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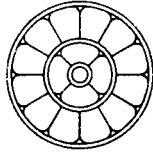
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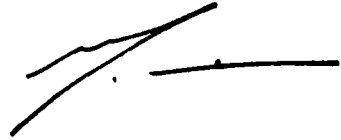


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled



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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

After reading the part of the conversation of 4 August 1929 on sacrifice and self-giving, the Mother continues.

“The spiritual life reveals the one essence in all, but reveals too its infinite diversity; it works for diversity in oneness and for perfection in that diversity. Morality lifts up one artificial standard contrary to the variety of life and the freedom of the spirit. Creating something mental, fixed and limited, it asks all to conform to it. All must labour to acquire the same qualities and the same ideal nature. Morality is not divine or of the Divine; it is of man and human. Morality takes for its basic element a fixed division into the good and the bad; but this is an arbitrary notion. It takes things that are relative and tries to impose them as absolutes; for this good and this bad differ in differing climates and times, epochs and countries.”

Questions and Answers 1929 (4 August)

In the past, why did men offer human sacrifices in temples?

I DON'T quite understand the question. Why should they not do it? There is not much difference between killing a goat and killing a man. I don't know. In any case, what has come down to posterity and what really happened may be two very different things. When they spoke of sacrifice, it was perhaps only symbolic. Certain religions, we are told, have massacred men by thousands. It is possible, it is the same instinct which makes men destroy things. And these were certainly religions which tended towards destruction. Now, there are many different cases, and if someone asks why people offered material sacrifices, one should first be sure about it. As for me, I am not sure of it. It is possible. It depends on the way one looks at life. And in any case, if one arrogates to oneself the right to make use of another man's existence to offer a sacrifice to the Divine, or if one looks at it in a certain way, it is a pretty bad attitude. I was saying at the beginning I don't see why one should make a difference between any other animal and a human animal. It is a very curious thing.

In the majority of religions, I believe it used to be as it still is here where there is a temple of the headless Kali¹—it is an extremely dark and ignorant affair. It comes from a sort of unhealthy fear of a monstrous god who needs either blood or force or no matter what in order to be satisfied and not to do harm. And all this comes from a dread and a conception of the Divine which is a monstrosity. But even were it admitted, there would be only one tolerable sacrifice, the sacrifice of oneself. If one wants to sacrifice something to the

¹ In whose honour, every year, men wring the necks of a huge number of chickens

Divine, I don't see by what right one can seek the life of another, be it human being or animal, to offer it in one's own stead. If one wants to sacrifice, it is one's own self one must sacrifice, not others. And as the movement itself is sufficiently ugly and obscure and unconscious, I don't see why there should be such a difference between sacrificing a goat and sacrificing a human being. From the goat's point of view it is an intolerable idea—if a goat were to be asked why ...

Men have strange ideas about their own importance in the world and the respective worth of their person. It does not make much difference. If they are told, "You have no right to take the life of another", it is defensible; but then do not offer sacrifices, or if you want to sacrifice, sacrifice your own self; if you believe there is a terrible God who needs to be given blood or whatever else it may be, vital forces to satisfy him, do it. But by what right are you going to take the life of others to give it? That is an intolerable tyranny. Even were it only all those chickens one kills! But I believe there is another reason for that—it is that men have a fine feast! It is simply an opportunity to swallow a considerable amount of food.

I don't know, for me it does not make a great difference.

Is it possible to feel the divine Presence even when one is surrounded by a bad atmosphere, a mental and vital disturbance?

Provided the atmosphere is not within oneself! For if so, it is difficult. And yet! We have had frequent instances of people who used to lead a more than doubtful life and who had revelations. There is the instance of a drunkard who, in his drunkenness, suddenly had a contact with the Divine—which, moreover, changed his life and, I must tell you, prevented him from drinking in future. But still, at the time he had the revelation of the divine Presence, he was in an intoxicated state. I don't think—here again we fall back into the same things—I don't think the Divine is a moralist. It is man who is a moralist, not the Divine. If it happens that, just then, at that moment, there is a concurrence of events and perhaps an opening in the being, the Divine, who is always present, manifests himself. On the other hand, for the sage or the saint who is quite infatuated with his own importance and his own worth, and full of pride and vanity, there is not much chance that the Divine will manifest in him, for there is no place for the expression of the Divine! There is no place except for the important personality of the wise man and his moral worth.

Naturally, there is a state in which one may be perfectly pure, perfectly wise, and be in contact with the Divine! But then, that means that one has reached a certain degree of perfection and lost the sense of one's personal importance and personal worth. I believe that's most important. The greatest obstacle to the contact with the Divine is pride and the sense of one's personal worth, one's personal capacities, personal power—the person becomes very big,

so big that there is no place for the Divine.

No, the one truly important thing is the intensity of the aspiration. And this intensity of aspiration comes in all kinds of circumstances.

There are two things we must not confuse: certain necessities (which are purely necessities if one wants to succeed in completely controlling physical matter), and then moral notions. These are two very different things. One may, for instance, refrain from poisoning one's body or besotting one's brains or annulling one's will because one wants to become master of one's physical consciousness and capable of transforming one's body. But if one does these things solely because one thinks one will gain moral merit by doing so, that will lead you nowhere, to nothing at all. Because it is not meant for that. One does it for purely practical reasons: for the same reason, for instance, that you are not in the habit of taking poison, for you know it will poison you. And then, there are some very slow poisons taken by people (they think, with impunity, because the effect is so slow that they cannot discern it easily), but if one wants to succeed in becoming entirely master of one's physical activities and capable of putting the light into the reflexes of one's body, then one must abstain from these things—but not for moral reasons: for altogether practical reasons, from the point of view of the realisation of the yoga. One must not do this with the idea of gaining merit, or the idea that because you will gain merit God will be very pleased and come and manifest within you! It is not at all that, not at all! Perhaps even, He feels closer to him who has made mistakes, who is conscious of his faults and has the sense of his weakness, and aspires sincerely to come out of it all—He feels perhaps closer to him than to one who has never made a mistake and is satisfied with his external superiority over other human beings. In any case, that does not make a great difference. What does make a lot of difference is the sincerity, the spontaneity, the intensity of the aspiration—the need, that need which seizes you and which is so powerful that nothing else in the world counts.

As I have said elsewhere about surrender and sacrifice, if one regrets something, that means that one is not in a spiritual state of consciousness. If one regrets that one can no longer satisfy one's desires, that means the desires are at least as important as, if not more than, the thing one aspires for. You may say, "Desires are something of which I am quite conscious, whilst if I give up my desires with the idea of getting the Divine, I am yet not sure that I shall have him; hence I call this a sacrifice." But I, I call that bargaining! It is bargaining with the Divine. One tells Him, "Give and take; I, I give You the joy I have in satisfying my desires, You must give me in exchange the joy of feeling You within myself, else it is not just."—This is not self-giving, this is bargaining.

This is something I have heard so often, so often: "I have sacrificed so many things, I have made so much effort, have taken so much trouble, and now see, I have nothing in exchange." All that I can answer is, "No wonder!"

Can a very proud person have a great aspiration?

Why not? The very proud person may receive blows and become sensible; besides, when he receives a blow, that may awaken him a little! Then he has an aspiration. And if it is someone who has intensity in his nature and some strength, well, then his aspiration is powerful.

And without receiving blows?

That may happen. Only in that case it will be very mixed up. In all instances it will be very mixed—but always everything is mixed. A long time is necessary for things to become clear. One may begin anywhere at all, at any state whatever and in any condition. One can always begin. Only, in some cases it takes a very long time. For the mixture is such that with every step forward one takes half a step back. But there is no reason for this. Fundamentally, as it is the true *raison d'être* of life and of individual existence to become aware of the Divine, that may emerge anywhere at all, at any moment whatsoever. If there is the least possibility, it springs up. Naturally, if one is perfectly satisfied, then that is an obstacle, because one sleeps in self-satisfaction. But that cannot last. In life, in the world as it is at present, an egoistic satisfaction, a personal satisfaction cannot last, and—as long as it lasts, yes, one may grow hard, not aspire at all. But it does not last.

Anything else?

Nobody has anything to say?

Then, *au revoir* my children, good-night!

(*Collected Works of the Mother*, Centenary Edition, Volume 5, pp 346-351)

MIGHT-HAVE-BEENS

WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

All event and all process of event is a selection out of infinite possibility which surrounds the actual past as the Might Have Been and the actual future as the May Be. Of every cause, process and result we can say justly that the result might have been otherwise or the same result spring from some other cause or be effected by some other process. This perception in mind of an omnipresent infinite possibility is a shadow of the soul's perception of the infinite freedom of God.

What then is it that in any given working of result out of precedent condition by *numutta*, fixes the combination of the forces at work, governs their manipulation, selects in one case to be the determining factor a force which in other cases was impotent to decide the eventuality? Is it Chance? Is it Fate? Is it some inexplicable mechanical self-guidance? Or is it supreme intelligent Will, Will that is in its nature Intelligence? Is there a conscious Will or rather a Will-Consciousness which contains, informs, constitutes these apparent forces and objects, but is hidden from our eyes by their multitudinous whirl of motion, by their clamorous demand on the attention of the mind and senses, by their insistent claim that we should submit in thought and act to the tyranny of their workings? This last answer is the solution proposed by Vedanta. It rejects the concept of Chance as only a specious name covering our self-satisfied ignorance of the cause and process of things; Chance is really the free action, not pursuable by us in its details, of a mighty cosmic Providence which is one with cosmic Force. It accepts the reality of Fate, but rejects as a void and baseless imagination the idea of an inexplicable mechanical Necessity; Fate is merely the inevitable working out in itself by a cosmic Will of its own fixed and predetermined self-perceptions. It accepts the idea of a principle of unerring self-guidance in Nature, but is unable to regard that principle as in any way a mysterious agency or an inexplicable birth; Nature guides itself unerringly only because Nature is the self-working of a Self-luminous conscious Existence formulating its Will in fixed processes of things and combined arrangement of event actualised in its own eternal and illimitable being. Nature to Vedanta is only the mask of a divine cosmic Will, *devāitmaśaktiḥ svaguṇair nigūḍhā*; Prakriti of Vedanta is no separate power, no self-existent mechanical entity, but the executive force of the divine Purusha at once self-revealed and self-concealed in the mechanism of its own workings. Purusha, conscious Soul, is the divine Poet and Maker; Nature, conscious Force, is His poetic faculty; but the material of His works is always Himself and their stage and scene are in His own conscious being.

Pre-ordered selection out of infinite possibility is the real nature of the power we call Fate. Chance is a secret Providence and Providence the constantly active Self-Knowledge of cosmic Existence and cosmic Will always fulfilling in actuality

its foreseen selection of event and means,—foreseen in knowledge,—and preventing the pressure of infinite possibility from disturbing that pre-ordered arrangement. So a poet might work out in execution the original plot and characters as arranged in his mind and reject at every step the infinite possible variations which suggest themselves to him as he writes.

Law of Nature is the fixed system of conventional or habitual relations under which the Purusha has agreed with Himself to work out His pre-ordered selection and harmony. Causality is the willed arrangement of successive states and events and the choice of particular means in accordance with this fixed system of relations by which pre-ordered Fate of things is worked out in actual event.

Fate, Law and fixed Causality bind things in the movement of the Jagati; they do not bind the Purusha or conscious Soul but are the modes and instruments of His free self-working.

We must be on our guard against the idea that in this statement of the problem of predestination the infinite possibility we assert is an otiose and practically non-existent conception,—a thing that Is Not, a mere mental perception,—or that because the course of the world is fixed, the infinite freedom of God which supports and contains that fixity, is an abstraction of no practical moment or no practical potency. Among the many superficial fallacies of the practical man, there is none more superficial or fallacious than the assumption that in face of what has been, it is idle to consider what might have been. The Might Have Been in the past is the material out of which much of the future is shaped. It would not be so if the material life were a self-existent thing, proceeding out of itself, sufficient to itself, ending with itself. But the material life is only a selection, a formation, a last result of an infinite conscious life behind, which far exceeds the sum of all that actually exists in form and happens in event. Infinite Possibility is a living entity, a positive force; it is the material out of which God is constantly throwing up the positive and finite actuality. It is therefore all-important for a full and real knowledge of the world to know and see this infinite material as well as the actual finite result and ultimately determined shape of things. God Himself in His foreknowledge foresees the infinite possibilities that surround the event as well as the event itself. The forces that we spend vainly for an unrealised result, have always their ultimate end and satisfaction, and often form the most important determinants of a near or a distant future. The future carries in it all the failures of the past and keeps them for its use and for their success in other time, place and circumstance. Even our attempts to alter fixed process, when that process seems to be a fixed and unalterable law of Nature, are not lost and vain; they modify the active vibrations of the fixed current of things and may even lead to an entire alteration of the long-standing processes of things. The refusal of great minds to accept the idea of impossibility, with which they are not unoften reproached by the slaves of present actuality, is a just recognition of the omnipotence divinely present in us

by right of the one supreme Inhabitant in these forms; nor does their immediate failure to externalise their dreams prove to the eye that sees that their faith was an error or a self-delusion. The attempt is often more important than the success, the victim more potent than the victor, not to the limited narrowly utilitarian human mind fixed on the immediate step, the momentary result, but to God's all-knowing Fate in its universal and millennial workings. From another standpoint, it is the infinite possibilities that surround the act or the event which give to act and event their full meaning and value. It may be said that Arjuna's hesitation and refusal to fight at Kurukshetra was of no practical moment since eventually he did take up his bow and slay the Dhritarashtrians and the otiose incident might well have been omitted by God in His drama; but if it had not been possible for Arjuna to hesitate, to fling down the bow Gandiva or to have retired from the fight but for the command of the incarnate God beside him, then his subsequent action in fighting and slaying would have had an entirely different value, the battle of Kurukshetra would have meant something entirely different to humanity and its results on the future life of the nation and the world would have been, comparatively, almost a zero. We can see this truth even with regard to slighter incidents. The fatality which in Shakespeare drama wills the death of Romeo and Juliet as the result of a trivial and easily avoidable accident, receives all its value from the possibilities surrounding the actual event, the possibilities of escape from fate, reconciliation and for these tragic lovers the life of an ordinary conjugal happiness. These unrealised possibilities and the secret inevitability—of Spirit, not of matter,—which prevents their realisation, which takes advantage of every trivial accident and makes use of it for the swift and terrible conclusion, make the soul of the tragedy. A mechanical fatality must always be a thing banal, dead, inert and meaningless. It is their perception of these things behind the veil, their transcendence of the material fact, their inspired presentation of human life that ranks the great poets among the *sophoi*, *kavis*, *vates*, and places poetry next to the Scriptures and the revelations of the Seer and the prophets as one subtle means God has given us of glimpsing His hidden truths.

The unrealised possibility is as much a part of Fate as the actual event. The infinite possibilities surrounding an event are not only the materials out of which the event is made and help to modify or determine the more distant future, but alone give its true and full value to every human or cosmic action

(Sri Aurobindo Archives & Research, April 1980, Volume 4, No 1.)

LIFE—POETRY—YOGA

SOME PERSONAL LETTERS

I WELCOME your warning against what you think to be “a growing trend of *Mother India* to devote more and more pages and attention to its Editor ” I endorse your remark: “Self-praise is a slow poison that can kill a soul. Please shake up yourself and free yourself from this slow poison.” Yet I must echo the old cry of Themistocles: “Strike, but hear!”

Your expression—“self-praise”—has to be understood, I suppose, in a special sense. Surely you cannot mean that there is any article by me praising myself? Perhaps you intend the expression to signify that I have let admiration of me by my friends find a place in the very journal I edit? Well, I have edited *Mother India* from February 1949. For nearly 46 years nobody has said a word about K. D. Sethna or Amal Kiran. Only the fact that he happened to be in the saddle even in the forty-fifth year of the journal's existence and that this year coincided with his own ninetieth which is considered rather a memorable milestone—only that fact has loosened the tongues of his friends in appreciation of his work and his own personal being. He had no control over them. What he could control were the pages of *Mother India* But you have to understand the situation in which he got placed

Two articles which had been meant for the souvenir volume generously edited almost behind my back by Nirodbaran and R. Y. Deshpande arrived too late either to be included in it or to go with the long article by Jugal Kishor Mukherjee which came out as a booklet soon after Where were they to appear? Persuaded by the wish of my friends I made room for them in *Mother India*. Not by an act of planning but by a stroke of fate they happened to hit you in the eye and irritate your grey cells and turn them black with indignation at my supposed conspiracy with my friends to put me in the limelight.

There is also a subtle factor to be borne in mind. You have pictured me as gleefully swallowing the praise in spite of its being “a slow poison”. I first came to Sri Aurobindo's Ashram on December 16, 1927, spent nine and a half years at a stretch except for two short visits to Bombay Later I was in Bombay for a number of years, but finally came to settle down here and have been in the Ashram for the last 41 years. Surely something of the normal ego has rubbed off? Would you believe the fact that it's only now when you have brought the topic of my ego into my thought-range that I had the curiosity to look with some attention into the souvenir volume, wondering what might have been penned in praise of one who has never longed for praise except from Sri Aurobindo as critic of the poems sent up to him time and again? A few articles had been sent to me for a general “look-over” and possible correction and all made me wonder how whatever I had been or done could have struck anybody as extraordinary.

However, I shall not try overmuch to convey to you what long years of Yoga may have tended to do to me. It is always salutary to be put on one's guard against complacency about one human frailty or another. Thank you. (7 5.1995)

*

You have asked me to write in some detail on the “emptiness” which I recently felt on a wide scale. The feeling had more than one shade. It was not only that everything had lost its importance and vanished from the centre-stage of consciousness. This vanishing is significant enough: issues that once struck me as vital to the world's intellectual vision receded into a dim distance. Thus the historical question of whether a Dravidian India was invaded by Aryan foreigners in a less civilised state in c. 1500 B.C., had loomed large to me at one time and drawn a voluminous treatment. Now I did not care a rap for it. The inner space stood completely clear of such “burning issues”. Scientific controversies like the apparent incompatibility between point-events in the Einsteinian space-time continuum on one hand and, on the other, the discontinuous leaps of energy in quantum mechanics turned into will-o'-the wisps not worth pursuing. Even day-to-day affairs of practical interest—for instance, my work on future publications of *Mother India*—assumed a far-away look and I had to compel myself to keep them in near-focus, reminding myself that it was a responsibility given by Sri Aurobindo and continued by the Mother.

