MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE
24 NOVEMBER 1990

PRICE: Rs. 4.25

NEW RATES

Owing to the rise in costs all-round we are obliged to make a small increase in the inland subscription of *Mother India* from January 1991. We hope our subscribers will kindly co-operate.
The new rates are as follows:

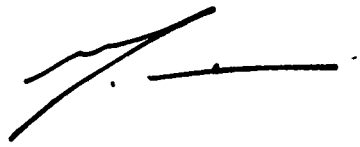
INLAND
Annual. Rs 52 00
Life Membership Rs 728 00
OVERSEAS
Sea Mail
Annual $16 00 or £10 00
Life Membership $224 00 or £140 00
Air Mail
Annual $36 00 for American & Pacific countries
£26 00 for all other countries
Life Membership $504 00 for American & Pacific countries
£364 00 for all other countries

Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



All correspondence to be addressed to
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India
Editor's Phone 24782
Publishers Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

Editor K D SETHNA
Published by P COUNOUMA
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST
PUBLICATION DEPARTMENT, PONDICHERRY - 605 002
Printed by AMIYO RANJAN GANGULY
at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002
PRINTED IN INDIA
Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No R N 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XLIII No. 11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

STUDENTS' SECTION

DESIRE AND THE PSYCHIC BEING

A SEMI-AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TALK BY THE MOTHER TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN

Sweet Mother, is desire contagious?

Ah, yes, very contagious, my child. It is even much more contagious than illness. If someone next to you has a desire, immediately it enters you; and in fact it is mainly in this way that it is caught. It passes from one to another... Terribly contagious, in such a powerful way that one is not even aware that it is a contagion. Suddenly one feels something springing up in oneself; someone has gently put it inside. Of course one could say, "Why aren't people with desires quarantined?" Then we should have to quarantine everybody. (*Mother laughs*)

The Buddha said that it comes from ignorance. It is more or less that. It is something in the being which fancies that it needs something else in order to be satisfied. And the proof that it is ignorance is that when one has satisfied it, one no longer cares for it, at least ninety-nine and a half times out of a hundred. I believe, right at its origin it is an obscure need for growth, as in the lowest forms of life love is changed into the need to swallow, absorb, become joined with another thing. This is the most primitive form of love in the lowest forms of life, it is to take and absorb. Well, the need to take is desire. So perhaps if we went back far enough into the last depths of the inconscience, we could say that the origin of desire is love. It is love in its obscurest and most unconscious form. It is a need to become joined with something, an attraction, a need to take, you see.

Take for instance... you see something which is—which seems to you or is—very beautiful, very harmonious, very pleasant; if you have the true consciousness, you experience this joy of seeing, of being in a conscious contact with something very beautiful, very harmonious, and then that's all. It stops there. You have the joy of it—that such a thing exists, you see. And this is quite common among artists who have a sense of beauty. For example, an artist may see a beautiful creature and have the joy of observing the beauty, grace, harmony of movement and all that, and that's all. It stops there. He is perfectly happy, perfectly satisfied, because he has seen something beautiful. An ordinary consciousness, altogether ordinary, dull like all ordinary consciousness—as soon as it sees something beautiful, whether it be an object or a person, hop! "I want it!" It is deplorable, you know. And into the bargain it doesn't even have the joy of the beauty, because it has the anguish of desire. It misses that and has nothing in exchange, because there is nothing pleasant in desiring anything. It only puts you in an unpleasant state, that's all.

The Buddha has said that there is a greater joy in overcoming a desire than

in satisfying it. It is an experience everybody can have and one that is truly very interesting, very interesting.

There was someone who was invited—it happened in Paris—invited to a first-night (a first-night means a first performance) of an opera of Massenet's, I think... I don't remember now whose it was. The subject was fine, the play was fine, and the music not displeasing; it was the first time and this person was invited to the box of the Minister of Fine Arts who always has a box for all the first nights at the government theatres. This Minister of Fine Arts was a simple person, an old countryside man, who had not lived much in Paris, who was quite new in his ministry and took a truly childlike joy in seeing new things. Yet he was a polite man and as he had invited a lady he gave her the front seat and himself sat at the back. But he felt very unhappy because he could not see everything. He leaned forward like this, trying to see something without showing it too much. Now, the lady who was in front noticed this. She too was very interested and was finding it very fine, and it was not that she did not like it, she liked it very much and was enjoying the show; but she saw how very unhappy that poor minister looked, not being able to see. So quite casually, you see, she pushed back her chair, went back a little, as though she was thinking of something else, and drew back so well that he came forward and could now see the whole scene. Well, this person, when she drew back and gave up all desire to see the show, was filled with a sense of inner joy, a liberation from all attachment to things and a kind of peace, content to have done something for somebody instead of having satisfied herself, to the extent that the evening brought her infinitely greater pleasure than if she had listened to the opera. This is a true experience, it is not a little story in a book, and it was precisely at the time this person was studying Buddhist discipline, and it was in conformity with the saying of the Buddha that she tried this experiment.

And truly this was so concrete an experience, you know, so real that... ah, two seconds later, you see, the play, the music, the actors, the scene, the pictures and all that were gone like absolutely secondary things, completely unimportant, while this joy of having mastered something in oneself and done something not simply selfish, this joy filled all the being with an incomparable serenity—a delightful experience... Well, it is not just an individual, personal experience. All those who want to try can have it.

There is a kind of inner communion with the psychic being which takes place when one willingly gives up a desire, and because of this one feels a much greater joy than if he had satisfied his desire. Besides, most usually, almost without exception, when one satisfies a desire, it always leaves a kind of bitter taste somewhere.

There is not one satisfied desire which does not give a kind of bitterness; as when one has eaten too sugary a sweet it fills your mouth with bitterness. It is like that. You must try sincerely. Naturally you must not pretend to give up

desire and keep it in a corner, because then one becomes very unhappy. You must do it sincerely.

How is the psychic need realised?

(*Silence*)

I heard you clearly. But it is the meaning of your question which I don't understand.

When one realises in the mind?

Oh, oh, no, not at all. "The psychic need is realised", you mean, "How is it realised? How is it expressed in the outer life?" What do you call "realising"? Not clear? It is not very clear in your thought? "Psychic need" to begin with, what do you call "the psychic need"? The need to know one's psychic being or the need of the psychic to express itself?

The psychic's need to express itself.

It expresses itself by realising itself, expressing itself.

In what way?

You mean whether it needs to go through the mind? Thank God, no, because it would be a very difficult operation. The psychic need is an expression of the divine Grace and it is expressed by the divine Grace.

Psychic life in the universe is a work of the divine Grace. Psychic growth is a work of the divine Grace and the ultimate power of the psychic being over the physical being will also be a result of the divine Grace. And the mind, if it wants to be at all useful, has only to remain very quiet, as quiet as it can, because if it meddles in it, it is sure to spoil everything.

So there will be no need of the mind?

Ah, excuse me, I did not say that one doesn't need the mind. The mind is useful for something else. The mind is an instrument for formation and organisation, and if the mind lets the psychic make use of it, that will be very good. But it is not the mind which will help the psychic to manifest. The roles are reversed. The mind can be an instrument for the manifestation of the psychic later, when it has already taken possession of the outer consciousness. It is rarely so before that. Usually it is a veil and an obstruction. But surely it can't help in the mani-

festation. It can help in the action if it takes its true place and true movement. And if it becomes completely docile to the psychic inspiration, it can help to organise life, for this is its function, its reason of existence. But first of all the psychic being must have taken possession of the field, must be the master of the house. Then, later, things can be arranged.

There is only one way for the outer being. Let us take the physical being—the physical being, the poor little physical being, the outer being, which knows nothing, can do nothing by itself. Well, for it there is only one way of allowing the psychic being to manifest: with the candid warmth of a child (*Mother speaks very softly*) to aspire, pray, ask, want with all its strength, without reasoning or trying to understand. One can't imagine how great an obstruction reasoning and this effort to understand put in the experience. At the moment when you are on the point of reaching a state in which something will happen, some vibration will be changed in the consciousness of the being... you are all tense in an aspiration and have succeeded in fastening your aspiration, and you are standing there awaiting the answer, if this wretched mind begins to stir and to wonder, "What is happening, and what's going to happen, when is it going to happen, how is it going to happen, and why is it like that, and in what order will things manifest?" it is all over, you may get up and sweep out your room, you are not fit for anything else.

(*Questions and Answers 1955*, pp 37-42, February 9)

THE MOTHER AND HER NEW CREATION

THE Mother assured us: "I have never left the earth since its formation."[1] Once she told Nolini-da: "If ever I leave my body, my Consciousness will remain with you."[2] From her recorded talks we gather that Sri Aurobindo "possesses...more power for action now than when in his body. Besides, it was for this that he left, because it was necessary to act like that."[3] If that was the case with Sri Aurobindo, why can it not be the same with the Mother? The Mother took up her present incarnation because, as we know from Sri Aurobindo, "...a work of a physical nature (i.e., including a change in the physical world) has to be done."[4] The Mother herself has asserted about her continuing to be with us after Sri Aurobindo's passing: "I am here because my body has been given for the first attempt at transformation. Sri Aurobindo told me so. Well, I am doing it. I do not wish anyone to do it for me because...it is not very pleasant, but I do it willingly because of the results: everybody will be able to benefit from it..."[5]

A Decision to Carry All with Them

"...It was precisely the problem that was put before Sri Aurobindo here and before me in France...must one withdraw from life and action until one has reached the goal,—that is to say, become conscious of the Supramental and realise it in oneself—or must one embrace the whole creation and with the whole creation advance progressively towards the Supramental?"[6]

Evidently, like Sri Aurobindo, she chose the second alternative She has explained: "It is by living in the inner heart of an organisation that one can help it to become enlightened and rise towards the Truth."[7] This organisation is the Ashram which has been created in order to "concretise and synthesise the work of transformation of the earth and prepare the new creation."[8] Auroville is an additional and more popularised aspect of this work. The Mother, while she lived in her body, was the centre and dynamic force in the work undertaken. Even after she has left her body, her Power and Presence continue to guide and govern. When she was physically with us many of us were apt to look upon her as the human mother behaving with us in a familiar way and allowing us to deal with her in our own manner: "you consider me as a human being and you act in such way as if I am a human being...you have been accustomed to see me, hear me—I speak to you as one speaks to all children, I have even played with you as one plays with children..."[9] In a very jocular vein she remarked regarding the games which she played with youngsters: "You believe you are giving a game or even helping to play a good old lady for whom you feel a little gratefulness and some kind of affection."[10]

About the purpose of her physical embodiment she wrote in 1951: "my physical existence can be interesting only for those who have faith and who, by

virtue of this faith, can through me enter into contact with the Supreme Consciousness."[11]

Incarnation of Beauty

The Mother's body was extremely beautiful. Everybody who is keenly sensitive to beauty has noted this. "She came to us first in this garb of beauty," says Nolini-da in his *Reminiscences*. Amal Kiran had the first impression: "She is very beautiful." Vasudha first saw the Mother at the age of fifty as Amal had done and she recorded: that "She looked very young... She was tall and slim and had a beautiful figure. She looked startlingly beautiful."[12] "...you move like a young girl,"[13] remarked Champaklal to the Mother in 1944, when she was sixty-six. Ten years later at seventy-six, the Mother herself noted: "My body is strong and healthy, full of energy and life, supple and harmonious."[14] It was a common experience that she looked glorious during the Darshans, except towards the end of her life when there were signs of tiredness, but at the very last Darshan in August 1973, she made an impression of extraordinary beauty.

In the early 'seventies her body suffered tremendously. That was a suffering brought about voluntarily; much of her beauty and suppleness decreased. Why did she undergo such suffering? She said to Champaklal on 9.8.68 (about 10 a.m.): "Something is going on which is interesting. They are saying I am not collaborating. It is not for me personal. Something is being done in order to save them—work of transformation." The Mother patted Champaklal and blessed him and said: "Do not worry." She repeated this three times and continued: "It is the image of the world." The Mother called Nolini and said: "It is not an illness. I will tell you one day what it is."[15]

All the physical imperfections and limitations she faced quietly and bravely. It is as if these difficulties were allowed to concentrate themselves in her physical frame in order to get transformed. A little later, in June 1969, she avowed that a *corps glorieux*, a "luminous body", would be a "marvellous solution" to the problem of evil and world-pain. But she was not certain and she had no ambition that her present physical body would co-operate with her to become a *corps glorieux*. She said: "the body has not at all, not at all, no ambition or the desire, whatsoever or even the aspiration to become the *corps glorieux*".[16] Of course, this does not mean that she did not care for her body. Up to her last breath she was trying for the physical transformation.

Her body, according to a private statement, "was prepared by Maha-saraswati before she was born that the great Work might be accomplished."[17]

She quite consciously made an effort to bring about the perfection of the body during her adolescence and youth, to make it a fine and fully conscious instrument. We know of her "passion" for tennis at the age of eight,[18] her walking tour across the mountains of France,"[19] her experiments of making the

hands conscious. She says: "I knew how the consciousness works. Well, it is impossible to learn piano or to do painting unless the consciousness enters into the hands and the hands become conscious *independently* of the head."[20] Her body-consciousness became as vast as the universe, as she has mentioned in her *Prayers and Meditations* (November 26, 1915).

Champaklalji made a startling discovery in the afternoon of the day when she was to leave her body: "All on a sudden—without any forethought—I took Mother's hand in mine and saw her life-line. Kumud asked what I was doing. I told her that I saw Mother's life-line, and added: 'Oh, there is a very short life line...' I was very much surprised."[21]

The Mother was an accomplished palmist and may have seen her life to be short—and may have made it long. There were some instances in her life which showed how she escaped from death. Once it was in Paris. She was crossing a busy thoroughfare, thinking exclusively of the Divine Presence in the psychic being—"...and it is not a place to cross when one is deeply absorbed within," as she put it. A tramcar passed by, within an arm's distance, and she jumped back just in time. "The aura of protection had been hit and that had literally thrown me back."[22]

Next, it was in Algeria 1904, in Tlemcen. While she was in a trance with her instructor Théon watching over her, what she calls the "cord" connecting the body to the inner being got snapped. The snapping was due to Théon's anger at the Mother's refusal to divulge to him the "mantra of life" she had found in the occult world. This snapping means death. But the Mother used her power and, helped by Théon who was frightened at what his anger had done, she re-entered her body.

She said that when she was in France she narrowly escaped from death. "I had inflammation of the nerves..." The interesting thing was: "I could see that nothing could stop the work. Even without the body the work could go on."[23]

On another occasion, in January 1919, while she was in Japan it was once again a matter of life and death. She had told the story in full detail in one of her Talks. A severe epidemic was raging in Tokyo: people died like flies. It was a peculiar kind of fever. Within three days a panic prevailed in the city. The Mother was requested by friends to tell them what was the reason behind this peculiar malady. At first she did not bother; and then she began to wonder what after all this malady was. Suddenly she took ill: the thing had caught her. After a couple of days of high fever she lay in bed alone. She has recounted: "I saw clearly a being, one part of his head cut off, in a military uniform (or the remains of a military uniform), approaching me, suddenly flinging himself upon my chest with that half a head to suck my force. I took a good look, then realised that I was about to die. He was drawing my life out.... I thought: Now it is the end.... Then I called on my occult power, I gave a big fight and succeeded in turning him back so that he could not stay there any longer. And I woke up. But I had seen.

And I had learnt, I had understood that the illness originated from beings who had been thrown out of their bodies. I had seen this during the First Great War, towards the end, when people used to live in trenches and were killed by bombardment."[24] The Mother destroyed that being. The epidemic stopped at once.

Referring to a talk with Sri Aurobindo in 1950, she said: "While discussing things, I remarked that I felt like leaving this body of mine. He spoke out in a very firm tone, 'No, this can never be. If necessary for this transformation I might go; you will have to fulfil our yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation'."[25]

In her birthday Message of 1956, she alludes to her body as a "transitory body".[26] Soon after the Supramental Manifestation of 1956, a prayer rose from her heart: "My Lord, what Thou hast wanted me to do I have done... Now that the Supramental is there... is it that the mission of this form is ended and that another form is to take up the work in its place? I am putting the question to Thee and ask for an answer... Whatever is the sign, I do not care, but it must be obvious."[27] Here it appears she was hinting at herself taking up "another form" in a later age and not at somebody else succeeding her to carry on her Yogic work.

