

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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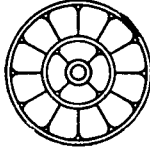
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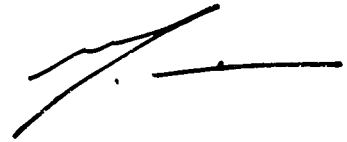
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born  
The things that were promised are fulfilled



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLVI

No. 5

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

### CONTENTS

<i>The Mother</i>	
A TALK TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 17 JULY 1957	. 311
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
ON BUDDHI	... 314
<i>Sitangshu Chakraborty</i>	
CALFNDARLESS GAME (Poem)	.. 315
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
VISION OF THE FUTURE SOCIETY (COMPILED BY GOPAL BHATTACHARJEE)	.. 316
<i>Amal Kuan (K. D. Sethna)</i>	
LIFE—POETRY—YOGA	
A PERSONAL LETTER	. 322
PILGRIMAGE TO THE MATRIMANDIR	
A DIARY-NOTE	329
<i>Nudbaran</i>	
TALK ON CHAMPAKLAL	. 331
<i>Huta</i>	
THE STORY OF A SOUL	... 337
<i>Samar Basu</i>	
AND SO THIS HAPPENS	. 345
<i>Kripa Anuru</i>	
HE (Poem)	.. 351
<i>Vikas Dhandhamia</i>	
QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE—PART II	352
<i>Nilma Das</i>	
SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	356
<i>Dinkar Palande</i>	
THE TWO (Poem)	... 360
<i>Chuntal Chowdhury</i>	
UNFORGETTABLE	. 361

## CONTENTS

<i>Wilfried</i> NEW AGE NEWS	... 367
<i>P. Raja</i> A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS	... 369

## STUDENTS' SECTION

<i>Speech by Dinesh Chainani</i> THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 16 AUGUST 1992 "THE DIVINE GRACE"	.. 373
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## A TALK BY THE MOTHER

TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN ON 17 JULY 1957

HAS no one any questions on the text? .. I have nothing special to tell you this evening, and if you are not curious to know what the new perfections of the body could be.

*Mother, in the physical education we practise here our aim is a greater and greater control over the body, isn't it? So, as Sri Aurobindo has said in what we read last time, that the Hatha-yoga and Tantric methods give a very great control over the body,<sup>1</sup> why don't we introduce these methods into our system?*

These are occult processes for acting on the body—the Tantric ones, at any rate—while the modern methods of development follow the ordinary physical process to give the body all the perfection it is capable of in its present state. . I don't quite grasp your question The processes are completely different

The basis of all these methods is the power exercised by the conscious will over matter. Usually it is a method which someone has used fairly successfully and set up as a principle of action, which he has taught to others who in turn have continued and perfected it until it has taken a somewhat fixed form of one kind of discipline or another But the whole basis is the action of the conscious will on the body. The exact form of the method is not of primary importance. In various countries, at various times, one method or another has been used, but always behind it there is a canalised mental power which acts methodically. Of course, some methods try to use a higher power which would in its turn transmit its capacity to the mental power. if a power of a higher order is infused into the

<sup>1</sup> "Something there is in us or something has to be developed, perhaps a central and still occult part of our being containing forces whose powers in our actual and present make-up are only a fraction of what could be, but if they became complete and dominant would be truly able to bring about with the help of the light and force of the soul and the supramental truth-consciousness the necessary physical transformation and its consequences This might be found in the system of Chakras revealed by Tantric knowledge and accepted in the systems of Yoga, conscious centres and sources of all the dynamic powers of our being organising their action through the plexuses and arranged in an ascending series from the lowest physical to the highest mind centre and spiritual centre called the thousand-petalled lotus where ascending Nature, the Serpent Power of the Tantrics, meets the Brahman and is liberated into the Divine Being These centres are closed or half closed within us and have to be opened before their full potentiality can be manifested in our physical nature but once they are opened and completely active, no limit can easily be set to the development of their potencies and the total transformation to be possible But even these changes would still leave a residue of material processes keeping the old way and not amenable to the higher control and, if this could not be changed, the rest of the transformation might itself be checked and incomplete A total transformation of the body would demand a sufficient change of the most material part of the organism its constitution, its processes and its set-up of nature "

mental method, this method naturally becomes more effective and powerful. But essentially all these disciplines depend above all on the person who practises them and the way he uses them. One can, even in the most material, ordinary processes, make use of this altogether external basis to infuse into them powers of a higher order. And all methods, whatever they may be, depend almost exclusively on the person who uses them, on what he puts into them.

You see, if the matter is considered in its most modern, most external form, how is it that the movements we make almost constantly in our everyday life, or which we have to make in our work if it is a physical work, do not help or help very little, almost negligibly, to develop the muscles and to create harmony in the body? These same movements, on the other hand, if they are made consciously, deliberately, with a definite aim, suddenly start helping you to form your muscles and build up your body. There are jobs, for instance, where people have to carry extremely heavy loads, like bags of cement or sacks of corn or coal, and they make a considerable effort, to a certain extent they do it with an acquired facility, but that doesn't give them harmony of the body, because they don't do it with the *idea* of developing their muscles, they do it just "like that". And someone who follows a method, either one he has learnt or one he has worked out for himself, and who makes these very movements with the will to develop this muscle or that, to create a general harmony in his body—he succeeds. Therefore, in the conscious will, there is something which adds considerably to the movement itself. Those who really want to practise physical culture as it is conceived now, everything they do, they do consciously. They walk downstairs consciously, they make the movements of ordinary life consciously, not mechanically. An attentive eye will perhaps notice a little difference but the greatest difference lies in the will they put into it, the consciousness they put into it. Walking to go somewhere and walking as an exercise is not the same thing. It is the conscious will in all these things which is important, it is that which brings about the progress and obtains the result. Therefore, what I mean is that the method one uses has only a relative importance in itself; it is the will to obtain a certain result that is important.

The yogi or aspiring yogi who does *āsanas* to obtain a spiritual result or even simply a control over his body, obtains these results because it is with this aim that he does them, whereas I know some people who do exactly the same things but for all sorts of reasons unrelated to spiritual development, and who haven't even managed to acquire good health by it! And yet they do exactly the same thing, sometimes they even do it much better than the yogi, but it doesn't give them a stable health. because they haven't thought about it, haven't done it with this purpose in mind. I have asked them myself, I said, "But how can you be ill after doing all that?"—"Oh! but I never thought of it, that's not why I do it." This amounts to saying that it is the conscious will which acts on matter, not the material fact.

But you only have to try it, you will understand very well what I mean. For instance, all the movements you make when dressing, taking your bath, tidying your room.. no matter what, make them consciously, with the will that this muscle should work, that muscle should work. You will see, you will obtain really amazing results.

Going up and down the stairs—you cannot imagine how useful that can be from the point of view of physical culture, if you know how to make use of it. Instead of going up because you are going up and coming down because you are coming down, like any ordinary man, you go up with the consciousness of all the muscles which are working and of making them work harmoniously. You will see. Just try a little, you will see! This means that you can use all the movements of your life for a harmonious development of your body.

You bend down to pick something up, you stretch up to find something right at the top of a cupboard, you open a door, you close it, you have to go round an obstacle, there are a hundred and one things you do constantly and which you can make use of for your physical culture and which will demonstrate to you that it is the consciousness you put into it which produces the effect, a hundred times more than just the material fact of doing it. So, you choose the method you like best, but you can use the whole of your daily life in this way.... To think constantly of the harmony of the body, of the beauty of the movements, of not doing anything that is ungraceful and awkward You can obtain a rhythm of movement and gesture which is very exceptional.

We are going to meditate on all this.

(*Questions and Answers*, 1957, pp 152-55)

## SRI AUROBINDO ON BUDDHI

BUDDHI is a construction of conscious being which quite exceeds its beginning in the basic Chitta, it is the intelligence with its power of knowledge and will. Buddhi takes up and deals with all the rest of the action of the mind and life and body. It is in its nature thought-power and will-power of the Spirit turned into the lower form of a mental activity. We may distinguish three successive gradations of action of this intelligence. There is first an inferior perceptive understanding which simply takes up, records, understands and responds to the communication of the sense-mind, memory, heart and sensational mentality. It creates by their means an elementary thinking mind which does not go beyond their data, but subjects itself to their mould and rings out their repetitions, runs round and round in the habitual circle of thought and will suggested by them or follows, with an obedient subservience of the reason to the suggestions of life, any fresh determinations which may be offered to its perception and conception. Beyond this elementary understanding, which we all use to an enormous extent, there is a power of arranging or selecting reason and will-force of the intelligence which has for its action and aim an attempt to arrive at a plausible, sufficient, settled ordering of knowledge and will for the use of an intellectual conception of life.

In spite of its more purely intellectual character this secondary or intermediate reason is really pragmatic in its intention. It creates a certain kind of intellectual structure, frame, rule into which it tries to cast the inner and outer life so as to use it with a certain mastery and government for the purposes of some kind of rational will. It is this reason which gives to our normal intellectual being our set aesthetic and ethical standards, our structures of opinion and our established norms of idea and purpose. It is highly developed and takes the primacy in all men of an at all developed understanding. But beyond it there is a reason, a highest action of the Buddhi which concerns itself disinterestedly with a pursuit of pure truth and right knowledge; it seeks to discover the real Truth behind life and things and our apparent selves and to subject its will to the law of Truth. Few, if any of us, can use this highest reason with any purity, but the attempt to do it is the topmost capacity of the inner instrument, the *antahkarana*.

Buddhi is really an intermediary between a much higher Truth-mind not now in our active possession, which is the direct instrument of Spirit, and the physical life of the human mind evolved in body. Its powers of intelligence and will are drawn from this greater direct Truth-mind or Supermind. Buddhi centres its mental action round the ego-idea, the idea that I am this mind, life and body or am a mental being determined by their action. It serves this ego-idea whether limited by what we call egoism or extended by sympathy with the life around us. An ego-sense is created which reposes on the separative action of the body, of the individualised life, of the mind-responses, and the ego-idea in the Buddhi



centralises the whole action of this ego's thought, character, personality. The lower understanding and the intermediary reason are instruments of its desire of experience and self-enlargement. But when the highest reason and will develop, we can turn towards that which these outward things mean to the higher spiritual consciousness. The "I" can then be seen as a mental reflection of the Self, the Spirit, the Divine, the one existence transcendent, universal, individual in its multiplicity, the consciousness in which these things meet, become aspects of one being and assume their right relations, can then be unveiled out of all these physical and mental coverings. When the transition to Supermind takes place the powers of the Buddhi do not perish, but have all to be converted to their supramental values.

(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library Vol 21, pp. 624-626 )

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## CALENDARLESS GAME

THE Divine plays  
 A marvellous calendarless game  
 In unfoldment of Nature  
 From inconscience to omniscience.  
 The phenomenon appears to Him  
 Like blooming of flowers from buds.  
 Avatars symbolise  
 The meeting of the stars of heaven  
 And the gems  
 From the hidden depths of the earth;  
 And they speak about  
 The riddles of this play eternal.  
 A dumbfounded 'I'  
 Stares at the sky  
 With endless curiosity,  
 Seeking to comprehend  
 Why a flower blooms,  
 How an Avatar cherishes it.

SITANGSHU CHAKRABORTTY

# SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF THE FUTURE SOCIETY

PASSAGES COMPILED BY GOPAL BHATTCHARJEE

*(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1993)*

## PART II

### WHAT HOLDS BACK HUMANITY FROM TAKING THE LEAP

#### Man not yet fully grown to his stature

NORMAL humanity is itself something abnormal in Nature, something the like and parity of which we look around in vain to discover, it is a rapid freak, a sudden miracle

Abnormality in Nature is no objection, no necessary sign of imperfection, but may well be an effort at a much greater perfection. But this perfection is not found until the abnormal can find its own secure normality, the right organisation of its life in its own kind and power and on its own level.

Man is an abnormal who has not found his own normality,—he may imagine he has, he may appear to be normal in his own kind, but that normality is only a sort of provisional order, therefore though man is infinitely greater than the plant or the animal, he is not perfect in his own nature like the plant and the animal.

This imperfection is not a thing to be at all deplored, but rather a privilege and a promise, for it opens out to us an immense vista of self-development and self-exceeding.

Man at his highest is a half-god who has risen up out of the animal Nature and is splendidly abnormal in it, but the thing which he has started out to be, the whole god, is something so much greater than what he is that it seems to him as abnormal to himself as he is to the animal.

This means a great and arduous labour of growth before him, but also a splendid crown of his race and his victory. A kingdom is offered to him beside which his present triumphs in the realms of mind or over external Nature will appear only as a rough hint and a poor beginning.

#### Wherefrom springs this imperfection?

What precisely is the defect from which all his imperfection springs?

We see that at first sight man seems to be a double nature, an animal nature of the vital and physical being which lives according to its instincts, impulses, desires, its automatic orientation and method, and with that a half-divine nature

of the self-conscious intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, intelligently emotional, intelligently dynamic being who is capable of finding and understanding the law of his own action and consciously using and bettering it, a reflecting mind that understands Nature, a will that uses, elevates, perfects Nature, a sense that intelligently enjoys Nature

The aim of the animal part of us is to increase vital possession and enjoyment; the aim of the semi-divine part of us is also to grow, possess and enjoy, but first to possess and enjoy intelligently, aesthetically, ethically, by the powers of the mind much more than by the powers of the life and body, and, secondly, to possess and enjoy, not so much the vital and physical except in so far as that is necessary as a foundation and starting-point, a preliminary necessity or condition, a standing-ground and basis, but things intellectual, ethical and aesthetic, and to grow not so much in the outward life, except in so far as that is necessary to the security, ease and dignity of our human existence, but in the true, the good and the beautiful

This is the manhood of man, his unique distinction and abnormality in the norm of this inconscient material Nature

### **Growing into God is his *swadharma***

This means that man has developed a new power of being,—let us call it a new soul-power, with the premiss that we regard the life and the body also as a soul-power,—and the being who has done that is under an inherent obligation not only to look at the world and revalue all in it from this new elevation, but to compel his whole nature to obey this power and in a way reshape itself in its mould, and even to reshape, so far as he can, his environmental life into some image of this greater truth and law

In doing this lies his *swadharma*, his true rule and way of being, the way of his perfection and his real happiness.

Failing in this, he fails in the aim of his nature and his being, and has to begin again until he finds the right path and arrives at a successful turning-point, a decisive crisis of transformation

Now this is precisely what man has failed to do.

He has effected something, he has passed a certain stage of his journey. He has laid some yoke of the intellectual, ethical, aesthetic rule on his vital and physical parts and made it impossible for himself to be content with or really to be the mere human animal. But more he has not been able to do successfully.

The transformation of his life into the image of the true, the good and the beautiful seems as far off as ever; if ever he comes near to some imperfect form of it,—and even then it is only done by a class or by a number of individuals with some reflex action on the life of the mass,—he slides back from it in a general decay of his life, or else stumbles on from it into some bewildering upheaval out

of which he comes with new gains indeed but also with serious losses. He has never arrived at any great turning-point, any decisive crisis of transformation.

