you can only "come" to him, to receive his "welcome".

Now to my infirmities. My existence now is in either wheelchair or bed. I practise a bit of walking with the help of a "walker" (unfortunately not "Johnny Walker") but it is a caricature, what with my right leg's lower half at an angle to its upper and my right shoe's sole two inches thicker than my left one's. An operation is said to give hope of righting the right leg's wrongness so that no disparity with the left leg may be left. Don't feel anxious about me. I am well taken care of and I both eat and sleep normally. And at the Samadhi I shall appeal to our Lord and the Divine Mother to help my deeply cherished friend.

(23 10.1992)

*

As regards a photo of you which I have requested, it is all right if you have shunned being snapped for several years lest a picture should show the fulfilment of the poet's prophecy:

Beauty is a flower
Which wrinkles will devour.

But I am sure that a beauty such as you would have, a beauty which is not skin-deep cannot be destroyed. Can anything touch eyes that have dreamed of Arch-images, a nose waiting to catch a whiff of some lost Eden, a mouth about which one can say,

The name of God, no more a name,
Sat, a heaven-taste, upon my lip?

The beauty which has come in a face from loving St. Augustine's *Pulchritudo antiqua sed semper nova*—"Beauty of ancient days yet ever new"—cannot be eaten up by any wrinkles

From where I am sitting—at my typing table—I look up every now and again at a window from which a prospect of the outside world enters my room. Through the well-spaced bars and the thin netting I see a tree with slim branches and a spread of green-gold leaves dancing gently in the breeze and letting small spangles of sunlight fall upon my table. Beyond its slender swaying is the far-away sky, soft blue crossed by little clouds. A great peace seems to send out its message to me across a translucent distance, carried at the last stage as if by hundreds of tiny leaf-hands softly and intimately to my little human self dreaming of a divine destiny. Remembrances of all my dear friends hover in this reverie and just now you are very much in the forefront. (2 11 1992)

*

The memory of the warm sweetness of you and your brother during your stay here is still fresh and will remain vibrant always. Now comes a massive reminder of the deep friendship in the form of a birthday present flown by courier service—a swift flight bearing a recorder of irresistibly flying Time: a beautiful wall-clock! It is something really necessary in my room. My chums have been thinking of getting one for me for a long time and they no less than myself are very glad to see it hung up in front of me.

There cannot be a finer calling of my attention to the truth that the relentless run of Time is meant to give us an opportunity to make the most of our lives. Its running without end in contrast to the end awaiting our careers on earth should make us aware not only of the need to hurry up to build a worth-while structure of our thoughts, feelings, desires, energies but also of the need to charge this structure with the sense of something beyond its brevity. The very fact of Time's endlessness from past through present to future should awake in us the consciousness of an everlasting phenomenon pulsing across the brevity of our existence. We have a natural instinct to fight against this brevity: we seek to perpetuate ourselves through our children, hoping to win thus an indirect immortality. But such an instinct should point to something hidden within us which we commonly miss, a secret Reality waiting to be found as our deepest self. The Rigveda named it "Agni", hymning it as "the immortal in the mortal", a being of fire leaping always upward, towards some eternal Vast, an entity of light revealing our own mysterious continuity from a far past to a remote future and disclosing in us a gradually unfolding godhead. The Rishis also designated

Agni as *jatavedas*, “knower of births” By “births” they indicated two things: (1) a series of life after life upon earth with a “soul”, a divine spark, growing through them wider and brighter by means of various experiences undergone by assuming diverse personalities across the ages; (2) a process of realising our existence on plane after plane beyond the earth, a higher and still higher self of our own in superhuman regions culminating in the world of a supreme “Surya”, a divine Sun of Knowledge and Bliss where all things are unified and harmonised.

See what your big and beautiful clock has driven home to my heart and evoked from my mind! It has been a good stimulus. Thank you for your timely gift.
(11 11 1992)

*

You have written with sincerity of your puzzlement and pain. I have given due consideration to the problem you have posed. A friend of mine, an Englishwoman who comes from the Quaker group of Christians and is now residing in Pondicherry in relation with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram has written for me what strikes me as the best answer possible to your query

Before I quote her I may point out that in the Hindu scriptures food like meat is not labelled as “tamasic”, as you say, but classed as “rajasic”. Even certain vegetarian items are so classed: e.g. onions.

Now to the central topic of your letter: “The Mother whom we see as the Mother of the universe—how could she give permission to the late Bhai Dyuman to prepare chicken soup on the doctor’s advice? Was that poor animal not a child of her?” I may add that in the article Dyumanbhai is quoted as saying that he himself tasted the soup before giving it to the Mother—as was his custom for the sake of the Mother’s safety.

My English friend has written:

“There are four factors/participants in this situation for the puzzled soul of your correspondent:

- (1) The Mother
- (2) The chicken
- (3) Dyuman
- (4) The correspondent himself,

and the law of respect for life as expressed in Vegetarianism.

(1) and (2): The Mother was not ignoring or flouting the law, but had moved through and beyond that law to a higher law. As it is clear that she was in tune and contact with all living things, it is probable that she was in contact and harmony with the world and spirit of chickens and they were agreeable to nourishing her body.

(3) Dyuman: In tasting the chicken soup, as in the other things he

experienced as recounted in the article (brandy, etc.) he was also obeying a higher law—the law of total love and self-surrender.

(4) The correspondent himself: There is no suggestion that he should give up vegetarianism. Vegetarianism may well be contributing to his sadhana if it leads him towards reverence for and harmony with all created things and so to greater realisation of the Divine.”
(23.11.1992)

AMAL KIRAN
(K.D. SETHNA)

O BEAUTIFUL ICONOCLAST

O BEAUTIFUL Iconoclast,
 A Love wakes in this storm-swept world,
 A Splendour breaking the deities
 We mould and cling to.
 A pain bursts open the cavern of our heart
 Where a paeon is heard to Your Light.
 Amidst this welter and roar of crashing seas
 A deathless flame ever-yearning wanders,
 Haunting the searching brevities of our desires—
 A bird lost to its nest
 In the boundless twilight crying your Name—
 To fling itself at Your dancing feet
 Where the cosmic whirl finds its centre.
 Like spray our thoughts scatter
 On the marge of Your might;
 Yet the simple voice of a child within
 Intimate in an affinity
 Calls You its own—
 O Splendour of ruin, O Peace!

DAMODAR REDDY

A CORRECTIVE LETTER TO AMAL KIRAN

APROPOS your comments in “Life—Poetry—Yoga” on Sri Aurobindo’s poem “Is this the end?” in *Mother India* (December ’92) I have not understood why you have called the last two stanzas a paradox. To me it appears that the poem rises from stanza to stanza until it declares in the last one that even after the ‘heart discovers God and the soul knows itself’ there is no end, that is to say, then begin the splendours of divine manifestation (“Our Yoga starts where others end”)

I do not think that even up to Stanza 6 ‘everything is said to terminate’ as you have put it. Sri Aurobindo of course describes the external fact of death vividly, but his very question “Is this the end?” appearing in every stanza is rhetorical, in the sense that the answer to the question is implied in the question itself, namely “this is *not* the end”. So even in the first four stanzas I cannot find sadness but exultation, because of the hidden indication that what appears as death is not truly the end. This idea-substance becomes clearer and clearer as the poem proceeds and reaches its climax in the last stanza, where even the purpose of creation is hinted at.

How are we then to take the Mother’s remark ‘very sad’ (as quoted by you) on this poem? Perhaps we forget too often the Mother’s injunction: “Beware of what is repeated to you in my name—the spirit in which it is said is lost!”

*

As regards “The Death of a God” I agree with you that what is described need not be the poet’s own inner state. This, however, is not a solitary example among Sri Aurobindo’s poems. The poem “The Dream Boat” which is also written in a similar vein gives a poetic account of an inner tragedy, which I am told is quite common among seekers.

5 11 ’92

A G. SAVARDEKAR

Amal Kiran’s Comment

Thank you for your fine letter. You have opened a prospect which I now consider to be the right one. Congratulations! But the “exultation” you speak of is rather subtle in the four opening stanzas. Only from the fifth onward the real mood can be seen to show itself increasingly, and the closing words of the poem

and even then
There is no end—

reveal clearly the leitmotif, the positive theme present in some form or other throughout

NIRODBARAN'S TALK ON CHAMPAKLAL

"I have been waiting. He will come straight to me "

This profoundly mystical statement uttered by Sri Aurobindo and heard inwardly by a disciple when Champaklal's health was deteriorating and there was no hope of recovery, startles and thrills us. His long period of ailment and suffering would end in his soul's 'union' with the Supreme, his beloved Master and enjoy eternal bliss. Who else could deserve such a wonderful consummation of his earthly life?

When we look far back, we notice in his early youth how in his first meeting with Sri Aurobindo he lay prostrate at his feet for nearly an hour and his entire face was bathed in happy tears. Then we find Sri Aurobindo enquiring about him and asking his friends to bring him back with them. Lastly, Sri Aurobindo's surprising ecstatic embrace of his devoted disciple as a parting gift of his undying love—all these woven together prepare us in a way for the mystical utterance from Sri Aurobindo we have quoted. Add to them the Mother's equally sublime statement: "Champaklal, you have become a part of me."

Of such a sadhak I have been asked to speak a few words by virtue of my long association with him in the service of Sri Aurobindo, and thereafter.

There is much to speak and much also not to speak. We have seen, enjoyed, suffered, and shared so much in common of the Lila of the 'double Divine Incarnation'—the supreme Purusha-and-Prakriti on the earth.

It was in early morning when I was working at the Samadhi that somebody came and whispered to me that Champaklal had passed away. There was a moment's shock though the end had been expected. The Samadhi too heard the news. What Sri Aurobindo had waited for had happened. Time began to move on. Similar was the shock when the sudden news of Dyumanbhai's passing arrived. That was an unexpected blow.

Champaklal had endeared himself to all of us, young and old, by some inborn psychic quality that cast a spell and attracted people. His external features added to it in no small measure.

He was conscious of the truth that he was engaged in the service of the Divine, that the Divine was his Father and Mother, but he made no ado about it.

How did I come into a close contact with such a dedicated soul, a man in many respects my contrast? Our first contact was, however, not pleasant; it was rather a confrontation. When I came to the Ashram, my attention was drawn to him by friends saying that he was Sri Aurobindo's personal attendant. His half-bare robust body with a smooth shining skin, a brahminical thread across his chest, his flowing hair and beard—in a word he was an embodied High Priest. And of course everyone was whispering the awe-inspiring phrase that he was Sri Aurobindo's personal attendant. I had no occasion to meet him till a few years later. One day he came to the Dispensary for medical help. I happened to be in

charge of the Dispensary Suddenly on some flimsy excuse both of us burst into hot temper, almost an explosion. In my medical report I narrated the incident to the Mother. At that time I enjoyed some intimacy with Sri Aurobindo. He wrote back: "Outbursts of that kind are too common with him And when heat meets with heat... it is almost midsummer now." The breath of the Master's genial humour made me burst into a hearty laugh and all was quiet.

Now I was thrown into the company of such a man by an adverse fate when Sri Aurobindo broke his right thigh in 1938. But the adversity turned into a golden opportunity by the alchemic touch of Sri Aurobindo's Grace and we two became sweet friends for long decades. I felt as if we had been together for many past lives in spite of our outer differences in nature and temperament. We served Sri Aurobindo for twelve years, slept together in the same room and shared our services amicably without any serious interruption by our egos. I have paid a genuine tribute to him in my book, *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*. So I need not repeat it. Throughout these long twelve years, one thing I have learned from him which has come as a revelation: it is his deep love for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, a love which is rare to find in this material world of ours. Perhaps it was quite a common feature in the Vedic and Upanishadic days when the disciple was an integral part of the Guru's life. An utter self-abnegation and sacrifice obviating all physical necessities, and a single dominant note in his consciousness—how to serve the Divine Guru who needed nothing, asked for nothing and yet was pleased with the bhakta's service of love and devotion? When I used to go away after my duty for hours in the evening, it was he alone who remained with Sri Aurobindo and enjoyed the beatitude of his silent all-sufficing company. It was not without reason that he prided himself on being called Hanuman.

What he did at this time was revealed to me long after Sri Aurobindo had passed away. He was taking notes of many significant casual remarks made by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on various topics. The daily routine work appeared to him important but for me it was trivial and therefore to be left out of our 'Talks'. Now it appears in a different light. Of these notes I shall supply a number of instances which will give the key to the sealed heart of the bhakta.

(To be continued)

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1993)

The Burden of Property

I HAVE told you that I had become the owner of a huge property left to me by my grandfather Surendra Nath Banerjee To a young woman who had no experience of life or of business matters and no one to guide her, property was a heavy burden.

