

MOTHER INDIA

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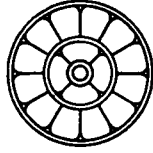
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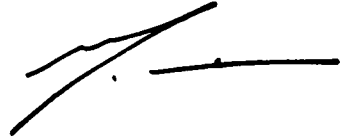
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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LETTERS BY THE MOTHER TO A YOUNG DISCIPLE

Mother, I don't know the significance of animals.¹ For example, the lion...

POWER..

the deer...

Swiftness of movement.

the swan

The soul.

The parrot signifies “fluency of speech” and the elephant “strength”. The dog on the envelope means: obedience.

What is the significance of the picture you sent me this morning?

It is a seal—a very clever animal that can be taught all sorts of tricks—even juggling.

What does the peacock signify?

Victory.

What is the significance of the picture of the rabbit you sent me today?

It is not a rabbit, it is a *hare* and the hare means “prudence”.

(About a picture on an envelope) Is it a goat?

It is an antelope, with the significance “swiftness of movement”. The goat is “agility”.

(About a picture of some pigs)

The envelope I am sending you represents the obscure movement of the vital in the nature.

¹ The disciple enquired about this because the Mother was sending him pictures of animals pasted on the front of the envelopes containing her replies to him

At night I sleep well only after 11.00. I get up at 5.30, but I wake up at 4.00 or 4.30.

It is not good to lie in bed when you are awake; it is more tiring than restful and it increases *tamas*. It is better to jump out of bed as soon as you wake up; then in the evening you will feel sleepy and get to sleep earlier. The hours of sleep *before midnight* are the best and most restful. •

What does compassion mean?

Compassion is the equivalent of *miséricorde*. It is a pity full of strength and kindness, a pity that pardons and makes amends, forgets all offences and wants always what is best for everyone.

Where should I learn good French style?

It is taught in advanced grammar courses, and there are also special books. One of the principal rules of style is that in a prose passage one should not use “I” except when it is absolutely impossible to avoid it, and in any case *one should never begin two consecutive sentences* with “I” This gives you an idea of what you must do to give some style to your daily report.

Instinctively I uttered the following words. “My little garden is opening to the divine Consciousness.”

Plants too can open to the Divine.

I said, “Y, we must not see the bad side of people, but always the good.” He answered, “No, we must see both sides and then distinguish between them.”

It is certainly very bad to speak about the faults of others. Each one has his faults and to emphasise them in your thoughts certainly does not help to cure them.

We should not get upset about the mistakes we make; we need only maintain a *perfect sincerity in our aspiration*—then all will be well in the end.

What is real meditation?

It is an active and deliberate concentration on the Divine Presence and a sustained, alert contemplation of that Sublime Reality.

Please tell me what to do, Mother, so that nothing and no one can disturb me.

The whole being must be governed by the psychic being and by that alone. It is behind the mind, behind the vital, in the psychic centre that one can find the quietness that never wavers.

I think, Mother, that there are three states of consciousness for feeling Your love. In the first, a man is only an ordinary human being and feels nothing whether he sees You or not. In the second he feels something if he does not see You for a long time. In the third, he does not need Your physical body—in the extreme fire of love Your body and his physical body are dissolved in a soul-communion. I think, Mother, that man does not need Your physical body, since You are already in his heart.

That is not quite true. If there were not something more in the physical contact than in the inner contact, there would have been no reason for me to take a body upon earth.

O Mother, what should I do? I am completely unconscious. Mother, where are You?

In your psychic being—I am always present there. It is there that you can find me and must find me, and when you have found me there, in the depths of your heart, you will also recognise me in my physical form.

By what signs can one tell that the psychic being has come to the surface?

One feels peaceful and happy, full of trust, full of a deep and true benevolence, and very close to the divine presence.

This morning I told Y that Mother had told me that She does not know what will happen to this Ashram in the future. "How is it possible?" he said, "I cannot believe that She knows nothing about the work for which she has taken a body on earth."

I do not think that I said any such thing. You must have misunderstood me. But Y is wrong to believe that I came upon earth to establish an Ashram! That would really be a very paltry objective.

May I know, Mother, how many centuries ago You descended upon earth?

I have never left the earth since it was formed.

It is said that Krishna, Buddha and Jesus Christ were Avatars. So weren't these people Yourself?

Krishna was an Avatar, but Buddha and Christ were only emanations. As for the second part of your question, I have no idea what you mean.

Is it true that at one time the Divine ruled everywhere—the “Satyayuga”?

Certainly not on earth.

Does the soul never come to an end? Must it always take a body?

Not necessarily; but the soul needs to have achieved a *very high degree of perfection* before it has the power to choose whether to return to the physical life or to rest outside the manifestation.

I thought that the soul was perfect in its nature. I don't understand the ascension of the soul towards the truth from which it springs”.

The essence of the soul is divine, but the soul (the psychic being) grows through all the forms of evolution; it becomes more and more individualised and increasingly conscious of itself and its origin.

“When the central being has surrendered, the principal difficulty has disappeared.” What is this central being?

The central being is not the same in everyone—it is the part that governs the rest of the personality and imposes its will on it.

When the psychic being holds this central position in the personality, everything becomes very easy.

I think that the love and peace which come by the opening of the heart are psychic and unmixed.

Not necessarily; even if they come from the psychic, they may get mixed with other less elevated movements when they manifest in the mind or the vital.

Love and peace can also come from above, directly from divine regions.

“The psychic is not, by definition, that part which is in direct touch with the supramental plane... The psychic part of us is something that comes direct from the Divine and is in touch with the Divine.”—Sri Aurobindo

I don't know the difference between the Supermind and the Divine.

The Divine spoken of here is that which has been in contact with the earth from the beginning of time; the Supermind is a new aspect of the Divine, which up to now has not been manifested upon earth.

The inner development is the most important thing, for through that we receive Your love and peace, not through any outer thing. The joy that comes through outer things, through Your outer actions, is not of divine or spiritual origin. The proof of this is that when Your actions change we feel upset.

Absurd!!!!

You are mixing up two different things. I can assure you that my action, whether inner or outer, is *always of divine origin*. The disturbance you feel is not proof of a lack of divinity in the action, but of a lack of plasticity and receptivity in your mind, your vital and your physical.

(*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol 17, from pp 1-87)

A DROP OF GRACE

A MYSTIC typhoon sweeps away
 Inheritance of frozen prejudices,
 Immense fog of separation from light.
 Stop I bewildered to see
 How a moment's magic completes
 A mammoth task of centuries—
 Toppling of a mountain down,
 An unthought-of soothing bliss
 Brings me back to nestling home,
 A moment's click
 Puts me to a solacing sleep
 After centuries of wakeful nights

SITANGSHU CHAKRABORTTY

SRI AUROBINDO ON EQUALITY

(Continued from the issue of October 1992)

COMPLETE *samatā*¹ takes long to establish and it is dependent on three things—the soul's self-giving to the Divine by an inner surrender, the descent of the spiritual calm and peace from above and the steady, long and persistent rejection of all egoistic, rajasic and other feelings that contradict *samatā*.

The first thing to do is to make the full consecration and offering of the heart—the increase of the spiritual calm and the surrender are the conditions for the rejection of ego, *rajoguna*, etc to be effective

*

When the peace of the higher consciousness descends, it brings always with it this tendency towards equality, *samatā* because without *samatā* peace is always liable to be attacked by the waves of the lower nature.

*

Equality is a very important part of this yoga, it is necessary to keep equality under pain and suffering—and that means to endure firmly and calmly, not to be restless or troubled or depressed or despondent, to go on with a steady faith in the Divine Will. But equality does not include inert acceptance. If, for instance, there is temporary failure of some endeavour in the sadhana, one has to keep equality, not to be troubled or despondent, but one has not to accept the failure as an indication of the Divine Will and give up the endeavour. You ought rather to find out the reason and meaning of the failure and go forward in faith towards victory. So with illness—you have not to be troubled, shaken or restless, but you have not to accept illness as the Divine Will, but rather look upon it as an imperfection of the body to be got rid of as you try to get rid of vital imperfections or mental errors.

*

No doubt, hatred and cursing are not the proper attitudes. It is true also that to look upon all things and all people with a calm and clear vision, to be uninvolved and impartial in one's judgements is a quite proper yogic attitude. A condition of perfect *samatā* can be established in which one sees all as equal, friends and enemies included and is not disturbed by what men do or by what happens. The question is whether this is all that is demanded from us. If so, then the general

¹ Equality

attitude will be of a neutral indifference to everything. But the Gita, which strongly insists on a perfect and absolute *samatā*, goes on to say, “Fight, destroy the adversary, conquer ” If there is no kind of general action wanted, no loyalty to Truth as against Falsehood except for one’s personal sadhana, no will for the Truth to conquer, then the *samatā* of indifference will suffice. But here there is a work to be done, a Truth to be established against which immense forces are arrayed, invisible forces which can use visible things and persons and actions for their instruments. If one is among the disciples, the seekers of this Truth, one has to take sides for the Truth, to stand against the forces that attack it and seek to stifle it. Arjuna wanted not to stand for either side, to refuse any action of hostility even against assailants, Sri Krishna, who insisted so much on *samatā* strongly rebuked his attitude and insisted equally on his fighting the adversary. “Have *samatā*,” he said, “and seeing clearly the Truth, fight.” Therefore to take sides with the Truth and to refuse to concede anything to the Falsehood that attacks, to be unflinchingly loyal and against the hostiles and the attackers, is not inconsistent with equality. It is personal and egoistic feeling that has to be thrown away; hatred and vital ill-will have to be rejected. But loyalty and refusal to compromise with the assailants and the hostiles or to dally with their ideas and demands and say, “After all, we can compromise with what they ask from us”, or to accept them as companions and our own people—these things have a great importance. If the attack were a physical menace to the work and the leaders and doers of the work, one would see this at once. But because the attack is of a subtler kind, can a passive attitude be right? It is a spiritual battle inward and outward, by neutrality and compromise or even passivity one may allow the enemy forces to pass and crush down the Truth and its children. If you look at it from this point, you will see that if the inner spiritual equality is right, the active loyalty and firm taking of sides is as right, and the two cannot be incompatible.

I have, of course, treated it as a general question apart from all particular cases or personal questions. It is a principle of action that has to be seen in its right light and proportions.

(All excerpts are from Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 23, pp. 663-666)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

PERHAPS the most momentous utterance of the Mother in my memory is one which was no more than a brief passing whisper—a short unfinished phrase, spoken as if to herself and caught almost accidentally by me to make what I could of it.

The occasion was one of those afternoons when I was the only disciple left at the end of her morning's meeting first with the secretaries and then a few others who somehow had happened to be upstairs between the time she came down from her second-floor rooms and the time she sat down for her lunch with Pranab on the first floor behind a screen. At about 12 everyone went home. Only I was left behind, sitting in the small passage between the staircase door and the bathroom. How I came into this exceptional role I can't recollect. But, as I have recounted elsewhere, I sat by myself through her lunch—within earshot of her varied talk with Pranab. Usually I would leave a note under a paper-weight on a small table by which she passed after lunch on her way to the bathroom through another door from a passage beyond the room where we used to do pranam to her and sit while she would give interviews in the Meditation Hall

On this particular morning I had left no note and she came out towards me from the bathroom without any oral or written reply to my questions. I got up from the mat, knelt at her feet as she stood for a moment before passing on to her siesta in the lunch-corner. After blessing me she just let fall the five words: "To keep one body going. "

As they sank into my mind they got enveloped with a soft light yielding several successive shades of meaning. Evidently the body was her own. Also, it was a body all by itself: one. Further, its singleness was special. Not only was it special but also unique. And it was unique by being more than strikingly different from other bodies. Clearly, it was a body holding a consciousness immeasurably greater than any in the world. But it was a body too which Sri Aurobindo, before leaving his own body, had charged with a mighty mission. "You have to fulfil our Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation." The Mother has herself given a more distinct depth of significance to this charge: she has declared that hers was a body in which for the first time in human history the experiment of physical divinisation was being tried—a most difficult and outwardly a most distressing experiment, entailing a lot of suffering under the tremendous pressure of a divine Power of immortality which had never before brought its unrelenting all-transformative light into a stuff of flesh and bone deliberately accepted to be like our own in essence so that whatever would be achieved in it could represent a general human possibility. Finally, the suggestion of her words was that this body should be able to continue its work on earth

and for that it was necessary to do everything which could help. Most pointedly the words implied not only help from herself but from others as well—and the second kind of assistance was rather crucial because sufficient realisation of its need might not come to us. So her whisper connoted what she would never openly insist on: “You, my dear disciples, should see to it that you do nothing to hinder the going on of my body which Sri Aurobindo has marked out for his work and on which the whole future of the world depends.”

How have we lived up to the duty to help her? Should we have taxed her less in the way of wanting to be with her? In fact she herself wanted to be with us as much as possible. To put her divinely developing body in touch with our bodies was the *raison d'être* of her incarnation. Especially as Sri Aurobindo had withdrawn from us into physical seclusion in 1926, she felt the need to give herself more and more to our aspiration for spirituality. This feeling must have increased tenfold after he had given up his own body on December 5, 1950. And though she appreciated the attitude of those who did not wish to encroach on her time, she was very far from pushing away those who yearned to be in her physical ambience. To a backward Yogi like me, being near her was half the sadhana and she never grudged the gracious gift of her bodily proximity. What was wrong at times was to consider our petty needs more than her convenience. Thus some of us unduly prolonged the pranam she daily allowed us to make or unnecessarily lengthened out our periodical interviews with her. On occasion we overlooked some physical needs of hers.

I distinctly remember one incident. She had come to a house where several people were lodged. The occasion was the birthday of one of them. She had granted him an interview in his own room. When the interview was over she came out to the veranda on her way to the Playground. The inmates of the house offered flowers to her. One of them said: “Mother, I want to tell you something important. Will you please come into my room?” The Mother answered. “If I come, I shall be late at the Playground and have no time to take a little refreshment in my room there before attending to the Playground activities.” The person addressed just kept weakly smiling and would not say: “All right, Mother. I shan’t keep you.” Obviously, there was a persistent wish to have the Mother in for a special talk. Seeing the disinclination to let her go, the Mother quietly went into the room as desired. She remained there quite a time and came out smiling as usual after the grace shown to one of her children. But she must have missed the refreshment and rest of which her over-taxed body was in need.

She never let us know whatever strain she underwent. She used to stand for over an hour at times in the early morning in the passage-room I have spoken of, receiving pranams and giving blessings. And as she could draw endless energy from the Universal Consciousness she could compel her body to carry on to please her children. But at the time I heard that whisper, her body had already reached the age of eighty years.

Even more of a strain than physical exertion was the non-receptivity of people or else their carrying undesirable states of consciousness to her. It was the most natural movement for the Mother to open herself completely to her children and quite a lot of psychological “dirt” would get into her and affect her body. There was also the classical case of her falling ill because of the Soup Distribution. She used to put something of her subtle-physical substance into the soup when she sipped it before giving the cup to the sadhak who was on his knees in front of her. The cumulative strain was so great that she fell seriously ill. That was the end of the period of Soup Distribution in the Ashram’s history. Some sort of reciprocal energy-flow between the Mother and the sadhaks was expected, but evidently there was too little response from us to her and the giving was markedly one-sided. Hence the physical breakdown on her part. Another kind of attack on her was the despatch of ill-tempered letters. Her son André once remarked that they affected her body. Even Sri Aurobindo was said to have suffered from such letters. Once a nasty epistle affected his eyes for a while. Our gurus’ attitude to their spiritual children was so trustingly open that they were often caught off their guard, as it were, and had to exert special powers to get back to normal.

In a number of ways I must have been a considerable drag on the Mother. Was that why she let out that unfinished sentence in my presence? I have not heard of anybody else reporting such a hint. Or was she confiding in me a secret as a result of something having happened independently of me, which was more of a drag on her than other occasions? I shall never know. But since that afternoon I have tried not to forget ever how precious, how invaluable, how packed with super-destiny, how centrally significant in the career of our evolutionary cosmos was that one body that held so much sweetness and so much strength for baffled benighted souls—

A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple-door to things beyond.¹ (26 7 1992)

*

You have written: “26th June 1969 is the day when the Mother came to save me on the operation table when the operating staff had declared that the patient was dead.” The same date—26th June—but in 1938—is one when, according to what the Mother has said, my heart should have stopped by all normal standards yet kept beating because, as she explained in a talk, the habit of remembering and invoking her had been constant—had become second nature—in this complicated fellow whose first nature was rather reckless and who had taken 48 times

¹ *Savitri* (Centenary Ed.), p. 15

the normal dose of a stimulant drug! It was a mistake bound to cause death but there was, as Sri Aurobindo put it, a divine intervention and the rash disciple's heart is still beating and will complete its eighty-eighth year on November 25.

