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.


## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words of the Mother:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Unpublished Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and Answers</td>
<td></td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mother on Divine &quot;Pre-Determination&quot; and Human Choice:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Talk of March 1, 1951</td>
<td></td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fate and Freewill in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Excerpts</td>
<td></td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks with Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>Nirodbaran</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ashram of Pondicherry:</td>
<td>Maurice Magre</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A French Savant's Impressions in 1936</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a Peace Corps Worker in Nepal:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Letter of September 27, 1972</td>
<td>K. D. Sethna</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Love (Poem)</td>
<td>Amal Kiran</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udar Remembers</td>
<td></td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Search for Soma:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Book-Review with the Editor's Comment on its Theme</td>
<td></td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>Girdharlal</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Golden Ball</td>
<td>Yvonne Artaud</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Abyss (Poem)</td>
<td>A. Venkataranga</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

RADHA SINGS (POEM)  Jean  ...  412
A SWEEP OF LIGHT (POEM)  Arvind Habbu  ...  413
FACTS ABOUT SNAKE BITE:  Harry Miller FZS  ...  414
    WRONG IDEAS AND RIGHT TREATMENT
HANDCUFFS—THE PRICE FOR NOBILITY:  Surendra Nath Jauhar  ...  420
    A TRUE STORY
DIALOGUES  Bina Bragg  ...  424
PUNCTUATION  ...  429
PSYCHE:
    A PLAY IN VERSE  Peter Heehs  ...  430
CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO BUSINESS
    MANAGEMENT  Garry Jacobs  440

Editor: K. D. Sethna
Managing Editor: K. R. Poddar
Published by: P. Counouma
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY-605002
Printed by: Amiyo Ranjan Ganguli
at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry-605002
PRINTED IN INDIA
Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No. R. N. 8667/63
Le silence se fait, puis la flamme de l'aspiration s'allume, alors une chaleur envahit le corps surtout du cœur au cerveau, et dans cette chaleur est un élan de transformation plein de béatitude; le chant de l'harmonie divine se fait entendre souriant et calme, c'est une symphonie douce, à peine perceptible et puissante à la fois. Puis le silence revient plus profond et plus vaste, oui, vaste jusqu'à l'infini, et l'être existe hors de toutes limites de temps ou d'espace.

Savoir renoncer à la satisfaction de l'instant présent en vue de la réalisation de son idéal est le grand art de ceux qui veulent faire produire son maximum à leur fugitive existence intégrale.

Il y a d'innombrables catégories parmi ceux qui "réussissent"; ces catégories sont déterminées par le plus ou moins d'envergure de noblesse, de complexité, de pureté, de luminosité de leur idéal. On peut "réussir" comme chiffonnier et "réussir" comme maître du monde et même comme parfait ascète; et dans les trois cas, quoiqu'à des degrés très différents, c'est la maîtrise de soi plus ou moins intégrale et étendue qui permet la "réussite".

Par contre il n'y a qu'une façon d'être un "raté"; et cela arrive au plus grand, au plus royalement intelligent, comme au plus petit, au plus borné, à tous ceux qui ne savent pas subordonner la sensation présente à l'idéal qu'ils voudraient accomplir sans avoir la force de prendre le chemin—identique pour tous dans sa nature sinon dans son étendue et sa complexité—qui mène à cet accomplissement.
To know how to renounce the satisfaction of the present moment for the sake of realising one's ideal is the great art of those who demand a maximum yield from their whole transient existence.

There are innumerable categories of "successful" people; these categories are determined by the greater or lesser degree of breadth, nobleness, complexity, purity and luminosity of their ideal. One may "succeed" as a rag-picker or "succeed" as master of the world or even as a faultless ascetic; in all three cases, although on very different levels, it is the greater or lesser integrality and range of self-mastery which promotes "success".

On the other hand, there is only one way of being a "failure"; and that happens to the very greatest, to the most sovereign intelligence as well as to the very smallest, the most limited, to all those who are unable to subordinate their present feeling to the ideal they would like to achieve without having the strength to tread the path—which is identical for all in nature if not in range and complexity—that leads to this achievement.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1976)

(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 Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat fragmentary incomplete form. The translation of the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother at the time of its first publication as a book in French, came out in book-form in 1973. We are giving this translation here.)

MARCH 13, 1957

This evening, once again, no reading. But someone has asked me a question on something I have written—Pavitra, do you have it? Read it.

(Pavitra reads) “Our best friend is he who loves us in our best part, and yet does not ask us to be different from what we are.”

(From Aphorismes et Paradoxes, p. 151)

I am asked to explain what this means. I have a great mind to say all sorts of paradoxical things to you. But still....

In any case, I wrote this having in mind something one generally forgets: one asks one’s friends and those around one to be not what they are but what one would like them to be—one can form an ideal for oneself and want to apply it to everybody, but.... That reminds me of Tolstoy’s son whom I met in Japan and who was going round the world in the hope of bringing about unity among men. His intentions were excellent, but his way of doing it seemed less happy! He said with an imperturbable seriousness that if everybody spoke the same language, if everybody dressed in the same way, ate in the same way and acted in the same way, that would perforce bring about unity! And when asked how he thought of realising this he said it would be enough to go from land to land preaching a new but universal language, a new but universal dress, and new but universal habits. That was all.... And that was what he intended doing!

(Laughing) Well, everyone in his own little field is like that. He has an ideal, a conception of what is true and beautiful and noble, and even divine, and this his conception he wants to impose on others. There are many people who have a conception of the Divine also and who try with all their might to impose their conception on the Divine... and usually don’t lose heart until they have lost their life!

It is this spontaneous and almost unconscious attitude I had in mind, for if I were to tell one of you: “There! that’s what you want to do”, he would protest quite vehemently, saying: “What! never in my life!” But when one has opinions about people and specially reactions to their ways of life, it is because one blames them for
not being what one thinks they ought to be. If we never forget that there cannot be, should not be two things exactly the same in the universe, for then the second would be useless since there would be one of the same kind already there, and that the universe is constituted for the harmony of an infinite multiplicity in which two movements—and yet much more, two consciousnesses—are never similar, then by what right can we intervene and wish that somebody should conform to our own thought? ... For if you think in a particular way, it is quite certain that the other won't be able to think in the same way. And if you are a person of a certain type, it is altogether sure that the other cannot be of the same type. And what you ought to learn is to harmonise, synthesise, combine all the different things in the universe by putting each one in its place. Total harmony is not at all in an identity, but in a harmonisation which can come only by putting each thing in its place.

And it is this which must be at the root of the reaction that one has the right to expect from a true friend, who should wish not that his friend resemble him, but that he may be what he is.

Now, at the beginning of the sentence I have said: “He loves you in the best part of yourself”.... To put it a little more positively: Your friend is not one who encourages you to come down to the lowest level of yourself, encourages you to commit stupidities with him or practise vice with him or one who commends you for all the nasty things you do, that’s quite clear. And yet, usually, very, very often, much too often, one makes friends with somebody with whom one doesn’t feel uneasy when one has sunk lower. One considers one’s best friend him who encourages one in one’s follies: one associates with others to go a-roaming instead of going to school, to go off to steal fruit from gardens, to jeer at one’s teachers and for all kinds of things like that. I am not making any personal remarks, but indeed I could cite examples, unhappily far too many. And it is perhaps because of this that I said: “These are not your real friends.” But still, they are the most convenient friends, for they don’t make you feel that you are in the wrong; whilst to him who comes and tells you: “Now then, say, instead of going to roam about and do nothing or commit stupidities, if you came to the class, don’t you think it would be better?”, to him generally one replies: “Don’t bother me! You are not my real friend.” It is perhaps because of this that I wrote this sentence. There you are. I repeat I am not making any personal remarks, but still it is an opportunity to tell you something that unfortunately happens much too often.

There are children here who were full of promise, who were at the head of their class, used to work seriously, from whom I hoped much, and who have been completely ruined by this kind of friendship. Since we are speaking of this, I shall tell them today that I regret all this very much and that such people I do not call friends but mortal enemies from whom one should keep oneself away as one does from a contagious disease.

We don’t like the company of one who has a contagious disease, and avoid him carefully; generally he is segregated so that it does not spread. But the contagion of
vice and bad behaviour, the contagion of depravity, falsehood and what is base, is infinitely more dangerous than the contagion of any disease whatsoever, and it is that which must be very carefully avoided. You must consider your best friend one who tells you that he does not wish to participate in any bad or ugly act, one who gives you courage to resist low temptations, such a one is a real friend. It is with him one must associate and not with one who has a little fun with you and strengthens your evil propensities. That's all.

Now, we won't labour the point and I hope that those I have in mind will understand what I have said.

Essentially, you should choose as friends only those who are wiser than yourself, those whose company ennobles you and helps you to master yourself, to progress, to do better and see more clearly. And finally, the best friend one can have—isn't he the Divine, to whom one can say everything, reveal everything? For there indeed is the source of all compassion, of all power to efface every error when it is not repeated,\(^1\) to open the road to true realisation; it is he who can understand all, heal all, and always help on the path, help you not to fail, not to falter, not to fall, but to walk straight to the goal. It is he who is the true friend, the friend of our good and our evil days, he who can understand, can heal, and who is always there when one needs him. When you call him sincerely, he is always there to guide and uphold you—and to love you most truly.

---

\(^1\) In 1961 when this talk was published for the first time, Mother commented upon this phrase "So long as one repeats one's mistakes, nothing can be abolished, for one recreates it every minute. When someone makes a mistake, serious or not, this mistake has its consequences in his life, a 'Karma' which must be exhausted, but the Divine Grace, if one calls It, has the power of cutting off the consequences; but for this it is necessary that the fault is not repeated. One shouldn't think one can continue to commit the same stupidities indefinitely and that indefinitely the Grace will cancel all the consequences, it does not happen like that! The past may be completely purified, cleansed, to the point of having no effect on the future, but on condition that one doesn't remake it into a perpetual present; it is necessary that you yourself stop the wrong vibration in yourself, that you do not reproduce indefinitely the same vibration."
THE MOTHER ON DIVINE "PRE-DETERMINATION" AND HUMAN CHOICE

FROM THE TALK OF MARCH 1, 1951

"There is a plane of divine consciousness in which all is known absolutely, and the whole plan of things foreseen and predetermined. That way of seeing lives in the highest reaches of the Supramental; it is the Supreme's own vision. But when we do not possess that consciousness, it is useless to speak in terms that hold good only in that region and are not our present effective way of seeing things. For at a lower level of consciousness nothing is realised or fixed beforehand; all is in the process of making. Here there are no settled facts, there is only the play of possibilities; out of the clash of possibilities is realised the thing that has to happen. On this plane we can choose and select; we can refuse one possibility and accept another; we can follow one path, turn away from another. And that we can do, even though what is actually happening may have been foreseen and predetermined in a higher plane."

Questions and Answers 1929 (28 April)

The word "predetermined" does not correspond to the reality; the word "pre-existent" would be more correct. The consciousness of an unfolding has a reality, it is not only an appearance.

Imagine the world as a single whole and, in a certain sense, finite, limited but containing potentially innumerable possibilities of which the combinations are so numerous that they are equivalent to an infinite (you must be careful with words, however; I am very much cramped by words, they do not express exactly what I mean). So, the universe is objectified by the Divine Consciousness, by the Supreme, according to certain determined laws of which we shall speak later. The universe is a single whole, in the sense that it is the Divine—it does not contain the whole of the Divine, but it is as though the Divine deployed Himself so as to objectify Himself; that is the raison d'être of the manifestation of the universe. It is as if the Divine Consciousness wandered into all divine possibilities following a path it had chosen. Imagine then a multitude of possibles of which all the possible combinations are equivalent to an infinite. The Divine Consciousness is essentially free—it wanders therein and objectifies Itself. The path traversed is free in the midst of an infinite multiplicity which is at the same time pre-existent and absolutely undetermined according to the action of the free divine Will. It may be conceived that this Will, being free, is able to change the course of the deployment, change the path and, although everything is pre-existent and consequently inevitable, the road, the path is free and absolutely unexpected. These changes of the route, if one may say so, can therefore change the relations between things and circumstances, and consequently the determinism is changed.
This change of the circuit is called “the effect of the Grace”; well, through the aid of the Grace, if the Grace decides it, things can change, the course can be different. Things can change their places and instead of following a certain circuit follow another. A circumstance which, according to a particular determinism, would occur at a certain place ahead, for instance, would instead occur behind, and so on. The relations between things consequently change.¹

At what moment does Time begin? The Consciousness that chooses—is it in Time as soon as the unrolling begins?

No, Time is a succession; you must be able to conceive that the Supreme Consciousness, before objectifying itself, becomes aware of Itself in Itself. There is a global, total and simultaneous perception and there is no Time there. Likewise one cannot speak of “Space”, for the same reason, because all is simultaneous. It is something more; it corresponds to a state of consciousness subjective rather than objective, for the aim, the motive of creation is objectivisation; but there is a first step in this objectivisation in which there is a plenary consciousness, total and simultaneous, beyond Time and Space, of what will constitute the content of this universe; and there the universe is pre-existent, but not manifested, and Time begins with objectivisation.

¹ Returning to the definition of the word “pre-existent”, Mother added the following commentary at the time of the publication of this talk: “Sat, that is, absolute Existence, is not in the Manifestation; it exists without being manifested; it is the non-manifest state of existence. There is Tat which is the state of non-existence and Sat which is the state of existence; and Tat naturally is not manifested, but Sat also is not manifested: it is only when Chit-Tapas comes, the Consciousness-Energy, the Consciousness which realises, that Sat manifests itself.”
FATE AND FREEWILL IN SRI AUROBINDO'S
SAVITRI

SOME EXCERPTS

Fate is Truth working out in Ignorance.
O King, thy fate is a transaction done
At every hour between Nature and thy soul
With God for its foreseeing arbiter.
Fate is a balance drawn in Destiny's book.
Man can accept his fate, he can refuse.

(Book VI, Canto 2)

A secret soul behind supporting all
Is master and witness of our ignorant life,
Admits the Person's look and Nature's role
But once the hidden doors are flung apart
Then the veiled king steps out in Nature's front ..
A divine Puissance then takes Nature's place
And pushes the movements of our body and mind ..

(Book VII, Canto 5)

Man is a dynamo for the cosmic work;
Nature does most in him, God the high rest:
Only his soul's acceptance is his own.
This independent, once a power supreme,
Self-born before the universe was made,
Accepting cosmos, binds himself Nature's serf
Till he becomes her freed man—or God's slave.
This is the appearance in our mortal front;
Our greater truth of being lies behind:
Our consciousness is cosmic and immense,
But only when we break through Matter's wall
In that spiritual vastness can we stand
Where we can live the masters of our world,
And mind is only a means and body a tool.

(Book VII, Canto 6)

A magic leverage suddenly is caught
That moves the veiled Ineffable's timeless will:
A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man’s strength to a transcendent Force.
Then miracle is made the common rule,
One mighty deed can change the course of things;
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent.

(Book I, Canto 2)

A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,
An Inquisition of the priests of Night
In judgment sit on the adventurer soul,
And the dual table and the Karmic norm
Restrain the Titan in us and the God...
A bond is put on the high-climbing mind,
A seal on the too large wide-open heart;
Death stays the journeying discoverer, Life...
The will of the Timeless working out in Time
In the free absolute steps of cosmic Truth
Appears a hard machine or meaningless Fate.
A Magician’s formulas have made Matter’s laws
And while they last, all things by them are bound:
But the Spirit’s consent is needed for each act
And freedom walks in the same pace with Law.
All here can change if the Magician choose.
If human will could be made one with God’s,
If human thought could echo the thoughts of God,
Man might be all-knowing and omnipotent;
But now he walks in Nature’s doubtful ray.
Yet can the mind of man receive God’s light,
The force of man can be driven by God’s force,
Then is he a miracle doing miracles.
For only so can he be Nature’s King.

(Book VI, Canto 2)
TALKS WITH SRI Aurobindo

(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, Purani, 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.)

JULY 10, 1940

P: The Hindu says that Mittelhauser has resigned.
SRI AUROBINDO: Resigned? He was relieved, they said.
P: No, the paper says he has resigned and many French Officers have joined the British.
N: Yes, mainly those of a high rank. There seems to be unrest in Syria. The Syrians want independence and are being supported by Turkey and Iraq.
SRI AUROBINDO: Syria is a mandated territory like Iraq.
N: What exactly is “mandated territory”?
SRI AUROBINDO: That means the French hold the country in trust and when the people are fit they are given independence. The French have been going back and forth for some time in this matter—they have been vacillating.
P: De Gaulle is bitter because the British have destroyed the French Fleet. He says they cannot claim it as a naval success as there was really no fight and that every Frenchman is in grief and pain over the tragic episode.

Gandhi has appealed to Britain to accept Working Committee’s resolution.

N: Yes, it seems to be a resolution brought by C.R. It was carried by a majority against Gandhi’s. Gandhi has given a statement to explain the background of the resolution. C.R. gave a bit of a hard truth to Gandhi saying that Gandhi had been obsessed with the idea of ahimsā by constantly brooding over it. Gandhi says, “He went on to say that my vision is blurred.”

