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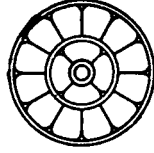
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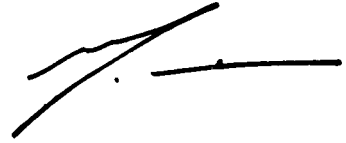


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

“God and Nature are like a boy and a girl at play and in love. They hide and run from each other when glimpsed so that they may be sought after and chased and captured.”

(Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*, Cent. Vol. 16, p. 382)

Why do God and Nature “run from each other when glimpsed”?

IN order to play. He says so: “They are at play.” It is in play.

(A young disciple) *Mother, does Nature know it is a game? God knows it is a game, but does Nature know it?*

I think Nature knows it too, it is only man who does not know!

(Another child) *Sweet Mother, where can Nature hide?*

Where can she hide? She hides in the inconscience, my child. That is the greatest hiding-place, the inconscience. Besides, God also hides in the inconscience.

Perhaps, when one knows it is a game and plays it for fun, it is amusing. But when one doesn't know it is a game, it is not amusing. You see, it is only when one is on the other side, on the divine side, that one can see it like that; that is, as long as we are in the ignorance, well, inevitably we suffer from what should amuse and please us. Fundamentally, it comes to this: when one does something deliberately, knowing what one is doing, it is very interesting and may even be very amusing. But when it is something you don't do deliberately and don't understand, when it is something imposed on you and endured, it is not pleasant. So the solution, the one which is always given: you must learn, know, do it deliberately. But to tell you my true feeling, I think it would be much better to change the game.... When one is in that state, one can smile, understand and even be amused, but when one sees, when one is conscious of all those who, far from knowing that they are playing, take the game very seriously and find it rather unpleasant, well... I don't know, one would prefer it to change. That is a purely personal opinion.

I know very well: the moment one crosses over to the other side... instead of being underneath and enduring, when one is above and not only observes but acts oneself, it is so total a reversal that it is difficult to recall the state one was in when carrying all the weight of this inconscience, this ignorance on one's back, when one was enduring things without knowing why or how or where one was going or why it was like that. One forgets all that. And then one can say: it is an “eternal game in an eternal garden”. But for it to be an amusing game,

everybody should be able to play the game knowing the rules of the game; as long as one does not know the rules of the game, it is not pleasant. So the solution you are given is: "But learn the rules of the game!"... That is not within everybody's reach.

I have the impression, a very powerful impression, that a practical joker came and spoilt the game and made it into something dramatic, and this practical joker is obviously the cause of the division and the ignorance which is the result of this division, and of the suffering which is the result of ignorance. Indeed, in spite of all the spiritual traditions, it is difficult to conceive that this state of division, ignorance and suffering was foreseen at the beginning of creation. In spite of everything, one doesn't like to think that it could have been foreseen. Indeed, I refuse to believe it. I call it an accident—a rather terrible accident, but still, you see, it is especially terrible to the human consciousness; for the universal consciousness, it may only be quite a reparable accident. And after all, when it has been set right, we shall even be able to recall it and say, "Ah! it has given us something we wouldn't have had otherwise." But we must first wait for it to be put right.

Anyway, I don't know if there are people who say that it was foreseen and willed, but I tell you it was neither foreseen nor willed, and this is precisely why when it happened, quite unexpectedly, immediately something else sprang forth from the Source, which probably would not have manifested if this accident had not taken place. If Delight had remained Delight, conceived as Delight, and everything had come about in Delight and Union instead of in division, there would never have been any need for the divine Consciousness to plunge into the inconscience as Love. So, when one sees this from very far and from high above, one says, "After all, something has perhaps been gained from it." But one must see it from a great distance and a great height to be able to say that. Or rather, when it is left far behind, when one has gone beyond this state, entered into Union and Delight, when division and inconscience and suffering have disappeared, then one may very wisely say, "Ah, yes, we have gained an experience we would never have had otherwise." But the experience must be behind, we must not be right in the midst of it. For, even for someone who—this is something I know—even for someone who has come out of this state, who lives in the consciousness of Oneness, for whom ignorance is something external, no longer something intimate and painful, even for that person it is impossible to look on the suffering of all those who have not come out of it with a smile of indifference. That seems impossible to me. Therefore, it is really necessary that things in the world should change and the acute state of sickness should disappear, so that we can say, "Ah! yes, we have benefited by it." It is true that something has been gained, but it is a very costly gain.

That is why, I believe, because of that, so many initiates and sages have been attracted by the solution of the void, of Nirvana, for this is obviously a very

radical way of escaping from the consequences of an ignorant manifestation.

Only, the solution of changing this manifestation into a true, truly divine reality is a far superior solution. And this is what we want to attempt now, with a certitude of succeeding one day or another, for, in spite of everything, despite everything, what is true is eternally true, and what is true in essence must necessarily become true in the realisation, one day or another. Sri Aurobindo told us that we had taken the first step on the path and that the time had come to accomplish the work, therefore one has only to set out. That's all.

So, your question? (*To the child who asked about the game of hide-and-seek*) Was this what you wanted to know?

Actually what you were asking was: Why this image?

Yes.

One could reverse the thing. Instead of saying that the universe is like this, that is, the Divine and man are like this, look like this, one should say that this is perhaps an outer, superficial expression of what the essential relation between the Divine and man is at the present moment.

In fact, this would amount to saying that when one plays one is much more divine than when one is serious! (*Laughing*) But it's not always good to say this. Perhaps there is more divinity in the spontaneous play of children than in the erudition of the scholar or the asceticism of the saint. That's what I have always thought. Only (*smiling*) it is a divinity which is quite unconscious of itself.

As for me, I must confess to you that I feel much more essentially myself when I am joyful and when I play—in my own way—than when I am very grave and very serious—much more. Grave and serious—that always gives me the impression that I am dragging the weight of all this creation, so heavy and so obscure, whereas when I play—when I play, when I can laugh, can enjoy myself—it gives me the feeling of a fine powder of delight falling from above and tinting this creation, this world with a very special colour and bringing it much closer to what it should essentially be.

Mother, when and why are you grave?

Oh! well, you have seen me sometimes, haven't you? Perhaps when I come down a rung, I don't know—when someone is drowning or in difficulty, then one must come down from the bank into the water to pull him out. Perhaps that is the reason. When the creation is in a special difficulty, one comes down a little, one pulls, so one becomes serious. But when all is going well, one can laugh and enjoy oneself.

In fact, it could be said that all preaching, all exhortations, even all prayers and invocations come from what Sri Aurobindo calls the lower hemisphere, that

is to say, one is still down below. It may be the summit, may be the frontier, it may be just the edge of this lower hemisphere, but one is still in the lower hemisphere. And as soon as one passes to the other side, all this seems, to say the least, useless and almost childish in the bad sense of the word—ignorant, still ignorant. And it is very interesting to be still in this state where one is at times on one side, at times just on the border of the other. Well, this border of the other, which for the human consciousness is an almost inaccessible summit, for one who can live consciously and freely in the higher hemisphere, is in spite of everything a descent....

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 9, pp 9-14)

THE REAL DIFFICULTY

THE real difficulty is always in ourselves, not in our surroundings. There are three things necessary in order to make men invincible, Will, Disinterestedness and Faith. We may have a will to emancipate ourselves, but sufficient faith may be lacking. We may have a faith in our ultimate emancipation, but the will to use the necessary means may be wanting. And even if there are will and faith, we may use them with a violent attachment to the fruit of our work or with passions of hatred, blind excitement or hasty forcefulness which may produce evil reactions. For this reason it is necessary, in a work of such magnitude, to have resort to a higher Power than that of mind and body in order to overcome unprecedented obstacles. This is the need of *sādhanā*.

God is within us, an Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient Power; we and He are of one nature and, if we get into touch with Him and put ourselves in His hands, He will pour into us His own force and we shall realise that we too have our share of godhead, our portion of omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. The path is long, but self-surrender makes it short; the way is difficult, but perfect trust makes it easy.

Will is omnipotent, but it must be divine will, selfless, tranquil, at ease about results. "If you had faith even as a grain of mustard-seed," said Jesus, "you would say to this mountain, Come, and it would come to you." What was meant by the word Faith, was really Will accompanied with perfect *śraddhā*. *Śraddhā* does not reason, it knows; for it commands sight and sees what God wills, and it knows that what is God's will, must happen. *Śraddhā*, not blind but using sight spiritual, can become omniscient.

Will is also omnipresent. It can throw itself into all with whom it comes into contact and give them temporarily or permanently a portion of its power, its thought, its enthusiasms. The thought of a solitary man can become, by exercise of selfless and undoubting will, the thought of a nation. The will of a single hero can breathe courage into the hearts of a million cowards.

This is the Sadhana that we have to accomplish. This is the condition of our emancipation. We have been using an imperfect will with imperfect faith and imperfect disinterestedness. Yet the task we have before us is not less difficult than to move a mountain.

The force that can do it, exists. But it is hidden in a secret chamber within us and of that chamber God holds the key. Let us find Him and claim it.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol. 17, pp. 178-9.)

NOVEMBER 24, 1926

REMINISCENCES

FOR some time past, Sri Aurobindo had been more and more withdrawing into himself and retiring within. An external sign of this became visible to us as his lunch-hour shifted gradually towards the afternoon. We used to have our meal together and the Mother too ate with us, at the Library House, in the room later used by Ravindra as the fruit-room. There used to be about eight or ten of us. On the previous day, Sri Aurobindo came down to lunch when it was past four. We would naturally wait till he came.

Then the great day arrived. In the afternoon, it was in fact already getting dark, all of us had gone out as usual. I was on the sea-front. Suddenly someone came running at full speed and said to me, "Go, get back at once; the Mother is calling everybody." I had not the least idea as to what might be the reason. I came back running and went straight up to the verandah facing the Prosperity room. Sri Aurobindo used to take his seat there in the evening for his talks with us, or rather for answering our questions. As I came up, a strange scene met my eyes. Sri Aurobindo was seated in his chair, the Mother sat at his feet, both of them with their faces turned towards us. I looked round to see if all were present. Satyen was missing and I said, "Satyen has not come. Shall I call him in?" The Mother spoke out, "Yes, all, all." All were called in, everybody was now present. We took our seats before Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, both of whom were facing us. The whole scene and atmosphere had a heavenly halo.

Sri Aurobindo held his left hand above the Mother's head and his right hand was extended to us in benediction. Everything was silent and still, grave and expectant. We stood up one by one and went and bowed at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. After a while, both of them went inside. And then, Datta, who had been among us, suddenly exclaimed at the top of her voice, as though an inspired Prophetess of the old mysteries, "The Lord has descended. He has conquered death and sorrow. He has brought down immortality."

From this time onwards, Sri Aurobindo went into retirement; that is to say, did not come out any more for his evening talks.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

DESCENT

The concept of ascent of consciousness is ancient. The Veda speaks repeatedly of 'rising' to the world of Light, reaching the realm of Gods in the Home of Truth. The Tantra has familiarised us with the phenomenon of the rising of the inner potential—Kundalini—from its basal centre to the crown of the head. There are

other systems of yoga combining the principles of both the traditions—Veda and Tantra—in which the movement of ascent figures prominently. We do not speak at the moment of still another way, the technique of interiorisation in which one plunges inward in quest of the Reality. Focussing on the route upward, we note that ascent of consciousness is a must in paths that follow the evolutionary course of Nature.

At every stage in the history of evolution of the world, there has been a marked ascent of the concealed conscious-force to higher and higher levels of existence. This is aptly described in the Tantra as *arohana*, climbing up. But corresponding to this ascent is a descent, *avarohana*, of what is above. Each step of the ascending movement acts as a call to what stands above to descend. And, we must note, that this descent plays a greater role in the whole movement. It is the descent that brings in new elements in the situation at our level. Without this fresh ingression at each step, we would be turning in circles. The impact of the higher and new factors leads to a leap of what is lower. It exerts pressure. It also opens the way for further ascents. Thus while the initial impulse is caused by the ascent of aspiration, the ensuing results follow on the heels of the descent in response. Things are made easier. Obstructions are removed by a force from a higher level.

Each descent releases something that is involved below and the upward movement is speeded up. Legends of heavenly Rivers rushing down and sweeping away obstinate rocks on earth—physical and psychological—are symbolic of this action of higher Nature in transforming the lower. There is a stage in sadhana when the main emphasis is on purification and ascent of inspiration in the being. This is only a preparation for the next step which is a descent of what is aspired for. It helps if a state of receptivity and silence is built up so that there is no interference in the movement of descent, no dilution.

M.P. PANDIT

ABOUT WOMAN

(Translated by Satadal from the Bengali of Nolini Kanta Gupta)

Translator's Note

This is the first of the twelve articles contained in the book "Nārī Kathā" (meaning "About Woman") by Nolini Kanta Gupta which was subsequently included in his collected works in Bengali ("Rachanā-bālī", vol. 5). I intend to translate all these articles one by one along with another article "Ati-ādhunīk Nārī" to be found in his book "Ādhunikī" (included in "Rachanāvalī", vol. 1) to make the total number of articles in this serial to be thirteen to bring together what Nolini Kanta Gupta says exclusively on women; and the number of thirteen has special significance because 13th January is the birthday of Nolini Kanta Gupta. I pray to the Mother, who has inspired me to start this work, to get it done as perfectly as she can through her humble instrument.

WE are not sannyasins—we want world and life and therefore worldly life and society. What constitutes worldly life and society? What is that upon which worldly life and society stand?—Woman. Worldly life and society have come into being with woman at their centre. It is around woman that this institution of life has expanded. The relationship of man and woman lies at the root of life's play. That is why we see that the very first object of a sannyasi is to reject his wife and children or to abstain from that life from the very beginning. That's why we find Buddha so reluctant to initiate women and take them into his fold. The cult of sanyasa always depicted woman as the gateway to hell.

It is not surprising that the cult of sanyasa looks upon woman with suspicion and neglect. Because in reality sanyasa is the dharma of man. Woman is prakriti—embodied life. Woman is essentially the idol of this-worldly truth and beauty. Man is naturally a thinker and contemplator—some sort of a detachment finds a natural expression even in his life of action. But woman cannot keep that sort of separative distance from the waves of life in action. Immersing into it and identifying herself with it she glides along the wave. Man is mental while woman is vital. Woman's base is in the vital or the heart—her natural dharma is love and feeling and emotion.

The sannyasins feared this force of prakriti in women, the pull that draws us towards life and world with woman as the base. This force, this pull is a supreme truth—and is not a thing to be easily ignored however one may try to do that by calling it maya or illusion. Woman has therefore secured a place in the cult of sanyasa itself. The sannyasin first wanted to belittle her and drive her away. When that was not possible, he tried to keep her at a distance by worshipping

her. Woman then appeared as a mother—in the form of Madonna. Earth, life, this-world assumed this sense with which the contemplative, renouncing, other-worldly sannyasin of the man's inner being could easily establish some sort of a harmonious relation without going against his swadharma. So, the sannyasin said: so long as you cannot destroy the world, accept it and continue—take and tolerate this life as a means to work out your karma; but see only as a seer, you may even taste the *rasa*, but that also from a distance like a poet in his inner world, but be on your guard—do not accept enjoyment.

We look upon woman neither with fear nor with diffidence. Not with narrowness, not as a thing of need or convenience, we see woman with a simple and natural look. We want the truth in woman to be fulfilled, the divine inspiration in woman to blossom—in its own way, in its own fashion, according to its own will. If woman is Earth's embodiment, *rasa*, fragrance, life's passion—then let her be established fully in that dharma. We are to accept her in whatever form she appears for the fullness and fulfilment of life. To make us understand what this earth stands for she becomes at times a mother, at others a daughter, a house-wife—*grhīṇī*, *sacivaḥ*, *sakhī*, *mītāḥ*. Man is related to woman in all these varieties of relations.

We don't ask men to be sannyasins, nor women to be sannyasinis. There is no fulfilment for a human anywhere else save in this world. It is in sannyasa only that man stands separate from woman. And does not the creation cease when these two forces stand separate? The play of world and life, *i.e.* creation, is only in the union of Purusha and Prakṛiti. That is why we want to keep humanity within the household and society, to get established in the proper dharma of the household and society and to express therein the supreme consummation. Man alone is only a half, woman too alone is only a half. Man and woman coming together will achieve each one's fullness and lead the world also towards global perfection. Man and woman are like those twin birds referred to in the Upanishads: *dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā samānam vṛkṣam*.¹

Dharma cannot be performed without a wife—*sastrīko dharmamācaret*. We all know and always say that the wife is *sahadharminī* but it has a deeper meaning. Here, by dharma generally we understand worldly duties or the observance of some rituals and practices. But dharma is a much higher and vaster thing—it is the perfect spiritual development of a human being; the worldly actions are one of its various aspects, rituals and practices are its symbols, its external forms only. With this true meaning of dharma in mind, if we try to understand the meaning of the adage “to perform your dharma along with your wife”, then we will see that an entirely new world has opened before us. Earth and creation have shown their faces in a new sense, life is blossoming with a new purpose.