Don't ever think I have forgotten you The Samadhi-offering continues and when the offering is made I instinctively turn my head to my left as if you were sitting there in your wheelchair. Now that I too am wheelchaired, we shall make a pretty pair when you next come here and the hearts of both of us go forth to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

You have asked me about my first darshan. My first sight of the Mother was on the very day I reached Pondicherry on December 16, 1927. I had been taken by Pujalal, who had received my wife and me at the station, to Purani's room—previously Sri Aurobindo's for 6 years and afterwards mine for 9 Looking out of the north window I saw the Mother walking on the roof-terrace of her house, drying in the sun her just-shampooed hair This was a most enchanting vision and my heart leapt out to her and since then has kept leaping. The word "leap" is very appropriate to my response to her as compared to my answer to the Divine Call through Sri Aurobindo. I do not leap but sweep towards Sri Aurobindo. A warm deeply reverent continuity of movement is experienced in regard to him, whereas in regard to the Mother there is always a swift and sudden movement of exultation. If I may pick up a clue from this last word, I may say that face to face with the Mother I feel my heart intensely exultant. Fronting Sri Aurobindo I know my heart to be immensely exalted The heart is concerned and dynamised in either case—profound love is astir, but on the one side it is fugged by a dazzle of beauty and bliss while on the other it is drawn by a tranquil glow of compassionate grandeur.

You have referred to a poem of mine which the Mother, after reading it, had asked everyone present at the time to read. Here it is:

PRANAM TO THE DIVINE MOTHER

There are two ways of bowing
 To you, O Splendour sweet!
 One craves the boon of blessedness,
 One gives the soul to your feet.

Pulling your touch to ourselves we feel
 Holy and happy—we think huge heaven
 Comes close with you that we may pluck
 A redder dawn, a purpler even.

This is but rapturous robbery
 Deaf to infinity's call

That we should leap and plunge in you
Our aching empty all

And, in the surge of being your own,
Grow blind and quite forget
Whether our day be a richer rose,
A wealthier violet.

Precious each moment laid in your hands,
Whatever the hue it bear—
A flame and a fragrance just because
Your fingers hold it dear

Make me your nothing, my whole life
I would drown in your vastnesses—
A cry to be ruled by your flawless touch,
Your will alone my peace.

I was interested to read your account of the Champaklal-episode at Puri. I wonder what exactly was the relation conceived between Champaklal and the Jagannath temple. Evidently a high value was set on this temple and especially on the special prasad cooked there, which was proposed to be brought to him. But I don't think Champaklal was considered to be blessed by the projected visit by him to the temple or by the sanctified food from it. It must have been the other way around. His value was deemed so high that what was regarded as the highest according to the Hindu religious sense was to be set before him. You say you opposed the plan; you must have done so because you saw in it an undue premium put on traditional Hinduism and an unnecessary link made between traditional Hinduism and Sri Aurobindo's supramental spirituality which goes beyond the reign of the Overmind godheads that has prevailed so far in India as in the West. I consider your insight to be deeper than that of the Reception Committee. The Mother did not want any sadhak to be drawn to any past religious institution or ceremony. The seer-knowledge enshrined in the Rigveda, the Upanishads and the Gita is indeed precious and forms an antechamber to the Aurobindonian revelation, but the popular cults and the temples in which they are perpetuated were never encouraged by the Mother. The same holds for the churches of the Western religions. Most followers of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy do not quite realise the line he and the Mother draw between the old Hindu scriptures and the popular practices. Perhaps the personal figure of Champaklal did not encourage the Puri-receptionists to mark such a line. For he throughout his life in the Ashram and in the exemplary service of his Gurus retained on his body the traditional "sacred thread". The Gurus never objected to this thread:

they never went out of their way to criticise any old-world foibles of their disciples. They never made it a point to frown on Champaklal's traditional sign of his brahmin caste any more than to show disapproval of Dilip's attachment to the sannyasi's ochre-coloured robe

Not that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother consider temples and churches and mosques superfluous. Ordinary life needs such supports and they have a place in the evolution of consciousness. And the religious instinct of prayer, worship and self-offering is very valuable. In its essence—shorn of egoistic and materialistic motives—it has a place even in the highest Yoga when the being is turned towards a personal Supreme and seeks His manifestation in one's active life.

(15.6 1992)

*

Thank you for appreciating my poem "Pranam to the Divine Mother". Only one phrase in it you have fallen foul of: the four opening words of the last stanza:

Make me your nothing, my whole life
 I would drown in your vastnesses—
 A cry to be ruled by your flawless touch,
 Your will alone my peace.

You object: "Is it possible any time or anywhere—in whatever state of consciousness we may be—that we are not in Her lap, not portions of Her? Above all, when She has recognised us as Her children, when She is with us so concretely, when She is doing even the necessary preparations or even the sadhana for us, how can we say or even think or imagine that we are nothing of Hers?"

I am afraid you have not seized my drift—especially in the context of the rest of the stanza. My plea to the Mother is: "Take away from me all selfhood separate from you. Let it be a nothing on its own so that it belongs altogether to you." This is the import conveyed compactly by the words. "Make me your nothing". The next phrase elucidates them by expressing the wish that I may be drowned—lost—in Her immensity—with no existence as myself, no activity on my own initiative, no will I can call mine. Only Her will should prevail and its prevailing is the sole fact that can give me peace, filling me with all which would be needed by me, granting me complete fulfilment.

Some earlier lines add another shade to the last stanza. At the beginning of the poem I differentiate between those who try to aggrandise themselves by taking the Mother's grace and those who come to her to surrender their souls. About the action of the former I say:

This is but rapturous robbery,
 Deaf to infinity's call

That we should leap and plunge in you
Our aching empty all

The suggestion here is that really we are a zero with a painful yearning for self-consummation and that we can have it only by losing ourselves in the infinity of the Divine. The phrases prepare us for the idea that, instead of being our own zero with delusive egoistic hopes of becoming big by falsely assumed riches of the godhead, we should become that godhead's total possession: the Supreme Mother's zero, Her "nothing"

On p 3 of your letter you have the statement: "I am insincere, so suffering." This implies on the one hand that we suffer because we are insincere and on the other that because we suffer we are proved to be insincere. Our world is a complex and often enigmatic phenomenon. Not only do bad people suffer: the good also do it. Sincerity by itself is no armour against suffering and just by their suffering men are not shown to be examples of insincerity. All of us suffer through the general condition of Ignorance—our lack of the Divine's luminous consciousness. There is also the seeming paradox that even the Avatar or the enlightened soul suffers. The latter has elements of humanity that are still open to dark forces. Our body, for instance, lives under laws that have not yet been changed by the spiritual power. The Avatar has similar infirmities and he may even undertake labours for the world that are bound to cause suffering to him. Of course, one should always question whether one is sincere, but merely on the basis of one's suffering one should not sit in sackcloth and ashes bemoaning "Oh, I am such a putrid fellow, shot through and through with pretence and falsehood!" If one can lay one's finger on the cause of one's suffering, well and good: one should then set about removing the cause if possible. Otherwise what is to be done is to offer the suffering to the Divine and implore Him to reveal the cause and in any case to make even the suffering a passage to some good of the soul because the pain is inwardly put in His transmuting hands.

To balance, as it were, your erroneous judgment in two instances, you have a very insightful pronouncement in the course of the touching prayer you have formulated.

Day by day,
Hour by hour,
Your longing
For my perfection
Quickens in my body
New Divine Strength.
I submit to Your
Wonderful purity,
O Supreme and Blissful Lord.

Lines 3-6 struck me at once as inspired and intuitive in a special way. They point us to a truth not often realised. In the first place, it is that the “Supreme and Blissful Lord” has a heart full of intense concern for our spiritual progress, a keen desire that you and I, stumbling pilgrims towards that heart, may outgrow all our shortcomings and turn perfect and satisfy this heart’s boundless love for us. In the second place, the truth is: it is by the Lord’s “ache”, as it were, for our perfection that we come to have in our embodied human existence the renewed surprise of strength after strength of a divine nature. The gracious warmth of Him for us kindles in our aspiring bodies the force fit to take us towards Him. On our own we could never acquire the power to reach the Lord’s beatific height.

You have hit upon a side of the Aurobindonian Yoga of self-surrender which divulges the key to its success. We are asked by our Gurus to divest ourselves of all “I” and “Mine” and lay our whole being at the Divine’s feet. A childlike helplessness is called for. Why? Surely not simply to make us love the Highest, though that is a grand aim by which we can grow into instruments of Him in our lives. There is a greater reason. By becoming a helpless child in the hands of the Supreme we render it possible for the Supreme to enter our sadhana and tackle our difficulties by means of His more-than-human strength. In other words, by our self-surrender His “longing for our perfection”, His love which seeks ever our absolute good and yearns to give our littleness His utter infinite of light and joy and beauty will have a chance for expression. He will take up the problems of our composite being and solve them. Sri Aurobindo has said that the secret of success in sadhana is to know how to let the Divine attend to our weaknesses and deal with them in His magical masterful way. By offering to Him all our troubles, by laying at His mercy our whole defect-ridden self, by our self-surrender we clear a passage for His love to act, we get Him to put Himself at our disposal and we set Him to unravel the numberless knots of our nature. This is a work He is most eager to do and it is a work He alone can do, but He cannot do it unless we abandon ourselves to Him as a child to its mother. Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga wants our self-surrender to the Divine so that the Divine may take away from us the whole load of our imperfection, lay His all-transformative love at our service and save us the Herculean labour of cleaning the Augean stable of our *condition humaine*.

In the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo the Divine’s love is all agog to shoulder such a job because this Yoga is of what he has designated the Supermind whose purpose is to manifest in the long run a life on earth perfected in every respect, whereas all the other Yogas, no matter what stress they might have put on quotidian objects, trained their sights ultimately on the Beyond. There is a profound reason for the radical difference. The vision of the Beyond as the goal, instead of its being a glorious mid-term for the aim of changing earth root and branch with the splendid powers of the unearthly, is due to a certain lack in what so far was discovered in the Beyond. Convinced that earth-life could not be just a stepping-

stone, a mere passage, from the Beyond back to it, Sri Aurobindo could not rest in his supra-terrestrial explorations until he had reached the plane where the archetypes of our whole being wait not merely to be reached but to be invoked for manifestation here below after having been attained. This plane is the Supermind as distinguished from the top of spiritual realisation up to now, which he has named the Overmind

The distinction between the Divine who is “over” and the Divine who is “super” brings me to your request to me to say “something about our attitude towards divinities such as Krishna, Shiva, Durga and Ganesh”. You ask: “In what way do they carry on or participate in the process of Supramental transformation?” You add that your question has no bearing on your own life which is devoted and dedicated to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: you have posed it just “to know and let others know”.

Your inclusion of Krishna in the list you have given is not quite proper. According to Sri Aurobindo, Krishna is the Supreme Divine who incarnated as the Avatar on earth through the Overmind formulation of his manifold being. He thus stands apart in one sense from the other deities you mention, who are typical Overmind personages and no more. He may be taken as summing up in his active self the whole Overmind Consciousness while being in his essential self above it. He has a special place in Sri Aurobindo’s life and work. We also consider him to have been the greatest form Sri Aurobindo took in his series of past lives upon earth. Sri Aurobindo has also said that Krishna’s work is being done in the Ashram—not, of course, a mere repetition of this Avatar’s earthly activity but a carrying forward of his multiform Overmind drive to a supramental manifestation. That is why so much importance has been accorded to the spiritual event of November 24, 1926 which has been called by Sri Aurobindo the descent of the Krishna Consciousness, the mightily luminous Overmind-divinity, into his physical being. This descent opened the way to the descent of the Supermind, towards which Sri Aurobindo set his face when he put the Ashram in the Mother’s hands after November 24 and withdrew into seclusion for a dynamic meditation to hasten the supramental advent. However, the special place given to Krishna does not justify any separate cult set up in his name. Krishna has to be seen as merged in Sri Aurobindo

As for deities like Shiva, Durga, Ganesh, we have to keep an appreciative attitude towards them as part of the general Overmind Puissance which has been helpful to the Ashram. The Mother was on very amicable terms with them and they must have served her purposes at various times. She has made several smiling references to her relations with Ganesh, one of whose functions is the deployment of money. The Mother has said that he had promised to bring money to her for her work but he is rather lazy and she had to prod him again and again. Durga is surely subsumed in her highest aspect in the play of those four goddess-personalities which, according to Sri Aurobindo, have been put

forward by the Mother in her world-work down the ages: Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati. Those who have served Sri Aurobindo have often been struck with a detached contemplative grandeur holding at the same time a tremendous reserve of power and felt in this combination the presence of the traditional Shiva. Just as Krishna figures in a number of Sri Aurobindo's poems, so too Shiva has had his role in at least three: the series of twenty couplets titled *Epiphany*, the sonnet *Shiva* and that experiment in quantitative metre *Shiva the Inconscient Creator*. The Mother has spoken of Shiva sometimes walking with her and also of his having declared that he would take part in her new creation only when the Supermind has completely descended.

Yes, the Overmind deities are accepted in the Aurobindonian vision of heaven and earth. But in the practice of our Yoga they are never presented as objects of worship. Specific worship of them is definitely ruled out for a follower of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The Mother has also said in connection with February 29, 1956, marking the manifestation of the supramental Light, Consciousness and Force in the subtle-physical layer of the earth that the age-old reign of the Gods is over. We do not rule out their further activity in the world; but it is by a push from the past and not by a pull from the future. For those who are attached to them with a sincere fervour and faith, their effects can be quite beneficent and even be unwittingly preparatory for a Greatness beyond them. So we should never look down upon people's ways of worship, but we as Aurobindonians can take no part in any cult of the old Gods and Goddesses. To do so would be a retrograde step and an act of unfaithfulness to our Gurus. To visit temple-ceremonies (or for that matter Christian Church-rites or Muslim mosque-rituals) would be to lay ourselves open to atmospheres and influences which grossly or subtly tend to lure us away from the path of spiritual evolution along which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have sought to lead us.

But I may put a footnote to my exposition. The Mother has said that most places of public worship dedicated to traditional deities are really controlled by hostile forces eager to suck up, as it were, and feed upon the adoring ardours of the congregation. They, however, cannot prevent a genuine God-lover from piercing his way to the divinity to whom he has come to offer his prayers. But such a person is not common and most cultists get very small benefit and may even get harmed. Whenever the Mother has found a good spirit presiding over a house of worship and showing some affinity to her she has appreciated the phenomenon and even encouraged in one or two cases a sadhak or sadhika to go in and show thereby our friendly attitude. I am referring in particular to the Ganesh temple in the neighbourhood of the Ashram. But generally speaking a visit to such a place would be inadvisable because of the rather low psychological atmosphere of the bulk of the devotees. This atmosphere is not necessarily linked to the poverty of the folks. Even where well-off and apparently cultured

people congregate, the level of their psychology may be just as low that is, superficial in devotion, thick with worldly desires and ambitions, lacking in true goodwill towards their fellows.

Now to more personal topics I am indeed grieved that you have to pass through physical troubles which upset your whole system. Of course my good wishes are always there—good wishes in the form of appeals to the Mother to help her physically unfortunate child who is so sincere in his aspiration to be inwardly moulded by her. I am glad that time and again you are saved because, as you say, she wants you to continue your journey towards her.

Your keen response to both the world's beauty and the world's misery is certainly creditable. You have yourself had a beautiful past up to your fifteenth year and known subsequent years of acute misery in spite of which you have not lost the ability to smile with the dream of the Mother always in your eyes. Your being moved by the present painful circumstances of the person who has brought in the last few years a good deal of trouble to your life is indeed noble. If there is any way you can be of assistance, take the chance, but unless there has been a change in the mentality of this person don't get involved in her affairs. Leave her to the Mother's wise will.

(30 7 1992)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

GOLDEN GLADES

FOR the son of man
It is never too late
To dare the paths
Of the mystic ray—
To drink nectâr
From heaven's petal-cups
And to explore with the high Gods
Their celestial ways.
Free is he to choose
Either the uncertain joys
Of this valley of shades
Or to claim the bliss
Of Eden's golden glades.

SHYAM KUMARI

SOME EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF “AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL”

A REPORT BASED ON ORAL COMMUNICATION

(Continued from the issue of June 1992)

About my Mother

RECENTLY a young friend of mine affectionately teased me by telling me I had been born with a golden spoon in my mouth. “How much we had to struggle and suffer to achieve a modicum of comfort in life!” she said.

“Do you think so?” I replied. “Must you judge only by outer appearances? All right, I don’t mind your teasing. You still have a lot of growing up to do despite your hardships. Just bear in mind that money and wealth are not everything in life.”

Then I told her of my own experience, and how I looked after my ailing mother for five or six long years without any assistance. My mother had diabetes and her condition worsened with age. Finally she was confined to bed and had to pass urine every hour. Each time I had to help her to the bathroom, which was no easy matter, because she was so heavy and I for my part was small and frail. With this routine day and night, often I did not get any sleep for days on end. Then one day, she discovered she couldn’t walk any more. “What’s the matter?” I asked her. “Why can’t you walk? Yesterday your legs were all right. What has happened today?”