SRI AUROBINDO (Smiling): He said that?
N: Yes, Gandhi pays a tribute to C.R. about the patience, skill, etc. by which he carried the members with him. Individually he has placed his service at England’s disposal, he says.
SRI AUROBINDO: Spirit of non-violence?
N: Yes. But the demand of complete independence remains.

1 Rajagopalachari.
SRI AUROBINDO: That is difficult for the British to accept.
N: And the National Government will include defence. Will the Viceroy give it?
SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on how they work it out. But, as for defence and war, they are all inexperienced. In England a Minister can carry on with the help of the Civil Service, the Admiralty etc.
Jinnah is already speaking against the national Government. He wants Pakistan. I suppose that if a Moslem majority is granted, he will accept such a government.
P: In Pondicherry the officials are laughing over Gandhi's appeal of non-violence to the British. Of course it is beyond their conception. They are saying, "Is he mad?" (Laughter)
S: But by non-violence he does not mean what the officials have done in France.
SRI AUROBINDO: What then?
S: He says the British should refuse to carry out Hitler's orders, not cooperate. They may be killed for that. Still....
P: Even the Congress regime has adopted the Police System.
SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see how non-violence can work in administration.
N: I wonder what Chamberlain would have done if he had been the Premier.
SRI AUROBINDO: He would have committed twenty mistakes.
S: He may also be compared in the future to somebody and given praise.
SRI AUROBINDO: Praise in the sense that nobody has ever committed so many mistakes? (Laughter)
P: No, people may say he worked for peace and reconciliation. During the Munich Agreement they were going to name streets after him.
SRI AUROBINDO: Chamberlain Street and Umbrella Square? (Laughter) Peace? Yes, it was meant to be peace for our time, but a short peace. This is how people like Pétain and Chamberlain, who make mistakes, get a following.
P: The Italian Navy is withdrawing under a smoke screen from contact with the British Navy.
SRI AUROBINDO (Laughing): Yes, the meeting with the British Navy was an unexpected surprise for them. If the British can destroy the Italian Navy, then it will be a big gain in their favour.
S: On land too, the Italians are not shining. Perhaps Hitler will employ them to guard the French territories?
P: If he can trust them.
SRI AUROBINDO: Trust? Hitler can drive them out and conquer Italy any time.
N: Nolini, in his translation of a chapter of The Life Divine, is finding some difficulty about the word "defy" in "defy matter". He has used the word অবজ্ঞা করে (abajñā kare).
SRI AUROBINDO: অবজ্ঞা (abajñā) implies "contempt" which isn't the case here. It should be something like "challenge".
N: But we couldn’t find the Bengali for “challenge”, either. অন্তর্ভুক্ত, অন্যান্ত, অগ্রহয় (asvikār, amānya, agrāhya) etc.—none gives the sense of “defy”.

P: Bengal doesn’t challenge anybody, so no word exists for it. (Laughter)

N: Bose’s talk doesn’t do anything but challenge.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps you could say in Bose’s language: “give an ultimatum to matter”! But has even “ultimatum” any equivalent in Bengali?

Evening

SRI AUROBINDO (After some stray talk had been going on): By the way, the Government people here have given up the 14th July celebration. When Pétain has become a dictator there is no meaning in that occasion and, for that matter, the whole of France is now one big Bastille. Pétain has killed the Revolution, the Revolution which had required three more revolutions to make it firm and established.

S: There is no hope of any revolution now.

SRI AUROBINDO: So long as Germany doesn’t leave, no.

P: Now the motto is: “Work, Family and Fatherland”—most mundane and stupid. It doesn’t evoke any inner feeling at all, while “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity” acts like a mantra.

S: Not stupid but mundane, as you say.

SRI AUROBINDO: Work and Family will always be there.

P: Yes, so there is nothing new in it.

SRI AUROBINDO: What does Counouma say about this Government?

P: He is not here now. But he is against it. He said, “Armistice maybe all right, but if they try to destroy the Republic, I will enlist myself. I don’t know what Dr. André and others think about it. They still support Pétain in his peace move and say, ‘People on the spot know better than others’, and blame the British for their insufficient help.”

SRI AUROBINDO: If people on the spot know better, it means Pétain and his minority know better than others. One may also suggest perhaps that Pétain is working for giving bread to the people. (After a while) If David were to become a dictator of Pondicherry and say he would give bread, would he know better because he would be a man on the spot?

As for the help of the British, you can blame them for their late conscription which was due to Chamberlain. But instead of trained soldiers whom they could have sent if they had made the conscription earlier, they sent whatever army they had and could muster. And if they had adopted conscription earlier, the labour party would have made a row. It is no use blaming the British people for that.

P: They blame Chamberlain’s Munich policy for all this and say England has directed the French foreign policy so far.

SRI AUROBINDO: But all the Rightists who are now against it supported the Munich policy at that time.
THE ASHRAM OF PONDICHERRY

A FRENCH SAVANT'S IMPRESSIONS IN 1936

(Concluded from the issue of April 24, 1976)

This is the concluding part of the translation of the chapter “L’Ashram de Pondichéry” in Maurice Magré's book À la Poursuite de la Sagesse published by Fasquelle Éditeurs, Paris, 1936. The translation first appeared, with the permission of the Publishers, in Sri Aurobindo Circle, Thirteenth Number, 1957, without the present subtitle. Our acknowledgments are due to Sri Aurobindo Circle. The Mother is reported to have remarked that Magré's impressions were shot with a psychic vision. Thus they have an inner value in addition to the purely historical.

In the order that reigns in the Ashram one feels admiration for the divine work. The work portioned out to each, the glances filled with quietude, the form of the shadow projected by the tree, everything proclaims obedience to law. Happy the one who can find the divine law beautiful, the law that since the aggregation of the first atoms has willed the triumph of the strongest. Sometimes I happen to say to myself: If I were God!

All my efforts would have consisted of contradicting the order of things. I would have given sap to the trees during the winter so that the fruits might appear under the snow and that it might make them fall by the bursting of their warm flesh. I would have given to the solitary man the surprise of finding a thin-bodied virgin in his empty bed. The servant would have seen his work ended before having begun it. To one who is avid of beauty I would have brought dreams so splendid that he would keep lying down until he died, for fear of interrupting them. According to my capacity as God I would have prevented man from degrading himself. A God cannot reform the world but He can help to better it by supernatural creations. Baseness comes from pride and it comes from misery. I would have lowered the pride of the powerful by peculiar miracles and they would be stripped of their dresses and their houses as the butterflies emerge from their chrysalises to become winged beings. I would have breathed into the heart of miserable creatures such a hunger for beauty that they would have laid aside their tools, their brushes, their sacks of coal to see how a flower blooms or what grace the clouds have when they stretch across the setting sun. I would have mastered the sexual energy which blinds the clear-sighted and makes four-footed those who before were standing on two feet. I would have castrated them and made them learn the inutlity of reproducing themselves and of spreading upon the planet beings condemned to pluck bitterly their sustenance without ever thinking of their souls. I would have fixed myself to the earth in order to transform it so forcibly that I would have felt against me the palpitation of its substance; I would have clasped
the hearts of men with a love so puissant that I would have moved them to a love equal to mine. O the mad dream of being God!

**

The Buddha teaches that we should escape from the wheel of lives and re-enter most swiftly the bosom of God and not occupy ourselves with the magnificent curve in which the creatures are put forth.

You contradict this ancient sage, this reformer of personal views. God, you say, has not organised with an infinite prevision the descent of life into matter, from the dull rock to conscious man, so that man may profit by this consciousness in order to escape from the law and return by a short cut to the primary source whence he started. It is thus the lamb does, hardly desirous of skipping in the sunlit hills; it returns, when the dog is inattentive and the shepherd sleeps, to the stable where it can dream at ease. But why is the lamb not right in preferring the prairie of its dreams to the hard rock-path where short grass grows and it bruises its delicate hooves? The work of God is immense and the curves He traces are of infinite variety. Certain comets trace limited ellipses around the suns whose satellites they are, while others lose themselves in the infinite without the astronomers being able to calculate their return. Are we not in the right to consider earthly evil and its visible aggravation even by our uncertain standards as the sign that we must retrace our steps?

The divine creation does not develop with surety. It resembles the work of an architect who makes attempts, builds and demolishes without any care for the materials he uses. There have been grotesque species, which had organs not adapted for living and which the Creator had given up sustaining. There have been over-prolific ones which exceeded His plans by their pullulations and which he had to destroy by means beyond natural laws. Why should not the human creation end in an impasse whose sorrow, injustice and falsehood would be the Mané, Thécal, Pharès, warning the souls that they must find in themselves the resource of their salvation?

"Evil is incomprehensible," you reply, "for a human intelligence and one should be much farther and much higher in order to seize the necessity and the benefit." But it is a strange paradox unworthy of God who has willed it. What is the better part of us, what is divine, revolt against this explanation. One cannot shut up a prisoner and make him suffer in the prison, telling him that these torments have an origin which has to remain incomprehensible to him and which he must bless in spite of this. Or if these torments have a cause to which he has himself given rise in previous lives, how should we judge a Creator who has taken away the memory of these causes and in consequence the possibility of modifying them, who has made man responsible for chastisement and unresponsible for redemption? "One has not the right to judge the Creator," you will say. But why? Since He has willed that with the human reign there should appear a faculty of judgment. Unless this faculty has been born despite Him, unless He has been, at some minute of the cosmic ages, like one
who sowing the wind reaps the whirlwind, like one who playing with fire forgets the power of his creation and lights in his own dwelling a flame which he cannot any more extinguish.

**

You have penetrated the wisdom of books and of traditions. You have made a tour of the sciences like Aristotle and of metaphysics like Shankara, and after having followed the immense circle of human knowledge you have leapt towards the supreme essence of the spirit like a jet of water that is urged by a formidable hidden pressure and carries in itself the spirit of solar rays. You have crossed the invisible world of illusions as a dauntless swimmer crosses a gulf full of monsters, dispersing them with his breath. And now you are stripped of fear, enveloped in calm, concealed in serenity. You keep yourself in the midst of your disciples’ love like a unique rose around which the foreseeing gardener allows only delicate grasses to grow.

How could you deceive yourself, you who have touched the Divine, you who have gained the experience of what is above human reason? And yet I cannot prevent myself from remembering that the Buddha told his disciples to believe nothing beyond what they had understood with their own inner faculty, what was of the divine essence.

**

In the country from which I come, one does not worship the spirit. Hardly a few men, in the monasteries, practise methods analogous to yours by glorifying the prophet who was born in Judaea. I do not shave my head, as is their practice, I am not dressed in rough serge, I have not sung their canticles. I dreamt of a light for which the cloisters have too much shadow and the basilica too much sadness.

Once only in my childhood I grazed the mystery of solitude and of the Presence. It was not far from Toulouse, the town where I was born, in a country where all is sweetness and half-tint and where nature is like a child that has never been ill-treated by its father. On the bank of the Garonne where the poplars grow, there is a great house of stone. When I had run up to it, I stopped, seized by the silent beauty of the landscape. And suddenly I saw, emerging from a pathway, men clothed in robes and looking into themselves. They were walking gravely. They were going nowhere. They disappeared among the trees. A clock struck six. I have not been able to forget them.

The men whom I see here do not resemble them at all. They have more love for the sun and for living nature. I feel closer to them than to the others. And while I have seen them walking under the trees where there were so many singing birds, I have not been able to check myself from dreaming of those men of Toulouse who were passing under the poplars when the clock struck six and whose prophet had been crucified.

But towards these or towards those, I have gone too late or too early. It is one's
youth that one should offer to the Divine. Fortunate are those who rise at dawn and have reached the end of the course before sunset. When I crossed the threshold of the Ashram, there was a form which barred the way. It stretched out its arms and said: "Turn back your steps! It is too late!" And this form it was myself who created. In the gladness of arrival I had passed by it, seeming to ignore it, but it has pursued me step by step, it has kept by my side and always it has whispered in a low voice, with a great deal of melancholy: "Turn back your steps, it is too late!"

**

The men in rough serge, who walk under the poplars of Toulouse, have too melancholy songs. The organ has always moved me to despair. I am penetrated with the joy of life and cannot bear human injustice.

Torn by this contradiction, I am tossed between my admiration for the forms of earth and my revolt against their suffering. When I see the trees in cluster lifting harmoniously towards the sun, like chalices of sap and leaves, I wish to be only a branch and share in such a surge. When I see a stunted bush writhing among dry stones, straining towards an ungracious universe the anger of its thorns, I want to give it my blood if it can change it within its substance into a bit of fresh greenness.

But I am crushed by the immensity of law and I ask myself why I have been given this faculty of accepting it when I cannot modify it in the least? How to get out of these two opposed ideas that answer to each other like the sound and the echo, like the beatings of a clock, like day and night? Should one admire nature and hurl oneself gladly like a swimmer who follows the current of a river, letting himself be carried by the waters and getting drunk with the beauty of the banks? Or should one believe in the word of a host of saints who have rejected the temptation, revolted against Evil, prepared themselves their cross, loved better to be flayed alive than to bow before God?

O Master, if you know, resolve for me the problem, utter the liberating word, the word that makes the inner chains fall. If in the mysteries of Samadhi you have caught a glimpse of the truth, if you know why man is on the earth, what sense has the face of beauty, what sense has the grimace of grief, whether one should love them equally, say it and your word shall make the universe ring, it shall rejuvenate it to its foundations. For the truth is divine. There cannot be any calm for the disciple, even though he take ten million breaths attuned to the rhythm of the stars, if he knows not why creatures have been thrust upon the planet, to live there, to decompose there and be reborn.

**

O Master, it is not possible that there should be no redemption for a man of the West! I do not have the pride common to those of my race. It has been for a long time that I have regretted not having been born with a bronzed face, near a temple
where I would have performed rites since my childhood and where I would have ob­
tained naturally what I seek with so much pain. Out there, I am solitary in the midst
of men. I do not understand them any more and I feel that they have ceased to love me
because I am no longer like them. But here I am a stranger. The language and the dress
create an insurmountable barrier. I should like to cry out my love for men and for
things and I remain an indifferent personage who pronounces banal words. But this
again is nothing. You have given me a welcome most magnificent. The room is very
beautiful and the food very rich and the servant very zealous.

I have visited all the rooms of the Ashram and all the doors have been opened to
the guest. But there is one invisible room which has neither door nor walls and which
is the room of the Spirit. Within that, I have not been admitted. If I were worthy of
entering it, there would be no need to demand and I would find myself there by the
power of wishing. I know my unworthiness and I have gauged the distance which
separates me from a goal of which I have not even a glimpse; but is there not an in­
struction which you give to some people? As one who reaches the summit of a high
mountain throws a rope to those who are remaining in the valley, you should throw
some marvellous words to fill the soul with happiness and allow it to raise itself.

O Master, make these words resound for me. I know that the voices which go
from below can always be heard, thanks to the force which sound has, and that no
prayer is lost. And I know that the voice from on high has a tendency to rise and is
not perceived by the deaf who are housed below. I need a sublime order, an instruction
which falls like a luminous stone, a teaching come from the summit. Tell me how the
spiral of meditation should climb up, give me a formula of prayer, even a syllable to
which I would cling like a swimmer who has found a buoy. I am one who is deaf and
still wishes to hear, who is blind and yet opens wide the eyes. Make one sign from
your side, a tiny bit of it can save me from despairing of salvation.

**

Perhaps I have understood the secret. He who has mounted cannot redescend,
even if he wishes it with his heart of old times. He who has attained the house of
wisdom cannot re-open the marble gate, even if there is someone who begs, on a
stormy evening, in a desperate tone. Just as we do not bother ourselves whether the
water of marshlands is vivifying enough to let tadpoles grow harmoniously into frogs,
so too he who has access to divinity cannot soil his feet any more in the marshes of men.

I knock at the marble gate. Never has the night been so thick. Never has the
wind blown with such tumult. Is it not already much to have discovered this gate
across the shadow, even if one has to d e by the perfection of its whiteness?

O Master, what is the sign by which to recognise the one who ought to enter, the
one who is permitted to receive the transmission of the Spirit? Is he chosen by virtue
of an incomprehensible grace or does he choose himself by the ardour of his faith
and the purity of his love?

**
O Mother, while your hands of a Sheherazade are stretched in the half-light of the hall of elevations for the benediction of disciples, the invisible Presences stand by your side.

Then the souls mount in a group, disengaged from the body’s form, and by this grace that comes from you they have the faculty of uniting.

I have seen them, at the twilight hour, like a cloud of radiant beauty, rise towards the tranquil sky, lift high in a single sheaf, when the birds go to sleep, when the stars begin to appear.

As long as your hands are outstretched, like two symbols of adoration, the souls of all the disciples are united in love of the Master, they taste the beatitude and the perfection of love.

And when you sweetly lower your hands there is an invisible separation, the beautiful Egregore of the bluish gold fades and comes back to the earth, all the souls return to their earthly form, as the colours of a rainbow, after having shone in a circle, become again mist and azure.

* * *

O Mother, I have not risen with the chosen ones and the blessing has passed by me. But, in the measure of his sincerity, has not each the right to a little bit of love?

It is part of the attributes of your power to help the men who appeal to you at the beneficent hour of death. And this hour is like a cloud that sails round my sky without moving farther or disappearing.