Did she not declare in 14.6.32, "we live only because Thou willest it. We do not die unless Thou willest it"?[28]

We may well assume that she let her body drop deliberately. The Mother had already found herself in the subtle-physical in an entirely new type of body which she could use perhaps more freely for her work which could never stop. She has described this new body. We may quote:

"For the first time, early in the morning, I saw myself, my body—I do not know whether it is the supramental body or... (how to say it?) a body in transition, but I had a body altogether new, in the sense that it was sexless—it was not a woman nor was it a man.

"It was very white. But it is because my skin is white, I believe, I do not know.

"It was very slim—it was pretty. Truly a harmonious form.... It was the trunk that was quite different from the chest down to the waist: neither man nor woman.... I do not know how to say it. It was like a semblance, but had no form at all... A very white skin, all very even. No belly, so to say. The stomach—no stomach. All that was slim.... Also, it was clear that there should not be any complicated process of digestion nor of elimination as now.... And the 'outline', the silhouette, was almost the same as that of a very very young person. There was a sort of semblance to human forms.... And there was a kind of veil that I had put on just to cover myself. It was a mode of being, not surprising to me, it was a natural mode of being.... The two things very very different: first, procreation, of which there was no possibility there; secondly, the food....

Evidently there is no more need of chewing and so the teeth have no more.... But there must be something in their place...

"Evidently, what will change very much, which had become very important, was breathing. It is upon that this being greatly depended.... Is that, (*Mother points to her body*), is that going to change? It must change or it has to follow the old ordinary process of undoing itself and remaking itself.... I do not know.... Evidently life can be much prolonged... the person that I was the night before yesterday, evidently if it materialised itself... But how?"[29]

These were the Mother's last comments on her body. If she does not know, can we know? But she has given us a certainty and written to a young aspirant: "... I shall always be with you, my dear child—in the struggle and in the victory."[30]

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCES

1 *Breath of Grace*, p 217
2 *Mother India*, December 1973, p 1
3 "Notes on the Way", 20.12 1972, *Collected Works of the Mother*, vol. 11
4 *Mother India*, February 1955, p 10, fn
5 *Ibid* , January 1974, p 7
6 *Ibid* , February 1960, p 19
7 *Ibid* , February 1965, p 5
8 "Mother Answers", 4th Series, *Bulletin*, August 1975
9 *Champaklal Speaks*, p 27
10 *Champaklal's Treasures*, p. 88
11 *Ibid* , p 62
12. *Mother India*, June 1975, p. 475
13 *Champaklal Speaks*, p 67
14 *Ibid* , p 260
15 *Ibid* , pp 150, 151
16 "Notes on the Way", 4 6 1969
17. *Mother India*, February 1975, p 95
18 "Questions and Answers", *Collected Works of the Mother*, vol 4, p 42
19 *Ibid* , p 305
20 "Questions and Answers", *Collected Works of the Mother*, vol 11, p 98
21 *Champaklal Speaks, Postscripts*
22 "Questions and Answers", *Collected Works of the Mother*, vol 10, p 133
23 *Mother India*, September 1961, p 5
24 *"Questions and Answers"*, vol 5, p 164
25 *Mother India*, December 1967, p 666
26 *Ibid* , p 1 "Birthday Message"
27 *Champaklal's Treasures*, p 96
28 *Ibid* , p 86
29 "Notes on the Way", March 24-25, 1972, pp 301-306
30 *Bulletin*, November 1974, p 99

A DREAM ABOUT NOVEMBER 17, 1973

THE other day a friend, referring to a book by somebody, told me sadly of an implication in it that the Divine Mother had to leave her body because of someone's mistake. I said: "Do you think that anything can prevail over the Mother's Will? If she didn't want it, could any mistake carry her away from us? I think she left her body for some special reason she alone knows."

A little later I suddenly remembered a dream which had come to me a few days after the passing away of the Mother on November 17, 1973. Her passing away was a terrible shock to me as to all her other children. When I heard the news I could not believe it. Even on seeing her body I hoped that she was only in a long trance, or had withdrawn temporarily to some other world for her work and would soon wake up. This was not only my hope, it was also the hope of many others. Though Sri Aurobindo had left his body we had the strong expectation that the Mother would remain with us on earth to complete his work of transformation. So the departure was a real bolt from the blue. She did not wake up.

About 2-3 years before this event I used to write to her almost daily and her blessings were sustaining my life. It wasn't possible for me to live without writing to her. Now when she passed away I felt quite helpless. I wondered how the innumerable problems of my life would be solved without my writing to her. I was afraid the demon forces would pounce on me and make my life impossible.

On the morning of November 20, 1973 her body was laid in the Samadhi. In the afternoon as I was sitting near her empty couch in the Meditation Hall I was weeping like a child and asking her again and again: "What shall I do? How shall I live without writing to you?" Then the answer came from my heart: "Go on writing as before." I was startled. How could I write her letters when she was not in her body? People would laugh at me and think me mad. But picking up courage I continued to write and felt much relieved. This continued for several years.

During this time I used to see the Mother in my dreams quite often. One of these dreams I related to my friend the other day. It was as follows:

The Mother was lying on a bed. Some of her attendants were by her side. Her body was all black. I was feeling that it was black because she had descended into the Inconscient to do there her work of transforming the grossest matter. I was standing a little away from her. The colour of my own body was exactly the same as of hers. She opened her eyes and tenderly inquired of her attendants: "Why is she standing there? Why is she writing so many letters to me?" The attendants called me towards her. I went near and sat on her bed like an intimate friend. We talked for some time. By and by I asked her: "Why did you go away?" She said calmly: "That was the Will of God."

After this dream I never think that any human mistake could have taken the

Mother away from us. I feel that she went because we were not ready, the world was not ready to keep her longer. She had to go in order to give us time to prepare for the New Creation The Mother has repeatedly told us not to find fault with people, not to try to correct others but to correct ourselves if we want to change the world. So it is our solemn duty in this "Hour of God" to better ourselves as much as we can and thus hasten the descent of the Mother for the Supramental Creation.

I pray for the Mother's blessings which alone can take away all discord and dissension and make us divinely one.

"A CHILD OF THE MOTHER"

THE TEMPLE

No tower crowns this temple, nor a spire.
There's little architecture and less art.
You strain your eyes to see the sacred fire
Flickering from the figure of the heart.

Scattered about the temple are thorny weeds,
And various hissing snakes are here not scarce.
Up to the temple-door no pathway leads.
Distant seem the sun and moon and stars.

A little beyond this place the wild beasts rove.
Still wilder are the robbers ranging around.
Where eager eyes expect orchard and grove,
Aggressive monstrous trees grapple the ground.

Yet seekers ever strive to reach the place
And bathe themselves in a secret rain of Grace.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

PERSONAL LETTERS

IT is 4.58 in the morning. I have got up nearly an hour earlier than usual. Before my eyes opened, there were these words in my mind: "He is everywhere"—and when I opened my eyes I spontaneously whispered: "Everywhere is He." Somehow the very next thought was to write to you. And I realised that a connection had been made between you and me through an invisible Omnipresence. I know that to say such a thing is rather high-flown and the spirit of our age is all for a subdued key where matters beyond the senses are concerned. But we must not fear to be poets and mystics. They do not belong just to one age or another. They belong to the subtle eternity that runs through all time—and equally valid today as at any moment in the past is that cry from Shelley's heart:

Thou whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.

In far Germany you must still be asleep—unless my intense remembrance of you has momentarily pulled you outward or else more inward to that dimension in which the Divine Mother holds all her children together in the depths of her love. I have been graced with a general sense of this dimension, for there is in my heart a warmth and a glow which I feel in a certain measure to be simultaneously my own little soul and a heavenly hugeness known to be Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a hugeness with whom I am in intimate relation and within whom I perceive myself sweetly related to a multitude on whose lips the Two Great Names are a secret sound at all hours. When I think of one person or another, it is not as if they came into my mind from outside but as if they emerged into recognisable form out of some hidden world of the One who is Many. Now this morning you are vividly before me and I am writing to you not only as a response to your affectionate letter but also as though at a call from that manifold Unity.

The news you give makes me at once sad and glad. Your hint at a long confinement to a hospital bed in the early months of the year and your mention of being "tormented again and again with very aching attacks of lumbago caused by muscular atrophy" due to that experience—all this saddens me very much. But I am glad to see that your faith and courage are always present and even a sense of humour gleams out. That sense reminds me of something I said in my *Talks on Poetry*, a copy of which you received some months back with the most touching gratitude. I tell my students that I am being visited by this awful complaint—"rheumatic pains in the lower back and loins", as the dictionary puts it. I explain how I shall make history by my battle with that hellish visitor to my body. "The history will be made in three stages. First, there will be a realisation of the full presence of the dread torturer—full presence summed up by my

thundering out the name as it is: 'Lumbago!' Next you will see me tackling the demon and sending him away by a mantric strategy of the resisting will. I shall shout: 'Lumba, go!' The last stage will find me quite relieved, a conqueror wearing a reminiscent smile and whispering with the sense of a far-away unhappiness, the almost fairy-tale expression: 'Lumb, ago!' "

I am encouraged as a letter-writer by your saying that the opening part of a letter to a friend published in the July *Mother India*, dated 7.4.1990, helped you a great deal to counteract your ailment. Remember that when I appeal to the Divine at the Samadhi it is not merely for protecting you and keeping you going. The appeal is an extreme one, invoking the Mother to cure you. And along with my fervent prayer there come to my mind on almost every afternoon some phrases from a poem of mine, which I once quoted to you because Sri Aurobindo had discerned a touch of the Overmind in the second line:

What visionary urge
Has stolen from horizons watched alone
Into thy being like a fathomless smile.. ?

I think the three verses breathe something of your present and your future in relation to the Divine. Your soul is seen peering into the dream-distances that are our approach to the immensity of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It is isolated from the hubbub and hunger of the common world and wants nothing but the holy and healing influence of that far-seeming Perfection. Out of that remote prospect where earth and sky appear to meet, a happy message, too deep, too wondrous to be expected and to be comprehended, wafts secretly an assurance to your dedicated self, promising to you an image of its own all-transcending Bliss.

Your lament that your English is not adequate to explain things to me is unnecessary. You want me to read between the lines, but your lines say enough about the state you are in, both of body and of soul—and what they convey in the spaces between them is the aura of your sweet friendship to which no words can do full justice. (6.8.1990)

*

Thank you for your kind thoughts about me and for the generous movements of your heart. Contrary to your own view, I find you a good and sincere person. When you have the faith that the Mother whom we adore in the Ashram and whom Sri Aurobindo put before us as the incarnate Shakti of the Supreme is indeed such and when you are convinced that she has protected you, helped you in critical situations and kept you alive by her grace, how can you consider yourself a "zero"? You are indeed her child and hasn't she said that no child of

hers can ever be a zero? You condemn yourself because you have "sex impulses" and cannot cross the bar they set up in sadhana. Have you heard of St. Augustine? Although he had a Godward aspiration, sex impulses stood in his way. There is the famous cry of his to God: "O give me chastity—but not yet!" Again and again carnal desire lured him away from the path he longed to tread and in spite of his aspiration he could not bring himself to resist the temptations of the flesh. But in the midst of all side-tracks the flame of prayer to be free kept burning—and finally he got over his sensual hankerings. His tremendous difficulties and his ultimate triumph over them has made him in the Roman Catholic Church "the patron saint of chastity." He exemplifies the Mother's saying that our chief weakness points to what we are meant to represent in the list of the Divine's victories. A line to the very opposite of it is indicated by it as leading to our special individual fulfilment in spirituality. But always for this fulfilment God's grace is to be invoked again and again.

There is no cause for you to despair. It has been well observed that we are never defeated as long as we go on fighting and that there is no failure except giving up The only thing I would like to add is that one should find the right mode of fighting. A head-on meeting of the lower movements with the force of our human will is not always the correct confrontation. The Mother has advised a turning away of the mind somehow or other when those movements are perceived. Open a book of Sri Aurobindo's or go out for a long walk or immerse your eye in the beauties of Nature or else seek harmless happy company. She has also told us that nothing throws the hostile powers into disarray so effectively as laughter in their faces. Laughter at them blows off their pretence of overwhelming strength and evokes in us a sense of the Divine Ananda hidden in our depths. It stirs into activity the true soul of us that is sweetness and light and an intrinsic unstainable purity. This "psychic being" is an effortless dweller in the presence of the Supreme, a spontaneous all-surrendering instrument in the hands of the Lord and by that winsome weakness a born king over life. Have the smiling confidence that Sri Aurobindo stands looking at you and beckoning you to freedom across even the darkest-seeming upsurge of physical desire. Behind each devil God waits, masked, to be recognised and to be called for assistance in that peculiar context of difficulty which is most natural to your make-up. Never feel helpless. The Divine is within your reach every moment and in the thick of every temptation. Even if you fail at times to resist it, never think you are cast out from the Mother's love. Offer the failure itself to her with the faith that she will take note of it and save you from its recurrence. I believe I struck upon a great truth when I wrote to a friend in dire trouble: "There is no pit so low and deep that the Divine Grace cannot lift you out from it sky-high."

As for your job, why should you take it to be at a tangent from the line of sadhana? Whatever the job, tackle it with an inner dedication of it to our Master and Mother. We cannot always pick and choose our vocations, but all work is

acceptable to the Divine if done with consecration to Him. It then becomes a gift from His own wise and compassionate consciousness. (17.6.1990)

*

Two attitudes of yours are full of wisdom. You are ready for any kind of future and you have no complaints against life. When I probe these attitudes I see that they have their roots in the Yogi in you—or more accurately you the Aurobindonian. Whatever prospect opens to us in the time to come is bound to lead us towards the same goal—the heights of the Divine Master's all-enfolding serenity, the depths of the Divine Mother's all-soothing affection. We are in the hands of the one Divine's dual manifestation we have been lucky enough to know in terms of very earth and these hands can bear us only towards the goal of the Infinite and the Eternal whose attainment through the path of assuming a humanity like our own is symbolised by those feet at which our souls have knelt. Here two stanzas from that credo-poem of mine, "Triumph is All", surge up in my memory:

Not only where Thy silver steps
    Twinkle a night of nenuphars,
But everywhere I see Thy heaven:
    I love the night between the stars....

The whole world is my resting-place:
    Thy beauty is my motherland:
Sweet enemies are wounds of age—
    My body breaks but by Thy hand.

These stanzas cover both the attitudes I have mentioned. They peer into the future and look around at the present, but all is seen as vivid generalities. The word "complaints" which you have used suggests particularities as well, including small day-to-day pricks no less than the larger obstacles the milieu may set up. A philosophical temper should suffice to bear things stoically. A religious approach would help one to read God's Will in all unpleasant events or else discern the after-effects of our own past Karma. But we Aurobindonians can practise a finer art of living in the midst of whatever big or small "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" the Shakespearian-seeming World-Drama may bring us. There is, first, the wide calm we have to develop or call into ourselves with the remembrance of Sri Aurobindo's face, about which one of his disciples has written:

All heaven's secrecy lit to one face
Crowning with calm the body's blinded cry—
A soul of upright splendour like the noon!

The human body through the ages has struggled for light and appealed to some celestial Mystery to put off its veil so that our life may not feel dark with ignorance of the ultimate Truth. With the advent of Sri Aurobindo we have a revelation of supreme knowledge, a countenance whose eyes have visioned that Truth and which wears as a result the peaceful expression of a radiant life-fulfilment. Nor, I may add, is this knowledge confined to a powerful insight into the complexities of the various planes of existence: it is also a technique of transforming and harmonising our whole many-aspected nature so that this nature may no longer be a play of shine and shadow as at morn and eve but a shadowless glory as when the sun is at its midday zenith.