But she was as bewildered as I was. I had to call our family doctor only to be told that it was a common feature of diabetes that paralysis could suddenly strike the lower limbs

“What can I do?” I asked him in panic. “How will I manage her alone now?” Then I suddenly remembered what my astrologer had said to my mother: “Listen, in future—”

“No, no!” she had protested vehemently. “I don’t want to know the future. Why probe into what God has hidden from us?”

“So be it,” the astrologer had replied. “But allow me to say one thing. A day will come when you will lose your power to walk due to paralysis.”

Since then, I used to constantly tell my mother, “Ma, pray to the Mother. There is no other way. You know this astrologer’s predictions have almost always come true. From now on take refuge in God. Tell Him to protect you.”

But all my pleading proved to be of no avail. And now the predicted blow had fallen, while, for me, my miseries had only just begun. If I had had trouble before helping my mother to the bathroom, now it became impossible. My son assisted me when he was at home, but the rest of the time I managed alone. How

many times I had to change my mother's clothes and bedding. Visiting relatives demanded to know why I did not employ a nurse, but my mother would object at once, dissolving into tears. "Don't leave me in the hands of nurses," she would weep.

Finally she was fitted with a catheter, and I could have some rest. But when I asked the doctor how long the respite would last, he replied that it would only be for about a month, because if the catheter were kept for longer than that, there would be the risk of infection. At any rate, I thought, at least I can get rest for a month. But a complication quickly set in with blood appearing in the urine. In my disturbed state, I fearfully imagined that my mother might have cancer. However, when I consulted the doctor, he told me that whatever the diagnosis, nothing further could be done for her.

I objected, saying, "That can't be. I must try to do something, whatever her condition, otherwise I'll be plagued by a sense of guilt for the rest of my life." I recalled how due to my negligence my mother had lost the sight of one eye. When the trouble began she complained of blurred vision from time to time. The doctor diagnosed a cataract. But when her vision in one eye had been totally lost, another doctor declared that diabetes had been the culprit and had dried up the nerves. Then when he examined the other eye, he found it was suffering from the same defect. He prescribed a medicine to be applied once a week. And so the eye was saved. If only I had known enough to do the same for the first eye! I could not get over the remorse I felt in my very soul for the loss of that eye. So I was determined not to let such a thing happen again. I would learn the cause first, then decide on the next step.

Meanwhile, my mother's condition worsened beyond words. She soiled her bed which I cleaned myself, and she had to be hand-fed. We thought of taking her to a nursing home, but she refused outright. Besides, the charges were beyond our means, amounting to Rs. 1000/- per day, that too when we did not know how long the patient would survive. It was quite possible she would live another year.

A relative saw how conscientiously I was performing my task and remarked, "You must have a deep love for your mother. Otherwise none but a yogi could perform such ideal service—it would be humanly impossible."

"No," I replied. "You may say so but it is more for the sake of duty than for love, and I'll continue so long as I have the strength."

But then something quite unexpected happened. One day, I left my mother alone and went to the bazar with a friend. When I returned, I found my mother had fallen down the staircase from the third floor to the second. We were stunned to find her lying on the landing. To carry her back up again was no easy matter, considering her massive weight. We had to call the neighbours for help. When we got her upstairs, we saw that she had probably dislocated her shoulder. Upon our asking her why she had gone out of her room, she replied, "Somebody seemed to be calling me. I got up with great difficulty, and opened the door. I

saw someone who looked exactly like you, standing there 'Come, come, Mother,' she was calling Then when I tried to step out, I slipped and rolled down the stairs to where you found me "

I was non-plussed! Who was this woman who had impersonated me? What could her motive have been in playing such a malicious trick?

We took my mother to the doctor who confirmed that she had dislocated her shoulder, and ruled that it would have to go into plaster But luckily our family doctor did not feel that in her condition she could tolerate a plaster cast He advised a simple bandage instead

On another occasion, during my mother's illness, a friend invited me to dinner My son too had gone out to dine with friends after which he planned to go to the cinema Later he would pick me up from my friend's house and take me home. Before leaving, I fed my mother, and then left, pulling the door shut with its automatic lock. I did not realise that the key had been left inside by mistake with my mother. After the dinner, I did not wait to return home with my son, but was accompanied back by my friend who brought me to my door Then, realising my mistake, I rang the bell, there was no response. "Good Lord!" I exclaimed "What if my mother is lying unconscious inside?" We could think of no way to open the door In panic, my head began to reel and darkness swept over me as though I were going to faint Like a mad woman I ran out into the street till I stood in the middle of the traffic passing in both directions. Drivers began to shout abuse at me, but I was so dazed I did not know what to do or where to go

All at once, my son came by in his car and was stupefied to see me standing there at that unearthly hour in the midst of the passing cars. I flung my arms around him. He lifted me to his car and parked by the door of our house He then let us in with his own key. We found my mother lying senseless on the floor, and when we called the doctor he told us it was a case of kidney failure. He gave her repeated injections in the arm After some time fluid began to spurt out from her mouth and would not stop. We began to pray to the Lord When it did not work, I thought suddenly to make her drink চৰণামৃত* and I went to Sri Aurobindo's photo with a cup of water That worked like a charm and the flow stopped gradually

Another time during my mother's illness it happened that I did not have any money in the house, and it was raining heavily Where and how could I go in that downpour? My mother had to be fed and there was nothing to eat. I was terribly upset. I somehow managed to go out and reach a house for which the tenant owed us rent I explained my predicament to the man and asked him to give me some money, and he answered that I should not worry If I went home, he would bring me the money later.

I returned but there was no sign of him even though I waited and waited. The idea of not having anything to eat tormented me I fell to weeping before the

* Water touched by the feet of the Deity

Lord's photo, then suddenly heard his voice, "Why are you so worried? I'm here. How can you starve when I am with you? You will get the money."

And at the dead of night in that downpour, I heard a knock on the door. It was our tenant with the money in his hand. "Please take the rent," he said humbly. "I am sorry I couldn't come earlier "

But on such a stormy night? And then I heard the voice. "Well, I gave you my word, and I meant it." I can't express how sweet was the voice of the Lord, the same voice I have heard so often.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

DERAILMENT

Derailed from convention's track
He crashed into Light
Which caved into further depths
That bathed him in delight.

Luckily accidents
Sometimes throw us down
To visions of the smile of Grace
We mistake for a frown.

K B. SITARAMAYYA

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of October 1992)

The Mother's Message

This is the
interesting story of
how a being discovers
the Divine Life



THIS was the New Year message of 1961 from the Mother to all:

“This wonderful world of delight waiting at our gates for our call to come down upon earth.”

As always the Mother gave me diaries in which to write my journal.

*

My reading of *Savitri* with Ambalal Purani continued. It was not possible for me to do *Savitri* paintings. The Mother kept quiet about her direct guidance to this project. Perhaps she was still testing me and preparing me for the task, I thought.

The Mother pointed out to me numerous defects and faults directly and indirectly to make me worthy to collaborate totally with her.

Since I was conscious, I was desperate to improve and convert myself. But unfortunately the psychological struggle and setbacks were so acute that many a time I could not think straight. I was abysmally ignorant.

My main trouble was an inferiority complex which seemed a chronic disease—and an endless nightmare.

I had gone to London to gain confidence. True. Yet I felt that I was a nobody in front of “intelligent” and “wise” people.

I was hypersensitive and ultra-emotional. I thought that it was too late for me to do anything worthwhile. It would take an eternity to find the Divine Life. Time and age could not wait.

I received from the Mother a letter dated 31-6-61 in answer to mine:

“Huta, my dear little child,

First of all, it is *never too late*.

From the point of view of spiritual realisation, the time has no concrete reality; all depends on sincerity and intensity of the aspiration, on the steadiness of the effort. Some can do in few weeks and even days, what takes years for others. Moreover, as the mind and vital, the chief factors of progress, are not submitted to the same rules of decay as the material body, the age factor loses all its importance when we speak of spiritual and intellectual growth; there is no time limit nor age limit for the mental progress which can go on steadily for hundreds of years.

Secondly, failure is not the sign of incapacity—far from that.

Repeated failures come always to those who have something exceptional to do; it is only those who are satisfied with a commonplace and ordinary realisation who succeed easily in what they attempt to do.

The natures of a special value have always to face many ordeals.

And thirdly, when I say to take refuge in the Divine’s love, I do not mean that it is all-sufficient in itself. Not so, personal effort and favourable circumstances are also necessary for the promptness of the advance. But those who can take refuge in the Divine’s love, find there a support, a protection and a joy that gives them strength to face all the ordeals and surmount all the difficulties.

I am always ready to help you according to my possibilities, and I need not tell you my love—you know it.”

If I would not have gone through difficult times, I would have never grasped the true meaning, the true purpose of life.

I am extremely lucky that the Mother guided me directly and put me on the path which leads to the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Love. My whole being aspires for nothing but everlasting union with the Divine. Sri Aurobindo's promising words are really encouraging:

"In the end a union, a closeness, a contact, companionship in the soul with the Divine, and yet more wonderful oneness in living."

*

Savitri-reading with Purani was going on well. All other subjects seemed flat in comparison with this wonderful subject.

Still there was no indication from the Mother about commencing the work of *Savitri*-paintings.

I felt unsettled. In answer to my letter the Mother wrote on 7 February 1961:

"Huta, my dear little child,

You ask me what you must do. It would be better to ask what you must be, because the circumstances and activities in life have not much importance. What is important is our way of reacting towards them.

Human nature is such that when you concentrate on your body you fall ill, when you concentrate on your heart and feelings you become unhappy, when you concentrate on the mind you get bewildered.

There are two ways of getting out of this precarious condition.

One is very arduous; it is a severe and continuous tapasya. It is the way of the strong who are predestined for it.

The other is to find something worth concentrating upon that diverts your attention from your small personal self. The most effective is a big ideal, but there are innumerable things that enter into this category. Most commonly people choose marriage because it is the most easily available. To love somebody and to love children makes you busy and compels you to forget a little your own self. But it is rarely successful, because love is not a common thing.

Others turn to art, others to science, some choose a social or a political life, etc., etc.

But here also all depends on the sincerity and endurance with which is followed the chosen path. Because here also there are difficulties and obstacles to surmount.

So in life, nothing comes without an effort and a struggle, then it is

better to accept the fact that life will be dull and unsatisfactory and submit quietly to this fact.

This, my dear child, is the first point I must make clear to you before proceeding any further.

With my love and blessings.”

The Mother read out this letter to Satprem who recorded it on 7 February 1961. She, taking up the theme of my letter, made various comments about her body and the trials it had gone through.

Readers may note that many of the things the Mother told Satprem about spirituality and occultism—especially in connection with the cells of her body and their transformation—she told me also, a shade differently but essentially covering the same truths. In addition, she gave me concrete experiences of both the higher and the nether worlds—particularly when she started guiding me as regards *Savitri*-paintings in October 1961. My account of the matter will be packed with things splendid as well as things that must cause a shudder.

Each painting has its own history. The Mother commented on many pictures. She has also written letters on them.

*

Whether I liked to undergo the hideous difficulties or not, I was compelled to accept them to purify my whole being and to prepare myself for the higher Consciousness.

I was inspired to write a letter to the Mother on 9 February 1961 expressing that I should make my life worth living by doing something concrete and genuine which might be profitable to others. The Mother replied:

“Huta, my dear little child,

I have read your excellent letter and mostly agree with what you write.

The best indeed, is that we should have a good talk together.

So I shall see you tomorrow the 10th at 10 a.m.

With all my love and blessings.”

We had a “good talk” about what I should do and become. My soul’s prayer to her was: “O Mother, make me your true and perfect child, and use my whole life for your purpose.”

The Mother held my hands, looked deeply into my eyes for a long unfathomable moment and then said:

“I will take you to your goal.

Your aspiration will be fulfilled ”

She smiled reassuringly and went into a trance for a few moments, then opened her eyes and said:

“Behind all troubles, behind all difficulties, there is the Divine Grace
When you are on the point of falling down and even actually fall, the Grace
appears ”

(To be continued)

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WHAT I HAVE SEEN

I HAVE not seen Her,
But Her smile I have seen
In the eastern sky: its crimsoning
From moment to moment
Like an ascending tune
Till all was gold in a sacred delight.
The smile lessened my grief
While into its house of tomb
I laid the dead body of a person
Who had just got a new lease of life
From long excruciating pain.
Now silently would Death die in the grave,
He could not partake of the dawn's feast,
A message from the ornate sky read:
“Death may punch holes in your bodies
But not in your souls. At life's far end
A still newer, brighter life is held by Her,
Tears have no meaning there.”

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

LOOKING BACK AT DYUMAN

IN the middle of last year—1991—Dyuman came to my room for a chat. We remembered old times. He said: “Now you and I are the only two persons who can speak of the earliest phase of the Ashram. I came to the Ashram in May 1927 and you in December the same year. Nobody alive except Champaklal came earlier. But Champaklal can’t speak now. So we two alone can report about the old days.”

I reminded him of the meetings the Mother used to have with some of the disciples in the years just following 1927 in the “Prosperity” room in the Library House. They would be before the Soup Distribution downstairs in what is now the Reception Room. Both Dyuman and I belonged to that group. Most of us sat in a semicircle in front of the Mother. The Mother often gave talks and I jotted them down in abbreviated long-hand and afterwards reconstructed them and read them out to her during my interviews. At other times games were played to develop our intuitive powers. There was also informal chit-chat with the Mother. Once she raised the question: “Who among you has progressed the most during the past year?”

The answer would not mean which sadhak or sadhika was the most advanced in general. It would declare which one had taken the most marked step forward during the preceding twelve months.

While recollecting this question I turned to Dyuman and asked him whether it had stuck in his memory too. He said: “Yes.” Then I asked him whether he recalled the answer. He looked at me but kept quiet. I smiled and said: “We thought of Nolini, Amrita, Champaklal, Pavitra and Anilbaran, all old-timers. But the Mother named you.” Dyuman’s face beamed and he exclaimed. “So you remember this?” I replied: “Who could forget so great a compliment?” He looked very happy.

Now, what could have been the progress which marked him out? The central clue lies in the words the Mother once wrote in a letter to a disciple. “Dyuman loves me very dearly.” The expression implies an extreme movement of the deep heart—the constant outflow of what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother call the psychic being, the true soul which is a scintilla of the Divine and has a spontaneous leap of self-surrender to its luminous source. A rapt devotion for the Supreme streams out from it at all hours and everything one does is offered at the feet of the Lord and His manifesting Power,

Mother of the universe,
Creatrix, the Eternal’s artist bride

But the soul does not merely live in an enchanted garden away from the noises and hurdles of ordinary life. It sallies forth to carry out the Will of the Inmost

Beloved and that was another characteristic of Dyuman who held the Mother so infinitely dear. His love was such that he would obey her slightest wish and go all out to give her the best of everything. “Yes, Mother,” was the most frequent utterance from his lips, and just as frequent was the phrase: “You will have it.” I have witnessed occasions when he would report to her some project he had started on her behalf. But the moment she showed the slightest sign of hesitation he would immediately shelve it. Never was there any argument. And always he would seek out ways and means to secure for her the best the world could give. For instance, it was the sweet child-heart in him that dreamed of seeing the Mother move about like a queen in a Rolls-Royce! The dream was never realised—perhaps because the Mother retired to her second-floor rooms in April 1962 and it seemed she would never come down. As I said in my short notice that was pushed into the September *Mother India* at the last minute, the Mother called him “The Perfect Worker.” I think it was on one of his birthdays that I heard this rare compliment come from her mouth.

As a worker he was not only most obedient and scrupulous: he was also unsparing of his own energies. He often over-exerted himself. On the most recent *darshan* day—August 15—he used every ounce of his strength and stamina to distribute for hours on end the Darshan Message. The very next day he ran a high temperature—and two days later he passed away in the Ashram’s Nursing Home as the result of a sudden heart-attack.

His inner contact with the Mother was such that he could draw her out of the deepest trance if she was required for some purpose. This I was told by Udar in connection with the last hours of Sri Aurobindo. The Mother had gone away to rest some time before the end was expected, so that Sri Aurobindo might have a passage free of the Mother’s constant inevitable impulse to prevent him from his contemplated self-sacrifice to effect a radical step forward for the earth-consciousness. Dyuman was sent to call her inwardly out of her trance into which she had gone in the interval between her leaving Sri Aurobindo’s side and his taking his last breath. Without a whisper or a touch he is said to have informed her of the need to go back to Sri Aurobindo’s room.