O Mother, when this hour comes for me, may my breath have strength enough to pronounce the syllables of your name; may my memory be lively enough to build up your exact image within the shadows of remembrance!

May you keep by my side like a seraph of pity and dispel before me the ensnaring people of the shadows! May you lead me, stripped of fear and pride, towards the abode where the pure ones go, where all is love and beauty!

* * *

I shall depart loaded with a precious treasure. I have not gained the answer which I came to seek. But the great masters answer not to the questions of men. Jesus and Buddha kept silent and they have taught that it was vanity to know. Perhaps the supreme wisdom is to limit the vision to the span of what one sees. Perhaps there is even a higher wisdom which lies in not seeing.

On the most sacred soil of the world I have come to seek that which I name the Truth. I have beheld men good and pure and such as I did not know could exist. They have had merely to stand before me to attest by their presence that there is no wisdom superior to uprightness of heart. I am going a thousand times brimmed. I feel myself marked by an elective grace. I am like him who has gone to quest for gold and who brings back a stone precious like one that can only be in the planet
Venus. It is because somewhere, in the dark world, there is this beauty of the soul, because some men have uplifted themselves silently towards perfection, that all men can be saved.

**

I have taken a handful of earth, a handful of the earth of India, to carry it for remembrance in my own country. I have looked at this earth in the hollow of my hand. It was exactly like the earth of a field of Toulouse, which I took when I was a child and which I ran between my fingers. All the earths resemble one another. All are made of the primitive substance and of the refuse of dead plants. But the spirit is different. What I should have carried was a little of the eternal light whose ray has descended here. I have come quite close to it. But the light of a divine order has this subtle quality of passing without leaving a trace. Has it perhaps touched me? How shall I know, my God? Oh if I have carried merely this handful of earth in the hollow of my hand, this handful of Indian earth so like the earth of other countries!

**

I was going to leave and someone carried my baggages across the rooms and along the staircase. I saw a man who was naked with a loin-cloth. He prudently kept apart and lowered his eyes while joining his palms all the time my look met his. There was under these traits a strange joy and the illumination of perfect beings. I thought of some saint come at the last hour for a marvellous communication.

“What is this man?” I asked with an inner emotion the servant who acted as my interpreter, “and what does he want?”

The servant answered: “He has come to know that you are leaving for France and he wishes to get a bit of money on this occasion.”

I kept silent and then my soul was filled with joy. If the face of the beggar and that of the saint wear the same beauty it is because to give and to receive are two actions of the same essence, which only seem different to eyes that do not know how to see.

O Master! through the intermediary of one who asked me for an offering, your message has reached me!

**

O Master, you have not cured the leper, you have not delivered the woman possessed nor ostensibly walked on the waters. By the path you have discovered in the inner labyrinth of the spirit, you have reached the realm of the Divine. No Lazarus has risen from the tomb to bear witness to your power, no miracle has flashed forth like a celestial aerolite. But a few inspired men have known that the miracle has taken place in silence and solitude and they have come to gather around you. With the souls of these perfect ones you have condensed a spiritual diamond of such purity that the earth has not known its like. What pride would be required of me to believe
that I could mingle with these perfect ones or rather what ignorance would be re-
quired! Now my soul will turn back eternally to the place of election where you live
and each night it will perch on the trees of the Ashram, lost in the thousands of birds
that sleep with folded wings and fly off at dawn.

**

There are words which one uses and whose sense one understands only very
late. One pronounces them a thousand times without knowing their value. And all
of a sudden these vague words become alive in front of you, as if they had blood in
their letters and flesh in their syllables.

Ah! how poignant they are and nostalgic, charged with all the distress of my soul,
these words which have remained up to now mute and lack-lustre, these words which
have just revealed themselves to me in their profundity of despair, these words of
“Lost Paradise”!

**

I would wish there were more than five parts of the world and that the oceans
were more numerous. It is not enough to have one China and it is not enough to have
one India! I would wish there were several pole-stars and a whole pack of Great
Bears. How swift go the ships! How equal are the shores! How deceptive is the
Southern Cross! The sharks are too few and the flying fishes fly hardly enough to make
a parade of their little power of leaping. Faintly lit, the cities fade out and all the ports
dwindle. The gulfs are thin like serpents, the islands have not the air of being water-
ringed on all the sides and the revolving light-houses are so low that one thinks always
that they are on the point of being extinguished. The beauty of the world is less great
than what one has dreamed in writing books of travel. One sole lamp is bright and
shall not ever pale for all its smallness, scarcely a dust-grain of gold above the
night of the oceans. It is the lamp of the pure spirit which needs no oil once it has
been lit!

O ship, you can sail on and carry me towards no matter what world, even beyond
the Red Sea and beyond Greece, towards the country where reigns the fog and where
turns the machine! There, on the shore that I leave behind me, is a man garbed in
white who bears aloft a lustre for me despite the rain and the glooms which have
suddenly spread. He makes a gesture of farewell, the gesture of a brother to a brother.
I have no need to open the eyes in order to see him and the farther away I move the
more brilliant grows his light.

MAURICE MAGRE

(Translated by K. D. Sethna from the original French.)
TO A PEACE CORPS WORKER IN NEPAL

A LETTER OF SEPTEMBER 27, 1972

I THINK that what you have gone through lately in Kathmandu is not something unexpected. Of course, you may not have known it coming, but when one has suddenly burst open to new dimensions of feeling, new depths of being, a return to the old associations and environments is bound to bring a psychological reshuffling, a vision of things and persons as if one either saw them from a great distance that dwarfs their former importance or from very close so that one touches all the grossness and insufficiency and impermanence which one never realised before.

But the reshuffling should not disorientate one completely. And I am glad you have been able to keep the Pondicherry-peace glowing within you. It will effect a new adjustment, in which you will find in the very diminution of the old values and old ties an increase of the divine presence that is always there in the world and only waits for our receptivity to show us its calm eternal smile whose message is: “Abhaya —Have no fear”

Your indecision over staying on in Nepal or going back to your own country is quite natural. But I am afraid the time has come in the evolutionary career of the world when many souls are likely to feel that they have no home. The whole Hippie movement is an odd manifestation of this widespread homelessness. The true reason for the phenomenon lies in our having reached a critical threshold where one epoch of evolution is dead and another not yet born—or, if born, still not “alive and kicking”. Man the Mental Being has had his day—the hour of his triumph, the hour of nuclear energy and bio-genetic control, is also the moment when he sees an abyss yawn under his feet, the abyss opened up by his awareness of the huge imbalance between his world-knowledge and his self-knowledge.

Suddenly something from beyond the Mind has touched Man’s glittering kingdom and shown up its inadequacy. Nothing positive has yet come to light in the common world-consciousness, but this touch has disclosed a void in the human set-up and that void creates the sense of homelessness, the vague wandering of the heart away from ancient fixities, a profound discontent with all achievements of society, religion, science, personal relationship

The turn in the right direction will arrive, I believe, when the void will be seen as God-shaped. The emptiness, the homelessness will then become a positive power and guide one towards one’s true parents, whom I consider to be Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A real home will then have been found—an America beyond Columbus’s discovery, a country even beyond the India Columbus dreamed of reaching when he stumbled upon America, a land towards which Whitman moved when he cried “Passage to India!” but which is truly seen when we hear his deeper cry: “Passage to more than India!” For, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are leaders, from
an Indian starting-point, to a Future where all earth will attain at the same time its consummation and its self-transcendence.

However, it is not unimportant to know where Sri Aurobindo and the Mother start from on their wonderful journey.

K. D. Sethna

YOUR LOVE

Your love for me is like unearthly water
Singing in silver curves along my flesh—
A wizard mesh
Of melted moonlight fallen from afar
To capture and dissolve in lustrous sleep
The heart’s unvisioning hurry towards the grave....
O seraph wave,
White prelude of some incorruptible Deep
Whose rumour haunts me like an aureole,
You come to wash and heal for ever the scar
That is my body on the secret soul.

Amal Kiran
UDAR REMEMBERS

III

This is my third attempt at remembering some of the wonderful things The Mother said to me or of things that happened. But I would like to mention first those things which have points of interest to others and express certain truths.

For instance, we were once talking of a person who had quite exceptional occult powers and with this could perform all sorts of miraculous things. The Mother had often explained that such occult powers do not necessarily stem from a spiritual process although they often do so, as Yoga siddhis. Such powers can also come from the Dark or Asuric Forces. In this connection we may read those lines from Savitri—Book III Canto III—which say:

All seemed to have perished that was undivine:
Yet some minutest dissident might escape
And still a centre lurk of the blind force.
For the Inconscient too is infinite;
The more its abysses we insist to sound,
The more it stretches, stretches endlessly.

In this particular instance it seemed fairly clear that the person with these powers was not really a spiritual seeker though he was considered by several persons as such and was looked upon as a guru. To this The Mother said: “If a disciple has a sincere faith in such a person, then even if the person is a false guru, to the disciple the guru is true. The faith of the disciple makes it so.”

There is another story that concerns faith which has relevance here though it may seem a bit contrary. I shall have to explain from the beginning. The Mother would ask me to do all sorts of jobs for Her. She once commented on this by saying to me: “Udar, you are very useful to me. If anyone asks me for something to be done and I do not know who or which department should be approached, I say ‘Go to Udar, he will get it done!’ ” One of the things I had to do sometimes was to take a lady by car to visit certain other spiritual persons in whom she was interested. One of these was a Swami called Gyanananda Swami who was said to be a very spiritually advanced person and had a small Ashram of his own at Tirukoilur. According to his biography he was reputed to be 160 years old. He died recently. I had been to him a few times with the lady and found him really a fine person with undoubtedly a good spiritual attainment. Later, the lady made her own arrangements to go to him. One day she saw me limping with the arthritis that I suffer from and which sometimes is quite painful. She asked me if she could speak to the Swamiji about it. I asked her not to because for everything I needed I went only to The Mother. But she insisted saying the Swamiji might know some herbal cure and so she finally asked him about it and the Swamiji said: “Yes, I know what is wrong with him. It cannot be cured by medicine but it can be cured by other means.” He then gave the lady some of the ashes,
vibhuti, from his puja place and said that I should first pray to whomever I had belief in, and then put a pinch of the ashes on the tip of my tongue and see what happens.

When I was given the packet of ashes by the lady I took it to The Mother and told Her the whole story. The Mother asked me if I would try it out and I said: "No. I do not try out things from others. Only from You." Then The Mother held the packet in Her hands for a while and gave it to me saying: "Now I give it to you. Will you try it?" I replied: "Yes, now certainly I will do it, but there is a difficulty—that of praying." The Mother asked me why and I replied: "Mother, you know what a bad boy I had been before I came to you, and now when I pray to God for something I seem to hear Him say: 'Ah! Now you come to me—to ask!' and He begins to laugh and I laugh and that is the end of my prayer." The Mother Herself laughed but insisted that I should make a serious attempt to pray and I said I would.

When I went back home I tried it out. I was really in much pain and I tried my best to pray in all sincerity without laughing and then I put a pinch of the ashes on the tip of my tongue. Suddenly the pain disappeared. I was truly surprised. I had really not expected anything but it happened. It was all so marvellous and I was overjoyed. But a little later when I examined myself more thoroughly I found that there was still a trace of the pain—about 10%. It had not all gone as I had first felt when I had so much relief. When I told The Mother all this She was pleased and asked me to continue and said that the 10% would also disappear. I carried on for several days, but the pain did not disappear; rather it began to increase. When I informed The Mother She said: "It is because you did not pray properly." And She added: "You know, Udar, a ninety percent cure can come from faith but the balance 10% requires Grace, and this you did not get because you did not pray properly."

This is a very interesting view on faith. It can move mountains, it is said, but perhaps 10% of the mountain is left behind. This needs to be investigated.

Now to continue the story. The pain came back more and more and became even worse than before. I could hardly walk. Then I asked The Mother what I should do. She said: "Why not try running?" I had often said to Her that running was so good—much better than walking. So She asked me to try it even when I could hardly walk! The doctor who was looking after me was quite against this. He said that in this condition I needed full rest. All movement would only aggravate the condition. If I ran, he said, my knees would become like red footballs.

When I reported this to The Mother, She said that I should try it out, nevertheless, and I did. What the doctor had forecast actually happened. My knees were swollen like red footballs and the pain was intense. Even going to The Mother was difficult but I managed somehow. When She saw my state She said that I should continue but that during the running I should meditate. To this I agreed at once. She said that thus the pain would go in three days. It went in three days—and did not come back in any great degree. I am now managing very well after all these years. That is the story. There is another story on the same matter which brings out another interesting point. We shall leave that for another time.
THE SEARCH FOR SOMA
A BOOK-REVIEW WITH THE EDITOR'S COMMENT
ON ITS THEME

The Fortifying Fungus


The price is sensational, the production—print, paper, and the stunning colour plates alike—impeccable. And the variety of the ground covered daunting. The subject? The fly-agaric (what the Germans call the *Fliegenpilz*), that lovely but somewhat sinister fungus which enlivens the woods of northern Europe in autumn and for which the British have no familiar name. The novelty of the book is that it identifies the Soma of the Vedic hymns with this beautiful but toxic mushroom.

The identity of the plant Soma has baffled all students of the subject from the earliest post-Vedic literature until today. The problem is this: the Vedic Indians and the pre-Zoroastrian Iranians worshipped a plant called *soma* (Avestan *haoma*) which was at the same time a god. It was intoxicating, gave strength in battle as well as a widening of consciousness. It was golden-red in appearance, grew on high mountains, its stalks were crushed to extract the intoxicating juice, but there is no reference to roots or leaves, blossom or seed. What is extraordinary, however, is that in both India and Iran the identity of the plant was very soon forgotten, and substitutes had to be used in its place; the earliest substitutes seem to have been creepers of one sort or another, grasses maybe, but never a mushroom. The efforts of scholars, both ancient and modern, to identify the plant have been meticulously catalogued by Dr. Wendy O’Flaherty in Part Two of *Soma, the Divine Mushroom of Immortality*.

Among the moderns the favourite has been the swallow-wort (*sarcostemma brevistigma*) but there are plenty of other suggestions more or less plausible. Hitherto no one has thought of a mushroom except Aldous Huxley, whose experience under mescaline caused him to muse not so much on peyote, a cactus, the active principle of which is mescaline, as on hallucinogenous mushrooms in use in Mexico. This idea has now been taken up with enthusiasm by Mr. Wasson, a retired banker and a mycologist.

Soma, he thinks, was a mushroom, and not only a mushroom but the fly-agaric. This amiable fungus, he thinks, was consumed by the Vedic (and Iranian) priesthood both (as the Veda explicitly says) in the form of juice pressed out of the stalks and in the form of urine issuing from the Soma-intoxicated hierophant. His argument on behalf of the latter mode of ingestion has a certain cogency, although the evidence is rather thin, though he seeks to substantiate it from all Asia and beyond and from

---

1 With grateful acknowledgments to the *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 5 1969, p. 562, col 3-5.s
every period of history. In so doing he has invariably consulted the best experts available to him in the enormous field he covers. Thus, he investigates in great detail the Chinese ling chi, the "divine mushroom of immortality", and he submits that this is an alliterative reflection of the Indian Soma, maybe.

He further maintains that the Manichees, whose mycophilia was scorned by the great Augustine and indeed seems to have been excessive, inherited this taste from their Iranian religious forbears and their cult of Haoma. If so, it is strange that the Iranian Zoroastrians, who continued the Haoma cult, had long since forgotten what the Haoma plant was. And this indeed is the main argument against the mushroom theory: if Soma-Haoma was the fly-agaric, and if in the course of the Indo-Iranian migration from the north to hotter climes it had become at first difficult and then impossible to find, why were the substitutes themselves never mushrooms but always creepers of one sort or another?

Mr. Wasson's mushroom thesis rests on two pillars: the fly-agaric corresponds more nearly to the descriptions of Soma-Haoma in the Veda and Avesta than does any other plant so far suggested, and, until the Russian authorities clamped down on them, certain Siberian tribes used to use fly-agaric as a religious intoxicant. Did not the Indo-Iranians in their southern migration do the same? The implausibility of this has already been pointed out. There are, however, further difficulties; for it is generally known that the fly-agaric has a most unpleasant taste and causes vomiting, while it is only pleasantly intoxicating if it is first dried and then re-hydrated. There is no evidence that the early Indo-Iranians did this. Intriguing though the hypothesis is, it still leaves the identity of the Soma plant wide open.

However, Soma, the Divine Mushroom of Immortality is a joy to look at, a pleasure to read, and a mine of curious information not always relevant to the subject at hand. Few people, for instance, know that reindeer have a passion for both the fly-agaric and human urine, whereas the gluttony of the Manichees for this mushroom had hitherto been overlooked. Interesting too is Mr. Wasson's separation of the human race into mycophiles and mycophobes. Among the latter the Anglo-Saxons are far in the lead, as the paucity of their mycological vocabulary all too plainly shows.