The sage-king Bhartrihari reduced life's many-sidedness to a single bifurcation by saying: “For a wise man there are only two choices worth considering—the ascetic's forest and a woman with large hips.” This is a raising to the *n*th degree of simplification the typical possibilities of the Indian genius. India concentrated either on spiritual escapism, involving the shedding of all holds by earth on the adventuring soul, or on full vitalism keeping in sharp sight the pleasures of the senses and the favours of the body, as evidenced by the famous *Kamasutra*. A mental existence, rejoicing in sheer philosophical castles in the air, does not seem to have ever been a great draw—in spite of such examples of elaborate logic-chopping as Shankara's argumentative thinning away, layer after layer, of the phenomenal world to reach the bedrock of the single Self of selves replacing every appearance of solid existence. Indeed Mayavada itself was meant to serve a purpose beyond philosophy: sheer spirit-consciousness. For me in my “empty” state, an all-swallowing vacuum appeared to be the sole lure. Not only substantial female hips but also the deep recesses of lonely woods as the milieu of an inward-going mind faded into insignificance and inconsequence. What then survived? Surely not mental pursuits—nor the explorations of inner spaces, the discovery of visionary worlds. Physical death could be a candidate—but that too was not satisfying enough. What seemed the master-attraction was, in the words of an old poem of mine, “The Kailas of Night”, some supreme mystery, infinite

and eternal, in which the obscuration and absence of all conceivable things and activities would lead to the emergence and presence of a plenitude from which, as the Upanishads say, all speech falls off as totally inadequate. My poem runs:

A mount keeps vigil here beneath vague skies,
 A throne of shadow: claim it with closed eyes.
 Grow deaf to your heart, the brain's hot hunger still,
 To catch the curbed omnipotence of this hill,
 This sovereign height of trance-intensity
 Where the universe is lost without one sigh—
 Secret of deathless self-dominion
 Waiting for evermore yet calling none,
 A vast withdrawal from our transient sun! (20.12 1994)

*

To most people sexual pleasure is the intensest self-fulfilment. I have heard a highly cultured man—one deeply interested in the world of the mind—say: “If there was no sex-act, life would not be worth living.” One may understand this “self-fulfilment” to consist in two things: first, a raising of the sense of bodily existence to a piercing pitch, as it were, of pleasure, and in its wake a dissolving of what Wordsworth would call the world's heavy and weary weight in a thought-escaping rest of the whole physical system. But Wordsworth's own experience of the lifting of this weight had a quite different source: an entry into an interior life beyond the senses. It was a state of trance in which one became a sort of bodiless soul. But in the waking state too one can get beyond the hold of the sensational nature and its attendant sex-clutch if one brings forward what Sri Aurobindo terms the psychic being—a condition of consciousness in which there emerges from some secret depth in the heart-region—from behind the middle of the chest—a quietly keen delight, a rarefied intensity of joy, entirely different from any pleasure one has known, yet holding an essence of all pleasure in a profound purity.

In the moment of that emergence one tells oneself. “How inadequate are all attempts by lyrical poets like Jayadeva to symbolise this mysterious inner intoxication by thrilling pictures of romantic sensuality!” The “feel” of the psychic experience is worlds apart from anything connected with sex. What has led poetry to see love of God through sexual spectacles is the failure to distinguish between the sensuous and the sensual: the sensuous comes to us through line and curve, texture and colour, form and movement, the sensual hears through these appeals a call to possess, devour, penetrate—a stirring of frenzy. The frenzy itself has two parts—we may style them public and private. The former covers eyes, lips, hands: the latter extends below the waist. The two

parts can combine but can also exist and function independently. Yet even in what is above the waist there is a tinge of turbidity which is always liable to make one slip down. At times a sense of escape comes when somehow one is pulled, as it were, to the top of one's head by some radical stroke of circumstance demanding a resort to a haven of spiritual safety where one can hold aching thought at bay.

Thus I remember two years of complete rest from the pull of sex when I had to pass beyond the memory of the tragic way a dear one had died. Here was not the old control so much as a constant breathing of an air of freedom. However, the area of consciousness below was lit up by an alien light and not by its own inherent radiance. I have known an inherent radiance only once—for a few minutes. One evening, after the old soup-distribution by the Mother, I was going towards the main Ashram building. In those days a number of short tunnel-like passages connected the several buildings rented to form the Ashram. Crossing one such passage I suddenly found my body translucent, as it were, felt it crystalline and knew it inherently devoid of all sexual presence. The whole self of sex seemed thrown out, leaving the body in a state which I can best describe as ready to be uplifted into its own free unsullied original divinity which may be suggested by a phrase like *Savitri's*

A crystal of the ultimate Absolute (38:22)

An alternative to the “crystal” imagery is the “diamond”-metaphor as in the *Ilion*-line:

Ida rose with her god-haunted peaks into diamond lustres.

A body, liberated from all load of common life and awaking into its own higher self-sense just by being swept clear of sexuality in a radical manner, appears to be an important part of the vision of the human soul straining towards complete self-consummation—

Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight,
Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,
An unvalled mind dissolved in the Infinite,
Force one with unimaginable rest.

(*Collected Poems*, 575: 45-48)

The first line assumes that an ineffable rapture awaits the experience of having a body and that this experience can be reached when there is an ultimate love-gesture by the body towards an ideal of itself—a full resort by the limbs to the greatest self-fulfilment possible by means of a quest to realise their own

substance and shape in the Bliss of an archetypal existence—the *kāraṇa śarīra*, the Causal Sheath, revealed by the seers of the Upanishads. The descent of this Causal Body and its merging with our own flesh which is heir to a thousand natural shocks, as Hamlet tells us, would be, to my understanding, the fullest form of what Sri Aurobindo calls physical transformation. (24.1.1995)

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While there is universal condemnation of terrorism, a good deal of confusion exists regarding its essential nature, the means to meet it, and its implications as between State and State. A cool and clear look is required.

First of all, terrorism is not a matter of stray murders: it is systematised killing. Nor is it to be equated with guerilla warfare. A body of opponents to a regime is a military organisation with military targets. Though it may at times attack officials directly upholding that regime, it does not deliberately and indiscriminately kill civilians, including women and children. The terrorists do so.

Secondly, they cannot be met by an attitude which pictures them as wronged parties whose cause justifies the means adopted. The means are too blind and brutal to help the cause: even those who have some sympathy with it do not excuse them and the professed goal will never be achieved by the chosen means unless civilised countries lose their nerve. Terrorists cannot be taken as fighting for any cause conceived as legitimate. They must be seen as bent simply on destabilising civilised life—and it may be noted that their activities are directed against such life in democracies and grossly misuse the freedom of individual movement permitted there.

On recognition of the true nature of terrorism, fitting steps have to follow. There cannot be any accommodating parley with people who hold innocent lives to ransom—as in the cases of “hostages”—in order to collect inordinate sums of money for their activities and, as part of the bargain, to free fellow-criminals from legal custody. With the needed skill and strategy they have to be attacked, the attackers taking as much care as possible not to endanger the lives of the hostages, but refusing to be handicapped by some risk being involved. If this risk is shirked, greater peril is invited in the future: more lives will be put at the mercy of the terrorists because hesitation now will encourage them to go on playing the game of hostage-taking. The choice of right action against this game is a delicate and difficult and sometimes heart-searing matter, but the general principle of no intimidated concession has to be observed.

Apart from the concern to save lives, there is the commercial motive. A country may have trade-relations with a country whose nationals happen to be the terrorists requiring to be countered. It is a base argument that if a fair amount of trade is going on with a country secretly supporting these nationals we

must be restrained. Under no circumstances should commercial considerations hinder firm treatment of terrorists.

Finally comes up the question of the direct ways to deal with terrorism-supporting countries. Economic sanctions on a concerted scale against them is one way. It is, however, a slow process and never leak-proof. While the sanctions are being tried out, terrorist acts may continue and innocent lives be lost. More stringent measures may be called for, and here the issue of a suspected State's sovereignty has to be faced.

Can any State's sovereignty be regarded as absolute and unconditional? Take the famous case of Israel's "Operation Jonathan" to rescue over a hundred hostages held in a hijacked plane which had landed in Idi Amin's Uganda. Idi Amin refused to free the hostages. Israel flew 2000 miles to take by surprise the airport at Entebbe, killed the terrorists concerned and freed the hostages, at the cost of one life of her own—unfortunately the heroic leader Jonathan himself. The whole world applauded Israel's enterprise: a daring humanitarian adventure had been carried out. But the sovereignty of Uganda had been violated.

Every civilised country accepted the violation as justified, thus granting that no sovereignty is absolute and unconditional. Even under circumstances other than those that spurred "Operation Jonathan" but sufficiently barbarous, restricted military action may prove to be legitimate. One could perhaps go so far as to argue: "After all, terrorism by one country's nationals or by its stooges is practised on several other countries' soil. Bombs and other weapons of war are repeatedly employed there without any heed to these countries' sovereignty. So a retaliatory violation of the offending State's sovereignty cannot be ruled out." Anyway, respect for the principle of sovereignty depends on circumstances. No doubt, the principle cannot be lightly set at naught. But if one has refrained for a long time from retaliation because incontrovertible evidence of guilt was lacking and if at last such evidence comes to hand, there is no reason why punitive military measures within defined limits should not be undertaken against terrorist headquarters or training camps on foreign soil. Some civilian casualties may occur, but they will be accidental and unavoidable, quite unlike those which are intentionally brought about by the machinations of the terrorist organisation on soil over which other countries are normally sovereign.

Whether or not the retaliatory act is to be committed hangs on many factors: every wronged country may not be in a position to exercise its right. What should not be denied with pious platitudes is the right itself.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

A TALK BY NIRODBARAN

AT PITANGA HALL, AUROVILLE,
ON SUNDAY FEBRUARY 26, 1995, 4.30 P.M.

FRIENDS, it is after about two years that we are meeting again in this charming room surrounded by Nature's magic. At that time I spoke on Sri Aurobindo—my very intimate subject—not on his philosophy or yoga, of which I know very little, but about my personal contacts with him. Now I have been asked to say something about the Mother, as a complementary subject.

I must confess to you that although I was in the Ashram for so many years, I could not come as close to the Mother as to Sri Aurobindo. To know her intimately is not possible even for the gods. But if one can open his heart to her like a child, then she comes very near to you indeed. Since I was not very psychic by nature, my doors opened more naturally towards Sri Aurobindo—and that was also due to his Grace.

Because of this difficulty, I proposed that we should rather chat, as in a friendly gathering, about the Mother, devoid of any formality, in the form of questions and answers. Well?

Franz: Nirodbaran, I wanted to ask you, isn't it a fact that the Mother had selected you as one of the people from the Ashram to be present at the inauguration ceremony of the laying of the foundation-stone of the Matri-mandir?

N: Yes, that is true.

F: Can you say something about that, if you can recollect?

N: There is nothing much to say—it was a mystery to me how I had been selected, and naturally I was extremely happy and took it as an act of Grace from the Mother. But in fact I believe it was the people around her—such as Champaklal and others—who might have proposed our names. All the same, I repeat that it was a sheer act of Grace, for what I witnessed that day in the early morning was a veritable experience, an epiphany. I perceived that Bonfire which illumined the whole vast area and rose with its thousand-tongued flames as the god Agni himself. It was unforgettable.

P: I have another question. Do you remember the speech which Nolini-da gave on that occasion?

N: No, I don't remember it.

P: Nolini-da gave a very powerful speech for the foundation of the Matrimandir. Do you know whether he had shown the text to the Mother, or not?

N: Did he give a speech, or was he reading something?

P: He was reading something. But do you know whether the Mother was

aware of it, or whether it came spontaneously to Nolini at that time?

N: The Mother must have been aware of it. Nolini would not do anything by himself without telling the Mother. But he did not speak—he was reading.

P: Yes.

N. Now about myself. I think I can say that I am one of the longest and oldest survivors amongst the sadhaks. I have been here for more than half a century. That is, from 1933 to this day. Therefore I had a great opportunity to see the Mother at close quarters, to hear about her from others, and to follow her or be near her in various ways throughout that time....

I was not in such close contact with the Mother as I was with Sri Aurobindo. But the contact was sufficiently close to know things about her, to know things that she was doing, and sometimes to have a kind of a glimpse of her inner work. This is my advantage. And further, I had a certain professional advantage too, in the sense that I served as a medical practitioner, in charge of the Dispensary; an advantage, because it was the Mother who was guiding us in all practical aspects.

Another great advantage was that some of us had the privilege of playing tennis with the Mother. She made it a rule to give me some games because I was serving Sri Aurobindo so that whenever after finishing my work with Sri Aurobindo, I used to go to the tennis-ground, she would give me a chance to play with her. I need not tell you that playing with her is not just play: nothing is just play with the Mother. Playing, talking, are outward symbols. You always get something from her in exchange. I don't know whether... at this age of mine—when I am unusually youthful—I have not gained something physical through contact with her in the play. Since she was acting upon the physical, giving us strength, giving her power, giving her consciousness, all of us who were her partners have gained something in this respect. People very often ask me about my being a “young man of ninety”—to quote the remark by a famous urologist of Madras. It may be also due to my close physical contact with Sri Aurobindo's physical.

Q: In your book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* you have spoken about the divine love, the love between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I would like you to speak about that love.

N: The Divine Love?

Q: The love between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother... could you say something about it now?

N: (I can't hear properly; so I'm asking) About the love? Sri Aurobindo's love was not like the love of the Mother. Sri Aurobindo's whole personality, if you can understand, was always impersonal. He did not show things by any outward sign or word. This is the characteristic of Sri Aurobindo. As I have said, he rarely used to call us by name. This is a difference in behaviour between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. On the other hand, when I was writing to him, in correspondence, he was very, very personal. But when we went up to his room,

we saw the other face of his life, the face of the Guru, which is the impersonality. And Sri Aurobindo in particular was impersonal in his love. Even with the Mother it was so. This does not mean that he had no love. The Divine cannot be without love. But he can be without showing his love openly, manifesting it, whereas with the Mother the personal aspect was prominent. Two different personalities: one personal, the other impersonal—that is the difference. However, we always felt, though he did not express it in words, that there was a great love in him for all of us. It cannot but be so. Otherwise, we would have died there, out of hunger for love. His very presence, his very existence was love—but his way of showing it was not the same as the Mother's. For all of us in his aura, in his room, it was full of love, tenderness, consideration. All of you know, I think, how he showed his profound love for Champaklal when he was passing away. That was a strange thing—even for us. Champaklal, as you know very well, was a wonderful sadhak and a bhakta... Sri Aurobindo gave him his reward. All of us were amazed. So that is one expression, a personal expression that we saw in Sri Aurobindo. About his love for the Mother, you can read Champaklal's book.

This consciousness of love, in *Savitri* and other writings, is the supreme power by which transformation is possible.

Coming back to tennis, I will explain for the sake of newcomers how the Mother was personal there. When Sri Aurobindo passed away, I said to the Mother, "Now our tennis is finished." The Mother said, "What? We shall not stop; no, we will continue. Come to the Tennis Ground and we will play." But as it was a play of only a few games, the Mother noticed that I was not satisfied, I was going on playing and playing even after she had left. To make this story short, all of a sudden... she stopped calling me to play with her. She would call all the others, my comrades and friends, but deliberately left me out. And this went on for weeks till I realised her meaning. The Mother never told me "Stop playing" directly. She has so many ways... If you have read Sri Aurobindo's *On the Mother*, her ways are very quick, very subtle, no one can understand her. Finally, I stopped playing. I have written about it in detail. I began to follow the Mother wherever she went after tennis. And there too again, she used to keep an eye on me. I noticed it, it was not my imagination—just one look. When I was reading this chapter of *Twelve Years* to her, she said, "I admire your understanding." This is one example out of hundreds of the Mother's working. How severe, how strict she can be! This is how Sri Aurobindo was beating me, I might say. We have faced many ordeals, but somehow through her Grace—beatings on the one side, love on the other—we have plodded through till we reached this stage.

Since we have started now to talk of the Mother, let me go back to the very start and repeat my first wonderful experience. When I was coming back from England and on my way home I visited the Ashram, she gave me an interview.

At that interview I felt that the Mother was not a human being—she is divine. That was my impression; she was wonderfully dressed, and smiling and smiling like Mahalakshmi. Sri Aurobindo has delineated Mahalakshmi's smile saying that whoever has the opportunity or the privilege of having that smile is simply enchanted as by a spell, and that was what happened to me. The Mahalakshmi smile of that day converted me from within. It went on working and working, I believe, till after three years I was ready to throw away bag and baggage, my duty, my world, and I came. I came to know later on that among the people whom the Mother had brought here one was myself.

Apart from the small personal side, let us talk about big issues—how the whole Ashram has passed through many crises and the Mother saved us.

After Sri Aurobindo passed away there was a tremendous vacuum in the Ashram. The Mother herself has said "I myself felt like going away." But she resisted that urge, and if she had not been there with us I don't know what would have happened. As a matter of fact many people outside, when they heard the news that Sri Aurobindo had left, said "Now the Ashram is finished! The Ashram will go." But they saw to their surprise, or to, what shall I say, their regret even, that the Mother was here and she took up the cause, took up the duty, took up the work, of Sri Aurobindo. And protected by the divine Power, as it were, she supported the Ashram and all of us with all her strength and love. After that the work went on not only smoothly, but most divinely I should say.

When the Mother passed away, there was another crisis that we had to face. I don't know if you have heard about it—that the Ashram itself might be taken over by the Government as was the case with Auroville. There was some sort of a conspiracy, some people were waiting for an opportunity to take over the administration of the Ashram. After the Mother's passing that opportunity came, and they tried to persuade the Government to take over the administration of the Ashram. These people would say, "They are coming, coming, coming... come, the government will come." etc. Here every word is true: At that time it was Nolini (with the help of André, the Mother's son) who saved the Ashram from their clutches. We have passed through that crisis too. Nolini, among all of the disciples of the Ashram at that time, had reached the highest status among us. The Mother went so far as to say "Nolini is a collaborator in my work." He proved his salt.

