

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JUNE 1994

PRICE: Rs 8 00

## NEW RATES

### INLAND

Annual Rs 80 00

Life Membership Rs 1120 00

### OVERSEAS

#### Sea Mail

Annual \$18 00 or £12 00

Life Membership \$252 00 or £168 00

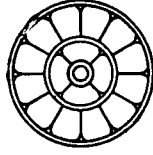
#### Air Mail

Annual \$36 00 for American & Pacific countries

£26 00 for all other countries

Life Membership \$504 00 for American & Pacific countries

£364 00 for all other countries

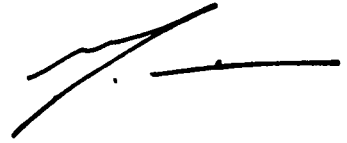


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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

All correspondence to be addressed to

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

Editor's Phone 34782

Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor K D SETHNA

Published by HARIKANT C PATEL

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST

PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY 605 002

Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

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

# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLVII

No. 6

---

*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

### CONTENTS

<i>The Mother</i>	
THE STEPS OF THE SOUL	... 381
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
IDEAS AND IDEALS COMPILED BY G. P. GUPTA	... 384
CHITRANGADA	
A PASSAGE REVISED IN 1949 (Presented by Peter Heehs)	... 388
<i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i>	
LIFE — POETRY — YOGA	
SOME PERSONAL LETTERS	... 390
<i>Ashalata Dash</i>	
THE UNEXPECTED (Poem)	... 398
<i>Nirodbaran</i>	
TITBITS FROM MY CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	
ABOUT MY BENGALI POETRY	... 399
SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF "AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL"	... 401
<i>Sitangshu Chakraborty</i>	
A TRICKY HAND (Poem)	... 402
<i>K. B. Sitaramayya</i>	
THE BOOK OF JOB	
A NEW COMMENTARY	... 403
<i>Aster Patel</i>	
DR. INDRA SEN	
AN OVERVIEW OF HIS LIFE	... 409
<i>Satadal</i>	
THE GATE (Poem)	... 411
<i>Nirodbaran</i>	
IN MEMORY OF DR. INDRA SEN	... 412
<i>Chunilal Chowdhury</i>	
A CALL FROM THE CRADLE (Poem)	
IN MEMORY OF NISHIKANTO	... 413

<i>Christopher Nicholson</i>		
POETRY'S FROG PRINCE	..	414
<i>Wilfried Huchzermeyer</i>		
ESSAYS ON THE MAHABHARATA (III)	...	418
<i>Report</i>		
THE UNESCO CONFERENCE IN VIETNAM	...	423
<i>Arun Kumar Sen</i>		
DAYBREAK (Poem)	...	425
<i>P. Raja</i>		
A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS	...	426
<i>Nilima Das</i>		
AN INSPIRING BOOK		
A REVIEW	...	434
<i>R. Y. Deshpande</i>		
TOWARDS THE THIRD MILLENNIUM		
A REVIEW	..	441

## STUDENTS' SECTION

<i>Speech by Meera Guthi</i>		
THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION		
THIRTIETH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 8 AUGUST 1993		
"HOW TO TURN ONE'S DIFFICULTIES INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS?"	...	445

## THE STEPS OF THE SOUL

SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER ON 12 NOVEMBER 1952

THE human individual is a very complex being: he is composed of innumerable elements, each one of which is an independent entity and has almost a personality. Not only so, the most contradictory elements are housed together. If there is a particular quality or capacity present, the very opposite of it, annulling it, as it were, will also be found along with it and embracing it. I have seen a man brave, courageous, heroic to the extreme, flinching from no danger, facing unperturbed the utmost peril, truly the bravest of the brave, and yet I have seen the same man cowering in abject terror, like the last of poltroons, in the presence of certain circumstances. I have seen a most generous man giving things away largely, freely, not counting any expenditure or sacrifice, without the least care or reservation; the same person I have also found to be the vilest of misers with respect to certain other considerations. Again, I have seen the most intelligent person, with a clear mind, full of light and understanding, easily comprehending the logic and implication of a topic; and yet I have seen him betraying the utmost stupidity of which even an ordinary man without education or intelligence would be incapable. These are not theoretical examples: I have come across such persons actually in life.

The complexity arises not only in extension but also in depth. Man does not live on a single plane but on many planes at the same time. There is a scale of gradation in human consciousness: the higher one rises in the scale the greater the number of elements or personalities that one possesses. Whether one lives mostly or mainly on the physical or vital or mental plane or on any particular section of these planes or on the planes above and beyond them, there will be, accordingly, differences in the constitution or psycho-physical make-up of the individual personality. The higher one stands, the richer the personality, because it lives not only on its own normal level but also on all the levels that are below it and which it has transcended. The complete or integral man, some occultists say, possesses three hundred and sixty-five personalities; indeed it may be much more. The Vedas speak of the three and thirty-three and thirty-three hundred and thirty-three thousand gods that may be housed in the human vehicle—the basic three being evidently the triple status or world of Body, Life and Mind.

What is the meaning of this self-contradiction, this division in man? To understand that, we must know and remember that each person represents a certain quality or capacity, a particular achievement to be embodied. How best can it be done? What is the way by which one can acquire a quality at its purest, highest and most perfect? It is by setting an opposition to it. That is how a power is increased and strengthened—by fighting against and overcoming all that weakens and contradicts it. The deficiencies with respect to a particular quality

show you where you have to mend and reinforce it and in what way to improve it in order to make it perfectly perfect. It is the hammer that beats the weak and soft iron to transform it into hard steel. The preliminary discord is useful and needs to be utilised for a higher harmony. This is the secret of self-conflict in man. You are weakest precisely in that element which is destined to be your greatest asset.

Each man has then a mission to fulfil, a role to play in the universe, a part he has been given to learn and take up in the cosmic Purpose, a part which he alone is capable of executing and none other. This he has to learn and acquire through life-experiences, that is to say, not in one life but in life after life. In fact, that is the meaning of the chain of lives that the individual has to pass through, namely, to acquire experiences and to gather from them the thread—the skein of qualities and attributes, powers and capacities—for the pattern of life he has to weave. Now, the inmost being, the true personality, the central consciousness of the evolving individual is his psychic being. It is, as it were, a very tiny spark of light lying in normal people far behind the life-experiences. In grown-up souls this psychic consciousness has an increased light—increased in intensity, volume and richness. Thus there are old souls and new souls. Old and ancient are those that have reached or are about to reach the fullness of perfection; they have passed through a long history of innumerable lives and developed the most complex and yet the most integrated personality. New souls are those that have just emerged or are now emerging out of the mere physico-vital existence; they are like simple organisms, made of fewer constituents related mostly to the bodily life, with just a modicum of the mental. It is the soul, however, that grows with experiences and it is the soul that builds and enriches the personality. Whatever portion of the outer life, whatever element in the mind or vital or body succeeds in coming into contact with the psychic consciousness—that is to say, is able to come under its influence—is taken up and lodged there: it remains in the psychic being as its living memory and permanent possession. It is such elements that form the basis, the ground-work upon which the structure of the integral and true personality is raised.

The first thing to do then is to find out what it is that you are meant to realise, what is the role you have to play, your particular mission, and the capacity or quality you have to express. You have to discover that and also the thing or things that oppose and do not allow it to flower or come to full manifestation. In other words, you have to know yourself, recognise your soul or psychic being.

For that you must be absolutely sincere and impartial. You must observe yourself as if you were observing and criticising a third person. You must not start with an idea that this is your life's mission, this is your particular capacity, this you are to do or that you are to do, in this lies your talent or genius, etc. That will carry you away from the right track. It is not the liking or disliking of your

external being, your mental or vital or physical choice that determines the true line of your growth. Nor should you take up the opposite attitude and say, "I am good for nothing in this matter, I am useless in that one; it is not for me." Neither vanity and arrogance nor self-depreciation and false modesty should move you. As I said, you must be absolutely impartial and unconcerned. You should be like a mirror that reflects the truth and does not judge.

If you are able to keep such an attitude, if you have this repose and quiet trust in your being and wait for what may be revealed to you, then something like this happens: you are, as it were, in a wood, dark and noiseless; you see in front of you merely a sheet of water, dark and still, hardly visible—a bit of a pond imbedded in the obscurity; and slowly upon it a moonbeam is cast and in the cool dim light emerges the calm liquid surface. That is how your secret truth of being will appear and present itself to you at your first contact with it: there you will see gradually reflected the true qualities of your being, the traits of your divine personality, what you really are and what you are meant to be.

One who has thus known himself and possessed himself, conquering all opposition within himself, has by that very fact extended himself and his conquest, making it easier for others to make the same or a similar conquest. These are the pioneers or the elite who by a victorious campaign within themselves help others towards their victory.

*(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 15, pp 355-358)*

# IDEAS AND IDEALS

## PASSAGES FROM SRI AUROBINDO

Always the Ideal beckoned from afar  
Awakened by the touch of the Unseen,  
Deserting the boundary of things achieved,  
Aspired the strong discoverer, tireless Thought,  
Revealing at each step a luminous world

*Savitri*: Book II, Canto 12.

### *Compiler's Note*

*India has been a grand workshop of nationalism and a living laboratory of the soul. The movement which started from nationalism, declares Sri Aurobindo, will end in spiritual consummation. Hereunder is reproduced from Sri Aurobindo a parallelism in Spirituality and Nationalism and the role India has to assume to usher in an era towards a universal resurgence*

G.P GUPTA

### **Spirituality and Nationalism**

MANKIND have a natural inclination to hero-worship and the great men who have done wonders for human civilisation will always be the inspiration of future ages... so the men whom we worship are those who have helped the spiritual progress of mankind. Without being sceptical no spiritual progress is possible, for blind adoration is only the first stage in the spiritual development of the soul. We are wont to be spiritually sceptical, to hesitate to acknowledge to ourselves anything we have not actually experienced by the process of silent communion with God, so that the great sages of antiquity were as sceptical as any modern rationalist. They did away with all preconceived notions drawn from the religion of the Vedas, plunged into the void of absolute scepticism and tried to find there the Truth. They doubted everything, the evidence of the senses, the reality of the world, the reality of their own existence, and even the reality of God. This scepticism reached its culmination in the teachings of Buddha who would admit nothing, presuppose nothing, declare nothing dogmatically, and insisted only on self-discipline, self-communion, self-realisation as the only way to escape from the entanglement of the intellect and the senses. When scepticism had reached its height, the time had come for spirituality to assert itself and establish the reality of the world as a manifestation of the spirit, the secret of the confusion created by the senses, the magnificent possibilities of man and the ineffable beatitude of God..



The long ages of discipline which India underwent are now drawing to an end. A great light is dawning in the East, a light whose first heralding glimpses are already seen on the horizon; a new day is about to break, so glorious that even the last of the *avatārs* cannot be sufficient to explain it, although without him it would not have come. The perfect expression of Hindu spirituality was the signal for the resurgence of the East. Mankind has long been experimenting with various kinds of thought, different principles of ethics, strange dreams of a perfection to be gained by material means, impossible millenniums and humanitarian hopes. Nowhere has it succeeded in realising the ultimate secret of life. Nowhere has it found satisfaction. No scheme of society or politics has helped it to escape from the necessity of sorrow, poverty, strife, dissatisfaction from which it strives for an outlet; for whoever is trying to find one by material means must inevitably fail. The East alone has some knowledge of the truth, the East alone can teach the West, the East alone can save mankind.... the grand workshop of spiritual experiment, the laboratory of the soul has been India, where thousands of great spirits have been born in every generation who were content to work quietly in their own souls, perfect their knowledge, hand down the results of their experiments to a few disciples and leave the rest to others to complete. They did not hasten to proselytise, were in no way eager to proclaim themselves, but merely added their quota of experience and return to the source from which they had come. The immense reservoir of spiritual energy stored up by the self-repression was the condition of this birth of *avatāras*, of men so full of God that they could not be satisfied with silent bliss, but poured it out on the world, not with the idea of proselytising but because they wished to communicate their own ecstasy of realisation to others who were fit to receive it either by previous *tapasyā* or by the purity of their desires.... The movement of which the first outbreak was political, will end in a spiritual consummation.

### The Asiatic Role

... The elixir of national life has been discovered by India alone. This immortality, this great secret of life, she has treasured up for thousands of years, until the world was fit to receive it. The time has now come for her to impart it to the other nations who are now on the verge of decadence and death. The peoples of Europe have carried material life to its farthest expression, the science of bodily existence has been perfected, but they are suffering from diseases which their science is powerless to cure. England with her practical intelligence, France with her clear logical brain, Germany with her speculative genius, Russia with her emotional force, America with her commercial energy have done what they could for human development, but each has reached the limit of her peculiar capacity. Something is wanting which Europe cannot supply. It is at this juncture

that Asia has awakened, because the world needed her. Asia is the custodian of the world's peace of mind, the physician of the maladies which Europe generates. She is commissioned to rise from time to time from her ages of self-communion, self-sufficiency, self-absorption and rule the world for a season so that the world may come and sit at her feet to learn the secrets she alone has to give. When the restless spirit of Europe has added a new phase of discovery to the evolution of the science of material life, has regulated politics, rebased society, remodelled law, rediscovered science, the spirit of Asia, calm, contemplative, self-possessed, takes possession of Europe's discovery and corrects its exaggerations, its aberrations by the intuition, the spiritual light she alone can turn upon the world.... Asia has always initiated, Europe completed. The strength of Europe is in details, the strength of Asia in synthesis.

.... In former ages India was a sort of hermitage of thought and peace apart from the world. Separated from the rest of humanity by her peculiar geographical conformation, she worked out her own problems and thought out the secrets of existence as in a quiet Ashram from which the noise of the world was shut out. Her thoughts flashed out over Asia and created civilisations, her sons were the bearers of light to the peoples; philosophies based themselves on stray fragments of her infinite wisdom; sciences arose from the waste of her intellectual production.... Her all embracing intellect, her penetrating intuition, her invincible originality are equal to greater tasks. The period of passivity when she listened to the voices of the outside world is over. No longer will she be content merely to receive and reproduce, even to receive and improve. The genius of Japan lies in imitation and improvement, that of India in origination. The contributions of outside peoples she can only accept as rough material for her immense creative faculty. It was the mission of England to bring this rough material to India, but in the arrogance of her material success she presumed to take upon herself the role of a teacher and treated the Indian people partly as an infant to be instructed, partly as a serf to be schooled to labour for its lords. The farce is played out. England's mission in India is over and it is time for her to recognise the limit of the lease given to her.... The real truth is suggested in the famous saying that England conquered India in a fit of absence of mind, which is only another way of saying that she did not conquer it at all. It was placed in her hands without her realising what was being done and how it was being done. The necessary conditions were created for her, her path made easy, the instruments given into her hands.... The subjugation of India is explicable neither in the ability of the men whose names figure as the protagonists nor in the superior genius of the conquering nation nor in the weakness of the conquered people.... In other words, it was one of those cases in which a particular mission was assigned to a people not otherwise superior to the rest of the world and a special *faustitas* or decreed good fortune set to watch over the fulfilment of the mission. Her mission once over, the angel of the Lord who stood by England in her task

and removed opponents and difficulties with the waving of his hand, will no longer shield her. She will stay so long as the destinies of India need her and not a day longer, for it is not by her own strength that she came or is still here, and it is not by her own strength that she can remain. The resurgence of India is begun, it will accomplish itself with her help, if she will, without it if she does not, against it if she opposes.

*(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol I, pp 799-801, 842-845)*

# CHITRANGADA

## A PASSAGE REVISED BY SRI AUROBINDO IN 1949

SRI AUROBINDO'S *Chitrangada* was first published in the *Karmayogin* in 1910. The poem bears much resemblance to *Uloupie*, written about ten years earlier but left incomplete and not published until after Sri Aurobindo's passing. *Chitrangada* itself was completed, but the portion left unpublished when the *Karmayogin* ceased to exist was lost.