When we don't place the ideal of sannyasa before man and woman, it does not mean that we advocate the satisfaction of carnal desires as the aim. The

saying—*putrārthe kryate bhāryā*—is true and it has a special connotation which we will gradually understand; but he who says that a wife is the field only for producing children, only an ingredient for the sensual satisfaction of man, does not know, does not recognise man, he knows and recognises the world of animals. On one side is the sannyasa and on the other is ordinary enjoyment. Man is not bound to accept or follow nothing else than these two. There is a third way out whose aim is to awaken and establish the spiritual in the world, to uplift enjoyment into the Divine. In the delight of this divine enjoyment is the fulfilment of man and woman. To realise this delight and to permeate life with that *rasa* is the dharma to be followed by man and woman.

Human beings, men and women, must take their support on a spiritual discipline so that this life becomes an expression of the soul, the divine purusha, and the enjoyment becomes the tasting of *rasa* by this indwelling divinity. We have to search and find a path in order to rise above and take our stand on the divine state instead of remaining in the mundane state of consciousness. This path of sadhana is the same for both men and women. For, that path, built on the general truth and dharma of the creature called human, is meant neither solely for man nor solely for woman; because we want to take men and women together, to express the one dharma, the great harmony, that utter completeness through a mutual union in ourselves as well as in the world simultaneously.

We are under a strange sort of notion that sadhana is better done alone. This is nothing but an atavism of sannyasa in us. When Bhabani Pathak asked Devi Choudhurani about her intentions as to how to utilise her huge inheritance, Devi replied, “Why? I will enjoy it.” Pathak smiled at this reply and said, “You mad girl, how can you enjoy anything all alone?”² We say that not only can one not enjoy anything alone, it seems that sadhana, that is to say integral sadhana, is also not realisable all alone. That the sannyasins congregate together to form a monastery, establish even an organisation, is a proof that society is the result of some deep necessity of mankind. And what is society after all? It is the relation between the two. But then the sannyasins have wanted this relation between the two specially among men. They have conceded some place there for women also only when the women have forsaken their womanhood.

Man and woman—*purusha* and *prakriti*—are the only duality, there is no other. If any relation exists at all between two different things which seek each other as separate entities for a greater harmony and more perfect realisation—such an interchange between two things is possible only between man and woman. In reality they don't seem to be two different things but the two halves of one and the same thing—*ardhabrgalamiva*—as the Upanishad puts it. When man approaches man or woman approaches woman, then two integral things are added together which are complete in themselves. This addition results in something bigger no doubt, but nothing really new or unexpected is created out of it. But in the association of man and woman we find a sort of compounded

multiplication—it is not merely a mixture, but a novel alchemy as it were. The idol of Hari-Hara no doubt reveals one of the mysteries of the world; but a greater truth, a deeper mystery is revealed in the idol of Hara-Gauri or Radha-Krishna.

What part does woman fulfil in sadhana? Woman is the mirror in which man sees the reflection of his own self, his own dormant and hidden powers of genius when she comes and stands before him; immediately he becomes awake and energetic with the inspiration of fully manifesting and expanding himself. That is why woman is the shakti—without a touch of this force of woman man cannot attain full awakening and integral self-realisation. That is why even Shankara, a brahmachari from his very boyhood and a sannyasin, had to enter the body of a certain king given to pleasures and enjoyment and to get initiated in love for the completeness of his sadhana—and the seed of that initiation was implanted by Ubhayabharati, a woman. Without the touch of a woman it is as if the jivatman cannot open his thousand petals in full bloom. A life, however glorious it may be, is always found to be handicapped if it is not touched by the shade of a woman, it seems that a bird which could have flown with a greater force on a pair of wide open wings, somehow manages to be supported by a single wing only. Woman is said to be an equal partner in following the dharma—*sahadharmī*—because she is as though this other wing of man. With her help man is capable of giving an expression to his own complete dharma of life and embraces his own greater self. Man is like empty space without woman. Woman fills this emptiness—*ayamākāśaḥ striyā pūryata eva*.³

To remain alone, to tread the path alone is what the human being wants, because then there are no worries and troubles. But to remain too much preoccupied with only oneself is itself great egoism. It is by bearing the burden of responsibility that the human being grows in stature. If he remains engrossed within his own shell, the human being only dwarfs and shrinks himself. When I look up to another being without, and want to take him along, it is then that my life is enlarged and my strength too gets an opportunity to increase. Many such helpful supports of sadhana are there no doubt, but woman is the best of them all. He who is absorbed in his own self and inwardly has become listless and lifeless, suddenly finds his soul astir again with the alchemy of woman, as if one dead gets back to life—*mrtam kañcana bodhayanti*.⁴ That's why the Upanishad says—*sa vai naiva rame, tasmādekākī na ramate, sa dvitīyamaichhat, sa hautā-vānāsa yathā strīpumānsau sampariṣvaktau*.⁵ “Purusha did not enjoy all alone, from then on nobody ever enjoys alone. Purusha wanted a companion, that's why he formed himself in such a way that he became the dual form of male and female.”

Woman is *sahadharmī*, not only because she is a companion in sadhana but also because she is the symbol of execution and realisation as well. Woman is guru and disciple at the same time. Who is a guru? One who can look into my

soul and understand it, who awakens my indwelling god by the force of a unique oneness, who unerringly feels all my moods, that is, the will of my indwelling purusha, and with an eye on it directs me accordingly. Such a person alone is revered as a guru, isn't it so? I don't know who else can do this job as easily and naturally as a *sahadharmiṇī*, the woman. Then, again, where else do we find a disciple like a woman? She has poured her all for me, her fulfilment coincides with mine; she has made her soul to dance in harmony with the rhythm of my soul. Each phase of my sadhana, each phase of my siddhi, that is to say realisation, she is making her own automatically and effortlessly; my sadhana and my siddhi thus doubled are becoming more visible, concrete, unailing and vast.

In one word woman is *grhalakṣmī*, i.e. the goddess of beauty and harmony and wealth of the house. She has built, decorated and sustained the house—both inner and outer, the house of my being and the house of my life—with health and solace, with beauty and wealth. Without a woman the household does not exist, without a household there exists no life, no world. Woman is the centre on and around which crystallises the society. If woman had not pulled from within, had not concretised, invigorated and made to blossom all around with her power of alchemy, then man's garden of *līlā* would have fallen barren and dry. We might probably have chanced upon one or two wayfarers of the path of nirvana straying here and there, but that could hardly be called a world—and what after the passing of those few...?

Venerable are those who, age after age, have initiated the world to dharma and upheld the ideal of spirituality. But for that we don't find any compulsion to follow the views of those who have also preached that woman is a hindrance to this pure dharma and this spiritual life. This utterance proves that they look upon women as inferior and assume that there can exist no other relation between man and woman save sex. Yet in the cult of sannyasa too, which according to them is the ultimate and full blossoming of spirituality, woman has a score to prove her worth. I don't know how many of the sannyasins are deemed greater than Maitreyee or St. Teresa. Not only that, it does not even seem true that the influence of woman in all the upsurges and establishments of new religions and the spreading of spiritual movements is less than that of the male counterpart. Man may be a preacher and by virtue of his oratory and intellect may convince and convert or with the help of his power of austerity—*tapah*—may collect people but woman is no less helpful in this work; however, her way of working is different. Whatever she builds by virtue of her own life-example and silent yet unimpaired faith, is not easy for man to achieve. Is it for the Buddhist monks and monasteries that the teachings of Lord Buddha spread far and wide and exerted such a powerful influence for centuries, or for that utterly poor woman who uncovered herself to offer her only cover at the feet of Buddha, for that maid who continued to worship him even at the cost of her life? May we ask who was

the first to exercise the influence to steady the following of Christ—St. Paul or Magdalene?

Whatever it may be, we say that woman is as equal a companion of man in the other-worldly as in the this-worldly sphere. We want the union of man and woman first of all in the spiritual world. Let the divine entity in one come to help the other, unite with the other to grow mutually. Personal salvation is not our aim. When our aim is to build human beings as the idol of the divine entity within, when our aim is to keep human beings within the society and to make this society a divine play-field, we cannot afford to forget woman—the *sahadhar-muni*. Let the sadhana and realisation of man blossom into fruition in woman, and the sadhana and siddhi of woman blossom into fruition in man. The whole creation is the idol of Bhagavan-Bhagavati, Krishna-Kali. Let the personal and the social life too of the human being be an image of that dual principle.

Then we shall perceive that the senses are not senses any more, sex is no longer sex—it has taken a new birth so to say in a new form. Since the wife is the equal partner of my spiritual being, for the very same reason she is the equal partner too of this physical being—all separation, all contradiction between spiritual and physical, soul and body, God and the creature has disappeared. Both have mingled into one in a marvellous alchemy. Then the words: “It is not for the sake of the husband that the husband is dear, but for the soul in him; it is not for the sake of the wife that the wife is dear, but for the soul in her; it is not for the sake of the son that the son is dear, but for the soul in him”—will strike us with a new meaning. Husband will not forsake wife, wife too will no longer get rid of husband. And the sons need not be *mānasputras* only. Husband, wife and son will be the different aspects, different projections of the same integral divine substance. All these relations will exist, but they will be created unlike common mortals into a material image of the spiritual.

Notes

- 1 Rigveda, 1-164-20, Shwetāshwatara, 4-6, Mundaka, 3-1-1
- 2 *Devī Choudhurani*, a novel by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay
- 3 Brhadāranyaka, 1-4-3
- 4 Rigveda, 1-113-8
- 5 Brhadāranyaka, 1-4-3

REMEMBERING

SMOOTHLY contoured,
Cool and heavy in my hand,
Its glassy skin pocked and pitted,
This stone speaks
Of rolling and grinding in distant torrents.

One scarred and bumpy surface tells
That once it was torn rough and raw away
From the side of its mother-mountain;

And these encircling veins
Remind how long before
This substance seethed and folded over,
Was kneaded like dough,
Baked in the earth's furnace,
Pressed out to cool and petrify.

Long before that perhaps
Atoms now packed dense inside this lump
Flared out—a cloud in the solar wind.

Long it lay, oblivious;
But now another force,
More resistless than all these
Has carried it far
From that river-carved mountain

To lie here:
Cool and heavy to a human hand,
Questioned by a human gaze,
Remembering....

SHRADDHAVAN

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

I AM always glad to hear from you but feel sad that all the news is not happy. There are two components here: one is the actual weakness, trivial thoughts, lack of sleep—the other is the worry about these things. Take them for brute facts without thinking: “How long will they last? Will they be there for ever? What other troubles will come in their wake?” When you write, “My equipoise is gone”, you touch the real mishap. But this is not an irrevocable affair. Call for Sri Aurobindo’s peace which is invisibly there all the time above you and around you and deep within you. Once he has accepted you as his own, he never leaves you. The same with the Mother’s sweet grace. She can never be far from you and both she and the Lord hold you always in their arms. Try to be conscious of this fact and do not allow your heart and mind to be troubled, no matter how many outward “ills” (as Hamlet would say) “the flesh is heir to”. The Divine Presence has been established in your life: you have only to grow aware of it. Once you realise that it is ever accompanying you, all those “ills” will be held securely in an inner calm, kept within their proper limits—that is, the sheer physical sense—and not permitted to overflow into the rest of your psychology. I am not telling you all this out of a book of wisdom but reading out what is written on the pages of my own life. So many bodily inconveniences and even aches are part of my days—and nights—and yet my eyes are filled with glorious memories of Sri Aurobindo’s serene greatness and the Mother’s depths of love, and with those memories their actual beings are present with me from hour to hour and a far-away smile plays about my lips—far-away because I am inwardly taken to a dreamful distance from those inconveniences and aches. From that distance they look small, insignificant. The same can happen to your troubles, for surely you are as much a child of His imperturbable immensity and Her intensity of bliss as I am. Remember also that I invoke their help every afternoon at the Samadhi and seek to make you remember the help which is unfailingly with you.

You find it difficult to understand why Dyuman didn’t look at Sri Aurobindo while working in his room. I can try to lessen your difficulty by recounting one incident. After the Soup Distribution in the old days I used to go ahead and wait in the courtyard of the main building for the Mother to pass on her way to the staircase leading upstairs. Once I saw the silhouette of Sri Aurobindo behind the shutters on the first floor. I felt very happy. When I told the Mother of it afterwards, she said: “It is better not to look at him.” Evidently the work he was doing on his own body at that time was not to be interfered with by anyone looking at it. Some subtle vibrations touching it were to be avoided.

As for the operation on me in London, it was because of the attack of polio I had suffered when 3 years old. The heel of my left foot was pulled up so much

that I had to walk with my hand on my left knee in order to press the heel down to floor-level. Walking like that, bent all the time, I would have developed a permanent spinal curvature. To save me from it and give me a fair deal in life, my father, along with my mother, took me to London. There were in fact two operations under a mask of ether. A famous surgeon, Dr. Tubby, did the job. My father took me from clinic to clinic in Harley Street, asking each doctor for his method. Dr. Tubby's struck papa as the best. All the others had offered to do the work free, papa being himself a doctor. Tubby was greedy and asked for a high fee. But papa accepted him. The operations made me a straight fellow and in course of time I could ride horses to my heart's content and in Pondi go cycling every day. I could cycle till quite late in my life—in the early part of my stay after the second home-coming in 1954. I wasn't so handicapped or rather "leggi-capped" until about ten years back—more acutely from 1985 or so. (7 4 1990)

*

Your series of questions is frightening and causes a lot of worry to me about you. You must take yourself in hand with a quiet determination to get rid of the psychological difficulties. The root of them seems to me a deep-seated sense of loneliness. You appear to have no friends in tune with you—and you are not sufficiently in tune with your own soul. I have no doubt that your soul is awake and is near Sri Aurobindo but somehow does not realise how near Sri Aurobindo is to it. This reads like a paradox: actually it signifies that you are doubting whether Sri Aurobindo cares for you sufficiently in spite of your worshipping him and invoking him. I think you are setting up the test of a sign. It is as if you were asking: "If Sri Aurobindo cares for me, how is it that my troubles are continuing? Why doesn't he attend to my mental disturbances and my bodily ailments? How am I to know of his relationship to me if there are no concrete answers to my appeals?" On my side, I may tell you: "If there is somebody who loves you, would that person's attention to you and warmth towards you depend for proof only on his or her ability to get rid of some disorder, inner or outer, troubling you? Love is an absolute value independent of whether this or that action is possible. The very presence of the loving heart and face is a boon and must be felt in your own depths as divine grace. Then you will experience a wonderful solace. Strength and tranquillity will be yours, making you free in the centre of your being from all that burdens or hurts you. 'The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' may still be all about you but something in you will be like the woman in the circus who stands intact while her husband throws knives at her from a distance, knives that stick in the board behind her close to her ears and neck and arms stretched on either side yet never touch her anywhere! The real You will be that woman while your superficial self will be the board into which the knives plunge. Perhaps the intuition may come to you that even the knives

are thrown by a love whom you haven't recognised and that, despite their seeming attack, you are preserved safe and that they have come for some reason you cannot as yet understand and are not a punishment or a sign of neglect: they are meant to make you go deeper into yourself and realise something within you which, as the Gita says, 'fire cannot burn nor water drown nor sword pierce.' Perhaps without the assault of fire and water and sword you are incapable of the desired realisation. Once that secret aim is fulfilled, at least the psychological troubles will disappear. The body's ills may continue according to the frailty of our mortal state, but all the fears and confusions and regrets and aching will vanish or linger only as harmless ghosts—fading memories and not living facts."

I have in my own life found that Sri Aurobindo approaches us in various manners. I may even say "in various disguises." At times the most inauspicious occasions have him strongest behind them. Or we may aver that if we look for him behind them we shall surely find him and he will help us to take a short-cut to our spiritual goal across what looks like—in T. S. Eliot's words—

A whole Thibet of broken stones
That lie, fang-up...

The difficulty appalling us has to evoke in our hearts an intense cry to see the Beloved's face through the terrifying mask and in response we shall discover tender arms stretching out to us to bear us towards that face and out of the hurting tract to a bliss beyond all our dreams—a great enfolding quietude of the Unknown in which moment after moment passes glimmering like star after gold star. It is short-sightedness that discerns always the Devil behind disasters. Of course, the Divine does not deliberately create catastrophes. They occur as part of our wandering through "this transient and unhappy world". But there is nothing that does not carry the Divine within it. Even the Devil can be a puppet in God's hands—provided we invoke God's presence and pray to Him to show Himself and reveal to us the secret benefit which always sits smiling in the core of every misfortune—hidden with its sweetness and light behind what Sri Aurobindo interpreting Virgil calls "the touch of tears in mortal things". I am telling these paradoxical matters not by a flight of ingenious theological theory. It is my very pulses that are beating out truths to you. I have gone under the Shadow and met through it the Sun. (27.4.1990)

*

Our way to the Divine will be the swiftest as well as the sweetest if its starting-point is the deep heart in us, "the crimson-throbbing glow" of spontaneous devotion to Him, for, it would be impelled and guided by the Supreme Beauty and Bliss from its own secret station in the embodied human being.