Yes, first there is the Aurobindonian crown of luminous calm to be won for ourselves. Then there is in its wake the sense of Sri Aurobindo's presence looking at us through all the vicissitudes of our little days. He has accepted us as his followers and thereby taken into his hands the tenor of our lives: he can meet us across every incident and turn it into a passage between our littleness and his greatness. If we are vigilant enough to realise that he has our lives in his charge and can convert all the apparent "slings and arrows" into his own dynamic messages, piercing our superficial selves and making ways for our profounder beings, our hidden souls, to come forth—if we have the faith that there is nothing he cannot use for the growth of our Yoga and if we constantly offer to him whatever takes place, no matter how unpleasant or hurtful, surely we shall meet his illuminating grace at every step and the missiles seeming to be hurled at us will prove to be a shower of blessings. Indeed, a twofold spiritual art of living is open to us beyond both common philosophy and religion.

Now a word on your experiences at night and in day-time. I repeat that night with its stillness and its opening up of a star-studded immensity calls out your soul in a spontaneous response and whether awake or asleep the inner and the outer in you are at one. I can understand very well that "burning aspiration" which you feel when by chance you get up from sleep at some hour of the night. Neither is your whispering of lines from *Savitri* or some other poem a surprise to me who am haunted by a hundred voices from the English-speaking poetic past or else the one superb voice from the present which sums them all up and exceeds them with a succession of rare revelatory rhythms—

The lines that tear the veil from deity's face.

What puzzles me a little is why on rising at 4 a.m to begin the day one should be troubled by a raid of unpleasant mechanical thoughts for some time. Perhaps your nights, with their dreams of happy contact with fine friendly beings, make too much of a contrast with the day's common routine and there is a lurking fear which opens the gate of your mind to the subtle influences of the "subconscient". With most people it is the deep-engulfing sleep that invites

The demon and the goblin and the ghoul.

Of course, what happens to you can hardly be described in such terms. But some lack of smooth transition into the quotidian consciousness is responsible. Perhaps you get out of bed at once at the end of sleep Try to stay within your mosquito-net for some time after your eyes have opened and review quietly the night's experiences and think peacefully of the waking hours ahead of you. And when the night and the day have met smoothly in your mind, step out of your bed. In a more jocular vein I would advise you to imitate what a relative of mine used to do whenever he had to get up at night to go to the bathroom. He would always keep one eye shut so that sleep might not fly away from him! If you could psychologically open only one eye at 4 a.m. and later gaze fully at the coming day, you would not feel too sharp a break-away from the magic realms of reverie. In any case I don't think you should worry about those unwelcome mechanical thoughts. It is worrying that gives them strength. Just let them be and go about your business until the usual time when you start to read *The Life Divine* and, facing the prodigality of knowledge in it of all the aspects of our cosmos, say to yourself: "Surely, the author of this book must be the author of the universe!" (4.8.1990)

*

I am happy to learn that you have always taken an interest in poetry The names you have listed bring a glow to my memory—Keats for the rich texture of his verbal felicities evoking significant imaginative pictures, as in his description of the sea-bottom:

... nor bright nor sombre wholly
But mingled up, a gleaming melancholy,
A dusky empire and its diadems,
One faint eternal eventide of gems—

Shelley for his subtle suggestions and haunting rhythmical patterns, like airs caught from another world:

A tone
Of some world far from ours
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one—

Wordsworth for his profound simplicities and his powerful visionary effects due to a philosophical mind attuning itself to a secret Spirit behind universal Nature, a Spirit which is also behind this very mind but mostly wakes to awareness of its

own depths by touches of sound or silence or quivering colour from wood and stream, hill and sky. Well could he say,

> To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,

and affirm feeling

> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

You may have been out of contact with English poetry and, if my *Talks* brings back to you the happy thrill you had in times past, I shall think myself rewarded. I live in a vast inner world of many-mooded poetry—scores of lines throng my memory and come to the forefront of attention either on their own or in answer to occasions and sometimes a stray word starts up a series of lines from various poets in which that word found apt use. Even a part of my Yoga comes from the sense of perfect form which the finest poetry achieves. The flawless, the unsurpassable, the archetypal, the transcendental, the absolute—the presence of such an ultimate goes home to me in a most magical way through the diverse modes in which poetry attains inevitability of expression, the acme of its fusion of matter and manner, its moved precision of measured speech. The subject may be anything, the style may be vibrant with any level of our multifold being and yet through the delicate or forceful unity of intense vision, word and rhythm the creative poet sets before me an airy but irresistible pageant in which gods of infinite bliss and goddesses of eternal beauty seem to interplay. I am stirred to a feeling of the Supreme and the Divine even when nothing directly spiritual is uttered by a poet, for what he says conjures up a sheer perfection of verbal form, at once meaningful and musical, as when Shakespeare tells me of King Duncan lying in his grave—

> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well—

or when the same poet makes Romeo exclaim at first sight of Juliet's beauty at a ball given by her family:

> O she doth teach the torches to burn bright!—

or else when that distillation of the Stoic in the Roman temper is put in Caesar's mouth in *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> Be you not troubled with the time, which drives
> O'er your content these strong necessities,
> But let determined things to destiny
> Take unbewailed their way.

Mantra after sudden Mantra leaps out to me from unexpected places because I respond not only to the many-passioned heart of poetry but also to the unimpeachable art with which it gets embodied, gaining an utterly ravishing outline for its inner substance. The result is that I catch in all shapes of the poetic intuition, be they ever so secular, something manifested of the spiritual reality which is figured in that couplet of mine which Sri Aurobindo declared to be revelatory in the Yogic sense:

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

(12.7.1990)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

THE SEA OF LIFE

I WAS standing on the shore of the Sea of Life.
Many times I tried to cross it.
The relentless waves of Karma
Brought me back and back again.
Limbs all tired, feeling helpless,
I began to weep.
Suddenly I felt safe. A sweet Presence was by me,
With a kind smile and dazzling eyes.

I fell at Her Feet and wept aloud.
She raised me and, smiling, hugged me.
A miracle happened; I felt so light.
Where was I? Neither here nor there.
The 'I' was safely engulfed in Her bosom,
Floating in Happiness, above the sea.

S. SETHU

THE ASHRAM CHILDREN AND SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE

A DREAM-DIALOGUE

(*Continued from the issue of October 1990*)

SRI AUROBINDO went on:

"Last time, we were talking about planchette and automatic writing and things of that sort, weren't we? Indeed, in Baroda, we practised automatic writing a good deal. A few of us would sit around a table, silently. One of us would be the medium, he would hold a pencil and have a notepaper before him. He would write a question and then everybody would wait for the answer, without speaking, seeking to still even the movements of the mind through concentration. In due course, the spirit would come and it was as if it held the medium's hand while it wrote just like your mothers did when they taught you to form your letters. The medium must surrender himself completely, letting the spirit guide him. At some of those sessions, Barin would ask to be the medium. Once he decided to call our father's spirit. Father had always loved him very dearly. During all the years that we had been away in England, he was the only son, the youngest, who had been close to Father, the recipient of all his paternal affection.

"So that day, we sat there wonderingly waiting for his spirit to come to us. All on a sudden Barin's pen began to move on the paper, and the spirit introduced itself. But Barin remained sceptical; he demanded further proof before believing that it was indeed our father. So the spirit reminded my brother of a gold watch which Father had once given him, a fact that Barin had quite forgotten. This proof so excited him that he began to make more demands on the spirit. One of the most amusing messages he received was the information that if one looked carefully on the walls of the house of an engineer called Devdar, one would find the drawing of a monkey. Devdar happened to be present at the time and he denied the fact. The spirit then requested Devdar to investigate the matter a little more thoroughly which he did later by asking his mother. She replied that indeed there was such a drawing but that it was now hidden by a coat of plaster and whitewash."

"Fantastic! How did your father's spirit know about that?"

"I'll tell you. But first listen to even more fantastic stories. The spirit made two prophecies about the future, both of which later came true to the letter. The first one was about Lord Curzon. At that time it was he who had suggested partitioning Bengal and then had created acute and widespread discontent; all over the state people were criticising and opposing the implementation of the idea. It was at that point that the spirit informed us that Curzon would soon leave

India, although at the time there was absolutely no question of his resigning or being pushed out of his position. The spirit told us that it had seen Curzon trying to gaze at the other side of the blue sea, and that is why it was sure he would go. In fact, Curzon was indeed forced to leave, unexpectedly, though somewhat later."

"This is unbelievable! How could the spirit prophesy something that did not seem even remotely possible at the time?"

"But that is the very nature of prophecy. Often the present gives us no inkling of what is to come. I have told you, haven't I, that whatever happens here has already taken place in an invisible world, sometimes much earlier. It only takes time to materialise on our earth, that's all. Those who can contact this invisible world do not find it difficult to know about its events and activities. But that does not mean that everything they see there will be realised here, in our physical world or even that they should be able to predict when it will manifest itself, if it does do so. You must have heard that Mother had known about India's freedom as far back as 1920. She had then seen a vision of innumerable people, gleefully running with their arms raised and chanting, "We are free! We are free." Yet it took India so many more years to become politically independent. But your rational Science does not believe in occultism—that is because it is still so undeveloped and immature

"When somebody asked the spirit about Tilak and what sort of a man he was it replied: 'When all that you have striven for will seem lost and ruined and your erstwhile friends have turned their backs on you or betrayed you, then this man alone will stand by you, holding his head proudly high.' This promise too proved to be absolutely true. In the annals of our Revolutionary Movement Tilak's name indeed shines as brightly as the vermilion castemark on a royal forehead."

The youthful audience looked at one another in silent questioning puzzlement at all these strange revelations. Sri Aurobindo continued:

"Whether the spirit was my father's or any one else's, it certainly was an exceptional one. All the spirits do not know so much, neither are their revelations so effective. The other spirit that we called was supposed to be that of Sri Ramakrishna's, which commanded us, "Build a temple." Just that, nothing but those words. At that time we were indeed planning to build a temple to the Goddess Bhavani. So we immediately concluded that the plan met with his approval. But, in fact, he wanted us to raise a temple to the Mother within us, not just build a stone edifice. I realised this only much later through an experience which finally made me turn to Yoga."

"So there is some truth in these things?"

"Of course there is some truth, but a great deal of falsehood and error is mixed up with it—it is indeed quite a mixture. Oh yes! I forgot to mention a detail. What Barin wrote was beautifully worded in excellent English, an English

which should normally be beyond the reach of one who had studied only up to Matric."

"But how are such things possible? Is it the souls of these great beings who help in automatic writing?"

"Souls? Certainly not, because souls do not linger so many years in the earth-atmosphere. Actually those early experiments with occultism roused my interest sufficiently for me to try them again later, both in Calcutta and even in Pondicherry. But my experiences never revealed any profound or fundamental truths, which is why I gave up dabbling in them. But it is not easy to analyse or explain these phenomena, since they are linked with the mystery of birth and death. Our knowledge of the worlds beyond the physical and the visible is so limited that it could be called negligible. The human entity goes through so many transitions after death, and it would be an unacceptable oversimplification to call them all 'soul'. We ordinarily believe that man has a body and a soul, and that after death the soul goes either to heaven, to hell or takes up another body. But very many events intervene before these things happen. Besides his physical body, man has several other subtle bodies or sheaths about which most people are ignorant. And in the subtle worlds, there are innumerable separate entities, small and big, good and bad. In short, even when the soul has returned to its own world after the death of the physical body, the subtle sheaths may be taken hold of by subtle beings of the supra-physical planes, who may pass under the old names. It is rare for the being to return clothed in its own sheaths which it had cast off earlier. The phenomenon that occurs in automatic writing does not merely concern these subtle sheaths of human beings. In some cases its source or inspiration is directly from beings of various non-physical though usually not very elevated planes. Most often they are part of the play of the writer's subliminal consciousness. You surely know that our ordinary external consciousness is not the only one we possess, for behind it is a vast and deep world of consciousness—which is why it is called the subliminal. What our conscious minds do not know is often known to this inner consciousness, a knowledge which extends even to the future. If you can take hold of a pure strand of this hidden consciousness, then your writing may reveal past, present or future. But remember, the strand must be pure—something that is not easy to get, which is why this sort of writing is often of little value. But it is also an error to pass it off as dramatic imagination. I myself experimented with automatic writing once, in the process of which I managed to write a whole book called 'Yogic Sadhan'. Whenever I sat down to write the book, I would see the spirit-form of Rammohan Roy standing beside me. When I would finish for the day, he would again be there. I have called the author of the book 'Uttara Yogi' or 'Yogi from the North.' Do you know why?"

"No!"

"There is a mystery shrouding the name. There used to be, in South India, a

great Yogi. When it was time for him to leave his body he told his disciples that a great, or rather an integral Yogi, would come from the North. This Purna Yogi would be recognised by three characteristics. One of the wealthy disciples of that Yogi found me with those characteristics. And he it was who bore all the expense of publishing 'Yogic Sadhan'."

"We've heard that you have experimented with automatic speaking too!"

"Who has told you that?"

"We learned from Nolini-da's 'Reminiscences' that you had experimented with automatic speaking."

"What does he say?"

"He says that around eight o'clock in the evening he and others would all sit down around you, having first switched off the light. Not a word or a whisper was heard, all waited in an expectant and absolute silence. Then words would come forth from your mouth, but not spoken in your own voice. They expressed different tones, and different modes of speech. Sometimes it was Bankim, at others Danton, then again it was as though the Greek political leader Theramenes was speaking. Some discoursed about literature, others on politics. The instance of Danton was extremely dramatic, he came declaring—'I am Danton! Terror! Red Terror!'

"Many spirits thus came and taught Nolini-da and his friends many things about different subjects."

(Sri Aurobindo sat listening and gently smiling).

"That would be fun!" burst out a youthful member of the audience. Fun indeed to learn all our subjects without having to study all those dry books!" (*Laughter*)

"But Mother says that all this spirit-stuff can be quite dangerous. She doesn't like us to play about with them."

"That's true. What exactly has she said?"

"She has recounted a very strange incident which took place when she was in France. A certain individual had managed to establish contact with a spirit with the help of some of these occult practices. The man was a gambler by profession which he exercised mainly in the South of France—a place where the games of chance were extremely popular. It seems that this spirit would always tell him the right number in the game of roulette, and he grew fabulously rich. One of his friends warned him not to trust spirits, that they invariably betray one in the end. But his lust for money had made him deaf and blind to everything else. One day the spirit told him: 'Chance all you have on this particular number.' He did so and in a moment lost everything. The matter did not end there. Next the spirit mockingly said: 'Now blow your head off with a gun,'—and he did that too! But Mother says that these lower spirits could never come to bother you. You would call down only those spirits whom you wished to contact and they came from the world of Mind."

Sri Aurobindo listened without a word, smiling. Then he said:

"Nowadays one hears of a different brand of automatic writing which seems to have created modern literature. It is called Surrealism, and your Nirod-da is supposed to be an expert on the subject. He can tell you a great deal about it." (*Laughter*)

"Indeed he admits to having written several poems in this manner, poems which he himself did not understand at all. But he tells us that you explained them to him since they were inspired by you. Is that so?"

"Is that so hard to believe? Well, it happens to be absolutely true. But this has nothing to do with spirits. These poems have their origin in the hidden consciousness I have already spoken to you of. One also calls it dream-consciousness, though it does not closely resemble a dream at all."

"Oh! Can I ask you something? Recently I saw a rather strange dream. It was about a friend of mine who had died. The face and form were his, but he looked much darker than he was, and his clothes too were very dirty. His hair looked clumsily combed, straight down towards his forehead and eyes. Yet in spite of these differences, I felt terribly happy to see him, but he, surprisingly enough, hardly looked at me. I ran to put my arms round him but felt unnerved and uneasy. This gave me a sensation of discomfort, almost of feverishness which remained with me the rest of the day."