### **Man has not shifted upward his central will**

The main failure, the root of the whole failure indeed, is that he has not been able to shift upward what we call the implicit will central to his life, the force and assured faith inherent in its main power of action

His central will of life is still situated in his vital and physical being, its drift is towards vital and physical enjoyment, enlightened indeed and checked to a certain extent in its impulses by the higher powers, but enlightened only and very partially, not transformed,—checked, not dominated and uplifted to a higher plane.

### **The higher still only an intruder**

The higher life is still only a thing superimposed on the lower, a permanent intruder upon our normal existence. The intruder interferes constantly with the normal life, scolds, encourages, discourages, lectures, manipulates, readjusts, lifts up only to let fall, but has no power to transform, alchemise, recreate.

Indeed it does not seem itself quite to know where all this effort and uneasy struggle is meant to lead us,—sometimes it thinks, to a quite tolerable human life on earth, the norm of which it can never successfully fix, and sometimes it imagines our journey is to another world whether by a religious life or else an edifying death it will escape out of all this pother and trouble of mortal being.

Therefore these two elements live together in a continual, a mutual perplexity, made perpetually uneasy, uncomfortable and ineffectual by each other, somewhat like an ill-assorted wife and husband, always at odds and yet half in love with or at least necessary to each other, unable to beat out a harmony, yet condemned to be joined in an unhappy leash until death separates them.

All the uneasiness, dissatisfaction, disillusionment, weariness, melancholy, pessimism of the human mind comes from man's practical failure to solve the riddle and the difficulty of his double nature

### **Dominance of successful individuals at times**

We have said that this failure is due to the fact that this higher power is only a mediator, and that thoroughly to transform the vital and physical life in its image is perhaps not possible, but at any rate not the intention of Nature in us. It may be urged perhaps that after all individuals have succeeded in effecting some figure of transformation, have led entirely ethical or artistic or intellectual

lives, even shaped their life by some ideal of the true, the good and the beautiful, and whatever the individual has done, the race too may and should eventually succeed in doing, for the exceptional individual is the future type, the fore-runner

But to how much did their success really amount? Either they impoverished the vital and physical life in them in order to give play to one element of their being, lived a onesided and limited existence, or else they arrived at a compromise by which, while the higher life was given great prominence, the lower was still allowed to graze in its own field under the eye more or less strict or the curb more or less indulgent of the higher power or powers: in itself, in its own instincts and demands it remained unchanged. There was a dominance, but not a transformation.

### **Mind not the destined archangel of life**

Life cannot be entirely rational, cannot conform entirely to the ethical or the aesthetic or the scientific and philosophic mentality; mind is not the destined archangel of the transformation.

All appearances to the contrary are always a *trompe-l'œil*, an intellectual, aesthetic or ethical illusion. Dominated, repressed life may be, but it reserves its right, and though individuals or a class may establish this domination for a time and impose some simulacrum of it upon the society, Life in the end circumvents the intelligence; it gets strong elements in it—for always there are traitor elements at work—to come over to its side and re-establishes its instincts, recovers its field

Or if it fails in this, it has its revenge in its own decay which brings about the decay of the society, the disappointment of the perennial hope.

So much so, that there are times when mankind perceives this fact and, renouncing the attempt to dominate the life-instinct, determines to use the intelligence for its service and to give it light in its own field instead of enslaving it to a higher but chimerical ideal

### **Shift to the materialistic age**

Such a period was the recent materialistic age, when the intellect of man seemed decided to study thoroughly Life and Matter, to admit only that, to recognise mind only as an instrument of Life and Matter, and to devote all its knowledge to a tremendous expansion of the vital and physical life, its practicality, its efficiency, its comfort and the splendid ordering of its instincts of production, possession and enjoyment.

That was the character of the materialistic, commercial, economic age of mankind, a period in which the ethical mind persisted painfully, but with

decreasing self-confidence, an increasing self-questioning and a tendency to yield up the fortress of the moral law to the life-instinct, the aesthetic instinct and intelligence flourished as a rather glaring exotic ornament, a sort of rare orchid in the buttonhole of the vital man, and reason became the magnificent servant of Life and Matter

### **Titanic development ends as Titans end**

The Titanic development of the vital Life which followed is ending as the Titans always end; it lit its own funeral pyre in the conflagration of a world-war, its natural upshot, a struggle between the most "efficient" and "civilised" nations for the possession and enjoyment of the world, of its wealth, its markets, its available spaces, an inflated and plethoric commercial expansion, largeness of imperial size and rule

For that is what the Great War signified and was in its real origin, because that was the secret or the open intention of all prewar diplomacy and international politics, and if a nobler idea was awakened at least for a time, it was only under the scourge of Death and before the terrifying spectre of a gigantic mutual destruction

In that awakening lay some hope of better things. But for the moment at least the vitalistic aim has once more raised its head in a new form and the hope has dimmed in a darkness and welter in which only the eye of faith can see chaos preparing a new cosmos.

### **Our natural road is towards the summit**

The first result of this imperfect awakening seemed likely to be a return to an older ideal, with a will to use the reason and the ethical mind better and more largely in the ordering of individual, of national and of international life

But such an attempt, though well enough as a first step, cannot be the real and final solution; if our effort ends there, we shall not arrive

The solution lies, we have said, in an awakening to our real, because our highest self and nature,—that hidden self which we are not yet, but have to become and which is not the strong and enlightened vital Will hymned by Nietzsche, but a spiritual self and spiritual nature that will use the mental being which we already are, but the mental being spiritualised, and transform by a spiritual ideality the aim and action of our vital and physical nature

For this is the formula of man in his highest potentiality, and safety lies in tending towards our highest and not in resting content with an inferior potentiality.

To follow after the highest in us may seem to be to live dangerously, to use again one of Nietzsche's inspired expressions, but by that danger comes victory

and security. To rest in or follow after an inferior potentiality may seem safe, rational, comfortable, easy, but it ends badly, in some futility or in a mere circling, down the abyss or in a stagnant morass. Our right and natural road is towards the summits.

# LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

## A PERSONAL LETTER

I HAVE quite a pile of your letters—with quite a host of questions. I shall try to answer them not in a chronological order but as they come up in the order in which the pile has put them

The first to hand reminds me of the Biblical war-horse neighing “Ha! Ha!” as its nostrils breathe the smell of the battlefield. You are in a regular frenzy facing the field of human knowledge as laid out by encyclopaedias and dictionaries. Here comes your aspiration to be a polymath, master of a hundred disciplines. Ever since my middle teens I have thrilled to the same lure. Except for mathematics, which don’t daunt you, I have felt competent to tackle all the ranges of intellectual inquiry but I can’t say I am anywhere being in full control of most of them—poetry alone I have scoured from end to end to the extent my extreme familiarity with English allows. Beyond poetry what has most drawn me is literary criticism, philosophical speculation, scientific thought, historical research. I believe I have contributed a bit of original work to each of these branches of knowledge, even though not of an outstanding quality everywhere. The desire to pursue various lines further even now persists, but here some words of the Mother to me keep ringing. In effect their import ran: “The plane of the mind is infinite. One can go on and on there, in fascinated pursuit of knowledge. No time will be left for the spiritual life. One can have a glorious time, mastering arts and sciences and making discovery after discovery. A wide-surface satisfaction can be yours but, having seen beyond the mind and obtained a taste of spirituality, glimpsed a ray of the direct light of the Divine, too much preoccupation with mental knowledge will be a waste of your life.” Ever since I gathered this grace of wisdom from the Mother, I have moderated my acquisition of mental knowledge. Though every new vista of intellectual research pulls me towards it, there is a profound sense in the heart that truth lies elsewhere and that my main concentration should be on what hides behind the endless variety of the mind’s offerings.

We are beings in whom the evolutionary impulse is accompanied by strong whiffs from the tygal worlds. There is a world of the mind-energy just as there is a world of the life-force where these powers of consciousness are fulfilled and there is left no need to aspire beyond them. In them one is lapped in ever-unfolding immensities of felicitous ideas and theories or of sensuous-emotional enjoyments. All is revelation on revelation of horizontal adventure—no vertical thrust towards an uncertain and hazardous Unknown, no gamble for a Godhead surpassing vitality and mentality have any part in the tygal planes. These are the pleasures and perils of the evolutionary plane. Evolution is a difficult process whereas it is easy to let ourselves drift on the tygal tide and if we yield to this tide



the vertical thrust weakens. So it is necessary to be careful in our ambition to be polymaths. How to move in the direction of polymathy without sacrificing that thrust: this is the problem for people like us who are intoxicated with encyclopaedias and dictionaries

In the wake of your hunger to know everything within man's range, you are led to "an epistemological inquiry—what exactly is knowledge and what is the *raison d'être* of man's insatiable urge to search for it?" Over and above or rather behind and beyond the push of the typical mental plane to pursue ideas and theories for their own sake, there is one aspect of the Divine Nature, the Divine Existence, responsible for this urge. The ultimate reality is Omniscience (All-Knowledge) along with Omnipotence (All-Power) and Omnipresence (All-Pervasion), to which we may add Omnifelicity and Omnipexpression. Omniscience has two sides: what the Vedanta calls the Higher Knowledge and the Lower Knowledge. The latter covers the world of phenomena, of outer objects and processes. In Vedantic terms, the Play of the Many as distinguished from the Work of the One. When it is contrasted instead of being merely distinguished, it is dubbed Ignorance—*avidyā* in opposition to *vidyā*. The knowledge that is ignorance consists in being aware of the Many to the exclusion of the One. The sense of the One is never quite lost, but it remains merely a notion and is not perceived as an actuality in the way the various objects are perceived. For those who want to be seers and not only thinkers, the quest for the One as the Infinite, the Eternal, the Divine is of prime importance and they must see (being "seers"!)) that this quest does not suffer by the lure of the Many getting excessive. However, the voice of the Isha Upanishad no less than that of Sri Aurobindo has to be heard, insisting on a due regard for the apparently finite, temporal, non-divine. According to this voice, exclusive knowledge of the One is, in the final perspective, as much Ignorance as exclusive knowledge of the Many. The integral aim of life is manifestation (many-festation?) of the Single, the Unitary, in a double awareness of both the Unique and the Multiple. So I wouldn't pour cold water altogether on your desire to be an expert in the subjects whose very mention thrills you: "Mathematics, computer science, architecture, poetry, painting, music (singing, instruments and composition), literature, nuclear physics, plant science (botany, horticulture, floriculture), mythology, philosophy, 'holopediatrics', geography, astronomy, finance, political sciences, linguistics, grammar, etc."

Now to another question you have raised:

"There is this apparent divergence between two of the Mother's statements:

- (1) It is not what one does that is the most important thing but what one is.
  - (2) In work one progresses ten times more than in empty contemplation (this statement is from memory, so might be slightly inaccurate in wording)."
- Your puzzlement arises from misconstruing the non-emphasis on "what one does" as putting a premium on inactivity. There are actually two shades in the

Mother's intention. One is discouragement of getting impressed by big-looking activity as such. One may win name and fame by grandiose achievements and still remain a poor specimen of a man—selfish, censorious, greedy, ambitious. Secondly, one may be busy all the time but with one's consciousness on the surface. The true measure of a man is the quality of his consciousness. One may even do next to nothing outwardly and yet be the acme of humanity. What did Ramakrishna or Raman Maharshi do by way of physical productivity? But this does not imply that doing things is set at a discount. It is assumed that one is doing something; only, we do not get the true measure of a man thereby. Whether it is big work or small work, what fundamentally counts is the wideness of one's mind, the depth of one's heart, the height from which one's will operates.

If you keep in view my exposition of the Mother's statement you will not find it to be at odds with her other pronouncement where she encourages work as a means of spiritual progress, preferring it to passive and therefore empty contemplation. Not that she quite discourages contemplation. Everything has its proper place in her many-sided vision. But the contemplative capacity is rather rare, and mostly people flatter their souls by stretching out hours with eyes closed. It is better to occupy oneself in work which one inwardly dedicates to the Divine and during which one keeps one's consciousness high-uplifted. One thus advances further on the Aurobindonian path—especially as this path insists on a new mode of living, a new manner of activity, a creative expression of the inner being's surrender to the Mother's light and love.

You have raised the issue of the Mother and her Grace: "Is the aspiration for the intervention of the Grace the same as aspiring to the Mother? If the two were inseparable, there should not be any need for aspiring for the Grace in particular, because appealing to the Mother would in any case bring forth a reply in the form of Grace's action." Indeed, basically speaking, the Mother and the Grace are identical and everything that comes from the Mother is an act of Grace. But we can speak of Grace's general action and its particular action. The latter is what we commonly refer to when we talk of Grace. It consists in a keen response of help from above to a piercing cry of the heart from below. The general action is the showering of knowledge and peace and power and bliss on our deep dissatisfaction with ourselves, the gift of vastitude and altitude to the sincere smallness and surrendering littleness that we are in our best moments. Perhaps we can suggest with a fine feeling the shade of difference between the general Grace and the particular while not forgetting the common basis of both by quoting some lines from a well-known hymn. Here the general Grace is movingly touched off

Change and decay in all around I see.  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

Here is the lighting up of the Grace in its acute particularity:

When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

In this context I may try to hint an answer to your query: “What is the difference between prayer and aspiration? Which is superior? Or does the question of superiority not arise here?” To aspire means etymologically to breathe towards something and figuratively to rise high for something. The aspirant has in view, as it were, luminous heights and his inner movement is towards them. He who prays finds within his sight, so to speak, shadowy depths surrounding him and his inner movement is to ache for their diminishing and disappearing. He too is aware of a luminosity overhead, but his call is for it to come down while the aspirant feels called by it upward. The latter is not unconscious of his own low state but his concentration is on getting elsewhere. The prayerful soul is more concerned with getting his deplorable plight changed. I may add that his appeal is, more specifically than the aspirant’s, to a personal Divinity and is more than the aspirant’s in tune with the Grace in its particular aspect. Aspiration and prayer are both of value in the spiritual life and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish them. How would one characterise the famous cry of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad?—

From the unreal lead us to the Real,  
From the darkness lead us to the Light,  
From death lead us to Immortality!

As in most of the Upanishadic verses the fundamental drift here is in the direction of the never-born ever-undying single infinite Self of selves, the Atman who is one with the secret universal Presence, Brahman. But in these three lines we have not only an immense aspiration for the inmost Knowledge: we have also an intense prayer as if to some Supreme Other to make us know that Other as our own essential being. It is as though Brahman were invoked to let us experience Him as Atman. An aspiration finds voice in the accents of a prayer.