We had a large house at Barrackpore situated on the banks of the Ganges. It had a big lawn, a garden and trees in the backyard In all respects it was an enviable site. Since we were just a few family members, we had no need for such a huge building. It was an encumbrance. So I decided to sell it off I went to see the then Chief Minister of Bengal and enquired if the Government would buy and preserve it as a memorial in honour of my grandfather who was a great patriot and had won the title “Uncrowned King of Bengal” The Chief Minister was a man well-known all over India. He asked me the price of the building. I said, “One and a half lakhs.” He shouted at me saying. “What? Your tenant is now paying only Rs 90 per month and you demand such a huge sum for selling it! It’s impossible!” He spoke very rudely and dismissed me off-hand.

I then advertised in a newspaper and in reply a Marwari businessman turned up to negotiate The news spread everywhere The editor of a well-known Bengali paper came to see me and asked me, “Is it true that you are selling your grandfather’s house to a Marwari?” It was my turn now to be annoyed. I answered, “Why shouldn’t I? I offered it to your Chief Minister and he turned me out charging me with excessive greed for gold And you are now accusing me of having no patriotic feeling!” The Editor departed.

As the negotiations proceeded with the prospective buyer, I had a dream. I saw my grandfather and he told me, “You’re selling this house to a Marwari?” “What else can I do? Everything is settled,” I answered.

“No, you can’t do that,” he said emphatically. “In tomorrow’s paper you will read about the issue ” And what did I read? The Editor of the paper had severely taken to task the Chief Minister for allowing Banerji’s house to pass into a Non-Bengali’s possession It had an instantaneous effect. The Chief Minister wrote to me that the Government would accept my earlier offer and buy the house. I kept quiet and gave no answer. Finally, the Government bought it.

But later on they charged from me what is called Gain Tax to the tune of about Rs. 17000 since the property had not been worth the high price it had

fetches I refused and filed a suit, but I lost. And since I had not paid the required sum a bailiff was sent to confiscate my furniture. I sent him off with Rs 50 as pocket money. I appealed now to the High Court. My pleader told me, "The judge is a very strict man—he is from the North, offer him a bribe." I refused. I approached my son for help, "What shall I do now?" He said roughly, "Why do you annoy me? What can I do? You say you have faith in God. Why don't you tell him?" I was angry and retorted, "Do you think it is so easy? Why don't you try it for once?" He rebuffed me with, "I don't boast of sharing such a faith!"

Well, my eyes were opened. I prayed to my Lord. I later learned that I had won the case. The judge took no time in giving the judgment in my favour. "Lord, you have taught me a lesson," I gratefully acknowledged.

*

We used to own two old houses, but when the refugees from East Bengal came, they occupied them. We had no way of driving them out, and neither the police nor the Government would offer us any assistance. I was in a quandary, but fortunately there was a military cantonment nearby and we were on good terms with one of the officers, who had wanted to marry one of my cousins but had been refused. He was a non-Bengali and a very nice person indeed, so I told him about my predicament.

He advised me to submit an application to the Government stating that the houses had become so old that they needed urgent repair. "Start right away with the repair work and break down the roof," he said. "I shall be present during the demolition."

Because of this stratagem, the refugees had to leave one house immediately, but they refused to relinquish the other, saying their womenfolk were there and that no men could enter the place. Declaring that being a woman I would go in myself, I discovered that a number of these women were sitting there quite naked. They were low-caste people and thought they had struck upon a fine trick to keep possession of the house. But as soon as I saw to it that the repair work began, they had no option but to leave. Of course, I had the courage to follow this course of action because of my friend's support.

Now the refugees had their chance, and started a scandal-mongering campaign linking me to the young officer. When this reached the ears of his superiors in the cantonment headquarters, they quickly transferred him to another station.

Soon another difficulty arose regarding the payment of taxes which came under the jurisdiction of the military. I immediately thought of approaching the head officer who had transferred my friend. But this was no easy matter, because his office was in Fort William where no one could enter without a pass. When I

asked my son's advice about what to do, he simply turned away saying, "I know nothing about your affairs "

"In that case I'll go without a pass," I retorted.

"Don't do that, Ma. You're asking for trouble," he warned.

Without a backward glance, I brought out my car and started straight for the Fort, thinking all the while of my Lord. As soon as I arrived at the gate of the Fort, the guards blocked my path with their rifles and demanded to see my pass. "I have no pass," I said haughtily. I forced my way through and had advanced a short distance when I heard a thunderous shout, "Halt!"

I turned around and saw an officer aiming his revolver at me. I stopped. "Are you a Bengali?" he asked. I answered in the affirmative.

"How have you dared to enter here? Where is your pass?" he demanded. I told him I had no pass but that I urgently wanted to see Major Datta.

"Do you know him?" he asked after a moment's thought. "If you don't he won't see you "

"I must see him," I insisted. "I am in much trouble "

"How long will you take?" he said more gently.

"About five minutes," I replied.

"Well, then, his office is over there straight ahead."

Thanking him, I mounted the stairs and knocked at the office-door. "Come in," Major Datta called. I walked in and the Major started with surprise. "Who are you?" he exclaimed gaping at me. "How did you get in here? Where is your pass?"

Once again I declared that I had no pass but that I had dared to come because I was in great difficulty. He asked me to sit down.

"Please tell me your story," he said politely. I recounted how I owned property near the cantonment and the cantonment people were harassing me. "I have come to you because you are the senior officer," I concluded.

"I am not the right one. The Executive Officer could look after your problem."

I replied that I could not trust him.

"Very well," the Major told me. "I will look into the matter. Please come tomorrow. I am giving you a pass so that you will have no trouble getting admitted "

I thanked him and came away in a triumphant mood. When I told my son what had happened he could scarcely believe his ears. I did not care. I know people might laugh at me or consider my stories outlandish, but when I call my Lord, something comes down in me—call it force or strength—and I can perform exceptional acts without any thought for the consequences. In addition, by God's grace, I had a very striking face in those days.

Next day I arrived at the Major's office on time. He told me he had been expecting me. "Come with me," he said. "We must go to the Head Office."

We had walked down to the car when Datta asked me where my driver was. I said I didn't have one and got into the driver's seat. He was about to get into the back, but I motioned him to sit beside me. As we drove through the Fort everyone stared at us wide-eyed with surprise and curiosity. At the Head office, I waited while the Major visited the various departments in the course of making enquiries.

"I'm sorry you had to wait so long," he told me upon returning. "But you will be glad to hear that the work is done. You can go home in peace." With these few words he left me.

The next morning I went to him again to offer him my thanks. After a while, I said to him, "Mr. Datta, may I ask you a question? Please tell me why you have gone out of your way to help a person whom you did not know and whom most likely you would never see again?"

The poor man was not prepared for such a question and could not find anything to say. I continued, "And yet, when you received a false report about your subordinate officer, you transferred him without troubling to verify the truth of the scandalous allegations against him. How much I myself had to suffer on this account. Still, if I had been your superior officer, perhaps I would have done the same thing. Why do people behave like this?" Again he did not reply. Then I added, "You see, man is a most helpless creature. Should we not help him in his trials and ordeals as far as we can? Is the law everything? This is my question—please don't be offended."

"You are indeed an extraordinary girl," I, Nirodbaran, commented.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1993)

The Mother's Message

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



FOR several months the Mother and I worked continuously. We were in the middle of Book One Canto Four. Meanwhile in May 1962 the Mother was taken seriously ill. She convalesced for quite a long time in her second-floor apartment. She never came down. I went to her for our work on *Savitri*—in the music-cum-interview room.

She explained to me the sixth picture of Book One Canto Four:

“Along a path of aeons serpentine
 In the coiled blackness of her nescient course
 The Earth-Goddess toils across the sands of Time.”

It was the Mother’s own struggle, I felt.

*

During the year 1962 she arranged for me to go to Madras, because there I had my two wisdom-teeth extracted. It was a trial for me.

*

On 13th October 1962 the Mother got my account opened in the United Commercial Bank by putting Rs 500/- from her own purse. Afterwards my parents did the needful about the finance.

*

Time flew on rapid wings. Our work progressed considerably well.

The Mother took my consciousness to other spheres and let me see many extraordinary things in detail. She also made me feel their vibrations and meet numerous strange beings of different types. Without her direct instructions, guidance and constant help nothing could have been achieved.

Interested people thought that the paintings of *Savitri* were mere pictures—some even mocked and criticised. Some passed random and gauche remarks out of sheer jealousy and disdain. They believed the paintings to be my personal possessions and affairs, because I had done them and because the Mother graciously had granted me special copyright.

Really speaking, the paintings of the whole of *Savitri* are the Mother’s own creation based not only on her series of visions but also on her own guiding sketches—this was a reflection of her own Yoga.

+

On the morning of 18th December 1964 the Mother explained to me one of the paintings of Book Five—*The Book of Love*

For Satyavan she drew trousers and said:

“He should wear tight trousers.”

I raised my eyebrows and inquired: “Mother, tight trousers? They are modern—what about a dhoti?” She said:

“Why, but the trousers are all right. I do not like a dhoti here, because it is modern.”

When I showed the painting to the Mother, I thought it was awful. Once again I broached the subject regarding the dhoti. She said firmly:

“Ah, no, I prefer trousers here. It is better if you change the colour of the trousers to pale greyish-blue instead of brown. Then they will look nice.”

Here too some people criticised when they saw the Exhibition of *Savitri* paintings.

The Mother once remarked that people did not see beyond their noses. She always reiterated:

“All these paintings are paintings of tomorrow—future paintings.”

*

When the Book Six—*The Book of Fate*—was in progress, I did the painting of Savitri’s mother. I did not cover her head with the sari, so she lacked the appearance of royalty. The Mother asked me to cover her head. I said: “As I have painted the first picture of her without any covering, how will it look in other pictures if I cover her head?” The Mother smiled and said:

“Why, but she can always cover her head when the sari slips from her head.

In the first picture the sari had slipped and in another picture she pulled it up!”

I savoured her sense of humour

The Mother was very particular about covering. One day I remember, while I was working my sari got disarranged. She arranged it and advised:

“Child, you should always cover yourself properly.”

*

I painted the Mother’s eyes from the photograph depicting her eyes. She liked the painting very much and asked me to include it in *Savitri* Book Ten—*The Book of the Double Twilight*: picture thirteen: These verses correspond to it:

“And Savitri looked on Death and answered not. . .
A mighty transformation came over her. . .

A curve of the calm hauteur of far heaven
 Descending into earth's humility,
 Her forehead's span vaulted the Omniscient's gaze,
 Her eyes were two stars watching the universe."

*

As days, months and years passed our work almost came to a close. Each day was a new revelation for me. Each painting had its own story—told and written by the Mother.

I am sorry I cannot give a full account of my work with the Mother. What I am writing in *Mother India* is just a glimpse—an outline. All the details will be given when *The Story of a Soul* will be published in book-form in several volumes.

*

The Mother saw the last paintings of Book Twelve—Epilogue—on 1st September 1965. The verses of picture thirteen ran:

"Numberless the stars swam on their shadowy field
 Describing in the gloom the ways of light.
 Then while they skirted yet the southward verge,
 Lost in the halo of her musing brows
 Night, splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven
 In silver peace, possessed her luminous reign
 She brooded through her stillness on a thought
 Deep-guarded by her mystic folds of light,
 And in her bosom nursed a greater dawn."

When the Mother saw the painting she told me in moving words:

"It is beautiful, excellent—full of feeling."

I actually saw her eyes moist with tears of happiness—because, indeed, she was anxiously waiting for the auspicious day to come—the great Dawn of the Supramental World.

Then with a smile she put a garland of Jasmynes around my neck—this was my award. In my birthday card she wrote:

"With my blessings for your whole being to become conscious of your soul
 and to manifest it constantly in your thoughts, feelings and actions.
 In Eternal Love."

*

I told the Mother: “When I have finished re-touching and re-doing the *Savitri* paintings according to your guidance, I shall have no work.” She smiled and affirmed:

“You see, you will have so many things to do Only idle people can say they have no work!”

Later I re-touched almost all the *Savitri* paintings and many I re-painted before they were exhibited in February 1967

The Mother after seeing all the paintings over again remarked:

“People see these types of paintings from the material point of view while I always see them from the spiritual point of view. They are visions—they are symbolic.”

A dear old lady said with good will:

“Huta, I saw the exhibition of *Savitri* paintings. You have done the work of 100 births in this one birth. You are liberated.”

I said that it was all the Grace of the Divine.
Here I recall Michelangelo’s words.

“The true work of art is but a shadow of the divine perfection.”

*

The *Savitri* paintings and other paintings were done in the midst of hideous difficulties and sufferings.

Many a time the Mother was taken suddenly ill—she ran a temperature along with a cold and cough. Despite all this, she never stopped explaining to me *Savitri* paintings

On my side too there were spells of indisposition. But the stress of inspiration was so intense that I could not stop.

The Mother gave certain dates in the week for our work. The rest of the days I was so preoccupied with painting that sometimes there was no time even to comb my hair

When my maid servant was absent, I had no time to go to the Dining Room. I had to make-do with bits of bread and water.

Often the electricity failed. The inspiration was so intense that I had to hold a flash-light in one hand and keep on painting with the other. I simply could not halt.

