

# MOTHER INDIA

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*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## THE GREATER PLAN

I am held no more by life's alluring cry,  
Her joy and grief, her charm, her laughter's lute.  
Hushed are the magic moments of the flute,  
And form and colour and brief ecstasy.  
I would hear, in my spirit's wideness solitary  
The Voice that speaks when mortal lips are mute:  
I seek the wonder of things absolute  
Born from the silence of Eternity.

There is a need within the soul of man  
The splendours of the surface never sate;  
For life and mind and their glory and debate  
Are the slow prelude of a vaster theme,  
A sketch confused of a supernal plan,  
A preface to the epic of the Supreme.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 137)*

## **‘TO TURN TOWARDS THEE...’**

**June 18, 1913**

To turn towards Thee, unite with Thee, live in Thee and for Thee, is supreme happiness, unmixed joy, immutable peace; it is to breathe infinity, to soar in eternity, no longer feel one's limits, escape from time and space. Why do men flee from these boons as though they feared them? What a strange thing is ignorance, that source of all suffering! How miserable that obscurity which keeps men away from the very thing which would bring them happiness and subjects them to this painful school of ordinary existence fashioned entirely from struggle and suffering!

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 22)*

## **‘THY VOICE IS SO MODEST...’**

**June 27, 1913**

THY voice is so modest, so impartial, so sublime in its patience and mercy that it does not make itself heard with any authority, any force of will but comes like a cool breeze, sweet and pure, like a crystalline murmur that brings a note of harmony to a discordant concert. Yet, for him who knows how to listen to the note, to breathe that breeze, it holds such treasures of beauty, such a fragrance of pure serenity and noble grandeur, that all foolish illusions vanish or are transformed into a joyful acceptance of the marvellous truth that has been glimpsed.

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 23)*

## **21 FEBRUARY, 1972**

THE whole day of the twenty-first I had a strong feeling that it was the birthday of everyone, and I was impelled to say to everyone “Bonne Fête”.

It was a very strong feeling that something new has manifested in the world and that all who were ready and receptive could embody it.

No doubt one will know in a few days what it was.

THE MOTHER

*(Notes on the Way, CWM, Vol. 11, p. 297 fn.)*

## **‘A PORTION OF THE MIGHTY MOTHER...’**

A portion of the mighty Mother came  
Into her as into its own human part:  
Amid the cosmic workings of the Gods  
It marked her the centre of a wide-drawn scheme,  
Dreamed in the passion of her far-seeing spirit  
To mould humanity into God’s own shape  
And lead this great blind struggling world to light  
Or a new world discover or create.  
Earth must transform herself and equal Heaven  
Or Heaven descend into earth’s mortal state.  
But for such vast spiritual change to be,  
Out of the mystic cavern in man’s heart  
The heavenly Psyche must put off her veil  
And step into common nature’s crowded rooms  
And stand uncovered in that nature’s front  
And rule its thoughts and fill the body and life.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, Book VII, Canto II, CWSA, Vol. 34, pp. 486-87)

## YOGA AND SKILL IN WORKS

Yoga is skill in works.

*Gita*

YOGA, says the Gita, is skill in works, and by this phrase the ancient Scripture meant that the transformation of mind and being to which it gave the name of Yoga brought with it a perfect inner state and faculty out of which the right principle of action and the right spiritual and divine result of works emerged naturally like a tree out of its seed. Certainly, it did not mean that the clever general or politician or lawyer or shoemaker deserves the name of a Yogin; it did not mean that any kind of skill in works was Yoga, but by Yoga it signified a spiritual condition of universal equality and God-union and by the skill of the Yogic worker it intended a perfect adaptation of the soul and its instruments to the rhythm of the divine and universal Spirit in a nature liberated from the shackles of egoism and the limitations of the sense-mind.

Essentially, Yoga is a generic name for the processes and the result of processes by which we transcend or shred off our present modes of being and rise to a new, a higher, a wider mode of consciousness which is not that of the ordinary animal and intellectual man. Yoga is the exchange of an egoistic for a universal or cosmic consciousness lifted towards or informed by the supra-cosmic, transcendent Unnameable who is the source and support of all things. Yoga is the passage of the human thinking animal towards the God-consciousness from which he has descended. In that ascent we find many levels and stages, plateau after plateau of the hill whose summit touches the Truth of things; but at every stage the saying of the Gita applies in an ever higher degree. Even a little of this new law and inner order delivers the soul out of the great peril by which it had been overtaken in its worldward descent, the peril of the ignorance by which the unilluminated intellect, even when it is keenest or sagest, must ever be bound and limited, of the sorrow and sin from which the unpurified heart, even when it wears the richest purple of aspiration and feeling, must ever suffer soil and wound and poverty, and of the vanity of its works to which the undivinisised will of man, even when it is most vehement and powerful or Olympian and victorious, must eternally be subject. It is the utility of Yoga that it opens to us a gate of escape out of the vicious circle of our ordinary human existence.

The idea of works, in the thought of the Gita, is the widest possible. All action of Nature in man is included, whether it be internal or external, operate in the mind or use the body, seem great or seem little. From the toil of the hero to the toil of the cobbler, from the labour of the sage to the simple physical act of eating, all is included. The seeking of the Self by thought, the adoration of the Highest by the emotions of the heart, the gathering of means and material and capacity and the use of them for the service of God and man stand here on an equal footing. Buddha sitting under the Bo-tree and conquering the illumination, the ascetic silent and motionless in his cave,



Shankara storming through India, debating with all men and preaching most actively the gospel of inaction are all from this point of view doing great and forceful work. But while the outward action may be the same, there is a great internal difference between the working of the ordinary man and the working of the Yogin,—a difference in the state of the being, a difference in the power and the faculty, a difference in the will and temperament.

What we do, arises out of what we are. The existent is conscious of what he is; that consciousness formulates itself as knowledge and power; works are the result of this twofold force of being in action. Mind, life and body can only operate out of that which is contained in the being of which they are forces. This is what we mean when we say that all things act according to their nature. The divine Existence is pure and unlimited being in possession of all itself, it is *sat*; whatever it puts forth in its limitless purity of self-awareness is truth of itself, *satya*; the divine knowledge is knowledge of the Truth, the divine Will is power of the Truth, the divine workings are words and ideas of the Truth realising themselves in manifold forms and through many stages and in infinite relations. But God is not limited or bound by any particular working or any moment of time or any field of space or any law of relation, because He is universal and infinite. Nor is He limited by the universe; for His infinity is not cosmic, but supracosmic.

But the individualised being is or acts as if he were so bound and limited, because he treats the particular working of existence that he is and the particular moment of time and field of space in which it is actually operating and the particular conditions which reign in the working and in the moment and in the field as if they were self-existent realities and the binding truth of things. Himself, his knowledge, his force and will, his relations with the world and his fellows, his need in it and his desire from them he treats as the sufficient truth and reality, the point of departure of all his works, the central fact and law of his universe. And from this egoistic error arises an all-vitiating falsehood. For the particular, the individual can have no self-existence, no truth, no valid force except in so far as it reflects rightly and relates and conforms itself justly to the universal, to the all-being, the all-knowledge, the all-will and follows its true drift towards self-realisation and vast delight in itself. Therefore the salvation of the individual lies in his universalising himself; and this is the lesson which life tries always to teach him but the obstinate ego is always unwilling to learn; for the universal is not any group or extended ego, not the family, community, nation or even all mankind, but an infinite far surpassing all these littlenesses.

Nor is the universalising of himself sufficient for liberation, although certainly it will make him practically more free and in his being nearer to the true freedom. To put himself in tune with the universal is a step, but beyond the universal and directing and determining it is the supracosmic Infinity; for the universe also has no self-existence, truth or validity except as it expresses the divine Being, Knowledge, Will, Power, Delight of Him who surpasses all universe, so much that it can be said

figuratively that with a petty fragment of His being and a single ray of His consciousness He has created all these worlds. Therefore the universalised mind must look up from its cosmic consciousness to the Supernal and derive from that all its sense of being and movement of works. This is the fundamental truth from which the Yogic consciousness starts; it helps the individual to universalise himself and then to transcend the cosmic formula. And this transformation acts not only on his status of being but on his active consciousness in works.

The Gita tells us that equality of soul and mind is Yoga and that this equality is the foundation of the Brahman-state, that high infinite consciousness to which the Yogin aspires. Now equality of mind means universality; for without universality of soul there may be a state of indifference or an impartial self-control or a well-governed equality of temperament, but these are not the thing that is meant. The equality spoken of is not indifference or impartiality or equability, but a fundamental oneness of attitude to all persons and all things and happenings because of the perception of all as the One. Such equality, it is erroneously thought, is incompatible with action. By no means; this is the error of the animal and the intellectual man who thinks that action is solely possible when dictated by his hopes, fears and passions or by the self-willed preferences of the emotion and the intellect justifying themselves by the illusions of the reason. That might be the fact if the individual were the real actor and not merely an instrument or secondary agent; but we know well enough, for Science and Philosophy assure us of the same truth, that the universal is the Force which acts through the simulacrum of our individuality. The individual mind, pretending to choose for itself with a sublime ignorance and disregard of the universal, is obviously working on the basis of a falsehood and by means of an error and not in the knowledge and the will of the Truth. It cannot have any real skill in works; for to start from a falsehood or half-truth and work by means of blunders and arrive at another falsehood or half-truth which we have immediately to change, and all the while to weep and struggle and suffer and have no sure resting-place, cannot surely be called skill in works. But the universal is equal in all and therefore its determinations are not self-willed preferences but are guided by the truth of the divine will and knowledge which is unlimited and not subject to incapacity or error.

Therefore that state of the being by which the Yogin differs from the ordinary man, is that by which he rises from the foundation of a perfect equality to the consciousness of the one existence in all and embracing all and lives in that existence and not in the walls of his body or personal temperament or limited mind. Mind and life and body he sees as small enough things which happen and change and develop in his being. Nay, the whole universe is seen by him as happening within himself, not in his small ego or mind, but within this vast and infinite self with which he is now constantly identified. All action in the universe he sees as arising in this being, out of the divine Existence and under the stress of the divine Truth, Knowledge, Will and Power. He begins to participate consciously in its working and to see all things in the

light of that divine truth and governance; and even when his own actions move on certain lines rather than others, he is not bound by them or shut to the truth of all the rest by his own passions and preferences, gropings and seekings and revolts. It is evident that such an increasing wideness of vision must mean an increasing knowledge. And if it be true that knowledge is power, it must mean also an increasing force for works. Certainly, it would not be so, if the Yogin continued to act by the light of his individual reason and imagination and will; for the intellect and all that depends on it can only work by virtue of rigid limitations and exclusive determinations. Accordingly, the continued activity of the unilluminated intellect and its servants conflicts with the new state of consciousness and knowledge which arises out of this larger existence, and so long as they remain active, it cannot be perfect or assured; for the consciousness is being continually pulled down to the lower field of ego-habit by the claim of their narrow workings. But the Yogin ceases, progressively, to act by the choice of his intellectual or emotional nature. Another light dawns, another power and presence intervenes, other faculties awake in the place of the old human-animal combination.

As the state of being changes, the will and temperament must necessarily be modified. Even from an early stage the Yogin begins to subordinate his personal will or it becomes naturally subordinate to the sense of the supreme Will which is attracting him upward. Ignorantly, imperfectly, blunderingly it moves at first, with many recoils and relapses into personal living and personal action, but in time it becomes more in tune with its Source and eventually the personal will merges upward and all ways into the universal and infinite and obeys implicitly the transcendent. Nor does this change and ascension and expanding mean any annihilation of the will-power working in the individual, as the intellectual man might imagine; but rather it increases it to an immense forcefulness while giving it an infinite calm and an eternal patience. The temperament also is delivered from all leash of straining and desire, from all urge of passion and pain of wilful self-delusion. Desire, even the best, turns always to limitation and obscurity, to some eager exclusive choice and pressure, to some insistent exclusion of what should not be excluded and impatient revolt against the divine denials and withholdings. It generates anger and grief and passion and obstinacy, and these bring about the soul's loss of its divine memory or steadfast consciousness of itself and its self-knowledge and its equal vision of the truth of things. Therefore desire and its brood are incompatible with skill in works and their persistence is the sign of an imperfect Yoga.

Not only must the will and fundamental knowledge-view of things change, but a new combination of faculties take the place of the old. For if the intellect is not to do all our mental work for us or to work at all in its unilluminated state and if the will in the form of desires, wishes, intellectual preferences is not to determine and enforce our action, then it is clear that other powers of knowledge and will must awaken and either replace the intellect and the mental preference or illumine and guide the one

and transform and dominate the other. Otherwise either the action may be nil or else its impulses mechanical and chaotic, even if the static being is blissfully enlarged; for they will well up indeed out of the universal and not the personal, but out of the universal in its lower formula which permits the erratic action of the heart and mind, while the old personal will and reason will not be there to impose some light and order on their ill-connected impulsions. Such faculties and new combination of faculties can and do emerge and they are illuminations and powers that are in direct touch and harmony with the light and power of the Truth; therefore in proportion as they manifest and take hold of their functions, they must increase the force, subtlety and perfection of the Yogin's skill in works.

But the greatest skill in works of Yoga is that which to the animal man seems its greatest ineptitude. For all this difficult attainment, the latter will say, may lead to anything you please, but we have to lose our personal life, abandon our personal objects, annul our personal will and pleasure and without these life cannot be worth living. Now the object of all skill in works must be evidently to secure the best welfare either of ourselves or of others or of all. The ordinary man calls it welfare to secure momentarily some transient object, to wade for it through a sea of grief and suffering and painful labour and to fall from it again still deeper into the same distressful element in search of a new transient object. The greatest cunning of Yoga is to have detected this cheat of the mind and its desires and dualities and to have found the way to an abiding peace, a universal delight and an all-embracing satisfaction, which can not only be enjoyed for oneself but communicated to others. That too arises out of the change of our being; for the pure truth of existence carries also in it the unalloyed delight of existence, they are inseparable in the status of the infinite. To use the figures of the Vedic seers, by Yoga Varuna is born in us, a vast sky of spiritual living, the divine in his wide existence and infinite truth; into that wideness Mitra rises up, Lord of Light and Love who takes all our activities of thought and feeling and will, links them into a divine harmony, charioteers our movement and dictates our works; called by this wideness and this harmony Aryaman appears in us, the Divine in its illumined power, uplifted force of being and all-judging effective will; and by the three comes the indwelling Bhaga, the Divine in its pure bliss and all-seizing joy who dispels the evil dream of our jarring and divided existence and possesses all things in the light and glory of Aryaman's power, Mitra's love and light, Varuna's unity. This divine Birth shall be the son of our works; and than creating this what greater skill can there be or what more practical and sovereign cunning?

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Essays in Philosophy and Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 119-26)*

## FEBRUARY 21

ON one 21<sup>st</sup> of February in the late 1950's I repeated to the Mother the usual English formula for a birthday: "Many happy returns." Immediately, half-jocular, half-serious, she exclaimed: "What! You want me to return again and to the earth still further? Haven't I had enough of being born so far?"

I was taken quite unawares by such a response. I mumbled something like: "No, Mother, I don't at all wish you a rebirth. I have only used the customary words meaning that you should enjoy numerous future birthdays in this very life." She answered: "That's all right." But her response set me thinking.

My first thought was of her own statement made a little earlier in that decade: "Since the beginning of the earth, wherever and whenever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of the Consciousness, I was there."<sup>1</sup> Then it struck me that though the work done each time had been glorious the labour must have been heavy and that the need to carry on this illuminating toil from age to age must have taxed the human embodiments for it grievously. The Mother must have passed through her frequent births with a graceful heroism but there could be no denying the fact that for the sake of the world's uplift she repeatedly

Assaults of Hell endured and Titan strokes  
And bore the fierce inner wounds that are slow to heal.<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of this second thought followed the sense that the Mother was carrying even in her present embodiment a tremendous burden whose recurrence she did not want in another incarnation—a burden she wished to dispose of by a supreme victory. The victory was, of course, for the earth's good. Like Sri Aurobindo who once said that the mighty task he had undertaken was not for himself since he did not require either liberation or supramentalisation, the Mother as the Avatar of the Highest Divinity had nothing to accomplish for her own sake: she had shouldered the luminous load of the Integral Yoga in order to lighten humanity's evolutionary travail. But the load was immense and such as nobody else could endure and it had become greater after the passing of Sri Aurobindo: now the concentration of the Supermind's transformative pressure was wholly on the Mother's body.

Sri Aurobindo has well summed up the Avatar's situation: "It is only divine Love which can bear the burden I have to bear, that all have to bear who have sacrificed everything else to the one aim of uplifting earth out of its darkness towards the Divine. The Gallio-like 'Je m'en fiche'-ism (I do not care)—would not carry me one step; it would certainly not be divine. It is quite another thing that enables me to walk unweeping and unlamenting towards the goal." (April 1934)<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, if her remark to me was to be fully understood, the Mother desired the Divine Love, which was sustaining her, to fulfil its aim of supramental descent

and transformation in this very birth of hers: she had no inclination to write “To be continued” to the story of her present life. What is more, she did not think in terms even of her disciples being reborn for success. Not only to me did she say at one time: “When I speak of total realisation for any of you, I mean in this very life.” Her vision is expressed to others also when Sri Aurobindo wrote to a sadhak on 15 January 1934: “The Mother has never spoken of anything to be done in the next birth.... Naturally the vital has to be transformed if one is to succeed.”

Yes, it was as she told me on one occasion: “Death is not in our programme.” The Mother’s birthday was meant to repeat year after year, with her work moving from strength to strength....

\*

21 February is especially an occasion of spiritual spell-binding for me. My first darshan of the Mother side by side with Sri Aurobindo was on this date in 1928 when she was exactly at her half-century. And my last well-remembered darshan of her was also on 21 February in 1973. The April darshan is vague in my mind and on 2 May I left for Bombay for a cataract-operation. Owing to unavoidable circumstances the operation was long delayed. I had to miss the darshan of 15 August when the Mother was seen as an embodied divinity for the last time by the Ashramites. I returned to the Ashram on hearing in the early morning of 18 November that she had renounced her embodiment. On the preceding night she had appeared to me in a vivid dream, with a bunch of red roses which she had told me to put on my head.

Last year, on her birth-centenary there was a very strong experience of her coming extremely close to our physical space-time, as if she were on the verge of taking up a body once more. If on every birthday of hers we could feel with increasing strength her proximity to the earth-scene, one day in the near future the thin veil will be rent and her supreme sweetness and power, instead of guiding us invisibly, stand again intimate to our seeking gaze and eager touch.

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

(Opening and closing paragraphs of the article “February 21: A Look Behind and Ahead” from the book *Our Light and Delight—Recollections of Life with the Mother*, 1980.)

### References

1. The Mother: *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 13, p. 37.
2. Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 28, p. 230.
3. Sri Aurobindo: *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 152.

## **PRANAM TO THE DIVINE MOTHER**

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

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

This is but rapturous robbery  
Deaf to infinity's call  
That we should leap and plunge in you  
Our aching empty all

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

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

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

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

*(The Secret Splendour—Collected Poems, p. 397)*



## ‘THE LIGHT IN MATTER’

### FROM A CONVERSATION WITH THE MOTHER

SRI AUROBINDO has arranged everything so that my work becomes easy. Sri Aurobindo has the key to open this region of the Inconscience. He turns the key to open the door and illumines my way, and very gently I enter to infuse the Force, the Light and the Divine Ananda into the body of this inert and obscure matter. When it is touched by this transforming light, the atoms that constitute this matter awake to a New Consciousness. Like this the work continues and spreads or multiplies. You understand, Sri Aurobindo is the Soul of Matter, the aspiration of the whole humanity. He is the Light in Matter or the Spirit incarnated in Matter. Sri Aurobindo has separated himself from the Supreme and has plunged in this matter, in a body, with this load of inconscience and ignorance upon himself—to awaken them to the divine life. For this he has invoked the Supreme, the Grace, to descend here below on this earth to help in his work. That is why, having heard his call, I have come down here into matter in a physical body, into this world of pain, suffering and death. And it is in the union of both of us that the world will witness gradually this miracle of a divine life. It is because of him that I have descended. It is this intense aspiration of matter from below that he has sent up and the Grace has responded by a descent. What a blessed hour for the earth. It is an occasion for a tremendous progress so that the whole universe may blossom in a great *élan* towards the goal of its existence. With our help which will be at its disposal and a will to pursue, what could be there that would be impossible to realise! This is the moment.