"I understand. This was not your friend. Clearly, it was a being from the vital world, the kind of beings we were talking about earlier. Very probably it had worn one of the subtle sheaths belonging to your friend—and certainly it intended to do you harm. These beings enjoy having fun at our expense, even to make fools of us It was your attachment to your friend that helped it to approach you.

"Gradually you will get to know more about these beings and the planes they come from. They can put on various appearances to disturb us. Among their most cunning and deadly games is to disguise themselves as the Mother and myself and present themselves before the sadhak."

"Yes, we have heard about how one of them tried to fool even Nolini-da. It came to him wearing your shape, and asked him to bow before it. When Nolini-da began doing so, he noticed that the feet were different from yours. Instantly the form disappeared."—(While he was speaking, the child lowered his gaze on to Sri Aurobindo's feet and was surprised to find them so small in proportion to his body.)

Sri Aurobindo laughed and said: "There are innumerable mysteries of this kind. Voices and visions both good and bad frequently come to one who is advancing on the path of yoga—experiences which Science cannot explain. But (*smiling*) our discussion of spirits has taken us quite far away from our original subject—automatic writing. Before I finish with this kind of writing, let me tell you something about another kind of automatic writing—though in fact, it

should really be called spontaneous, living writing. This happens when life moves like a river, freely following its own intrinsic rhythm, not guided by thought and logic—and yet all that one does or says is always the right thing, simply and naturally. It may be described as never being out of step. This is the result of the psychic transformation, which in our sadhana is the first of a series.

"So you see, after beginning with political revolutions, we moved past literary revolutions and now we have reached the spiritual revolution."

This last word seemed to puzzle the audience. Sri Aurobindo took up the point:

"The ordinary man stumbles along the path of his life, isn't that so? Intelligence, logic, thought, feeling and imagination help him on his way. Without them he cannot move forward an inch, and yet they are not infallible at all. This is the reason why his life is soon filled with grief and pain and hopelessness. Now supposing I show you how to live a life like the one I have just described, isn't that being revolutionary? Only this time it would be an inner revolution. One would need weapons but they would be used to fight the enemies within us. You follow?

"Similarly when I spoke of the literary revolution, I meant a quick change, (whether by violent or non-violent means). When I said that poetry was created by a conscious pen, that the mind behind it was totally silent and motionless—and that this was universally accepted as the essential mode of writing poetry, wouldn't you call this a literary revolution? Any one of you may one day find yourself turned into a poet. (*Laughter*)

"One of our friends is like that. You only have to ask him once and he will write a poem for you." (*Laughter*)

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

(*Translated by Jhumur from the Bengali*)

SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF AN "EXTRAORDINARY GIRL"

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(*Continued from the issue of October 1990*)

Father's Fatal Accidents

My father had the habit of going for a car ride in the evening. One day he said to me, "Darling, would you like to come too?" This invitation needed no answer. I made myself ready in no time. As he was coming out of his room, he tripped, knocked his head against a wall and received a cut on the forehead. It began to bleed. My mother, on seeing the cut, told him,

"It would be better not to go out today. This accident is a bad omen."

Father, typically, laughed away her 'superstitious' fear. Then, while both of us were coming downstairs with father holding my hand, my foot slipped and I rolled down to the bottom of the stairs. Father picked me up. Again mother repeated her warning. "I told you it is a *bad* day. Here is a second mishap. These are clear indications. Don't go out today."

But what wilful man has ever paid heed to a woman's 'baseless intuitions'?

Father started the car. I sat by his side. A little beyond our house at a turn in the road stood the house of an old doctor. He had a very long beard upon which his habitual benign smile seemed to cast a glow. He had a son about ten years of age who had an extremely sweet face, like a fresh flower. My father would often joke with the doctor saying, "I will give my girl in marriage to your handsome boy." The humble doctor would shyly protest.

"How can you say such a thing, sir? We are poor people and you are rich beyond words. How can I cherish such a hope even in my dreams?"

Sweet though he was, the boy had a peculiar bad habit. He would stand at the turning of the road and, whenever he saw a car coming, would either pelt stones at its rear wheels or try to hit one with a stick. That day too he was ready to play this mischievous game. When he saw our car coming, he took his position at the turn. However, just as he was about to swing his stick, he lost his balance and slipped on the street made muddy by a recent shower. The car ran over him As it was evening, father had not seen the boy. But he felt as if the car had bumped over a rubber cushion. People rushed out from all sides. Father stopped the car and discovered to his horror that he had run over the young boy. He picked up the blood-smeared body of the dead child and carried him into his house to his mother. The old father was away from home.

Father arranged immediately for the funeral of the boy, took him to the cemetery with his elder brother, had the body cremated and returned home He

broke down completely and, almost like a madman, began to sob and weep aloud. He cried out, "A heavy load is pressing upon my chest. Relieve me. I'm dying of pain and suffering." In this way he passed hours in anguish and lamentation.

The boy's old father returned after a day or two. On learning the dreadful news he came to see my father. Father at once clasped him and began to mutter a thousand things as in a delirium The doctor, strangely enough, was as calm as a god and consoled him saying, "You have no hand in it, you are free of any guilt. It is my son's fate that has overtaken him. It is God's Will. Don't grieve."

But father would not be consoled. He cried, "No, no, these are all empty words for me. You have faith in God, I have none. I am a born atheist. So I can't find any comfort in such sentiments. Take me to the police, let me be hanged. That will be my only atonement and deliverance. There is no other way out for me."

Earlier, father had sent my mother to the child's mother to console her in her bereavement. The visit had, however, the opposite effect. The child's mother burst into rage and heaped abuses and curses upon her. She ended with these words: "Listen, your daughter will die in the same way as you have caused my son's death. This is my curse. Go away." My mother remained calm throughout the tragic scene and came away.

Many days passed before father came back to his normal mood and temper. By way of atonement for his crime, father took up the maintenance of the doctor's family. He arranged and bore the expense for their daughter's marriage and the older son's education. Later, even though the boy turned out to be a bad character, father did not stop his help. When neighbours protested that the family did not deserve further assistance, he replied, "This is my duty, my atonement and the fulfilment of my promise, my lifelong debt. I have got to keep it. Whether they deserve it or not is not my concern."

Luckily there was no police case; for my father was an influential man and had a good reputation.

I have heard this story so often that everything is still vivid before my eyes.

At times, when I think of the people who have trust in God and those who have none, the scene that looms before me is the striking difference between my father's reaction and the doctor's. Father used to say, "You people believe in God. So you get peace. I don't. What then will be my fate? Is there no salvation for me?" My reply to him would now be: "If in such heart-rending circumstances the doctor could remain calm and unmoved to tears because he had trust in God, is it not worth having the faith?"

I remember the last scene of my father's life. He had fallen ill. He must have known he would not recover. A few days before he left his body I saw him sitting with folded hands before our Ishta Devata in the Pooja-room. It surprised and moved me greatly. A few days later he passed away peacefully.

Let me relate one last story in his life and finish my ties with him in this world. Once a widow came to him carrying a child in her arms. She said, "I am indeed very poor. I seek your help for this fatherless child." Those few words were enough to melt father's heart. After he had helped her for a year, an unbelievable thing happened. Father received a letter signed by an advocate on behalf of this woman. She alleged that he was the father of her child. Hence, she claimed half the share of his property. If her legitimate demand was rejected, she would file a suit. My parents fell from heaven, as we say in Bengali. Can anyone be so ungrateful as to fabricate such a lie? Mother got a chance again to admonish father and said, "How many times have I told you not to be so generous? There is no end to people's evil designs and no limit to their lies. They are extremely clever in making dupes of their benefactors. But when have you listened to me?" Father heard her quietly. It was unthinkable to him that people could be so deceitful and ungrateful. However, he said, "Let her do as she pleases. I shall see this through to the end." Father's friends were all on his side and promised to stand by him. "We won't tolerate this calumny. We will drive away this woman from our locality," they assured him

I do not know the details of how the farce ended But the woman did leave the place and was never seen there again. Such people make me wonder how greed can drive one to such folly. But what I want to say by relating this incident is that father was a simple-hearted man, candid and always ready to help others in distress. He made a rule in the house that once a month he would feed the poor and destitute. This he observed till the end of his days. Besides, before his midday meal, he would send a servant to enquire if in the neighbourhood anyone remained unfed. If any was found so, he would have his food sent to him and only then would he sit down to whatever surplus was there for his meal. And yet he professed he did not believe in God. But to my mind it mattered little. For there was a lot of godliness in him.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

THE BIGGEST PUZZLE IN THE TEXT OF *SAVITRI*

1

IT is well known that a Critical Edition of Sri Aurobindo's epic is under preparation. The general guide-line is: "Follow the text"—the "text" signifying Sri Aurobindo's latest handwritten version or else his latest dictated matter. In regard to dictation some questions are natural because of possible mishearing. In regard to the manuscript there should theoretically be no question. On its authority a good number of what are termed "transmission errors" have been set right—that is, mistakes committed in copying out the occasionally difficult-to-read text and then repeated or sometimes even added to, inadvertently, in the typescript from which the press went to work. But there is one place in *Savitri* where the final MS itself has given rise to very grave doubt. It is in a passage on p. 347 of the Birth Centenary Edition and may be called the biggest puzzle in the text.

King Aswapaty (corrected form of the old spelling "Aswapathy") has returned from his exploration of the supra-terrestrial "planes", which had culminated in his vision of the Divine Mother and his securing a boon from her for the world. Though back on earth, he is still receptive to influences from beyond:

> Once more he moved amid material scenes,
> Lifted by intimations from the heights
> And twixt the pauses of the building brain
> Touched by the thoughts that skim the fathomless surge
> Of Nature and wing back to hidden shores.

Savitri has run through several editions but no reader has marked any anomaly here. The passage was read out to Sri Aurobindo himself before publication and he too did not notice anything amiss. No doubt, he has also passed many words which now stand convicted of being "transmission errors". Of course, in spite of their varying from the original text they were passed not because he considered the variations in Nirod's copy or in Nolini's typescript improvements again and again on his own writing but because he had forgotten what he had written and these variations managed in their own way to make sufficient sense. The trouble with the passage I have quoted is that it exactly transmits Sri Aurobindo's final manuscript so that the charge of his somehow accepting something alien is not valid—and yet a word here has seriously raised eyebrows during discussions for the Critical Edition.

The word is "twixt". At a recent count, in at least thirteen MSS before the very last, the third line is written with "in":

And in the pauses of the building brain...

Impressed by the fact that Sri Aurobindo's own hand has replaced the long-standing "in" by "twixt", meaning "between", a commentator on *Savitri* has publicly dwelt on the passage thus:

> Sri Aurobindo as an imager of thought-birds and as an artist of an exceptional merit making these heavenly visitors slip between the pauses of the building brain—when the brain is in its phase of intense activity symbolic of the duties of the ruler with a concern for his kingdom—is just superb There is something remarkable here from the point of view of poetic expression achieving through its round-aboutness a very unusual result. Complex in structure but metrically so well-poised, the third line in the above passage depicts exactly the whole process by which Aswapathy the Yogi is presently seen engrossed in affairs of public life, a typical Aurobindonian integration of the secular and the esoteric.[1]

In view of this emphatic printed pronouncement with no hint of the known diffidence about "twixt", which was aroused in some parties concerned with the Critical Edition, it is necessary to bring out in the open the precise bone of contention.

When Sri Aurobindo wrote "in", he evidently meant that during the times when Aswapaty's "building brain" had ceased from its activity and was in a state of calm, a condition of quietude, making an interval of "pause", he had received "thoughts" from far-off unearthly regions. In other words, these supra-mundane thoughts were received when the usual mental constructions were in abeyance. With this meaning, the line was a straightforward statement. It had no "round-aboutness", no "complexity in structure". Similarly straightforward would have been a line if Sri Aurobindo had wished to say that the opposite was true—namely, that the activity of the building brain and not the recurrent pause in it rendered Aswapaty a recipient of superhuman influences We might have expected a verse like

And in the ventures of the building brain. .

Now, with "twixt" instead of "in" to precede "pauses", one has to take Sri Aurobindo as resorting to "round-aboutness" and "complexity in structure" in order to suggest the same situation by saying that everything happened in the space of time between one pause and another and that nothing happened at the time a pause was there. Sri Aurobindo is made to imply not just that the

[1] P 102 of *Sri Aurobindo Circle—Forty-sixth Number* (1990) article "A Poem of Sacred Delight" by R Y Deshpande

presence of the "heavenly visitors" was felt during intensely busy cerebral processes but also that it was felt *only* during them and *never* if there was any calm, quietude, "pause".

On the very face of it, this strikes one as a contradiction of all that Sri Aurobindo has said on spiritual problems and Yogic practices. In fact, according to his writings, what now has been called "a typical Aurobindonian integration of the secular and the esoteric" occurs with the "secular" giving up its usual activity of the building brain and letting its striving thoughts be replaced by the assured luminous thinking of the "esoteric", the higher planes, or else allowing its own thought-stuff to be moulded by their light. To put it otherwise, it is not "between" but "in" the "pauses" that the integration takes shape. This sense is borne in on us by another passage in *Savitri* where too the precise verbal turn used in the numerous earlier versions of our passage meets us. On p. 421 we read:

> Although in pauses of our human lives
> Earth keeps for man some short and perfect hours
> When the inconscient tread of Time can seem
> The eternal moment which the deathless live,
> Yet rare that touch upon the mortal's world.

The spiritual situation is similar. In addition to "pauses" reappearing, the past participle "touched" gets represented by the noun "touch", both of them relating the terrestrial to the finer and greater beyond.

The general drift intended in either passage is clearly caught in a third on p. 476:

> Open God's door, enter into his trance.
> Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light:
> In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
> His vast Truth wake within and know and see.

Such is Sri Aurobindo's message everywhere, in both prose and poetry. Even the commentator whom I have quoted lets this message come through in one of the lines he[1] cites to show the varied poetic and spiritual qualities of *Savitri*. The line, taken from p. 383 of the Centenary Edition, runs as cited:

> ... Mind motionless sleeps, waiting Light's birth.

Savitri itself the commentator characterises in terms that go counter to the

[1] P 103 of *ibid*

denigration implied earlier of "pauses". He[1] writes: "It is the Word that has taken birth in the Infinite's bosom of Silence, in the 'omniscient hush': *Savitri*'s substratum is the divinely pervasive *Shanta Rasa*." The Supreme Truth and Beauty emerge from or through or in depths of peace.

2

That "twixt" makes really a twist in Sri Aurobindo's vision and is, in my opinion, the result of a strange oversight. But an attempt to rectify the situation appears to have been made. For, in Nirod's handwritten ledger where the text had been copied, a line was put under "twixt" and a tick in the margin, the usual sign of some uncertainty. When these marks were first noticed, it was thought that Nolini, struck by the incongruity of "twixt", had been responsible for them. Nirod said that he must have brought Nolini's questioning of the word to Sri Aurobindo's attention and that Sri Aurobindo must have affirmed "twixt". I believed that the underlining and the tick must have served simply as a push to Nirod to check the word with the original and that he must have done the checking and told Nolini of the word's occurrence in the MS. I could not think of Sri Aurobindo's giving no importance to Nolini's pointed query. To my mind Sri Aurobindo did not come directly into the picture at all.

Now I have been proved wrong but in an unexpected sense—in favour of my distrust of "twixt". Wondering whether Nolini would really have been involved and rejected, I asked Richard Hartz, one of the editors of the Critical Edition, who has ready access to all the materials connected with *Savitri*, to examine whatever related to the question in hand. He has kindly supplied a report:

> A study of the marks in the margin of Nirod's copy shows that Nolini put question-marks in pencil to indicate his doubts at the time of typing. Nolini questioned very obvious slips on Nirod's part, such as "who's" for "whose", "compliment" for "complement" and "slow-placed" for "slow-paced". He usually typed the correct form.
>
> The mark next to the "twixt"-line is not a pencilled question-mark but a tick in ink—the same ink as used by Nirod for his copy. There are two possible explanations for this mark and similar ones. Nirod might have put the tick while copying to indicate his doubt about the reading of a word in the MS. But in the instance before us, there is no question of the word having been illegible or difficult to decipher· there is no alternative to reading "twixt". This explanation is inadequate in other cases also, for the underlined words in lines marked with ticks are not generally more difficult to read than most of the handwriting Therefore, marks like the one here

[1] P 105

must have a different purpose connected with Sri Aurobindo's revision. Such ticks are found in the manuscript as well as the copy. Nirod has told us that, during dictated revision, Sri Aurobindo asked him to put these marks by lines he wished to come back to.