During the rainfall, the water would leak from all sides of the ceiling. I suffered from a severe cold and cough I had to clean the rooms before I retired late at night

The Mother instructed me that I should clean the brushes and the palette as soon as my work was over Several times I got electric shocks in the water while cleaning the brushes They were terrifying

Later this mistake was rectified by Bula-da for whom I had a great regard. Once he told me: "Huta, let other people go in the Frontier Mail, we will go in the goods train. That too will reach the goal—slowly but surely." I liked his advice.

The Mother's Force was working ceaselessly in my whole being to fulfil my soul's aspiration. She believed in killing several birds with one stone. Only the Divine Diplomat can do this

When I was completely absorbed in painting, I forgot to use my handkerchief on my face—instead I wiped my face with the rags I used for cleaning the brushes—and wiped the brushes with my handkerchief!

After I finished the work, I went to clean my brushes and glanced at the mirror. I was horrified to see my face. My hair was dishevelled, several patches of different colours added a rainbow glory to my visage!

Sometimes while doing painting I started feeling suffocated owing to some heaviness in my heart The inner churning was constant Tears rolled down my cheeks With one hand I was painting and with the other wiping my eyes.

The Mother's strides were getting longer and quicker At times it was difficult to keep pace with her. I got exhausted.

There were the days when nothing existed for me except the mission of finishing the task I carried in my heart

(To be continued)

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SUNDARAM—THE POET

(An informal introductory talk given on 21.3.92 to the senior students and teachers of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, by Anuben Ambalal Purani. The English translation of Gujarati poetry quoted is by Dhanavanti.)

FRIENDS, to-day, I would like to go down my memory lane with you, to review the life of an extraordinary person who was born on 22nd March many years back

Sundaram is a pen-name which he himself chose. It so happened that he came across the name Balasundaram, and he thought the latter part was very beautiful and he adopted it as his pen-name. I think it goes very well with his nature because he was always in search of beauty and he appreciated beauty wherever he saw it and in whichever form he saw it. He truly was searching for beauty all his life, and the name Sundaram does fit him very well. Just see these lines of his on beauty and love—

All that is beautiful on earth,
I love, I deeply love.
And all that is not beautiful on earth,
I shall beautify,—
With my love,
With my deep transforming love

Neither Sundaram's parents nor any of his people ever dreamt of the astounding destiny which awaited the new-born child. His parents gave him a significant name—Tribhuvandas. I don't think I need to explain the meaning of Tribhuvandas and I feel that at the end of his life, yes, Sundaram had justified, fulfilled the name Tribhuvandas. He came to the Lord and he became the slave of his Lord. And that is why I feel that that name was also a right name for Sundaram.

Young Tribhuvandas reached High School and by that time his teachers were amazed at his ability to learn, for, at that tender age he had mastered the Sanskrit language so well that he wrote short poems and even his diary in Sanskrit. He was given the title of "Bhasha Visharad" by the authorities while he was still in his teens.

When Sundaram was a young man, communism had just started and it was something so new and so exciting that all the young people at that time were very much in favour of it and so their outlook on life was strongly coloured by what struck them as a new idealism.

Sundaram had begun writing poems when he was very young but very soon

he rose like a constellation in the Gujarati literary horizon and all the Gujarati people hailed the new poet. He also started writing on subjects about which the previous poets never thought of writing—ordinary, insignificant events which usually made no impact on people, but Sundaram, being a very sensitive person, was inspired by such insignificant events also. And at the same time, at that age, he questioned many things: such as God's laws and why the poor suffered. Why was there injustice? Why was there inequality in society? These are the things that extremely disturbed him. And he wrote a number of poems on these subjects, creating a new character. This character was a Bhakta. Though the Bhakta loved his God, he constantly argued with Him, asked Him difficult questions. This fictitious character was called "Koya Bhagat". Koya Bhagat went on asking his God, "Well, God, here is a woman who is suffering, who is sick and she has no medicines. What are You going to do for her?" And in that strain he wrote many poems and lastly Koya Bhagat got terribly disgusted with his God and said, "God, why don't You go back to Vaikuntha? I think we would all be better off without You!"

This was Sundaram's tone at that time. At the same time Gujarat was very much taken up with the Purani Brothers who had established many Akhadas (Gymnasiums) and those Akhadas had selected Saturday as a day for talks, discussions, recitations, advice whatever—they had become a kind of centre for character-building. And it seems one day Sundaram had gone to one of those Akhadas and he was asked to read a poem. In those days Sundaram was full of criticism against injustice, so naturally he recited a small poem called "Paandadi"—paandadi means a leaf. In the poem he says, "Little Paandadi was five years old and she had a brother who was just a little more than one year. So Paandadi looked after her brother—if he laughed she laughed with him, and if he wept she wiped his tears, and when he slept she put him in the cradle, and sang for him. Paandadi never realised what she was missing. She had no freedom to play, she couldn't go to a school for study but she was happy with her brother." And that reminds me of another poem which I have read somewhere. There the poet describes a little girl who is carrying her little brother on her arm and is going up a mountain road. It was very steep, so she was panting and a traveller who was coming down saw her and said, "He is heavy, isn't he?" She smiled, and said, "No, he is my brother." So in the same way Paandadi never felt that she was deprived of her liberty. She was very happy with her brother. But all days are not the same. One day her friend comes with five shining pebbles and a game of pebbles is very attractive to a child and Paandadi didn't know what to do. How to leave her little brother and how not to miss this glorious opportunity to play? So she tied the string of the cradle to her toes and sat down with her friend and their game started. The game was exceedingly exciting, it now reached its climax. Just then what would happen? Two wild cats came mewling and shrieking and the little girls were so frightened that they jumped and tried to run. Paandadi

forgot that she was tied to a string So the cradle was overturned, the little brother started crying loudly and just then came her mother. She picked up the child. The poet, at the end of the poem, asked, "Dear God, what kind of a creation have You made? Here is a little girl who must look after her brother. She cannot have freedom to play. Here is a little boy who needs someone to look after him. And there is that woman who must work so that she can feed her family What a strange world You have created, God!" This was one of his very well-known poems.

The next thing in which Sundaram was seriously and sincerely involved was the freedom-struggle. At that time Gandhiji was like a magnet and all the young people were drawn to him Sundaram also took a very active part in politics. He even went to prison for some months And he gives expression to his feelings in one of his poems He calls it "Rana-geet" I think Gandhiji wouldn't have liked that title at all—"The Song of the Battle-field." Anyway there it was And in the poem he says, "The Mother is in chains, Her face is washed with tears, the Mother is suffering Who will suffer for her?" And a conch calls out to the people. Thousands of young voices ring forth, "We, we the youth will suffer for the Mother and with the Mother." Again the conch rings out and says, "Who will go to the battle-field and get wounded? Who will bleed for the Mother?" A thousand young voices echo, "We will go to the battle-field and we will bleed for our Mother." And lastly the poet asks, "The Mother is in chains, who shall liberate her? Who shall die for her, so that she may live?" And a thousand young voices echo, "We, the sons of Mother India, we will die so that she may live." This was the feeling Sundaram had, and I think he aroused many young hearts with this poem

But I think not everybody is meant to lead a nation. It is not everyone's mission to enter politics and perhaps Sundaram also was not meant for that field of life Very soon he turned to social work And this gentler occupation perhaps turned him inwards, and gave him time enough to look within and to feel deeply. He began to question the many ceremonies and ceremonials that the religious people do As he had a very well-developed mind and a very sensitive heart, he questioned and at the same time he found the answer to his question. He calls that poem, "Salute Thee?"

SALUTE THEE?

Salute thee? Statue—stone?
No! No! I bow to faith's altar-throne;

Where worshipping innocent human hearts
Find their pure adoration's niche,
Where streams of tenderness freely flow

From God-intoxicated gazes There I bow,
There do I bow

Thou, inhabitant of the mind of man,
Wert made human by the human;
In this the victory of man's manhood
I recognise and I bow.

In wood, in stone and tree, thou art in every place,
Wherever faith finds an altar, thou seated art;
I bow to thee as also to the stone
I bow to faith's altar-throne.

By this time Sundaram's old ideals had all been broken He was looking for a new ideal, a new guide And he speaks of his despair at his unsuccessful efforts in the poem "Further over There":

FURTHER OVER THERE

I spent a sleepless night
An inner disquiet dogging me,
Off I went, my sack a-shoulder,
 Something to discover,
 Somewhere further.

I met the mundane with their hoarded treasures,
And the aged wise wayfarers. I asked them:
'Citizens, do you know where he resides?'
'Further over there.'

I came to dazzling pleasure-domes.
I saw them by beauty gratified.
'Does he stay here, my paramour?'
'Not here, further over there '

And there were the learned heavy with learning,
Gravely debating the undebatable.
'Is this the abode of God, O revered ones?'
'No Further over there, further.'

A glimmer of lamps, a tinkle of temple bells,
The worshipping, prostrate devotee.

Once again, in hope, I posed my riddle
 'Is this where he lives, my paramour?'
 'No. Further over there, further '

Not with people, not in pleasure,
 Not in learning, not in temples
 Everyone answers 'Further, further '
 Where further?

This poem reminds me of 'The Hound of Heaven' by Francis Thompson. That poem is in complete contrast to Sundaram's. In 'The Hound of Heaven' the poet describes his desperate efforts at fleeing from the pursuing Hound—but is there anyone on earth who can escape the Hound of Heaven (The Divine's Grace)? Finally the poet is seized by the Hound and he hears a soft murmur "who would love thee save me?"

After the futility of his search Sundaram was in great despair. These periods of depression which some call 'the Valley of the Shadow of Death' are common to all extraordinary people. There are some who come out of it and many who succumb to it. Sundaram was lucky enough to feel a ray of Light in the depths of despair and come out with a new life. He describes this experience in a dramatic and colourful poem called 'The Story of a Nobody'

THE STORY OF A NOBODY

(1)

I am nothing
 Such a nothing
 No one's ever whispered to me 'Welcome '
 Such a nothing I am
 What should I do?
 Where do I proceed?
 In this soulless world I roam,
 Aimless, anchorless, vagabond

Look! These festive meetings,
 Consultations, greetings,
 Happy, candid, casual chats
 Where hearts quiver open and bloom

I too would go there, be a part
 I go, I stand, I wait

No one's bothered that I live, I breathe.
 I am such a lifeless, shadowy nought,
 Would someone tell me 'Begone!'
 They wouldn't tell me 'YES' I know,
 But I am such a nothing
 They didn't even give me a 'No'!

(2)

And so I thought
 This life of mine a running waste
 Why perpetuate?
 I went to the cemetery.
 I dug myself my own burial pit
 Not for me the luxury
 Of a ceremonial interment

I called the Lord, stepped in, lay down.
 To pull the earth-shroud over my face
 I stretched my arms, looked up:
 The skies met my eyes,
 My fingers for that instant froze.

Oh! that pregnant midnight moment,
 Awesome, eternal!
 Flinging aside my depressions's heavy cloak,
 Life stood there and stared,
 Deep into my ocean-eyes,
 For the very first time!

Her body was the milky way
 And her fairy fragrance
 Floated gently in the breeze.

Then from her snow-white robe
 Like a love-drop of nectar
 Broke out a star; softly first
 And whizzing like an arrow next.
 Her cheek wore the rose of happy hearts.

What happened then,
 I just do not know

(3)

I opened my eyes,
 Everywhere there was light,
 Tender, twinkling, pure,
 White like the champa flower.

And then I noticed
 On my tomb's edge,
 That lucid light in person stood
 She saw my open eyes and, happy, said:
 'A nothing, eh?
 Good you came here and rested so, my love!
 Here now will I my sowings throw
 And on this living earth shall grow
 My dream-flowers,
 My very own dream-flowers!
 Then she smiled a smile,
 So soothing, so fresh, so warm,
 I simply shut my eyes

(4)

I woke up to the glare of a naked noon
 There was no burial pit nor ground
 In the embalmed cosy lap of a tree
 I lay reclined Thrilled my limbs
 With the mad murmur of spring
 I gazed at the universe reborn.

Wherever I looked
 A garden was in bloom
 In its subtle, myriad shades
 Flowed the wonder-warmth of my gaze.
 The rich champaka raga of my new life

(To be continued)

SHAKESPEARE IN THE LIGHT OF SANSKRIT POETICS

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1993)

THE theory of *rasa* has so many complexities that it is truly impossible to give even a very sketchy account of it in a short essay. In the foregoing account it is only the chief points that have been mentioned. When we are trying to study Shakespeare from this point of view, occasions will repeatedly arise to explain terms that have been merely mentioned here. There is one factor, however, that will have to be mentioned before any progress can be made.