Of course a Power of all-unifying Eternity has to descend from above and there has to be the pull of a Power of varicoloured Infinity from around and one has to feel at the back of one a nameless Peace that is a Power to stand everything without personal reaction. But these greatnesses are likely to be drawn to us by the Divine Himself acting from our heart-centre, and not need our own exertion in the direct sense though some initiative on the part of creatures who are self-aware is always expected, an eager cry and a glad consent to the Deathless In-dweller to do everything for them. (27.11 1986)

*

Your reference to drawing makes me aware that an old dream of mine is still to be fulfilled. From my earliest remembered years the re-creation of the visible world on paper has fascinated me. When my parents took me to England at the age of five and a half years I happened to be the only child on board the French ship in which we sailed, who could trace recognisable shapes with a pencil. The French boys and girls would flock round me and look over my shoulders with jubilant cries of "Cheval! Cheval!" The drawing of horses used to be my favourite occupation. I have always loved these glorious animals. When the Mother once told me that she hoped to cure my defective leg one day, the first thought that came to me was: "I shall immediately get a beautiful white horse between my legs!" Ever since the operation in London set right the left leg whose heel had been pulled up by polio when I had been about three years old, riding has been a passion with me. I gave rein (literally) to this passion up to the time I came to the Ashram at the age of 23. It was on a "hill-station" near Bombay, where my grandmother had a cottage and where she and her family went during the hot months of May and October and in the Christmas season. In Pondicherry there was no chance for riding. But once after three years of horse-starved eyes I heard a clop-clop under my window. I looked out and saw a man atop a fine steed passing through the street. At once I ran down and followed the pair as far as I could and came back with an old dream revived. For days I longed for horses. I even wished I could have one staying with me in my room. I could understand the redeeming mania of that monster of cruelty, the Roman emperor Caligula. He had a horse which he adored. It was given the best apartment in the royal palace and was made to attend all the meetings of the Roman senate. Whenever a law was to be passed, the stallion was told about it and all the grave toga'd elders had to watch for some sign from the animal—a turn of the head one way or another or a flick of the ears or a faint or emphatic neigh—to ascertain its vote for or against. Three of my best poems are about horses. I recall the beginning of the last one:

Who shall tame the tarpan,
Horse of wild Tartary?

No word of wisdom in his ear
Blows out the fire in his eye.

I am afraid the equestrian topic has galloped me far afield from the subject of drawing. At one time I had to make a choice between training to be an artist and practising to be an author. The latter activity came more easy. So I set aside my pencils and brushes. When I joined the Ashram, one day the Mother suddenly asked me whether I would take up the work of painting the various flowers she was giving to her disciples every morning. I asked her: "How do you know I can draw and paint?" She gave the enigmatic answer: "I can see it from your hands." I took up the work and did it for years. Later I had the idea of making a picture for each of my poems. I did two and then something made me set aside the project. But I kept it in mind and hoped that some day when I had more leisure I would depict the vision and symbol of every poem of mine. But that day of meaningful line and revelatory colour has not dawned yet. A poem touching on "overhead" worlds has a couplet which will be a challenge to the artist in me:

Bodies of fire and ecstasies of line
Where passion's mortal music grows divine.

Sri Aurobindo considered this couplet one of the best things I had done and said it had the power of revelation. (12.11.1987)

*

Yes, it's been a long time since we last corresponded, person to person, and not merely in the course of our press-work. But, of course, the inner communion has never been interrupted. You are an intrinsic part of my consciousness and your face comes up before me time and again and often at odd moments. The other day it appeared quite vividly while I was taking my bath. Perhaps the occasion symbolises the presentation of the naked truth of Amal to his all-understanding all-pardoning friend.

Nolini was always open to correction if the pointer came from someone who had both goodwill and competence. More than once he has made changes on my prompting. Only once he did not comply. A certain statement of his was meant to be made public. He had signed it with "Nolini-da." I suggested that the "da" was out of place. I believed that it was appropriate when others spoke of one or quoted one and should not come from one's own self. Perhaps I am mistaken, and certain pronouncements may need to be given explicitly as by an "elder brother" in order to be impressive?

I personally have never cared about respectful address. An old friend of

mine, now dead, Premanand, who used to be the Ashram librarian, would feel offended if anybody called him "Premanand-ji". I think he felt that the would-be respectful appurtenance spoiled the beauty of the name. At least it adds nothing significant to my mind and assimilates the name to the sphere of public relationship and thereby removes the attention from its meaningful sound. Of course, if the addition is made out of genuine affection and not merely deferential formality it has a sentimental value. In any case I don't expect anyone to "Amal-da" me, much less "Amal-ji" me. However, when the "da"-ing or "ji"-ing takes place, I don't frown or feel disgusted like Premanand.

As for the missing passages in Nolini's translation of *Savitri*, your two dreams seem to suggest that they are hiding somewhere. The vision of an exercise-book provides the clue most probably. I am reminded of a very important historical case. The last few cantos of Dante's *Divina Commedia* were missing. At least the very last is absolutely the *ne plus ultra* of poetry. I have made a translation or rather a transcreation of it. It is included in "*Overhead Poetry*": *Poems with Sri Aurobindo's Comments* (pp. 127-131). The loss of it would have been irreparable. The editors were in a quandary. Then a nephew of Dante's had a vivid dream in which the poet appeared and told the young man that he had kept the manuscript safe in a certain wall niche. On following the instructions as to where exactly the niche was, the cantos were found and the complete poem published to the immense benefit of the world's aesthetico-religious mind.

Before I came to know of this incident I had written a short story involving the manuscript of the *Divina Commedia*. There the pile of the poet's writing is saved from being destroyed by a fire. Around this point a dramatic sequence of events is woven, posing an intense moral-aesthetic problem. The story was seen by Sri Aurobindo and much appreciated. It is included, along with another short story, in my book: *The Sun and the Rainbow*. If at some time you feel interested to read the two stories I'll send you my copy of the book. This book was not printed at our press but at Raju's for the sake of coping with the limited money available from some friends in Hyderabad. My copy rather than any other is recommended because some needed corrections have been made in it. One of the stories is called "The Hero" and is based upon an anecdote told me by the Mother. The other, which concerns Dante, is titled: "A Mere Manuscript."

Strange things have been happening of late to me. I have written of them to two or three friends and at least one letter will appear in a future *Mother India* relating them. But I mustn't make you wait till then. Let me tell you my story.

For some time I was feeling as if the usual radiance that had seemed to pervade my mind and heart had diminished a good deal. In this clouded condition my heart began to play tricks. After every fourth or fifth beat there was a beat missed, causing a vague discomfort in my chest. The miss-beats were mostly at the Samadhi after my walk from the Ashram gate to my chair under the

clock opposite the Samadhī. Dr. Raichura checked the pulse several times and felt quite concerned. Three cardiograms were taken, one immediately after my drive home in a rickshaw after the visit to the Ashram. They proved very disappointing—in the sense that all of them showed the heart beating regularly! Yet the irregularity went on at the Samadhī and even at home. I was put on Sorbitrate tablets, either swallowed or put under the tongue. They did not have the expected effect of stopping the irregularity by increasing the circulation of the blood. All they did was to create a mild headache accompanied by a sense of unsteadiness in the head, lasting for several hours. Then suddenly one evening I felt as if a large shadow had been lifted off my head! At once I felt perfectly normal again and the mind and heart knew the old brightness. There are still occasional miss-beats—even at the Samadhī. But I am completely free from their effects on the whole system. They don't matter at all.

Towards the end of this period I made a discovery. The strain on the body during my weak-legged trudge in the Ashram tends to vanish into a strain of music within me if I go looking at the several pots of plants ranged all along my passage. The continuous green of the leaves wafts to me a sustained heart-ease while the many-coloured and many-shaped blossoms spring into my sight like little fillips of sudden joy instilling an energy that is both a light and a laugh.

I had never before realised such effects of flowers and foliage. What exactly must be happening? Do they communicate with us on their own? I suppose they do, but my intuition is that they are only aspects of a universal Presence—all Nature as a living being—which is ready to enter into a psychological exchange with us. It delivers various messages or rather states of consciousness through all its visible components: changing sky-pageantry, mountain-soars and valley-dips, winding rivers and rhythmic seas, stretches of tremulous greenery, sweeps of swaying blooms. Wordsworth was the first high-priest of this Nature-communion in English literature—,an intimacy either by a vast single peaceful enfoldment or by a multiplicity of mood-touches soothing or stirring. You may remember his rapturous response to a field of dancing daffodils on the one hand and on the other his deep absorption in

The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

(9.5.1990)

AMAL KIRAN
(K.D. SETHNA)

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION TO NIRODBARAN

(Continued from the issue of October 1994)

My Divorce Case

The Saviour (Dénouement)

THE case dragged on for years. Though there are many interesting incidents, I will leave them out and give only the resumé of the case.

A year after I had won the case for my divorce, my husband filed a suit against me for possession of my child. Of course, I had apprehended such a possibility, for he was not the man to take things lying down. The Voice had warned me that he was a Devil, a Satan and would seek every possible means to do me harm, and was in fact gathering all sorts of information before he would strike me his lethal blow. When he thought he had sufficient evidence in his favour, he launched the case.

As I appeared before the court with my mother and child who was four or five years old and was studying in St. Xavier's School in Calcutta, the judge who was a Muslim told me sweetly, "You see, Madam, I can perceive from your looks and the complexion of your face that you are an honest and innocent lady, but being a judge I am bound by the law and the law is in favour of your husband. You have to surrender your child to him."

My lawyer pleaded that the plaintiff had been writing letter after letter to the tutors claiming that he wanted to transfer his child to another better school in Calcutta. But the tutors paid no heed to his claim, for it was the mother who had put the child in their care and she had pleaded with them not to succumb to his demand.

Now the judge wanted to hear the evidence of the tutors. But they were not supposed to appear before the Court. I had therefore to go myself to them and plead with them to grant me the favour. My supplication moved their hearts and two of them were allowed to appear before the Court. They said that the husband had shown no interest and not even once inquired from them how the child had been getting on. How could he then claim the child and transfer him to another school which had quite a different system of education from theirs?

As the legal battle was going on I brooded on my fate feeling helpless and forlorn. Then all on a sudden something happened. To my eyes the hall was suffused with a pale blue light; two big legs stretched apart stood on the floor and on the ankles exquisite anklets were worn. They were like shining golden bells. It

was a ravishing sight. I was overwhelmed with the beauty and splendour of those bells. I knew it was my Krishna who had come and I felt peaceful and secure.

The judge after hearing the evidence postponed the case to another date.

Now my principal lawyer had his chance. He advised me not to appear before the Court on one excuse or another. And I should employ this pretext repeatedly till my husband's resources were drained out.

Mind you, I never prayed to Krishna or anyone else during the crisis and still he came!

Many months passed in this way. One day my husband appeared before the Court and complained to the judge, shedding crocodile tears, that we were harassing him by applying all pretexts and ruses and had made him a pauper. The judge moved to pity for him gave a final date for the hearing and if the defendants did not appear he would decide in his favour.

Now we had to appear on the fixed date. As we reached the hall, I heard the wailing voice of my husband appealing to the judge in his private chamber. As soon as he left, the judge called me and said that my husband had given up his claim for the child and would like to have me back. I saw through the whole satanic move behind it. The judge now began to play on my sentiments and, moved to pity by my husband's tears, asked me to come to a reconciliation with him saying, "Let your child be with your mother and you can go back to your husband since he is keen on having you."

I thought much over the proposal with tears rolling down. After a long while, I said, "All right, I agree."

When my lawyer heard about my decision he was simply flabbergasted and said, "What have you done? You have surrendered to him, that devil!"

"Well, I did it for the sake of my child. What does it matter to me, after all, it is a question of only one life."

At this point another tremendous thing happened. I felt a hand on my head with peace descending. Then I saw Sri Aurobindo standing by my side as I see you. He was a very large figure full of power as if he could crush the whole world. I felt protected. Suddenly I proposed to the judge, "I will go with him but he must take me at once with him." My husband got suddenly frightened and cried out, "No, no! I can't, I won't! I don't want her." Here too I did not invoke Sri Aurobindo.

The Judge was completely baffled and much annoyed. He said, "Very well. The case is dismissed." And turning to me he added, "Are you satisfied now?" I replied, "No, he must now sign a document that he must on no account try to see me or meet my child. If he does not comply, he'll be arrested." On hearing this my husband burst into loud sobs.

Thus Satan was worsted by the Divine Power: He met his nemesis.

I don't know what Power inspired me to be so bold.

My lawyer said later, "You are an extraordinary lady. God is with you."

(Concluded)

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of October 1994)

THE “forty-two” persons who had been kept in Alipore Jail were charged and prosecuted in the Bomb-Case. The case was brought up before Mr Birley, District Magistrate of Alipore, on May 17, 1908. The application for bail for Sri Aurobindo was not granted. All were charged with “organising a gang for the purpose of waging war against the Government by means of criminal force”.

The prisoners of Alipore Jail “were put in an old ward where they could be ‘completely segregated’ and cut off from communication with other prisoners”.¹ “In the ward were two blocks of cells resembling kennels. These were known, after the number of cells in each, as ‘the 44 degrees’ and ‘the six degrees’. Most of the Bomb Case prisoners were lodged in groups of three in the 44 degrees.”² “Even in such solitary confinement there is a rule of castes or hierarchy. Those who are heavily punished have their courtyard doors permanently closed; deprived of any contact with the rest of the human world, their only relation with the outside world is restricted to the vigilant eyes of the sentry and the fellow-convict who brings food twice a day.”³ Sri Aurobindo’s ironical comments on British hospitality run: “But the solitary cell has its own refinements—handcuffs and iron rings round one’s hand and foot. This highest punishment is meted out not only for disturbing the peace of the prison or playing rough, but also if one is found frequently slack in prison labour. To harass those convicted in cases of solitary confinement is against the spirit of law, but the Swadeshi or ‘Bande Mataram’ convicts were beyond the pale and, according as the Police desired, benign arrangements were made for those.”⁴ “The men the Government feared most, Hem Das and Aurobindo, were placed in solitary confinement...”⁵

“Such was the place where we were lodged. As for fittings, our generous authorities had left nothing to be desired so far as our hospitable reception was concerned. One plate and bowl used to adorn the courtyard. Properly washed and cleaned, my self-sufficing plate and bowl shone like silver, the solace of my life. In its impeccable, glowing radiance in the ‘heavenly kingdom’, in that symbol of immaculate British imperialism, I used to enjoy the pure bliss of loyalty to the Crown. Unfortunately, the plate too shared in the bliss, and if one pressed one’s fingers a little hard on its surface it would start flying in a circle, like the whirling dervishes of Arabia. And then one had to use one hand for eating while the other held the plate in position. Else, while whirling, it would attempt to slip away with the incomparable grub provided by the prison authorities. But more dear and useful than the plate was the bowl. Among inert objects it was like the British civilian. Just as the civilian, *ipso facto*, is fit and able to undertake any administrative duty, be it as judge, magistrate, police, revenue officer, chairman of municipality, professor, preacher, whatever you

ask him to do he can become at your merest bidding,—just as for him to be an investigator, complainant, police magistrate, even at times to be the counsel for defence, all these roles hold a friendly concurrence in the same hospitable body, my dear bowl was equally multi-purpose.”⁶

About the cells of both blocks Sri Aurobindo writes: “My solitary cell, nine feet long and five feet in width; had no windows; in front stood strong iron bars, this cage was to be my appointed abode. Outside was a small courtyard, with stony grounds, a high brick wall with a small wooden door. On top of that door, at eye level, there was a small hole or opening. After the door had been bolted the sentry peeped, from time to time, in order to find out what the convict was doing. But my courtyard door remained open for most of the time. There were six contiguous rooms like that, in prison parlance these were known as the ‘six decrees’. ‘Decrees’ stood for rooms for special punishment—those who were condemned to solitary imprisonment by the orders of either the judge or the jail superintendent have to stay in these mini-caves.”⁷ Thus Alipore jail caused acute psychological suffering for all the prisoners and gave a decisive turn to Sri Aurobindo’s life and transformed by a process of unbelievable alchemy the solitary cell into a spiritual retreat and cave of sadhana.

For Sri Aurobindo Alipore had meant a total revolution, not an outer, political one, but an unexpected spiritual transformation. He came out a completely changed person. What was the content of this inner revolution? How did it come about? Sri Aurobindo described it in *Kara-Kahini*:

“I have spoken of a year’s imprisonment. It would have been more appropriate to speak of a year’s living in a forest, in an ashram or a hermitage. For long I had made great efforts for a direct vision [*sākkhāt darshan*] of the Lord of my Heart; I had entertained the immense hope of knowing the Preserver of the World, the Supreme Person [*Purushottam*] as Friend and Master. But due to the pull of a thousand worldly desires, the attachment towards numerous activities and the deep darkness of ignorance, I did not succeed in that effort. At long last the most merciful all-good Lord [*Shiv Hari*] destroyed all these enemies at one stroke and helped me in my path, pointed to the *yogashram*, Himself staying as guru and companion in my little abode of retirement and spiritual discipline. The British prison was that ashram. I have watched this strange contradiction in my life that however much good my well-intentioned friends might do for me, it is those who have harmed me—whom shall I call an enemy, since enemy I have none?—my opponents have helped me even more. They wanted to do me an ill turn, the result was I got what I wanted. The only result of the wrath of the British Government was that I found God...”⁸

Sri Aurobindo described how he was waiting to listen to the inner voices which guided him throughout his prison life. In his *Uttarpara Speech*, delivered promptly, he reported:

“When I was arrested and hurried to the Lal Bazar Hajat I was shaken in

faith for a while, for I could not look into the heart of His intention. Therefore I faltered for a moment and cried out in my heart to Him, 'What is this that has happened to me? I believed that I had a mission to work for the people of my country and until that work was done, I should have Thy protection. Why then am I here and on such a charge?' A day passed and a second day and a third, when a voice came to me from within, 'Wait and see.' Then I grew calm and waited, I was taken from Lal Bazar to Alipore and was placed for one month in a solitary cell apart from men. There I waited day and night for the voice of God within me, to know what He had to say to me, to learn what I had to do. In this seclusion the earliest realisation, the first lesson came to me. I remembered then that a month or more before my arrest, a call had come to me to put aside all activity, to go into seclusion and to look into myself, so that I might enter into closer communion with Him. I was weak and could not accept the call. My work was very dear to me and in the pride of my heart I thought that unless I was there, it would suffer or even fail and cease; therefore I would not leave it. It seemed to me that He spoke to me again and said, 'The bonds you had not the strength to break, I have broken for you, because it is not my will nor was it ever my intention that that should continue. I have had another thing for you to do and it is for that I have brought you here, to teach you what you could not learn for yourself and to train you for my work'."

