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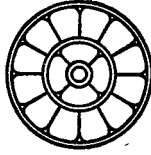
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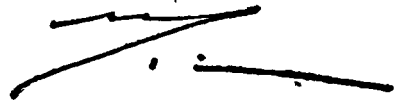


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXV

No. 2

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

You belong to this stage in spirituality that needs to reject matter and wants to escape from it. The spirituality of tomorrow will take up matter and transform it.

30-7-1965

Sexual relations belong to the past, when man was closer to the animal than to the Divine. All depends on what you expect from life, but if you sincerely want to do the Yoga, you must abstain from all sexual activities.

23-3-1968

Do not do your own will, but the Divine's will.
Do not either do other people's will, for you will be torn apart.

1972

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM AS AN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH IN YOGA

- Project:* The Ashram has a Yogic Project of Research. *Viz.*, the Divinisation of human nature.
- Operation:* The mode of operation of this project is a change of consciousness brought about by the descent of a New Force and the advent of a new race.
- Methods:* The methods have been very fully described in various writings of Sri Aurobindo.
- Assessment:* The criterion for assessment of the progress of the participants in the research work is as follows:

The more a person is quiet in front of all occurrences, equal in all circumstances, and keeps a perfect mastery of himself and remains peaceful in the presence of whatever happens, the more he has progressed towards the goal.

1967

THE MOTHER

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of January, 1973)

(This new series of answers by the Mother to questions put by the children of the Ashram appeared for the first time in the Bulletin of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat incomplete form. We now give, in a new English translation, the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother herself at the time of its first publication in French in February 1968.)

AUGUST 1, 1956

Sweet Mother, has the worship offered to the goddess Durga and Kali any spiritual value ?

THAT depends on who offers the worship.

It is not that which is of importance for the spiritual value. It is for the integrality and the complete truth of the Yoga that it is important not to limit one's aspiration to one form or another. But from the spiritual point of view, whatever may be the object of worship, if the movement is perfectly sincere, if the self-giving is integral and absolute, the spiritual result can be the same; for, whatever be the object you take, through it (sometimes in spite of it, despite it) you always reach the supreme Reality, in the measure and proportion of the sincerity of your consecration.

That is why it is always said that, no matter what aspect of the Divine you adore or even who the guide you choose, if you are perfect in your self-giving and absolutely sincere, you are *sure* to attain the spiritual goal.

But where the result is no longer the same is when you want to realise the integral yoga. Then you must not limit yourself in any way, even in the path of your consecration.... Only, these are two very different things.

Spiritual realisation — as it was formerly understood, as it is still commonly understood — is union with the Supreme in some way or other, either within you or through some form or other; it is the fusion of your being in the Supreme, in the Absolute, almost the disappearance of your individuality in this fusion.¹ And that depends

¹ Later a disciple asked the Mother: "Why did you say 'almost'? Isn't the disappearance complete?" To this the Mother answered: "Somewhere, I believe it is in *The Yoga of Self-Perfection*, regarding those who wish to merge in the Supreme, Sri Aurobindo says or rather hints that this *cannot* be done, for the Supreme wants it otherwise. But Sri Aurobindo says it without saying it, it is just an allusion in passing. The idea is that beyond Being and Non-Being, the total Summit includes necessarily a form (what may be called an *essential* form) of the individuality, which no longer contradicts or even is distinct from the One, but is included in the One without any separation. But the words at our disposal mean nothing! And one is reduced to giving a childish explanation. That is why I said 'almost'."

absolutely on the sincerity and the integrality of your self-giving, more than on the choice you make of that to which you want to give yourself. For...the very sincerity of your aspiration will make you cross all limitations and find the Supreme, for you carry Him in yourself.

Whether you seek Him outside, whether you seek Him within, whether you seek Him in a form or without form, if your aspiration is sufficiently sincere and your resolution sufficiently sincere, you are sure to reach the goal.

But if you want to make the complementary movement of which Sri Aurobindo speaks, that is to say, return to the outer consciousness and world after having realised this union in yourself, and transform this outer consciousness and world, then in this case you cannot limit yourself in any way, for otherwise you will not be able to accomplish your work.

Essentially, you must be able to find this oneness with the Divine under all forms, all aspects, in every way that has been used to attain Him. And you must go beyond that and find a new way.

So, the first point to clear up in your thought (and it is one of capital importance): you must not confuse the integral yoga with other spiritual realisations, which may be very high but cover a very limited field, for theirs is a movement only in depth.

You may pierce a hole with your aspiration and make a movement in depth through anything whatever. All depends on the intensity and sincerity of your aspiration (on the sincerity, that is to say, on how far your self-giving is complete, integral, absolute). But that does not depend upon the form you have chosen: necessarily you will be obliged to pass through to go and find what is behind.

But if you want to transform your nature and your being, and if you want to participate in the creation of a new world, then this aspiration, this sharp and linear point does not suffice any longer. One must englobe everything and contain everything in one's consciousness.

Naturally, that is much more difficult.

Mother, what is this "divine element in human nature" which always demands symbols for the completeness of its spiritual satisfaction?

What?

Which demands a form, the translation into a form.

Oh! what I have just read to you today?¹

¹ "In any cult the symbol, the significant rite or expressive figure is not only a moving and enriching aesthetic element, but a physical means by which the human being begins to make outwardly definite the emotion and aspiration of his heart, to confirm it and to dynamise it. For if without a spiritual aspiration worship is meaningless and vain, yet the aspiration also without the act and the form is a disembodied and, for life, an incompletely effective power. It is unhappily the fate of all forms in human life to become

It is precisely that part of the being which is not satisfied with abstractions and with escaping from life and evading it and leaving it as it is. It is that part of the being which wants to be integral, wants to be integrally transformed or at any rate to participate integrally in the inner adoration.

There is in every normal being the necessity, the need — an absolute need to translate into a physical form what it feels and wants internally. I consider those who always want to evade life in order to have self-realisation as abnormal and incomplete. And essentially, these are generally weak natures. But those who have the strength, the force and a kind of healthy equilibrium in themselves, feel an absolute need to realise materially their spiritual realisation; they are not satisfied with going away into the clouds or into worlds where forms no longer exist. They want their physical consciousness and even their body to participate in their inner experience.

Now, it may be said that the need to adopt or follow or participate in a religion as it is found ready-made, arises rather from the "herd instinct" in human beings. The real thing would be for everyone to find that form of adoration or cult which is his own and expresses spontaneously and individually his own special relation with the Divine; that would be the ideal condition.

To adopt a religion because one is born in that religion or because the people one loves and trusts practise that religion or because when one goes to a particular place where others pray and worship, one feels helped in one's own prayer and worship, is not a sign of a very strong nature; I should say it is rather the sign of a weakness or in any case of a lack of originality.

But to want to translate in the forms of one's physical life the inner aspiration and adoration is quite legitimate, and it is much more sincere than what is done by the man who splits himself into two, lives a physical life quite mechanically and ordinarily and, when he can do it, when he has the time or when it suits him, withdraws within himself, escapes from physical life and the physical consciousness and goes to the far-off heights to find his spiritual joys.

He who tries to make his material life the expression of his highest aspiration is certainly more noble, more upright and sincere than the one who splits himself into

crystalised, purely formal and therefore effete, and although form and cult preserve always their power for the man who can still enter into their meaning, the majority come to use the ceremony as a mechanical rite and the symbol as a lifeless sign and because that kills the soul of religion, cult and form have in the end to be changed or thrown aside altogether. There are those even to whom all cult and form are for this reason suspect and offensive; but few can dispense with the support of outward symbols and even a certain divine element in human nature demands them always for the completeness of its spiritual satisfaction. Always the symbol is legitimate in so far as it is true, sincere, beautiful and delightful, and even one may say that a spiritual consciousness without any aesthetic or emotional content is not entirely or at any rate not integrally spiritual. In the spiritual life the basis of the act is a spiritual consciousness perennial and renovating, moved to express itself always in new forms or able to renew the truth of a form always by the flow of the spirit, and to so express itself and make every action a living symbol of some truth of the soul is the very nature of its creative vision and impulse. It is so that the spiritual seeker must deal with life and transmute its form and glorify it in its essence."

(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 185)

two saying that the outer life is of no importance and will never change and must be accepted as it is, and that, in fact, only the inner attitude counts.

(*Silence*)

My file of questions is increasing! And I must say they are not all equally interesting; but still, I could perhaps take one or two of them for the satisfaction of those who have asked them.

First, some have formed the habit of sending me questions without signing them, for fear that I may reveal the identity of the one who has put the question! I shall never reveal it, you may rest assured; and even if I make a displeasing remark, nobody will know for whom it is meant! (*laughter*).

There is another thing. Some of you don't take the trouble of asking your questions in French. As I did not warn you openly that I shall reply only to questions in French, I have translated one or two of them for the moment; but in future, if you want me to consider your questions, they must be expressed in French. Even if there are many mistakes it does not matter, I shall correct them!

Here is one of those put in English, the answer to which is very short. I am asked:

What is the fundamental virtue to cultivate in order to prepare for the spiritual life?

I have said this many times, but this is an opportunity to repeat it: it is sincerity.

A sincerity which must become total and absolute, for sincerity *alone* is your protection on the spiritual path. If you are not sincere, the very next step you are sure to fall and break your head. All kinds of forces, wills, influences, entities are there, on the look-out for the least little rift in that sincerity and they immediately rush in through that rift and begin to throw you into confusion.

Consequently, before doing anything, beginning anything, trying anything, be sure *first of all* that you are not only as sincere as you can be, but have the intention of becoming still more so.

For that is your only protection.

Can this effort to cultivate this initial virtue be a collective one?

Certainly it can. And it was this that used to be attempted long ago in the schools of initiation. Even now, in more or less secret societies or very small groups, the collectivity seeks to be sufficiently united and make a collective effort sufficiently complete for the result to be a group result instead of an individual one.

But naturally, that complicates the problem terribly.... Each time they meet, they try to create a collective entity; but for a virtue to be collectively realised, a formidable effort is required. However, it is not impossible.

(Silence)

There is another question which is a little more subtle, but it seems to me it has quite a special interest.... Somebody asks what is the true intensity for wanting the Divine, in the will to unite with the Divine. And then this person says that he has found within him two different modes of aspiration, specially in the intensity of aspiration for the Divine: in one of these movements there is a sort of anguish, like a poignant pain; in the other, there is an anxiety, but at the same time a great joy.

This observation is quite correct.

And the question is this:

"When do we feel the intensity mixed with anguish, and when the intensity containing joy?"

I don't know if several or many of you have a similar experience, but it is very real, this experience, very spontaneous. And the answer is very simple.

As soon as the presence of the psychic consciousness is united with the aspiration, the intensity takes on quite a different character as if it is filled with the very essence of an inexpressible joy. This joy is something contained in all the rest. Whatever may be the outer form of the aspiration, whatever difficulties and obstacles it meets, this joy is there as though it filled up everything, and it carries you through despite everything.

That is the sure sign of the psychic presence. That is to say, you have established a contact with your psychic consciousness, a more or less complete, more or less constant contact, but at that moment it is the psychic being, the psychic consciousness which fills your aspiration, gives it its true contents. And that's what is translated into joy.

When that is not there, the aspiration may come from different parts of the being; it may come mainly from the mind or mainly from the vital or even from the physical, or it may come from all three together — it may come from all kinds of combinations. But generally, for the intensity to be there, the vital must be present. It is the vital which gives the intensity; and as the vital is at the same time the place of most of the difficulties, obstacles, contradictions, so the friction between the intensity of the aspiration and the intensity of the difficulty creates this anguish.

This is no reason for stopping one's aspiration.

You must know, must understand the reason for this anguish. And then, if you can introduce just one more element in your aspiration, that is to say, your trust in the divine Grace, trust in the divine Response, that counterbalances all possible anguishes and you can aspire without any trouble or fear.

This brings us to something else, which is not positively a question, but a request for an explanation, commentary or development of a question. It is precisely about Grace.

I have said somewhere, or written, that no matter how great your faith and trust in the divine Grace, no matter how great your capacity to see it at work in all circumstances, at every moment, on every point of life, never will you succeed in understanding the marvellous immensity of Its Action, and the precision, the exactitude with which this Action is accomplished; never will you be able to grasp to what an extent the Grace does everything, is behind everything, organises everything, conducts everything, so that the march forward to the divine realisation may be as prompt, as complete, as total and harmonious as possible, considering the circumstances in the world.

No sooner are you in contact with It than there is not a second in time, not a point in space which does not show you dazzlingly this perpetual work of the Grace, this constant intervention of the Grace. And once you have seen this, you feel you are never equal to it, for you should never forget it, never be afraid, never have any anguish, regrets, set-backs, ...even suffering. If one were in union with this Grace, if one saw It everywhere, one would begin living a life of exultation, all-power, infinite happiness.

And that would be the best possible collaboration in the divine Work.

SOME LETTERS OF THE MOTHER

The questions are quoted before the replies.

(Pardon my writing to you without any specific reason; but I felt like telling you that you are extremely dear to me. In spite of my thousand and three imperfections, this one sense remains in me — that you are my Mother, that I am born from your heart. It is the only truth I seem to have realised in all these years. A very unfortunate thing, perhaps, that I have realised no other truth; but I deeply thank you that I have been enabled to feel this much at least.)

Sri Aurobindo's reply: "It is an excellent foundation for the other truths that are to come — for they all result from it."

The Mother's reply: "My blessings are always with you." (17-9-1934)

*
**

(I had been expecting a reply from you — but I got it this morning in your face. I suddenly resolved not to touch drink again, but saw some inconveniences in the way, so withdrew the resolution in its extreme form; yet a power for good remained. Facing myself later I perceived that, though a certain itch for drink had been brought about, it was only a temporary development and I really had no special complex for alcohol. The seven days' experiment with a bit of Bacchus seemed over.

Then I fell asleep and had a most frightfully realistic dream in which my teeth broke off in my mouth and fell out in my hand and on the floor. Thinking — in the dream itself — that this must be a dream, I *dreamed* that I got up. But in that condition also I discovered that my teeth came loose and I spat out quite a lot of them. I was terribly pained to see such a thing.

I really woke up after this and, understanding that the falling of teeth in a dream meant the breaking of the physical mind's habits of thought, I felt a great release — a fine sense all over me of openness to you. Of course the physical mind brought back certain retarding considerations — but surely, Mother, something has been done. I should like to have some words from you.)

"I am happy at your resolution and I hope you will keep to it. I was going to write to you that you must choose between seeing me and drink — for I would not see you if you went on drinking — but I am glad to hear that you have made the resolution already." (11-10-1935)

*
**

(A friend wishes to collect money for you. He says he will be very much helped if you write for him a statement about approaching people for monetary help.)

"I am not in the habit of writing for money to anybody. If people do not feel that it is for them a great opportunity and Grace to be able to give their money for the Divine cause, *tant pis pour eux*!¹ Money is needed for the work — money is bound to come; as for *who* will have the privilege of giving it, that remains to be seen."

(24-4-1938)

*
**

(I am puzzled. My heart is pulled towards you and I want to come back. But certain things are keeping me here and I feel that they will keep drawing me even if I return at present. What should I do? But please know that whether I come just now or not I cannot ever break away from you. I pray to you not to abandon me).

"My dear child, blessings of the day.... Just received your letter of 21st; it came to me directly (without the written words) three days ago, probably when you were writing it, and my silent answer was categorical: remain there until the necessity of being here will become so imperative that all else will completely lose all value for you. My answer now is exactly the same. I want only to assure you that we are not abandoning you and that you will always have our help and protection." (24-4-1939)

*
**

(People keep lamenting about their lot and feel that their troubles and their unhappy reactions would go if other people and things were changed Do you share my doubt about this feeling?)

"Each one is the artisan of his own miseries."

(4-12-1939)

*
**

(I dabbled in stocks and shares a little, but came a cropper. The speculation I carried on for a while has burnt quite a hole in my pocket. I really wish I hadn't. Are you dead against speculation?)

"You ought to know that I do not approve at all of speculation — but what is done is done."

(17-12-1939)

*
**

¹ So much the worse for them (Editor).

(So many problems have been facing me of late. I wonder how they are to be solved happily).

“The only way to a true and lasting happiness is a complete and exclusive reliance on the Divine’s Grace.” (19-10-1941)

*
**

(Your last letter, in reply to mine which explained what I thought of doing, runs: “Do as you like. But as you ask my opinion I must say that it is silly.” Is it silly because there is a feeling in me that circumstances are compulsive? Another thing: why have you omitted those words which mean so much to me and which you have always ended with: “Love and blessings”?)

“My ‘it is silly’ covered many sides of the question, including the most exterior one. What you suggest as the foolishness of believing that circumstances are compelling when they are not, is part of it.