The phenomenon known as universalization or *sādhāranīkarana* is of great importance. Bharata says “Rasa is fulfilled when these emotions are expressed in a universal manner.” The emotions of a particular individual should be presented in such a way that it becomes universally acceptable. Abhinavagupta’s exposition of the idea explains that permanent (*sthāyī*) emotions as well as determinant (*vibhava*) can be universalized. Such universalization means liberation from spatio-temporal bondage, from individual considerations. It is not personal but a mass process—in the case of drama all the spectators experience it. Referring to a certain scene in *Shakuntala* where a yearling is frightened Abhinava says

“In that experience of poetry where the yearling is the subject, we get the knowledge ‘it is afraid’, yet the frightening factor (Dusyanta) is absent. Fear—liberated from time and space—is experienced.”

Universalization thus liberates the elements of *rasa* from their individual features and enables the discerning reader or spectator (*sahridaya*) to experience *rasa*. The much-discussed scene in King Janaka’s garden as described by Tulasidasa in the Balakanda of the *Manasa* will exemplify this point. In this well-known scene Rama and Sita meet and fall in love with each other: here Rama is the *āśraya* (the recipient), Sita is the *ālambana* (fundamental determinant), the garden is the *uddīpana* (the excitant). Rama’s joy, surprise, admiration, etc. are the *anubhāva* (consequent), love is the permanent emotion and pleasure, doubt, etc. are the *sancara* (transient) emotions. All of these get universalized. Rama becomes the universal young man in love. All spatio-temporal and individual limitations disappear and Rama’s feelings become universal feelings. So do his reactions. Love as depicted here is not the love of Rama for Sita, or of the reader for Sita or of the reader for his own beloved. This is love in a liberated form—basically the *sthāyī* or permanent emotion of the reader but completely impersonal.

Identification (*tādātmya*) with the recipient (*āśraya*) is a necessary part of universalization. Here the question arises: how can the reader’s identification extend to unattractive characters like Ravana or Surpanakha? It is here that Jagannatha expounds the idea of flaw or fallacy (*dosa*). Besides this concept of

an emotional fallacy, he mentions that wonderful effect (*camatkāra*) of poetry while trying to account for identification. This idea of identification (*tādātmya*) has been considered and discussed from all possible angles.

There is no place here to reproduce the hair-splitting argument that lies behind each idea and concept. For our purposes the extreme importance of the phenomenon of universalization has to be recognised. It is this corollary of the *rasa* theory that makes it applicable to the works of all writers. Since it is agreed that universalization raises *rasa*-experience above all limitations of time, space and individuality, it would be sheer narrowness of vision on our own part if we fail to apply this theory to works that are not Indian.

Whether the *rasa*-experience is a joyous one or not is a very controversial question. Over the centuries scholars have discussed this point pretty exhaustively. The experience of *srngāra*, *vir*, *hāsya*, *advuta* and *sānta* awaken joy, but can we say the same of *karunā*, *bhayānaka*, *vībhatsa*, etc.? *Rasa* is full of joy, but is this inevitably true? These and many other questions have vexed the scholars. Abhinava holds that *rasa*-experience is a joyous one but Acarya Visvesvara takes him to imply *rasa* to be ambivalent—awakening sorrow as well as joy. Abhinava, however, makes it quite clear that he thinks the *rasa*-experience to be a blissful one. He actually uses the term *ānanda* (bliss) to describe this joy, going to the extent of saying that this experience is like the experience of Brahman—*Brahmasvāda-sahodara*. Though this last term has undergone severe criticism, most of the scholars agree with Abhinava. Bhatta Nayaka, Mammata, Dhanika, Jagannatha and many other scholars belong to this school. Almost all of the modern scholars also endorse Abhinava's view.

Different views are held by critics like Ramacandra-Gunacandra who hold that *rasa* is of two kinds: affording joy as well as sorrow. Lollata and certain Sankhya scholars belong to this school. Among the moderns Acharya Ramachandra Shukla is against the doctrine of the joyous nature of *rasa*.

Even when we accept the theory that the *rasa*-experience is joyous by nature, there still remains the question: how does the experience of *rasas* like *karunā* become joyous? This is of particular interest to us since we shall be studying Shakespearean tragedies. Our ancient scholars discussed the question in painstaking detail. Though it is not possible to give an account of their views we can summarise the ideas they have handed down to us:

(1) The creative process is not subject to the rules of natural creation and is full of surprises.

According to the rules of causality sorrow begets sorrow, but under the poet's magic touch sorrow undergoes a sea-change to something rich and strange and may afford pleasure. Jagannatha declares as much in *Rasa-Gangādhara* and so does Visvanatha in *Sāhitya-Darpana*.

(2) Bhatta Nāyaka, while refuting Lollata, argues that the experience of *Karuna* is not a sad one. He posits that we appreciate the elements of poetic

technique, etc after understanding the literal meaning This has a double function: (a) it liberates the reader or the audience from personal emotion and (b) it universalizes the vibhavas, etc This act of appreciation leads the audience towards a pleasant contemplation of rasa, even if it is *karuna* rasa

(3) According to certain scholars rasa is neither generated nor perceived nor experienced. Rasa means the acquiring of self-knowledge through the means of words, music, acting, etc This knowledge is a joyous one. Abhinavagupta says that it is the joyous consciousness itself which is experienced as rasa and this precludes the fear of sorrow.

(4) Sāradā Tanaya bases his argument on the foregoing theory Man enjoys life with the help of three faculties: emotion, knowledge and art Emotion gives pleasure and knowledge helps the consciousness to obtain wisdom Art brightens the soul. The spectator witnessing the different rasas contemplates them with the help of these three faculties within himself.

These are the four main theories we have inherited from the ancient scholars A fifth one, that of the Jaina scholars, argues that we get the illusion of joy in Karuna through appreciating the techniques of the artist It is the function of art to establish harmony and unity and the fulfilment of this function produces an illusion of joy

These attempts to answer the vexatious question of the pleasure-giving aspect of Karuna rasa have their corresponding theories in Western aesthetics. Here, however, we are concerned only with the rasa-theory

This extremely sketchy account of the rasa-theory gives us only a very hazy idea of the richness and meticulousness of the great variety of works on this theory. Quite apart from explaining the major terms, it has to be confessed with regret that it has not been possible even to mention many technical terms Later whenever the proper context is present, the relevant terms will be explained. It now remains to be seen how far this crowning achievement of Sanskrit poetics can highlight different aspects of Shakespeare's plays

(To be continued)

RATRI RAY

VYASA'S TALE OF SAVITRI IN THE MAHABHARATA

A VERSE-BY-VERSE RENDERING INTO ENGLISH

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1993)

III· *Savitri's Marriage with Satyavan and her Courting the Life of the Hermitage.*

Markandeya said

1. Then the King gave thought to the details of his daughter's marriage, by arranging for the vessels and related things he began preparations for the wedding.
- 2 He invited the elderly Brahmins, and all the priests officiating at the holy sacrifice, and the reciters of the Riks; choosing an auspicious day and hour he, along with them, and his daughter, set out on the journey
- 3 On reaching the sacred forest the King walked, accompanied by the Brahmins, to the hermitage where abode the King-sage Dyumatsena.
4. There he saw, under a tall and stately Shal-tree, seated on an ascetic's mat, the illustrious King, but now blind
- 5 The King with due honour offered respects to the King-sage and using proper and intent speech introduced himself to him.
6. In return the King-sage, well-versed in dharma as he was, received the King by giving him oblations and making available a high seat and by gifting a sacred cow; he then enquired the good cause of his visit to him.
- 7 Then expressing his wish and the purpose of approaching him, about Satyavan, he described the several details that had to be attended to in the matter

Aswapati said·

- 8 O King-sage, a beautiful and virtuous daughter I have, named Savitri, and I am approaching you with a request to accept her in the just way as your daughter-in-law.

Dyumatsena said

- 9 I have lost my kingdom and here in the forest I dwell, living a life according to the dharma, in the practices of austerity, how can it be proper for your

daughter to adopt this hermitage-life and bear sufferings and hardships associated with it?

Aswapatī said:

- 10 Happiness and sorrow are born and then die—both my daughter and I know of it; please speak not therefore in that manner and to a person like me I have come here with the proper resolve being aware of all the things, O King
- 11 It is in the expectation and with a feeling of good agreeable friendship that I propose this marriage and in that disappoint me not; having approached you thus with love send me not dejected
- 12 In every respect you conform to my standing and you are acceptable to me as I too for you, kindly then consent to receive my daughter as a bride for Satyavan and a good daughter-in-law for you,

Dyumatsena said:

13. It had been my long-cherished desire to have a family-tie with you; and with the loss of the kingdom I thought I had lost all hope for such a relationship
14. But if this old wish of mine, which I always held close to me, is to be fulfilled by coming back this way, then let it be so; you are my most welcome and honourable guest

Markandeya said:

- 15 Then, inviting all the learned Brahmins and the dwellers of the ashram of that forest the two Kings, in their assembly, and following the prescribed rites and ceremonies, performed the marriage
- 16 Aswapatī, after having extended several presents and giving his daughter, and being well-pleased returned along with his retinue to the Palace.
17. Satyavan was happy to have such a beautiful wife, endowed with noble and fine qualities, and she too was joyous that her heart's desire had been fulfilled in him as her husband.
- 18 After the departure of her father she laid aside all the rich ornaments and robes and began wearing bark garments and red-dyed clothes
- 19 With the service and with other similar qualities, of courtesy and humility, of poise and great composure in the conduct, and by doing the varied duties to each one's satisfaction, she kept all pleased and happy.

- 20 She looked after the physical needs of her mother-in-law and took care of her clothes; also, whatever little she spoke to her father-in-law, restraining herself, she did so with godly respect and reverence for him
- 21 In a like manner, with sweet and loving speech, and ever proficient, always remaining calm and tranquil, and in their privacy, she saw that her husband was happy
- 22 O Yudhishtira, thus in that ashram, and absorbed in tapasya, this way they lived and a lot of time went by
- 23 But then Savitri, with woe in her heart, was languishing ever, on getting up in the morning or while sleeping in the night, at every moment, what Narad had foretold, those words constantly remained in her mind.

IV: *The Three-Night Vow of Savitri and with the Permission of the Parents-in-Law her Going to the Forest along with Satyavan.*

Markandeya said

- 1 O Yudhishtira, with the rolling of several lunar fortnights as the time was passing, the fated day on which Satyavan was to die was also approaching soon
2. Savitri was counting down the day with each lost day; what Narad had foretold about the impending doom, those words were ever fixed in her heart
- 3 The virtuous and noble lady, now much worried, when she saw that only four days were left, decided to undertake the three-night vow of standing at one single place throughout
- 4 The King, when he heard of this difficult vow, was very much distressed, he got up and spoke kind and conciliative words to Savitri

Dyumatsena said

5. O Princess, what thou hast taken upon thyself is very hard and severe; to remain standing for three days like this is extremely difficult to accomplish.

Savitri said:

- 6 Have no apprehension, Sir, I shall be able to carry the vow without blame; only a firm resolve makes it go through successfully and I have initiated it with that resolve.

Dyumatsena said:

7. How can it be proper for me to tell you at all to break the vow? The best a person in my position can wish for you is that you be able to take it to the full end

Markandeya said.

8. Saying so, the great-minded Dyumatsena retired and Savitri, standing erect on a fixed spot, appeared to be as though she was a straight stick or a staff
9. O Yudhishtira, 'Tomorrow the husband is to die'—it was with this thought, and filled with an intense grief, Savitri remained standing even as the last night of the vow was about to be over.
10. Next day, knowing that it had arrived, well before the sunrise she completed the morning ablutions and lit a bright fire and made to it sacrificial offerings.
11. Then she gave her respects and obeisances to all the elderly sages and to the in-laws and, folding her hands reverentially, stood in front of them.
12. All those sages in the forest, grown in austerity, blessed Savitri wishing her auspicious things and a life without widowhood
13. Entering into the Yoga of Meditation and saying to herself 'Be it just so!', she in her heart of hearts repeated the benediction-words of the sages
14. Knowing that particular time and that moment as foretold by Narad to be arriving, the Princess was filled with great grief in that thought.
15. O Yudhishtira, finding thus the Princess seated lonely and quiet, the father-in-law and the mother-in-law spoke with loving tenderness to her.

The father-in-law said:

16. You have, following the strictest rules of observance, completed the vow; it is time now that you should take food. But do what is befitting in the matter

Savitri said

17. It is only when the sun has departed, and my desire is fulfilled, that I shall eat; this is my heart's resolve and I shall go by it

Markandeya said.

18. While Savitri was conversing thus about food, Satyavan, taking his axe on his shoulder, was leaving for the forest

19. Savitri, approaching her husband, told him that he would not go alone and that she would accompany him, she would not venture to leave him unattended.

Satyavan said:

20. O Sweet and Beautiful, never have you been to the forest earlier and the paths there are rough and wounding, besides, you have become feeble with your vow and fast, then how can you walk when so weak?

Savitri said:

21. Neither languid nor exhausted do I feel due to this vow and the fasting; but full of eagerness because I am to accompany you; refuse me not this request of mine

Satyavan said:

22. If you are so desirous to come along with me, I shall do what is pleasing to you; but that I be not blamed for this, obtain the permission from the venerables.