That room—before the accident to the Master’s right leg on the night of November 23, 1938—was the scene of a sacred seclusion. Away from physical contacts Sri Aurobindo wanted to practise his dynamic meditation to hasten the descent of the Supermind. Once I saw his silhouette behind the open shutters of the outermost room on the first floor, as he was waiting for the Mother’s return through the courtyard of the house after the nightly Soup Distribution. The next day I spoke with happiness to the Mother of having caught a glimpse of the glorious body that was on the way to transformation. She looked grave and told me it would be best if no one did what Sri Aurobindo did not want—namely, to see him. Like Champaklal and one or two others, Dyuman had to go to the Lord’s room for some practical reason. But, knowing the Mother’s wish, he most

conscientiously avoided casting the least glance on that most worshipping form. Absolute obedience, no less than utter love and whole-hearted service, was a marked characteristic of the unpretentious dedicated soul who left his slender yet lithe physical sheath to join his adored ones on August 19 this year

AMAL KIRAN

A LETTER FROM A YOUNG SADHAK REMEMBERING DYUMAN

DEAR AMAL,

I will try my best to recollect my talks with Dyumanbhai. The most recent is the one a couple of days after M.P. Pandit's talk on Champaklal at the school. I went to Dyumanbhai's room. As usual he was writing letters. On that day he finished the work soon and sat in his easy-chair with his eyes closed. I was sitting at a little distance. As soon as I moved forward he opened his eyes and said "Come." I asked him how he had liked the talk on Champaklal. He said, "I had a very close relation with Champaklal for a long time. Everything goes on within, and, if you ask me, I can't recollect anything of that talk. But I am looking forward to work. Now there is no difference for me between serving you and serving the Mother. This body is now old, but the mind is not old. When I am talking to you, do you feel that it is old? The body has to co-operate with it. I can't work less. How can I betray my Lord? Many people have looked at my palm and told me that they saw no sign of death and that I would die at my will. But I want to go on working. Champaklal had to be in bed for two years."

I said, "I was at Cazanove on the day Champaklal's ashes were buried." Dyumanbhai told me, "When they were selecting a place for Champaklal, somebody pointed to a certain place and remarked, 'This place is for you.' I replied, 'No, let me go in the ordinary way. Forget Dyuman.'

You have informed me that the Trustees acted on an earlier saying of Dyumanbhai, "I would like to be with my friends." That meant burial.

Dyumanbhai said, "After the Mother's passing, Champaklal went out for the world's sake, but I had to be here. How could I leave my work?"

I don't know how the subject changed, but the next thing I recollect is Dyumanbhai saying, "In 1947, one month before Gandhiji's death I received a letter from him. He used to write to me, addressing me by my old name 'Chunibhai'. I read out the letter to Mother. She remarked that now Gandhiji was a changed man and she would like to see him. I started trying for a meeting, but before anything could be done Gandhiji was gone."

"According to Sri Aurobindo," I remarked, "the only strong man at that time was Vallabhbhai Patel."

Dyumanbhai answered, "I was one of Vallabhbhai's volunteers. In fact, it was in Vallabhbhai's house I took the decision to come to Pondicherry. Thus he lost one of his volunteers "

At an earlier meeting, when I accompanied my sister to Dyumanbhai's room, he recounted to us, "From my childhood I was guided by a sort of light which never allowed me to settle anywhere though I went here and there most of the time. It disappeared when I came to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo. I

was in the first batch that came here to stay and was involved in every-day life from the very start. In those days Mother was very strict. Nobody was expected to meet outsiders without her permission. Even among the Ashram's inmates there were restrictions, unless their meeting was absolutely necessary. Our room-doors were always closed. If somebody knocked, we would open the door just a little, finish the talk quickly and shut the door again."

Looking at my sister he said to me, laughing, "If in those days she and I had been seen chatting freely, you would have been the first to report it to Mother and we would have soon received a letter from her of disapproval. There was strict discipline. But shortly everything changed as more and more the spiritual light came down and established itself and when children were admitted into the Ashram."

Dyumanbhai continued, "There were hard days too in the Ashram's life. I was the culprit who arranged to sell Mother's jewellery."

One Saturday my sister and I visited Dyumanbhai. There was a film-show at the Playground. He was a little surprised that we had not gone there. Then he told us "It's good. Don't go. You are not here for such things. Why waste three hours?"

I asked, "Why then did Mother allow film-shows?"

"Mother did not want the children to go outside to see films. I have never gone to the Playground to see films, except one or two. There was the film based on Chaitanya's life, which I went to see at the request of one of my friends."

Apropos of a scene in which Chaitanya's wife figures in that film, Dyumanbhai spoke of his own wife. When she first came to the Ashram, she and he met each other only for a minute and that also in the presence of the Mother. After a long time she came again. He asked the Mother whether he should meet her or not. The Mother replied, "You are meeting so many people. What harm is there in meeting her?" Dyumanbhai told us, "So we met here in this room, sitting on that mat you see there. I once inquired of her about the nerve-illness from which she had been suffering when I had left her to come to Pondicherry. Her heart was very much moved. She said, 'You still remember my illness!' After this we became good friends. Life is like that."

After a pause Dyumanbhai went on: "I never joined the Group at the Playground because, when Mother started going to the Playground, somebody had to be here in the house. So I used to stay back and wait for her to return late in the evening. At times I went to the Playground when nobody was there."

He told us about the breaking of some of his inhibitions.

"Once somebody invited me and purposely served eggs as a dish. When I ate them, he exclaimed, 'Dyumanbhai, you are eating eggs.' I coolly answered, 'So what?' Once Mother gave me a fruit as *prasad*. She had eaten the upper portion. The lower one happened to be a bit rotten. On eating it my whole body became cold. So Mother told Nirod to give me some brandy. Thus I have tasted

brandy too.” Here Dyumanbhai laughed

He further reminisced: “I never gave Mother anything to eat without first tasting it to make sure it was good and safe. The doctor told Mother when she was unwell that chicken soup would be good for her. She said that if Pranab would agree she would take it provided there was no meat-piece in it. As I tasted everything beforehand I have tasted chicken also.”

At this point of the talk a person came into the room and conveyed something to Dyumanbhai by gestures. Dyumanbhai at once said, “I don’t give blessings. Only Mother gives them ”

On another occasion when I was sitting with him, two girls came to meet him. He talked to them very affably and when they were gone he said to me, laughing, “In olden days Apsaras from heaven used to appear before Rishis to destroy their tapasya. I meet so many women and if I had been like those Rishis I would have been finished long ago!”

CHAMPAKLAL'S WISHES

મેં હું ઘાતું ઘું ગઈ સારા. મારા અવસાન

સંઘા વિગત જણાવી હતી - પુંડાઈમાં

હવે આ વર્ષે પાંચા ફાદર જણાવું છું

આ દેહ જ્યાં પડે ત્યાં - એરલે એ રાહેર

મા - અગ્ની સંસ્કાર ના સ્થળે કરવાનો.
પ્રાર્થના - આગ વગર હોતો તે અંત્યજન્યના પ્રાર્થના
ફક્ત લંગોરી ભોજન.

ફક્ત - શરીર પર એક જ ચાદર નાંખી

શરીર ઢાંકવાનું.

અને એક જ પુણ્ય લખાઈ ન લખ તું

મારી દાતી પર મૂકવાનું.

હાર તોર મારા પર કે. મારી આસપાસ

જીએપણ નહિં મૂકવાના. -

જે પુણ્ય અને મહાન વિ. કરે છે. અને

શરીરને સ્પર્શ કરવામાં આવે છે તે નહિં

કરવાનો - ફોર કે ફોલ્ડ વિ. નહિં લેવાના

કોઈપણ જાતનું સ્મૃતિ ચિન્હ રાખવાનું નહિં

મુખે વસ્તુ - છે - સ્મૃતિ ચિન્હની. ૮

આ - કદાચ કોઈપણ જાતનું ન જોઈએ -

પ્રાતઃ સ્નાત્ય- એક જ છે.

જે પ્રત્યેક વ્યક્તિના- પોતાના

ઈષ્ટદેવજ.

જાળ કોઈને મળુ સ્નાત્ય કરવાની જરૂર નથી.

સ્મૃતિ ચિન્હ એ જાણ્ય વસ્તુ- તદ્દન

એવી વગરનું ફરવાર થયું છે. જે મોવા

જાતી દરેકના હૃદયે લે જોઈ જ શકાય,

એ શાકાચો- એ મળુ- વફર કરેલા તમા

ગુણમાં ઉદ્ધ ગતિ કરે છે. મળુ એક મેળાનું

ઉપહ્રમ થયું છે. —

પ્રેમીના પ્રેમ પિ- નહિ કરવા દેવાના

નાથે ભ્રમા પર મળુ નહિ જ

સ્વેચ્છાનામાં મળુ- તદ્દન ચોલી

શીતે- જ. — સામાન્ય માણસ માટે

કરવામાં આવે છે એ જ ચોલી —

ચંપકલાલ.

૪-૧૦-૮૭

વડોદરા વામ પાપન સારી મળ્યા.
 એનાં ચારીશીદામ જી અશ્વિંદ
 નિવસાદા —

લા.મ. યુ.પ.વિ. અમલું કિલ્લાને બદલે
 બાંધીએ પોતે. આ સમયે- પોતાના જીવનને
 ઈન્નાત ફેર એવો કોઈ સંકલ્પ ફેર અને મા
 હિમામયિને એ માટેજે સાથું પલટા આપવા માલે
 પોતાના અંતિમે આ માત્ર માટેની વાદા —

TRANSLATION

I THINK it was last year that I spoke in Bombay about things to be done in the event of my death I am repeating them again this year

Wherever I die, that is, in whichever town, my body should be cremated in that place If I die outside Pondicherry, *there is no need to take my body there* My body should be clothed in a loin-cloth only and covered with a chaddar And only one flower of "Divine Love" should be placed on my chest Do not put any wreaths or garlands, either on my body or on the ground nearby

No one should bow down to my body or place any flowers on it and in no case should anyone touch it *It should not be photographed or video-filmed*

Nothing should be done to commemorate me This is important—no memento or memorial of any kind Only One—the chosen deity of every individual—is worthy of being remembered It is not necessary to remember anyone else A memorial is an external thing, without any meaning, and those who look with open eyes can realize the truth of what I say

These spiritual camps, though they have been helpful in the spiritual growth of a few individuals, have, by and large, taken the form of a social get-together

No pranam and no flowers even on the nearby ground should be allowed

Even in the cremation ground everything should be done in a very simple manner as it is done in the case of an ordinary man

5 10 87

CHAMPAKLAL

Baroda—the unique, spiritually exalting, holy place of pilgrimage—Sri Arvind Nivas P S Instead of offering flowers etc, let everyone, at that time, make a resolution which may elevate his life and pray to the gracious Mother to give him the right attitude to fulfil it Let this be his last offering to me

SOME THOUGHTS ON 'THOUGHTS AND APHORISMS'

“Three times God laughed at Shankara, first when he returned to burn the corpse of his mother, again, when he commented on the Isha Upanishad, and the third time when he stormed about India preaching inaction.”

READING the above sentence of Sri Aurobindo quoted in an article, an ardent mayavadin is said to have become furious, as he felt that Sri Aurobindo was lashing at the great Shankara at a personal level. The gentleman would have had a more charitable view of the situation, had he known that the quotation in question does not occur in *The Life Divine* but in *Thoughts and Aphorisms*!

For of all the prose writings of Sri Aurobindo *Thoughts and Aphorisms* are among the few relatively neglected ones. Most readers are well-acquainted with the stately style of *The Life Divine*, the depth and wide sweep of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, the clarity and personal touch of his *Letters*, the fire and fervour of his *Bande Mataram* days, or the pure incantatory style of *The Mother*, but few are aware of the distinct रस (*rasa*) contained in the Aphorisms. For here the आनन्दमय (*ānandamaya*) confronts us with a different kind of रस, an atmosphere of superior humour which bites only to awaken, and hits hard for prejudiced minds to open.

Although there are various shades and hues to the ways the Thoughts are expressed, their dominant feature is a kind of paradox or rather unexpectedness which strikes us. For example

When, O eager disputant, thou hast prevailed in a debate, then art thou greatly to be pitied, for thou hast lost a chance of widening knowledge

or

Only those thoughts are true the opposite of which is also true in its own time and application;

These pithy maxims in their inimitable style strike us in order to awaken our slumbering minds and compel them to think

Sri Aurobindo's next most common instrument is satire or वक्रोक्ति. It states the wrong viewpoint deliberately and makes evident how obviously that can't be. Listen to the following.

What I wished or thought to be the right thing does not come about, therefore it is clear that there is no All-wise one who guides the world but only blind Chance or a brute Causality.

Here the scheme is evident. Only the opposite view is stated and no attempt is made to clarify the position, as if to say "How ridiculous to think like this!" A similar tone is found in the following Aphorism where the irony reaches its acme:

Not to have heard the voice of God and His angels is the world's idea of sanity.

What an elegant manner of putting worldly wisdom in its place!
Sometimes the ironical ring takes a turn and expresses a known Truth but in a sharply edged manner:

Either do not give the name of knowledge to your beliefs only, and of error, ignorance or charlatanism to the beliefs of others, or do not rail at the dogmas of the sects and their intolerance

What a stroke at the mistaken notion of the Intellectuals, who hold that their beliefs are ascertained facts while those of others mere errors!

Although back-hand is the more common stroke in the Aphorisms, Sri Aurobindo is not averse to making direct terse statements when necessary.

God, the world-Guru, is wiser than thy mind, trust Him and not that eternal self-seeker and arrogant sceptic.

or

Our country is God the Mother; speak not evil of her unless thou canst do it with love and tenderness

or he can become more direct still:

Live within; be not shaken by outward happenings

Sri Aurobindo sometimes adds ridicule to directness and makes it more effective:

Reason gives me no basis for this faith, thou murmurest. Fool! if it did, faith would not be needed or demanded of thee

Being poet first and last, Sri Aurobindo is known to be poetic even in his prose writings. Here is an example of poetry in disguise:

O Death, our masked friend and maker of opportunities, when thou

wouldst open the gates, hesitate not to tell us beforehand; for we are not of those who are shaken by its iron jarring

or

To thy Lover, O Lord, the railing of the world is wild honey and the pelting of stones by the mob is summer rain on the body For is it not Thou that railest and peltest, as is it not Thou in the stones that strikest and hurtest me!

Sometimes the poetic utterance can take an essentially Tagorean turn. Listen again—

My lover took his crown and royal necklace from His head and neck and clothed me with them; but the disciples of the saints and the prophets abused me and said "He is hunting after siddhis".

or

O Misfortune, blessed be thou; for through thee I have seen the face of my Lover

The poetic expression at times reaches the extreme of Divine Passion. See how Sri Aurobindo expresses the ecstatic play of Krishna, the divine paramour, with His playmate:

After offending, He forced me to pardon Him not by reparation but by committing fresh offences

It is claimed by some that the influence of the Bible on English writers is inescapable. In the Aphorisms also we find an echo of the Biblical style:

If a woman has tempted thee, is it her fault or thine? Be not a fool and a self-deceiver.

We have so far considered in the Aphorisms the facets of styles which are humanly possible; we have yet to consider one more facet, namely that of utterances which come from very high and before which we stand awed and ask ourselves what has happened. They have a tremendous force and a power that borders on the revelatory. See the following:

To the senses it is always true that the sun moves round the earth; this is false to the reason. To the reason it is always true that the earth moves

round the sun; this is false to the supreme vision. Neither earth moves nor sun; there is only a change in the relation of sun-consciousness and earth-consciousness.

Here Sri Aurobindo takes us gradually through familiar facts expressed in the first two sentences, to a sudden superhuman height which reveals the non-materiality of the material universe. As if we were travelling on known ways with familiar landscapes and were suddenly to cross over a ridge and obtain a total view! Such is the revelatory impact of these magical words. And nothing could have expressed more effectively the truth that Matter is ultimately Spirit in disguise.

We have seen that the beauty of the Aphorisms is unparalleled in its own way. And there is a great variety of style in them. The style can be paradoxical, satirical, poetic with various shades, intellectually cogent or revelatory. But, whatever the style, the sublime Presence is always there behind the words. Moreover, the whole of *Thoughts and Aphorisms* is pervaded with a grand sense of humour. This humour, like human humour does not tickle or make one giggle. It is a reflection of the divine आनन्द (Ananda) and bathes us in its atmosphere.

To enjoy the Aphorisms no special knowledge of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical 'system' (if it may be so called) is necessary, the new terms coined or invented by him do not occur there. A modicum of intelligence and an open heart are sufficient tools to enjoy and understand the Aphorisms, at least in the sense we understand 'understanding'.

A D SAVARDEKAR

A LIVING, PICTURESQUE, RACY LANGUAGE

AMERICAN English is looked down upon by the older generation in countries that had been ruled by Britain. It was reviled by the British themselves for a long time. When Thomas Jefferson used the word “belittle” in 1787, he was ridiculed in London for this “obnoxious” coinage. Some of the words which horrified the English were “bamboozle”, “mad” (in the sense of angry), “lengthy”, “calculate”, “antagonise”, “placate”, “to loan”, “to advocate”, “demote”, “contact”, “O.K.” and “reckon”. They were considered “the uncouth expressions of the Yankee dialect.” The English weekly *Punch* expressed the then prevailing view thus: “If the pure well of English is to remain undefiled, no Yankee should be allowed henceforth to throw mud into it. It is a form of verbal expectoration that is profane, most detestable.” The English poet, Coleridge, went to the extent of saying that Americans were a people without a language.