“It is purposely that I have omitted the words ‘love and blessings’, because I did not wish you to think that I am blessing your enterprise — I do not — just because I find it silly. So, do not be mistaken if I end by love and blessings. These words are for your soul of which you are not just now very conscious, and not for your exterior being.” (18-6-1942)

*
**

(I spent quite a lot of grey matter, putting before you argument after argument. But you have not argued back. You are quite happily unconcerned.)

“All the reasonings in your letter come from the external physical mind. You cannot expect me to come down to that level and discuss with you from there. I see things from another plane and in a different way.” (19-7-1942)

*
**

(It is hard for me to understand how X who had been so absorbed in Yoga for years, who had been considered by you to have the nature of the Saints, could drift away from you and have a fall from the Yogic life).

“The mistake in your psychology is its excessive simplification. You look at one side and with exaggerated emphasis and ignore the rest. A person may have certain qualities but not in perfection, and there is in the subconscious the very contradiction of these qualities. If one does not take care to eliminate this contradiction, then at any

moment under the pressure of circumstances what is in the subconscious may rise up with force and bring about a collapse, what is called a fall from the Yoga."

(30-11-1943)

*
**

(If a person who was declared by you to be "saintly" in nature could come away from a yogic life of many years, I can't help feeling quite sad and discouraged).

"I may point out to you that nothing irreparable has happened. Of course the further one wanders away from the path, the more radical will be the conversion needed to return to it; but the return is always possible."

(22-12-1943)

*
**

(You know that for many years I have been in the habit of leaving my physical body and making exploratory tours in my subtle body. I leave the physical from the region of the waist. Slipping out into the other planes while I am living in Bombay, I find that I mostly get into planes that are not of a very high nature. Sometimes I pass through attractive scenery. Once I gripped some flowers and determined to keep them fast in my hand and then come back to the earth-consciousness in an attempt to force them into the physical plane. But only up to the final verge between that world and this I could bring them. At other times the other world which I explore has a terrible dryness and there are also ugly sights compared to which earth's uglinesses are very far from being intense. Once or twice I was among haunts of a low erotic life. I have also entered many houses and moved from room to room, closely examining the furniture and the belongings. I have seen strange kinds of clocks and recently a type of flower-vase which does not exist on earth. Then there are the people. They look human, have the shapes of men and women, but carry a silent menace in their looks. They are embodied figures that have not the soul-being in them. Nor have they any sense of scruple. I suppose this is because the planes beyond the earth are typal and not evolutionary: the soul in us is for the purposes of an evolution from the lowest to the highest, while everything in those planes moves with endless variations in a fixed type having its own perfection and pleasure, however evil and perverse. Once I found myself to be not a full subtle body but a sort of pigmy with a semi-idiotic consciousness, a funny squeak and an irresponsible hurried movement. We seem to have odd beings within ourselves.

Last night I was glared at by some people in the subtle world and they closed in upon me. I managed to escape back to my physical sheath, but there was a kind of crash over my spine and when I woke up I found myself awfully sick with a peculiar broken feeling in the back. I wondered what I should do. No doctor could have helped me. Then it struck me that this sort of subtle attack can only be remedied by bringing vibrations of the highest possible consciousness into my being. So I opened Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* at the passage in which he describes the avatar-like nature of

Savitri. It is a passage which, on being taxed by my questions, he had said to be originating in the Overmind Intuition. I read it out loudly, giving full effect to its marvellous rhythm. Especially when I came to the line —

For even her gulfs were secrecies of light —

I felt flooded in all my inner recesses with an intense healing power, and at the end of the passage the brokenness in the back was gone.

I wonder whether I should keep up my practice of getting out of the body. It is extremely fascinating, but is it a necessary part of Yogic development for keeping the consciousness open to inner spiritual things?)

“It is much better to stop the experiences altogether. They seem to take you into levels which are undesirable and most unsafe; they are not at all necessary for any opening in the Yoga.” (28-3-44)

*
**

(Your letter of warning has set me thinking whether you have my death in mind. Death by itself does not frighten me very much. I do have the normal man's recoil from it, but my mind has a certain detachment which makes something in me rise superior to fear, and there is also the vision and conviction born of my contact with you and Sri Aurobindo, making me keep a grip on the tremble of the heart-strings. Yet death does appear to me horrible because it would cut short my spiritual growth in this life and waste the mercy that has brought me close to you and given me a grand opportunity to be your instrument. I want to live and realise what I have never ceased to regard as my true ultimate goal. Personally, I do not and cannot ever believe that I shall die and not realise that goal. You know the secrets of all hearts. So what I feel for you and Sri Aurobindo must be known to you. With that feeling I find it hard, if not impossible, to envisage final defeat. Sometimes I think that even if you told me that I would be defeated I would refuse to believe.

Again and again I cannot help turning to you. You are a haunting background at all times and on occasion too a flame in the forefront. I should like to relate an experience several months back, which was one of the most vivid of the forefront type.

I was lying in bed at night and telling myself how vain were all things of the ordinary life, with death as the blind terminus of their groping. I reflected on the complex forces at play in my personality and the uncertain future they were working out. To know God by intimate experience seemed to me the sole worth-while business on earth. I exclaimed to myself: “O that I might one day know God wholly!” As soon as these words were uttered, a powerful tug was felt in the middle of my chest and, like a stream of warm wind or rather like a wind of fire, there rushed from the chest a cry that had nothing to do with my conscious mind. It went on and on for many minutes, an intense aspiration for the Divine, like a thousand prayers gathered into one yet prayed by something that was not my own self as I commonly knew if but a

deep dweller within, who had suddenly come out and uttered his luminous hunger. I was afraid no less than astonished, as that soar of soul was like a knife cutting through all the small desires of my being. I did not know what dear delight of the human heart in me it would slay if I let it move on its relentless path, without any check or control. All my little longings stood anxiously around that upflying and upburning ache. So pure was the aspiration, with not the slightest reserve in its cry, that I hesitated to interfere with it: it was sacrilegious to put anything in its way, and I hung by, letting it go undisturbed, no matter what the consequence to my cherished frailties. I yielded to its steady sweeping self-consecration my whole consciousness, and the conviction dawned on me that this experience was definitely moulding my future. I seemed to realise that there was waiting for me an inevitable day when I would lie for ever at your feet and Sri Aurobindo's.

How I wish you would tell me that I am not mistaken! Have you given me up? Will you one day take me to the goal I desire?)

"Certainly I have not given you up, not in the least. You are quite capable of the realisation if you make up your mind to it, and the experience you relate seems to me a valid promise that it will come."

"As for what I meant in my last letter it was simply that there were things which might act to delay your spiritual realisation and might be otherwise dangerous for you. This does not mean that the realisation will not come." (19-5-1944)

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(I was rather depressed on hearing of Chandulal's death after an operation. He was one of your workers with an exceptional ability. How is it that he passed away although under your influence and guidance?)

"The operation was quite successful, done by a very skilful surgeon, but Chandulal's heart was weak beyond expectation and he died of heart failure five days after the operation. It has been a sad event and a big loss for the work. But for some time he suffered much and felt tired of it. He had several times expressed the wish to change his body for a better one. It is surely this wish that is responsible for what happened." (22-11-1945)

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(I am still not through with this second spell of heart-trouble. The first was in June, 1938, owing to a gigantic overdose of a stimulant tonic powder. This time it is strain of the heart-muscle. The doctors have advised complete rest in a supine position. Not even the head is to be lifted. They also warn me that if I don't take extreme care I may develop more serious trouble. But I feel full of your presence

and do what my suddenly and abundantly released poetic inspiration leads me to do. I sit up frequently, get excited with the passage of the poems through me — especially when the lines seem to come from wide far-off spaces — and my heart starts beating fast at that time and if the doctors could then put their stethoscopes to my chest they would begin to shake their heads at the prospect of a quick cure. But I am unconcerned. I trust implicitly in your power and feel like laughing away the black future with which they — of course, with the best intentions and for my own good — threaten me in case of carelessness about my heart. I feel certain, Mother dearest, the Divine Power can help — can't it?)

“My dear child, I quite agree with you that there is a power other and much more powerful than that of the doctors and the medicines and I am glad to see that you put your trust in it. Surely it will lead you throughout all difficulties and in spite of all catastrophic warnings. Keep your faith intact and all will be all right.”
(28-5-1948)

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(I want to ask you a question concerned with my reaction to the inconsideration and vulgarity in Y's letter about Sri Aurobindo. I remember an occasion many years ago when a lady friend of mine spoke unbecomingly of both of you. I verbally choked her off at once, but the indignation within me went on burning. It was like a sword of fire leaping out of my chest, striking and striking through the hours. My mind could serve only to direct it accurately, it had itself little part in the actual violence. The next day the lady had a terrific attack of diarrhoea. A similar blaze began to go out of my chest yesterday on reading Y's letter. I had no scruple in directing it at his journal as if to consume its future to ashes. But although I also struck out at Y himself as if to destroy him I did not encourage the fiery onslaught. I started wondering if it was right to attack a person like that. At times I thought I was perfectly justified. At other times it seemed to me that I should offer my sword of fire to you and Sri Aurobindo and leave it to you both to use it instead of myself concentratedly directing it at Y. I shall be thankful if I can have some words of guidance from you. Please keep in mind that I am not talking of a mere outburst of anger: some force appears to be there which wants to destroy and which feels it has the power to destroy. Of course I would never think of using it for my own private ends.)

“It is evidently the working of the Kali force that has lit and is directing this fire in you. There is nothing wrong in its action; it is not an anger personal to you but the wrath of a divine power and it must be allowed to act; in fact, I think you could not stop it from burning in you even if you wanted to stop it. This man has drawn it on himself and there is nothing wrong in what is happening, he alone is responsible. Of course, it must not be used for any personal aim or in any self-regarding way.”
(8-10-1950)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1972)

(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others after the accident to his right leg in November, 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were : Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becharlal, Puram, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)

JUNE 21, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (addressing P): The Armistice seems to have failed; the envoys came back almost immediately yesterday. Hitler must have pressed for complete acceptance or complete refusal and didn't give any chance for discussion. The French government also seems to have gone to Morocco from Bordeaux.

P: Then it is all right; no more chance of peace.

SRI AUROBINDO: Can't say. Pétain is dangerous so long as he is in the government.

N: If the army could now be withdrawn!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is the first thing to do now. If Hitler had got the fleet, he would have attacked Africa and taken possession of the colonies. Have you seen the other news? That Roosevelt has taken two Republicans in the Government?

P: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: This is unprecedented in history.

P: They have been made secretaries of Navy and War. If he plunges into war, he wants to have the Republican party with him perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Another unprecedented step is his standing for the third term.

P: The Democrats will nominate him, I hope.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh yes, and then he may decide about the war. Now if he declares war and somebody else becomes the President, he may disown the policy and it will be very awkward.

N: Italy is not showing herself anywhere — neither on land nor in the air. It seems the Italians could easily be driven out of Africa. Then Mussolini and Hitler can quarrel over France.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not so early. As long as Hitler has England to fight, he will keep Italy with him.

EVENING

According to Bhaskar's radio, peace terms have been placed before Pétain. Laval and fifty other government officials pledge to support Pétain and all the deputies place their confidence in him.

But this report seems to contradict what Gabriel said. He said that it was all untrue. Plenipotentiaries have not returned. Protests are coming to Pétain from all sides against peace and the government has been removed from Bordeaux. All communications are to be sent to Casablanca in Morocco.

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably the plenipotentiaries have refused to sign the terms and Hitler has himself communicated the terms to Pétain. That is how the two news reports can be reconciled. Bhaskar's news is sometimes very confusing.

N: What is the next news item about Gandhi being absolved of responsibility by the Working Committee?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps they want to start civil disobedience and Gandhi is against it. So they may want to go ahead on their own initiative.

N: The *Patrika* gave the news that British papers had published a message from Wardha that Gandhi and others were trying to start a provisional government with the Hindus, Muslims and the untouchables.

SRI AUROBINDO: That must be then from Abul Kalam Azad and the Muslim Premiers' conference.

P: The American Republican party has disowned the two members Roosevelt has appointed.

SRI AUROBINDO: What a pity! Why?

P: Because they are strongly pro-English. Not that the Republican party is itself anti-allies. Spain perhaps will enter the war on Germany's side.

N: She already took the first step by declaring nonbelligerency.

S: Everybody is being on Hitler's side.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, and those who are not are afraid of him. Unless America declares war, England will be alone. Egypt is also trying to back out. With Gibraltar on one side and the Suez on the other, England will be in a difficult position, unless she can create some revolution in Egypt and bring in Nafiz Pasha. Russia is trying to keep out Turkey.

N: Keep out of what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Out of the war on the side of the Allies, as a possible trouble-maker in the Balkans.... Is it true that Italy is bringing down her own planes? (*Laughter*)

(It seems in a raid over some Italian town by English planes, not a single plane

was brought down by the Italians and much of their ammunition was lost for which the Commander reprimanded the anti-aircraft personnel and asked them to be careful next time. In the next English raid the Italians fired accurately and carefully and brought down two out of three. But those two turned out to be Italian planes.)

S: Who is this Sir Patro of Madras? He is also clamouring for India's defence.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, everybody is doing that now.

N: The Congress Working Committee has asked Congressmen to take precautionary measures for defence. What precautionary measures can they take?

SRI AUROBINDO: They can make a battle cry with their charkhas and shoot down the parachutists with them. Gandhi may have disagreed with the W.C. on this point of defence. Being non-violent, how can he support any defence measures?

S: I don't think he will object to others taking them for the sake of the country.

SRI AUROBINDO: But on principle he can't allow them.

N: I don't understand how without Gandhi they can launch civil disobedience. It will end in a fiasco.

P: Quite so. (*Sri Aurobindo smiled*)

SRI AUROBINDO (*after some time*): Russia is following a dangerous policy for herself. Does she think that Hitler will be so damaged by his fight with England that Stalin will be able to destroy him by an attack? When Hitler gets the whole of France he will build up his position very strongly; then he might try to blockade England, since a direct invasion of England is out of the question. If the French navy falls into his hands, he will become tremendously strong. But when England is conquered, he will have all the French colonies and most of the British ones. His next step will naturally be to move towards the Balkans and then a clash with Russia is inevitable unless Hitler has given up his project of becoming Master of Europe. The Balkan Powers are foolish enough not to see that their turn will come later on.

P: England is not going to have Mediterranean engagements with Italy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Too much occupied with Africa probably.

P: If the English can take the whole of Africa from Italy and crush her navy then Italy will be crippled. Her long sea coast will be open to attack everywhere. I don't understand why Egypt is backing out.

SRI AUROBINDO: This king can't be trusted, he is a man of the dictator type. He can do anything.

N: Laski has written to America that he expects Labour to make an early agreement with England.

SRI AUROBINDO: He expects many things that don't come off. He expects that every Frenchman will fight till the last Frenchman falls.

N: The Congress Working Committee admits that some useful purpose has been served by Abul Kalam Azad's talks with the Muslim Premiers and says the talks may continue.

P: This Iyengar of Madras is supporting 50 % demands for Muslims.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who is he?

P: He is a crank, giving opinions when nobody wants them.

N: Oh, somebody was saying that Sir Akbar also demands 50 % for Muslims.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is for Hyderabad where the Muslims have had a monopoly till now. He can't suddenly bring it down to 20 or 30%, the same as in Kashmir. There the Hindus had all the monopoly. Now if the Muslim demands are acceded to, the Hindus will be wiped out.

P: People here are defending the French Government. They say that the people on the spot know best what the situation is and they have to act accordingly.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who are the people? Indians?

P: Yes, they say that Hitler has allowed in Holland her own Dutch Government.

N: Government is all right. What about the policy? The Dutch will have to follow Hitler's policy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why won't he allow their own Government? Hitler can bring his own men to rule all the places. I don't think he wants to attach all his conquered countries to Germany. He will make them all vassal states and have them all ruled by their own people. How can he govern all the colonies by his own people? For that matter England can't govern India without the help of Indian officials.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

AIDS TO AN INQUIRING OUTSIDER

Q. Sri Aurobindo left British India and came to Pondicherry in French India and the Mother came from France to join Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. Will you explain the significance of their meeting?