There were other minor disturbances. Local people, rioters who were against the Divine, invading us, destroying our property, so many times. Even in the Mother's time too. But the Mother was not in the least disturbed, and all these clouds were dissolved. Now we can say we are out of the wood.

Here I'll repeat the story of a different kind of crisis, one that affected not only the Ashram during Sri Aurobindo's time but the whole world. It is through the Grace of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo that the world has been saved from the menace encountered by the Ashram and the world. I am referring to the last

War. Hitler on the one side and the Divine on the other have battled for India's fate and fortune. People recognise Mahatma Gandhi's role but not Sri Aurobindo's. Alas, they know nothing of the occult world, the occult forces of the greatest power for destruction ever born on earth. So this is another work of wonder that the Mother has done, not only for the Ashram, but for the world. You can imagine, if Hitler had come and there was no resistance from India, because they would be prepared only for non-violence, Hitler would have been very happy indeed... and where would be Auroville, what would have been Matrimandir today?

Today we see the Ashram, the Matrimandir; how everything goes on expanding and unfolding day by day, month by month, year by year, we have no idea at all that this is how the supramental power which has manifested is working.

We believe that from now on there will be no other power able to take possession of the Ashram, or Matrimandir, or Auroville. There may be inner troubles. But the way it is going on, you must see it much more than I do, things have improved enormously everywhere through their intervention in a subtle way. They are there behind us, before us... unfortunately we have not yet the subtle sight to perceive how they are working. They have come here, for the new creation. Those who have executed everything cannot but be high and great and supreme—it must be something divine. That's how I see it. Similarly, when Auroville will come up, that will be a great example of the divine power, the supramental power that is working through all of us, even materially. And along with it, change of consciousness—otherwise it can't be done. And who knows... some transformation of our nature going on at the same time, that you must admit, friends.

Now the time is very hard—very difficult. The forces, the adverse forces and the divine forces are at loggerheads, and the strain is acute; there will be many troubles; we have to advance, to stick, to endure, beware, until the break of the Dawn—and the Dawn will come.

(To be continued)

CORRECTION

In Georgette Coty's *Christalis* in the July issue, p 589, line 7 from below, please read "possibly" instead of "forcibly".

ABOUT WOMAN

8. MAN AND WOMAN

(Translated by Satadal from the Bengali of Nolini Kanta Gupta)

INDIA wanted to build and control the relation between man and woman according to a special ideal, in a special way. She wanted to keep woman thoroughly dependent on man. Woman was not permitted a personal existence and fulfilment separate from man. Woman had to accept the life and dharma of man and consecrate herself for its completeness. Man decided the aim and the way to achieve it—woman came as a helpful force on the way. The more a woman thus lost her selfhood and characteristics in man, sacrificed herself to allow man to grow and advance, the more she was an ideal of womanhood.

Not only in India, previously everywhere the life of woman used to be moulded in this way. In Europe also this was the rule, not to speak of ancient Greece and Rome where this ideal was forced to prevail upto the medieval age and even afterwards. Of course in India this ideal was anointed with the status of a fullfledged ideal, was made a thing of sadhana after being tied up with religion and morality. In Europe it was at most a social arrangement or notion; but India laid this social arrangement on a stronger basis by uniting it with sadhana and higher movements of life. The mission of woman was to dissolve herself in man, man's duty also was to lift woman within himself.

There was a reason behind such an arrangement or ideal. This does not simply prove man's greed for domination or woman's helplessness in submission. This relation has developed on the basis of a specific truth in the respective natures of man and woman. There is no conspiracy on the part of man in it, nor woman's acceptance of this relation under sheer compulsion. What is that truth in man, what is it in woman, that has brought about this relation of the leader and the led or the master and the slave between man and woman?

Man's natural base is in the world of mind and that of woman is in the world of life. In terms of the Upanishads, man's life-centre is in the mind-cells, in the mental being, and that of woman's in the life-cells, in the vital being. That is why man is by nature a symbol of knowledge and woman is the embodiment of force. The dharma of life-force is firstly to tie a creature downwards and homewards as strongly as possible with the earth. For this very reason woman has become the centre for building society, her natural dharma is at home, to create a home—*grhinīrgrhamucyate* (the wife is so to say the house). There is another aspect of life-force which does not want or hasn't got the capacity to build as much as it wants or the capacity to destroy. There is in life-force an unbridled movement, a restless passion, an unsatiated hunger. In Nature as we see on one side the beautiful, calm and beneficial form—moonlight, spring-night, sun, rain, flowers,

fruits, beauty, taste, smell; on the other side it has a formidably devastating form—moonless night, hailstorm, cyclone, volcanic eruption, epidemic. With a combination of virtues dire and sweet, woman also, like Nature, is *adhr̥ṣyaścā-dhigamyāśca*—unconquerable and covetable at the same time.

There is a blind passion in woman's force, a downward pull, a sort of uncertainty. So it has been attempted to keep it subjugated to man's upward movement of knowledge. The pressure and influence of the mental being was needed to keep the vital force tied, to direct it through a specific channel and to lift it towards a higher ideal in a cohesive order. Otherwise society does not grow, cannot survive; the master and slave attitude of man and woman was needed for the order and stability of society. The natural dharma of the mental being is the sadhana of knowledge, fixation of the ideal, determination of the true form of life's mission. So we see, it is man who has fixed a particular ideal and initiation—woman has added her life-force to it for its completeness and fulfilment. This is the reason why ancient society did not want to or was not in a position to give independence to woman. A wall was built all around under pressure of collective necessity so that the life-force remained restrained and did not become disorderly and overwhelming, and society showed no sign of the centrifugal movement of disintegration. This excuse accompanied with much half-knowledge and ignorance managed to put it under such shackles. Independence of woman means to open the path of life-force without restraints—that may infuse force into society but there is no certainty about the course this force will follow. It may do good, it may cause harm also; but society cannot function depending on an uncertain thing like this. That is why it wanted to give a sure and well-defined form to this force even if by crippling it. Helped by the vision of knowledge of the mental being of man, it has striven to direct and control the blind life-force of woman.

Of course it cannot be said that every man is a receptacle of knowledge, and every woman is merely the image of life-force. Ample proofs to the contrary are available in society. But the general dharma, the principles at work underlying the life-stream beyond what is personally true and false is what we are talking about. Society has to see the way of working of the general force, so its arrangement, even when it seemed to be improper in some particular cases, was accepted for the sake of an overall social order.

The arrangement to keep woman fettered from all sides as far as possible and entirely subservient to man may be very effective for social stability and order but it cannot be denied that it is a hindrance to the development of society and nation. Because in this arrangement woman becomes only an echo of man—and an echo, however strong and beautiful it may be, is not a living thing. Since separate individuality is not awakened, in such a society there cannot be from woman's side any new creation of her own. The gradual development of

society depends on a living union of both man and woman through a greater and more intimate interchange not only of hearts but also of minds. When new ideals, realisations and efforts blossom in two hearts and continue to move towards the same goal, that gives society the elixir of a new life. But where there is no scope for interchange in this higher level from both sides, gradually there appears inertia, relaxation, customary prejudices and immobility. The ideal of "Sati" was a living ideal when society was first knit together, but at present has it not turned merely into a lifeless blind habit?

Not that woman as the echo of man is in no way helpful to him but that helpfulness mostly means not to oppose. And for this very reason woman becomes a burden for man if not directly a hindrance; when she cannot move on her own, she has to be carried, dragged so to say, more or less laboriously. And as a result man also cannot stand upright and move with vigour in his own field, he has to come down. Although woman is subservient to man in ordinary life, from the inner side it is man who really gets swallowed by the vital-urge of woman. But when woman, independent and fully blossomed, stands by the side of man with her own force and capacity, then the strength of man becomes doubled and redoubled. When two full-grown independent beings unite, they not only help each other but nourish each other at each step and swiftly take each other towards the realisation and fulfilment of life.

Society did not encourage the union of two full-grown souls, because that was too risky. When they unite in concord and harmony it is ideal, but in many cases the chances of conflict are more. Society is made up of the common mass; society did not expect the highest form of union from them, hence did not want to take the risk involved in that course even for the sake of a higher realisation. When woman has to be moulded a dependent on man, then it is better to get it done as flawlessly as possible—that is why, in India, society prescribed child-marriage.

But it is also a truth that woman has a separate individual entity which too demands its own manifestation and with its support a greater union with the individual entity of man. This truth at times shows itself piercing through the stringent customary arrangements of society. The ancient European society—Greek and Roman—kept woman completely under man's grip; the wife in that society was simply a machine for house-keeping and reproduction, a bond-slave of the family. That is why in that society man used to seek an equal partner outside marital relation from the courtesans in particular who exhibited a special personality and mental power by virtue of their education and their culture of the fine arts. However, probably because Europe at one time kept the women of her society so much neglected and unrefined the women there gradually woke up as a consequent reaction, got inspired to be established on the feeling of selfhood and achieved a little bit of success. As a result lack of order and discipline has

become amply visible in the society of Europe, but along with it don't we see the increase in vitality of society and the beginning of a new relation between man and woman?

Such a scope did not occur in the social system of India for she never slighted her women-folk so categorically. No doubt she kept woman inferior but at the same time tried to link her with the superior being of man. Woman was given the status of an equal partner of man even while kept subservient to him. Even the practice of dharma and its fulfilment for woman was prescribed to conform with her slavery. Woman did not feel herself disgraced by it, nor the need of any other form of sadhana. That is why the women of India are so helpless. When the illusion of a dharma, of an ideal, engulfs the soul, then it is not at all easy to be freed from it—there is no bondage as firm as that of dharma.

We have kept woman under restraints because she is the embodiment of life-force. But as a result she has become confined within the field of life-force; she never did get a chance to wake up in the field of mind above life. And for the same reason the field of life-force also has become narrow for her, it has become gradually crowded with all sorts of rubbish. The nature and reality, the characteristic feature of woman may lie in the play of this life-force; but one must not forget that woman too is human having a mental being within and the development and fulfilment of this mental being is necessary for her. There is a vital field in man as well, and woman has been able to establish her right only over this vital field of man, and a sort of separation between his mind and life has crept in; even when he is liberal and reflective in the field of mind, he seems to be more earth-bound, more attached to the body in the vital field. The very fear has shown its face through those measures which society once prescribed as its remedy.

Even as man has got a personality, a characteristic of his own by virtue of his mental being, woman too must achieve her mental being, her own personality taking the stand on her life-force. A new mode of union between man and woman in society has to be found within this personality of the two. But first is needed the awakening of personality in woman also, like that of man. Before she forms any relation with man, the matrimony of her life-force with her own mental being is really the spiritual matrimony of woman, her first and real initiation.

CORRECTION

The instalment of "The Book of Job A New Commentary" which appeared in the June issue was meant to follow instead of preceding the instalment of July. The error in the sequence is regretted.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of July 1995)

THE journal, *The Karmayogin*, ventured into political controversies of the day, knocking down many untenable positions and arguments of its opponents, often with a mixture of humour and sarcasm. The bureaucracy couldn't appreciate the shift in emphasis implied in the change from the *Bande Mataram* to *The Karmayogin*. A trap was suspected in the change itself. A hostile Anglo-Indian newspaper advised Sri Aurobindo to devote himself to literature and religion and refrain from speaking on Swadeshi and Boycott.

In all his speeches and writings Sri Aurobindo consistently emphasised the need of India to repossess her soul, to become conscious of her high mission in the world, God's will in her, and to base all her activities on a strong spiritual foundation. The reader will observe in the passages quoted below—as, indeed, one observes in all of Sri Aurobindo's political speeches and writings—that if there is one thing which recurs more often than anything else, one thing upon which he insists with his usual force and eloquence, one thing with which he wants to inspire his readers and audience, one thing which is the burden of his political as well as spiritual song, it is God, surrender to God's will, and God's service. Nobody before him or after ever came to the political field so much drunk with God, so much irradiated by His light and led so unmistakably by God's will. His political life was foreshadowed in his life in England and Baroda, and his spiritual life was foreshadowed in his political life, student life in England, the scholarly life in Baroda, the political life in Bengal, these superficial divisions are made by those only who cannot view his life as a whole. In fact, as we have already remarked, there was no break in his life at all. It was a natural continuous evolution, a natural outflowering.

On the 23rd June he went to Barisal and delivered a speech at the Jhalakati Conference about the repression and deportation of Indian leaders by the British Government:

“ . . . We have had many other forms of repression besides these deportations. We have had charges of sedition, charges of dacoity and violence brought against the young men who are the hope of our country—charges such as those which we have seen breaking down and vanishing into nothing when tested by a high and impartial tribunal. This is the nature of the repression we have been called upon to suffer. It has been so engineered by the underlings of the Government that it strikes automatically at those who are most energetic, most devoted, most self-denying in the service of the mother-country. It addresses itself to the physical signs, the outward manifestations of our national life, and seeks by suppressing them to put an end to that national life and movement. But it is a strange idea, a foolish idea, which men have, indeed, always cherished

under such circumstances, but which has been disproved over and over again in history,—to think that a nation which has once risen, once has been called up by the voice of God to rise, will be stopped by mere physical repression. It has never so happened in the history of a nation, nor will it so happen in the history of India. Storm has swept over us today. I saw it come, I saw the striding of the storm-blast and the rush of the rain and as I saw it an idea came to me. What is this storm that is so mighty and sweeps with such fury upon us? And I said in my heart, ‘It is God who rides abroad on the wings of the hurricane,—it is the might and force of the Lord that manifested itself and his almighty hands that seized and shook the roof so violently over our heads today.’ A storm like this has swept also our national life. That too was the manifestation of the Almighty. We were building an edifice to be the temple of our Mother’s worship—were rearing her a new and fair mansion, a place fit for her dwelling. It was then that He came down upon us. He flung himself upon the building we had raised. He shook the roof with his mighty hands and part of the building was displaced and ruined. Why has He done this? Repression is nothing but the hammer of God that is beating us into shape so that we may be moulded into a mighty nation and an instrument for his work in the world. We are iron upon his anvil and the blows are showering upon us not to destroy but to re-create. Without suffering there can be no growth....”¹

“... We are a people ancient as our hills and rivers and we have behind us a history of manifold greatness, not surpassed by any other race, we are the descendants of those who performed Tapasya and underwent unheard-of austerities for the sake of spiritual gain and of their own will submitted to all the sufferings of which humanity is capable. We are the children of those mothers who ascended with a smile the funeral pyre that they might follow their husbands to another world. We are a people to whom suffering is welcome and who have a spiritual strength within them, greater than any physical force, we are a people in whom God has chosen to manifest himself more than in any other at many great moments of our history. It is because God has chosen to manifest himself and has entered into the hearts of his people that we are rising again as a nation. Therefore it matters not even if those who are greatest and most loved are taken away. I trust in God’s mercy and believe that they will soon be restored to us. But even if they don’t come again still the movement will not cease. It will move forward irresistibly until God’s will in it is fulfilled. He fulfills his purposes inevitably and these too he will fulfil.”²

Sri Aurobindo further continued: “Our business is to realise ourselves first and to move everything to the law of India’s eternal life and nature.”³ The stress was on winning back the inner empire, ‘the inner Swaraj’, first and foremost, for “it is a spiritual revolution we foresee and the material is only its shadow and reflex.”

About this time the Morley-Minto Reforms were very much in the air, and

the Indian political atmosphere became rife with hopes and speculations. It may be mentioned here that Lord Minto who succeeded Lord Curzon in 1905 was a Conservative. However, soon after he came out to India, the British electorates threw out his party and installed the Liberals in power and Mr. John Morley became the Secretary of State for India. Thus a Liberal Morley and a Conservative Minto presided over the destiny of India during 1905-1910. The natives of England, the Liberals and the Conservatives quarrelled a good deal among themselves in their own country but on the question of ruling India they were united in keeping the British banner flying aloft over her. Morley was not at all happy at the savage sentence imposed by Minto's regime on Tilak and the deportation of Lajpat Rai, Ajit Singh etc., and the Viceroy not only justified his action but even gloated over the fact and the Judge on the Bench was in fact a provost-Marshal in disguise. The rulers were really getting worried, not so much over a few terrorist activities as over the possibility of losing India, the jewel of their empire.

