

# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SEPTEMBER 1977

Price : Rs. 1.75

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### AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

**Mother India** has again to call for financial help. Our last appeal brought a very good response and we are deeply thankful. Costs have been steadily rising in everything. Our immediate need is to stock paper for a year. So we badly require donations of any amount that can be spared by our well-wishers. The full amount to make paper-stocking possible is in the neighbourhood of Rs. 10,000.

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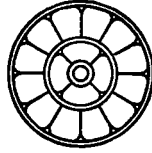
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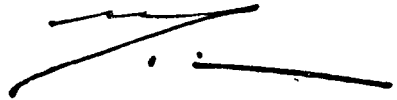
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605002, India.

Editor's Phone: 782.

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.



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



# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXIX

No. 9

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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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

## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

### SRI AUROBINDO'S TEACHING, AUROVILLE AND THE ASHRAM

*Will a day come when there will be no more poor people and no more suffering in the world?*

THAT is absolutely certain for all those who understand Sri Aurobindo's teaching and have faith in him.

It is with the intention of creating a place where this can come about that we want to establish Auroville.

But for this realisation to be possible, each one of us must make an effort to transform himself, for most of the sufferings of men are the result of their own mistakes, both physical and moral.

8 November 1969

*How can you believe that in Auroville there will be no more suffering so long as people who come to live there are men of the same world, born with the same weaknesses and faults?*

I have never thought that there would no more be suffering in Auroville, because men, as they are, love suffering and call it to them even while they curse it.

But we shall try to teach them to truly love peace and to try to practise equality.

What I meant was involuntary poverty and begging.

Life in Auroville will be organised in such a way that this does not exist—and if beggars come from outside, either they will have to go away or they will be given shelter and taught the joy of work.

9 November 1969

*What is the fundamental difference between the ideal of the Ashram and the ideal of Auroville?*

There is no fundamental difference in the attitude towards the future and the service of the Divine.

But the people in the Ashram are considered to have consecrated their lives to Yoga (except, of course, the students who are here only for their studies and who are not expected to have made their choice in life).

Whereas in Auroville simply the goodwill to make a collective experiment for the progress of humanity is sufficient to gain admittance.

10 November 1969

\*  
\* \*

A safe and quiet life is not enough to make people happy. Inner development is necessary, and the peace that comes from a conscious contact with the Divine

13 November 1969

\*  
\* \*

## THE ASHRAM AND AUROVILLE

*What is the difference between the Ashram and Auroville?*

The Ashram will keep its role as pioneer, inspirer and guide.  
Auroville will be an experiment in collective realisation.

June 1968

\*  
\* \*

## THE MOTHER'S STATEMENT ABOUT HER WORK

The task of giving a concrete shape to Sri Aurobindo's vision has been entrusted to the Mother. The creation of a new world, a new humanity, a new society, expressing and embodying the new consciousness is the work undertaken by her. In the nature of things, it is a collective ideal calling for a collective effort to realise it in terms of an integral human perfection.

The Ashram, founded and built up by the Mother, has been the first step towards the fulfilment of this goal. The project of Auroville is the next step, "more exterior", seeking to widen the base of this endeavour to establish harmony between soul and body, spirit and nature, heaven and earth in the collective life of humanity.

August 1971

# TO BE SPONTANEOUS

## FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER

To be spontaneous means not to think out, organise, decide and make an effort to realise with the personal will.

I am going to give you two examples to make you understand what true spontaneity is. One—you all know about it undoubtedly—is of the time Sri Aurobindo began writing the *Arya*, in 1914. It was neither a mental knowledge nor even a mental creation which he transcribed: he silenced his mind and sat at the typewriter, and from above, from the higher planes, all that had to be written came down, all ready, and he had only to move his fingers on the typewriter and it was transcribed. It was in this state of mental silence which allows the knowledge—and even the expression—from above to pass through that he wrote the whole *Arya*, with its sixty-four printed pages a month. This is why, besides, he could do it, for if it had been a mental work of construction it would have been quite impossible.

This is true mental spontaneity.

And if one carries this a little further, one should never think and plan beforehand what one ought to say or write. One should simply be able to silence one's mind, to turn it like a receptacle towards the higher Consciousness and express as it receives it, in mental silence, what comes from above. That would be true spontaneity.

Naturally, this is not very easy, it asks for preparation.

And if one comes down to the sphere of action, it is still more difficult; for normally, if one wants to act with some kind of logic, one usually has to think out beforehand what one wants to do and plan it before doing it, otherwise one may be tossed about by all sorts of desires and impulses which would be very far from the inspiration spoken about in *Wu Wei*; it would simply be movements of the lower nature driving you to act. Therefore, unless one has reached the state of wisdom and detachment of the Chinese sage mentioned in this story, it is better not to be spontaneous in one's daily actions, for one would risk being the plaything of all the most disorderly impulses and influences.

But once one enters the yoga and wants to do yoga, it is very necessary not to be the toy of one's own mental formations. If one wants to rely on one's experiences, one must take great care not to construct within oneself the notion of the experiences one wants to have, the idea one has about them, the form one expects or hopes to see. For, the mental formation, as I already have told you very often, is a real formation, a real creation, and with your idea you create forms which are to a certain extent independent of you and return to you as though from outside and give you the impression of being experiences. But these experiences which are either willed or sought after or expected are not spontaneous experiences and risk being illusions—at times even dangerous illusions.

Therefore, when you follow a mental discipline, you must be particularly careful not to imagine or want to have certain experiences, for in this way you can create for yourself the illusion of these experiences. In the domain of yoga, this very strict and severe spontaneity is *absolutely* indispensable.

For that, naturally, one must not have any ambition or desire or excessive imagination or what I call "spiritual romanticism", the taste for the miraculous—all this ought to be very carefully eliminated so as to be sure of advancing fearlessly.

August 15, 1956

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## LUCK, FAILURE, DIVINE GRACE

### FROM A TALK BY THE MOTHER

*What about those who are unlucky and always fail in everything they do?*

FIRST, once and for all, you should know that luck, good or bad, does not exist.

What to our ignorance looks like luck is simply the result of causes we know nothing about.

It is certain that for someone who has desires, when his desires are not satisfied, it is a sign that the Divine Grace is with him and wants, through experience, to make him progress rapidly, by teaching him that a willing and spontaneous surrender to the Divine Will is a much surer way to be happy in peace and light than the satisfaction of any desire.

17 November 1969



## A SPIRITUAL APPRAISAL

### A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE woman of the photograph is certainly genuine, that is to say she is sincere and her trances are genuine. The Mother could follow her through the trance experience reflected in the photograph and find that she went into a sort of static Sachchidananda consciousness, that is a broad release of peace and quietude, behind the vital,—for into this kind of state one can withdraw on almost any level, in the physical consciousness, in the vital as well as in the higher mental or overmental. Wherever entered into, it is though negative yet a very happy state and it is probably the light of that happiness that creates the radiance they speak of. It is a withdrawn and disinterested condition; one always wants to be in it and has no wish for anything else. Hence her refusal to be bothered with disciples and her frequent samadhi.

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13.7.1936

## SEER-SINGER

*This is an 8-line experiment in a 4-foot metre of 8 syllables per line in which the first line contains 8 words, the second 7, the third 6, and so on in a regular diminishing series until the eighth which has just a single 8-syllabled word.*

DUMB dusk has taught his heart to sing.  
He shuts his mortal ears and eyes—  
He pierces through each visible thing  
And strains beyond earth's harmonies:  
Poet with visionary wing  
Penetrates supernatured skies—  
Innumerably glimmering  
Incomprehensibilities!

AMAL KIRAN

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1977)

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

JULY 16, 1940

P. Italy has published a long article on the New Order in Europe and it says that if England doesn't recognise this Order she will have to pay the price.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even if she recognises it, she will have to pay. (*Laughter*)

P. It says war on England is to begin in a week.

SRI AUROBINDO: The German paper says England won't enjoy another week-end. Hitler will enter in a triumphal march on 27th July, for which windows are being hired for sight-seeing.

S. That means hardly two weeks.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. I don't know how he is going to do it.

N. Italy says her navy will involve the British Navy in engagements on the high seas in the meantime.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Surely not engagements. The Italians will try to keep the British occupied so that they may not go elsewhere. If there are engagements, there won't be any Italian Navy left to keep the British engaged—they know this very well.

N. Britain seems to be mediating between Japan and China.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is what the Governor of Malay says. If true, he shouldn't have said it.

(After this there was an interval in which S, C and P were talking among themselves. There was a stain on S's shirt which brought up the following topic.)

C. Paul Richard used to say that a stain on the clothes meant a stain on the soul. If he saw any stain on his clothes—dhobi stain even—he would be very angry and consider it as a stain on his soul.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): If it was a dhobi stain, it would be a stain on the washerman's soul (*laughter*). That was one thing he believed in—signs, emblems, omens, etc...

C. Every time he saw a stain, it made him angry.

SRI AUROBINDO: If he knew the nature of the stain, why should he be angry afterwards?

S. He did not like it to be revealed to him. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: He revealed it himself. If all cloth-stains had been stains on the soul, then no unstained place would have been left on his soul. (*Laughter*) But the soul has no stain

P. No; that's how I argued with him saying that according to Hindu philosophy the soul is pure and immaculate. It can have no stain

SRI AUROBINDO: He meant the vital being perhaps.

P. Yes; he was a very self-contradictory man. At one moment he said one thing and at the next another.

(*When the others had gone away*) Hitler is not getting any inspiration for attacking England.

SRI AUROBINDO: No; nobody knows what he has up his sleeve. But I don't know how he can attack. He can attack by air and destroy the industrial centres, which will be something. Britain's air force has increased but still it is inferior in number. She has also a smaller army. She has now about three million men in arms, who will be sufficient to deal with Hitler if he makes a land attack, for he can't at once land his whole army and armoured units. Most probably he has not worked out a plan yet.

P. Or he may be considering various possibilities that may come in his way.

SRI AUROBINDO: That does not matter to him. He always considers possibilities. If he gets the right inspiration possibilities do not matter. That is how he goes against all the generals who show various possibilities that may run counter. He has been guided by inspiration and he has gone ahead depending on luck. Regarding France, Poland and all the other countries he had a set-out plan beforehand and carried it through. But regarding England nobody knows what he has. He has a most original mind, because it is not his own mind.

I can understand if he wanted to take Gibraltar first. That will not be difficult; then he could go to Africa and destroy the British Empire there. This would be a mighty blow. Then he could turn towards Asia unless Russia came in the way. The British island can then remain as it is. Of course then Britain will still have her Navy. But Germany is a land power.

#### EVENING

The second volume of *The Life Divine* has come out, in two parts. They are very big in size.

SRI AUROBINDO: They are like two elephants.

S: The price is Rs. 16, which is pretty high and it is difficult to get the money. Some people deposited their money in advance but withdrew it afterwards.

SRI AUROBINDO. Well, after all the book tries to solve all the problems of existence. (*Laughter*)

S. That it does, both internally and externally. It is very sound in every way. I was in fact wishing for this book to come out. N has not finished the first volume yet.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing to Nirod*): By the time you finish the three volumes, you will become a philosopher. (*Laughter*)

N. I doubt.

S. It does not follow.

SRI AUROBINDO: No?

N. Some say that Part I of Volume II is the most difficult.

SRI AUROBINDO: The psychological and the metaphysical chapters may be difficult.

N. What has the sale been like in America?

SRI AUROBINDO: There were some orders from America but there were no books available. Biswanath could not send any.

S. Now they are busy with something else and cannot take any interest in *The Life Divine*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, busy with bombs.

NIRODBARAN

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# SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES—FROM THE PHYSICAL BEING UP TO THE OVERHEAD PLANES

## CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO IN THE 1930's

*After seeing the Mother, my flesh began to feel different kinds of experiences. I do not know how to express them.*

*Even the teeth, the most inconscient part of the body, have entered into the field of experience!*

Yes, these things are felt when the Force is working.

*Our human mind would like to argue about this point: how is it the Force begins to act on an inconscient substance like teeth before it has acted sufficiently on the conscious parts like the vital and physical?*

With many these experiences are the first they get.

*Let me tell you what happened during my noon nap. I was on the lap of the Mother. She had put her transforming palm on my head. With her thumb she was pressing or rather opening the Brahmic centre of my head. I began to feel as if something were received from there. Then all on a sudden there was a shifting of the consciousness into some other world. A supraphysical light was experienced in the cells of the body which was already flooded with light. The physical itself was taken up. Will you please explain this phenomenon?*

There is nothing to explain. It was what you describe: at once the raising of the consciousness to a higher plane and the descent of that into the physical.

*Some say that it is not possible to fix peace in the outer physical till the supramental descent, and that there is only one man in the world who has done it up to now?*

Who says that? Peace can be brought down into the physical—to its very cells. It is the active transformation of the physical that cannot be completely done without the supramental descent.

*During today's Pranam, I perceived the Mother in a majestic form, seated very high. Of course she is always that inwardly. But what I experienced this morning was something on the physical plane and seen by my human eyes. Her grandeur showed as if she had already conquered the whole universe!*

Yes, the power was there in the body. Both your perception and reaction are right—which shows that you have progressed immensely.

*It is not only from the teeth that the nectar-juice (Amrita) flows. It springs from any part of the body.*

*During such a condition, sometimes the consciousness feels as if there does not exist a mouth or any part inside the mouth—only there is Amrita and Amrita!*

That kind of non-existence of the body or of some part of it is a frequent experience of the sadhana.

*During the state of self-realisation very little sense remains of my body. I do not know what it does or where it lies.*

That is usual. I was in that way unconscious of the body for many years.