Markandeya said.

23. Then Savitri, the observer of the difficult vow, went to her in-laws and with due respect requested them this way: Presently, my husband is leaving for the great forest to gather fruits

24. A desire impels me to go also with him, if by the father-in-law I shall be permitted to do so; I cannot stand, even for a moment, separation from him any more.

25. Your son is going to the forest to collect fruits and flowers and sacrificial wood for the sacred fire, as are needed by his respectable Teachers. So it behoves me not to stop him from this; had it been for something else, I would not have allowed him to go to the forest.

26. Besides, it is almost for a year that I did not step out of the ashram-premises; but now a curiosity has arisen in me to see the forest, full of trees and flowers

Dyumatsena said:

27. Ever since Savitri's father left her here as my daughter-in-law, never has she made any request to me for anything, I do not recollect her having done so any time

28. And therefore let my son's wife have what she is longing for, but, O my dear daughter, be vigilant and careful while following the way with Satyavan.

Markandeya said

29. Obtaining thus the permission from both the in-laws, the triumphant lady went with her husband, but while she appeared to be smiling and happy, her heart was afflicted all along

30. She saw, large-eyed as she was, different forests varied in aspects and beautiful everywhere, with flocks of joyous peacocks

31. Showing the sacred rivers carrying waters, and the tall mountains, and trees laden with flowers, Satyavan would speak to Savitri in words that were honey-sweet

32. Yet, with a steadfast look, she kept a close vigil on all the movements of her husband, remembering well the words of the heavenly Sage, she knew for certain the death of her husband with the arrival of Time

33. She, walking with a slow and ponderous gait, had her heart as if divided into two, one following her husband and the other awaiting the fatal moment.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1993)

Assessment of Copernicus's Work (Contd.)

LET us now turn to the qualitative aspect of the Copernican proposal

Here we must immediately recognise that which makes Copernicus so distinct an astronomer from the rest. He had a special insight which enabled him to “distinguish between the mere capacity of a theory to generate accurate numbers, and its further ability to provide an intelligible foundation for comprehending the phenomena studied”. As a consequence, the study of the “heavens” acquired, in his hands a sound and scientific basis; theory and reality complemented each other with a conviction as never before. True, Aristarchus the mid-third century BC Greek astronomer and philosopher had considered the possibility of a sun-centered universe, but his was more a *mystical vision* and had no scientific grounds on which he could dislodge the well-developed geocentric notions of the time. Working out a complete and professional system in the midst of a helpless situation is what Copernicus did; in it indeed lies the genius's lasting contribution.

A number of parallels to Aristarchus-Copernicus may be found in the history of science, and here we may illustrate two of them. While studying the nature of chemical reactions Dalton suggested his atomic hypothesis in 1808; this had thus emerged on the basis of scientific observations, following a step-by-step procedure, and it left no room for any other possibility; on the other hand, the earlier ideas of Democritus were only of the nature of an intellectual speculation. In the case of corpuscular theories of light we find that Einstein was not exactly the first to propose it; but it was with his work that the “photon” acquired a scientific reality; Newton's suggestion remained only a competitive theory and had to be abandoned in favour of the wave theory. What we see in these parallels is that Aristarchus, Democritus or Newton is not an initiator of the present-day analogous theory, the credit of tossing off an idea or a concept is not sufficient to claim that priority. Only when these concepts get quantitatively substantiated by observation do they become scientific and only at that point can the credit really be attributed to the author concerned. Copernicus deserves that credit in the developments of planetary study

But more important than this claim is his contribution to what constitutes the “enormous change” A quick summary will help. We have already seen that Copernicus lived in an era of renaissance and the blossoming of life when the authoritativeness of the Church was being questioned in every field. We saw that here was a versatile genius who gave us a thorough and complete professional

astronomy; his intellectual capacities were of the highest order and, by interacting with the various sections of society, he had acquired a perceptive knowledge of the age he was living in. His heliocentric model did account wonderfully for all the observations and take care of the shortcomings, inaccuracies and errors of the Ptolemaic system. His was a much simpler and more aesthetic system which broke off from tradition and set in motion a major revolution that gave to science a new road to follow in the coming centuries.

But the most relevant and important consideration in any study should be the underlying attitude with which the presentation of a work like *De Revolutionibus* is carried out. Here we may recall his own words “.. I think that those [studies] should be embraced and pursued with the greatest zeal which have to do with things that are *very beautiful and worthy of knowledge*” [Italics our own.] From such statements we can at once see that Copernicus gave his presentation a non-professional turn to take care of other aspects. He set out first to build a readership, to prepare and influence the minds of the people; only then did he venture into the professional details of his proposal. This approach was essential, for the Churchian authorities were neither alive nor liberal to the blossoming spirit of the age; anything that countered the scriptural ideas in the minutest order was considered heretic. Bronowski is right in saying that heliocentrism “was not a proposal to be made lightly in an age of religious upheaval”. It is thus clear that if Copernicus wished his proposal to stand a fair chance of acceptance, without being suppressed at the moment of its publication, he had to take particular care of these “other aspects”.

We all know, and know it well, that the Churchian authorities lay deep engrooved in nothing but scriptural formulations. It is thus quite understandable that Copernicus should have taken care of this milieu while making his presentation of the new theory. His long prefacing is not only an attempt to prepare the mind for accepting such radical proposals, that was of course the style of the day and he fully adopted it as well as exploited it to his advantage. Arguments such as *very beautiful and worthy of knowledge* can apparently be considered as apologetic in nature and a defence against the anticipated attacks. But taking our argument as part of an in-depth evaluation we would like to state that his feelings in this regard were very genuine indeed. He was a neo-Pythagorean and neo-Platonist in essence, had studied a wide range of subjects, had an appreciation for art and had developed a deep sense of aestheticity. All this and more put together very well suggest that the statement *very beautiful and worthy of knowledge* was truly a sincere expression coming from the inmost parts of his being. In fact we should proceed to assess him more on the basis of such a premise.

Let us pursue further our study of the enormous change. To put it in a nutshell, though the age was one of re-birth and discoveries, religious writings ruled with supreme authority. That is, anything which countered the godly

notions of the scriptures—however convincing a sensorial and/or mathematical proof it was supported with—was just not acceptable. In such a situation the Church believed that the senses had betrayed the proposer and that he was possessed by the devil. But then science had reached a stage where certain observed phenomena could no longer be carried in the currents of theology. Science needed freedom and for this it had to battle against the “religious obscurantism”.

Science, after a hard-fought battle, forged ahead to assert empiricism as its sole ruling authority. However, yet another opposition had to be encountered on its way; this was the battle against the insiders themselves, *viz.*, the highly qualified professionals. And so Newton had to defend his proposal of the universal Law of Gravity by saying about the mode in which gravity would be transmitted across space: “I frame no hypotheses.” An opposition from within the scientific institution itself at first does seem strange; but as our study shall later on reveal these opposers were right in questioning Newton and Newton did enormous credit to science by not returning an offensive defence to his notions of Gravity.

More than two centuries after this had happened did science finally acquire that freedom to place experiment as the supreme authority in the material world; only now could it boast of the power of objectivity by means of the empirico-rational approach. *En passant* we should nonetheless mention that in the present day developments of science the question of experiment itself acquires a new connotation which will have to be looked into with greater care.

Let us emphasise all the same, that the change in approach to presenting a new idea, from the days of Copernicus to modern times, is enormous. This is best illustrated in the suggestion of matter-waves by Louis de Broglie. When de Broglie presented his mind-boggling idea he made no prefatory comments as was done by Copernicus, in an attempt to build a readership or lobby.

The openness and maturity of the scientific community is further reflected in the fact that it did not oppose such a revolutionary idea as had happened at the time of Newton. Rather, Paul Langevin, de Broglie’s teacher and guide, said: “His [de Broglie’s] ideas, of course, are nonsensical but eminent scientists of the day clearly indicate the following: however nonsensical or absurd an idea may seem on its face, it cannot be discarded offhand, and it must be viewed without any preconceived notions.” It is clear that from the time of Copernicus to the quantum-era, science has undergone an “enormous change”.

Indeed, we have come a long way in the making of modern science or, shall we say modern man. But let us go through these developments a little more carefully to see the future possibilities.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1993)

DURING the years of his stay in Baroda, Sri Aurobindo found the British system of Education disgusting “He felt that it tended to dull and impoverish and tie up the naturally quick and brilliant and supple Indian intelligence, to teach it bad intellectual habits and spoil by narrow information and mechanical instruction its originality and productivity”¹

Despite the glaring defects of the British system the masterly commentary in the *Sources of Indian Tradition* sums it up thus: “The introduction of the English system of education had two main results. On the one hand it greatly accelerated the diffusion of Western ideas and the Western outlook on life among Indian intellectuals. On the other hand, both the rapid penetration of foreign ways and attitudes, and the publication of the Hindu classics in English translation stimulated movements defending Hinduism or demanding greater political opportunities for Indian movements whose leaders often wrote, spoke and thought in English. English education produced another drastic change in the Indian environment. By providing a common language and a common cultural background for men in all parts of India previously separated by linguistic, regional and cultural differences, it offered Indians the opportunity of creating a common, modern culture of their own. It was only a question of time until these new conditions of all-India unity gave birth to political self-consciousness and to Indian Nationalism itself”²

There is no doubt that the above advantages India continued to derive. But it had some bad effects at the same time. The avowed aim of Macaulay was to produce a class of “interpreters”, of babus who were to assist the British in the task of governing the vast Indian masses. But it is interesting to note that the curricula were excessively formalistic, void of any integral relationship with the social and economic life of India, extremely far removed from the spiritual and cultural milieu of India. This caused a growing dissatisfaction and opposition among the self-conscious section of the Indian Intelligentsia, particularly in Bengal.

The partition of Bengal in 1905 marked an immense upsurge of anti-British feeling and agitation throughout the province. So the cry of ‘Boycott and Swadeshi’ spread like wild fire in the country.

A report from Mr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar runs: “The adventure of starting the National College at Calcutta and other schools elsewhere evoked considerable enthusiasm at first, and the movement seemed to spread. The Risley Circular and the attempt to insulate Government and aided educational institutions from the breath of freedom and the breezes of Nationalism would, it was hoped, give a further fillip to national education. When Sir Bampfylde Fuller, as

Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal, had tried to disaffiliate the Serajgunge schools for the crime of their teachers and pupils taking part in politics, Lord Minto's Government had disallowed the move and driven the Lieutenant-Governor to resign in a huff and get back to England. But with the Risley Circular, 'the same Government and the same Lord Minto' began 'out-Fullering Fuller' and flourishing the Damocles' Sword of disaffiliation over all schools and colleges, and not only over the two Serajgunge schools. On 28 May, 1907, Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Bande Mataram* that what the Government seemed to object to was not mechanical learning but dynamic practice. 'They do not care very much if certain academical ideas of liberalism or Nationalism are imparted to the young by their teachers, but they desire to stop the active habit of patriotism in the young, for they know well that a mere intellectual habit untranslated into action is of no value in after life. The Japanese when they teach Bushido to their boys do not rest content with lectures or a moral catechism, they make them practise Bushido and govern every thought and action of their life by the Bushido Ideal. This is the only way of inculcating a quality into a nation, by instilling it practically into the minds of its youth at school and college until it becomes an ingrained, inherent, inherited national quality' ”¹

Sri Aurobindo as a keen observer immediately felt the need of educational boycott. He saw that it was an essential feature of the integrated structure of boycott and he envisaged it as an important weapon in the struggle for national liberation. He realised that this aspect of boycott would affect and enthuse the student community.