In the early years, Americans looked for recognition from Britain. When they met with criticism and ridicule, there was a sharp reaction against Britain and British English in the eighteenth century. After attaining political independence, Americans sought linguistic independence. There was such a reaction against Britain that some resolved to replace English by Hebrew as the language of the country. Some others suggested that English be replaced by Greek. This idea was given up as it was felt that “it would be more convenient for us to keep the language as it is, and make the English speak Greek.” The tendency to imitate the English, their language and literature in every respect was denounced by most Americans. James Russell Lowell wrote:

You steal Englishmen's books and think Englishmen's thought;
With their salt on her tail your wild eagle is caught;
Your literature suits its each whisper and emotion
To what will be thought of it over the ocean.

However, there were a few Englishmen who defended the Americans' right to shape English the way they wanted. Richard Aldington said in 1920: “Are Americans to write the language which they speak, which is slowly but inevitably separating itself from the language of England, or are they to write a devitalised idiom learned painfully from books or from a discreet frequentation of London literary cliques? Another century may see English broken into a number of dialects or even different languages, spoken in Canada, Australia, South Africa, the United States and England. The result may eventually be similar to the break-up of Latin.” The intense vitality and colourful expressiveness of the American language was commented on by some English writers.

It is interesting to note that in 1930 a conference of Russian teachers in Moscow proposed that “American” be taught in schools instead of English. *Inter*

alia, it said: “(a) Oxford English is an aristocratic tongue purposely fostered by the highest British governing and land-holding class in order to maintain their icy and lofty exclusiveness (b) The American language is more democratic, for the employing classes speak no different from their employees. (c) The American language is more alive and picturesque tending more to simplification both in spelling and grammar.”

What are the differences between American and British English? There are differences in grammar, pronunciation, spelling and vocabulary. In the following pairs, the first word in each is English and the second American: sweets—candy; petrol—gas; dynamo—generator, race-course—race-track, biscuits—crackers or cookies; tram—street car; first floor—second floor; flat—apartment; motor car—automobile; luggage—baggage; chemist—druggist; lift—elevator; rubbish—junk, parcel—package, torch—flashlight; maths—math; bonnet—hood; cutting (from a newspaper)—clipping; hire purchase—instalment, interval—intermission; leader—editorial, motorway—highway; nappy—diaper; notice board—bulletin board; number plate—license plate; pram—baby carriage; right-angled triangle—right triangle; rise (in salary)—raise; silencer (of a car)—muffler; single ticket—one way ticket; unit trust—mutual fund; waste paper basket—waste basket, windscreen—windshield; zed (pronunciation of the letter “z”)—zee.

There are no pavements on the streets of America but only “sidewalks”. An American does not black his shoes but shines them. While a candidate in English stands for office, an American runs for it. The undertaker in Britain is a mortician in America, the hairdresser a beautician, a rat-catcher an exterminating engineer and the cemetery a memorial park. If you need coffee, an Englishman would make some for you and an American would “fix it” for you.

Some examples of difference in pronunciation: The “a” in “tomato” is pronounced like the “a” in “cart” in British English, and “ei” as in “make” in American English. The “a” in “grass”, “path”, “glass” is pronounced like the “a” in “can” in American English and like the “a” in “cart” in British English. “News” is pronounced “noose” in American English. The “sch” in “schedule” is pronounced “sk” in American and “sh” in British English. The following are some examples of American spelling: color, rigor, check (British cheque), center, plow (plough), program (programme), mustache (moustache), sulfur (sulphur), pajamas (pyjamas), aluminum (aluminium), catalog (catalogue), theater (theatre).

Grammatical differences: In the following pairs, the first is British and the second American. He has just gone home; He just went home, Have you got children? Do you have children? I have never really got to know him; I have never really gotten to know him; It is essential that he should be punished; It is essential that he be punished; protest against something—protest something;

stay at home—stay home; Monday to Friday—Monday thro Friday; meet somebody—meet with somebody.

These are some of the differences between American and British English, but these are not such as to make them mutually unintelligible. American English is the mother tongue of Americans and it is not inferior to British English. It is vibrant, racy and highly creative. Young people of today have been more influenced by American rather than British English. American English is developing in its own way and nothing can stop it.

Till about 1900, American English was more influenced by British English than British English was by American. Now it is the other way round * British English has borrowed a number of words such as baby-sitter, teenager, gimmick, knowhow, laid-back, rip-off, hopefully, reliable, influential, bunkum, highbrow, jaywalker, to bank on, to get busy, to iron out, to stay put, to sidestep, cold feet, live-wire, rubberneck, cafeteria, commuter, home spun, to streamline, electioneering, gangster.

It must be remembered that 200 million people speak American English and, with the passage of time, one should not be surprised if British English is referred to as a dialect of American English! As early as 1582, Samuel Daniel, an English poet, visualised the spread of English to “strange shores and unknowing nations.” It has happened now with the assistance of America. This is what Samuel Daniel wrote:

And who, in time, knows whither we may vent
The treasures of our tongue, to what strange shores
This gain of our best glory shall be sent,
To enrich unknowing nations with our stores?
What worlds in the yet unformed Occident
May come refined with the accents that are ours?

Or who can tell for what great work in hand
The greatness of our style is now ordained?
What powers it shall bring in, what spirits command,
What thoughts let out, what humours keep restrained,
What mischief it may powerfully withstand,
And what fair ends may thereby be attained?

In 1780, two hundred years later, John Adams wrote:

“English will be the most respectable language in the world and the most universally read and spoken in the next century, if not before the close of

* Or “around” as in American English—Editor

this.... It is destined to be in the next and succeeding centuries more generally the language of the world than Latin was in the last or French is in the present age. The reason for this is obvious, because the increasing population in America, and their universal connection and correspondence with all nations will,...force their language into general use...”

K SUBRAHMANIAN

(With acknowledgments to *The Hindu*, 1.2.1989, p. 8)

POETRY AND THE IDEA OF CHILDHOOD

MODERN man in need of innocence, in search of his own childhood, is a theme that has assumed a special dimension in modern literature. For there are situations which make him forget his usual characteristics especially when he perceives that the essential thing that maintains life is something other than the struggle. He no more feels the need for conquest, all the same the yearning for purification, innocence and peace still persists. In that state of immaculate peace man seeks a renewal of life, a regeneration. To embark upon the pilgrimage for self-realization and to investigate the nature of *joy* is then to cast a glance backward at the shores of innocence and thereby retrieve the precious toy lost in the blue distance of time. This process which involves the re-creation of the ontological reality of childhood is an integral part of the artist's creative endeavour.

But how do we approach the study of childhood so that one may perceive the meaning and significance of one's own childhood experiences? The child's world is inaccessible to the adult; for the communication between the two is bound to be vague, inadequate and incomplete. The adult acts in blindness and fails to sense the unknown and the mysterious in the child. Even when the child is observed and studied by such disciplines as ontology and psychology the essential being of the child, its underlying mystery, defies scientific investigations. This unknown in the child can be sounded only at the literary level where the poet assumes the essential characteristics of the child in an attempt to re-enact the process of childhood. Further, as poetry is in itself a way of focussing on the archetypes,* it deciphers the language of the child which is essentially the language of the archetypes. This connection between the language of poetry and the language of the child opens up new vistas of exploration for the creative artist. And the exploration has assumed new dimensions in modern literature.

Now, the question is what exactly is the advantage of studying the child-mind at the literary level?

It is true that great advancement has been made in the study of the child in the field of psychology and other related disciplines. But the twentieth century has imposed on the social space of childhood an emasculating psychologism which has alienated the life project of the child from the child's existential reality. In the process of measuring the various characteristics of childhood "we have progressed from the forgetfulness of childhood to its containment."¹ In so doing, we have the very ontology of childhood eroded as a life-phase.² Hence the attitude towards childhood needs a re-orientation. Diagnosing the problem Valerie Polakov Suransky observes:

* "A symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognisable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole" (Northrop Frye)

...we must now turn, in order to seek possibilities of meaning, another explanatory language that speaks to the landscape of childhood.³

This explanatory language she finds in such playwrights as Athol Fugard and poets like William Blake and Dylan Thomas,

..who have best understood through the aesthetic paradigm in which they live and move with acute sensitivity, those quintessential human attributes that capture the elusive history-making moments of childhood⁴

Later, commenting on one of the poems of Dylan Thomas, Suransky observes:

..(he) depicts the child's sense of freedom embodied in movement, in colour and in space and the transformative nature of that experience, for it is these history-making acts of the child which invest everyday life experiences with consciousness and meaning in the very act of being . It is this ontology of childhood that seems so sensitively captured by the aesthetic paradigm which in many ways offers a far more accurate portrayal of the mode of being of childhood than the indifferent technical vocabularies of our modern era⁵

Suransky's observations give valid reasons to conclude that the treatment of childhood in literature deserves special attention as a unique way of exploring the mystery and meaning of childhood. This assumption is what has inspired the study.

Modern researchers have established beyond doubt that the child possesses certain unique qualities, as an experimenter and as a quester. It has remarkable abilities to make observations and to search indefatigably for causes though the child's causality is rooted in magic. But the most distinctive trait of the child, according to Malanie Klein, is its ability to blend the objects with the archetypes.⁶ In this respect, the child image presents special advantage to the poet, for poetry in its search for meaning implies an unusually warm, intimate involvement with objects, making for detachment at the same time, because it focusses on the archetypes beyond them

Next, the relationship between the poet and the child may be examined in the light of the postulate that the child is the symbol of the self To begin with, the child perceives its environment as a whole with interdependent parts Only in such an environment it is possible for the child to orient itself and to act with purpose without it, the child would have no basis on which to build its perception of relationships The child tries to assimilate its environment and from such efforts springs the deep-seated unity of his personality.⁷ This is what has given rise to the Jungian notion that the evolution of the child's identity is in

a sense the making of the individual self itself.⁸ According to C G. Jung it is not a metaphysical statement but a psychological fact Jung relates the idea of childhood to selfhood in the following words

.. a characteristic of childhood is that thanks to its naiveté and unconsciousness, it sketches a more complete picture of the self, of the whole man in his pure individuality, than adulthood.⁹

So, childhood is a door to the discovery of the self, a key to self-realization and instrument of self-definition. Naturally, every human being has to live with it, before he can leave it. As Laontine Young notes, "perhaps we would realize and give ourselves a chance to learn to explore and to admit that we have got a way to go in that most amazing search of all—the search for ourselves."¹⁰

The relationship between the poet and the child may be further examined from the proposition that the child and the poet are mutually inclusive entities as inhabitants of Eden In Eden man was able to converse with God just as he was able to talk to his own kind. There was no sense of Good and Evil and no separation of the natural world into different camps. The world was a unity. In other words, Eden is the state of man before the process of differentiation of the various aspects of his personality took place. He is part of a world which he does not consider to be essentially different in nature from himself. He is able to communicate with it at all levels and has no sense of the inanimate or objective. It is a state of psychic equilibrium, the quintessential characteristic of childhood.

As the man in Eden (child) has not undergone the process of individuation, the presentiments of his unconscious are fully as real as perception by the conscious mind. His sensation is vivid, his feeling unrestrained and he operates as a unity

The child has also been described as more imaginative than the adult as its mind is endowed with a mythopoeic quality. For it the dream, day-dream, imaginings and hallucinations exist on the same plane of reality as what the adult mind would call actuality. Being a unity, the polarities of good and evil do not operate in it. Thus childhood may be regarded as existing in Eden. Poets have frequently referred to childhood as a paradisaal state. Thomas Traherne observes:

Certainly Adam in Paradise had not more sweet and curious apprehensions of the world than when I was a child... My knowledge was divine. I knew by intuition those things which since my Apostasy, I collected again by the highest reason. My very ignorance was advantageous.¹¹

Here we see in the child another aspect of the complete Man. Ignorance is advantageous because thought has not developed to obstruct intuition In it sensation has not been overdeveloped. The faculty of feeling has also not been

inhibited by the recognition of the laws. Thus the child, like the poet, brings "the whole soul of man into activity with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity."¹²

Robin Skelton associates the poet with the man unfallen, man complete, man made in God's image whose world is an Eden. According to him the primal function of poetry itself is an effort to return to Edenic innocence.

The poetic activity in its use of language as in its fusion of the unconscious aspects of personality and its being opposed to the idea of differentiation is a tendency to return to the state of unfallen man.¹³

After 'fall into division', the poet thus attempts a 'resurrection to unity'. But he is different from the child (man in Eden) in several respects. In him the process of individuation has allowed the conscious elements of personality to be developed. He has more sense-data at his disposal. The development of the personality in the case of the poet causes a greater degree of tension to exist between Instinct and Reason. Therefore the poetic activity of the man is not merely a return to the situation of childhood, but the re-establishment of a higher and more significant level of that quality of psychic equilibrium and unified perceptiveness which is to be found in childhood. It is a rebirth.¹⁴

In this process of manoeuvring the psychic functions into equilibrium the poet feels that he is living fully and that a barrier of dumbness and opacity has been broken; he is no longer slave to time. In this condition the poet knows that he can perceive pattern, can provide the notation for an experience, which unites for him all his faculties. The tensions created in establishing the psychic equilibrium inevitably leads to certain conflicts.¹⁵ In such a state man exists not as a self-conscious ego, but as a complete personality, as "the true man." Once he has re-entered this realm, his ancient state, he perceives all things "as with the eyes of God." But with this alone the picture is not complete. It has been already mentioned that the mythopoeic nature of the child's mind experiences the world as a unity. But the world in itself acts as an enemy and slowly breaks the child's holistic psyche into fragments. It is a tragic paradox that the child's coming into the world, its very ascent, is thwarted by the divisive agencies of the world. The child, because it lives its childhood, is rather unaware of this fragmentation of his being, which operates otherwise holistically. The child takes this world for an invitation, as a part of his own being. But the ways of the world are too devious to make the child at home any more. So the poet, in whom the characteristics of the child remain dormant, experiences a need to go back, to withdraw to the beginnings of life, a moving away from the world to a more sheltered place, the womb itself. The poet, as here, as the explorer of the higher spiritual dimension, to enable himself to resume the work of creation, detaches himself and thereby 'transfigures.' The first step of this detachment, as Joseph Campbell observes,

consists of a radical transfer of emphasis from external to the internal world, a retreat from the desperations of the waste land to the peace of the everlasting realm that is within. Examining the realm in detail, he remarks:

...this realm, as we know from psychoanalysis, is precisely the infantile unconscious. It is the realm that we enter in sleep. We carry it within ourselves for ever. All the ogres and secret helpers of our nursery are there, all the magic of childhood. And more important, all the life potentialities that we never managed to bring to adult realization, those other portions of ourself, are there; for such golden seeds do not die. If only a portion of that lost totality could be dredged up into the light of day we should experience a marvellous expansion of our powers, a vivid renewal of life.¹⁶

Thus the child and the poet are mutually inclusive entities among themselves. They are complementary principles working in unison. So, for the poet the memory of his own childhood becomes a potential source of creativity and self-discovery. Perhaps the same thing is meant when Robert Penn Warren says that, as a poet, all the images one needs are acquired and accumulated during the period of childhood.¹⁷

It was mentioned that the poet, in whom the characteristics of childhood are dormant, experiences a craving to return to the beginnings of life—i.e., to the state of man in Eden, the man of the paradisaical period. And this he achieves through the ritual of poetic activity. Certain anthropological studies offer revelatory suggestions in discovering certain hidden connections of the nature of poetry and of man's yearning for paradise, to the concept of childhood.

According to Mircea Eliade, the characteristics of the man of the paradisaical period include the ability to ascend to Heaven, easy access to the gods, friendship with the animals and knowledge of their language. This combination of privileges and powers was lost as a consequence of a primordial event: the Fall. It might have been caused either through an ontological mutation in man's psyche or through a cosmic rupture, says Eliade.¹⁸

In many primitive societies the symbolism of the heavenly ascension was realized by means of a tree. In the mythical times of paradise, there was a tree, a pole, a vine or a mountain which connected Earth with Heaven. Primordial man could readily pass from one to the other by climbing them. Communication with Heaven was easy. In the shamanistic rites the mountain or the cosmic tree becomes the actual vehicle of attaining Heaven such as it was before the 'Fall'. The ecstasy of the shaman enacts though temporarily the initial state of all humanity. The mystic experience of the primitive people—the shamanistic ecstasy—is equivalent to a return to the beginnings, a reversion to the mythical days of a 'Lost Paradise'. It reveals the 'yearning for paradise', the wish to return to a state of blessedness and freedom such as existed before the Fall, to restore

the contact with Heaven and Earth.