(Noted down from memory)

*(The Supreme—Conversations with the Mother recollected by Mona Sarkar, p. 68)*



## A CENTURY'S SALUTATIONS TO SWADESHI AND SWARAJ

*Repression comes, reform lingers,  
And we linger on the shore,  
And the Moderates wither  
And the Nationalist is more and more!*

—A doggerel popular in the first  
decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,  
cited by historian R. C. Majumdar

WE celebrate a historic event for two reasons: (a) to ascertain its contribution to the society or humanity; to see how far the experience, distilled from the sequence of incidents preceding and following the main event, has been well-utilised (even though experience is often like a comb that falls into our hands when we have already grown bald); and (b) to pay tribute to those who championed the cause that went with the event and made exemplary sacrifices for it.

### **Partition of Bengal: the Motive and the Move**

Lord Curzon planned and gave effect to the partition of Bengal in 1905, ostensibly to facilitate administration. In the post-independence period, when India had created several smaller states out of some big ones, we can very well ask what was terribly wrong with Curzon's policy.

What appears worse retrospectively and extremely ironical, East Bengal, of which Curzon made only a separate state, became a wing of a new nation carved out of India and later a sovereign nation by itself!

It is not easy to enter the spirit of a period in the past—and particularly that of a situation prevailing 100 years ago—because the events and ideas dominating the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after its first two decades, have radically changed our attitudes, outlooks and philosophies to an extent that no other century in recorded history had ever done. It is also unfair to measure the values and idealism behind a movement through a mind conditioned by developments that were unthought-of, even though the forces moulding our outlook today may have been prepared by the very values of a time past that appears almost alien to us now.

At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, administration did not mean what it does today. The people's expectations from their rulers were humble. Queen Victoria died in January 1901 and the people of Kolkata were entertained to 25 booms from the cannons at Fort William to announce Edward VII's ascension to the throne. It was not an announcement of any change, but that of quiet continuity—of a rule that desired

to carry on its business quietly, but ready to flex muscles when and wherever any unrest was noticed.

But there were individuals among the ruling class who never accepted Joseph Chamberlain's merry announcement of 1904: "The day of Empire has come!"

In fact, even though the Sepoy Mutiny had ended happily for the rulers, it had left several British thinkers in a state of gloom. One of them was John Bright, believed to be the most powerful orator of his time who, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1858, asked the House of Commons: "How long does England propose to govern India? Nobody can answer that question. But be it 50 or 100 or 500 years, does any man with the smallest glimmering of common sense believe that so great a country, with its 20 different nationalities and its 20 different languages, can ever be bound up and consolidated into one compact and enduring empire's confine? I believe such a thing to be utterly impossible." (Beverley Nichols: *Verdict on India*)

There is a reason for my referring to this passage that will grow obvious if we study the following dialogue between Jinnah and Beverley Nichols in December 1943, after the former had read it out to the latter:

JINNAH: What Bright said then is true today... In fact, it's far more true—though, of course, the emphasis is not so much on the 20 nationalities as on the two, the Muslim and the Hindu. And why is it more true? Why hasn't time brought us together? Because the Muslims are awake... because they've learnt, through bitter experience, the sort of treatment they may expect from the Hindus in a "United India". A "United India" means a Hindu-dominated India. It means that and nothing else. Any other meaning you attempt to impose on it is mythical. "India" is a British creation... it is merely a single administrative unit governed by a bureaucracy under the sanction of the sword. That is all. It is a paper creation; it has no basis in flesh and blood.

NICHOLS: The ironical thing is that your critics say that Pakistan itself is a British creation—that it is an example of our genius for applying the principle of "divide and rule".

JINNAH (with some heat): The man who makes such a suggestion must have a very poor opinion of British intelligence, apart from his opinion of my own integrity. The one thing which keeps the British in India is the false idea of a United India, as preached by Gandhi. A United India, I repeat, is a British creation—a myth, and a very dangerous myth, which will cause endless strife. As long as the strife exists, the British have an excuse for remaining. For once in a way, "divide and rule" does not apply.

NICHOLS: What you want is "divide and quit"?

JINNAH: You have put it very neatly.

The years that had passed between the Mutiny and the emergence of Jinnah had been

the period when the idea that the key to a lasting British rule in India lay in a society divided,—and nothing could be more powerful and deadly as a means to perpetuate this division than religion,— had been brewing in many a brain. For the most remarkable characteristic of the Mutiny had been the unity between the Hindus and the Muslims, an articulate aristocrat Azimullah pleading the case of Nana Sahib in London and Hindu rulers depending on Muslim generals, and *vice versa*. Examples can be multiplied.

Curzon did nothing more than apply this simple divisive strategy in practice in a different pretext. In fact, whenever convenient, he did not hesitate to hammer the point home, as he did in Dacca in the course of his tour of Eastern Bengal in 1904, before the Partition had been notified:

...the proposed transfer would make Dacca the centre, and possibly the capital of a new and self-sufficing administration... which would invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussalman Viceroys and Kings... (Ajit K. Neogy: *Partition of Bengal*)

But there were voices among the British who totally disapproved of the move. *The Statesman* wrote in July 1904:

...objects of the scheme are, briefly, first, to destroy the collective power of the Bengali people, secondly, to overthrow the political ascendancy of Calcutta, and thirdly, to foster in East Bengal the growth of a Mohammedan power which it is hoped will have the effect of keeping in check the rapidly growing strength of the educated Hindu community. (*Ibid.*)

A big obstacle for Curzon was the attitude of the Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, who at first branded the Governor-General's proposal a "Beastly arrangement" but, surprisingly, became its staunch champion before long. The key to the mystery probably lay in the government sanctioning him a loan of £ 100,000. However, his brother, Nawabzada Khwaja Aktikullah, declared at the 1906 Congress session that the Muslims in East Bengal did not want Partition and "the real fact is that it is only a few leading Mohammedans who for their own purpose supported the measure".

In fact, most of the Muslim leaders who were respected by both the communities, opposed the Partition. Among them were Moulvi Abul Hossain, Abul Kasem, A. Rasool, Liyakat Hossain, and Ismail Hossain Sirazi.

### **An Undeclared War**

In order to appreciate the value of the public participation in the movement against the Partition we must visualise the Kolkata of 1905. A dozen politicians could not just

stage a *rasta roko* and in a few minutes find an audience of thousands stranded on both sides of the road and in numerous automobiles obliged to bear with the leader's harangue broadcast through a microphone. There were no public transport buses, cabs, three-wheelers or motorcycles to be paralysed by a *roko*. There was no microphone. Radio was still a dream. The first tram had begun its magic voyage, covering a small distance. People had to walk miles to attend a public meeting and those from the suburbs and villages would often spend the night on the pavements. Even then, largely attended meetings were held daily, the biggest of these being on 8 August 1905, at the Town Hall, where a sea of people thronged around it.

Workers and the clerical staff of numerous factories and jute mills observed a strike on the very day after the Partition was officially announced on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1905. Muslim and Hindu workers exchanged *rakhis* in several industrial establishments, to the chagrin of their British management.

As R. C. Majumdar has stated, "...it was incipient rebellion—an undeclared war between Government and the people."

The right moment for Swadeshi had arrived, for the government would not undo Partition unless the gross interest of the British commerce was affected. The boycott of British goods, as an ideal, caught the people's fascination. At certain places, such as Barisal, the fervour for boycott was total—so much so that the cobblers refused to mend shoes of foreign make and washermen refused to wash Lancashire linen.

But vested interests succeeded in creating chasms between the communities, as is obvious from the following letter written by G. K. Gokhale to Sir William Wedderburn, a great friend of India who, after retiring from the ICS, presided over two sessions of the Indian National Congress:

The anti-Partition agitation which is confined mostly to the Hindus is naturally resented by the officials... The wild talk in which some of the more irresponsible speakers on the Hindu side have been indulging on the subject of independence or *Swarajya* without British control as they call it, is also naturally setting the officials against the Hindu community. Then the denunciations in the Calcutta press, often based on inaccurate information or unfair inferences, are a further source of irritation to the officials. Lastly, the aggressive preaching of the boycott and the resort to picketing in some districts have been provoking for the last year and more the silent wrath of the Government. All these things have combined to create a bitterly anti-Hindu atmosphere in official regions and there is no doubt that the officials have allowed the impression to spread (and have even openly encouraged it) that the Hindus were in their bad books and that the Mohammedan community was the special object of their favour and patronage. There is also no doubt that when the present disturbances first began, there was a marked tendency to wink at Mohammedan rowdiness and leave the Hindus more or less to their own fate. I think these facts could be established before a

Commission of Inquiry if one were granted. The supineness of the Executive in dealing with the situation even when it became clear that Mohammedan rowdies were getting altogether out of hand on all sides has made a painful impression in the country and unless a searching inquiry is made into how this temporary breakdown of the Government machinery took place, the harm that has been done will not be remedied. Mr. Morley stated the other day in the House that these disturbances were due to Mohammedan resentment of the boycott preached by Hindus. I am sorry to say that this is on the whole a very unfair statement of the case. It is true that the boycott campaign of the Anti-Partitionists has contributed its share to the difficulties of the present situation, though that campaign has given far more offence to the Government and the European community than to the Mohammedans, who, so far as the weaving class is concerned, have even gained to some extent by it. The boycott of Liverpool salt has no doubt inflicted a serious hardship on poor people and as the bulk the Mohammedans in the Eastern Province are very poor, they have in my opinion a just grievance there. But this by itself would never have led to a breach of the peace if the impression had not prevailed in the Province, especially among the more ignorant and fanatical sections of the Mohammedans, that the Government would be behind them in any injury they might inflict upon the Hindus. (*Gokhale Papers*, File No.203, National Archives)

The divisive forces worked determinedly. Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the first and the last Lt.-Governor of East Bengal, could not check his temptation to go down as a master of prosody when he tried to present a serious political agenda through a bit of uncanny simile. He announced that he had two wives, the Hindu and the Muslim. But the Muslim was his favourite!

As Sir Surendranath Banerjea observed in his *A Nation in the Making*, "The Civil Service took their cue from him; and his administration was conducted upon lines in the closest conformity with the policy which he had so facetiously announced."

Along with a nationwide awakening against subjugation to a foreign power, some sort of a jinx too seemed to be operating, the evil influence of which made well-meaning efforts appear communal. Bal Gangadhar Tilak organised festivities highlighting the greatness of national heritage. But the reaction was not always happy.

By nature and temperament, Tilak was never an anti-Muslim and the entire idea of celebrating the Shivaji Festival was not to alienate or even to irritate the Mohammedans. He strongly believed that with the change of time the Mohammedans and Hindus were in the same boat as far as the political condition was concerned. But the very mention of the name of Shivaji, who had fought against the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, was bound to have an adverse effect on the minds of the Muslims... Instead of interpreting the deeds of Shivaji in

the modern light in order to exploit his name for future political gains, the politically unconscious and illiterate Muslim was bound to read the proceedings of Shivaji Festival along communal lines. This was an opportunity for the alien regime to colour Tilak's endeavours for national independence as a deliberate attempt to foster communal animosity and raise a bogey of separate nationhood. (Dr. Sukhbir Caudhary: *Growth of Nationalism in India*)

### From Swadeshi to Swaraj

We have seen Gokhale's observations on the Anti-Partition movement and Swadeshi. Among those who were directing the movement, there were two distinct schools of thought. For the first, reuniting Bengal was the end; for the other, the movement was only the means for a far greater goal.

One was represented by Sir Surendranath. This is how he saw the *raison d'être* of the movement:

We felt that we had been insulted, humiliated and tricked. We felt that the whole of our future was at stake, and that it was a deliberate blow aimed at the growing solidarity and self-consciousness of the Bengalee-speaking population. Originally intended to meet administrative requirements, we felt that it had drawn to itself a political flavour and complexion, and, if allowed to be passed, it would be fatal to our political progress and to that close union between Hindus and Mohammedans upon which the prospects of Indian advancement so largely depended. For it was openly and officially given out that Eastern Bengal and Assam was to be a Mohammedan province, and that credal distinctions were to be recognised as the basis of the new policy to be adopted in the new province. (*A Nation in Making*)

While saying so, Banerjea made it clear that the only purpose of the movement was to unify Bengal again and that there was nothing anti-British beyond this limited goal.

The other view originated from Sri Aurobindo (then Aurobindo Ghose). Even while he was a Professor of English and French at the Maharaja's College, Baroda, he greatly influenced the movement by paying visits to Bengal and through his faithful and powerful emissaries. Hence no wonder that he should become the paramount leader of the radical elements among the nationalists in a short time after his shifting to Kolkata, in 1906. As the eminent Bengali author Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, who had been a witness to the eventful time, wrote: "It can be asserted without any doubt that Aurobindo was the Brahma of the movement—detached and silent! But the sparks fanning out of his pen initiated to the fiery cause whomsoever they touched." (Translated from the Bengali *Bharater Jatiya Andoloner Prabhab*)

Sri Aurobindo came over to Kolkata to head the National College, founded with resources donated by Raja Subodh Mullick—a project of the Swadeshi agenda. (In fact, a large crowd hailed Subodh Mullick as “Raja” when his munificence was announced and the appellation stuck to his name forever—probably the only case of its kind.) But at Bipin Chandra Pal’s request Sri Aurobindo took charge of the *Bande Mataram*, a newspaper that was, in the words of S. K. Ratcliffe who was then Editor of *The Statesman*, “full of leading and special articles written in English with brilliance and pungency not hitherto attained in the Indian Press... the most effective voice of what we then called national extremism.”

For Sri Aurobindo, the Partition was an opportunity to mobilise the people against colonial rule. In the 1 May 1908 issue of the *Bande Mataram*, he was unambiguous about it. “It is time that the nation rose above Swadeshi to Swaraj. It is time that it left the path of self-realisation through disguises and side-issues and flung itself frankly and wholly into the attempt to win Swaraj.”

The first leader to demand unqualified freedom, “...to Aurobindo is due the chief credit for the triumphal emergence of Extremist Party, and the virtual extinction of the Moderate Party which was to follow,” says R. C. Majumdar. With an array of facts, the other eminent historian Tara Chand asserts: “His love of India was for him the utterly unreserved abandonment of the worshipper to God... He had a lofty sense of national dignity and reacted strongly against unmanly conduct. His courage was magnificent. He could attack fearlessly his own countrymen when he considered them wrong and he was ruthless, almost fierce, in his denunciation of the anti-Indian measures of the government. But he did not allow his indignation to betray him into saying anything unbecoming or vulgar, or overstep the bounds of law, as distinguished from the executive decrees of haughty administration.” (*History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. III)

No wonder that with the Partition of Bengal as the background, the Calcutta Congress of 1906, under Dadabhai Naoroji’s presidentship, would be obliged to pass for the first time the drastic resolutions demanding Swaraj and upholding the ideas of Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education. This was possible because of the untiring efforts of Sri Aurobindo, supported by other leaders of the Nationalist group—Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Khaparde and Khare. The leaders of the Conservative group, known as Moderates, Sir Firozeshah Mehta, Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjea, were all opposed to the resolution. Naoroji was first undecided. But he was, for the time being, won over by the Nationalists and he influenced the dissenters to veer round to the new spirit.

### **The Momentous Split**

Desperate Moderates planned a powerful scheme to thwart the programme of the Nationalists at the next Congress, the venue of which was shifted from Nagpur to



Surat—because Surat, the old guard believed, had a sizeable number of their supporters.

Which group would command the majority was uncertain. But in this city dominated by the Moderates, they could mobilise delegates numbering 1,300 while the Nationalists could manage only 1,100. It was known that the Moderate leaders had prepared a new constitution for the Congress that would render it practically impossible for the Nationalists to command a majority for any annual session for years to come. The younger Nationalists, especially from Maharashtra, were determined to prevent this by any means.

The session began before an audience numbering more than 10,000. The President-elect, Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, followed by other celebrities, ascended the platform amid cheers from a section. Dewan Bahadur Ambalal Desai formally proposed Dr. Ghose for the chair. At first, what was heard was only a murmur of dissent. But no sooner had Sir Surendranath stood up to second the proposal than a thundering chorus of protest broke out. His words were drowned in the ear-splitting din. The greatest orator of the then Bengal, the Pied Piper of many a mammoth rally, had the jolt of his life.

Let us turn to Henry Nevinson, the author of *The New Spirit in India*, for his first-hand account of the event:

Waving their arms, their scarves, their sticks and umbrellas, a solid mass of delegates and spectators on the right of the Chair sprang to their feet and shouted without a moment's pause... the whole ten thousand were on their feet, shouting for order, shouting for tumult. Mr. Malvi (Chairman of the Reception Committee) still half in the chair, rang his brass Benares bell and rang in vain. Surendranath sprang upon the very table itself. Even a voice like his was but a whisper in the din. Again and again he shouted, unheard as silence. He sat down and for a moment the storm was lulled. The voices of the leaders were audible, consulting in agitated tones—Dr. Ghose shrill, impatient and perturbed with anger; Mr. Gokhale distressed, anxious, harassed with vain negotiation and sleepless nights. Already one caught the word ‘suspension’. ‘If they will not hear Surendranath, whom will they hear?’ said one. ‘It is an insult to the Congress,’ said another. ‘An insult to Bengal,’ cried a third. Again Surendranath sprang on the table, and again the assembly roared with clamour. Again the Chairman rang his Benares bell, and again in vain. In an inaudible voice, like a sob, he declared the sitting suspended.

The session resumed the next day and so did the confrontation. Surendranath exhorted the audience to maintain calm and Motilal Nehru spoke briefly to the same effect before Dr. Ghose occupied the chair. The President had hardly begun reading his address when Tilak stood up. He had given notice for an amendment and he must



move it. "You cannot move an adjournment of the Congress," cried Mr. Malvi. "I declare you out of order," the "president" added.

"I wish to move an amendment to the election of president and you are not in the Chair," replied Mr. Tilak.

"I declare you out of order!" shouted Dr. Ghose.

"You have not been elected. I appeal to the delegates," retorted Tilak.

Once again let us look up the inimitable Nevinson:

Uproar drowned the rest. With folded hands Mr. Tilak faced the audience. On either side of him young Moderates sprang to their feet, wildly gesticulating vengeance. Shaking their fists and yelling to the Chair, they clamoured to hurl him down the step of the platform. Behind him Dr. Ghose mounted the table, and, ringing an unheard bell, harangued the storm in shrill, agitated, unintelligible denunciations. Restraining the rage of the Moderates, ingeminating peace if ever man ingeminated, Mr. Gokhale, sweet-natured even in extremes, stood beside his old opponent, flinging out both arms to protect him from the threatened onset. But Mr. Tilak asked for no protection. He stood there with folded arms, defiant, calling on violence to do its worst, calling on violence to move him, for he would move for nothing else in hell or heaven. In front, the white-clad audience roared like a tumultuous sea.

Suddenly something flew through the air—a shoe!—a Mahratta shoe, reddish leather, pointed toe, sole studded with lead! It struck Surendranath Banerjea on the cheek; it cannoned off upon Sir Ferozeshah Mehta. It flew, it fell, and, as at a given signal, white waves of turbaned men surged up the escarpment of the platform. Leaping, climbing, hissing the breath of fury, brandishing long sticks, they came, striking any head that looked to them Moderate, and in another moment, between brown legs standing upon the green-baize table, I caught glimpses of the Indian National Congress dissolving in chaos. Like Goethe at the battle of Valmy, I could have said that today marks the beginning of a new era, and you can say that you were present at it.