*The consciousness feels as if the Pure Existence were materially descending into one, down to the neck. But how can that be?*

The Pure Existence is not something abstract but substantial and concrete. Moreover it is descending into the body, so it is quite natural to feel it materially.

*The Self extends its influence more and more. Even my body feels it and remains intoxicated most of the time. This perhaps shows that the subconscious and mechanical mind and all other parts are under its spell?*

Yes.

*A few days back you wrote: "It happens sometimes when the force is flowing down from the Brahmarandhra." What does this Sanskrit word indicate?*

The place at the top of the head (called crown of the head) which is supposed to be the part at which things ordinarily come in from above and go out. E. g. it is through this that the sukshma deha (subtle physical) goes out at the time of death and also it is the passage of connection (previous to opening) between the higher and the lower consciousness

*Since early morning I have been receiving something from above through the forehead. It descends swiftly and powerfully.*

It is the higher consciousness sending its force down into the inner mind centre.

*In the morning my inner consciousness was lifted up above the head. There it found a plane which was filled with force—a force of great intensity and power. Even the air there was full of fiery vibrations. What was this experience?*

It is the higher Force above which is always there waiting for its time of descent. As one feels the silence and wideness of the Self there, so one feels there a presence of a great Force—higher or Divine Force.

*During the free reception I feel the descent passing through my head, forehead and inner vision centre.*

It is the inner mind centres that have become open and conscious.

*During a deep meditation, sometimes I feel a sweet and star-cool intense Force just above my head. At the same time I see my vital consciousness rising from its navel centre to that Force and drawing it down. It may be noted, however, that this whole movement needs a little effort (though not striving), otherwise the Force by itself does not descend.*

Such an ascent and drawing down from above is often the preliminary to the spontaneous descent of that which is above.

*When it is too difficult to bring down the Force while remaining below and to remove the darkness that is there, I simply leave my external being and rise above.*

That is good. The power of rising above at will is of great value.

*There is started today an easy soaring from planes to still higher planes of consciousness. It is a sweet and joyous flight.*

That is good. It means the way is open to higher and higher planes of consciousness.

*This particular movement I could not follow with full clarity: whether it was an ascent or a descent or both. First something huge came through the head, filling my body with its light. Passing through the throat centre with a little difficulty it reached the chest. Simultaneously another movement took place from the chest. It rose up to the seventh centre (sahasradala padma chakra on the head). The second movement was also full of intensity and supported by the vital, otherwise it would not have been experienced so clearly at the same time. It would have been rather engulfed in the powerful descent.*

It is the descent and responding ascent in the higher part of the being.

*If you would kindly permit, I prefer to station myself in the higher consciousness, from where I have been absent for quite a time, to be up there and associate myself with the Mother in her working out the change of the lower nature.*

No objection—it is a very good thing to keep working in the higher consciousness. It is more effective than struggling all the time down below with the lower forces.

*There are periods when there is no active or apparent movement of the sadhana, for the entire being is at rest. During such a transitional period, I pulled up my human consciousness from below and united it with the self-existence above. By this method, it will carry back at least some peace and purity of the higher planes when it returns to earth.*

It is an excellent method.

*There was just one moment, a single moment, when I experienced myself completely and throughout as the divine Force itself. Is it not by such openings that tamas will be conquered most easily and effectively?*

Yes.

*While rising a little above the human mind I see and feel a direct and straight path.*

*Its one end is at the seventh centre and the other high above, in fact so high up that I cannot see it but can have only an impression of it. This flight has many gradations.*

It is the line of connection between the spiritual mind, through higher mind, illumined mind, intuition, overmind to the supramental.

*For the last two days, my consciousness seems to soar much higher than the Higher Mind. Not only the inner but even the outer being feels elevated. Today especially I experienced as if the consciousness had crossed the Intuition plane. I cannot be quite certain about these flights unless I have your confirmation.*

It may be, but it is comparatively easy to go high when the way is opened. The difficulty is to bring down the power of those states and that can be done only stage by stage.

*The inertia, physical weakness, endless subconscious recurrences have covered up my sadhana again and made such a confusion that I don't know how to pull myself out of it.*

By calling down the Descent, since the Ascent is impossible. At least that is how I dealt with the situation in my own case.

*Regarding the change of the physical nature, I never thought of doing it myself. My impression was that such a herculean task could only be performed by the Mother's Force, while I maintained my station above. I always had a will for it but did not myself work at it.*

One can remain in the higher consciousness and yet associate oneself with the change of the lower nature. No doubt it is the Mother's Force that will do what is necessary but the consent of the sadhak, the association of his will with her action or at least of his witness vision is necessary also.

From *Guidance from Sri Aurobindo: Letters to a Young Disciple*—Nagin Doshi,  
Two Volumes, 1975-76.

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## UDAR REMEMBERS XIV

FROM my childhood I have been short-sighted, myopic. I suffered quite a bit for this as a little child, for at that time neither I nor others knew of the defect in my sight. At school, I could not read the black-board from my seat and the teacher thought I was being naughty and obstinate and scolded me and punished me often. I did not complain of this at home and so my trouble continued. Then one day, in a rage, the teacher banged my face on the board and I had a heavy bruise which I had to explain at home. It was only then that my eyes were examined and I was given glasses to wear. So I wore glasses from about the age of seven, and when I joined the Ashram I was still wearing them.

It was around 1956 or so, at my age of around 50, when I was working with The Mother one day, that She suddenly asked me why I wore glasses. I answered that it was because I was short-sighted and had been so since my seventh year. The Mother then said, "Nonsense! Throw them away!" The Mother's orders to me were sacred, so I literally threw them away and I found my sight to be quite normal and stopped wearing glasses. The doctors were surprised when I had my eyes examined and my previous history was known but I was not surprised at all. It seemed quite a natural thing to me.

Then, around 1971, the vision in my left eye became blurred and so I could not see through it. Examination revealed that I had developed a cataract, quite fast. It was mature and the doctor advised an early operation as, he said, there was incipient cataract in my right eye and, if I did not have the cataract in my left eye removed in a short time, I would soon be totally blind. I then asked the doctor to explain to me the operation he proposed. He said that it was a very simple one. The lens of the eye, which is normally transparent, had become opaque and so it had to be removed and I would have to wear eye glasses which would function as the lens. To this I replied that it seemed to be like a man coming to a doctor with a pain in his leg and the doctor recommending that the leg be cut off and a wooden leg fitted to replace it. The doctor thought I was being funny. I then asked him what the cause could be of the lens becoming opaque and if there was no way of making it transparent again, of effecting a real cure instead of an operation of removal which is a defeat. He gave a long technical explanation of the nature of the opaqueness and said that it was impossible to make it transparent again. There was the analogy of an egg. Once it is boiled and becomes opaque, how can one make it transparent again? It is impossible, he repeated. At that moment those wonderful lines of Sri Aurobindo in His *Savitri* came to my mind:

The high gods look on man and watch and choose  
Today's impossibles for the future's base.

When I went to The Mother I related to Her all that had happened and all our conversation. The Mother listened carefully and then said, "Take up the impossible, Udar. I will help you with my Light and Grace. Do not be operated upon, find a real cure and this will benefit thousands of people who suffer from cataract. They will then be cured without the operation which is a defeat, as you have said."

"In that case, Mother," I replied, "I must not be cured by a miracle but by a method." "You are right, Udar," The Mother said: "No miracle for you this time. If you are cured by a miracle it will be a cure for you alone. A cure must be found which will benefit all. Go on! try out all methods—search everywhere for new methods. The Divine Help and Grace is there with you."

And that challenge I have taken up, on our Sweet Mother's Order and with Her Light and Love and Grace. This was in 1971. Now, after five years, what is the result? I shall write on this in another reminiscence.

---

## WHEN IT RAINS

WHEN it rains,  
I pull the reins  
To silence the outer din,  
For it is time  
To be showered with rhyme  
Of eternal poetry within.

As it pours,  
The wild sea roars  
With wind to back him strong;  
All these together  
Make of wild weather  
The muse of a cradle-song.

Dive then I deep  
Into a conscious sleep  
Amidst a domain of sweetness and shine;  
Where I repose,  
A bright red rose,  
In the bosom-compassion of the Mother Divine!

SATADAL

## A FOREWORD TO PHILOSOPHY

UNITY in Diversity—from Kapila down to Carnap, that is the most comprehensive concept possible to man when he turns a searching eye upon the gigantic enigma presented by the cosmos in which he plays so striking a part.

There have been uncompromising monists of stark, immutable, homogeneous Being who have looked upon all diversity as an inscrutable phantasmagoria, and on the other hand implacable pluralists have refused to see any essential unity in the teeming multitude of heterogeneous events which seems to constitute the spatio-temporal process. But in the end these extremes fail to satisfy the integral philosophic sense of the human mind: all life and thought are based on a fundamental recognition of identity and difference, of the universal and the particular, of the one and the many.

All things tend to indicate a ground of unity just as much as each thing tends to express a unique shade of it: cosmos is at once a universe and a pluriverse. The most satisfying as well as finally inevitable act of both reason and intuition is to affirm and believe in the bedrock reality of a single yet multiply-realised Fact.

However, once we have admitted that if Philosophy seeks to evade this Fact it is always likely to be so much the worse for Philosophy, we must, in order to have a clear insight into the ultimate nature of the bedrock reality, take into account the two poles of evolutionary history—the material existence from which man is apparently sprung and his look upward from it towards spiritual truth. He is, somehow, always subject to the dual attraction of Matter and Spirit. Living and thinking in a physical body, he cannot neglect the demands and necessities of his material nature, its comfort, gratification and development, its insatiable push towards a perfect secular fulfilment. But at the same time there is in him a conviction of something else than his first insistent experience of terrestrial being. Set like flint against the invasion of doubt from a certain part of his nervous psychology which harps on the paramount importance of secular growth is the feeling that life on earth is not the sole reality and that its vicissitudes do not exhaust his entire duration. Soul, After-life, God—these intuitions shine out through whatever thick veils he chooses to put upon them: he cannot for long hold them at bay, they persist in returning, in moulding his action as a step towards meriting celestial enjoyment, in suggesting a chain of rebirth as developing his spiritual potentialities in order to deserve an ever more ample heaven and, if too unwisely thwarted, they acquire a morbid hold on him, casting over his whole terrestrial existence a hue of futile disorder and incorrigible sinfulness.

Thus, no age of scepticism which denies the Spirit and refuses to investigate sympathetically the data of religious experience can last long; it is condemned to transience by the unconquerable aspiration in man towards the immortal, the infinite, the divine. Neither does any feverish emphasis on other-worldliness give him

permanent satisfaction: the moment religion, no matter with what conciliatory compromises, regards in the main a supra-terrestrial sphere as the scene of his final fulfilment it becomes suspect to the equally unconquerable impulse in him towards material self-consummation, individual and communal. What Philosophy has to find is the sovereign equation which perfectly harmonises these two master-passions. The very fact that they are equally inevitable, creating by their perpetual conflict the whole course of man's advance and destiny, seems to imply that there is such a comprehensive equation possible and that the very instinct of Nature is somehow to arrive at it.

Hence we must take the human aspiration towards the immortal, the infinite, the divine as not just the fallen soul's home-sickness for a post-mortem paradise but rather as the evolutionary urge by which Nature is striving to produce the superman in whom mind, life and body have received the law and light of a higher Consciousness and Power which have purified, subtilised, intensified and transformed them into perfect images on earth of their own ideality. In that case, Nature is at bottom a supreme Spirit conceptively self-extended as the basis and substance of all cosmic existence, a Spirit of which the implicit diversity is necessarily of living soul-truths enjoying a play of divine consciousness, force and bliss, and which guides overtly or covertly a phenomenal mould of itself which starts with a complete involution of all its powers in order that they may be progressively manifested in the terms and figures of their own seeming opposites—apparently inanimate Matter and unconscious Force.

What we call evolution is a process by which the multiplicity of the soul-truths inherent in the Spirit shape various series of formulations on earth for the gradual revelation of their own shades of divine diversity at play in the divine unity. This, again, means that each soul-truth gathers and assimilates through these formulations or rebirths a certain growing experience which helps it to express its diversity on evolutionary lines, and which it holds together in an evolving intermediate psychological form of itself between its pure spiritual status and its expression here. That is to say, midway between the material existence in which life and mind develop because of a hidden Spirit in it and the spiritual existence which contains the ideal realities of all that is gradually worked out here, there is a subtle psychological existence which reveals itself with its derivative light and power in the form and scope afforded them by nature-force on the material plane.

For, matter contains, on this hypothesis, everything in potentiality; it is the action of what is hidden in it that aids to compel the emergence of the higher values, the action of the Spirit's single yet multiply-realised splendour through intervening terms of itself which are mind and life-force. This explains the rise of living and thinking forms, half-obscure and half-enlightened, in the material universe as a preparatory step to the emergence of a spiritual consciousness which will display and fulfil all that life and mind hint at in matter.

The first objection to such a promising vision of our possibilities is that there

is no evidence even of a consciousness, much less a supreme Spirit, in crude inanimate matter. But this argument derives its seeming strength from the fact that we have assumed our mental awareness or whatever else appears to approximate to it as the sole criterion of consciousness, forgetting that there may quite easily be in what is to us the sleep or insensibility of matter and unconscious inanimate force a consciousness differing from ours in its action, its pitch, its organisation and hence incommunicative to us, so that apparent matter may be merely the most involved manifestation of the conceptively self-extended substance of Spirit.

The second objection is that the huge amount of waste in Nature, the plethora of blind and useless expenditure of energy we notice all around, gives the lie direct to the presence of a secret spiritual Consciousness. But the impartial philosopher must reply that what we consider waste may be precisely a necessary feature in Nature's plan, an unavoidable element in the logic of the aim to manifest her innermost truth through various symbols of involution or superficial contradiction of that truth.