In 1949 the *Karmayogin*-text of *Chitrangada* was revised by Sri Aurobindo and published in *Sri Aurobindo Circle* and also as a separate booklet. This revision, it has recently been discovered, was rather extensive. One significant passage of 26 lines was enlarged to 42. This passage, containing the admonition of *Chitrangada*'s father to the nobles of the realm at the time of his death, was among the last passages of poetry other than *Savitri* that he worked on, and like the passage of *Savitri* beginning "A day must come when she must stand unhelped" (which apparently was one of the last he dictated) seems to be premonitory. The revised passage of *Chitrangada* is reproduced here. The portions printed in italics are new.

PETER HEEHS

### CHITRANGADA (1949 Revision)

#### New and Altered Lines

*About me stood a circle fierce and strong,  
Men high like rough gnarled trees or firm squat towers,  
A human fortress in its savage strength  
Enringed my future with bright jealous spears.  
To them he entrusted me, calling each name,  
And made their hearts my steps to mount a throne  
Each name was made a link in a great chain,  
A turretted gate inwalling my rule,  
Each heart a home of trust, a seal of fealty  
So were their thoughts conciliated; so  
Their stern allegiance was secured. He spoke,  
And, though of outward strength deprived, his voice  
Rang clear yet as when over trumpets heard  
It guided battle. "Warriors of my East,  
Take now this small white-bosomed queen of yours,  
Surround her with the cincture of your force  
And guard her from the thieves of destiny*

*Who prowl around the house of human life  
 To impoverish the meanings of the gods.  
 For I am ended and the shadow falls.  
 She is the stem from which your kings shall grow  
 Perpetual. Guard her well lest Fate deceived  
 Permit unworthier to usurp her days  
 Than the unconquerable seed of gods.  
 Oppose, oppose all alien entry here,  
 Whether by force or guile the stranger comes,  
 To clutch Nature's forbidden golden fruit.  
 Serry your bucklers close to overwhelm  
 The invader, seal your deaf and pitiless ears  
 To the guest's appeal, the supplicant call. He sole  
 Darling of Fate and Heaven, shall break through all  
 Despising danger's threat and spurning death.  
 To grasp this prize, whether Ixvacou's clan  
 Yield a new Rama or the Bhoja hear  
 And raven for her beauty,—Vrishny born,  
 Or else some lion's whelp of those who lair  
 In Hustina the proud, coveting two worlds,  
 Leaping from conquered earth to climb to Heaven.  
 Life's pride doubling with the soul's ethereal crown".  
 He closed his eyes against the earthly air,  
 The last silence fell on him: he spoke no more  
 Save the great name until his spirit passed.*

## LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

### SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

Now we are nearing the birthday of the Mother: 21 February. There will be a special force at work on and around that date. I take it to be a force that may surprise us by saying:

“Why do you worry whether you are strong enough or worthy enough to do Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga? Just keep visualising me constantly. Those of you who have seen me should try to revive memories of me as you saw my face and form in one activity or another. Whoever has not seen me in person has still my various photographs to go by. The photographs of either Sri Aurobindo or me are not mere pictures. They automatically carry by their very representations of us our consciousness. In the absence of the direct recollection of our physical presence in a body, our photographs can well serve as projections of ourselves. Let there be your soul’s focus on them, either with eyes open or with shut eyes holding an image of the portrayal. By whatever means a vivid sense of us as we were in our recent incarnations on earth is called for—an incarnation carrying the supreme Truth-Consciousness with its all-penetrating light and its all-enfolding love. Concentratedly, devotedly, silently conjure up our image or, if silence does not come naturally, let the heart whisper: ‘*Mā-Śrī Aurobindo śaraṇam mama*’ (‘Mother-Sri Aurobindo are my refuge’). To dwell on that image as intensely as you can with a deep unwavering movement of self-giving—that is all the Yoga I want of you. This Yoga has to be practised not only in the hours when you are alone or unoccupied. Even in the midst of people and even while work is being done by you, let a feeling of our presence, accompanied as far as possible by an inner visual touch, prevail. I expect that by its prevalence there will be at the same time a profound quiet and a shining joy. With those around you you will experience a happy *camaraderie* without losing by one whit your poise in us. Indeed the friendliness you feel will be directed by a seeking within their diverse selves as a reflection of serene Sri Aurobindo and smiling Me. What else can there be when, whether those selves know it or not, we carry all creation as our child and when your Yoga consists in keeping before your inner eyes a vision of us? One further word I shall utter of initiation. By means of the Yoga I have outlined, you will realise vividly for yourself the reality I have suggested to you as lying behind the people with whom you come into contact. You will find yourself perpetually in our arms and guided at all hours by a divine creative Parenthood. From us will spring every moment of your life—a shaft of Truth’s sunshine from depth beyond depth of eternal Delight ”

(? 2 1994)

\*

Here is the comparison you wanted from me of the two “Autumns”—Hood’s and Keats’s.

(1) Keats’s style is more objective. There is no mention of “I”. Where Hood says “I saw old Autumn in the misty morn”, Keats simply apostrophises “Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness”. Even when the motif of “seeing” comes in, he uses the third person: “Who hath not seen thee...?” The personal subjective element is completely absent. Hood not only begins with “I” but also ends with a reference to a mental condition: “In the hushed mind’s mysterious far away....” Keats’s utter objectivity makes his picture more vivid, while Hood brings towards the close, in the phrase I have just quoted, a profound note beyond anything in Keats’s picture—a note which may legitimately be called the Romantic Age’s anticipation of the Aurobindonian style.

(2) Keats packs his lines with richer details: every phrase is laden with descriptive matter: there is much more poetic information. Only one is laxly built: “Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find”. Hood’s style does not so “load every rift with ore” (Keats’s advice to Shelley): he is occasionally content with more or less conventional language. Compare “The sweets of summer in their luscious cells” with “For Summer has o’erbrimmed their clammy cells”, or “Shaking her languid locks all dewy bright” with “Her hair soft lifted by the winnowing wind”. But in places Hood equals Keats in the richly packed and carefully chosen phrase: e.g., “The squirrel gloats on his accomplished hoard”, or “With the last leaves for a love-rosary”, or “Like a dim picture of the drownèd past”, and the line I have already quoted about the hushed mind. This line exceeds the range Keats has accepted here but it is not something alien to his own imagination, as he shows in that snatch in the Ode to Pan woven into his early *Endymion*:

... solitary thinking such as dodge  
Conception to the very bourn of heaven,  
Then leave the naked brain...

Hood has a weak moment which is almost unforgivable: “Alone, alone upon a mossy stone”. This phrase is like a snatch from a ballad, quite out of tune with even the rest of Hood’s piece.

(3) Hood makes one mood-tone predominate: vague melancholy. Each of the three stanzas brings it in. Stanza 1: “Old Autumn... shadowless like Silence . listening to silence... lonely bird... hollow ear... woods forlorn”. Stanza 4: “autumn melancholy dwells,/And sighs her tearful spells... sunless shadows”... “alone, alone... dead and gone... withered world looks drearily... dim picture .. drownèd past. . ghostly thing... grey upon the grey”. Keats brings many lights and shades of mood—the melancholy touch is only in “Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn”. His picture is composite, more true to

objective Nature, while Hood has approached his subject with an already made-up mind, as it were.

\*

You say your little son Jeraz is enamoured of the sign for OM. This sign is a powerful symbol of a very significant sound. The sound is really composed of three strains: A, U, M. When you utter them, there is first an open movement of the lips with A, then with U a round contraction of them on the way to a closing of them which takes place at the end of the utterance with M. The A sound signifies the outer world and its consciousness. The U symbolises the inner reality. The M points to the innermost. The total word, towards which the three sounds take us and which transcends all of them, indicates the sheer ultimate Existence. The Sanskrit terms for the three are, respectively, Vaishwanara, Taijasa and Prajna—corresponding to the waking state, the dream-state and the sleep-state. The sleep-state, in which the consciousness is most in-drawn, represents the Divine Being, creator of both the dream-state and the waking one from its own depth of omnipotent vision.

What is beyond is simply called Turiya, meaning “Fourth”. It is the final ground of all and at the same time overarches all. As such, this utter Absolute, this basic stuff of Being, may be considered a universal consciousness in all the planes, founding everything as well as pervading and containing everything. It is called the Self and this Self is called “fourfold”. Through a widened awareness in response to its universality on the physical plane we can prepare ourselves to penetrate the inner and innermost worlds and reflect something of “Turiya”.

To take to the OM-symbol is good, but it must not become a mere light-hearted game, a formal gesture towards the Divine, mostly for the sake of good luck to ourselves. Of course, a longing for good luck is nothing wrong, but a sense of the profundity of this symbol should come also. Your son’s writing it on your palms will be no more than a game. If you fancy it, you may indulge him. By itself it means hardly anything. The true thing to do is to understand what this symbol stands for and be inwardly in tune with it.

Jeraz’s wanting to be a superman should be an aspiration and not an ambition. His feeling for the more-than-human is not to be discouraged but a finer tone should come into it. The true Superman is not just a master of men but a servant of the Divine.

All this is perhaps too much for the little fellow to grasp in full. Still, a general awakening to the spiritual responsibility of being a Superman may be tried.

Your account of your pregnancy and delivery is fascinating. You were certainly in the right frame of mind all through. I don’t believe you were indulging in mere imagination. There was an unborn soul inspiring you. You



were feeling Sri Aurobindo's presence more than the Mother's because a male child was on the way. But, finally, the creative power is the Mother's—and therefore your dream of the delivery was permeated by her presence. What you were told in your dream was correct as to the gender of the newcomer but not accurate as to the time of the delivery because several factors come into play in the time-field. But the *darshan*-day need not be taken as a fixed thing. It has "fringes", as it were, extending before and after. To be born 2 hours before the 24th of April 1984 is as likely as to be born 2 hours after that date—that is, at 2 a.m. on the 25th. In either case the child would be within the glow of the 64th anniversary of the Mother's final settlement by the side of Sri Aurobindo to bring into birth a New Age of spiritual evolution. It is also significant that, on the glimmering edge of an anniversary of a day with such a sign of the fabulous future, exquisite aspiring Yasmin brought into the world a boy like Jeraz joyously jumping with a dream of supermanhood.

You have written: "The mental is too active, I *must* learn to silence my mind. Any suggestion?" In Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* we have the verse:

The breathless might and calm of silent mind.

If you will excuse the digression, I would like to quote to you a short passage from Wordsworth which the general cast of this verse calls up from my poetry-packed memory:

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;  
The holy time is quiet as a Nun  
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
Is sinking down in its tranquillity.

The passage seems to become somewhat relevant because of the adjective "breathless" no less than the epithet "calm" common to it and to Sri Aurobindo's line. But here it is "adoration" which creates the rapt in-drawn hushed state answering, as it were, subjectively to the outer scene of sunset in a calm sky free of obstructing clouds. Here is a state of the heart rather than of the mind but I have found that the adoring heart with its deep absorption in the Divine tends automatically to save the mind from random wandering and imparts to it, even when it is busy planning, a certain poise charged with confidence in the Power and Beauty that have entranced the inner self of Godward feeling. No doubt, a silent mind would be an ideal preparation for receiving the "overhead" splendours of the infinite and eternal Spirit, yet a mind quieted to a marked degree by the heart's devoted plunge into a blissful sense of the Personal Divinity is not an achievement to be sneezed at. Also, into whatever measure of mental quietude has been induced by any approach to

being “breathless with adoration” the revelatory light from above the mind is likely to enter, even if one fails to realise the condition reflected in that magnificent mantric phrase of Sri Aurobindo’s:

Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient.

Ultimately, this is how our minds have to be. In the meantime the path to this *grand finale* is easier and quicker through the consecration of the emotion-centre in us, touched by the secret soul behind it, than by a direct grappling with the centre of thought. The sustained experience of dedicated love for the Mother emanates an aura of tranquillity to smooth out the repetitive ruffles of the brain. That has been my observation. And such smoothing out prepares for the silence you desire. So let there be, as a result of your *bhakti*, a deep happy stir of serene longing for the Mother or Sri Aurobindo and gradually in consequence there will come about the reality figured by that stanza of Sri Aurobindo:

My mind is awake in stirless trance,  
     Hushed my heart, a burden of delight;  
 Dispelled is the senses’ flicker-dance,  
     Mute my body aureate with light. (24.2.1994)

\*

I am honoured by your following in my stumbling footsteps and imitating my career of many a fall on the way, but please refrain from considering me an exemplary “uncle” in this matter. Uncle in such matters is worse than carbuncle! I am really sorry you have hurt your left upper ribs. I shall surely try my best to invoke the Mother’s Light, as I feel it, on their behalf, particularly when I face the Samadhi. In fact as soon as I knew of your pain I appealed to the Mother to relieve you. Nowadays my appeal has a double movement. One movement is to hand over the pain or whatever else is the trouble to the Mother whom I feel to be standing in front of me. The second movement is to lift the trouble far above my head to some transcendent region of light and love. Of course, along with the trouble, I offer to the Mother the person who is suffering or has the problem. In both cases the offering is sustained for a time and is repeated a number of times during the day. And both the movements are made not only with a keen mental concentration but also with the heart’s intense consecration.

When I look at the picture on the card you have sent, I find it symbolising the very movement upwards of which I have written. The white vase on the white square pedestal seems to be intently raising up a bouquet of yellow roses to a mysterious beyond. The flowers are on long stems with a throng of delicate green leaves springing out of them. These leaves represent the life-force touched with

tenderness carrying aloft the rose-bunch. I notice that the yellow flowers bear a light on their petals, an answer of Divine Grace to their sincere human plea.

Glancing downward at the picture I mark that it is not quite confined to reflecting the upward movement of my call for help. At the foot of the white vase there is one yellow rose, accompanied by a few green leaves, offering, as it were, a horizontal prayer to a secret Presence in front. So I see both sides of my inner response to you depicted in advance—the token of your love foreshadowing the answer of my mind and heart to the cry from your depths. (13.1 1994)

\*

On the phone I told you—or was it during our *tête-à-tête* in my room?—that I would be replying to your long letter of January 20. It was a very special letter bringing quite a number of fine topics and thoughts together. To you the centre-piece is of course the birth of your grand-daughter “Rishaya”, that “little-in-much” that has just come into your family. Her date of birth rings a bell in my mind: January 6 is known in Christian history as the “epiphany”, the day on which baby Jesus is said in legend to have manifested his divine light to the three magi (pronounced “mayjai”) who had come from afar, led by a stellar sign. The relevance of this legend to Parsis is not generally known, though the word “magi” is the plural of the old Persian word “magus” which denotes a member of an ancient Persian priestly caste. The magi were Zoroastrian priests and the earliest tradition<sup>1</sup> about the three “wise men”, as the English Bible translates the term “magi”, is that their names were typically Parsi-sounding: Hormizdah, Yazdegerd and Perozadh.<sup>1</sup> Later, the names Balthazar, Melchior and Gaspar came into vogue.<sup>2</sup> So the Epiphany-day, January 6, is radiantly connected with the wisdom of the Parsis’ ancestors turned towards the Divine Light.

The name which Rashmi got, as you say, “out of the blue, without a thought”, strikes me as very euphonious and the meaning found of “Rishaya” is indeed auspicious: “Ri” for “abundance” in Persian and “shaya” for “protection” in Sanskrit, as the research of Behram and Jehangir has discovered. How it stands numerologically—having number 9 thrice—is not clear to me. Will you send me, at your convenience, an explanation? Is numerology applied to the name as spelt in English or as spelt in Gujarati? In English there are 7 letters, in Gujarati only 3—or are there 4?