THE meeting of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother appears as if predestined. Events and circumstances have been so moulded as to bring them together. Sri Aurobindo, who had been practising Yoga during his 6-years' leadership of the nationalist fight for freedom in British India, received an inner command to leave the political field and go to French India, first to Chandernagore and then Pondicherry, in order to devote himself to a spiritual work that would usher in a new age for the whole world with India as its luminous centre. The Mother, who had been practising spirituality first in France and then in Algeria, got also into touch with Pondicherry — initially through one who came there in connection with French politics. She asked him to look for some Indian sage who could throw light on a certain symbol which she had found in the course of her occult experiences. This symbol is commonly known as the Star of David. Before the emissary arrived in Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo had already made his home there. When shown the symbol, he explained it at once and, when told who had sent it and how eager that person was to come to India, he said that at the right time he would call her to Pondicherry. The symbol — a triangle with its apex upward superimposed on a triangle with a downward apex — is now familiar to us as Sri Aurobindo's own emblem, but with a square in its centre and a lotus floating on wavy lines within the square.

Four years after the symbol-explanation, the Mother arrived in Pondicherry. This was in 1914. Before coming, she repeatedly had the vision of a certain figure whom she accepted as her guide and instinctively called Krishna though she knew very little of Indian mythology or history. Being a gifted painter, she made a coloured sketch of that figure. At the very first meeting with Sri Aurobindo she recognised in him the master of her occult life. We may observe here that Sri Aurobindo, during his political life in British India, had raised the cry of "The Divine Mother", the World-Creatrix whose frontal aspect was to him the Soul of India, the presiding Goddess of this country's career through time, this country whose most characteristic trait has been its seeking for the infinite and eternal Spirit all through her long history. On meeting the Mother, Sri Aurobindo recognised an emanation of the Divine Mother he had worshipped.

The meeting of the two represents the coming together of the necessary creative powers by whom a new age would be born. And it is to be noted that both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had been pursuing the inner life on essentially identical

lines which would unite Spirit and Matter. So their joining of forces was the most natural thing. And it was not only a doubling of strengths but also a linking of complementaries. Sri Aurobindo's main movement of consciousness may be said to have been an immense Knowledge-Power from above the mind, though whatever was necessary for an integral spirituality was also there in one form or another. The Mother's chief movement may be said to have been an intense Love-Power from behind the heart, even if all else needed for an all-round Yoga was present as a ready accessory. When she and Sri Aurobindo met, they completed each other, brought fully into play the spiritual energies in both and started the work of total earth-transformation from high above and deep within.

Another significance of their meeting may be read on the cultural plane. Sri Aurobindo, hailing from India, was educated in England from his seventh to his twenty-first year — at the start privately in Manchester, later at St. Paul's School in London and finally at King's College, Cambridge. He became not only a master of English but also an extraordinary scholar of Greek and Latin. He grew perfectly familiar with French and knew Italian and German sufficiently to read *The Divine Comedy* and *Faust* in the original. European history was a special study of his and he steeped himself in Western culture, ancient, medieval and modern. It was only after his return to India that he plunged into a study of India's history and cultural institutions and awoke in himself the multi-dimensional spiritual consciousness of India. He embodied a fusion of the West and the East and expressed himself and his experiences in poetry and literary criticism, philosophy and socio-political thought. Nor has he been merely a literary and spiritual figure of giant proportions. Practical politics was his daily concern for several years. He gave India's nationalist aspirations a new dynamism, evoked in a fallen people the vision of its freedom and of its psychological revival, and stood as its leader through a crowded and dangerous period of revolutionary activity. Also, all through his life in India he kept in living contact with the West and he has particularly recorded that he was drawn by an intense affinity to France although he was educated in England and never set his foot in the former country.

On the other side, the Mother has declared that as soon as she came to India she felt India to be the true country of her soul. But, of course, she brought too the finest that French culture represented and she bore in herself the whole artistic spirit of Europe. She was in her younger days a student of painting, familiar with the great artists and studios of Paris. She practised painting for many years and her inspired output is both abundant and varied. Music too was a part of her being and it has found creative expression time and again. Further, she embodies a practical genius of a rare order, with powers of wide yet precise organisation.

Thus she and Sri Aurobindo complete by their combination the entire circle of the higher human activities and are supremely fitted to bring the East and the West together and, blending them, lead to a common all-consummating goal.

Q. Is it true that every 12 years there has been a change in Sri Aurobindo's life in connection with his Yoga of what he has called Supermind?

At least four important "changes" we can see at intervals of 12 years.

In 1914 the Mother came into Sri Aurobindo's life and their direct collaboration for the Yoga of the Supermind started. Also in that year Sri Aurobindo, with the Mother's assistance, launched the monthly philosophical review, *Arya*, in which most of his works first appeared serially.

In 1926 — that is, 12 years later — there was the descent, into Sri Aurobindo's body as well as into the Mother's, of what Sri Aurobindo has termed Overmind. Overmind is the World of the Great Gods, diverse aspects of the One Divinity. It is the Plane of Krishna-Consciousness, the highest unified power of the Divine known in the past. With its descent the preparation was made and the foundation laid for the descent of the hitherto unmanifested power which is the unique goal of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, the Supermind. Supermind is the supreme dynamic and creative Consciousness, also designated by Sri Aurobindo Truth-Consciousness, Gnosis, *vijñāna*, whose direct entrance into the world can alone transform and divinise not only the mind and the vital being but also the body.

After another 12 years — in 1938 — there was, as certain words of the Mother seem to indicate, a momentous move onward. Before 1938 the Supermind had already been within Sri Aurobindo's body, because it had descended into his mental and vital being and had been functioning in them. But now the Mother could see the Supermind descending into the most physical part of Sri Aurobindo and directly mingling with his outermost centre of consciousness rather than indirectly through his mental and vital being. But the problem was to fix it there, a permanent light in what we may pinpoint as the physical mind, so that an immediate and settled action of the Supramental Consciousness instead of a come-and-go of it might develop in the material being.

Only in 1950 — when 12 years again had elapsed — this kind of action became a part of earth-life — but as a result of Sri Aurobindo's sacrifice of his own body. The whole resistance of what he had named the Inconscient, the root and support of all incapacity of the physical nature, including death, was, as it were, swallowed up into Sri Aurobindo's body and nullified and exhausted there. Hence this body, semi-divinised and marked for total transformation, had to be given up and in return that Supramental Consciousness poured forth unresisted. Because of that pouring forth, Sri Aurobindo's body, as it lay in view of a devoted public, was seen not only by the Mother but also by a number of disciples as filled with light. The light remained for 5 days, during which there was no touch of decomposition, not even of discolouration. The Mother has said in private that as soon as Sri Aurobindo left his body what he had called the Mind of Light was realised in her — and she has defined the Mind of Light as the physical mind receiving the Supramental Light. Thus we may say that the "change" which occurred in Sri Aurobindo's life in 1950 established permanently

the Supermind, as a starting-point, in the most external being of his companion in Yoga, the Mother.

Q. Sri Aurobindo has called his Yoga the Supramental Yoga. What exactly is it and why precisely is it needed?

All Yogas aim at the union of the human consciousness with the Infinite, the Eternal, the Divine and at the expression of this union in world-activity. But all Yogas have held that this expression cannot be complete because the very stuff of world-existence has an in-built imperfection. Entire spiritual fulfilment can never take place on earth: it can take place only in the Beyond after the body has been given up.

This attitude and position are due, according to Sri Aurobindo, to the fact that the highest spiritual Consciousness directly attained and set working in our nature so far is not the ultimate creative Power. The ultimate creative Power must hold the secret divine truth of all that is in our world, a truth that is meant to unfold itself in the course of earthly evolution and fulfil here and now all the terms in which this evolution has occurred: the mental, the vital, the physical being. Otherwise the universe in which we live fails to discover its final justification. Coming as an expression of the Divine it should in the end be able to express the Divine and not serve merely as a grandiose stage on which a soul arrives to develop and pass out, abandoning as ultimately useless the instruments through which it has worked. Some sense of this fulfilling destiny of the universe and its forms was there in very early ages of Indian spirituality; but it faded afterwards. Sri Aurobindo seizes that sense, clarifies it, dynamises it as a result of his Yoga which passes beyond all the splendid achievements of the past and reaches a hitherto unmanifested power of the Infinite and the Eternal, which he names Supermind. Hence his Yoga is the Supramental Yoga: it brings into play the divine truth of the mind, the vital being, the body and asks the soul in us, whose instruments these are, to surrender itself wholly to the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, God in His highest form, so that our whole self may ascend there and the whole Supermind may descend into us.

All through human history, our imperfect nature has longed for perfection. The mind has aspired after plenary knowledge, the life-force after total capacity, the body after health and beauty and perpetuation. Only the Supramental Yoga can answer these basic demands. For they arise from its own hidden presence in Nature. That is one aspect of the need for this Yoga.

Secondly, unless the very body receives the Divine in its cells and tissues and bones, unless the entire outer self and its activity is filled with the Divine, the spiritual light will never make its permanent home on earth. Sages and prophets and Avatars will come and bring their glory, but the glory will thin away after a time and humanity will continue to be ignorant and weak and mortal. To establish God amongst us for good, the Supramental Yoga is needed.

Thirdly, the Supermind will make all life its province: no function of the human consciousness will be left out: every field will be covered and changed. This means the solution of all our problems — cultural, social, political, economic.

Fourthly, the Supermind brings to completion the evolutionary process which is concerned not only with individuals but also with collectivities. The Supramental Yoga takes all mankind as its material. It is not for just a few extraordinary individuals: its call is to the whole of humanity, declaring to all the divine destiny awaiting them. It is a collective and not a merely individual Yoga and it promises a perfect society, a new world of complex harmony moving from adventure to blissful adventure of Truth-discovery and Truth-dynamism. All modern thought which has a global vision and stresses the ideal of "One World" is in profound need of the Supramental Yoga.

Q. What, according to Sri Aurobindo, would the Supramental Body be like and how long will it take to fulfil his vision?

A very precise description of the Supramental Body cannot be given but some general points may be put forward. This Body will have four main attributes: lightness, adaptability, plasticity and luminosity. It will feel absolutely light, weightless, as if walking on air — because all inertia and unconsciousness will be gone. It will also have the power to adapt itself to any condition. Whatever the demands on it, it will prove equal to them — because its full consciousness will drive out all incapacity, all resistance to change. To put the matter a little frivolously: sitting on the North Pole it can say, "How warm and cosy!" and squatting on the Equator it can start an inward air-conditioner. Further, its plasticity will make it immune to injury. If a bullet, for instance, is fired at it, it will not dully receive it but pliantly open up and let the bullet pass through and then close up once more. Of course, most probably the bullet will fail to reach it and somehow get deviated; but in case it comes in the right direction it will find no vulnerable surface. Finally, every cell will be radiant with the supramental glory. All the physical substance will be turned into stuff of living light. And this luminosity will be visible to everyone. Sceptics may at first say that phosphorus has been cunningly applied. But they will soon realise that the glow is permanent — a lasting proof of the supramental transformation.

It should be evident that a body with these four main attributes cannot be composed of gross parts like bones and arteries and organs like heart and stomach, or live on food and water and have a process of blood-circulation and waste-elimination. Quite a different kind of structure no less than a different kind of substance must go to the making of it. Instead of solid fixed organs there will be subtle centres of energy and instead of a definite process of chemical changes there will be a radiation of forces, energy-exchanges — and all the movements, as well as all the centres will be materialisations of an illumined consciousness.

As to the general form, it will have a human aspect, but there will be no

differentiation of sex, and the typical sexual traits, primary or secondary, will be absent. The sexual function itself will be out of place and unnecessary just as the intake and throw-out of food will be. Whatever creative action is needed will be achieved by subtle means, by a pure play of conscious energy.

This is as it should be, for the sexual function comes into existence because the individual body is mortal and the race has to be continued through one's offspring. The Supramental Body, being what it is, cannot degenerate and die or be subject to fatal accident. The necessity of death is due also to an incapacity of the ordinary body to change and keep pace with inner development: it has to break up and set free the evolving soul to get for itself new bodies. The Supramental Body by its infinite adaptability will never lag behind the inner movement and thus require no substitution. Not that it will be bound to immortality: such bondage is again a glorified shortcoming. The Supramental Body, like the Divine Consciousness which has shaped itself into it, will be free in all respects. It can dissolve at will and re-form at will.

Who can say for sure how long evolution will take to arrive at a wholly divine physical life? Sri Aurobindo once remarked that perhaps 300 years would be wanted. The change has certainly to be gradual if it is not to be a temporary miraculous imposition of Supernature upon Nature but a lasting wonderful growth of Nature into Supernature — a true evolution, however much the final result may look like a revolution. Yet definite signs of the change can come much before 300 years.

In closing, we may distinguish between the Supramental Body which will be the transformed human physical life and the Supramental Body which will be the direct material manifestation of beings belonging to the Supermind itself. The latter will not ever have known a past of earthly development and so will possess what we may term a perfect perfection whereas the former will be the best and most perfect job made out of materials that were once human and imperfect.

Q. Will you tell me something about Sri Aurobindo's poetic masterpiece, Savitri?

Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol is a poem over which Sri Aurobindo worked for almost half his life-time. The very first version dates back to his twenties: the final one was on the anvil in even his seventy-eighth year when he passed away. There were almost twelve recasts, not exactly to add to the purely poetic merit but essentially to lift the work to the highest and most comprehensive expression possible of spiritual realities within the scheme set up by him of character, incident and plot. The expression sought was from the top range of what he designated "Overhead" planes — ranges of consciousness lying hidden above the human mind and possessing an inherent light of knowledge and a natural experience of the Infinite. He distinguished in general a progression of four levels as expressible at present in poetry (or prose): Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. *Savitri* was intended to be on the whole the poetry of Overmind, akin on a massive scale to what the ancient Rishis had called the

Mantra — the supreme revelatory expression. The Mantra can open up in the hearer luminous tracts of the inner being and put him in touch with the very heights from which it has descended through the hushed intense receptivity of the poet's deepest self. Brief instances of the Mantra in *Savitri* are lines like

The abyss of the unbodied Infinite...

His mind hushed to a bright omniscient...

The superconscient realms of motionless peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone...

All can be done if the God-touch is there...

Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,
The impossible God's sign of things to be ..

Sight's sound-waves breaking from the soul's great deeps...

Both in quality and bulk, this epic must be counted as remarkable among even the world's remarkable achievements. With its 23,813 lines, covered by Twelve Books, each mostly of several Cantos, it is the longest poem in the English language, beating *The Ring and the Book* of Browning with its 21,116 lines to the place of runner-up. Among the world's epics which can in general be compared with it in sustained poetic quality, only the *Shah-Nameh* of Firdausi, the *Ramayana* of Valmiki and the *Mahabharata* of Vyasa exceed it in length — three works which, like it, are products of the East. And indeed *Savitri* stands with the masterpieces of Valmiki and Vyasa in more than one respect. It has been conceived with an affinity to the ancient Indian temperament which not only rejoiced in massive structures but took all human life and human thought into the spacious scope of its poetic creations and blended the hidden worlds of Gods and Titans and Demons with the activities of earth. A cosmic sweep is *Savitri's* and Sri Aurobindo wanted his poem to be a many-sided multi-coloured carving out, in word-music, of the gigantic secrets of his "Supramental Yoga".

With the *Mahabharata* it has a direct link too. For, it is based on a story, in that epic, of a victorious fight by love against death. But the *Savitri* of the *Mahabharata*, fighting Yama the God of Death who took away her consort Satyavan, becomes here an Avatar of the eternal Beauty and Love plunging into the trials of terrestrial life and seeking to overcome them not only in herself but also in the world she has embraced as her own: she is sworn to put an end to earth's ignorant estrangement from God — estrangement whose most physical symbol is Death, the bodily opposite of the luminous inherent immortality of the Divine. Her story grows a poetic structure in which Sri Aurobindo houses his special search and discovery, his uttermost exploration of occult worlds, his ascent into the highest plane of the Spirit, the hitherto unmanifested

Supermind, his bringing down of its power to divinise man's total nature. And the figure of Savitri suggests in general his own companion in the field of Yoga, the Mother, who is at present carrying on the great task set by the Master.

The technique of *Savitri* is attuned to the scriptural conception at work. The iambic five-foot line of blank verse is adopted as the most apt and plastic for harmonies like those of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The blank verse, however, is given certain special characteristics affining it still further to them. It moves in a series of blocks formed by a changing distribution of correctly proportioned sentence-lengths. Scarcely any block breaks off in the middle of a line and each thus forms, in spite of linkage with the others, a kind of self-sufficient structure like a stanza, but in general no two such "stanzas" are equally long. The units also of each block tell markedly in their own individual mass and force of word and rhythm, though a concordant continuity is maintained in the sense. Enjambment (overflow from line to line) which was used to impetuous effect in Sri Aurobindo's early narratives — *Urvastie, Love and Death* and *Baji Prabhou* — is not altogether avoided, yet end-stopping is the rule as serving better the graver, more contained movement demanded by the scriptural mood.