It was, however, a brilliant hunch to seek the solution of the Soma problem among the mushrooms. But must it be the fly-agaric? The stock epithet of Soma in the Rig-Veda is harī, and this appears originally to have meant "reddish-brown verging on yellow" or "golden" (compare Persian zarr, "gold", with its Avestan and other cognates): it is for instance used for foxes in the Rig-veda as well as for the sun. In Sanskrit the cognate harita later comes to mean "yellow" or "yellowish green", whereas in Persian its correlative sar-d settles down firmly in the sense of "yellow". The fly-agaric, on the other hand, is, before it starts to decay, brilliantly red; and if this was indeed Soma, it is a little difficult to see how it could later have been firmly identified with the moon.

Would Mr. Wasson be prepared to consider some other fungus? To throw out a casual suggestion, could it not be the girolle chanterelle which, when young, has
the colour and shape of the moon and, when past its prime, is reddish-brown rather the colour of the fox? In this connexion, moreover, it is perhaps worth noting that the Czechs call the girolle *lska*, the ordinary meaning of which is “fox”. Can the juice of this mushroom, if suitably treated, produce intoxication of any kind? Probably not, but perhaps Mr. Wasson might consider casting his net wider in his fascinating fungoid world.

**Editor’s Comment**

It is legitimate for scholars to seek the identity of the marvellous Soma of the Rigveda. Their efforts claim justification from the fact that an actual plant was used in rituals of the times succeeding those of the ancient scripture which had made Soma famous. But, as the reviewer of Mr. Wasson’s book clearly tells us, the plant in question was acknowledged to be a substitute. The fundamental fact, as pointed out by the reviewer, is: nobody could tell, even in antiquity, what plant the original Soma had been. Surely, therefore, it is legitimate for one to counter the scholars by asking: “Was the Rigvedic Soma ever a plant at all?”

This question is supported by the reviewer’s words: “... the Vedic Indians and the pre-Zoroastrian Iranians worshipped a plant called *soma* (Avestan *haoma*) which was at the same time a god.” There is also the information to be derived from the reviewer that even in later times Soma was more than a mere plant: it was “firmly identified with the moon”. A sense of the deific, the numinous, in the “high-lights”, so to speak, of Nature is evident here, taking us beyond a mere earth-plant and indicating much more than the reviewer’s inference that the original plant must have had not only the colour but also the shape of the moon. An esoteric tradition seems to have persisted from the Rigvedic time into a later period, a lingering remembrance of the usages natural to an age of spiritual symbolism. The Sun and the Moon are obvious symbols of Divine Knowledge and Divine Delight. Identification of the God Soma with the moon argues for more than a plant’s colour and shape—more even than for the urge of Nature-worship. It harks back to the psychology of the cult of “Mysteries”—the ancient mind’s resort to a set of symbols which, to the adept, signified realities and realisations of the inner mystical or Yogic life while to the commoner it stood for external objects and forces and a religious ritual, a sacrifice at which professional priests officiated.

The unearthliness of the Rigveda’s Soma is hinted even by the account of it as if it were a plant of the earth. The reviewer writes: “It was golden-red in appearance, grew on high mountains, its stalks were crushed to extract the intoxicating juice, but there is no reference to roots or leaves, blossom or seed.” The lack noted in the last two phrases is puzzling indeed for an earthly plant. The growing on high mountains is extremely suggestive too—and when we find, in Rigveda X.34, 1, Soma described as coming especially from the mountain named Mujavant the suggestion acquires
extra concreteness, for no mountain of that name has ever been identified. Zimmer\(^1\) tried to equate it with one of the lower hills on the south-west of Kashmir, but, as Hillebrandt\(^2\) has asserted, the equation lacks evidence. We can conjecture a connection with a people designated as Mujavants in the Atharvaveda (V.22) and the Yajurveda Samhitas (e.g. Taithtiriya Samhita, I.8.6.2) and considered as dwelling far away and typefying distant folk. Such a connection can only convey a vague remoteness for the provenance of Soma, agreeing with the total blur in the minds of both the Indians and the Iranians about the identity of the scriptural plant.

What clinches the unearthliness of Soma is the manner in which the supposed “sieve” purifying it—\(\text{pavitra,}\) as the Rigveda (e.g. I.28, 9) terms it—is spoken of. We have to take into account two points about it.

First, its “material.” No doubt, it is said to be made of a ram’s or sheep’s wool (IX.75, 4). But we have to weigh Sri Aurobindo’s gloss:\(^3\) “The strainer in which the Soma is purified is made of the fleece of the ewe. Indra is the Ram [I.10.2;51,52, VIII. 2.40; 87,12]; the Ewe must therefore be an energy of Indra, probably the divinised sense-mind, \(\text{indriyam.}\)” Such a psycho-spiritual view is natural if we look at what the Aitareya Upanishad has to say. To quote Sri Aurobindo\(^4\) again: “In the Aitareya Upanishad Soma, as the lunar deity, is born from the sense-mind in the universal Purusha and, when man is produced, expresses himself again as sense-mentality in the human being. For delight is the \(\text{raison d’\’etre}\) of sensation, or, we may say, sensation is an attempt to translate the secret delight of existence into the terms of the physical consciousness. But in that consciousness,—often figured as \(\text{adri},\) the hill, stone, or dense substance,—divine light and divine delight are both of them concealed and confined, and have to be released or extracted. Ananda [the divine principle of Bliss] is retained as \(\text{rasa,}\) the sap, the essence, in sense-objects and sense-experiences, in the plants and growths of the earth-nature, and among these growths the mystic Soma-plant symbolises that element behind all sense-activities and their enjoyments which yields the divine essence. It has to be distilled and, once distilled, purified and intensified until it has grown luminous, full of radiance, full of swiftness, full of energy, \(\text{gomat, āṣu, yuvāku.}\) It becomes the chief food of the gods who, called to the Soma-oblation, take their share of the enjoyment and in the strength of that ecstasy increase in man, exalt him to his highest possibilities, make him capable of the supreme experiences. Those who do not give the delight in them as an offering to the divine Powers, preferring to reserve themselves for the sense and the lower life, are adorers not of the gods, but of the Panis, lords of the sense-consciousness, traffickers in its limited activities, they who press not the mystic wine, give not the purified offering, raise not the sacred chant.”

It is because of the spiritual nature of Soma that it is “called sometimes \(\text{amṛta,}\) the Greek ambrosia, as if it were itself the substance of immortality”\(^5\). And this

\(^1\) Altgndisches Leben, 29.  \(^2\) Veddische Mythologe, I, 65  
\(^3\) The Secret of the Veda (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1971), p. 541, fn. 2.  
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 249.  \(^5\) Ibid., pp. 344-5.
nature stands out in Rigveda IX.83.2, where the true sense of *pavitra* emerges beyond a doubt. In the course of commenting on that hymn, Sri Aurobindo writes: “This strong and fiery wine has to be purified and the strainer for its purifying has been spread out wide to receive it in the seat of Heaven, *tapospavitraṁ vitatam divaspade*; its threads or fibres are all of pure light and stand out like rays, *socanto asya tantavo vyāsthiran*. Through these fibres the wine has to come streaming. The image evidently refers to the purified mental and emotional consciousness, the conscious heart, *chetas*, whose thoughts and emotions are the threads or fibres. Dyau or Heaven is the pure mental principle not subjected to the reactions of the nerves and the body. In the seat of Heaven,—the pure mental being as distinguished from the vital and physical consciousness,—the thoughts and emotions become pure rays of true perception and happy psychical vibration instead of the troubled and obscured mental emotional and sensational reactions that we now possess. Instead of being contracted and quivering things defending themselves from pain and excess of the shocks of experience they stand out free, strong and bright, happily extended to receive and turn into divine ecstasy all possible contacts of universal existence. Therefore it is *dvaspade*, in the seat of Heaven, that the Soma-strainer is spread out to receive the Soma.”

Surely such a strainer cannot be the sieve for the juice of any actual plant. True, the hymn in question “begins with an imagery which closely follows the physical facts of the purifying of the wine and its pouring into a jar”. But even here we get hints that what appears like a wine used in an external sacrifice is a symbol of a deity who is the supernal wine of Bliss and Immortality. Soma “is pressed out by the pressing-stone (*adri, gravaṇa*) which has a close symbolic connection with the thunderbolt, the formed electric force of Indra also called *adri*. The Vedic hymns speak of the luminous thunders of this stone as they speak of the light and sound of Indra’s weapon. Once pressed out as the delight of existence Soma has to be purified through a strainer (*pavitra*) and through the strainer he streams in his purity into the wine bowl (*chamar*) in which he is brought to the sacrifice, or he is kept in jars (*kalaśa*) for Indra’s drinking. Or, sometimes, the symbol of the bowl or the jar is neglected and Soma is simply described as flowing in a river of delight to the seat of the Gods, to the home of Immortality. That these things are symbols is very clear in most of the hymns of the ninth Mandala which are all devoted to the God Soma. Here, for instance, the physical system of the human being is imaged as the jar of the Soma-wine ...”

Sri Aurobindo continues: “But it is not every human system that can hold, sustain and enjoy the potent and often violent ecstasy of that divine delight. *Atatapanur na tad āmo aśnuta*, he who is raw and his body not heated does not taste or enjoy that; *śrtasa id vahantas tat samāsata*, only those who have been baked in the fire bear and entirely enjoy that. The wine of the divine Life , cannot be held in the system unprepared for it by strong endurance of the utmost fires of life and suffering and

---

1 Ibid., p 343  
2 Ibid., pp. 342-3.  
3 Ibid., p. 344.
experience. The raw earthen vessel not baked to consistency in the fire of the kiln cannot hold the Soma-wine; it breaks and spills the precious liquid. So the physical system of the man who drinks this strong wine of Ananda must by suffering and conquering all the torturing heats of life have been prepared for the secret and fiery heats of the Soma; otherwise his conscious being will not be able to hold it; it will spill and lose it as soon as or even before it is tasted or it will break down mentally and physically under the touch.”

Sri Aurobindo also elucidates the Godhead of Soma in IX 83: “Arūruchad uṣa-sah prśnir agriyāḥ, the supreme dappled One, he makes the dawns to shine: ukṣā bibharti bhuvanāṇi vājayuh, he, the Bull, bears the worlds, seeking the plenitude. The word prśnih, dappled, is used both of the Bull, the supreme Male, and of the Cow, the female Energy; like all words of colour, śveta, sukra, hari, harit, krṣṇa, hiranyāyā, in the Veda it is symbolic; colour, varṇa, has always denoted quality, temperament, etc., in the language of the Mystics. The dappled Bull is the Deva in the variety of his manifestation, many-hued. Soma is that first supreme dappled Bull, generator of the worlds of the becoming, for from Ananda, from the all-blissful One they all proceed; delight is the parent of the variety of existences.... He makes the Dawns to shine out,—the dawns of illumination, mothers of the radiant herds of the sun; and he seeks the plenitude, that is to say the fullness of being, force, consciousness, the plenty of the godhead which is the condition of divine delight....

To complete the picture we may cull from Sri Aurobindo a few more passages about the same hymn. Now the last two verses (4 and 5) are under comment. They begin with the mention of “Gandharva”. The name is additional testimony to the unearthly status of Soma. It first occurs in the Rigveda in I.22,14. In the well-known translation of Ralph T.H. Griffith, which seeks no esoteric sense, we have the sufficiently esoteric pointer in a note to the phrase “the Gandharva’s steadfast place”: “Though in later times the Gandharvas are regarded as a class, in the Rigveda more than one Gandharva is seldom mentioned. He is commonly designated as ‘the heavenly Gandharva’, whose habitation is the sky, and whose especial duty is to guard the heavenly Soma, which the Gods obtain through his permission.” In the hymn under comment, Griffith proposes the Sun as the Gandharva, while in hymn 85,12 his note says: “here Soma, the Moon.” But his translation of the relevant phrase in 83,4, where so far only Soma has been mentioned, indicates the same meaning: “Gandharva verily protects his dwelling-place; Wondrous, he guards the generations of the Gods.” In any case we are clearly directed towards Heaven and not Earth for Soma’s original status. Sri Aurobindo’s comment on the two concluding verses runs: “Soma is the Gandharva, the Lord of the hosts of delight, and guards the true

1 Ibid., pp. 345-6.  
2 Ibid., pp. 346-8.  
4 Ibid., p. 338, note to line 4  
5 Ibid., p. 342, note to line 12.  
6 Ibid., p. 339.
seat of the Deva, the level or plane of the Ananda; gandharva itthä padam asya rakṣati. He is the Supreme, standing out from all other beings and over them, other than they and wonderful, adbhutah, and as the supreme and transcendent, present in the worlds but exceeding them, he protects in those worlds the birth of the gods, pāti devānāṁ janināṁ adbhutah. The 'birth of the gods' is a common phrase in the Veda by which is meant the manifestation of the divine principles in the cosmos and especially the formation of the godhead in its manifold forms in the human being. In the last verse [3] the Rishi spoke of the Deva as the divine child preparing for birth, involved in the world, in the human consciousness. Here he speaks of Him as the transcendent guarding the world of the Ananda formed in man and the forms of the godhead born in him by the divine knowledge against the attacks of the enemies, the powers of division, the powers of undelight (dvisah, arātiḥ), against the undivine host with their formations of a dark and false creative knowledge, Avidya, illusion (adevir māyāḥ).

"For he seizes these invading enemies in the net of the inner consciousness; he is the master of a profounder and truer setting of world-truth and world-experience than that which is formed by the senses and the superficial mind. It is by this inner setting that he seizes the powers of falsehood, obscurity and division and subjects them to the law of truth, light and unity; grbhnāti ripuin nidhayā nidhāpatiḥ. Men therefore protected by the lord of the Ananda governing this inner nature are able to accord their thoughts and actions with the inner truth and light and are no longer made to stumble by the forces of the outer crookedness; they walk straight, they become entirely perfect in their works and by this truth of inner working and outer action are able to taste the entire sweetness of existence, the honey, the delight that is the food of the soul. Sukṛtamā madhuno bhaksam āśata.

"Soma manifests here as the offering, the divine food,-the wine of delight and immortality, havīh, and as the Deva, lord of that divine offering (havismah), above as the vast and divine seat, the superconscient bliss and truth, brhat, from which the wine descends to us. As the wine of delight he flows about and enters into this great march of the sacrifice which is the progress of man from the physical to the superconscient. He enters into it and encompasses it wearing the cloud of the heavenly ether, nabhas, the mental principle, as his robe and veil. Havir havismo mahi sadma daivyam, nabho vasānāḥ pari yāsti adhvaram. The divine delight comes to us wearing the luminous-cloudy veil of the forms of mental experience.

"In that march or sacrificial ascent the all-blissful Deva becomes the King of all our activities, master of our divinised nature and its energies and with enlightened conscious heart as his chariot ascends into the plenitude of the infinite and immortal state. Like a Sun or a fire, as Surya, as Agni, engirt with a thousand blazing energies he conquers the vast regions of the inspired truth, the superconscient knowledge; rājā pavitraratho vājam āruḥah, sahasrabhrś̥trī jayaśi śravadv̄yhat. The image is that of a victorious king, sunlike in force and glory, conquering a wide territory. It is the immortality that he wins for man in the vast Truth-Consciousness, śravas, upon
which is founded the immortal state. It is his own true seat, ittha padam asya, that
the God concealed in man conquers ascending out of the darkness and the twilight
through the glories of the Dawn into the solar plenitudes."

Having made out the case that the Rigveda is not merely religious ritualism
directed at deified nature-forces but a spiritual cult aiming at the human soul's realisation
of the Supreme Being by an inner Yogic process of deepening, widening and
heightening the consciousness and that it has both an esoteric and an exoteric side
and that its true understanding comes by a symbolic vision of it, we have still to ask:
"If there are two sides, have we not to assume an actual plant whose juice represents
the occult experience of the Divine Delight? Was there not a physically drinkable
wine as a symbol of the Wine of Immortality with which the aspiring soul was filled
when it invoked, under the particular name of Soma, the one Existent to whom the
seers give different names (I.164,46), the timeless Unknowable beyond the mind
(I.170,1), the Unmoving and Infinite which is the single mightiness of the Gods
(III.55,1), the transcendent and universal Deva, "the Father of things who appears
here as the Son in the human soul",1 "the Blissful One to whom the movement of
the Gods ascends, manifest as at once the Male and the Female, vrśan, dhenu"?

We can only answer: "There are hymns like IX.83 where the physical inter­
pretation is impossible. There are no hymns where this interpretation alone stands
forth. There are double-aspected hymns where, in spite of physical appearances,
the spiritual-symbolic interpretation can be maintained. Therefore all the hymns
are capable of such an interpretation and the sole logical course is to give it to them.
Thus nowhere in the Rigveda can an actual plant be taken as intended." But this
need not imply that no plant existed in the Rigveda's day by the name of Soma. Just
as the fire, the clarified butter which was put into it, the cow, the horse, the wealth,
the hills, the rivers existed as physical counterparts to their psycho-spiritual originals
and served as symbols for the processes of the inner Yogic life, so too an actual plant
whose juice was pressed out must have been present for the exoteric sense to have
some bearing here as everwhere else. However, it would be a mistake to look for a
sort of point-to-point correspondence with the divine amṛta which was meant by
Soma. We should not bother to search for some extraordinary herb whose extract,
as Mr. Wasson’s reviewer puts it, “was intoxicating, gave strength in battle as well
as a widening of consciousness”. The Rigveda (X.85,3,4)2 very clearly forbids any
quest for point-to-point correspondence:

"One thinks, when they have brayed the plant, that he hath drunk the Soma's
juice;
Of him whom Brahmans truly know as Soma no one ever tastes.