Your dream, whose memory came back to you in a flash while trying to read the alphabetical index of first lines in my *Secret Splendour* and coming at the very start upon the phrase—

A band of light is now the horizon’s line—

your dream is very fascinating. I’ll attempt to read its significance. You write:

“In the dream I was in Pondicherry, on a big long beach with clean sand. On the left of me there were huts and on my right was a clear huge lovely quiet ocean.” Here we have a division between a narrow impoverished existence and the vast beauty and freedom resulting from participation in a Universal Consciousness. The locale—Pondicherry—implies the choice offered by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram between the old human way of living—cooped within a small mentality—and the liberation into a superhuman state illustrating the truth of the old Upanishadic pronouncement: “Immensity alone is felicity.” What you saw next was symbolic of the process going on in the Aurobindonian Yoga once we launch on an exceeding of the old restricted habitation within mental ignorance. You write. “At the horizon was one straight beam of light coming down like a thick pillar. Next to it, facing it, on its right was a ball-shaped structure of light.” The horizon stands for the distance needed to be traversed by the consciousness when it has struck out beyond the accustomed human boundaries, before a superior mode of living is experienced. The luminous pillar from above is the descent of the transforming power of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The lit-up ball-shaped structure is the earth-consciousness in a state of response to that power. The light coming out of both the structures is described by you as “bluish-white, whitish-blue” It is interesting that you have employed two expressions for the same phenomenon. They touch off the dual joint presence of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The Mother’s light is white, Sri Aurobindo’s blue and together the one becomes bluish and the other whitish—a single grace-light, so to speak, with two shades of emphasis: all-transcending purity, all-suffusing richness, without the purity turning into a blank and the richness running into a riot.

The sequel, which you report, to the spectacle afar pleases me as much as the spectacle itself. You “just wanted to go to it” but you remembered that your husband Behram was at Golconde and that you must somehow call him to share the glory you were witnessing. This shows the unselfishness of your nature.

Then there is the all-too-human struggle between the distant glory and the various material temptations at hand. You describe the latter: “I saw persons offering me lovely silk materials beautifully painted with orchids on one of them, lovely fruit and introducing me to some person from Australia and so on. I was telling myself that all these are beautiful but the real beauty is there at the horizon. I kept on being torn between my love for the light across the ocean and what the persons were offering—none of them I knew but all were very sweet. The beautiful bluish white light I was trying to call for my protection so that I might not get enamoured of any of the material objects in preference to it.”

There is no attempt to pose as being above temptation. There is only an earnest cry to the true splendour, as distinguished from the spurious one, to save you

All in all, the dream marks a highly significant stage in your soul’s career. It is surely your soul and nothing less in you that is in evidence and in action. Not

only is apparent the soul's spontaneous turn towards the great ultimate light of which it is a small yet true representative in our being—"a sun grown soft and small", as I have put it in a poem. Apparent also is the inherent sweetness of the psyche, on the one hand its natural leap of love towards the Highest and on the other its instinctive consideration of whoever is deeply linked with it. Finally apparent is the quiet strength of this inmost self—the way it is resolved to seek the Supreme Truth and nothing short of it. And in all these three characteristics it is at the same time the eternal child and the immortal sage. It has an in-born purity, simplicity, humility, gratitude along with a wideness of outlook which is accompanied by a sense of the importance of little things and a profound patience learnt from the experience of having passed through many lives and many deaths. A definite many-aspected symbol-stamp of the Inmost Dweller in you comes to me from your dream and in the days ahead you will feel increasingly the spreading of the influence of this unforgettable snatch from your night-hours

It is stimulating news that the pain in your ribs disappeared almost instantaneously after you had written of it to me and I had made an intense inner gesture of offering it to the Mother for its removal. As you say, with lifting things up and with over-work you get some pain at the same spot but nothing like what it was formerly. This is because a sort of physical memory was left by the long experience of the pain and it gets a bit of reviving under abnormal circumstances. You have to avoid such circumstances and give the affected spot a little time to forget the subtle impressions and to live long enough in the experience of the sudden relief following the invocation of the Mother's grace by someone over a thousand miles away from you. Such a "miracle", as you call it, does not happen at all times but when a keen loving faith is at the receiving end an unusual result is quite probable. A number of similar instances have come my way. So I am not inclined to look upon the present event as being a freak. There seems to be some hidden logic behind the apparent magic.

You have, like me, an inquiring and questioning mind. Your legal training leads you to write: "I have yet to make proper research about the day the pain vanished and the day you prayed." You have also rightly asked yourself whether the Ayurvedic medicine you had been taking could have worked after so many days like a miracle. But something in you—the intuitive observer—refuses to get round the fact of the sudden relief after an act of appeal to the Divine Mother of both of us by a loving relative who is always close to your heart.

This relative sends his warmest love to you and your family, including the newly arrived Rishaya. (12.3 1994)

AMAL KIRAN  
(K.D. SETHNA)

## References

- 1 *The Birth of the Messiah* by Raymond E Brown, S S (Image books, Garden City, New York, 1979), p 198
  - 2 *Ibid*
- 

**THE UNEXPECTED**

In agony  
I simply turned  
Towards You;  
I expected  
Your saviour Hands  
But You stretched  
Your Legs:  
They are extended  
Not for my worship  
But for my babyship  
In a soothing Lap  
Crossing every gap

My rude resistances  
Crumble down  
And my heart melts  
As stubborn snows  
In the radiant Sun  
To merge in You.

ASHALATA DASH

## TITBITS FROM MY CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO ABOUT MY BENGALI POETRY

17.2.37

GURU, you also fail to give the precise meaning of my poem? Then it will be condemned by all saying, “Surrealist! Worthy of W.P.B.!”

A: Who the devil can give the precise meaning of inner things? “W.P.B.”? Write plenty of books?

Q: The other day D said to Baron, “But one can’t understand these surrealist poems!” He replied, “But why should you understand?”

A: Exactly—why should you understand when you can instand, overstand, roundstand, interstand—what’s the need to understand?

Q: If you don’t need to understand, how do you say of a poem “fine, beautiful”, etc. etc.?

A: Queer fellow! As if feeling could not go deeper than intellectual understanding!

Q: It seems the “poet” has no hand in his work at all except to submit himself to the hands of the Force. And he can’t improve or change anything. It is like casting a net and depending on his luck to catch any fish big or small or none and rest yogi-like without demanding any fruit of action. See for instance this poem of mine which I wrote as the lines dropped, without my making any head or tail about the meaning. Seems all like fairly well-dressed dames and virgins without any relation between them. And lots of such stuff coming Sir! A fine source you have tapped for me. Here is the poem. How do you find the fish?

দিনান্তে কল্পনাময়ী কনকদুহিতা  
একাকী বসিয়া ওই বিটপী তলায়  
সমুখিত স্বরূপেব সরসী দোলায়  
চেয়ে থাকে নির্নিমেষ, অতল-প্রোথিতা  
নিব্বরিণী-বিদ্যুতের বিলাপ-কাহিনী—  
ধমনী শোণিতে যেন স্তম্ভিত বিষাদ—  
ঢালে আলো-কণ্ঠ হতে সে অভিসম্পাত।  
গন্ধহারা পবনের তরঙ্গবাহিনী  
নিয়ে যায় তারি মন্ত্র-রশ্মির ভূষণ  
নিঃশব্দ উষার নীল স্বয়ম্ভু সাগরে;  
নিহিত রবির লিখা অসঙ্গ স্পন্দন  
সৃষ্টি করে ইন্দ্রজাল-মন্দ্রিত অন্তরে  
অলোক রহস্য ছবি; সে প্রোজ্জ্বল হাসি  
বিধাতার মর্ম-ঝরা স্বর্ণাঙ্কিত বাঁশি।

Do you find any head or tail, Sir, in this poem? How to write better in this kind of stuff? What’s the trick?

A: Very fine, this time. Very nicely coloured glowing fish.

Well, let us put it in English—without trying to be too literal, turning the phrases to suit the Eng. Language. If there are any mistakes of rendering they can be adjusted.

At the day-end behold the Golden Daughter of Imaginations—  
She sits alone under the Tree of Life—

A form of the Truth of Being has risen before her rocking there like a lake  
And on it is her unwinking gaze. But from the unfathomed Abyss where it  
was buried, upsurges

A tale of lamentation, a torrent-lightning passion,

A melancholy held fixed in the flowing blood of the veins,—

A curse thrown from a throat of light.

The rivers of a wind that has lost its perfumes are bearing away

On their waves the Mantra-rays that were her ornaments

Into the blue self-born sea of a silent Dawn,

The ceaseless vibration-scroll of a hidden Sun

Creates within her, where all is a magic incantation,

A picture of the transcendent Mystery—that luminous laughter

(Or, A mystery-picture of the Transcendent?)

Is like the voice of a gold-fretted flute flowing from the inmost heart of the  
Creator

Now, I don't know whether that was what you meant, but it is the meaning I find there. Very likely it has no head or tail, but it has a body and a very beautiful body—and I ask with Baron, why do you want to understand? why do you want to cut it up into the dry mathematical figures of the Intellect? Hang it all, sir! In spite of myself you are making me a convert to the Housman theory and Surrealism..

It is enough to feel and grasp without trying to “understand” the creations of a supra-intellectual Beauty

18.2.37

Well, Sir, neither do I know what I meant. As you have put it, it seems excellent stuff. It is after all, as I find now, a golden daughter of Imaginations who has run riot like this. But I found some thrill only in certain lines like ধমনী শোণিতে যেন স্তম্ভিত বিষাদ (6th line of the text). But so long as you feel something, it is reward enough for me. Only please do share a bit with me your finding. I am glad to discover that in spite of yourself I am making you “a convert to the Housman theory and Surrealism”.

NIRODBARAN



## SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

*(Continued from the issue of March 1994)*

### Experiences on the Way: Vision of Kali The Mother

SOME time ago I had a few striking visions during my Pranam at the Samadhi. Quite a number of my experiences happen at such a time. So, the Samadhi is very living for me and I have been asked not to miss my pranam at the Samadhi. It is as if the Guru waits for me there and our talks go on. I come back full of joy and peace.

One day I saw the entire Samadhi was all aglow with bright light and Sri Aurobindo was lying on a bed of Light, in a trance as it were. His body was luminous. And Kali was standing by his side. She was rather of a short stature and dark, but sparkling, as if her black figure was dazzling. It was really wonderful. This was the first time I saw Her. As soon as I saw Sri Aurobindo I rushed towards him. But before I could touch him Kali stretched out her hand and said in a stern voice, “Don’t touch!” I stopped

After a few months the same experience repeated itself, but this time Kali was of a bigger size and was full of power. Her darkness was like a statue of light and Her pose was majestic. She was the Mother herself in her form of Kali. As I approached Her, she said in a strident voice, “Without my Grace you cannot meet your Guru.” I was struck dumb.

I began thinking, why did the Mother say that? Have I not received Her Grace? If I think more often of Sri Aurobindo it is because from my childhood he has been with me and it is natural that my thoughts and feelings should be occupied with him. Then the question that troubled me was, “How to receive the Mother’s Grace?” See and meet Him I must. I began to pray to Her. Some friends suggested that I should do some work for Her. Besides, Sri Aurobindo had also said that doing the Mother’s work keeps the body healthy. So I took up making garlands for the Samadhi, for that work was the most suitable for me.

I started doing it. And I was doing it as an offering, with full concentration. After a few days something very startling happened. As I bowed down at the Samadhi, I saw the Mother’s face with three eyes, two wide-extended and one in the middle of the forehead. And they were gazing into my eyes. Beams of Light issued forth from them and penetrated my sight and kept me transfixed with their gaze. Such wondrous eyes I had never seen before.

When I returned home I told Sri Aurobindo of my experience. He seemed

to be happy and said, "It is true that without Her Grace none can see me, just as without Radha's Grace none could come to Krishna."

*(To be continued)*

NIRODBARAN

---

## A TRICKY HAND

THERE may come moments of stagnation  
 When inertia does not give way to incessant progress.  
 My friend, then lose not patience.  
 A sudden click may work for a jolt  
 In a moment of surprise  
 Leading to a glory of new height.  
 Then you may realise  
 That the inertia of denying nights  
 Is required waiting-time for a birth anew.  
 Let me whisper to your keen ears,  
 O fellow-walker,  
 Behind all such ups and downs of the journey unknown  
 An invisible tricky hand is there.  
 You may call it naughty  
 Or healer of all pains—  
 Yet it can unveil to you  
 The Lord's alluring face  
 Even in the stuff of inert stones.

SITANGSHU CHAKRABORTTY

# THE BOOK OF JOB

## A NEW COMMENTARY

(Continued from the issue of May 1994)

### *Chapter 5.*

The one important implication of all that Eliphaz had been saying was that instead of lamenting he should have prayed to God, confessed his sin (wickedness) that must have brought him to his suffering. It is possible that he meant that Job must have raised the fallen by turning their thoughts to the Maker. Job, when he himself became the victim of pain and sorrow, instead of praying to the Lord began to weep and wail, which was his mistake. It is that implication that he developed in the next part of his advice.

It is needless to repeat that the wise man was actually otherwise not only in the discourse we are discussing but the ones that follow; the two others fared no better. Not only did they fail to offer human sympathy which Job needed badly but they were wrong in accusing him of wickedness and sin. That their obsession with the traditional idea of sin was wrong was shown by the Lord Himself at the end. How can piety, not to speak of self-righteousness, ever understand the purposes of the Lord?

### *Verses 1 to 7.*

With abrupt transitions the verses create a problem to the Commentators. Some have suspected some kind of corruption of the original text. Others have suggested a reordering of the verses. Abrupt transitions are not uncommon in Scriptures. The Upanishads have such transitions frequently. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, with the "formal ending of an Upanishad" which perhaps suggests an initiation of Upanishadic structure, is full of such transitions. But since they are not to be seen elsewhere in the Book we cannot call it a characteristic of the work. But it is not impossible to make sense of them.

### *Verse 1.*

Because Job did not pray to God or confess his "sin", Eliphaz asked Job, tauntingly if he wanted to address angels or other beings who could intercede between God and him. Commentators argue that this idea of his friend's took root in his consciousness and later developed into the concept of "mediator" unconsciously prophesying the advent of Christ in Chapter 9, verse 33, 16:33 and 19:25.

Nothing can be said against what Job is taken to have "prophesied" in the later chapters. It is a matter of faith and belief. All that can be asserted is that the Jews were against the idea of mediators. In Psalm 73, verse 25, we read,

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee

It is that which makes the taunt of Eliphaz meaningful.

*Verse 2.*

From the idea of Job calling someone (angel or another) to intercede between God and himself, Eliphaz suddenly turns to an apparently unconnected idea:

For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one.

(RSV substitutes *vexation* for *wrath* and *jealousy* for *envy*: this makes no essential difference in meaning).

What Eliphaz obviously means is that Job's possible desire to call somebody else in the place of God to intercede with Him must arise out of wrath or vexation. Job could possibly feel in the state of his agony envious of those who are happy and prosperous whatever their nature or character. The wise man wants to impress upon his friend that wrath and envy lead only to death. Again and again we see the speaker ignoring the simple fact of Job's longing for death in that state.

*Verse 3.*

From the general statement Eliphaz turns to a concrete instance of the foolishness taking root and the fool cursing his habitation or dwelling.

*Verse 4.*

The children of such a fool are endangered by his very folly. They are crushed at the gate and nobody saves them.

*Verse 5*

The harvest of such a fool is eaten up by someone else who is hungry. He takes it in spite of the thorns that fence the field. The robber devours the riches of the children.

*Verse 6.*

Neither does affliction arise out of dust (by itself) nor trouble spring out of the ground without the seed of sin being sown.

Eliphaz (like the other friends who are to 'advise' Job) is sure that Job would not have suffered but for his "sin".

Scherer<sup>43</sup> brings to our notice how the verse appeared as a banner headline in newspapers in Paris on the day Hitler invaded the city. Which implied that

Hitler's invasion was seen as punishment for some sin committed by the citizens. Calling it a profound truth, Scherer calls Eliphaz

a classical embodiment of all the men since the beginning of time who have said the right thing at the wrong time.

One cannot be too sure that the rise of an Asuric (Diabolic) power like Hitler has anything to do with people's "sins". God may permit it as in the Book under study He permitted Satan to torment Job for his own purposes. Perhaps the rise of Hitler helped the forces of Good to come together and help in the human evolution.

*Verse 7.*

Commentators render the verse,

Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

as follows:

It is man who begets trouble as surely as sparks fly upwards.