Before the Fall, the friendship with animals was an integral part of the paradisaical condition. The shamanistic rituals very much incorporate this idea. The animals are the bearers of a symbolism and mythology very significant for the religious life. The vital experience of this friendship with the animals advances him far beyond the general situations of fallen humanity.¹⁹

Christianity too is dominated by this yearning for paradise. In Christian literature Christ is often referred to as the Tree of Life. Baptism is thought of as entrance into paradise and the life of mysticism is considered as a deeper penetration into paradise. Thus it is mysticism that best reveals the restoration of the paradisaical life. The paradisaical symbolism finds a further edge in Christian churches and the monastic gardens, the landscape, for example, which surrounds the monk represents the earthly paradise.

For Christianity, just as for the archaic cultures, the present state of humanity is the result of the 'Fall'. Consequently to do away with this state, even if only provisionally, is equivalent to re-establishing the primordial condition of man; in other words, to banish time, to go backward and to recover the paradisaical *illud tempus*.²⁰ There is also no break of continuity in the ideology of the 'primitive' mystic experience and Judeo-Christian mysticism. For both "mystic ecstasy is a return to paradise, expressed by the overcoming of Time and History, the Fall."²¹

This complete ideological continuity between the primitive forms of mysticism and Christianity leads to the conclusion that yearning for paradise is a persistent attitude in the religious history of Man, and that the mystical memory of a blessedness without history haunts man from the moment he becomes aware of his situation in the cosmos.²² The poet, in whom the characteristics of the child operate in a hidden way, enacts this paradisaical syndrome present in humanity's evolution in terms of his poetic creativity. In a sense, he acts as a sort of shaman in restoring the original blessedness. To this may be added the fact that the theme of childhood itself offers ample scope for further exploration in this direction by virtue of its initiatory experiences which run parallel to the ordeals of shamanistic initiation.

The motif of childhood can thus be viewed from three vantage points. First, the exploration of the idea of childhood at the literary level assumes importance because only at the literary level (which incorporates literary mysticism also) could the ontology of childhood be examined. Second, it has been mentioned that the child's mental world focusses on the archetypes, which in truth, form the essential language of poetry. This establishes the hidden link between the faculties of childhood and the essential characteristics of the poetic process. Poetry itself has been looked upon as an expression of the yearning for paradise, a tendency to restore the Edenic innocence. Third, modern psychological research has established that the child is the symbol of the self and that

childhood, thanks to its naiveté and unconsciousness, sketches a more complete picture of the self of the whole man in his pure individuality than adulthood. Finally, man's urge to go back to a more sheltered place, which is none other than his primordial state, is indicated by the modern anthropological theory concerning the fallen man's quest for paradise.

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SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of October 1992)

THE aim of the *Bande Mataram* was not only to swell the ranks of Nationalists in Bengal but equally to convince the leaders of other Provinces to see things through the Nationalist eyes and to turn away from pursuing and upholding the supine policy of the Moderates. With an unflinching candour the paper chalked out the policies and the programme of the new party and the tactics to be employed for their realisation. It was felt that this was the effective way of suppressing the Moderates and a means of capturing the Congress organisation into the Nationalists' own hands. It pressed into service every aspect of Indian thought and culture in support of its arguments. Verily, its editorial writings which were mostly written by Sri Aurobindo were the voice of the awakened soul and spirit of India.

Extracts from the *Bande Mataram* were reproduced in the *Times*. When the *Times* complained that these Nationalists were spreading racial hatred and disaffection against the ruling race, the *Bande Mataram* replied. "Our motives and our objects are at least as lofty and noble as those of Mazzini or of that Garibaldi whose centenary the *Times* was hymning with such fervour a few days ago. The restoration of our country to her separate existence as a nation among the nations, her exaltation to a greatness, splendour, strength, magnificence equalling and surpassing her ancient glories is the goal of our endeavours: and we have undertaken this arduous task in which we as individuals risk everything, ease, wealth, liberty, life itself it may be, not out of hatred and hostility to other nations but in the firm conviction that we are working as much in the interests of all humanity including England herself, as in those of our own posterity and nation. That the struggle to realise our ideal must bring with it temporary strife, misunderstanding, hostility, disturbance—that in short, it is bound to be a struggle and not the billing and cooing of political doves, we have never attempted to deny. We believe that the rule of three hundred millions of Indians by an alien bureaucracy not responsible to the nation is a system unnatural, intrinsically bad and inevitably oppressive, and we do not pretend that we can convince our people of its undesirability without irritating the bureaucracy on one side and generating a strong dislike of the existing system on the other. But our object is constructive and not destructive, to build up our own nation and not to destroy another. If England chooses to feel aggrieved by our nation-building, and obstruct it by unjust, violent or despotic means, it is she who is the aggressor and guilty of exciting hatred and ill-feeling."¹

The *Bande Mataram*'s writings were translated at that time into many Indian languages. A series of articles (seven in number) on 'the Doctrine of Passive Resistance' appeared from April 11 to April 23, 1907. Sri Aurobindo's col-

leagues too were all talented and they picked up Sri Aurobindo's style, particularly Shyam Sunder. He picked up Sri Aurobindo's style so well that his articles were mistaken for Sri Aurobindo's. Historian R C. Majumdar, in his *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, quotes from J.L. Banerjee's tribute: "Whoever the actual contributor to *Bande Mataram* might be—the soul, the genius of the paper was Arabinda. The pen might be that of Shyam Sundar or whoever else but the voice was the voice of Arabinda Ghose."

The *Bande Mataram* expounds Sri Aurobindo's vision and true concept of Indian Nationalism "All great movements of life in India have begun with a new spiritual thought and usually a new religious activity" ² "The world needs India and needs her free "

In our earlier instalments we have mentioned how the renaissance in India emerged from the modern nineteenth century nationalism which was shaped by the various social reformers, thinkers and religious movements resulting from the Western impact on the ancient Hindu Culture.

Sri Aurobindo's ideal of Nationalism was deeply influenced by a celebrated novel *Ananda Math* ('Abode of Joy') by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, published in 1883. In this novel appears the song "Bande Mataram" which today is one of the two national anthems of free India.

Sri Aurobindo incidentally reveals the deep influence of Bankim. We may quote a part of the summary of the lecture by Sri Aurobindo in the Grand Square of the National School, Amraoti, Berar, on Wednesday the 29th January, 1908. The meeting commenced with singing of "Bande Mataram". We read: "He was exceedingly pleased to know that the song had become so popular in all parts of India and that it was being so repeatedly sung. He said that he would make this national anthem the subject of his speech. The song, he said, was not only a national anthem to be looked on as the European nations look upon their own, but one replete with mighty power, being a sacred *mantra* revealed to us by the author of *Ananda Math*, who might be called an inspired Rishi... The *mantra* of Bankim Chandra was not appreciated in his own day, and he predicted that there would come a time when the whole of India would resound with the singing of the song, and the word of the prophet was miraculously fulfilled. The meaning of the song was not understood then because there was no patriotism except such as consisted in making India the shadow of England and other countries which dazzled the sight of the sons of this Motherland with their glory and opulence."³

"Bande Mataram" was the key to the understanding of Sri Aurobindo's concept of Nationalism. He writes: "For what is a nation? What is our mother-country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty *Shakti*, (power) composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation.... The *Shakti* we call India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the Shaktis of the three hundred million of people...."⁴ In his essay on Bankim Sri Aurobindo says: "It is not till the motherland reveals

herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great Divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart, that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-absorbing passion for the Mother and her service, and the patriotism that works miracles and saves doomed nations is born.”⁵

Sri Aurobindo translated the song “Bande Mataram”, from the original Sanskrit in Bankim’s novel *Ananda Math*. Bankim writes with lyrical beauty of his conception of Mother India. Here are some lines from the translation:

“Mother, I bow to thee!
 Rich with thy hurrying streams,
 Bright with thy orchard gleams,
 Cool with thy winds of delight,
 Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
 Mother free....
 To thee I call, Mother and Lord!
 Thou who savest, arise and save!
 To her I cry who ever her foemen drave
 Back from plain and sea
 And shook herself free
 Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
 Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
 Thou the love divine, the awe
 In our hearts that conquers death.
 Thine the strength that nerves the arm,
 Thine the beauty, thine the charm
 Every image made divine
 In our temples is but thine...”⁶

The white heat of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual patriotism is well revealed in the following passage which is from an article meant for the periodical *Bande Mataram* but seized by the police and used as an exhibit in the Alipore Conspiracy Case “Love has a place in politics, but it is the love of one’s country, for one’s countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine *ananda* of self-immolation for one’s fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one’s blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race. The feeling of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother-soil, of the winds that blow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills, in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of that love. The pride in our past, the pain of our

present, the passion for the future are its trunk and branches. Self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, great service, high endurance for the country are its fruit. And the sap which keeps it alive is the realization of the Motherhood of God in the country, the vision of the Mother, the knowledge of the Mother, the perpetual contemplation, adoration and service of the Mother.”⁷

From the above quotation it is evident how deep was Sri Aurobindo’s love for India as a living spiritual entity.

Sri Aurobindo’s political thought may well be defined as Spiritual Nationalism. It had a firm belief that India has a mighty role to play in the spiritual regeneration of the human race, and that India has to fulfil a divine mission on earth. For that he was fully convinced that absolute freedom (*Purna Swaraj*) should be the goal of genuine Indian Nationalism. He writes in the *Bande Mataram*: “We recognise no political object of worship except the divinity in our Motherland, no present object of political endeavour except liberty, and no method or action as politically good or evil except as it truly helps or hinders our progress towards national emancipation.”⁸

One of his inspiring editorials runs. “The bureaucracy will not have to reckon this time with a few self-styled leaders who are only too eager to fall down and worship the idol of the hour, but with a newly-awakened people to whom the political freedom of the country has been elevated to the height of a religious faith. The political strife has assumed a religious character, and the question now before the people is whether India—the India of the holy Rishis, the India that gave birth to a Rama, a Krishna and a Buddha, the India of Sivaji and Guru Gobinda—is destined for ever to lie prostrate at the proud feet of a conqueror. Are we going to sacrifice our national destiny to the whims and interest of the foreigner or are we again to take ourselves seriously and struggle for the right to live that we may fulfil in this world our Heaven-appointed mission?”⁹

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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QUANTUM AND THE ENORMOUS CHANGE

(Continued from the issue of October 1992)

PART II

THE BEGINNING OF DOCTRINATION AND THE SETTING-IN OF DOGMATISM

SUMMARIZING the contents of the last few paragraphs of the preceding section in a single sentence, we may state: In the early stages of its growth Christianity very gladly and willingly absorbed, borrowed, retained and incorporated philosophies, sciences, conventions, traditions, customs, mythologies, ritual practices, scriptural writings and thinking patterns of its neighbouring cultures—Greek, Jewish, Roman, Egyptian, Hebrew. But when we come to reflect over “The Inquisition of Galileo” what strikes us in contrast was the unwillingness of the Church to accept and incorporate new findings of the day into its system. Not only that; it went to the extreme of suppressing vehemently all activities of a creative kind that ran against the “Holy Scriptures”

These two opposite stances of the same institution, although in different periods of time, are striking and demand an explanation. More specifically, why at one stage did Christianity have no hesitation in absorbing pagan ideas and yet at another stage, some 1300 years after; persecute innovators and brand them with the stigma of heresy?

The roots of the answer lie in the subsequent historical developments of the Roman Empire that took place until the invasion of the Barbarians in 476. Let us therefore continue our review of the historical proceedings of the Empire from 180 AD onwards.

For a hundred years after the death of Marcus Aurelius the Roman Empire saw a steady decline, a disintegration that could not be stopped by anyone who assumed the throne of Rome. A lack of powerful command saw the Empire slowly break down as the far-out provinces began to dissociate from the centre. It was in 284 AD, that Diocletian made a significant effort to restore the crumbling Empire, to pull it out of troubled waters, and put it back on the road to glory. As a leader he was strong and as an administrator skilful, but he lacked a certain wisdom to match with his position. His innovations in the governmental systems were no doubt helpful but were only of the nature of a temporary solution—with it began a kind of caste system.

It was in this long period of disintegration that Christianity—with its inflexible and, as Gibbs calls it, “intolerant zeal” derived from the Jewish religion—began to impress itself upon the people of an Empire which had grown

weary and frustrated. "Sick with hesitations of thought men turned greedily to a cult which gave theology instead of philosophy" and to a religion which assured them of happiness after death.

Two decades after Diocletian, in 324 AD, Constantine, the last of the greats in the long list of emperors, came to power. Under his emperorship two extremely important events took place. It was with a "sincere conviction" that he became a Christian and made Christianity the official religion of the Empire; in that process he "faithfully" persecuted paganism and "took God into partnership at every step". We may say that "he gave new life to an aging Empire by associating it with the young religion, a vigorous organisation, a fresh morality". This set the ground for Christianity to become "a mould for 14 centuries of European life and thought". The second major event was the organisation of the Council of Nicaea where all the leading Fathers and Priests gathered to resolve the growing problems within Christianity itself. This marks the beginning of Doctrination.

Although Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Empire, it was not automatic that in the following few decades the religion was totally accepted. On the contrary, its growth received a set-back, and attempts were made to reinstal paganism. However, the Barbaric invasion in the year 476 brought an abrupt end to the glorious cultures of Greece and Rome. It was in this period that Christianity was provided with an opportunity to fill the religious void in the masses. Since then, for the next 1400 years, Christianity remained a powerful institution putting its stamp upon the European society.

We have already seen that the sprawling Roman Empire in the first century housed a number of diverse cultures each of which enjoyed a complete freedom to co-exist, also, in this period when Christianity was growing, some of the Apostles disapproved of the approach carried out by Saint Paul to spread the teachings of Christ. Though fundamentally each of these preachers was syncretist, mild differences began to appear among them. Their consequences, crucial to our study, were felt some 250 years later.

We must not forget that every Church propagated the teachings of Christ in an independent manner. There existed no framework or authoritative restrictions, but only the teachings of Jesus written by his followers. The interpretations of the Gospels and the ways of implementation differed in different provinces. In the course of a few generations the initial mild differences led to the formation of creeds which varied from locality to locality. And in the time-span of three centuries the minor diversifications had turned into major credal viewpoints. Within the institution of Christianity itself there arose conflicting ideas and practices. The "serious struggle ..over the forms and nature of its own beliefs and rituals" had reached such a point that a reviewing of Christian ideas and a strengthening of the religious force became an urgent and immediate necessity. The only way for Christianity to survive was to reconcile all the

conflicting ideas and practices and to sort out the numerous controversies that had sprouted within the institution itself. It was with this objective in mind that the Council of Nicaea was called in the beginning of the second quarter of the 4th Century.

Among the most important things that happened at the Council were the following two. The first was: the writings representing the early followers were presented in an edited form in the New Testament; and the second: Christianity set off to build a "hierarchical organisation stronger in administration than in religion" which soon led to the establishment of an authoritative Church. The concluding outcome of this historical event is extremely significant since it marks the beginning of the doctrination and dogmatism and the end of the growth of Christianity. This is also the beginning of the end of the mighty Greek culture in which philosophy and reason had contributed immensely.

Here a pertinent question may be put: Why at all did Christianity follow such a course? Why should it have expanded freely for a while and then all of a sudden stunted its own growth by taking away its very freedom?

The important people connected with Christianity in the third century were quite different from their counterparts of the first generation. On the level of experience, they lacked the deeper understanding of the teachings of Christ, an outlook to view Christianity in a broader perspective, and a vision to lead the religion in its dark hours, on the mental level it was the absence of an open-mindedness, of a kind of creativity that was present in the earlier generations. We can well suggest that with Christ came an influence and force of a spirit from a different world and, with the passing of time, it got diluted and became weak.

Looking into the period 500-1900 AD with this perspective, we are prompted to put the following question. In the presence of this active spiritual force and influence would the Church have condemned Galileo and rejected Darwin? Would the open-mindedness have permitted the burning of Bruno at the stakes? The answer is, obviously, NO!

A brief look at the character portrayed by Christianity a few centuries before the entrance of Galileo is essential. This will enable us to understand why Copernicus was so hesitant about his book being published during his life; why Galileo, against his deepest convictions and beliefs, was made to renounce the heliocentric system of the universe. This presentation will also give us an insight into the commonly used phrases like "the degeneration of human thought", or "Christianity of the Middle Ages had paralysed free and creative thinking", etc. We shall also see the meaning of the "enormous change" properly in that context.