Writing on the doctrine of passive resistance, Sri Aurobindo refers to educational boycott and says "We are dissatisfied also with the conditions under which education is imparted in this country, its calculated poverty and insufficiency, its anti-national character, its subordination to the Government and the use made of that subordination for the discouragement of patriotism and the inculcation of loyalty. Accordingly we refuse to send our boys to Government schools or to schools aided and controlled by the Government; if this educational boycott is general and well-organised, the educational administration of the country will be rendered impossible and the control of its youthful minds pass out of the hands of the foreigner" ”²

On 7 June, again Sri Aurobindo said that "general defiance of the Circular will be unworkable." He wrote: "What India needs especially at this moment is the aggressive virtues, the spirit of soaring idealism, bold creation, fearless resistance, courageous attack, of the passive tamasic spirit of inertia we have already too much. We would apply to the present situation the vigorous motto of Danton, that what we need, what we should learn above all things is to dare and again to dare and still to dare." ”³

In his position as the first Principal of the Bengal National College he was closely connected with the movement of National Education. He wrote in the

issue of 8 July 1907 in the *Bande Mataram* "It extends to a limited few and fails to inspire even them with any divine wonderment, the curiosity to know or the passion to leave the world better than they have found it by a single act or thought. Imparted with the predetermined purpose of reconciling the mind of its recipient with the order of things as they are, it has necessarily culminated in the production of a monstrous species whose object in acquiring knowledge cannot reach beyond the vision of mere luxurious animal life, who have been content with merely thinking of and describing the incident of their political slavery in the language of freedom learned from the noble literature of England, and then imagining themselves free; who have been content with the mere explanations their text-books give of their country's economic condition, content furthermore with their life of mere external conformity to ancient customs which they have ceased to have faith in, with the daily lies of their life, with the thousand and one defects, evils and insincerities of the disorganised society around them which they have not the moral force to reorganise"⁶

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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A TREASURE OF HONEY IN THE COMBS OF GOD*

A REVIEW-ARTICLE

A STARTLINGLY unique combination: a Bengali Cantabridgian classics scholar turned revolutionary who suddenly leaves the capital of the British Indian Empire to settle far south in French Pondicherry as the prophesied *Uttar Yogi*; and a French artist in union with the Divine since childhood who travels all the way to Pondicherry and recognizes in him the spiritual guide of her dreams whom she spontaneously knew as “Krishna” These are the Avatars of the Supramental, ushering in the path of integral yoga for transforming the earth-consciousness, the very cells of the body, into the golden noon-light of the future

Dilip Kumar Roy had daringly named his book *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, recounting how the Divine as it were grabbed him by the short hairs, put him on the road of spiritual realization and firmly kept him on it despite his high-spirited jibbing That flew in the face of Indian tradition of the disciple searching high and low for his chosen guru In keeping with it, Shyam Kumari has named her three-volume work *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother*, recounting the true life experiences of eighty-seven seekers—representing a cross-section of India and many foreigners—who found their way to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. However, reading through these tastefully produced 257-page volumes with a lovely flower on each cover the sense seeps in, in each case, of the hound of heaven relentlessly pursuing its chosen quarry till the human soul realizes its self-fulfilment in blissful surrender In each case, indeed, it is Sri Aurobindo and The Mother who came to the seeker!

To read these three volumes is to be surprised by joy. The experience is profoundly moving, a sense of being lifted up into an ambience of ineffable beauty and light, evoking thoughts that lie too deep for tears

Volume 1 contains the narratives of 29 seekers, beginning with the story of Dyuman, “the luminous one” which is particularly valuable for little did one expect that within a short while of publication of this account we would lose this radiant soul Dyuman’s mission in life was to serve The Mother and Sri Aurobindo It is a task he performed unquestioningly with single-minded devotion excluding all else from his consciousness The revelations provided of the personal sacrifices The Mother made are a startling eye-opener to the devotion of the Avatar to the Divine’s work.

If Dyuman is service incarnate, Laljibhai represents the Divine’s yoga in the material world It is amazing how from distant Africa, with no intention of settling in India, Laljibhai came to establish a successful sugar factory in

* *How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother* by Shyam Kumari, vols 1-3, published by the author, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, pp 257, each Rs 60 Available with the author

Pondicherry. The account of the management of occult forces by The Mother to prevent the breakdown of the factory machinery provides a fascinating insight into the unseen world which, unknown to us, "beats at our own clay-shuttered doors"

Tarachand Barjatya's story brims over with his unwavering faith in The Mother who named him "Dvija" (Twice-born). The humility and the purity of motive seen in this film-maker having the largest film distribution network in the country, persisting unwaveringly through successive failures at the box-office through the miraculous unprecedented success of *Maine pyar kiya*, is a lesson in itself. The account is particularly fascinating because of the information provided about the involvement of The Mother in minute details of production of his first runaway hit *Dostu*. He is yet another devoted soul to have departed this year.

Volume 2 gives us the account of Pranab, "The Mother's shadow", providing intimate glimpses of small matters of daily life and dealings, the human side of The Mother. That of the Frenchman Philippe Barbier Saint-Hilaire (renamed "Pavitra", the Pure) presents an astonishing picture of a widely varied life spent initially fighting in the trenches of the First World War, then in quest of spiritual liberation practising Shintoism in Japan, Lamaism in China and Mongolia, finally finding fulfilment as the scientist-*sadhak* setting up laboratories in the Ashram while doing *sadhana*! It is his death which, however, is the most unusual part of the account.

Volume 3 begins with the story of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Secretary of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, whom Shyam Kumari knew as "Sri Aurobindo's *manas putra*", fascinating for the glimpses it affords of his past lives as Yuyutsu of the Mahabharata, as the French poets Ronsard and André Chenier, as Le Notre, gardener of "the Sun King", as Elizabeth I's secretary Walsingham, his daring adventures as a revolutionary, and the metamorphosis into a *sadhak* beyond compare of the yoga of the Supermind. One of the most revealing statements in the narrative is his comment that the present birth was intended to develop in his soul, whose path had so long been that of knowledge, the element of Ananda and love which Shyam Kumari exemplifies sensitively in vignettes of his dealings with children and his flashes of humour.

The true *rasa* of the volumes, however, does not lie just in these high-profile accounts. The nectar is secreted by the vast majority of the stories of seekers who have insisted on remaining anonymous. The very success of Shyam Kumari's effort lies in the fact that accounts of people referred to only by fictitious single initials are so deeply moving, engrossing and inspiring. The range itself is stunning. There is the gripping story of a Soviet diplomat inexplicably turning towards Pondicherry from far-off Geneva late in the 1980s, well after Sri Aurobindo and The Mother had left their bodies. There is the Bangladesh freedom fighter dying of thirst with his comrades in a bunker, praying to Durga for succour with his last breath, seeing a lady in a vision at whose touch all

hunger and thirst disappears—not only his own but of his 22 comrades-in-arms—and who recognizes her in the photograph of The Mother he sees by chance in Siliguri. There is the agnostic engineer who casually opens *The Synthesis of Yoga* and finds his life transformed by the words on a page. His wife—no devotee—recognizes in Sri Aurobindo the person who appeared before her five years earlier, and in the Ashram playground sees, instead of The Mother, Sri Krishna. There is the Swiss student wandering in search of a system of integral education whose friend insists on going to India and unaccountably drops out after they meet “by chance” in Teheran a party from Sri Aurobindo Ashram and he decides to go to Pondicherry—He does not wish to do *sadhana* but the Divine will not let him go! There is the atheist who is strangely attracted by a photograph of The Mother among those of many spiritual leaders and receives the answers to the question that torments him in the book *The Supreme Discovery* which falls open “by chance” at a particular page. There is the medical student in London frustrated with her studies who “chances upon” a course on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. There is the army officer who arrives “by chance” on Sri Aurobindo’s birthday and has the darshan of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother without having asked for it, who had planned to start religion after the age of 45 but is forced much earlier to turn to the *The Life Divine* and the *Gita* in three-and-a-half years of solitary imprisonment (with inimitable *sang froid* he describes it as “The Mother decided to get tough with me”!) A five-year-old boy hits a Chief Minister with a stone and that leads to his admission to the Ashram school. A student picks up his teacher’s purse lying open with Sri Aurobindo’s picture in it and is magnetically attracted to him. A vituperative newspaper article about the Ashram impels a Gujarati to visit Pondicherry and turn devotee. A French reporter lands up in Saigon, is attracted to a library where he finds The Mother’s *Prayers and Meditations* and leaves immediately for Pondicherry. Later he finds that this book had been taken from Pondicherry to that library by a professor! A fire-brand Communist finds his problem of reconciling his political creed with his wife’s faith in divinity vanishing after meeting The Mother. As Shyam Kumari puts it so inimitably: “It was all over in five minutes” (vol. 3)

Indeed, these life-stories bring home, over and over again, the realization that on the spiritual path there is nothing that happens “by chance”, that there are no meaningless meanderings. The recurring refrain of “the unseen hand” is a golden thread running through this necklace of eighty-seven pearls-beyond-price shimmering with the ambient glow of the divine touch.

Some of the most stirring moments concern children. A six-year-old disputes his father describing Sri Aurobindo as a great yogi and exclaims that there are only two Gods: Sri Aurobindo and Krishna and at the age of ten writes to join the Ashram. A five-year-old girl used to climbing into Sri Aurobindo’s lap shouts at The Mother, “You Europeans! How can you forbid me to climb in

Aurobindo's lap?", then falls asleep in her arms. A six-year-old boy shocks everyone by vigorously shaking The Mother's hand and when his parents point out she is too delicate retorts that she plays with the world like a football and only the stupid think she is weak. When his four elder brothers are not admitted, this little boy writes direct to The Mother to accept them and it is done. This remarkable child consoles his mother who is weeping for her dead grandmother, that one does not weep for a worn-out pencil or worn-out cloth, so why weep at death? A one-and-a-half-year old boy refuses to learn from a tutor because he knows his school is elsewhere and describes it without ever having been to Pondicherry and before the school had been located in the building he describes. A three-year-old boy, on his first visit to The Mother, tells her in Bengali that he wants to study in her school. A five-year-old European girl is thrilled on hearing the word "India" and wants to live in "a convent" there—a desire she ultimately achieves in the Ashram. A Swiss sadhak realises that he was more evolved at the age of five than at 18, and provides an engrossing description of the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* force in him ("Experiences in Yoga" vol. 3)

A remarkable feature of the stories—remarkable all the more because it is so unobtrusive—is the assertion of woman's independence and her right to lead her life according to her own lights. In a number of accounts we find women defying family ties and braving even their husbands' anger to affirm their right to work out their salvation in the path of their choice.

Side by side with this are thrilling accounts of miraculous preservation from impending rape, hijacking, murder, of being unhurt though trapped under a taxi, or caught in a snowstorm en route to Amarnath out of season, or in serious medical emergencies. Remarkable cures are wrought by the Blessings Packets and the protection and guidance of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are shown as still enveloping the sincere seeker long after they have left their physical bodies. Stephen Venables carried one Blessings Packet up to Mount Everest on his daring climb forcing a new route across the South Col in May 1988 and left it on the summit.

Some of the stories are particularly memorable because of the powerful mystic visions they contain. In "Homecoming" (vol. 2) there is the woman who dreams of a mother on a huge white horse in her bedroom saying, "I have come to take your rubbish away", a statement that remains an enigma till, years later, in London she hears an Indian discoursing on The Mother removing attachments—and it makes complete sense. She had a number of dream experiences from her childhood onwards though she was not aware of Pondicherry and lived in London, and each dream had deep significance as she discovered later. Her description of the dream-symbols is so vivid that the reader feels as if able to anticipate what will take place in the narrator's life in future. A non-devotee freedom fighter has a vision of The Mother in which her figure stretches up to the sky, lighting up the whole countryside with celestial effulgence, is assured by her

of India's independence after four years and so it happens. Another non-devotee sees a man working a persian wheel and a European lady who bathes him in indescribable bliss atop two mountains on opposite sides, and recognizes them to be Sri Aurobindo and The Mother from photographs years later. There are also thrilling accounts of revelations of the occult worlds of poetry, of music ("Blossoming" vol. 3) Particularly striking are the spiritual visions seen during the stay at Tapogiri (vol 3) which give a sense of piercing through a huge foreboding mystery

The stories offer novel and enriching insights. Thus, the method which Sri Aurobindo taught Nolini Kanta Gupta (vol 3) for the study of a new language was remarkable: since he was an adult he should not start it with primary readers or children's books but straight off with one of the standard works in that language. This is indeed a surprising revelation because ordinarily when a person starts a new language it is from the alphabets. This novel method enabled Nolini Kanta Gupta to pick up new languages swiftly and led him to plumb their very core with little difficulty

The manner in which the Divine comes to help a devotee even in small matters is seen in the story of Chandradeep (vol 3). Invited to be a chief guest at a Sri Aurobindo Centre he felt very nervous and was trembling, not knowing what to do, when he had the powerful experience of sitting inside a room in his heart and looking through a window at the scene outside, and without any effort his problem was solved. The beauty of surrender is brought home vividly in the deeply moving description of a lady with strict Arya Samaj upbringing finally revelling in giving herself to The Mother in *pranam* ("Indomitable" vol. 1). There is the tantra-initiated seeker who picks up *The Life Divine* with a prayer, finds in it what he has been seeking all along and has no difficulty in comprehending a book which a professor of philosophy returned to the bookshop finding it incomprehensible ("Waiting for her boat" vol. 3).

However, the "Soviet Odyssey" (vol 3) is written in too rambling a manner, describing too many events not related to the theme of the book and does not come to any particular point of how the diplomat came to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. It mainly shows his contact with influential diplomats and the reader is not really convinced that Sri Aurobindo and The Mother guided him to start his U.N.D.Y

Again, in "Sri Aurobindo is pleased with you" (vol 2) the conduct of the householder in abandoning wife and six children strikes one as irresponsible but it is counter-balanced by the remarkable persistence of his 13-year-old son in the face of the family's opposition to his going to Pondicherry. This episode makes very exciting and inspiring reading.