Nevinson was not totally wrong. It was indeed the beginning of a new era. ("The Congress is Dead—Long Live the Congress" was the headline in Surendranath's daily, *The Bengalee*.) Next day the Nationalists held their conference in a large courtyard—and they streamed in as "silent crowds". Nevinson observes, "Grave and silent, I think without saying a single word, Mr. Aurobindo Ghose took the Chair and sat unmoved, with far-off eyes, as one who gazes at futurity. In clear, short sentences, without eloquence or passion, Mr. Tilak spoke till the stars shone out and someone kindled a lantern at his side."

Nevinson travelled with the delegates by train. He records that each station rang with the shout: "Down with the Moderates!" Sri Aurobindo and Tilak were

hailed as the harbingers of a new age.

Lt.-Governor Fuller, accused of inefficiency, had to go. Curzon too resigned and left for home because of some difference with the authorities in London. Sri Aurobindo was implicated in what is famous as the Alipore Conspiracy Case and spent a year in jail, in solitary confinement, for the greater part of that time, but setting out on a splendid spiritual odyssey in his consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo's trial, conducted in the court of Mr. Beachcroft who was his classmate at Cambridge and second only to him in academic excellence, had several serious moments when the brilliant defence lawyer, C. R. Das (later the celebrated Deshbandhu) or the prosecution lawyer, Mr. Norton, a barrister specially brought from London for the purpose, argued or probed the witnesses. But here is a lighter moment when a policeman is being examined by Mr. Das. Lighter, but it presents the popular perception of the politics of the Moderates.

DAS: Up to what standard did you read?

WITNESS: I read up to the Entrance-failure. (Laughter)

JUDGE: Up to the standard of Entrance-failure! (Renewed laughter)

DAS: Who are Moderates?

WITNESS: Moderates are those who are always on the side of the Government.

DAS: Extremists?

WITNESS: Extremists are those who attend meetings.

DAS: At Nagpore Moderates do not attend meetings?

WITNESS: No.

JUDGE: Perhaps there are none! (Laughter)

### **The Most Dangerous Man behind Swadeshi**

Mr. Norton resented that "Aurobindo was treated with the reverence of a king wherever he had gone. As a matter of fact, he was regarded as the leader not merely of Bengal but of the whole country".

No wonder that Sri Aurobindo's acquittal should worry Lord Minto, who succeeded Curzon as the Governor-General. "He is the most dangerous man we have to deal with at present and he has great influence with the student class," he wrote to Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India.

While Minto was trying to convince Morley about the justification of somehow deporting Sri Aurobindo, the latter had quietly left for the French colony of Pondicherry. He had seen India's freedom as inevitable. Now he must move to pastures new—in quest of the passage to man's freedom from "inconscience" and elevation to a higher phase in evolution—for articulating what was his inner realisation: the prospect of man's transformation into a new race. The one academic historian who saw Sri Aurobindo *vis-à-vis* the struggle for freedom in a new light was Tara Chand: For Sri Aurobindo, says the historian, "the Indian struggle for independence was

essentially an expression of the urge of the spirit for self-realisation. The spirit had a dual aspect—collectively as the nation and severally as its components the individuals...”

Sri Aurobindo had figured in the House of Commons more than once even before the memorable debate on him in 1910. For example, on 5 August 1909, Mr. J. D. Rees asserted that although deporting without trial was autocratic, Sri Aurobindo had to be deported as he commanded a great sway over the youth. “In order to make the people of the East realise that their rulers had power, it was essential to use it autocratically in grave and critical situations.”

On 7 April 1910, Sir Ramsay Macdonald, then the leader of the Labour Party, referring to a news item in *The Times* (London) that a warrant had been issued against Sri Aurobindo for an article in the *Karmayogin*, demanded to know its content. But the Under Secretary of State, Mr. Montagu, said that his own knowledge too was limited to the news in *The Times*. Sir Ramsay repeated his question a week later, again only to meet with a confession of ignorance on the part of the Treasury Bench. There were heated exchanges between Sir Ramsay and Mr. Rees—the latter too eager to bring Sri Aurobindo “to justice”.

But it was on 28 August that Sir Ramsay Macdonald made his grand speech outlining the life and the political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. It was probably for the first time ever that an Indian leader was prominently projected, and by no less a person than the most eminent parliamentarian of the day and the future Prime Minister of Britain. (It is surprising and sad that the Indian chroniclers of our freedom movement have never referred to this memorable debate.)

Since the government could not produce a copy of the so-called seditious article, Sir Ramsay himself flashed a copy of the *Karmayogin* and read the important parts of the article, challenging the Government to show where sedition lay. He asserted, “Surely, to any man who reads this article as it was meant to be read, the meaning is perfectly clear and Mr. Aurobindo Ghose, as is perfectly well known by those who have followed his action and his writings, sincerely believes that the nationalist movement of which he is the head for the time being at any rate, or was till quite recently, is the one guarantee that there shall be no violence done in India and he blames the officials who have suppressed the free expression of the nationalist sentiment for the unfortunate circumstances which have led to murder and death and executions which everyone deploras.”

Mr. Keir Hardie, the Founder of the Labour Party, also spoke at length in support of Sir Ramsay.

In the course of his speech, Sir Ramsay disclosed that he had met Sri Aurobindo in India and was convinced that Sri Aurobindo “would not be very much longer in the affairs of the world”.

Only one zealous member interrupted Sir Ramsay to ask if this article had been written in Bengali and if the author was not a Bengali, to which Sir Ramsay replied,

“The article is in most excellent English. Mr. Aurobindo Ghose could no more write an article in Bengali than I could.”

The last time the House of Commons heard about Sri Aurobindo on this issue was on 21 February 1911. Mr. O’Grady asked “whether the publisher of the *Karmayogin* was prosecuted for issuing the article by Mr. Aurobindo Ghose, for writing which a warrant was issued against Mr. Ghose, whether that trial resulted in the acquittal of the publisher on the ground that the article was not seditious, and whether the government had now withdrawn the warrants issued in connection with the article.”

This was Mr. Montagu’s reply: “The answer to the first part of my Hon. Friend’s question is Yes; to the second, Yes; and to the third, Yes.”

Lord Minto’s term as Viceroy was coming to end. But he never believed that Sri Aurobindo meant to give up politics. He wrote in his last letter to Morley, “I hand the concern of Aurobindo to you. I cannot think what your information may be about his conversion. I can only say my information was very direct indeed and his intimate friends believed him to be quite beyond reclamation.”

### Lesson of the Century

The Partition of Bengal, “a settled fact”, was unsettled in 1911 through an announcement by King Edward VII, along with that of Kolkata losing the status of the nation’s capital in favour of Delhi. What did Curzon’s engineering of the partition of Bengal and the anti-Partition movement achieve? Curzon’s immediate action apparently failed, but his motive did not. The venom of communalism infused into the *élan vital* of the nation worked viciously and divided the country in 1947—opening a Pandora’s box of intermittent bloodshed, multiple refugee problems, the Bangladesh war, infiltrations, the Kashmir imbroglio, a dusky atmosphere of suspicions, violence, insecurity, massive waste of men, resources, energy, so on and so forth.

The devilish consequences of partition continue their macabre boogie, but can we say it had triumphed? The answer is a resounding NO.

The very basic philosophy on which the nation was divided—the “Two Nations” theory—proved utterly wrong and pitifully false. If Muslims were one nation—as Mr. Jinnah so very uncompromisingly asserted—his Pakistan would not have been torn apart, resulting in yet another partition.

Hostile forces, sporting deceptive religious, social and political nomenclature, can infiltrate and exploit any ideal, as long as man is a creature of ignorance. We must learn the hard way that unity is a must even for our survival, not to speak of the higher goals of happiness and progress. To quote from the message of Sri Aurobindo on the occasion of the 15 August 1947:

The unification of mankind is under way, though only in an imperfect initiative, organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum

is there and, if the experience of history can be taken as a guide, it must inevitably increase until it conquers.... A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For in any case the unification is a necessity in the course of Nature, an inevitable movement and its achievement can be safely foretold.... India, if she remains divided, will not herself be sure of her safety. It is therefore to the interest of all that union should take place. Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness could prevent it. Against that, it has been said, even the gods strive in vain; but it cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions; even it may be such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship and a voluntary fusion of cultures may appear in the process of the change and the spirit of nationalism losing its militancy may find these things perfectly compatible with the integrity of its own outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

The immediate positive contribution of the Partition of Bengal, of course, was the Swadeshi movement which matured into the final phase of the fight for freedom of the country and achieved it. Despite all our weaknesses exposed by our freedom, it would have been a terribly embarrassing proposition for India to have stepped into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as a colony.

MANOJ DAS

(Courtesy: *The Statesman Festival Annual 2004*. The Article is an expanded version of the keynote address delivered by the author at the Centenary celebration of the Anti-Partition Movement, organised by the Asiatic Society, at Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Kolkata, on 7 August 2004.)

*Already before the Swadeshi movement the divergence of ideals had begun to declare itself and in several parts of India strong sections had grown up who were already dissatisfied with mendicancy and with the haphazard formation and methods of the Congress. Until recently the only course which seemed left to men of this persuasion was to hold entirely aloof from the Congress or else to attend it without taking any prominent part in its deliberations.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

(*Bande Mataram*, CWSA, Vol. 6, pp. 179-80)

## ON SUBTLE PERCEPTION

MAN does not see with the eyes alone, hear with the ears alone, smell with the nose alone, savour with the tongue alone or feel the touch with the skin alone. Nor does he understand even with the mind which tries to interpret things by forging a relation amongst the information supplied to it by these sense organs. Let us first take up the case of the sense organs. If these sense organs were the sole indispensable means of cognition, then how is it that when one is asleep, the exact scenario of one's waking state is repeated in one's dream? There is no noise outside, yet one hears sounds, words and tunes in the same manner; there is no aromatic substance near by, yet one smells the same pungent odour; there is indeed no delicious food around, yet how one relishes it; there are no near and dear ones close by, yet their touch really thrills us. Why do these happen? The external senses are not functioning at all and yet how is the effect of their functioning felt so vividly? It may be said that this is all but the action of memory. But, just try when you are awake, to feel again as vividly as before one of your sensations already experienced only with the help of memory! Well, you can't! Such an exercise of memory is nothing but an effort of the imagination—it lacks the distinctness, the infallibility, the surety of the waking state. If you say that this memory is the memory stored by us or the after-sensation,—well, what does it signify? In a way, it is nothing but a repetition of what we have stated above, because this remark only admits that the memory may be stored or the sensations of the waking state may remain accumulated at a certain place and from there they can, without the help of any external instruments, emerge again in their pristine form. Therefore, the conclusion is that apart from the external sense organs there is a storehouse of sensations at a certain place. But some questions arise: where is that storehouse? what sort of a storehouse is it? why and in what manner do the sensations keep accumulating there? and how do they reappear without any external shock?

Is the human brain this storehouse? If it is the brain that is the sole instrument, then whence comes the difference between imagining a sensation experienced in the waking state and re-experiencing the same sensation in a dream?—because both these activities are located in the brain. It may be said that the first cause of this difference is that, in a dream, the sensations of denser and deeper layers of the brain become awake and rise to the surface and that is why they are so distinct. The second cause is that in the waking state other irrelevant sensations coming from outside try to efface and obscure the sensations hidden within the brain. But if it would have been only a matter of re-portrayal of known sensations, then this conclusion could have been somehow accepted. But it is certainly not that. Yet another phenomenon we come across is that it is not always the sensations already experienced that come to our perception, we also perceive completely new sensations which the external senses have never brought or can never bring. It is, as it were, an unrelated and independent creation of sensations somewhere within. The novel and strange examples of sensual



actions, which the Psychical Science of today has collected and is collecting, are no longer matters that can be ignored. It has already been proved beyond doubt that in a state of hypnosis, in a kind of trance, man can experience amazing sensations without the help of the external senses, without any previously known sensation. Speaking or writing fluently and impromptu in a language completely unknown, debating and discussing smoothly an unknown matter, seeing and hearing something remote, restoring the past, foretelling exactly the future—even diehard scientists cannot deny vehemently the possibility of such things. Only those sensations which have come in contact with the external sense organs can reach the brain, but through which passage do the unknown and unfamiliar sensations enter the brain?

Though we think that phenomena like clairvoyance, clairaudience, etc. are of an extraordinary nature and are a monopolistic speciality of the Psychical Society, they are not so in reality. These are matters of daily occurrence. They are the common property of more or less all men. We do not feel the existence of these things because we do not pay any attention to these phenomena. Had we paid attention to them, we would have found so many sensations entering us without our knowledge, crossing as it were the very doors of our external senses. In our ordinary life the phenomenon called *Premonition* is not as rare as we consider it to be. How much of the world of our daily life is represented by this narrow world of knowledge offered by the external senses? It is by and large a world of conjecture, a world of assumption, isn't it? How much of our knowledge about men, things and happenings is based on scientific observation and experiment? Is not the information supplied by the gross senses mostly superficial, partial, fragmented and incomplete? These senses are as though only a refuge, a support or a pretext. The true faculty that builds the world for us is something else, something beyond these senses. This is not simply an imagination, for if it were so, we would not have been able to move even a step forward in our daily activities; we would have erred always. Is there then a kind of truth-perception even behind the imagination?

The scientists have nowadays started speaking of the radioactivity of the microcells of the brain. The basic idea of this new theory is that each of our thoughts, each of our feelings raises a vibration in our brain and as a result of that vibration subtle electric waves spread out in all directions. Like the electromagnetic waves of wireless telegraphy these waves too, generated in the brain, can travel easily through the air to faraway places and, as a matter of fact, they do thus travel. Not only that, the brain can also receive into itself all these waves coming from far-off places; in other words, the brain is not only a generating station but it is a receiving station as well. In the realm of thoughts and feelings this type of continually enlarging electric field is spread in all directions. Therefore, the thoughts and feelings of one person easily pass on to another person and vice-versa. The thoughts and feelings which I consider, more often than not, as mine may in reality be those of another person and may be coming from another place. Apart from the intermediary of gross external

senses, there exists a direct contact, a direct exchange between one brain and another.

We say that even this exchange of electric waves between one brain and another is only an effect, not the real cause. It is the vehicle of yet another subtler and greater force. Neither the material sky nor ether but yet another subtler firmament spreads, envelops the whole creation. We are not talking about the transcendent spiritual firmament—that is a very distant thing; we are talking about the spiritual firmament of the life-force which is stationed just above the material or electric force as conceived by the West. The realisation of the transcendental spiritual space comes by virtue of a sadhana of integral knowledge, but the experience of the spiritual firmament of the life-force is more or less a thing of daily occurrence which always remains awake behind all the physical sensations of man. The transcendental space is something beyond the ken of human consciousness. On the one hand, this space of spiritual consciousness and, on the other, the material space of the West charged with electricity—between these two lies the supra-physical firmament of vital consciousness which connects the two and builds a passage between the two. The hidden force or the master of the senses is called in the Vedas *devatā*—isn't it?

The part or the status of a thing with which the gross senses make us acquainted represents the broader material structure—it is, as it were, the photograph of a thing, that is, only a sketch of lines of its external appearance; we do not get here the living touch of the thing. Whenever a thing, whatever it may be, comes in contact with any of our senses we get not only the knowledge of the outer form of the thing but also at that very moment we grow intimately familiar with it, a relationship of joy develops instantly—a thing outside the scope of the perception by the senses. When a tree or an animal or a bird or anything whatsoever, even something very trivial, is noticed by us, it is not just its physical form that we see but our life-waves too surge up in the same rhythm as its life-waves or there takes place an invisible and intimate exchange. And for this reason, whether we remember its form or not, a kind of a faint feeling, an impression of a perception, another kind of name and form remain imprinted somewhere inside us. Haven't we noticed on many occasions that when we try to remember something seen before, its external appearance, despite being on the point of surging up, does not flash upon our mind—it springs up only with a kind of a subtle body?

As a matter of fact, the true being of a thing is this subtle body. The material body is only an extension or a projection of this very subtle body. European science too is alluding to something of this nature. What we call matter is not absolutely inert; on analysis we find that it is actually radiant and that gross matter is only a result, a solidified form of this radiant matter. However, European science is still unable to understand precisely the relationship between this radiant matter and consciousness. Some have even tried to suggest that it is not unconscious and that it contains within it a presence of consciousness. It is exactly this thing that Bergson wanted to call Mind-Energy, but be it radiant matter or mind-energy, it is the



manifestation of yet another subtle force. A special property of this thing is that there is in it an order of free movement whereas all gross material things, as they appear, are isolated, each one remaining detached with a hard covering. A mutual exchange takes place between these two as if in an indirect manner, overcoming the natural barrier. However, there is a single conscious-force holding together all objects which connects one to another effortlessly—it is like the play of varied waves upon the surface of a pool.

When we take our stand on this level, we get acquainted with the things by virtue of a union attained through a spontaneous and direct flow of life. It is, as if, at the very outset that we get a subtle touch of the thing (that is, we get a sensation of that place where all the senses have mingled), thereafter we get a particular form of the thing with the help of a particular sense organ. Kalidas said: *sambandha-mābhāṣanapūrvam* (first greeting and then relationship) but, here we see just the opposite: first the relationship and then the greeting. Here there is, as if, no separation between time and space—all things happen in the eternal present.

It is in this subtle world that we live at every moment. It is by our subtle perceptions that we, in reality, get acquainted with the material world. It is on these subtle perceptions that our gross sensations depend; after the necessary adaptations the latter present before us the former. However, our spontaneous relation with this subtle world has not succeeded in becoming active and clear. The reason behind it is that we, goaded by multitudinous activities, let ourselves be carried away by the senses turned outwards; we give them too much importance and we do not try enough to bring to our notice the truth and the force acting behind them. In this age in particular, we have become much too shortsighted, not because of the fact that we have made material success our goal, but because we have learnt to repose our confidence excessively on the intelligence or the logical faculty. In fact, the main adversary of the subtle perception which we are discussing is this logical faculty. Logical faculty does not generally allow vital sensitivity, feelings or the sense of appreciation to blossom. It simply collects material facts of sensorial knowledge provided by the gross senses and tries to build an artificial relationship within them. The spontaneous and lively expression that is ingrained in a thing cannot be found by dry and drab analysis—it has to be experienced. This experience, however, may be of various kinds, at various levels; it may get tainted by imagination, personal desire, but despite this possibility of error, it is here that one can find the possibility of real truth also.

The basic deficiency of our existing system of education lies precisely here. This system of education wants to sharpen our brain but it is not aware of the thing called vital sensitivity. To practise appropriate application of the gross senses is the new discovery of the most modern system of education, its only purpose is to rectify the intelligence which is logical, to keep it linked with the reality. But by this means, as a result, we also make the very structure of the brain all the more lifeless. Before

we learn to use our senses we must discover their original power, for it is the awakening of the subtle perception animating the gross sensations that is the foundation of all education. In the present educational system we search intensely for the external facts only and we want to enlist them *in toto*—but when we try to extract some general rules out of them, we invariably land ourselves in an utter mess and end up groping in vain for the truth. We are prone to forget this simple fact that it is not possible to collect pure facts—the collector comes across only those facts which are in conformity with his own bent of mind, or they get coloured even beforehand by the colour of his own mind. Therefore, what is needed is to awaken and purify this inner temperament. That this age of ours belongs to the collectors, i.e., to the scholars and archaeologists, that there is such a dearth of connoisseurs at present, that so many varieties of dictionaries are being brought out but poetic creations are not coming up in that proportion is all due to this very reason.