"Soma, secured by sheltering rules, guarded by hymns in Brāhiṭi,4

1 Ibid., pp. 341-2.  
2 Ibid., p. 342.  
4 That is, hymns in that metre.
Thou standest listening to the stones: none tastes of thee who dwells on earth.

Some sort of winy liquid was obtained, but it was not more unusual or in a class by itself than were all the other physical analogues of inner realities. The only thing we can affirm with certainty is that it differed from common “spirituous” drinks. The Rigveda calls these drinks Sura as distinguished from Soma and sometimes frowns upon them (e.g., VII.86,6) and twice (VIII.2,22;21,14) regards them as causing broils. It is possible that its actual Soma was more or less like the creepers or grasses later epochs employed as substitutes. Perhaps those creepers or grasses were not really substitutes but believed to be so because the Rigvedic symbolism and esotericism were forgotten and the high qualities ascribed to Soma were taken literally to belong to an earthly plant.

K. D. Sethna

WORDS

\`
Weed out
All sterile words
From your speech
And see how tremendous
Is the effect of the remaining words.
It is tremendous
Because now the words
Are no more your ego’s words.
Now they are
The words of the humbly wise Soul.
\`
THE GOLDEN BALL

SINCE Arjuna appeared in his shining chariot with Sri Krishna standing beside him and telling him what to do at each moment of the great battle between the future that was to be born and the past which sought to endure, the Guru of the world has never ceased to guide man towards his highest destiny.

For us, he took the compassionate forms of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, to whom, over a period of years, all the members of the Ashram could write daily and ask all kinds of questions about their sadhana and the mysteries of the universe and evolution. With the Mother, it became possible to enter into even the smallest details of our physical life and to know from her, for example, whether it was good for one of her children to drink some milk before going to bed, or to play football, or to meditate beside a paddy field on the crop growing there.

Of whom shall we ask our questions now?

The Mother long ago started to wean her children, preparing us to find the answers by ourselves in ourselves. For some, she deliberately refused to answer any question, big or small, suggesting that they get into contact with the inner knowledge and guide.

For all, she gave a very simple method. It was during one of her Wednesday classes, on the sixth of June 1956 at the playground. It was raining heavily and everything had been arranged in the gymnasium for people to sit there and listen to her. That evening she explained how to interrogate "the invisible knowledge" on whatever we wanted to know, through the intermediary of some book of wisdom or revelation with which we felt in intimate relation, preferably a book which contains "precise thoughts expressed in a condensed form". The purpose was not to read the book, but to find out directly, by an intuitive method, the word or sentence or passage contained in the book which could project a significant light on our quest.

"Everybody can do it," said the Mother.

First, "You concentrate on what you want to know. If you have an inner problem and seek for a solution, you concentrate on that problem. If you want to see your actual condition or state of being, you present yourself and ask for the light. Or you may be simply curious about what the invisible knowledge has to tell you."

"You remain a moment quiet and silent and, while you concentrate, you introduce into the book the point of a letter-opener, which will then indicate" the appropriate words to you.

"It is not chance" which brings you the answer. "If you are sincere and really aspire to know, the vibration of your aspiration meets the corresponding vibration in the book and the energy resulting from the union of the two forces guides your hand to just what you need to find out."

"And it is a higher Consciousness which gives you the answer."

The Mother immediately demonstrated this method by asking for a message for the group of people attending her class, followed by a personal message for two of
the participants. For this she used a book of Sri Aurobindo’s letters, where she chose successively three different passages with the help of a card. The answers were very appropriate and striking.

I remember that, after this beautiful lesson and demonstration, I used this method with reverence and enthusiasm. The answers always touched me deeply, in my practical work as well as in my sadhana. But this method hardly enabled me to learn, for example, whether or not I should take a given medicine, or if I should go to Madras the next week to meet someone—although I may have felt the need for a clear answer to such simple problems of daily life in order to obey the Truth. Also I felt the necessity of offering to the Truth a more precise and at the same time more multiple way of expressing itself.

Sixteen years later, a few days before the birth-centenary of Sri Aurobindo, we were sitting with friends in my studio, when somebody suggested:

"Medhananda, you should create a game!"

As an answer, Medhananda took a pencil, some sheets of paper and started drawing the first cards of the Golden Ball game. An hour later the entire structure of the game was sketched out and before the end of August, we could play with the complete game. Like many other marvellous things, it had been hanging above our heads, all ready, "waiting for our call to come down upon earth".

***

The game consists in putting at the disposal of Truth 256 key words used by Sri Aurobindo to explain the main movements or powers of consciousness and transformation of man and the universe. There are 64 cards covering the whole range of yogic awareness, from the One to the many through the self, the two-in-one, the three-in-one (sat-chit-ananda) and the four mothers, from the cosmos to the microcosm, from the supermind to the subconscious. We can meet there the avatars and other helpers of evolution, the fish, the dwarf and the giant, the lover, the unexpected and Sri Aurobindo, the man-lotus who brings the flowering of man into a flowering universe. The great meditations are awaiting us: silence, eternity, infinity; the psychological perfections necessary for the work of transformation: sincerity, purity, readiness, courage, etc.; as also art and science, discipline, experience, weightlessness and the eternal child at eternal play.

At the end comes the void, out of which the plenitude surges and completes the cycle from the One to the One through the many which never ceased to be the One.

All these psychological powers and facets are assembled into an immense finger-board on which the Truth can express itself or rather make itself understood by us. How?

On each card four yogic possibilities intimately connected define a force-field of manifestation. We have to arrange the 64 cards face down on a flat surface and
give each one an equal chance of being selected. Then we concentrate on what we want to know, the aim of our quest. If we are very attentive, we shall see or feel or know which card makes a special sign to us or gives us a warm feeling, a deep satisfaction or marvellous certitude when we touch it.

We have asked, for example: “Who will answer my question?” and we get the card _Guru_. This card not only tells us that the Guru will answer our question. It indicates where the Guru can be found, what his space-time or territory is, or the house in which he lives: _receptivity_. Wherever there is receptivity, there the Guru is. It shows also his permanent gift to us: _guidance_. Then the card suggests the path we should follow in order to meet him, to become him and finally to transcend him: _finding_. Finding the Guru in everything and in the Guru the One and transforming ourself into the Guru—such is the yoga open to us by that power. Or, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, “Transform the animal into the Driver of the herds; let all thyself be Krishna. This is thy goal.”

The four different aspects of each card can be used also independently. When we choose one of the 64 cards, we can select one of its four aspects as well.

We want to know, for example, the attitude we should adopt in a given situation, and we draw the card _Virgo_ with the accent put on _readiness_. That means we have to be ready and available for what is going to happen. The two other sides of the card appear, so to say, by transparence through readiness and give to it depth and richness in the form of _spontaneity_ and _meditation_.

In truth all the cards are transparent to one another, sustained by the chorus of the entire manifestation and inhabited by the One.

When we play with several cards at the same time, the selected words stand together not in a grammatical sense but linked by consciousness and, beyond our mental constructions and prejudices, present us with a message from eternity.

Whatever may be the number of the chosen cards and the structure according to which we arrange them, they give to our summits of consciousness an opportunity to mirror themselves within the reach of our vision and capacities of understanding.

For all the powers present in the Golden Ball game symbolically belong to our own psychological make-up: deities already at work in our daily life or sleeping beauties to be awakened. None stands for anything which is not some part of ourself. And none is negative or malevolent, for in this game the One is never forgotten or hidden.

**

After six months of intensive and extensive experimentation with the multiple possibilities revealed to us by the Golden Ball game, on 26 February 1973, for Medhananda’s birthday, Medhananda and I put the game at the feet of the Mother. She broke into quiet, luminous enthusiasm, and the festival started. We helped her spread the cards on a board placed on her knees and it was she who showed us how to play by selecting a card for herself. She closed her eyes and concentrated for
some time. Then with her left hand above the game, she started tenderly to touch all the cards as if they had been flowers. It took a certain time, her hand slowly going and coming in beautifully curved movements until it stopped on one. She picked it up and gave it to me. I read: "Capricorn, the one who stands at the top of the mountain, sits in ecstasy, brings us vision and is reached through adoration."
The Mother nodded in recognition of herself and a silence followed. It was only after the Mother's physical departure that we looked into our Sanskrit list and found that the card Capricorn was also named Samadh.

"It is very good!" said the Mother and she added: "Now I will choose a card for Medhananda." To our great joy, her speech was now crystal clear. She was perfectly incarnated. Her body was radiating with fitness and plasticity. She was occupying it fully, in each of its cells. And I had the feeling that each cell knew it and was full of her to the brim. She had the solidity and the permanence of a statue which at the same time was so suffused with life that it was a great marvel and mystery to see her move and speak. And everything she did, every precise and hieratic movement, was inscribed in eternity. Between the Golden Ball game and the Mother a power of mutual evocation was acting that day. Something of herself that I had not seen before was there in front, while she was evoking out of the game all the great powers of transformation.

She chose a card for Medhananda with the same delicacy and care, as she had for herself: the Sun of the mind of light, and she beamed in approval. The next one was for Champaklal: the Self; and the fourth was for me: the Sage. Then she made an experiment and asked me to choose a card for myself, to see how the game and I responded to each other. The card I drew was Gnosis, quite near to the Sage and she was happy. Kumud wanted to play also, and she received the Child. To Champaklal who was standing just behind her and looking over her shoulder the Mother said: "Champaklal, choose a card." Champaklal took Vitality. After a moment I realised that he might not have chosen this card for himself but, in his self-dedication, for the Mother. The Mother remained impassive and silent. She had chosen her card.

The moment had come to take our leave. The Mother put both her hands on the cards of the Golden Ball game and blessed them abundantly, all of them, once again, taking them into herself and pronouncing again: "C'est bien!" She blessed us with the same pouring grace.

It was the last time Medhananda and I saw the Mother incarnated in her physical body.

* * *

Full of inspiration, we have worked to establish more and more precise ways to get in touch with the Truth through the Golden Ball game, to know continuously from a higher consciousness what to do to advance swiftly on the road of evolution. Our records contain two thousand personal experiments; and many friends in
different places in the world—educators, psychoanalysts, businessmen—use the game intensively to help them in decision-making for their inner and professional life, and they keep us informed about their progress.

An absolute need for Truth developed in us. We felt more and more like the fish of the Devonian age which wanted to go outside the ocean in spite of its incapacity to breathe there. In Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga*, in the chapter on the intuitive mind, page 769 of the Centenary Edition, we found the following passage about the Supermind and man, which brought us an understanding of the nature of our efforts, a confirmation of the way to follow and the promise of something wonderful in the making:

"In the first place it will not be for him a native power always enjoyed without interruption, but a secret potentiality which has to be discovered and one for which there are no organs in his present physical or mental system: he has either to evolve a new organ for it or else to adapt or transform existing ones and make them utilisable for the purpose."

To help us develop an organ for Truth might well be the main function of the Golden Ball game.

It has many other related functions. The Golden Ball offers us a precise way of communicating with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, a means of perceiving their guidance in the general orientation of our work and sadhana as well as in the smallest detail of our life.

It also brings us something which may have been lacking in our synthesis of all yogic methods: a true yoga of play.

The children have immediately recognised the Golden Ball as their game and do not feel embarrassed by the somewhat difficult psychological vocabulary. They ask it all kinds of questions—questions that few actual teachers might be able to answer: "Who am I?", "Why does everybody have a birthday?", "What is waiting for us on the moon?", "What does the Buddha who sits in myself see through my eyes?"

How the Golden Ball game manages to answer such questions for the children is a secret between them. Whatever the Golden Ball tells the children they keep in their marvellous growing book of knowledge—a knowledge unheard of, that uses words long incubated by Sri Aurobindo, a free, non-grammatical utterance of Truth to the children of the future living among us.

YVONNE ARTAUD
IN THE ABYSS

An unremembered need of God had forced me
Down to the fields of Time;
To live in an unlit cave of Night
And pine for the forgotten Home.

Here was Negation’s absolute rule,
A giant opposite god;
All light was twisted out of shape
In the blind illusion’s mud.

All ways of life were a wandering grope
And each way had its deep-laid net,
By the enemies of soul from the sunless worlds
Of doubt, disease and death.

I was all lost in the eyeless agony,
An easy prey of chance;
And the living breath seemed an evil lie,
A fake of Matter’s trance.

Yes, life is a lie or a truth sublime,
A high paradox of God;
But Thine is this gift, a breath of thy bliss
Oh, my sweet Lord!

The touch of Thy feet, and I am set free,
Thy child for ever Thine
Beyond the world and its falsehood’s lure—
Oh, grant the coveted boon—

Keep me clung to Thy Lotus Feet,
The endless river of Grace;
To know, to feel, to see Thee teach,
Oh, Thou truth-born face!—

That here and now the need be fulfilled,
The seed of Heaven sprout
Into a tree of power with flowers of light
And love’s fire-fruit.

A. Venkataranga
RADHA SINGS

"How many songs must die that this may live!"

(FRANCIS THOMPSON)

In the fields of night strange splendour blooms,
And deep hushed dreams of rapt desire
Make me hunger to fill my heart's bare rooms
With the fragrance of Your soul's white fire.
The wind sings high and swift and wild,
Dim shadows sweep a moontossed tree,
And I long for You like a lonely child
That wanders near a stormswayed sea,
And hears the whisper of wave upon wave
As they beat and break on the pale bright sand—
Oh wings of my heart, be bold and brave,
And soar toward the calm of His starcaressed hand!
I would fly to You as flame flares to flame,
Flee to Your heart in a falcon's fierce flight,
Fling at Your feet my fear and my shame,
And laugh in Your arms like a fool flushed with light!
But now I am like quiet rain
That sings in secret to the night
Of the tears that shine through my love's shy pain
As it trembles and yearns toward Your passionate height.
Wan clouds wind through a moonburnt sky
And from the depths of its darkvast heart
The silence of one still silver cry
Seeks to shatter the pride that tears us apart.

Somewhere there is a sunlapped land
Where when dawn comes with Her faint tender smile
We can sit and sing on the soft golden sand,
Or race with wonder's winds awhile;
Where, leaping lightenchanted streams,
I can raise my eyes to Your radiant face
And dance with You my rapture's dreams,
As the force of our love sends us spinning through space!
Your voice in my heart is like the music I hear
In the murmuring speech of a miststirred tree,
Like a green crystal pool, gentle and clear,
Or the night as it kneels and prays to be free.

JEAN
A SWEEP OF LIGHT

A SWEEP of Light emblazes all
   And gathers in its core
A fount of silent golden Might
   Daring every door.

Signs of deep Victory I catch
   While darkness still prevails,
In me resides the thrilling Call
   The Form that never fails.

A cry of the Vast, a depth of being,
   Superb and supreme;
In hushed intense moments I live
   The glow of a Fire a-dream.

High and brooding, a puissant Love
   Leans over my frame—
And in swift haloed ecstasy
   The whisper of a Name.

White and pure, a Silence stoops,
   Rich with living Peace,
In it I see a throbbing Soul
   On a shore of sight’s release.

A breathless Beauty candid shines
   A-glow with consciousness,
A glimpse of limpid deathless eyes,
   A touch my life to bless.

A perfume in my breath, a softness on my hand
   Still linger, and in my heart
A blissful, ineffable, diamond Smile,
   Never to depart.

ARVIND HABBU
Facts about Snake Bite
Wrong Ideas and Right Treatment

(With the kind permission of the author, Mr. Harry Miller FZS, and due acknowledgements to The Indian Express, Madras, of January 17 and 24, 1976, we are publishing under a new heading two articles as one whole. Mr. Miller is in charge of the Madras Snake Park. Written by a master of the subject, the articles are real eye-openers and will serve most efficiently to save lives. Not the least of their life-saving means will be the removal of that prime cause of both physical and psychological troubles, against which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have warned us so often: Fear.)

A friend who has recently taken up a course of first aid with an internationally famous organisation has shown me the textbook he has been issued with and drawn my attention to the section dealing with the treatment of snake bite in India.

All workers who have considered the problem, agree that the official figures of fatal snake bite in India are totally unreliable. In rural areas especially, snake bite is often used as a cover for murder and awkward suicides and can seldom be verified since there are no coroner's courts with expert medical testimony involved and cadavers are cremated within hours of death.

A second factor that grossly inflates the official figure is the undoubted fact that it is the treatment, rather than the snake, that causes many deaths.

The book I am writing about was published in 1962. I can only hope that a later edition without the gross errors it contains is now available. The section on the treatment of snake bite begins with the words 'Send for a doctor', and that is the only bit with which I am in total agreement. The rest is not only rubbish but dangerous rubbish.

It begins with a page and a half of diagrams intended to help you identify poisonous snakes. By the time you have mastered these, your patient, if he has been genuinely poisoned, is likely to have died anyway. These detailed drawings of scales and bellies are totally unnecessary for a number of reasons.