A question which must be fairly common is: “Isn’t never having seen the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and not living in the Ashram a bit of a spiritual handicap? Or can the Integral Yoga be done with the same intensity without the above-named factor as it is in my case?” Actually you have fused two points: doing the Integral Yoga without having come in physical contact with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and doing this Yoga outside the Ashram. There have been people who knew the two Gurus physically yet did not continue to stay in the Ashram while doing the Integral Yoga just as there are people who are staying in the Ashram though they have never stood physically face to face with their two Gurus. In the complex situation you posit, the main thing is to feel in one’s own

heart the presence of the beings who physically manifested as the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Even during their physical manifestation the main thing was the same. Of course there were many spiritual advantages in coming into contact with that manifestation, but none would have been of fundamental value without the heart's awaking inwardly to a glorious sunlight called Sri Aurobindo and an enchanting moonlight named the Mother. And once the awaking was there, the golden epiphany and the silver secrecy could be living realities anywhere and they could be such even when their outer double embodiment had ceased. No doubt, there were special possibilities of spiritual experience for those whom the Divine had willed to be bodily with them, but no essential realisation is debarred to those whom the Divine has willed to be not so. The central point is the inward touch the Divine has given to a seeking soul. All who have become disciples and children of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother under any circumstances have had their touch—and to have received that touch is the only thing we should be concerned with, for it guarantees to us the entire riches of the Divine Existence in proportion to our capacity. As for the opportunity to stay in the Ashram, it depends on a number of things. When Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were in our midst they themselves on several occasions decided that this or that person should do Yoga outside the Ashram in spite of the parties wanting to be Ashramites. When the Mother was there, she in the light of her inner perception decided the issue. At present the Trustees have to ponder many conditions over and above their own inner sense. We may say that broadly the issue is whether one should come to Pondicherry and practise Yoga or stay where one is and do it. As far as I can see, your circumstances at the moment do not point in the direction of permanent residence in Pondicherry. So do not fret. Make the best of what is possible. Content yourself with occasional visits. To make your sadhana fruitful lies in your hands. If there are difficulties in your milieu, they are not at all likely to disappear if you are in Pondicherry. They are not such that merely a change of place can resolve them.

Now to another problem you have posed: "The Mother says. 'Be aware of the Presence within you.' It gives me an impression as if it can be a conscious willed act instead of being the result spontaneous of the Grace where the Presence 'happens' to you. Please bring some illumination as I direly need a concrete sense of the Presence within me." You seem to forget that Yoga is a twofold affair: the Divine's Grace and one's own effort. One has to fulfil certain conditions, create a certain attitude, extend a happy co-operation to the Guru. Man is a mental being, he stands in consciousness a little apart from the stream of what the Vedanta terms the play of Nature in him. He is to some extent a witness and a giver of sanction and has the possibility of becoming ultimately the master of Nature's play. Being thus constituted he cannot simply be pushed into anything. He cannot evolve without conscious collaboration with the Divine Force. And the collaboration is made easy because the same Force which acts as

Grace is already within your own being as what the Mother calls “the Presence” To be aware of it you have to quiet yourself, turn your thoughts towards the Mother, make as much as you can an offering of all your movements to her. In this way you will help her to open you up, you will render her grace more effective, achieve a fusion of the One whom we outwardly adore with the One who shines at all times inwardly adorable and casts a transforming and unifying smile on all that fumbling many-mooded multitude which is our common self.

A few minor questions remain. One is: “What should be my sleep-requirements? 6-6½ hours or more?” Let me quote you an authority. Napoleon. I label him as an authority because he had complete control over his sleep. He could go into the land of Nod any time. Even in the midst of a battle, with cannonading all around, he could snatch some minutes of sleep. His formula is: “6 hours for men, 7 for women, 8 for children and 9 for idiots.”

Next: “Is it advisable or worth it to maintain a spiritual diary viz. a booklet which will serve the purpose of chronicling the course of my odyssey towards the Supreme Goal?” As you are a born writer, it won’t be a bad idea to record your day-to-day observations on your own spiritual wanderings, which may hopefully mean at times the noting down of

#### Those thoughts that wander through Eternity

Your choice of the word “odyssey” is apt For this “man many-counselled”, as Homer designates him, passed through quite a number of perils and temptations during his nine-year tossing on the high seas. Will you be able to resist the song of the Sirens or the lure of Circe? Perhaps if you put down everything in cold ink you will acquire an objective view of things and may stop short of complications. Already you have been jotting down your inner and outer vicissitudes in the shape of an epistolary plethora directed towards me. Diary-keeping won’t be anything quite strange. But you will have the chance of looking back at all you have passed through and taking stock of all your forwards and backwards and sideways and the final upshot of all the movements during a year.

You have asked: “What happens to those sadhaks who pass away? Is it inevitable that in their next life they will be spiritually oriented?” Ordinarily it would be difficult to chart out a course But when we know that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are residing on the earth’s subtle-physical layer in an embodied form in order to carry on their work, the future of dead sadhaks would lie entirely in the hands of our Gurus and I believe that they would be helped to pursue their sadhana in whatever way is deemed helpful by the Gurus I have also the notion that, since a sincere sadhak has his mind and vital no less than his soul set to one note of devotion to the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the same mental and vital beings and not only the psychic being which naturally persists from life to life may return in a new body in the next birth. After death

they may stick together or they may serve different functions but they continue. My notion is suggested by what the Mother said about my friend A.B. Purani who passed away on 11 December 1965: "His higher intellectual part went to Sri Aurobindo and united with him. His psychic is with me, and he is very happy and in peace. His vital is still helping those who seek his help." When the time of the next embodiment arrives, all these members that are still intact may come together and continue in a spiritually oriented way under the conditions the new physical form will create. Don't take my notion as Gospel truth It may be just a spark of fancy.

(16.10.1992)

AMAL KIRAN  
(K.D. SETHNA)

# PILGRIMAGE TO THE MATRIMANDIR

## A DIARY-NOTE

EVER since the crystal globe was set in the inner chamber of the Matrimandir at Auroville, friends had been proposing to take me to the “holy of holies”. My answer was always “I don’t have the urge to go there at present.” But lately my attitude was not so hesitant—especially when Huta told me more than once: “Amal, in your lifetime you must visit the Matrimandir.”

On March 29 while I was being driven home in my wheelchair from the Samadhi at about 5.30 p m., I overheard Madanlal Himatsingka say to Nina Jethwa, a young Gujerati girl who had been born in England and was on a two-month visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and had become a good chum of mine, “Would you like to come with me to the Matrimandir tomorrow? I am taking there a lady who wants to sit and meditate in the inner chamber ” Nina excused herself, but I was struck by the offer made within my hearing. I knew that Madanlal motored to Auroville every afternoon and was closely connected with the Matrimandir. I told Nina to ask him if he would arrange for me to go to the Matrimandir as soon as possible. He gladly assented, came to my place with Nina on March 31 and told me he would bring his car at 4 p m. He inquired whether I would want my wheelchair to be taken there. When I learnt from him that a chair with a pole on either side had served to take Champaklal up to the inner chamber, I said “No” It was arranged that I would sit in the car next to the driver and four people—Madanlal himself, Nilima, Nina and Rasananda—would pack themselves in the rear-seat My close friend Saurav would have been happy to come and sit beside me if he could have got away from his duties at the Park Guest House

When we reached the Matrimandir a number of old acquaintances, who had had news of my trip, came to greet me. Divakar, a foreigner Aurovilian of long standing, was the first to shake my hand vigorously and he proved also to be one who took part in the difficult task of carrying my chair to the top of the Matrimandir. Two others who greeted me with enthusiasm were Arjun and Barbara Afterwards I had the pleasure of meeting Shraddhavan and Helmut, the two Aurovilians with whom I am most in contact

Clean white socks were to be worn by all who entered the inner chamber. As soon as we got there I felt a sudden stillness and a sense of inexpressible mystery. They seemed to draw me in with a silent welcome of enfolding love. My chair was placed in front of the crystal globe forming the centre of the chamber and receiving a beam of light through an aperture in the domed roof My first response was a flush of emotion and a vague feeling of tears in the eyes—tears of joy as if something precious long lost or long hidden away had swum into sight Then the impression took shape of an immense height meeting an intense depth

Spontaneously there arose in my mind a line from *Savitri* I had quoted to the Mother more than fifty-five years ago as an ideal experience for me. She had smiled and nodded. At that time she used to come every week to Lalita's room which is now Huta's bedroom. The Mother would sit in a specially draped chair and Lalita and I would be on the floor at her feet. On one such occasion I quoted to her that line. I had picked it out from the passages which Sri Aurobindo had been privately sending me for typing and comment every morning. It ran:

All was made wide above, all lit below.

Now it appeared as though the Yogic state caught in these words had been given a concrete exteriorisation in the inner chamber for all aspirants to get an inkling of a double divine action by which heaven and earth would both be equal components of an all-round self-manifestation by a Supreme Presence.

For nearly twenty minutes I sat in the inner chamber, facing the mysteriously gleaming crystal globe poised unmoving in an atmosphere of what I can only call intimate remoteness. When I was carried out into the common world again, I felt washed clean of all impurities and given a new birth. Indeed, as promised at the very initiation of the Auroville project, here in the inner chamber was the Soul of the "Dawn-City", with the creative consciousness of the Divine Mother at concentrated work in harmony with the world-regenerating Power at the heart of Her Pondicherry Ashram.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SEHTNA)



## NIRODBARAN'S TALK ON CHAMPAKLAL

*(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1993)*

I HAVE read out to you Champaklal's Diary Notes, an extensive record that he had kept for so many years. Some of these records may appear to us modern disciples very trivial and superficial. But read carefully they appear in a different light and prove to be very significant indeed. You find there three significant illustrations about which we have heard and read theoretically but which here we see in a living form as it were. First the relationship between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Second, the extent of sacrifice the Mother has made for our sake—e.g., letting the sadhaks do pranams at midnight; in the daytime seeing people while standing on the doorsteps hours together, with Sri Aurobindo keeping an invisible eye on her all the time. Next, we are astonished to see that Sri Aurobindo had his dinner at midnight just because the Mother could not manage it earlier due to the pressure of her work. Lastly, Champaklal's own relation with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. With the Mother he is so free and natural, like a child asking questions, correcting her, and the Mother indulging his whims and views. None of us would dare to take so much liberty with her and he did it because he loved her as his own mother.

We also get a glimpse of the Mother's mysterious dealings with people. Lastly, we see his deep genuine love for Sri Aurobindo, so much so that a simple touch of his body, hearing his name pronounced, and to be merely near him always, etc., etc., give him a heavenly ecstasy.

One can realise then the consciousness in which he was living, where no earthly recompense had any lure for him.

Is it for nothing that Sri Aurobindo, his father, his Lord, embraced and kissed him as his farewell boon on this earth?

You will also remember Champaklal's heartbreaking grief and loud lamentation when Sri Aurobindo breathed his last.

Let me add here one small but very meaningful event in which Champaklal was involved and the Mother was much concerned about him. He happened to contract a serious disease in one eye. I was asked to take him to the eye-specialist in the local hospital. The doctor diagnosed the case and said, "It is iritis, he has to be confined to his room and make as little movement as possible. It may take a serious turn unless proper steps are taken now." The doctor bandaged Champaklal's eye and asked us to come next day. Not to be able to attend on Sri Aurobindo or see him even was for poor Champaklal a severe punishment. I had to do his part of the job. I used to visit him in his room and bring the report. He presented a picture of utter dejection and lay down in bed almost lifeless. Two or three days passed in this manner without any improvement in his condition; it was rather getting worse. The Mother went to see him and reported with a grave

tone to Sri Aurobindo while he was taking his meal that Champaklal's condition was taking a serious turn. Unless he came out of his seclusion and joined his work, he would lose his eye. Sri Aurobindo simply listened and made no comment. I was alarmed. The remedy suggested by the Mother seemed to me very risky and unorthodox. Next day, however, he appeared and joined the work without any bandage. The Mother asked me to put some simple eye-drops. The iritis disappeared in two or three days and Champaklal was again Champaklal with a beatific smile. Now, here is a miracle I saw with my own eyes. The Mother flouting all medical wisdom presented the patient before the All-healer's silent Presence and cured him.

There is another example of how we enjoyed a forbidden delight that might meet your strong disapproval. Uday Shankar, the famous dancer, visited Pondicherry with his troupe. I think his new film *Kalpana* was being shown in the town. Naturally the whole Ashram was caught in a wave of excitement. The Mother's notice that no member should attend the show cooled down the simmering expectation. Myself and Champaklal, however, conspired to go out stealthily after our work was over and Sri Aurobindo had retired. Another attendant would do our duty. So, almost at dead of night, we slipped out. Everything was arranged for us. The cinema was shown in an open field and we were given an honoured place. But unfortunately we could not appreciate the film. I think it did not meet with success. The Mother must have heard about our escapade, but she gave us no hint.

†

I am starting the second part of Champaklal's life with a long digression. Its purpose will be obvious to those who know that Leonardo da Vinci was no other than Sri Aurobindo himself in a past life. And the boy who became so fond of him could only be Champaklal. The audience will find ample traits of similarity between Champaklal and the boy. I'll start quoting from the famous book, *The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci*.

On the evening before Leonardo had set out for the villa of Melzi, in Vaprio, Girolanno Helzi had forsaken his service at the court of the Sforzas after the death of his young wife and had settled with his son in an isolated villa at the foot of the Alps. There he had formed a group of friends, philosophers, esoteric scientists, alchemists. Leonardo used to visit them and give Helzi the greatest joy.

Timid, as bashful as a girl, the boy for a long while fought shy of him. But once, entering the artist's room on an errand from his father, he saw the varicoloured glasses with the aid of which the artist was studying the laws of supplementary colours. Leonardo invited him to look through them; the

amusement was to the boy's liking.

In the village school of the old abbot of a neighbouring cloister, Don Lorenzo, Francesco studied but lazily,—he memorized Latin grammar with aversion; at the sight of the ink-smeared, green covers of his arithmetic book his face would lengthen. (It reminds us of Champaklal's bitter school-days.) But Leonardo's science was such that it seemed to the boy as interesting as a fairy-tale. The appliances of mechanics, of optics, of acoustics, of hydraulics, attracted him just as though they were living, magic toys. From morn till night he would not tire of listening to Leonardo's stories. With grown-ups the artist was secretive, inasmuch as he knew that every careless word might draw suspicions or a sneer upon his head. With Francesco he spoke of all things trustingly and simply; not only did he teach him, but, in his turn, learned from him. And, recalling the word of the Lord: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," he would add. "Nor shall ye enter into the kingdom of knowledge."

On one occasion the boy asked him if it were true of the stars, that they were like diamonds, set by God within the crystal spheres of the heavens, which, revolving, draw them along in their progress and produce music. The master explained that, according to the law of friction, the spheres, revolving for the duration of so many millennia, with unbelievable rapidity, would have fallen apart, their crystal edges would have been eroded, their music would have ceased, and the "irrepressible dancers" would have ceased moving.

Having pierced with a needle a sheet of paper, he allowed him to look through the opening Francesco beheld the stars, devoid of their rays, resembling radiant, round, infinitely small dots or globules.

"These dots," said Leonardo, "are enormous; many of them worlds hundreds, thousands of times larger than ours; which, however, is by no means worse, nor more insignificant, than all the other heavenly bodies. The laws of mechanics,—mechanics, discovered by the intelligence of man, and sovereign on earth,—govern world and suns."