A notable feature, in *Savitri*, of this mood and of its expression is that there is no strict confinement of them to ostensibly spiritual subjects. A Legend as well as a Symbol, the poem has many scenes and levels of human development at the same time that it is instinct with a mystical light. It includes and absorbs every life-theme of any import in man's evolution towards deity. Again, ancient motifs and motifs of our own day are equally caught up. Even modern totalitarianism is seized in its essence, even the new physics that replaces the classical concepts in which "all was precise, rigid, indubitable" enters the poetry, and there blows through the epic the breath of what can only be termed a Democracy of the Divine, whose aim is to liberate the whole of humanity into Light, as in those words Sri Aurobindo puts into the mouth of his heroine:

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart:
I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
My spirit's liberty I ask for all.

K. D. SETHNA

THE SYMPHONY OF LIFE

THERE is a silence that contains all sound,
a silence in which sound itself becomes
the silence that it feeds upon and feeds.
Tread softly, for the silent echo
is heard beyond the ear of the farthest star —
a single note in the symphony
of Life, which begins and ends
where Life is.

There is a joy that contains all pain,
a joy in which pain itself is lost
in the eternal breath of living; in which
pain becomes
the trans-substantial stepping-stones
from the global dream of heavenly bliss
to the Soul-knowledge of Nirvana. 'TO BE'
is 'TO BECOME', for Life evolves through being,
guided by the Hierarchy of a Realm
beyond our world of time and space, of pain
and pleasure, of "I" and "THOU".

We are the living cells in the body
of Man; the pleasure and the pain
belong to earth, for they are vibrant
with mortality. We think; we know —
and yet our knowledge is the light
that opens up a path from flesh-bound pain
to a greater pain within; it is
the pleasure that conceals the joy of being
in the lust for the magic whorl
of a programmed self-creating chaos.

There is a Joy that steps along the causeway
of Aspiration across the egoic straits of night
towards the Dawn,
towards the Light of a Truth that grows
as Being grows, as Light enlightens,
and as eyes perceive the Consciousness

of Truth, the Soul of Love,
beyond the ceaseless round of man's endeavour
to re-create the world in his own image.

There is a Love that contains all hate,
a Love in which hate itself becomes
the love that it denies and seeks;
for Love is life, and life is love —
the Flaming Sword that leads
the warring nations through the maze
of mangled bodies,
shattered by the fearful weight of blinded justice.
To be faithful in a world at war is
to be ready to live or die as man dictates
or destiny decrees. To soldier on
in such a tortured peace is to live within
the obedient death-defying, death-embracing role
of freedom-fighters, whatever freedom means;
it is to die a thousand deaths,
when others fall in mortal anguish,
as darkness falls upon benighted lives.

Our love is challenged by each thought
that maims, each thought that claims
the right to have the greater share of this
and that within a world where people starve
beside the pyramids of unsold food,
where people seek in vain for love, until
they find it wrapped within the hatred
of their hearts, lost in the folds of life,
where ego holds its court
in bold defiance of the eternal law
that love transcends the egoic will, declares
the death of hate, for Love is Light,
wherein the night of hatred turns to day,
and Love perceives within the rich transparency
of Light the Truth of Soul-experience
and the joy of total dedication —
to LISTEN and OBEY.

DAVID DAVIES

A LOOK BEHIND

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY ASHRAM DAYS

3

THE Second World War was in progress. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother made a donation to the Viceroy's War Fund and openly gave their support to the Allies. I was shocked and surprised, almost dejected, because I was full of anti-British feeling. My reactions were exactly like those of many others in or outside the Ashram, even though I did not discuss the subject with anybody except Pavitra. I strongly criticised Sri Aurobindo's gesture, and even went so far as to say that He, who was to us Indians the living symbol and hope for India's freedom from slavery to the British, had now turned completely against all such hopes for her. Was He not merely afraid that the Ashram would be in danger without pro-British feelings? I told Pavitra, in my mental agony, that I had taken to the Ashram life not so much for progress in the line of spiritual evolution, as out of disgust for the old dead society and a desire to be in tune with the real freedom movement of India. Because of that, my feeling of vengeance against the British was ever mounting, for I had not only read but witnessed the atrocities of the British against innocent Indian people. Pavitra tried to explain to me, in the light of Sri Aurobindo's public statement to the press, that this was not a fight between nations only, but one that was waged to protect human civilisation and the spiritual values of humanity. I retorted to him by saying that, after all, he was from France, which was a free country and an ally of England, and so for him it would not be possible to feel or understand the enslaved Indians' reaction. It must have been too much for him. He reported to the Mother my reactions to Sri Aurobindo's recent contribution. I did not know about it. Suddenly I saw the Mother quite unmindful of me. I thought, it might be because She was very busy in those days. But I observed Her for three days, and was convinced that something was amiss.

I approached Her and asked, "Why are you ignoring me?" She said, "You know it very well." But I was puzzled, I guessed every other reason than the true one, which according to Her was serious. I did not think that Pavitra would report to Her my talks to him. So I begged Her to tell me what I had done, because I was sure to rectify my grave error. To this She said, with severity, "There are things that were settled long before you were even born. We have been working on them for a long time. Now you with your infinitesimally small mind believe that all that is nothing, that Sri Aurobindo and I are wrong, and that you are right in your judgment!" I was taken aback; it flashed before me, "What could be the reason?" Being nonplussed, I

expressed my surprise, "Is it something about the war that I spoke to Pavitra?" The Mother made the sign of Yes. I felt relieved and said, "Oh, it was nothing, I just spoke to him casually, it was not at all serious." But the Mother's face was stern and She said "Not serious? It was almost unbelievable that you of all persons could speak like that about Sri Aurobindo! Haven't you read all that He has given out to the Press?" I said, "Yes, Mother, I have. But have not the British done anything wrong to India?" The Mother replied, "We never said that they had not, nor do we say that in the future they will not do so any more. But today the question is not that; don't you understand it? When you see your neighbour's house on fire, and yet you do not go to help to put it out, because he has done wrong to you, you risk the burning of your own house and the loss of your own life. Do you not see the difference between the forces that are fighting for the Divine and those for the Asuras?" I said, "Yes, Mother, I do see; only what baffles me is that Churchill, whom you and Sri Aurobindo have chosen as your direct instrument, wants today India's help for his own country's existence, and yet says that His Majesty's government has no intention of liquidating its Empire!" The Mother said, "But leave all that to the Divine. Churchill is a human being. He is not a yogi aspiring to transform his nature. Today he represents the Soul of the Nation that is fighting against the Asuras. He is being guided by the Divine directly and his soul is responding magnificently. All concentration must be now to help the Allies for the victory that is ultimately assured; but there must be no looseness, not the slightest opening to the Asuras. After the battle is won, if Churchill's soul can remain still in front and he continues to be guided by the Divine, he will go very fast in the line of evolution. But generally on earth it doesn't happen like that. His human mind and vital will take the lead after the crisis is over, and then he will come down to the level of an ordinary human being, though of a high order."

After that I had no illusions about my confused understanding. And I was amused to hear of similar reactions of people from different quarters of India against the support to the Allies.

Then came the famous Cripps' Proposals. My intention here is not to narrate the story. So those who want to know the details should read the chapter "War and Politics" in the beautifully written book by Nirodbaran, entitled *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, just published by the Ashram. Here are a few personal retrospections.

The evening Sir Stafford Cripps broadcast his proposals to the Indian people from Delhi, they were discussed everywhere. In Pavitra's room the radio was installed and a connection made to Sri Aurobindo's room so that he might listen to the war news and reports from all quarters of the globe, except the Axis zones.

The next day at about 2 p.m., after the All India Radio's news at 1.30, there was a hot discussion among three Sadhaks, including Pavitra, in his room. Pavitra took the standpoint of the purely spiritual man, who judges by looking at what is behind appearances. It seemed that he had already spoken with the Mother and thus was arguing forcefully for the acceptance of the Proposals. The second person was an experienced politician of the Gandhian Congress

days and took the negative position. He argued the pros and cons of the Proposals and was of the opinion that the Indian leaders would reject it. The third, a novice, with no political experience, was more for its acceptance. The discussion became hotter and hotter, so much so that the Mother, while going from Her bathroom to Her dressing room, was attracted by the unusual volume of sound. She did not enter Her dressing room, but turned Her steps towards Pavitra's room. Before entering there, She heard part of each one's argument. Then She stepped in and asked, "What was it all about?" Pavitra said that one person argued that Cripps' offer would not be accepted by the Indian leaders. The Mother felt amused and inquired, "Why?" By then She had sat on the chair that was in front of Her. It was a very unusual and interesting scene: the Mother, still in Her beautiful Japanese kimono just after the bath, didn't seem to care to change Her dress, and was more interested in the arguments against the acceptance. Then She began to talk, with a very calm and distinct voice. One could see that She who had entered a few minutes ago had been transported somewhere else and the voice was coming from that plane. There was no tape recording arrangement in the Ashram at that time. What She said was noted down later from memory by all the three people and shown to Her. But She rejected all the three reports and said something to the effect that these were mental adjustments of what man could catch of Her utterances. She added that, if there was an exact shorthand version of Her talk, She could then with its help enter into the same plane and correctly put down what She had said. So, now after exactly thirty years, it is still more difficult to note Her words from memory. Only a shadow can be attempted.

Here it is:

"One should leave the matter of the Cripps offer entirely in the hands of the Divine, with full confidence that the Divine will work everything out. Certainly there were flaws in the offer. Nothing on earth created by man is flawless, because the human mind has a limited capacity. Yet behind this offer there is the Divine Grace directly present. The Grace is now at the door of India, ready to give its help. In the history of a nation such opportunities do not come often. The Grace presents itself at rare moments, after centuries of preparation of that nation. If it is accepted, the nation will survive and get a new birth in the Divine's consciousness. But if it is rejected the Grace will withdraw and then the nation will suffer terribly, calamity will overtake it.

"Only some months ago, the same Grace presented itself at the door of France, immediately after the Fall of Dunkirk, in the form of Churchill's offer to her to have joint nationality with England and fight the enemy. Sri Aurobindo said that it was the right idea, and it would also have helped His work immensely. But France could not raise herself above the ordinary mind and rejected it. So the Grace withdrew, and the Soul of France has gone down. One doesn't know when the real France will be up again.

"But India, with her background of intense spiritual development through the

ages, must realise the Grace that is behind this offer. It is not simply a human offering. Of course its form has been given by the human mind, and it has elements of imperfection in it. But that does not matter at all. Have faith in the Grace and leave everything to the Divine, who will surely work it out.

"My ardent request to India is that she should not reject it. She must not make the same mistake that France has done recently and has gone into the abyss."

As soon as the Mother finished speaking She hurried back to Her dressing room, without a word or a look to anybody.

Later, on the same day, the first of April, 1942, when She returned from the Prosperity after the distribution, She disclosed that Sri Aurobindo had already sent a telegram to Sir Stafford, and the latter had reciprocated very heartily, and both the telegrams were being put on the notice board by Nolini. We then read the messages and were very much encouraged.

But the next day or the day after it, Congress announced that it had rejected the offer. The Mother was quite unperturbed. She only said, "Now calamity will befall India."

The events that followed in India right up to now need no mention. We have been paying all along for our mistake.

M

A STORM, FROM THE MOTHER'S TERRACE

I STOOD alone,
as on wide tilting wings of space,
surveyed the world
and in its spinning wake beheld
two homing birds, then flailing trees,
a flapping flag, a motionless tower,
and plastic-covered men and women fetching letters
as in a sacred rite
all moving through the navel pit of time.

How smooth-unerringly they flow,
though some to North the fate winds blow
and some to South,
though men move down or to the crest,
they all are swept to Your still smile
and tumbling swiftly through Your gaze
in silent joyful regions come to rest,
Inviolable rest,
Life's rest.

MAGGI

SRI AUROBINDO'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

AN OUTLINE

(Based partly on a lecture delivered under the auspices of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, in March 1972.)

I. Introduction

THERE is little of any significance in the whole history of political thought that has not received an illumining touch at the hands of Sri Aurobindo. He takes his stand on the past and the present, and casting his vision far into the future offers a solution to the problem of politics which man can neglect only at his peril.

To give an adequate account and study the subject in any depth would need more than one treatise. All I propose to attempt here is to touch on the barest essentials and, keeping to the actual wording used by the Master as far as possible, present in outline the salient points that might be of use to a newcomer or else help pinpoint the attention of the serious student. I have purposely omitted quoting the references, as that would be to encumber the text to an unpardonable extent. All I can say is that I have tried to remain as faithful as I could to the original texts, which for the present purpose may be regarded as mainly two of his major works, namely, *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *The Human Cycle*, both of which, it may be remembered, appeared in the form of a series of essays in the *Arya*, between 1915 and 1918, and were touched up here and there before publication in book-form, only one new chapter having been added to the first book in the late 40's.

Certain critics have noticed some superficial resemblances between Sri Aurobindo's political thought and that of Hegel. A careful comparison will show that the gaps are wide. There is a closer correspondence with some lines of recent Western thought. Here it will be relevant to remember the dates, and also the significant fact that the *Arya* had a wide circulation among the élite of the West.

Sri Aurobindo's political thought naturally falls into four categories which, though overlapping to a certain extent, can for the present purpose be studied conveniently under the following distinct headings: his philosophy of history, his view of international relations and their future, his view of the state, and his attitude to the principle and practice of nationalism. I propose for the present to confine myself to the first three of these headings, reserving the last for another occasion; for it has a direct bearing on his work for India's political freedom and the source material goes back to an earlier period than that of the *Arya*.

II. Philosophy of History

(a) Meaning of the Historical Process

In concentrating on external data, economic factors, changing institutions, events and personalities, history seems to miss the sense of the goal towards which humanity is moving and the power that moves it. The power that moves it is the Supreme Divinity within and above the vague entity we describe as Nature. This Divinity is ever conscious of its aim, which in humanity is to progressively manifest through the individual and the collectivity Its Power, Unity, Freedom, Beauty, Good and Delight, Its Harmony and Truth and all the myriad riches of which It is the Absolute.

This manifestation is a slow and logical process which takes full account of the complexity of man's nature and the forces that oppose his upward endeavour. Rooted deeply in his vegetable and animal past, man, a developing soul incarnated for this progressive manifestation in a mind, life and body, has been struggling to illumine and harmonise the demands of his body, the instincts and impulses of his life, the ideas and ideals of his mind into an ordered whole. Starting with no sure basis of knowledge—for the truth-conscious soul within him remains hidden for the most part allowing the outer instruments with the ego as their nodus to develop on their own lines—he has had to proceed by a constant swing backwards and forwards between their various possibilities of self-effectuation.

In this uneven march, culture patterns of different sorts have developed in the course of history; and each well-defined culture has grown along its own lines even when exerting a mutual influence on other cultures. Thus, the ancient cultures of Asia and Europe regarded this life primarily as an occasion for the fulfilment of the rational, the ethical, the aesthetic, the spiritual being, relegating the economic *motif* to a second plan. In this too there were variations. Ancient Athens laid most stress on beauty and reason, Sparta and Rome on will and character, Israel on the ethical preoccupation, ancient India on the spiritual. In medieval times, an ardent other-worldly religiosity took hold of the cultured mind of the race to the exclusion of much else. The modern age has seen the emphasis shifting to practical reason and science, to the material and economic preoccupation, to a social and political readjustment through machinery rather than an inner change of spirit.

All the great cultures ancient and modern seem to pass through a cycle of growth and decay of which the general lines are clearly marked. There is first a seed-time when the main ideals and aspirations find their clear formulation in the minds and actions of a few exceptional individuals, like the Rishis of ancient India, the sages of ancient China and Greece. This is followed by a long period of crystallisation, when the ideals and aspirations are sought to be enshrined in forms of thought and life; this we see in the classical ages of all the great cultures. This maturity is followed inevitably by decay and death, for forms cannot endure unless they acquire the ca-

capacity to recreate themselves anew at every moment; this can be done only when man or nation learns to live consciously in the soul, and few have done that.

(b) Steps of Inner Change

Taking an overall view, the evolution of society seems to start everywhere with an infra-rational state, in which men in the mass act principally out of their customary responses to desire, need and circumstance; it is these that are canalised or crystalised in their social institutions. Society proceeds out of these beginnings towards a rational state, through three broad phases, which need not coexist at the same time all over the world; some societies advance faster while others lag behind. Besides, each of these phases contains within the same society elements of the other phases, though not in dominant form.

The first phase of the infrarational order may be called the symbolic, because the society derives its guiding principle, its basis of order, primarily from the symbols or forms of an occult Reality which it instinctively feels as governing and determining its every movement. The gods are felt to be embodiments of this Reality, a sense of their nearness is present, and their will however ascertained passes for law. Religion determines all.