The hardships of Jail hurt at first, but Sri Aurobindo soon learnt to tolerate them, then to ignore them, even to laugh at them; there could be no anger, nor resentment; it was a divinity that had shaped the ends, and regrets were wholly out of place.

We quote the lighter side of the jail experience of Sri Aurobindo from his book *Kara-Kahini*:

"But for one month I acquired an unsought lesson in controlling my sense of disgust. The entire procedure for defecation seemed to have been oriented towards the art of self-control. Solitary imprisonment, it has been said, must be counted a special form of punishment and its guiding principle the avoidance of human company and the open sky. To arrange this ablution in the open or outside would involve a violation of that principle; hence two baskets, with tar coating, would be kept in the room itself. The sweeper [*methar*] would clean it up in the mornings and afternoons. In case of intense agitation and fiery speeches from our side cleaning would be done at other times too. But if one went to the privy at odd hours, as penance one had to put up with the noxious and fetid smell. In the second chapter of our solitary confinement there were some reforms in this respect, but British reforms keep the old principles intact while making minor changes in administration. Needless to say, because of all this arrangement in a small room, one had throughout to undergo considerable inconvenience, especially at meal times and during the night. Attached bathrooms are, I know, a mark of western culture; but to have, in a small cell, a

bedroom, dining room and w.c. rolled into one—this is what is called too much of a good thing! We Indians are full of regrettable customs, it is not easy for us to be so highly civilised.”¹⁰

(*To be continued*)

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 *The Bomb in Bengal*, by Peter Heehs, p 178
- 2 *Ibid* , p 178
- 3 *Tales of Prison Life*, by Sri Aurobindo, p 24
4. *Ibid* , p 25
- 5 *The Bomb in Bengal*, by Peter Heehs, p 178
- 6 *Tales of Prison Life*, by Sri Aurobindo, p 25
- 7 *Ibid* , p 24
- 8 *Ibid* , pp 7, 8
- 9 Sri Aurobindo *Karmayogin* SABCL, Vol 2, p 3
- 10 *Tales of Prison Life*, pp 27, 28

MATRI MANDIR

THE skyline of Auroville landscape
 ever shines in its natural splendour,
 When the heart seeks for visual union
 with the Mother's shrine in supernal grandeur.

Matri Mandir, the “soul of Auroville”,
 stands aloft in celestial effulgence,
 Like a beacon light on life's coast-line
 to help devotees discover Spirit's radiance.

As stalwarts of science and spiritual giants feel
 they merely collect pebbles on the Knowledge beach,
 The ocean of Wisdom with its deep-blue expanse
 whispers to beachcombers not to preach

The spherical dome-shaped tabernacle of God
 dotted with glittering golden discs,
 Never fails to guide and impregnate our minds
 with holy thoughts and spiritual bliss.

SURESH DEY

THE UNICORN

(FROM ISAAC ASIMOV'S *GUIDE TO THE BIBLE*, 1968)

FROM Mount Pisgah, Balaam praised God, saying:

(Numbers 23:22) God brought them out of Egypt; he (Israel) hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

The Bible mentions the unicorn on several other occasions, notably in the Book of Job:

(Job 39:9) Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib?

The Hebrew word represented in the King James Version by "unicorn" is *re'em*, which undoubtedly refers to the wild ox (*urus* or *adrochs*) ancestral to the domesticated cattle of today. The *re'em* still flourished in early historical times and a few existed into modern times although it is now extinct. It was a dangerous creature of great strength and was similar in form and temperament to the Asian buffaloes.

The Revised Standard Version translates *re'em* always as "wild ox". The verse in Numbers is translated as "they have as it were the horns of the wild ox", while the one in Job is translated "Is the wild ox willing to serve you?" The Anchor Bible translates the verse in Job as "Will the buffalo deign to serve you?"

The wild ox was a favourite prey of the hunt-loving Assyrian monarchs (the animal was called *rumu* in Assyrian, essentially the same word as *re'em*) and was displayed in their large bas-reliefs. Here the wild ox was invariably shown in profile and only one horn was visible. One can well imagine that the animal represented in this fashion would come to be called "one-horn" as a familiar nickname much as we might refer to "long-horns" in speaking of a certain breed of cattle.

As the animal itself grew less common under the pressure of increasing human population and the depredations of the hunt, it might come to be forgotten that there was a second horn hidden behind the first in the sculptures and "one-horn" might come to be considered a literal description of the animal.

When the first Greek translation of the Bible was prepared about 250 B C. the animal was already rare in the long-settled areas of the Near East, and the Greeks, who had had no direct experience with it, had no word for it. They used a translation of "one-horn" instead and it became *monokeros*. In Latin and in English it became the Latin word for "one-horn"; that is, "unicorn".

The Biblical writers would scarcely have had the intention of implying that the wild ox literally had one horn. There is one Biblical quotation, in fact, that clearly contradicts that notion....

And yet the fact that the Bible speaks of a unicorn seemed, through most of history, to place the seal of divine assurance upon the fact that a one-horned

animal existed. The unicorn is therefore commonplace in legends and stories.

. It is very unlikely that the Biblical writers knew of the rhinoceros and they certainly knew of the wild ox.

The unicorn entered European legend without reference to the rhinoceros, which was as unknown to the medieval Westerner as to the Biblical Israelite

THE PUREST GIFT

I HAVE preserved
 My poetic penury
 For your fond touch
 To fill it with
 Riches in variety,
 O bard of plenty!

Because of your
 Ceaseless care
 I fly like a bird
 Ignoring the fear
 Of fall or failure,
 And soar upward
 To regions unknown.

That is perhaps
 My purest gift
 And love in essence
 To offer to you
 Fully and exclusively
 My embellished emptiness,
 O luminous bard!

ASHALATA DASH

ESSAYS ON THE MAHĀBHĀRATA (VII)

(Continued from the issue of October 1994)

Dharma and its Limits—Kṛṣṇa's Commentary

IF we take a close look at Yudhiṣṭhira's action, we realize that Draupadī had to suffer for the sake of a principle which is questionable in itself: the vow to accept any challenge, even for a game of dice. Actually, this cannot be considered part of the proper *dharma*, but it is some personal idiosyncrasy of Yudhiṣṭhira's. To accept a challenge for a fight or battle is altogether another matter and there is no question then of getting helpless women involved. We may conclude that Yudhiṣṭhira did have a passion for the game, the one famous weakness of otherwise morally perfect men. But even when he had to follow this principle he should have made an exception in this case where he stood no chance against a master gamester proficient in the art of cheating. For his obligation as a king is not only towards a personal vow, a small principle, but the protection of the kingdom, its wealth, its subjects. The latter aspect is entirely pushed out of sight, it vanishes before the *dharmarāja's* single-minded concentration on one particular personal interest. Moreover, there was a special law prevalent at the time advising the protection of women, one's wife in particular. This law too is entirely forgotten. We cannot imagine any other convincing explanation for his action except the one we offered from the viewpoint of depth-psychology. In that case the stubborn adherence to a particular interpretation of *dharma* was only the external justification for an otherwise irresponsible action.

We may ask next whether Draupadī was right in her revolt. The answer is 'no' from the viewpoint of family *dharma* which asks absolute submission of the wife to the husband's will. It was obvious that Yudhiṣṭhira wanted her to surrender, by sending an usher of his choice to her rooms. And the answer is 'yes' from a modern point of view which attributes to woman an independent right of free existence. The same answer 'yes' we may get if we look at the *result* of her revolt: it was freedom for herself and her husbands whom she saved. By this result she stands justified.

As for Bhīma, he remained powerless at the moment since he did yield to the family *dharma* after all. But the provocation to which he was exposed became then a moving force in the Great War. Thus nothing was lost of his force, it was only a postponement.

Yudhiṣṭhira's capacity to suffer for the sake of a principle is something typically Indian. Perhaps in no other literature could we imagine this event of the game of dice. His capacity of forgetting everything over this sense of *dharma* is at the same time an immense virtue and a great obstacle. We have here a peak of sattvic culture represented in the *dharmarāja*, and at the same time the poet

points towards its limitation. Draupadī breaks through this limitation—Draupadī who is Kṛṣṇa’s devotee. Did perhaps Kṛṣṇa himself inspire her to throw herself into the battle? Did he perhaps inspire Vikarna to speak out at that awkward moment when an impenetrable silence had settled over the assembly with no one able or willing to say a word in favor of the helpless woman? What did Kṛṣṇa himself think about the whole event? An answer to these questions we get in Book III, 13. Here Kṛṣṇa and his people as well as Dhṛṣṭadyumna and others visit the Pāṇdavas in the forest during their exile. In a very pathetic speech Draupadī complains about all that had happened to her after the game of dice. We give some extracts from this speech in which she condemns her own husbands in the strongest terms:

“... And here am I, about to tell you of my grief, out of love—for are you not the lord of all creatures, whether human or divine, Madhusūdana?

Then how was it that a woman like me, wife to the Pārthas, friend to you, Lord Kṛṣṇa, sister of Dhṛṣṭadyumna, came to be dragged into the hall? Subjected to the Law of women, stained with blood, shuddering in my sole piece of clothing, I was grievously dragged into the assembly of the Kurus. In the midst of the kings, inside the hall, overrun by my menses, they watched me, the Dhārtarāṣṭras, and burst out laughing, the foul-minded! Madhusūdana, they wanted to exploit me as a slave wench! While the sons of Pāṇḍu, the Pāñcālas, and the Vṛṣṇis were alive! Am I not Kṛṣṇā, by Law the daughter-in-law of Bhīma and Dhṛtarāṣṭra? And I was forcibly reduced to a slave!

I detest the Pāṇdavas, those grand strongmen in war, who looked on while their glorious consort in Law was molested! A plague on the strength of Bhīmasena! A plague on the bowmanship of the Pārtha (Arjuna)! Both stood by, Janārdana, when churls manhandled me! *Is it not the ancient way of the Law*, forever followed by the strict, *that husbands*, however feeble, *protect their wives?*... These five fathered on me these five sons of boundless lustre, and for their sake, too, I should have been rescued, Janārdana...

So aren’t they the best with the bow, *undefeatable in battle* by their enemies? Then why did they suffer the jejune Dhārtarāṣṭras? It was an Unlaw that their kingdom was taken and they were all made slaves, and that I, in my month, was dragged around in their hall with my one piece of clothing...

I have got no husbands, no sons, Madhusūdana, not a brother nor a father, nor you, nor friends, if you mercilessly ignored me when I was plagued by the vulgar For this grudge of mine shall never be appeased: that a Karna laughed at me”.¹⁷

In his answer Kṛṣṇa assures Draupadī of his full support and gives her a

promise that she shall be queen once more: “Let Sky fall down, let Himālaya break, let Earth splinter, let Sea dry up, Kṛsnā, my word shall not be false!” Kṛṣṇa gives then his commentary on the dicing game (addressing Yudhiṣṭhira)

“If I had been present in Dvārakā earlier, O King, you would not have got into this trouble. I would have come to the dicing, even if the Kauravas did not invite me, or if King Āmbikeya (Dhṛtarāṣṭra) and Duryodhana did not, invincible lord! *I would have stopped the gaming by pointing out the many things that were wrong with it, and by bringing in Bhīṣma, Drona, Kṛpa and Bāhlikā.* I would have told King Vaiçitravīrya on your behalf, “Be done with the dicing of your sons, Kaurava, lord among Kings!” and pointed out the deceptions by which you have now become unseated and by which at one time Vīrasena’s son was deprived of his kingdom. I would have truthfully described how by gaming a man loses what has not yet been eaten up, and how the addiction to gambling lasts forever

Women, dice, hunting, and drinking are the four vices that spring from desire and make a man lose his fortune. Those who know the texts believe that this can be said of any one of these vices, but the experts find that this can be said of gambling in particular. In a single day one may lose one’s property, distress is certain, possessions are lost without the enjoyment of them, and only insults are left. Of this and other sources of bitterness I would have spoken before Ambikā’s son, strong-armed Lord. If at my words he had accepted my advice, the Law of the Kurus would have been intact, scion of Kuru. *If he had not accepted my mild and apt advice, lord among kings, I would have stopped him by force, best of the Bhāratas.* I would have shown up in the same manner the other men in the hall, enemies pretending to be friends, and I would have destroyed the gamblers. It was my absence from Ānarta, O Kauravya, that has caused all of you to fall into the distress that was brought about by the dicing.”⁷⁸

Kṛṣṇa’s statement reads like a devastating verdict against Yudhiṣṭhira. There would be no reason to quote those four vices of kings if the *dharmarāja* had not been subject to one of them here. We are reminded of Vikarna who had talked in the same way. But again the Mahābhārata is a Mahābhārata of contradictions, as shows the following quotation where Kṛṣṇa says to Yudhiṣṭhira

The Law is higher than a kingdom won;
They say that austerity leads to it, king.
While you lived by the Law, uprightly and truly,
You have won this world and the world beyond.
At first you studied, obeying vows,

Then acquired entire all the lore of war,
 Obtained your wealth by baronial Law,
 And regained all ancient sacrifices.
 You found no joy in the Laws of the rustics,
 Nor, Indra of men, pursued your desires,
 Nor abandoned the Law out of greed for Profit,
 And thus by nature you are King Dharma.

...

Who else but you could endure, son of Pāṇḍu,
 That spectacle robbed of all Law and manners,
 When the gathering folk of the Kuru jungles
 Saw Kṛṣṇā afraid and reduced to a slave?³⁹

With this quotation which restores all honour to Yudhiṣṭhira, we close this study of the game of dice.

(To be continued)

WILFRIED HUCHZERMAYER

Notes

37 Mahabharat 3 13 53-113

38 Mahabharat 3 14 1-4

39 Mahabharat 3 180 16-18 & 20

TO THE POT-BOUND BEAUTY

O SYMBOL of the unknown forests and lands,
 Distant seas and mountains and sands,
 Earth-bound evergreen friends of happy hours,
 Buds of your love bloom into wondrous flowers—
 Overbrimming my being with crimson glows
 My heart forever towards you flows
 Like a river destined to the infinite sea—
 Pot-bound beauty, impetuous but not free!

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE TOMORROW OF THE EARTH

Talk at the Savitri Solar Dome, Crestone, Colorado on August 15, 1994

by C.V. Devan Nair

IF I would do justice to personal experiences and perceptions of the past year, which included a rough passage to India, a four-month stay there, and an equally rough return, I must meditate on several separate themes and combine them as best I may. It has been a multi-thematic year of our multi-stringed lives, in a multitudinous world. We don't know the denouement, for the Divine Harpist keeps his secret. I ask you therefore to bear with the stream-of-consciousness approach I adopt this year. Life being what it is, my themes merge into each other—not always, perhaps, in a smooth fit. For mine has been, of late, a bumpy ride. Nonetheless, one needs a text, if only to place on record one's humble offering to the richest spirit of our Age—the colonist from Immortality, the summoner of a new dawn of consciousness for earth and men.

True, the world at large has failed to appreciate the mighty creative legacy of Sri Aurobindo. After a stunning realization during my stay in India (I simply cannot explain the why and the wherefore), this no longer surprises me. It never surprised the Mother. She knew why. “Three quarters of humanity is obsolete”—she once said. And those who are already obsolete or on their way to obsolescence cannot reasonably be expected to resonate to the supernal significance of the divine bequest. Similarly, one can imagine the once largely simian world being totally indifferent to the first few human voices of wonder and awe as they looked up at the star-spangled marvel of a cloudless, moonless night-sky. Perfectly understandable! After all, these were merely a few aberrant apes uttering sounds abnormal to the ‘cultivated’ gibberish of simian culture. Pooh! (in gibberish, of course, perhaps only a grunt)

The most radical changes in the aeonic adventure of consciousness on earth have always gone unnoticed, except by the all-seeing eye of the Supreme Mediatrix. They occur way below the surface reaches of beast and man—in the cells of embodied matter. Things like the aspirations of heart, mind and soul, or the intoxication of Divine Love so vividly exemplified in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, are beyond the range of the paraphernalia of modern medical science, like X-rays, CAT scans, ultra-sound and MNR scans. We recall the observation made by the renowned English physicist, Sir Arthur Eddington: “Any attempt to scientifically measure a subjective experience is like trying to find the square root of a sonnet.”

Again, the results of transformative changes in the conscious aspiration of the cells, for instance, are not immediately manifest externally, any more than did the reptiles suffocating in their dehydrated swamps develop wings overnight,

to wing their way to the sky as birds. A period of mounting intensity of aspiration, as that of a drowning man for air—a desperation in the very cells—is necessary. And there is a time lag between the aspiration and its fulfilment.