"The Missioned One" (vol. 2), the story of Ambapremi, is truly remarkable as it shows how a penniless youth with no future before him travelled all over the world and collected enough funds to build Sri Aurobindo Nivas at Baroda. This

can only be a proof of the Divine hand guiding and protecting him throughout his life so that his mission could be achieved "The Quest was over" and "Towards Tapogiri" in vol. 3 recount similar stirring experiences of how an unseen force guided seekers to Pondicherry

In "A Soul's Journey" (vol 3) Yogananda's journey from Bangladesh to Pondicherry is recounted in an utterly fascinating manner as one feels that he is about to go back and is at the end of his tether when his problems start getting solved miraculously The letters to him by Sri Aurobindo deeply impress one with their simplicity yet profundity.

The varied stories of human beings from different walks of life, different countries, with different states of consciousness and of how they came to the Ashram makes engrossing reading as one lives through their experiences and their trials and afflictions It is remarkable how despite so many obstacles not one of them gave up hope and returned to their previous lives In the end they all made it and lived happily with no regrets under the divine protection, having been successful in their quest for the meaning of existence

Also as we read through these episodes we find that this path of yoga is after all not so severe as one does not give up everything one is familiar with and does not have to live in a cave, forest or the Himalayas or perform severe physical penance to follow the spiritual path as laid down by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother That is what captivates the ordinary reader

Shyam Kumari's collection is rewarding also because of the light it throws on the sort of idea prevalent in the past regarding Sri Aurobindo. The popular belief appears to have turned him into a cave-dwelling ascetic emerging from its recesses only rarely to give "darshan". It was also believed that those going to Pondicherry invariably renounced the world and never returned. We get to know the interesting fact that Sri Aurobindo read P.G. Woodhouse

One's respect for Shyam Kumari's integrity as compiler-editor is enhanced when we notice that she has retained narratives stating how the first "darshan" of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother left certain persons unmoved and even disappointed. This renders all the more credible and thrilling the complete reversal of the situation that follows through either a visionary experience or the "chance" reading of a line of their writings She does not leave out, either, descriptions of the tortuous "dark night of the soul" in which the aspirant struggles in agony, sometimes shrouded even in the terrifying fumes of insanity, through which faith and divine grace pull him through. One cannot help remembering Francis Thomson's

"But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry;—and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched 'twixt Heaven and Charing Cross."

On reading through these three volumes the feeling one gets is perhaps best expressed in the pregnant words of the same poet:

“The angels keep their ancient places,
Turn but a stone and start a wing—
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing.”

These eighty-seven narratives are, indeed, a veritable “treasure of honey in the combs of God” for any reader interested in matters spiritual who would, with Henry Vaughan, “feel through all this fleshly dress/Bright shoots of everlastingness” and would seek to learn how a myriad paths do exist, all leading to the same goal: the Divine.

PRADIP & NANDITA BHATTACHARYA

MAN

O EVOLUTION'S palimpsest!
The dust, the leafy life and the brute
The lower passions and the higher thought
Overlap, yet can be read;
Other tongues from other worlds
Have entered this of flesh and bone,
Tongues of the Devil and of God.

The Sanskrit of the soul, though dim,
Overlapping all stays to the end;
Though boldly written in gaudy hues,
Time will erase all common scripts.

K.B. SITARAMAYYA

UNFORGETTABLE

(Continued from the issue of 21 February 1993)

10. Pundit Mashay

ON one afternoon Bimal and his class-mates, sitting in the green grassy school-compound, were discussing the result of their Test Examination. At that time a peon came and informed him, "Bimalbabu, the Headmaster wants to see you." Bimal entered the Headmaster's office hesitatingly, where other teachers were also present. The Headmaster said, "Bimal, the result of your Test Examination has been bad I am afraid you won't be able to pass the Matric Examination." Bimal failed to make out the implication. The Headmaster continued, "You have stood third and your total marks are respectively seven and five less than those of the first and the second boys." Bimal looked at him questioningly. The Headmaster added, "Still you may fail in the Final Examination."

Now it dawned on Bimal that he had done very badly in the Sanskrit Paper. He scratched his head and fumbled, "Sir, I have done very badly in Sanskrit." "Not only badly, you could have been plucked, you very narrowly got through. Perhaps you know that to fail in one subject is to fail in the whole examination." Bimal could only murmur as an excuse, "What shall I do? I don't like the subject, sir, I don't understand it, nor do I study it." "But this lame excuse won't do, Bimal. It's the question of passing the Matric Examination which relates to the reputation of our school as well."

Puzzled, Bimal gazed vacantly at him. The Headmaster deliberated and seemed to have pity on Bimal. He consoled him, "Never mind, Bimal, let me see if I can do something." He addressed the Sanskrit teacher, "Pundit Mashay, I have a request to make, please take upon yourself the charge of coaching Bimal in Sanskrit for two hours a week. Will you?" Pundit Mashay thought for a while and then nodded in assent. The Headmaster concluded, "Bimal, you can go now and don't forget to fix the day and time with Pundit Mashay."

In fact Bimal was not on good terms with this teacher who used to neglect and ill-treat him and even punish him for nothing. Bimal's only fault was that he was the close friend of a boy who, for some unknown reason, was an eye-sore to Pundit Mashay. Consequently Bimal disliked him and neglected his subject, Sanskrit, without thinking of the ultimate outcome. Now on being advised by the Headmaster he brushed aside his former attitude and approached the teacher submissively. It was arranged that he should go to Pundit Mashay's house every Sunday and Thursday at 9 00 A.M.

Now for Bimal to go to Pundit Mashay's place meant a two-mile walk through the fields with mud at places. Still he was punctual and reached there on the first Sunday but had to come back with a heavy heart as the teacher was

absent from home. On the next Thursday also he went at the right time. But the teacher's daughter said, "Father has gone out just now." He was disappointed on the next two days also. On the fifth day, however, the servant disclosed the secret, "Babu, why do you come on these two days? Don't you know that on these two days the master goes to the temple to worship?"

It was a bolt from the blue to Bimal. He got terribly annoyed and decided not to go to him any more. Rather he would report the matter to the Headmaster. But then self-respect stood in the way and prevented him from doing that. He would depend on his personal effort and fate, he thought.

In the final Examination Bimal seemed to have done even worse in Sanskrit than he had done in the Test. But he accepted the situation calmly and prepared himself to face any consequence whatsoever. Days passed by without any notable event.

One day suddenly he was informed that the results of the Matriculation Examination had been hung on the school-noticeboard. He headed towards the school reluctantly for fear of being disappointed. Just as he neared the big pond beside the school he found Pundit Mashay on his way back home. He tried to evade him but could not. The teacher saw him and called, "Bimal, listen for a moment, I knew that you would come out successful. So what would be the good of walking two plus two, four miles, twice a week, along the muddy way?"

Bimal's heart heaved in sudden joy but he could never shake off from his mind the doubt about Pundit Mashay's intention. Had he actually known that he would pass or had he wanted him to fail?

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11. Weeping

Bimal respected and loved and adored his mother. But he had no faith in those whom his mother loved, worshipped and adored. She spent most of her time in decorating and worshipping pictures and images of gods and goddesses. Her attitude and action appeared to Bimal as something playful and meaningless. At times he would even criticise and cut jokes with her about her preoccupation. She in turn would feign anger and rebuke him, "You are a rogue, an agnostic; you don't have even an iota of faith within you." "Why, mother, don't I respect, love and adore you?" She was taken aback and replied in a subdued voice, "Yes, you do. But I don't mean that, I mean faith and devotion towards God."

His father was of a different nature. He would not bother about any ceremonial worship. But every morning and evening he would sit quietly for about an hour in the solitary attic and meditate. One day after the evening meditation he said to Bimal, "Bimal, tomorrow morning I have got to go out for the whole day, please don't loiter about, keep up with your studies and, if

possible, look after the work of the servant ”

When he met his mother, Bimal asked, “Mother, tomorrow is Sunday, a holiday, still father will go out Do you know where he will go for the whole day?” “Yes, I know, he will go to Kumudbabu’s house in the town ” “But why?” “To see his Gurudev, who has come there and to know if we two can take Mantra-diksha (initiation) from him.” “Oh, that is the case? Well, have the two of you ever seen his Gurudev before?” “No, we have only heard his name and seen his photograph. Would you like to see the photo? Wait, let me bring it ”

Looking at the photo Bimal got overwhelmed He felt a magnetic attraction towards the man. Finding no rational explanation of it he directly went to his father and implored, “Father, tomorrow I shall also go with you.” His father gazed mutely at him for a while and then nodded his head. “Very well ”

A sharply flowing canal divided the small subdivisional town At a particular place on its bank a few people assembled and were looking intently towards the water At that time Bimal with his father appeared there He thought, “What are they observing? Are they after catching fishes? But where is the fishing-tackle?” He noticed that instead of it some onlookers held in their hands silken dhotis and chaddars, kosha-kushi (copper vessels for worship), til seeds, tulsı leaves, flowers, etc Suddenly he got startled to see an upsurge of bubbles in the water and as they died down, tufts of long black hair floated and swayed with the current. Finally a head emerged, the owner of which was none else than the man Bimal had seen in the photo Slowly a wonderful statue-like figure stepped up ashore, a figure carved out of granite by an expert sculptor, as it were His complexion was shiny ebony and his age perhaps not more than forty

His appearance evoked such a feeling in Bimal that he felt like weeping It was as if deep within him a flood-gate of tears had opened He checked its flow with the utmost effort

Wet and half-clad, Gurudev sat down on the bank of the canal The devotees placed before him the items of Tarpana (Sacrament) and he set to offer them to the deities or manes with chanting of Sanskrit hymns. The opening syllable ‘OM’ was pronounced with such a gravity and intonation that Bimal could no longer check the flow of tears from his eyes The sublime sound and the pure spirit of the hymns created a most unearthly atmosphere around Its heavenly impact shattered Bimal’s long-standing aversion towards the Sanskrit language The hair of his body stood on end and he thought, “Oh, it’s simply divine! What a fool I was to neglect it for years together!” His flow of tears increased doubly at the thought.

12. Karma Yoga

The Tarpana (offering to the deities or manes) being over, Gurudev stood up and changed his wet clothes and put on a silken dhoti and chaddar offered to him. Then Kumudbabu led him towards his house and the devotees followed them amongst whom Bimal with tears in his eyes was the youngest.

As the Guru reached the doorway a veiled lady appeared and placed at his feet her long-ailing incurable son. Instantly he burst into terrible anger and flung at Kumudbabu random rebukes. Frightened, the lady took to her heels with her child. But the Guru's scolding went on unabated and Kumudbabu endured mutely the onrush of angry words.

In fact the devotees were to blame, the lady was innocent as she was tempted to act on hearing stories about the supernatural healing power of the Guru spread by them. It was said that once he had brought back to life the only child of a widow, declared dead, by the mere touch of his toes.

However, while pouring out words of rebuke he asked for new clothes and changed those he had worn which were supposed to be polluted. He then entered a room meant for him and seated himself on a bedstead and the devotees assembled on the floor in front. He went on uttering angry words nonstop. As his eyes fell suddenly on Bimal with tears in his eyes he stopped and asked him in a tender voice, "What's the matter with you? Why do you weep? I have not scolded you!"

Bimal himself was unaware of the reason why tears welled up from within him. So what reply could he give? He remained silent. The Guru called him cordially, "Come nearer." As he went closer the Guru pressed the sole of his right foot on the solar plexus of Bimal and rubbed on smoothly. Gradually his flow of tears diminished. The Guru then showed him his rejected silken clothes and asked, "Go and wash them nicely with a soap from the bathroom." At this a hitherto unfelt energy and enthusiasm possessed him and he collected the clothes and a servant directed him to the bathroom.

After completing the work Bimal came back to find the Guru busy with religious discourse with his devotees. Bimal's presence distracted him. Pointing to the devotees he said, addressing him by his name which by then he had come to know, "Bimal, they will have lunch here. You go, ask and find out where food will be served to them and then sweep the place nicely with a broom."

He went away quickly with renewed vigour and returned after performing the allotted work. Then he noticed for the first time an odd-looking middle-aged man seated just near the Guru's feet. He was startled and wondered who might be this strange person! The Guru studied his thought and replied instantly, "Don't you know him? He is Vishu-goonda, he was once a rogue, a dacoit and a murderer. Now, of course, he is docile like bhakta Hanuman and strong as a robust young man. Will you be able to defeat him in wrestling? No, leave aside

wrestling. Do as I say, do some dips on the floor in front of me. After you, Vishu will also do the same thing I shall count and judge who does the maximum and wins.”

Bimal was reluctant this time to carry out the Guru’s whims, particularly in the presence of so many spectators. The Guru remarked, “I know, you are afraid of a defeat.” It was as if a whip had struck Bimal on his back. He took a deep breath and with firm determination started the task asked for.

Guru set about counting aloud, went on for some time and then stopped. But Bimal did not, he continued doing dips with his utmost strength. The Guru interrupted, “Enough, stop now, you are declared the winner. But that’s not all, Bimal, let’s see who wins this time. Now tell me, have you ever seen God?” Panting, Bimal nodded in the negative. The Guru then questioned Vishu-goonda with a mysterious smile, “Vishu, have you ever seen God?” The devotees were all ears to hear him answer in the negative. But what a wonder! He replied boldly, “Yes, I have seen God.” “Where have you seen Him?” “Why, here,” he pointed at Gurudev himself. Guru observed, “Bimal, this time you are defeated; to the disciples the Guru is God!”