There are several species of snakes that live in the seas around India. They are all venomous—very venomous indeed—but fortunately they seldom bite and deaths from sea-snake bites are unknown in India. But don't take liberties with any sea snakes you may find washed up on the beach. If you do get bitten there's little we can do for you, for no sea-snake antivenine is produced.

On the other hand, of the two hundred or more species of land snakes in India, only five of them are dangerously venomous to man. There are others which are mildly venomous, but they are dangerous only to their natural prey, not to us.
Of the five, one is rare and unlikely to be met with: the king cobra or hamadryad, which lives in the dense rain forest (or what is little left of it) of the hills. No antivenin is produced for this snake in India because bites from it are rare or unknown and it is therefore of no medical importance.

That leaves us with only four: the common cobra, the common krait, the Russell’s viper and the saw-scaled viper. These are the only four venomous snakes of medical importance in India.

Now the easiest way to learn how to identify these four snakes is to look at them. This can be done by the very large number of people who visit the Madras Snake Park, and the less fortunate ones who cannot do so have books and museums to fall back on.

Once you know what these four look like, you have no need of complicated diagrams: all other snakes can be dismissed by the simple process of elimination.

If you are dealing with a genuine case of snake envenomation even this knowledge is unnecessary. There is only one cure for genuine snake envenomation, and that is the anti-venin scientifically produced by the Haffkine Institute in Bombay. Let me repeat that there is no other cure for genuine envenomation. I keep using the word genuine because by far the largest number of snake-bite cases involve snakes that are not venomous, though fear and shock may mimic genuine symptoms. This accounts for the magical and herbal ‘cures’ for snake bite.

The snake concerned in genuine cases cannot always be identified even by the expert for the simple reason that it may not be available, particularly, as so often happens, when the victim has been bitten in the dark. Again, the snake responsible is often smashed and crushed beyond recognition in a spirit of primitive but useless revenge.

But there is no need to worry, no need to identify the snake at all, because the anti-venin produced in India is polyvalent and will counter the venoms of all the four medically important snakes I have named.

It’s really all very simple, but the errors of the book do not end there. We are told that the krait is found in Northern India and Sind, which would imply its absence elsewhere, but it is in fact found throughout the Indian Union and is as common in the South as anywhere else. The King Cobra, it is said, is found in Lower Bengal, Assam and Burma, but no mention of the fact that it also occurs in the hills of South India is made.

Again, the saw-scaled viper (they even spell its scientific name wrongly) is said to occur in Northern India ‘but is not very common’. On the contrary, it is found throughout India and through the Middle East into Africa, and is by far the most common of the deadly four. Only last week a little boy near Madras died from a saw-scaled viper bite.

The book continues with ‘Colubrines are usually large and very poisonous with grooved, not bored fangs’ and later ‘Colubrine venom is a very rapidly absorbed nerve poison’. This is all false: the Colubridae are the largest group of snakes and none of the ones we have in India are dangerous to us at all: the writer is presumably
confusing them with the Elapids, to which the cobras and the kraits belong.

Finally, in the treatment recommended for snake bite we are given the most dangerously wrong advice of all: we are told to make an incision over the bite and to rub potassium permanganate into the wound.

The writer is perpetuating advice from Victorian days. Nothing but harm can come from making such an incision: it is acutely painful and increases the terror and shock of the patient; unless complete asepsis is assured, which is highly unlikely outside a hospital, you are pretty sure to introduce dangerous bacterial infection, which does in fact account for much of the damage seen by doctors after such treatment. Unless you have studied your anatomy thoroughly you are very likely to damage important nerves and other tissues and, finally, the only effect of such an incision on the venom would be to afford it easier access to the bloodstream.

Potassium permanganate is a mild antiseptic that has no effect on any snake venom. To rub crystals of it into an open wound would only lead to further necrosis, to the damage and death of the surrounding tissues.

This kind of false information is common enough in popular articles and books written by unqualified people, but that it should appear in the standard textbook of a reputable organisation and be taught to innocent people whose desire is to help those in pain or danger is nothing short of scandalous.

To summarise what has gone before, let me repeat that (a) it is most unlikely that you will ever be bitten by any snake; (b) if you are, the chances are that it will be a non-venomous species and (c) even if you are bitten by one of the only four species of dangerous snakes in India it is unlikely that any venom, or any fatal amount of venom, will have been injected into you.

To quote Reid's important dictum again, poisonous snake bite is not synonymous with snake-bite poisoning.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, studies show that of those genuinely poisoned by genuinely venomous snakes, the majority recover with no treatment whatsoever! In fact, as I explained in my December 13 article, it is the treatment more often than the snake that kills!

In almost all snake-bite cases the dominant factor which may completely falsify the clinical picture is fear. Because of this, snake-bite cases often appear in a state of shock, with cold, clammy skin, feeble pulse and rapid shallow breathing. It is vital for both layman and doctor to remember that if such symptoms appear within a few minutes of a snake-bite they are NOT due to snake-bite poisoning. Genuine symptoms of systemic snake-bite envenomation rarely appear less than half an hour, and more usually two hours or more, after the bite.

1 Editor's Note. "again" relates to an earlier article than the one of January 17—perhaps that of December 13 to which the author refers in the next paragraph.
FACTS ABOUT SNAKE BITE

For the doctor, therefore, treatment of such cases should be initiated by placebo injection. Normal saline is usually recommended, but I prefer tetanus toxoid, for its obvious double value. The shock symptoms described vanish dramatically after such an injection, as does local pain if this is complained of. For the layman without recourse to sterile syringes and the required skill, reassurance, calmness and an aspirin or two are all that is required. A copy of this article might with profit be read to the patient.

In such cases what we may call ‘magical’ treatments are of great value. Let me make it quite clear that there are no magical ‘snake stones’ or herbs that can ‘draw out’ snake venom once it has been injected into the body, and that in cases of true systemic envenomation no stones, herbs, mantras, or pujas can alter the natural course of subsequent events.

Practitioners of such treatments are without experience in the identification of snakes or the evaluation of symptoms. For example, the rat-snake (Tamil: “sarai pambu”) is often declared to be the male cobra. It is nothing of the sort. The rat-snake is not only a different species but belongs to a totally different and non-venomous family of snakes.

Very often the patient is not even seen, and is treated from afar after receipt of telegrams or telephone calls. It is unlikely that such people could distinguish between symptoms of genuine envenomation and their mimics and it is hardly surprising that the chanting of mantras is followed by the recovery of patients bitten by harmless snakes. Moreover, failures are seldom reported.

As for the various herbal remedies for snake bite, these plants have been carefully studied and found without exception to be members of the Rauwolfia family. Rauwolfia yields reserpine, a powerful tranquilliser of obvious value in case of shock and fear. But it cannot in any way affect snake venom.

This is not to say that folk remedies for snake bite are to be dismissed as useless rubbish. On the contrary they are of inestimable value to those with suitably conditioned minds. Remember that the majority of snake-bite cases even where genuine envenomation has occurred will recover without medical treatment. Mantras have no effect on snake venom but could be of great help in relieving fear and shock.

What, then, can the layman do when confronted with a case of snake bite? First and foremost, comfort and reassurance. The likelihood of death is small. On no account should the traditional Boy Scout or St. John’s ambulance incision be made over the fang punctures, if any. Experiments have shown that under laboratory conditions a significant amount of venom can be removed by incision and suction provided this is done within a minute or two of the bite, but laboratory conditions do not exist in the field, and there may be no venom to suck out anyway.

Cutting the living flesh with pen knives or razor blades is excruciatingly painful and would certainly exacerbate panic and fear. The danger of damaging veins, thus offering the venom a quicker route, is surely obvious. Tendons may be cut with resulting irreversible damage and, worst of all, severe bacterial infection is almost certain
to be introduced. These factors individually and together far outweigh any possible value of making an incision.

A clean light dressing on the bite should be applied. A tourniquet can be useful, but only if carefully done. It should be tight enough only to compress the tissues and care should be taken not to occlude arterial blood, with the consequent danger of causing gangrene, which may eventually require amputation.

That is all the first aid possible or required. Other steps, if necessary, can only be taken by doctors or trained medical workers. Most doctors I have met readily confess that they know little or nothing about the treatment of snake bite. Snake-bite cases are rarely presented in Indian teaching hospitals—another fact to support my contention that they are comparatively rare.

Doctors finding themselves confronted with a snake-bite case should first remember that snake bite, at least in the early stages, is not a medical emergency. There is always time. Stories of death within minutes may be discounted or attributed to other causes. Only when the genuine clinical symptoms of systemic envenomation appear should treatment with anti-venom be started.

There is no need to identify the snake, since Indian anti-venom is polyvalent and covers the only four medically important snakes we have. Attempts to catch and identify the snake responsible have often led to further bites.

Anti-venom is made from horse serum to which many people are violently allergic. Sensitivity tests should therefore first be made and de-sensitising procedures carried out as required. The serum is best administered through an intravenous drip and a syringe of adrenaline must be kept handy to counteract possible anaphylaxis. Steroids like dexamethasone may prove life-saving in delayed serum shock. Renal failure and extensive necrosis are common sequelae of severe envenomation.

Where genuine envenomation has occurred clinical symptoms are unmistakable: Local swelling starting within a few minutes of a bite is invariable if the snake was a viper. (Therefore, if a viper has bitten you and there is no swelling, you can take it that no venom was injected.) Cobra bites also lead to swelling but not until some hours later. Local pain may or may not be present and is of no diagnostic value.

Blood-stained spit and urine and non-clotting blood are reliable indications of viper envenomation. Ptosis (loss of control of the eyelids) and later glossopharyngeal palsy (loss of control of tongue, mouth and throat) are symptoms of cobra or krait envenomation.

A common belief (especially by those who think mistakenly that ‘snake-bite kits’ should be carried everywhere in the tropics) is that a single injection of anti-venom is sufficient. In fact large quantities are always required in severe envenomation—as much as 100 ccs or more. Indian anti-venom is supplied in crystalline form which can be kept for years at room temperatures. It does not affect subsequent necrosis when infiltrated around the bite unless this can be done within a few minutes of the bite.

The Haffkine Institute in Bombay is many years behind the times in producing only a polyvalent anti-venom. Doctors can easily differentiate between the two types
of poisoning—viperine and elapid—and at least two types of anti-venom should therefore be available. Specific anti-venoms for each of the four species should also be made available for use in the majority of cases where the identity of the snake is certain. As things stand, snake-bite victims must now receive huge quantities of anti-venom of snakes that did NOT bite them.

Finally, I must emphasise that much, but not all, that I have written in these articles is applicable to snake bite in countries outside India. Readers who wish to ask questions are welcome to write in. Visitors to the Madras Snake Park will find me there most Sunday mornings, very willing to discuss these subjects on the spot.

HARRY MILLER FZS
The whole area was mountainous and the special beauty of the area was that it was full of natural growth of the best fragrant roses and it is said that the roses of this region used to be exported to several foreign countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, etc., for the Kings and Nawabs. These roses were also abundantly used for making rich Unani medicines and perfumes.

My own village Vahalee was just close—hardly a mile from this area, that is why I can describe the area exactly and with certitude, because we used to run about the place quite often. There were plenty of fruit gardens also. In fact, I miss the beauty and richness of this region and I am writing this story in that frame of mind.

It was perhaps fate and the Will of the Lord that once upon a time even such a place of divinity and beauty was caught in a severe famine with lamentable stories of hardship. I am narrating and describing one of the most amazing stories.

Zakir Hussain was a small tiller. On account of the ravages of famine, he was forced to sell off his small holding of land and leave the place and go to some of his relations in a far-off place, free from famine, where he could save himself from its tragic effects.

He used to go to the village shopkeeper ‘Sahukar’ Mool Raj to sit at leisure for chit-chat and also purchase some of his daily requirements. He requested him one day to purchase his land. Mool Raj was hesitant to deprive his friend and a noble soul of his small holding of land but could not help it and had to purchase his 13 bighas of land for Rs. 1300/- only.

When the bargain was complete, both the families faced each other to depart and then abruptly burst into tears. But the departure was inevitable. Zakir Hussain, his wife and his son started on their destined journey. Trekking on foot for three or four days with loads on their heads and backs, they reached a small town, Dandot, where
Zakir Hussain’s maternal uncle, Fatah Muhammad, lived. Fatah Muhammad received them with a hearty welcome, but was surprised and shocked to see them in a miserable condition. Zakir Hussain naturally narrated the story of their misfortune.

Fatah Muhammad was a noble person and an elder-man of the town, and was very much loved and respected by the people. This was a town on top of a hill rich in coal deposits; there were a number of small collieries being worked by different people and the coal used to be transported by rope-way down to the rail-head for onward despatch in waggons.

Fatah Muhammad on account of his influence managed to get a small colliery for Zakir Hussain. Zakir Hussain was a sincere and hard worker and within a year or two he developed the colliery entrusted to him into a successful coal-mine. In the meantime, his young son also worked with him and became mature enough to run the colliery.

Ravages of famine and ill luck rather proved to be a boon for Zakir Hussain and gradually he became a well-to-do person, constructed his own house and decorated it with beautiful furniture and lived a respected life.

At Choa-Saidan-Shah, Mool Raj had the luck to get a bumper crop on the land purchased from Zakir Hussain. But being a noble and considerate person he was always thinking about the misfortune of Zakir Hussain and was feeling somewhat guilty of depriving Zakir Hussain of his land. He could not reconcile himself to it; he packed as much wheat crop as he could on his head and started for Dandot to offer the first yield to Zakir Hussain, as he deeply felt that the land actually belonged to him.

On reaching Dandot he was amazed and happy to find Zakir Hussain and his family in a well-to-do position and living comfortably. He put the wheat load down and offered it to Zakir Hussain as a token of his affection and love. Zakir Hussain was deeply touched at this gesture of nobility from a person who was not by any means under any obligation to him. He accepted the gift and entertained Mool Raj as his worthy guest and the next day while saying good-bye Zakir Hussain gave him a packet of sweets for his family.

A few years rolled by, and one early morning while Mool Raj was ploughing his field, his plough suddenly struck something hard and made a startling noise. His bullocks naturally stopped, and he began to examine the cause and found to his amazement that there was a metal vessel deep below.

Forgetting his ploughing, Mool Raj dug out the vessel and brought it home and found to his utter astonishment that the vessel was full of gold sovereigns. He was very much puzzled and he finally closed the mouth of the vessel and decided at once to carry the vessel to Zakir Hussain and give it to him as he honestly felt that this wealth belonged to Zakir Hussain and not to him as he had only purchased the land and not his wealth.

On reaching Dandot, he immediately put the vessel in the hands of Zakir Hussain and narrated to him the story of its recovery from his field and humbly told
him that he had not removed even one sovereign from the vessel and had brought the same intact to him.

Zakir Hussain was bewildered. As soon as he recovered himself he told Mool Raj he would never accept that vessel of sovereigns, for once he had sold the land to him everything contained therein belonged to him, and therefore it was his property. But Mool Raj did not agree. He could not reconcile himself to the suggestion and refused to take back the vessel of sovereigns.

On this there were arguments and counter-arguments and the debate continued for more than a day, but neither of them would accept the ownership of the sovereigns.

When the limit of their arguments was reached, they started to quarrel—blaming each other for trying to force each other to commit a sin. Zakir Hussain strongly blamed Mool Raj for trying to send him to hell—‗Dozakh‘—by accepting wealth which did not actually belong to him and by the same token Mool Raj blamed Zakir Hussain for coercing him to keep the wealth which did not belong to him and thereby to suffer the pangs of hell—‗Narak‘—and pass through the 84 lacs of lives (84 लाख बोलि) instead of being liberated by good deeds.

Gradually the quarrel turned into a hand-to-hand fight with shouting at each other at the top of their voices. Hearing this the people gathered from all around, including Fatah Muhammad, the elder-man of the town, and tried their best to make them calm down, but no one was able to resolve or disengage them from the fight.

Finally, the police appeared on the scene and handcuffed both Zakir Hussain and Mool Raj, and took them to the police station. Even there they continued to quarrel from each other’s cell.

In the course of time, the case was brought to the court of justice—‗Kazi‘. The Kazi questioned them about their undesirable behaviour and the reasons for the same. Both Zakir Hussain and Mool Raj gave their own versions, each blaming the other. The Kazi was perplexed with such an extraordinary case, for which he could not find a solution. He abruptly declared that as the vessel of sovereigns was found in Choa-Saidan-Shah and the cause of action had taken place there, the case should be transferred to that place and tried there for decision and judgement.

Both the prisoners were transferred to Choa-Saidan-Shah jail, and in due time were produced before the Kazi of that place in the court of justice there. The same fiery arguments were repeated in that court also and the Kazi felt helpless to pronounce a judgement. But he was shrewd and he decided to call the chief Kazi from the nearby town Pind-Dadan-Khan to seek his counsel and guidance; he called the Dandot Kazi as well.

It took some months before the tribunal consisting of three Kazis could sit jointly in a court of justice. Then both Zakir Hussain and Mool Raj were produced before the tribunal. The chief Kazi examined both prisoners and made several suggestions to them to resolve the dispute. The most reasonable and equitable proposal was to divide the wealth equally between them. But even this suggestion did not appeal to them as
they said that the sin for taking half the wealth which did not really belong to them would still lead them to hell.