After returning to the line and either revising it or deciding to leave it as it was, the tick would normally be cancelled. Uncancelled ticks in the MS were transferred to the copy so that the matter could be attended to there. When the copy was revised, most of these ticks were cancelled—unless the correction itself, being obvious, made it unnecessary to cancel the tick. Some new ticks were also put during the revision of Nirod's copy. For example, the word "ineffable" was underlined and a tick put beside the line:

> A Being intimate and ineffable,

Later, "ineffable" was crossed out and "unnamable" written after it.

The underlining of "twixt" and the tick in the margin would appear to indicate, then, that Sri Aurobindo entertained some doubt about this word when the copy of his manuscript was read to him. However, the fact that no action was taken and the tick was not cancelled may show that the intended return to it never came about. Once the canto was typed, there was no further reference to Nirod's copy. The attention which had been drawn to "twixt" would have been forgotten by the time the typescript was revised.

For a substantial amount of time must have elapsed between the revision of this canto in Nirod's ledger and the revision of the typed copy of it. We learn from Nirod himself that his copy of the first three Books of *Savitri* was first completed and revised, then given to Nolini for typing. The revision of the typescript then began from Book One. By the time the present passage was reached, almost at the end of Book Three, it seems unlikely that Sri Aurobindo would have had much recollection of details of the previous phase of revision.

It may be noted in passing that Nirod, in copying the "twixt"-passage, had miscopied "shores" as "spheres" two lines below the line with "twixt". Sri Aurobindo did not notice this error when the passage was read out from Nirod's ledger, whereas he seems to have had some qualms about "twixt", as indicated by the underlining and the tick. However, when the typescript of the canto concerned was read to him, among the very few changes made in that canto was the correction of "spheres" to "shores", while "twixt" two lines earlier passed unnoticed—the exact opposite of what had happened at the ledger-stage. We have no way of knowing whether Sri Aurobindo, who had overlooked "spheres" in the ledger, suddenly remembered his own MS's much earlier detail. A fresh inspiration is also possible, accidentally

coinciding with the original term. A number of transmission-errors were corrected in ways suggesting that Sri Aurobindo did not remember what he had previously written. Where the restoration of his original word would have provided the most natural and felicitous solution, we find him revising a line in accordance with the change in sense introduced by a mistake in copying or typing. To give a couple of examples out of several: this happened when his "iteration" was mistyped "vibration" and when his "freak" was wrongly typed "peak". In any case, the overlooking of "twixt" at the time "spheres" was corrected need not be accepted as a confirmation of "twixt" any more than the overlooking of "spheres" in the ledger need be so accepted for that word.

While no definite conclusion can be drawn from this ambivalent situation, the fact remains that Sri Aurobindo himself at one stage showed signs of being not quite at ease with his own "twixt". Thus we may be encouraged to discuss whether the perplexities created by this word are the result of a clear-sighted and final choice by Sri Aurobindo, in preference to the long-established and straightforward "in" of his earlier versions.

3

Yes, everything inclines one to regard "twixt" as a strange oversight. Still, how are we to explain its original entry into the MS and how is it that Sri Aurobindo let it stand when Nirod read the canto to him before publication?

A highly intelligent friend, well conversant with both Sri Aurobindo's poetry and his Yogic teaching, accounts for the fact that none of us reacted against "twixt" for years and years, by remarking: "On a first reading (or even many more casual ones) we read the *meaning* and not quite the words, and so 'twixt' was just taken for 'in'. Now that it is pointed out one notices it." The background of Sri Aurobindo's uniform teaching would suffice to render us uncritical. The same explanation may hold for Sri Aurobindo's own attitude on hearing the passage read out, even if more than once. Actually, hearing instead of reading is bound to diminish critical attention further. As for the first half of the question, linked with the final draft, we may surmise a general state of inattention at the time Sri Aurobindo made this copy. Wanting to put a more weighty preposition than "in", he may have thought of "midst". But, even in the state we have surmised, he could not help noting "amid" just two lines earlier:

Once more he moved amid material scenes—

and immediately before this line there was

The mortal stir received him in its midst.

Sri Aurobindo may have loosely opted for "twixt". One other instance in *Savitri* of "twixt" used not in a strict grammatical bearing is on p. 213:

> Twixt the magnificence of her fatal breasts.

The singular noun "magnificence" after a preposition connoting "between" is odd. But the plural "breasts" makes the sense clear and the line as it stands is far more poetically effective than the less concentrated but correct version possible:

> Twixt her magnificent yet fatal breasts.

Unlike our line both the versions here carry the sense of "between", but we may observe that in the original line "Midst" could have been substituted so that "Twixt" might create the impression of being able to play the role of a broad synonym of that preposition. A close analytic view could show more clearly in our line the misleading which "twixt" instead of "midst" would cause. But a general state of inattention due to any hurry would be liable to exclude such a view. Now, have we any grounds to posit a state in which Sri Aurobindo was not focusing on all particulars though his eyes might have been moving up and down the page for some reason or other?

Highly relevant here is the earlier report on the page concerned, submitted by Richard Hartz to the group examining the data for the Critical Edition. It had been suggested that Sri Aurobindo must have inserted "twixt" with a cool deliberate eye to each item in the passage. Hartz wrote:

> The final MS where "twixt" was substituted for "in" does not support the impression that Sri Aurobindo was attending carefully to every detail. Elsewhere on this page, for example, he neglected to put commas after "hush" and "trance" in these lines:
>
> > The harmony journeyed towards some distant hush
> > A music failing in the ear of trance
> > A cadence called by distant cadences,
> > A voice that trembled into strains withdrawn.
>
> Essential punctuation is also missing in three other places on this page of the final MS. But much more unusual are the slips which Sri Aurobindo made in writing the lines after "And twixt the pauses of the building brain." He first wrote "Lif"—obviously the beginning of "Lifted", which occurs two lines above. After cancelling this false start, he wrote:
>
> > surge
> > Touched by the thoughts that skim the fathomless ~~shores~~
> > Of Nature and wing back to hidden shores.

"Fathomless shores", which Sri Aurobindo wrote at first, cannot possibly mean anything; evidently, "shores" was copied by mistake from the line below. Sri Aurobindo noticed this error immediately and changed "shores" to "surge", as in the penultimate version from which he was copying.

Although Sri Aurobindo corrected these mistakes, it would have been a more convincing sign of attentiveness if he had not made the mistakes at all. If there is any passage in the manuscripts of *Savitri* which gives the impression of some lack of attention on Sri Aurobindo's part, this is it. The reading "twixt the pauses" belongs only to this version, in contrast to "in the pauses", which has the opposite meaning and is supported by a long series of manuscripts. In view of the apparent meaninglessness of "twixt", I think we would be justified in this case in departing from our usual rule of adhering to the last version. A footnote would be sufficient recognition of "twixt".

Just the state is observed here which we have surmised—a looking up and down the page with mixed results while being somewhat inattentive as though one were in a hurry.

In such circumstances I cannot but agree with Richard about retaining "in". The footnote to it might be phrased thus:

As in the numerous versions before the final which reads "twixt".

If, out of rigid piety, we go the other way around and keep "twixt" in the text, the footnote should be:

All the large number of versions before the last have "in".

But this footnote may prove unhelpful, for in the future a footnote is likely to be ignored by literary articles and currency given only to the text. We should beware of allowing currency to a text which, on a natural interpretation, is out of accord with Sri Aurobindo's known spiritual teaching no less than with his own poetic choice in an overwhelming majority of versions.

4

Lest anyone should think we are making a very special or unique case out of "twixt", I might point out that this is not exactly so. Even if it were so, our procedure would be fully justified by all the circumstances I have set forth. But remembering a past instance broadly analogous to it I turned once more to Hartz to bring it to a focus. He has submitted the following account:

There is one other place where, because of an apparent verbal slip in Sri Aurobindo's last handwritten manuscript, it has been proposed to follow an

earlier version in the Critical Edition. This case, involving lines 6 and 7 on p 218 of the Centenary Edition, has not aroused any controversy though it has some similarity to the problem with "twixt". In the penultimate manuscript, Sri Aurobindo had written:

> A formless void oppressed his struggling brain,
> A darkness grim and cold benumbed his flesh,

The final manuscript reads:

> A formless void oppressed his struggling brain,
> A darkness grim and cold oppressed his flesh,

It appears very unlikely that the repetition of "oppressed" was an intentional change. The original "benumbed", found in all earlier versions that I have seen, can hardly be improved upon in sound or sense. The second "oppressed" looks like an inadvertent slip made in the somewhat mechanical process of copying out lines which did not require alteration. That Sri Aurobindo was not deliberately trying to make the word "oppressed" more oppressive by repeating it, is shown by his revision of the typescript. The ledger gives no sign of revision in this particular instance. In the typescript Sri Aurobindo changed the first "oppressed" to "suppressed" to avoid the repetition. Thus we have the printed text:

> A formless void suppressed his struggling brain,
> A darkness grim and cold oppressed his flesh,

Strictly according to the "rules" of textual editing, this revised version should stand as our text—just as "twixt" would be our choice in the line in Book Three according to a literal-minded interpretation of the same principles. Yet all of us have accepted to print "oppressed" and "benumbed" as in the penultimate manuscript, treating the repetition of "oppressed" in the final MS as a sort of "transmission error" although it is in Sri Aurobindo's own hand. The subsequent alteration of the first "oppressed" to "suppressed" is then regarded as a consequence of the mistake. As such, it does not have quite the same value as the original version, though it must surely be mentioned as a variant since it represents Sri Aurobindo's own revision.

The case of "oppressed" and "benumbed" is not identical to that of "twixt" and "in", but there are enough similarities to make it useful to discuss them together. Among the similarities is the fact that Sri Aurobindo's final manuscript of the concluding passage of Book Two, Canto Seven,

shows some signs of a certain inattentiveness even apart from the replacement of "benumbed" by a repetition of "oppressed". Two sentences later comes the line:

> There crawled through every tense and aching nerve

After copying this, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

> A nameless and unutterable

then cancelled these words, noticing that he had skipped a line. He then wrote, as in the manuscript from which he was copying:

> Leaving behind a poignant quaking trail
> A nameless and unutterable fear.

(The "a" before "poignant" was later changed to "its".)

With this detailed account we may close our survey of the biggest puzzle in the text of *Savitri* and draw a general balanced conclusion.

The editors of *Savitri* must certainly not succumb to the temptation to choose readings from earlier versions merely out of personal preference. But neither can a purely mechanical approach to editing be the ideal for a poem which covered many years and took shape in such a complex manner. Among the diverse possibilities of corruptions creeping into the text, slips and oversights by Sri Aurobindo himself form an extremely small category consisting primarily of omitted punctuation. But rare verbal slips are a possibility the editors must accept when there is very clear evidence for it, particularly from the standpoint of Sri Aurobindo's consistent yogic teaching.

K. D. SETHNA

MOOT COURT HEARING ON SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE OR EDWARD DE VERE?

Few readers of literature know of a recent event of great interest to the literary world. On September 25, 1987, the American University, Washington D.C., held a trial to decide a question that has vexed scholars for quite a time. Mother India *has the privilege to serialize the fascinating proceedings, thanks to the enthusiastic help of our friend Mr. William W. Jones of Memphis, Tennessee, U.S.A.*

(*Continued from the issue of October 1990*)

BERENDZEN—Well, welcome again this afternoon as we hear the decision of the court on surely one of the most extraordinary events this or any other University has had the privilege to hold in a long long time if ever. The justices have decided that they would like to proceed in the same fashion that they always use at the court. And what will happen is that each of them will render his decision and will speak and describe his decision and why. They will take questions in the same fashion that they do normally in the court proceedings. Justice Brennan.

BRENNAN—Thank you Dr. Berendzen. First of all on behalf of all three of us, may I congratulate both counsels on an absolutely superb presentation from each of them of his side of this argument. It's very obvious to us that both of you have dug very deeply into all available sources to turn up a wealth of material that I doubt any of the others that have been interested in this very provocative question have exceeded. I have to tell you that the three of us feel somewhat at a disadvantage. None of us, as you might appreciate, could possibly have found the time to do the kind of job that each of the counsels did. We did the best nevertheless to prepare as thoroughly as we could for this argument. Of course perhaps you may recall I said earlier that another reason for our feeling disadvantaged is that ordinarily as an appellant court what we do is review judgments based on records that have been made by some lower court or agency. Now we haven't had the advantage of either a judgment or a record of a lower court here and, without it, if I may say to you frankly, we do feel just a little bit at sea. But each of us nevertheless, following in this instance the British judicial practice, not our own, will separately state his position and reaction to the arguments that we've heard, and what he can say as to the resolution of the controversy.

Speaking first, the debate about the authorship of these plays, and indeed as well the sonnets I think, derives from a perception of the plays as reflecting a vast knowledge in a number of areas: the law, medicine, philosophy, geography and

so forth, and a belief that William Shakespeare of Stratford could never possibly have been exposed to the education and experiences necessary to produce these marvels of learning and erudition. Both of these impressions are I think inaccurate. For one thing, the plays as brilliant, witty and poetic as undoubtably and undeniably they are, nevertheless are not factually perfect. They contain a number of errors, amusingly documented by various scholars. For example, Bohemia is given a sea coast in *The Winter's Tale*, characters in *Two Gentleman of Verona* board ship at Verona for passage to Milan; Cleopatra wears a corset and plays billiards, Hector quotes Aristotle; Hamlet attends a yet to be founded University; there are clocks in ancient Rome and gunpowder in the time of King John; Edgar, although a contemporary of pre-Roman King Lear, is familiar with Bedlum, the hospital for the insane in Shakespeare's London, and there are other inaccuracies. As for Shakespeare's supposed expertise and the law, Elizabethan legal experts point out that when he uses legal terms in the plays they are in fact such terms as he would have encountered, it would seem to me, in his own basic dealings with deeds and titles to land and so forth, or in his sources because he did consult sources, notably I guess Hollingshed's *Chronicles of England*, which was published in 1577. So if the plays aren't as perfect as the Oxfordians suggest, the historical William Shakespeare was not such an ignorant butcher's boy as has been made out. While Shakespeare's wife Ann Hathaway and his younger daughter Judith may well have been illiterate, I guess most women in those days were not given educations. Yet his elder daughter Susannah was not illiterate, nor was his father John Shakespeare, although it's been maintained that the man couldn't even sign his own name. In fact he was a member of the Burrough Council and fairly prominent in local affairs in Stratford. Well, if he signed some documents with his mark rather than with his signature, so did most people in those days. As for Shakespeare himself, there is every reason to believe that he attended the excellent local grammar school in Stratford where several of the teachers had Oxford degrees, and that he received a fine education and classical training there. Now we have sadly only, I think, six examples of Shakespeare's signature, so I grant that the ghost signatures are written in such a shaky, illegible, illiterate hand that they certainly can speak of no particular education and yet it may well be that they are a very fine example of the so-called secretary method of writing, which to be sure does look somewhat strange to our 20th century eyes, but a 16th century scholar would probably think that our writing, at least mine, looks barbarous and untutored. The theory that Shakespeare's plays were actually written by Oxford was first put forward only as recently as 1920 as I understand it, and it strikes me that that theory is essentially a conspiracy theory. The Earl of Oxford for various complicated reasons could not be publicly recognized as the author, so he hid under the name of William Shakspere or Shakespeare, an actor with Lord Chamberlain's Men, which was of course a playing company that put on several

of the plays. The Stratfordians believe that this actor and William Shakespeare of Stratford are for that reason the author. Oxfordians on the other hand say it was only a cover up. Well, I said at the outset this morning that the burden, I thought, was on Oxford to prove in order to prevail that Oxford was indeed the author of the plays. It wasn't enough to prove that Shakespeare of Stratford was not. To prevail here as the case had been presented to us, it had to be Oxford proved. I felt that myself by clear and convincing evidence, it may be that even applying the ordinary preponderance of evidence standard, the case was not proved as I saw it. Unfortunately too, and this is the principal reason why I have concluded that the case is not proved, the fact is that several of the more important plays actually surfaced after Oxford's death in 1604. Now, there is no proof, to me at least, which I thought was essential, that any of these plays which surfaced after 1604 had been written by Oxford before 1604. What evidence there is to suggest that they were written by Oxford before 1604 is at least in my judgment inadequate to establish that in fact they were, and that for me is sufficient reason to say that the case has not been proved for Oxford. It must, it seems to me, be apparent that if a single one of the plays that surfaced after 1604 was not written by Oxford before his death, then I think the whole case collapses. It may well be that if there were other opportunities, more could be proved than has been submitted on behalf of Oxford today. But I can't tell you how much I have enjoyed this experience. It is a little different from the things that go on in our building every day, but near enough like it so that it has been a great experience. In any event my conclusion is that Oxford did not prove that he is the author of the plays. Hence I feel that the fact that only after two hundred years, or at least long after Shakespeare's death any doubt was cast on whether or not he was the author, leaves this thing about where we started. Justice Blackmun.