Much of what he said Francesco did not understand. But when, throwing back his head, he would contemplate the starry sky, he was overcome with awe.

"But what is *there*,—beyond the stars?" he would ask.

"Other worlds, Francesco, other stars, which we see not."

"And beyond them?"

"Still others "

"Yes, but in the end,—in the very end?"

"There is no end "

"There is no end?" repeated the boy, and Leonardo felt Francesco's hand tremble within his, in the light of the unmoving flame of a lamp burning on a little table in the midst of the astronomical instruments he saw that the child's face had become covered with sudden pallor.

“But, where,” asked he, slowly, with growing amazement, “where is paradise then, Messer Leonardo,—the angels, the martyrs, the Madonna, and God the Father, sitting on His throne,—and the Son, and the Holy Ghost?”

Leonardo would keep quiet.

In the last days of March, more and more alarming tidings began to arrive at the Villa Melzi. The troops of Louis XII had crossed the Alps.

Rumours of war (with France) and of politics reached like a faint, muffled rumbling to the villa at Vaprio

Thinking neither of the French king nor of the Duke, Leonardo and Francesco rambled over the neighbouring knolls, dales and groves. At times they climbed upward, following the current of the river, into the wooded hills. Here Leonardo would hire labourers and make excavations, searching for ante-diluvian sea-shells, and petrified marine animals and water plants

On one occasion, returning from a ramble, they sat down to rest under an old linden-tree, on a cliff over the steep bank of the Adda. The endless plain, with its ranks of wayside poplars and elms, was spread out at their feet

He indicated the plain spreading out before them with an all-embracing gesture.

“All that you see here, Francesco, was at one time the bed of an ocean, covering a great part of Europe, Africa and Asia. The marine animals which we find in these mountains bear witness to those times when the summits of the Apennines were the islands of a great sea, and over the plains of Italy, where the birds soar now, the fishes were swimming ”

Not far from the settlement of Mandello, near the foot of Monte Campione, there was an iron mine

A subterranean passage, steep, dark, resembling a well, with half-ruined slippery steps, descending in the direction of the lake, led to the shafts. The guide went on ahead with a lanthorn, Leonardo, bearing Francesco in his arms, followed him. The boy, despite the supplications of his father and the dissuasions of the master, had won his way after much imploring to be taken along.

The passage constantly grew narrower and steeper. They had counted up to two hundred steps, but the descent still continued, and it seemed as if it would never end.

“Afraid?” he asked with a kindly smile, feeling Francesco snuggling up to him.

“Nay, 'tis naught,—with you I am never afraid ”

And, after a silence, he added quietly:

“Is it true, Messer Leonardo, what father says,—that you are going away soon?”

“Yes, Francesco ”

“Whither?”

“To Romagna, to serve Cesare, Duke of Valentino.”

“To Romagna? Is that far?”

“ ’Tis several days’ journey from here.”

“Several days!” repeated Francesco. “That means we shall never see each other again?”

“Nay, why should that be? I shall come to you, just as soon as I can.”

The boy grew pensive; then, with both arms, in impulsive tenderness, he embraced Leonardo’s neck, snuggled up to him still closer, and said in a whisper:

“Oh, Messer Leonardo, take me,—take me with you!”

“Whatever art thou saying, lad? How can it be? A war is going on there... ”

“Let there be war! I tell you that I fear naught when I am with you! . I shall be your servant, I shall clean your clothes, sweep your rooms, give the horses their feed, and also, as you know, I can find sea-shells, and imprint plants on paper with charcoal. Why, you yourself were saying but the other day that I do it well I shall do everything—everything that you may order me to do,—like a grown-up Oh, do but take me, Messer Leonardo,—do not forsake me!...”

“But what of your father Messer Girolamo? Or dost thou think that he will let thee go with me?”

“He will let me go, he will! I shall wheedle it out of him. He is kind. He will not refuse me if I cry. . Well, if he will not let me go, then I shall slip away on the sly.... Only do you tell me that I may. . Yes?”

“Nay, Francesco, I know that thou dost but say so; yet thou thyself wilt not leave thy father. He is old, poor fellow ...”

“Poor fellow, yes,—I am a poor fellow.... And yet you too.... Oh, Messer Leonardo, you do not know,—you think me a little fellow. But I know everything! Aunty Bonna says that you are a wizard, and the schoolmaster, Don Lorenzo, also says that you are wicked, and that I may send my soul to perdition with you Once, when he spoke ill of you, I answered him so that he almost gave me a beating And they all fear you. But I fear you not, because you are better than all of them, and I want to be with you always!....”

Leonardo stroked his head in silence; and, for some reason, there came back to him how several years ago he had been carrying in the very same way the little lad who had taken the part of the Golden Age at Moro’s festival.

Suddenly the clear eyes of Francesco dimmed, the corners of his mouth drooped, and he whispered.

“Well, what can I do? Let it be so, then,—let it be! For I know why you do not want to take me with you. You love me not.... Whereas I...”

He burst into uncontrollable sobs.

“Cease, lad. Art thou not ashamed? Better listen to what I shall tell thee When thou art grown up, I shall take thee as a pupil, and we shall live gloriously together, and shall never part again ”

Francesco raised his eyes to him, with the tears still glistening on his long lashes, and looked at him with an intent, prolonged gaze.

“Is that true,—you will take me? Perhaps you do but say so, in order to console me, but will forget about it later? . ”

“Nay, I promise thee, Francesco ”

“You promise? But after how many years?”

“Well, in seven or eight, when thou shalt be fifteen.. .”

“Seven....” Francesco checked up on his fingers “And we shall part no more?”

“Never, till very death ”

“ ’Tis well, then, if it be for certain,—but only if it be for certain; in seven years?”

“Yes, for certain ”

Francesco gave him a happy smile, caressing him with an especial caress he had invented,—which consisted of rubbing his cheek against Leonardo’s face, as cats do

“But do you know, Messer Leonardo,—’tis amazing! I had a dream once,—it seemed I was descending in darkness down long, long stairs,—just exactly as we are doing now, and it seemed as if I had always been doing so, and would always be doing it, and there was never an end to them. And someone whose face I could not see, was carrying me. But I knew that this person was my mother. And yet I do not remember her,—she died when I was very little. And here, now, is this dream, in reality Only it is you, and not my mother But with you I feel just as well as I did with her. Nor have I any fear.. ”

Leonardo glanced at him with infinite tenderness.

In the darkness the child’s eyes shone with a mysterious light. He offered his lips to Leonardo trustingly, as though really to a mother. The master kissed them,—and it seemed to him that in this kiss Francesco was surrendering his soul to him

Feeling the heart of the child beating against his, firm of step, with insatiable inquisitiveness, following the dim lanthorn, down the fearful stairs of the iron mine, Leonardo descended lower and lower into the subterranean murk.

*(To be continued)*

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1993)

The Mother's Message

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



AFTER the middle of 1970 the Mother's voice was not up to the mark to recite and give her comments on the passages of *Savitri*. So, instead of the work, she asked me to meditate with her.

During our meditation she gave me numerous magnificent experiences of my psychic being. In fact, she made my body conscious of my true being. When we meditated I became aware of its movements. The spontaneous response of

my psychic to the Mother's Light and the sweet warmth of her Love were constantly felt.

Indeed, I was having the most blissful and soothing feeling throughout. No words can do justice to the splendour and sublimity of the perfect interchange between the Supreme and the psychic.

Each experience sent quivers of ecstasy through my whole being.

I may attempt to express one of my experiences during our meditation.

It was 18th August 1972. I was called at 10 45 a.m. I offered a garland of Jasmynes and five flowers of the Indian Cork Tree. "Transformation—The goal of Creation."

The Mother kept one of these five and gave me back the other four, along with a lovely bouquet of white flowers of various kinds—and the inevitable white roses!

While handing me the bouquet, our fingers touched. Immediately I felt intense vibrations spreading all over my body. My psychic was wide awake. ♣

I sat near the Mother's feet. No sooner did I settle than my subtle eyes opened and I saw the flame of my psychic being. It was rising from the heart towards the head. I felt concretely the sensation of vibrating light in both these places. My eyes were half closed. I was drowsy and intoxicated by the ethereal atmosphere. I saw the Mother in meditation with her open eyes watching all the movements of my psychic being. First she looked at my heart because the flame was there; after that, over my head and then gradually on my right side because the psychic stood there. Wherever on my body her gaze fell, I felt it was charged with her radiating vibrations and force. I was totally oblivious of my existence—I became absolutely quiet and cool. Everything around me was blank and silent—everything was marvellously peaceful.

Now the Mother was completely indrawn.

Suddenly it chimed 11 o'clock, she awoke from her profound trance and held my hands in hers. I kissed her hands. She smiled and caressed my head. She was extremely happy and passed some delightful remarks about my psychic being which I failed to grasp utterly. For I was still dazed by the heavenly atmosphere. I truly wished this experience to be prolonged. I did not want to get out of this extraordinary state nor did I wish to leave the Mother's room. I realised how one would feel when one's mind becomes silent.

As soon as I emerged from the Mother's room, my eyes brimmed with tears because I had still to face the roughness of the physical world—the harsh reality.

I recalled one of the Mother's letters dated 27 11 1956 which she had written to me on a pretty card showing snow-clad mountains and underneath them a small church.

"Bonjour

To my dear little child, to my sweet Huta. Here is the pure silence of



the heights—when the soul comes to the front and the mind becomes quiet and still

My love and blessings along with the Divine's Grace are constantly with you."

I wrote to the Mother "I feel sure you will make my soul attain the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Love." The Mother assured me.

"Yes "

Once again I expressed my feeling: "Mother, I shall have to reach my goal—otherwise my soul will never keep quiet." Her reply was.

"Yes, your soul wants the whole being to be free "

I also prayed ardently "O Mother, let it be realised I am yours in all love." She promised me.

"This is exactly what I am doing  
With a ceaseless love."

From the beginning of 1956 the Mother started introducing my soul to me. She saw innumerable visions of my true being during our meditation in her Playground-room. She related them to me by means of her sketches and asked me to paint them according to her instructions. Later she gave significance to each of them.

Little by little I became conscious of my psychic being. The Mother never said anything which she did not mean. She did not go back on her promises either.

I am afraid I have still much to assimilate—still more and more to aspire for the perfection of my whole being—still to pray intensely to the Supreme to make me worthy of her Grace and Love. The wonderful inner knowledge is not sufficient for my soul. Indeed the Mother gave me the golden opportunity to work with her—to sit near her and meditate. I am eternally grateful to her.

My memory travels back to one of her letters dated 12-10-1964

"Dear little child of mine,

With all my heart I want you conscious, peaceful and happy, *one with your soul*

And my force and help are with you to make this possible.

In the Lord's love."

I did the sketches of my psychic being and the Mother in meditation. The Mother saw them and approved  
In future I intend to paint these wonderful experiences.

r

Apart from *Savitri* paintings—*Meditations on Savitri* and the paintings of *About Savitri*,—the Mother made me do many other pictures. Some of them she used as Christmas and New Year cards by giving them appropriate significances.

r

I wrote the following letter to the Mother

26 11 '72

My dearest Mother,

Last year on 25th December You gave this message

‘The time has come for the rule of falsehood to end

“In the Truth alone is salvation ”

But at present the falsehood is in full swing While observing and seeing things all around, one feels that nothing is happening because everything goes wrong all the time and the falsehood always wins!

No doubt, the Lord’s Action is very powerful and it compels everybody to change their consciousness At least I feel it myself and it is a great help to know each time what is wrong and what is right

Mother, there is nothing unknown to You And I feel that the Ashram is the foundation of the Future World I am sure that You and the Lord will certainly make the Truth win

Finally, I pray to You on my behalf and on behalf of true people “Let Your Victory come soon and let Your Truth and Love reign in this world for ever ”

With love and kisses,

Yours,  
Huta

The Mother answered

“Before dying falsehood rises in full swing Still people understand only the lesson of catastrophe Will it have to come before they open their eyes to the truth?”

I ask an effort from all so that it has not to be.

It is only the Truth that can save us; truth in words, truth in action,

truth in will, truth in feelings.

It is a choice between serving the Truth or being destroyed ”

\*

Often the Mother warned me against people and asked me not to mix with them—not to be social. Once she advised me:

“Child, I am not social, and I don’t want you to be social ”

I asked her: If I ignored people, wouldn’t they feel hurt or offended? She simply cut me short:

“Child, have you come for me or for them?”

From that day onwards I have been obeying her

During the year 1971-72 the Mother cautioned me two or three times:

“My child, if you wish to remain happy and peaceful in the Ashram, do three things: Don’t hear, don’t speak, don’t see.” (*This she showed me with gestures*)

Even if people back-bite, do injustice and be unreasonable, I never have ill-will towards them and will never dream of it.

In August 1966, an American lady, who used to teach painting in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, came to me time and again in order to have ideas about how the Mother taught me painting.

One day she came and told me:

“Huta, some people speak ill of you. They say you are unfaithful to the Mother—not refined. It is not advisable to be friendly with you because of your notorious nature.”

I listened to her attentively. I smiled and suggested to her:

“Look, Alice, I don’t know anything about myself. If you wish to know my real character, please seek an opinion of me from the Mother who is omniscient ”

Ah! she really wrote to the Mother all that she had told me. Afterwards I received from Alice the following letter dated 31-8-1966.

“Dear Huta,

The reply came from the Mother this morning. She has written: ‘Be a friend of Huta without fear. If you love me, she will love you.

‘Some people have the bad habit of talking too much. When you talk much you are bound to speak nonsense

‘The best is not to listen to them and attach no importance to what they say.

‘When one has a big heart, one can have friends and be faithful to them—provided the friends love the Divine.

Blessings ’

“So there you are! Isn’t it beautiful and of course (as I knew) you were *right*

“Tomorrow I will try the new paints from you. And you’ll see the result (may be) then.

With love

Alice.”

As a matter of fact, I do not depend on people’s judgment and opinion. They praise one day and the next day they abuse me. That is what I have experienced throughout my life

I also came across some people who ran with the hare and hunted with the hounds. They are full of revengefulness, full of hatred, full of jealousy, full of prejudice, full of ill-will. In their eyes I am always queer, tiresome, egoistic and a bad-tempered person. They gave me all the adverse super-adjectives they could summon under the sun. They have a fixed rigid idea and impression of me which is uncomplimentary

I have never known what their grievance against me is and why their outlook is so jaundiced

This quotation from Francis Bacon is really striking:

“A man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green.”

The Mother has stated:

“Those who want to follow the true path will naturally be exposed to the attacks of the forces of ill-will which not only do not understand, but generally hate that which they do not understand ”

Most fortunately, I am always protected. One of the Mother’s letters to me dated 16-6-65 is so true:

“Your soul is there conscious and active in your body, and your soul is

strong with the Lord's strength. That will protect you against any bad-will that others can throw upon you...."