And thus it is that, not aberrant apes this time, but a mere handful of aberrant men and women, who gasp for another kind of air, have gathered here on this day, as they are doing in similar gatherings in scattered areas of our globe, without attracting headlines anywhere, in remembrance of what the Mother called “an eternal birth” It is good that we have gathered once again on “this day of great amnesties, when all past errors are effaced,” as the Mother put it. In other words, on this day of days, we have the opportunity to achieve the utmost possible sincerity—and to put ourselves back once again on the Grand Trunk Road, and consciously walk once more towards the Tomorrow of the Earth. How often, and perhaps in how many previous lives, have we not allowed ourselves to be diverted from the main highway of existence by some bondage to opinion, emotion, or physical appetites? “Opinions are worthless,” the Mother said.

Virginia Woolf described the opinions of know-all critics thus: “as hot as lava, discoloured as dish-water.” And how often have we not heard, in one language or another, under one skin or another, the eternal poet’s cry in our ears: “In what landscape of disaster has your unhappy spirit lost its road?”

It is with a thrill of instant recognition that we recall the great words of Sri Aurobindo:

... safety lies in tending towards our highest and not in resting content with an inferior potentiality.... 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.

Seekers who have taken the irrevocable resolution that their “right and natural road is towards the summits” have Vivekananda to thank for a remarkable rendering he once gave of the deathless charge in the Dhammapada to the human soul:

Go forward without a path!
 Fearing nothing, caring for nothing,
 Wander alone, like the rhinoceros!
 Even as the lion, not trembling at noises,
 Even as the wind, not caught in a net,
 Even as the lotus-leaf, unstained by the water,
 Do thou wander alone, like the rhinoceros.

In this connection, one recalls the Mother's words on the crucial importance for every seeker to discover the truth of his or her own being:

Ultimately, it's always the same thing;... realise your own being, enter into conscious contact with the supreme Truth of your own being, in *whatever* form, by *whatever* path (that's totally irrelevant): it's the only way. We each carry a truth within ourselves, and we must unite with that truth; we must live that truth....

In a striking paragraph in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo quoted Vivekananda. He wrote:

Vivekananda, pointing out that the unity of all religions must necessarily express itself by an increasing richness of variety in its forms, said once that the perfect state of that essential unity would come when each man had his own religion, when not bound by any sect or traditional form he followed the free self-adaptation of his nature in its relations with the Supreme. So also one may say that the perfection of the integral Yoga will come when each man is able to follow his own path of Yoga, pursuing the development of his own nature in its upsurging towards that which transcends that nature. For freedom is the final law and the last consummation.

In her own inimitable way, the Mother clinched the argument thus: "Who knows," she said once, "the very multiplicity of paths might yield the result."

An unique spiritual experience and its expression are not as uncommon as we think, and do not occur only in ashrams or retreats, when seated in meditation or counting one's beads. In today's world, they can occur at the oddest of moments to the unlikeliest of persons at the unlikeliest of places—in bus or train, in a bazaar or in an airport—anywhere at all.

Now, I had greatly regretted not having had Sri Aurobindo's personal darshan. I had been busy nurturing a political revolution in the years when he still walked our planet. Nonetheless, a wonderful poem by Sri Aurobindo's foremost poet disciple, K.D. Sethna (whom Sri Aurobindo had named Amal Kiran—*The Clear Ray*), came as a near substitute for the actual darshan. It is simply titled *The Master*:

Bard rhyming earth to paradise,
 Time-conqueror with prophet eyes,
 Body of upright flawless fire,
 Star-strewing hands that never tire—
 In Him at last earth-gropings reach
 Omniscient calm, omnipotent speech,
 Love omnipresent without ache!

Does still a stone that cannot wake
Keep hurling through your mortal mind
Its challenge at the epiphany?
If you would see this blindness break,
Follow the heart's humility—
Question not with your shallow gaze
The Infinite focussed in that face,
But when the unshadowed limbs go by,
Touch with your brow the white footfall:
A rhythm profound shall silence all!

When I first read this poem, a profound gratitude welled up in my deepest heart. It was as if Amal's lines gave me the much-coveted darshan of the 'Time-conqueror with prophet eyes', and I felt a benediction on my brow from that white footfall. And I said in my heart: "Thank you, dear Amal, thank you!"

Sincerity was the Mother's key word. And what it certainly does not mean is the holy humbuggerly that so often accompanies the word. There are those who put on soulful expressions and glibly mouth scripture, and thereby deceive the world and themselves. On the contrary, the practice of 'Sincerity' is the most exacting spiritual discipline possible. Mother's definition of the word bears constant repetition: "That's what I call sincerity: If one can catch oneself every minute belonging to the old stupidity." Let alone every minute, I confess that I sometimes find myself stumbling every half minute. It truly has to be an unremitting vigilance.

O, we hug so many delusions, pursue so many mirages—but the sacred thirst remains unquenched, for the good reason that it *is* unquenchable, until slaked by the might and freedom of Infinity—here, in our very bodies. Vivekananda expressed this, in some electrifying remarks, to a few disciples: "For infinite man can only be satisfied when his desire is infinite and its fulfilment infinite also.... Even the hand that comes to you through the darkness will have to be your own: We—infinite dreamers, dreaming finite dreams."

(To be continued)

CHRISTALIS

by

GEORGETTE COTY

Here is a serial story inspired by the teachings of the Mother and reflecting them in an unusual and lyrical rendering.

Synopsis

THE story begins graphically illustrating the aftermath of the devastating sweep of a war that ravaged the world.

Christalis, a boy of light, appears to a woman devoted to the care of children left without parents or homes. The struggle for survival prompts his arrival.

Christalis, a being from the realm of the Enlightened World, transcends both time and space. He offers his help and teachings to the woman.

Traversing both the spiritual and the physical realms, he leads her to varied planes of existence to show her the future of a more harmonious and enlightened existence for earth.

Episodes are told in vivid imagery of places of learning they visit, and beings of advanced knowledge they meet.

He reveals the vision of a united universe and forecasts the advent of a New Age, the Age of Light, culminating in the coming together of the advanced mind and the present ways of man. The two existences are already moving closer to each other to lay the foundation for a re-created world. The first rays of the Higher Light have already touched the earth.

Preface

This work was written out of a sincere desire to offer the gift of hope and inspire trust in the future.

It addresses itself to youth in particular, but also to today's children, whose mentality, receptivity and sense of observation are more advanced than those in the past.

It wishes to say that there are better ways to be had than turning to drugs and other forms of escape. Why not turn toward the light that dwells within the realm of perception and draw knowledge from there?

"What shall we call it?" you might ask. "Is it a story-telling book? Is it a utopia? Is it a looking-in-the-future book then? Is it simple?" Yes, it is, for, it is not intellectualisingly eloquent, nor is it terribly sophisticated.

But why not so?

Maybe because that is not the field it wishes to visit. We have already entered that field and now we are looking toward another tone to fill the emotional need of today. Did we say “hope” and did we say “trust in the future”? Yes, here we must answer in the affirmative. It offers that.

I dedicate it to the children of tomorrow and to all the wonderfully young, whose minds, hearts and spirits age cannot mar and whose eyes shine with an inner knowing that looks beyond the horizon to where they see a world filled with hope and light. They tell me that they do see the storm that sweeps over the lands—but not to worry, because there shines a sun behind those clouds, whose light is brighter than was ever seen before—and they wait for it to shine upon them.

How fortunate it is that the sun-lit souls are wise and know about a lot of things, even though they do not talk so much of what they know.

Yet, in the future, they may have to—out of love, if they wish to help others out of the dark realms of their mind’s making—and lead them gently toward the world they know about. Theirs will be the task to love and be patient with those who do not share their visions and are a little frightened when the horizon is overcast.

We shall ask them then to take us to that wonderful world with great people in it, which is seen only when you shut your eyes and look with your dreaming eyes of light, be it day or night, but it is there all the same... real as the tales which children tell you when they are young and true.

I too entered their world one day, a place where people are full of goodness and light. I entered a city and there I made a friend. I first met him in the sound of bells and later again in dream-seeing, where the real and the unreal cross barriers and meet.

I saw him then—a shimmering image in the longing eyes of his parents. I knew him from the moment he was beckoned by the great love that lived in their hearts. Their love was like a well, where clear images appear and you could look deep into it.

Yes, I was there and saw the coming of Christalis to his parents—and from him I learned many things.... That beautiful child, whom I shall always hold dear in my heart.

Christalis, come, meet your brothers, meet your sisters.... O Christalis, my boy.

PART I

Mother beloved, tell me a tale...
 Some say there was a time
 When living was pain.
 Hush, child, speak gently,
 Talk of good things,
 Dream of tomorrow's
 Bright-sided dreams.

Mother beloved, won't you please tell—
 Was there a time when all was not well?
 I heard of a light, bright as the sun
 And when it shone it made children die.
 Mother beloved, was there such a time?

Child of my heart, I'll tell you a tale—
 Hearken and hear me, I tell you a truth:
 In the beginning of life.. time before now,
 First there was strife ...

Shadows of the Antilords

In the beginning there were wars.... Afterwards there was no longer any use for them. It seemed as if the very thought of war had left man's mind, where it had its dwelling before.

Now the mind simply turned the dweller out. Like an army on the run, abandoning commando headquarters and commanders they would no longer obey—they had scattered to the winds.

A new occupant had arrived. It was let in to take its seat. Its name was Peace.

Although desire for peace now reigned in almost every heart, there remained some who felt otherwise.

This contrary state of affairs did not come abruptly, nor was it attained cheaply. Not before the preceding play had run its course to the full.

The onslaughts were without number, the results were largely the same. The flower of manhood went away, marched off under the yoke of wars. Driven on by a hell-machine in motion, never to return to their loved ones who awaited them in vain, they lived out their lonely lives without them. Some did come back, but they were not the same as when they had left. Maimed in body or in spirit, tired out, their light of joy was dimmed

Those were called the heroes of war. Fêted at first, forgotten later, left to themselves and to the cares of those who had remembered them as they had been before. Slowly they would fade into oblivion, those once beautiful, proud cedars of youth and veterans of a grand battle.

And the conditions yielded the bitter fruit of fear. Fear, like an unseen worm within, began to gnaw at the entrails and men knew not what ailed them.

Fear was the ruler now; of one another, of the real and imagined enemies... fear of today and of tomorrow. Out of this yield grew knotted, twisted offshoots; suspicion and hate, blind fury and cruelty.

As a consequence men began to arm themselves anew against imaginary attackers. The production of cunningly designed varieties of death-dealing devices was now their chief occupation. To make weapons took priority over all other considerations. Arms were made of hard metals, others of vapour, chemicals and death-rays. All of them dangerous, life-terminating contrivances. Slowly those who created them became themselves like the weapons they made. Hard, unyielding to anything but the dedication of their destructive might.

Devious they were and dangerous as the devastating energies they had evoked. They harnessed them and kept them in store, in order to appease their fears. This had earned them money and power and every desirable thing. Even their indoor opulence of comforts and of all things pleasant made them prisoners of blindness, insensitive to anything outside their gates. It seemed that man had now a new God to worship,—it was Technology, it was the Machine Great shining things, or unseen substances. He thought that, because he created them, they were his, he owned them to command them at his will. But in truth they owned him instead. They got into his system and ruled him from there.

If fear was commander, then falsely perceived values, imagined phantoms and warped concepts were lieutenants-in-charge. A devilish network of dark intelligence ruled the minds and it placed at points of importance its confidants, to rule and subjugate those who wanted to be free.

They had sent their evil-minded agents among the folks in every far corner of the world to create conditions of strife and animosity, thereby encouraging the need for their products. This had made them rich and powerful, caring nought for the devastating harm they had planted in the soil. By and by, their ill effects began to show signs everywhere, and could no longer be hidden from notice.

The peace brigades were sent to find the whereabouts of the hidden fortresses. They sought them out painstakingly one after another. They came upon steep, seemingly impenetrable hard metalled walls, protected by harmful currents and other evil devices to ward off anyone from unwanted entry. But the truth-seekers, suitably equipped, followed in after them into places unknown to anyone before. Led by a guiding light, they penetrated the sombre empires of this Dark Aristocracy.

Long used to rule, blinded by greed and by their own awesome power, they

resisted; unwilling to yield even now. But an unseen pursuer, far more forceful than they, marked them on their forehead and let them have their run yet, waiting for the appointed hour to strike. Awesome was this force which aimed to melt and remould all things rigid and hard or—if found incorrigible—remove them from its path. It appeared to work simultaneously in cross-currents of motion. If one mighty sweep in floodlike fashion removed the debris of all it found below its liking, another force rushed forth in torrents of newly arisen designs, yet to be manifest in some future time. So rapid were the movements of this now observable force, that time itself acquired a new dimension pressing upon events, hastened on by an unseen all-knowing Will.

Those aristocrats of darkness and their armies, in one mad rush holding onto their acquisition, crushed themselves and all their kin in the onslaught, demolishing unwantingly their own dreadful industries. Self-eliminated lay their inhabitants and their empire in ruin.

If their rules came truly to an end at last, it was not without cost to those who had entered the battle—those glorious hero warriors of right. Nor was it sparing to the land and the people and to all living things under the sky. Some of the good had gone with the bad, for this was God's removing time—this was His remaking time—and the people looked heavenward questioningly; some with awe, others with fear.

For God took a backseat in the affairs of men far too long, and the souls of men could no longer soar to their native heights. Caught as they were in a subtle net, condemned to their lonely cells, from where not even their sobbing could be heard. Only God knew they were there, and God marked His time. Calm, unperturbed eyes of eternity looked on patiently, observingly. The master of the play waited....

Decades passed in man-measured time... no more than a blink of the Eternal Eye. Then His desire for change began to roll its wheels.... Slowly at first, speed-gathering later on.

To show His discontent He sent His emissaries, who bore His seal.

Warning Signals

The wonderful green earth started to show terminal illness, and Mother Nature called to heaven for help. So did men, the animals and all that lived upon earth, in its waters, and those that winged their ways in the air.

Curiously something began to take the colours out of their foliage. The blooms withered and the trees that gave men so many gifts, now looked tired and many of them died altogether. So did the joyful songs of the birds, the gay announcers of the coming day.

Rivers changed courses, and their waters were no longer soothing to body or

thirst. Some vanished altogether, leaving parched beds and the earth around them changed to dust which made a greyish curtain in the air. Hot winds scorched hitherto fertile lands. Deserts crept slowly onto once lush green meadows, leaving the earth starved for sustenance. Vegetation and grains were increasingly scarce and hard to grow.

With the fat of the land gone, the fat of the cattle followed suit. Their once shining coats now hung drab on their skeletal frames. In places where the waters once came rushing from the mountains to the plains, now fell only a meagre trickle, hardly sufficient to sustain the shrubs and grass, or any living greens. They too fell into dust. Soon animals in want of food and water did the same.

And the rains did not come. There were not enough trees left to attract clouds to shower their benevolence upon the lands. The rivers, the lakes were so full of poison from former industries that not many fish had survived, and those remaining were dangerous to eat. Clearly, the times were frightening. It was not long before the freest of all creatures, those that flew the skies, fell out of it, as if shot by so many fusillades.

The oceans showed angry, menacing signs. They roared and sent foaming waves to the shores full of the dirt and grime they wished to be free of. So violent were the waves that the fishermen found it increasingly difficult, even dangerous to venture out with their nets, which often brought up sickly, half dead creatures from the deep in a piteous condition.

The winds had changed direction as had the seasons. Where there used to be a joyful, moderate fall of snow, it now fell in heavy loads, or there was none at all. Frost and ice covered the lands and deathly cold winds blew across them. Men and animals huddled within their dwellings, waiting for the spring to come to relieve them from this freezing misery.

If the icy cold wind was the lot of one land, unbearable heat was another's. The sun sent down its fiery rays relentlessly, sapping the energy out of all and everyone.

None knew what to make of these severities. Frightened, they prayed to God to help them. They prayed, but when the earth shook its shoulders and caused the ground and dwellings to tremble, and none knew where it might shake next—men remembered then that for too long they had done wrong.

They knew now that they had looked on complacently, and accepted things they knew to be wrong; caring only for their momentary benefits, hoping that the ones who would succeed them would do better than they. And the young were angry or worse. Their eyes were no longer filled with the light of zest and joy—marks of their fresh years—but more often with a kind of sadness. Aimlessness, anxiety hung about them, like a grey foreboding cloud.

Man looked to the stars for signs and for guidance. And the stars sang back their message to them: "We obey His command. Do right, choose a better way. Let patience and forbearance be your guide."

And again men prayed, for they were visited by strange maladies. The number of casualties were growing and science knew no remedy for them.

“Is our world made of an enduring substance,” they asked then, “enough to bear the wrongs we have done to it? Have we so abused its gifts that were ours in abundance, that it has turned in anger against us? Will the shadows of our errors engulf us in their dark, angry folds? Will there be a dawn? When will this heavy time pass from us? Our hearts tremble, feeble against such heavy, frightening odds.”

So spoke the people and they called as with one voice:

“Great Heaven above, O shining Sun, sustainer of all living things! Waters vast and small, our sweet Earth, be merciful to us, for we have children to raise.

“Look upon their sweet but frightened faces, make their lovely eyes laugh again.

“They shall be wiser than we, their hearts are pure, unsoiled are their thoughts and they speak to us of wise things we haven’t taught them to say. They know many things which we do not know, or perhaps we knew them once, but have forgotten.