We have said in the beginning that man does not acquire knowledge with the help of the mind. Mind is that faculty which is based on the gross sensations. It is these sensations that it presents in a well-arranged and orderly fashion. The mould of the mind is cast with these gross senses. If the mind alone could give us knowledge and details about the world, then we could not have recognised the things lying outside the perception of the gross senses. We could not have understood man's deeper thoughts and feelings, we would have seen only some outer movements of his limbs. We could not have grasped the meaning of a thing or of an event, we would have got only a few external inklings, indications or signs. We would have moved along depending only on guesswork; we would have got acquainted with the form but as to the manner of formation we would have remained totally blind. But that is not the case in reality. We do not just see, we do not just understand merely the outer nature of a thing, for some sort of a subtle contact connects us with the heart of a thing. That is why we do not count only on the senses in order to recognise something—be it a man, a thing or an event—otherwise that acquaintance would never have been completed. With just one or two touches of the senses we get as if fully acquainted with the entire man, the whole thing, the whole event. That acquaintance may not be always perfect, but on account of that, it cannot be said that there is no truth in it.

As a matter of fact, that this kind of acquaintance cannot become vivid and true is due to our perverse nature—especially in this era of material science. It is with scepticism that we look at the facts of subtle perceptions, we do not want to present them in a pure and intelligible manner. Whenever there arises a doubt, we immediately take resort to our gross senses as the touchstone of truth—it is in this gross body that we want to capture the subtle thing. That is why the real nature of the subtle cannot blossom forth. The sense-oriented mind expresses itself chiefly through logical intelligence. Material science has made this logical intelligence its only instrument of research. In order to reach a conclusion we want facts and more facts. In order to know whether there is life or consciousness in the tree, we are creating so many

types of instruments. But what do we get thereby? We compare the external signs of our own life and consciousness with those of the tree. In order to find out whether animals have reflective intelligence or not, we compare the similarity or the dissimilarity of the results between man and animal. It is for this reason that we hear many a great thinker saying at times that the animal is a mere automaton despite the results being similar. That is why even after observing a purposeful creative intelligence working in this world, we cannot believe that there is behind it a consciousness of the Supreme Person [*Virāṭ Puruṣa*].

Even the plants have feelings of happiness and sorrow, even the birds and the beasts have knowledge and intelligence, there is a God who is the Lord of the world—all these so-called common feelings of common men are not based on scientific theories (at least common men do not know the scientific theories), but, for that, no one can assert that all those feelings are only figments of imagination. These feelings have not come through a scientific analysis but rather through another subtle manner and that is why these feelings are so common and universal through the ages and in all countries. Still these are only words of very general subtle perceptions. Who will ascertain how many others have been lost and are in the process of being lost, how many more have not been able to bloom at all by the formidable onslaught of logical intelligence?

Herein also lies the reason why we do not find amongst the followers of religious founders high-thinking men endowed with sharp logical intelligence and why we find rather the very opposite, men of a very ordinary level. Logical intelligence dries up and destroys the lively feelings of man. It is only in simple people that the field of subtle feelings may be more fertile. Without an overt expression of these subtle feelings, religion or spirituality cannot exist. As the logical intelligence of a scientist is based on the gross senses, so is the truth of a spiritual seeker based on subtle perceptions. That is why one can never reach the domain of spirituality through scientific process. But that does not mean that there is no utility of sensory experiences, of logical intelligence and of materialistic science; their utility lies in detecting the wrong subtle perceptions, that is to say, in preventing imaginative sensations from being considered as true subtle perceptions. The function of the gross sensations is negative, corrective, but even this function is effected within a certain limit. Detection of a real error, establishment of a truth avoiding error are also dependent on subtle perceptions.

However, there are again various levels of subtle perceptions. At the bottom of all lies the spontaneous sensation of the vital being called Instinct—it is when a light of consciousness from above falls on this sensation that it becomes truly subtle, a variety of knowledge finds expression in it. Then we see not only the form of a thing but we get also its true nature; we not only analyse its physical structure but we get as well the playful movements of the force of the soul. In ordinary life, this subtle sensitivity remains mixed, first, with logical intelligence and secondly, with the

sensations resulting from the senses and physical activities. As we put greater emphasis on the latter, we cannot get at the source of their true power. We get some glimpse of it in the poets, but we decry it as imagination, grand and beautiful—may be the poets themselves do the same thing. It is only among the mystics that we find an endeavour to keep it alive, though there too there has not been an attempt to strictly test the truth and the falsehood.

Nowadays, as we are delving into the origin of the material world, we are compelled to move towards this subtle truth. But we will never be able to reach there if we continue to cling to Matter. In order to rise from the grip of Matter to the Spirit what is needed is a totally new vision, a conversion of the *ādhāra*—not by the utterly extroverted methods of a scientist but by a calm and joyous ingoing of the *ādhāra*. The Psychic School of Europe wants to impose the methods of the material world even in the workings of the subtle world—this is a blunder on its part. The subtle world has to be known by the subtle faculties; therefore, what is needed first and foremost is the awakening of this subtle faculty. For this purpose, yogic means have been prescribed in India.

Hence, in this age, we require scientists of a new brand. They will map out not only the workings of the gross physical world, but outline the map of the subtle world as well. They should not hold the material workings of the things as fundamental, but rather inquire into the movement of life and consciousness of the things. When this is mastered, external workings will be understood in their true perspective and they will reveal a new significance.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Courtesy SACAR, for this essay taken from *Education and Initiation*, translated by Amarnath Dutta from the original Bengali, *Shikkha O Dikha*, first published in 1926.)

*But the subliminal self has not at all this subconscious character: it is in full possession of a mind, a life-force, a clear subtle-physical sense of things. It has the same capacities as our waking being, a subtle sense and perception, a comprehensive extended memory and an intensive selecting intelligence, will, self-consciousness; but even though the same in kind, they are wider, more developed, more sovereign. And it has other capacities which exceed those of our mortal mind because of a power of direct awareness of the being, whether acting in itself or turned upon its object, which arrives more swiftly at knowledge, more swiftly at effectivity of will, more deeply at understanding and satisfaction of impulse.*

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 18, pp. 559-60)

## MOMENTS, ETERNAL

*(Continued from the issue of January 2005)*

So many memories of my life in Feni come to me. Even in those days there were so many facilities for sports and theatre in that small town. Father himself used to look after these activities. In the college gymnasium we had almost all types of body-building equipment. There was a huge ground where we could practise even athletics. There was a football field and a tennis court. Teachers and students played tennis together. In wintertime we would all sit together after the game and eat oranges. As we little ones picked up the balls, we too were entitled to a share of the oranges. Badminton was played on four-five courts. We would all spend the evening together in great fun and merriment. And what to say about the football tournament time! On days when college and school students would have their football matches there was excitement in the whole town. When a goal was scored, at once cries of 'Goal! Goal!' rent the air and how the boys would dance, their chests thrust to the sky! We little ones would scream of 'Goal! Goal!' whenever the school students scored. The funniest part of it all was one night when our elder brother, Saroj, flung his leg in sleep and yelled 'Goal! Goal!' The whole town of Feni got all charged up during the football season.

There were also arrangements for playing hockey and cricket. Father used to play these two games with the boys. What exciting games there would be in the afternoon! When father joined the game the boys would play with a lot of gusto. Father also played tennis very well. When the Mother started playing tennis here, on father's birthday (11<sup>th</sup> July 1948) She invited him to come and play a game with Her. She told Tapati and me:

"Both of you, come to the Tennis court. I'm going to play tennis with your father today."

We were both delighted. We went to the Tennis court and sat next to Vasudha. Father played beautifully that day. He had this opportunity of playing with the Mother for a few days. Later, he got so busy with the work at the Press that it was no longer possible for him to be at the Tennis court by four o'clock. Work for father was tapasya.

Father himself taught acting to college students. He would enact every character's part to show how it was to be done. He was extraordinary. The day the final performance was to take place, father became unbelievably busy. He directed everything, including how the screens and the stage were to be set up. He would also do the make-up for each actor and help them dress up. I have seen father work hard, silently, hour after hour. We little ones were allowed to go everywhere and that is why we could judge father's amazing acting ability. It is very rare to come across such a talented artist. Manoj and Arati acquired their acting ability from father.

Father's acting as Savitri suddenly comes to mind. In our uncle's house (Niyogi's

house in Patgram) for every *Puja* my uncles along with others would enact a play. Rehearsals would go on for many days. On one occasion a play based on the story of Savitri and Satyavan was selected. Father was given the role of Savitri. In those days boys used to take up female roles as well. Savitri is speaking to the lord of Death, Yama: “You have to give back Satyavan to me.” I was not old enough to understand the dialogue between Savitri and Yama. But father and Moni-Mama (Subodh Niyogi) played their parts with such extraordinary skill that a deep impression was made on my young mind. When the Mother gave me Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* on one of my birthdays, I suddenly remembered that scene and the dialogue between Yama and Savitri... I now had the opportunity of reading the dialogue between the lord of Death and Savitri in Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*.

Father was very capable in all kinds of ordinary jobs as well... gardening, growing fruits and vegetables were daily activities. He even grew potatoes extensively in his garden. The house was filled with flowers and fruits. He would mix the soil himself, prepare the compost and even water the trees. He was truly a hard-working man. He would climb on top of the roof and lay the thatch along with the workers; he would chip and polish bamboo to make fences. The workers were thrilled to see father working with them and they would praise him highly. He was even capable of mending shoes!

Now when he sat down to read or write he was a completely different man. He would read with such total concentration that we would forget that father was at home. At college, while teaching he would pace up and down on the platform. He could explain the most complex problems of philosophy so simply that the students would listen to his discourses in rapt attention. Father had an inborn gift for discourse. That is why the philosophy classes were so interesting. His vast erudition and his various skills in work had made his life supremely successful and complete.

An amusing incident comes to mind...

One day Sri Aurobindo told father:

“Naren, start doing yoga.”

Father was still quite young then. All that father knew about yoga was that after leaving all earthly preoccupations one sat in meditation with eyes closed. Father said to Sri Aurobindo:

“I want to do that type of yoga which helps in transforming all the earthly and worldly things, a yoga-sadhana where we don’t need to abandon anything.”

Smilingly Sri Aurobindo looked at father for some time. Then he gently answered:

“Oh, I see.”

Father was also good at drawing. He had filled a whole notebook with all kinds of portraits of gods and goddesses and people. That notebook is, unfortunately, lost... On the table in father’s *Puja* room there used to be a painting of the Mother’s Feet done by him. The Feet had anklets and in front of them there were some lotus flowers.



It was exceedingly beautiful. Just looking at that painting the heart would overflow with love for the Mother. It is when I came here for the first time that I had the privilege of a Darshan of those Feet of the Mother during the evening Pranam on the first day. The Mother's Feet, I saw, were indeed adorned with broad anklets.

Father's painting of the Mother's Feet has also been lost. Those Feet and the lotus flowers were a lovely example of the gifted artist's work.

Father was a most loving and affectionate human being. That is why he never wanted to become an Ashramite all by himself, leaving behind his brothers, sisters and us. When Chhoto-kaka was working as a college professor in Feni, in the evening father would pat his little brother and tenderly ask:

"Sachin Das, what are you reading?"

Like a little boy, he would show father the lessons he was preparing. Every evening, father used to give him some new things to read. At that time Chhoto-kaka was preparing for the Indian Civil Service exam. On the other hand, father's attention was focused on the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's Feet. I can almost even now hear his calling out every night with all his heart, "Sri Aurobindo... Sri Aurobindo."

He was engaged in sadhana from the very beginning of his life. He used to write about his experiences to Sri Aurobindo and had the privilege of first coming here in 1925. In those days, Sri Aurobindo would spend some time with the sadhaks, discussing their sadhana and give them advice. Father kept notes of all those valuable conversations with Him. Father never talked about his realisations in sadhana or even referred to the conversations he had had with Sri Aurobindo. Manoj discovered this notebook by accident while arranging his cupboard full of books. How many letters from Sri Aurobindo have been lost! During my father's time matters related to sadhana were never talked about. He never told anybody about any of his experiences. Towards the end of his life he surprisingly came out with an experience or two. On 11<sup>th</sup> July 1994, on the occasion of his centenary, Manoj read out some things from that notebook. It was just marvellous!

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I had just come to the Ashram. When I received news of my passing the exam, I ran to the Mother. Oh, I was so happy!

"Mother I have passed the exam!"

She held both my hands and said:

"Go to Benjamin tomorrow itself. You will start learning French with him. He is a wonderful teacher of French pronunciation."

The Mother had in a flash organised everything. And that is how I began my French lessons. I went to Benjamin the following day. Benjamin was a Tamil gentleman, a sweet, humourous sort of man. As he sat down to teach he said:

"Repeat exactly whatever I say, even if you don't understand."

He started with: "*Sans le Divin, la vie est une illusion douloureuse. Avec lui*

*tout est félicité.*" (Without the Divine life is a painful illusion, with the Divine, all is bliss.)

I kept pronouncing the words exactly as he did and kept telling myself: "How will I remember anything without understanding?"

Mr. Benjamin said:

"Now, let me explain."

I stared at him, slightly perplexed.

"You'll understand later," he continued, "what an invaluable thought I have taught you through our first French lesson."

For many years now these words have come to my mind again and again:

*Without the Divine life is a painful illusion, with the Divine, all is bliss.*

After remembering these words of the Mother that Benjamin had taught me, I suddenly recollect a great change that took place in my life. I was very young then, hardly nine or ten. One day, my elder brother who himself was eleven or twelve told me:

"You know these parents of ours are in fact not our real parents."

I was slightly frightened and I retorted:

"Don't say such things, Dada. It won't do any good."

Then I asked him:

"Who are our parents then?"

"Father's father, his father, then his father, again his father..." my brother drawled on, "is there really an end to this?"

"Who is our real father, then?" I asked.

Pointing his finger at the sky, he said:

"There, there our real father sits. God is our real father."

Hardly had he finished saying this that he began drawling again:

"Mother's mother, her mother, then her mother, again her mother," then pointing his finger at the sky said:

"There sits our real Mother. The Divine Mother is our real Mother."

Listening to my brother, I was a little disheartened.

"Then how can we meet our real parents?" I enquired.

My brother, that little boy, spoke like a wise old man:

"By prayer. We need to pray everyday. Then one day we shall surely meet them."

I looked at the open field and realised that evening had fallen. I felt terribly helpless. From that day I would stare at the open field in the evening, sit still and think about why we were born, what work the Divine Mother had sent us to the Earth for, why man suffered so much, where man went after death. Oh, so many questions! And they would all crop up at that time!

On growing up when I read *Anandamath* I found almost the same questions there. Almost every human being comes face to face with the question: "What is this life for?"



Right from childhood all these questions would gnaw at me. There was no such thing as joy then.

I started growing up, but I just could not get any peace. Why have I come upon the earth? Why is man born? Where does he go after death? Why does man suffer so much? Why? Why? Why?

And then, quite unexpectedly, father brought Tapati and me to the Ashram in 1941. For the Darshan of 15<sup>th</sup> August, I saw our Eternal Mother and Father sitting side by side on this earth of dust, the very ones that Dada had indicated in the sky with his finger.

During the Darshan, in a flash all thought or questions vanished. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had filled my heart with deep devotion and love.

After the Darshan we went back to Feni. Every evening, I would sit silently facing the wide open field. Those questions continued to haunt me. As soon as evening fell I would begin to feel helpless.

In 1944 when I finally settled down here, the Mother offered me the “Nanteuil” house to stay. There was nobody around. All the rooms were closed. Except for Ambubhai and two other people, nobody else stayed at “Nanteuil”. We did not meet anybody at any time. Everyone was busy with his or her work. After the evening meditation at the Ashram, I used to return to this big deserted house and sit on the outer staircase. The War [World War II] was on then. There was no light anywhere in the streets. Total darkness reigned everywhere. In such an atmosphere those same questions of my childhood would overwhelm my mind. I don’t know how long I would sit there in lonely silence. The mind felt burdened. One morning, when I went to the Mother to receive Her flower-blessings, She took both my hands very tenderly and spoke to me like a very close friend:

“Why do you sit and worry about all those things in the evening?”

And She started enumerating all my questions one by one. I was totally new to the Ashram then. I kept staring at her, a little bewildered. She also knows our questions and worries, thus I saw quite an unimaginable aspect of the Mother that day.

“Don’t think about all this,” the Mother continued, “Sri Aurobindo and I have come this time to protect you from the grip of all pain and sorrow. We will answer all your questions. Put all your faith in us and be happy. The responsibility is ours and Sri Aurobindo is there, I am there. What need you fear, then? Remain always happy. Fill yourself with *ananda*.”

Listening to these reassuring words from the Mother all those questions that used to eat me up from childhood dissolved into thin air in an instant. I looked at the Mother with tear-filled eyes. She placed the flower-blessings into my hands. I bowed to her with my heart full of gratitude and came back home.

I became an entirely new human being after this. I noticed that everything appeared wonderful to me! A huge transformation took place in my life on that day. Sri Aurobindo is there, the Mother is there: What need we fear, then? Bowing at

Their Feet I began a new life.

My elder brother had told me:

“The Divine Mother is our real Mother.”

Quite unexpectedly the truth came out one day from the Mother’s own mouth!

One day, one of my friends scolded her little daughter. When the child went to the Mother she looked a little dejected. The Mother asked:

“What’s wrong with you, darling? Why are you so sad?”

“My mother has scolded me,” she replied.

The Mother very affectionately gave her a lot of flowers and talked to her for a long time. The child’s little heart was filled with joy. When the child’s mother came to the Mother to receive the flower-blessings She told her:

“Please don’t scold children unnecessarily. They are my children. I have sent them to you. I am their real Mother.”

I was greatly perplexed after hearing about this incident. My mind flashed back to that evening in the field when I was sitting with my brother and he told me: “The Divine Mother is our real Mother”.

Who knew that from my brother’s mouth such a clear truth would be revealed? Children can feel deep within themselves a lot of things that we adults cannot even conceive. That is why the Mother loves children so much and has given them so much freedom. I learnt from the Mother Herself that She was indeed our real Mother.

\*

I am suddenly reminded of a strange dream of mine. It was a long time ago. I had just arrived in the Ashram. The Mother had consented to my staying on in the Ashram.

The Mother used to ask me every morning:

“What did you dream last night?”

I would narrate to Her my dreams one after the other. From time to time, the Mother would explain something. She would not let me go until I had finished telling her all my dreams and I too would go on persistently like a good girl.

Here is one dream: One night, while I was sleeping I felt a terrible pain right in the centre of my chest. I saw the Mother putting Her hand into my chest and with intense concentration twisting Her fingers as if She were unscrewing a bottle. I began screaming with pain and told Her:

“Stop, Mother, stop, it hurts! What are You doing? Ah! It really hurts!”

But the Mother was deeply absorbed and untiringly, with great patience, She went on, Her hands inside my chest, operating like a surgeon. I just could not remove the Mother’s hands and kept crying helplessly...

I woke up. First, there was that fear of the patient at the time of an operation and then that feeling of relief and rest when it is over surrounded me. I still felt a little angry with the Mother. But then look at this! When I went to the Mother the

following morning and She held me tenderly and asked me about my dreams of the previous night I just burst out crying!

The Mother kept telling me:

“Softly, softly! Sri Aurobindo is in the next room.”

But I just could not stop. Then, slowly, I managed to tell the Mother about my dream. She smiled gently and said:

“That wasn’t a dream. That was a true happening. I was working inside you. I work like this inside everybody. The part that does not want to receive or is slightly closed, I open it in this way, exactly as you’ve experienced. You know, every night I go to each person. And as you watch pictures in a film, I can see, early in the morning, all the events that happened in the Ashram and what each one did during the whole day.”

I kept staring at the Mother, quite stunned. The Mother started laughing on seeing me in this state and She laughed so much that Her eyes glistened with tears.

And so in this way, day and night, the Mother in Her aspect of *Mahasaraswati* goes on labouring untiringly.

In this context a very amusing incident comes to mind. One morning, a young person from our group went to receive flower-blessings from the Mother. While giving him the flowers the Mother remarked:

“I know everything that you do each day.”

The boy could not believe his ears.

The Mother kept looking at the boy and told him, one after the other, all that had happened. Then She started describing a certain incident and the boy just ran away.

Even now the Mother visits us at night and She saves us from great perils and difficulties. She is truly our Friend in times of danger.