People expect too much from me, because they think that since I have worked with the Mother for many years I should do this and should not do that.

They also thought me unruly—they charged me falsely with taking indiscriminately the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother without the Trustees' permission and manipulating things to make money as if I had never seen money in my life!

They added that I am obsessed by the spiritual treasures and the copyright given to me graciously by the Mother.

Also, some remarked.

"Huta was working with the Mother, and now the Mother is no more, so Huta is enjoying herself fully."

How touching! Indeed, I am enjoying myself fully by doing the Mother's most wonderful work with a clear conscience.

Nevertheless, I am really thankful to these people because they have made me turn exclusively to the Supreme Lord for my support.

In fact, I have never interfered and never will in people's lives and work—nor am I interested in their affairs. Why then are they crossing my path? The simplest rule for all is:

"LIVE AND LET LIVE."

\*

We always talk about the polluted air and atmosphere, but what about the inner pollution—jealousy, narrow-mindedness, pettiness, hatred, prejudice, ill-will which belong to the lower vital?

The true being in us is suffocated, strangled to death by this poisonous smoke of lower elements.

This mentality is beyond my comprehension.

The Mother once wrote to me:

"Jealousy is a deadly poison that is fatal to the soul."

In one of her letters to me the Mother said:

"Why do you listen to all the rubbish people say? They are full of mischief and throw their poison on everybody."

One thing you must know and never forget—it is that all that is *true* and *sincere* will always be kept—only what is false and insincere will disappear.

So in the measure in which your need for me is sincere and genuine, it will be fulfilled.”

Another letter of hers to me was very reassuring:

“Of one thing you can be sure, if I was not certain that you will reach your goal I would never scold you, because it would be useless—my scolding is a proof of my conviction that you will succeed.

My love and blessings are always active with you ”

The Mother wrote to me in 1967:

“Nobody knows the exact truth of things here. And each one speaks as if he knows, but in fact, nobody knows

If the truth were revealed one day to all, most of the people here, like everywhere, would be terrified by the enormity of their ignorance or their wrong interpretations

So I advise all to be in peace and to abstain from all judgment—it is safe ”

She also wrote to me in 1966.

“Goodness! why do you listen to all these stories? They simply spoil your mind and your *Sadhana*. But you must know that in each and everyone of my children, whenever they talk, speak or act under the impulse of falsehood, it acts on my body like a blow

So do not listen to all these stories and think only of the Love Divine.”

*(To be continued)*

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## AND SO THIS HAPPENS

*(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1993)*

THE professor enquired whether the editor intended to record the entire talk in one sitting.

The editor promptly answered, 'If this is not inconvenient to you, I should like to complete the task this very day.'

'All right,' said the professor, 'but I have got nothing to think anew, for all my thoughts and views and explanations will be in the light of Sri Aurobindo. I shall only endeavour to put them in such a way that your readers may feel interested to go through his original works. So, let me start

'Today's problems to which you have drawn our attention and which have stirred the very foundation of our society by breaking down all social standards, and devaluating some eternal human values, are so dangerous to the moral progress of the race that we cannot remain helpless spectators. Each one of us must rise to the occasion with the utmost zeal to find ways and means to radically cure all sorts of social ills. You have come forward with a view to getting this difficult but acutely needful work done as far as possible through your media. I personally appreciate your noble venture and feel happy to extend my hand of cooperation for its success.

'From the discussion that I have had with you on the issue I have understood that you have certain preconceived ideas about what would be the outcome of your appraisal and how you will proceed thereafter. Perhaps I'm not wrong in my assumption. For, those who ponder over this type of social problems,—you may call them social thinkers or reformers,—generally hold the view that the root cause of all such problems lies in the structural weakness of the three pillars on which the society stands: Education, Administration and Economy. They are of the opinion that if each individual in the society is properly educated, then he himself can remove the darkness from every nook and corner of the society, similarly if Administration is made free from the chronic maladies of injustice, nepotism and corruption etc., then the State can serve its people more genuinely and confidently. They believe that if the economic policy of the government is changed to ensure full employment then there will be no unrest, no psychological derangement of the youth. Every member of the society will be able to live in peace and prosperity. All these propositions they place before you with such strong logic that you cannot but be convinced. In that case I'm afraid your toilsome endeavour may prove to be futile. For changes in the machinery and the policy and the methodology are not the sole things needed.'

'Sir, I've got one point,' abruptly interrupted the editor. 'Apart from the three pillars that you have just indicated there are certain other factors that generate conflicts and clashes between individuals, groups and communities

They may be regional in character, but their actions impede the progress of the nation; they are linguistic and ethnic issues, religious fundamentalism, racism etc.'

'Yes, I do admit this,' said the professor, 'but I do not like to go into such details, because they are all related in some way or other to the three main factors which I was explaining. Please go deep into the issues and seize what I mean to say.'

'Yes, sir, that's right.'

The professor continued with a smile, 'Now let us examine how education can help in moulding our society. Perhaps you are aware that, for some time past, the thinkers and educationists of the world have been brooding very deeply over all the problems that are engulfing the spheres of education. Many of them want a total breakthrough. They have been relentlessly trying to assess the position correctly through commissions set up from time to time since the beginning of the present century. In India we have seen that the Government after independence has been following the same principle to bring about a total change in the policy and system of education for the purpose of creating a new and prosperous India. But our experience says that the new system may not yield the desired result, because the fundamental aim of education, as the root-term "educate" itself denotes, is to draw out what is within, to enable man to become actually in his outer life what he potentially is, that is to say, to make him capable of actualising his potentialities. Since it is man and no other creature who needs education to grow to his full capacity, it is necessary to know him fully before determining the system of education that has to be inculcated in him. Man is an evolutionary being. He was not in the past as he is at present. It follows that what he has now become he will not remain in the future. He is now a thinking animal. He has to become a real man, in other words, he has to attain to manhood. But that is not his final aim, he has to rise above manhood to manifest the divinity in him. So man is not matter, not even mind, but an evolving god.

'The primary aim of education, as we all know, is to make man perfect. And a society composed of perfect men is always free from all ills. Then why are we here to deal with the burning question of social maladies? Are there not educated men in our society? Was not Neelesh—the hero of the story—a university student? He received education but education could not make him perfect. It is our long cherished hope that through education man can be changed. But we see that it has failed to fulfil our expectation. Why? There must be some defect or lapse somewhere in the system itself. It may be that the policy-makers have not taken sufficient care, or they are quite ignorant of the defect. Whatever the cause may be, the result is no doubt perilous.

'Here I once again recall Sri Aurobindo. Please listen.' Saying this, the professor started reading out relevant passages from *The Life Divine*:

"A perfected human world cannot be created by men or composed of men who are themselves imperfect. Even if all our actions are scrupulously regulated



by education or law or social or political machinery, what will be achieved is a regulated pattern of minds, a fabricated pattern of lives, a cultivated pattern of conduct, but a conformity of this kind cannot change, cannot recreate the man within. ””

“If we inquire how this radical change can be brought about, two agencies seem to be suggested, the agency of a greater and better mental knowledge, right ideas, right information, right training of the social and civic individual and the agency of a new social machinery which will solve everything by its magic cutting humanity into a better pattern. But it has not been found in experience, whatever might have once been hoped, that education and intellectual training by itself can change man, it only provides the human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego.”<sup>6</sup>

‘Since I’m an educator by profession, it is natural that I give much stress on this factor. So please allow me to be a wee bit elucidative.’

The editor nodded his head, with a smile.

‘Now-a-days we forget the message of our sages when we talk on education; so our students have but little chance to think what is actually meant by “Know thyself”. They have accepted the message of the thinkers—“Educate thyself.” Personally I believe that the motto of our present education can be found if the two messages are read together—that is to say—“Educate thyself to know thyself”, to this we may add, “so that thou mayst progress and the world may prosper.” It means then that education remains incomplete if the educatee fails to realise his own self which is necessary for his inner development and progress and for the world’s prosperity. It is interesting to note that the thinker’s message has made the educatee aware of his duty of imparting his knowledge to others. This is what we call general education. We may recall once again a few words of Sri Aurobindo’s on this education:

“The idea of the necessity of general education means the recognition by the race that the mind and not the life and the body are the man and that without the development of the mind he does not possess his true manhood. The idea of education is still primarily that of intelligence and mental capacity and knowledge of the world and things, but secondarily also of moral training and, though as yet very imperfectly, of the development of the aesthetic faculties.”<sup>7</sup>

‘You must admit,’ continued the professor, ‘that the modern commercial civilisation which now governs humanity wants man to become an intelligent thinking being, moralised—capable of controlling his instincts, impulses and emotions by his will and his reason. He should be acquainted with all that he should know of the world and his past, and organise his social and economic life by that knowledge. Obviously the idea gives much stress on capacity and utility and a very diminished stress on beauty and refinement as compared to the ancient Greek civilisation.

‘But, as Sri Aurobindo has indicated, “we may suppose that this is only a

passing phase, the lost elements are bound to recover their importance as soon as the commercial period of modern progress has been overpassed ""

'But what is commercial civilisation?' asked the editor.

The professor replied, 'That may be discussed later when I deal with the machinery of economics.'

'On several other occasions,' continued the professor, 'Sri Aurobindo has also explained why the system fell short of yielding the expected result '

The professor then took up *The Human Cycle* and read out passages from its 21st chapter

"... the radical defect of all our systems is their deficient development of just that which society has most neglected, the spiritual element, the soul in man which is his true being. Even to have a healthy body, a strong vitality and an active and clarified mind and a field for their action and enjoyment, carries man no more than a certain distance, afterwards he flags and tires for want of real self-finding, a satisfying aim for his action and progress."

"It is then understood that to fulfil the desires and demands of body, life and mind cannot be the aim of human life because these three things do not make the sum of a complete manhood ""

'Therefore through physical, vital and mental education man cannot achieve his aim. If emotional, moral and religious systems are added, still you find that the aim is not achieved; because, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, "All these things human society has developed, but none of them has saved it from disillusionment, weariness and decay ""

'He has also indicated that the modern "discovery that education must be a bringing out of the child's own intellectual and moral capacities to their highest possible value and must be based on the psychology of the child-nature was a step forward towards a more healthy because a more subjective system, but it still fell short because it still regarded him as an object to be handled and moulded by the teacher, to be educated ""

'Here we find a very important aspect of which the system of our education falls short, and it is that the teacher's business is not to mould the child into a preconceived form but to help him find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. In another context Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, "In education our object is to know the psychology of the child as he grows into man and to found our systems of teaching and training upon that basis. The new aim is to help the child to develop his intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual being and his communal life and impulses out of his own temperament and capacities,—a very different object from that of the old education.""

'The present age is the age of Reason or the Rational age,' the professor continued. 'The system of education followed in this age may be termed rational education which means three things, as indicated by Sri Aurobindo: "first, to teach men how to observe and know rightly the facts on which they have to form

a judgement; secondly, to train them to think fruitfully and soundly, thirdly, to fit them to use their knowledge and their thought effectively for their own and the common good”<sup>14</sup>

‘But it is a fact that the systems actually followed in the most advanced countries of the world have not had the least relation to these necessities

‘As we all know, the social thinkers in this modern age always give much stress on the immediate necessity of the society to them the society is more important than the individual who is regarded as an instrument to serve the society. He must not have any demand of his own. He has to live for the society, and the society in its turn is to fulfil his needs. So, in framing educational policy, it recommends such a system as is helpful to fit the individual to the needs of the society. After the Second World War almost all the underdeveloped countries including India have been striving to become developed like the countries of the West. They need thousands of scientists, engineers, architects and technicians, and therefore give exclusive stress on that direction, ruthlessly neglecting the soul of the child. And accordingly the society or the State puts special emphasis on the spread of technical education for the outer development of the country, ignoring the necessity of the inner development of its individuals.

‘Since man has animality in him which he has inherited from his ancestors, his animal instinct has been dominating his nature since his appearance on earth. He has humanity and divinity within him as well, but he has to awaken and develop them by his own effort. Here lies the necessity of what we call a true education, which alone can help him in this endeavour

‘Because he has divinity in him his thirst for “Light” is very intense and found to be perpetual. It may be that he is not fully aware of it; but he realises that what he has owned through physical power, gained through vital impulse and emotion and achieved through the mind’s culture have not been able to give him satisfaction. Why? Because his outer life is not his whole life, he has his inner life as well and that life too has its needs to be fulfilled. Whatever he achieves through physical-vital-mental education pertains to his outer existence and has but little concern with his inner world. Therefore, along with physical-vital-mental education he needs psychic and spiritual education. It is unfortunate that in no country, whether developed or developing, are followed these two systems of education so essential for man’s inner development. For most people still hold the view that spirituality has nothing to do with our day-to-day life; it is something pertaining to the world beyond. Instead they introduce some sort of moral and religious education and believe that this will help the child to become religious and moralised. In fact this moral and religious training is also imbibed by the child through its mind, so it is part of mental education. And we know that education of the mind does not necessarily change the heart. So we see that the primary aim of education is not fulfilled, the man is not changed. We may conclude then that any system of education that ignores the soul element in

man and does not provide him with sufficient scope of developing his inner nature cannot be regarded as a True Education, and therefore must fall short of achieving the result that the society at present is badly in need of

'Now perhaps you understand how I intend to deal with the issue.' The professor cast a glowing look

And at once the editor replied with applause, 'Yes, sir, your approach now seems to me very convincing. Your analytical explanation not only reveals the deeper aspects of the problem but also indicates the clue to its radical solution.'

*(To be continued)*

SAMAR BASU

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## HE

HE was cloaked in robes of mystic Light,  
His lotus-eyes were oceans of Might.  
From His royal head flowed down his hair,  
Silvery white, like the Ganges fair.  
His lips withheld his dynamic Will,  
He was seated above, aloof and still.

He saw this world through dreamy eyes  
Helplessly whirl across the skies  
Towards a dark and dreadful Nought—  
The nescient void of this human lot.  
No star flickered, no path unfurled  
To save this weary wandering world.

Even the gods who walk this sphere  
For moments only can dally here,  
To hoe and sow the Spirit's seed,  
Unreckoning man's devouring greed.  
Hard is the task to kindle the faith  
In a life that is wedded to sombre death.

Then something stirred in His bosom of Love,  
A flutter soft as the wings of a dove,  
A heartbeat of divine Compassion  
Throbbled to save this sweet creation.  
The soil He blessed and kissed the skies  
And smiled on earth with lotus-eyes.

The hearts of men He now embraced;  
Deep within, the flame was placed.  
Man put on the mantle of God,  
A golden sun in this human clod.  
A pointed flame of sweet Delight  
Dispelled at last the terrible Night.

KRIPA ANURU

# QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

## PART II

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1993)

### KEPLER'S CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASTRONOMY

OUR understanding of the modern universe is greatly shaped by Newton's law of gravitation. And Newton himself acknowledged that his contributions derived immensely from the works of these three giants—Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo. Thus, Kepler's role in moulding human thought is extremely significant, we shall soon see that his three laws of planetary motion are more than just scientific landmarks. A hint to this effect is found in the words of Arthur Koestler: "On the surface, Kepler's laws look as innocent as Einstein's  $E=mc^2$ , which does not reveal, either, its atom-exploding potentialities."