“They say that there will be a better world, more wonderful than was ever known before. How do they know these things, who told them so? Truly we think that they can be our teachers now.”

(To be continued)

THE BOOK OF JOB

A NEW COMMENTARY

(Continued from the issue of October 1994)

Chapter 10.

EXCEPT for the last four verses, this Chapter is what Habel calls Job's formal legal complaint against God. It is also a direct address to God calling upon Him to explain why Job suffered. His description of God "making" (=creating) him in different stages, even if it was only to destroy him, as he thought, brings out the closeness between God and him.

Verses 1 to 3.

Beginning with a *tāmasic* note he soon rose to a *rājasic* one of accusation and charge against God. Behind both was an unconscious urge to have the answer from God and thus come near him. Consciously his one never-failing conviction was that he never deserved all his suffering.

Verse 1

The AV reads:

My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself: I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

In spite of the imprecision of the rendering of the second sentence the verse speaks more powerfully to our hearts than the more correct RSV etc. That Job would give free utterance to his complaint is not certainly brought out in AV. Those who are sensitive to rhythm immediately catch the *tāmaso-rājasic* state of Job's consciousness in AV.

Verse 2.

The first words of the verse, *I will say unto God* explain what he *will speak in the bitterness of his soul*. This makes it clear that Job did not really want a mediator. The Jews did not believe in mediators.

Do not condemn me: Anderson¹¹³ comments:

Job seems to concede what his friends have inferred. *Condemn* implies that God has treated him as if he were wicked.

How does the word *condemn* or its implication make it appear that Job conceded what his friends had inferred?

The original words in Hebrew for *condemn* means
make one appear wrong.

Hartley¹⁴ renders the line:

Do not declare me guilty.

Job wanted God to show him why he contended against him.

Verse 3.

Job wanted to know from God what good or advantage he derived by oppressing him and despising the work of his own hands.

The idea that Job was the work of God's hands is developed fully in the verses that follow (vs. 8 to 12).

Also, why did he shine upon the counsels of the wicked? *Shine upon* has the special meaning of bless. Counsel of the wicked leading to destruction is often spoken of in the Psalms.

Verses 4 to 7.

The verses are not as simple as they appear. At one level Job charged God with being inhuman like human beings (like Eliphaz and Bildad) looking for his sin and wickedness. Anderson¹⁵ suggests another possible level when he comments,

A possible explanation of God's upside-down treatment of a good person like Job as if he were a sinner (verse 6), while apparently smiling (shining—verse 3) on the wicked could be that God sees things differently from men, or that a man's brief life gives the matter a completely different perspective from God's endless years.

Verse 4.

The question in the verse,

Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?

lends itself to more than one possible explanation. Marvin Pope,¹⁶ for example, comments,

The question is not so much whether God has human limitations, but whether he can really understand and sympathize with man's predicament... he wonders whether God can really put himself in man's place.

But linked with verse 6, the question could very well mean if God has eyes like man to look for his iniquity and sin.

It is possible that Job initially meant to ask if God looked at him sympathetically but thinking of men like Eliphaz and Bildad he changed his meaning and tone.

Verse 5.

This verse adds further complexity: Job asked if God's days were like the days of man; were his years like man's days? (RSV substitutes *years* for the last word *days* perhaps nearing the original in meaning but moving away from the significance of God's time-span being different from man's). Was God really human or inhuman like man or was His nature inexplicable?

Verse 6.

The initial *That* links God's nature and his inquiring after Job's iniquity and searching for his sin.

It appears as though Job was consciously thinking of God's inhumanity but unconsciously of His transcending human understanding.

Verse 7.

After questioning if God were like or unlike man in his vision and life-span to probe into his wickedness and sin Job stated that God knew he was not wicked. Unlike AV, RSV starts with an *although* implying that God probed into his wickedness inspite of knowing that he was not wicked. Habel,¹¹⁷ however, implies God's knowing Job's innocence after the investigation:

If God's surveillance methods are accurate God must know that Job is not guilty...

God was also aware that Job had none to deliver him from his hands. Habel¹¹⁸ makes a very interesting comment:

Job's need for a deliverer may serve to emphasize his helplessness, but more probably it highlights again Job's quest for an arbiter who can remove God's threatening hand... and intimidating terror...

Hartley¹¹⁹ says on the other hand:

Whereas Job had looked for an arbiter to settle his case (9:32-4), now he realises that he needs a deliverer, rather than an arbiter, to rescue him from God's cruel inquiry.

For aught one knows poor Job was expressing no more than his sense of helplessness

Verses 8 to 12.

The four beautiful and tender verses describe God as the Maker, the maker of Job as an individual whom he was now trying to destroy. The value of the verses consists in the remarkable poetry presenting even biological detail not in the ugly raw language of much modernist poetry but in the most delicate expression. Job's remembering God's work not without a sense of gratitude even while perceiving the irony of the maker becoming the destroyer is remarkable. Perhaps Job had the sense of his end drawing near—he thought God was destroying him—because at such a moment there is a tendency to remember the past, especially one's beginnings.

Verse 8.

Job began with a statement of God's fashioning him and yet destroying him. Donne could have had the verse in mind when he began the famous Sonnet,

Thou hast made me, shall Thy work now decay?

though the poet developed a different theme.

Terrien's¹²⁰ simple human approach is more helpful than the scholarship displayed by others:

The thought of the artist's cruelty to the work of his hand (see vs. 3) emerges once more, but this time it is purified of its derisiveness and conveys a sentiment of desperate abandon, and an undertone of helpless reproach, as that of a rejected child to his unnatural parent—worse still, of the horror of a son about to be murdered by his own father

Verse 9.

He implored of God to remember that He had made him as clay and asked Him if He would bring him to dust again.

We could listen to Terrien¹²¹ once again:

Instead of defending his own right to live, the son of this inhuman father appeals to whatever feeling of tenderness or pride may remain in the heart of his progenitor.

Verses 10 and 11.

The verses may only be quoted, not paraphrased or summarised:

Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?

Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hath fenced me with bones and sinews.

Marvin Pope¹²² explains:

The marvellous mastery of man's conception and prenatal development is metaphorically depicted here. Semen, poured like milk into the womb, is coagulated like cheese, and finally bones and muscles are formed.

After referring to a number of Biblical passages, Pope tells us,

The Prophet Muhammed frequently cited the marvel of man's creation from a drop of semen or a clot (of blood), Koran, XXII 5, XXXVI 76, LXXX 19 and XCVI 2.

Habel's¹²³ comment is very illuminating:

The poetry of these similes, however, highlights the mystery and intimacy of God's involvement in prenatal growth... rather than the biological process.

Verse 12

Completing the picture of God as a Maker, Job said that he had granted him life and favour and that his visitation has preserved his spirit.

RSV and others read *steadfast love* for *favour* and *care* for *visitation* in AV. Terrien¹²⁴ notes that the last words *my spirit* ought to read rather "*my breath*" Hartley¹²⁵ makes the verse refer to the act of creation itself:

With the breath of life comes the commitment of loyal love to the new creation.... Since Job believes that he has proved faithful to God, he now calls on God to prove true to his commitment by guarding his life from a premature death.

Anderson¹²⁶ seems to agree with the above interpretation:

God treasured in his heart a covenant promise (*steadfast love*) that guarantees life for his creatures. . The affirmation of life by God through creation is all-important for Job.

Marvin Pope¹²⁷ thinks differently:

These lines (Verse 12) probably refer not to the miracle of gestation and birth but to God's providential care of Job in his earlier years, before the calamities befell him.

Habel¹²⁸ thinks like Pope but with a particular point of view:

Standing alone this verse could be read as a touching recognition of God's providential care for Job throughout his life.

Before we take up the point of view with which Habel looks at the verse it is necessary to deal with the divergent ways in which it is looked at. It is possible that Job was thinking of both the moment of his creation and coming to this world and the early period of his life when he did receive the love and care of God.

Habel points out that the verse by itself makes it appear that Job recognized God's love and care but in the context of what has gone before and what follows it carries overtones of regret and irony.

Once again it must be said that the verse must be considered both in itself and in the context of Job's sorrow and despair. The *sātwik* element in Job asserted itself for a moment even when he was *tāmaso-rājasik*.

It must never be forgotten that Job's evolution was not a straight-line movement. It was in spite of himself and unconsciously that he was moving *towards* the depths.

Verse 13.

The verse forms a kind of transition between the preceding four verses and the concluding section of Chapter 10 which completes Job's response to Bildad. (In all that Job said he seemed to ignore the "friend" altogether! Much of the time he was addressing God directly.)

Job told God that behind all the love and care with which He had made him and looked after him He was hiding his plan to bring him down and make him miserable.

Verses 14 and 15.

Whether he sinned or not it made no difference. (He did not sin,—that goes without saying it.) Supposing he actually sinned God would mark him out and would not acquit him. If he were really wicked woe be unto him! If he were righteous it was all the same: he could not lift his head. He was full of confusion and he wanted God to see his affliction.

RSV renders the words *I am full of confusion*
I am filled with disgrace.

The rendering brings out the significance of the previous words of Job that he could not lift up his head.

Verses 16 and 17.

The verses describe Job's affliction:

Verse 16.

Job said that his affliction increased. God hunted him like a fierce lion and again revealed Himself marvellous in His powers against him.

Commentators differ in the explanation of the simile; some see that Job is stalked by a lion; some see God like a lion chasing Job. The fact is, either way Job regarded himself as God's victim.

(To be continued)

K.B. SITARAMAYYA

Notes

- 113 Anderson, p 152
- 114. Hartley, p 188
- 115 Anderson, p 153
- 116 Pope, p 78
- 117 Habel, p 198
- 118 *Ibid*
- 119 Hartley, p 195
- 120, 121. Ternen, pp 988-9.
- 122 Pope, p 78
- 123 Habel, p 199
- 124 Ternen, p 989
- 125 Hartley, p 187
- 126 Anderson, p. 154
- 127 Pope, p 78
- 128 Habel, p 199

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

(Continued from the issue of October 1994)

43. UNBELIEVABLE... BUT TRUE

KAMBAN was surprised to see king Cheran in tears. As he tried to console him, Cheran said: "I do not know how to recompense for the sin I have committed... The sin of employing a divine poet as my minion."

"Well! Why should you feel sorry for no fault of your own? Things would have been different had I revealed my identity. I wasn't unaware of that. But I desired to know what I would have been had I not become a big name!"

King Charan smiled amidst tears. His smile seemed to ask Kamban a thousand questions. The poet reciprocated the king's smile and began to recollect for him what had happened ever since he had become angry with the merciless king Kulothunga Chozhan.

*

In a fit of fury Kamban decided to leave the Chozha empire once for all. And before he left he spat out the following poem at king Chozhan:

"Neither are you the monarch of the world;
Nor is your kingdom the only fertile land;
Nor did I become a Tamil poet to please you only.
Is there a king on this earth who would ignore me?
Is there a tree-branch that wouldn't hold a monkey?"

Kamban allowed his feet to carry him as they pleased. On his way he said to himself: "What use are power and glory? They have not helped me to save my son from the king's butchering blade. Let me make a living by physical labour. I shall not reveal my identity to anyone."

As he passed through a village he learnt of a woman named Veili who was unable to complete the construction of her house for a particular wall failed to remain intact. Many were the skilled masons who tried their hand. No sooner did one complete the construction of the wall than it crumbled and fell to the ground. The villagers attributed it to a mischievous spirit.

Since Veili had announced the reward of a big measure of paddy to the one who would succeed in constructing the wall that would not fall down, Kamban wanted to take up that challenging job.

Veili accepted Kamban's offer. Kamban began the work.

After a whole day's toil he beamed with satisfaction and went to receive the reward from Veili.

“Are you sure that the wall is intact?” asked Veili.

Kamban nodded his head.

“Unbelievable!” said she.

“But true,” responded Kamban.

Veili hurried to the site with the eagerness of a child towards a sweetmeat shop.

Disappointment awaited her there.

Kamban didn't lose hope. He tried again on the morning of the next day. Taking the utmost care he constructed the wall and by sun-down he completed his work.

Heaving a sigh of relief he said: “At last I have earned my food.”

But a sense of fear began to dart down his spine as he saw the wall shake and tremble.

Hunger began to gnaw at his belly.

He addressed the wall thus:

“Long have I come from an eminent kingdom.
Is there no one here, I wonder, who could
Appreciate and reward my songs?
So stand still, O Wall! till I get a measure
Of paddy from the doe-eyed Veili.”

The spirit playing pranks on the wall moved aside out of sheer respect for the poet.

Delighted at the sight of the inert wall, Veili gave Kamban his reward.

As soon as the big measure of paddy changed hands, the wall began to show signs of tremors.

Panic-stricken, Veili requested the mason to do something about it. And Kamban sang the song again replacing the word “till” by “even after” and the spirit left the place once for all allowing the wall to stand still forever.

Veili couldn't believe her eyes. “It's a miracle,” she shouted in joy. “Who are you?” she asked.

“Only a coolie.”

“Unbelievable!” she said.

“But true!” Kamban responded.

Veili honoured the coolie with several presents which he gave away to the poor as he proceeded towards his undecided destination.

Two days of wandering in a jungle brought him to a paddy-field where a farmer took pity on the tired and hapless wanderer and gave him food.

Kamban sang in praise of him and immortalised him.

As Kamban took rest in the shade of a tree, the farmer continued to plough the field. As his ploughshare was making furrows in the field it hit on something and made a metallic sound.

Curious to know what actually made that sound, the farmer took a spade and plunged into action. A pleasant shock awaited him. He unearthed a copper pot full of gold coins.

The farmer ran in great glee towards Kamban and said: "Your blessing has come true, Sir! I have become rich with this potful of gold. Take as many gold coins as you want."

Kamban smiled. "It's all yours... You have given me enough food. Now all that I need is two pieces of cloth.

The farmer happily bought them. Kamban wore one to cover the upper part of his body and the other to cover the rest of it and resumed his journey.

Soon he found himself in the kingdom of Cheran. Wishing very much to have a job to support himself he approached a nobleman and said: "I was one among the minions of Kamban. Owing to some misunderstanding between the poet and his king, the poet has left the Chozha empire once for all. No one knows his whereabouts. And I too came away seeking a job. Will you please help?"

The nobleman recommended the case of "Kamban's Minion" to king Cheran who added him to his train of servants.

*

"I can't excuse myself for being unaware of the presence of a great poet called Kamban. But now to recompense for what I have done, I appoint you Poet Laureate of my kingdom," said King Cheran.

44. A KING FOR A SERVANT

Father Time is a great healer. He can with his invisible magic wand repair broken hearts too.

The hour struck for king Kulothunga Chozhan to feel sorry over what he had done to his bosom friend Kamban. The prolonged absence of the poet had visibly upset him.

After many a question addressed to himself, king Chozhan decided to call Kamban back to his kingdom. As his spies had already informed him of the whereabouts of Kamban, king Chozhan sent the poet a note of regret and an invitation to join his court.

Kamban too, as if he had been longing for such an invitation, rushed with a cry of pleasure to the chamber of king Cheran. "It's time to leave, your majesty!" said the poet, "I can't ignore king Chozhan's invitation in spite of the many misunderstandings that drove me out of his kingdom."

Cheran threw his head back, tilting his face skyward, perhaps to choke his

tears. "I can't stop you from going to your native land. But what made you take such a hasty decision when I am keeping you as the apple of my eye?" Cheran asked.

"Love for my land," came the reply.

King Cheran started to laugh, chuckling slowly at first, and then deeply. His loss of control was contagious and soon Kamban was laughing too.

They kept looking at each other, as if they wanted to read the language of their eyes. A few seconds later they embraced each other. Tears began to stream down their cheeks.

The chosen day of departure came.

King Cheran waved his hand as Kamban mounted the elephant presented by the king. As the animal began to amble away Cheran shouted: "My doors will remain open for you. Don't hesitate to ask for any help. I will feel honoured if I could be of any service to you."

Kamban bowed in all humility.

Honoured and revered all the way to his native land, he was given a grand welcome by king Chozhan. The king and the poet hugged each other and then hand in hand entered the palace to the joy of every courtier.

Days passed.

It is said that real friendship once ended can never be mended. Kamban and Kulothunga Chozhan were real friends... but that was before the king's ego had a blow at the hands of Kamban. And both of them had played tit for tat in their own ways. There was a breach in their friendship on two occasions. They were not ego-free.

"The day you left my empire, you vowed to make kings more powerful than I your minions," said king Kulothunga to Kamban during one of their evening strolls in the orchard. He then heckled him and asked, "How far did you succeed?"

"I will show you how successful I am in another week's time," said Kamban with an impish smile.

On the morning of the next day Kamban despatched a messenger to king Cheran with a letter which read as follows:

"Now is the time for you, my dear king Cheran, to do me a favour. Please be kind enough to come over to my palace and honour me by being a 'minion' for a day."

King Cheran felt honoured by the invitation. Since he was not in the good books of king Chozhan, he reached Kamban's palace in the disguise of a servant.

Evening came. King Chozhan along with his Chief Minister entered Kamban's palace.

"Shall we go for a walk?" the king asked Kamban who was relaxing in his chair. Beside him sat his 'minion' rolling betel leaves with areca nuts for his master.

“Uh!... That’s king Cheran... Kamban’s minion is king Cheran,” whispered the Chief Minister to king Chozhan.

King Chozhan was taken aback.