We might indeed resort to a sort of *tertium quid* between Spirit and unconscious Force, a rudimentary consciousness fundamental to matter and attaining higher intensities according to the growing complexities of physical structure. But we can rest in such a theory only at the risk of leaving it unintelligible why neither a religionism which lays up its treasure in a future heaven nor a materialism which ignores the mystic in man ever seems to afford lasting and integral satisfaction. Whereas, if we accept the hypothesis that a sovereign Consciousness has in one of its interminable self-deployments used its power of variable realisation in order to find itself through a process beginning with an increasing concealment of itself in what it formulates, we explain not only this fact but also all the anomalies of evolution.

For, such a hypothesis makes us understand better than any other view how, out of the terrible phenomenon of an apparent non-mind and non-life, living and conscious creatures emerge, how at last human beings come to be, yearning for truth and bliss and freedom and God, rising towards the contemplation of absolute values and thrilling with the emotion of supernal ideals. That these beings should be callous, ferocious and stupid is explicable on account of the vast superficial insentience of matter out of which their natures are compounded, but whence spring beauty, harmony and unbounded compassion, how out of a heartless and inexorable unconscious energy are born the heart of a Chaitanya, the intellect of a Plato and the exquisite sensibility of a Da Vinci? If we accept a Spirit as well as its secondary powers as concealed in the material shell, we can comprehend both sides of human nature no less than all those intermediate impulses between the brute and the superman which constitute average humanity.

The one last question which intrudes itself hails from the moralist quarter: the moralist tries to arraign Omnipotence for choosing this particular possibility of involution and evolution. He becomes melodramatic in gathering up all the details

of sorrow, pain and futility and asks the Supreme how it could stoop to the baseness of manifesting so laborious a cosmos, how it could ever mix with loveliness, harmony and delight the bitter drop of ugly discord and suffering.

Thus one of the most idealistic minds of our day has uttered the crashing blasphemy that he would spit in the "empty face" of a God who did not utilise His almightiness to lend a fiat to the "Open Conspiracy" by which an ignorance-besotted, capitalist-ridden world is to be saved. The same humanitarian type of conscience anxious to spare an almighty Maker the responsibility of an imperfect world has compelled another reactionary against Materialism to conceive a universal Life-Force originally blind and undeveloped, stumbling experimentally towards perfection.

No doubt, there is a certain truth in this theory of trial and error, but the main dilemma is purely intellectual, and solved the moment we are humble enough to acknowledge that our human standards of benevolence cannot be wholly applied to the ultimate Being. Our intuitive aspiration towards an absolute Good, a final Law of Righteousness, is indicative, like all feeling-out towards absolute values, of something in the constitution of this Being, yet we have to realise that this Being is not good in our sentimental human way: His is a benevolence which in its wisdom and far-sightedness must surpass our notions just as considerably as our notions would exceed those, say, of the most altruistic gorilla possible. For, while the essence of rationality is the sublime feeling that there is Intelligence at the back of the universe, it is the very essence of irrationality to suppose that this Intelligence is only of a much magnified man.

All we can ask is that somehow our nature's highest desires and noblest longings must get fulfilled, and this much is amply provided for in the view we have sponsored. The grim involution is accomplished only so that the self-finding by the Spirit may be through a varied battle and not that the end of the cosmic manifestation may mark the frustration of all the terms through which the Spirit expresses itself.

Indeed, to bring the battle of the ages, the slow travail of phenomenal Nature to a rapid victory by not merely extending the limits of our vital and mental faculties but by predominantly seizing on the true psyche, the inmost soul, hidden behind life and mind, the spontaneously spiritual part of our nature which possesses the dynamic to develop the vision, the faith and the will required for the discovery of our supra-mental Self with its masterful ability to perfect by its highest law our entire earth-life—this indeed is the practical outcome of all spiritual philosophy. It is what Sri Aurobindo calls the Integral Yoga.

The Integral Yoga is the methodised effort towards perfection by a constant urge towards the Divine as a Presence and Power capable of all relations of identity-in-difference with us—by an incessant surrender to it and consecrated invocation of it in the midst of work no less than in restful meditation—by a steady awareness of it within and without and an appeal to it to fill the whole system and take charge of all our nature, substituting for our activities its own supra-mental

Light which will give us the uttermost freedom of our own highest soul-truth without sacrificing anything essential in us because it will reject only those inferior operations which will become superfluous because superior faculties will do their work with greater certitude, efficiency and synthesising prescience.

No easy task is this for man, says Sri Aurobindo, "but in the end the difficulty resolves itself into two adverse tendencies, one of his lower nature, a downward attraction to what he has been and still partially is, one of his higher nature, too much attachment to what he has become and satisfaction with partial achievements. It is the joys of the way useful in themselves as a support to his strength on the journey, that hold him, when clung to with too much attachment, back from the splendour of his goal. To know himself for a pilgrim of the heights called on to press ever upwards, to know the principle of his life as a constant self-becoming and self-exceeding of which each step is a present form out of which something higher is to be delivered, is the sign of his election. This constant upward will is his true heroism, his true greatness, his sane and sound asceticism. To discover more and more highly and widely the goal and the way his complex and ascending powers of knowledge were given, to follow it more and more strenuously and indomitably his forces of will and infinite aspiration. The Spirit within him supports him by its universal delight, by its growing largeness in his consciousness, by its inexhaustible treasures of will and capacity, by all the vastness of its infinite being. When he tears away the veils of the Spirit, when he sees God and delivers his outward nature into the hands of the divinity within, what is now impossible will be revealed as his one possibility and his eternal certainty; his obscure and difficult journey will become a rapid and luminous ascension. Then will he climb to that fulfilment of the apparent and discovery and possession of the real Man which is the meaning of supermanhood."

K. D. SETHNA

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# HUMAN PERSONALITY AND EDUCATION

## FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

WE have fallen on our heads. We are stunned, dazed, groggy, groping to orient ourselves, to find our place and purpose in life. If you have had the experience of awaking from what appears to be a very deep sleep and for a second or even several minutes you don't know where you are or who you are or where you've been or what you are supposed to do, you will be able to identify with what I am suggesting. It is a state that most often produces fear and anxiety until the dawn of memory comes and with a sigh of relief we grasp what is familiar and secure. However, this momentary amnesia is offered only as an analogy to a lapse of consciousness having universal dimensions—a cosmic amnesia. Given the present conditions in the evolution of the earth it is a state that we all assume when our psychic being or soul takes the terrestrial plunge.

What does this have to do with education and human personality? If you go to meetings of educators you will hear them speaking of many diverse phenomena: better techniques of teaching, source materials, size of classes, how students can be best prepared for certain fields of work, how many courses should constitute a major concentration, dealing with the slow learner, etc. This is the accepted machinery or technology of education but behind it all are certain unspoken biases or presuppositions. For example what is the aim or goal of education? What is the nature and role of the mind, the vital and the physical parts of the being in the process? On the depth and quality of your bias will depend the nature and value of education.

In speaking of the condition of cosmic amnesia I am immediately taking up the bias of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in regard to education. It is a bias that carries with it the elements of a revolution that is psychic and spiritual in nature. It seeks nothing less than a total rending of the veil that separates us from our true individuality, psychic and supramental. In this context education is at least part of the process of recovering the memory of our origin, and human personality is the instrument or the bridge to that goal.

The dominant feeling that arises upon reading Sri Aurobindo and the Mother *On Education* is: "I must begin again! I must become a child again! Things must be new, fresh again!" It is not wishful or fanciful thinking but a true movement of consciousness, for these are the qualities of the psychic personality—a child, the eternal Child, ultimately the Golden Child. In its deepest and truest sense it is the aspiration for a new individual, a new race and a new world. It is the experience of the psychic touch in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

I would like to focus initially on two of the Mother's remarks regarding education. First,

The education of a human being should begin at his very birth and continue



throughout his life. Indeed, if the education is to have its maximum result, it must begin even before birth...<sup>1</sup>

And secondly,

Education to be complete must have five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual.<sup>2</sup>

The Mother reveals very succinctly the tremendous scope of education and at the very least implies to those who will take up the work, the necessity of a deep and thorough experience of human personality and psychology. To really have the aspiration to begin at the beginning, in order to develop a new attitude towards education, we have to see and feel the child not as some vague combination of mental and physical life but first and foremost as a psychic being who has come to earth for a certain experience in its evolution. In order to do this the child has found it necessary to assume a mind, a vital and a physical as instruments for his growth or we might say the required native dress for earth habitation. Although the psychic being is not first in the order of our growing awareness or consciousness, *i.e.* it usually takes some time before we are conscious of it, it is first inasmuch as it is the part of our being that persists from birth to birth and is the foundation of what we call human personality. Sri Aurobindo has described it as

...a spiritual personality put forward by the soul in its evolution; its growth marks the stage which the spiritual evolution of the individual has reached and its immediate possibilities for the future. It stands behind the mental, the vital, the physical nature, grows by their experiences, carries the consciousness from life to life... At first it is veiled by the mental, vital and physical parts, limited in its self-expression by their limitations, bound to the reactions of Nature, but, as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating the mind, life and body.<sup>3</sup>

And the Mother has given the following description:

...the creation of an individual being is the result of a projection, in time and space, of one of the countless possibilities latent in the Supreme Origin of all manifestation which, through the one and universal consciousness, is concretized in the law or the truth of an individual and so becomes by a progressive growth its soul or psychic being.<sup>4</sup>

In light of this revolutionary understanding of individuality—psychic individuality—when one stands before a child of any age one must first cultivate the attitude of

providing an opening, through the mental, vital and physical instruments, for the manifestation of the true Person. In the context of education the Mother reminds us that "...till now, the discovery of the psychic being, the identification with it, has not been among the recognised subjects of education."<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to the attitude that we are serving and guiding an evolving psychic being who is using mental, vital and physical instruments to eventually come fully to the front, very often children are not even considered to have the status of a human person. What we call education erects a calcified shell over the psychic being rather than creating the most favorable conditions for its manifestation. If we can imagine for a moment the passage of the psychic being into our present terrestrial conditions it is indeed traumatic under the most favorable circumstances. This marvelous form of light plunges from the peace of the psychic world into the most constricting prison house of ignorance. In this regard the Mother points to the necessity for education to begin before the birth of a child:

...what you are at your birth is most of the time almost absolutely what your mother and father have made you, and also, through them, what your grandparents have made you. There are certain vital traditions in families and, besides, there is the state of consciousness in which you were formed, conceived—the moment at which you were conceived—and...not once in a million times does that state conform to true aspiration....The willed conception of a child is extremely rare; mostly it is an accident.<sup>6</sup>

The gifts of the parents to the child are precisely the mental, vital and physical components of the being which are both the obstacles and the aids to his evolutionary growth. And again the Mother reminds us,

...you go down to the subconscious root of the being—that exactly which comes from parents, from atavism—...all, almost all difficulties are there, there are very few things added to existence after the first years of life.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the preparation of the *ādhāra* or vehicle of the psychic is extremely important and the Mother urges women to have a conscious and definite will to form a child according to the highest ideal of which she is capable. In this light she has told us that the psychic being sometimes presides over the actual formation of mental and physical life, sometimes enters at the moment of conception, or after birth with the child's first cry, or weeks, months, years after, or never! Much depends on the aspiration of the parents and their effort to create a mental, vital and physical atmosphere of beauty and harmony.

The next thicket of ignorance through which the evolving soul must pass is the actual process of birth and it is here that man's attitude towards children is reflected in its most barbaric and unconscious form. We have to imagine the developing child

residing in a warm aqueous world, for all practical purposes weightless and sustained directly by the mother over a period of nine months—and then complete chaos erupts. The life-supporting ocean runs dry, an all-encompassing pressure crushes him through a passage way whose only apparent function is to oppose him. And then it happens—he is forced out by a combination of pushing and pulling into a world of blinding light, deafening noise and excruciating sensitivity as air invades his uninitiated skin. His internal life line is severed, he is held upside down which probably introduces him to vertigo and he receives a blow allegedly to induce crying. Try to put yourself in his position—identify with him! If you find yourself saying, “Oh! he really isn’t conscious at that point. He’s certainly not a person. His reactions are instinctual and he really doesn’t feel any pain”, you are in concert with the majority of humanity. Is there any solution to a condition where birth and death are experienced as one? Yes, there is, and I believe that it is a direct result of the psychic evolution being carried on all over the world by the Mother of Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram. It must be remembered here that it was the Mother who brought the psychic dimension to Integral Yoga. Before her coming to join Sri Aurobindo there was no direct or prominent mention of it in the work he was doing.

Here I wish to refer specifically to the work of Dr. Frederick LeBouyer part of which has been printed in a book called *Birth Without Violence*. Dr. Le Bouyer is a Buddhist who has by now delivered hundreds of children by a method which is a manifestation of the Buddha’s teachings on compassion. It is a method that flows naturally from his *attitude* towards the child—his identification with his difficult journey, his recognition that he is something more than an unconscious piece of matter. It is as follows: the child is gently received from the mother by the father, when possible, under the supervision of the doctor and placed face down on the stomach of the mother without severing the umbilical cord. The environment is softly lit and silence is respected. The father or doctor gently massages the child for some time and then the umbilical cord is disconnected and tied. This gives the child a period to make the transition from a system of internal to one of external life support. Next the child is held in a container of water and allowed to move in that medium and finally he is put by himself for a short period of time in order to have the experience of being alone. The difference in the physical expressions of infants born in this way from those born by the ordinary method is extraordinary. The eyes are open very soon and there is an expression of calm and peace. Dr. LeBouyer has been making long range studies on individuals born in this manner and finds them to be generally warm, loving, intelligent and creative individuals with great capacities for detachment and independence.