The symbolic passes into the typical phase, when in the course of time with the greater predominance of the intellect the spiritual and religious *motif* is subordinated to the psychological idea and to the ethical idea which expresses it. The social order comes to be determined primarily by temperament and psychic type with a corresponding ethical discipline, so well illustrated in the ancient Indian system of the four Varnas. Dharma, that is, the inherent law proper to each being and thing, becomes now the watchword.

The Dharma codified into Shastra, inherent law fossilising into code and convention for the safe guidance of thought and life, paves the way to the next phase of the infra-rational order of society, the conventional. The tendency of the conventional phase is to fix, to arrange firmly, to formalise, to erect a system of rigid grades and hierarchies, to stereotype religion, to subject thought to infallible authorities, to cast a stamp of finality on what seems to it the finished life of man.

This brings in its train an inevitable revolt of the spirit in man, when he finds that the social order is based on sanctified tyrannies for which there is no rational justification. It is the individual who asserts the right to freely use his own reason and pass everything through the crucible of his personal judgment. Religion, thought, society, politics are all subjected to a close scrutiny, anything in them that does not seem to be rational is discarded. Reason proceeds to reconstruct everything anew.

This rational age of human development, first begun in the West with the Renaissance, has now been influencing the mind of the East in increasing measure. Its record of achievement has been impressive, but also the record of its failures. Its method has been to erect a system, work it out with enthusiasm, then discard it

on account of the defects it has shown, and then to proceed to another scheme hoping that it might prove to be enduring. The hope is always belied by experience, and this is bound to be because reason can never take the whole of life in its grasp, it has to proceed by partial constructions which do not square with the facts.

This has already led some advanced minds to question the ultimate validity of reason. A more subjective approach to literature and art and religion, the intuitivist trends in philosophy, a growing interest in psychical phenomena, a certain incertitude in the findings of physical science, a more mystical view of the state with its vague concepts of the nation-soul and its "divine" mission — these are pointers to the coming of a new and subjective age. If the search goes deeper and does not miss its true aim, this may well be the harbinger of the reign of the Spirit; the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth of which the old religions dreamed.

(c) Development of Forms

Simultaneously with this inner adventure of the spirit in man, there has been a slow evolution of the outer forms of the socio-political life in response to an inner need, and this must be traced in brief outline.

The family and the clan, the earliest forms of group life of which we have record, needed to organise themselves in a city-state or tribal kingdom for the purposes of defence and internal progress. These latter in their turn had to be replaced by the regional kingdom or the much bigger empire, if they were not to be baulked of their primary aims through constant warfare and internal discord. The bigger units assured peaceful progress, but by crushing out all local feeling and concentrating the best energies in the metropolitan centre—this applies with particular force to the big empires — themselves fell an easy prey to more vigorous barbarians when the centre itself had exhausted its vitality. This story has been repeated often enough and in Asia until quite recent times.

In Europe, after the fall of the Roman empire, a new beginning was made with the *débris* of the empire to build up the nation-state on the basis of the regional units. The nation-state, which came into being after a long see-saw between the forces of feudal anarchy and monarchical absolutism, succeeded finally in creating a lasting bond of unity where the empires both ancient and modern have failed. The nation is immortal because it is based on a real psychological unity and meets a genuine demand of the race. It now seems to have become the only viable form of the state, until a new unit, the world-state, replaces it. We shall consider that possibility in the sequel.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

A SEARCH APROPOS OF R. C. ZAEHNER'S STUDY OF SRI AUROBINDO AND TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

(Continued from the issue of January, 1973)

5 (Contd.)

ZAEHNER'S INTERPRETATION OF TEILHARD, THE QUESTION OF TEILHARD'S PANTHEISM

(d)

TEILHARD's innate push, towards accepting both pantheism and Catholicism in their essence and going past them to a greater synthesis, may be caught even in the set piece, *Pantheism and Christianity*, which he wrote in 1923 to avert all suspicion of heresy from his religion of the Whole, his mysticism of a living cosmic Unity. He wanted to show that he denounced pantheism in its generally understood connotation and was therefore faithful to Christian orthodoxy while yet asking his Church to follow his pantheist-seeming turn towards the universal All — a drive which he took to be central to enlightened modernism and which he deemed indispensable to the Church if the latter was not to become obsolete and untrue.

As a Churchman he was concerned to deprecate the submergence of the human elements in an impersonal cosmic Whole and to enforce the existence of a personal and transcendent God. But he persistently asserted that a cosmic Whole of a non-impersonal kind enfolding yet not submerging the human elements is a vital necessity of religious experience just as much as a transcendent Person. He expressed his basic aim to combine pantheism and Christianity instead of harping on the usual gap seen between them: "My approach...will be...to narrow that gap...by bringing out what one might call the Christian soul of pantheism or the pantheist aspect of Christianity."¹

The pantheism he sought to avoid was that which he dubbed "Spinozism, Hegelianism, theosophy, monism"² — especially the first-named which all Catholics consider the arch-heresy. But, when he came to describe the pantheist trend which he saw as an unavoidable ingredient of human religious thought and emotion and most markedly of the modern spirit which stands perennially in front of a universe evolving as a single bloc, he employed terms no Spinozist would have rejected: "What

¹ *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1971), p. 56.

² *Ibid.*

we reach out to grasp in our aspirations is something which is diffused throughout, which permeates everything. Fundamentally we have but one passion: to become one with the world which envelops us without our ever being able to distinguish either its face or its heart.... When we read the evidence of certain Christian and pagan mystics or even simply what many perfectly ordinary people may tell us in confidence, we cannot but quite seriously question whether there may not be a sort of cosmic consciousness in our soul, more diffuse than our personal consciousness, more intermittent, but perfectly well defined — a sort of feeling of the presence of all beings at the same time, so that they are not perceived as multiple and separate but as forming part of one and the same unit..¹

To ward off the charge of Spinozism, Teilhard takes care to use the word “sort” when speaking of “cosmic consciousness” and adds after “unit” at the close of his definition the phrase: “at least in the future.” By this phrase he brings in a gratuitous and ridiculous reservation. No mystic, Christian or pagan, talks merely of the future. Teilhard is trying to twist the pantheist experience or the realisation of the cosmic consciousness into just an inkling of the Pleroma of Christ, the ultimate Mystical Body, the consummated creation which is his magnificent obsession — an event of universal spiritual union he expects to occur millions of years hence. However, we may note two things. First, the mention of “certain Christian mystics” and, secondly, the words he uses elsewhere in the same essay when, naming one Christian mystic of eminence, he focuses a particular interpretation of the Pleromatic union.

He leads up to those words through a general discussion of the Pleroma. With his pantheist tendency he inveighs against the current conception of the Pleroma as an association like a family or a social group. Family or society is simply an aggregation formed by moral or juridical relationships and not by physical or organic ties. It is such ties that Teilhard wants. He regrets that even the theologians who think of the Pleroma as holding together by characteristics not external to the soul but by a new and higher inner life, a super-animation from within, make “the very common mistake of regarding the spiritual as an attenuation of the material whereas it is in fact the material carried beyond itself: it is super-material.”² Hence the so-called ties they want are of an “infra-physical nature”. “Thus what they make...of the Pleroma is primarily a vast association, a family on a very large scale, in which the individuals are held together principally by bonds of common agreement and affection.”³ Even the most advanced Christianity, failing to go further than an “infra-physical” organicity, stands condemned in Teilhard’s eyes. He appeals beyond it and still more beyond “the language of the Gospels, which are...inclined to announce and describe the kingdom of God in terms of the family or of society”⁴ — he appeals to some expressions in the Pauline and Johannine Scripture to support his own pantheistically slanted view. An association, having not the least sign of an aggregation, is for him the import of this Scripture.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

"St. Paul," says Teilhard, "gives us to understand that the happiness of the elect should not be understood as a solitary, self-centred enjoyment of God. On the contrary, heaven will consist in the close association of all the elect, gathered into one single body under the influence of their head, Jesus Christ. However individual our salvation may be from many points of view, it is in consequence accomplished only in a collective fulfilment. The heavenly Jerusalem, the Apocalypse tells us, knows but one medium of knowledge and action: the illuminating and unifying radiance emanating from the God-man.... We shall be saved, and we shall see God only in so far as we are one in Christ Jesus."¹ There, Teilhard believes, the supernatural organism of the Pleroma is hinted to have "a structure at least as consistent as that which we see in the tangible realities of the natural cosmos".²

In this structure, nevertheless, he finds no submergence of the individual soul. Not wanting to sacrifice either pantheism or Christianity, he writes: "...we Christians can (and, what is more, we must) understand the mystical union of the elect in Christ as combining the warm flexibility of social relationships with the imperative rigour and irreversibility of the physical and biological laws or attractive forces operating in the present universe."³ It is here that he introduces the name of one eminent Christian mystic and, in order to clarify his own view of the Pleromatic Mystical Body, cautions us against this mystic's vision and yet comes out with a statement full of implications germane to the point we are seeking to make about Teilhard's ineradicable *penchant* for pantheism. He says:

"When we try to understand and express in physical terms the way in which the mystical body (pleroma) is held together, there is, of course, one extreme we must avoid if we are not to 'founder in our faith'. We should not do what could be read into the language censured in some mystics (Eckhart, for example) and try to make of the consummated Christ a being so unique that his subsistence, his person, his 'I', takes the place of the subsistence, the personality, of all the elements incorporated in his mystical body. This concept of a hypostatic union extended to the whole universe (which, incidentally, is simply Spinoza's pantheism) is not in itself either contradictory or absurd; but it conflicts with the whole Christian view of individual freedom and personal salvation."⁴

What, first of all, is most surprising as well as revealing here is the joining up of Spinoza's pantheism with the consummated Christ visioned as a state in which all souls are absorbed into his supreme personal selfhood. Spinozism becomes the doctrine of a divine Person whose incarnation is the entire universe. The "hypostatic union" of God and matter, which constitutes, in the eyes of the Church, the unique phenomenon of the Incarnate Word in the historical Jesus is seen to apply on a cosmically extended scale. So the pantheism of Spinoza remains no longer the arch-heresy of an impersonal Whole of undifferentiated all-submerging unity: it figures an infinite "I" with whom human elements get identified in their final fulfil-

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴ *Ibid.*

ment. Spinozism is made equivalent to a conception *à la* Eckhart of Christ's Mystical Body. Teilhard's ostensible repudiation of pantheism in its generally understood connotation is thus undermined by himself and a "Christian soul" of pantheism found without further need of converting the idea of a monistic Whole with which all human elements are substantially one in their ultimate nature.

In the second place, we have the explicit judgment that Spinozism is neither contradictory nor absurd in itself. Teilhard is shown to be intellectually quite ready to embrace pantheism. Only his adherence to the Christian view, that unless the human elements are distinct in substance from God they cannot either exercise freewill or experience salvation from their sins, holds him back. But when he sees Spinozist pantheism as a cosmicised Eckhart-visioned Christianity the suggestion cannot be helped that the souls before they are absorbed in the consummated Christ could, in spite of their substantial oneness with God, know and feel themselves as Christianity conceives them. Surely, Eckhart, for all his implications of a "hypostatic union extended to the whole universe" — his Spinozist pantheism, in short — so regarded the souls.

Teilhard's sense of a conflict between the Eckhartian Christ-consummation and "the whole Christian view of individual freedom and personal salvation" is itself reduced to a vanishing point when he comes to consider the true meaning of the Christian rite of Mass and Communion. He asks us to realise "the full depth and universality of their mystery":

"We now understand that when Christ descends sacramentally into each one of his faithful it is not simply in order to communē with him: it is in order to join him, physically, a little more closely to himself and to all the rest of the faithful in the growing unity of the world. When, through the priest, Christ says, '*Hoc est corpus meum*', 'This is my body', the words reach out infinitely far beyond the morsel of bread over which they are pronounced: they bring the entire mystical body into being. The priestly act extends beyond the transubstantiated Host to the cosmos itself, which, century after century, is gradually being transformed by the incarnation, itself never complete. From age to age, there is but one single mass in the world: the true Host, the total Host, is the universe which is continually being more intimately penetrated and vivified by Christ. From the most distant origin of things until their unforeseeable consummation, through the countless convulsions of boundless space, the whole of nature is slowly and irresistibly undergoing the supreme consecration. Fundamentally — since all time and forever — but one single thing is being made in creation: the body of Christ."¹

Reflecting on his own words Teilhard tells us that by thus translating "the mysteries and the practical application of our faith...into terms of organic and physical realities,"² and understanding "the universal function exercised by the incarnate God,"³ the Christian "has...stolen the pantheist's fire, the fire with which he threat-

Ibid., pp. 73-4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³ *Ibid.*

ened to set the earth ablaze with an incandescence that would not have been Christ's."¹ And how exactly is the fire stolen? The Christian, says Teilhard, "is more successful in his 'unitarian' attempt" because he "knows that in the powerful embrace of the omnipresent Christ, souls do not lose their personality, but win it", whereas the pantheist, "while claiming to unify beings, merges them in an undifferentiated whole; which means, in fact, that his monism annihilates the mystery and joy of union".²

There we have the general suggestion that the Christian differs from the pantheist insofar only as souls preserve the experience of uniting in the midst of the union instead of losing it. Of course, Teilhard misconceives the loss as a disappearance of consciousness: what really happens is the all-effacing realisation, by the parts, of their own ultimate Whole-Self. But Teilhard's Christian does not directly emphasise that the parts are not the same in substance as the whole. Nor is there any stress on the Christ-Whole being altogether separate from the cosmos. The Teilhardian Whole has two sides: Christ eternally complete in himself and Christ becoming complete in his universal body of Nature evolving through the ages into Spirit. As regards this second side we have on the one hand a divine process going on from "the most distant origin of things" and a diviner process from the time of Christ's birth. In both cases there is the presence of the Supreme Being in the substance of the world — a vari-aspected and vari-phased incarnation. Now and then Teilhard wishes not to commit himself to a world-wide "hypostatic union", but, by and large, the attitude appears to be that there is such a union without its implying necessarily a merger of the parts in the totality which has put forth partial self-expressions. How else are we to interpret his insistence on the universe being "the true Host, the total Host"? We may remember his letter of 1915 to Père Victor Fontoyne in which he speaks of "the Earth becoming like a great Host in which God would be contained for us".³ All description of the cosmos as a Christ-containing Host must mean, as in the rite of the consecrated and transubstantiated bread, that the universe is the body of Christ and that with each act of mass the increase of the cosmos's Christification — the increase which took place with the birth of Jesus — is reinforced and extended. With such a Host-concept, Christianity is bound to shade off into pantheism, no matter how Christ-coloured the latter may be.

Olivier Rabut leaves us in no doubt on this point. Commenting on certain phrases in Teilhard's *The Divine Milieu*, which also carry his crypto-pantheism, Rabut warns us: "We must be careful not to imagine that there is such a thing as a 'pan-Christism', in which everything contains a fragment of Christ. Christ is *linked* with the cosmos, but the universe is not and never will be a vaster Incarnation of him. It is better, then, not to speak of 'a silently accruing presence of Christ in things'. Earth is not (even if we add 'beyond itself') 'the body of him who is and him who is coming'. There is no such thing as a cosmic Host; the phrase has only a meta-

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ Quoted in Henri de Lubac's *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin* (Collins, London, 1968), p. 244.

phorical meaning, and is too misleading to be retained. The universe is an extension of the body of Christ; this concept, which is very profound, is well worth elaboration; but we must be careful to distinguish the body of Christ from its adjuncts. And the insistence on the physical or biological reality of the Mystical Body is also misleading; the vital (and real) bonds which unite are all supernatural."¹

As against Rabut, Teilhard has the conviction: "it is Christ who in a real and unmetaphorical sense of the word holds up the universe. So incredible a cosmic function may well be too much for our imagination, but I do not see how we could possibly avoid attributing it to the Son of Mary. The Incarnate Word could not be the supernatural (hyper-physical) centre of the universe if he did not function *first* as its physical, natural, centre. Christ cannot sublimate creation in God without progressively raising it up by his influence through successive circles of matter and spirit. That is why, in order to bring all things back to his Father, he had to make himself one with all — he had to enter into contact with every one of the zones of the creation from the lowest and most earthly to the zone that is closest to heaven.... Even, therefore, in that aspect of its evolution which is regarded as the most 'natural', it is towards Christ that the universe, since all time, has been moving as one integral whole. '*Omnis creatura usque adhuc ingemiscit et parturit.*' Has any evolutionist pantheism, in fact, ever spoken more magnificently of the Whole than St. Paul did in the words he addressed to the first Christians?"²

Teilhard, as usual, formulates himself apparently in as Christian a way as possible but the difference from Rabut cannot be missed. Rabut is anxious to make us understand things metaphorically, Teilhard is all for an unmetaphorical sense. The former takes supernatural bonds to be the vital and real ones, the latter gives primarily a physical and natural function to the Christ-centre of the cosmos and even labels the supernatural bonds "hyper-physical" (equivalent to "super-material"). The very quotation from St. Paul conjures up a world-picture to which Rabut could never subscribe. The footnote, to the Latin words, by the editor of Teilhard's book runs: "After Romans 8:22: 'The whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now.' " If the universe can act like this it must be basically a living universe, one single whole with consciousness in various modes of manifestation everywhere. To see the universe thus is to see it under a certain aspect of pantheism — the aspect which we may designate panpsychism. C.C. Martindale, a friend of Teilhard's and a fellow Jesuit, realises such an aspect when in an article on Teilhard he refers to the same quotation and, apropos of the Pleroma, says: "...since the Consummation is not yet reached, Saint Paul can say (Romans 8:22) that *all* creation is *still* 'groaning and suffering birth-pangs *along with us* and joins in our yearning' for the ransom of our humanity. We agree that a certain timidity has been felt about this apparent equipping *all* creation with a sort of consciousness: even the

¹ *Dialogue with Teilhard de Chardin* (Stagbooks, Sheed & Ward, London and New York, 1961), pp 88-9.