BLACKMUN—I share Acting Chief Justice Brennan's general approach to things. I suppose that is the legal answer, whether it is the correct one causes me greater doubt than I think it does Justice Brennan. But one can say that even accepting the fact that William Shakespeare is not the author, the secondary question which has been emphasized today is whether the Oxfordians have proved their case. My own feeling is that they come closer to proving it than anyone else has, and I suppose we should say this is enough, and yet I'm reluctant to say it. It reminds me of two excerpts from the plays. It makes me sad to have to sit on this kind of a case and that reminds me of the opening lines of *The Merchant of Venice* where Antonio is proclaiming: 'In sooth, I know not why I am so sad. / It wearies me and you say it wearies you' and so it goes on. And then Salarino says: 'Your mind is tossing on the ocean.' That's about where I find myself in trying to decipher the answer to this very fascinating issue. And the other one is I ask myself what business have I to try to judge this, and hence I hesitate to do it and that brings to mind the very profound saying of Isabel in *Measure for Measure*

when she says 'Oh, it is excellent to have a giant's strength, / But it is tyrannous to use it like a giant.' And that is the way I feel here today—like it is tyrannous and that I shouldn't try to use the judicial process in this kind of a thing. I have been impressed with the fact, which I think is true and accepted, that there have been four major claimants, or claims advanced, on behalf of four major figures in English literary history. The first of course is that of Francis Bacon 200 years ago, when a rector named James Wilmont advanced his authorship. And then, as Justice Brennan has indicated, that of Edward De Vere in 1920, but that was 65 plus years ago. And then more recently in 1952, on behalf of Stanley and again still more recently in 1955 for Christopher Marlowe. But I think, if I judge it correctly, there are no less than 56 other names that have been advanced with more or less serious concern about the authorship of the Shakespeare plays That's remarkable that there are 60 claimants, some of depth and some of not so great depth. It reminds me of some other controversies in English history that you people know far better than I—whether Richard the Third did murder the young princes in the tower of London, an old controversy that has a lot of strength behind it, and yet Josephine Tay in more or less recent writings takes the other position. It reminds me also of some of the myths that have grown up around Sherlock Holmes and Sir Conan Doyle. It's the kind of thing, it seems to me, that English literary history is full of, and it's such a great thing to study and to think about. I for one would much prefer to leave the disposition of this issue to the historians. Whatever we decide today is certainly not the answer to it, because the controversy will go on and on. So Justice Brennan, I've been groping, I wish we could say this is a political question of the court and the judiciary need not and cannot decide. But what fun and fascination it has been to hear these very talented scholars present their respective points of view, and I share Justice Brennan's comments that we are indeed indebted to both of you for what you've done—for the hours you've put into this, for the briefs you have produced—I found them fascinating. And so I express my personal appreciation to the two of you for what you've done. It certainly was presented extraordinarily well, and made me wish I was back studying English Literature again. Thank you very much.

(To be concluded)

VISIONARY TALES

1. THE ANGEL FLOWER

It was white like a fairy star, raying into space. Leana called it her angel flower and she cultivated it beneath the great Realisation tree. Its broad lateral leaves seemed to help it keep its poise, it didn't seem to know if it belonged in earth or heaven. It had near it a twin, with the same number of scapes and delicate, curling flowers.

Leana had cared for the two as they had grown up together. She had planted them there and watched them go from sprout to bud to flower. They were like her children and she knew them very well.

One day in the garden an unusual thing happened. Near the spot where the angel flowers grew, atop the large grey rocks that caught the falling Gul Mohur petals, silver-white crystals began to appear in certain patterns. Each day layer after layer was added until it became clear that some kind of magical construction was going on by some invisible Hand. Winds could not disturb the work, nor the rain wash it away. It continued to grow until one fine day on one rock a tiny temple had been made, on another a palace with many terraces, and on a third an elegant crystal globe, resting on a criss-cross base.

All the time that this strange happening was going on Leana tried not to interfere with disturbing thoughts or reactions, but just to wait quietly for the result. Once the three buildings had been completed, she came to look at them as closely as possible without touching. As she leaned near, a gentle voice issued from the crystal globe. "We have been built by the angel of the flowers," it said. "We represent a symbolic start of something that must be done in your world, for India, the human family, and the soul of the earth. Come each day at this evening hour and more will be revealed to you."

Leana came the next evening before sunset and let the twilight stillness imbue her soul as she waited to be told of that of which she intuited herself to be a part. The crystal Voice came again, this time enhanced by a subtle halo around the white temple, spotlighting it as for a drama and the story began.

"This temple is a living symbol," the Voice said, "of all the religious and spiritual heritage of India. It is a model of one of the most ancient and ornate temples as it will be when it is entirely refurbished, as will eventually happen with all the great temples all over India. It represents also the resurrection and restoration of all the forms of religious and spiritual practice to their original purity and power. All this must come one day in India and this edifice stands indestructible to that end. Meditate often here and each time you will realise one of these great Truths; it will open to you an avenue of new experience."

The Voice ceased and Leana continued to sit before the illumined temple, awaiting quietly the first revelation, as the stars shone brightly in the immaculate night. The Silence deepened and became all-pervading; all thought and feeling was stilled, every nerve bore the stamp of an immense quiescent Peace. It lasted

for long, and when Leana finally stirred, she had understood that out of that seemingly blank immensity the great creation had come. She had been in the womb of the Immortal Word.

The next evening, at the same hour, Leana came again to the plot beneath the tree, what was now for her a garden of mystical experience, a trysting place with the Beautiful and True. This night the Voice and the Light highlighted the "palace" with its sparkling walls and lattice-work terraces. "This symbol is more complex," the Voice declared. "It represents a number of ramifications of human life and relationship that need to become harmonised in order for society to be divinised here. It is at once a palace of kings, a model for future beauty in architecture, and a residential home, symbol of an ideal for future groupings in the family of God. It is a centre for the Government of Love that must rule the world, a spiritual environment for maximum growth towards divinity on earth, and the happy household of those who in sharing this space can share their souls."

Leana meditated deeply on this fascinating description and soon saw herself within the walls of this "palace", moving in its spacious, high-ceilinged rooms, meeting people from all over the country and the world in international friendship and as part of a patriotic brotherhood. She saw also quiet mornings and evenings alongside the inner pool where her spiritual family joined her often in meditation, readings and recitations. The purity of the atmosphere there made it possible for her to be with others and yet not lose her highest consciousness, for all the people were in their right places in the group life and an inner serenity prevailed. The pastel décor and crystal floors were a marvel to all who came and the craftsmanship inspired artists all around the world.

On the third evening, after her inspiring experience of the night before, Leana approached the garden with an even greater feeling of anticipation and wonder, for she felt within that now she would receive the profoundest initiation of all. She knelt before the crystal globe and watched the golden-white luminosity from within emerge as a pastel rainbow across the facetted face of the transparent gem. The globe then began to rotate slowly clockwise and the Voice said, "This is the crystal that has captured the spiritual Sun. It is the symbol of the soul within us all that ever radiates sweetness and Light and keeps us centred on the godward way. There is a place on earth where this outer crystal will be housed, but those who are building it are not yet ready to receive it so it remains here, unfound. You, Leana, are to guard it, and give it watchful care, so when the moment comes for it to be transported, you as a conscious helper can be there."

Leana felt the awesome responsibility and privilege that had been accorded her, and she prostrated herself in true surrender to that which she had been asked to do. She arose and sat before the crystal globe, feeling an inrush of Force that could be seen as a rain of silver stars entering her brain. She was no longer just a woman; she was already half-divine.

"BALAK"

SAINT JOAN OF ARC

AN ESSAY BY MARK TWAIN

I

THE evidence furnished at the Trials and Rehabilitation sets forth Joan of Arc's strange and beautiful history in clear and minute detail. Among all the multitude of biographies that freight the shelves of the world's libraries, *this is the only one whose validity is confirmed to us by oath.* It gives us a vivid picture of a career and a personality of so extraordinary a character that we are helped to accept them as actualities by the very fact that both are beyond the inventive reach of fiction. The public part of the career occupied only a mere breath of time—it covered but two years; but what a career it was! The personality which made it possible is one to be reverently studied, loved, and marveled at, but not to be wholly understood and accounted for by even the most searching analysis.[1]

In Joan of Arc at the age of sixteen there was no promise of a romance. She lived in a dull little village on the frontiers of civilization: she had been nowhere and had seen nothing; she knew none but simple shepherd folk; she had never seen a person of note; she hardly knew what a soldier looked like; she had never ridden a horse, nor had a warlike weapon in her hand; she could neither read nor write; she could spin and sew; she knew her catechism and her prayers and the fabulous histories of the saints, and this was all her learning. That was Joan at sixteen. What did she know of law? of evidence? of courts? of the attorney's trade? of legal procedure? Nothing. Less than nothing. Thus exhaustively equipped with ignorance, she went before the court at Toul to contest a false charge of breach of promise of marriage; she conducted her cause herself without any one's help or advice or any one's friendly sympathy, and won it. She called no witnesses of her own, but vanquished the prosecution by using with deadly effectiveness its own testimony. The astonished judge threw the case out of court, and spoke of her as "this marvelous child."

She went to the veteran Commandant of Vaucouleurs and demanded an escort of soldiers, saying she must march to the help of the King of France, since she was commissioned of God to win back his lost kingdom for him and set the

[1] The Official Record of the Trials and Rehabilitation of Joan of Arc is the most remarkable history that exists in any language, yet there are few people in the world who can say they have read it in England and America it has hardly been heard of

Three hundred years ago Shakespeare did not know the true story of Joan of Arc, in his day it was unknown even in France For four hundred years it existed rather as a vaguely defined romance than as definite and authentic history. The true story remained buried in the official archives of France from the Rehabilitation of 1456 until Quicherat dug it out and gave it to the world two generations ago, in lucid and understandable modern French It is a deeply fascinating story But only in the Official Trials and Rehabilitation can it be found in its entirety —M T

crown upon his head. The Commandant said, "What, you? You are only a child." And he advised that she be taken back to her village and have her ears boxed. But she said she must obey God, and would come again, and again, and yet again, and finally she would get the soldiers. She said truly. In time he yielded, after months of delay and refusal, and gave her the soldiers; and took off his sword and gave her that, and said, "Go—and let come what may." She made her long and perilous journey through the enemy's country, and spoke with the King, and convinced him. Then she was summoned before the University of Poitiers to prove that she *was* commissioned of God and not of Satan, and daily during three weeks she sat before that learned congress unafraid, and capably answered their deep questions out of her ignorant but able head and her simple and honest heart; and again she won her case, and with it the wondering admiration of all that august company.

And now, aged seventeen, she was made Commander-in-Chief, with a prince of the royal house and the veteran generals of France for subordinates; and at the head of the first army she had ever seen, she marched to Orleans, carried the commanding fortresses of the enemy by storm in three desperate assaults, and in ten days raised a siege which had defied the might of France for seven months.

After a tedious and insane delay caused by the King's instability of character and the treacherous counsels of his ministers, she got permission to take the field again. She took Jargeau by storm; then Meung; she forced Beaugency to surrender; then—in the open field—she won the memorable victory of Patay against Talbot, "the English lion," and broke the back of the Hundred Years' War. It was a campaign which cost but seven weeks of time; yet the political results would have been cheap if the time expended had been fifty years. Patay, that unsung and now long-forgotten battle, was the Moscow of the English power in France; from the blow struck that day it was destined never to recover. It was the beginning of the end of an alien dominion which had ridden France intermittently for three hundred years.

Then followed the great campaign of the Loire, the capture of Troyes by assault, and the triumphal march past surrendering towns and fortresses to Rheims, where Joan put the crown upon her King's head in the Cathedral, amid wild public rejoicings, and with her old peasant father there to see these things and believe his eyes if he could. She had restored the crown and the lost sovereignty; the King was grateful for once in his shabby poor life, and asked her to name her reward and have it. She asked for nothing for herself, but begged that the taxes of her native village might be remitted forever. The prayer was granted, and the promise kept for three hundred and sixty years. Then it was broken, and remains broken to-day. France was very poor then, she is very rich now; but she has been collecting those taxes for more than a hundred years.

Joan asked one other favor: that now that her mission was fulfilled she might be allowed to go back to her village and take up her humble life again with

her mother and the friends of her childhood; for she had no pleasure in the cruelties of war, and the sight of blood and suffering wrung her heart. Sometimes in battle she did not draw her sword, lest in the splendid madness of the onset she might forget herself and take an enemy's life with it. In the Rouen Trials, one of her quaintest speeches—coming from the gentle and girlish source as it did—was her naive remark that she had "never killed any one." Her prayer for leave to go back to the rest and peace of her village home was not granted.

Then she wanted to march at once upon Paris, take it, and drive the English out of France. She was hampered in all the ways that treachery and the King's vacillation could devise, but she forced her way to Paris at last, and fell badly wounded in a successful assault upon one of the gates. Of course her men lost heart at once—she was the only heart they had. They fell back. She begged to be allowed to remain at the front, saying victory was sure. "I will take Paris now or die!" she said. But she was removed from the field by force; the King ordered a retreat, and actually disbanded his army. In accordance with a beautiful old military custom Joan devoted her silver armor and hung it up in the Cathedral of St. Denis. Its great days were over.

Then, by command, she followed the King and his frivolous court and endured a gilded captivity for a time, as well as her free spirit could; and whenever inaction became unbearable she gathered some men together and rode away and assaulted a stronghold and captured it.

At last in a sortie against the enemy, from Compiègne, on the 24th of May (when she was turned eighteen), she was herself captured, after a gallant fight. It was her last battle. She was to follow the drums no more.

Thus ended the briefest epoch-making military career known to history. It lasted only a year and a month, but it found France an English province, and furnishes the reason that France is France to-day and not an English province still. Thirteen months! It was, indeed, a short career; but in the centuries that have since elapsed five hundred millions of Frenchmen have lived and died blest by the benefactions it conferred; and so long as France shall endure, the mighty debt must grow. And France is grateful; we often hear her say it. Also thrifty: she collects the Domremy taxes.

II

Joan was fated to spend the rest of her life behind bolts and bars. She was a prisoner of war, not a criminal, therefore hers was recognized as an honorable captivity. By the rules of war she must be held to ransom, and a fair price could not be refused if offered. John of Luxembourg paid her the just compliment of requiring a prince's ransom for her. In that day that phrase represented a definite sum—61,125 francs. It was, of course, supposable that either the King or grateful France, or both, would fly with the money and set their fair young benefactor free. But this did not happen. In five and a half months neither King nor country

stirred a hand nor offered a penny. Twice Joan tried to escape. Once by a trick she succeeded for a moment, and locked her jailer in behind her, but she was discovered and caught; in the other case she let herself down from a tower sixty feet high, but her rope was too short, and she got a fall that disabled her and she could not get away.