Keeping in mind our theme of developing human personality, mental, vital and physical, as a vehicle for the manifestation of psychic personality it is crucial in the light of Aurobindonian psychology to create the most favorable pre-birth and birth conditions. But in order for this to occur a reversal in consciousness must take place, a new attitude must be fostered whereby we consent to look with new eyes on our

primitive and sometimes barbaric ideas or habits concerning our role as parents and educators. The grand paradox here is that what we ordinarily call "education" is, from the perspective of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a force working against the growth of both the human and the psychic personality. It is, as we shall see, psychologically damaging in most cases. It is hard medicine to swallow that we should have to admit that most education as it exists is anti-evolutionary. In this regard the Mother remarks,

I have known children who were much more conscious of their psychic being at the age of five than at fourteen, and at fourteen than at twenty-five and above all from the moment they go to school where they undergo that kind of intensive mental training which draws their attention to the intellectual part of their being, they lose almost always and almost completely this contact with their psychic being.<sup>8</sup>

In regard to the time when a child can become conscious of his psychic being, the Mother says it is usually between the ages of four and seven but sometimes earlier or even in exceptional cases almost immediately on birth. However, the psychic influence can direct all of the child's life even if he is not externally conscious of it. It is, almost in every case, the mind acting as a protective device that veils the psychic being. Speaking of the light or the wonder of the psychic in a child's eyes the Mother says,

Children have this but as they learn more, become more intelligent, more educated, this is effaced,...And you may be sure it is the mind that has got in there, and the psychic has gone very far behind...if you take a boy of fourteen...who is at school, who has ordinary parents and has been ill-treated, his mind is very much in the fore-front; there is something hard in him, the psychic has gone behind.<sup>9</sup>

It is a combination of the attitude of the parents and the methods of formal education that severs the contact with the psychic personality. And as a result it also usually produces distortions in the human personality. Speaking of the educational system in Europe and India Sri Aurobindo says,

It is based on an insufficient knowledge of human psychology, and it is only safeguarded in Europe from disastrous results by the refusal of the ordinary student to subject himself to the processes it involves, his habit of studying only so much as he must to avoid punishment or to pass an immediate test, his resort to active habits and vigorous physical exercise.<sup>10</sup>

He is quite obviously referring here to overloading the mind at the expense of the rest of the being which can create psychological damage. In light of this we must begin to view the so-called "problem child", who rebels against the system, as being

among the most healthy. Speaking even more pointedly Sri Aurobindo warns,

The system prevailing in our universities is one which ignores the psychology of man, loads the mind laboriously with numerous little packets of information carefully tied with red tape, and, by the methods used in this loading process, damages or atrophies the faculties and instruments by which man assimilates, creates, and grows in intellect, manhood and energy.<sup>11</sup>

In educating the mental, vital and physical instruments of evolution the keynote is *receptivity*. They must attain a plasticity, a wideness and a depth in order to receive the inner and the higher knowledge and power: "This continual improvement of the *ādhāra* and increase in quantity and complexity of action of the informing energy, is the whole aim of evolution."<sup>12</sup> In regard to nurturing the inner life of children by providing avenues of expression both parents and formal educators have for the most part either ignored or actively discouraged this sphere of experience. How many times have we witnessed a child attempting to relate a dream, or tell a story to express an inner experience or say that he knows that a certain event will happen or has happened, only to be ignored, or told, "It is only your imagination! Stop that nonsense! You are lying." And after a while the child as a protection and to gain approval from the parent or teacher represses that whole wonderful world of inner experiences. One way he accomplishes this is to develop his mind, for it is the tool for breaking the inner ties. The Mother speaks of this inner contact in children:

For the mind always separates the external being from the deeper consciousness. Little children are quite tied up. I knew children who were quite sincere but could not distinguish whether a thing was going on in their imagination or in reality. For them the inner life was as real as the external life. They were not telling stories, they were not liars, simply the inner life was as real as the external life. There are children who go night after night to the same spot in order to continue the dream they have begun—they are experts in the art of going out of their bodies.<sup>13</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has reminded us that the real malady of the world is that it has lost contact with its soul and we must be sincere enough to acknowledge that what we call "education" has been one of the primary collaborators in this event. In this light the Mother has insisted

...that from their infancy children must be taught that there is an inner reality—within themselves, within the earth, within the universe—and that they, the earth and the universe exist only as a function of this truth, and if it did not exist the child would not last, even the short time that it does, and everything would dissolve even as it comes into being.<sup>14</sup>

This should not be communicated in a philosophical way but through the inner experience of comfort, satisfaction and intense joy. If we as parents and educators do not experience it, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to communicate it to and foster it in the child. There is no set recipe for doing this outside of finding the Child in yourself and nurturing it. The Mother says, "Above all, do not be in a hurry not to be a child any more! One must be a child all one's life, as much as one can, as long as one can. Be happy, joyful, content to be a child, plastic stuff for shaping."<sup>15</sup>

Persisting throughout the thousands of volumes written on human personality the illusion is maintained that we can organize one unified combination of mental, emotional and physical dimensions that will have continuity throughout the multitude of life experiences. Still in the West, to suggest the possibility of more than one personality raises the spectre of abnormality. In brief I am suggesting that surface or egoic personality is considered the beginning and the end of consciousness and individuality, and the majority of psychological and educational efforts labor at discovering the secret of its creation. From the perspective of the evolutionary psychology of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the instrument of the true Person or psychic being, *i.e.* the human personality, is taken in the West as being sufficient to itself—the part is taken for the whole. This presents a huge obstacle to the integration of the being around its true center. Personality for Sri Aurobindo is not such a simple matter:

The changing personality is not this mental person... it is a very complex composite with many layers; there is a layer of physical, a layer of nervous, a layer of mental, even a final stratum of supramental personality; within these layers themselves there are strata within each stratum. The analysis of the successive couches of the earth is a simple matter compared with the analysis of this wonderful creation we call personality.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, without a guide we might wander interminably in this maze of multiple personalities but it is the integral vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that this multiplicity be integrated by a central Person:

Man is in his self a unique Person, but he is also in his manifestation of self a multiperson; he will never succeed in being master of himself until the Person imposes itself on his multipersonality and governs it: but this can only be imperfectly done by the surface mental will and reason; it can be perfectly done only if he goes within and finds whatever central being is by its predominant influence at the head of all his expression and action.<sup>17</sup>

This central being or unique Person is, as we have seen, the psychic being and until it fully manifests in its various ministers, mental, vital and physical, we

are under the rule of our different selves. In some the physical man comes to the front and he is mainly preoccupied with his corporeal life. In another the identification may be mainly with the vital personality resulting in a concern with ambition, passion, impulse, desire, domination, power, battle and adventure. And yet another may develop and become the mental man who subordinates the rest of his being to a mental idea or ideal. One is never purely one to the exclusion of the other personalities but it is this dominant rule of the different selves that constitutes the stages of the development of human personality in Aurobindonian psychology.

This is the "infinitely subtle and sensitive organism" with which the educator must work.<sup>18</sup> He must work, not from the old attitude of supplying various kinds of information, but, rather from the perspective of a midwife who is preparing the instrument of human personality for the birth of a higher knowledge and power. This is essentially Sri Aurobindo's maxim that "the first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught."<sup>19</sup> His teaching is in continuity with the educational discipline of ancient Hinduism which "... had the view that all knowledge is within and has to be evoked by education rather than instilled from outside."<sup>20</sup> It is presumptuous to imagine that most of us know the intricate workings of this instrument of the psychic Person—only an integral yogic experience can reveal its true workings. But if we can nurture the vision of a higher Truth manifesting, so as to create a new man and a new race we shall automatically open ourselves to both the inner worlds of ourselves and the children we are helping.

Any program of education that aspires to be integral must become aware of perfecting all of the parts of the being—mental, vital, physical, psychic and spiritual. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer particular methods for educating these various personalities I would emphasize again that the indispensable key for discovering the ways is to learn to see the child as an evolving soul, an experiment of the Divine in which you have been given the grace to participate. This attitude will immediately produce a response in the child, for you will be making contact with his psychic being. Only the psychic can know another psychic—the mental, vital and physical can only suffer its sweetness, rapture and light. What I am suggesting is that the psychic Person become the teacher. While mental, vital and physical education serves as a means for developing the personality into a self-conscious entity, receptive and plastic to a higher manifestation of Truth, the discovery of the psychic is the true cure for the cosmic amnesia we spoke of in the beginning. To light this fire and nurture it is the primary objective of the future education. The Mother shows us the way:

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which

carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, termless continuity. Then you decentralise, spread out, enlarge yourself; you begin to live in everything and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, you feel in their feelings, you live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated with a marvellous consciousness without time and limit.<sup>21</sup>

We carry within us this memory of our future and because we have forgotten it we collaborate to make children forget it. Whatever we term as a success or an advance in the field of education, if it leaves the psychic veiled or increases the hard crust around it, it must from the integral vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother be declared an utter failure. The goal must be nothing less than perfection which the Mother has described:

We may say that perfection will be attained in the individual, the collectivity, on the earth and in the universe, when, at *every moment*, the receptivity will be equal in quality and quantity to the Force which wants to manifest.<sup>22</sup>

CHARLES MALONEY

#### NOTES

- 1 Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, *On Education* (Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973), p. 96.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1970), p. 281
- 4 *Op cit*, *On Education*, p. 123.
- 5 *Ibid*
- 6 The Mother, *Questions and Answers* 1950-51 (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1976), p. 260.
- 7 *Ibid*, p. 261
- 8 *Op cit*, *Questions and Answers*, p. 26
- 9 *Ibid*, pp. 26-7
- 10 *Op cit*, *On Education*, p. 19.
11. Sri Aurobindo, "The Brain of India" in *The Harmony of Virtue* (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p. 330
12. *Ibid*, p. 332.
- 13 *Op. cit*, *Questions and Answers*, p. 128
14. *Ibid*, p. 25.
15. The Mother, *Questions and Answers* 1953 (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1976), p. 288
- 16 Sri Aurobindo, "The Reincarnating Soul" in *The Supramental Manifestation* (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p. 94.
17. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), pp. 897-8
- 18 *Op. cit.*, *On Education*, p. 19.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 20
20. *Op. cit*, "The Brain of India", p. 335
21. *Op. cit*, *On Education*, p. 124.
22. *Op cit.*, *Questions and Answers* 1950-51, p. 16.



# TOWARDS THE HIGHER LIFE

(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1977)

## CHAPTER II (Contd.)

### THE INNER ROOMS

A cave of darkness guards the eternal Light.

(Savitri)

To discover the Kingdom of Heaven within, one must have a free access into the inner rooms of the heart-centre. I did all in my power but the bolts from inside were so stiff, the inner doors so tightly screwed that no effort could produce any result. Finding no go, I remained lying outside "the barred doors", crying as if in a wilderness. No prayers, no appeals were heard. No petition was found acceptable. My condition is reflected in these lines of *Savitri*:

Heaven too high for outstretched hands to grasp...

Mine is the prayer that climbs in vain from earth.

Thus the resistance in the heart-centre was much more fierce than in the regions of the mind and all my efforts ended in total failure—I could not enter even an inch within myself. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga insists:

"In this Yoga the whole principle is to open oneself to the Divine Influence. It is there above you and, if you can once become conscious of it, you have then to call it down into you. It descends into the body as a Peace, as a Light, as a Force that works..."

The attraction for concentration was due to the fact that it helped to invoke the Mother's Force and made it descend into the system. The moment I feel the action of the Force anywhere in the body I put myself in its care and stop all personal effort. Sadhana by personal effort can stand nowhere in comparison to the silent joy that emanates from the peaceful atmosphere that is created by the action of the Mother's Force, provided the being is ready to receive and there is no resistance. Hence meditation or concentration is for me a means for calling in the Mother's action and nothing more. By itself it has no attraction for me. And this has been my attitude since I learned to meditate. When I wrote all this to the Master he remarked: "It is very good."

I was not able to keep the doors of my being always open for the Mother's Force because the psychic being had not taken the lead in the sadhana. In the absence of the Mother's Force there remained no alternative but resort to personal effort lest I should lapse into inertia. My feeling finds support in the following:

"It is not advisable in the early stages of the sadhana to leave everything to the Divine or expect everything from It without the need of one's own endeavour. That is only possible when the psychic being is in front. Under other conditions this attitude is likely to lead to stagnation and inertia."

When questioned how we could find the Divine within ourselves, the Mother made the answer:

“First of all, you must set about looking for Him, as it is the most important thing in your life, then the will must be constant, the aspiration constant and this must be the only thing that you want, then only you will find Him.

“Naturally, if you think of it only five minutes in your life and be busy with other things for three quarters of an hour, there is hardly any chance of success. In any case, many lives will be needed. It must not be a pastime, it must be the exclusive occupation of your being, the very reason of your existence.”

The inner moon was so rigorously guarded by the battalion of dark clouds that no ray could escape into the inner sky. The distracting thoughts came one after another — the more I tried to drive them away the more they came, hence *japa*<sup>1</sup> from the heart could not be maintained even for five minutes.

If the base is solid like that of a tree then only can sadhana blossom and bear fruit. Though the dark days followed in long succession, I persisted and the battle with my own nature went on unabated.