² *Op. cit.*, pp 71-2.

late Monsignor Ronald Knox said that if Saint Paul was referring to the whole of creation, he must be speaking with 'something of a poetic outlook'.¹ In the same context of the world being not "yet complete", Martindale has also the remark: "...when speaking of such matters it is hard not to sound pantheist, at least at times."²

Teilhard has two other phrases from St. Paul. They come at the close of his *Pantheism and Christianity*. We may cite the entire concluding passage:³

"Christ is clothed in the earth: let this earth, then, grow ever greater that Christ's raiment may be ever more magnificent! Christ guides from within the universal progress of the world: may our consciousness, then, of the bond that runs through all things, of their constant movement in being, grow ever more keen, and so make the impact of Christ upon us ever greater.

"Already, at this very moment, by everything we do, we all share in all, through and in him whom we might think distant from us, but in whom, quite literally, '*vivimus, movemur et sumus*'.⁴ A little while yet — what hope could be grander? — creation, totally dominated by Christ, will be lost in him and through him within the final and permanent unity, where (in St Paul's very words, the most clear-cut assertion we have of Christian 'pantheism') '*est et o theos panta en pasin*'.⁵"

On the Greek quotation, which serves for a *leit-motif* to many of Teilhard's works, we shall have a number of things to say at a later stage. Suffice it here to note that Teilhard himself suggests its pantheist bearing, even if Christianised, and that it belongs to the same philosophical and mystical background against which St. Paul's apostleship was carried out and from which it drew expressions at the same time connected with the pagan world and sliding into the Christian. The phrase in Latin is part of St. Paul's speech "in the midst of Mars' hill" to the "men of Athens". Immediately after this famous turn, meaning "in him we live, and move, and have our being", we read: "as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring."⁶ Albert Schweitzer says of the famous turn that its "God-mysticism...is Stoic" and adds about the succeeding one that it "is from Aratus (*Phaenomena*, 5), who like Paul was a native of Cilicia".⁷ Schweitzer continues: "that which is expressed is the Stoic pantheistic Mysticism. It implies a way of looking at life in which the conception of the divine is immanent. God is conceived as the essence of all the forces at work in nature. Accordingly all that is 'is in God'. In man as capable of thought this fact becomes an object of consciousness."⁸ If, unlike several Bible scholars, we accept as authentic the words put into Paul's mouth by the author of *The*

¹ "Thy Labour Under the Sun", *Teilhard de Chardin Pilgrim of the Future*, edited by Neville Braybrooke (Libra Books, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1966), p. 94.

² *Ibid*, p. 93.

³ *Op. cit*, p. 75.

⁴ *Ibid*, fn 7. 'We live and move and have our being' (Acts 17.28).

⁵ *Ibid*, fn 8 'God will be all in all', after I Cor. 15:28.

⁶ *The New Testament*, Cambridge, 1899. The Acts XVII, 28.

⁷ *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, translated into English by William Montgomery, B.D. (A. & C. Black, Ltd, London, 1931), p. 7.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 8.

Acts we should have to wonder whether the Apostle was not harmonising with his doctrine of the transcendent God the immanence of divine substance visioned by Stoic pantheism, rather than merely using for his own ends the ideas and language familiar to the Athenians. Such harmonisation would be "Christian pantheism" in the most significant sense — the sense which so often, in spite of disclaimers, seems apt to Teilhard's pantheism-haunted Christianity. The aptness appears to be confirmed by Teilhard's own pen when he goes out of his way to assert that we live and move and have our being in the Divine "quite literally".

The utter literalness has indeed to be there once we talk of Christ guiding the universal progress of the world from within and once this guidance of all the universe is seen to be an activity inward "even in that aspect of its evolution which is regarded as the most 'natural' ". Teilhard is introducing a new formula of God's immanence. That formula runs through the entire mass of his writings and is always pantheist in temper and tone. Nothing short of this characteristic faces us when he spoke of "the transparency of the world" to the eye of faith and explained that if we are to set God "as a focus at the summit of the universe" (Omega Point, Pleroma) we must find God "simultaneously impregnating with his presence even the most insignificant evolutionary movement". What Teilhard thus expounded in *Human Energy* (1937) is equally obvious in *The Divine Milieu* (1926-27):¹ "The Creator and, more specifically, the Redeemer have steeped themselves in all things and penetrated all things to such a degree that, as Blessed Angela of Foligno said, 'the world is full of God.' "

Teilhard's "immanence" is surely not identical with "immanentism" which denies God's transcendence, yet neither can it be identified with the old Christian term which accompanied the concept of transcendence. While always defending divine transcendence, he had to make a special effort to reconcile it with "an immanence which...must be given progressively a more important and more explicit place in our philosophy and religion".² This immanence is not given greater weight merely because of world-values as such: it is what it is because of "the new properties of a universe in process of cosmogenesis".³ It is an immanence organic to the world: it carries on cosmic evolution by being united with it and being internal to it and not just by an omnipresence such as Christianity conceives, namely, a power that is external to the cosmos and separate from it and is everywhere by only its causative action supporting the existence of the cosmos and serving as the ground for the universe's dynamic continuance but never functioning as the inner soul of the world, as the Cosmic Christ who is the all-evolver and all-consummator. Teilhard brings a crucial metamorphosing touch to the traditional omnipresence. While wishing to save thereby modern mankind from the traditional pantheism to which it feels drawn through the new properties of a universe in process of cosmogenesis, Teilhard still recognises a core of vital truth pressing him to pantheise

¹ Translated from the French by Bernard Wall (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1960), p. 94.

² Letter of 3 August 1952 to Père André Ravier.

Ibid.

Christianity. And his metamorphosing touch no less than his saving wish is clear in those early words¹ of his: "It is faith in the divine Omnipresence, completed by the doctrine of the Universal Christ, that will provide the antidote to the temptation of pantheism."

The doctrine of the Universal Christ — the Creator who, in *Pantheism and Christianity*, functions as the universe's "physical, natural centre", "the bond" running "through all things", and makes himself "one with all" and enters "into contact with every one of the zones of the creation" and wears the earth as a "raiment" which is a living tissue secretly "groaning", charged with 'travail' for a supreme goal and meant from the beginning to be increasingly the Creator's "Mystical Body" and growing, ever since his incarnation in a human form, more and more swiftly and extensively Christified and turned into a sacramental "Host" by means of "the universal function of the incarnate God" — it is this doctrine that is behind Teilhard's taking Paul's great declaration from Mars' Hill "quite literally". And the complete literalness cannot but push Teilhard beyond Roman Catholic orthodoxy, while his ubiquitous affirmation of God's transcendence as the originating background of the inwardly animated phenomenon of cosmogenesis must break through the usual limits of pantheism.

We may repeat what we have said in other places, that the double movement never found definitive articulation in Teilhard, but it is the central drive in him and the cause of all the ambiguities and ambivalences which his co-religionist commentators regret in his writings and attempt to gloss over.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Writings in Time of War* (Collins, London, 1968), p. 121, fn. 10.

THE MAGICAL CAROUSEL

A ZODIACAL ODYSSEY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(Continued from the issue of January, 1973)

(This is the story of a being in Manifestation. The children represent two complementary poles within the individual. It is also a treatment of astrology, each image evoked being a key to the deeper meaning of the signs.)

CHAPTER XII

Unity, Return to the Origin

VAL and Pom-pom feel the currents in the jug begin to swell with tremendous force. They are thrust against the tightly closed lid several times and they sense that either it opens or all the contained energy will finally explode. Eventually on the cover they see the symbol and the number 12, and with the greatest joy the children use the final key. The lid flings open and releases the cyclonic forces on which they tumble into the last of the three realms.

Again the tornado whips around them with mighty force, this time descending in an ultra-sonic plunge until a great splash is heard. Val and Pom-pom find that the enormous gust of currents has charged into an apparently vast body of water, still spinning and thereby forming a radiant whirlpool. They are bounced hither and thither in the flow until suddenly each find themselves riding on the backs of two odd looking fish, whirling in a circle in the magic whirlpool — but one going in one direction and the other in another, crossing each other's path each time around.

Gloo gloo gloo gloo glooooo

Gloo gloo gloo gloo gloooooooooo

"Valieeeeeee"

"Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat..."

"I can't swiiiiimmmmm..."

"Swim!" one of the Fishes shouts. "Ha! Ha! Ha! He says he can't swiiiiim. You're in the cosmic sea! You've always been swimming in the cosmic seeeaaaa, only unawares."

"There's no beginning and no end to this sea! You've always been in it. Gloo gloo gloo glooooo!"

"Pom-pom, these Fishes are mad! Maaaaaaaaaaaad! Just hold tight, as best you caaaaaaaaann..."

And round and round they whirl on the Fishes' backs, a very joggily ride indeed, for the Fishes are springing along to the rhythm of a lively tune they whistle.

"This is certainly a bouncy ride," Val yells to her Fish.

"Bouncy, you say! Maybe, but have no fear. Even if you fall, where would you fall to? There's not an end nor beginning you see, to this cosmic sea."

Hippity-hop, bouncy-SPLASH!

"Are we going to go on forever like this?" Pom-pom asks his Fish, for he is getting rather dizzy.

The Fish responds:

"Forever is never and never is forever,
and now is then and then is now,
and gone is coming and coming is gone,
and to be has been and been always was....

What was your question?"

"Never mind."

Gloo gloo gloo gloooooooooo

Really the whirlpool never seems to end. They go down and down in this sea that is no sea, of water that is not water. But at last the spin gets tighter and tighter, the Fishes are circling nearer to one another until finally, side by side, they announce:

"It's Piscesland and February 21st,
the beginning that starts an end
and the end that's a beginning!"

And they send Val and Pom-pom off on a final spin through the rest of the spiral, and behold! At the end of the whirlpool they plop into a great blue-green bubble, suspended like a brilliant transparent star in the vast cosmic sea.

Looking out of the bubble into the far distance the children see a vague light. Something approaches through the enormous void. At first only a tiny light, as it comes closer it proves to be a fantastic sight indeed! Nearing the big bubble is the glorious image of the Ram with golden horns, pulling the chariot that carries Great Hunter of Ariesland. Their movements are graceful and slow, as those carried out under water, and there is total silence, the silence of the realm of sea.

What a joyous sight for Val and Pom-pom!

They shout to Great Hunter and Ram and wave their arms, so thrilled to see these wonderful creatures who started their trip through Zodiacland. But Hunter and Ram take no heed of them and commence to circle about the great bubble. Val and Pom-pom float a while with them from the inside, gesticulating, calling, shouting — but to no avail. Ram continues the parade around the bubble in slow motion, as Hunter snaps a silent whip over his head.

"Pom-pom, there's another light out there," cries Val.

And in the same manner as before, the light comes closer, this time revealing itself to be Malamulapaga preceded by Bull, and all the little elves swarming around their adored mistress. Val and Pom-pom call to them frantically in the hope that at least Bull will hear his little friends he so ungraciously butted out of Taurusland. But they are as unsuccessful as with Ram and Great Hunter. The party also begins to circle

around the bubble, taking its place behind Hunter's chariot, all moving in the same slow motion and oblivious of each other and everything around.

Again another light appears resembling a distant star. It is seen to be the Twins of Geminiland, elegantly walking arm in arm, their noses in books. They take their place in the circle behind Malamulapaga and in the same manner parade around the bubble that encloses Val and Pom-pom.

More little stars appear. There is the Queen of Night and her many girls from Cancerland, dancing around her with garlands of flowers and vaporous veils, preceded by the enormous coral-coloured Crab, Val and Pom-pom's mysterious escort to the peculiar castle of the Queen.

Now a cart comes pulled by gnomes and inside rides the merry King of Day from Leoland, with his most noble Lion. Behind them follow the maidens of Virgoland, marching in a very neat file with Lily Spotless at their head.

From another direction the Judge of Libraland appears, accompanying Frank and Felicity Harmony, perched on the life-size scales in perfect balance. They are immediately followed by Hayala of Scorpioland and the gigantic Scorpion, going through the motions of her special dance.

Pom-pom quickly spots the flamed arrows of the Centaur from Sagittariusland, and soon the Archer appears with Heropodus Heronimus mounted on his horse back. They join the magical carousel that continues its graceful parade around the suspended bubble.

Now there appears the immobile image of Omanisol as she is escorted into the round by the Goat-Fish of Capricornland, who makes great efforts to move her along without disturbing her state of deep concentration.

Then the Speaker of Aquariusland follows with his Sacred Server, pouring the etheric waves from a jug he is carrying. They also take their place in the carousel, completing the images Val and Pom-pom have come to know so far in Zodiacland. The children are desperate for they cannot be heard or seen by these creatures they know so well. None of them takes, any notice of Val and Pom-pom and there doesn't seem to be any way to unite with these people once more.

"Gloo gloo."

They spin around to find the two inverted Fishes, floating in the bubble.

"If you want to be united with all your friends it seems you'll have to break the bubble! Gloo gloo glooooo!"

"How?" Val and Pom-pom shout.

"Ayama! Ayama! She breaks all bubbles. Yes, she's a bubble breaker! Gloo gloo!"

"Where is she?"

"Everywhere, that is

everywhere is no where

and no where is everywhere

and here is there and there is here

and in is out and out is in
 hmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm, let's see
 that would make her location. .right...."

Bing!...and suddenly Val and Pom-pom see the light change in the bubble and the zodiacal carousel becomes only vaguely visible. Looking up and around they find that the bubble has turned into the substance of a veily material, as those of a woman's dress. In fact, looking closer they can just make out the features of a person encompassing them, part of the billowy, magical cloth.

"Valie, this is a dream! She can't be the bubble or come out of it! She hasn't even got any feet!"

And the woman speaks to them.

"A dream, yes, this is a dream. There is the big dream and all the little ones, those of nighttime sleep. You will awaken from all of these, the big ones and the little ones. If you would have us all you must first let us go.

"The past is gone and the future should give no care," at which point the Fishes scurry up to the spheres Val and Pom-pom hold and snap the plusses out with their mouths. They are left with only the void circle.

"It is the present that contains everything, all that is past and all that will be...."

"But this is the end," cries Val, "it's all over and gone. We must leave Piscesland and we have no more keys!"

"Is there an end? Only myths have an end so that they may begin again, and it is only the power of love that makes of every end a beginning. Now, help me to take the veils away that separate you from the rest."

"How can you do that," Pom-pom asks.

"With the power of love."

There is a moment of profound stillness and silence in the veiled bubble, even the Fishes have stopped. Val and Pom-pom close their eyes and concentrate very deeply on this feeling Ayama has spoken of...and then. ..

Bing! She, veils and bubble all disappear and the two Fishes then whisk Val and Pom-pom on their backs and take their place in the majestic parade, completing the circle and forming one, united cosmic carousel.

After circling many times, Ram then breaks out into a new direction and all the creatures follow in a long and radiant file that spirals through the vast cosmic sea, on and on into the void, finally disappearing in swirls and layers of fine purple mist.

Pisces is a Water sign, feminine, ruled by Jupiter and co-ruled by Neptune. It is the exaltation of Venus and thus the three "benefics" of the planetary system join in this last sign to indicate, beyond any possible doubt, the ultimate goal of Manifestation, a conscious realisation of the eternal perfection.