(To be continued)

PRITI DAS GUPTA

(Translated by Maurice Shukla from the original Bengali *Abismaraniya Muhurta*)

*...love is the one emotion in us which can be entirely motiveless and self-existent; love need have no other motive than love. For all our emotions arise either from the seeking after delight and the possession of it, or from the baffling of the search, or from the failure of the delight we have possessed or had thought to grasp; but love is that by which we can enter directly into possession of the self-existent delight of the divine Being. Divine love is indeed itself that possession and, as it were, the body of the Ananda.*

Sri Aurobindo

(The Synthesis of Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 24, p. 559)

## SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from the issue of December 2004)

TODAY man has passed beyond the stage of clans, and tribes, countries and duchies, and has arrived at the nation-state—"the living collective unit of humanity." There are empires, too, but they are not real units. Political exigencies, and dynamic ambitions brought them into existence. Some of them passed away after the First World War, some after the Second, some still linger. Austro-Hungary, that strange combination of the Teuton and the Magyar, split up under outside pressure, never to come back again. The Arab states will never merge into a Turkish empire again. There was no cement of unification in these empires—no soul, so to speak. It is different with the splitting up of the German Empire after the Second War. It was a pure act of tyranny perpetrated for purely selfish reasons by the victors of that war. The spirit of German patriotism, the spirit of the old *Tugendbund* was bound to resuscitate an undivided German State again just as in Greece and Italy the national spirit had survived through centuries of foreign rule and ultimately created the Greek State and the Italian State. Some examples of lesser nations are cited by Sri Aurobindo. "The nation in modern times is practically indestructible, unless it dies from within. Poland, torn asunder and crushed under the heel of three powerful empires, ceased to exist; the Polish nation survived and is once more reconstituted. Alsace after forty years of the German yoke remained faithful to her French nationhood..." Foreign rule has often rendered valuable aid to the process of nation making. "In Russia and England it was the domination of a foreign conquering race which rapidly became a ruling caste and was in the end assimilated and absorbed..."

Generally speaking a distinct group-soul driven by an inner urge takes advantage of outer circumstance and constitutes for itself an organised body. The most remarkable instance of this is the evolution of India. We shall quote a few eloquent lines from Chapter V of *The Ideal of Human Unity*: "Nowhere else have the centrifugal forces been so strong, numerous, complex, obstinate. The mere time taken by the evolution has been prodigious; the disastrous vicissitudes through which it has had to work itself out have been appalling. And yet through it all the inevitable tendency has worked constantly... with the... relentless obstinacy of Nature... and finally, after a struggle enduring through millenniums, has triumphed." The spirit of unification goes back to the earliest times and is typified in the conception of a Chakravarti Raja and the sacrifices, like Aswamedha, that he performed. Indian history is the recital of a long series of empires, national and foreign, each destroyed by centrifugal forces, and yet each bringing the centripetal tendency nearer to its triumph. The essential spirit was there and it prevailed at the end.

So far, then, we see that the nation is immortal. Empires are as yet impermanent

units. A real unit bigger than the nation will possibly emerge in human affairs and the question we have to consider is whether the empire is not that destined unit. Obviously it cannot be that unless it develops into a psychological entity. A political unification may precede and lead to an inner unity. Two ideas have emerged out of the recent world-wide conflicts. They are, on the one hand, a federation of free nations and, on the other, the division of the earth into a few big empires or hegemonies. Whether these two can be combined and made the basis of a new and permanent order is an important point for our consideration.

Empires are primarily of two kinds—the homogeneous natural and the heterogeneous composite. All empires are composite to start with; that is to say, the component parts have some separative sense within the whole. But, in some, these parts develop a psychological sense of oneness and the whole becomes a homogeneous aggregate. Taking the example of Great Britain and Ireland, one finds that Scotland and Wales fairly easily developed a sense of unity with England and became the United Kingdom while the major portion of Ireland could not develop this sense and ultimately seceded and formed an independent State. Germany without Alsace, Schleswig-Holstein and Poland would have been an empire of the homogeneous kind, but with these three regions she belonged to the second kind. Japan would have been a national natural empire without Korea and Formosa, but with these territories she was a looser heterogeneous State. Britain, encumbered by India, Burma, Ceylon, could never form a homogeneous empire, but shorn of these she could easily have developed a group soul, an inner sense of unity—in spite of the French colonists in Canada and the Dutch in South Africa.

A pure form of homogeneous imperial aggregate is hard to find. If an empire is to be changed from a political to a psychological unity, to a natural unity, the system embodied in the United States would be a very good guide for us; it is a system in which a greater unified whole is formed of many State units, each with a sufficient local freedom. Another kind of large aggregate has appeared in political thought which may seem, at first sight, to be a move in the right direction. It has taken the form of a Pan-Slavic, a Pan-Germanic or a Pan-Islamic empire. This species of grouping humanity on a racial or cultural or religious basis is not likely to materialise to an appreciable extent because of its inherent anomalies. These vast aggregations—Slavic or Germanic or Islamic—would always find in their dominions enclaves inhabited by groups heterogeneous to them. These groups would obviously have to be held under sway by political or military force. Consequently this method of forming units larger than the nation is not likely to facilitate human unification. The problem of transforming a political unity into a psychological unity still remains unsolved. Any solution, worth the name, must indicate how to weld into an empire smaller units, heterogeneous in race, language and culture. Until several more decades have passed we shall not be able to say if the Soviet method in Russia is going to be a success. Sri Aurobindo remarks in this connection, "...one is not quite sure whether

this is a permanent reality or only a temporary apparent phenomenon.” The old Chinese Empire, composed of five Kingdoms, was admirably organised, but it is not really a case in point, because the component parts were all Mongolian in race.

The Roman Empire, alone in history, tackled problems such as face us today, and with reasonable success. It lasted several centuries and would have lasted longer if certain mistakes could have been avoided. We have to see if it has any lessons for us in the work of organising large and enduring homogeneous empires. It is often said that barbarian invaders destroyed the Roman Empire. But these hordes could never have broken down its “magnificent solidarity” if the centre of its life had not decayed. We shall come back to this decay presently. Let us now briefly go over the character of this empire organised by the Romans.

The Roman extended his domain by military conquest, but once that conquest was assured, he gave the new territory peace and good government as soon as possible and then started deliberately and systematically to blot out the separative spirit of the conquered peoples by a gradual process of Romanisation. It was not done by any crude or brutal methods but by a peaceful pressure. Not only were the higher posts thrown open to the subject peoples, but we find in history that one Iberian and one Gaul actually assumed the Imperial power. Ultimately full Roman citizenship was bestowed on all subject races in Europe, Asia and Africa, without distinction. The result was that the whole empire became a single-Graeco-Roman unit politically as well as psychologically. Not only this, Rome carefully removed all tangible causes of disruption and developed a passive resistance to all disruptive tendencies. What, then, happened to break up such an empire? We have already hinted that the life at the centre decayed. Sri Aurobindo says, the “empire lived only at the centre and when that centre tended to become exhausted, there was no positive and abounding life throughout the body from which it could be replenished”. It is a notorious fact that towards the end, in order to resist the barbarian invaders, Rome had to raise regiments from the frontier barbarians themselves. The barbarian that destroyed Rome was a living force, while Rome was a principle of death. She had to fall to pieces in order to make room for the vital and religious culture of the Middle Ages.

The latter-day empires like that of the British in India and Ceylon, of the French in Algeria and of the Dutch in Indonesia were of a mixed Roman and Carthaginian type. The only reality in them was organised exploitation and when the subject peoples made up their minds not to submit to any further exploitation they began to crumble down. Britain has turned over a new leaf already. Holland after a great deal of hesitation has granted self-rule to Indonesia. The problems in the colonies are by no means local, affecting any particular nation, they pertain to the exploitation of one continent by another. The methods of Rome and Carthage are dead, never to be revived. It is ridiculous today to base an empire on racial superiority. The failure of Germany has amply demonstrated that. If a psychological unity of many peoples is to be achieved, it would have to be by other methods. It is no use ranting about a superior culture and



trying to impose it on other people. The process of Europeanisation of "natives" has proved to be futile. "The earth is in travail now of one common, large and flexible civilisation for the whole human race..." Only those empires are likely to endure which recognise the new law of interchange and adaptation and reshape themselves accordingly.

The new federal model has begun to evolve already. The question before us is: how is it possible to create a securely federated empire of a vast extent composed of many races and many cultures and how to weld it into a natural and psychological unit? The problem resolves itself into two factors—the form, and the reality which the form is to express. What is this reality which we intend to create in the form of a federal empire? Is it only an enlargement of the Nation-type or is it a new type of group life which must exceed and supercede the nation? The human mind, in the mass, does not readily accept a radical change of its ideal. If by some fiction the change is made to appear like an extension of the old ideal, it is more easily accepted. The French idea of empire is illustrative of this. The possessions of France are, by a fiction, conceived to be not dependencies but colonies of the mother country grouped together as France beyond the seas, "educated to centre their national sentiments around the greatness, glory and loveliness of France the common mother". A fiction like this has great power, especially for certain temperaments. But is it based upon a reasonable parallel, is it true that imperial unity will be only an enlarged national unity? Or is the fiction intended to prepare another realisable fact? There have been many composite nations known in history. Is our federal empire going to create another such composite nation?

Sri Aurobindo has considered in some detail, here, the fully evolved composite British nation and the still evolving composite British empire. The British nation has been formed out of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. As far as the first three are concerned, they have been welded into a psychological unit very successfully, while the major portion of Ireland has gone out of the United Kingdom and formed an independent republic. In the two islands of Britain and Ireland, there was always a geographical necessity of union. The conquest of Ireland and Wales and the union with Scotland were events of history which brought about a political union and satisfied the geographical necessity. This necessity is a relative thing; it can be counteracted by a strong feeling of disunion. From the geographical point of view, Belgium and Holland should have been one. So too Sweden and Norway, Spain and Portugal. In fact, they have been so, at different times, though temporarily. The feeling of disunion, again, can be got over. In the case of Ireland, the British rulers never attempted it. Instead of trying to bridge the gulf between the two peoples they rather emphasised it, in the strongest possible manner. The difference of race and religion was there, but over and above that, "the economic life and prosperity of Ireland were deliberately crushed in the interests of British trade..." And this is a thing which cannot be done with impunity, for, as Sri Aurobindo says, if it does not destroy the oppressed organism,

it provokes necessarily the bitterest revolt and ends in one of Nature's inexorable retaliations. Non-interference and peaceful pressure solved the difficulty in Wales and Scotland, but in Ireland an opposite course was pursued and brought about an opposite effect. While Wales and Scotland were fused into England, secession became inevitable in the case of Ireland. The result, says Sri Aurobindo, may necessitate an eventual remodelling of the British empire. Events have marched apace since, and the idea of a British Commonwealth of Nations has advanced so far that it has been found possible to include the Indian republic—entirely different from the other British units in race, language and culture—in its framework.

The British colonial empire is scattered all over the globe. The geographical necessity of union is entirely absent. Not so long ago, it was believed by many that the secession of Australia, Canada and South Africa was inevitable in the near future. The economic interests of Britain were disparate with those of her colonies. To safeguard their own interests, these colonies adopted Protection as against the Free Trade of the mother country. No doubt, the former enjoyed the powerful protection of the British navy, but, on the other hand, they had hardly any share in the shaping of imperial policy. The sentimental bond, too, was very loose, for, after all, the race origin varied considerably. A peaceful separation was predicted by many.

But what has actually happened is something quite different. Two great World Wars have led nations definitely towards the formation of large aggregates. Thirty years ago Sri Aurobindo said, "...it is easy to see that the fusion of the colonial empire into a great federated Commonwealth... is practically inevitable." Today we are much nearer to that ideal. The racial difficulty is no longer formidable. The problem of both India and Egypt has been solved. Sri Aurobindo notices this in a footnote (CWSA, Vol. 25, p. 333). In fact, a large part of the situation which this Chapter (VIII) discusses is no longer prevalent, as things have taken a different turn in the last three decades. The Commonwealth, the Soviet Union, the conception of the United States of Europe hold the field at present. There is a great deal in this chapter as to how Britain should shape her conduct towards the colonies. Britain has certainly moved in the direction pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, but world conditions seem so uncertain that no country in the world can pay much attention to constitutional matters. Every nation seems to be occupied in picking its friends in view of a possible third conflagration. In the meantime the U.N.O. is functioning as best it can.

The progress of the empire idea to the stage of a realised psychological truth is no more than a mere possibility. The folly of leaders, the passions of the masses, the vested interests of the classes will in all probability prevent its fruition. If so, what other way is there of unifying humanity? A free association of free nations may, of course, do it if the Himalayan obstacles on the way can be removed. Or the establishment by force of a single World-empire can do it also, if such a thing be feasible. In Chapter IX Sri Aurobindo considers the latter alternative and comes to the conclusion "that the conditions for the successful pursuit of world-empire are such



that we need hardly take" it as within the range of practical possibility. But he adds that Nature being ever full of surprises we cannot lay down that it is utterly impossible. Very probably it will be tried again, but it is almost certain that it will fail. Even if by force or luck, or by both, a single empire is imposed on the earth, it is more than probable that it would come to an early end.

The dream of world-domination is a very old dream. Alexander and Caesar dreamt of it; Napoleon dreamt of it and, a hundred years later, the Kaiser dreamt of it. Possibly the last named did not start fighting with a conscious intention of establishing his sway over the world. But it grew inside him under the pressure of circumstances. So great was the general efficiency of Germany, so ingeniously did she utilise the discoveries of Science, so powerful was her military and civil organisation, that the high ambition could not but enter her ruler's head. Yet there were so many things Germany lacked. Sri Aurobindo enumerates them. We shall be satisfied with a short *résumé*. Germany "had the strongest military, scientific and national organisation which any people has yet developed, but it lacked the gigantic driving impulse which could alone bring an attempt so colossal to fruition"—it lacked the impulse that drove Napoleonic France. It lacked a powerful diplomatic genius. It had overwhelming land-power but no corresponding sea-power. Its diplomacy was faulty, too, in so far as it failed to secure the aid or at least the neutrality of France and Russia. It could then have concentrated on England instead of defying all and sundry and running amok, to use a trite phrase. All these mistakes may be avoided and a new bid made for world domination by a new power. But, in these days of rapid communication, why should the world stand by and see a miscreant nation making preparations to disturb the peace of the earth? Sooner or later, there is bound to be a general combination against the culprit. It is no use relying on the discovery of a particularly murderous weapon. What one nation has discovered today, another will discover tomorrow. In fact, all civilised nations are engaged just now in inventing monstrous engines of destruction. Till they are actually used no one will know of them, as was the case with America's atomic bomb. Conquest of the world by one power is, therefore, very unlikely, and even if there is such a conquest, it is sure to be short-lived.

*(To be continued)*

C. C. DUTT

*(This instalment first appeared in October 1951 in Mother India)*

## HIS NAME WAS PARICHAND

His name was Parichand,  
The Ashram gardener.  
So many came to him  
Eager to work with flowers.

Parichand was a Jain,  
An extraordinary face.  
He spoke of Mother to all  
Imparting love and grace.

But about those seekers who came,  
He had them pull weeds!  
An interesting way  
To test sincerity.

An Australian girl once said  
Her way to calm the mind  
Was to bend and pull weeds,  
And a famous writer wrote

That weeding unknots the mind,  
Weeds, the earth's blanket  
To cover barren soil  
Awaiting the hand of man.

Before the first seed  
Or bulb or plant is placed  
The sweat-work of our hands  
And backs and legs begins.

I revel in the earth  
Preparing flower beds  
Seeking a harmony  
Of nutrients and tilth.

Again I have digressed.  
Parichand was joy  
Incarnate in human form.  
No sorrow could sustain

Its flow, no grief remain  
In his light-filled atmosphere.  
Never have I left  
His laughing presence dismayed.

Infectious his delight,  
Communicant of bliss,  
Whose offering of self  
Sustained, inspired us.

Therefore he made them weed,  
Native and foreigner,  
Men and women all,  
And if they laboured well

Under India's sun  
There might be pots to fill  
And later on a seed  
To plant or plant to trim.

And perhaps the budding soul  
In his perennial care  
Might come to early bloom  
As the sanctified rose.

I keep his photo near  
To focus on his smile  
That says the sunlit path  
Is but a step away.

NARAD  
(RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

## BETWEEN THE ARRIVAL AND THE DEPARTURE

(Continued from the issue of January 2005)

My elder daughter Gitika was born in June 1925. All my close friends, such as Dilip Kumar Roy, Kazi Nazrul Islam and others came to my house to celebrate the event and bless my daughter. But the fire of our jubilation turned to ashes a few days later when unexpectedly news came from Darjeeling that on June 16, 1925 Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das had breathed his last. It was true that he had been ailing for some time. But after he went to Darjeeling in the month of May for a change of climate, the health bulletins that were issued from his cosy retreat, “Step Aside”, sounded very optimistic. And now came this bolt from the blue!

On June 18, the body was brought to Calcutta by the Darjeeling Mail. A mammoth crowd had gathered at the Sealdah Station to have a glimpse of their beloved leader. Soon the crowd became uncontrollable. Fortunately, Mahatma Gandhi was in Bengal at that time and he had boarded the train at the Barrackpore Station. His presence in the compartment pacified the people and they acted in a disciplined manner. At Sealdah Station a beautiful flower-bedecked carriage had been kept ready. Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, Shyamsundar Chakraborty (Sri Aurobindo’s associate during the *Bande Mataram* days), Deshbandhu’s son, Chiraranjan, and son-in-law Sudhir Chandra carried his body and placed it reverently on the carriage. The funeral procession started at about eight o’clock in the morning and winded its way slowly to the cremation ground of Keoratala, on the bank of the Ganga. More than a million mourners accompanied it in as disciplined and quiet a manner as possible. Many *Keertaniya* groups spontaneously joined the procession, ceaselessly singing devotional songs. All the roofs and balconies of the houses lining the streets through which the procession passed were packed with people craning their necks to have a last darshan of their beloved Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. It took more than six hours for the procession to reach Keoratala where his mortal remains were consigned to the flames.

Many poets, writers and editors paid their respect to Deshbandhu in their writings. Rabindranath Tagore wrote these immortal lines:

A deathless life you’d brought with you;  
You’ve given us That in death.

\*

Dilip began to take lessons in *keertan* singing from Nabadwip Brajabasi. My friend Kshitindranath Majumdar and I too were learning *keertan* from the same teacher. One evening, while discussing the pure devotion involved in *keertan* singing, Dilip and I began to talk about yogis and saints and rishis of India. Our talk drifted to my

friend, Yogi Baradacharan Majumdar. When I described some of his yogic powers, Dilip evinced a keen desire to meet him and seek his advice in spiritual matters.

Barada-babu was then the headmaster of the Lalgola High School, in Murshidabad. Dilip and I travelled to Lalgola and met him there. It was morning. Barada-babu asked us to accompany him to the school. As soon as he could make himself free, he gave us his full attention. In detail Dilip told him the purpose of our visit, especially about his spiritual quest. Barada-babu heard him out, and then went into a deep trance. When he came out of it, he touched a particular spot on the left side of his own waist and asked Dilip, "Do you have a pain in that area?"

Dilip said, "No."

"Then has my vision been wrong?"

"What did you see?"

Baradacharan said, "Aurobindo Ghose had come."

In utter surprise, Dilip asked, "Aurobindo Ghose? When did he come, where?"

As an eyewitness describes a scene, Barada-babu said, "He was standing just behind you. This is what he told me, 'Tell Dilip that I have accepted him. I myself had told him that as soon as his pain got cured, he should start practising yoga.' Aurobindo himself said these words, and yet you deny having any pain!"

Dilip was stunned. He had kept this fact a close secret. Moreover, at that time he had not even thought of it. Then how could this man know it?

He explained to Barada-babu, "It was hernia. I had gone to Pondicherry last January and had asked him to give me initiation in yoga. He had merely told me to start yoga after I was cured of hernia. But he did not tell me anything about accepting me."