Bimal had entered Kumudbabu’s place with eyes full of tears, he came out from there with a heart full of joy, awe and wonder mingled with a touch of cryptic humour ..

But on his way home abruptly the question cropped up in him, “How was he defeated? He was not at all his disciple nor was the man his Guru. So where was the scope for him to see God in him?”

(To be continued)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD

51. What is Happiness?

It was time for sunrise. A royal guest moved out of the guest house to enjoy the splendour of the countryside in the early morning.

He was surprised to see an old man, shouldering a ploughshare and trudging his way to the field at that hour. A couple of sleepy bullocks plodded behind the old man.

“He! you,” cried the guest calling a halt to the steps of the old man.

The old man went on his way without even throwing a glance at the guest.

The guest ran after him and yelled, “Are you deaf? I told you to stop. I want to ask you a few questions.”

“I have no time to stop here and answer you,” the old man said while moving on.

The guest walked along with the old man, and began the conversation: “How long will you till the land?”

“Till it is dark and I am unable to see.”

“How many acres will you be able to till in 12 hours?”

“Just half an acre but I’ll till it again and again.”

“It must then be your land?”

“No. I till my boss’s land.”

“How much will you be paid after the day’s work?”

“Eight annas.”

Shocked stood the guest, while the old man tethered the bullocks to the plough and pressed them into service. He looked at the old man contemptuously and asked, “Is it enough to make a living?”

“Why not? More than enough. There are people who are unable to earn a single anna. And God graciously gives me eight annas every day. I am quite happy with what God gives me.”

The royal guest looked askance at the old man. He said to himself, “I live in the palace. I have many acres of land to call my own. There are hundreds of servants at my beck and call. I roll in wealth. Yet I am neither happy nor contented.” And so out of curiosity he asked, “How do you manage with just eight annas per day? Will you please tell me the secret behind your happiness?”

“Quite simple. Out of the eight annas I earn, I spend two annas for my family. I return two annas to settle my debt. I lend two annas for interest. And the last two annas are given away as alms.”

Dumb-struck stood the guest. He was unable to believe his ears. “Impossible! Impossible! How could you afford to give alms? And two annas you give for interest? Unbelievable. And yet you say you are happy.”

“Nothing is impossible,” said the old man. “One can be happy with what one has. All that one needs is a contented heart. And now listen to what I say. You’ll understand how I am happy.”

The guest cocked his ears.

The old man continued, “I spend two annas on food for me and my wife. My aged parents are alive. They are not healthy enough to earn for themselves. Since they brought me up providing me with food, clothes and shelter, I am indebted to them. And so I spend two annas on them and thereby clear my debt gradually.”

“Well then! What about lending for interest and giving alms?” asked the curious guest.

“My widowed sister along with her two children live with me. I spend two annas on them. I will never get back what I spend on them. Hence it only amounts to alms. And I have two sons of my own. I spend two annas on them. I am sure they will look after me when I become very old and invalid. Does it not amount to lending for interest?” said the old man gleefully. After a pause he added, “True happiness lies in making others happy.”

The guest praised the old man heartily. He bought the land the old man was tilling from its owner and gifted it to the old man. Happy at heart, the old man bowed with reverence.

The guest was elated. He understood what happiness is.

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52. When Trees Too Show Mercy

Afternoons in summer are usually sultry. But in the orchard they are pleasant. On one such lovely afternoon, the King sat in his orchard and played chess with his beautiful queen. Half-a-dozen bodyguards stationed themselves in different places in the orchard and kept a watchful eye on the couple.

A wide variety of fruits from the royal orchard was kept in different silver bowls and they were within the reach of the royal pair.

While they were blissfully ignorant of the surroundings, a stone whirred its way from the other side of the compound wall of the orchard to the head of the King.

The King yelled. The next moment he became unconscious. His head was profusely bleeding. While one of the bodyguards ran to fetch the royal physician, the others clambered up the compound wall and tracked down the culprit.

The culprit was a poor man, who had not eaten for three consecutive days. He had no money to buy food. He had no mind to beg for food. The hungry man

watched ripe mangoes hanging from a branch that was sticking out of the compound wall of the royal orchard.

It is said that all rules of conduct are forgotten when one becomes terribly hungry. Hence he took a couple of stones and hurled them at the mango tree.

The guards arrested the poor man and brought him to the king, even before the physician was fetched. They tied him to the trunk of the very tree at which he had hurled the stones.

The physician cleaned the wound the stone had made, applied a herbal paste and dressed the wound. It took a few minutes for the king to regain consciousness.

The moment he opened his eyes the guards showed him the culprit tied to the mango tree and said, "That is the fellow, your Majesty! He is the one who threw stones and hurt your head. We are waiting for your orders."

The king looked at the poor and haggard-looking man. He signalled to his guards to untie the fellow. As soon as they obeyed his command, the king beckoned the culprit to come nearer.

Trembling all over, he crept towards the king. He was sure of capital punishment.

The queen looked daggers at him. The guards were ready to pounce on the culprit and tear him to shreds. Just a word from the king would press them into action.

"Why did you hurl a stone at me?" asked the king, still holding his painful head with his hands.

"It was not aimed at you, your Majesty! I hurled it only at the mango tree. And I was not in the least aware of anybody's presence here, for I was on the other side of the compound wall," the poor man said.

"How many stones did you throw?"

"Two, your Majesty. One missed its target but landed me in trouble. The other brought down two ripe mangoes. I still have them in my pockets, though I am not allowed to eat them."

"Eat them, then," said the king.

The poor fellow devoured the two mangoes in a trice. Such was his terrible hunger.

The King gave him one more from the nearby bowl. He ate .. One more . . one more. . . and then one more.

The poor man ate to his stomach's fill. "Enough, your Majesty! Can't eat any more at the moment," he said.

"Be one among my gardeners. You can join duty today itself," said the magnanimous king, to the shock of everyone around.

The new gardener thanked him profusely, while the queen and the guards stood puzzled. The king spoke: "He threw a stone at the tree. It gave him two

ripe mangoes to satisfy his hunger .. I am a king and am expected to provide food and shelter to everyone of my citizens It was not he who threw the stone. It was his hunger. The tree answered his need And am I inferior to a tree?"

(Finis)

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-second Seminar

26th April 1992

“WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO’S INTEGRAL YOGA AT PRESENT WHEN HUMANITY IS UNDERGOING AN EVOLUTIONARY CRISIS?”

Speech read by Robert Poddar

At present humanity is engulfed in a crisis in every sphere of its life. Different thinkers have given different explanations of its cause and, according to their views, proposed different solutions for it—mostly political and economic because these are the dominant forces in man’s present life which govern all the spheres of his individual, social and international existence.

But, according to Sri Aurobindo, the present crisis in its inmost significance is an evolutionary crisis and its decisive solution can only be found by carrying the evolutionary process to a higher level beyond man’s present mental consciousness.

The process of evolution is interpreted in different ways by different thinkers. Most of the modern scientists consider it to be an organic process in which Nature creates higher and higher species culminating in man which is its final stage or end-product.

But, according to Sri Aurobindo, evolution, in its essential significance, is an evolution of consciousness and at present there is a pressure on man’s mental consciousness to rise to a higher level which he has termed the Supermind. This pressure has now reached such an extreme point that it has created critical situations in every sphere of modern life which are only outer symptoms of the inner crisis in his inner consciousness and it can therefore only be solved by taking a radical leap from his present mental consciousness to the Supramental.

In the pre-human stages of evolution it is the universal Nature which carries it forward from a lower grade to a higher grade according to the law governing her process. The evolving entity is entirely subject to her law. But since man is a self-conscious being it becomes imperative for him to make a willed, a conscious choice to rise to a level higher than his mind. This means that if he makes the right choice he will rise to the supramental level and divinise his life, but if he fails to make it he, as a race, may remain a stationary species and the evolutionary process will move forward through only those few members of

humanity who will fulfil the evolutionary conditions of rising to a higher level and they will begin a new race of Supermen

At the present moment, which Sri Aurobindo has called "The Hour of God", this choice has become imminent and imperative because the Supermind has descended in earth's subtle atmosphere in 1956 and is exerting increasing pressure upon earth and men to open to it and receive it. It is this pressure that has created acute problems in every realm of modern man's life. So the whole fate of humanity now hangs upon whether he makes the right choice and willingly receives the Supramental Truth and allows it to divinise his life, or resists and obstructs its advent and suffers the consequences of his refusal. In several of her New Year messages after 1956, and especially in Her New Year message of 1967, the Mother has drawn pointed attention to the urgent need of making this choice and has even given a warning of the consequences of failing to make it. I read it here:

"Men, countries, continents!
The choice is imperative.
Truth or the Abyss "

This choice is especially necessary for the few individuals who profess to be Sri Aurobindo's disciples because humanity in general does not even understand the real significance of the present crisis, nor is it capable of satisfying the necessary conditions to carry out the arduous task of fulfilling it.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga has laid down the whole process of triple transformation necessary for man to rise to the supramental level but it is an extremely difficult endeavour which only a few can undertake. But it is the only solution of the present evolutionary crisis which can establish the Supramental Truth upon earth and divinise human life.

This then is the relevance of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga at present when humanity is undergoing an evolutionary crisis, it is the only right answer posed in the question in the subject of this Seminar. And it is for Sri Aurobindo's disciples who have accepted the discipline of his Integral Yoga to fulfil the necessary conditions to carry it out in all earnestness in themselves. Sri Aurobindo himself has in an early letter clearly stated in very clear and forceful terms what these conditions are. The Mother found this letter so relevant to the present situation that as late as April 1973 She got it separately printed, and giving it a title: *The Truth to be realised now* got it published as Supplement in the *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*. The whole letter is rather long and is included in *Letters on Yoga* (Centenary Edition, Volume 24, pages 1305-11). I shall read here only a portion of this long letter.

THE CRUCIAL CHOICE

“This yoga can only be done to the end by those who are in total earnest about it and ready to abolish their little human ego and its demands in order to find themselves in the Divine. It cannot be done in a spirit of levity or laxity; the work is too high and difficult, the adverse powers in the lower Nature too ready to take advantage of the least sanction or the smallest opening, the aspiration and tapasya needed too constant and intense. It cannot be done if there is a petulant self-assertion of the ideas of the human mind or wilful indulgence of the demands and instincts and pretensions of the lowest part of the being, commonly justified under the name of human nature. It cannot be done if you insist on identifying these lowest things of the Ignorance with the divine Truth or even the lesser truth permissible on the way. It cannot be done if you cling to your past self and its old mental, vital and physical formations and habits; one has continually to leave behind his past selves and to see, act and live from an always higher and higher conscious level. It cannot be done if you insist on ‘freedom’ for your human mind and vital ego. All the parts of the human being are entitled to express and satisfy themselves in their own way at their own risk and peril, if he so chooses, as long as he leads the ordinary life. But to enter into a path of yoga whose whole object is to substitute for these human things the law and power of a greater Truth and the whole heart of whose method is surrender to the Divine Shakti, and yet to go on claiming this so-called freedom, which is no more than a subjection to certain ignorant cosmic Forces, is to indulge in a blind contradiction and to claim the right to lead a double life.

“Least of all can this yoga be done if those who profess to be its sadhaks continue always to make themselves centres, instruments or spokesmen of the forces of the Ignorance which oppose, deny and ridicule its very principle and object. On one side there is the supramental realisation, the overshadowing and descending power of the supramental Divine, the light and force of a far greater Truth than any yet realised on the earth, something therefore beyond what the little human mind and its logic regard as the only permanent realities, something whose nature and way and process of development here it cannot conceive or perceive by its own inadequate instruments or judge by its puerile standards; in spite of all opposition this is pressing down for manifestation in the physical consciousness and the material life. On the other side is this lower vital nature with all its pretentious arrogance, ignorance, obscurity, dullness or incompetent turbulence, standing for its own prolongation, standing against the descent, refusing to believe in any real reality or real possibility of a supramental or superhuman consciousness and creation, or, still more absurd, demanding, if it exists at all, that it should conform to its own little standards, seizing greedily upon everything that seems to disprove it, denying the presence of the Divine,—for it knows that without that presence the work is impossible,

—affirming loudly its own thoughts, judgments, desires, instincts, and, if these are contradicted, avenging itself by casting abroad doubt, denial, disparaging criticism, revolt and disorder. These are the two things now in presence between which every one will have to choose.

“For this opposition, this sterile obstruction and blockade against the descent of the divine Truth cannot last for ever. Every one must come down finally on one side or the other, on the side of the Truth or against it. The supramental realisation cannot coexist with the persistence of the lower Ignorance; it is incompatible with continued satisfaction in a double nature.”¹

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 24), pp 1310-11