This is the last journey of the tornado. In Capricorn, a sign of Cardinal energy, the children were lifted with great force out of the land of Omanisol and carried away, hence the quality of the Cardinal signs of forceful change with

impact and direction. In Aquarius, of Fixed quality, they are immediately thrust into the centre where it would seem movement is arrested. Here in Pisces, a sign of Mutable energy, they abandon themselves into the flow itself, are found to be spinning right in the movement of the whirlpool, but each going in opposite directions and apparently without direction: the key to the quality of mutable energy.

Now all resistances have fallen away. All that was seen, understood, accumulated in the way of experiences, no matter how sublime, dissolves in the waters of divine love — the ocean permeating and sustaining the whole of creation. Power (Capricorn) and Love (Pisces) join — the indication was given already in the symbol of the Goat with the tail of a Fish — and on this élan the individual is able to dissolve completely and to unite with the essence from which he sprang. He has attained unity of being, but it would appear that even an attachment to this very achievement must go, since what marked the passage into a unified realisation, Capricorn and Aquarius, also parades around the bubble in silent, timeless suspension, patiently awaiting the moment when the children will let them also fall, to be thus one with the Origin of all that is. In this act of abandon, of complete and total absorption in love, the final surrender is accomplished and thus all that had fallen they regain in an even greater expansion, as they join the whole Carousel which carries them to a new birth. But from the true and sacred waters of Pisces, from the spiritual journey such as the one which has taken place, the only birth which can ensue is that of the divine child.

EPILOGUE

The purple mist becomes ever thicker until Val and Pom-pom can no longer see the magical line of zodiacal figures, of which they are the tail. And they soon begin to roll and roll through the deeply coloured smoke like two leaves tossed to and fro by the wind. It is an ecstatic feeling for the children, to be so carried about, without a care of yesterday or tomorrow, free of joys and sorrows, of hopes and desires. The ecstasy builds and builds until they burst into a very fine light, the rays of Glow who welcomed them to Zodiailand.

"Look at the circles you carry," speaking to them once again as if right inside their bodies.

Val and Pom-pom observe that the spheres now contain all the signs and symbols of the lands they have visited, carved into the globes that once were smooth.

"Bring these with you back to Earth, all these figures you have seen outside and inside yourselves, and so you shall carry with you the message of Zodiailand, of Oneness, ... of Love."

Glow carries them along for a while and behold! There is Fritz, shining in the distance! He is still suspended in the middle of the violet mist, awaiting the children and joyous to be moving once again.

They enter the rocket and before Val and Pom-pom can even blink their eyes,

they find themselves soaring into space and heading toward a star with a great ring of light around it.

“Valie, Valie, it’s the magical carousel! Look!”

“Of course, Pom-pom, it could even be the magical carousel.....”

(Concluded)

PATRIZIA NORELLI-BACHELET

GOD’S STEEP

ASK not yourself: “How can I climb God’s steep?”
 O not by reason rose that impossible hill
 And reason shall not be its conqueror.
 Only some animal hunger for the height,
 Dreaming not of the path but of the goal,
 A cry from the dazzled depth of a child-heart,
 Can dare as in somnambulist ecstasy
 The sheer face of the superconscious Calm.
 No look behind at the broadening abyss,
 No scrutiny of the beetling rock above,
 But a close clasping of ledge on small keen ledge,
 A love that clings in blindness to the light
 And feels in every inch of intimate height
 A foretaste of the all-fulfilling peak,
 Till suddenly the hushed infinitudes
 Halo the thought-transcending human head —
 While wise men chattering faintly far below
 Argue for ever the unattainable!

AMAL KIRAN

SEVEN LIVES

A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

(Continued from the issue of January, 1973)

CHAPTER III

PART 2

"POSEIDON is kind and we reach our destination this second time without mishap. Even the beasts bear the journey well, though their spirits flag with the tedium of the voyage, and they totter with the motion of the sea, till we warriors fret for land and open field to recover the fettle of our chargers, our most precious instruments of battle. Now that the ships have once again found shore, we lead the horses staggering down onto the beach, crooning to each as though it were a human child; and we stroke and ease the quivering, high-strung flesh, while bathing hoofs and tendons in the foaming tide. Next come the chariots and the arms, the armour and tents, and finally the cattle and sheep for the cooking fires, until the Argive camp spreads out upon the hitherto wide and empty beach between the extended double line of the ships drawn up along the sand."

"After our disembarkation, come all the daily chores of preparation and training for the days of battle ahead. Even the presence of the gods fades in our consciousness as we lose ourselves in every petty detail of armour, chariot, harness and bridle that might spell life or death upon the field. Finally we are able to race our horse teams, revived and reassured after the voyage, across the plain before our camp, and then we know we are ready to take our part against the might of Troy."

"Next morning at the call to battle, after a brief assembly of our Argive chiefs resplendent in their panoply of war, we rush into the fray, each of us choosing his prey like a lion on the prowl, and then driving home his spears as fangs upon the throat of a failing deer."

"All around us swirls the vast tumultuous noise of battle, the veils of tumbling dust, and the flat, dull reek of blood from those for whom all is already done and who grotesquely bestrew the field like the broken, discarded toys of some savage and titanic game. Yet in the midst of it, I move from conquest to conquest in a strange calm. I do not know if it is the same with you, invincible Diomed. No, he shakes his head, I can see that he is hot with triumph, and like the trained athlete and warrior is exulting in his battle art. But I? I move as though within a silent dream, my horses flying before me like dark, airy phantoms, while the Trojan warriors I slay fall away from me like spectres — not dying, for there is no death in this dream of mine, but simply fading

from my vision. Still I know that even acclaimed heroes have not fought as I am fighting today despite my youth and inexperience. Never has my body worked with such mechanical perfection. Never have my horses or my charioteer carried me so steadily through the treacherous, rutted ground where we make war. The reins are light upon the horses' mouths — it seems as though the intelligence of the gods itself has entered between their black and shiny brows, and of themselves they take me where they must even before my charioteer can guide them."

"How true he speaks, for when the day is done, none can leave talking of Asterion's prowess equalled in any single day only by fabled Achilles. Yet in the midst of praise he sits silent and we are still further amazed that he does not drink and rejoice like the rest of us."

"Rejoice I cannot, dearest of kinsmen nor, for that matter, mourn, for I recount to you how more than ever before I feel mine was not the hand that slew today. Mine was not the chariot bearing me from victory to victory, mine not the horses nor the spear that never failed to seize upon its quarry. A force greater than that of any mortal being worked in my stead, and I would be a fool to claim otherwise.... Not even 'fool' but say 'a common thief' to take upon myself what was and is not mine."

"Instantly, I am abashed before the wisdom of my companion, though he is a mere boy before me. I ask his pardon, and then we speak of lighter things in strolling together at night upon the sands and watching the sea break white and cool about our feet."

"For many days thereafter we fight on, yet truly the gods are with us for each evening we return unscathed to replenish ourselves and rest at ease within our ships and tents. Then at last a new day dawns which sets itself apart from all the others. This special morning I feel no ordinariness, no routine about the chores of preparation. How splendid even the sun appears as it rises behind the beleaguered city, and how precious each little task performed. Today in the early light, I feel in my spear a living friend, in my armour the intimate embrace of an old and trusted guardian who keeps the enemies' shafts from my tender, all-too-human body. See how many dents it bears now, with what noble pride the chased patterns upon it show their scars and scratches. Equally beloved do I feel the shield upon my arm, my omnipresent fortress in both assault and flight. And last yet perhaps sweetest of my possessions that accompany me to battle are the muzzles of my black chargers as they nestle about my neck and shoulders. Oh, lovely creatures, who have borne my life time and again behind your flying hooves and your tails like streaming penants of victory: how many times have you not sped me to safety with your godly instinct truer and surer than any man's?"

"At last I climb into my chariot beside my charioteer and the horses begin to move and gather speed. I look about me and continue to marvel at the seemingly heightened splendour of all that lives and breathes on this radiant morning. The vision of Phoebus Apollo seated in his glade returns to me and suddenly I think how

strange it is that in such a mood I should be on my way to take another mortal's blood. But then without a further moment of delay a great gust of wind rushes upon my chariot buffeting the great shield strapped onto my arm, and I know that Pallas Athene hovers about me. 'What weakness is this?' she cries to me from the skies. 'On this your greatest day you are not to fail me.' Instantly, she descends with all her power and propels me forward into the core of the fight. Suddenly, it is as though she points and says within my heart, 'There is the Trojan hero, Tisamenes, who awaits your spear and sword and is your destined victim.'

"I look at the one who stands before my chariot and see a giant not built with grace or beauty but with the strength of a rough-hewn, granite pillar. Beneath his helmet shows a closely curled black beard, while through the metal mouth-piece of his visor comes the bull's roar of his war cry. Quickly we lose our spears in the first exchange, for my horses swerve at the last second and both my throw and his miss their mark. Now I leap from my chariot and we rush at each other with our swords. Some comrades from Diomed's ships run to my side but I shout at them to stay clear for I wish to take my man in single combat. I challenge Tisamenes to do likewise, and he too admonishes his followers and friends to keep a distance of twenty paces from us both. Then he laughs while saying to me that it would be beneath his dignity to engage any assistance in crushing a mere suckling lamb such as myself. I am not interested in taunts and remain silent while I move quickly about him with my athlete's speed and spar at him with my sword. Both my silence and my movement enrage him and he lunges at me in a fury with a jagged rock in his hand which he hurls expertly. But I am still more nimble and it glances harmlessly off the edge of my shield. Now he too takes up his sword which he had transferred to his left hand while he had wielded the stone, and charges at me once again, but his weight hampers him, and I am easily able to dodge his thrusts and stay out of his wrestler's grasp. A never-failing flow of strength seems to imbue my limbs. Round and round the giant I dance, while in the sky the sun chariot climbs to its noon-time zenith, and a great circle of warriors both Argive and Trojan ring us in and hang on the outcome of the fray. Now within me I start again to hear the voice of Pallas Athene and what other gods I cannot guess. They are exulting and crying out, 'Argive, for this was your perfection bred. For this have we watched and waited all these years and taught you all our arts of war and the body's skill. Each action, each stance, each flow of movement speaks of the symphony of your creation.' And at last the sole and unmistakable voice of Athene herself, 'Take this battle-field to be the mortar and pestle of the gods. Then observe, my mortal one, how the human substance is ground in it to extract the gold...'

"At these words, I am suddenly overcome by a fit of rage and I shout back, 'So it is my gold you want, is it? Well, you shall have it in full measure.' And in my vanity I add, 'Oh, Gods, I am no miser with my own substance. See for yourselves, I have more gold in me than would fill all your heavenly treasuries put together!' Strong words, dear Diomed, but I am full of defiance, and something has rebelled in me at the thought of being a puppet of the gods that they watch, admire, and then lightly cast

aside as one might a pet falcon once it has been wounded beyond healing. I desperately wish to believe that I, a man, am worth more than this, especially at this moment of deadly trial when all Argos and Troy stand still to see the quality of which I am made shine forth and win, or fall as a valiant but broken banner in the dust.

"The giant Tisamenes is slaving now like a hungry bear for he has not yet seen the blood he has been thirsting for, and the conflict is more prolonged than any other witnessed so far during the war. He hunches forward and seems prepared to charge still again. Yet I wish to exhaust him a little longer with my agility before falling upon him and driving home my sword. Closer and closer I come in my circumambulations till my slashing weapon makes bleeding nicks in his neck and bare sword arm. I feel the conflict in my hands for my foe is weakening with loss of blood and the heat of noon, while I prance on aglow with sweat yet tireless as a young stallion, until at last Athene's voice breaks out, 'Oh, imprudent one, look what you have done with your boasts and your strength drawn from the liquid purity of an Arcadian spring! All Olympus envies you and you are lost. See before you the dark shadow that comes as Mortality's messenger.... He comes for you.' I look directly before me at my opponent and I see not the familiar massive form of Tisamenes but a sombre figure with a vast black cloak, — and momentarily stagger back. Then with quick urgency Athene's voice resumes: 'But no, my hero, do not be dismayed. You are to die not like a cur, but like one of my own offspring. Let a hero's death be your final gift to the cause of the Argives.'

"The moment of my last test upon me, I once again feel the goddess's force course through my frame. Whether my opponent be the Trojan warrior or Death himself, I feel it no longer to be of any consequence. And now at last I prepare for the leap that will mark the conclusion of the fight. Crouching low, I brace my feet against the soft earth, and thrusting the protective wall of my shield before me, I hurl myself upon my foe. My sword drives through his breast-plate as though through a brittle crust, and I press the hilt against the broken metal so that the blade emerges from Tisamenes' back and grinds into the dirt beneath him as he falls. But he too has been ready for me all this while despite his wounds, and his instincts rally even at the instant of his death. His bear's arms close around my body with a crushing grip and the dagger in his hand sinks to its full depth between my shoulder blades. Too sudden the shock for me to cry out or see or feel any longer in the human way. I look around and find myself standing a little apart, while I observe the figure cloaked in black lift a body I recognize to be mine. It lies crumpled in his arms and I watch him carry it away, stately and god-like in his gait, while the form of Tisamenes too vanishes wrapped in a fold of his vast, billowing cloak. But around that part of me which yet remains I find the brilliance of a sunrise with all the air bathed in particles of shimmering gold. To one side of me, Pallas Athene stands holding my helmet with its great horse-hair crest, my spear, my sword, and my shield. She offers them to me, but instead of taking them I turn to her and say as though prompted by one I neither know nor see — yet now I realize, Silent Goddess, the prompting was yours and no other's — 'Keep them

as my offerings to the virgin daughter of Olympian Zeus. I have used them in your service; now, as living creatures that yearn for a once-remembered mother, they long to remain with you till you choose to loose them again upon the world of men in the hands of ones worthy to wield their power. As for me, something calls me further into the horizon of the sun beyond, and I must not linger.'

"'You speak the truth,' she answers. 'It is not for me to detain you here, for your destiny lies far ahead. Be on your way, brave one, but remember always that you served me once and our comradeship bound us inextricably together for one bright moment of eternity.'

"So we part and as I walk on I seem to enter the white centre of the sun itself till no longer do I remain Asterion or an Argive, nor have I any name that I recall, but melt into the all-pervading whiteness and then into the blessed sleep in which I feel myself grow back in time to a new and mysterious infancy."

Having reached the end of his life's recollection, he fell silent and looked beseechingly at Silent Daughter who stood before him with the infant self of whom he was a part still in her arms.

"Golden one," she said, "my thanks go out to you for relating the sweet and splendid page that belongs to you in this book of life we must reread anew. My gratitude also flows to you, dear Diomed, Argive warrior and timeless friend. See how my child revives upon beholding you both and devouring with eager eyes the visions you have played out so exquisitely before him."

And, in fact, the infant no longer lolled back in her arms but sat up and seemed to focus all his being in his great dark eyes that stared forth as if they wished to engulf all knowledge at once. Nor did any smile enliven his baby lips, but the enormous solemnity of a paradoxical old age settled in his face. Then all of a sudden he appeared to rouse himself as though while lost in thought he had overlooked some critical detail. His hand shot out towards the one that had been Asterion, and tears of irrepressible longing welled in his eyes, while the golden being of memory, feeling his master's call, rose up ghost-like and merged once more into the child's form. Nor could the merging leave the child unchanged, for the memory that had returned to him had been a soul's recollection touched by the gods. The infant image fell from him at once and Silent Daughter now held on her hip a young and radiant boy as grave as one who has seen worlds and deeds far beyond his years.

Silent Daughter herself shone with a bright delight while she spoke one last time to regal Diomed: "Rejoice over the fine flower of your work, Argive hero. Now at last you may depart wreathed in the garlands of my grateful love to reign triumphant and joyous in your heaven where you pursue the Great One's duties and uphold the ideal of being that he has enshrined in you!"

"Beloved Goddess, I shall always come flying at your call, for was it not your light of love and tolerance that gave me peace and wisdom on the earth? Was it not your warm and healing hand that soothed every tumult of a long, eventful life of war and princedom? Silent deity, you live eternally by my side and all the warmth

within my heart emanates from the well-spring of your own being.”

With the full tenderness of her liquid soul, she reached out and stroked Diomed's head, while her heart murmured, “Most steadfast of my children, my love enfolds you — walk with it wrapped about you forever.”

Her hand lingered about his face for one last moment and then he started to walk away, while she, and the child watched his receding form, and felt in its stead a white stillness close about them from every side like a formless veil.

(To be continued)

BINA BRAGG

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

EXPERIMENTS IN NEW EDUCATION

(Continued from the issue of January, 1973)

THE other day a doctor came seeking answers to a number of questions.

Question: “What will be the future of my sons if they cannot get a degree or diploma here? How will they be able to secure Government service? My two sons are being educated here and ever since I received a circular saying that degrees will no longer be conferred, I have been very much worried about their future. As a father my only aim is to see them placed somewhere in a lucrative service. Without a degree or diploma how will their qualifications be judged? Won't their lives be a zero?”