"He didn't accept you? Please tell me exactly what was said."

Dilip gave a detailed account of the conversation that he had had with Sri Aurobindo.

Barada-babu commented, "But he never told you that he did not accept you. He had merely said that the time was not yet ripe for you to be initiated in yoga. He has now told me that he has accepted you. Rest assured, when the right time comes, he himself will pull you to him."

\*

Sahana Devi was not only an expert in Rabindra Sangeet, she was exceptionally skilful in classical music too. Rabindranath Tagore had arranged for her to take lessons from the famous musician and singer, Surendranath Bandopadhyay of Bishnupur.

In a musical soiree, conducted by Sangeet Sammilani, both Dilip Kumar and Sahana Devi were invited to sing. In those days Dilip had a wide repertoire of songs: apart from singing *Khayal*, *Thumri*, *Bhajan*, *Ghazal* and songs composed by Dwijendralal and Atulprasad, he sang many popular songs recorded by the Gramo-

phone Company of India. But he rendered them in his own inimitable style.

That evening Dilip began the soirée with a *khayal*. The audience consisted almost entirely of connoisseurs of music. The technical perfection of Dilip's song drew spontaneous applause from everybody. It was now Sahana Devi's turn. Accompanied on the esraj by her guru, Surendranath, she too sang a *khayal*, creating a heavenly atmosphere with her music.

Next Dilip sang a very popular recorded song, *What magic spell knows, O Hari, your bamboo flute...* This very ordinary song became something most extraordinary because of the manner in which Dilip Kumar presented it. On the gramophone record, this song was over in three minutes, but Dilip sang it for at least fifteen minutes. The audience listened, wonder-struck. Dilip held us in thrall.

After such an outstanding performance by Dilip Kumar, few singers would have dared to sing at the same venue. But Sahana Devi showed no hesitation. When she was asked to sing, she sang that famous *keertan* of Vidyapati, that song of self-surrender, *Madhava, bahuta minoti kori toyee*. Sahana Devi's sublime voice gave this prayer, this self-surrender, a life of its own and it found its way to our heart, making us breathless with adoration. The whole place became charged with a divine presence. It was a palpable spiritual experience that overwhelmed all of us.

Dilip was a great singer. In tunefulness, modulation of voice, sense of rhythm, musical concord and above all, sweetness, his voice was unmatched. Added to these he had a spiritual opening in him. This last could be sensed when he sang *bhajans*, as when he praised the magic flute of Krishna. On the other hand, Sahana Devi's *keertan* of self-giving re-awakened the divine love in the heart of the devotee and illuminated it.

Sahana Devi's highly devotional song must have touched a chord in Dilip's spiritual depth, for the very next morning he went to Sahana Devi's house to offer her his personal felicitations. Gradually, a very beautiful, life-long friendship blossomed between them which embraced their two families and mutual friends too.

We all knew Sahana Devi as a famous singer but one day, by a very happy chance, I discovered that she was an accomplished dancer too. A European lady known to Dilip wanted to see Indian dancing. On Dilip's request, Sahana Devi readily agreed to dance. In Dilip's house, before a small, informal gathering, Sahana Devi gave an unforgettable performance. Without any make-up, without the required costume, without even any instrumental accompaniment, she sang Tagore's well-known song, *Nrityer tale tale*, and made it an embodiment of visual delight with her graceful dance movements.

It was a most memorable experience for everybody present there. Our appreciation merely echoed the superlative praise that the chief guest, the European lady, showered on Sahana Devi. But that was the one and only time I had seen her dance.

Dilip Kumar Roy had been corresponding for some time with the Gramophone Company of New York, founded by Thomas Alva Edison, the inventor of the gramophone. They had invited Dilip to visit America. Finally Dilip decided to accept the invitation.

Some of his friends thought of giving a farewell party in his honour on a lavish scale. We toyed with the idea of asking Rabindranath Tagore to preside over the meeting and one fine morning, mustering our courage, my friend Suhrit Roy and I went to Santiniketan to beard the lion, as it were, in his den. For moral support, we asked Dilip to come along with us.

Unfortunately, our mission was not successful. Tagore made many excuses and declined to act as president. However, while we were in Santiniketan, we learnt that Sahana Devi was also there, but very sadly, she had contracted that dreaded, contagious disease, tuberculosis. Rabindranath himself had asked her to stay in Santiniketan and the members of Tagore's own family as well as many inmates were taking turns to try and nurse her back to health. All three of us went to see her and cheer her up and to wish her a speedy recovery. But all the while we were painfully aware that tuberculosis was incurable. With a heavy heart we returned to Calcutta.

Finally we got Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, the famous scientist and nationalist, to preside over Dilip's farewell party which was graced by many luminaries of Bengal of that period, for Dilip's genius and personal charm always won him everybody's love and affection.

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We received the news that Dilip had reached Europe. But he got stuck there. He could not make up his mind whether he should proceed to America. In France, he met the great thinker and philosopher, Paul Richard, and spent long hours with him talking about Sri Aurobindo. A total change came over Dilip. After spending a few months in Europe, he returned to India in the month of November.

His friends and admirers made all the arrangements to give Dilip a hero's welcome. The University Institute was rented for the occasion. Beautiful invitation cards were printed. A silver casket was made ready for containing the Certificate of Honour that would be given to him. The famous novelist, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, was to preside over the meeting. Although Rabindranath was then in Calcutta, residing in his ancestral home at Jorasanko, we did not approach him. His refusal on the previous occasion still rankled. I merely took some invitation cards and giving them to him, requested him to come and give us his blessings.

Some Calcutta newspapers had advertised this meeting, also mentioning the fact that Dilip and his party would sing there. As a result, the auditorium was filled long before the appointed hour. There was a big crowd in front of the main gate. Many invitees could not enter the Institute. Somehow, the president, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and Subhash Chandra Bose managed to get in. The crowd kept increasing.

It was impossible for the gatekeepers to control them.

When a few stones came flying and broke some window panes, Subhash Chandra Bose himself went and stood at the gate. The crowd became a little quieter. Just then something unexpected happened: Rabindranath's car came and stopped before the Institute. As soon as they got the news, Sarat Chandra, Dilip Kumar, Subhash Chandra and a few others rushed out into the street and escorted the poet on to the dais in the auditorium. It was a historical event: beside the president, the greatest novelist of India, Sarat Chandra, sat the greatest poet of Asia of the time, the Nobel Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore.

After Dilip received all the gifts that his admirers presented to him, Subhash Chandra, followed by Rabindranath and Sarat Chandra, said some beautiful things about Dilip. The programme ended with Dilip and the other artistes entertaining the audience with their spellbinding songs.

\*

There was a Music Conference in Trivandrum (now Tiruvananthapuram). Dilip was invited to read a paper at that Conference. Although the Conference was scheduled for the Christmas holidays, Dilip's nomadic spirit wanted to set out in September itself and spend the intervening time visiting various places in India—Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow, to name a few. He invited me to accompany him. But I had a problem. I was not only a radio artist at that time but a full-fledged employee as well. I would not be free until the Pooja holidays in October. Since Dilip was going to stay in Benares for some time, it was decided that I would join him there.

The Pooja holidays came. I went to Benares with my family, only to find that just two days before my arrival Dilip had gone to Allahabad. He had left his Allahabad address for me to contact him. My family wanted to see something of Benares so we stayed there for a while. When finally we went to Allahabad we missed Dilip again. He had gone on to Lucknow. My vacations were over by then. I returned to Calcutta. There was a letter waiting for me. Dilip had written from Lucknow: "I had waited for you in Benares. When you did not turn up, I left for Allahabad. Now I am in Lucknow, staying in Atul-da's (the celebrated poet Atul Prasad Sen) house. I am very happy here in the company of Ronald Nixon (who later became the Yogi, Krishnaprem), Dhurjatiprasad Mukhopadhyay and other friends...." In his second letter he informed me that he was going to drop the Trivandrum trip and go to Pondicherry instead. The third letter came from Pondicherry in the last week of November. He wrote: "I have reached Pondicherry. I shall not return."

I heard that Sahana Devi had gone to Madras from Calcutta by sea. She would go on to Bangalore and live there to regain her health. From Dilip's subsequent letter I learnt that from Bangalore Sahana Devi too had reached Pondicherry on November 28, 1928, the very day of Dilip's arrival in Pondicherry. From that day till her death



at the age of ninety-five, Sahana Devi lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

\*

A senior advocate of the Calcutta High Court, Jatishchandra Roy, paid me a visit, ostensibly to invite me to the marriage of his son, Raja. "Your friend, Raja, is getting married to the daughter of the zamindar of Nimtita," he said. "You have to join the bridegroom's party. And it is my ardent wish that you will persuade your friend, Kazi Nazrul Islam, to accompany you and attend the wedding."

I demurred. "Nimtita is a very backward village," I said. "There the society is controlled by orthodox Brahmins and other upper castes. For the least aberration they ostracise you. Do you think it is advisable to drag Nazrul to such a place to participate in a highly religious social function? I know our narrow-minded Hindu society very well. Why do you want to put poor Nazrul into an embarrassing situation?"

Jatishbabu was adamant. In a firm tone he said, "I take the entire responsibility of protecting Nazrul's honour and self-respect. I guarantee that no harm will come to him. You just bring him along. You speak to him first and then I shall invite him personally."

I saw that Jatishbabu would not take 'no' for an answer. My only hope lay in the possibility of Nazrul's refusal. When I met Nazrul the next day, I told him about the invitation but at the same time I tried to dissuade him, saying, "They are orthodox Hindus in that village. I don't know whether they will at all approve of a Muslim attending their sacred social function. What if by chance they insult you? I think it is better you don't go."

But Nazrul was very enthusiastic. "I've always wanted to see your village," he said. "Since this opportunity has come knocking, I'm not going to miss it. When do we leave?"

On the day before the wedding, the bridegroom's party assembled at the Howrah Station. On seeing Nazrul a group of young men crowded round us. They were eager to travel with Nazrul, at least a part of the journey. When we entered our reserved compartment, some of them trespassed, just to enjoy Nazrul's company for a short while. Nazrul on his side kept us all entertained with his songs, recitations and anecdotes. Before nightfall, of course, we had the compartment to ourselves. Just before retiring for the night, Nazrul told me, "Nolini-da, I've decided not to stay with the bridegroom's party. I shall put up with you in your house."

Although I told him that I would be glad to have him in my house, I was worried no end. The only person living in my house at that time was my old aunt, a very orthodox Hindu widow, who ate only one meal a day, which she cooked herself, and scrupulously observed all the prescribed rituals of purification. How could she accept a Muslim in her household? Perhaps she would leave my house and go away. I spent a sleepless night.



Early next morning the train reached Nimtita. A large number of local boys had gathered in the station, more keen to see Nazrul than the bridegroom. An automobile, two horse-drawn carriages and some bullock carts were waiting to take us to our destination. After consulting the bride's family, Jatishbabu invited Nazrul to travel with the groom in the automobile. But Nazrul declined, saying that he would first go with me to my house and that we would meet them later.

My house was not far from the station. We took a bullock cart. When it deposited us before my house, I saw my aunt at the doorstep. I introduced Nazrul to her, saying, "Auntie, this is my friend, Kazi Nazrul Islam." Nazrul stepped forward and touched her feet. She blessed him by placing both her palms on his head, then said, "These last few days I've been hearing all about you from our boys."

Nazrul now said, "Auntie, I want to stay with you here."

"Of course you'll stay here. You're my son's friend, how can I let you stay somewhere else? Go in now and have a wash while I prepare your tea."

In a short time she served us tea and halwa. After we finished the meal, she herself removed the cups and plates and washed them without the least hesitation. It was an act of unimaginable broad-mindedness in such a village of those days.

The local school building had been taken over to accommodate the bridegroom's party. We went there and saw that quite a few people were already sitting on the carpets which covered the floor of the big hall. On one end there was a harmonium. Without bothering to ask anybody's permission, Nazrul sat down behind the harmonium and started tuning it. Apparently they were all waiting for Nazrul. Soon the hall was filled. Mostly young people made up the audience and Nazrul sang whatever they requested him to sing. But soon a number of elderly people came in. Nazrul now switched over to devotional songs, such as *keertan* and *shyamasangeet*. The old, orthodox heads of Hindu Society were overwhelmed on hearing a Muslim poet singing such beautiful and deeply significant Hindu religious songs which he himself had written and set to music. They were wonder-struck.

Soon tea was served. Nazrul picked up a cup and, to my horror, after taking a few sips, put it back on the same tray. But nothing untoward happened. A few young men as well as some of the old people picked up their cups from the same tray and drank without batting an eyelid. With my eyes nearly popping out of their sockets, I witnessed the genius of a poet shattering the very foundation of religious bigotry.

My friend, Yogi Baradacharan Majumdar, the headmaster of Lalgola High School, was an invitee at this wedding. It was here that Nazrul met him for the first time and became his disciple. What the poet saw in him during that momentous meeting, he has recorded in the introduction that he wrote later for Barada-babu's book, *Pathharar Path*. Here I would like to quote a passage from that beautiful introduction which gives us a glimpse of Nazrul's psychic opening. Nazrul wrote:

"Many years ago, my appearance in the Bengali literary firmament, like a comet, had given rise to both fear and curiosity. My experiences in World War I, where I had

witnessed the Tandava dance of Rudra bathed in blood, had created waves of rhythm in my own bloodstream. In those days I was writing and speaking as though I were in a trance, without bothering to find out whether I was making any sense. Now I feel that it was necessary. He whose will was being served through my work had engulfed me to such an extent that He had not even left me the desire to know Him. Simultaneously I sat on the throne of fame and rolled in the mud of adverse criticism, enjoyed the garlands and suffered the thorn-wounds. But He who was guiding me, that invisible charioteer, suddenly began to make Himself felt. While writing, while speaking, unknown to myself I would mention Him. This made me wonder but I was sure that although I did not know Him at all, I would recognise Him if I saw Him. I have said this in many of my writings and speeches.

“One day unexpectedly I saw Him. In the village of Nimtita, while everybody was busy looking at the bridegroom, my hungry eyes gazed at my *Pralaya-sundar* charioteer. During that marriage ceremony, my bride-soul welcomed her life partner. The conches were sounding, women were ululating, the fragrance of sandalwood and garlands wafted in the air, the shenai was diffusing its plaintive melody—at such an auspicious moment I met the deity of my meditation, the writer of this book, Shri Shri Baradacharan Majumdar.”

*(To be continued)*

NOLINIKANTO SARKAR

(Translated by Aniruddha Sircar from the original Bengali, *Asa Jaoar Majhkhane*)

*All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded by the instruments.*

Walt Whitman  
“Leaves of Grass”

\*

*After silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.*

Aldous Huxley

## THE SEEKER

Some gaze on me there is,  
Some spirit breathes a secret on my brow.  
I hover on the edge of half-remembered dreams  
That run through life,  
The promise of refreshing streams,  
Receding from me even now,  
Ever fading, never to be touched.  
Never from those waters do I drink.  
Never can I bathe my fingers in their rills...  
Yet I know that if even once they yielded me a sip  
I would be eased of all my ills.  
This heavy mantle would from my shoulders slip.

My ear strains for a name I might have heard  
That may have been revealed one night only to melt away  
And in my heart I summon it, rehearsing name and word  
As though my longing were a magic of recall  
To batter down a wall.  
What is it I have lost?  
Is there anyone to tell me?  
Is it a mirage that will always melt in air?  
This love that draws me,  
That beckons me I know not where,  
That echoes in me like my footsteps,  
Yet haunts me with its absence.  
What light submerged in shadows am I seeking?  
Is there anyone to guide me?  
My whole life in search away is leaking,  
For something lost or forgotten.

“This is the plight of gods in the making,” they tell me.  
I am a god in the making?  
Yes, but I am too a man of woman begotten  
And like a man I suffer and pine  
With my whole life and each breath.  
Can anyone give me the remedy to this anguish of mine?  
If I were never to find it  
Life would have been slow death.  
Yet since it continues to beckon and call me

On this earth I must remain  
 In case one day its good befall me.  
 But how long am I fated in suffering to linger?  
 I must be like that poor King of Legend  
 Under a forgetfulness spell.  
 Is there no one to put the remembrance ring on my finger?  
 Is there no one to pull me out of this well?

*Night and day do I beckon  
 And hold out the ring.  
 But where is thy hand O Seeker?  
 I am here to pour my sweetness into thy longing  
 But first thou must empty the beaker.  
 Thou art full of the words of thy plaint to the brim.  
 I wait and watch in the wings for thy silence,  
 For thy thoughts to recede from the rim,  
 And when thou no longer hast words to think,  
 Then shall I pour thee the nectar.  
 Then shalt thou drink.*

MAGGI

*Poetry reveals to us the loveliness of nature, brings back the freshness of youthful feelings, reviews the relish of simple pleasures, keeps unquenched the enthusiasm which warmed the springtime of our being, refines youthful love, strengthens our interest in human nature, by vivid delineations of its tenderest and softest feelings, and through the brightness of its prophetic visions, helps faith to lay hold on the future life.*

William E. Channing

## THE PURANAS AND OUR CENTURY

(Continued from the issue of January 2005)

### 15. The Elephant King

EVEN in this century there are hundreds of elderly women in Andhra Pradesh who make it a point to recite the Gajendra Moksha episode as retold by Pothana in his Telugu version of the *Bhagavata*. The way the legend has been structured gives hope for one who has all doors shut upon his future. It was so especially for the women till recently. Engaged in performing the household chores from early dawn, they would finish cooking and other domestic duties, and then sit in the “god-room” to recite the poem before taking food. Some of them who knew the entire narrative by heart would be reciting it while engaged in work. Obviously they found in it a text that reflected accurately their patriarchal society, the helplessness of women when the male was threatened by external forces, the deep faith in a never-failing para-human help disseminated by the Bhakti Movement and the need never to lose hope, even in the face of certain annihilation.

Also, the Telugu was sweet and easily understood by the unlettered women at home who were kept away from Sanskrit and Shastric studies. Pothana (15<sup>th</sup> century) uses mellifluous phrases and colourful descriptions. Listening to a woman reciting it with involvement, I have seen the vision take shape before me with easy strokes: the thick forest, the deep lake full of lotuses in bloom, the noble herd of elephants, the royal tread of the leader, the crisis when the crocodile catches hold of the leader’s leg, the blood-curdling battle between the duo through a thousand years. Then suddenly the yearning voice of the woman: “*Evvaniche Janinchu...*” It is the long, passionate prayer of the Elephant King:

From whom does this creation come to being;  
In whom does it rest; who subsumes it;  
Who is the Supreme, who the Original Cause?  
One who has neither birth, growth or death;  
One who pervades everything; The Lord  
Who is the Indwelling Universal; I surrender  
Unto Him.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Pothana’s Gajendra dives into the Divine, with a “fixed and unfailing aspiration”. Swift is the answer from the Grace, dramatically posited by Pothana. Narayana and Lakshmi have been playing dice in heaven when the voice of Gajendra reaches them: “Save me! Save me!”

“He (Narayana) did not inform Lakshmi; nor did he take up His discus and conch; nor did he command his assistants to accompany Him; nor did He order his mount, Garuda; He would not tie up his tresses that were dancing around His face; having got up in a hurry, he would not loosen his fingers holding the upper garment of Lakshmi; He rushed, eager to save Gajendra’s life.”

This is total surrender and unfailing Grace acting in tandem so that there is hardly any time-lag between the Call and the Reply. The surrender of Gajendra is a living surrender, not a blind, tamasic, inert surrender. The Andhra women reciting it in the mornings definitely empowered themselves with the needed spiritual strength to face the harsh hours of the day and night that were to follow. And not only women but all others marginalised in this manner have found much comfort in repeatedly referring to the manner in which the elephant was saved from torture and death by the Lord Himself.