It is generally considered that the Dark Ages began around the 6th Century. By this time the institutionalisation of the religion, against the backdrop of the lost spiritual influence and force, had set in a dogmatism and orthodoxy that ran completely against the grain of the teachings of Christ. Christianity had become

“a religion of authority, finding its seat in a tradition believed to be supernaturally imparted. Instead of the contemplation of the formless we have a definitisation of the deity in the personal God or His incarnation. Instead of indifference to rites and formulas, we have the greatest insistence on them.” It was only a question of time before Authority would begin to rule supreme, make “faith” the dominant nature of the religion and eliminate all opposition by suppressing doubt and curiosity. “The ecclesiastical tyranny was so ubiquitous that it was perilous to breathe a word against accepted dogmas.... The heretic was the enemy, more than the infidel.” Instruments of torture were devised and the Inquisition established to defend this dogmatic faith. The spirit of the teachings of Christ receded farther into the background, giving way to inconceivable inhuman and cruel practices; in this period of the Dark Ages “Europe weltered in ignorance and misery and lived in constant peril and pressure.”

Christianity had built a strange psychology. On one hand, it chased the dream of being the dominant religion and, on the other, there existed an undercurrent of strange mortal fear, a fear of its own collapse and failure. Riding this complex arose the ‘desire for power’ under the garb of spiritual dignity. The simple faith of Jesus had been turned into a crude proselytising creed.

Europe had reached a stage where a change from the engrooved dogmatic traditionalism and “religious obscurantism” was necessary... And the change was coming.

(To be continued)

VIKAS DHANDHANIA

NEW AGE NEWS

COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY WILFRIED

Mystic Baseball

WHAT does the term “New Age” mean to Americans today? The journalist Michael D’Antonio spent more than a year travelling in the U.S. and visiting a number of spiritual places, esoteric groups, alternative seminars. He has published the result of his research in a book titled *Heaven on Earth—Dispatches from America’s Spiritual Frontier* * D’Antonio is basically skeptical, but he has an open mind and is always ready to listen, to watch and to recognize real achievement. Nevertheless, there is frequent disillusionment, often quite justified, because a lot of falsehood has invaded a movement which originally started on a genuine impulse. Rather than describing the author’s manifold experiences, I want to discuss only the best chapter in the book, “Camp Omega, New York—Mystic Baseball.”

Baseball is the American version of cricket. The main difference is that there are no wickets. The batsman, after hitting the ball successfully, heads for the “base(s)”, with the eventual object of a “home run”. As in cricket, the required skills are effective throwing (“pitching”), accurate and powerful batting, fast running and safe catching. Although this game is little known in Europe, it is one of the three favourite kinds of sport in the U.S., along with basketball and (American) football. Like many other Americans, D’Antonio had very often played this game in his youth. Now, as a grown-up man, he wanted to play it again—with a difference.

One of the two baseball teachers at the Omega Institute near New York was Bill Lee, in his best days an ace pitcher of the famous Boston Red Sox. His nickname was ‘Space Man’ because of his eccentric, mystical approach to the game. Lee “had been an extremely controversial ball player. In Boston he had annoyed management by standing on his head in center field and speaking his mind to the press about everything from the team’s managers to racism in Boston. Lee’s book, *The Wrong Stuff*, is the only ball player’s autobiography that touches on holistic medicine, the concept of karma, and the teachings of Buckminster Fuller.”

The other instructor is a man named McKay, who once played in minor league and was active as a college coach. Both of them combine solid mastery of the game with enlightened philosophy † “Everyone is an athlete,” says McKay

* Crown Publishers, New York 1992, Pp 422, \$ 20

† According to D’Antonio, McKay has taken his philosophy mainly from *A Zen Way of Baseball* by the Japanese author Sadaharu Oh. In this book Oh describes how he learnt to regard his opponents as partners in a dance rather than enemies in a battle, trying to draw on their energies to power his own efforts. Oh also

to free the players at the camp of their complexes. He recommends balancing “championship” and “sportsmanship” The first means playing hard with all your skills, the second is “your regard for yourself and the other players.” Finding this balance is the object of the camp

Lee follows up with his personal baseball-philosophy. He is ever in search of the perfect game, and that alone matters in his life. You forget about everything else, you create a one-pointed concentration. “You are the baseball, the baseball is you.” He starts with some practical demonstrations, the proper positioning and balancing of the body, the right gripping of the ball to throw fastballs, sliders and curves The whole instruction is interspersed with some very original remarks and interesting references One of the remarks shows that Lee is also familiar with Indian spiritual literature

In the presence of such a gifted and competent coach progress comes naturally. Michael D’Antonio experiences this at once, as he starts practising with a partner who tries a curve which soars right into D’Antonio’s glove. A wonderful throw “Then I tried it. It was amazing. For the first time in my life, I could throw a curve ball, or a fastball, or a slider, at will.” At this point D’Antonio’s book really makes delightful reading, which continues as we are told how McKay makes them select bats and teaches them to form a living relationship with the wood, feeling it, running your hand along its finish, getting it to know until it’s like an extension of you “It’s like an extension of your consciousness. It’s something that can work with you Respect it ”

One of the next passages at last explains to us why some of the world’s best tennis players fill the arenas with terrible groans when hitting the ball. McKay points out how the batsman relates himself to the power of earth, water, fire and wind. There is the “grounding” in the batter’s box followed by a ritual inducing higher concentration, then the “hitting from the belly” (fire), and the element of air expressed in loud exhaling as the ball is being hit, called *kee-ah* by the Chinese. That’s useful knowledge, of course, although it does not necessarily contribute to the aesthetic value of tennis, for instance Water symbolizes fluidity. “It is all one, fluid movement”

A few more interesting points could still be made, but this is only a review-article, whose length should not exceed that of the original text So I’ll stop here, concluding with D’Antonio’s following summary statement: “In mystic baseball, the idea is to play hard, play to win, but regard one’s opponent as gifted, human, and worthy. That way, a player can complete the game feeling the same way about himself.”

discusses the blending of spiritual and physical energies and explains the *do*, the way of baseball which he used as a spiritual practice to guide his entire life

SUDDEN TALES THE FOLKS TOLD

37. SMILE AT DEATH

THE post of the Chief Minister to a king fell vacant. Many of his ministers who held other portfolios clamoured for it. But the king wanted the best out of the whole lot to become his Chief Minister. Hence he devised a plan.

One fine morning he called all his ministers and spoke thus: "It is universally agreed that a country is prosperous only if it is endowed with power, strength and knowledge. No doubt, ours is a prosperous country. The selection of the Chief Minister must only add to it. It is his duty to remain a constant support and comfort to the king. And to be so, he must constantly use his brain. Don't you agree with me?"

"Yes, your Majesty!" the ministers agreed in unison.

"Hence I have decided to put you to test," continued the king "Whoever wishes to be my Chief Minister must have the courage to face Death. I'll send each one of the competitors to a different king of our neighbouring countries who pay me ransom, with a letter to put you to death. Whoever comes back alive will be honoured with the much-coveted post."

The ministers trembled at the words of the king. On second thought all of them, except one, backed out, showing a great sense of satisfaction with their present portfolios.

The bold minister was despatched to the nearby country with the ominous letter.

"Aren't you aware of the content of this letter?" asked the neighbouring king, after glancing through it.

"Yes, your Majesty! . I am not unaware of it. But please put me to death as early as you can," pleaded the bold minister.

Baffled stood the king.

"According to the Court astrologers," continued the bold minister, "I am fated to die within a week. But the country in which I breathe my last is destined to have not a single drop of rain for a period of twelve years at a stretch. This is the reason why my king had immediately dispatched me here with the letter."

The king blinked. A chill ran down his spine. Next minute he was on his knees and begged the minister to go away from his country and thereby save it from the impending disaster.

Back home, the bold minister went to meet his king, who was both surprised and happy to see him alive.

The witty minister rehearsed to him all that he had said to escape death.

"But how did you know that that king is a staunch believer in astrology?" interrupted the king.

"That's where my talent lies, your Majesty! Who in this world has no weak

point in him? Hit at it and he surrenders,” said the minister and smiled. He was smiling his way to Chief Ministership.

*

38. KNOWLEDGE AND WEALTH ARE NO SISTERS

“Any fool can make money and boast of his wealth. But it needs a real thinker to act wisely,” said an insulted scholar to a landlord and continued: “It is said that Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, and Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge, don’t go together. No doubt, Lakshmi has blessed you. But I am sure Saraswati has cursed you.”

The landlord flared up. He gritted his teeth before he said: “How dare you speak like that before me? If you doubt the integrity of my knowledge and wisdom, put them to test, if you can ”

The scholar went home and brought three statuettes. Placing them before the landlord he said, “Now find out and tell me which out of these three is the best. You must substantiate your view ”

The landlord looked at the statuettes. All the three were identical in every respect. Hence he turned them left, right, upside down and in all different directions, viewed them at close quarters and then at arm’s length. But there was no use. He tapped his forehead, scratched the back of his head and finally accepted defeat.

The landlord’s gardener who watched the entire exchange while watering the plants, came nearer and asked the landlord, “May I try my luck, Sir?”

“Yes. Why not?... If you succeed in giving a satisfactory answer to this scholar, I will have to accept all he has said about me. Yet try your luck,” said the landlord, gulping down the spittle that had collected in his mouth.

The gardener observed the three statuettes carefully for a minute. He then picked up a slender twig and inserted it into the right ear of the first statuette. As he pushed the twig, it made its way out through the left ear. He did the same to the second statuette. But the twig found its way out through the mouth. And with the third statuette, the twig got stuck and, however hard he pushed it, it found no outlet.

“The third statuette is the best out of the lot,” declared the gardener.

The Scholar beamed with satisfaction. But the landlord giggled nervously and asked the gardener to substantiate his view.

The gardener smiled and said: “Sir! In the case of the first statuette, the twig pushed through its right ear directly came out of the left. That only amounts to lending deaf ears. With the second statuette, the twig pushed through the right ear peeped out of its mouth and found its way out. That only amounts to idle talk. It is said in our ancient lore that those who lend deaf ears to all that happens

around them, and those who are idle talkers are a bane to the society, but those who keep their ears open and retain in their memory whatever they have heard in order to put it to proper use at the right time and at the right place are a boon to the society... In the case of the third statuette, the twig found no way out. Hence it is the best," said the gardener.

"Well done, gardener," applauded the scholar. The landlord accepted with a grin that Goddesses Lakshmi and Saraswati don't go hand in hand

*

39. ELEPHANTS TOO SLIP AND FALL

The sun woke up from his slumber. His herald, the cock, stood on a mound in a wood and crowed. A fox who was sleeping nearby woke up with a start. He yawned, stretched his limbs and stood up. Feeling hungry, he tiptoed his way towards the mound.

"How fine is your voice! It is music to my ears when you crow! What a beautiful bird you are! You are really a feast to my eyes. All birds pale into insignificance before you. What a heavenly look you bear when you crow, especially when you do it by closing your eyes!" flattered the fox.

The cock's joy knew no bounds. Very pleased with the words of the fox, the cock said: "I feel it an honour to fulfil the desire of a fan of mine. I'll crow for you and, of course, shutting my eyes."

"Ko...K ..ra...kho. .kho. ."

The fox, having fooled the cock, pounced upon it, caught it by its neck with its mouth and let out a suppressed guffaw.

At that juncture a pair of hounds, who had sighted the fox at a distance, began barking aloud and came running towards him.

The fox took to his heels, carrying the cock.

The cock, of course, is a foolish bird and no one knows for certain who taught him the proverb, "If you are drowning, even a straw is worth a grab." Hence he told the fox: "Should a crafty and bold animal like you run away at the sight of the poor hounds? Hounds too are after all dogs. Hence halt. Right about turn. And tell the hounds: 'You insignificant creatures! The cock is mine for I trapped it with my wit. You have no right to my prey'."

The fox, no doubt, is a crafty animal. Perhaps it is not aware of the proverb, "Elephants too slip and fall". Hence he halted, turned to face the approaching hounds and opened his mouth to speak.

In a trice he realized that he too was gullible, for the cock flew up and perched on the branch of a nearby tree. He fluttered his wings and crowed.

But the fox was not alive to hear the "music" he pretended to have loved.

*

40. DOGS DON'T BITE WITH THEIR TAILS

Centuries ago a king who loved dogs commanded his subjects to rear dogs in their houses. While the beggar had his cur, the landlords had their hounds. The status of a subject came to be judged by the number of dogs he kept with him.

Once a washerman carried a bundle of cleaned royal clothing on his back and was making his way towards the king's palace.

As he neared the palace, a dog of high breed, which was as tall as a calf and as fat as a pig, came like a dart towards him, barking all the while.

Sensing danger, the washerman looked here and there, searching for anything that can be used as a weapon to drive away the ferocious-looking dog. Finding nothing, he uprooted a cactus plant from a nearby bush, and holding it like a sword he thrashed the dog.

With bruises all over and bleeding profusely, the dog ran howling for its life.

As suspected by the washerman, the dog turned out to be a royal canine. Even before he could reach the palace to deliver the cleaned dry clothes, news about the ill-treatment meted out to his pet dog reached the king.

He inspected the wounded dog and told his physician to take care of his pet. And when the washerman entered the palace nervously, the understanding king asked him: "Should you uproot a cactus plant to thrash a dog? Could you not use your hand to drive the poor creature away?"

The washerman stood silent, till the king vented his anger and cooled down.

"Your Majesty! Had your dog attacked me with its soft tail, certainly I would have used my soft hand to prevent the creature from biting me. But unfortunately it came rushing towards me with its wide-opened mouth showing all its cruel sharp teeth. And I had no other go but to use the uprooted cactus plant which had thorns as sharp as the canine's teeth "

The sympathetic king smiled at the washerman for his fitting reply and pardoned him.

*

41. A 'MANTRA' TO GO TO HEAVEN

Long ago a sage established an ashram in a forest and lived peacefully with half-a-dozen devoted disciples.

What was special about the sage was that he knew a 'mantra' which when recited on the death-bed would take the dead directly to Heaven, irrespective of his sins. But the sage had never divulged it even to his disciples.

A hunter, who happened to go to the forest now and then, became very friendly with one of the disciples of the sage. He soon learnt from him the power of the sage and the 'mantra' he was keeping as a secret.

Desirous of learning the 'mantra', the hunter washed the feet of the sage with his tears. When the sage asked him why he was doing so, the hunter replied: "O sage! Can you find a sinner worse than a hunter like me? Every day I shoot my arrows at animals and birds, and take their precious lives. Am I not cursed to rot in Hell for killing the creatures of God? Is there no way out?"

"There is always a way out," said the sage. After a pause he added, "Stop hunting."

"I have already stopped hunting," bluffed the hunter. "But what about my past sins? I am sure of my place in Hell and not in Heaven. Even a powerful sage like you can't save me from the cauldron of boiling oil awaiting in Hell to roast me alive."

The sage pitied the hunter, called him nearer and whispered into his ear thus: "I know a mantra that will take those who recite it to Heaven after their death...I'll tell you some day, provided you promise to keep it a secret."

The hunter jumped for joy.

Years passed. But the sage didn't tell him the mantra.

"O Sage! You are already quite old. Suppose you leave your body and go to Heaven without imparting the secret mantra to me, no one will be able to save me from the jaws of Hell," pleaded the hunter.

The sage out of sheer pity whispered the mantra into his ear and reminded him of the promise.

The hunter thanked him profusely. He then moved into the kingdom, ascended the top of the temple tower and attracted the attention of the common people.

When the entire kingdom gathered around the temple, he recited the most guarded mantra as loudly as he could and revealed to them the power behind it.

People in the whole kingdom rejoiced for they were sure of going to Heaven.

The sage, who heard about the foolish deed of the hunter, called him and cursed: "Since you didn't keep your promise, may you go to Hell."

"So let it be, sage!" said the hunter and continued: "I'll happily go to Hell for I am sure thousands of my people will be going to Heaven. The true happiness in life lies in making others happy."

*

42. O YAMA! WHERE ARE YOU?

On his way to the forest, an aged woodcutter vexed with his way of living spoke to himself thus: "What a life am I destined to live! Every day by sun-up, I go to the forest risking my life. I cut wood and by sun-down I reach the market to sell it... Only then I can have food."

Inside the forest, axing branches from trees that could be used as fuel, he added: "But do I get enough to make a decent living? No .. Not even a full meal a day.. Is this life worth living?"

By the time he finished cutting enough wood, the sun had started descending towards the West. The woodcutter heaved a sigh, mopped his sweat-covered face and bony torso. "How many more days should I pull on like this? When will I go to the abode of the Lord of Death?", he asked. He then raised his voice and yelled: "O Yama! Where are you?"

It was by sheer coincidence that the Lord of Death who had an appointment with someone was passing through the forest. He heard the words of the woodcutter and directed his vehicle—a buffalo—towards him.

Yama was gigantic in appearance, coal-black in complexion, pot-bellied and fiercesome-looking. A couple of horns crowned his head. A club in one hand and a rope with a noose in the other, he came riding his sturdy buffalo.

The very sight of the Lord of Death made the woodcutter jittery. He blinked at the Lord and his sunken eyes betrayed the fear in his heart.

"What can I do for you?" asked Yama, getting down from his live vehicle.