Kamban motioned his ‘minion’ with a wave of his hand to go away and then got ready for the stroll.

By the time king Chozhan returned to the palace, it was brought to his notice that king Cheran had left for his kingdom.

“Why did you send him away so soon?” the king asked Kamban.

“Because I was afraid that you would throw him behind bars at any time. I am quite aware that you consider king Cheran as your foe. And he had come without an army. I know you would pounce at the opportunity,” said Kamban.

While it was true that king Chozhan had held Kamban in high esteem ever since he saw his arch rival serving the poet, it was also true that he began to fear him.

He feared that king Cheran at Kamban’s instigation would at any time threaten him with war. And he imagined that Kamban would go to such an extent even at the least provocation.

As his fear took gigantic shape he began to show signs of hatred towards Kamban.

“I must put an end to my fear. To kill Kamban is the only way,” king Chozhan thought aloud.

45. SON FOR SON

King Kulothunga Chozhan’s hardened hatred for Kamban had no end. He began to trouble the poet in every manner possible. His taunts and insults drove the poet to treat the man who had been his friend as his foe.

The king and the poet very rarely met. And when in unavoidable circumstances they met, their eyes spat venom at each other.

One morning Kamban sat gloomily in his house as his thoughts hovered around his dead son, Ambigapathy. As tears trickled down his cheeks, he felt his heart weighing down his chest. His thought shifted on to his one-time friend and now his foe—king Chozhan. His eyes turned red and he gnashed his teeth. He was mentally tearing the king to pieces.

Just at that time king Chozhan’s youngest son—a teenager—dashed into Kamban’s house crying all the time, “Save me! Save me from the wild elephant.”

Kamban stared at the young fellow.

“I went for a hunt in the wilderness. I lost my way. But I am lucky to find you here. Save me from the wild elephant. It is at my heels,” said the prince panting for breath.

The wild elephant trumpeted awhile and left. The prince heaved a sigh of relief.

But Kamban fumed. He pulled out his stylus from below his turban and jabbed it with all his might into the heart of the jittery prince.

“You can manage your escape from a wild elephant but never from my omnipotent stylus,” Kamban said as he saw the prince fall down and die.

The murder of the prince sent a tremor down king Chozhan’s spine. “It is high time that I turn a murderer. Any further delay would dig a grave for me,” the king mumbled.

The king had Kamban arrested and set his royal elephant to shatter the poet’s head.

The elephant headed towards Kamban.

Kamban stared at the animal. The animal stopped. He then roared out a song which really resembled the roaring of a ferocious lion.

The royal elephant had heart-failure. It fell to the ground with a thud and died.

King Chozhan decided not to delay any more. He pulled out an arrow from his quiver, set it to his bow, pulled the string, aimed at Kamban and released it.

Swishing the air the arrow sped. It entered Kamban’s chest and passed through his back.

“Arrows are of two kinds.
 One released from the bow,
 The other from the tongue.
 The tongue-released is more powerful
 Than the bow-released
 Yours from the bow has wounded my body.
 But mine from my tongue
 Will put an end to your lineage.”

Thus cursed Kamban and sagged down.

(More legends on the way)

P. RAJA

MUSINGS ON *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS* OF THE MOTHER

1. THE SEPARATION AND THE ANGUISH

In the first week of March 1914, the Mother left her country of birth, France, on a voyage to India believing that most probably she would not return. She took leave of her family and friends. Amongst those she left behind was her young son André who was about 16 years old. The members of her family and her friends were naturally grieved at parting from their cherished one.¹

Divine in her essence, the Mother was even in her outer consciousness, as early as 1914, worlds apart from ordinary human beings. She had, by then, scaled great heights of spirituality, and had risen above suffering in the human way. This fact is amply proved by one luminous page of her diary, *Prayers and Meditations*, written in Geneva on March 6, 1914.

In an obvious reference to her family and friends, she wrote,

After having suffered acutely from their suffering, I turned towards Thee, trying to heal it by infusing into it a little of that divine Love which is the source of all peace and all happiness. We must not run away from suffering, we must not love and cultivate it either, we must learn how to go deep down into it sufficiently to turn it into a lever powerful enough for us to force open the doors of the eternal consciousness and enter the serenity of Thy unchanging Oneness.

Her words show that the Mother suffered acutely not from her own suffering but from that of those she was leaving behind. She did not look down from the exalted heights of her serene Consciousness on the emotional suffering of her family and friends. Rather, she pierced the outer seeming and went to the very core of this problem of the pain of parting:

Surely this sentimental and physical attachment which causes an agonizing wrench when bodies are separated, is childish from a certain point of view, when we contemplate the impermanence of outer forms and the reality of Thy essential Oneness...

But then the Mother identified herself with the human viewpoint. She looked deep to find out the *raison d'être* of attachment and its resultant sorrow. And having identified it she wrote,

¹ Though the Mother was forced to return to France in March 1915 due to the outbreak of the First World War, and lived there for about 15 months, this in fact was the effective separation

... but, on the other hand, is not this attachment, this personal affection, an unconscious effort in men to realise outwardly, as far as possible, that fundamental oneness towards which they always move without even being aware of it?

And then the Mother revealed the secret of making suffering a means of ascension:

And precisely because of that, is not the suffering that separation brings one of the most effective means of transcending this outer consciousness, of replacing this superficial attachment by the integral realisation of Thy eternal Oneness?

Though herself above such anguish and pain, she appreciated this “beauty of affection and tenderness” in others. Thus, in such a lofty frame, with sweet compassion and total detachment and integral calm the Mother on that day of March, 1914, left all that is held dear by human hearts, without a backward look, without tears, offering her dear ones in total trust to the Lord, praying that their suffering might be healed:

This is what I wished for them all; this is what I ardently willed for them, and that is why, assured of Thy victory, certain of Thy triumph, I confided their grief to Thee that by illuminating it Thou mayst heal it.

O Lord, grant that all this beauty of affection and tenderness may be transformed into glorious knowledge.

Grant that the best may emerge from everything and Thy happy Peace reign over the earth.

Conscious yet calm, understanding yet unmoved, on the above exalted note of invocation and trust the Mother closed this prayer.

Surely this was the sublimest parting that was ever recorded in world history. When Sri Rama left for Ayodhya his father, the great King Dasharatha, died of a broken heart due to the departure of his son. Actually Sri Rama thought it advisable to leave while his father was in a swoon. Vaishnava literature records in detail the unbearable pangs of separation of Ma Yashoda, Sri Radha and the Gopis when Sri Krishna left Vrindavan. Even the animals and the plants have been said to have suffered intensely and nobody can doubt those seer poets of Sanskrit and later of other Indian languages who write of this pain. The great renunciation of Buddha is called *Mahābhiniṣkramaṇa* and looked upon with holy awe, and rightly too, by the whole world. Yet Buddha had to leave while his wife was sleeping, and he left without informing his parents. His parents were beside themselves with grief when they came to know of his

departure. Along with his wife, sweet princess Yashodhara, they wept throughout the long years of his Tapasya, until he came home and enlightened them. The great Shankara had to take his mother's permission by a ruse and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu left behind a heart-broken mother and a hardly reconciled wife. Probably the Time Spirit was not advanced enough for it to be otherwise.

The Mother, the Supramental Mahashakti, acted in a different way. As we see in the sole record of that noble parting how the Mother was not only above suffering, she also healed the suffering of all those she left behind, amongst them her only son about 16 years old, and parents whose only daughter she was, and the friends who must have held her dear because none could have helped loving her.

Thus the Mother wrote a *finis* to the reality of emotional suffering by offering it to the Divine for transforming it into a compassionate and universal greatening. That day the dramatic intensity of human suffering at parting was conquered 'in its essence', and not only was a victory made possible for all those who wished to overcome it, but also a diminishing and sublimation of the pain and anguish of lesser mortals.

(To be continued)

SHYAM KUMARI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Many Worlds of Manoj Das, by *P. Raja*, Published by B.R. Publishing Corporation, Shakthi Nagar, Delhi - 110 007. Price Rs. 80, Pages 111.

THE book under review is the ninth publication of Mr. P. Raja. Well-known as a poet and short-story writer, he has now entered the arena of literary criticism with this excellently written account of Manoj Das's art of story-writing. Mr. Raja has done research for his doctorate on the fiction of Manoj Das and the present book is a slightly altered version of his Ph.D. thesis. The book is a truly fascinating and intensely original study of Manoj Das's work. Mr. Raja successfully penetrates into the very psyche of his subject and brings out the 'uniqueness of the art and craft of the great author' by analysing almost all his stories from the point of view of their theme, style, philosophical and psychological significance, social content and aesthetic value.

Manoj Das is one of the most gifted among Indian writers possessed with an uncanny perception of life and its mysteries, who can wield the pen both in his mother tongue Oriya and in English with equal ease. He was the first to publish a collection of short stories in English from Orissa. Manoj Das began as a student political activist and rebel of the Left persuasion. But in later life he turned a spiritual seeker and settled in Pondicherry under the sober sky of Sri Aurobindo's yogic radiance. Through all the vicissitudes of his life he remained a writer, a teacher and a practitioner of the Integral Yoga. Today he is an internationally known writer whose stories have been published in magazines and anthologies all over the world. In 1976 *Imprint* wrote—"There are only a few story-tellers left in the world today. One of them is Manoj Das."

The author Mr. Raja confesses that he came across Manoj Das's stories by chance and he was immediately impressed especially by the comic situations presented in the stories. At a deeper level, the stories showed 'how thin is the line that divides life and death, sanity and insanity, love and hatred, and above all the human and the inhuman' (Preface). According to Mr. Raja, Manoj Das is a teller of stories rather than a writer of stories. How did Mr. Das achieve that special quality of endearing himself to the readers, a quality most other Indo-English short-story writers lack? Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar has observed that for an Indian writer to succeed in English, 'what is written has to be recognisably Indian to the Indian reader and recognisably English to the English reader'. Manoj Das has demonstrated this rare quality. He writes with a wholly Indian view of things from an Indian background but in a language and style which he acquired through constant involvement with world literature. Manoj Das stresses the comic aspect of life in most of his short stories, indulges in fantasy and nostalgia, uses satire and irony with deadly effect and tickles the reader's curiosity and imagination by presenting a gallery of unforgettable characters. All through his

attempts to delineate the social and personal aspects of human existence by an apparently light-hearted but ironic stance, he has never forgotten to present a brightened view of the divinity and psychic splendour inherent in man. He stimulates the reader in several directions by inviting him to partake in a world throbbing with the fullness of the human psyche, with dreams and fantasies, mystery and myth. The intensity and sublimity of that world haunts the reader for ever; he is made aware of several typical Indian situations and human dilemmas in general.

Manoj Das has created many worlds. Mr. Raja has deftly delineated these worlds in vivid colours through the five chapters of the book. In the first chapter which is in the form of an introduction, the author presents Manoj Das as an interpreter of Indian culture who has made the short story a vehicle for conveying the Indian ethos. Mr. Raja argues that Manoj Das is a follower of the oral tradition of story-telling with the difference that he has made use of modern ideas, symbols and techniques. The second chapter, 'From Realism to the Sublime' traces the growth of Manoj Das's art of story-telling from realism as found in his stories with a rural background to the sublime as found in stories where he successfully blends mysticism, mystery and the supernatural. Here the author shows certain original insights as a critic. He argues that the growth of Manoj Das's art is from realism/mystery to transcendence/sublime. One may agree with the author that there is a small dose of mysticism in the story 'Sita's Marriage'; however, the author's discovery of a 'different aspect' of mysticism in the story 'Mystery of the Missing Cap' disconcerts the reader. Mr. Raja analyses several of the outstanding stories and suggests that Manoj Das's attempt in his better and deeper stories is to bring out the hidden transcendence of man. The author focuses our attention on Manoj Das's view that the destruction of the ego and detachment constitute peace of mind. Das's stories like 'The Statue-breakers are Coming' and 'A Crack of Thunder' come under Mr. Raja's special mention as stories that show how transcendence/sublime which is hidden in every human being reveals itself when the soul is free from ego and attachment. Some of Manoj Das's stories illustrate this process of liberation from the self and the final realisation of transcendence. It is Mr. Raja's original contribution as a critic that he discovers the fabric of transcendence/sublime that hides behind the apparent realistic and cryptic style of story-telling adopted by Manoj Das.

In chapter 3, 'Relationships', Mr. Raja points out that one of the predominant themes in all of Das's stories is the family relationship. Mother-child relationship is the most beautifully explored aspect of the family in Das's stories. The best part of the book is certainly Mr. Raja's discussion of Death as a subordinate theme in Manoj Das's stories. He discovers four different relevances for the presence of Death (p. 42) in Das's stories and analyses a few stories to bring home his point. Mr. Raja says that although Das is a believer in the mystic purpose of Death he has not made it the central theme in any of his stories.

In chapter 4, 'Transition' Mr. Raja dwells upon Manoj Das's transitions. Das's stories spring from the centre of Indian life before and after Independence. According to the author, Das's stories exemplify three transitions, namely, India's passage from a colony into a free country, the passing of feudalism especially the zamindari system, and the slow transformation of Indian villages into towns (p. 58). The novel 'Cyclones' portrays all these transitions in realistic and metaphoric terms. Manoj Das's stories are at the same time universal in their impact as they exhibit a synthesis of the national and universal ethos.

Chapter 5, 'Craftmanship', is a scholarly and exciting discussion of Manoj Das's art in its various manifestations. His stories are remarkable for the manner in which the writer's vision of life and the technique of narration are harmoniously blended. Das uses the frame of realism or that of the fairy tale as the theme demands; he mixes the quotidian with the supernatural, realism with fantasy; he harmonises comedy and satire with haunting observations on the meaning of existence.

His short stories are a delight for the average reader who wants to spend a few hours in a relaxed mood. They are also an experience for the more discriminating type of readers because they expose the vulgar values and evils of contemporary India. As a critic has observed, 'there is about him the comfort of a grandmother's lap'; but there is also about him the joy of an encounter with mystery, fantasy and the supernatural. Mr. Raja finds two reasons for Manoj Das's popularity. Firstly, Das's stories, despite their fairy-tale-like form, surprise the reader with a relevant social message; secondly, they are a storehouse of chaste and dignified humour. And Mr. Raja is right.

Many Worlds of Manoj Das is the first full-length critical study of the famous writer's work. Mr. Raja deserves our gratitude for bringing out his thesis in book-form so that readers interested in Indo-English fiction can have a profitable starting-point as far as Manoj Das's works are concerned. Mr. Raja has succeeded in whetting our interest in Manoj Das's works and presenting him as one of the finest short-story writers in India today. He has exercised his critical insight on some of the usually unnoticed aspects of the gifted writer's art. His study is profound, compelling and original and helps us to see the brilliance and originality of an artist about whom other equally evocative studies do not exist. After reading Mr. Raja's account, we may as well agree with the tribute to Manoj Das paid by Bhavan's Journal—"Here is a writer truly Indian in his vision and wisdom and truly universal in his appeal." About Mr. Raja one may say—here is a critic truly original in his understanding and fascinating in his exposition.

K.R. RAMACHANDRAN NAIR

Index to Sri Aurobindo Circle: 1945 to 1994. Published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry. Available at Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency, Pondicherry, 605 002. Pages 69, Price Rs. 40/-.

This Index to *Sri Aurobindo Circle* (published by Sri Aurobindo Society every year on 24th April) covers fifty years of its publication, from 1945 to 1994. During these 50 years it has published in its Numbers a large amount of original writings by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as well as by several eminent Indian and European writers and scholars on spiritual, philosophical, psychological, sociological, political, literary, educational, scientific and other important subjects. It has also published a large number of poems written by Ashram poets inspired and guided by Sri Aurobindo.

All these writings are of very great value to those who are interested in Sri Aurobindo's many-sided thought in various spheres. It is of especial value to the students, professors and scholars, in academic institutions in India and in foreign countries, who are now increasingly drawn to Sri Aurobindo's thought and have undertaken research projects in their different fields of study.

KISHOR GANDHI

TO PĀṆINI'S TIME FROM PĀṆINI'S PLACE

HIS GEOGRAPHICAL POINTER AT HIS HISTORICAL PERIOD

(continued from the issue of October 1994)

4

If Pāṇini's lower time-limit is c 543 B.C., then, within our universe of discourse, is there a way to the upper time-limit?

We have noted that the Achemenid Gandhāra covered Kohistān-Kafīrstān. Hecataeus of Miletus, whose life (549-486) spanned the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius I, is said to refer to Kaspapyrus (Kaśyapapura, i.e. Kāśmīra) as "a Gandaric city".¹ Gandhāra thus may be thought to include the capital of Kāśmīra. This political situation is reflected in some of the Buddhist *Jātakas* recounting past history. In *Jātaka* No. 406, as Raychaudhuri² observes, Kāśmīra is included in the kingdom of Gandhāra. A few other *Jātakas* represent the two countries as being ruled by one king.³ As the *Jātakas* talk of "kingdom" and "king", they have a pre-Cyrus independent Gandhāra in mind, which yet, like the Achemenid satrapy, was inclusive of Kāśmīra or composite with it in that earlier age. Where it differs is in the prominence the *Jātakas* give to the city of Takshaśilā (Taxila) on the eastern side of the Indus.⁴ Takshaśilā was the capital of the territory which went into Gandhāra on that side in certain historical epochs. The trans-Indus territory seems to have been of secondary importance, for it plays little part in the *Jātaka* stories. The Achemenid Gandhāra, as far we know, was confined to this territory, though some indirect Persian influence has been observed in the old Taxila dug up by the archaeologist's spade.⁵ Now, does Pāṇini's Gandhāra agree with the pre-Cyrus Gandhāra of the *Jātakas*?