When Sri Aurobindo came out of jail in May 1909 the moderates meanwhile had been trying to get the Government's favour with men like G. K. Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjee and they were openly co-operating with high officials. In order to get the Government's favour Gokhale went to the Lieutenant-Governor, and showed the Moderates' plan by "deliberately resiling" from his 'support of the boycott movement'. Mr. Peter Heehs gives a report of the situation of the political atmosphere, the shrewd policy and cunning game of the British Administration couched in the Reforms of Morley-Minto in the following sentences:

"The Government had won over these and other Moderate leaders by convincing them that if they helped keep the country quiet they would gain what they had been crying for since 1885: a package of administrative reforms. This scheme, the Indian Councils Act (known popularly as the Morley-Minto Reforms), had been announced in December 1908. It was to consist of a reorganisation of the legislative councils and to be accompanied by the appointment of 'native' members to the councils of the viceroy and of the secretary of state. Moderate spokesmen competed with one another to find the most fulsome words of praise for the proposed reforms. They were 'a great step forward... in the grant of representative government' and 'a step worthy of the noble traditions of the Government which has given us liberty of thought and speech, high education and good government'. The sponsors of the measure (with London to answer to) were quick to set the record straight. 'We have distinctly maintained,' said Minto, 'that Representative Government, in its Western sense, is totally inapplicable to the Indian Empire and would be uncongenial to the traditions of Eastern populations.' Morley told the House of Commons: 'If it could be said that the chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily up to the establishment of a Parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing

at all to do with it.' Soon even the Moderates realized that the Act did not represent a change for the better in any real sense. Its principal effect was negative. By institutionalizing communal electorates it drove a wedge between Hindus and Muslims, splitting the movement and encouraging the growth of that sectarian brand of politics which remains the curse of the subcontinent."⁴

"The government combined its policy of 'rallying the Moderates' with a harsh campaign of repression against the Extremists. In the wake of the Muzaffarpur incident lawmakers had rushed through the Explosives Substances Act and the newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act. The latter measure made it dangerous to publish anything remotely resembling sedition—as the editors of *Bande Mataram* soon learned. The silencing of this journal in November 1908 left the Bengal Extremist Party without an organ. It was planned to hold a national Extremist Congress but this was prohibited by executive order. When the Moderate Convention that had taken the place of the Congress met in December, the President, Minto's friend Rash Behari Bose, declared that sometime 'in the distant future' when the Indian people had proved themselves fit for self-government' they might witness 'the extension to India of the colonial type of Government'. This utter betrayal of the ideals of the Calcutta Congress was heard by fewer than 600 delegates."⁵

"Despite the government's repression, an outbreak of revolutionary activity had come on the heels of the Muzaffarpur incident. With the breaking up of the Garden society, the Dacca Anushilan became the chief revolutionary samiti in Bengal. During the second half of 1908 it carried out a number of dacoities and other actions including the beheading of the informer Sukumar Chakravarti. In response the government passed the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, which provided for summary trials and 'the prohibition of associations dangerous to the public peace.' Under this measure the Dacca Anushilan and four other East Bengal samitis were outlawed in January 1909. The Dacca Anushilan survived and eventually prospered as an underground society; but the proscription, the deportation of its leaders and other effective counter-measures made it necessary for the group to cut back on its activities temporarily. By May 1909, when Aurobindo was released, Lord Minto could write to the secretary of state, 'Politically things continue satisfactorily, and there is the feeling of a calm after a storm'. But Minto was too much of a realist not to add: 'Still we must never be surprised if it starts to blow hard again.'"⁶

Sri Aurobindo observed the situation and found in the atmosphere 'a general discouragement and depression'. He, therefore, 'determined to continue the struggle.' The first necessity was to reawaken nationalist sentiment through open propaganda, the second to continue the secret revolutionary work. When the first issue of *The Karmayogin* was published on June 19, 1909, one copy of it was sent to the central office of the C.I.D. Before the end of the month it had reached Lord Minto's office. Mr. Peter Heehs further continues. "Minto's chief

secretary H. A. Stuart, a former CID director, advised putting pressure on the Bengal Government to prefer an appeal of Aurobindo's acquittal, there being 'no political reasons' against this course of action. A week later Stuart was for taking even more aggressive measures. In a circular letter to his colleagues on the viceroy's council, he pointed out that Aurobindo 'has been most active since his release' This was something of an exaggeration since so far he had only brought out three issues of his journal and delivered a half-dozen speeches. Nevertheless, said Stuart, 'If he is allowed to go on he will very soon have the country in a blaze again.' Stuart recommended calling 'the attention of the local (Provincial) governments of the two Bengals' to Aurobindo's 'dangerous campaign and inquire what steps they propose to recommend to stop it.' Venturing the optimistic opinion that 'at this juncture the Secretary of State would probably give us a fairly free hand', he concluded: 'I would not hesitate to deport Aurobindo if he cannot be silenced in any other way.' Minto agreed to this proposal, but when he wrote to the secretary of state the same day he made no mention of deportation, which Morley had ruled out except for cases of 'extreme urgency' ".⁷

"The most attractive of the possibilities was a prosecution for an infraction of the existing law. It was this Minto had in mind when he wrote to the Secretary of State on 7 July: 'I only hope he will sufficiently commit himself for us to prosecute.' If Aurobindo wrote or said anything expressing 'disaffection' of the government he could be indicted for sedition and put in jail for a very long time. But Aurobindo was a cautious speaker and a master of writing between the lines. Police spies took down every word he spoke in public; Police officials scrutinized these transcripts together with published versions of the speeches and the texts of every article that appeared in *Karmayogin*. Aurobindo disappointed them. His speeches, as a Government of India official acknowledged, were 'not actually seditious' though of a 'distinctly inflammatory character.' "⁸

There were a number of letters and telegrams exchanged between Minto and Morley. After reading the correspondences with Lord Minto, Lord Morley weighed the question in different ways. He had a deep insight into the situation. Soon after the release of Sri Aurobindo from Alipore jail Lord Minto wrote a letter on 7th July 1909, to Morley putting the arguments in favour of deporting Sri Aurobindo. Lord Minto's letter runs:

"Aurobindo Ghose who you will recollect was acquitted in the Alipore trials is again on the war-path. I only hope he will sufficiently commit himself for us to prosecute. He is reorganising the revolutionary movement in Eastern Bengal, and if we can't take hold of him he will do a great deal of harm.

"We have beforehand read in Sir Fraser's letter how the leading merchants from Calcutta were urging for the deportation of Sri Aurobindo. Now we will see the leading Princes' advice on the matter..."⁹

On the 26th of August 1909, Morley replied:

“It will be difficult to justify the deportation of Arabindo Ghose after we have failed to procure a conviction by the ordinary law. You must give me very strong facts and arguments before I could agree to such a course as that.”¹⁰

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library*, Vol 2, pp 61, 62
- 2 *Ibid* , p 63
- 3 *Ibid* , p 20
- 4 *The Bomb in Bengal*, by Peter Heehs, pp 219-220
- 5 *Ibid* , p 220
- 6 *Ibid* , pp 220-221
- 7 *Ibid* , pp 221-222
- 8 *Ibid* , pp 222-223
- 9 *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the Century*, by Manoj Das, pp 131-132
- 10 *Ibid* , pp 132-133

THE ADVENT

FLOODGATES open
 Barriers vanish
 The sun is dwarfed
 Immense is the silence.

He is coming!
 The Temple Within is resonant with His approaching steps
 The air is fragrant with flowers sprung unbidden,
 and a Divine Ecstasy is on the way to dwell in the heart-core.

The bated breath is limned with a gathering luminosity
 and the Soul-fringes tremble and swoon to His impending
 Presence.

Self is submerged in the vast ocean of incoming Light
 even as a throb of Joy dances across its iridescent expanse.

Hail The Advent,
 Rejoice in The Event.

VIREN

ISN'T IT ENOUGH?

Oh this blessed aloneness!
Being in light though wrapped
In a dark robe!

There is no regret at finding myself
To be an enigma,
There is no sadness in the recognition
That I am in ignorance,
Only an acceptance
That the time of light is not yet.

Isn't it enough
That my eyes now see wonders
In many moments?
That my lips smile
Hearing some laughter hiding
In routine life-notes?
That often I bathe in a downpour
Of joy without reason,
Of peace within turmoils?

Oh beautiful aloneness,
Lead to the awareness
Of an unseen presence in all my worlds.

It is still night,
Dark,
But no more foreboding,
Stars
Are already fading.

DINKAR PALANDE

MUSINGS ON *PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS*

(From this issue the “musings” will begin from the first prayer onwards, of course leaving out those which have already been taken up.)

For Them

THE pre-condition of any great victory is an utmost effort. Winning an empire, writing a masterpiece, painting a Mona Lisa, constructing a Pyramid or a Taj Mahal or a Konark, walking on the moon—the list can be endless—require a total absorption in the task at hand. Half-measures bring flawed results, short efforts result in small victories.

Throughout the ages the great of the world have accepted that the most difficult of all the noble endeavours, the most elusive Height to be attained, is the conquest of Self, the casting of one’s personality in the Divine’s image—in short, the attainment of *Yoga*, of the Oneness with the *One*.

A sporadic effort, a half-hearted surrender, a hesitating mind, a regretful vital, a Tamasic body under the sway of animal atavism, cannot, and will not, achieve this *summit* or for that matter any other summit.

We human beings are given to regrets, we hold back something for fear of losing our great burden, our personality which we consider to be ‘ourselves’. *Arrière pensée* is second nature with us and suspicion and holding back of a part of ourselves are in-grained in our weak human psyche. The Mother opens her *Prayers and Meditations* with the following declaration,

Some give their soul to the Divine, some their life, some offer their work, some their money. A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have—soul, life, work, wealth; these are the true children of God.

O Soul, delude not yourself. Nothing short of a total self-giving is acceptable to our Master, nothing less than all-out effort will achieve the *siddhi*. If we would live divinely we must give all ourselves to the Divine. Remember that Draupadi had to let go of her sari before Sri Krishna came to her rescue. Any preservation of a separate ‘self’ will make our offering incomplete. One will have to accept to be *nothing* in order to *Be*.

O aspiring soul! grudge not the self-giving. Offer to the Lord all that has been given to you by him and then if he would have you pass through hell, who are you or what right do you have to complain?

This total self-giving is meant for a selected *few*. From the others the Divine accepts gladly a coin, a flower or a leaf. But the Mother says,

Others give nothing—these whatever their position, power, and riches

are for the Divine purpose valueless cyphers.

Vain is the existence that has no value for the Divine. The life and death of such people are equally meaningless. Take care, O soul, not to be one of those *valueless cyphers*. The Mother emphasises about her *Prayers and Meditations*,

This book is meant for those who aspire for an utter consecration to the Divine.

To the Mother who has given us these Revelations, whose each word is a pure pearl strung on the thread of the Divine Love, let us bow down in deepest gratitude.

*

Why did They Write?

Saints and sages, thinkers and theologians of different religions and spiritual disciplines, who had the gift of expression, have spoken or written of the spiritual experiences they had on the Godward path, sometimes in emotionally moving poetry, sometimes in revelatory mantras, at others in transforming prose. These testaments of faith, yearnings of the heart and luminous answers to many questionings of the mind by the seekers on the upward path are the priceless spiritual legacy of humanity. These sacred texts have acted as living lights for later or lesser seekers aspiring for the summits, not only because they speak of the soul's highest yearnings but also because of the ingathered *tapas-shakti*, power of askesis with which the words of these ascetics and Rishis are impregnated.

They form an inexhaustible source of enlightenment. Age after age, aspirants and devotees benefit from them. They never cease to inspire awe and wonder, never cease to uplift. Illumined *shastras* like the Gita, the Vedas and the Upanishads are perennially effective.

The question arises, "What was the necessity of writing these or such other texts? Was it for the upliftment of the others who are less enlightened? Or was it an inner necessity for self-expression? After all, what impelled these great souls to break the inner sacred solitude for revealing the inmost secrets of the Spirit? Surely they were beyond the need of any sort of self-perpetuation or self-aggrandizement?"

In the first *prayer* of her *Prayers and Meditations* our sweet Mother has revealed the necessity which impelled her to write and express her sacred musings. On November 2, 1912, she wrote,

Although my whole being is in theory consecrated to Thee, O Sublime

Master, who art the life, the light and the love in all things, I still find it hard to carry out this consecration in detail. It has taken me several weeks to learn that the reason for this written meditation, its justification, lies in the very fact of addressing it daily to Thee. In this way I shall put into material shape each day a little of the conversation I have so often with Thee; I shall make my confession to Thee as well as it may be; not because I think I can tell Thee anything—for Thou art Thyself everything, but our artificial and exterior way of seeing and understanding is, if it may be so said, foreign to Thee, opposed to Thy nature. Still, by turning towards Thee, by immersing myself in Thy light at the moment when I consider these things, little by little I shall see them more like what they really are,—until the day when, having made myself one in identity with Thee, I shall no more have anything to say to Thee, for then I shall be Thou. This is the goal that I would reach; towards this victory all my efforts will tend more and more. I aspire for the day when I can no longer say “I”, for I shall be Thou.

This then is the reason, to *put into material shape* the communion one has with the Lord. This giving of material shape to the inner verities clarifies and concretises them to the outward being of the aspirant and brings out their substance. These are the stepping stones as well as the shining landmarks on the pathway of the spirit. They help the aspirant to achieve clarity and understanding of the inner phenomenon and also give shape to what otherwise would remain only an amorphous mass of consciousness. It is like cutting and new-shaping a rough diamond and the more it is brought to light—cut, chiselled, polished—the more it increases in value, beauty, power and potency. The repeated call to the supreme Beloved, the constant remembrance of the Divine, the sweet self-offering to the Lord, the reaching out of the soul to the Oversoul, endow these writings with a unique power of upliftment. Each such *prayer* or prose-poem is like an upward ladder for its creator and it would have, by its inherent *tapas*, the same effect on those who later on read it.

Sweet is an opportunity to call the Beloved, all occasions are good, all opportunities are welcome, to utter the Divine Name. Each ‘call’ is an experience of love and intimacy, which is not possible without the existence of some sort of distance, some lack of identity between the one who calls and the One who is called.

The Mother makes it clear that on the day the union between the soul and the Lord would be total there would not be, there could not be any more call. She writes,

How many times a day, still, I act without my action being consecrated to Thee; I at once become aware of it by an indefinable uneasiness which is translated in the sensibility of my body by a pang in my heart. I then make

my action objective to myself and it seems to me ridiculous, childish or blameworthy; I deplore it, for a moment I am sad, until I dive into Thee and, there losing myself with a child's confidence, await from Thee the inspiration and the strength needed to set right the error in me and around me—two things that are one; for I have now a constant and precise perception of the universal unity determining an absolute interdependence of all actions.

The saint poet of Hindi, Kabir wrote in a couplet, "I spoke only up to the time when I knew nothing. Now that I *know*, there is nothing that can be spoken of."

The Mother points out that any action done or any word spoken without our being conscious of the Divine is a falsehood. Here she reveals something startling that there is *an absolute interdependence of all actions*. This is a sobering realisation. It shows that if any person can rise to the summit of the consciousness, by his achievement discords of the world may be annulled to a certain extent. A yogi's sole achievement may avert a war, or may resolve peacefully a conflict in some far-off country and that all the discordant notes and lowly actions which an aspirant unwittingly indulges in, in spite of the objection of his higher parts, come from other sources and if we would raise ourselves we would have to bring a corresponding change in those around us.

What a stupendous opportunity and what a Himalayan burden! But despair is not warranted. Each of these *prayers* is a staff on which we can lean on our upward way, each one is like a minor sun that can pierce and illumine all our darknesses. The Divine Mother's benediction and protection will act powerfully through these *prayers* on us and will do for us all that is required, if we offer ourselves sincerely and willingly at her feet.

Guardian Angels are around.

*

Robe of Light

When night covers the earth with her star-sequined dark robe, all life seems dead. There are no flowers with their laughing hues, there are no child faces with innocent smiles. The majestic mountain tops are lost in the gloom and the rivers rush by silently. The commerce of life is dulled, death seems to rule.

It is this silent face of Darkness that overshadows the little lights of our being. We grope and stumble in the alien land of life which is always hostile to high purpose and ideal ways.

The sensitive soul meets injustice at each step. There is a massed attack from the Protagonists of Falsehood who keep up a pressure and mount a

concerted attack and hedge-in the simple soul, who would escape their net. Calumny and persecution at each step are the meed of the Divine-oriented.

But the viciousness of this outer resistance is nothing compared to the ferocity of the inner battle that the sadhak faces at each instant. When he would like to muse on Infinity, his heart runs to the anklet bells of the courtesan, when he would like to forget all physical needs and concentrate on the Eternal, his senses wander away to dwell on the many exoteric delights life offers—a soft hand-clasp, a desired food, a satin dress, a great worldly achievement; in short he is inexorably pulled by the mesmerizing, multi-coloured charms and delights of this external world.

Thus begins the long night of the soul. Life after life, the lost soul wanders in this magic valley of desires and duties, defeats and victories.

But all the powers of night vanish when from the east, trailing his robe of countless rays, bursts forth the glorious sun. Then, not being able to bear the phalanxes of light, night sulks in shadowy corners.

The same is equally true of the night of our soul. What darkness can withstand the Master of the Suns, the Fount of all Light? On November 3, 1912 the Mother wrote in her diary,

Let Thy Light be in me like a Fire that makes all alive; let Thy divine Love penetrate me.

No appeal or invocation to this Light and Love is ever in vain. This all-powerful Light of the All has the potential to defeat the armies of night and of routing the standard-bearers of desire and death. Once we array ourselves under the Banner of Light victory is sure. The Mother further prays,

I aspire with all my being for Thy reign as sovereign and master of my mind and heart and body; let them be Thy docile instruments and Thy faithful servitors.

To us is given the ineffable joy, the sweet felicity of offering ourselves integrally—*mind and heart and body*—at the altar of the Lord. We have this Choice and once we choose the Divine, the right is ours to call him at each step, to invoke his presence and Power to come and fight our battles against the apparently invincible and endless-seeming Night. The All-Compassionate is honour-bound to answer our call.

Fear not, O soul, the All-Mighty holds you by the hand.

Who

Who can know or define the Divine except the Divine? From the beginning of civilization the sages and Rishis have tried to analyse the character of the Divine but without much success. Either they adopted a negative approach which tries to seize the Divine through a process of elimination: neither this nor this and not this either—*neti, neti*, or they tried to approach Him through adoration and appreciation; an approach in which the devotee attributes all the possible good qualities to the Divine. Even though the premise of the devotee is true, this was and is, at best, an emotional approach. All efforts at evaluation or analysis were efforts to contact the Elusive, to understand the One, which by Its very nature is beyond understanding. The ancients tried to storm the citadel of secrecy surrounding the Divine by concentrating all thoughts, energies and emotions on the object of their worship.

Even though Sri Krishna showed his Vishwarupa to his best and dearest disciple Arjuna, yet He was much more than what Arjuna was shown or could understand. It cannot be otherwise. Because by Its very nature, and in Its constitution, the Divine is limitless and the human understanding is, even at its best, only mental and therefore limited.

In rare moments of Grace through some golden words, the Divine reveals Itself and when that happens then our circumscribed understanding is shot with immortal rays of light. Such a revelation is to be found in many *slokas* of the Gita—the scripture, of which the world has known for millenniums and at which it never ceases to wonder.

There is another such revelatory book, the *Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother, though it is much less known and has remained almost unnoticed, except by some disciples. It is natural. The Divine does not reveal herself except to those who seek her sincerely. In the sacred pages of *Prayers and Meditations*, the Mother frequently reveals her identity and her state of being. Here is not the Typal Avatar, the Gnostic Being, who descends on the earth with His or Her full Divine Power and is thus above human frailties and sensitivities. The Mother began yoga, in her outer being, from a point which was not much different from that which has been gained by numerous developed human beings. But hers was a yoga of total sincerity. Once she recognised a weakness or shortcoming she concentrated all her energies on rectifying it and so total was her sincerity that a mistake once recognised was never committed again, even though she had to battle all the human shortcomings, first on the individual level and then on the universal scale. From a human status she rose in stature and consciousness till she achieved oneness with her Transcendent Status. This thrilling story of divine ascension, this spiritual history at its highest, has been revealed by her in this book.