Kepler was a life-long Copernican, in *Cosmological Mysteries*, his first major publication, he develops in favour of the sun-centred universe numerous arguments in a more detailed and comprehensive manner than Copernicus did. Although he is full of praise for the new planetary model, we do find him quite critical of Copernicus's mathematical system. Kepler emphasises: "Copernicus had never recognised his own riches and after the first bold step in the transposition of the sun and the earth, he stayed too close to Ptolemy." True, Copernicus had failed to treat the earth as just another planet and had attributed to it a number of special functions. For example, in the Ptolemaic system the planes of all planetary orbits intersected in the centre of the earth, Copernicus preserved this in a rather subtle manner. In his new model the planetary orbits intersected in the centre of the earth's orbit; and not in the sun which—as indicated—did not coincide.

On the other hand, Kepler recognised the fact that the earth deserved no such special attention. This new position which formed part of the rudder of his research enabled him to further eliminate a number of problems that had stifled astronomy over the past millennium. To enumerate a few: the number of circles required for computation got reduced considerably; several apparent variations of eccentricity vanished, Mars, which had been running on five circles, now required only a single eccentric circle.

It was Kepler's persistent attitude of putting Ptolemy, the earth, and the sun in their right perspective, which finally paid off richly. On the theoretical level it was a significant breakthrough as astronomy was released from the bonds of theology and became a part of the new sciences (physics); on the practical level, that of mathematical computations, the problem of the planets also finally got

resolved. Copernicus's cumbersome system was transformed into a "supremely simple and accurate technique for computing planetary positions"

It took Kepler eighteen long and laborious years to achieve this epoch-making success. In retrospect it is, however, seen that he faltered on a few occasions, committed errors and went astray; his zigzag course of reasoning was rather exasperating and tedious.

Kepler's professional career began in the year 1600 when, as a young student of Brahe, he was assigned the study of the motions of Mars. Mars, as we have already noted, was an extremely difficult planet to tackle; the pronounced irregularities it demonstrated had intrigued astronomers ever since the days of Ptolemy and had been a challenge to the ingenuity of the ablest minds. Ptolemy's explanations were far from satisfactory and Copernicus could not improve the situation. Even Brahe's theory, formulated after having carried out a series of special observations, had failed to reach the desired standards of accuracy; thus it fell upon Kepler—in the light of Brahe's observations—to sort out the challenging task.

Before we proceed further we should indicate that Kepler was an ardent member of the neo-Platonic and neo-Pythagorean schools of thought. He strongly believed that "mathematical simplicity was the basis of all natural phenomena" and, just like all other Pythagoreans, had an immense reverence for the sun. For him the sun alone appears, "by virtue of his dignity and power", suited to move the planets "and worthy to become the home of God himself, (if) not to say the first mover". It was this strong mystical neo-Platonic faith that formed the psychological basis and drive of his research, in particular, it proved to be crucial in the discovery of his second law which says that in a fixed period the area of the orbit swept by the planet is constant.

Coming to Kepler's study of the motion of Mars. He was prompt to recognise that attacking the problem along the traditional lines was of no use; so he discarded a whole load of ancient beliefs and made three revolutionary innovations. They are: 1) Copernicus, influenced by Ptolemy, had postulated that the Martian orbit oscillates in space and this orbit depended on the position of the Earth. Kepler called this idea "monstrous" and proved that the orbital planes did not oscillate but formed very small angles with the plane of the earth's orbit. 2) In the Copernican model the centre of the universe was the centre of the earth's circular orbit, and not the sun. Driven by the notion of physical reality, coupled with his neo-Platonic bias, Kepler objected to this. For him the sun governed the planetary motions and thus the system should be centred around it. 3) A most fundamental axiom that had gripped cosmology from Plato to Tycho Brahe was *uniform motion in perfect circles*. Once again, guided by physical considerations rather than mythological and theological ones, Kepler retained circular motions but discarded the notion of uniform speed. He argued that if the sun was responsible for the motion of the planets, then its force would act more

powerfully on the planet when closer; thus the speed of the planet would be dependent on its distance from the sun

After having made these 3 drastic moves, Kepler considered the victory to be round the corner. His next task therefore was to define completely the various features of the Martian orbit: for example, the size of the orbit, its radius, the distance of the planet from the sun at perihelion and aphelion etc. Basically, two orbits had to be worked out, that of the Earth, and that of Mars as seen from the Earth. For this objective he selected a few convenient observed positions from Brahe's impeccable data. The nature of the problem was such that it had to be solved only by a trial-and-error process, until the errors were within the acceptable limits. This was obviously an extremely laborious operation and Kepler covered 900 pages of calculation considering innumerable combinations of circles. He was forced to reject every system he tried, simply because it had "failed to confirm Brahe's brilliant observations" Such was his faith in the authenticity of his mentor's skill and power of observation. On one occasion, after some 70 odd attempts, with extreme delight he proclaimed victory, for the errors resulted in no more than  $2^\circ$  of an arc. But when he further tested this new system against a careful selection of data from Brahe's treasury, he found the error to be  $8^\circ$ . Such an error is well within the limits of measurement and would have easily satisfied all pre-Tychonic astronomers. But Kepler lived in a post-Tychonic era, a time when attitudes were changing. Moreover, Brahe's data was accurate to  $4^\circ$  of an arc and thus he discarded *this* system too. And by doing so he enormously gratified science.

Kepler might have been, in a sense, unaware of the magnitude of the contribution he was making to science, although from his point of view he was primarily paying tributes to his much-respected teacher, Brahe. This is what he writes: "... by divine kindness we were given an accurate observer such as Tycho Brahe, for us it is fitting that we should acknowledge this divine gift and put it to use... Henceforth I shall lead the way toward that goal according to my own ideas.... since it (is) not permissible to ignore them, those  $8^\circ$  point the road to a complete reformation of astronomy: they have become the building material for a large part of this work .".

So long cosmology was guided by geometric rules, and minor discrepancies were settled by adding yet another wheel to the system. But in Kepler's universe, where movements are caused by physical forces, such an approach is no longer possible. His "introduction of the physical causality into the formal geometry of the skies" was indeed a revolutionary step; it freed human thought from the stranglehold of all ancient dogmas, and at the same time forced into the sciences a new and rigorous discipline based on "irreducible, obstinate facts".

We may at this point recall the work of R.A. Millikan; he too—as we have said earlier—was committed to science in a similar manner and spent 10 long years to prove the validity of Einstein's theory of the photoelectric effect



The professional aspects—in a general way—connected with the crucial role Kepler played, not only in the developments of astronomy but in the development of scientific empiricism itself, will be taken up next

*(To be continued)*

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of 24 April 1993)

IN the early budding glory of the National College—in August 1906, and the months following—all was resplendent hope and towering expectation. And Sri Aurobindo came to the class-room trailing clouds of glory. He was an inspiring teacher—his presence was noble. A former pupil of the National College, Balaji Dev Sharma, has thus reminisced about the well-beloved and universally respected Sri Aurobindo: “He was clad in a shirt and a chaddar. I seem to recall his eyes, which were withdrawn from the outer world and concentrated on the inner spaces of his consciousness”<sup>1</sup> A former colleague at the National College, Pramathanath Mukhopadhyaya, later Swami Pratyagatmananda, has also recorded his memories of those times: “When he started his work in the heaving politics of Bengal, it was the blazing, fiery aspect of Rudra that stood out in front. But those who associated with him in the National College saw his serene figure, glowing with a mellow lustre. These two aspects were fused into one in Sri Aurobindo as in the third eye of Shiva”<sup>2</sup> Once at a meeting of the College staff, Sri Aurobindo took the chair, “his body framed in august silence”. The meeting discussed whether the Bankim Day should be included among the “days of national festival”, and the support to the proposal that came from Sri Aurobindo “had the benign vibrant blare of the trumpet of Shiva”. On the Saraswati puja day, again, Sri Aurobindo sat with the others in the courtyard, “silent and immobile, like Shiva in a trance”, and on that occasion, in a flash of intuition, Pramathanath saw Sri Aurobindo, not merely as a “Jnana Yogi and Karma Yogi,” but as “a Purna Yogi, lapped in the yogic sleep of deep meditation”<sup>3</sup> This was no learned colleague merely, this was an immaculate and ineluctable Power that had assumed a human form, this was the manifestation of “a resplendent divinity”

Sri Aurobindo resigned his post of Principalship of the College some time later. Many writers have recorded in their accounts that Sri Aurobindo resigned his post “for private reasons”. But Mr. & Mrs. Mukherjee report: “Hemendra Prasad Ghose records in his authoritative Bengali book ‘Congress’ (3rd edition, 1928, p. 205) that on June 8, 1907 the Government issued a letter to the Editor of the *Bande Mataram*, ‘warning him for using language which is a direct incentive to violence and lawlessness’. This was followed by press prosecutions which began from July, 1907 and the first Governmental attack was made on the *Jugantara* (vide the *Bengalee* and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, July 25, 1907). Apprehending his involvement in a case in the very near future as the Editor of the *Bande Mataram* and lest the National College should suffer on that account, Aurobindo abjured his connection with the Bengal National College by formally

resigning from his post of the Principal on 2nd August, 1907. On the 16th of that month, on hearing that a warrant had been issued for his arrest for having reproduced "translations of articles for which *Jugantara* was prosecuted, and also for having edited and published an article entitled 'India for Indians' in the *Dak* edition of *Bande Mataram* on the 28th July," Aurobindo out of his own accord went to the Detective Police Officer for surrendering himself. He was, however, released on Bail (vide the *Bande Mataram*, August 19, 1907) "1

The *Dawn* Magazine recorded the farewell meeting which was held at the National College and Sri Aurobindo's brief and moving speech which carried its accent of persuasion and authority to all time.

### Sri Aurobindo's Advice to National College Students

On the 22nd August last the students and teachers of the Bengal National College in meeting assembled expressed their heart-felt appreciation of the eminent qualities as a teacher of Srijut Aurobindo Ghose, their late beloved Principal, and recorded their deep regret at his resignation at the end of August 1907, of the high office which he had filled with such conspicuous ability and so much personal sacrifice to himself during the first year of the existence of the college. They also expressed their heart-felt sympathy with him in his present troubles in connection with his prosecution on the alleged charge of editing and publishing certain seditious articles in the *Bande Mataram*. It was further resolved that a photograph of the late principal be taken to be hung up in the college hall. Accordingly the next day Srijut Aurobindo Ghose was invited to come over to the college premises to be photographed. When the boys of the college and school came up to their beloved principal one by one, bowed at his feet and garlanded him it was a sight for the gods to see! This touching manifestation of the feeling in the hearts of the boys at this sudden shock of parting with their beloved principal under such peculiar circumstances, brought tears to the eyes of all present, as it revealed the true inwardness and sanctity of the bond of friendship that binds the pupil to his teacher. After the photographs were taken, Srijut Ghose was entertained by the boys to a sumptuous lunch in the Hindu style. The teachers then requested him on behalf of the boys to speak to them some words of advice. In response to the desire of the boys to hear from him he delivered in a voice choked with emotion a soul-stirring address of which we proceed to give the substance.

*Dawn*, September 1907

On 23rd August 1907 Sri Aurobindo said:

"I have been told that you wish me to speak a few words of advice to you. But in these days I feel that young men can very often give better advice than we

older people can give. Nor must you ask me to express the feelings which your actions, the way in which you have shown your affection towards me, have given rise to in my breast. It is impossible to express them. You all know that I have resigned my post. In the meeting you held yesterday I see that you expressed sympathy with me in what you call my present troubles. I don't know whether I should call them troubles at all, for the experience that I am going to undergo was long foreseen as inevitable in the discharge of the mission that I have taken up from my childhood, and I am approaching it without regret. What I want to be assured of is not so much that you feel sympathy for me in my troubles but that you have sympathy for the cause, in serving which I have to undergo what you call my troubles. If I know that the rising generation has taken up this cause, that wherever I go, I go leaving behind others to carry on my work, I shall go without the least regret. I take it that whatever respect you have shown to me today was shown not to me, not merely even to the Principal, but to your country, to the Mother in me, because what little I have done has been done for her, and the slight suffering that I am going to endure will be endured for her sake. Taking your sympathy in that light I can feel that if I am incapacitated from carrying on my work, there will be so many others left behind me. One other cause of rejoicing for me is to find that practically all my countrymen have the same fellow-feeling for me and for the same reason as yourselves. The unanimity with which all classes have expressed their sympathy for me and even offered help at the moment of my trial, is a cause for rejoicing, and for the same reason. For I am nothing, what I have done is nothing. I have earned this fellow-feeling because of serving the cause which all my countrymen have at heart.

The only piece of advice that I can give you now is—carry on the work, the mission, for which this college was created. I have no doubt that all of you have realised by this time what this mission means. When we established this college and left other occupations, other chances of life, to devote our lives to this institution, we did so because we hoped to see in it the foundation, the nucleus of a nation, of the new India which is to begin its career after this night of sorrow and trouble, on that day of glory and greatness when India will work for the world... There are times in a nation's history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end. If you will study, study for her sake, train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service.”

After his acquittal in the *Bande Mataram* case, Sri Aurobindo resumed his professorship—though not as the Principal. Due to his increasing involvement in politics, he was compelled to give less and less time to the college. At last, during the Alipore case, on the suggestion of the college authorities Sri Aurobindo

finally severed his connection with it. The National College thus lost its principal light-giver

*(To be continued)*

NILIMA DAS

#### REFERENCES

- 1 *Bulletin*, August 1964, p 110
- 2 *Bulletin*, February 1966, pp 98-100
- 3 *Ibid* , p 100
- 4 *Origins of the National Education Movement*, by Haridas & Uma Mukherjee, p 155
- 5 *Speeches*, Sri Aurobindo (Enlarged Edition, 1974), pp 6-9

## THE TWO

SURELY both the suns shine  
In the two skies, one deep blue  
The other of burnished golden hue  
I feel the warmth on my skin,  
I sense its glow behind my heart,  
They are too bright for my gaze to bear—  
Looking down I see the shadows  
Of my two beings

One of human form  
With lessening greys  
And diminishing distortions  
When the shadow would show  
A perfect silhouette of a God's body  
My eyes could then gaze  
On the sun's splendour  
Through the deepest blue

Yesterday under the service tree,  
At Their feet at the *Samadhi*,  
Within the fragrant freshness  
That is Their Presence,  
I had a glimpse,  
As if through a grey mist,  
Of the flame leaping from my heart  
Towards infinity,  
An eternal bliss that is so far  
Yet ever near

O glory, O beloved Goddess,  
O my secret self, hide no more  
From my gaze, the reach of my mind,  
The touch of my heartbeat.  
Appear, O bright flame of gold,  
In your true diamond radiance  
In all my worlds  
And fill the space  
Between the earth and the heavens

## UNFORGETTABLE

*(Continued from the issue of March 1993)*

### 13. Gurugriha

BIMAL failed to find God in Kumudbabu's Gurudev. But the latter, as a man, influenced and attracted him tremendously. He looked forward to meeting him again, but that could not come about due to his preoccupation with studies and classes.