One day, by chance my eyes fell on the *Mantra*:

*Om ānandamayī chaitanyamayī satyamayī paramē,*<sup>2</sup>

in a magazine. This very *mantra* was once given to us as a message by the Mother in a facsimile of Sri Aurobindo's writing of it in Sanskrit characters, but at the time my inner being was not able to perceive the Light it carried. I read it and then it passed out of my memory. Now it captured my heart and I started repeating it as many times as I could and whenever I could get time, especially during holidays which I usually spend enjoying “the sweetness of solitude”.

As on other days I had to attend to my work, nevertheless I would be looking forward all the week to Sundays. First I would allow myself to be plunged into meditation. If I failed there, I would try to concentrate. When neither concentration nor meditation was possible I would start *japa*. This seemed to me the easiest method to keep myself turned to higher pursuits. It greatly helped warding off rambling thoughts. The moment it appeared boring I left it.

But turning one's face away from it does not solve the problem. It is the physical mind that is the source of all troubles and it cannot be subdued till there is a change in the vital nature. Yet both must be made to obey the higher law. There is no end to the obstructions they put in our way. And what precisely are they?

“The insistence of the ordinary mind and its wrong reasonings, sentiments, and judgments, the random activity of the thinking mind in concentration or its mechanical activity, the slowness of response to the will or the initial touch are the ordinary obstacles the mind imposes, just as pride, ambition, vanity, sex, greed, grasping of things for one's ego are the difficulties and obstacles offered by the vital. As the vital

<sup>1</sup> “A mantra by which the thought can be fixed.” (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 592.)

<sup>2</sup> Om. O Thou full of bliss, full of consciousness, full of truth, supreme!

difficulties can be fought down and conquered, so can the mental. Only one has to see that these are the inevitable obstacles and neither cling to them nor be terrified or overwhelmed because they are there. One has to persevere till one can stand back from the mind as from the vital."

At that time I was in the clutches of hundreds of fears, the most obsessing being the fear of pain.

The Mother explains with her usual simplicity the nature of fear:

"...the greatest obstacle perhaps that hinders man's progress is fear, a fear varied, numberless, self-contradictory, illogical, unreasonable and often irrational. Of all kinds of fear the most subtle and most clinging is that of death..."

How to get rid of this fear? The Mother gives four methods. To save space I quote only the third which I found congenial to my nature:

"The third method is for those who have faith in a God, their God, one to whom they have given themselves altogether. They belong to him integrally. All the happenings of their life are an expression of the divine will and they accept them not merely in peaceful self-surrender but with gratitude.... They have absolutely surrendered their will to his and feel his unvarying love and his constant protection, quite independent of the accidents of life and death. They have the constant experience of being at the feet of their Beloved in absolute self-surrender or nestling in his arms and enjoying perfect safety. There is no room in their consciousness any more for fear, anxiety or trouble. All that has given place to a calm and delightful bliss".

Sitting daily before the Mother's photograph and opening the heart before her I tried to imbibe more and more this spirit.

Whenever the prayer rose from the inner depths, I felt a touch, a touch as soft as of a flower. Occasions were not rare when I visioned the Mother placing her palm on my head. It was not only seeing but sensing a touch that melted the stone-like heart or opened up the hidden spring. This kind of touch has become frequent since 1959. The Mother is ever ready to give a push to those who are able to seize the opportunity when it comes. And all get something from her to the measure of their readiness.

They feel a Presence and obey a might,  
Adore a love whose rapture invades their breasts.<sup>1</sup>

What does our adoring heart yearn for? A word, a smile, an affectionate look or an awakening touch of the one who "always drives the souls to new attempts."

While under the spell of these ideas, the following lines of *The Life Divine* flash into the memory:

"At first what is necessary is that the touch of the spiritual force must intervene in mental nature: that awakening pressure must stamp itself upon mind and heart and life and give them their upward orientation; a subtle light or a great transmuting power must purify, refine and uplift their motions and suffuse them with a higher conscious-

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Book IV, C-2, Part II, p 16

ness.... This can be done from within by an invisible action through the psychic entity. ....The presence of the spirit is there in every living being, on every level, in all things and because it is there, the experience of Sachchidananda, of the pure spiritual existence and consciousness, of the delight of a divine presence, closeness, contact can be acquired through the mind or the heart or the life-sense or through the physical consciousness; if the inner doors are flung sufficiently open, the light from the sanctuary can suffuse the nearest and the farthest chambers of the outer being.”<sup>1</sup>

Radha's Prayer forms part of my daily adoration. But my being has often shrunk from uttering its last lines.

“Whether thou choosest for me life or death, happiness or sorrow, pleasure or suffering, all that comes to me from Thee will be welcome. Each one of Thy gifts will be always for me a gift divine bringing with it the Supreme Felicity.”

I found no strength in me to stand this test.

One day I had a strange experience. I saw myself cutting my limbs one by one and making an offering of them to the Mother. It might be a vision of what was taking place in the subtle being; for unless and until the “ego's knots” are cut, nothing worth the name can be achieved. There is a legendary story about King Shivi in our Puranas. Though a ruler himself, he preferred to be ruled by the Dharma. The story goes that chased by an eagle a tired dove sought the shelter of the King and prayed to be saved from being eaten bit by bit by the bird of prey. When the eagle protested and argued that the dove was his natural food and must be given to him, the King persuaded him to desist from the act and instead offered his own flesh to feed him. He went on cutting his limbs one by one to feed and satisfy the ferocious creature. This is not a mere story but carries a deeper meaning. When the being consents to give its all, even its life, the soul is supposed to be ready for redemption. The gods who had come to test the King's sincerity and devotion had appeared before him in the disguise of the eagle. On his self-surrender they disclosed their real forms and restored him to his normal health.

To the scientific man of the modern age, the fable might appear funny but there is nothing inapt in the episode. It is a symbol indicating what goes on in the inner regions of our being. It conforms in character to what Sri Aurobindo has said to a sadhika who had seen in meditation her head being drilled and had become extremely frightened.

When the tightly closed “inner doors” gave way and I had a little access to the “inner rooms” of my being, there was revealed to me the secret of a renowned poet's saying:

“If I am to pass my life in a bare loin-cloth and live on mere greens without salt but feel the Presence of the Lord in the heart, then even Indra's sovereignty will pale into insignificance.”

There are those lines in *Savitri*:

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, American Edition, p 829

As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,  
 Its message enters stirring the blind brain  
 And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound....<sup>1</sup>

I now hear distinctly a sound rising from the *Ajna-chakra* between the eye-brows and from the *Sahasrara-chakra* at the top of the head.

Visions also come. Here are two of them. A serpent with several heads, steeped in red white light was seen behind the occiput. A beautiful lotus with many petals half-curved appeared at the crown of the head. But these visions did not stimulate any spiritual fervour. Perhaps they were mere visions. They came and went—unlike what is called experience, which leaves a stamp on the consciousness.

As a contrast let me cite an experience.

The one prayer constantly on my lips is: 'May a ray of Thy Grace penetrate into my heart!' One midnight this prayer went on in the dream state. While still dreaming I visualised something unusual in the heart, which resembled the crack<sup>2</sup> of a rock, with a layer of white-blue light between the two half-broken parts. A little after, I found myself climbing downwards into the heart. As if awakened from sleep, I was struck to see the entire area within illuminated. By degrees the action of the Mother's force spread from head to foot. Thus the whole body became the field of sadhana.<sup>3</sup> This made the tired heart grow glad.

"Before the untiring persistense of your effort, an inner door will open suddenly."  
 (The Mother)

It was in this way that a longing to live out what I had read about concentration and purification was awakened, yet but for the Mother's invisible help I would have remained "a creature of mud" and never tasted whatever I have known of a "sorrowless life."

The poet makes a prophecy about the child Savitri when she was born "...this fair child

Shall pour the nectar of a sorrowless life  
 Around her from her lucid heart of love..."<sup>4</sup>

Here in the Mother we saw its fulfilment.

(To be continued)

<sup>1</sup> *Savitri*, Part II, p. 26 (IV. 3).

<sup>2</sup> "As the crust of the outer nature cracks .the inner fire burns in the heart " *The Life Divine*, American Edition, p. 807

<sup>3</sup> "When the whole body becomes the field of sadhana the progress is rapid " I have the memory of a statement to this effect from the pen of Sri Aurobindo but I do not remember the exact wording.

<sup>4</sup> *Savitri*, VI, C-I, Part, II p. 70.

# AMRITA

19-9-1964

OUR Amrita is he who covers the scars  
Of other souls even from their own sight.  
He comes to us all veiled under varied forms,  
Bringing in every guise a unique light.

Him we revere because his snow-white heart  
Believes in Truth's Ideal and its endless range.  
No sacrifice to him is ever too great  
In the cause of creation's fire-pure change.

A million seekers may sit at their Master's feet,  
But Amrita's life makes him a worshipper true.  
Forgiveness-Sun belongs to the Mother alone,  
But this child can image that Sun all ages through.

His kingly Soul is far above the Law,  
Yet obeys the Law to be at our hearts' doors.  
Reality and Unity—his boat  
Plies quick between these two supernal shores.

Delight shoots through his life because he knows  
How to do good to others at each hush-gap.  
His loving heart feeds not the dark despairs.  
Nothing he ever expects save the Mother's Lap.

CHINMOY

## A SHEAF OF SYMBOLS

*(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1977)*

### *Summer Solstice*

17

THIS is Thy Day, O Lord! or, is it ours?—  
For, 'tis to-day Thou visitest Thy children here  
In all the effulgence of Thy Glory and Grace,  
Showering on them Thy choicest Blessing-Boons,  
Whether they acknowledge and appreciate them, or not!

All days are Thine, indeed, from first to last,  
Had we vision and wits and wisdom to spot Thee out—  
Behind Thy protean mantle of myriad Rays,  
Smiling benign behind aurora-veils  
And playing on our senses Thy delightful tricks!

Thou art ever-poised and fixed, yet wheeling round  
ONE plenary SUN of all our reference—  
At once the centre and circumference—  
Of all our systems, movements, rhythms, worlds,  
Traced on the magic scrolls of unfolding Time!

Thou art One and yet many, having various names:  
Thou art Surya-Savitri-Pushan-Aryaman-Arka,  
Thou art Ravi-Bhanu-Bhaskara-Marichi-Khaga,  
Thou art Tapan-Mitra (Zodical Aditya's Twelve):  
And Thou art the superclock and 'metronome'  
Wherewith we mark our Heart-beats, and beats of Progress-march!

### *Autumnal Equinox*

18

A milestone more, O Lord of Love-Light-Life,  
En route from Perfect to absolute Perfect yet!—  
A Day of the annual Four marked out for us,  
Like the cardinal Four Directions of Thy march!

We humans have our own individual way  
 Of celebrating Four such flexible ones:  
 It's all Thy Pliant Grace that permits this play,  
 With the matchless constancy of millennial yore!

This Day Thou crossest the Imaginary Line  
 Dividing our Planet into two Hemispheres net:  
 Thou movest hence to south for 'pastures new',  
 Returning duly to North 'fresh fields' in time!

It's all, however, for our senses' make-believe,  
 For Thou art ever-poised, star-fixed in space:  
 Far greater stars there may be there, indeed!  
 But Thou art with us, all-adequate for us!

So let us humans have our little play,  
 And let us march ahead with Flag-display!  
 For soon to-day will be but yesterday,  
 And the cycle will roll on, forever and aye!  
 Meanwhile, 'Adieu' and 'Au Revoir'—and signal Green from day to day!

CHIMANBHAI

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## WORDS: TWO MOODS ,

### I

Few now remain of the myriad  
Words that paused briefly  
In the corridors of my brain,  
Only to fade and return no more,  
Lost in some obscure heaven  
Of the noosphere's illimitable store.  
Farewell flimsy syllables,  
Life's only an endless echo  
Returning to its source.

Words, I have loved your worlds  
Too much. Hidden deep in your realm  
I have entered all truth but my own.  
Leave me now to begin my search  
For that wondrous eloquent silence  
Wherein your mighty mother dwells.  
Move aside and observe closely  
The secret you can never tell.

### 2

Hey ho, I'd like to spin a  
Sonnet out of ether  
With a twirl of the pen  
And some magic words.

Alas I'm a dunderhead,  
A bit too well-fed  
With the spoils of the earth.

But never mind the stuff,  
I've still not had enough  
Of this bewitching, ambiguous play,  
Let the words fall as they may.

GORDON

## THE FOUNT OF POETRY

THE Roman poet Horace has the dictum: "No poems can please long, nor live, that are written by water-drinkers."

Horace touches a sympathetic chord in me with his winey nature, but I cannot echo his thought on poetry-writing. I should rather say: "There can be no long-pleasing or living poems by those who *need* to be wine-drinkers in order to be drunk." And I would add: "No man can be a poet who, in order to be drunk, needs to give up water-drinking." But a *caveat* must be entered: "If one is such as to make a fetish of water-drinking, one can't be a poet."

A bit of complexity here. May I explain a little? According to me, a poet is one who is always intoxicated—by the very fact of his over-sensitive aesthetic consciousness. This consciousness puts him in contact with an eternal Bliss endlessly expressing itself in various harmonies of interrelated structures catching in the flux of time something of the splendours and mysteries that are at play in an Ideal World beyond ours, where the Divine is perfectly manifest. To the poet, all that the earthly day brings is shot with those supernal splendours, all that the earthly night holds is charged with those lofty mysteries. Not that he lives in a fool's paradise: he is quite aware of the delusive gleams that mislead one in the day and of the treacherous glooms that make one stumble at night. But even there he can seize an artistic pattern, a dramatic propriety and reflect them in accurate words building a flawless form of significance and sound: beauty, shimmering beauty, is the end-product, no matter what perceptions and experiences have gone into the process.