Finally, Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, paid the money and bought Joan—ostensibly for the Church, to be tried for wearing male attire and for other impieties, but really for the English, the enemy into whose hands the poor girl was so piteously anxious not to fall. She was now shut up in the dungeons of the Castle of Rouen and kept in an iron cage, with her hands and feet and neck chained to a pillar; and from that time forth during all the months of her imprisonment, till the end, several rough English soldiers stood guard over her night and day—and not outside her room, but in it. It was a dreary and hideous captivity, but it did not conquer her: nothing could break that invincible spirit. From first to last she was a prisoner a year; and she spent the last three months of it on trial for her life before a formidable array of ecclesiastical judges, and disputing the ground with them foot by foot and inch by inch with brilliant generalship and dauntless pluck. The spectacle of that solitary girl, forlorn and friendless, without advocate or adviser, and without the help and guidance of any copy of the charges brought against her or rescript of the complex and voluminous daily proceedings of the court to modify the crushing strain upon her astonishing memory, fighting that long battle serene and undismayed against these colossal odds, stands alone in its pathos and its sublimity; it has nowhere its mate, either in the annals of fact or in the inventions of fiction.

And how fine and great were the things she daily said, how fresh and crisp—and she so worn in body, so starved, and tired, and harried! They run through the whole gamut of feeling and expression—from scorn and defiance, uttered with soldierly fire and frankness, all down the scale to wounded dignity clothed in words of noble pathos; as when her patience was exhausted by the pestering delvings and gropings and searchings of her persecutors to find out what kind of devil's witchcraft she had employed to rouse the war spirit in her timid soldiers, she burst out with, "What I said was, '*Ride these English down*'—and I did it myself!" and as, when insultingly asked why it was that *her* standard had place at the crowning of the King in the Cathedral of Rheims rather than the standards of the other captains, she uttered that touching speech, "*It had borne the burden, it had earned the honor*"—a phrase which fell from her lips without premeditation, yet whose moving beauty and simple grace it would bankrupt the arts of language to surpass.

Although she was on trial for her life, she was the only witness called on either side; the only witness summoned to testify before a packed jury commissioned with a definite task: to find her guilty, whether she was guilty or not. She must be convicted out of her own mouth, there being no other way to accomplish

it. Every advantage that learning has over ignorance, age over youth, experience over inexperience, chicane over artlessness, every trick and trap and gin devisable by malice and the cunning of sharp intellects practised in setting snares for the unwary—all these were employed against her without shame; and when these arts were one by one defeated by the marvelous intuitions of her alert and penetrating mind, Bishop Cauchon stooped to a final baseness which it degrades human speech to describe: a priest who pretended to come from the region of her own home and to be a pitying friend and anxious to help her in her sore need was smuggled into her cell, and he misused his sacred office to steal her confidence; she confided to him the things sealed from revealment by her Voices, and which her prosecutors had tried so long in vain to trick her into betraying. A concealed confederate set it all down and delivered it to Cauchon, who used Joan's secrets thus obtained, for her ruin.

Throughout the Trials, whatever the foredoomed witness said was twisted from its true meaning when possible, and made to tell against her; and whenever an answer of hers was beyond the reach of twisting it was not allowed to go upon the record. It was upon one of these latter occasions that she uttered that pathetic reproach—to Cauchon: "Ah, you set down everything that is against me, but you will not set down what is for me."

That this untrained young creature's genius for war was wonderful, and her generalship worthy to rank with the ripe products of a tried and trained military experience, we have the sworn testimony of two of her veteran subordinates—one, the Duc d'Alençon, the other the greatest of the French generals of the time, Dunois, Bastard of Orleans; that her genius was as great—possibly even greater—in the subtle warfare of the forum we have for witness the records of the Rouen Trials, that protracted exhibition of intellectual fence maintained with credit against the masterminds of France; that her moral greatness was peer to her intellect we call the Rouen Trials again to witness, with their testimony to a fortitude which patiently and steadfastly endured during twelve weeks the wasting forces of captivity, chains, loneliness, sickness, darkness, hunger, thirst, cold, shame, insult, abuse, broken sleep, treachery, ingratitude, exhausting sieges of cross-examination, the threat of torture, with the rack before her and the executioner standing ready: yet never surrendering, never asking quarter, the frail wreck of her as unconquerable the last day as was her invincible spirit the first.

Great as she was in so many ways, she was perhaps even greatest of all in the lofty things just named—her patient endurance, her steadfastness, her granite fortitude. We may not hope to easily find her mate and twin in these majestic qualities; where we lift our eyes highest we find only a strange and curious contrast—there in the captive eagle beating his broken wings on the Rock of St. Helena.

(To be concluded)

IN THE GREY EXPANSES...

In the grey expanses withholding the bounty of rain and sun
Where the self has broken the barriers of space hungering for the Unknown
A mendicant wanders in the infinities of our own inmost soul
Seeking the dole at every sleeping door
In the chill resisting twilight veiling the dawn.

A confluence of many argent forces crowding the mystic gate
Left ajar by the failing force of the Night
Yielding to the light of a new day,
Leaving the gods to their sublime realms and worshipped powers
Seeks a birth in vain to incarnadine
This world of toil and fears and fugitive laughter.

One roams in rags the cosmic corridors,
Voicing his golden song alone,
Disturbing the endless universe the aeons have built,
To build a city of God's untarnished truth on this indolent earth
Where the children of light caught in a crypt
Cry to flee their plight and kiss his sacred feet.
Unheeding whirl the magnitudes Nature displays.

Here our days are but appendages of the disastrous Night
Glossing the grievous wrong of the child left crying in the mire,
Where Beauty's imprint erupts in the sable hoods and sanguinary wars,
Our efforts at peace launch a million evils
Lording the high seas of life in bellowing sails;
Where the heaven close to our heights sobs in maternal ache
To span the chasm of our unseeing depths.

A silence shielding our heavenly fate from adverse days
Hears the trudge of the naked gold feet in the maze of time,
Descries an oracular voice waking the slumber of the ages
To the music of the celestial change—
An impalpable breath foils the calamitous ends.

DAMODAR REDDY

THE CURTAIN FELL

I TURNED to your irresistible call, O my soul,
And upon the deepest waters cast
My voyage. Ever unhorizoned the stars beckon
As behind me unrolls swiftly my past.

The ray that drew my feet, my eye forward, has now withdrawn.
In the sheer gloom of the night,
The aim is lost, lost the adventurer's art,
Lost the will to seek and lost the fight.

The next storm that billows will seal my doom,
I await the moment in peace.
Death's not sharp any more, even fear of the unknown is dead,
In tranquillity unbroken the final release

Comes, as the inner eye opens into Light, the Truth
Permeates the ocean; the wind, the star,
Are recovered under the inward firmament;
Cosmos breathes, where's the near? No more the far.

All is instantaneous in immediate space,
The dimension of Time vaporizes dissolved;
Almost the Guessed lingers unseen, I thrill to the kiss
Of Being, by intimate oneness resolved.

I seek for joy, but only rooted tranquillity traverses,
Unrippling, the fibres of self, only the meditative profound,
The still vast Compassion of which the cosmos is a speck
Is my heartbeat, is life, is Love without sound.

ARVIND HABBU

"SATYAVAN MUST DIE"

A DISCOURSE APROPOS OF A PHRASE IN SRI AUROBINDO'S *SAVITRI*

(*Continued from the issue of October 1990*)

6. Love at First Sight

SAVITRI has grown to full maidenhood and her father tells her to seek in the wide world-ways her life's companion who has not yet come to her. She is bidden to "Ascend from Nature to divinity's heights" that she may meet a greater God, her own self, beyond Time. She rides her beautifully carved chariot and sets out on the unknown quest, travelling across distant lands and countries, through ancient places gorgeous and bathing in sun and rain, through wonder-realms held secret in its bosom by the approaching silent hour of love. At last she comes to a wooded region

> Where man was a passer-by towards human scenes
> Or sole in Nature's vastness strove to live
> And called for help to ensouled invisible Powers,
> Overwhelmed by the immensity of his world
> And unaware of his own infinity.[1]

In the wilderness of that life, in the dense solitude of that cloistered world, untouched by the hurry and care of the busy traffic of the day, Savitri meets Love almost with the unexpectedness of the call of the flower-season to the spirit of delight. All in an epoch-ushering moment's flash changes her life and with it the entire destiny of the earth. Mighty workings of an unknown power bring the lovers together to a place that is a "sanctuary of youth and joy" and where the Spring is on the verge of turning into the Summer's rich golden promise, Savitri is a stranger to the ways of the world, and to the doings of Time, but it is here that she discovers through love a new identity beyond them. From the far-off Madra, situated on the remote banks of Alacananda, she comes down to the plains and even as her beautiful carven car cuts through the Shalwa woods suddenly meets her second self for whom her high nature was secretly yearning. He shall strike the intimate chords of her being, a lyrist giving utterance to what in her is mute; a quiet divinity that was waiting for expression shall at once awake to the dynamics of love's wondrous joys. On the face of Satyavan there is a happy glow of fresh life; he is a Veda-knower; his mind is wide and open to infinity; though brought here by adverse fate, he turned it into an opportunity to learn things from sublimities of stream and wood and from voices of the sun and star and flame and from chant of the birds and dumb movements of the animals.

From the silent hills and the rustle of the winds, in deep communion with primal nature, he acquires the wisdom of the ages. The way the morn is sure of the coming day so seems he to grow in sunlight of the spiritual knowledge. In studentship under the sages of the wood he glimpses the "presence of the One in all'. Indeed,

> As if a weapon of the living Light,
> Erect and lofty like a spear of God
> His figure led the splendour of the morn.
> Noble and clear as the broad peaceful heavens
> A tablet of young wisdom was his brow,
> Freedom's imperious beauty curved his limbs,
> The joy of life was on his open face.
> His look was a wide daybreak of the gods,
> His head was a youthful Rishi's touched with light,
> His body was a lover's and a king's.
> In the magnificent dawning of his force
> Built like a moving statue of delight
> He illumined the border of the forest page.[2]

One who brings light to the darkness and in the rush of his force god-delights—that is young Satyavan.

And such were the lovers who, by the accident of Fate, met in sylvan recesses of the earth-nature's varied secrecies of life. But in the accidents of Fate there are Mystery's designs. On that particular day Satyavan, leaving his accustomed path, took another as if to meet Savitri by appointment. She was going from place to place in search of her unknown lover who in this rendezvous was prompted by a secret Destiny's call. Savitri would have passed by; she would have lost the aim, the meaning and purpose for which she had come down from her high noble dwelling above. The one who had stepped here "Into the darkness of the suffering world" to change it by "Her healing touch of love and truth and joy" would have failed in her incarnate mission.

> But the god touched in time her conscious soul.[3]

Aided by designs of that invisible power, two beings have come together to merge into each other's identity. At first Savitri's look was casual and she might have moved on to other lands and countries. But it was not to be so! The God of Love settled everything for them—and for the earth too. The silent moment of their meeting has already worked out a miraculous alchemy. The very physical being of Savitri is filled with wonder and joy. The new-found beauty in her eyes has drawn out her deep soul making it see through those windows the world with the light of love:

Allured to her lashes by his passionate words
Her fathomless soul looked at him from her eyes.[4]

A similar alchemy makes Satyavan invite Savitri to enter his life. A mind of light and a life of rhythmic force have fused into one consciousness that triumphs over death. Savitri's choice of Satyavan is the choice made by her conscious soul; similarly, Satyavan, looking out from his "soul's door", sees in the presence of Savitri a new divinity spread around him. While he fills the golden spaces of her life, for him the wonder and speed of her beautiful carven car carries fulfilment of all the aeonic dreams. But this soul-sight and soul-truth awakens in these extraordinary lovers only when touched by Love; until then both of them lived, oblivious of their own deeper reality, in the circle of incomplete routines as if given to little human wants and frailties, yet waiting for the spirit of the one to be kindled by the unknown other's. When they meet and get acquainted with each other, Savitri pleads to Satyavan to speak till a light shall enter into her heart and her moved mortal mind understand all that the deathless being in her feels. As for Satyavan, although he was a Veda-knower, he had until now missed something in life, the very meaning of creation,

The link of the finite with the Infinite,
The bridge between the appearance and the Truth,
The mystic aim for which the world was made,
The human sense of Immortality.[5]

But in the figure of Savitri there is an assurance of the human sense turning into Immortality. From some deep perception of fulfilment, he tells it to her:

...now the gold link comes to me with thy feet
And His gold sun has shone on me from thy face.
For now another realm draws near with thee
And now diviner voices fill my ear,
A strange new world swims to me in thy gaze
Approaching like a star from unknown heavens...[6]

Satyavan's seeing in Savitri's coming the "gold link" and the "gold sun" is the first sign of a higher knowledge-dynamism in the terrestrial play. The God of Love has hence done well in bringing to either one of them the identity as of earth with heaven.

Satyavan must have been a brave youth to espouse a princess like Savitri, too high and flaming-bright for mortality's feeble arms to grasp and clasp. She was a "glory unapproachably divine" and no hero-warrior had ever ventured to ask for her hand in marriage.

No equal heart came close to join her heart,
No transient earthly love assailed her calm,
No hero passion had the strength to seize;
No eyes demanded her replying eyes.
A Power within her awed the imperfect flesh...[7]

But Satyavan makes himself bold to question her as to who she is and tell her to accompany him to his father's "creepered hermitage". With the marriage hymn he gathers "all Savitri into his clasp" and she too lets herself pour into him, like a river into a mighty sea. To be able to hold the pouring of such a river whose flowing contents are eternity is possible only for an infinite self whose depth is omnipotence. On the human plane Satyavan knows, by the power of Love, the full meaning of his soul in the beauty and wonder of Savitri and they, like the Lord and Spouse, join together for the world-delight's creation. The suddenness of their identity in love's union sets aside all the uncertainties of Time and brings to the slowness of the cosmic wisdom-and-force's workings God-speed and God-surety. But now it looks as though such a union can be solemnised only through the priesthood of death. If the child of mortality's love is death, then that death itself must be made a means to dissolve its begetter and nourisher. Then shall the divine progeny be born.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

REFERENCES

1 *Savitri*, p 385 2 *Ibid*, p 393 3 *Ibid*, p 395 4 *Ibid*, p 409
5 *Ibid*, p 408 6 *Ibid*, p 408 7 *Ibid*, p 367

SENTINEL

O LOVE! Stand sentinel at my senses' doors—
So that, thief-like, no thoughts may pass.
Let only those find entrance
That lift burning incense to invoke Thee.
Dazzling and blinding me forever to outer lures
O secret Sun! let Thy haloed smiling face
Like a supreme magnet, hold fast all my fate.

SHYAM KUMARI

CALCUTTA'S TERCENTENARY

(Continued from the issue of October 1990)

APART from the temples and churches, we must remember the spiritual personages of Calcutta like Sri Ramakrishna, leaders of the Brahma Samaj like Keshab Chandra Sen, Maharshi Debendranath, and Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Vijayakrishna Goswami and others. Their pervading influence helped the spiritual growth of the people which in turn helped towards achieving a better transformation of the society.

The British people lived around the old fort and tank square up to 1760, after which they spread towards Gobindapur village, the present Chowringhee area. This became their residential area. After acquiring the Zemindary of the 24 Parganas the city further spread in all directions. Roads were constructed and areas were being developed at the cost of the local people. But the foreigners did not pay much attention to the city's uniform growth and beautification. Had it been the French, the city would have better grown, professor Hiren Mukherjee has opined. The city was growing haphazardly—"Chance erected, chance directed", "Palace, byre, hovel/poverty and pride/side by side."