On November 19, 1912 the Mother wrote,

I said yesterday to that Englishman who is seeking for Thee with so sincere a desire, that I had definitively found Thee, that the union was constant. Such is indeed the state of which I am conscious. All my thoughts go towards Thee, all my acts are consecrated to Thee, Thy presence is for me an absolute, immutable, invariable fact, and Thy Peace dwells constantly in my heart.

This is the high summit which the Mother scaled by her intense Tapasya and it is the radiant state in which she would come, after about sixteen months, to take her place by Sri Aurobindo's side as his Shakti. What she had realised was not some fleeting glimpse, or a chance contact, but a *constant* union with the Divine. She lived in the ambience of the Lord. This *presence was an absolute, immutable, invariable fact*. One may wonder that when this is achieved what more remains to be done? What higher summit awaits conquest?

Howsoever great this state may seem to us, the Mother makes it clear that this is just a beginning. There are greater states to be achieved. She writes,

Yet I know that this state of union is poor and precarious compared with that which it will become possible for me to realise tomorrow, and I am as yet far, no doubt very far, from that identification in which I shall totally lose the notion of the "I", of that "I", which I still use in order to express myself, but which is each time a constraint, like a term unfit to express the thought that is seeking for expression. It seems to me indispensable for human communication, but all depends on what this "I" manifests; and how many times already, when I pronounce it, it is Thou who speakest in me, for I have lost the sense of separativity.

After achieving the inner union the Mother's field of action shifted from the inner to the outer world, from realisation to manifestation. The outer world being based on Inconscience and Inertia is, at best, capable of only a partial and truncated manifestation. It distorts even the greatest of Truths and effectively limits the Limitless.

When the centre of her consciousness shifted back into her individual consciousness the Mother had to act from this individual status and consciousness and how much this consciousness could and did manifest the inner Divinity became the crux of the problem. The Mother had to labour each moment to divinise, in an ever greater degree the outer "I". She had to infuse the Illimitable in the limited, the Eternal in the time-bound. She tried to manifest All Divinity in her body, in which were condensed all the earth-elements which by their very nature resist divinity.

This was to be her life-long Tapasya. But she knew that the Lord was with her at each step and all would be done in His own time and in His own way. She wrote,

But all this is still in embryo and will continue to grow towards perfection. What an appeasing assurance there is in this serene confidence in Thy All-Might!

Thou art all, everywhere, and in all, and this body which acts is Thy own body, just as is the visible universe in its entirety; it is Thou who breathest, thinkest and lovest in this substance which, being Thyself, desires to be Thy willing servant.

The Heights leaned down towards the abysses, the depths aspired towards the Heights. The Mother is the golden-rainbow bridge between them.

SHYAM KUMARI

KABIR WEAVING

KABIR sits weaving.
The warp is ready,
He must finish the web.
His poor man's thin body
Imprisoned by the loom,
He weaves with his soul.

His poor man's fingers
Weave rough cloth for sale,
His soul weaves for joy.
He works the whole day long,
His poor man's legs in shackles
But his rich soul dances.

A weaver of poor people,
He sits on the ground,
His soul is in heaven.
Mad with love for the Lord
He is weaving blue silk
With suns, moons and stars.

MARTA GUHA

SHIVABHAI AMIN: A COURAGEOUS CRUSADER

To him transformation of the body was a one-pointed effort to be made in all sincerity by the followers of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The words of his Gurus were Mantras, not to be talked about or discussed and filed away in the archives of our beings. Words like "Transformation", "Integral Yoga" and "Consciousness" were never uttered in a light vein. They were to be practised in day-to-day life. He practised pranayama several hours a day, slept absolutely straight on his back even when the pain at the end could be excruciating. When told about the cancerous growth in his lungs and throat, he remained absolutely quiet for an hour and simply said, "May be but also may not be." He found it difficult to talk and eat but never did he once complain of pain. He did not want people to sympathise and talk about this physical illness. "I don't want anyone to talk about me in that way." He went about his daily routine independently.

All twenty-four hours were dedicated to Sadhana active and consecrated. It was like a non-stop Ahuti, all thoughts were taken in hand, dealt with in the inner chambers, looked at from every angle, the unwanted ordinary ones dropped, the others enriched on the anvil of hard routine and only when fully purified were they offered to the constantly trim-kept brazier. It was a joy to be with him.

The last three days of his life, he had been in constant link with his beloved Gurus. He saw them, at his side all the time, he talked to them, often "Sri Aurobindo ki Jai, victory to the Mother" was uttered, he smiled as if he was enjoying a revelation gifted to him. He saw many old friends who had left in recent years, he saw his grandfather who had given him the glimpse of the spiritual life at the tender age of four and he told him, "Dada, you have been with me for two hours, but it is time to go to Samadhi in the Ashram. Please go and visit before the gates close." This was perhaps his way of bringing everyone he knew to the doors of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Shivabhai was born in 1900. Educated at his village school, Anand, Ahmedabad and London. At an early age began the spiritual and religious life with Vaishnav literature in the family circle and it developed during school and college days.

He took part in the first non-cooperation movement as a student volunteer in Kaira and Borsad Satyagraha in 1920-25.

He had Sri Aurobindo's Darshan for the first time in 1925, became a disciple, studied and expounded the teachings of Indian philosophy in general and of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in particular.

He went to East Africa in 1926 and from there to London in 1927. He became a Barrister and started legal practice in Kenya in 1932. He took an active part in the public life of Indians and Africans there. Mr. Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of independent Kenya, was a personal friend and Shivabhai fought

many court battles for him without a penny.

He became a member of the Kenya Legislative Council in 1942-45 and the President of the East African Indian National Congress from 1946 onwards.

He had the privilege of hoisting the Indian National flag on 15th August 1947 in public in East Africa. He was chosen to immerse the ashes of Mahatma Gandhi at the source of River Nile in the presence of thousands of Indians, Africans and Europeans.

He acted as a bridge between African and European leadership and the British Administration. He visited India several times as part of deputations on behalf of Indians in East Africa and every visit to India was crowned with a visit to Pondicherry to be at the feet of his Gurus to re-enforce his energies.

In 1969 he came to live at the Ashram and dedicated himself fully to the work of spreading the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, through talks, classes, tours and visits to remote villages during the two Centenaries in 1972 and 1978.

His pet subject was *Savitri* which he could expound in one hour, one day, ten days or ten years, depending upon the time and patience of his students. He never got tired of this subject. *Savitri* and *Ashwapati* as created by Sri Aurobindo were personalities *par excellence* whose life-styles were to be followed, put in practice, not merely talked about lightly.

SUNANDA

THE GREATEST JOY

It has taken a lifetime
But at last I have learned
That the greatest joy
Is the giving of love—
It need not be returned.

ELIZABETH STILLER

AT THE FISH-LADDERS

It's January again.
The river's in full spate
Between snow-laden banks and branches.
In this black-and-white landscape
Again and again flashes steel-silver:
Trout are leaping the ladders.

Why now,
When all's at its hardest?

It's no fun for the fish!
Driven against the flow,
Battered and bruised by the torrent,
Again and again they fall back, thwarted.

No angler wants them now.
(In smooth summer he would lure them
Out of lazy leisure in the soothing shadows
Of their cool underwater gardens,
Flashing a silver fly to make them rise...)

Nearing the end of their course
They must face its greatest challenge.
How many will reach the quiet spawning-grounds beyond,
To pour out their last strength in sacrifice to the future?
How few!

But someone has fun!
Oh, You who drive the fish upstream,
What fun *You* have!

Standing here on the bank,
I too delight in the tensing muscles,
The silver springing
Against the foaming glassy rush pouring over,
The patient breathing of the winter woods—
Dark, leafless, damp, beneath their load of snow,
A sudden sparkle of bird-song,
Twig crackling underfoot .
Sense life's eddy and slither

Out of one form into another,
Feel You feeling each of us
Within Your whole.

Oh, You who drive the fish upstream,
You drive us too!
How many will reach the tranquil pools?

Yet, even now, standing here on the bank,
We can sense Your silver laughter.
Plunged in the torrent,
Like fish we can bathe and leap—
Battered and bruised but elated—
In our breathtaking onrush,
Goaded for ever upwards
Against the current
By Your insistent will.

SHRADDHAVAN

PRATTLING PRAYERS*

ON what rests Thy white marble temple,
 nestling in the hills beyond?
Upon what remain suspended the exquisite domes,
 Which foundation supports Thee, O Supreme Mother!
Thou who art the Sustainer of the Universe,
 The Supreme Creatrix Force,
 Unborn, Deathless, Timeless and Eternal,
Won't Thou whisper to reveal Thyself,
 And let me fathom Thy ineffable Spirit?

Thou who hast been creating and destroying
 innumerable galaxies,
And causing holy descents of Avatars
 On the earthly scene, age after age,
Why needest Thou tapestried roofs above,
 And huge caparisoned elephants,
With uniformed watchmen to protect Temple wealth?
Hast Thou concealed treasures there
 To compete as the wealthiest Goddess?

The azure sky above, the sun, the moon,
 The milky ways and the twinkling stars
Feel amused to see Thy bejewelled swings,
 Thy victory processions in full regalia,
Where countless devotees prostrate themselves,
 Defying stampedes and throw coconuts at Thee;
Where angels fear to descend upon
 Gun-toting guards and jostling high-priests,
I am left forlorn with my tearful looks
In the dark corners of the wayside lanes.

Listen to the prattling prayers
 of Thy child's suppliant heart
Across the distant meadows,
 And place them like tiny grass-flowers
To adorn Thy glowing tender Feet,
When they become free from the weight
 Of diamond anklets and gorgeous garlands;

* On viewing the grand Annavaram temple located in the beautiful hills, from a running train on the Madras-Howrah main line

Teach my mind to sing silent songs of praise
When Thy temple doors are closed,
When people think Thou hast retired,
 When immortal sages and saints assemble
In Thy precincts, to perform silently
 The invisible Vedic sacrifice, in quiet gratitude.

SURESH DE

I BEHELD...

In the clutch of night
I beheld
The smile of Light—
Though sober,
Quite sturdy
To penetrate
Night's breast
And emerge unstained.

My doubting mind
And incredulous heart
Are at repose
To enjoy the sport
Of night with Light,
Where Light led
And night followed
As an obstinate child
When convinced
After rigid vehemence.

ASHALATA DASH

THE CULMINATION OF HUMAN CONDUCT

I am charged by God to do his mighty work,
Uncaring I serve his will who sent me forth,
Reckless of peril and earthly consequence.
I reason not of virtue and of sin
But do the deed he has put into my heart.¹

THE above is the message we received on 24th April, 1995. The lines are pregnant with the power and spirit of self-realisation and absolute identity with God. The identification with God is the aim, ideal and aspiration of a true seeker of the Divine. Not only the individual seeker but also the whole of humanity has, during its long history, consciously or unconsciously, borne within it a seeking for something high and lofty, some ideal of absolute beauty, good and perfection. But a balanced and healthy social order, with a spontaneous inner growth and rhythmic vibration of the All-beloved, still appears to be a distant dream.

But is it actually so? Will it be an overstatement to say that humanity is now on the verge of a new orientation which, when it culminates, will satisfy its age-long groping and aspiration for an ideal order? In order to ascertain the truth we have to take recourse to Sri Aurobindo's views and observations on the subject.

To live a normal life man has the need of a society for his growth and development. His progress is very much conditioned by the growth and development of the society of which he is a member. Similarly the improvement of the society also is dependent on the progress of the individuals constituting it. It is so because all existence itself proceeds by the mutual interaction between the whole and the parts, the collectivity and the individuals.

Generally the individual conforms to the standard of conduct laid down by the society and the society manages to maintain them by its members' sanction behind all its customs and laws. But the difficulty crops up when the individual finds the external social laws a compulsion on him and a hindrance to his own law of nature. In such a case, if he breaks the social law for his own self-fulfilment, from what point of view may he have his justification? A great light on the point is shed by the following statement of Sri Aurobindo:

"The Divine Will acts through the aeons to reveal progressively not only in the unity of the cosmos, not only in the collectivity of living and thinking creatures, but in the soul of each individual something of its divine Mystery and the hidden truth of the Infinite."²

If that is accepted then the conduct which expresses the Divine Will in an individual must be pursued even when it does not agree with the set social, mental, and moral rules. But it is not an easy job to know and judge the Divine Will in oneself. Individuals are very often prone to disregard social, moral and ethical laws for the satisfaction of their crude and unhealthy vital or physical

needs and desires. Social codes and laws are of immense value and importance insofar as they put a restraint on such motives.

In fact, the creation advances through various steps and stages and as such there cannot be any fixed rule for all and at all times. So to have a clear understanding let us try to follow the successive standards of conduct which developed in the course of evolution and then see how they stand in relation to living according to the Divine Will and Spirit.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of four such standards of conduct which came up one after another in the history of the human race. The first is the standard of personal need, preference and desire; the second is that of the collective good and well-being; the third is an ideal ethic; last comes the divine law of nature.

The first two are the animal and vital laws of conduct of humanity in its infancy. The main object of man on earth is to attain and express the Divine in him and his type. But at first he is ignorant of this inner aim of his life. In the crude physical stage, he knows his material and vital needs and desires and their dictates as the only guide to show him the purpose of his life. But this first law of desires is counteracted by the same demands from the family, tribe, pack or community of which he is a member. Thus the second law of his conduct, *i.e.*, the law of the good and well-being of the collectivity evolves. Perhaps man in his primary phase found that his needs and desires could be better satisfied by the formation of groups and packs and was thus obliged to give the needs and desires, motives and habits of the group a dominant position, keeping his own in subordination. This is how a sense of the collective whole grew in the mass consciousness.

The two main impulses of man, one personal and the other social or collective, are always at work and go together, though at any time there is a possibility of their opposition. The harmonisation of these two propensities is said to be at the basis of our civilisation. As already stated, the external social law is at different times both an advantage and a disadvantage to the development of the Divine in man. When it goes to suppress and immobilize the individual self-development, nature in the individual reacts. The manifestation of the reaction may occur in various forms. It may be the vital revolt of the criminal or the complete renunciation of the ascetic. It may also impose a new social idea and bring about a compromise between the social and the individual demands. But a compromise is never a solution of the problem.

At this stage a new principle is called in which is higher than these conflicting ones of the individual and the society. That is a moral law which controls the divergent interests and establishes an ideal order. Thus a door is opened to man to enter from vital and material to mental life. This new law is not a product of the mass mind but an individual standard developed in the nature of the individual by the culture of the mental and moral qualities like justice, love, right reason, right power, truth, beauty, etc. At the subconscious stage of the

society an individual who is a thinker formulates and accepts these ideals as a ruling principle of life. But gradually those who are influenced by his thought movements begin to practise the new ideal and in the long run the society itself absorbs the influence and modifies and reshapes its institutions into new forms according to the higher ideal.

We can appreciate the fact by seeing the change in the society at the advent of the individualistic age. How it accepted the mental ideal of justice, communal sympathy and right reason and how magnificently this new law contributed to social progress. We can have its testimony in every walk of life. But it has its drawback as well. It tends to become rigidly binding upon the spontaneous life-principle. It is, to quote Sri Aurobindo, "more intent upon status and self-preservation than on growth and self-perfection."³

The attempt of the thinker at leading the society can be successful only when we can persuade the collective whole to govern the external by the internal instead of binding the inner spirit by the compulsion of the form or structure.

But that has not normally come about as yet. Rather the ethical standard set up by the moralist becomes too rigid and binding to allow any new movement of action to rise and have a free play in the individual or in the society. To him the doctrine of so-called truth, love and justice becomes an all-important affair and even the safety and the most pressing interest of the society have no place against it. But neither the individual nor the society can afford to satisfy such demands since nature will not allow them to do so. This is because the mental construction of the moralist is not the eternal truth of the spirit. The vital and emotional impulses in man contain in them invaluable elements which no ethical formula can fathom or grasp within its limits. If the mental and moral ideals are professed with an uncompromising insistence, they remain in the air and cannot become a practical reality.

However, ideals like love, beauty, justice, right reason, power etc., in their application conflict with one another. The demand of justice neglects the essential principle of love. Right reason puts forward such rules of living as are incapable of admitting absolute justice or beauty. In short, the one-sided and rigid mind of man cannot cope with the subtler truth of things and the plasticity of life. That is why humanity moves in a roundabout way and fails to follow that which the highest spirit demands of it. The solution of this chaotic disorder and the harmonious fulfilment of the ideals lie elsewhere and not in the rational or ethical mind.

Exceeding the mental being in us there is a greater being, which is spiritual and divine, the direct experience of which leads us to a wideness and freedom of spirit where all mental constructions dissolve. And in that divine vastness one can find the harmony amongst different powers and qualities. There only can our mind, life and body discover their secret sources which reconcile the conflicting mental moods and motives. There, in the light of the Supreme, knowledge, love,

truth, justice, beauty etc., can have their proper play without any clash. Beyond the external law of the society, there is a divine law secret in the heart of each human being which is the truth of his own essential nature. That truth has a double aspect; it is the guiding light of each one in his individual life and also of the spiritualised collectivity, the determinant of the social relationship.

The only way to find this is by personal experience. On the one hand it is an imperative law and on the other an absolute freedom; because it is the Dharma of our inner self which governs all movements in us but in each case in accordance with the plasticity of our nature. The ethical law is reached by the individual in his mind, so also the supreme law must be discovered by him in his spirit. But like the former it cannot be extended to others by mental ideas. It is only through a spiritual influence that its effect on others can be brought about.

To sum up, the Divine Will is secretly leading man throughout his long and arduous career. First it expresses itself in the law of needs and desires and then in the mental and moral rules of the idealist. Now it is preparing man to exceed both these formulae to attain a divine and spiritual law of nature. In this new state of his conduct, the essential needs and demands of the previous ones will not be rejected or suppressed. On the contrary, rising above them, it will bring about a synthesis of all those which are divinely true in their spirit and purpose. Maybe, the principle of needs and desires will be transformed into divine Will and Ananda and moral aspiration into the powers of the divine Truth, Beauty and Perfection. Moreover, there is the infinite possibility of the descent into earth nature of other powers of the Supreme, the splendour of which has not perhaps even been dreamt of by humanity at large.