With a soul and a sensorium born astir with a creative delight, how should a poet require the fillip of any Falernian to impart to his work the flush and fire of immortality? It is not poets but mere versifiers who have to be artificially stimulated to carry them in some lucky moments beyond their own dull hearts and labouring minds. Perhaps we may say that even a true poet has his versifier-spells when the genius in him withdraws for some reason or other. Possibly then the aid of Bacchus would be fruitful—but just to sparkle up the versifying intelligence and quicken it to call out the hiding poetic intuition.

That intuition itself comes with its own bubbling store of the Vedic Soma and borrows no singing strength from the wine-cup. When its power is active in the forefront and has not receded into the background, draughts of water are enough to keep the life of song going. The poet has just to live in order to sing—and *aqua pura* is all he needs to keep existing as a perennially dream-drunk wanderer through this world of God's evolution with its swift stabs of magic and its slow difficult sorceries.

Now a word explaining my *caveat*. If a man makes it a point always to drink water and avoid wine, thinking that wine would be a distraction and that water alone can keep him in poetic fitness, he commits an error, for the poet is not dependent on water any more than on wine for the wonder-flow of his language. The poetry

wells from a self-supplied source—and it calls for a constant alertness and plasticity in the human medium and for a sense in that medium of the utter independence the creative fount possesses. To be caught in any fixity, in any fad, in any narrowing belief would come in the way of the freedom, the many-sidedness, the expectation of the unexpected which go with the creation of worlds and with the creation of words aspiring to reflect cosmic harmonies.

AMAL KIRAN

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# MAN AND WOMAN

## Introduction

*"For God's sake cannot you forget that you are a girl or a boy and try to become a human being?"*

MUCH attention has been focussed recently on the emancipation of women. There are approximately 1,988,000,000 girls and women in the world. That is half the world's population. The contribution of these women and girls is important for society's progress. It is but essential that today's girls should receive adequate attention so far as their health, physical as well as mental, is concerned. Moreover, if we really want women to be emancipated or become equal to men, we will have to make women themselves conscious of their innate strength. For, as the Mother has said very prophetically, "—no law can liberate women unless they free themselves." And to be able to make themselves free, women need to be awakened to the most natural potentialities which are lying dormant within each girl. If we truly wish to work for women's liberation we will have to spread the words of the Mother, which have behind them the force of Truth and Realization and can be easily termed Mantras. The Mother, being herself a woman, knew the weaknesses of human nature, particularly of a woman's nature as well as the power, the Shakti which is waiting to be unfolded through woman in the future. She always believed and worked for women's equality with men. For her, man and woman both are human beings. She helped and encouraged girls to grow strong and healthy and work hand in hand with boys. Equality for both sexes is a principle being loudly proclaimed throughout the world yet when it comes to such matters as education, employment, leisure, welfare, marriage, adopting a child or family affairs, there is a vast gap between what society is saying must be done and what in fact are the actual life prospects facing millions of adolescent girls. The full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women as well as men in all fields. Ways must be found to open the door to education and opportunity for millions of girls all over the world who are now cut off from the future—not because they have no talents, but because they never get a chance to develop and use them. We must find ways to draw girls into the maintenance of life. If girls and women, who are now illiterate and isolated, are trained, motivated and respected, they can help lift up their families and communities and, taken altogether, they can help our whole nation—our whole world—to improve. The Child is father to the Man, they say, and the same can be said about girls being mothers to future women. If we really wish to usher in a new era, an age of Peace and Harmony in this strife-torn and conflict-ridden world, we will have to sit up and give some time to thinking out ways and means for making girls conscious of their role in the life of the family, community, nation and the world. Only pious wishes will not help them much.

The hour has come for action which is positive and helpful, not only negative and destructive. So long we have been telling our girls not to do this and not to say that, but now we will have to tell them to do this and do that and become worthy of being a human being the same as man.

### 1. A New Basis of Equality

“Man feels himself superior and wants to dominate, the woman feels oppressed and revolts, openly or secretly, and the eternal quarrel between the sexes continues from age to age, identical in essence, innumerable in its forms and shades.”

“This is then what we say: given similar conditions, the same education, identical possibilities, there is no reason to make a categorical, final and imperative distinction between what is called men and women. For us, human beings are the expression of one and the same soul,—Nature has made a differentiation in the expression with a view to satisfying her needs and realising her purpose....”

THE MOTHER

For ages man has claimed superiority over woman and sought to dominate and rule her; woman has submitted outwardly, but inwardly she has always resisted the idea of man being superior to her. There has been a continual conflict and illwill within humanity, with the result that almost half of it suffers from mental and physical retardation. Now at last it is being realized that mankind needs reorganisation and women must be given their proper place. Women are no longer looked upon simply as housekeepers and nurses of infants, but also as collaborators and comrades, whose help is very much appreciated by men. The world can no longer remain divided into two opposite camps, as some of the women's lib advocates would very much like us to believe. The time has come when the relation between men and women will have to be revalued. More than men, it is the women who will have to take deeper thought and review their anti-man stand. For if it were not for their weakness for a peaceful homely life, men could not have so successfully turned women into domestic animals. The blame for the present chaotic situation and constant conflict between the two sexes must be shared by both men and women equally. Woman will have to grow conscious of her innate strength and learn to use her captivating qualities with discrimination and control. Though she has fought and won the much-coveted equality with man, she is still lagging behind him in many ways and if she really wants to be equal to him she will have to grow more inward and look within and discover her true personality, instead of trying to become more charming and attractive externally in front of man. It is she who is responsible for dancing to his tune rather than he for making her dance to it. Woman was not created just for satisfying man's desires and looking after his hearth. Man and woman both have an important role to play in the life of their community, society, nation and the world at large.

The Mother has clearly put the problem in a nutshell before us. She says:

"It is well understood that man throws the whole blame upon the woman, as woman in the same way throws the entire blame upon man. In truth the blame should be equally distributed between the two and neither should boast as being superior to the other.

"Moreover as long as this notion of superiority and inferiority is not eliminated, nothing or nobody can put an end to the misunderstanding that divides the human race into two opposite camps and the problem will not be solved. In their mutual relations, man and woman are, at once and towards each other, quite despotic masters and somewhat pitiable slaves.

"That is why no law can liberate women unless they free themselves.

"This state of secret conflict, often not admitted, but always present in the sub-conscious, even in the best cases, seems inevitable, unless human beings rise above their ordinary consciousness to identify themselves with the perfect consciousness, to be unified with the Supreme Reality. For when you attain this higher consciousness you perceive that the difference between man and woman reduces itself to a difference purely physical...the best that can be done for the progress of the present human race is to treat the two sexes on a footing of perfect equality to give both one and the same education and training and to teach them to find, through a constant contact with a Divine Reality which is above all sexual differentiation, the source of all possibilities and all harmonies

"And perhaps India, the land of contrasts, will also be the land of new realisations, even as she was the cradle of their conception."

*(To be continued)*

PUSHPA A

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# THE CHARACTER OF LIFE

## CONSCIOUSNESS APPROACH TO SHAKESPEARE

*(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1977)*

### **The Character of Life in *Hamlet* (Contd.)**

HAVING identified the forces seeking to permanently displace Hamlet from the throne, we need ask how then he survived as long as he did and eventually succeeded in accomplishing the ghost's commission. Furthermore, how can we explain events such as his meeting the pirate ship which seem to actively support his cause even in spite of his own incapacity and unwillingness? The answer is that there is a counter balancing movement of life forces directly in opposition to the first, which fosters Hamlet's cause and makes him an instrument or agent for its own intention. It is this force which Hamlet feels as Providence and A.C Bradley dismisses as chance or accident.

The first expression of this other movement is the threat from Norway which immediately follows Claudius's taking the throne. It is a direct challenge to Claudius's rule and an indirect support to Hamlet. This deeper connection is confirmed by the fact that soon after Hamlet accepts the duty of revenge, the threat of outer war disappears and the direct confrontation of antagonists commences.

The attitudes of Francisco, Marcellus, Bernardo and Horatio are a second expression. We may take them as representative of the common people of Denmark, as opposed to the aristocracy. They express feelings of sadness, discontent and uneasiness over the rapid changes in the country. Their natural goodwill and loyalty is towards Hamlet, not Claudius, and because of it, when the Ghost appears they immediately seek him out and refrain from informing the new king. Horatio is more than a commoner but less than aristocracy. It is noteworthy that he alone actively takes Hamlet's side, while all the others, including Ophelia, lend their silent or active support to Claudius. Of the major characters, he alone lives to tell the story.

A further example of the manner in which these social forces find avenues for expression is the sudden arrival of the players at Elsinore. Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Polonius view the players as a means to entertain Hamlet in the hope he will loosen up and reveal the true cause of his discontent. But Hamlet immediately recognises the troop as his old acquaintances and seizes on their profession as a means to trap the king. It is not chance that brings them, but an active force. Their goodwill towards Hamlet and his own fondness for drama draw them to the castle and they become willing agents for his plot, just as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern lend themselves for the king's purposes.

There are other striking expressions of the life forces supporting Hamlet in his effort and carrying him forward in spite of himself. We shall return to these events shortly. But first we must enquire into the nature of these forces which at crucial moments seem to have saved him from disaster or raised him out of inertia into activity.

First, there is the basic goodwill of the people, their loyalty and devotion to Hamlet's father and their high respect for Hamlet himself. Horatio calls Old Hamlet "a goodly king" and says that "this side of our known world esteem'd him" as a valiant man. Claudius tells us of the people's regard for Hamlet:

He's loved of the distracted multitude. (IV.iii.4)

Ophelia tells us more:

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!  
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword;  
The expectancy and rose of the fair state. (III.i.158)

The goodwill of friends and the admiration or loyalty of the community are powerful positive forces in social life, just as illwill and public defamation are negative influences. This positive atmosphere acts as a channel for supportive conditions and events. In normal life we refer to it as good fortune, chance, luck, coincidence, according to our disposition.

There are also indications that the people suspected some foul play or immorality in the behaviour of Claudius and the queen. Horatio was certainly sensitive to the great haste with which the old king's funeral was followed by the queen's remarriage.

Hor: My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

Ham: I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow student,  
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

Hor: Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon. (I.ii.176)

This also explains Francisco and Horatio's expressions of discontent in the opening scene and Marcellus's "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (I.iv.90). A general feeling of suspicion, disapproval or moral outrage among the people would have a powerful influence on the events which followed. The substance of this claim is borne out by the readiness with which the people rise up against Claudius when Laertes learns of Polonius's death and returns to Denmark for vengeance.

Laertes shall be king, Laertes king! (IV.v.108)

Obviously the new ruler was never completely accepted by the country nor did he have the full support of his people.

At a deeper level the positive support for Hamlet reflects the readiness and willingness of the country for an evolutionary advance, namely, to develop a governing mental consciousness. The resistance to this advance comes from the old established order, not the wider collectivity and we find the forces of the social life constantly fostering the movement. When it is disturbed by Claudius or delayed by Hamlet himself, the country shows signs of disease or decay symptomatic of the transition from an old to a new consciousness. John Holloway expresses the negative side of Hamlet's role which is vital purification when he says that Hamlet acts "to purge from the society the evil which it could not otherwise escape."<sup>40</sup>



A third contributing factor is the Ghost. According to Sri Aurobindo's view of human psychology, it is the vital being of Old Hamlet violently thrown out of its body and now caught for a time suffering in the vital plane prior to dissolution. Because it is simply a vital force and not the full emotional personality, it lacks warmth and Hamlet feels no attraction or affection for it. Though disembodied, it is still an active force which Hamlet recognises as his father's. The Ghost's primary expression is of outrage at his wife's unfaithfulness and his brother's treachery. His pride is hurt because the queen chose a man of inferior quality over him.

...a wretch whose natural gifts were poor  
To those of mine! (I.v.51)

He is angry and his anger remains as a force in the atmosphere compelling Hamlet to seek revenge and supporting his cause against Claudius.

But the Ghost's concern is not only with revenge. He is not only angry but also sad, and this sadness stems from his continued attachment to his wife. His last words to Hamlet on the battlement are not of revenge at all, but about the queen:

But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,  
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul continue  
Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven  
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,  
To prick and sting her. (I.v.84)

Later the Ghost makes a final appearance in the queen's bed-chamber at a time when Hamlet is confronting her with her sinful deeds. The Ghost says,

...this visitation  
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose, (III.iv.110)

meaning to set him against Claudius rather than the queen. But the Ghost seems more concerned with the queen's distress than with revenge:

But, look, amazement on thy mother sits:  
O, step between her and her fighting soul. (III. iv. 112)

These words are spoken out of weak attachment, not forgiveness and compassion. This is the "one defect" and the "vicious mole" which Hamlet just described. It not only costs Old Hamlet his life but takes his son's as well. For, in fact, the queen is the true cause of her husband's murder though she was probably unaware of Claudius's deed. By allowing herself to be won over and seduced, she paved the way for Claudius to kill the king and claim the throne. In trying to spare her punishment, the Ghost is actually protecting the source of all the difficulty. So long as the queen remains alive, Hamlet is unable to kill Claudius. Hamlet senses this truth in himself. From the beginning his mother's acts seem far worse to him than Claudius's and all of his emotions are tied up in her.

The difference between Hamlet and his father is mind. Hamlet possesses true emotions born of mind while his father has only uncontrollable feelings flowing to an object, a foolish fondness aware of its own intensity, emotions of a low order lacking discrimination. Nevertheless, there is a marked similarity between Old Hamlet's vital attachment to his wife and Hamlet's relation to Ophelia. In courting her, Hamlet expresses a melancholy sadness and passionate attachment similar to his father's. Ophelia, like the queen, is a weak, unformed personality, but she does not suffer from the same impurity and depravity. Her weakness is that of a passive submission to the insensitive commands of her father. When Hamlet comes to her in desperate need of support, she is too ignorant and frightened to respond. She is incapable of receiving or returning any intense emotions. Even had their relationship been allowed to continue, the stress of the intensity would have led to illness or separation.