Seeing the palaces at Chowringhee Mrs. Fanny Parkes felt Calcutta's name 'city of palaces' quite justified. Rents in 1822 at the Chowringhee area for a bungalow were between rupees 300 and 500. The then Calcutta as seen from the top of the monument through the eyes of a foreigner: "There is, behold, a countless number of flat-roofed houses... so close do these roofs appear to be to one another that he who inclines may apparently walk and jump over them... In other parts of the native town the houses are covered with tiles... and most of the chunamed houses in the north-east part are dingy..." (refer to 'Chronicle of Town Calcutta', Part II, in Bengali by Benoy Ghosh—p. 39).

Lopsided development of the city may be easily verified from the above observation.

The biggest town of India, Calcutta, had a population of six lakhs in 1872. The number of people reached to 12 lakhs in 1931. It was 90 lakhs in 1981. It is now expected to have crossed a crore. This growth is the result of normal growth plus influx of people from other provinces as settlers, service-holders and refugees. The area under Calcutta Corporation has increased to 187.33 square kilometres.

Apart from the absence of proper town-planning from the beginning till now and its architectural flaws, the city suffered setbacks due to many unforeseen calamities. During the Second World War Calcutta became the storehouse for the eastern hemisphere and its centre of communications. All big military convoys ran through Calcutta's roads. Calcutta had to withstand all the hazards of the war. As a result of the war came the great famine of 1943 followed by

economic depression. Then there was a conspiracy of the colonial power, of which many narrow communal forces became easy victims—there took place the horrible riot of 16 August 1946. Then came the transfer of power—with the division of India. After the partition there was an exodus many a time from the then East Bengal—the pressure had to be absorbed mostly by the Calcutta city. In 1971 and also at other times the exodus from a neighbouring province took place. Calcutta was the worst victim of all these calamities. As in the case of other big towns it had grown by the bank of the Hooghly river (the Ganges) with a port. The port had the biggest hinterland in the country. After the partition it lost a big part of its hinterland and business to Chittagong port. Later it lost further business to Vizag, Paradip and other ports. The river lost its navigability as it was silted up towards the sea. As a result big ships could not enter the port. Calcutta has grown with many an imbalance and incongruity, in naming streets and roads (its first road was Chitpur road)—in erecting statues (with structural and artistic flaws)—in constructing tall buildings (some of which have come down heavily on the road killing men)—for its inherent defects, etc. Calcutta was variously called from time to time: first 'city of palaces', then 'city of processions', then 'city of slums'. It has the most ugly areas as well as the most beautiful places. All sorts of people live here—the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich.

In spite of all contradictions it has been accepted that Calcutta is a very joyous city ever growing with love and hate, joy and sorrow, fear and courage. Nowhere in India are people so fond of games—particularly football—and music, dramas and poems. Literary magazines are published in the largest number from this city. People's appreciation of art and artistic objects is ever increasing here. For all its load-shedding and traffic jams, conveyance-problems and other hardships, people love to live here in increasing numbers and they come regularly from other places. New thoughts here emerge every now and then. The city remains always creative.

(Concluded)

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

Solar Cars

A LOT of progress has been made over the past few decades in car technology from the ecological point of view. This becomes most evident if we compare a modern West German, American or Japanese car with the old-fashioned East German *Trabant*. A single "Trabi" with its two-stroke engine produces a cloud of exhaust fumes as toxic as that of one hundred high tech cars combined.

Nevertheless, cities all over the world are getting more and more polluted, since the number of vehicles is constantly increasing everywhere. The only answer to this problem would be the solar car which has already been manufactured on an experimental basis in hundreds of models. However, they are all very expensive and rather inefficient. Some experts believe that the proper solar car with large solar panels will never appear on the streets on a large scale. But they believe in the future of battery-powered electric cars.

Small electric vehicles have been in operation for long in many railway stations or at airports, for instance. The technology is well developed, although there are still problems with the batteries. In most cases, the electric mobiles have only a short range and would be at best capable of helping their users to do city shopping. Moreover, they would only be truly ecological, if the batteries are recharged with "clean" energy. Otherwise, the problem would only be shifted. More power stations of whatever kind would have to be constructed to supply electric current to millions of cars connected to their electric outlets at home in the night.

The ideal would be an electric car which is recharged at a solar fuel station. The first experimental German "Solartankstelle" was opened in May 1990 in Kassel. It is to produce about 650 kilowatt hours per year, which would be sufficient to recharge two electric cars within two hours with energy for ten kilometres

Electric cars, often inappropriately called "Solarmobile" by their constructors in Western Europe, will be more and more seen on the streets in the West. At an exhibition in Geneva, General Motors has introduced its "Impact", a two-seater whose production is to start before the end of 1990, as *Der Spiegel* (7-5-1990) reports in an article. The French company Citroen is preparing the production of its "C 25" and Peugeot works on the "205", all of them priced on the level of a medium-sized standard car. The "Impact" would accelerate to 100 km/h in eight seconds and reach a maximum speed of 170 km/h. If driven more moderately, it could have a range of up to 200 km per battery charge. The French models are slower and have only half the range. Recharging the batteries

is to take about eight hours. Some 500 "Solarmobile" of various types are already moving on the streets of Switzerland and have a few solar fuel stations available.

The rather slow recharging has been a negative point so far, but according to a note published in *bild der wissenschaft* (April 1990), the American Power Devices Corp, has developed a patented new procedure for fast recharging which does not damage the batteries. An electric impulse of a few hundred mili seconds duration is sent into the lead battery, followed by three mili seconds of discharging. This procedure has to be continued for no more than half an hour for complete recharging, a comparatively short period as compared to the conventional methods.

Enthusiasts believe that all this might be a small beginning with a great end, even though many engineers doubt whether any economic solar-electric car could be constructed before the year 2000. Just now, driving a battery car is slightly risky in a country like Switzerland: sudden freezing temperatures strongly affect the performance of the batteries so that the car may stop very soon—a problem you wouldn't have to worry about in most parts of India. In fact, these experiments, made in the vicinity of the Alps and elsewhere, will eventually give the greatest benefit to drivers near the equator.

MEETINGS

SOME we meet
On the surface of thought.
We dare not enter the depths,
Lest our meetings come to nought.

Others we know
In the depths of thought.
It matters not
What we say or do
For our bonds in depth are strong and sound.

SURESH THADANI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle, Forty-sixth Number 1990 (Sri Aurobindo Society Annual); published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry; pp. VIII + 106.

THIS beautifully got-up annual Number for the year 1990 carries an impressive symbol of peace on its front cover. A fresh dawn breaks for Modern Man and the bird begins its long journey to spread the message of peace and harmony on earth in the present hour. The Number speaks of the same message everywhere inside but the message is imparted through several manifestations of life and literature. The four photo-plates in the beginning featuring the Mother are four different dimensions of Her personality thus gracing the issue with a luminous spiritual aura.

The messages of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, along with their facsimile reproductions, introduce the annual. Sri Aurobindo answers the question how to get the "feeling from within". It depends on being able to go inside; that comes best by bhakti. Excerpts from his writings are strung into a garland and they highlight the power and dimension of the Inner Self-elevation which demands the supramental transformation of Mind, Life and Body.

Excerpts from the writings of the Mother are complementary to Sri Aurobindo's. Everyone is here on earth with a mission to fulfil. Since everyone is endowed with a consciousness, one should become conscious of Divine Love. The process begins when one puts to oneself the first question: 'Why am I here?".

Nearly half of the issue comprises poems and articles presented by several celebrities. Poems of Amal Kiran, Nirodbaran, Arjava, Nolini Kanta Gupta, "Gleaner", Lal Kamal, Romen Palit and R. Y. Deshpande adorn the centre of the annual. Kishor Gandhi's third article on Critical Evaluation of Marx's Theory appears here. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar puts the message of Sri Aurobindo in a nutshell. K. D. Sethna's serial "Sri Aurobindo and Greece" and Prema Nandakumar's serial "Sri Aurobindo's Interpretation of Indian Culture" exhibit their critical acumen and scholarly erudition.

A. S. Dalal's article "Sri Aurobindo and Modern Psychology" substantiates that Sri Aurobindo has, through personal exploration and experience as a yoga practitioner, mapped out and intimately described the entire terrain of consciousness in all its gradations. R. Y. Deshpande describes *Savitri* as "A Poem of Sacred Delight" with beautiful illustrative examples. The issue becomes, by oversight perhaps, forty-fifth from Page No. 10 to Page No. 18. Except for this lapse, it is meticulously edited—exquisite and refreshing in its contents.

D. GNANASEKARAN

Practical Criticism, Edited by V. S. Seturaman, C. T. Indra, and T Sriraman. Publishers: Macmillan India Limited, Madras. 1990. Pages: 263. Price: Rs. 40/-

"People ask for criticism, but they only want praise," commented Somerset Maugham. The object of true criticism is neither praise nor blame. What then are the aims and duties of criticism? They are, William Gilmore Simms answers, "Justly to discriminate, firmly to establish, wisely to prescribe, and honestly to award." These four concerns can further be simplified as "a serious examination and judgement of a work of art in all its aspects "

In his *Mirror and the Lamp*, M. H. Abrams describes four different approaches to criticism:

a) *Mimetic* criticism which gives primacy to the work of art as imitation or representation of the external world;

b) *Pragmatic* criticism which shifts the emphasis to the reader—the strategies or codes an author employs to produce the desired effects on the reader;

c) *Expressive* criticism which places its emphasis on the writer, looking upon a work of art as an expression or an overflow of the powerful feelings of the author;

d) *Objective* criticism which cuts the poem off from its creator and the world that we know. It looks upon a work of art as something autonomous.

Under the fourth category falls Practical Criticism, otherwise known as applied criticism or even descriptive criticism. At the turn of this century, the younger generation of poets and critics revolted against the prevailing tendency of English literary criticism which had become impressionistic, subjective and bioliterary, and attempted to turn the attention of the reader from the author to his work. Though T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards and William Empson were associated with this approach, the label 'Practical Criticism' is more appropriately attached to the name of F. R. Leavis. It is because he not only crusaded for practical criticism but also gave a moral turn to it "adding weight to the semantic dimension which it had already acquired".

Leavis "looked upon literature as a responsible and powerful weapon for effecting a moral change in society. He regarded poets and writers as moralists foremost in the broadest sense of the term. He demanded that the poet should develop 'a technique of sincerity' and felt that practical criticism would prove whether a poet has successfully attained to this technique." This actually is the very purpose of criticism. Through his journal *Scrutiny* (1932-53) edited with the assistance of his wife Q. D. Leavis, Leavis brought practical criticism to a great degree of refinement.

It was Leavis who was responsible for establishing practical criticism as part of the English course at the undergraduate level. Indian universities, which even now continue to remain faithful to English, have taken practical criticism to a

programmatic level in the curriculum both at the undergraduate and at the post-graduate levels. Quite a good number of preliminary books such as *A Premier of Appreciation* by C. Hollingworth, *Literary Appreciation* by F. T. Wood, *An Introduction to Prose Style* by Edwin T. Bowden, *A Poetry Premier* by Gerald Sanders, *Poetry and Appreciation* by A. F. Scott, *An Introduction to Fiction* by Robert Stanton were made available through British and American libraries in India to students and teachers of English Literature. But since the 'ever-busy' Indian mind hardly finds time to pursue knowledge by going through such books, and is more interested in having everything in a nutshell, it longed for an all-in-one edition of practical criticism. The book under review is prepared to meet the long-felt need

Designed to help students and teachers of practical criticism, the book is made up of three sections, *viz* , Introduction, Analysis and Exercises. The most informative first section discusses in detail the function of practical criticism. It gives a brief outline of the classical critical tradition and the development of the English critical tradition up to Deconstruction, furnishes an account of New Criticism in America and highlights the use of practical criticism: "(It) creates an atmosphere where the students feel that they are being helped to see, experience and describe what the poem does to them." In order to appreciate a poem better and help us to read it aloud effectively, a knowledge of metrics, which is concerned with all rhythmical effects in poetry, is necessary. Hence the editors provide us enough information about syllables, stress, feet and metres, pause, rhyme, etc. They teach us not only to scan a line of a poem, but also to arrange it into feet and find out whether it is iamb or dactyl or anapaest. Since the introduction is mostly about poetry, it gives information about the various types and patterns of rhyme.

The second section takes up poems, passages from prose-writings, dramatic works and fiction for scrutiny, and every passage is followed by a sharp practical criticism with attention focussed on significant linguistic features. Sometimes two poems from different poets are taken up for study and they are compared and contrasted. The editors are at times bent on showing the fusion of physical description with symbolic significance. A few passages are also approached from the stylistic point of view. Their approach through the verbal texture and sentence-pattern reveals to us the mode of narration, the perspective, the function of imagery, and the tonal variations.

The third section actually puts our memory and grasping capacity to test. Any clever and sincere student, who has made a proper study of the first two sections, will be able to do the exercises satisfactorily. The well-framed questions that follow every passage demands discrimination and judgement in reading. Some questions deal with theme and content, others ask for a paraphrase or a summary of more difficult passages and detailed comment upon the implication of certain words and phrases. The second and the third sections are devised with

the purpose of showing to the student the merits and limitations of practical criticism as a method of analysis.

A glossary of select literary terms, and the extracts from the best practical critics of our time are appended and they are bound to give the student greater accuracy of expression. A very helpful book, indeed!

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

27th Annual Conference

12 August 1990

THE Twenty-seventh Annual Conference of the New Age Association was held on 12 August 1990 to commemorate the 118th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. Eight members of the Association, all of them students of the Higher Course of the Centre of Education, read out papers prepared by them on different aspects of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Some of these papers will be serially published in the ensuing issues of *Mother India*.

As the Conference was organised to commemorate Sri Aurobindo's birthday, it was considered most appropriate to recollect some of the short writings of The Mother bearing on His life, His teachings and His mission. Ten such writings were selected, nine of which were read out by the eight speakers in a group. One more—the first—was heard in The Mother's own tape-recorded voice. These writings of The Mother are reproduced below:

The Mother on Sri Aurobindo

"What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme."[1]

*

"Sri Aurobindo is an emanation of the Supreme who came on earth to announce the manifestation of a new race and a new world: the Supramental.

"Let us prepare for it in all sincerity and eagerness."[2]

*

"Sri Aurobindo belongs to the future, he is the messenger of the future. He still shows us the way to follow in order to hasten the realisation of a glorious future fashioned by the Divine Will."[3]

*

"Sri Aurobindo's message is an immortal sunlight radiating over the future."[4]

*

"Sri Aurobindo incarnated in a human body the supramental consciousness and has not only revealed to us the nature of the path to follow and the method of following it so as to arrive at the goal, but has by his own personal realisation given us the example; he has provided us with the proof that the thing can be done and the time is now to do it."[5]

*

"The best homage that one can render to Sri Aurobindo...is to have a thirst for progress and to open all our being to the Divine Influence of which he is the Messenger upon the earth."[6]

*

"We must not be bewildered by appearances. Sri Aurobindo has not left us. Sri Aurobindo is here, as living and present as ever and it is left to us to realise his work with all the sincerity, eagerness and concentration necessary."[7]

*

"To express our gratitude to Sri Aurobindo we can do nothing better than to be a living demonstration of his teaching."[8]

*

"Who can understand Sri Aurobindo? He is as vast as the universe and his teaching is infinite...

"The only means to come a little close to him is to love him sincerely and give oneself unreservedly to his work. Thus each one does his best and contributes as much as he can to that transformation of the world which Sri Aurobindo has predicted."[9]

*

"One must always laugh, always. The Lord laughs, and he laughs, and his laugh is so nice, so nice, so full of love. It is a laugh that envelops you with an extraordinary sweetness."[10]

REFERENCES

[1] *Collected Works of The Mother* (Cent Ed), Vol 13, p 3
[2] *Ibid* , p 19 [3] *Ibid* , p 14 [4] *Ibid* , p 19 [5] *Ibid* , p 21 [6] *Ibid* , p 20
[7] *Ibid* , p 7 [8] *Ibid* , p 28 [9] *Ibid*., p 399 [10] *Ibid* , Vol 11, p 56