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

References

- 1 Savitri, Canto Four, p 509
- 2 *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part I, Chapter VII, p 179
- 3 *Ibid* , p 187

FLOATING IDEAS

SRI AUROBINDO and the Mother, with all the potentiality of ultimate supremacy, were born with the divine intensity of self-forgetfulness. What we call their progress in Yoga is not a progress but the gradual unfolding of their remembrance of what they are. Since their potentiality is infinite their gradual recovery from self-chosen forgetfulness will be constant and endless. We evolve, they unfold.

*

Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's photographs are not documents merely representing what they originally looked like when the photographs were taken. They are too sensitive to be used as the past or as passing into the past through memory. They are not remembrances. They are powerful presences. If the person who worships the photographs does it with sincerity and aspires that they may represent all that He or She constantly unfolds, the photographs will definitely respond to the aspirations of the worshipper. The photographs can continuously correspond to "the future becoming the present". Photographs with our intense adoration can reflect all that they achieve or become in the subtle-physical because in every dimension every second they move forward, they never stagnate even for an instant. It is our attitude that brings out the magnitude of the photographs.

*

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother love each other infinitely. We, every one of their children, reflect this love. It is our duty to discover what aspect each of us represents in our reflection of their love. Their love for each other has infinite aspects—each aspect being unique. For this reason each one of us has a unique, exclusive relation with them.

*

Sri Aurobindo's Omnipotence would consent to triumph only if we look at danger straight in the face with an unshakable faith in His Omnipotence.

JAGAT KAPADIA

THE MOUNTAIN MORE THAN A MOUNTAIN

THE mountain with its peaks uplifted
Has been praying to the Infinite for ages
Not for a greater height, a tougher head
But for the strength to kneel and bow,
A power to melt and mingle in the Mother Earth.
They ask me to see the mountain as the mountain
But how can I? Its trees and shrubs
Tell me of Beauty's forgotten lores
And produce a saintly breeze keeping its aspiration aflame,
Its rivulets play a harmonious note of immortality,
Its sturdy rock breathes an ancient knowledge
Revealing tales of incomparable endurance
And detachment, of its unforgettable commerce
With the clouds and the stars, the universal lovers,
Its secret communion with the unmoved sky.
An all-pervasive Force conducive to peace
Is all it knows, obedient to an omniscient law,
Like a Rishi in rapt meditation,
Unaware of the cycle of seasons.
With its own trials and vicissitudes unconcerned,
The mountain sits there, calm joy exuding from every ledge.
Though moveless, it is a path-finder
To lands of mystic Light, its inner journeyings
A mystery to the drab souls,
An invitation to the seeking few.

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

THE ULTIMATE QUEST

CONVENTIONAL SCIENCE BEGINS THE SEARCH FOR THE SOURCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

BY THEO NEWMAN

(Note by Maggi Ligchi-Grassi)

In the early '60s, at a time when World Union was organizing a conference on "Science and Spirituality in the Light of Sri Aurobindo's Teaching", the Mother gave a message saying that if science were sincere, it would get there first.

The Mother has also told us that by the end of the century the most recalcitrant and resistant of people would be obliged to acknowledge the truth of Sri Aurobindo's message.

Almost seventy years ago, Sri Aurobindo wrote that science's recognition of more subtle planes would indicate the coming of a new era. In fact, there are many interesting discoveries surfacing today, but none that one has come across which were not foreseen by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother long, long ago.

The following article from a new international quarterly, Planetary Connections by Theo Newman, is entitled "The Ultimate Quest". Its subtitle is "Conventional Science Begins to Search for the Source of Consciousness".

SINCE Fritjof Capra started the science and mysticism bandwagon rolling by publishing *The Tao of Physics* in 1975, the subject of consciousness has remained the biggest but the least addressed challenge. Mainstream scientists continue to pursue ever smaller particles like quarks and gluons, and have continued to protest stoutly that consciousness is merely the result of brain function. The brave few who have ventured to remove this strait-jacket like David Bohm and Rupert Sheldrake have been sidelined, and even ridiculed, by their colleagues. The view of a dualistic, chaotic universe ruled by cruel chance has remained firmly in place in the institutions of our civilisation.

The good news is that science itself, not scientists, is presenting the crucial problem of consciousness with an increasing urgency. Quantum physics, the jewel in the crown of science today, is revealing an holistic and intelligent subatomic universe where previously only chaos was perceived. It also reveals that the point of view of the observer is an integral part of the witnessed event, that wherever we are, wherever our consciousness is present, it is an inseparable part of that time and place. This idea is so threatening to scientists who base their whole discipline on an impartial and rational empiricism that they simply have to

reject it out of hand and bury their heads in the antique sands of Cartesian duality. The same debate arose in the mid-nineteenth century when Ronnie Knox wrote a limerick criticising idealism.

*There was once a man who said, "God,
Must think it exceedingly odd
If he finds that this tree
Continues to be
When there's no one about in the Quad."*

He received the anonymous reply:
*"Dear Sir, your astonishment's odd:
I am always about in the Quad.
And that's why the tree
Will continue to be,
Since observed by yours faithfully, God."*

The new Quantum understanding in physics and in atomic bio-chemistry has inspired writers like Dana Zohar (*The Quantum Self*) and Deepak Chopra (*Quantum Healing*) to suggest that the basic energy of the whole creation is consciousness, that all things and events are unfolded from a fundamental ocean of consciousness which at its highest state is pure love. Chopra talks of the genetic DNA molecules, which code the information as to who and what we are, as if they are like radio receivers picking up information from the invisible world of consciousness.

All this is a tremendous leap forward but these ideas are still far from becoming accepted in the conventional world of education and research. It is a fact that an idea will have little impact until it enters into general education, and is taught as a truth to the young, who are forming their own worlds around them. To confirm this, one has only to see the state of mind produced in millions of people by the emptiness of their education and the base exploitation of the press and media.

Into this dark scenario has come good news, and as is often the case it has come in the form of a paradox. Francis Crick, one of the most eminent of the world's scientific community, discoverer of the DNA molecule and a notoriously die-hard dualist, has re-entered the book lists with a best-seller *The Astonishing Hypothesis. The Scientific Search for the Soul*. The whole of this book is devoted to the search for consciousness and where it arises in the brain. This may not seem too wonderful at first, but Crick ends his book with an exhortation to the mainstream scientific community to focus all its attention on the search for:

CONSCIOUSNESS—NOW!

It may well be that this will be like introducing the grain of sand into the

oyster, the irritant that will produce the pearl. Light from within has sparked into the darkness and the two streams of science and mysticism which have for so long appeared to be mutually dismissive may rejoin and form one whole again as they did in the flowering of both Eastern and Western cultures.

Books that are not too abstruse to be readable are:

David Bohm: *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (ARK), Fritjof Capra: *The Tao of Physics* and *The Turning Point* (Flamingo), Dana Zohar: *The Quantum Self* (Flamingo), Deepak Chopra: *Quantum Healing* (Rider), Gary Zukav: *The Dancing Wu-Li Masters* (Bantam) & Francis Crick: *The Astonishing Hypothesis* (Bantam).

EQUALS ONE CONFIRMED

AN ANECDOTE FROM MEDHANANDA,
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY YVONNE ARTAUD

IN 1964 the Mother asked Medhananda and me to take charge of an exhibition, and approved the title he had proposed: "Unity a Fact". On that occasion we discovered that we had a lot to say, much more than any exhibition could cover. At the entrance, Medhananda placed a small symbol which summed up the spirit of the display: = 1. So when Maggi Lidchi offered to pass on her editorship of the World Union magazine to Medhananda—which he undertook together with Maude Pickett Smith—we were ready. *Equals One* was born. The first issue appeared in February 1965.

Under his own as well as many pen-names, Medhananda dictated to Maude more and more articles for the journal. = 1 became an organ for the expression of his creativity, founded on a widely-educated mind that was always curious and ready to learn, and on an extraordinarily rich inner life and knowledge. Amrita was enthusiastic about = 1, and would read out some passages from each issue to the Mother. In 1967, she called me to read to her the whole of *Education = 1*, which she had asked me to write. (It was published 18 months later.) That took two sessions; and at the second session Medhananda (just back from his first visit to Tahiti after joining the Ashram in 1952) and Swapna were present—amidst a garden of Polynesian corals and shells spread at the Mother's feet, which is now on permanent display at the Sri Aurobindo Library. Later, before *City = 1* and *Society = 1* were published, I was also asked to read most of the articles to her, all written by Medhananda. Of certain ideas she said, "Oh! I did not see that before. It is like an open door." And she looked through it with great interest.

Besides an exuberant, provocative, but always illuminating humour—remarks such as, "Only stupid people die"—what is the stuff that = 1 is made of? It is the bearer of an ideal of service to the transmental truth Sri Aurobindo came to manifest, and of the joy attached to it.

Some texts which are apparently the product of the mind, such as those, for example, written under the pen-name "P. Daniel", are in reality supported by a complex structure of interrelations between things that is characteristic of Medhananda, leading to new perspectives, new viewpoints.

= 1 also contains many stories, skillfully expressed in symbols to veil while at the same time unveiling spiritual realities. A new age is constantly invited to introduce itself, joyfully, weightlessly, never imposing a single solution. Some beautiful formations of earthly aspiration appear here and there; and if they appeal to us, we could add our own aspiration to them, and so give them more chance to manifest. In the end we cannot define what = 1 is as a journal. = 1 is the laughter of a playful child of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. And for those

who understand new mathematics, Medhananda = 1

This brings us to the story which follows. To approach it we should go back to Medhananda's time in Tahiti, before he discovered the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on our planet. But he knew the Mother, in her role as the Great Mother, the Cosmic Mother, who was already guiding him. He often asked her, "Mother, tell me what to do." She invariably answered, "Play!" So he played, with the clouds, the trees, the stones, the rivers, the ocean—identity games. Then the injunction to play became, "Go and play! Play with the stars, with the pink nebulae...". So with her permission and protection he often visited the universe. One day when he was dancing with a star, it exploded into a nova. He thought he had made a terrible mistake. But the Great Mother reassured him, "You cannot harm anything. Each of your movements has been foreseen since the beginning of the world."

When the first books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother reached Tahiti, Medhananda plunged into the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and ceased his explorations as a cosmic traveller. It was for him the beginning of a new life. However, it happened one morning that he was involuntarily projected out of his physical body, far into space. He did not know that he was going to bring back a psychological pearl: a homage from our galaxy to Sri Aurobindo.

Well, you will read the story, which was published in the issue of = 1 dedicated to the Birth Centenary of Sri Aurobindo, in 1972. Most people thought it was fiction—perhaps because it was written under a pen-name. But it is a true story.

YVONNE ARTAUD

SRI AUROBINDO'S PLANET

In a moment of absentbodyness I had lost my way.

Just now I was standing in a busy oriental market place surrounded by a shouting, bargaining many-coloured crowd and the next moment I was alone. I didn't even have my usual solid, stodgy body with me, but only some flimsy shimmering wraith I could hardly call myself. Nor could I say in which space or time or spacetime I was. There seemed to be a lot of emptiness, then some luminous nebulae, then stars, then empty space again, sometimes dark, sometimes translucent with violet and bluish lights, and just when I asked myself anxiously, "Where am I?" and "What will become of that good old body I left in the middle of the bazaar?" I noticed somebody very huge standing beside me.

"Hello, little one," he said. For although I had been quite adult when I was in my body, I now seemed indeed a 'little one' standing beside that giant's shining figure.

"Lost your way?" he asked. "Where do you come from?"

“Well,” I answered, “from Earth”.

“From Earth?” he smiled. “Do you know how many earths there are?”

“I know only one,” I said.

“Do you know in which sector of the Milky Way it is?”

“No,” I admitted.

“Tell me something about it.”

I spoke of the oceans, the continents, the polar ice caps, and when he shook his head, I told him about the giraffes and kangaroos, the lions and the whales.

“But all that is common to trillions of planets,” he said. “You take a carbon ring and throw it into a primeval sea in the presence of C,O,H and N—all common ordinary stuff you can find everywhere in this galaxy—and you wait a few billion years, supervising temperature and cosmic radiation, then out come butterflies, birds, lizards, monkeys and men like you. So the probability of locating your particular earth is one chance in 300,000,000,000.”

Anxiously I searched my memory for something special about my home planet. After a long silence I said, “My teacher on earth was Sri Aurobindo.”

“Ah!” he exclaimed, “Sri Aurobindo! Why didn’t you say so in the first place? Sri Aurobindo’s planet! Of course! Come... here it is...”

My body was still standing among the crowd, and we were both happy to be together again.

MEDHANANDA

DR. G. R. MITRA HAS LEFT US

DEATH comes crawling stealthily—unseen, unknown—and quickly covers up the physical existence of a man. The reaction to such news is often of shock. So must have been the experience of people as the news of the sudden demise of Dr. G. R. Mitra of Asansol on 1.5.95 reached them. Though Dr. G. R. Mitra was aged when he left us, he was not sick, and not very old. He visited Pondicherry during Mother's Jayanti this year as usual

Dr. Gopika Ranjan Mitra was a real friend and guide to the people of his town. Long back he was elected member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly for two terms, and then he could not find a suitable place. Though he was very interested in politics until very recent years, he was a victim of group rivalry, it was said. But the truth has another face. He was a good doctor and surgeon and yet his fees were quite low, that too depending on the financial condition of the patient and his family. In deserving cases, he was glad to forgo his professional fees and supply medicines free. People thought and it was widely known that they would not permit their doctor, friend and guide to leave Asansol for a long period. Politicians come and go, they thought, forcibly and without their wanting it. What if they were not there? But Dr. G. R. Mitra was so amiable, friendly and so loving a personality that in his absence people really suffered for some time and then they decided to oppose him as a politician out of their love for him as a social man of action, lovingly known as Dactar-da. I suggested to him on many occasions to eschew direct politics as the Mother had not approved it for valid reasons of her own.

He was an ardent reader and editor of literary magazines, and had been for many years a true devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, visiting the Ashram at least twice a year. For quite some years he remained Chairman of Sri Aurobindo Society for West Bengal. He was an office-bearer of Nikhil Bharat Banga Sahitya Sammelan and many such organisations.

I cherish the memory of his presence in different meetings at different Sri Aurobindo Centres where both of us were present.

In Asansol he is known by his name and thousands at other places know him by his fame.

We hope the Mother has already taken care of his departed being and has given shelter to her son.

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

A PLUNGE INTO THE UNKNOWN

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE UNEXPECTED

(8)

THE new year message of 1954:

“My Lord, here is Thy advice to all, for this year:
‘Never boast about anything, let your acts speak for you.’ ”

1954 was the year when I got many good experiences. Two of these experiences I have already described. One was my experience of facing death in the early hours of 21 February and then during the darshan when receiving from the Mother a message on Death. The second was on Lakshmipuja day when during the balcony darshan I had a very concrete experience of Mahalakshmi’s force descending into my subtle physical sheath and even the physical proper—so much so that I could hardly lift up my feet while coming back.

All these unforeseen experiences might awaken in the heart of a sadhak a sense of pride and a spirit of boasting. That is why the warning of the Lord came at the beginning of the year. And it came at the right time for me.

But, at the other pole of boasting is a sense of inferiority, a constant consciousness of the defects and difficulties of my lower nature which made me think, “Perhaps I am not fit for doing Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga; perhaps the path of a sannyasin would be better for me,—that is why the Mother is dillydallying in my case.”

Particularly, when I saw all around me so many healthy and beautiful bodies and compared my own with them, I felt depressed. I felt that death was the only possible route of escape from this unhappy state of being. Thus light and darkness were alternating in my consciousness

On February 1, my mind was full of an inspiration and a new song was about to be born. I had no time to write it down. After the balcony darshan, the Samadhi pranam and breakfast I came back to my room and wrote it down. But the spirit of the song pervaded my consciousness throughout the day—as if somebody was singing the song in the depth of my being. During the Prosperity darshan, as I was approaching the Mother, she was smiling when all of a sudden I remembered my drawbacks and there was a shrinking within my consciousness... instantly the Mother made a gesture I will never forget—it was the Boon-giver—the Varadāyini—aspect of the Mother! With that gesture she reassured me of my true goal and my true path irrespective of my difficulties. Such gestures she made sometimes during the balcony darshan too. A single such gesture could replace lots of spoken words or written letters!

And then the experience of 21 February of which I have written earlier. On 29 March she distributed the following message of Sri Aurobindo:

“When knowledge is fresh in us, then it is invincible; when it is old, it loses its virtue. This is because God moves always forward.”

Again on 4.4.1954 the following message came:

“Poets make much of death and external afflictions; but the only tragedies are the soul’s failures and the only epic man’s triumphant ascent towards godhead.”

How appropriate in my case!—I thought. It was as if Sri Aurobindo himself was speaking those words within my heart.

I still remember the day—not the date—when the Mother started distribution of groundnuts or sweets at the Playground, sitting, with the map of unpartitioned Mother India behind her. Before that she had been going round the lines of people, herself distributing groundnuts with a long wooden spoon and toffees with her hand. Now, she started taking the Red-group and Green-group classes too from the same place. It was a great opportunity for me to remain in the physical presence of the Mother for a long time in the evening. Those days I remember with nostalgia. It all started after I finally came to Pondicherry before the August darshan of 1953.

Let me take this opportunity to quote Sri Aurobindo’s message for the said darshan which I received from the hands of the Mother. This is the first message I got after I took the final plunge:

“There is one thing everybody should remember that everything should be done from the point of view of Yoga, of sadhana, of growing into a divine life in the Mother’s consciousness. To insist upon one’s own mind and its ideas, to allow oneself to be governed by one’s own vital feelings and reactions should not be the rule of life here. One has to stand back from these, to be detached, to get in their place true knowledge from above, the true feelings from the psychic within. This cannot be done if the mind and the vital do not surrender, if they do not renounce their attachment to their own ignorance which they call truth, right, justice. All the trouble rises from that; if that were overcome, the true basis of life, of work, of harmony, of all in the union with the Divine would more and more replace the trouble and difficulty of the present.”

All the messages I received from her, I have kept carefully with me. Henceforward, I shall quote each message I received from her in the proper place. The message of 15 August, 1954 is the well-known message—“The Hour

of God.” This lengthy message need not be quoted. Everybody has read it and heard it in the Mother’s tape-recorded voice. But I shall quote here the message of 15 August 1950 when Sri Aurobindo was still in his body. The message was written by the Mother and I received it from her hand:

“Our sadhana has reached a stage in which we are mostly dealing with the subconscious and even the inconscient. As a consequence the physical determinism has taken a predominant position bringing an increase of difficulties on the way which have to be faced with an increase of courage and determination.