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers

I have not art to reckon my groans.

(II. ii. 120)

On top of Hamlet's disillusionment with his mother comes Ophelia's denial. Any remaining faith he had is completely shattered.

Hamlet's duty is set before him and yet he delays acting on it. We must now consider the eternally puzzling question of why he delays. Earlier we quoted Sri Aurobindo's description of Hamlet as a mind, an intellectual, one who observes too many aspects of things to have an effective will for action. The power of understanding is born in him but not the executive power of mental will. What he sees and plans does not translate into action. So long as the act required is only mental, he can do it. Thus the speed with which he arranges the play scene to entrap Claudius and exchanges the king's commission to England ordering his death for one bearing the names of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. But he lacks the will and the integration of his personality to make his mind express itself in life.

Yet it is not merely a mental nature which keeps Hamlet inactive. Even before the Ghost's first appearance, Hamlet is in a despairing condition. The Ghost's words cannot excite him. He has no energy left either for rage or resolution or action. The mere attempt to remember the Ghost drains all his remaining energy. He can only write a note to himself. To Hamlet, the incident of murder is secondary. He has discovered his mother's depravity and can never pardon it. This realisation absorbs all his strength and leaves him in a deep vital melancholy, incapable of initiative.

*(To be continued)*

GARRY JACOBS

#### NOTES

40 John Holloway, *Shakespeare Hamlet*, Casebook on Hamlet, edited by John Jump, 1967, p. 42.

# THE TORTOISE AND THE MOUSE

## A STORY

*(Continued from the issue of August 15, 1977)*

MAURIZIO strained to catch sight of the king's retinue but he was distracted by Angus, whose convolutions had now rolled him onto his back. Fortunately everybody was straining to catch a first glimpse of the king; everybody, that is, except Clement, Angus's fiercest rival and critic. Half frantic Maurizio managed to heave his friend right side up. A feat he would have never had the physical strength to accomplish had so much not depended on it. But it left him exhausted. He had now lost any hope of saving the day; it was his friend's personal plight that he thought of, the public reaction no longer concerned him at all.

"Angus, Angus old friend. It grieves me so much to see you like this." These words were torn out of him. And somehow they reached Angus. His new smile wavered.

"Why, Maurizio. Why...I never dreamed. What a thoughtless old tortoise I am. How inconsiderate. I never dreamed." He still smiled somewhat crazily at his friend, but the old tortoise was coming back. The smile had just a hint of the modest downward curve and not a moment too soon, for the heralds were shouting the name of the king.

"Make way for the King. King Harold approaches." And the crowds lining the road parted for the king. From this distance it was like watching a wave opening and closing. And what with the crowd's attention definitely away from them and fixed on the king (except for that of Clement Crool) and dear old Angus coming to his senses, Maurizio nearly wept with relief. Perhaps it was going to be all right after all. He noticed he was trembling.

Even now Angus wore a distracted expression as though he could not quite understand what had happened. But as the royal retinue came nearer and nearer his face cleared and he became perfectly normal and aware of his surroundings.

"Why, Morry," he said kindly, "you're not cold, are you? I'd invite you under my shell except that I'm not a very warm-blooded creature."

"No, thank you, Angus. I'm not cold. Actually it's pleasantly warm for this time of the morning." He was trying to draw Angus into a casual conversation.

"You're not ill then?" And now Angus seemed so completely himself, Maurizio decided it must be all over, that the aberration had been temporary.

"No, I'm not ill."

"What is it then?"

"You don't seem to realise, Angus. But you didn't seem quite yourself for a while." Angus smiled, trying to recollect.

"Oh yes. Just for a moment I did feel a little strange."

"You were laughing."

"Yes, I did laugh rather a lot, didn't I?"

"You laughed an awful lot for a tortoise."

"Yes, I suppose I did. We're rather a solemn breed. Everything did seem rather curious, but it all fitted much better than it does in my history." Here Angus smiled and fear clutched Maurizio's heart, but the tortoise regained his composure immediately. "No, I won't do it again. Please stop trembling, Morry. I'll try and explain later. I'm awfully sorry if I...did I startle you?"

"Out of my wits."

"Dear me. Dear me."

"Here comes the King!" And there was the king approaching solemnly with all his retinue behind him. He came up to the podium and congratulated Angus on his birthday. There were pleasant exchanges in which both said the right things. The King said he expressed the feelings of all when he said they expected great things from their beloved elder historian. Angus said that if he could please his King he would be greatly honoured; then he withdrew his head humbly for a moment. The king took this opportunity to let his eye rove rather freely over Angus's back but Maurizio, who was watching him closely, could see no change in his expression. He was not called Harold the Impenetrable on account of his shell alone. The king himself was not a learned tortoise but had great respect for learning and always waited for his pundits to speak before declaring himself.

And now Harold took his place in the royal enclosure. The queen, an unassuming soul, wagged her head at Angus and Maurizio. Speeches we made, mostly beginning with "There is no need to introduce so illustrious . ." and then came long introductions followed by yawn-producing lists of Angus's achievements. At one stage Angus seemed to be smiling rather too much but when Maurizio turned to him anxiously he whispered,

"Don't worry. I'm much too nervous to laugh. I'm only grinning with apprehension. In fact I think I've got stage fright again."

"Good. Splendid," said Maurizio, and then they had to be silent, for the first of a long line of pundits was wending his way towards the exposition podium, and before he could stop himself Angus had popped his head back into the dark comfort of his shell. After a while he heard his friend's voice whispering, "It's all right," and he came out to find that the first of the pundits had circled many times, had had his first viewing and had dictated some notes onto the back of his secretary. This process went on for a very long time until all the pundits had been around; Clement Crool was the last and the two friends held their breaths. Angus withdrew again but with a great effort forced himself out once more.

"How was it?" he breathed to Maurizio as soon as Clement was out of earshot.

"It's difficult to say with Clement. You know he doesn't show much expression with those thin lips of his. He seemed to be scanning everything very carefully. He sometimes smiled rather sardonically but he always does that, doesn't he?" Maurizio

lengthened his lips in imitation.

"Yes, he does, doesn't he?" said Angus unhappily. He no longer felt like laughing at all. He could hardly remember how he had done such a thing a few hours ago.

"He took lots of notes."

"Oh," said Angus bleakly.

They watched all the learned pundits talking, smiling, exchanging opinions. There was nothing to indicate that anything had been found amiss. Only Clement stood aside from all the excitement, smiling and never saying a word.

At last the second viewing was about to start and this one, though it was very long indeed, they endured more cheerfully. Angus managed to keep his head out most of the time.

Finally there were refreshments and a rest during which some of the pundits worked on their notes. In the early afternoon came the interpretations and appreciations. The first was that of the kind old councillor to whom Maurizio had run for help and advice that morning.

He started off by saying some very kind things about his old friend, once again listed his achievements and then went on to say that just as he had expected Angus had gone much further than any of them had expected. (A murmur of assent.) He added that that was the only way in which he had not been surprised, so that, as had become a habit, surprise was no surprise on the back of Angus. (A low ripple of amusement and approval. Cries of "Hear, hear" with restrained thumping.) He said that Angus had introduced them to something so revolutionary that the present company, himself not excepted, could not hope to understand the whole, indeed hardly a part of what Angus was offering them. It would be presumption even to hope to interpret the wondrous notions that Angus was presenting to the world. But one day future generations would remember this day with pride and wonder.

Most of the other pundits spoke very much in this way, saying that they had been completely overwhelmed or quite shaken by what it was that Angus was saying. Others said that what had been given to the world this morning implied that new borders were opening up, that the tortoise world could never ever be seen in the same way again. Delighted, Maurizio breathed, absolutely wallowed, in reflected glory. He found it very difficult not to scamper around hugging himself but this was something that Angus had once told him he absolutely must not do. So he did his best to emulate Angus's deportment which was now once again a model of propriety.

But then came Clement. They had almost forgotten the brilliant and rapier-sharp Clement Crool. He was known to be Angus's only rival, but after all that had just been said it seemed he too must bend the knee. Besides he was known to be critical but not unjust, the only redeeming feature in an otherwise unsympathetic personality.

And what Clement did was to denounce Angus as an utter charlatan. Speaking from his notes he refuted all that the others had said, challenging with specific facts and figures what he called Angus's chaotic and farcical thesis. Since none of the other

pundits had done anything like this the king and everybody else began to stir. Favourable opinion seemed to be suspended. As Clement spoke, it turned. Clement not only refuted everything that he had read this morning, heaping ignominy on his fellow critics in the process, but turned the full force of his savage scorn on Angus. He charged him with negligence of his most precious possession, a shell which was supposed to be used for enlightenment—a crime punishable by banishment from Tortoise-land. Moreover he said any sense that might be deduced from it (something which he very much doubted, for it looked as though Angus had gone through some drunken orgy) must be interpreted not as leading into the future but into some superstitious world of the dark past before tortoises had been enlightened by learning. Here he paused for a sip of water. There was a deathly hush. He finished off by saying that if they followed Angus they would find themselves turtles in the sea again.

Then everybody was given another turn. And, surprisingly, many now found themselves in agreement with Clement. Some abstained, but nobody was able to refute Clement's arguments and those who tried to do so were so swiftly defeated by his sharp tongue that any who might have made an attempt were discouraged.

Finally Angus was invited to defend himself

This he declined to do.

The result was that in a few brief words the king banished him. Angus had to leave Tortoise-land, not to return on pain of death unless he could prove Clement wrong. The heralds shouted the sentence. There was a blast of trumpets and the king departed.

A hardshell guard accompanied Angus and Maurizio to the border of Tortoise-land.

"You don't have to come with me, Morry."

"Yes, I do," said Maurizio. "If I don't I shall die, and there's something I want to tell you. I think that it's my...."

"I won't pretend I'm not glad of your company, but don't let's talk for the moment, Morry," pleaded Angus. "Let's take our last look of our dear old Kingdom. I at least shall probably never see it again. And goodness knows what wild places we shall soon find ourselves in. I've always dreamed of exploring unknown places and doing new things and now that I have the chance I don't feel at all that way inclined any more. I'd like nothing more than to be home munching at a fresh lettuce leaf or preparing something nice for you."

"Angus," burst out Maurizio in anguish and remorse. "I've not been a friend to you."

"Whatever can you mean? You are my one true friend and the world would seem bleak enough without you." So the mouse said nothing. He reasoned that if Angus knew what a traitor he had been it would only make him more desolate, more completely bereft of solace. He would tell him later when he had truly proved and redeemed himself by standing by Angus through whatever lay ahead.

They gazed their fill at the beloved homeland. It looked very cosy with its shady

patches and thick arbours. Angus said, "Only I don't know where to go or what to do. I've never been a tortoise of action, all my instincts are just trying to turn my steps home even now. You'd better lead the way and decide, Mousie." Angus had never called him Mousie before this morning and Maurizio would now have given much to see Angus laugh, even in his crazed fashion but the tortoise was merely wistful and subdued. It was up to him to devise some plan to introduce purpose into their lives.

"Why," he said, "don't we go and see Hermione, the hermit crab?" Hermione was a legendary figure, an eccentric even by crab standards and reputedly a prophetess of extraordinary powers.

"That's an excellent idea," Angus brightened up immediately. "Perhaps she'll be able to give us some explanation of the strange fate which has engulfed us. Perhaps she'll be able to prophesy about our future. Of course they say her explanations are usually more weird than the happenings, but then," he added with a philosophical sigh, "what could be weirder than last night's future. When you think of the two of us eating our jolly little dinner last night, Mousie. Who would have said?"

"Yes indeed. Yes indeed." But Maurizio answered mechanically. He had just thought of something. Hermione's tactlessness was as famous as were her prophetic gifts; or perhaps like so many sibyls she was just thoughtless and above human considerations, but the effect was the same. She was quite likely to reveal that it was he, Maurizio, who had gnawed the shell away and caused all the trouble, and though he fully intended that Angus should one day know the truth, he wanted to be the one to tell him. For one thing it would hurt the old fellow less. And him too for that matter. No, he didn't want anyone else blurting it out before he did. But now was definitely not the right moment. Angus looked old and forlorn. He was old of course, but certainly not very old by tortoise standards. In fact because he had kept his mind so alert and young and open to new things he had always given the impression of being a tortoise in his prime. Not so now. His step, naturally slow, now dragged. It wrung his friend's heart. Well, they would go to the sibyl come what may. He was not going to deprive his friend of this small shred of purpose. It took some courage to make this decision but once he had made it he felt much better. He would take his chances. And if the sibyl could in any way console Angus or point him to a solution, he must be prepared for whatever consequences might follow in its train. In itself the idea of banishment meant little to Maurizio who had been born a field mouse and who was always rather wild and nomadic. Banishment from Angus's side alone held terror for him. It was in the lap of the gods.