At this juncture, wisdom dawned upon the chief Kazi and he asked Zakir Hussain how many sons and daughters he had. Zakir Hussain said, 'Sir, I have only one young son.' Then the Kazi asked Mool Raj the same question, and Mool Raj replied, 'Sir, I have only one young daughter.' On hearing this the chief Kazi exclaimed, 'Then the solution is very easy and simple. Let the boy and girl be married and the vessel of sovereigns be given to them in dowry.'

Both Zakir Hussain and Mool Raj were alarmed and very much disturbed at this suggestion which their respective religions could never permit. How could a Hindu girl marry a Muslim boy? It would lead to another catastrophe in the domain of their sacred religious life.

Thereupon, a band of Pandits from the Holy Pilgrim place Katas Raj and a number of Mullahs from Choa-Saidan-Shah Dargah were called and these religious heads were acquainted with the whole story and the delicate situation in which the two disputants found themselves. After a serious and long deliberation between the Pandits and the Mullahs, both groups said there was no provision in their respective Holy Scriptures and Canon Law for such a marriage. But they felt that divine sanction in such an extraordinary case was beyond the laws of scriptures and no one could resist that and therefore it could be accepted as the Call Beyond and the Divine Will.

On this the tribunal happily pronounced their decision and the couple were married in the court itself in the presence of the Pandits and the Mullahs and the vessel of sovereigns entrusted to them. After a rich feast given to the whole village the parties dispersed in jubilation and the whole village was surcharged with joy.

The young couple were Rahmat and Asha, who, perhaps, were the first messengers of secularism.

Both decided to settle down in their original village Choa-Saidan-Shah. The land sold now became their property and Rahmat reclaimed the old cottage on his father's land, where he had been born. His father and mother also returned and they now enjoyed their new phase of life.

SUREN德拉 NATH JAUHAR
DIALOGUES

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1976)

Synopsis:
The girl's soul after travelling through numerous lives is born as the Norse queen, Hallgerda. At the height of a grave illness soon after her marriage, she encounters within herself the supreme mother goddess she has known in other births, but who now comes to her as a nameless, sustaining force—the one thing she had been lacking in her new existence. Hallgerda recovers her health and shares her inner good fortune with her beloved lord, Oswif the King.

CHAPTER VI

The years fell away as Oswif's and Hallgerda's tribe flourished. It seemed that the gods had so cast their spell upon them that they and their people became proof against defeat. Even the charm of luck and wealth lay forever in their path. No rival tribe prevailed against them in battle. No storm ever succeeded in inflicting critical damage on Oswif's fleet of long-boats during their protracted forays upon the open sea. No hardship of season or pestilence seemed able to more than slightly retard the growth of the mud and timber village, that had once stood on the brink of extinction, into a flourishing trading centre topped by a new hill-fortress of great earthworks and stone ramparts, still under construction at their furthermost limits. There Oswif and Hallgerda now presided in the freshly completed hall with its immense carven beams of pine that dwarfed in size and splendour anything the Norsemen had previously known.

Yet Hallgerda's innermost being kept mainly to its own pleasures, its own quiet communion with Oswif in the world of the goddess that they enjoyed together, and shared but briefly in the plethora of success and prosperity that marked their external life. It was only on her final day that Hallgerda's being returned to a full and vibrant consciousness of outward things and looked one final time through the two windows of her ice-blue eyes. It had been many years indeed, her being now observed—many years of happiness with her lord and his kingdom unrivalled at last in the northern lands. And herself ... why, here she was already past middle age, handsome still, yet wasted from some malady of the body that none—no healer or medicine man—could define, far less treat or cure. Only she herself felt it installed within her physical frame like a concealed but insatiable beast inexorably eating away her physical substance day by day. Nevertheless, on this day she knew to be her last, her innermost being looked about her with a profound sense of well-being and gratification. How the tribe had grown over the years! How the world's wealth had flowed in and embellished their hard sub-arctic existence with every succeeding season...

And Oswif—had there ever been one like him—high king of the fairest, most
invincible Norsemen in the world? But ye gods, was it possible? She looked him in
the face at that moment and wondered how sorrow could reduce even the most god-
like of men. Out of his eyes stared the greatest, most unaccustomed despair she had
ever seen, such that all at once she felt afraid. There in his sadness and despair she
saw the defeat of the spirit that had upheld the entire life of the tribe, the entire
force of the fortress that was now rising about them. If that spirit died, would the
tribe too vanish and the fortress crumble to ruin scarcely before the last stone had
been laid? Now as Oswif sat beside her at her bedside, she could restrain herself no
longer, and though the words came from her physical mouth, it was her inner being
that spoke them—

"Why so desolate, my love? I can't bear to see it. Your life is still long before
you, and I am departing in happiness. Then why—? It tears my heart out to see you
so."

Oswif's voice rumbled from its depths as he answered: "When your life and your
spirit go, Hallgerda, mine shall go also. It is for the magic in you that we have all
lived and fought and built, for that sorcery—oh, how am I to say it?—which flows
from you and you alone, that has sustained all our people, let alone their Lord Oswif.
Now when the sun is setting, and the horizon is already red with the last glow, should
we not feel the shadows of darkness creeping in about us and despair wrapping about
our hearts?"

"No, beloved. It's all wrong—you mustn't say such things. Each must bear his
own sun forward. No sunset must you tolerate in your heart, no cold embrace of des-
pair. Whatever I am, have I not shared it freely with you? Have I not given all I
could to the tribe? Then live for what has gone from me to you—for what we have
known together—"

"Yes," he was thinking, "all your wisdom, your indomitable strength, your warmth
that burnt constantly within you not like an ordinary emotion but like a white fire
that drew all creatures to it and held them there as steadfastly as a beacon." But in his
grief he was unable to articulate his thoughts. Instead he just said, "Yes, of course."

She took his hand now, for she saw no flame return with her wordsto reanimate
him. "Think of battle," she went on. "It will be soon that you must fight again.
Olaf has been challenging us for too many summers and this year the outcome must
be decided. We shall become his slaves—unthinkable fate—or he and his people, ours.
You will be strong—the strongest you have ever been and we shall win decisively,
one and for all."

Still no light flickered in him, not the faintest spark or glow, and with one last
outburst of inner strength, she willed that it should be so, that he should conquer once
again as he had always done. Silently she looked down at his great hand and felt all
her ebbing force pass into it. Yes, indeed, as Hallgerda's last legacy, Oswif would
conquer again and the tribe would continue to thrive. Thinking of the victory to come
that she would never see, she would have wept but no tears came. Instead, she merely
asked, "Is the long-boat ready?" It was in this that her body would lie buried when
she died.

"Yes, almost." And then silence overcame them both because all that could be said, and all that had not been, had been conveyed.

By nightfall, darkness descended upon Hallgerda. The two windows of her vision closed forever, and her being drifted away from the man, the people, the Nordic land she had come to love with such a deep passion, a passion that had burnt most powerfully behind the immobility of her face and the steady blue light in her eyes ... Her man ... her people ... her land.

As her being withdrew, all her past coagulated within her into a single nameless ache of longing. Then gradually it metamorphosed into a clarity where her greatest desire was to cleanse herself by weeping, and through her tears, to offer up all her clamorous memories as a prayer to the great gods of destiny so that they might take away that unbearable burden of remembrance and disgorge it as a last blessing upon the loved ones she had left desolate behind.

The tears came like a storm of sparkling rain. Then finally, after they had done their cleansing work, the peace of rest descended, and along with it the sense of an endless drifting in the arms of the gods, for where else would one repose and float in such a perfection of delight? How far now loss and suffering, despair, darkness, and death ....

But even in the bliss of her sleep a time came when she started to dream—dreams of a lingering beauty, of sun-dappled forests, and craggy sea-shores lost in mist, of still pools where carp played among reeds, and once again a castle that soared heavenward from giant banks of stone masonry. Then all at once it dawned upon her that her visions were no dream, but perceptions of her most recent life, her latest physical reality, and she started to look about her during her moments of wakefulness with more attention so that she might better absorb this new existence. As she did so, she discovered her surroundings to be the most beautiful of any she had ever known.

She found her life centred upon the elegant yet overpowering structure of the feudal Japanese castle, great Lord Kitamura's stronghold—the one she had first seen as though in vision or dream. At noon its peaked rooftops seemed to pierce the sun itself; at dusk and dawn its austere grandeur appeared to stand firm against the demons of all the worlds together. At least so it seemed to the little girl, Oshichi, whom she found herself to be—the only daughter of a humble castle servitor. She knew that she too, when she came of age, would have to serve in those great halls of stone and wood where the princesses and dowagers of the noble line had their apartments. But now for a few brief years she could enjoy the greatest freedom she would ever be allowed—to play alone around her parents' cottage, to gather berries in the forest, or to watch concealed from behind a bush as the great lords and ladies from the castle rode past, the mettlesome chargers of the princes and warriors dancing over the dirt path, the palanquins of the ladies swaying rhythmically from the shoulders of jogging palanquin bearers.

Still ... still ... she could not help musing how dreamlike it all seemed even now
... all this perfection, all this exquisite refinement of beauty—of castle and maple-leaf, of heraldic armour and legendary princesses swathed in patterned silks, of small flowers by pool-side rocks, and of a magical green forest where all things spoke. In the end perhaps it was really the forest that came to her with the greatest ring of reality. It was the forest that existed for her at all times, that was always there within and without her, dreaming and waking. She knew no gods but the forest gods and above all, the great gentle spirit she came to feel as the Spirit of the forest and, by extension, of the sky, of the sea where the land came to an end, and of the peasants’ fields that stretched away at the forest’s feet all around the castle walls. Whenever she felt lonely or had any thoughts or feelings whatever it was to this spirit that she would refer. For she felt somehow that she had known it longer than all the others—longer than even the soul of the immense pine that towered over her parents’ cottage, and that she addressed from time to time. No, the great Spirit was different. It seemed to have come with her from forever, along with a deep impassivity of being within Oshichi herself that had its profoundest roots in a past now lost and forgotten.

Indeed, the gods had left her nothing of what she had been or what she had loved. They had allowed her to keep only her inner stillness that now fitted so well into the Mongoloid features of her face; and they had perforce to allow her the memory and presence of the great goddess that they did not have the power to erase. But once again life pressed upon the travelling soul with its urgency of time. It was not for long that Oshichi was permitted to enjoy her enchanted childhood world. She was twelve when the last day came and she spoke one final time to her Spirit of the forest.

"You are sad today, great Mother. Is it because it will be evening soon, and the goblins and gnomes will play among your tree trunks, the sun will sink away to the west—?"

"No, no, child. It is because you will be going away and I won’t be seeing you any more."

"Oh, but that isn’t true! I’ll come every day—you know I will. How could I live without you?"

"You will see ... you will see .... When you enter into the world’s service, you’ll become like other humans. You cannot help it, child."

"Why, great Spirit? I won’t cease to live here—my service shall be only a step away in the castle. I will spend my day waiting upon the great lords and ladies, and then when all is finished, I will come here to you."

"Service to man is more demanding than that, little one. When men take, they take everything. They will take everything from you, for they look upon you as a slave—and a slave keeps nothing."

Tears came to her eyes at that. "I want to keep you, great Mother," she said.

"Very well, then we must try—but you must not expect to see me only in the forest."

"I will look for you perhaps in the temple halls? They say the temple halls of the palace are marvels of holiness."
"No, my child, the temple halls are too dark for me. Find me, rather, where it is light, where the sunshine plays, where beauty sings, where your heart smiles. I will be there, when you are not too busy for me...."

Night had already fallen when Oshichi's mother found her still weeping at the forest verge where the great trees began. And somehow the older woman understood, for she too had once been a little girl on the eve of her first day of service to the lords of the castle. Gently she placed an arm around her daughter's shoulders and led her silently back to the cottage.

The next day, all happened just as the great goddess had predicted. In the flurry, the utter bewilderment over her new surroundings, the intense excitement of seeing the castle for the first time from the inside, the young novitiate forgot everything, tears, nostalgia, inner vows of remembrance. Her new world absorbed her totally, her new deities in the form of human superiors exhausted her to the exclusion of anything else, and her life opened her to the demands of their lives in a way she had never imagined possible. Above all, the splendour of the lords and warriors of the court dazzled her. The beauty and delicacy of the noble ladies and princesses filled her with an awestruck wonder, while later secretly she was to wonder if any young lord would ever find her beautiful too, and shower his favours on her as even the least of his concubines.

Meanwhile, once again as it had done so many times before and as the great Spirit had predicted, her inner consciousness faded slowly back, ever further back where it could dream, undisturbed by any surface awareness, of the cool, sun-speckled pine forest, its most recent worldly recollection, and then of days and weeks and years, or who knows, even seemingly of centuries and millennia of the stillest repose. It was a repose in which all things floated in a suspension of clear light—slowly and with an infinite softness, where no sound occurred save occasionally the distant strains of the highest, finest music the inner ear could catch. But of the external life the inner self knew nothing—of the days of almost constant physical drudgery, of the little rewards, the rough clutches of some inebriated lord, of Oshichi's moments of sharpest suffering when she was discarded by one or another like an old scrap of unwanted paper, of the endless net of intrigue spread wide through the whole class of servitors in the castle as they manoeuvred for position or the least advantage. No, the inner being saw none of this human ugliness—its realms were elsewhere.

Yet it would not always be so, for hadn't the great Spirit predicted otherwise? Two decades had slipped by when the change in Oshichi occurred. By then, much of the novelty of her life had worn off. Little remained to happen that she had not seen come to pass many times before. She had witnessed the recurring births of infants, only the strongest and most closely protected of whom survived. She had witnessed too, time and again, the wordless, stoic agony of lords and samurai who had returned mortally wounded from battle to die in the castle. She had observed those fortunate enough to have reached old age pass away and have their places taken by the succeeding generation not always without rumours of murder. She had, in a word,
come to know how many secrets those stone and timber halls and pavilions guarded in their enigmatic silence, and finally, she had come not to care. Who lived and who died, who prospered and who failed among the great and noble folk of the castle? To the lowly servitor—the slave all but in name now past her prime so that she was no longer of any interest to the young men—what did it matter? She had seen enough to realize that all that would ever happen to her in life had already happened, and that the rest would be mere repetition.

(To be continued)

BINA BRAGG

---

PUNCTUATION

A man lost a comma and began to be afraid of complex sentences, so he kept his language simple. In the footsteps of simple language followed simple thoughts.

Then he lost the exclamation mark and began to speak softly, in even tones. Nothing gave him joy and nothing caused indignation, he turned a blank eye to all.

After that he lost the question mark and stopped asking questions. Nothing excited his curiosity, no matter where things were happening—in space, on earth, or even inside his own home....

A couple of years later the colon disappeared on him and he stopped explaining his actions.

Toward the end of his life all that remained with him were the quotation marks. He didn’t express a single thought of his own, all he did was quote others—in this wise he completely lost the ability to reason until his life culminated in a full stop.

Therefore, take care of your punctuation marks!
PSYCHE

A PLAY IN VERSE

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1976)

ACT TWO

SCENE THREE

Next morning

While one beside him keeps
Sweet secret vigil in the moonless night.
His eyes are closed; he would not wake
If for one moment I should light
A candle—but then I should break
The solemn vow that I have spoken.
    The vow will not be broken.

    But why should he conceal
His face from me and never say his name?
    No hymeneal flame
Burns round our bed in golden lamps of love;
But darkness is around and darkness is above.

    His arms are twined around me and I feel
Warm billows of the ocean of his life
Flow through my body. Now much more than wife
I am to him: this hand upon my breast,
This hair whose warm ambrosial ringlets rest
    Upon my cheek, are mine.
Our hearts beat with the same pulsation,
Through our nerves the same vibration
    Thrills, like potent wine.
Are you not my twin-born brother?
Sweet child, am I not your mother?
    But the darkness stays.
The nights are dark and long and darker still the days.

    Up before the sun has risen,
Off he goes to some adventure,
Leaving me alone and yearning
In his palace like a prison.
Later like a thief returning,
Laughing at my words of censure,
Making me forget my pride,
Tenderly he takes me to his side.
Then a few brief hours of pleasure
I am given; no delight
Such as mortal woman hopes for,
Such as ardent girl elopes for,
But a bliss surpassing measure
In the black-eyed night.

He sleeps, like a child he sleeps;
While one beside him keeps
Sweet secret vigil in the moonless night.

**Eros:** Awake still, Psyche? Was it your voice I heard
Ringing across strange distant fields of dream
And echoing through sheer skies of flawless blue
Where I soared free from earth’s dull gravity?
I heard and like a swallow sailing back
To its own nest and well-beloved mate
I have flown back to you. The east is pale
And I must soon depart.

**Psyche:** Oh no, my love,
That light you see is not the glimmer of dawn
But only the glow of a late rising moon
Whose beams will make the night more beautiful.
We still have many hours before the sun
Appears again with its unwelcome glare
That drives away all loveliness.

**Eros:** The moon
Has risen invisibly and I must fly.
Already I have stayed too long. Farewell.

**Psyche:** Farewell! But how will I fare well alone?
Oh let me come with you. I do not ask
To see you. Tie a blindfold around my eyes.
I promise not to lift it. Let me come.
I only want to be with you, to feel
That you are near me and to hear you speak.
I want to do the things you do and breathe
The air that you are breathing. I want to go
The places that you go. Please let me come,
I will not be a burden.