The KJV does not seem to warrant such a rendering. The initial "yet" makes it clear that the verse does not continue the thought of the previous verse. The RJV reads "But" which implies a clear presentation of something which does not follow from the previous verse. From what the commentators say it appears that they take the original reading as "yulladh" and not as "yôlîdh" which they guess to be the right reading.

Some commentators taking the original expression for sparks, "sons of the flame" to mean vultures render the verse,

Man brings an evil fate upon himself just as mighty birds fly high by sheer exertion of their muscles<sup>44</sup>

The rendering is far from being elegant whatever be its faithfulness to the original.

*Verses 8 to 21.*

Eliphaz told Job what he would do if he were in his position. He would entrust his case to God. God does great things, raise the low and exalt the sad. God defeats the crafty but saves the poor from destruction. If God wounds, His punishment is also a purification. He also heals. Job would live long with happy children if he surrendered to the Lord.

Scherer<sup>45</sup> with his discernment makes a very pertinent statement about Eliphaz trying to say, "If I were You".

But that is precisely what is not and what can never be.

How could a self-righteous man place himself in the position of Job? He did not have the necessary imaginative sympathy with the sufferer, let alone a proper understanding of what exactly his situation was. All the time Eliphaz assumed that Job must have suffered because of sin and unrighteousness. What he would say hereafter would follow from the same assumption.

*Verse 8.*

Eliphaz (if he were Job) would seek God and entrust his case to Him. (*Unto* in the Bible has a greater force than *to.*) *Seek unto God* would imply an entire reliance on God.

Terrien<sup>46</sup> sees in the wise man's statement a veiled allusion to Job's readiness to address a power other than the Godhead. (*Vide vs. 1.*)

*Verses 9 to 11.*

After stating in verse 8 that he would commit himself unto God, he described His nature in the verses that follow with a connecting pronoun *which* (*who*) at the commencement of the next verse.

He does great things beyond the search of the human mind. He does innumerable marvellous things. One marvels how the speaker of the words could claim to know that God must have punished Job for his "sins".

It is because of Him it rains and fields are watered.

He raises the low and exalts those who mourn.

*Verses 12 to 14.*

But there is another side to God's nature. Eliphaz, suspecting Job's wickedness, thought fit to point out that the Lord disappoints the plans of the clever; He would not allow them to carry out their enterprise.

God catches the "wise" in their own cunning and the advice of the perverse proves self-destructive.

The day becomes dark to them and they are to grope in the noonday as at night.

Terrien<sup>47</sup> says that Eliphaz, being a wise man, knew that some wise men could be crafty. More than once it has been pointed out that Job belonged to Edom proverbial for its wisdom and Teman to which Eliphaz belonged was itself a part of Edom. This implication is that the genuinely wise one, Eliphaz, knew how the "wise" like Job could be crafty! The verses 12 to 14 reveal the Temamite's cleverness in accusing Job of craftiness. The words make it obvious

that the wise Temonite could never place himself in the position of Job.  
It has been noted that the words of Eliphaz

He taketh the wise in their own craftiness

have been quoted by St Paul in “The First Epistle to Corinthians” 3:19

For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

The words are cited to be the only instance of any passage from the Book of Job quoted in the New Testament.

Paul’s use of the words in his context does not prove Job to be worldly wise or crafty.

*Verses 15-16.*

Contrary to God’s treatment of the cunning He saves the poor from destruction by the powerful. The poor therefore have hope and wickedness cannot harm them.

*Verse 17.*

Eliphaz once again used the interjection *Behold* to draw Job’s attention to what he considers an extraordinary fact—That man who unhesitatingly accepts the punishment of God meant to correct him is continuously happy. He therefore advised his friend not to despise the purification provided by God in suffering.

*Verses 18 to 26.*

In the verses that follow Eliphaz explained to Job the advantages of accepting God’s “correction”.

*Verse 18.*

It is good not to scorn God’s purification for the simple reason God who wounds and smites also binds up and heals.

God would free Job from his troubles. (Eliphaz taking seven instances as an example says he would be free from trouble in six instances and in the seventh no evil would touch him. *Vide* the note on numbers in the comment on 1:3.)

In famine God would save him from death and in war from being slain by the sword.

He would be hidden from the chastisement of the tongue, that is, blame. He would not also be afraid of destruction when it came.

He would laugh at destruction and at famine. He would not be afraid of the beasts of the earth.

There would be an absolute harmony between him and Nature around —stones of the field and beasts.

Scherer<sup>48</sup> notes that the Biblical view of life and nature is sacramental. It is a view, according to him, cherished more by the Eastern church than the West. Without disputing the truth of the statement in the abstract it may be pointed out that as spoken by Eliphaz the words have no relationship with the reality of the situation.

He would know his dwelling was in peace and would visit it and would not sin.

The wise man could never forget the idea of sin!

He would know his children would be great (prosperous); they would be the grass of the earth, that is an adornment.

He would live his full life. That he would live upto his ripe old age is brought out in a comparison with a shock of corn which would grow till the season of harvest.

*Verse 27.*

Eliphaz pompously ended his admonition with the words that what he said was the truth arrived at by his search (research!) He said, “hear it, and know it is for your good”.

Evidently he must have thought Job would have learnt his lesson. At least he would not have expected a reply from him.

*(To be continued)*

K.B. SITARAMAYYA

*Notes*

- 43 P 944 (Exposition)
- 44 P 944 (Exegesis)
- 45 P 944 (Exposition)
- 46 P 944 (Exegesis)
- 47 P 946
- 48 P 948



## DR. INDRA SEN

### AN OVERVIEW OF HIS LIFE

- Born on May 13, 1903, in the Jhelum district in Punjab, now in Pakistan.
- Family moved to Delhi.  
Schooling in Delhi—M A in Philosophy from the University of Delhi. Immediately appointed Professor of Philosophy and Psychology in the same University, in 1928. Some time later, took the Law degree, LL.B.  
(He had earlier, on his father's insistence, spent two years at a Medical College. Also, appeared and was selected for the Judicial Service but did not wish to serve an alien government.)
- From boyhood days, he sought the company of spiritual personalities—who often frequented the house on his father's invitation. Or, he was in the habit of slipping away in this search to the banks of the Yamuna flowing through Delhi.
- On December 5, 1928, he was married to Lilawati, who was just completing her University education in education and psychology. Subsequently, two children were born to them.
- An encounter that marked those early years at the University of Delhi was with C.G. Jung, who was visiting India for his own research work. Jung suggested that he go to Germany for doctoral studies.
- In 1931, he went to the University of Freiburg, where he did a thesis in Psychology for the Ph D. Degree. He also attended lectures given by Martin Heidegger and taught Indian Philosophy and Sanskrit at the University of Konigsburg, the birthplace of Kant, for six months.  
The deepest impressions on him, at the time, were made by the psychology of Jung and the philosophy of Hegel.
- On his return home in 1933, he resumed his teaching work at the University of Delhi and had a rich and many-sided intellectual life.  
Two events that marked this phase:
  - For the first time in academic circles, he investigated a case of reincarnation which came to be known as the "Shanti Devi" case and stands even today as a significant scientific document.
  - He was President of the Psychology Section of the Indian Science Congress at which he presented a paper entitled, "The Urge for Wholeness", which won wide acclaim.
- But the spiritual aspirant in him was not fulfilled. For him, the study of philosophy was not enough without a corresponding spiritual realisation. He started to travel to different parts of the country—from the remote Himalayas, which he loved, to the southernmost tip of the peninsula—to meet personalities who had had such a 'realisation'.

- One such trip, made in the company of Surendranath Jauhar in 1939, brought him to Pondicherry—and to the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.
- The next year, in 1940, he came again—this time with his wife. Then they came with their two young children And they kept coming. In February, 1943, The Mother asked Lilawati and the two children to come here by the April Darshan for good. But She asked him to continue with his work at the University of Delhi for some time more. In 1945, She asked him to resign and come over.
- The first work assigned to him by the Mother at the Ashram was to water the flower-pots in the Ashram courtyard!
- The second was to join the Ashram Press, where he worked for ten years. The Mother had been offered some printing machinery and when She turned to him, he said, “But, Mother, I ‘read’ books—I don’t know how to ‘make’ them!” But there he was!
- Subsequently, other work was given to him—
  - to resume his participation in the National Congresses in philosophy, psychology, education, yoga but now he presented the perspectives of Sri Aurobindo’s work in these fields
  - to teach a course in ‘Integral Psychology’ at the Centre of Education
  - to help develop three centres of the Ashram in the North, which were directly under the Mother’s guidance
    - one at Jwalapur, near Hardwar
    - two in the Kumaon Hills, ‘Mountain Paradise’ and ‘Tapogiri’.
 Of the latter, Sri Aurobindo Himself said when there were difficulties in running it: “This is our foot-hold in the Himalayas—it is not to be sold.”
- Thus, his life at the Ashram took its course—
  - the inner life of a sadhak of Integral Yoga
  - and outer activities of teaching, writing, meeting people, organising seminars and helping in the growth of centres.
- Over the past ten years, the outer activities diminished and the inner concentration became more pressing. In this period, the Cambridge University of England wrote to him wanting to include biographical data about him in a world’s ‘Who’s—Who’ of ‘intellectuals’. To this, he replied, “I am not an intellectual.”
- On January 1, 1993—after two years of being very withdrawn—he burst forth into smiles, wishing ‘Bonne Année’ to everyone around him. He even picked up his pen again and wrote three short pieces during the year.
- On March 19, 1993, he said something very significant to Nirodbaran: “I wish to convey to him that, spiritually, I am ascending to meet the Divine.” While saying this he made a gesture leading above the head.
- Some time in April, 1993, he said, “I have done the *ḥ*yoga of the cells for ten

- years but put it aside I must take it up again.”
- In the months of October, November and December, 1993, he gathered around him, each morning, as many flowers of ‘Transformation’ as we could collect and would arrange them in glasses on a table by his side.
  - The months of January, February and half of March, 1994 in the Nursing Home—the sense of a tremendous ‘activity’ and an intense pervasive consciousness as one entered his room. Something that seemed to be going on—but one didn’t know what!
  - On March 10, as we stood by him in the evening, his mouth started to crease into a smile—a smile of extreme sweetness. It spread to the corner of the right eye as the left side of the face had been paralysed—and lasted almost fifteen minutes. Sweetness—and something done and fulfilled. That was a very definite impression.
  - On March 16, 1994, between 4 and 4.15 p.m., when no one was near him, he withdrew peacefully.
  - Twenty-four hours after that at the house—a tremendously powerful Presence and a radiating glow on the face right through.

ASTER PATEL

---

## THE GATE

A SMALL fragment of matter crude—I was  
 Grace-scooped out of the Earth’s soul,  
 Then compassion-processed and cast into purer steel ingots,  
 Love-rolled and pressed through conscious spaces  
 Of formative dies into flats and rods  
 Cut to live pieces, into parts of being  
 And bent to shape a docile servitor  
 With a symbol-heart fabricated  
 Till the pieces were welded in harmony together  
 With an arc-aspiration ardently afire.  
 Thus the gate being ready was opened ajar  
 For Your welcome, O Sweet Mother, from afar.

SATADAL

## IN MEMORY OF DR. INDRA SEN

DR. Indra Sen, I was told by his daughter Aster, would often think of me and remember me during his last period of illness. I cannot figure out the reason that made him do so. Of course, we had known each other for decades. To be exact, since 1938, when I had begun to serve Sri Aurobindo. But our relationship was not deep, at least outwardly, and I did not know much about him except that he was a cultured man and a noted psychologist. In fact there was nothing much in common between us. He was an intellectual and his interest therefore lay in studies and seeking for knowledge, and his association too was with an intellectual circle of friends. We had not met even once for talks on any subject. Still, whenever we met or passed each other, he had always a sweet smile for me. Quite a number of notable men used to come to him in the early days. He would bring them and introduce me to them as being in the personal service of Sri Aurobindo. He was always affable, sweet and courteous, in a word, a gentleman.

During his last protracted illness when I went to visit him, he was in an indrawn condition. Aster, his daughter, called to him saying that I had come to see him. He opened his eyes and gave me a sweet smile of recognition.

I don't understand why the older sadhaks are now subject to a long period of illness before they pass away. I believe, however, that some inner work goes on to prepare them for a greater new birth. That was the impression I had in the case of Dr Indra Sen.

I was very touched indeed by his kind remembrance of me. Perhaps it was for one reason alone—that I was in close contact with Sri Aurobindo. That shows again his deep love for the Master. I may mention that his love for the Mother and Master was very genuine indeed and he has helped the cause of the Ashram in whatever way he could. Apart from spreading the Master's teachings by way of organising seminars, lectures, etc., most of the summer fruits like apples, pears, plums which are distributed in the Ashram and which we enjoy so much, are from his orchard in Tapogiri which he has offered to the Mother.

His wife is also a very sweet and educated lady. She enjoyed the close company of the Mother in the Playground. At the Mother's behest she took up Social Service and was awarded the Padmashree title for it. Their daughter Aster took the Ph.D. in Philosophy at Sorbonne and is now an important member of the Auroville Committee.

On March 19, 1993, Aster brought me a message from her father: "I wish to convey to him that, spiritually, I am ascending to meet the Divine and unite with Him."

May the Lord and the Mother bless this noble soul.

NIRODBARAN

## A CALL FROM THE CRADLE

### IN MEMORY OF NISHIKANTO

THE funeral pyre is ablaze,  
The body gets burnt,  
Flesh, muscles and tissues turn to ashes...  
Yet deplore not, deeming that I do not exist.

Leaving the worn-out frame  
I have departed into the supernal sphere of rest

By virtue of birth my journey is  
Towards the supreme source of Light  
And I aspire for the radiating gold-rays,  
Brighter than a thousand suns!

I aspire but at the same time  
Hear the call from the cradle of my infancy,  
The crimson-green nether creation .  
The once intimate ones invoke me with  
Rhyme, rhythm, music and melody,  
The selected pieces from my own compositions!

O my beloved earth, manifold are the modes  
Of your manifestations. .  
They used to animate my heart-strings  
With the resonance of sublime ideas!  
The poet in me still bears the essence  
Of those striking impressions  
And is ever grateful and indebted to you...

After completing my otherworldly course  
I shall return to your loving lap again  
And play gleefully with my brethren,  
Having a body healthy and sound  
By the grace of the alchemy of heaven...

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

## POETRY'S FROG PRINCE

*Despite its challenging format—three units of five, seven and five syllables respectively—the Japanese regard the haiku as a serious literary genre. Matsuo Bashō perfected this discipline to achieve great fame. Christopher Nicholson explains how a humble frog turned Bashō into a prince among poets.*

*'Furuike ya  
Kawazu tobikomu  
Mizu no oto'*

is the most celebrated, discussed, pored-over, pondered-upon poem in the Japanese language. It is, by common acclaim (its 17 syllables having been inspected like precious jewels under the critical microscope of the centuries and found flawless), the tip-top haiku of all time.

We know roughly how it was composed. One spring day in the 1680s—a day of gentle breeze and light rain, with the first petals of cherry blossom beginning to fall—Matsuo Bashō, already famous as a poet, was living in what is now Tokyo. His home was near a pond and occasionally he heard the sound of frogs jumping into the water. Suddenly the words '*kawazu tobikomu/mizu no oto*' floated into his mind. After profound cogitation, and ignoring the suggestions of friends, he discovered the first part of the poem '*Furuike ya*'. So that was it, bingo, a poem described by one 20th-century Japanese critic as 'a flash of lightning illuminating a quiet corner'.

Put straight into English, this great haiku can seem not so much a work of genius as an exercise in banality. It means: 'Old-pond/ frog jump-in/ water's sound' Translators have had a long and largely unsuccessful struggle to convey what they believe to be the true spirit of Bashō's verse, proposing versions which range from the leaden:

*'Breaking the silence  
Of an ancient pond  
A frog jumped into water—  
A deep resonance'*

to the more light-hearted:

*'Silent old pool  
Frog jumps  
Plop!'*

Or, in different versions, 'Splash!', 'Splosh!' 'Kerplunk!' and 'Kdang!' (this last, presumably, being a frog with a twanging metal spring). None of these, however, has won widespread acceptance and in truth the poem poses formidable problems for English language translators. It is an easy decision to abandon the strict haiku structure (three units, respectively five, seven and five syllables long), which seems too terse for English, but 'ya' is virtually untranslatable.