The “Gajendra Moksha” episode occurs in the Eighth Skandha of the *Bhagavata*. This is one of those important chapters which is an environmentalist’s delight. After all, it has been the advancement of science and technology that has denuded our forests and destroyed Nature’s cycle. The tenth century author of the *Bhagavata* gives a mind-boggling list of the various trees that adorned the Trikuta mountain. Creating a sublime style through a mere list is an epic device. And what a list that begins with, *sarvato’lankṛtaṁ divyai...!*

“The mountain round about it (the garden) abounded in trees like Mandara, Parijata, Patala, Asoka, Champaka, mango, Priyala, jackfruit, Amra, hogplum, arecanut, coconut, date-palm, Bijapooraka, Madhuka, Sala, palmyra, Tamala, Rasana, Arjuna, Arishta, Udumbara, Plaksha, Vata, Kimsuka, Chandana, Pichumanda, Kovidara, Sarala, Devadaru, Draksha, sugar-cane, Rambha, Jambu, Badari, Aksha, Abhaya, Amala, Bilwa, Kapitha, Jambira, Bhallataka and many others. In their midst was an extensive lake with golden lotuses.”

*Tasmin sarāḥ suvipulāṁ lasatkāñcanapaṅkajam.* Yet there are myopic scholars who feel the Puranas are irrelevant today! The poet does not stop with the trees. We have lists of the flora and the fauna too. The domestic bliss of the Elephant King is brought to us in a few brush strokes. The wily poet also takes this domesticity itself to convey an advaitic lesson. The elephant comes to the lake with its herd and plunges into it to get relief from the heat. It drinks the clear and fragrant water of the lake:

“Deluded by the Lord’s Maya, he was unaware, like a pitiable and foolish family man, of the imminent danger lurking, as he bathed and fed the cows and the calves with the water he drew in his trunk. O King! As Providence would have it, he found all on a sudden that his foot was in the grip of an infuriated crocodile stronger than himself.”

The great tussle is now on. It is an unequal battle for the crocodile is a denizen of water and is on home territory, while the elephant is not. The *Bhagavata* speaks of the battle only in a couple of verses. The elephant finds that he is quite helpless and

finds that his brood is equally incapable of rescuing him. Contemplating on this condition, the elephant resolves to appeal to god to save him. What strikes us most in this prayer of the Elephant King is that it is addressed to the Originating Cause. The elephant does not mention any of the names associated with Narayana. Usually the Puranic prayers describe the incarnations and exploits of Narayana, but here there is a hymn only to the Impersonal Supreme, *Om Namo Bhagavate!*

“Om! My salutation to that Worshipful One, who bestows consciousness to inert nature; who is both Prakriti and Purusha as also their controller; who is pervading everything; and who is the source of all... I seek refuge in that Being transcending all the highest human conceptions of Him.”

One is reminded of Sri Aurobindo’s poem “Who” in this context and it is almost as if Sri Aurobindo was giving an English voice to the Puranic poet. Gajendra says:

“When all the worlds and their protectors and all causal agencies had been dissolved in their primeval condition by the inexorable power of Time, and only the darkness of dissolution, abysmal in depth and endless in extent, remained, He the Supreme Light of Consciousness, shone undimmed over that darkness.”

There is the magnificent conclusion in Sri Aurobindo’s poem:

The Master of man and his infinite Lover,

He is close to our hearts, had we vision to see;

We are blind with our pride and the pomp of our passions,

We are bound in our thoughts where we hold ourselves free.

It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,

And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;

When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,

He was seated within it immense and alone.

In that extremity, the Elephant King gains the “vision to see”, thanks to his samskara of having practised the Mantra in his previous births, *jajāpa paramam jāpyam prāgjanmanyānuśikṣitam*. It may be noted that this inward vision releases the elephant from the fear of death. He is now praying to the Lord not for being delivered from death, not for being released from the fatal grip of the crocodile. The Puranic poet says that Gajendra now addressed the Lord for relief from the separative veil of ignorance that kept him away from the Divine. Immediately the Lord appeared riding on the Garuda, accompanied by gods. The elephant lifted his trunk with a lotus to the Lord in salutation.

“Seeing him in an agonising situation, Sri Hari got down from Garuda in haste and, out of his mercy, pulled out the elephant along with the crocodile from the water; slicing away the head of the crocodile with his discus, He released the Lordly elephant in the presence of all the Devas.”



There is now a flashback which could help a sociologist-historian to arrive at conclusions regarding the Aryan and Dravidian components in Indian culture. Just as the Lord as Matsya Avatar was discovered in the Kritamala river by Satyavrata, King of the Dravida country, the elephant is revealed to have been in its earlier birth King Indradyumna, the Pandyan King, *rājā pāṇḍyo draviḍa sattamaḥ*. A devotee of Lord Hari, the King had been so indrawn in meditation that he had failed to offer proper salutations to the sage Agastya. The sage cursed him to be born as a stupid elephant “immersed in the dullness of ignorance”. The King accepted the curse meekly and was born as Gajendra. After saving the elephant, the Lord spoke to him kindly:

“Those who in their morning prayers remind themselves of Me, of you, this lake and this forest with its caves, trees and thickets of bamboo and cane—will be freed from all sins. One should remember these mountains. Also worthy of remembrance for the purification of one’s mind are the following: these mountain peaks constituting the stations of Brahma, Siva and Myself; the milk Ocean where I have my abode...”

Once again it is a meaningful command that could curb the destructive instinct of man which destroys forests and even mountains and renders lakes dry. Also, it is a reminder for our century that begins the day’s experiences with the newspaper and the television flashing disasters of every kind. A command that has apparently been absorbed by the Andhra women referred to earlier should, perhaps, be taken seriously by everyone of us in this century!

The Gajendra episode forms a very important text for the Bhakti Movement. The Movement which rose in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century itself projected many important correctives to the religious mores. The Movement frowned upon the tradition of sacrificing lives in the name of performing yajna. Caste was another factor which had compartmentalised society preventing its progress on liberal lines. In fact, one-sixth of the population was isolated as “untouchables”. Yet another development was the marginalisation of women. In a land which had boasted of Vedic poetesses and scholars, women were rendered invisible in the societal structure. The devotion and rescue of the elephant king can thus be seen as a fine way of showing how there is no part of creation that is useless or stupid, and how neither caste nor class nor gender should be the cause of rejection.

The episode has also inspired later poets to uphold the glory and grandeur of the entire creation, Prakriti. They have gone much farther than the Puranic poet to speak to their audience of Mother Nature in all her multifoliate presence. Pothana has a long dandaka made up of names, taking a cue from the *Bhagavata*. With scents wafting from *mātulaṅga*, *lavaṅga*, *luṅga*, *cūta*, *ketakī*, *bhallāta* and the rest, eternal spring seemed to have set up camp in this area:

“The place was decorated by the Vitapi trees that had shoots coming, had buds that were blossoming and so had soft branches. There were the spaces with strange trees mid smiling waves that seemed made of pearls and creepers. On the trees were



parrots and nightingales whose beaks pierced the ripe fruits on the branches of the trees so that streams of juice ran down; there were tarns with waters that shimmered golden where golden lotuses and lilies blossomed spreading sweet scents from the satiated honey bees... close by were other birds like *śakunta*, *kalahaṃsa*, *kāraṇḍava*, *jalakukkuṭa*, *cakravāka*...”

There were precious stones glowing brilliant on the mountain, moonstones, emeralds, sapphires, diamonds. Vidyadharas, Gandharvas, Kimpurushas and Kinnaras roamed everywhere in pairs engaged in musical soirées. Interestingly enough all those beasts we are afraid of were there too a-plenty: lions, boars, monkeys, tigers, cheetahs. Pythons streamed everywhere. Pothana then goes on to describe several herds of elephants. The observation of wild life by our ancients is as visual as the scenarios brought to us by television channels like *Animal Planet*, *Discovery Channel* and *National Geographic*. One cannot ignore the research work of the BBC on various aspects of the earth’s environment, especially the programmes by Sir David Attenborough either. Describing the Elephant King moving with his cows, Pothana says:

“He gave generously the tender shoots of the wayside trees to the cows; he divided the tender leaves and flowering branches among his beloved ones; he fanned with his ichor-drenched ears the sweat on their brows; stroking gently with his tusks the necks of his wives with great love, he would be engaged in love-play.”

Is there a definite purpose in giving so much space for the environment in our Puranas? Thus, the Savitri-Satyavan story in the *Matsya Purana* uses one whole canto to give an elaborate description of the forest where Savitri and Satyavan wander on the day of fate. It is Satyavan who speaks all through the thirty-five verses as he describes the mango tree, the Ashoka, the Kimshuka tree full of fiery blossoms, the wind that blows sweet, the Karnikara trees, the creepers that close in on the footpath, the earth with a spread of flowers, the sound of bees that reminds one of Cupid readying his bow and arrow “to strike at couples like us”, the nightingales singing. Ah, “this forest is beautiful like you,” *vibhāti cārutilakā tvamivaiṣā vanasthalī*! In what appears to be a passage of acute dramatic irony, Satyavan points out the loving couples around them: koels, bees, crows, teetar birds, the lion and the lioness dozing, the tiger and the deer roaming in pairs. Also elephants, chakravaka birds: it is quite a list!

Almost all the great hymnologists of the Bhakti Movement have sung of Gajendra and his rescue repeatedly. All of them are lost in wonderment that when the elephant cried out to the Primal Cause (*Adi moolam*), the Supreme came to his rescue and beheaded the crocodile with a discus. The Tamil poet Perialwar refers to this episode in a famous verse, *tuppudayārai adaivatellām*:

One surrenders to a stronger person  
Because of the assurance of safety.

Though I am no equal, I have come to you  
 As I know you have guarded the elephant.  
 When old age comes to weaken me  
 I may not be able to remember you then.  
 Hence I have recorded my thought now.  
 O Lord who rests on the snake in Arangam!

The fact that the story of the Elephant King reinforces the faith of the common man has been demonstrated down the centuries. All Vishnu temples in South India have a variety of sculptures on this episode, as if assuring even the casual observer of the care with which the Supreme guards each part of His creation. In Srirangam, for instance, there is a moving sculpture in front of the Mother Ranganayaki temple. Just then the elephant has been saved by the Lord who is seen stroking its back with maternal love.

Was there a special reason for this emphasis on the description of Nature in the Puranas? Obviously they knew of the value of experiential wisdom:

One impulse from a vernal wood  
 May teach you more of man,  
 Of moral evil and of good,  
 Than all the sages can.<sup>2</sup>

One may even go further and say that when contemplating upon Nature one does learn about the past glory of mankind and the future possibilities inherent in creation. Watching good and evil subsisting together in Nature, one understands that it is from this crucible that the great future can be born. Nature proves by constant growth that such is our destiny. There has been a descent of God from the Heights to the Depths of gross terrestrial existence. But this descent is only half of the divine play. The second half is naturally the adventure of ascent. At present it may be true that mind continues to fail us, love seems to fail in its capacity to heal. Legends such as that of Gajendra have been symbols created by the Puranic sages to sustain our faith so that we would rise above tamas. When we recite the story of the elephant king in the early hours of the morning before beginning the day, a definite hope followed by a firm will steals into our being “reminding always of the ever-present help, pointing to the eternal sunshine”. Man is cradled by Mother Nature. Sometimes She might swing him fast, sometimes slow, sometimes in a zig zag manner accompanied by the “rages of the ages”. But always She is the Mother and on Her lap man attempts the transformation to divinity:

To seize the absolute in shapes that pass,  
 To fix the eternal’s touch in time-made things,

This is the law of all perfection here.  
 A fragment here is caught of heaven's design;  
 Else could we never hope for greater life  
 And ecstasy and glory could not be.  
 Even in the littleness of our mortal state,  
 Even in this prison-house of outer form,  
 A brilliant passage for the infallible Flame  
 Is driven through gross walls of nerve and brain,  
 A Splendour presses or a Power breaks through,  
 Earth's great dull barrier is removed awhile,  
 The unconscious seal is lifted from our eyes  
 And we grow vessels of creative might.<sup>3</sup>

There could be no better example of the state of our symbolic imprisonment in the outer form than the huge elephant. Immense, yet imprisoned within the body which makes it difficult to be nimble enough to escape the jaws and the pull of the crocodile of the deeps! Our body is no less a prison but then like Gajendra who escaped death when the Splendour broke through from nowhere and saved him, we too can have the shell of egoistic separativity removed when the answering Grace replies to our "fixed and unfailing aspiration".

Concluding the episode, the Puranic poet takes into account the common man, who is endowed with godward thoughts but does not know how to go beyond the thoughts of life and death. Gajendra went beyond the fear of death and aspired for help from the Impersonal One. In the extremity of danger, the Elephant King, thanks to his good samskaras in his previous birth, was able to remember the Supreme and call out to Him for succour when helpless. But not all of us realise the danger that stalks us in this life which is glittery like the tank of golden lotuses. Tempted by the joys of everyday life, we are not aware of Death that is close to us as a crocodile of the deeps. Must we then wait till death overtakes us? For people like us who continue to be ignorant in this manner, the poet gives something to hold on to so that our mind can remain tuned to God as the Pandyan King Indradyumna did. This hold is nothing but the *Divya Mangala Vighraha*, the Image of All-Auspicious Qualities. But would we not be scorned if we lap up what the poet has to say about the Supreme carrying a conch and a discus and all the rest? The myopia of the so-called "modern" mind is often insufferable. As Sri Aurobindo says:

"All the trend of modern thought has been towards the belittling of personality; it has seen behind the complex facts of existence only a great impersonal force, an obscure becoming, and that too works itself out through impersonal forces and impersonal laws, while personality presents itself only as a subsequent, subordinate, partial, transient phenomenon upon the face of this impersonal movement."<sup>4</sup>

But the devotee does not depend upon his intellect alone. What the heart tells

him is very important, and this too is taken into account in integral yoga, only the sadhak is warned not to get lost “in the delight of a Shadow” for all time. In Sri Aurobindo’s words, “Spiritual intuition is always a more luminous guide than the discriminating reason, and spiritual intuition addresses itself to us not only through the reason, but through the rest of our being as well, through the heart and life also.”<sup>5</sup>

Having given us the legend, the Puranic poet draws our heart and life to the Divine Personality. Interestingly enough, it is the Lord who calls upon us to contemplate upon His *Divya Mangala Vighraha*, as Krishna had done in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Hence devotees repeat and remember the great tale of Gajendra’s rescue and conclude with the incandescent hymn, *Śrīvatsam kaustubham mālām*. The Lord adorned with a variety of ornaments, Brahma, Shiva, Narada, Prahlada, the incarnations, the syllable Om, cows, holy men, the rivers, the sages... a glorious galaxy!

“If all the above-mentioned places, objects and personages are remembered in the mornings with the firm conviction that they are My parts, those who do so will be freed from all their sins. To those who extol me at the close of night with these hymns, I grant a pure understanding before the end of their lives.”

(To be continued)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

### References

1. Translated by Prema Nandakumar.
2. William Wordsworth, “The Tables Turned”.
3. *Savitri* (1993 ed.), p. 108.
4. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 21, p. 552.
5. *Ibid*, p. 553.

*Supreme art expresses the Beauty which puts you in contact with the Divine Harmony.*

*The Mother*

(CWM, Vol. 12, p. 234)

## A CLEAR RAY AND A LAMP—AN EXCHANGE OF LIGHT

*(Continued from the issue of January 2005)*

I SENT Amal the book he had wanted by S. P. Gupta. His ‘Calcutta book’ was still ‘hanging fire’. He wrote to me of his impressions on 19.11.79:

Perhaps the most meaningful for my research is his extensive attempt at demonstrating that the Painted Grey Ware (PGW) cannot be related to the Ware found in the Gandhara Grave Culture and in the Swat Valley Culture as well as that these two latter cultures cannot be legitimately connected with those of Northern Iran. This attempt may be considered part of his general thesis that the Rigvedic civilisation should not be derived from outside India. But the thesis is not developed in the book in hand. It is left for a future publication.

Another striking bit of information is about Ak Kupruk in North Afghanistan, a Neolithic culture dating back to *c.* 8000 B.C. which had a kind of domesticated horse (*Equus caballus*). But what is puzzling is that in the next phase of it there is only the onager. Gupta has an interrogation mark within brackets here. The third phase has bronze objects in 5500-5300 B.C., far older than any found in Western Asia. A third piece of value is the discovery of rice at Mehargarh in a Central Indian culture predating by 3000 years the Harappa Culture which was to my knowledge the earliest rice-cultivator apart from whatever may have been the case in eastern India. I would have written to you in more detail, but unfortunately the notes I took have got misplaced. I have searched up and down for them but to no avail so far. I can’t even conjecture where they could have gone.

At this stage his name had gone up for the Sahitya Akademi Award. I had been one of the sponsors. Amal closes this letter with, “We have to keep our fingers crossed about the Akademi Award”, with a postscript that he would soon be sending me the second part of his examination of Megasthenes. That didn’t arrive. I wrote to Amal asking him to reconcile Velikovsky’s radical revision of ancient chronology with the Harappan-Rigvedic time-line.

A year later Amal sent a postcard dated 7.11.80, having shifted to 21, rue François Martin, admitting, “I haven’t forgotten Megasthenes but have felt too lazy to get him packed off to you. I suppose I’ll have to gird my loins one of these days. As for old Veli, his reduced chronology can touch only the Mitanni rulers in regard to me. This won’t make any difference to my extended chronology in any vital way. I don’t know what changes Velikovsky has made in the Sumerian period, with which the Harappa Culture is contemporary. What effect Velikovsky has on Aryan movements in general

has to be ascertained. I have lost track of his 'whole-view' at the moment. Perhaps you can tell me after reading all his books."

Soon thereafter, on 18.11.80, he announces good news regarding publication prospects:

A piece of good news—for me. Sita Ram Goel of Delhi, a friend of my friend Ram Swarup who has just published an important study, *The Word as Revelation*, is eager to bring out my *Cotton in Ancient India: A Chronological and Cultural Clue*. So I am running through my typescript, omitting matter which may look repetitive and substituting new stuff. I hope to send it to Goel in a fortnight. If my Megasthenes could come out in the near future, I'd have done my bit in this field. I can't swear I am right all through, but my position is logically impregnable. Only a couple of archaeological observations seem to challenge it. But archaeology has quite often been proved wrong in matters of chronology. The walls of Jericho, which Garstang had dated to c. 1440 and a Catholic historian to 1250 or so, were proved by Katherine Kenyon to be nearly 6000 years old. Hammurabi has come down from c. 2300 to c. 1750 B.C. Even the Harappa Culture is receding into greater antiquity than 2500 B.C. Zoroaster still fluctuates between 600 and 1000 B.C. and may be really still older if the Greeks who were nearest 600 B.C. are to be believed. Already in the time of Herodotus and more in that of Aristotle he was put about 4000 years earlier. Thus I have not much reason to be daunted, but should like to be able to explain where the archaeological spade has gone wrong. As I have not succeeded in obtaining the reports I can't exercise my historical pick on the stuff of evidence. Sankalia wrote to me some months back that really revolutionary material has been dug up in Pakistan. I have just posted him a letter asking for details. In the meantime I came across the news that at Mehargarh a series of agricultural settlements have been unearthed dating to more than 3000 years before Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. According to Sankalia the Mehargarh excavation has not only traced back the beginning of civilisation in the Indus Valley to a period before 6000 B.C. but also given us the first glimpse of the artistic effort of early man.