“In any case, whatever happens and whatever you do, do not allow FEAR to invade you. At the slightest touch of it, react and call for help.

“You must learn not to identify with your body and treat it as a young child who needs to be convinced that it must not fear.

“FEAR is the greatest of all enemies and we must overcome them here, once for all.”

This message was particularly important in view of Sri Aurobindo’s imminent withdrawal from his body.

*

There was a rule in Golconde not to keep any food-articles in the bedroom. For that purpose a shelf was provided for each resident in the dining room. As I was not taking any extra food apart from the Dining Room food, I did not take a shelf. One whole lemon was given from the D.R. during lunch. I kept that lemon in my shirt-pocket and after returning from my garden-work I used to cut the lemon, squeeze the juice into two glasses of water, drink and then go out for a walk by the sea-side. I would not throw the lemon skins anywhere inside my room but put them back in my pocket and throw them into the roadside dustbin or somewhere else. One day it so happened that while cutting the lemon, I accidentally got a deep cut below my left thumb. At once I went to the Ashram Dispensary. Dr. Nripendra was still there. He plastered the wound. Now a thought took hold of my mind—perhaps it was my mistake to cut the lemon inside my bedroom; when I shall go to the Mother for the Distribution at the Playground the Mother will see the plaster on my outstretched palms—then what will happen? Then I thought—perhaps the Mother won’t notice it, she gives things quickly.

That evening the Mother was distributing groundnuts in small cloth packets. As I stood before her with outstretched palms I grew nervous. As she lifted up the packet, instead of giving it quickly as on other days, she steadily looked at my palms, concentrated for a few moments and then just dropped the packet on my palms without touching them. One more unexpected lesson for me!

Then I took a shelf in the dining room of Golconde and arranged also for my lunch to be brought there. Still I would not take any other eatable but the food of our dear D.R. Other diners noticed it. One day a Parsee lady asked me, “Why don’t you take butter, pickles etc. along with your lunch as everybody does? It is only your mental idea that your sadhana will be ruined if you take some extra food.” Then I purchased some sugar (because D.R. was not sending any sugar) and some cheese. But when my physical mother sent me a tinned airtight container of my very favourite sweet, rasagolla, I took it straight away to Nolini-da and told him: “Please offer these rasagollas to the Mother on my behalf”, which he did. I was so zealous of my sadhana.

Kalipuja day came. In the morning we received Mahakali blessings from the Mother. In the evening, after the Playground-function was over, I felt a sudden inspiration to write a poem in English which is extremely rare in my case (mostly I write in my mother tongue, Bengali) This is the poem:

The Battle of Battles

No bombs burst, no guns boom,
 The Mother gives sweets and flowers;
 Yet here the battle of battles is fought!
 Behind the curtain a clash of Powers.
 What is ‘Playground’ to our eyes,
 To our feelings a battle-field;
 When enemy’s but a part of self
 Where to conquer, where to yield?
 So the Mother, Commander Divine,
 Guides Her soldiers right and left;
 Now a smile and now a stare,
 And off their feet are enemies swept.
 The hostile forces muster strong,
 Hurl their weapons, around they throng;
 She fights on one hand, guides on the other,—
 The Divine Warrior, the Divine Mother!

Amal Kiran commented on this unpublished poem: “Very well done.”

(To be continued)

ABANI SINHA

CHRISTALIS

by

GEORGETTE COTY

(Continued from the issue of July 1995)

Shadow on my Brow

THE flowery field where we came to sit, whenever Christalis had time to devote to answering some of my questions, became my own corner of paradise. I always had the feeling that the very ground where we sat, the flowers and the trees smiled and quivered sweet fragrances when we reached there. Have I seen tiny lights flicker about them?

"Yes, you are right," came Christalis's reply to my thoughts. "What you have observed is true. A sign that your power of observation is increasing, we are progressing in the right direction. I want this to happen, and I caution you to put your observations to the test—so that nothing, no false appearances can mislead you at any time. Be it on earth, or above it, or on any plane you might pass through in the future. Whatsoever and whomsoever you will meet, when on your own, be vigilant! Wait patiently and look for signs of authenticity. Admit only those to your consciousness whom you have accepted as genuine. . Now, I want you to do a little work for me. Would you care to help?"

"But of course, Christalis, I will do whatever you ask me to. I cannot tell you how happy I am that you ask me."

"Very good, it is quite simple. A new Hall of Learning will be inaugurated today. Quite a large one, as so many beings are coming for learning nowadays. I was asked to make arrangements for its decoration. I should like to have lots of flower garlands made to give to every new arrival at the opening. Can you make garlands of flowers, Halio?"

"I think I can, but will you please show me how you would like me to make them? I should be very careful."

"That is a good beginning. Now look and observe carefully. First, you offer your thoughts of devotion to the Divine's aim and invoke the grace to help you. Next, take permission from the flowers to pick them and let them offer themselves to the wishes of the Light. Be careful not to pick those that do not wish to be plucked. Now then, I should like to have one thousand and eight white garlands and the same number of yellow-gold and of pink ones to be made, all of the same size."

He made a sign over the field and called to the flowers from within himself. I could hear faintly the tiny voices of them saying: "Take me, take me! No, not

me, I am not ready yet," and in no time they came to be in his hands. He selected the colour he wanted, and intertwined them gently. His fingers were moving as if he were playing a string instrument. When he stopped, the garlands were joined and ready, not one flower left unused.

"Is this all right, Halio, or shall I show it again? And will you remember all I have told you? Also ask the flowers for the number you need to have." I nodded that I understood everything and felt quite proud that he had entrusted me to do something on my own.

"When will you be back?"— I asked him. "My work will be finished in an hour, I will come back after that," he answered.

"One hour?" I looked at him in astonishment, "but how can I make so many garlands in that time?"

"Call upon the higher consciousness to help you, there should be no problem at all." And with that he disappeared out of sight.

Confidently I turned toward the garden, bending down to collect the blooms. I mustn't waste a minute. But not one came into my hand. Then I remembered he had told me to first call upon the consciousness. I concentrated quickly: "O Higher Light, aid me, so that I may do this work well." Tiny lights flickered over the flowers, which I understood to be a response to my prayer. Forthwith I bent toward them, but it was of no use, not one of them could I pick.

Dear me, I am losing so much time, why can I not proceed, what am I to do now? My own inner voice came to my aid: "Did you ask the garden for permission?"

"No, I forgot that too, I will do it now."—"Dear garden, give me of yours; dear flowers, will you come to me, so that I can do what I was asked to do?"

Little whispers, "Not to you, but to the Will."

"Yes, yes, you are right, excuse me. Will you fulfil the wish of Christalis, he also offers his labour to the Light."

Instantly the voices of tiny bells: "Take me, take me, here I am!" My hands were full. "May I lay you on the grass and pick some more?"

"Yes, yes, you can, but have you counted us?—We only give you the correct number, and do not mix our colours please." By now I was quite flustered. What was I to do? I haven't even started making one garland yet; I should get on with it right away.

"Halio, Halio, shall I help you?"—"Who called?" I turned around and saw a very old but sweet-looking man coming toward me. His silvery hair reaching to his shoulders gave light to his face and now as he came nearer, I saw that his eyes were as blue as the sky. Smiling, he approached me.

"I heard about you coming here," he said, "and I hoped to meet you. But my, are you not beautiful? You charm me!"

"Well, thank you, but who are you? Christalis has not introduced us."

"Ah, that, but he knows me well. I am this garden's keeper. But now—if

you permit me—I will give you a hand. We must not have your first chance of service spoiled, must we?”

“That is so kind of you really. It is true, I could do with some help, but this work was given me alone.”

“Don’t you mind it, your time is running short. Come, you are inexperienced. He should not have given you so little time, for such a large number of garlands to be made. Now look here, how I can make them fast, and you also make some of your own. The two of us will do this job in no time.”

His hands were old and bony with age, but his fingers as quick as the devil’s. Garland upon garland flowed ready-made from his touch. Did I see a green light flash in his eyes? A reflection from the grass, no doubt.

“Excuse me, but you have mixed up the colours. I was told to keep them separately.”

“Child, can you not see how lovely they look this way? He will be so pleased with these and so will the new learners. It will help them much. Are you not glad I am helping you? See, you have hardly made a dozen yourself.”

“True, that is true, dear Christalis, I don’t want to fail you.”

“Who is saying anything about failing when I am with you? You can trust me, I am quite old and experienced. Are you that?” So he can read my thoughts too, but of course everything is conscious here. I hurried on with my work.

“Are you that, Halio?”—Christalis from nowhere was standing before me, unsmiling.

“I, I... didn’t hear you coming. See, I have someone to help me... but I haven’t counted them yet—he came to my aid”—pointing in the direction of the old man, but I could see no trace of him anywhere, nor were the garlands fragrant and fresh. They lay there wilted, dead! I felt my heart sink, something was very wrong.

“But he was here a minute ago,” I stammered. “Where did he go? What happened to the garlands? Christalis, I feel something dark has come here, inside me there is no joy. Christalis, what has happened?”

I felt the life going out of me; senseless, without any strength, I sank to the ground. I tried to raise myself, but fell back instantly. I had no energy to keep my eyes from shutting and fell to the ground and into oblivion.

I awoke to the familiar fragrance of the garden, finding myself lying amidst the flowers and felt the refreshing breeze fanning my face. I opened my eyes and tried to raise myself but could not do a thing. Christalis was leaning over me.... “Where are the garl.. garl...ands? What happened to me?”

“Don’t try to talk, rest a little longer, can you hear me now?” “Yes... must sleep... very tired... I am very...”

“Not now, not any more, Halio—listen, inside your heart’s centre, call the Mother of Light for help, do you hear me?” With effort I concentrated, as I was very sleepy, wanting to sink into the ground and sleep some more.

"Do it, Halio, do as I tell you! Do it now!" I heard his voice and obeyed as well as I could: "Divine Mother, help me, I am dead."

I shuddered with the shock, a current had entered my heart. A charge of energy shot through my body from top to toe. Invigorated, I stood on my two feet, looking at him questioningly.

"What happened to me? I felt as if I were dead before, couldn't move a limb. Did I die, did you bring me back to life, Christalis? Where are the garlands? I haven't made them all, have I? Had I lost consciousness?—I don't understand a thing."

He touched my hand and pressed it hard, then my forehead. It was as if a fog was clearing before me. "Come," he said, "we will sit here for a while—now drink this, you will feel better still."

From his bag he pulled out a tiny flask and poured a few drops from it into the cup of a flower and held it to my lips. Sweet as honey, but more so—I was all life again, filled with joy and tranquillity. Life was good and sweet. I smiled at him, waiting for his response, which it wasn't late in coming.

"Now that you have regained your composure, do you remember how you had lost it? I will phrase it differently. Do you remember the subject of our previous session, when we were sitting here last? And can you recall my remark on the importance of the faculty of observation, which is the first step that leads to discrimination? Can you?"

I did not reply immediately, it took me some effort to concentrate. I shut my eyes and went deeper into myself. Soon all the marvellous teachings came back to me.

..."The preparations of the souls, who will be born with that added knowledge now taught to their consciousness, which will elevate our lives on earth. Knowledge about the ways of the God-appointed instigators of striving and effort to lead man to self-betterment—their early functions, and how they sank into darkness and became opposing powers later on. Yes, Christalis, I do remember now that you were pleased that my ability for observation was developing and you entrusted me to do the work, because you had found me able to do it all by myself."

"And did you do that, Halio? Concentrate, go deeper and tell me what else you find."

I paled before him, because I suddenly realised that I had accepted the gardener's offer of help, which I had not been instructed to do. I lifted my head slowly to look at him, but all he said was. " .. deeper, go into yourself deeper. everything is stored there. What else do you find?"

"He. . he mixed the colours, you told me to separate them. He said that you would be pleased and that so would the new leaders be to receive them. And his work was most rapid, whilst I hardly managed a dozen garlands, and the time was short. I became worried, because I had wasted so much time at first."

“And then what happened?”—“You had come and I could not see where he went. Then I felt unwell and couldn’t move my limbs. It was awful, I felt that this was .. this was death. I can remember no more ”

“What else?” His voice was prompting, strong, commanding.

“You woke me from my sleep.”

“Go on, what else?”—“I wanted to sink into the ground and sleep .. you said I should call”....

“Call whom, quick, remember.”

“Concentrate and call the Divine Mother for help, you said.”

“Did you do it? Answer me.”

“Yes I tried... then I felt a current, like a charge of electricity shooting through me and I came to life again—I thought from death.”

“Then what happened?”

“I could stand up and you touched me and gave me some honey to drink and now I am so happy to be with you, alive again. But I could not complete the work you gave me and that pains me so. Yet I was so glad of it and proud of the first task given me, and I didn’t... do it.” I never felt more wretched I began to cry... “I disappointed you, I know ”

“No crying, that is useless. Come, let us sit closer together and first let me wipe those tears away. Do you think I love you less because you made a mistake? Did you not tell me only yesterday that mistakes are the best teachers? Do you still believe this?”

“Yes, I think so, but I really don’t know why it all happened and what actually did happen. Where did I go wrong?”

“All right, now we start from this point. Listen very carefully, every word must be stored in your consciousness. You had the experience of a certain encounter EXPERIENCE, you understand, in capital letters, is your best instructor You can receive many a good teaching, just as you would at a higher course, a university on earth. But when you leave your seminars, the apprenticeship begins in practice, is it not so? You are bound to make a few mistakes at the start, due to lack of experience. ..

“And now to the second phase of your education: LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE. There is absolutely no substitute for it. You understand this, don’t you?” I nodded. His words were as invigorating as the drink he had given me. He went on:

“True, you do remember all that I taught you, it is all stored there in the mind of your consciousness. I had examined that, and it is also true that I was sufficiently satisfied with the progress you made. Or, better said, with the development of your consciousness to have put its working to test. So I gave you a certain task

“You were eager, overjoyed and proud to be entrusted with a work, as you had put it—and here is the first thing to be examined. Pride is folly, its root is in

the ego and therefore dangerous; humility is better. But I overlook that, because in this case it was just a childish folly.

"Yet, here is another point to remember; never be overconfident, it leads to mistakes. Cautious effort is advisable.

"Now, in order to avoid these first and very common pitfalls, we offer all our undertakings to the Higher Will, which is the Higher Consciousness. Only then are we safe in our efforts, because it is directed from that source, transmitted to our inner beings. Do you follow me? Recall the event, when the flowers—conscious beings themselves—would not come to you until you did just that. What took place next? You tell me!"

"I had forgotten also to ask their consent to offering themselves."

"Right, you are right. When you remembered this, things went as desired, did they not?"

"We go further now, examining everything phase by phase. You had become frustrated, worried about the loss of time, not so? Hmm, and here is another point; nothing can be done right under the pressure of confusion. Confusion becomes self-generating, it leads to further mistakes. Hurry is not advisable in our work. Concentrated effort, calm and harmonious movement are the requirement

"Yes, you were losing time, that was so—and what is best to do under these circumstances? It is to go within again and ask for an added force to help you. If that is found to be necessary for the work at hand, it will be received—and if not—you will know that what you were able to do and did well, will be sufficient for that time.

"Are you taking careful note of all these points? Let me see—hmm, yes, all right. It is there, but do not forget to implement them at all times. Shall we go further, or would you rather contemplate these first?"

"Please do continue," I pleaded, "it is rain on my thirsty soil. I am in need of these instructions and so very thankful for them, believe me."

"Good, I am glad you realize their importance. Indeed this is your first direct instruction, as you had observed. So then, we proceed to the next stage. You had an encounter with an unknown person. What do you think you should have done? Concentrate very carefully before replying, take your time."

"I think that I should have observed him and do you think I should have asked for his credentials? But maybe I was not competent to check those. But I did tell him that you had given the work to me. He seemed very gentle and wise and eager to assist me, so that I should not fail in my work. He understood that I didn't want to disappoint you, Christalis "

Silence... He waited to see if I had further points to offer, but I had none. "Right here," he continued, "we have the next major learning to do. It is true that you had no sufficient experience to check his authenticity. In such a case, you should always ask your own consciousness first, and then ask me, whose

instructions you have already received, whether this encounter is acceptable or not. You know that you can contact me within if you call me, don't you? And this is to be remembered for all future times.

"Next, did you put your capacity of observation to the test, Halio, as we discussed this morning? Not at all, you accepted what you saw on the surface. What 'seemed' to be right, as you described it, and that was the beginning of the trouble that followed.

"Without my permission, you had no right to accept this offer. And whose offer was this, do you think? Recall from your memory, what were his first words to you? Find these words one by one, now!"

I tried to retrace the event, swallowed hard... "He told me that he had heard about my coming there, and that... that I was very beautiful—he was charmed."

"Charmed indeed! He flattered you, that is what he did—and this, my dear, should have been your first warning: flattery has at all times a pointed purpose behind it, and it will collect its due at a given stage. There lay the hidden ambush.

"One thing you did notice however was that his hands were bony and his fingers as fast as—what, Halio? What did your consciousness tell you then? Find the word, bring it up to light, what was the simile?"

I shut my eyes in concentration. "What did you find, tell me!"

His words were prompting, like a trainer not letting me relax my inner muscles...

"I thought that he was as fast as the devil, I felt quite guilty actually to think such a bad thought."

"It was the right thought! Your soul told you that! But you could not receive the warning, and did you not notice the green flash of light in his eyes at that?"

"God, was he... was he then... not what he seemed? Oh God, I begin to understand, and he mixed up the colours too. I told him that you told me not to, but he said how much it would please you and all the new learners too. I thought that he was assisting me rightly, since he knew about everything."

"He most certainly did, no wonder you were easy prey for him. Do you know what force he put into those garlands and what harm they would have caused, had they been allowed to reach their targets? But who saved you and the work itself? You will say I did, won't you?

"The light of Truth saved you, Halio, that which acts through me, or in you. If you will always remember to call upon it for guidance and protection, you will not fail again."

I was aghast; what terrible blunder had I made? I was shaken, utterly distraught.

"What will I do now? Will you not trust me again? Christalis, tell me, was he then that?.. an anti-the-light person? This is just too terrible to contemplate!