Meanwhile his parents went to Gurudev's house and had mantra-diksha (initiation) from him. After that his father went twice. Bimal waited to accompany him during his next visit.

One day he overheard his father telling his mother, "I expect to go to Gurudev's house on the coming Sunday." "Why go so often? You have taken initiation from him, is not that enough?" "Yes, but I like the place and to listen to his talk on life, religion, karma, bhakti, etc." Just then Bimal came and said, "Father, this time I shall also accompany you." "Will you? Very good. He often speaks about you." Bimal felt exultant with the prospect of seeing the interesting man soon.

On Sunday they set out early in the morning, walked about four miles, then boarded a steamer to go to the adjacent subdivisinal town. Finally a short train-journey brought them to the district town where Gurudev lived. It was altogether an affair of four hours. From the station Bimal's father hired a hackney horse carriage (perhaps the rikshaw was not then available there). It took a lot of time to clear out of the hotchpotch of a clumsy and crowded station and come to an open place.

The vast blue above and the expanse of grassy green below bathed Bimal's heart with an unspeakable joy. The carriage rattled ahead beside the race-course till it entered a shadowy avenue with rows of sal trees on both sides. It was a very peaceful and solitary area which intensified Bimal's joy. Suddenly the carriage stopped in front of the surrounding wall of a palatial building.

"Why has it halted here?" asked Bimal. "We have already reached, it's Gurudev's house." "Oh! Is it so? I thought he lived in an ordinary house of corrugated tin." "Maybe formerly he lived that way. This house has recently been built for him by Ganguly Mashay, one of his wealthy disciples."

Father pushed open the massive main gate and they stepped onto a wide lawn. A multi-coloured flower-garden smiled at its right end and in the left corner stood a small temple with a verandah around. Inside the building, first there was a large hall with a number of almirahs with books, arranged along the walls. At the right end of it, on a big tiger skin sat Gurudev majestically. He had a milk-white dhoti on and his bare upper body shone with an inner light, as it

were. On the floor in front the devotees were assembled as usual and were listening spellbound to the divine discourse of the spirit-intoxicated Gurudev. Father found room and dropped himself down devotedly beside the others. Bimal was baffled and disappointed not to find in Gurudev the jolly and humorous man he had hoped to see. Suddenly Gurudev stopped talking, looked at him and said with a friendly smile, "Bimal, go upstairs and listen to the radio-programme with the children."

Bimal crossed the hall and entered the inner part of the house, and as he neared the staircase a fair gray-haired old man addressed him from behind, "Bimal, where are you going?" He turned round and was surprised, for he could not recognise the man. The man, however, smiled and affectionately placed his hands on Bimal's shoulders, "I know you, Bimal, I have seen you in Kumudbabu's house." "So, you know Gurudev well. May I ask you something?" "Oh yes, why not?" "Compared to you old people, Gurudev is young. How is it then, that he calls people like you by name and uses the term 'tui'?"<sup>1</sup>

"Because to the Guru, his disciples are like children. Moreover, our Gurudev, though younger in age, is older in wisdom and learning. At the age of eighteen, in the conference of religious debate at Nabadwip, he defeated all the ripe old Pundits of India and was awarded a title. Later, he was made the President of Kumbhamela at Hardwar. The scriptures and the other books in the almira's in the hall are at his fingertips."

Awe-stricken, Bimal stood speechless like a statue. The old man asked, "Bimal, where are you going?" "I was going to listen to a programme on the radio upstairs, but now I have lost interest in that. I would prefer to see the house." "Is that so? Come then, let's go around." They saw all the rooms both downstairs and upstairs and then went to the terrace. The view around from above—race-course, parks, avenues, ponds, etc.—appeared to Bimal very picturesque and charming.

They came down and made for the area behind the house. It was big and filled with the natural and random growth of various plants, trees, bushes, hedges, grasses and wild flowers. Pet birds and small animals had made it their natural habitat and were freely flying and roaming about to the joy of the onlookers. Bimal with the old man slowly stepped around along the gravel path and suddenly a squirrel climbed Bimal's body and perched on his head for a while and then jumped off onto the bushy gray hair of the old man.

From there they arrived at another place where cows, calves, goats and buffaloes were grazing. Bimal patted a tender calf and the cow with its long tongue licked his hand lovingly. It was a joyous experience indeed. Just then they heard the ringing of a bell. The old man got startled, "Oh, it's time, let's go." "Is there a school nearby, are you a teacher?" "Oh no, why should I be a teacher? It's lunch time, don't you feel hungry?"

<sup>1</sup> In Bengali "tui" is used in addressing children.



#### 14. Mid-day meal

On hearing the bell ring for lunch, the old man led Bimal towards the dining room. On the way, they came across Gurudev, who asked Bimal, "Bimal, did you not go upstairs for the radio-programme?" "No, I took a stroll around your beautiful house with this gentleman." "You are mistaken, Bimal, the house is not mine but of Ganguly Mashay, who escorted you. We simply stay here, that's all."

Astonished, Bimal turned his apologetic eyes towards the old man to see that he, with folded hands and half-closed eyes turned heavenward, was muttering devotionally, "Baba. Baba." Perhaps meaning thereby that everything belonged to Gurudev and nothing to his humble self.

The devotees sat in rows on the floor of the dining room for food. Bimal and Ganguly Mashay also followed suit. Gurudev stood aside to supervise and encourage the eaters. His graceful and beautiful goddess-like wife took charge of the serving. Everything went on smoothly. At one time Bishu-gunda was served with the head of a trout. At which Gurudev suggested, "Please serve Bimal also with a bigger head of trout." Bimal felt uneasy as he never liked to take the head of a fish. At once Gurudev changed his mind, and said, "No, not that, rather give him a good quantity of porridge." Bimal was happy, because he was very fond of porridge. But actually he found that he could not take even half the quantity which Bishu had taken. Gurudev commented, "Bimal, you are badly defeated again." He blushed and it was beyond him to guess why Gurudev treated him always as the rival of that ugly old man!

After lunch the devotees returned to the hall for rest and relaxation. Gurudev was to come down later for the second session of religious discourse. Meanwhile Bimal sought out Ganguly Mashay and entreated him, "Sir, I have got to know something more from you." "Yes, ask. Why do you hesitate, Bimal?" "Well, will you please let me know why Gurudev always treats me as a rival to Bishu-gunda?" "There is no why to it, it is his whim. And his whims we can never understand. We simply obey unquestioningly."

In the afternoon while Gurudev was sitting on the tiger-skin with Bishu nearby, Bimal and his father approached him to take leave. He asked them to sit down. That done, he said, "Bimal, you are strong, healthy and young, still you could not take as much porridge as Bishu the old man had taken, eh? Let that go, past is past. Now do one thing, compete with Bishu in wrist-wrestling. Let me see who wins." Bimal's whole being protested and he was going to open his mouth but then he remembered Ganguly Mashay's advice and kept silent. "What do you think, are you afraid of a defeat?"

His inner energy was stirred. Defeat? Impossible. He concentrated all his strength in his hand and caught hold of Bishu's. But strangely, there was no resistance, no effort on Bishu's part to win. His hand was quite soft and relaxed.

Bimal withdrew his own forthwith. Immediately he heard Gurudev's remark, "Bimal, this time also you are defeated." He was extremely annoyed and wanted to give a harsh reply when his attention was drawn to Gurudev's face. It was beaming with a naughty smile which magically revealed to him the ugly figure of his own ego, an aggressive young man attacking an old and docile devotee. He felt terribly ashamed and lowered his face.

Father bowed down to Gurudev's feet, he blessed him keeping his hand on his head. With subdued vigour and bent head Bimal followed his father out of the magnificent hall on their journey back home. Hardly had they stepped out of the door when Bimal heard Gurudev's voice, "Bimal, please come again."

### 15. Lost in the Wilderness

Gurudev's enigmatic smile brought about a change in Bimal's psychology. He returned home a changed young man. He lost interest in his studies, college and classes. Competition and progress in an academic career seemed to have no interest for him. He felt a seeking within for something more stable, true and permanent than these externalisms of life. But he had no clear idea or experience about it. He looked for suitable books which could give him some explanation of his uneasiness.

In such a state of mind he remembered Gurudev's words, "Bimal, come again." He pined for the peace and tranquillity of the hall of Gurudev's house and wanted to have a look at the books in the almirah. Next morning he set out for the place without even informing his parents.

He stepped into the hall to find everything like the time before. Gurudev was sitting on the tiger-skin with the devotees in front. Bimal was about to sit amidst them when he heard Gurudev's voice, "Bimal, please go to the back of the house to play with the boys." He went away as directed but came back soon after and sat quite close to Gurudev. Gurudev said, "Bimal, have you not gone to play with the boys?" "Yes, I went but did not like the hue and cry of the game. I prefer to silently sit here and listen to your talk." "What's the matter with you, Bimal, any problem?" "I don't find any interest in the ordinary external life. I feel a seeking within for something beyond and behind the visible world." "What's that? Can you give an example?" "No, I only feel a kind of restlessness and pang, and long for something which these tangible objects cannot give me."

Gurudev was introspective and spoke after a while, "Bimal, have you seen our temple?" "Yes, only from outside." "Doesn't matter, go there and wash the verandah of the temple with the water of the well behind it, will you?"

Bimal did as he was asked and it was quite tiring, but he felt better. He wanted to have the Darshan of the Idol inside. The door being locked he peered through the window. Strangely, there was no Idol at all on the big and beautiful altar. Instead, ten small golden thrones were placed in an orderly way from right

to left. On each of them was installed a black ball, the biggest being about the size of a tennis ball and the smallest like a marble. "What are these balls for?" Bimal reflected and the reply came in a flash, "Oh yes, these are called 'Salagram Sila' (black geodes worshipped as the symbols of Vishnu)." Such a one was there in the Laxmi Narayana temple of their own house. These are very rare and available only in the remotest recesses of the Himalayas, they say.

Tired and perspiring, Bimal went back to Gurudev. He said, "Bimal, you must be very hungry, take your food and go home by the earliest train available. Your parents are much worried by your absence."

Back home, he was taken to task by his parents. He told them the truth, "I have been to Gurudev's house." "You did not inform us. However, next Sunday we are going there. Monday being a holiday, we expect to stay there overnight." "In that case I shall go again with you."

On reaching there on Sunday, they could not find Gurudev in the hall. He was busy inside the temple, doing things best known to him only. He came out after more than an hour and gave Bimal some sweets and a banana to eat, saying, "This is enough, don't take anything else, today is your fasting day." He then brought out some books from the almirah and spread them in the sun on the open verandah. He said, "Bimal, now sit here and keep an eye on these books. If clouds overcast the sky and if it rains, call me immediately."

Bimal was happy to get a comparatively easy work on that day. He sat down quietly beside the books. But after some time he felt very sleepy, so much so that it became impossible for him to keep his eyes open, in spite of his utmost effort. It seemed that his consciousness was diving deep into a vast ocean of peace and tranquillity. Meanwhile, without his knowing it, clouds covered the sky and it started drizzling.

Gurudev's rebuke startled him, "I gave you a very simple work, that also you could not do properly, eh?" Bimal felt much embarrassed, but what could he do? He had tried his best to keep awake, but failed. He gazed at Gurudev with guilty eyes to find that there was not the slightest sign of annoyance in his face. He felt relieved. But the trouble came in a different way. He could not fully recover from his tendency of sleep. Forgetting time and place he would often start dozing. He thought he would overcome this after a night's good sleep. But at night he could not have sound sleep at all. He spent the whole night in a state between sleep and wakefulness.

Next morning they took leave of Gurudev in the usual way. This time he observed, "Bimal, now go, I shall come to your house soon." In the train also Bimal was the victim of occasional sleep. But he did not let his parents know about his trouble.

After the train-journey, while boarding the steamer Bimal managed to follow his parents like a dream-walker. In the steamer he found four Sadhus in different dresses sitting on a spot not far from the engine-area. Like an

automaton he also sat down near them, while his parents went to the upper deck, unknowingly leaving him behind with the Sadhus. They waited for Bimal to join them. But alas! Bimal forgot all about them and started dozing beside the absolutely silent Sadhus. In his slumber he could occasionally hear Gurudev's voice, "Bimal, now go, I shall come to your house soon." But he was immobile.

In the meantime, the steamer moved on and reached the station where Bimal and his parents were to get down. His parents looked long for Bimal on all sides and, not finding him, got down to the platform, thinking that he must have already alighted.

Bimal grew aware of the surroundings only in the evening, when the sun with its magnificent splendour was setting at the horizon, kissed by the rippling water of the river on which the steamer moved on, heedless of Bimal's helplessness. Bimal exclaimed at the sight, "Oh, marvellous!" and immediately remembered his parents and had an intense desire to go home. But how?

*(To be continued)*

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

## NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

### The Tao of Basketball

JEFF Wagenheim of the American New Age Journal was frantically dialling the number of the Omega institute for Holistic Studies, New York, the very moment registration began for the "Beyond Basketball" course. After ten minutes of a busy signal he finally got through, securing the number one on the waiting list. Forty-one slots had already been filled by this time.

Phil Jackson, the basketball coach at the camp, once belonged to a well-known New York team that had twice won the American NBA championships. His nickname was "Action Jackson", because he somehow made things happen in the game on the group level, although personally he averaged only 6.7 points per game. Later the "grown-up flower child" became a prominent coach remembered for his unorthodox methods, such as assigning his players readings from philosophical works on road trips. Jackson is assisted by Charley Rosen, a giant of a man with a hot temper who writes "vivid fiction" whenever he is not coaching. On the second day of the workshop, he gives an impressive reading from his latest novel titled "The Cockroach Basketball league".

Jackson starts the first day of practice on the court with a talk on the Tao Te Ching, enlightening his students on the virtue of losing as a path to self-improvement and explaining to them how winning is a journey rather than a destination. After this talk, someone suggests that "basketball is a metaphor for life." "Nah, that's backwards," counters Jackson with a smile. "Life is a metaphor for basketball."

After a lot of talking and lecturing we find the players at last in action. But it's not quite the natural intuitive alternative play that one might expect to take place now. Instead, the two coaches teach the students the tactics of a famous U.S. College team, which has to be practised in detail and with discipline. But, as Wagenheim reports, "intention quickly fell prey to instinct".... "My teammates and I reverted to the basketball habit we'd brought from home." Although he scores points, he isn't playing his assigned role and soon Rosen reprimands him with his un-holy-stically bellowing voice.

The writer's ego feels annoyed. "Inside, a little boy's voice was telling me to give up, to throw my hands in the air and sulk my way off the court." But then he remembers that "adept guys had been receptive to coaching" and decides to learn the lesson.

All the players strain themselves in a superb and sincere effort. But even in the heat of the game there seems to be some special gracefulness evident and "the energy level rose as each team developed, refined, and brought into balance a group mind."