Then there is '*kawazu*', which may be singular or plural in Japanese—in other words, is it one frog plopping into the pool or a whole bunch of them? And the haiku is so transparent that it leaves itself open to a multiplicity of symbolic interpretations.

One mournful theory suggests that the frog's brief trip through the air represents each human being's short life, ending (Splosh!) in the waters of eternity; others have argued that Bashō was describing a Zen experience, in which he momentarily became the frog; or that the frog is a thought, dropping (Plop!) into the pool of the mind.

It is this capacity to engage the reader, to invite speculation, that makes the poem so interesting. Perhaps no symbolism was intended by Bashō and the verse should be seen simply as an attempt to capture an insignificant event—a humble frog jumping into water—and to give it significance, to make it a part of history.

Certainly, this particular green amphibian has achieved a peculiar immortality. The poem has become so deeply lodged in Japan's cultural consciousness that the image of the leaping frog, even when it crops up on Tokyo advertising hoardings, instantly recalls Bashō's haiku and pays homage to it. As for Bashō, who died in 1693 at the age of 51, his position in the story of Japanese poetry is that of the venerable, beetle-browed sage.

Before him, composing haiku was just one element in a party game played by members of the merchant classes; after his death, and largely because of him, it became a serious literary genre, capable of expressing or hinting at profound spiritual meaning. Yet his writing is hardly ever pompous. He believed, like some of the romantic poets of early-19th-century Western Europe, that eternal truths could be found in natural objects and the subjects he took for his haiku are often commonplace: a horse eating a flower; a worm stealing inside a chestnut; a crow sitting on a branch. Occasionally, he is down to earth:

'Fleas lice  
Horse pissing  
Beside my pillow'

he wrote after an unpleasant night on his travels through remote northern Japan.

Three-hundred years later, his name is as famous in Japan as that of Shakespeare in the West. Every Japanese child studies Bashō at school and

memorises Bashō haiku, while tourists go on Bashō trails, take photos of Bashō statues, visit replicas of Bashō huts.

Bashō was not a prolific writer—his entire output consists of around 1,000 haiku, a few longer poems, some short travel journals and snippets of literary criticism—but no contemporary Japanese poet can escape his influence

Outside his home country, Bashō is an acquired taste. Earlier this century some Modernist poets like Ezra Pound developed an interest in haiku and the Western fashion for Zen Buddhism in the 1950s and 1960s brought Bashō new disciples, especially in the United States. Among them was the Beat Generation novelist Jack Kerouac, who scattered his books with haiku of his own composition including, in *Desolation Angels* (1960), the marvellously laconic:

‘Bleak.  
Blook.  
Void.’

Since then, tiny haiku societies have sprung up in many countries but they remain in a literary backwater. With its highly restrictive rules, its insistence on five- and seven-syllabled units, the haiku reflects and flourishes in a culture which places a high value on outward formality, like that of Japan. Yet as a verse form it is not much good if you want to write a narrative poem or to explore the dynamics of personal thought, nor, in its orientation towards matters of the spirit, will it appeal to those who say that poetry should have a public as well as a private purpose, that poetry should be questioning, sceptical, politically engaged.

Literary critics are also suspicious on the grounds that:

Any idiot  
Can write a sort of haiku  
It’s easy-peasy

In September, one British newspaper columnist joked that Prime Minister John Major, then visiting Japan, had accidentally composed a haiku during a press conference

‘The point about the hole  
Is that we are on our way  
Out of it’

A reader wrote to say that Major’s supposed poem had in fact contained 16, not 17, syllables, and was therefore not a true haiku.

While the joke was mainly against Major, it also poked fun at the haiku



form itself; after all, if you can compose one without knowing it, how can anyone take it seriously? A friend who teaches creative writing often ends classes by asking students to make up a haiku, because even the most incompetent can do it and it gives them the illusion that they have accomplished something

Bashō, who was under no illusions about the art of writing haiku, would be scornful of this. Anyone who composes five good haiku in his lifetime is a haiku poet, he wrote, and anyone who achieves ten is a master. But how do you recognise a good haiku when you see one? In the last analysis, what is so sublime about '*Furuike yalkawazu tobikomul/mizu no oto*'—the frog and bog?

One answer is that Bashō's haiku are invitations to the imagination. He was not telling people what to believe, he was not even saying what he believed. I think of him as the proprietor of a confectionery shop (standing behind a smooth wooden counter, wearing black, priestly robes) who offers a selection of sweets—some exotic, some sad, some comic, some odd—for us to pop in our minds, suck gently and see what happens

(*B B.C. Worldwide*, January 1994, pp 12-13)

## ESSAYS ON THE MAHĀBHĀRATA (III)

(Continued from the issue of May 1994)

### Psychological, Philosophical and Legal Aspects of the Game of Dice

“I wish to hear you tell this in detail, brahmin, for this was the root of the destruction of the world, best of the twiceborn ”<sup>1</sup>

Yudhisthira was the eldest, wisest and most virtuous of the Pāndavas, a paragon of Dharma, dominated in his nature by the element of *sattva*. Nonetheless, he allowed himself to get involved in a perilous game of dice which resulted in dramatic developments of key importance for the whole story of the epic. Here we find individuals in extreme situations of acute inner trial, see the wisest of the wise perplexed by a set of circumstances that are bewildering by their complexity, frustrating and fatal by their sheer inevitable force.

In the chapter of the game of dice we experience in a major scene a density of action and subtlety of perception which seem to reveal the hand of Vyāsa himself at work. The crisis of the Pāndavas and their wife, the immensity of inner torture that they undergo, are described in a terse, almost cool language which nevertheless makes us breathless participants of a tremendous drama. I would say that the inner torment of Yudhisthira, Bhīma, Arjuna and Draupadī in this scene is even greater and more severe and devastating than Arjuna’s famous despair at the beginning of the war. Apart from analyzing these situations where souls struggle for their survival, fight for their inmost Truth, we will also try to provide new answers to a number of questions which have often been neglected or insufficiently dealt with by commentators. These questions are:

1) Why did Yudhisthira accept the challenge for the Game of Dice? Was he really moved by his passion for the game?

2) Why did he accept to play against Śakuni, a well-known master-wizard who did his magic on Duryodhana’s behalf?

3) Why was Yudhisthira so much in haste to lose everything once the game started and his losing streak became obvious?

4) Why did Yudhisthira go so far as to stake even Draupadī, although it was clear that he would lose her as he had lost everything else?

5) What are the exact implications of Draupadī’s question to the assembly whether Yudhisthira had lost himself before he lost her?

6) Why did none of the elders present in the hall (Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Kṛpa, etc.) intervene on behalf of Draupadī when Duḥśāsana started molesting her?

7) How would Kṛṣṇa have acted, if he had been personally present in the assembly hall?

These are some of the questions which we will deal with, closely following

the text of the Critical Edition. All the while we will have the occasion to enter a real-life scene enacted in ancient India (or at least realistically imagined by the poet) which will provide us with a first-hand psychological experience of various characters and with a close understanding of the term *dharma* as interpreted by Yudhiṣṭhira, the *dharmarāja*, and Vidura, reportedly an incarnation of *dharma*, as well as Bhīma, the senior of the Kauravas, who was as perplexed as all the other elders by Draupadi's question whether she had been won or not and could not say anything more than that "the matter is subtle and mysterious as well as grave".

### Causes and Preparations

"One time the princely Dhārtarāṣṭra (Duryodhana) came, in the middle of the hall [which Maya had built for Yudhiṣṭhira], upon a crystal slab, and thinking it was water, the flustered prince raised his robe; then, bitter and shamefaced, he roamed about the hall. Again, seeing a pond with crystalline water adorned with crystalline lotuses, he thought it was land and fell into the water with his clothes on. When they saw him fallen in the water, the servants laughed merrily and gave him clean clothes at the king's behest. Mighty Bhīmasena saw him that way, as did Arjuna and the twins, and they burst out laughing. A choleric man, he did not suffer their mockery; to save his face he did not look at them. Once more he pulled up his robe, as though crossing a pool, to ascend firm land, and again those people all laughed at him. He once tried a door, which appeared to be open, and hurt his forehead; another time, thinking the door was closed, he shrank from the doorway." (2.43.3-10)

Duryodhana suffered three great disappointments in his life: the first was when the five Pāṇdavas left the forest after their father's death and moved into the palaces of the Kuru house with their mother Kuntī. Like an admired and undisputed champion athlete who is suddenly relegated to third or fourth rank by the unexpected arrival of new hopefuls, so Duryodhana was bereft at that time of his sure status of not only the successor of the Kuru dynasty but also the leader among the young princes at the Court. There are persons whose character is such that they can only prosper under conditions where they are the one and only leader. To be eclipsed by another 'star', to be driven by others rather than driving oneself, to have a rival who diverts the attention and admiration away from oneself—all this does not suit a Duryodhana. Thus we find him fighting from the beginning, trying to kill Bhīma at first for having humiliated the Kaurava princes with various feats of strength, and then later attempting to burn the five brothers in the lacquer palace at Vāranāvata.

The second disappointment was when Arjuna won Draupadī at her *svayam-*

vara by his superior skill in archery. Duryodhana failed to string the bow<sup>2</sup> and then saw his close friend Karna defeated in the short battle which ensued with the unknown Brahmins, actually the Pāṇdavas in disguise. His worst enemies, believed dead beyond doubt, had staged a powerful come-back, won a most beautiful bride for themselves and secured a powerful ally in king Drupada. Suddenly Duryodhana was back on the defensive

The third great disappointment was Yudhiṣṭhira's coronation as *samrāt*. For sure, this was a great event for the Kuru family whose members were given various functions at this occasion. "Duryodhana received all the gifts of homage," says the text. Even though Yudhiṣṭhira had generously assured the Kauravas, "all this wealth that is here is yours, and so am I. .", it can hardly have been a pleasing experience for Duryodhana to collect treasures on Yudhiṣṭhira's behalf. And then came, on top of that, his embarrassing experience (recorded in the quotation above) while inspecting the palace built by Maya with many contraptions. Like a fool he stumbles into all the traps carefully laid by the master architect, and everywhere he sees laughing grimaces enjoying his ill luck. Another person might have reacted with resignation and a sense of final defeat, but for Duryodhana this is only the beginning of a terrible battle for revenge which he conceived in his mind at this very moment, and it would be a battle where the end justified the means whatever be their nature. This was not exactly the cause of the War, but the occasion. Duryodhana would now openly fight up to the end—his own defeat or that of the Pāṇdavas, and preferably death so that the matter would be settled once for all.

While Duryodhana is returning home in the company of Śakuni, he is invaded by thoughts of abysmal depression and burning hatred. He conveys his inner convulsions to his uncle at his enquiry: "Rancour has filled me, and burning day and night I am drying up like a small pool in the hot season... When I saw all that blazing fortune at the Pāṇdava's, I fell prey to resentment and I am burning, though that is not my way. I shall enter the fire, or drink poison, or drown myself, for I shall not be able to live. For what man of mettle in this world will have patience when he sees rivals prosper and himself decline?... Fate, methinks, reigns supreme, and man's acts are meaningless, when I see such bright fortune fetched to the Pāṇḍava."

We need not assume that Duryodhana was really playing with the thought of ending his life. This is just cunning talk meant to impress Śakuni with the need of doing something in support of him. In fact, he expects Śakuni to go to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and relate to him those frightening thoughts passing through Duryodhana's brain

Śakuni, brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's wife Gāndhārī, emerges a man far less evil than is commonly believed, in the established text of the Critical Edition. There are two scenes where we find him to be a rather cool-headed advisor trying to calm down the passionate Duryodhana. Thus, in this present situation he begins

his answer to Duryodhana with a sentence which will take by surprise all those who believe in the myth of his entirely evil character: "You must harbour no resentment against Yudhiṣṭhira, for the Pāṇdavas have always enjoyed good luck."<sup>3</sup>

In the following passage too Śakuni does not say anything which could further fan the fire of Duryodhana's hatred. He is rather trying to bring him to a rational level, giving him a realistic evaluation of the situation. Śakuni points out that Duryodhana is not all alone, as he believes in this moment of depression, but that he has such powerful allies as Drona, Kṛpa and Karna. Quite apart from that, Śakuni does not encourage him at all to think of war, for "Dhananjaya, Vāsudeva, Bhīmasena, Yudhiṣṭhira, Nakula and Sahadeva, and the august Drupada cannot be defeated in battle by force, not even by the hosts of the gods. They are great warriors and archers, know their weapons, and are battle-crazy."

Here again Śakuni's way of talking to Duryodhana is more than surprising. To hear in such frank speech from his close advisor that his enemies are invincible must have been another severe shock for the Kaurava prince. We know from previous incidents that the Dhārtarāṣṭra would get furious with those who doubted his own fighting capacities. But Śakuni had a trump card up his sleeve which he quickly brought out to console his downcast protégé: the idea of staging a game of dice with Yudhiṣṭhira and robbing him of all his wealth by shrewd, though non-violent means. Before further following the thread of this story, we will turn to another episode which will serve to destroy the myth of Śakuni being the arch-villain whose only purpose is to instil evil thoughts in Duryodhana's mind.

At one time when the Pāṇdavas were staying in exile in the forest, Duryodhana staged a 'cattle expedition' as a pretext for visiting his troubled cousins in the forest and harass them in various ways. However, due to his arrogance he got involved in fighting with a group of powerful Gandharvas and was captured by their leader, Citrasena. Yudhiṣṭhira intervened on Duryodhana's behalf and had him set free. Thus the prince was entirely put to shame and plunged into deep depression. As he said to Karṇa, "the very men whom I had chased away and whose enemy I had always been now set me free, me the villain, and I owe them my life! It would have been better, hero, had I met my death in that grand battle than to live out such a life."<sup>4</sup>

Duryodhana is really hard struck this time and the thoughts of suicide come with an irresistible force. A warrior has lost his face before his own people, his wives, his retinue, and before his enemies who have humbled him. In this desperate situation we find Śakuni again addressing Duryodhana. We will quote the passage in full length since it will help to correct the image of Śakuni as it has been formed in the popular Indian mind. We do not intend to deny that he is an evil person. But on the basis of the text material at hand we must uphold that he is much more moderate than Duryodhana himself, trying to restrain the prince,

to calm down his violent passions. He does not himself encourage the prince's unreasonable demands, but takes up Duryodhana's wishes and seeks viable methods to satisfy them. All the while he acts on his behalf, tries to please him, collaborates with him as everyone else (except Vidura) is doing at the Court of the Kauravas. Did not even Bhīṣma join forces with the prince at the end, even though unwillingly and after much resistance? In any case, Śakuni's image deserves to be corrected and for this purpose we quote the following passage:

To the intransigent king Duryodhana who was set to starve to death, now spoke soothingly Śakuni Saubala, O King. "Surely, what Karna said is right, you have heard it, Kaurava! Why should you foolishly relinquish the plentiful riches that I took, and, best of kings, foolishly forsake your life? And it occurs to me today that you have not frequented your elders. If one does not control sudden joy or depression, he perishes with his fortune like an unbaked clay pot in water. Fortunes do not take to a king either too timid or cowardly, woolgathering or absent-minded, or beset with the vices of the senses. How can you mind having been treated well when you were down? *Don't destroy the Pārthas' fine act by feeling sorry! You should be happy and give the Pāṇḍavas their due.* Instead you are moping... about this setback. Please, do not kill yourself, *remember a good turn with gratitude! Return the Pārthas their kingdom, and you will earn fame and Law* Recognize the deed, don't be an ingrate. Act the brother to the Pāṇḍavas, re-establish them, and return to them their ancestral kingdom: then you can have happiness!<sup>5</sup>

(To be continued)

WILFRIED HUCHZERMEYER

Notes

- 1 Janmejaya to Vaiśampāyana (Mahabharat 2 46 2)
- 2 According to the Critical Edition (1 178 15) all competitors except Arjuna were unable to string the bow, other editions report of various near-misses
- 3 Mahabharat 2 44 1
- 4 Mahabharat 3 238 7-8
- 5 Mahabharat 3 239 1-8

## THE UNESCO CONFERENCE IN VIETNAM

SHRI Gopal Bhattacharjee, International Secretary, Sri Aurobindo Society, participated in the first UNESCO sponsored Regional Conference of Non-governmental Organisations in Asia and the Pacific held at Hanoi, Vietnam, from 7th to 11th March, 1994.