His heart drumming against his chest, the woodcutter hemmed and hawed before he blabbered, "Yes.. Lord! I .. I called you. But.. "

"Can I be of any help to you? Don't hesitate to ask," cajoled Yama.

The woodcutter mustered courage and said, "Yes, Lord. I called you because I wanted someone to help me in lifting this faggots up on my head."

Yama lifted up the heavy bundle with just one finger and placed it on the woodcutter's head.

The woodcutter without even thanking the Lord of Death hurried on his way, as fast as his lean legs could carry him.

Should I say that the frightened woodcutter didn't turn back even once till he reached the market?

(More Tales to follow)

P. RAJA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Themes and Structure in the Mahābhārata: A Study of the Adi Parva by Pradip Bhattacharya, [Dasgupta & Co., Calcutta, 1989; pp. 400, genealogies & map, Rs. 235].

THE sprawling *Ādi parva* of the *Mahābhārata* resembles the *ālāp* of an *ustad* presenting a *mahā-rāga*, so to say, where free singing leads slowly but steadily to a well-knit methodical presentation, and we suddenly realise that the *ālāp* has ended and we are in the midst of an exquisite myriad-noted Grand Song touching and vibrating the innermost chords of our being.

The *Ādi parva* contains the summary, contents, main features, story-line, purpose, lesson, etc. of the epic: weighs its excellences, ascertains its place in our life and literature and gives the verdict that it is an incomparable, indispensable, inexhaustible classic which has all dimensions of existence within its purview and hence will continue for ever to shape Human Destiny through innumerable poets, re-tellers and interpreters.

Pradip Bhattacharya is one of these interpreters who makes a commendable attempt to analyse the *ālāp*—the baffling nebulous mass of material with which the epic begins. His methods are the following:

(1) He gives a sub-title to each of the sub-*parvas* bringing out its central theme. In this method of naming, some of the names he borrows from the epic itself. The rendering of Khāndava Dāha as “Khāndava in Flames” is an example of how the poetic breath is retained in translation. He also injects a bit of Comparative Mythology when he sub-titles the “Sauparna” section of the *Āstika parva* as “Amrita, the Apple of Eris”, or, the story of Yayāti as “Yayāti, Yima and Eochaid Feidlech”. His sub-titling of *Paushya parva* as “The Raison d’être of the Snake Holocaust” shows more vividly the connecting link between the *Paushya* and the *Āstika parvas*, though his comment on the story of the ill-treatment of a dog by Janamejaya’s brothers as “unconnected with anything which has gone before or comes afterward” is unacceptable. The connection has been pointed out by Nīlakantha. In short, it is the “ill-treatment of the innocent that leads to serious consequences”, as illustrated by the epic itself. Further, it can be added that we have a dog at both ends of the epic to judge the standard of man. Yudhishtira passes the test with flying colours, whereas Janamejaya’s brothers—only three generations away from Yudhishtira—fail miserably. The listener of the *Mahābhārata* is thus, at the very outset, made alert to learn lessons from the epic and not just listen to the story, and is warned of the consequences of wrongs done thoughtlessly, no matter how exalted his ancestry is.

The deeper significance of the Snake-Sacrifice as a symbolic Kurukshetra war is suggested later, showing the author as a successful explorer of symbolism. There is a little confusion regarding time. The *sarpa sutra* took place decades

after the war (referred to as “coming”), Janamejaya being the great-grandson of Arjuna.

The several incidents during Arjuna’s exile are condensed into “Arjuna’s Amours”. Thus, the sub-titles become a condensed commentary, or rather *sūtras*, to comprehend the *Ādi parva*. One wonders, why the most important sutra, namely the first meeting of Krishna and the Pāṇḍavas, the first glimpse of the *Dharmamaya mahā druma*—still a sapling—is not clearly given in the sub-titles.

This method is in the line of Sauti who evaluates in a similar fashion all the *parvas* of the *Mahābhārata* in a single metaphor, equating each *parva* with the parts and surroundings of a tree. Incidentally, *Shalya parva* resembling the fragrance of flowers is not “just a figure of speech” as understood by Bhattacharya. Sauti is dwelling on the dharma-tree image. With Shalya, gone is the last flickering hope for victory of the side-of-Evil and hence the fragrance of the flowers—withheld so far, as it were—of the Dharma-tree. The *Āshramavāsika parva* is compared to “a place to rest or lie down near the tree” and not “the site where the tree grows”, and is not “another metaphor just for the sake of extending the tree-image”. The idea is that people after the weary journey of life are resting in the surroundings of the great, cool, peace-emanating Mahābhārata Tree.

(2) Bhattacharya analyses each section and gives his comments. Dhritarāshtra’s psycho-analysis from his famous “Laments”—surcharged with the emotion of a broken man who, blinded by attachment, has trodden the path of evil all his life—is excellent; though to consider the appointment of Yuyutsu (misprinted “Yuyutsut”) as regent to be Dhritarāshtra’s ultimate victory is a bit much. It can at best be adjudged as a consolation prize, for the line of succession goes to the Pāṇḍavas. It would be more appropriate to consider it as a harping on Vyāsa’s favourite theme, namely, the virtuous low-born getting equal place of honour with the virtuous high-born in society.

Observations like “Garuda...made the helper of Shesha (in holding the world steady) thereby effecting a reconciliation between the two opposite forces and hinting that stability depends on such harmonious co-existence” (emphasis added), or, on the reason of the importance given to *Maushala parva* by Sauti, “(Arjuna) realises that without contact with the Divine, man by himself is nothing” (emphasis added)—are insights that really help us to get a glimpse of the Vyāsan Vision and the Master’s mastery of his epic art in all its nuances.

(3) Bhattacharya helps the reader to comprehend the web of inter-connections by frequently referring to the other *parvas*, substantiating his comments. “Nothing in the *Mahābhārata* stands in isolation. Every event forms part of a pattern in the incredibly rich and involved tapestry.”

(4) He also points out similarities with the other epic, *Rāmāyaṇa*, which has more things in common with the *Mahābhārata* than are generally thought of.

(5) He gives parallels from European literature of characters, themes, expressions, etc. which add a taste of comparative literature and thus widen our field of vision

In spite of these and other commendable features, the author's study gets somewhat diffused and distracted as it progresses because of two reasons. One is too much adherence to Iravati Karve's hypothesis about the fathers of Kuntī's sons. His speaking of Kuntī in a lighter vein in this context is not in keeping with the deep veneration in which the epic holds her.

The main reason, however, is his pre-occupation with P. Lal's translation of the *Mahābhārata* which he meant to use as a peg to hang his thesis on (perhaps for the benefit of readers who have no access to the original), but which becomes a hammer on the reader's concentration. Bhattacharya sets himself the incongruous task of studying both Vyāsa and three-four translations of the epic, especially the P. Lal one, in the same breath. In fact, the book sounds like a review of this one, praising it eloquently at times, but most of the time suggesting corrections of the numerous strange mistakes—unexpected in such a noble and august venture supposed to be based on a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit and of the epic tradition—found in its renderings, prefaces and notes. It would have been far better if he had treated it in a separate study, or appended the mistakes and his corrections along with their epic equivalents to give the reader a better chance to compare and judge for himself. This would have cut the main body of his thesis to half its size and, along with proper editing and proof-reading, made it easier to follow. As it stands now, two entirely different projects have been fused into one and this defeats his purpose.

Now to the unpleasant task of pointing out a few mistakes:

(1) "Shalya" for "Shālva", the suitor of princess Ambā. "Hanumāna" for "Hanumān", "Parīkshita" for "Parīkshit" etc.

(2) *Timura* in the famous shloka *ajñāna timurāndhasya* etc. does not mean "darkness", for it cannot be removed by a stick of collyrium. *Timura* is the name of a disease causing partial blindness which can be cured by the medicinal collyrium stick.

(3) The story of Shankhamālā occurs in *Thākurdār Jhulī* ("Grandpa's Bag"), not in *Thākurmār Jhulī* ("Grandma's Bag").

(4) The case of Kaikeyī-Bharata is not the same as that of Chitrāngadā-Babhruvāhana. The *Rāmāyana* clearly states that Kaikeyī was *rājya-shulkā*, that is, Dasharatha had to promise to make her son his heir to the kingdom of Ayodhyā as the price for marrying Kaikeyī. To agree to allow Kaikeyī's son to inherit his maternal grandfather's kingdom was not the condition at all. Why should Ashvapati place such a condition having his son Yudhājit to inherit his kingdom? So, the *putrikā* custom referred to by Bhattacharya applied only to brotherless princesses like Chitrāngadā and not to Kaikeyī.

It may also be pointed out that the word "Suyodhana"—as Duryodhana was

called by Yudhishtira—is double-edged. It sounds pleasing, as Bhattacharya points out. But the gentle Yudhishtira intends to emphasize that the eldest Kaurava is not “difficult” but “easy” to *fight with*.

The study is lit up with humour at places like: “a fascinating snake-meet where all *hoods* are put together”; or, “tedious roll-call of the names of snakes”; or, Brahmā’s “simple prescription” to Agni for over-eating ghee, viz. “high animal and vegetable protein (meaning the animals and trees of Khāṇḍava) free from ghee” etc. Vyāsa’s humour, e.g. it is difficult to digest a brāhmaṇa, is also noted. He delightfully follows the Indian habit of chanting out a couplet by way of comment even in a serious critical work.

Thanks are due to Pradip Bhattacharya for displaying to us some intricate fabrics of the gigantic pattern that is the *Mahābhārata*, and giving us another opportunity to breathe in the refreshing air of great poetry, blowing away the monotony of life and opening up a Cosmic Panorama before which all pettiness vanishes.

DR. GAURI DHARMAPAL

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-first Seminar

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(Continued from the issue of October 1992)

HOW TO PREPARE OURSELVES TO BECOME THE TRUE INSTRUMENTS OF THE MOTHER'S GREAT WORK FOR EARTH AND HUMANITY?

Speech by Robert Poddar

IN the whole universe, the earth is the only place where the drama of evolution is unfolded scene by scene from the inconscient matter to the superconscient spirit. At present it has arrived at the mental stage of which man is the representative being. But mind is an intermediate stage and not the final destiny of evolution. Man therefore is a transitional being and as he has surpassed the animal before him, so he too will be surpassed by the supramental being embodying the supramental or the gnostic consciousness. This then, from the evolutionary point of view, is the destiny of earth and humanity.

The Mother's great work at the present stage is to fulfil this destiny by carrying the earthly evolution from mind to supermind and creating a New Race by transforming the present mental man into the supramental being.

I do not intend to explain in detail the nature of this evolutionary destiny, I only want to emphasize that it is the destiny of the whole of mankind. This is necessary to do because of the usual tendency to divide humanity into two main sections, the East and the West, and to hold the view that the destiny of each is different. But according to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo this is a wrong view because all humanity is one in its origin and its destiny in spite of the historical and cultural differences of its two main divisions. As the Mother says in a message which she gave to America on 4 August 1949:

“Stop thinking that you are of the West and others of the East. All human beings are of the same divine origin and meant to manifest upon earth the unity of this origin.”¹

Sri Aurobindo also in the message he gave to America on 15 August 1949

¹ *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed.), Vol. 13, p. 387

explained at some length this common human destiny of both the East and the West. I quote some passages from it here:

“I have been asked to send on this occasion of the fifteenth August a message to the West, but what I have to say might be delivered equally as a message to the East. It has been customary to dwell on the division and difference between these two sections of the human family and even oppose them to each other; but, for myself I would rather be disposed to dwell on oneness and unity than on division and difference. East and West have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself, something towards which inwardly and even outwardly we move. There has been a tendency in some minds to dwell on the spirituality or mysticism of the East and the materialism of the West; but the West has had no less than the East its spiritual seekings and, though not in such profusion, its saints and sages and mystics, the East has had its materialistic tendencies, its material splendours, its similar or identical dealings with life and Matter and the world in which we live. East and West have always met and mixed more or less closely, they have powerfully influenced each other and at the present day are under an increasing compulsion of Nature and Fate to do so more than ever before.

“There is a common hope, a common destiny, both spiritual and material for which both are needed as co-workers. It is no longer towards division and difference that we should turn our minds, but on unity, union, even oneness necessary for the pursuit and realisation of a common ideal, the destined goal, the fulfilment towards which Nature in her beginning obscurely-set out and must in an increasing light of knowledge replacing her first ignorance constantly persevere.”¹

But the question still remains to be answered as to what is that common destiny or goal for both the East and the West even though they have historically developed on divergent lines, and, during the modern period, hold different views of the aim or the ideal of human life. Here also the answer can best be found from Sri Aurobindo from the same message where he has elucidated it at some length. I read it here because it is most illuminating:

“Here we have to take into account that there has been, not any absolute difference but an increasing divergence between the tendencies of the East and the West. The highest truth is truth of the Spirit; a Spirit supreme above the world and yet immanent in the world and in all that exists, sustaining and leading all towards whatever is the aim and goal and the fulfilment of Nature since her obscure inconscient beginnings through the growth of consciousness is the one

¹ *On Himself* (Cent Ed., Vol 26), pp 413-14

aspect of existence which gives a clue to the secret of our being and a meaning to the world. The East has always and increasingly put the highest emphasis on the supreme truth of the Spirit, it has, even in its extreme philosophies, put the world away as an illusion and regarded the Spirit as the sole reality. The West has concentrated more and more increasingly on the world, on the dealings of mind and life with our material existence, on our mastery over it, on the perfection of mind and life and some fulfilment of the human being here: latterly this has gone so far as the denial of the Spirit and even the enthronement of Matter as the sole reality. Spiritual perfection as the sole ideal on one side, on the other, the perfectibility of the race, the perfect society, a perfect development of the human mind and life and man's material existence have become the largest dream of the future. Yet both are truths and can be regarded as part of the intention of the Spirit in world-nature; they are not incompatible with each other: rather their divergence has to be healed and both have to be included and reconciled in our view of the future

"The Science of the West has discovered evolution as the secret of life and its process in this material world; but it has laid more stress on the growth of form and species than on the growth of consciousness; even, consciousness has been regarded as an incident and not the whole secret of the meaning of the evolution. An evolution has been admitted by certain minds in the East, certain philosophies and Scriptures, but there its sense has been the growth of the soul through developing or successive forms and many lives of the individual to its own highest reality. For if there is a conscious being in the form, that being can hardly be a temporary phenomenon of consciousness; it must be a soul fulfilling itself and this fulfilment can only take place if there is a return of the soul to earth in many successive lives, in many successive bodies.

"The process of evolution has been the development from and in inconscient Matter of a subconscient and then a conscious Life, of conscious mind first in animal life and then fully in conscious and thinking man, the highest present achievement of evolutionary Nature. The achievement of mental being is at present her highest and tends to be regarded as her final work; but it is possible to conceive a still further step of the evolution: Nature may have in view beyond the imperfect mind of man a consciousness that passes out of the mind's ignorance and possesses truth as its inherent right and nature. There is a Truth-Consciousness as it is called in the Veda, a Supermind, as I have termed it, possessing Knowledge, not having to seek after it and constantly miss it. In one of the Upanishads a being of knowledge is stated to be the next step above the mental being; into that the soul has to rise and through it to attain the perfect bliss of spiritual existence. If that could be achieved as the next evolutionary step of Nature here, then she would be fulfilled and we could conceive of the perfection of life even here, its attainment of a full spiritual living even in this body or it may be in a perfected body. We could even speak of a divine life on

earth; our human dream of perfectibility would be accomplished and at the same time the aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religions and spiritual seers and thinkers.

“The ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is that soul’s highest aim and necessity, for that is the supreme reality; but there can be too the descent of the Spirit and its powers into the world and that would justify the existence of the material world also, give a meaning, a divine purpose to the creation and solve its riddle. East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things in the Spirit.”¹

I would like to add one more point before I conclude because it is closely related to the problem we are considering. It is often said that modern Westerners are incapable or unfit for doing yoga because of their materialistic outlook or that they would encounter more serious difficulties in doing yoga than the Easterners, especially Indians. But Sri Aurobindo does not at all agree with this view. I quote his own words on this point especially with reference to the practice of his own system of Integral Yoga. This is what he says:

“If your conclusion were true, the whole aim of this yoga would be a vain thing; for we are not working for a race or a people or a continent or for a realisation of which only Indians or only orientals are capable. Our aim is not, either, to found a religion or a school of philosophy or a school of yoga, but to create a ground of spiritual growth and experience and a way which will bring down a greater Truth beyond the mind but not inaccessible to the human soul and consciousness. All can pass who are drawn to that Truth, whether they are from India or elsewhere, from the East or from the West. All may find great difficulties in their personal or common human nature; but it is not their physical origin or their racial temperament that can be an insuperable obstacle to their deliverance.”²

¹ *On Himself* (Cent Ed , Vol 26), pp 414-16

² *Letters on Yoga* (Cent Ed , Vol 23), pp 559-60