Pāṇini does mention Takshaśilā (IV.3.93) and his manner of reference implies a past history of it; for, as Agrawala⁶ says, "Pāṇini applies the term *Tākshaśilā* to those whose ancestors lived at Takshaśilā." But Pāṇini has also the trans-Indus capital Pushkalāvati in his vision: it "occurs in a *gana* as the name of a river on which the town stood"⁷ His vision is thus somewhat different from that of the *Jātakas*. The difference is not very significant: it is natural for a trans-Indus man like him. What is of central moment is the relation we might deduce from him between Gandhāra and Kāśmīra.

Pāṇini's *Gaṇapāṭha* (IV.2.133; IV.3.93) knows of Kāśmīrā, but we do not gather that it was a kingdom on its own. Agrawala⁸ informs us: "As monarchical states, Pāṇini mentions the following: Sālveya, Gāndhāri, Magadha, Kalinga, Sūramasa, Kosala, Ajāda, Kuru, Sālva, Pratyagratha, Kālakūṭa, Aśmaka, Kamboja, Avanti and Kunti. Besides these names included in the *sūtras*, there might be others which were implied in Pāṇini's rules, of which Patañjali

mentions Videha, Pañchāla, Anga, Dārva, Nīpa, Sauvīra and Ambashtha, the latter two being mentioned in the *Ashtādhyāyī* in a different context.” Kāśmīra is, to all appearance, not a kingdom for Pāṇini. But, as a *janapada*, it might well be a republic. Does Pāṇini name it among his *Sanghas*, the republican *janapadas*?

No.⁹ Shall we then take it as a *janapada* dependent on some other and falling under its administration? Yes. But we have no hint even that it depended on Gandhāra. Would we be justified to accept as implicit in Pāṇini what is explicit in the *Jātakas*?

We must consider the relation between the two. Agrawala¹⁰ says: “In many respects Pāṇini’s language is earlier than that of the *Jātakas*, but in some cases the coincidence between the two is striking and helpful for chronology. Attention may be drawn here especially to the material for mounting chariots, viz., *dvaipa*, *vaiyāghra* and *pāṇḍu-kambala*, which is mentioned in Pāṇini and the *Jātakas*... The expressions cited above represent older conditions, and as a matter of fact these words occur in the *Gāthā* portions of the *Jātakas* which are admittedly earlier than the prose portions.” Here the upholstery-mounting with the special woollen stuff known as *pāṇḍu-kambala*, after which the chariots in Pāṇini are called *pāṇḍu-kambalī* (IV.2.11) is very apposite. For, Agrawala¹¹ tells us: “According to the *Vessantara Jātaka*, *pāṇḍu-kambala* was a kind of red-coloured blanket imported from Gandhāra (*Vessantara Jātaka*, VI. 500, *Indagopaka-vannābhā Gandhārā pāṇḍu-kambalā*), which, as the commentary adds, were of red colour and used for the army (*Jat. Commentary*, Vol. VI, p. 501, *Gandhāra-raṭṭhe uppannā satasahassagghenikā senāya pārutā ratta-kambalā*).”

Inference from the *Jātakas* to Pāṇini about Kāśmīra’s dependence on Gandhāra would be legitimate. And then we should have the grammarian belonging to the period pictured by the *Jātakas*. Within the current framework of chronology this period can fairly be dated. Rhys Davids¹² sums up the researches of Luders, Fick and Buhler: “As regards the allusions to political and social conditions, they refer, for the most part, to the state of things that existed in North India in and before the Buddha’s time.” In connection with King Pukkusati who is said in Buddhist books to have been the King of Gandhāra in the time of King Bimbisāra of Magadha who was Buddha’s contemporary we saw that to place him in the last two decades of the fifth century B.C. on the assumption that Buddha died in 483 B.C. would make nonsense of the inscriptions of Darius I. Majumdar too carries him towards the middle of the third quarter of the sixth century B.C. (c. 540 or 530 B.C.). Obviously Majumdar is going by the alternative Nirvāṇa-date for Buddha: 543 B.C. We have argued that if, as commonly held, Buddha died in the eighth year of the reign of Bimbisāra’s son Ajātaśatru, Pukkusati can be placed so as not to clash with Cyrus’s annexation of Gandhāra. He could quite safely be set reigning before 550 B.C. And, with Buddha’s death fixed to 543 B.C., Buddha’s birth would be eighty

years earlier in 623 B.C. Then the political and social conditions to which the *Jātakas* allude would obtain from c. 750 to c. 543 B.C. These 157 years would be roughly the upper limit of Pāṇini's time. As c. 543 is identical with the mean year we have chosen for his lower limit we may broadly accommodate his whole life within those 157 years.

This is so far as Gandhāra strictly is concerned. But, if we allow ourselves to take into account the other monarchical states Pāṇini mentions along with Gandhāra, we should focus our attention on an acute observation of Agrawala's. Listing the *janapadas* he¹³ says about Pāṇini's reference to Kāśi (IV.2.116): "Pāṇini does not mention Kāśi as an independent monarchy like Kosala, and Magadha." Now, in the time pictured by the *Jātakas*, Kāśi plays a prominent role. Apropos of its inclusion in their list, Rhys Davids¹⁴ remarks: "In the time of the Buddha this famous old kingdom .. had fallen to so low a political level that the revenues of the township had become a bone of contention between Kosala and Magadha, and the kingdom itself was incorporated into Kosala. Its inclusion in this list is historically important, as we must conclude that the memory of it as an independent state was still fresh in men's minds. This is confirmed by the very frequent mention of it as such in the *Jātakas*." The condition of affairs presented in the *Jātakas* must, therefore, be prior to the circumstances in which Pāṇini found himself. If we can go back to c. 700 B.C. for the former we must stop earlier for the latter.

Before seeking to decide where we should stop, we may put out of the way a suggestion of Agrawala's about the omission of Kāśi from Pāṇini's "monarchies". "The omission," he¹⁵ says, "may be accidental, or due to political reasons reflecting the condition when Kāśi lost its separate identity and was under the control of Magadha." Magadha twice took Kāśi over. The Purāṇas report Mahāpadma Nanda, founder of the dynasty immediately previous to the Mauryas, as conquering Kāśi as well as a host of other Kshatriya states.¹⁶ Agrawala,¹⁷ considering the age of Magadhan imperialism initiated by Mahāpadma Nanda, finds Pāṇini's enumeration of a large number of independent kingdoms inconsistent with placing him after this *ekrāt* or emperor. Before Mahāpadma it was Ajātaśatru who had started annexing neighbour-countries to Magadha. Agrawala calls it "only a passing phase". But a passing phase would be enough to cause a reference in Pāṇini. So we must ask if its character answered to the political data of the *Ashādhyaī* and the *Gaṇapātha*. Agrawala¹⁸ informs us: "Ajātaśatru as a Magadhan king had annexed... the kingdoms of Kāśi and Kosala." Pāṇini, however, according to Agrawala himself, mentions Kosala no less than Magadha as an independent monarchy. Therefore we have to fly past Ajātaśatru's annexation and, doing so, rule out Magadha and, ruling it out, conclude that on political data Pāṇini cannot be posterior to Buddha who died in Ajātaśatru's eighth regnal year. This conclusion, we may remark, agrees with our inferences from a study of Gandhāra's political status.

Kāśī's incorporation into Kosala as a reason for Pāṇini's treatment of that state must be earlier than 543 B.C. In Rhys Davids we have already the hint that the incorporation was a fact of Buddha's life-time. A more explicit and precise statement we find in A.D. Pusalker's narration¹⁹ of the ups and downs of Kāśī *vis-à-vis* Kosala. "... The final stage marks the total absorption of the Kāśī kingdom under the Kosala king Mahākosala who has been mentioned as the sovereign of both Kāśī and Kosala... Mahākosala was the father and immediate predecessor of Prasenajit (in Pali Pasenadi). Prasenajit was a contemporary of Buddha and died a few years before him.²⁰ As Buddha lived for 80 years we may think of Mahākosala as having been on the throne before Prasenajit during Buddha's own life. So the incorporation to which Rhys Davids refers does not seem to go beyond Buddha's birth. Hence Pāṇini's time, coinciding with it, should have that birth as its definite upper limit. In other words it is the same period as Buddha's: 623-543 B.C.

However, this very period is divisible into two parts—the first 35 years before the Enlightenment and the last 45 of mission and ministry. To which part does the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* belong? The answer depends on the signs we can read in it of knowledge of Buddhism. Agrawala,²¹ putting him in c. 450 B.C.—that is, after Buddha's death—has tried to show that the grammarian was aware of the new doctrine. Ram Gopal²² has opposed Agrawala's case. As what Agrawala says can be argued just as well to make Pāṇini a contemporary of Buddha during the years when the latter had succeeded in making his mark, Ram Gopal must be given a hearing in order that we may decide whether Pāṇini's book is nearer (623-35) 588 B.C. or 543 B.C.

Ram Gopal comments:

"Dr. Agrawala's strongest argument consists in that in one sūtra (IV.4.60) Pāṇini betrays his acquaintance with the chief doctrine of the Ājīvikas and that in another sūtra (VI.1.154) the grammarian refers to the name of Makkhalī Gosāla, the founder of the Ājīvika sect, who was a contemporary of the Buddha,²³ and the other important argument advanced by Dr. Agrawala is that Pāṇini's 'reference to such specifically Buddhist terms as Maskarin, Kumārī Śramanā (Maiden nun), Nikāya and Nirvāṇa suggest that Pāṇini came after the Buddha'.²⁴ It is rather difficult to find corroboration for the above arguments of Dr. Agrawala. There is no cogent proof to substantiate the assumption that the word *Maskarin* in Pāṇini's grammar stands for Makkhalī Gosāla who was a contemporary of Buddha. According to Pāṇini, the word *Maskarin* is synonymous with the word *Parivrājaka* denoting a wandering mendicant, and Patañjali restricts the sense of the word *Maskarin* to a particular type of mendicants who denounce action. No authority on Pāṇinian grammar interprets *Maskarin* as a proper noun. Moreover, the Buddhist and Jain traditions are not unanimous in regard to the name Makkhalī Gosāla; some Buddhist texts have the forms Gośālikāputra and Gośāliputra, while the Jain scriptures refer to the Ājīvika teacher as Gośāla

Maṅkhaliputta.²⁵ In this connection Dr. Basham observes that Makkhali or Maskarin, a fairly common appellation of a staff-bearing ascetic, was rather a title than a proper noun.²⁶ There is no basis for Dr. Agrawala's assumption that the term *Dishṭa* in Pāṇini's grammar (IV.4.60) refers to the doctrine propounded by Makkhali Gosāla; for it has been shown by Dr. Basham that Makkhali Gosāla had many predecessors and was not the first teacher to propound the doctrine of determinism.²⁷

“Dr. Agrawala's other argument that Pāṇini refers to such specifically Buddhist terms as Maskarin, Kumārī Śramaṇā, Nikāya and Nirvāṇa is far from convincing; for it is not yet certain that the above terms were first coined by the Buddhists and that Pāṇini uses them in the Buddhist sense. There is, on the contrary, ample evidence to show that some of the above terms are definitely pre-Buddhistic...”

We may add a note from E.J. Rapson²⁸ on the definitely pre-Buddhistic *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*: “Many of the terms which subsequently became characteristic of Buddhism, such as *arhat* ‘saint’ and *śramaṇa* ‘ascetic’, first occur in the *Śatapatha*...”

The upshot of Ram Gopal's censures seems to be not that Agrawala has been disproved but that his case remains unproven and the onus of proof lies on him. We need not hesitate to put Pāṇini's book around 588 B.C

It was in the opening quarter of the sixth century B.C. that, in Gandhāra on the other side of the Indus ruled over by a king who controlled also Kāśmīra and whose fellow-king of Kosala controlled also Kāśī, Pāṇini lived to compose the most astonishing ancient work on Grammar.

(To be concluded)

K.D. SETHNA

Notes

- 1 Barua, *op cit*, p 93
- 2 Raychaudhuri, *op cit*, p 124
- 3 Barua, *op cit*, p 93 Reference *Jātaka* III, pp 346, 378
- 4 Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India* (Calcutta, 1950), p 133
- 5 Olmstead, *op cit*, p 381
- 6 Agrawal, *op cit*, p 70
- 7 *Ibid*, p 49
- 8 *Ibid*, p 425
- 9 *Ibid*, pp 434-54
- 10 *Ibid*, p 473
- 11 *Ibid*, p 150
- 12 Rhys Davids, *op cit*, p 136
- 13 *Ibid*, p 60
- 14 *Ibid*, pp 17-18

- 15 Agrawal, *op cit* , p 60
- 16 *Ibid* , p 465
- 17 *Ibid*
- 18 *Ibid*
- 19 In *The Vedic Age* (London, 1952), p 323
- 20 Rhys Davids, *op cit* , pp 2 3
- 21 Agrawal, *op cit* , pp 458-9
- 22 *India of Vedic Kalpasutras* (Delhi, 1959), pp 86-7
- 23 Pp 458, 462, 381-383, cf Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, p 30, fn 1
- 24 Pp 475 & 459
- 25 Basham, *History and Doctrine of the Ājivikas*, pp 34 & 78
- 26 *Ibid* , p 78
- 27 *Ibid* , pp 29ff
- 28 *Ancient India* (Cambridge, 1916), p 57

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Special Seventy-fifth Seminar

23 November 1993

MOTHER'S VIEWS ON ART AND YOGA

Speech by Sunayana Shukla

THE subject I have chosen for this Seminar is: Mother's views on Art and Yoga. Many of us here may have seen the book of Mother's paintings which has recently been published. It took a long time to prepare and produce, I am told. But the wait has been worthwhile, for this book reveals to us an aspect of Mother which is not so well known. We are so used to seeing the divine aspect of Mother that her human side always surprises us. We see before our eyes in this book the testimony of Mother's skill and perfection, but invisibly behind the paintings are the patience and concentration which have gone into acquiring this skill.

But what makes us really stop and think is the way she herself admits that she did not give her painting work much value; that its importance was only limited, that it was not the aim of her life to be a great artist, that art is only a means and not an end in itself. So we ask ourselves, "A means to what end?"

The next question that comes naturally is, "Why did Mother take up art knowing that she had a spiritual aim in life?" After all, isn't the world of art and artists always associated with a vital way of life? Many artists including the great ones have been known to lead a life of excesses and disorder and mostly of vanity

Mother herself gives the answer in the same book. She says that true Art and Yoga are not as contradictory as they may seem to be. For in both one has to look beyond the apparent reality of things and enter into another hidden world. In one of the letters in which a sadhak asks this question on art, she ends her answer by saying, "This too is a kind of yogic discipline for by it [the artist] enters into intimate communion with the inner worlds."¹

If we ponder over this point we do find parallels in the fields of both Art and Yoga. Many artists admit that after long years of artistic work, particularly painting, the eyes and hands develop a consciousness quite of their own. In Art as in Yoga, there is a discipline, otherwise one cannot achieve the perfection which one seeks. And, after all, the world of Art is closely linked to the aspect of

¹ *Questions and Answers, Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed Vol 3), p 110

beauty of the Divine's manifestation. In India great artists, specially musicians and dancers, often refer to their training and practice as their "Sadhana".

Artistic education, according to the Mother, is a part of vital education. It is the awakening and refinement of the vital being. On the direction which our vital takes depends the outward quality and colour of our lives. This part of education is as important as mental or physical education.

It is not necessary that each man should become an artist but what is necessary is that each man must be trained to appreciate beauty and be sensitive to it. Mother says that her elders had told her that if she wanted to be an artist of any worth, then she had to follow it to the exclusion of all other activities. She had replied to them that her aim was to learn art only for the advantages it would give to her general development, "of giving breadth, suppleness to one's brain and understanding". So it was not her intention to devote all her energies to art alone, right from the beginning.

To go one step ahead in this line of thought we can recall how Mother herself asked certain Sadhaks to take up art as a means to prepare themselves for Yoga. For example, when Anil Kumar came to the Ashram he had no background in painting at all, but Mother asked him to take up painting. She herself used to cut out photographs of landscapes from newspapers and ask him to colour them. Later Anil Kumar became one of the most skilful artists of the Ashram. Most of his works depict scenes from the Himalayas where he had spent many years before he came here and where his yogic quest had first begun. Mother even mentions that the best artistic productions in India have been by anonymous Buddhist monks who were on a higher plane of consciousness from where they painted the murals of Ajanta. One can say this of all anonymous work done on the walls of temples and cathedrals of the world where people worked in a state of devotion and aspiration to something higher. This is indeed a breaking down of the ego, becoming a channel through which something higher can express itself. The attention is no more on *who* did it but on *what* has been done, and that divinity to which it has been dedicated.

I would like to conclude by reading what Mother says in a few words about this similarity between the disciplines of Art and Yoga.

"For like a Yogi an artist goes into deep contemplation to await and receive his inspiration. To create something truly beautiful, he has first to see it within, to realise it as a whole in his inner consciousness; only when so found, seen, held within, can he execute it outwardly; he creates according to this greater inner vision."²

² *Questions and Answers, Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent Ed Vol 3), p 110