The Conference discussed the objectives and the programmes of the Non-governmental organizations associated with UNESCO in the Asian and the Pacific region and made recommendations to UNESCO and the Governments of the Region for strengthening the ongoing programmes for Education, Culture, Communication, Science and International Understanding. During the discussions in the conference, Shri Gopal Bhattacharjee spoke about the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and their system of Integral Yoga, the aim of which is the attainment of a spiritualised society based on the transformation of the individual and the society. As part of this programme, the Sri Aurobindo Society is working for human unity, universal harmony, integral education and social transformation. Shri Bhattacharjee said that in order to achieve the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Society works, among other things, for development and research in the fields of Education, Science, Culture and Communication.

Shri Bhattacharjee pointed out that in order to enable the Non-governmental organisations to function effectively, UNESCO, along with the U.N. and other specialised agencies of the U N., should promote their links with N.G.Os and give them sufficient assistance to strengthen their role at the regional, sub-regional and national levels.

Speaking about specific programmes of UNESCO, Shri Bhattacharjee pointed out that very little had been done to eradicate the blight of illiteracy which had actually been increasing in the developing world. It is essential that UNESCO should mobilise extra budgetary resources on a massive scale to reinforce its ongoing programmes for the promotion of literacy and universal primary education. Shri Bhattacharjee stated that our educational system has lost the confidence of the young people. The unrest of the youth involving conflict and violence is a global phenomenon and it has often assumed a destructive formation. The largely obsolete educational system with its lack of resilience and its inability to adjust to the cultural, social and technical changes has been blamed for the revolt of the youth. Shri Bhattacharjee emphasised that the answer to the present dilemma is to reorient our system of education in order to inculcate ethical, moral and cultural values apart from the acquisition of knowledge and skills. This is the basis of the integral system of Education developed by Sri Aurobindo. He quoted the words of Sri Aurobindo that “the chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and to make it perfect for a noble use”. Sri Aurobindo wanted

our present system of education to be replaced by the integral system which will “promote the development not merely of specific intellectual and technical skills but of the whole inner and outer person, a strong, supple, healthy and beautiful body, a sensitive and energetic personality, a wide-ranging and lively intelligence and will, and the subtler spiritual qualities that can unify and harmonise all these capacities into a life that is beneficial both to the individual and his fellowmen.”

Shri Bhattacharjee pointed out that UNESCO should give assistance to developing countries to preserve their traditional cultural heritage at a time when the world is being increasingly overtaken by Western cultural values. The developing countries of Asia and the Pacific regions can do this by ensuring that their traditional arts and crafts, patterns of music, drama, dance and other performing arts, particularly those based on oral traditions and folk memory, are conserved and developed. The traditional aesthetic forms have to be renewed and reinvigorated. We have also to ensure the widest participation by the masses in the cultural life of the country

Shri Bhattacharjee mentioned that UNESCO should explore further the concept of a “Culture of peace” in order to strengthen the links connecting human rights, democracy, citizenship and sustainable development. International Non-governmental organisations can play an effective part in this process. It is necessary to promote human rights in the political, economic, social, and cultural circumstances that have emerged during the last two decades. But it must be noted that while the West finds fault with human rights in developing countries, it has itself no hesitation in committing violation of human rights. The discrimination against migrants from the developing world by the Western countries has to be noted. The basic human rights of such people are violated and they are being persecuted and pushed out by the countries of the West.

During his visit Shri Bhattacharjee met Mr. Nyuyen Khanh, Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam and Mr. Nguyen Nien, Deputy President, Vietnamese National Commission of UNESCO. He also met Mr. Ngoyen Manh Cam, Minister in charge of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam. It was an amazing experience for him to find that the people of Vietnam are now very eager to know more about Indian Culture, Philosophy and Spirituality. The teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will find a fertile soil in Vietnam if we send lecturers and visitors to spread the message. Many of the senior Vietnamese politicians and bureaucrats were educated in India in the nineteen sixties and have a basic understanding of Indian culture.

Shri Bhattacharjee attended receptions held by the Vietnamese National Commission for UNESCO and the Indian Embassy in Vietnam. At the reception in the Indian Embassy, photostat copies of Shri Bhattacharjee’s booklet *Fragrant Flower of Cambridge—Sri Aurobindo*, were distributed to many of the guests. The booklet received a warm reception and the feeling was that it gives an excellent introduction to Sri Aurobindo and his message in simple language. Mr.



Tawatia, First Secretary of the Embassy, who was very helpful in getting the photostat copies done, is arranging to get the book translated in Vietnamese and distributed widely.

---

## DAYBREAK

WHEN the light of the day  
Just opens its eye,  
When a soft sweetness  
Hovers in the sky,  
When the breath of the flowers  
Wings in the air,  
When the fresh water flows  
Through the waiting hills,  
I see Your Face  
Beautiful, brilliant, divine;  
Through the woods of pine  
I hear Your Voice—  
Marvellous, grand, sublime,  
Soul-stirring fountain of my rhyme.

ARUN KUMAR SEN

# A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

(Continued from the issue of May 1994)

## 29. THE GREATEST BOOK EVER WRITTEN

HELD in the highest estimation by the common people, Thiruvalluvar and his book on ethical subjects, *Thirukkural*, became household names. People liked the simplicity of the text as every couplet readily unravelled its meaning

Like every other poet who craved for a wider audience, Thiruvalluvar—the bard of Universal Man—too wanted his matchless piece of poetic effort to be introduced to the learned poets and critics of the *Sangam* at Madurai

Holding close to his chest the pack of cadjan leaves on which he had written his couplets with a stylus, he left Mayilai for Madurai.

The way was long The road was hard to traverse. To make matters worse, there was a sudden shower of rain.

Thiruvalluvar darted towards a nearby banyan tree for shelter.

A few steps away from the banyan tree stood a tamarind tree. Under it stood Edaikkadar, a renowned Siddha. His eyes didn't fail to notice the man with the cadjan leaves. He became curious. He yelled shouting the rain: "Hey! Bookworm! Come here under this small-leaved tree "

Thiruvalluvar perceived the meaning behind the speaker's words. He rushed towards the tamarind tree and stood beside Edaikkadar.

"What book is that?" asked the Siddha

"*Thirukkural*... I am its author, Thiruvalluvar," replied the poet.

"What is it all about?"

"Well! It's about everything."

"Everything! .. Are you sure?"

"Yes! It's about everything."

Edaikkadar smiled mischievously. Showing him the shepherd's crook which he had in his hand, he asked: "You have something about this?"

"Oh, yes! I have a couplet on that too," said the poet. Turning to the relevant leaf in his manuscript, he showed it to the Siddha.

The Siddha read:

"He, who with firmness-curb the five restrains,  
Is seed for soil of yonder happy plains," (Couplet No. 24)

under the chapter heading 'The Greatness of Ascetics'. He admired the depth of thought and moral excellence "What's the plan of this book?" he asked.

"First an introduction of 4 chapters that treat respectively of GOD, RAIN, VIRTUE and ASCETICS, followed by 34 on VIRTUE, practised by both the

householder and the ascetic; 70 on WEALTH, earned by the state and the citizen; 25 on PLEASURE, enjoyed by unwedded lovers ending in the conjugal life; making in all 133 chapters. Each chapter contains 10 couplets. Thus there are altogether 1330 distichs in my book.”

The rain continued. The Siddha and the poet found ample time to get to know each other.

And when the rain stopped, Edaikkadar said: “Come, let us proceed. I’ll accompany you to Madurai.”

As they headed towards Madurai they met Avvai on the way. She volunteered to go with them. Edaikkadar requested Thiruvalluvar to recite all the 1330 couplets from his book.

Thiruvalluvar very gladly and willingly did.

A reading of the book eased the tediousness of covering the long distance on foot

They reached Madurai and Avvai guided them to the *Sangam*.

Founded by the Pandya kings, the *Sangam* or Academy was an active institution. Legends galore speak of the existence of three Academies—the First Academy, the Middle Academy and the Last Academy—at three different periods. 549 members constituted the First *Sangam* with God Siva at their head. Sage Agastya, God Murugan (Siva’s younger son) and Kuberan, the Lord of Treasure, formed the executive body. Patronised by 89 kings (seven of whom were themselves poets), the First and Chief *Sangam* lasted according to legend for 4400 years. During this period, 4449 poets composed a good number of poems. This *Sangam* was located at Madurai.

The Middle *Sangam* lasted for 3700 years, and 59 were its members. It was patronised by 59 Pandya kings and the meeting place of this Academy was Kavataparam. During this period 3700 persons composed their poems.

Patronised by 49 kings, the Last *Sangam* lasted for 1859 years. It consisted of 49 members. 449 poets presented their poems and Uttara Madurai (North Madurai, the modern city of Madurai) was the meeting place.

The Academy acted as a literary censor of new poetical works and the able members of the Academy put the works to severe criticism before they approved it. The members of the Academy were established poet-critics and so they expected a certain standard in the works of the newcomers too.

The Academy prided itself on its possession of a *Sangappalakai*, a sacred plank of solid diamond presented by God Siva. It floated on the Golden Lotus Pond and allowed none but the flawless scholar or work to occupy it. Not more than a span in size the sacred plank loomed large to accommodate all faultless poets, regardless of their number and contracted itself whenever the unworthy poets tried to sit on it.

As the Age of Thiruvalluvar is still a bone of contention, one can’t be sure to which Sangam he went. Was it the first or the last, for both of them were located

at Madurai? But let us be content knowing that he went to the Academy

When Edaikkadar, Avvai and Thiruvalluvar entered the Academy, its members seated on the sacred plank were busily engaged in composing poems.

The academicians whose ears were tuned to hearing only longer poems simply riffled through the leaves of *Thirukkural* and commented: "Too short to be called poems. Hence it doesn't deserve a hearing in this busy academy."

Dejected by such a blatant rejection, Thiruvalluvar decided to leave. But Edaikkadar and Avvaiyar recommended his case by speaking highly of the brevity of the choicest of moral epigrams "Oh, you ignoramuses! This book I would say is a semi-perforated mustard seed into which the poet has emptied the contents of the seven seas," commended Edaikkadar "I would substitute an atom in the place of the mustard seed," recommended Avvai.

The academicians pretended they were too busy to listen to such balderdash.

"Doesn't matter if you are not ready to listen to the couplets. But give the poet a chance to lay his book on the *Sangappalakai*," requested Avvai.

The learned pandits very reluctantly agreed.

As Thiruvalluvar moved near the plank, it loomed large to accommodate the work. No sooner did the poet lay the book on it than the plank contracted itself to the size of the book leaving the learned academicians afloat in the Golden Lotus Pond.

The scholars reached the bank one after the other. Cleansed of their ego, they bowed in all humility before Thiruvalluvar and listened to his recitation of his work with rapt attention

Thiruvalluvar finished reciting his couplets Everyone in the Academy inspired by the greatest book ever written exhausted the subject of the poet's excellence with every variety of hyperbole

The sacred plank too vanished from everyone's sight. Perhaps it suggested to them that no other book as great as *Thirukkural* could be composed in the years to come.

The Academy too was closed down. The academicians who were all along under the impression that there were none to equal them in all the seven worlds went back to their respective villages to mind their family businesses.

### 30. FOLLOW WHAT YOU PREACH

A cynic who happened to hear people utter laudatory phrases about *Thirukkural* wanted to dip into that immensity of deep thought and noble diction. He borrowed a copy from a friend and carried it home.

"A mine of information and instruction!... An epitome of moral codes!... Ah! This is how people praise this work. Let me see how true are their words,"

so saying he flipped the cadjan leaf manuscript open. 'Forbearance'—one among the 133 chapter-headings arrested his attention. He read the very first of the ten couplets under that heading.

He read it again. . He read it for the third time.

"Lovely!" he cried His lips widened in appreciation of the poet. But the cynic in him asked "Do poets follow what they preach? Or is it merely meant for their readers?" A little later he added, "Let me test the validity of the couplet on its author."

It was dusk when the cynic reached his destination He saw Thiruvalluvar folding a three-yard cloth, which he had just finished weaving.

"Very nice! Beautifully woven," the cynic complimented, taking the cloth in his hands. "How much does it cost?"

"Eight coins," answered the weaver-poet.

"Oh! That would be too much You must be a greedy fellow," so saying the cynic tore the cloth into equal halves and holding one before the face of the weaver asked "Now what is its price?"

"Four coins," replied the poet unperturbed.

The cynic tore the piece further into two equal halves again. Throwing one on the floor, he waved the other in the air and motioned the weaver to quote its price.

"Two coins only," replied the poet showing not the least sign of disturbance on his face.

The cynic tore that piece again and asked: "And now?"

"Only one coin," replied the poet all the time smiling at the mischief-maker.

"Oh, I see! I may buy it some time later," he said and walked away.

On the way home he appreciated the patience of Thiruvalluvar and applauded him for following what he had preached in his monumental work. "Try again," It was the voice of the cynic in him.

He was unable to sleep that night. His mind became the devil's workshop.

At the first cock-crow he dressed up and was out to create mischief. The sun had just dispelled darkness. The weaver-poet was already at his loom.

The cynic stood close by the house of Thiruvalluvar.

"What should I do now to put the weaver's patience to the test?" he asked himself, tapping his brow.

Just at that time he saw Vasuki come out of the house and move towards the nearby well.

The cynic's face brightened up With quick steps he reached her and hugged her. Vasuki yelled as if she had sighted a hooded cobra.

Her cry distracted her husband from the loom. He saw his wife struggling in the clutches of the stranger.

"Hey! What are you doing? Take your hands off her. It is unworthy of any man to touch another man's wife," said the weaver.

The cynic cared a fig about his words and continued to hold Vasuki in his arms, all the time trying to fondle her.

Vasuki cried and tried to wriggle out of the cynic's tight embrace.

The weaver pulled out a staff from his loom, rushed towards the trouble-maker and hit him on his back so hard that he let go of Vasuki.

Vasuki watched her husband beat the stranger black and blue.

The cynic howled in pain. Seconds later he said to the poet: "Why should you write such a couplet when you yourself couldn't follow what you preach?"

"What couplet?" asked the poet.

The thrashed cynic quoted from memory:

"As earth bears up the men who delve into her breast,  
To bear with scornful men is of all virtues the best." (Couplet No. 151)

"You don't seem to have read all of my couplets," remarked the poet.

"True! I've read only one. But isn't one ray enough for one to speak of the sun?"

The poet guffawed. "Then what are the other rays of the sun meant for?"

The cynic looked at the poet inquiringly.

The poet gave another blow on his head with his staff and said: "Now go home and read what I have said in my couplet No. 466."

Back at home, the cynic flipped open *Thirukkural* and searched for the couplet. It read:

" 'Tis ruin if men do an unbecoming thing;  
Fit things to leave undone will equal ruin bring."

### 31. THE HEALING HERB

His parents named him Satthanar. He grew to be a poet. His fame spread far and wide. Poetasters flocked to seek his help. He helped them in all possible ways, ungrudgingly and disinterestedly. But he became furious whenever the poetasters went awry in prosody. He vented his anger not by shouting at the authors, but by jabbing his own head with his stylus.

The poetasters were too many. So were their mistakes. Hence the stylus found enough opportunity to wound the head of Satthanar. The wound festered. No herb had any effect on his wound. Pus formed and oozed from his head. Hence he was nicknamed *Seezh Thalai* Satthanar (*Seezh* = pus, *Thalai* = head)

In spite of the headache due to the pus-formation, he helped the poetasters by reading and correcting and suggesting. This only aggravated the disease. He stopped trying any new medicine, for he was sure that his disease was incurable.