**Eros:** One day, perhaps,
I'll let you come with me, but not today.

**Psyche:** And so I'll have to stay here all alone.

**Eros:** Is that so terrible? I have made this place
Almost a heaven and my serving-men
Will bring you anything that you desire

**Psyche:** But there is only one thing I desire
And that they will not bring.

**Eros:** And what is that?

**Psyche:** You, you, what else but you? Oh, let me come.
I will not ask again.

**Eros:** The way is long.
You are not strong enough. Another day
When you are ready.

**Psyche:** Please!—Forgive me, love.
I only beg because I worship you.
But then will you let my sister come again?

**Eros:** Your sister has come here? When?

**Psyche:** Just yesterday.
She called me from outside. I let her in
And entertained her. But I did not know
That it would make you angry. When she left
She asked if she could come again. I said
That I would have to ask you.

**Eros:** Did you speak
About me?

**Psyche:** If I told her all I knew
The telling would not be long. She asked to meet
Her brother-in-law. I said you were not home.

**Eros:** And did she see your servants?

**Psyche:** She herself
Commanded them to bring her food and drink.

**Eros:** Those spirits are for you alone. What right
Had she to command them?

**Psyche:** I permitted her.
I could not let her go away unfed,
Breaking the rules of hospitality:
She is my sister.

**Eros:** Yes, but dangerous
To us, dear Psyche. I cannot forbid
Her coming, for this mansion is your home
And I have given you full liberty
To do here what you will. But if you let
Her come again, be sure that she will bring
Unhappiness to you, much suffering
And bitterest regret. Believe me, Psyche.
Stay here alone until I have returned.
Forget about your sister.

Psyche: Not for me—
For I am happiest alone if you
Cannot be with me—but because of her,
Because she is my sister, and she wants
To visit me—is it so very strange
For her to want to see me—and because
She would not understand if I forbade
Her coming and would think that I was proud
And had forgotten all the days we spent
Together, playing in the fields of spring
When love had not yet taken hold of me.
I only want to do what you think best
I will not call her if you disapprove.

Eros: You know my feelings. I must go. Good-by.

Psyche: Good-by? Without a kiss good-by for me?
One small kiss to sustain me while I wait
Counting the hours till you return. [They kiss] Good-by!

[Eros goes out]

He is gone. The sky grows bright. The hateful sun,
That brings the common light of day, returns,
Making the tender glow my lover brings
Dissolve like starlight. Is it you who leave
Or I that leave you? Through what fault of mine
Are you compelled to go? What loathsome sin
Repels you so that after giving me
Such happiness you take back all you gave
And leave me desolate? Am I a toy
To thus be played with? Go, amuse yourself!
What do I care if you come back at all?
Oh Love, forgive me.

[Enter Zephyrus]

Zephyrus: Psyche.

Psyche: Yes! Oh, it’s you.
ZEPHYRUS: Yes me, your old friend Zephyrus, come to make Your day enjoyable.

PSYCHE: Leave me alone

ZEPHYRUS: Is this the way you greet your dear old friends?

PSYCHE: I want to be alone.

ZEPHYRUS: You always complain About your loneliness when he's not here But when we come to cheer you up you say: Leave me alone. Ah well. Come, little ones And bring refreshments.

[Enter SPIRITS]

PSYCHE: Tell them to go away.

I don't want anything.

ZEPHYRUS: Do you feel sick?

One of you go quick and bring her some medicine And something for the appetite.

EURUS: Me?

ZEPHYRUS: Yes you. [EURUS goes out] The rest Come here. Let lovely music fill the air Wonderful sweet delightful melody, Music to drive unhappiness far away And dance for Psyche, sweet ones, dance and sing.

SPIRITS: Day has dawned, the sun is shining. Dance, Psyche, dance. No time now for silly whining. Dance, Psyche, dance. Time for laughter, time for pleasure, Dance, Psyche, dance. Moving with a merry measure Dance, Psyche, dance.

Cast away the mind's misgiving Dance, Psyche, dance. Live, for life was made for living Dance, Psyche, dance. Cast away all signs of sadness Dance, Psyche, dance. Be glad, for life was made for gladness. Dance, Psyche, dance.

[ Dance with song]
PSYCHE: I thank you, lovely spirits, for awhile
You have made me forget my loneliness and smile.
EURUS: You must do more than smile, you must take joy
In life and all its wonder and delight.
THERME: Please let us bring you something, anything
To make you happy.
[DAPHNE and EUNICE enter outside]
DAPHNE: Psyche!
PSYCHE: Daphne's voice.
EUNICE: Psyche!
PSYCHE: Two voices. Eunice has come too.
AUSTRA: Ignore them, Psyche, those that live outside
Bring sorrow with their joy, but we can bring
Pure happiness, like that which was enjoyed
Before the Titans fell before the gods.
The golden age of Cronos can return
For you, within this mansion. Stay, enjoy
That inmost innocent delight with us
Forget the voices of the world outside.
PSYCHE: I don't know.
DAPHNE: Psyche.
EUNICE: I knew you were lying. Fool!
There is no palace. It was all a dream.
There's nothing here but rocks and stunted trees
And you've just brought me here to waste my time.
DAPHNE: It was no dream, I promise you. But her men
Must come for us or we will never find
The palace. Some enchantment rings it round
And no one can gain entrance from without
Unless the magic gates are opened wide.
EUNICE: Oh poppycock! Really! Magical serving-men!
What more will you try to tell me?
DAPHNE: But Eunice, it's true.
I saw them myself. They took me inside the house
And then disappeared; but when she clapped her hands
They reappeared just like that, right out of thin air.
She said "Command them", so I said "Bring wine."
They vanished again but just like that returned
With goblets full of sweet Arcadian wine.
EUNICE: So that's the reason! Well, I've had enough
And just like that I'm going to disappear.
I just hope I don't fall and break my neck.
Which way is father’s palace?

DAPHNE: Psyche! [To EUNICE] Wait!

Wait, Eunice!

EUNICE: No. I’m going. You can stay
To cry until your voice cracks. [Goes out]

Psyche! Psyche!

DAPHNE: One of them’s going to go.

AUSTRA: No, Eunice, wait.

Come back.

THERME: Oh, if only both of them would go.

DAPHNE: Psyche, it’s me, Daphne, open the gate.
Psyche, where are you? Eunice! Eunice, come back
[Goes out after EUNICE]

EURUS: They’ve gone.

AUSTRA: Just to the other side of the hill.
They’ll come back, probably.

PSYCHE: Yes, and when they do
I want you to go and bring them.

AUSTRA: No!

PSYCHE: What?

AUSTRA: We can’t!

PSYCHE: Of course you can.

AUSTRA: Well then, we won’t.

PSYCHE: You will.

EURUS: Look, look at me!

PSYCHE: Eurus, stop that now.

We’ll have time enough to play when they have gone.
I must at least allow them to come inside.
Just for a moment, long enough to say
Good-by to them and tell them they must go,
And tell the others that I am happy and well,
But that they must never try to come again.
It is the very least that I can do.
They are my sisters.

AUSTRA: Psyche, let them go,
They do not care for you and will forget
They ever had a sister.

THERME: Don’t let them in.

Remember what our master said.

PSYCHE: He said
That I was free here. He did not forbid
Their coming, he did not expressly say
I could not see them.

[ZEPHYRUS emerges from the wings]

ZEPHYRUS: He did not forbid
But warned you strongly. When he left he said
"You know my feelings", and you do.

PSYCHE: Have you been all this time?

ZEPHYRUS: I am always near,
Listening. All my spirits say is true.
Believe them, Psyche. Let your sisters go.
It is not love of you that brings them here
But jealousy and mischief. Let them go.

[Re-enter DAPHNE and EUNICE outside]

EUNICE: We've come this way before. If we get lost
I'll skin you alive.

DAPHNE: I'll call to her once more.
I know this time she'll answer. Psyche. Psyche.
It's me, Daphne. Send out your serving-men.
Eunice has come today. We only want
To wish you happiness in your new life.
We won't stay long.

PSYCHE: Go, bring them. I will receive
My sisters on the terrace. Quickly, go.

AUSTRA: We must obey you, yet unwillingly
We go to bring outsiders that will be
The cause of much unhappiness.

PSYCHE: Wait—no.
Do as I told you.—They will soon be gone
And we will dance together.

SPIRITS: We obey. [They go out]

PSYCHE: There is no harm in it. They only want
To say good-by and it will only take
One short hour. Is an hour too much to give
To those that I have loved; that I love still
But in a different way, for I belong
To him alone and all my love is due
To him. I hear them coming.

[Enter SPIRITS with EUNICE and DAPHNE]

EUNICE: There you are!
A fine way that you treat us. We have been
Outside for half the morning calling you
And you ignored us.

DAPHNE: I told her yesterday
That she was getting proud.

EUNICE: Was getting proud?

Why she is pride itself. She thinks she is
So far above us she does not even deign
To meet us in the house, but sees us here
As if we were too low for her. We have brought
Rich presents for the bride, but I believe
She will not take them. Here. Now we have done
Our sisterly duty, Daphne, we can go.
We are not wanted here.

PSYCHE: No, Eunice, please.
I'll gladly take your gifts. If I delayed
In answering you it only was because
My husband does not wish that I should meet
With anyone, even my sisters.

EUNICE: A strange man.

PSYCHE: In spite of him, because I love you well
I have received you. You may stay awhile
But must depart when you have taken rest.

EUNICE: What condescension. Fortune has made a queen
Out of our little sister and now she thinks
Herself too great for us. I will not stay
To be humiliated any more.
Come, Daphne.

PSYCHE: Eunice, wait. You must be tired.
Please sit. I'll call for refreshments.

DAPHNE: Now observe
O unbelieving mortal.

[PSYCHE claps her hands and the SPIRITS enter]

EUNICE: From all sides
They come, all loaded down with trays of fruits
And pastries and decanters filled with wine.
Sweet children, like the ones that brought us here.
How beautiful they are.

[She tries to fondle THERME, who draws away]

DAPHNE: They will not let
You touch them.

EUNICE: Everyone is haughty here.
Who are these children, Psyche?

PSYCHE: They are my friends,
Spirits of summer breeze.

[Enter ZEPHYRUS]

EUNICE: And who is this?

ZEPHYRUS: My name is Zephyrus, my gracious queen.
A servant of the master of this house
And of her who is its mistress.

EUNICE: Zephyrus!

Indeed it is a pleasure, sir, to meet
So great a one as you, but tell us, please,
What is the name of him you serve? You speak
Most guardedly of him, and Psyche, too.
What shall we tell her father and her friends
When we return? “She dwells in luxury,
With spirits of the air to serve her needs,
And chief of them the god of the west wind,
But of her husband we know nothing at all.”
They all are anxious for the princess, sir,
And we too, for the mystic Pythia
Spoke obscure indecipherable things
That seemed to spell misfortune. Will you prolong
The agony of her family and friends?
Please tell us about her husband and her new life.

ZEPHYRUS: You may ask Psyche. I must take my leave,
Good ladies, there is much for us to do
Before our lord returns.

PSYCHE: Why, Zephyrus,
You are not leaving now? How rude of you
To think of going while our guests are here.

ZEPHYRUS: I must go.

PSYCHE: Will you make me order you?
Remain, you must obey me.

ZEPHYRUS: Must obey?
I am too wayward, Psyche, and your commands
Are only binding within. Come, little ones.
A little happy labour for our lord,
Then time for frolic in the open air,
Wide wanderings through the wall-less atmosphere
And exploration of uncharted space.
Come all of you. [They all go out]

(To be continued)
SRI Aurobindo writes that “Freedom is the highest law and the last consummation”. To the extent that an individual is committed to the central aims of an institution and identified with it, he should be given freedom to err as well as succeed, for only so can he and the institution grow. Man responds to pressure, force, commands and outer discipline by a behavioural conformity which tends to revert to old forms as soon as the pressure is removed. It is only under conditions of freedom that man will impose discipline upon himself and only self-discipline, meaning a true consent of the will, can create true personality growth.

To put it another way, to the extent that a man shows the capacity to exercise freedom in a disciplined manner without letting it fall into licentiousness, he must be given room to exercise his free choice. Each man will have strong areas where freedom can be given and here he should be given free scope. The very act of giving freedom to a man in a new area serves as an incentive for him to extend his trustworthiness to other areas. One should look for this development and encourage it.

Yet the freedom one gives should not become an occasion for another to exploit you. It is as wrong from the higher point of view to allow oneself to be exploited as to exploit others. The fact is that when freedom is given man almost always utilizes it both for constructive growth and for greater self-indulgence—the two are distinct yet usually go together. To give freedom to others requires that one is himself established in that freedom inwardly, possessing a great inner stability, strength, patience and will for man’s growth. If these qualities are not there in some measure it is better to proceed cautiously, otherwise an initial gesture of freedom to others will be followed by a rapid withdrawal of the same and may lead to a demoralized atmosphere in which the individual takes less interest or initiative than ever. Some degree of misuse or exploitation will always be there and is tolerable. It is the price paid for the truest and most rapid growth of oneself, those around and the institution as a whole. Freedom implies and complements responsibility. If freedom is given it should eventually result in evoking a greater sense of and capacity for accepting responsibility on the part of the entrusted individual. As these grow, the man and the institution flourish.

In institutional life freedom and responsibility express themselves as an attitude of professionalism. Management implicitly recognizes the qualifications, competence, maturity and capacity of each man to properly exercise a certain degree of freedom and responsibility in a constructive manner. To relate to another as a professional is essentially a gesture of respect for his capabilities. Yet the true basis for respect is
not training or experience. It is founded on the essential divinity and dignity which is common to all human beings and the capacity of every man to develop his personality and capabilities further by the unfolding of the hidden potentialities within him. Every man merits a certain degree of respect and possesses a certain capacity for responsible activity. If one relates to the essential core of divinity in a man, he responds by bringing forward his best qualities and properly utilizing the freedom and responsibility given him.

XI. Exercise of Power

 Individuals and institutions make decisions on many levels according to many standards of conduct, ranging from motives of pure self-interest, social custom, legal right, moral and ethical right, to spiritual or inner right. At times a business may be faced with a situation in which what is permitted by law does not coincide with what is really fair to the party concerned. For example, law may establish a certain minimum wage for labourers, yet the work required does not truly fall in the normal labour category and one has the prerogative to pay by the law. By ignoring the legal standard and acting according to a more just guideline, one raises the level of the institution and fosters its growth. In fact, each time an individual or an institution acts according to a higher standard than that which the situation necessitates, he makes a growth in consciousness.

 An industrialist was plagued with complete shutdown of his three factories due to a labour strike. The trouble had been instigated by a single man who became leader of the workers and made untenable demands on their behalf. After more than two months this leader was caught in possession of a stolen watch belonging to one of the supervisors. The police placed him in jail. The industrialist knew of this principle for the exercise of power and wanted to rely on the justness of his position rather than on legal power. After great hesitation he decided not to press charges and ordered the police to release the man. The leader-thief came directly to the industrialist. He apologized for his behaviour, requested the workers to accept the fair terms offered and abandon their strike, and then he promptly left the company and the city.

 The greatest power available to a man is his highest ideal or his deepest faith—that is the Divine for him. Let his ultimate reliance be on these. Then lower authorities such as law can be resorted to when necessary as an instrument for this power to express itself:

XII. Effort and Token Work

 Exhaust your resources and life will respond.

 Often it happens that in one or more areas of a project a bottleneck is reached and progress grinds to a halt. It may be a need for new ideas, new information, more men, money, materials, etc. At these times it is good to step back from the particular issue at hand and examine the overall functioning of the institution in the light of the principles already described. One may observe how far the operating principles have
strayed from the basic ideals of the institution, how adequately attention has been given to the different elements of the work, what areas lack or have lost a basic harmony of functioning, and so on.

After such an investigation has been carried out and corrections been implemented, it may still be that the particular problem at hand needs an added impetus to get it moving. Where the atmosphere surrounding the work is unfavourable, where disharmony continues to prevail, it is better to patiently refrain from action until the mood changes. But where the atmosphere is good and all elements seem ready for a breakthrough, then it may be that a token effort will turn the corner and bring success. This means to make a determined initiation and persistent endeavour to no matter how small an extent it may be possible, and do whatever can be done in the given circumstances, exhaust all possibilities, potentials and resources. At the point where one has fully exhausted his energies and capacities, life responds by bringing the components necessary to complete the work. Where human effort is exhausted, one opens to the forces of universal life which take up the movement. But if one stops at the penultimate step, there is no response.

XIII. Forked Road Situations

In the process of making institutional decisions one is constantly faced not only with two or more alternatives, but the opportunity to act out of a higher set of values. When one chooses the higher, it leads to growth and incidentally includes the possible benefit of the lower.

A few examples are given of priorities which help the institution to expand:

- Long term over short term
- Progress over profit
- Convention over convenience
- Effort over comfort
- Sublimation over diversion
- Resolution into a harmony over solution
- Institution's welfare over department's welfare
- Employee's utility over management utility
- Confrontation over appeasement
- Compromise at a higher level over confrontation.

(To be continued)

GARRY JACOBS