After the first day's travel the terrain<sup>1</sup> became difficult. Tortoise-kingdom was far inland and Hermione lived on the seashore. Angus was not much used to long journeys. He found his body aching and his underside dragging. It was trying for his friend too, for he could do nothing about his nervous temperament which made it torture to travel so slowly. Why then did he not jump upon his friend's back as he was continuously invited to do? You may find the answer shocking, but the truth must be told: in spite of all that had happened Maurizio had not lost his taste

for tortoise shell and he was terrified that Angus's slow and rhythmic gait might lull him to sleep and a repetition of his shameful behaviour. Indeed, Maurizio was by no means sure of his ability to control his appetite even if he were able to remain awake. The fare was very meagre in the desolate country through which they travelled. It was all right for Angus Ranjit le Tournois who seemed to be quite free of the lower appetites, but more than once a horrified Maurizio jerked his wandering mind back from fantasies in which, ladle in paw, he poised expectantly over a steaming tureen of turtle soup! It was as though he had been put under a spell. So strong was it that one day while Angus was munching some grass with his usual detachment and Maurizio had eaten a tiny, skinny, ill-tasting baby lizard he began to ask him dreamily whether he'd ever had turtle soup? Now while Tortoises consider Turtles backward animals who never properly made the transition to land, there is a kinship there and to ask this question was a little like saying, "Did you ever cook and eat your poor deficient aunt, the one that never made it?" Angus who had been thinking of what questions he would ask Hermione, only half heard him.

"Yes, some people eat turtle soup," he said. He was broad-minded to a fault, for he had lived a long time and knew that there are all manner of things and beings and needs in the universe and he tried not to judge anyone. But his tone stabbed Maurizio's conscience. Was it possible that Angus knew? And from this moment a new anxiety possessed him. Every time Angus spoke he wondered whether he wasn't indirectly referring to what had happened on that fateful night. It began to make communication difficult, for each time Angus made the most casual remark Maurizio jumped.

"You know, Maurizio, I don't know what to think any more," remarked Angus when they were resting one day. A mouse's heart usually pumps very, very quickly but now Maurizio's nearly jumped out of his chest with the sudden acceleration. He thought Angus was going to continue: "...to think any more when a friend feasts off you while you lie trusting and all unawares," but he merely said, "I used to know what I was thinking. More or less that is. At least I used to think I knew what I was thinking. But now I wonder whether it was ever true. Perhaps it was only true while I lived in cosy surroundings, a cosy little truth for cosy surroundings and I dreamed of capturing it, all, making it so concise that it would fit onto a single shell. Do you think perhaps that that was great arrogance, Mousie, and that this is a just retribution? Do you think there is perhaps some meaning in our...pardon me, Mousie...in my banishment? Something... I find it difficult to say but some idea is shaping in me." Once over his personal apprehension Maurizio was much distressed to hear his friend speaking like this. He thought it might well mean Angus was going into a depression. As we have said, he had seen so many of his theatre friends, when they retired, thrown too much onto themselves and faced with an identity crisis. And that of course was not astonishing for people who had lived so many parts and who had never had a good look at themselves. Although Maurizio had done his share in pulling them out of their depressions, organising poetry readings for them, and charity performances so



they could feel useful again, he didn't know what to do for Angus. What could you organise in the wilderness? One evening he tried to sing and dance in order to cheer Angus up, an amusing number about a pompous professor and a disrespectful student. He had done it before all sorts of audiences and they had all loved it. It was in fact one of his command performance numbers but now under the stars nothing worked. It dwindled into utter pointlessness; his voice suddenly cracked and he couldn't go on. He sank onto a stone and sighed, "Hopeless."

"Why did you stop?" said Angus kindly though he hadn't really been attending too well. "I thought it was rather good."

"Because it doesn't mean anything. And in any case I'm such a ham. Always have been. It takes the stars and the wilderness to make you realise it though. I think I've always known. But," he said, "*this* is true," waving a hand around at the stones and the bowl of the sky. "The stones aren't going to stand up and clap unless you really have something." This outburst surprised them both and now seeing his small friend perched on a stone, his head hanging disconsolately, it was Angus's turn to worry about the banishment's effect on Maurizio. Perhaps it had been selfish of him to allow the mouse to make this sacrifice. He now tried to take the mouse out of himself.

"Why don't you juggle for me? I loved that turn you did once and there are plenty of stones about. That one where you start off pretending to be a beginner and then suddenly you're catching everything. I always thought that very clever and your monologue is brilliant." Maurizio tried to rouse himself and they collected the roundest smoothest stones they could find. He wanted to please his friend and hadn't noticed Angus was trying to please him.

"I haven't any trays or a hat," he said "but I'll do my best." He didn't much feel like it but then so often he hadn't felt like going to the theatre and once he was on the stage he forgot everything and it was all right again and you couldn't wish for a kinder, more indulgent audience than Angus. So he started his comedian's patter, throwing a couple of stones and missing them; mixing up his hands and speaking to his right hand and telling it not to know what his left was doing. The turn which was usually done with tennis balls and oranges. It called for one or two to fall on his head but when the first stone fell on his head he was knocked unconscious. He came to with Angus bending over him solicitously.

"I should have remembered. I should have remembered," he was saying.

Maurizio was too stunned to protest that it was his own fault, besides which he had a splitting headache and he did think that since Angus was the brains perhaps he should have remembered. The stars swam distressingly towards him and he wasn't sure that he was going to keep down the small lizard he'd had for dinner. During the days that followed Maurizio remained glum and for the first time he began to wish he'd never embarked on this adventure. He wasn't as young as he had been and though he'd been born a field mouse he had long since grown used to the benefits of a less rustic life style.

Angus noticed his friend's despondency and on the second night after the juggling

episode he said to Maurizio:

"You know I always thought you were a particularly fine Shakespearean actor, Morry. In a way you squandered your gifts. Why don't you do something for me tonight? The world is our theatre, the bowl of night our roof and even if the stones don't get up and clap I'm sure that I shall be tempted to."

At times like this Maurizio's irritability faded but still he said,

"I told you, Angus, I'm a ham. I always pretended to myself that I'd wasted my talents but when you're in the wilderness there's nobody to pretend to. You sort of get washed away. And I respect you too much to pretend that I'm a great Shakespearean actor, but thank you for thinking so all the same, Angus. I don't think I ever had too much talent and sometimes, in the quiet hours of the night, I almost used to know it. But in the daytime I'd keep the knowledge away by staying busy, busy, busy. You know, visiting my friends, arranging things, arranging for people to meet, arranging for actors to get pensions; you remember I was secretary to the Actors' Benefit Fund. But now all that about being great doesn't seem to matter any more. All the same I'll be happy to do a turn for you, old friend, what'll it be?" Angus listened thoughtfully. So it had got the mouse too. It was true that everything looked different here. At night they were alone in the universe, the two of them. Tortoise-land seemed to have been wiped out and he often felt that if the small warm-blooded creature that was Maurizio disappeared from his side the weight of the aloneness would be too great for him. He was embarrassed at the relief he felt to learn that it might be the same for Maurizio. Yet Maurizio could go back any time he wished to and, travelling at full mouse-speed, be there in a day's time, while he was well and truly in the middle of nowhere. He tried to sound cheerful, "What'll it be? Let's see, Morry, something that goes well with starlight and a newish moon."

"Well that'd be the balcony scene, I suppose. I can do the Juliet part too because I have a falsetto voice. You remember Romeo overhears Juliet declare her love for him. She doesn't know he's there and she is caught in the spell of that first love, not a thing of the senses, nor of the mind nor of the heart quite, but irresistible possession of the being by a vision which is as much inside..." Maurizio was in the grip of the old familiar emotion that always seized him when he explained theatre or directed a play. Usually it carried him like a wave until he had quite spent his energy, but tonight in the middle of everything he heard his voice echoing strangely from the stones. He stopped short, embarrassed and decided to begin Juliet's monologue directly. He leant a little forward, one paw against his cheek, the other resting on an imaginary balcony railing

"O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?  
Deny thy father and refuse thy name:  
And I'll no longer be a Capulet..."

Suddenly he stopped. His voice was echoing in that strange way again. He shivered.

He shook his head. "It's no good, Angus. I'm sorry. Perhaps this is too big a stage even for Shakespeare. Certainly for Juliet." He shivered and it turned into a light trembling.

"Why, Mousie? You're not well. What a thoughtless old tortoise I am, expecting you to perform for me when you should be taking rest. Come on, lie down now and I'll look after you," and Angus ministered to him with all the tenderness and gentleness in the world. He made wet packs with leaves and applied them to Maurizio's aching head.

"It must have been that stone the other night," said Angus.

"Yes," sighed Maurizio though it was all beginning to feel like doom descending on him.

"And it's all on my account," said Angus. And for a moment Maurizio thought *well yes, if I hadn't followed you...* then he remembered. But, in fact, he no longer cared much whose fault anything was. He only wanted to be out of this dreadful situation. If only they could have travelled a little faster. At this rate it would take them forever to reach Hermione and he felt that he might never make it. It was a terrible night for both of them. Watching his friend's fretful sleep Angus felt he should urge him to go ahead or go back and seek medical help. But he dreaded the thought of being alone and did not know whether he would be able to bring himself to give the mouse this advice next morning. After tossing about for a long long time he decided that he would, that he must insist on Maurizio's leaving him. And now that he had made his decision it seemed he was alone already and the weight of the night and the unpeopled universe pressed down on him and he began to wonder what had really happened on that day that he had been banished. What was the meaning of his life and strange fate? Was there anywhere in this wide universe a shell big enough to carry the whole story? For a moment he seemed to catch sight of something. As soon as this happened he fell asleep at last.

By next morning Maurizio's terrible headache had left him but he felt very weak.

"Dear Mousie," said Angus at once before his resolution should weaken. "I have something to say to you. You know how grateful I am to you for your accompanying me. I think that when I set out neither of us knew quite how hard it would be or I suppose I would never have accepted your unselfish offer to accompany me. Though I'm glad I did, for it has provided me with great solace in a world grown suddenly very strange and lonely. But now you are not well and I must insist that you go and get help. At your normal pace it shouldn't take you long at all, while if you wait for me, why, we will take forever and without the right food and attention you may become seriously ill. This wretched shell of mine—I have given it so much thought, cultivated it so....In the end it brought me nothing but trouble and now it is a heavy burden and prevents me from accompanying you. Do you know that during the night, I admit the idea is a crazy one, not to mention reasonable, but the idea came to me that I would slough it off if I could. There. I must be crazy. I am such a timid vulnerable creature I would die without my shell. You must go on alone."

"Angus, you speak like a madman," protested Maurizio. "Get rid of your shell! I wonder if anything like that showed in your thesis. No wonder they banished you. And as for my leaving you.. " that was exactly what he had decided during the night, pleading the need of medical care and promising to return with supplies, "...that is quite out of the question. We must stay together whatever happens. Please don't ask me to leave you. Please never mention it again."

And so they spent another dry and painful day plodding towards the ocean.

(To be continued)

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## EUROPE: 1974

### A TRAVELOGUE

*(Continued from the issue of July 1977)*

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ON an unusually cold July morning we reached London. It was cloudy and windy and it drizzled every now and then. From all outward appearances, it was all very dismal and dull; we could hardly imagine then that the next few days would be the happiest time in our tour.

The story of London is a tale of two cities. The City is the oldest part of the Metropolis, around which has grown what is known as Greater London. The City was founded by the Romans where the river Thames was easily fordable. Parts of the Roman wall are still there. Temple Bar to the west, Aldgate to the east, the City Road on the north and the Thames on the south form the boundaries of the ancient City. At day-time this area is the busiest part of London. For it is here that the great business houses are. The Stock Exchange, the headquarters of all the main Banks, Fleet Street which is the newspaper centre and named after the nearby river Fleet, a small tributary of the Thames, are all situated in this locality. Fleet Street is a real seat of power. Work goes on there night and day: there is no rest for the people who work here. But they seem to love it. This is the Commonwealth's busiest press centre; millions and quadrillions of words are written every year in this little street. The editors and journalists and reporters work at break-neck speed and round the clock. Newspapers with the largest circulations, such as the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Observer* are all edited here. Innumerable magazines both in English and in foreign languages are also edited and printed in Fleet Street.

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The Lord Mayor of the City of London is a big person. He entertains the Queen once a year in a spectacular banquet. Foreign dignitaries if they are invited by the Lord Mayor of London consider it a singular honour.

From the olden days London has grown in a haphazard manner. The suburbs as and when they become sufficiently urbanised just become part of Greater London. After the Great Fire (1666), Sir Christopher Wren made a plan for a new London. If they had followed his plan London would have been a completely different place, and would have transformed itself into one of the most beautiful cities of the world. But the authorities rejected the plan. Those who opposed the plan must have been pestering Wren for alterations to suit their whims. This he found very unpleasant. So he gave his servants the following instruction:

Said Sir Christopher Wren,  
"I am dining with my friend.  
If anyone calls,  
Say I am planning St. Paul's."

St. Paul's, the masterpiece of Sir Christopher Wren, is on Ludgate Hill, at the far end of Fleet Street. Some of the world's most famous monuments and churches are as beautiful in reality as they look in the pictures. There are others that look beautiful in the pictures but disappoint when we actually see them. There are yet others that look uninteresting in photographs but overwhelm us when they are seen. St. Paul's stands in the last category. From a photograph one can have no idea of its grandeur, its captivating charm. And if you happen to be roaming about in the City, you come across its dome at every turn. It catches you here and it catches you there and you get dazzled by its magnificence and cry out, "Oh, how beautiful!" Since it is on a hill you always have to look up and beyond the bustle of the street and the more prosaic buildings into the sky, towards infinity. St. Paul's gives one a wonderful experience in the very heart of the City. The Cathedral took Wren thirty-five years to build. It was completed in 1710. At the base of the dome is the Whispering Gallery that can be reached by two hundred and sixty steps, and is within the reach of any tourist. Above this is the Golden Gallery. Not all can ascend to the Golden Gallery. Yet it is only from there that one gets a really good panoramic view of the City. The inside of the Cathedral is as grand as its dome.

Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,

wrote Shelley. Here is one dome that does not stain the white radiance but enhances its splendour.

*(To be continued)*

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

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