Years rolled by. One day the remedy came in the form of a book.

Seezh Thalai Sattanar had the opportunity of reading *Thirukkural*. His headache was gone at the finish of the first chapter—VIRTUE. The oozing of pus stopped at the end of the second chapter—WEALTH. And by the time the third chapter—PLEASURE—was over, the wound had healed itself.

Sattanar couldn't but wonder at the miraculous healing power of the couplets.

### 32. THE POSTHUMOUS GIFT

Thiruvalluvar felt very lonely after the demise of his wife. He had written his *magnum opus* and had no intention of writing anything more. Hence the only thing that kept him busy and thereby drove his sense of loneliness away was his loom.

When he was not at his loom he found himself down memory lane. Vasuki was still alive in his mind. The day of his marriage had not yet faded from his memory.

Marka Sagayar, Vasuki's father, finding Thiruvalluvar suitable for his daughter, had told him of his desire. Thiruvalluvar very gladly agreed. "But one condition," he said. "I'll marry her only if she can cook this bag of rice."

Vasuki took the basket. It contained no rice but only sand. Yet she didn't hesitate. She was sure she could cook rice out of sand. Tradition has it that a virtuous woman has the power of a goddess. Hence a miracle took place in the kitchen. She cooked the sand and it turned into rice. Vasuki became Thiruvalluvar's wife.

Another day Vasuki served her husband cold rice for breakfast. "Why don't you make it hot?" asked Thiruvalluvar smiling.

"Why not?" said Vasuki and fanned the cold rice with a palmyra frond. A little cloud of vapour emanated from the cold rice indicating that it had become hot.

Thiruvalluvar was in tears as those scenes of his past life came and went before his mind's eye.

Loneliness surrounded him. But soon a friend by the name of Elela Singan came into his life.

Elela Singan was a very rich merchant. He owned ships and traded overseas. True to the words of Thiruvalluvar:

"Friendship from ruin saves, in way of virtue keeps;  
In troublous time, it weeps with him who weeps" (Couplet No. 787)

he proved to be a true friend.

The weaver-poet too had reciprocated his love by blessing the childless merchant to have a babe.

“The last day of my sojourn in this world is very near.. I can envisage it,” said the poet to his friend

Elela Singan was close to tears.

“You have helped me a lot all these years,” said the poet.

“That’s been my pleasure,” said the merchant.

“Will you do me one more favour?”

“By all means. If only the Lord of Death is willing to leave you alive and take me away instead, I’ll be glad to die for you.”

Thiruvalluvar shook his head and said:

“Birds fly away, and leave the nest deserted bare,  
Such is the short-lived friendship soul and body share.” (Couplet No. 338)

While Elela Singan burst into tears, the poet continued: “When I die, please arrange my body to be dragged to the outskirts of our village and let birds and animals feast on it.”

Elela Singan’s eyes opened wide as if he were looking at a strange man. “Are you serious?” he asked.

“Yes! Serious in every syllable... That is my last wish.”

Elela Singan nodded his head

A week or so later, Thiruvalluvar passed away

Elela Singan’s affection for the weaver-poet was so great that he was unwilling to let the body of Thiruvalluvar be torn to shreds. Hence he decided to give the corpse a decent burial. Accordingly he made a chariot, decorated it with flowers of different colours and shapes, placed the corpse in it and had it dragged towards the burial ground.

A very large procession of mourners headed by Elela Singan followed the chariot

But before the chariot could cover half the distance, Thiruvalluvar’s body shook as if life had been infused into it. He sat up and beckoned Elela Singan.

Elela Singan felt a shudder run down his spine. While every other mourner watched with fear-filled eyes, he moved nearer the resurrected poet.

“Why this chariot and all? Have you forgotten my last wish?” asked Thiruvalluvar.

Dumbstruck stood Elela Singan

“Shall I repeat my last wish, in case you have forgotten it?”

“No! I’m sorry. I wanted to give your body a decent burial. And that is why. . But I promise that I will do as you wish.”

Thiruvalluvar died once again and rolled down from the chariot

Elela Singan and others tied the legs of the corpse together with a hay-rope



and dragged it towards the outskirts of the village and left it there.

Carrion birds feasted on Thiruvalluvar's body. The natural colour of the birds paled and soon turned golden in colour.

An expression of awe animated Elela Singan's face. A couplet from *Thirukkural* flashed across his mind:

“Unfailing tree that healing balm distils from every part,  
Is ample wealth that falls to him of large and noble heart.”

(Couplet No 217)

(*More legends on the way*)

P. RAJA

*Note:* The translations of *Thirukkural* couplets, quoted in the legends connected with Thiruvalluvar and his consort Vasuki, are from an excellent rendering by Rev G.U. Pope (*Sacred Kurral*. Asian Educational Services, Delhi. 1980, a reprint of W H Allen & Co., London, 1886)

# AN INSPIRING BOOK

## A REVIEW

**I Remember...** by *Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya*. Published by Dīpak Gupta, Sri Aurobindo Bhavan—Youth Section, 8, Shakespeare Sarani, Calcutta - 400 071. Printed at All India Press, Pondicherry. Available at Vak. Pages 346. Price Rs. 50/-. Part I translated from Bengali by Kalyan Kumar Ghauthury and Part II by Maurice Shukla.

UNDER the picture on the opening page—a bunch of flowers—we read:

“Sweet Mother, I am offering to you the same flowers that you had arranged for me.

Your child,  
Pranab.”

I see here what I may call a sweet submissiveness by someone who holds a great depth in himself.

This book consists of two parts covering many interesting and luminous anecdotes. They are the reminiscences of Pranab known as ‘Dada’ in the Ashram. He relates a number of significant events of his childhood, his academic career and his concentrated disciplined life of physical culture. One is amazed to see what abundance of love the Divine Mother has poured on him. One feels a double movement, the Soul’s aspiration and the Divine’s Grace acting in such a way that one can never say which precedes which. We know from Sri Aurobindo: “He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite.” In the Gita Sri Krishna says to his beloved disciple Arjuna: “For the deliverance of the Good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enthroning of the Right, the Dharma, I am born from age to age.” There are two aspects of the Divine birth; one is descent, the birth of God in humanity, the Godhead manifesting itself in human form and nature, the eternal Avatar—the other is an ascent, the birth of man into the Godhead, man rising into the divine nature.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo came to the earth as the Avatars of the Supramental manifestation. When Avatars descend from age to age they bring with them their chosen instruments to fulfil the Supreme Mission on the earth. “Pilgrim souls of the new race”. thus these master-seekers of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother may be called. For example, we may mention Dyuman, “the luminous one”, Pavitra “the pure”, Pranab “the Mother’s Shadow.” Are they not brave heroes, precursors of the Supramental race, lifting humanity from its slumber-world?

Many questions cropped up in Pranab-da’s mind just after his arrival in the Ashram and he asked the Mother for the answers. This is the early period of his

Ashram life Pujalalji used to sit by, quietly listening to their discussions. Once he suggested to Pranab-da to note down the Mother's answers they might be useful for the future humanity. So Pranab-da asked the Mother one day, "Mother, should I write down all that you tell me?" He reports.

"Mother countered 'Why do you wish to write them down?'"

I said: 'There are valuable words. What if I forget them later?'

Mother said. 'All that I tell you, I say to your inner being. Your soul can never forget them. You'll remember them whenever they're needed.' "

So shall we say that Pranab-da has justified the title of his book?

The photograph 'Pranab with Mother'—5.8.51—shows a warm and fine feeling coming out. Pranab-da begins to feel the intense delight of existing only for the Lord, by the Lord, in the Lord.

On page 39, in the course of his conversation with the Mother, the writer has narrated that when he was a child an astrologer had told him that he would live till the age of 25. In the year 1947 he was 25. Hearing this, the Mother became serious and went to Sri Aurobindo and informed him about it. Is this not a fact showing how much love and care the Mother, the Supramental Avatar, bestowed on Pranab-da? So the author has remarked.

"For Mother was not only divine but also so very human. Even while being the Divine Mother, she used to be so concerned about us like any human mother.. She could be human because she was divine." Despite the shortcomings of her children her profound love and compassion welled up. These stories are precisely meant by Pranab-da to show the human aspect of the Supramental Avatars.

The Mother very often used to tell the events of her life to the author. The author's lucid exposition in the form of anecdotes is very valuable. These talks of the Mother are a repository of profound information which was untapped before by her disciples.

On pages 19-20 of the book Pranab-da recounts.

"I heard Mother once say that in one of her previous lives she had been the princess of a small kingdom somewhere in the Himalayas. She was very beautiful but she died very young.

"The king announced 'Her body mustn't be destroyed, she should be beautifully dressed and her body kept in a cave filled with ice.' This was done.

"Mother told me that once she saw in a vision that the princess' body was still lying in that faraway cave."

Pranab-da writes: "... Mother took a lot of trouble to learn all kinds of fine arts—Music, painting, literature, poetry, dance, recitation, flower-arrangement etc. She acquired a mastery over everything concerning beauty and joy in order to find these qualities in life."

The author has realised that bodily life is precious for the chance given us of questing for God through birth after birth and turning earth in all conditions into

a happy home.

Under the supervision of the Mother Pranab-da could learn many skills including photography "Mother said 'Photography is an art if the photographer is an artist.' "

One will be amazed and thrilled at how the Supramental Avatar came down to the physical level and took motherly care of Pranab-da.

The author's words run " . one evening Mother sent me a chit through Amrita-da, 'Pranab, I have a strange feeling that there's some danger hovering over you Be alert.' "

The sweet and high-themed music of the Mother held the heart of Pranab-da spellbound. He has reported its charm

"On this topic Mother said. 'Let me tell you of an incident. While travelling in France I once stayed at a hotel in a town. I found a piano there. As nobody was around and I don't know what came into me but I began to play the piano So completely absorbed I was that I lost all awareness of my surroundings. Quite some time later when I looked up I saw that silently a crowd had gathered around me and was raptly listening to my playing ' "

The variety of topics in this book is indeed attractive It encompasses spiritual, yogic, philosophical, literary matters and evinces the stamp of an interpretative thinker

When Pranab-da was five years old and living in his Berhampore home, he miraculously escaped from drowning in a full-brimmed tank. Much later when he settled in the Ashram, his physical mother told him one day "When you were very young and were drowning, you had called out 'MA' aloud, it was not me that you were calling The 'MA' you were calling was Mother, it was this Mother who saved you and you have found refuge in her "

Pranab-da was a wonderful sportsman from his young age At Berhampore in the year 1942 a swimming competition was started, organised by the swimming club And swimming practice for the competition was on He and his club youngsters could swim and cross the river to the other shore even against a strong current. He remembers: "One day we were swimming across the river when we heard some people on a boat remark, 'See how mad they are for booze Even a river in spate won't stop them' (There was a country liquor shop just opposite the river ghat. A ghat is a bathing place constructed on the bank of a river or lake )"

The seed began to sprout when Pranab-da formed his Berhampore club with the ideal to mould its members into true sons of the country He was convinced that " . only a straightforward, dutiful, skilled and selfless people could build a true society and country." Keeping that ideal in their minds, the club members tried their best to achieve the goal of their aspiration

The seed took firm root and became stable and secure when Pranab-da came to the Ashram for good and took up the responsibility of Physical

Education. He was one of the attendants of the Mother who dedicated their lives to serving the Divine faithfully till her passing.

It was in the year 1950 that Pranab-da put innumerable questions to the Mother. All the questions are published in book-form as *The Mother on Education*

In one of his memories of childhood he describes how he was called Dada. The story is headed "How he was destined to be called Dada"

On page 56, the reader will find a small incident in which a street-urchin who fought with other street-boys to pick up from the bottom of a scavenger's cart a somewhat large piece of papaya skin with some pulp sticking to it. He could succeed in getting it but instead of licking it himself he went to his baby sister who was sleeping in a corner, woke her up and gently fed her the lumps of pulp with a deep feeling of love. At that time what a glow must have filled her eyes! Pranab-da was moved by this small incident and has revealed his inner experience: "What a touching sight! In the affection and love of that street-urchin and from his generosity I received a touch of God. In this small insignificant incident I saw God revealing Himself—Truth, Goodness, Beauty—true beauty and true goodness. To me it was a fascinating experience."

On pages 59-62 and 67—the readers will find interesting episodes of Pranab-da's going on outings with Ashram boys and girls by motorbike and visiting different historical places of the South and taking fascinating photographs of the temples. The reader will be happy to see these beautiful pictures

Pages 165 to 209 cover a plethora of stories of Pranab-da's childhood, school education and college days. His urge for physical education was deep-rooted when he passed out from the Anandamayi School and joined the Ballygunj Jagat Bandhu Institution. A famous boxing-and-athletics teacher was there. His name was Jagatkant Sheel. He formed the B.A.B.F. (Bengal Amateur Boxing Federation). Pranab-da, in the course of his vigorous earnest practice of boxing, came to know Biren-da who was one of the best students of Jagat Babu at that time and was well-known in the boxing circles of Calcutta. One day Birendra Chandra came to teach boxing in that school. Seeing Pranab-da's capacity and interest he called him to join in his club at Kankulia road. On page 206, Pranab-da writes: "Besides learning boxing in Biren-da's club, I also learnt to do free-hand exercises, weight-training, wrestling, asanas, folk dances, volleyball, drills, parades, etc. Biren-da used to always encourage me a lot and taught me everything with a lot of care. Soon I became his favourite student."

At that time Pranab-da was not aware that the Mother's force and unseen hand were working behind him to make him an instrument of her future work. But he was conscious and determined. He writes: "At the age of 14-15 I resolved that the ordinary life was not for me and that I would consecrate my life for some greater purpose."

He passed his Matriculation in 1939 and joined the Arts Department of the

Berhampore College. It was in 1940 Besides his college study he started a Samiti (club) for a mini Gymnasium. He called it "*Vivekananda Vyayam Samiti*".

Whatever capacity and faculty Pranab-da had for teaching the young boys of the club, he used for them and tried to prepare them for success in the different walks of their lives

After his B A. Examination was over he came to Pondicherry and settled permanently in the Ashram in 1945. He took up the full responsibility during 1945-46 in the work of Physical Education.

From 1954 the Mother permitted him to take photographs of her and the Ashram She was very generous to Pranab-da She arranged to buy for him an expensive camera, a Zeiss Super Ikonta Pranab-da writes: "Those photos and films have filled up three video cassettes. *Four Chapters of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Four Aspects of the Mother, Flowers of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and The Mother: Glimpses of Her Life.*"

The Mother always saw things in a broad perspective. In her own life she had the courage to break conventional rules. On page 51, we will find one example. Pranab-da wrote in a very interesting way in connection with Ravindraji: "Once Mother felt like cooking something with eggs for me... One day Ravindra happened to be standing near her. While cooking Mother had to go to the next room for something so she hurriedly passed on the eggs she was holding to Ravindra saying: 'Here, hold this for me for a while. I am coming.' Now you may know that Ravindra belongs to a family where far from eating fish, meat or egg, no one even touched these things... He did not know how to hold an egg and so as he held the egg it broke and his whole hand was full of yolk. Stoically, Ravindra stood there with the crushed egg in his hand ." So the Mother broke the conventional morality of Ravindraji.