What has happened then? Tell me, was his influence so strong that it took the life force from me? Was this the reason I felt as if I was dead? I actually couldn't move at all! What would have happened, if you hadn't arrived and come to think of it, I was all right till you came and he had disappeared. Then all went blank. How did this happen? I do not know a thing, I do not know."... I was shaking my head, trembling all over.

"Of course you do not, and that was the reason I had allowed this to happen, as far as it was advisable to leave you in his company. You had to have the experience and so I repeat: without experience there is no learning and you had to learn this also. This was your practice in the field of knowledge applied.

"I knew that once I left you, he would seize his chance and do his best to divert you, to make you fail. You think that I left you unobserved, without my protection, do you? He tried to spellbind you and cut you off from my influence, but our link was intact. Your being's consciousness is linked to mine. From now on, my dear, never fail to call upon it when in need, or you could be in far more difficulty. And now I want to see you smile again. There, that's better.

"Why were you all right until I arrived, you ask—a good point. It was because he held his influence over you, so that you would notice nothing, and tried to bind you to himself. When I arrived, his influence was automatically cut and you collapsed. A lifeless body lay there, unable to help itself."

"Yes, Christalis, you saved my life, saved me from darkness. When I reflect upon what you have revealed to me now, I shudder. Could I have returned to my earth body had you not intervened?"

"Probably not, or if so, acting only under his influence."

"But this is too terrible for thought," I exclaimed.

"I agree, so don't think of it any more, but store away this experience safely in your consciousness. All this has happened for your benefit. And never do other than what you are told to do at any time at all. All right?"

"Do not be worried about this unduly now, it is part of your learning. There is much to be learned, if we aim to progress towards a higher stage of existence. Many and varied are the ways of training and developing our higher capacities.

"Knowledge, but only right knowledge, is indispensable. And so is courage. The knowhow and skill in combat and the safety in it. The art of self-defence, the defence of others and the strength for it. You will learn these in good time.

"The God-Light is your thrust, weapon and shield, when battle is called for to serve the work of peace and progress toward that Light. The day will come when earth will be a clear mirror of heaven and God's Love will rule the hearts of all who dwell on it."

He stopped now, giving me time to draw into my comprehension all that he had taught me that day. Then, taking my hand, he indicated that it was time for us to return.

"The Light be yours, Halio!" he said. "Now we go down."

“And the Light be for all!” I replied.

I still felt the soft touch of his hand after he left me and I prayed in inner silence: “Let the future be bright! Let there be happiness and joy for earth...” And the earth’s soul answered within my heart: “I too pray and labour for that, and endure the pains of my sacrifice.”

(To be continued)

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA

(THROUGH DIFFICULTIES TO THE STARS)

THE city and its lights are left behind,
Far from the fields and the lovely woods
We’ve come to live in the desert air,
To toil and reach the heavens beyond,
Per aspera ad astra!

The path is charted, the mission is begun,
The master-guidance assured and true,
The inner structure being moulded well,
Stage by stage, night and day, the work goes on,
Per aspera ad astra!

The booster and motors are in perfect shape,
Each part is designed and cast with care,
Subjected to fires of heaven and hell,
Perfection’s ultimate is our destined aim,
Per aspera ad astra!

The air is rent with din and strife,
And the earth trembles under the force,
To soar on the wings of fire above!
To bridge the gulf twixt the earth and the skies!
Per aspera ad astra!

V. JAYBEE

A TREASURY OF ANCIENT TAMIL LEGENDS

65. THE NECKLACE OF PEARLS

“WONDERFUL! Wonderful!” screamed Nedun Cheralathan, the Chera king, as he looked into the life-size mirror. “The gem-dealer has brought the right thing for me,” he said, admiring the necklace of pearls that adorned his neck.

The gem-dealer was paid more than he had expected

From that day the necklace of pearls remained hugging the king’s neck and hairy chest. It bathed with him and slept with him. In fact, the king took pride in swearing by his necklace and displayed it prominently on the battlefield before his enemies, for he believed that it brought good luck to him.

Since Nedun Cheralathan was in the habit of giving away whatever valuables he had at hand to needy poets, everyone including the queen thought that the necklace wouldn’t continue to enjoy this enviable privilege for long. But the king was very cautious about the ornament he prized most.

One day he was honoured by the visit of a poet named Kazha Thalaiyar. Much respected by eminent poets like Kapilar and Paranar, Kazha Thalaiyar was blessed with a highly creative mind and a mellifluous tongue. His songs describing the horrors of the battlefield sent a chill down the spine and King Nedun Cheralathan was quite familiar with those songs.

The presence of Kazha Thalaiyar in the royal court made everyone happy. And to please the king the poet sang a few songs. The contents, the language and the voice immensely pleased the king.

Honouring the poet with a platter of gold the king said, “Your songs that have immortalised me are more precious to me than all that I consider precious. And so you deserve something more than this platter of gold.”

“It’s enough if I continue to enjoy your love and affection, your majesty!” exclaimed the poet.

“Poets like you are the apple of my eye,” said the king and continued, “love and affection you’ll have from me in plenty. I’ve decided to give you what I treasure most. But just bear with me for a day. Tomorrow I will be fighting a battle against my arch-enemy Peru Virar Killi, the Chozha king. I am sure of my victory. And I’ll give you what I treasure most when you sing songs in praise of my valour and victory. Please do come tomorrow to the battlefield.”

Kazha Thalaiyar laughed to his heart’s content and said: “Whatever you want to do, do it today, for nothing is certain about tomorrow. Uncertain is this life itself and all things are only of ephemeral value. You may not be there to give me what you want to give. Or I may not be there to receive and fulfil your wish. It is not that I am greedy to receive more from you, for what you’ve given me is more than enough. But I want you to fulfil your wish by giving at once whatever you wanted to give and thereby enjoy heaven’s blessings for your

generosity... Secondly, how can you be sure of your victory? You seem to have underestimated your enemy. Suppose you fight a losing battle, then shame will gnaw at your heart and you may think of destroying yourself. On the other hand, if you emerge victorious and if I am unable to come to the battlefield you'll be disappointed. Why! Drunk with victory, you might also change your mind."

The king guffawed and said: "That could be true. But you'll have to wait and see, for I can't part with what I treasure most at this hour. Let's meet tomorrow."

The battle began as expected. Nedun Cheralathan and Peru Virar Killi fought for their rights at a place called Po Ore. Since both kings had huge armies at their command, the battle went on for hours together. But in the end victory slipped from the hands of both the kings for they drove their spears through each other's heart.

Peru Virar Killi breathed his last. But Nedun Cheralathan's soul was struggling to release itself from its fleshly cage.

Nedun Cheralathan made a pitiable sight. Tears trickled down from the eyes of Poet Kazha Thalayar. He was sure that the king was holding on to his soul in order to do what he had not done the day before.

The poet sat beside the dying king and affectionately caressed his bleeding chest. The king opened his eyes, hazily looked at the poet and beamed.

Inspired by such a gesture, Kazha Thalayar burst into a song, praising the king's valour and victory over the Lord of Death, though momentary.

Nedun Cheralathan enjoyed listening to the poet's song all the time closing his eyes. Then he removed his most treasured necklace and, presenting it to the poet, said: "I should have given this to you yesterday, for now it is blood-stained." As the necklace changed hands, King Nedun Cheralathan breathed his last, leaving Kazha Thalayar in tears.

66. A SPOUSE IS A SPOUSE IS A SPOUSE

"The king is dead," declared the court physician as he felt his pulse.

King Bootha Pandyan was not old enough to die. Yet Death with its cruel hands snatched his soul away.

"It is quite unexpected," said the queen amidst tears. After a pause she added: "Last night he went to bed complaining of a grinding headache. I never knew that those would be his last words."

Learned in the literature and the arts, King Bootha Pandyan was no novice in warfare. Bards admired him not only for his generosity but also for his poetic talents. The royal bard's compositions have been included in well-known anthologies like *Akananooru* and *Purananooru*. He was truly a blessed mortal, for his wife was equally talented. Since both of them were interested in

literature, they composed songs and critically evaluated each other's works. In short, they made a wonderful couple.

The death of the king was an irretrievable loss to the queen. And so she decided to die.

It was a pity that the death news didn't shock her to death. It was also a pity that she didn't have the strength of mind to spend the rest of her life as a widow. But the sad news made her heart so heavy that she decided to kill herself, and waited for the right moment.

The dead body of King Bootha Pandyan was carried to the burning ground. Almost all his subjects, including the aged and the crippled, gathered around the pyre.

Logs of sandalwood made a perfect bed for the king's journey to the world of the unknown. His body was laid to rest on the costliest of beds and the pyre was lit. Multi-tongued fire began to devour eagerly the dead king.

"Only this fire can quench the raging fire in me," shouted the widowed queen in a frenzy and surprised everyone.

"No... We'll not allow you to kill yourself," said a minister

"You'll have to rule our kingdom, for you are as efficient as our dead king," said the army-general.

"We have already lost one royal bard. We are not ready to lose one more," said the poet laureate.

The widowed queen looked at them and gave a smile. a mocking, unpleasant smile.

"You want me to live? What for?" asked she and continued, "If one's father is dead, any man can console the bereaved by saying, 'Don't worry I'll be a father to you and take care of you'... If one's mother is dead, any woman can tell the sad-hearted, 'Call me mother', though we know very well that words are poor comforters when the heart knows its own sorrows. But when one's spouse is dead, there is no substitute. A spouse is a spouse is a spouse."

"Agreed, your majesty!" said the minister, "But think of us. . think of your subjects. . think of your kingdom. Your death is not going to help us in any way."

"But I don't want to lead a death-in-life existence," persisted the queen.

While everyone looked askance at her, she continued, "A widow, be she a queen or a king's mother, is looked down upon by our society. With the death of her husband, she becomes a walking corpse, unhonoured and unrespected. Her very presence is an evil omen. I don't want to be a shame to our society and be treated like dirt

"Secondly, if I continue to live for the sake of this kingdom and its subjects, the memory of my dead husband will continue to haunt me and thereby spell a slow death for me. In my heart of hearts I'll be burning every day. I don't want to die every day.

“Finally, a widow in order to suppress the cravings of her flesh has to thrive on monotonous tasteless food and sleep on a stony bed. I don’t want to torture my body every day... Now tell me what I should do.”

Everyone looked at each other and mumbled. An elderly widow outshouted the crowd: “True! What she says is nothing but the truth. She has voiced my sufferings. Better to die with the husband than to live with the murderous memories and man-made-laws for the widows.”

Many other widows seconded the old widow’s view.

Before the minister and the courtiers could take any decision, the queen to the dismay of everyone jumped into the funeral pyre and became food for the ever-greedy tongues of fire.

67. A COWARD CAN NEVER BE A PRINCE

“I disown you. A coward like you deserves no place in my realm. You are womanish too,” yelled King Thithan at his son Nar Killi.

The prince sobbed like an abused child.

“Weeping and sobbing don’t befit a prince. Your being my son is a physiological accident. I banish you from my empire,” said King Thithan and motioned to his guards to take the prince away.

The guards took the prince away by force and left him in a forest that was out of the boundaries of the Chozha empire.

Nature had gifted Nar Killi with a sound body. He had enough strength to kill a tiger with his bare fist. But poor fellow! Even the barkings of a dog made him jittery. He spent much of his time in his chamber, eating delicious food and whiling away his time with his friends. He rarely stirred out of his chamber and whenever he did he covered himself with priceless shawls and spoke with none.

King Thithan didn’t like his son’s behaviour and hence warned him on several occasions to behave like a prince. The best teachers were appointed to teach him but they all invariably said that the prince understood nothing of what they taught. Several coaches were appointed to teach him the use of swords and spears but the prince ran away at the very sight of the weapons. The king was disgusted with his son and lost all hopes of making him his successor to the throne.

The howling of wolves and the growling of tigers at a distance in the depths of the forest made Prince Nar Killi shiver. He began to sweat profusely. Darkness ruled the forest. A jibbering monkey from a nearby tree sent a chill down his spine. And he became unconscious.

He came back to his senses when a python that had wound itself round him was struggling in vain to break his ribs.

He found himself facing the jaws of Death. He cried for help. No one was

there to come to his rescue.

As the python tried harder to break his ribs, Nar Killi out of sheer pain grasped it by its neck and without his knowledge strangled it to death

Nar Killi was unable to believe himself when the python loosened its grip and fell down lifeless. Happy at heart he lifted it by its tail and hurled it away.

Beaming, he asked himself: "Is the coward in me dead?" He was not sure of a positive answer.

Days passed. He roamed in the forest, eating only fruits and roots and sleeping on tree-tops.

Once when he was resting on a tree-top, his eyes wandered all over the place. He saw a crouching tiger and he was sure that the brute was aiming at something. His eyes searched for the target of the animal and rested on a meditating siddhar.

Nar Killi was not sure wherefrom he had mustered courage, but the next moment he jumped on the crouching tiger and with one blow killed it.

The tiger let out a sharp yell before it died

Disturbed, the siddhar opened his eyes. He guessed what had happened. He thanked Nar Killi for his timely help and showed interest in his past.

Nar Killi rehearsed to him the circumstances that had driven him into the forest.

The siddhar made Nar Killi his disciple

Months passed. Nar Killi showed proficiency in worldly knowledge and became skilled in martial arts.

One day the siddhar said to Nar Killi, "You are fit for the throne now. And it's time for you to meet your father."

Nar Killi took leave of the siddhar in the disguise of a mendicant and reached Uraiyyur, the capital city of the Chozha empire.

A wrestling tournament was going on in the capital. And the king was happily witnessing it. In all the matches, a wrestler named Mallan emerged victorious. And when he had defeated all the wrestlers, pride had gone to his head and he challenged the king.

King Thithan hadn't expected it, but yet got ready to meet Mallan in the arena.

"If I defeat you, O King, you must be prepared to descend from your throne for me to ascend it," howled Mallan.

"Agreed," growled the king.

But before King Thithan could reach the arena, Nar Killi in the guise of a mendicant jumped into the arena and said: "Mallan! Defeat me first, if you can, before you wrestle with the king "

The wrestling match began But before anyone could count twenty, Mallan accepted defeat for he was indeed small fry for Nar Killi.

King Thithan garlanded the mendicant and said: "This dress doesn't suit your valour... Who are you?"

Nar Killi revealed his identity.

King Tithan jumped with joy and said: "The kingdom is yours, my dear son."

(More legends on the way)

P. RAJA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

Seventy-eighth Seminar

19 February 1995

SOME GLIMPSES OF THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER

SADHANA THROUGH STUDIES

Speech by Parama Roy

WE are holding this seminar to commemorate the 117th birth anniversary of the Mother. And I thought that the best way to utilise this occasion is to grow more conscious of the unique significance of the Mother's work on earth. To us, who call ourselves her children, her devotees and disciples, let this opportunity serve as a reminder to reorient ourselves towards that which she wished us to become. Though, when she was asked, "What have you been expecting from us and from humanity in general for the accomplishment of your work upon earth?", the Mother replied categorically, "Nothing", yet to participate in her great work is our singular privilege. The Mother's great work to establish the Supramental Age and Race upon earth is bound to fulfil itself independently of any condition. But to mankind is left the choice of its dynamic collaboration.

I as a student can best respond to the call by making my studies the means of my sadhana. By sadhana I mean a process of self-discipline and self-development and perfection for the realisation of any aim, and more particularly the realisation of the veiled divinity in oneself. It is a process of exceeding one's own narrow consciousness and realising the sublime profundities, magnificent vastnesses and supernal heights of one's own being and nature, one's life and existence. Associated with this process are sincere aspiration, constant endeavour and the ideals of sacrifice and offering.

Studies are the complex set of actions of reading, thinking and writing that develop the faculties of the mind. There is in this concept a notion of quiet, steady, objective, and rational pursuit of knowledge. Studies have taught me to think for myself, to observe and assess things and happenings for myself and so to discover, express and be more and more myself. Thus, studies and sadhana do not exclude each other but are linked.

Studies, if pursued with the right attitude, can constitute a most important factor in one's life because they prepare man's outer being for his inner and higher growth. Vast and varied in its magnitude, life itself offers an enormous scope and opportunity for study and progress. Our study helps to build our

future life by gradually training and enriching our mind from childhood onwards. Studies serve to train the mind which has to become controlled, rich and plastic if it is to interpret without distortion the will of the soul, for it is finally the soul which has to govern our life. In the light of whatever the mind understands of the Ideal, it must organise one's life, always conscious that this understanding will progressively deepen, and that every time it must reorganise according to its new perception. In order that the mind may do well this organising job, it has itself to have the requisite qualities—first concentration, refinement and depth, then richness and variety leading to the wider understanding of any question. Of great importance is the capacity to look at one's thoughts and organise them around the supreme Ideal. Gradually, we must learn to silence the mind, knowing humbly that it is only an instrument which must receive from the spiritual heights the knowledge it seeks.

But in addition to developing the mental qualities which is the first objective of studies, they can also help us to know the different parts of our being: firstly by our reactions to what we read and observe and secondly by the interaction with our human environment. This leads to a better understanding of our nature, and presents the possibility to overcome our defects and drives us to work, not for personal accomplishment or intellectual fancy but for higher progress. Our understanding must deepen until we can discern the originaive inspirational planes of consciousness of what we study.

Then why do we fail to make our studies a means of sadhana?

We fail because there are lesser motives of studies, and these find a readier acceptance, especially now in the modern age. Studies have become a means to procure a certificate which will aid us gain a fat salary and serve as an incentive in the rat-race of the social ladder. This utilitarian motive assumes at its lowest the form of commercialism.

Or the unrelenting drudgery of going to school drags on from day to day, for the first one-third of one's life, and kills the wonder and joy of studies. Another error is the compulsion to study because it gives oneself a sense of aristocracy and exclusiveness and so the effort to attend classes is not exacting. Or some take up a too heavy burden and are unable to strike a balance, and this gives them a bitter attitude towards studies.

Studies can be made a means of sadhana only if they are pursued in a spirit of total self-consecration and offering to the Divine; not for the sake of one's own superficial development but for preparing oneself to be a perfect instrument of the manifestation of supramental Truth and the Divine Life upon earth. This is the general Truth, but it expresses itself differently with different students.

Let me conclude with a highly inspiring Upanishadic phrase:

तेजस्वी नावधीतमस्तु

“May one's study be full of light and power.”