Answer: “Must the successful career of a student be measured by the acquisition of jobs? There are a great many universities in India to prepare him for job-hunting. Ours is not a money-making education. What the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is striving to reach is a divine fulfilment without neglecting the human fulfilment. Even if only a few have an access to God they will be an example to others. But none will become zeros, for when they attain maturity, whatever be their life's occupation, in whatever position or situation they are thrown, they will have sufficient inner strength to fight the evils of life.”

Question: “Is it not too high an ideal for ordinary people like us to imbibe? All we crave is a rich, happy life.”

Answer: “Worldly richness alone cannot bring abiding happiness; it must be accompanied by an inner wealth.”

Question: “That's all right. But what about practical results?”

Answer: “If your boys intend to enter into service, they are free to do so but must attain the position on their own merits. Having drunk the spirit of the Ashram atmosphere some youngsters have gone to foreign countries; some have secured Ph. D's in philosophy or literature, winning French and Indian scholarships, some have secured jobs in France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland. Two boys got good jobs in Calcutta, simply because they knew French quite well. These are instances of those who are lured by worldly greatness and are unable to stand the rigours of spiritual life. Cases of highly evolved souls are different.”

I happened to make the acquaintance of a casual visitor in November 1971. He has been carrying on business in America for four years but he prefers to give his son an Ashram education rather than one in New York. Curious to know his mind

I asked him a pointed question: "What prompts you to have your son educated here? What are your expectations from your child's life?"

Answer: "I cherish no expectation, no ambition. He will have full freedom to choose his own career, his own way of life. I would like him to have a full course of education here and then he may come to New York and establish himself there or shape his future as he likes."

Question: "Don't you know your son will get no degree or diploma?"

Answer: "Yes, I know it. A circular was served to me by the Registrar. But I don't mind. I myself hold no diploma."

Question: "What is your special interest in the Ashram?"

Answer: "*The Life Divine*. I was in the company of Rammurti for 16 years. I have read the book thrice; once in India and twice in New York, devoting six hours a day to study. I have a mind to get selected portions tape-recorded."

I recall here my accidental meeting with Primitivo Flores, a citizen of the Philippines, now residing in California. It was the picture of Sri Aurobindo in a full-page advertisement for his five major works in the *New York Times* in 1951 that drew him to Sri Aurobindo.

He said: "The moment my eyes fell on his portrait, it stirred my being deep within and I resolved that one day I would read all these books. The first book I bought was *The Synthesis of Yoga*, the next *Essays on the Gita*. This was in 1958. Even before reading *The Synthesis* I felt that Yoga was the only thing that could satisfy the need of my soul. Yoga holds the clue to the unravelling of the deeper problems with which I was beset at the time. In 1960 I moved to California from New York and committed myself to regular sadhana."

"How do you interpret the word sadhana?" I interposed.

"By sadhana I mean self-discipline, to realise the ideal set before one's eyes."

"How did you make a start in your sadhana?"

"My recreation is in my meditation room which is surrounded by beautiful gardens. I am a scientist but it seems the Divine does not want me to be a scientist. I was so deeply moved by Sri Aurobindo's writings that I hardly read anything else."

"What impact did they have on you?"

"How to express myself in words? The life stories of highly realised souls are recorded in the spiritual history of the world, but no one even comes close to Sri Aurobindo. The height of his realisation and the power of his expression are simply marvellous, unparalleled."

"Is this your candid opinion?" My question made him serious.

"Opinion? Not my mind but my soul speaks. How can I convince you?"

Almost identical were the feelings of a visiting professor from Brazil. He was here for the February Darshan of 1971 with twenty-two students. He stayed here with his wife for a month. This was his second visit to the Ashram.

"No philosopher, not even Plato, reached the level of Sri Aurobindo. The world has never before produced such a giant thinker. Such a great philosopher and yet

only a few are acquainted with the name of Sri Aurobindo in the West, not to speak of his philosophy." He spoke without a pause.

To come back to the scientist philosopher.

"What do you love the most?"

"It is difficult to say. Sri Aurobindo's books have taught me to look on all with equal eyes and that helps me to ward off worries, to face problems with a calm mind."

"What do you do when there is an inrush of thoughts during meditation hours?"

"Sri Aurobindo has shown a very simple method and I find it very effective."

"What's that secret?"

"Observe! Look at the intruders. And at once they lose their force."

"I am taking a lot of books with me in the hope that they might bring at least a few in touch with the light. I freely distribute books to friends and relatives. My brother's heart is also touched by Sri Aurobindo's writings and he may come here one day."

"My first stay in the Ashram was for five days. I was on a visit to the Philippines. I wrote to the Mother from there about the possibility of a visit to the Ashram. A photo of mine was appended."

"The Mother replied that I could come. That very day I booked my passage for India. When I spoke to my family about a second visit, there was not a single contrary voice. And so I had no problem in that respect."

"I've never met so many good people as I find here. On my second visit there were quite a number to give me a hearty welcome."

Some days later, when I read out to him the notes I had made, which included the sentence, "Now he is a great admirer of Sri Aurobindo", he exclaimed: "Only admirer? No, I consider myself a devotee of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo."

In 1965, a boy of eleven expressed to his father his desire to be admitted to our Centre of Education. His two younger sisters were already here. Casting a glance at the photo of the boy the Mother passed a rare remark, "I like the boy very much."

In order to get admitted to a higher class, a boy should be well up in French; then only can he keep pace with the curriculum followed here. The boy knew no French but did not lose heart. Daily he would go to the Samadhi and set his heart in prayer.

Great was his astonishment when L who had just returned from France, after her studies there, offered to teach him French. He finished a five-year course in five months.

The day he was to be admitted, his father, who is leading a very successful business life, kept awake all through the night, pacing to and fro along the verandah of his hired house, greatly worried: "There is no degree or diploma here. He is such a brilliant boy. I could give the best education to my son anywhere in India or abroad, however costly. Am I right in having him enrolled here?" Endless questions ran through his mind. The more he tried to get a clear-cut answer, the more he got entangled in the net of his thoughts.

The night turned into day but the darkness that had overpowered his mind did not give way. Very much puzzled and perturbed he went to Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi. Suddenly he saw and felt that all the clouds had vanished. His mind was serene like the dawn. In that auspicious moment there shot forth a prayer from his heart:

"Mother, he is your child. I surrender him to your care."

About that all-important moment he said, "I was a changed man. I seemed to have risen to a new height. Since then not a single contrary thought about the boy has crossed my mind. Not only that, whenever there is trouble I get an immediate response to my prayer."

Since 1965, his son has been here and is now in the second year of the Higher Course.

The opening ceremony of his newly built house was performed in November 1971 by Monsieur André. The boy's father is thinking of joining the Ashram and starting some business in Auroville. He is a chemical engineer and was sent to England by the directors of his firm.

It is interesting to note how he came in touch with the Ashram. He was living in Assam. Some boys from his home town, while on tour, had included Pondicherry among the places to visit. The name of one of them was Gopal and he had come in 1955. After the Darshan, while leaving Pondicherry, he had left his Madras address with the Secretary of the Ashram.

To their surprise the very next day a wire came to them from Nolini Kanta Gupta: "Don't start by this train — The Mother."

The morning papers later announced that the train had met with disaster. On reaching home the boys opened a Sri Aurobindo Centre.

When in 1959 a branch of the Sri Aurobindo Society was opened, the boy's father was requested to be the Chairman. He practically refused saying that he was not spiritually developed. In reply he was told, "We are not concerned with what you are. A photo of yours will be sent to the Mother and we must abide by her decision." Thus began his connection with the Ashram.

About those who come under the wings of the Mother's protection another incident must be recorded.

It was on Sri Aurobindo's advice and approval that S had given his consent to be nominated as a candidate for the Legislative Council in Kenya. He was surprised when the news of his success in the election held in his absence was broken to him. Due to the threat of Japanese submarines, it was not safe in 1942 to set out on a voyage in the Indian Ocean. As he was pressed hard, by the people who had elected him, to come soon to Africa, he sought the Mother's Blessings.

In reply, he was asked if he was in a hurry?

He informed the Mother that people who had supported his election were pressing hard for him to return without delay. If it was not spiritually harmful, might he be permitted to go?

He was told that it was not a question of any spiritual harm but that the Mother

saw danger in that direction on the sea.

As there was danger even when he had come to India, he thought of taking the risk and left for Gujerat. There he waited for a message from Bombay. When he went to the transport agent it was found that his small-pox vaccination certificate was missing. He was told that it was quite possible to obtain it without delay.

This he declined outright. He did not like to obtain it by underhanded means. To get a genuine certificate would take time. It was November 18. Darshan was near. So he decided to avail himself of the God-given opportunity and started for Pondicherry. After the Darshan, when he returned to Bombay on the 27th, he was informed that the steamer on which he had wanted to travel had been torpedoed and sunk and two-thirds of the passengers had lost their lives.

S was one of the few fortunate ones who had the opportunity of sitting at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and talking with him a little before he went into seclusion. S was a student of Purani and through him had learned of Sri Aurobindo. It was a picture of Sri Aurobindo that had drawn him to the Master. There were many great names in the air in those days. But he felt attracted only towards these three — Tagore, Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo. He said:

“Tagore held one in awe and admiration by the grandeur of his aesthetic life; Gandhi fascinated one by his ethical dynamism, but Sri Aurobindo, captured one’s heart by his luminosity.

“He holds you, you cannot move your eyes away from him. When I came in 1926 and was granted the joy of an interview, I felt, as I was moving one step after another, the budding flower of my heart was opening petal by petal. Many questions were hovering in my mind, they all vanished the moment I stood before him. After garlanding him, I offered my Pranam, touching his feet, and had the rare privilege of hearing his voice which is still ringing in my ears.”

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Tales Of India: In Three Parts (Part One, Second Edition) *by Daulat Panday.* Publishers, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, India. Pages 114+10, 110+10, 126+10. Price Rs. 5 each.

WHEN a question mark skipped about in angels' heads, they had to do a little bit of research work. They had happened to see some creatures winging heavenwards. These were human prayers. "Have you noticed how pretty some of them are?" "Yes, but most of them are quite ordinary, and a few seem to be positively ugly.... Let us follow them." And the angels flapped upwards on their spying mission. One prayer, the most beautiful of all, "lovely and opalescent" bowed before the throne of Brahman and said in a humble voice, "O Lord of all Creation, accept my deepest gratitude for the countless blessings Thou hast bestowed upon me." Thus goes the very first story. And if you want to know from where such a prayer arose, well, you may lay your hands upon the above books and find out for yourself.

There are a number of lovely stories, not all like these, but they are certainly all interesting. And whether you read "King Janaka's Test" or "Abdulla and the Little Brown Bottle", "Envy Brings Trouble" or "A Pearl of Great Price," or "The Man who Grew Roses" or for that matter "Little Razia" or "The Beggar Maid" or "This too Shall Pass Away", they not only provide pleasant reading and aesthetic delight but have something to teach you, stimulate and uplift you, leaving you refreshed and wiser. There are stories of lotuses and roses, of fishes and cats and crows, of rabbits and dogs, of kings and servants, of thieves, of the foolish and the wise, of honesty and gratitude and above all of "The Compassionate One," "The Kingdom of Heaven," "The Servant of God," and "The End of the Journey".

Who would not relish the story where four princesses come one by one to a sick child and by their refreshing fragrance, their lovely caresses and their soothing touch leave him fully cured and cheerful? But the child was not a bad-humoured one nor of a tottering will. He had a simple heart and a firm faith. And, well, the princesses who did the miracle were none other than the four stages for the tranquillity of mind, which Sri Aurobindo has named Quiet, Calm, Peace and Silence.

And the one where a Yogi tells about his search for a Guru? "I just went along with the others, and nobody stopped me. As I came nearer and nearer to the room where the Master was seated I was filled with an inexpressible peace and joy. My heart seemed to sing within me. When at last I stood before the Master and the Divine Mother, I seemed to lose all sense of time and place. I commenced to cry like a child. I understood that I had at last come HOME, and that this was the Guru that my heart had long been seeking." "I HAD COME TO THE END OF MY JOURNEY."

These tales of which I have given passing glimpses will be enjoyed to their fullest not only by children but by all readers. They can indeed be prescribed as textbooks or recommended as extra reading material for the students, for apart from the reading pleasure they afford they offer a wealth of information about the names and kinds of fish, the vocabulary of the sounds that birds and animals make, the age of trees and animals, etc. The language is lucid and the style direct and appealing. The author must be congratulated for such a pleasing and edifying creation.

The type is clear, the printing and binding all admirable and the title-page attractive. An additional merit of the books is that they are interspersed with coloured pictures.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

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THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
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SRI AUROBINDO REVEALS THE FUTURE

Man and Woman in the New Age

THE prophetic vision of Sri Aurobindo is based on the emergence of the superman, not as something bizarre or a short-lived wonder but as a natural outflowing of evolution. Man is still half human and half animal; surely this state cannot be the apex of his becoming or the sign of his final development. History has kept record of his sanguinary deeds, his extravagant aspirations and sacrifices, marred by his unimaginable cruelty and singular baseness. He has made magnificent strides in science and technology, but is himself nailed down to the cross of his lower nature, his egoism, his pettiness and sloth. That, however, is only one side of the medal. The present chaos is the direct result of the conflict within him: one part seeking perfection in a greater and greater self-becoming, the other clinging to his past egoism, selfishness, habits of domination, self-assertion. In spite of this we are moving towards a greater age. Sri Aurobindo, says, "The step from man to superman is the next approaching achievement in the earth's evolution. It is inevitable because it is at once the intention of the inner Spirit and the logic of Nature's process."¹

In the great move forward, what will be the relation of man to woman, their position, importance, way of life and thinking, specially when family-life in society is undergoing an enormous change and when woman has come to stay as a symbol of sex? Before we actually examine the issue in the Aurobindonian light, it would be well to glance over the facts at hand so that we could have a background, a *point de départ* for our theme.

We cannot deny that this is a man-dominated world, in spite of woman's making ample contribution to the enrichment of existence. Man has lured her into a condition of slavery, of self-annulment for his own profit and interest. Yet she is in no way inferior to him in stamina, courage, intelligence, creativity and strength of character. We have only to turn the pages of history to be impressed with this fact in different walks of life: literature, science, music, arts and crafts, sports and even warfare. She has been the inspiration to poets and artists, as well as to men of action. Negatively, she is

blackened as the source of perdition. Sri Aurobindo comments on this attitude, "It arises from the extreme sexuality of men. They see in women *narakasya dvāram*¹ because that door is so wide open in themselves. But they prefer to throw the blame on women."²

For over half a century, there has been an upsurge everywhere by women to have equal rights with men, and to be economically, socially and culturally free. This liberation movement is much ridiculed and frowned upon by men. But the external freedom or equality can only come when the sexes have outgrown their cravings to exploit each other and have ceased to make demands on each other. The Mother says, "Both are slaves. Both man and woman are equal in their mutual slavery.... It is only when either can break out of this dependence, this slavery that one can be free. Till then, both men and women continue to be slaves and superiority or inferiority is only a delusion."³ Man desires woman for the little comforts and pleasures she brings, for sex and for the sense of possession. Apart from these things woman has no significance to him. Reciprocally woman hankers after a home and security, for children. It is for these satisfactions that she wants him. Such attachments on either side make the sexes mutual slaves barring the way to a purer relationship of love and friendship, without demand. They also stop free growth and progress for both.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

¹ The gate of Hell.

² *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, by Nirodbaran, p. 128.

³ *The Mother of Love*, Vol. I, by Madhav Pandit, p. 144.

EYE EDUCATION

TREATMENT OF MYOPIA

THE cause of myopia is an effort to see distant objects. When the normal eye stares at a distant object or tries to read two parts of a Snellen Test Card letter perfectly at the same time, an effort to see is made and myopia is produced. There is a strain; and the greater the strain, the more imperfect the vision. This suggests the cure of myopia.

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The Snellen Test Card can be used in various ways to improve the vision. Usually patients of myopia improve more when the chart is held at five feet or less, then the distance of the chart is gradually increased. When the patient sways his body from side to side, the chart appears to be moving in the opposite direction, and this optical effect is beneficial. Then gradually the sway is shortened. If the test card does not appear to sway, it is usually an indication of strain or an effort to see.

If the letters on the test card appear double, it is because the patient is trying to see the letters. This double vision cannot happen if the patient imagines the card moving slightly from side to side and does not try to see the letters. Palming when done properly relieves such symptoms quickly.

(To be continued)

DR. R. S. AGARWAL

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