One can read on page after page of this book about Pranab-da's elaborate and impeccable work of Physical Education: for instance, arrangement of film shows and a kitchen for the children named "Corner House". How much he has put his heart and soul into it, what meticulous care and sense of beauty and perfection he has contributed to the department! His experience is extremely moving—a sense comes to us of being lifted up into a spiritual ambience of ineffable beauty and radiance The readers will unmistakably feel that Pranab-da is moving under conscious guidance from the Mother

He writes: "... The Mother once told me 'The Organisation you are going to build up will be so nice that people from everywhere will come to see it.' And her prediction has come true! People who have seen and travelled much tell us that they have not seen such an organisation anywhere in India and few of its kind exist abroad." Pranab-da has kept up his high ideal The ideal of our Physical Education is to help the process of our physical transformation

On page 220, one will read of Pranab-da's exemplary service to the Mother at the time of Sri Aurobindo's passing on 5th December, 1950. The Mother

allotted the arrangements for building the Samadhī for Sri Aurobindo to Udar. Then she examined the photographs taken by Venkatesh, Vidyavrata and Chimanbhai. Then she went to her own room to rest. Pranab-da remained beside her. The Mother's words run. "Now you must stand by my side." These words were followed by him in full. He writes:

"Her words 'Now you must stand by my side' were ringing within me and I wanted my obedience to be total. I did not have any other special thoughts. Very simply, I remained by her side day and night. When she went in for her bath, I too would rush home during that interval to finish mine and get back to her room to wait for her to come out.

"In the meantime, the work of constructing the Samadhī on Mother's instructions was completed. She had asked two chambers to be built, one above the other. It was decided to place Sri Aurobindo's body in the Samadhī in the evening of December 9th. This was done. From 5th December when Sri Aurobindo left his body until 9th December when he was put into the Samadhī, I did not leave Mother even for a minute. Mother told me a few days later: 'You did the right thing. If you hadn't stayed on by my side, I would have left my body'."

Indeed Pranab-da may be called the Mother's Shadow. He was a divine instrument in taking care of the Mother's physical body. He was day and night with her, till she passed away on 17th November 1973. He observed strictly what she had wished him to do after her passing.

The readers will be wonder-struck to read the compliments given to the author by the Mother. On page 335, under the date 22.6.56 we find:

"My beloved child,

You are for me the living and perfectly representative symbol of the physical life ready for the transformation and wanting that transformation consciously. In all the plenitude of the Supreme Presence I say to you: 'I love you'."

Mother

On the next three pages we see:

"16.5.57.

To thee whom my love selected when the time had come to start my work on the most material level.

I did not see in thee the man, but the human being capable of supramentalisation, the aspiration for physical perfection, the effort towards total transformation, the will to divinise the body and a natural and spontaneous capacity to do so, a physical harmony already partly realised and a growing possibility of expressing materially the psychic consciousness. With the certitude of a final Victory."

"To that one of my children who has entirely dedicated himself to the realisation of the miracle which for the ordinary eye seems an impossibility.

Your psychic is wonderful in its loving consecration.

Your physical is most attentive and careful in its effort towards unselfishness.

Your vital submits and obeys, but unfortunately, could not do it through love, and that is why, until now, it is not happy and feels no joy, in spite of the great psychic achievement and the bliss it procures.

3.6.53.”

Thus love came in a blaze of beauty to Pranab-da.

As we go through the various episodes we find that this path of yoga is after all not too severe as one does not give up anything one is familiar with and does not have to live in a cave, a forest or the Himalayas or perform severe physical austerities. The Mother's saviour love is always there to guide and help

NILIMA DAS



# TOWARDS THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

## A REVIEW

*Footnotes to the Future: V. Madhusudan Reddy*, Price Rs. 130.00

*Towards a Global Future: V. Madhusudan Reddy*, Price Rs 50.00

Both the books published by Institute of Human Study, Aurodarshan Trust, Hyderabad, in January 1993.

A SPIRITUAL man is always driven by the light of the spirit and can to some extent make his life and external actions a part of its working. He may have great experiences, of the oneness in all and all in the One, of the silent Brahman, the Witness Purusha, the Cosmic Self, the deep experience of the omnipresent Reality beneath this entire creation, or of the Being of Bliss as its originator; he could perhaps live and move too in that consciousness. Yet his external nature, though it would get somewhat modified by the reflected light, may not undergo any basic change. Can or should this be taken as the intrinsic and untransformable aspect of existence itself? If yes, then there is really no issue and traditional disciplines are adequate for man's spiritual fulfilment in one way or another, though not here on earth but elsewhere in some luminous and distant empyrean. Of course, the other extreme is that of the materialist with his denial of the spirit itself, dismissing all such experiences either as moonshine or a product of matter from which have come life and mind or else, most charitably, mystagogical in nature possessing no real-life values. To the deeper urges of man, to his soul which is an enduring entity in him, both, however, remain unsatisfactory and have to be transcended in an organic synthesis if one is thesis and the other antithesis. The problem faced by man cannot in any genuine way be solved by science or religion alone, not even by the spiritual man who, even if he recognises the role of both, does not grasp the character of the Truth in this inconscient mode of functioning. Even if he endeavours with all his sincerity, he cannot effectively "bring about an operative change in earth-existence", although that could be our high expectation of him. It is here that Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy with its sweep of integralism comes in quite decisively to assert the essentiality of God's own presence in a dynamic manner in the world-process, in the scheme of evolution of consciousness rising to that God-consciousness itself in order to make it functional in it. Prof. V. Madhusudan Reddy's two books under review attempt to deal with these considerations in some rapid manner adopting a mystical-philosophical approach in a brief framework

*Towards a Global Future* offers an agenda for the approaching Third Millennium and is the first in a series of the curriculum chartered by the author in the light of Sri Aurobindo's ideal of spiritualised life. It elaborates, after

presenting a prefatory vision of the University of Tomorrow, the disciplines of Philosophy, Literature, Fine Arts, Economics, Polity, Religion, Science, Spirituality, and Education for the new race. Thus the object of the proposed educational system will be to nourish and promote an integrated and harmonious growth of a child in several respects. The education of the mind, for instance, will not only “lay emphasis on the development of analytical faculties of reasoning, inquiry, criticism and discrimination” but also “concentrate on championing the Promethean powers of contemplation, imagination and aesthesis”. Philosophy will transcend its intellectual formulations and expositions, even its approach as witnessed in the classical Indian Darshana-systems though based on some spiritual experiences, and will recognise that all “perceived truths are the many manifestations or revealed perceptions and expressions of an absolute Truth, the unmanifest Supreme”, without giving rise to acrimonious debates and conflicts. Rightly, the author goes even a step farther, *à la* Sri Aurobindo, to state that sometimes “even the denial of truth is necessary to arrive at a greater or more comprehensive and perfect truth”. God is the ultimate reward of earnest scepticism and denial as well. In the sequel we have essentially the luminous perspective of metaphilosophy itself. Similar rewards await the future man, rather the student of the University of the Future, the University of Tomorrow, in other disciplines which are, after all, different instruments of the soul for the purposes of a creative and joyous manifestation. In that sense we may only partly agree with the author that “Art is perfected Nature”. There is certainly something in Herbert Read’s human being drifting “through time like an iceberg, only partly floating above the level of consciousness”, because he can try and realise some of the dimensions and characteristics of his submerged being. In fact, it may almost look as if in one’s life, as well as art, there is no need for God if there is the power to create “that something of the eternal” which the Read-halo symbolises with the radiance and vibration of the colours. Indeed they do lie even beyond our perfected Nature, being something of the eternal.

The purport of the new curriculum can be well-summarised in the author’s own lucid statement, as follows: “It is spirituality that takes with it all our aims and activities and gives them a more intimate significance, a diviner sense. Within the parameters of the phenomenal, philosophy is a dispassionate rational enquiry into the first truths of our existence, but from a deeper standpoint it discovers the way of our growth into our divine nature. Whereas science gives us the knowledge of the physical universe and points to the manifold manner in which the Spirit works and manifests itself. A perfect society should take into cognisance the findings of both physical and psychical sciences in the organisation of life. In a spiritual culture Arts too should undergo the necessary transformation; their aim should be a revelation of higher and greater verities concealed in man and Nature. In a civilisation of consciousness, all social sciences should not limit themselves to the arrangement by which men can live

together and enjoy and satisfy their mundane desires, but seek to provide a structure for the growth of the individual into his spiritual self, to help him to progressively embody the higher law of being and to lead the collectivity towards loving unity, peace and harmony ” That is perfect in its cherished essentiality. But there is a new metaphor called consumerism invading India itself, where the chances to initiate such a new spiritual programme are most favourable. The global man has arrived in our cities and the petrochemical winds are blowing too loud and swift Will not the psyche of such a product reject what it would call modern anachronism? It will—because it is an entrenched attitude. However, the winds do change But more important than that is the sustainability of the new programme with its internal dynamism. Besides, if it is not quibbling, we have to ask ourselves whether we are justified in formulating a programme for the future man who, by the implied definition, is superior to us. What is its validity for him and to what extent will he, or should he, respect it? But if this man is to emerge out of us, then the bootstrap hypothesis must operate and we must do our best to offer him what we can

Prof. Reddy's *Footnotes to the Future* quite often touches the heights of his two *Vedic Epiphanies* and has been very fittingly dedicated to “Maharishi” Dyuman. The name “Dyuman” was given by Sri Aurobindo himself, meaning “The Luminous One”, about which the Mother had told him several years later, in the sixties, that he was still true to it The Prologue, a text reproduced from page 83, sets the tone for the *Footnotes*. “... we have arrived at a point in our great quest... where the known announces its origins in the Unknown. .” Such a rendezvous with eternal Time at once brings to our grasp the physical reality in which we live as only one note of a rich orchestral music, ontologically just an expression of that multitonal richness. If at one end the author makes an excursion into the Infinite, at the other he delves into Quantum Physics; there are brief but penetrating comments on topics such as illumined ignorance, values in the scale of things, new future dawning on us, collapse of a civilisation when the spiritual basis is knocked out, the work of the Avatar towards the establishment of a new world-order, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* as the Supramental-in-Action, the Golden Purusha in whom the earth aspires for the divine change, the Yoga of Rishi Agastya guided by the Maruts and by Indra on the path of affirmation towards the supreme Truth-Consciousness, are all matters esoteric and have been significantly dealt with; Dyumanbhai's ‘Gloria’, the past lives of Nolini-da, Sri Aurobindo's relics radiating his very presence, the Mother's work of transformation in the body-cells, which is “the flaming labour of a million suns”, certainly bring occult considerations into discussion and make the *Footnotes* valuable by their inclusion. Although this is basically a compilation of the author's diverse reflections and of occasional writings and addresses, and the topics are covered in varying lengths with varying styles, there is yet a unifying theme of a manifesting immanence, of consciousness in the triple role of—to

borrow the phrase of the blurb—the ideatrix, the creatrix, and the matrix of all existence.

Thus the author is Upanishadically right in saying that it is the power of concentration, the Tapas of Consciousness-Force on Matter, that has given rise to our material world: “Beyond Time and Space, in the bosom of the Infinite, where Time and Space vanish into something that unites them and also transcends them, there is heard the endless boom in the depths of being,—‘the great voice crying for ever’ on the waters of existence ‘Tapas, Tapas, Tapas’.” Similarly, it is by Tapas that there is manifestation, first in the Brahman and then in the process of Time: “In the eternality of the Unmanifest, forms are numberless silent possibilities, like subtle flower-essences, unheard melodies, nameless verities. Nourished by its creative dynamics, they blossom into becomings, mature into melodies and sprout into manifest realities.” Certainly the sense is not of the forms as silent possibilities held back in the Unmanifest—they issue out from the Unmanifest creatively; there is no prenatal existence of any kind for them at all. In this context we may also point out a statement of doubtful validity in its absolute contents regarding the subsistence of Eternity on Time: “Time and Eternity exist and coexist in and by each other.” Time exists in Eternity and Eternity too does exist in Time; also Time exists by Eternity,—but not the other way round. However, the following proposition of the author is perfectly valid and let us accept it: “The supreme future, the widest vehicle and nexus of Truth and the Right is now, it is right on the frontiers of our consciousness seeking inroads into our being and our very existence. Let us welcome the Shining Guest. Let us live the future now.”

In conclusion, let us also welcome the author’s two books which have been very elegantly brought out, notwithstanding a few minor proof-reading lapses. Certainly, the “future is a power that transmutes the present, and transforms it integrally”. Prof. Reddy has very well asserted the Aurobindonian future and we should be thankful to him for it.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

## *Students' Section*

### THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Thirtieth Annual Conference

8 August 1993

#### HOW TO TURN ONE'S DIFFICULTIES INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS?

Speech by Meera Guthi

EVERYONE has difficulties; no one is exempted from them. It is an indisputable working of the world and none can escape it. This steady hammer in the hand of God never fails to strike all, from the layman to the President, from the beggar to the tycoon and from the robber to the saint.

What happens when one is confronted with a difficulty in life? Either one grumbles, or blames it on others. Some turn pessimistic, some try to forget it, others try to run away from it; a few face it with courage and resolution to overcome it for the sake of proving their strength. But seldom do we see anyone who attempts to turn it into an opportunity for progress.

It is no use grumbling at the difficulty or blaming it on others. For it is not going to help the situation. Grumbling will not give the solution. Blaming it on others is trying to put the burden on someone else's shoulders, but how can this be done? If one steps back and examines carefully, critically, under the light of objectivity one will find that the origin of the difficulty lies within oneself. As Sri Aurobindo says: "No misfortune can come, the adverse forces cannot touch or be victorious unless there is some defect in oneself, some impurity, weakness or, at the very least, ignorance. One should then seek out this weakness in oneself and correct it"<sup>1</sup>

By turning pessimistic one invites more difficulties instead of solving them. For, if one looks at the world through pessimistic eyes one will find only misery, suffering and sorrow and thus enhance one's own difficulties by saying, "This world is full of misery. I can never solve my problems or overcome my difficulties." The difficulties are there precisely because one has to overcome them. There is some defect in one's nature, of which one is not aware and which one should remove. Such defects manifest themselves as difficulties so that one can be aware of them and try to rectify them. Each person has his difficulties according to his capacities. As the Mother says, "For each one has the life that suits him for his total development, and each one has the difficulties that suit him

<sup>1</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed, Vol 24), p 1639

best for his total realisation.... All the difficulties are there exactly in order that you might learn to transform them into the truth that they hide”<sup>1</sup>

Those who try to forget or run away from difficulties are unwise, for none can escape this hammer of God; it is a decree, a fiat inescapable and unforgettable. Sri Aurobindo says, “That is the inconvenience of going away from a difficulty,—it runs after one,—or rather one carries it with oneself, for the difficulty is truly inside, not outside. Outside circumstances only give it the occasion to manifest itself and so long as the inner difficulty is not conquered, the circumstances will always crop up one way or another.”<sup>2</sup> The difficulties goad you and push you to transform yourself. One can’t run away from them, for they will chase you like a shadow persistently until you have conquered them.

Those who try to overcome a difficulty by taking it up as a challenge to prove their strength, don’t make a real conscious effort to turn it into an opportunity for progress, they merely conquer it, they don’t progress by it.

If all these attitudes with which man confronts his difficulties yield no satisfactory result and if one should face them by turning them into opportunities for progress, how does one do it?

As soon as one is confronted with a problem in life, instead of getting upset, one should calm down, step back and watch oneself objectively. Ask yourself, “Why is it that I am facing such a difficulty? What is wrong in my nature? What should I do to rectify it?” If one is calm on such occasions and has faith, then one will be able to find the solution. The one important thing is faith. With faith in the Grace there is nothing one can’t achieve. Sri Aurobindo gives us this certitude when he says, “... You must also keep yourself open to receive the help towards that, for the help will always be coming from the Mother for the change of the nature.”

The Mother too emphasizes the Grace when she says, “. . . You have made a mistake, you are in a great difficulty; then if you have faith, if you have trust in the Divine Grace, if you really rely on It, you will suddenly realise that it is a lesson, that it comes to teach you to find within yourself what has to be changed and you will change it. And so from a difficulty you will have made a great progress, taken a considerable leap forward. This, indeed, happens all the time. Only, you must be truly sincere, that is, rely on the Grace and let it work in you—not like this: one part of you asking to be helped and another resisting as much as it can, because it doesn’t want to change . . .”

As in school we have lessons to learn, so in life, which is virtually a school, the difficulties are lessons, which should be learnt well and thoroughly

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin of Physical Education*, August 1957, pp 119-20

<sup>2</sup> *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 24), p 1697