After three days of intensive play, this most popular course of the Omega Institute is over. Wagenheim has had many ups and downs, moments of utter exhaustion, but also a positive group experience and periods where he totally merged with the game, when his passes were sharp, his shots on the mark, the whole play inspired.

In his final inspired address to the players Phil Jackson goes very deep into the Tao Basketball philosophy and takes up once more the life-as-a-metaphor-for-basketball theme. "Sometimes in life you'll run into a pick, but remember that you can roll off it and still get a lay-up," he says. "Remember that bad passes sometimes turn out to be good. Stay focused and find your center, and you'll do alright."

In case you have no access to the first part of his wisdom, take consolation in the second.

Source: *New Age Journal* (December '92)

## A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

My dear Readers,

I am back with you, after a nap, to entertain you with stories. From the small circle of Folktales of Pondicherry which I very much enjoyed in collecting from the grey-haired locals and retelling to you, I moved on to a big one, the 'Sudden Tales', that I gathered from various sources. The pile of letters I have received from you amply testify to the fact that you liked them. I am thankful to everyone of you who took pains to write to me every month about those tales and the way I narrated them. I am grateful to all of you who took the trouble of meeting me in person to shower your words of appreciation on me.

All that a storyteller needs is an enthusiastic audience. I am sure I have plenty of it in you. One among you has written to me "... your narrative style has the power to pluck one by the buttonhole and to lead the captivated reader into the byways of your own selection" (Miss Suchitra Sen of Calcutta in one of her regular monthly letters, dated Oct 7, 1992). Perhaps this is why I embolden myself to take you to a very wide circle of epic proportions.

Tamil being one of the ancient languages of the world, any one attempting to retell the ocean of legends found there will never be able to run out of stock. That means the storyteller has no way but to be very selective. However choosy I might be, this serial is bound to run on for several years.

It was purely for this reason that I was a bit hesitant to begin this serial, though my Editor, K.D. Sethna, had shown me the green signal long back.

Now that I have decided to retell the ancient Tamil legends, I must make myself sure of where to begin.

As usual I asked myself. Unusually different answers came.

"Begin with Lord Siva, who invented a language for the Southerners, who were later known as the Tamils."

"It was Sage Agastya who learnt the language from Lord Siva, taught the Tamils their language and also wrote a book of Tamil grammar, titled AGATTIYAM (perhaps the first written work in Tamil). So, there could be no better candidate than the sage himself for a good beginning."

"If it is a question of good beginning, how can one neglect the elephant-headed Pillayar ('Ganesa' in the North), the god of Wisdom. No writing is begun without the symbol '卐' that represents *Pillayar Chuzhi* (Salutation to Pillayar). So his must be the first in the long list of legends."

"Mahakavi Subramania Bharati, a polyglot, once said: 'Of all the languages I know, no language is so sweet as the Tamil'. Tamil owes its sweetness to a river valley civilization. Moreover, according to the Indian sensibility, every river with its unfailing water is akin to a mother. Since the mother deserves a predominant pride of place in our work, the best way to begin this proposed treasury is by recounting the legend of a perennial river."

These four answers, instead of finding me a way out of my problem, only landed me in further difficulties.

The question took the vigorous shape of a poser. But all the difficulties disappeared as easily as they appeared. That was because I could think of a legend in which all the three—Siva, Agastya and Pillayar—played major roles. And above all it is about a river.

Don't you think that that would be a good beginning?

## 1. THE CROW'S GIFT

Long ago, no one knows how long ago, the Vindhya mountains happened to hear of the glories of the fabulous mountain Meru, the abode of Lord Siva and his consort, through the luring tales of Narada the celestial bard and Rishi. They puffed out in pride and grew to a majestic height to be treated on a par with Meru.

The sun, who illuminates the earth by stretching out his golden arms and also blesses all creatures under him by infusing energy into them, rode as usual in his chariot drawn by radiant, white-footed steeds. As the galloping steeds called a halt all of a sudden to their breakneck speed at the sight of the strange height of the Vindhya range, by neighing at the top of their lungs and raising their forelegs, the sun, who was all along thinking of his forsaken wife, woke up to the situation. Like his steeds, he too found himself helpless. He was sure that he wouldn't be able to cross the mountain that stood in his way. Hence he retreated, allowing the other side of the mountain to grope in darkness.

People wept over their fate as they understood how horrible a place the earth could be without the affectionate kisses of the all-powerful sun. As their sufferings loomed large, they prayed to the celestials with utmost sincerity to save them from the engulfing disaster.

The celestials in their turn took pity on the suffering mortals and sought the help of the short-statured sage Agastya, said to have been born in a water jug.

Agastya, with the help of the powers he had obtained through rigorous tapasya, prayed to Lord Siva to bless him with the boon to humble Vindhya's pride. Siva obliged. As he bestowed on him the boon, the Lord said: "As soon as your mission is over, move to the South. Have your abode on Podhriyal Hills and continue with your tapasya."

With folded arms the sage stood still, silently listening to the Divine.

"I'll teach you a language which I call Tamil. I assign to you the work of teaching this language to the people in the South. They will remain faithful to you all through their lives."

"I'll teach it, my Lord," said Agastya and scratched the back of his head as a preamble to his request.



The three-eyed Lord smiled and asked “Anything else you need?”

The sage pounced at the opportunity. His voice became a pleading whine. “In order to go ahead with my tapasya without any difficulty, I would like to have from you a well with unfailing water. And holy water it must be.”

Siva nodded his head in approval and commanded one of the holy rivers in his domain to flow and disappear into the sage’s water jug

As the holy river obeyed, Siva told her “You shall flow out only when the sage motions you with his hand to do so And from that day you will become a perennial river and thereby help the folks who savour life with vigour.”

With a massive holy river in his hand, and with the knowledge of a new language, Sage Agastya began his journey to the South

As he neared the mountain that remained an insoluble riddle even to the sun, Vindhya who had heard of the Sage’s fame bowed to him with all humility The sage being a dwarf, the mountain had to bend very low in order to receive his blessings

The sage as usual pounced at the opportunity “Oh! You need my blessings I will. but only on my way back, provided you remain in the same position,” he said, and continued his journey

Vindhya agreed, unaware that the sage would never return.

The sun resumed his diurnal journey, thereby dispersing the gloom which had overspread the earth The people who came to know of Agastya’s timely help praised him sky-high in glowing phrases

Agastya stopped his journey and stayed in Kongunadu (Coorg) to do his tapasya.

Let us not disturb him for a while

Indra, the chief of Heaven and the celestials, who was at constant war with the giants and the demons, was for a time deposed by a demon king. Ashamed, Indra in spite of the vigour in his body, strength in his arms, a thunderbolt in his hand and wisdom in his head took to his heels with his wife Indrani. They sought refuge at Sirkali in Tamilnadu, and lived disguised as bamboo plants.

Not a day passed without the celestial couple grieving over their fate and meditating on Lord Siva for an early redemption In order to perform his daily pooja, Indra created a garden full of plants and trees bearing sweet-scented flowers Unfortunately the garden began to face the threat of extinction, since no drop of rain fell from the heavens, which were under the complete control of the demons.

Indra’s grief multiplied, as he was unable to offer flowers to the Divine during his prayer-time.

Rishi Narada who visualized the plight of Indra descended on Sirkali to console the grief-stricken wielder of thunderbolts.

“Nothing to worry about,” Narada said. “Your sorrows will disappear without a trace, if only you do what I say ”

“Tell me a way out of my problem Your words will be obeyed to the syllable.”

“Now listen A holy river from Mt Meru sleeps in the water jug of Sage Agastya who does his penance in the Saiya Hills of Kongunadu Do what you will, but make that river flow on the land Like an army in rout your grief will vanish The land too will bloom with life once again ”

A ray of disappointment ran in Indra’s charming face “Did you come all this way to give me a suggestion so hard to carry out?” he asked

Narada looked askance at Indra “You and I are not competent enough to think of any plan to make the holy river flow from its prison But all that you can do is to pray to Pillayar, the remover of difficulties and obstacles, and seek his help ”

Indra faithfully followed Narada’s suggestion

Pillayar, who magnanimously helped all those who sought his help, made his appearance before Indra Indra prostrated himself before him and threw open his heart.

“Done,” said Pillayar And what a surprise! The elephant-headed and pot-bellied god was metamorphosed into a crow He flapped his wings and flew towards Kongunadu. He didn’t close his wings till he perched on the rim of the water jug that stood majestically by the side of Sage Agastya Disturbed by the rustle of the wings, the sage in an attempt to drive away the bird motioned with a wave of his hand

The crow was eagerly waiting for such an opportunity Under the pretext of taking off he toppled down the water jug

The holy river, released from its incarceration, descended in torrents to the land

Infuriated, the sage ran after the crow to punish him for his unruly act. He succeeded in catching the crow When he raised his fist to rap the bird on the head, the latter showed himself as Pillayar

Cursing his ignorance, the sage prayed to the Lord to forgive him and as a self-imposed punishment he rapped on his temples with both his fists

Oh! Is this the reason why the devotees rap on their temples while they pray to Pillayar who sits under every pipal tree or at street corners?

The holy river that flowed from the sage’s water jug was called ‘kakaviri’ which in Tamil means (*kaka*=crow, *viri*=flow) flowing made possible by the-crow Today it is known as KAVIRI, a life-giving perennial river.

*(More legends on the way)*

## *Students' Section*

### NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Twenty-ninth Annual Conference

16 August 1992

#### THE DIVINE GRACE

Speech by Dinesh Chainani

Good morning, friends. The subject which I have chosen for this conference is The Divine Grace.

Before we plunge into the depth of this subject, I would like to touch upon the cardinal question on which I had to ponder a lot even before I decided to deal with this topic.

What after all is the Divine Grace?

Needless to say that the answer which I found was certainly not my own but as given by the Master. He says that the Grace is "a fact of spiritual experience."<sup>1</sup> To make his words more perceptible I will quote him again. Grace "is an action from above or from within independent of mental causes which decides its own movements."<sup>2</sup> "It can only come as a response to a spiritual or psychic state of consciousness or to a long course of sadhana rightly done."<sup>3</sup> "Grace is something spontaneous which wells out from the Divine Consciousness as a free flow of its being."<sup>4</sup>

With the full collaboration and receptivity of the Sadhak the Grace can completely manifest. Actually, it is the Sadhak who opposes the action of the Grace. When the Sadhak has sufficiently mastered his lower nature and the tendency of his vital to revolt against the Light and has channelised this vital energy for the manifestation of the Light by overcoming his weaknesses and by making a complete surrender, the manifestation of the Grace becomes possible. Along with surrender, faith, aspiration and sincerity are also necessary for the action of the Grace. As Sri Aurobindo says:

"Do not allow any discouragement to come upon you and have no distrust of the Divine Grace. Whatever difficulties are outside you, whatever weaknesses are inside you, if you keep firm hold on your faith and your aspiration, the secret

<sup>1</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed. Vol. 23) p. 611

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 608

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 790

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Power will carry you through and bring you back here. Even if you are oppressed with opposition and difficulties, even if you stumble, even if the way seems closed to you, keep hold on your aspiration, if faith is clouded for a time, turn always in mind and heart to us and it will be removed.”

“Keep firm faith in the victory of the Light and face with calm equanimity the resistance of Matter and human personality to their own transformation.”<sup>6</sup>

Sincerity too must be of the highest order, for without it the Grace will not act. Again to quote Sri Aurobindo. “The supreme Grace will act only in the conditions of the Light and the Truth, it will not act in conditions laid upon it by the Falsehood and the Ignorance. For if it were to yield to the demands of the Falsehood, it would defeat its own purpose.”<sup>7</sup>

If the Grace has to act in us there must be a total openness and receptivity which requires an unquestioning surrender, a surrender without any reservation. For this would mean that all our being has accepted the transformation and is turning towards the supreme aid to elevate itself. It is when the psychic being awakes that this happens spontaneously. But till then personal effort is necessary. In Sri Aurobindo’s words

“It is only the psychic that knows how to surrender and the psychic is usually very much veiled in the beginning. When the psychic awakes, it can bring a sudden and true surrender of the whole being, for the difficulty of the rest is rapidly dealt with and disappears. But till then effort is indispensable.”<sup>8</sup>

Also one must not be under the illusion that the Grace will act on one when only a part of one’s being sincerely asks for it, although some other part may not be open or may be open to adverse forces. There must be an integral harmony of the being. It would be an ignorantly false, arrogant, obscure and narrow-minded accusation when one under such circumstances says that the Grace is not acting.

“If part of the being surrenders, but another part reserves itself, follows its own way or makes its own conditions, then each time that happens, you are pushing the divine Grace away from you. Reject too the false and indolent expectation that the divine Power will do even the surrender for you. The Supreme demands your surrender to her, but does not impose it: you are free at every moment, till the irrevocable transformation comes, to deny and to reject the Divine or to recall your self-giving, if you are willing to suffer the spiritual consequence. Your surrender must be self-made and free, it must be the

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* p. 583

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* p. 585

<sup>8</sup> *The Mother* (Cent. Ed. Vol. 25) p. 1

<sup>9</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed. Vol. 23) pp. 588-89

surrender of a living being, not of an inert automaton or mechanical tool ”<sup>9</sup>

Sri Aurobindo further says: “Without the Grace of the Divine nothing can be done, but for the full Grace to manifest the sadhak must make himself ready. If everything depends on the Divine intervention, then man is only a puppet and there is no use of sadhana ..”<sup>10</sup>

And in sadhana, time is not the primary factor; it is with the aid of patient persistence and perseverance that the path is to be trod until the goal is reached. Despite all resistances and oppositions in the combat eventually it is the Grace which leads us to the victory of the Truth and Light.

We have also to note that the Grace does not select the righteous and reject the sinner “With all the *kṛpā* is there working in one way or another and it can only abandon the disciple if the disciple himself abandons or rejects it.”<sup>11</sup>

“The best possible way is to allow the Divine Grace to work in you, never to oppose it, never to be ungrateful and turn against it—but to follow it always to the goal of Light and Peace and Unity and Ananda.”<sup>12</sup>

No human formulation can explain how or why or when the Grace will act, for it transcends all rules, even the cosmic law. It follows its own laws which flow from the supreme Divine consciousness.

“Grace may sometimes bring undeserved or apparently undeserved fruits, but one can’t demand Grace as a right and privilege—for then it would not be Grace ”<sup>13</sup>

Friends, you will please excuse me if my speech has become only a string of quotations from Sri Aurobindo. But since I have taken all my ideas from him I thought it best to put them in his own words so that they might have a more forceful impact than if I were to put them in my own poor language.

To conclude this talk and summarise its main substance, I quote Sri Aurobindo again: “Few are those from whom the Grace withdraws, but many are those who withdraw from the Grace.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *The Mother* (Cent Ed Vol 25), pp 2 and 4

<sup>10</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), p 611

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid* , p 622

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* , p 613

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* , p 612

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid* , p 613