In the meantime, I. Mahadevan, who had been awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship for preparing a concordance of the Indus Valley script, visited the National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie to speak to the Civil Service trainees. I took advantage of his visit to show him *The Problem of Aryan Origins* and conveyed his impressions to Amal who replied on 9.12.1980:

Mahadevan is a researcher I respect and if he finds fault with my representation of Seal 3357 I have to sit up and take notice. I have, however, not imagined or made up this design. It comes originally from G. R. Hunter, *The Script of Harappa*

and Mohenjo-daro, 1934, Pl. XXXII, No. H 106. You may look it up in this book, from which the Finnish scholars too copied it. I may add that S. R. Rao has reported from Lothal “a graffito on a potsherd” in which “a figure is seen standing on two wheels resembling the Assyrian chariot-drivers painted on pottery” (*Lothal and the Indus Civilization*, p. 124). So Hunter’s reproduction is not inherently improbable. But I am prepared to accept Mahadevan if I can properly understand what you report. You begin by saying that there is only one visible wheel and this is spoked. Then you say that the other wheel is a conjecture: something I take to be a wheel is considerably damaged. Then you add that “the spokes do not exist on the original”. Which original? If there is no wheel here, how can we expect spokes? But if something is there and the man is standing with one foot on one spoked wheel and with the other on God-knows-what, how are we to think of a *chakravartin*? A solar deity is just as unimaginable in such a posture. Besides, as I have pointed out in reply to Pusalker, the solar symbol is a circle with a central dot. No spokes at all, and if there are rays there would not be a rim to hold them in. All the odds are in favour of a charioteer—even if one spoked wheel is a conjecture.

I informed Amal that one of the IAS trainees, a post-graduate in History, had penned a scathing review of his book. It was my constant attempt to bring to Amal’s notice every possible objection to his thesis so that he could plug every loophole. In this letter he responded with the open mind, honesty and humility that characterise him:

It is thrilling or rather chilling to learn that a scathing review has been written of my book. But I hope it is a competent piece of work. We are after truth and if I can be shown up as a polymathic humbug, though an honest one by believing in his own humbugry, I’ll congratulate your “probationer”. You can certainly send me the article. If he has asked me good questions, I’ll be happy to answer them.<sup>1</sup>

Who is this Vartak?<sup>2</sup> His figures are really astronomical! But now with Mehargarh on the Bolan River proving to have been an agricultural settlement 3000 years before Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, nothing so Vartakan can be just sneezed away. But Vartak is out-Puranaing the Puranas. They have dared to put the MBH War to a mere 3138 B.C.

I was in the Ashram in January 1981 and this is what I got on my return to Mussoorie:

I hope you reached Nandita’s lap in one piece. You have left behind a lot of warmth in my heart and a glow in my mind. Thanks to you a lot of things got

1. Amal included the review and his replies in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *The Problem of Aryan Origins*.

2. P. V. Vartak was a Pune scholar whose paper I had quoted to Amal.



done also. One of the results is the letter whose copy I am enclosing.

The letter was Sita Ram Goel's enthusiastic response to the typescript of *Cotton*, stating that he started on it at 8 pm on 19<sup>th</sup> January and read up to page 138 'in one breath' when he had to stop at 2 am, and that he had never found so absorbing a book since he read Jayaswal's *Hindu Polity* in a single sitting in 1943. He sent it for printing straightaway, sending some more reference books to Amal and offering to make provision for some appendices. Here is Amal's amusing letter of 17.2.81 in which he responds also to my suggestion that he get an introduction written by S. N. Kramer or H. D. Sankalia:

Your suggestion to get an introduction from Sankalia is one which Goel has also made. Kramer seems out of the question. I don't even know whether he by now is not "one with yesterday's seven thousand years".

An Appendix on Mehargarh threatens to become an appendicitis. Mehargarh is precisely what has posed a difficulty for me. I have to tackle a point revealed by Jarrige's excavation. It has become the one single obstacle possible to my thesis which otherwise would march triumphantly forward. At Mehargarh elementary evidence for cotton has been found. One is not sure from the traces whether cotton was cultivated, but it is certain that it was known and used for either its fibre or the rich oil its seed could yield. What was discovered was hundreds of charred cotton seeds. This is no indication of its cultivation in the sense the Harappa Culture cultivated it but these seeds were spotted in a milieu of cultivated plants. Jarrige leaves it an open question. Now, how is this question to be integrated in my thesis that there were a thousand years before the Harappa Culture, during which the use of cotton was not known—the period running from the *Rigveda* up to the Sutras? Cotton was thoroughly cultivated by the Harappa Culture: there is satisfactory evidence for it. So the thousand-year silence afterwards is incomprehensible and it demands that these thousand years be put anterior to the Harappa Culture. Now we are faced with the question: Can there be a thousand-year silence before the Harappa Culture if already in the fifth millennium cotton was known in Central Baluchistan? Here the answer may be "Yes" because, in spite of the favourable milieu of cultivated plants, the seeds were in such a bad state that Constantini, their discoverer, could not be confident of their pointing to cultivation. Just as at the end of Period I a few undomesticated animals are still found among domesticated ones, so too there could have been uncultivated cotton amidst cultivated plants. That is my stand. I shall formulate it properly and let Goel know of the additional matter to be included.

Amal was always reading anything new that was intellectually stimulating. In this



letter he puts me abreast of one such publication he had recently read:

I have recently struck upon a remarkable book, *Life-Tide* by Lyall Watson, a biologist who has already won fame by his earlier publication *Supernature*. It is a paperback eminently worth studying. Another paperback, *Ancient Mysteries* by Rupert Furneaux, has also proved fascinating, especially because one small section, "Myths versus Mathematics" is about Velikovsky. Evidently it is written before the publication of *Peoples of the Sea* and *Ramses III and His Time* which very impressively bolster the case made out in the astonishing *Ages in Chaos*. What is of great interest is the closing part of the treatment by Furneaux:

"Do these objections invalidate Velikovsky's claims? He asserts that there had been several global catastrophes in historical times, caused by extraterrestrial agents, and that in the most recent catastrophe Venus and Mars had played the dominant role. He claimed that his theories could be substantiated if Venus was still hot—evidence of the recent birth; enveloped in hydrocarbon clouds—remnants of the comet's tail; and had anomalous rotational motion—evidence that it had suffered unusual perturbations before settling in its orbit as a comet.

"In 1963 the space-probe Mariner II confirmed that the temperature of Venus was 800° F. It possessed a 15 mile (24 km) thick envelope composed, not of carbon dioxide or water as was previously supposed, but of heavy molecules of hydrocarbon. Observations taken by the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory at Washington and by the Goldstone Tracking Station in California indicated that Venus has a slow retrograde motion, a characteristic unique amongst the planets.

"Two more of Velikovsky's predictions have been confirmed. Radio signals from Jupiter were detected in 1964 when the planet suddenly changed its period of rotation. The truth of his revolutionary statement that the earth possesses a far-flung magnetic field has been proven. Close-up photographs have confirmed his guess that Mars is 'more moon-like than earth-like'. His assertion that the accepted dates of the Egyptian chronology are too early seems to be confirmed by the Carbon-14 tests made in 1964. Three wood samples taken from Tutan-khamen's tomb yielded the dates, plus or minus fifty years, 1030 and 1120 B.C. This transfers the date of that pharaoh's burial from the fourteenth to the eleventh or twelfth century...." (p. 22)

Amal was quite peeved with OUP turning down his *Tyger*, yet his sunny humour shines through, howsoever wryly. On 23.2.81 he wrote "there is absolutely no hint of an expert committee considering my book (as I had been told by them), much less of someone in England being consulted. Without even giving the book a look OUP has sent back my *Tyger*. The burning beast arrived this morning by parcel post." This must have come as quite an unpleasant surprise because I had informed him that OUP had told me they were getting the typescript examined by experts. He writes on

11.4.81, “(their) letter sounds pretty hollow. No expert could have gone through the book in a thorough way so soon. The very title must have frightened them off—from the point of view of sale. When you met (them), the book had still to be considered. But a day or two later I got the rejection note.”

In September 1981 I was to go to Manchester for a year-long study course. Amal made a rare exception by a request in his letter of 20.4.81:

I'll be interested to get extracts from Sagan and Gould, but much more to see Velikovsky's rejoinders to them. Surely the old warrior has met their onslaughts as he has met those of other critics. Why not try to procure the rejoinders when you are in UK? At the moment nothing occurs to me to ask you to bring from there—except my copy of *Blake's Tyger* from Kathleen Raine. In case she has not lost it, you may—if at all it is possible—contact some Blake Society or else some Christian organisation to see if it will take up my exposition and publish it. I'll send you Raine's address before you leave India.

Somehow, nothing came of this.

From making this solitary request, Amal shifts to something he considers as of much more importance, and it shows the unselfish generosity so characteristic of him:

Now to the most important matter of all. After the June issue the *Mahabharata* will have no more secret left... If you are going to be (away) I suppose the more instalments you let me have, the better.<sup>3</sup>

Is it possible for you to find out B. B. Lal's comments, if any, on Mahadevan? Mahadevan and Rao are the most favoured candidates at the moment by Dravidianists and Aryanists respectively. I think Lal has made more comments on Rao too. Years ago he had found his initial formulation not up to the mark.

Amal's letter of 30.4.81 carried great news. Sita Ram Goel had succeeded in persuading Girilal Jain, editor of the *Times of India*, to get Sankalia to review Amal's book. Amal had received a letter from Sankalia saying, “I am glad to have this opportunity. For now, after re-reading your book I think you have made a good case for the Indus Culture to be Vedic, and probably Shri Aurobindo would be proved right.”

My review of Amal's research on the Indus Valley Civilisation was not yet out in *Puratattva*. Of this Amal wrote on 9.5.81:

Your work for *Puratattva* seems to have no end. You are a very patient fellow.

3. The reference is to my book *Secret of the Mahabharata* that was being serialised in *M.I.*

In more eulogistic terms I should say a dogged one—a kind of Hound of Heaven where a worthwhile quarry is involved.

At this time he seems to have been afflicted with severe back pain, for he writes:

Unfortunately my back has not benefited—and I don't think it will unless I take a three-week's holiday in bed. This I can't do now. When Sehra was there, I could have indulged in the luxury. By now I have come to terms with the back-ache and as I don't do much of peregrination I am not specially bothered.

I was able to send Amal a 1973 paper by B. B. Lal and he wrote on 17.5.81:

What was of special pertinence was that Lal has been aware of Mahadevan's article which has been included in *Ancient Cities of the Indus*. Has M written anything else after that? I have the impression that after publishing the computerised book on the script he has brought out his own reading.

On 30.6.81 Amal sent me the correspondence between him and Sankalia over the unpublished review of *The Problem...* that Sankalia had sent him for reactions. Amal's rejoinder was, as usually happens with him, four times the length of Sankalia's letter! Amal's covering letter was unusual in that it was handwritten and not typed and had a postscript scribbled in the margin which warmed my heart ever so much:

While you are in England may I send (as gifts, of course) the September and October issues of *M.I.* by air?

Obviously, the financial crisis had passed!

(*To be continued*)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

Visual memory is more useful than mental memory. One should read a lot  
—see, see, see, on the blackboard, in books, on pictures.

*The Mother*

(CWM, Vol. 12, p. 326)

## THE HIGHWAY TREE

I DON'T plead for mercy  
Kill me if you must  
But remember  
There shall not be  
Another like me  
In the tomorrows to come.

I stood here in sheer majesty  
To give shade and shelter  
To your ancestors  
I am the oldest,  
The biggest banyan tree.  
I have seen history  
Parading under me;  
I am your history  
The ancestor of your ancestors  
Worshipped by mothers  
Loved by truant sons  
Hid in my tender leaves  
For generations  
And generations and generations.

Now you come and say  
You would kill me!  
The huge hacksaw  
Has the clots of my  
Brothers' blood  
Ninety-nine of them  
You have killed.

You come to me now  
The oldest and the last to fall.

Why do you want a wide road  
Bereft of shade and shelter?  
To run your giant trucks  
Four, ten and twenty-wheelers?  
What will they carry—  
What do you have?

I am not pleading for mercy—  
What do you know of mercy?  
I've seen the human ways  
Animals and birds too  
Even the insects are better  
So apologetic  
As they eat into my flesh.

'Tis growing warm in the day  
Look at those calves  
The lambkins and little birds  
Flocking in for shelter  
The sun is blazing hot  
Why don't you and your hacksaw  
Rest under me like others  
And pass the punishing hours?  
You can then kill me  
If you must  
I shall fall like my brothers  
And leave for you your road  
As wide as a desert.

CHANDRASHEKHAR RATH

## TWO INTERVIEWS WITH JAYANTILAL PAREKH

(1)

*(Interview with Shraddhalu, Sanjay and Raman on 11 September 1992)*

I WILL tell you about my connection with the Ashram from the earliest time.

In 1928, I came to the Ashram for the first time with two of my teachers and another student. We had come to the Theosophical Society in Madras for their annual convention and we decided to come to Pondicherry. I was too young to understand anything about the Ashram, but one of my teachers who was a Theosophist (he was interested in several things), had some contact with Purani. So he wrote to him that we were coming on a particular day. Since I was only 15 years old, there was no chance of my going to the Mother. But my teacher met the Mother, although we were here only for twelve hours. And that memory, I still carry with me.

While going in the train from here to Villupuram and then further south, he narrated to me something about the Ashram life. In those days, you could not even enter the gate if you were below 18. Another thing—anybody who came to see the Ashram or met anybody here, was followed by a CID. One or two of them were always sitting opposite the gate. They took note of us and, when we left, one of them followed us. Afterwards, it was the regular police who followed us. Even when we returned to Bombay, inquiries were made. But since none of us had any political connection or interest, it ended there.

*Who was this teacher?*

His name was Jamnadas Danik. He was my Gujarati teacher and he had had a long connection with the Theosophical Movement. It is very strange that he came again 42 years later and I took him to the Mother and told her that it was he who first brought me to Pondicherry.

The second time I came was in 1934. You see, Rabindranath used to take a few of his students from Shantiniketan and visit several places in India and abroad to collect funds. These students used to perform some drama or dance or music and collect money for Shantiniketan. So in 1934, around May, we went by sea from Calcutta to Ceylon. We went via the eastern coast to Colombo and we were there, I think, for three weeks or more. On the return journey [*by sea and land*], I got down at Villupuram station telling my teacher, Nandalal Bose, that I would go and see Krishnalal. Krishnalal had come to the Ashram in 1933. We had been together in Shantiniketan for a few months. I said I would go and see him. I was somehow drawn here. So I came and saw him, Nishikanto was also there, and I didn't go inside the Ashram. I saw them and returned.

*You knew Nishikanto before?*

Nishikanto was with me as a student in Shantiniketan. He was a student of painting there. But he left when he completed his course.

So we came to Madras in 1934. Now, in these outings there were two things: some performance of Rabindranath's drama or dance by the students and an exhibition of the paintings of Kala Bhavan, Shantiniketan. So, along with the others, I used to help setting up the exhibition and help backstage. We also went to Vishakhapatnam—Radhakrishna was there. We had one dance performance and lecture there and then came back to Madras. And since I was a student of painting, I wanted to learn the etching process. So I was there in the Art School for about three weeks. I learned that process. Now, during that time, I came here for the November Darshan. I stayed downstairs in what is now the Art House. It was formerly a hotel and a bar and they used to let out rooms. I stayed there in one small room which they now use as a storage place. During this stay, I began to read Sri Aurobindo's works—Purani gave me a few books. At that time, no books were published. Only *The Mother* was published and one or two small things which the Chandernagore people were publishing. So he gave me a copy of the *Arya* to read. And while reading it, something struck me and made a very deep impression on me. That decided my future.

Later, I tried to find out which book I had read, but I could not remember. Recently, maybe a few years back, I was going through *Karma and Rebirth* and there I found the sentence which had impressed me. It says that there are three elements. One is the individual, the other is the cosmos or the world and the universe, and the third is the transcendent, that which is above the other two. The whole purpose of life is to relate these three things in their original form. How the individual is connected with the world, how the individual is connected with the transcendent, how the world is connected with the transcendent—it is like a mathematical formula that you have to think of in terms of life and consciousness. Somehow it struck me and I felt that this is the only thing to be done, nothing else. When I went to Shantiniketan, someone gave me a copy of *The Mother*. Then there was a copy of the *Essays on the Gita* on somebody's cot, and that copy remained with me for years together. I couldn't find out who was the owner of the book. The copy of *The Mother* is still here with me, 1927-1928 edition. And then I used to go to Calcutta and buy small books.

Nandalal Bose had a very great influence on me. He was very interested in these things because he was a follower of Ramakrishna. You see, when I was there, there were hardly 200 people, including the teachers—200 people in a small village and, at night, sometimes we would go out camping and sleep in the open. There Nandalal would ask us some questions and explain things. He had a great influence on us; he had a very deep understanding of the Hindu religion and Hindu philosophy. Not that he was a scholar, but he had this understanding. So whenever I went to Calcutta, he told me, "When you buy a book, get a copy for me also." So I used to

buy two copies. But after returning from here [*Pondicherry*], I was there [*in Shantiniketan*] only for a few months. I completed my training there in 1935. When I finished my course, my teacher told me, “Lock yourself up in a room, do a painting and take it to Abanindranath in Calcutta. And if he says it is good, then you have passed.” So I locked myself up in a house, in a hut, and I did two paintings in three days—we were given three days’ time. I took them to Abanindranath Tagore in Calcutta and he liked one. The teacher, who was in charge of us, liked the other one. So I was considered to have passed my training period. Then I didn’t go home in 1935, I came straight to Pondicherry. I wanted to stay here.

At that time, the Mother had taken up the decoration of the Town Hall and eight paintings were to be done. Krishnalal was asked to do four and I was asked to do four. We also had an exhibition of paintings at that time. Sanjiban’s paintings were there, Krishnalal’s and Anil Kumar’s, Nishikanto’s. Mother had invited the Governor to come and see them. Since I was to be there for a few months I had brought my paintings from Shantiniketan, I exhibited one or two. So these were the occasions in 1935. Then, all of a sudden, I had to leave because my father fell seriously ill. I didn’t want to go back, but I had to go. Mother told me, “All right, you go, I will write to you,” and I went back. My father became better in the hospital. He was brought home and, just about that time, I received a registered letter from Sri Aurobindo. He had written about 5 or 6 lines, “I hope your father is better now... You can come and finish the work.” Now my people were not eager that I should come and stay here.

*What work did he refer to?*

The paintings which we had to do for the Town Hall.

*Oh, you had not finished the four paintings!*

We had just started the work.

*So you had left in the middle of it?*

Yes, either the middle or just before beginning it or something like that. My father was slightly irritated. He asked, “Why did he send a registered letter?” (*laughter*) Sri Aurobindo wanted to make sure that I received it! Whatever they did was so perfect. Anyway, I came here and finished the work. As my people were not at all happy about my stay here, I went back to Bombay after finishing the work. For one or two months, I struggled there, I was not very happy. My parents were annoyed with me because I was not doing anything at home. In between, I had applied to an Art School in Surat. I thought that even if I could not do anything, I could at least go and work



there and make something of the school. So when they wanted somebody to look after it, I had applied there. Another student from Shantiniketan had also applied. I went for the interview. The president of the institution was very well known to us. He and my father belonged to the same community, we were neighbours in the village. But they did not select me, they selected the other man. They said, "He has too independent a mind. We may have trouble with him." (*laughter*)

So just about that time the headmaster of the Government School of Art in Madras (I had stayed with him in 1934, he was an artist and a former student of Shantiniketan, one Mr. Chitra), wrote me a letter, "I have been offered the work of copying old paintings in Cochin state. Since I am not able to do it, it will be good if you can come and take up the work." I wanted to get out of my house, so this suited me. I could be independent, take leave from there and come to Pondicherry any time. I took up the work. For about a year I was there. I copied those works which belonged to the State. But I had not yet settled down, I had not told my people what I would do. I received another letter from Ceylon from the people with whom I had stayed [*in 1928*] asking me if I could come and work there. They had something like Shantiniketan called Sripalli School. In those days, it was a very idealistic, small community. They had a big tea and rubber estate. At the bottom of the hill, they had the school and the boarding was at the top with 20-30 students. So I went there for a few months. Then in 1938 I wrote to my people, "I have now decided to join the Ashram." My father said, "All right, but on one condition. Whatever you do, you must do on your own strength. Do not depend on us in the future." Since everything was being given here, there was no question of depending on them for anything. So I said, "No, I won't be dependent on anybody henceforth." Mother had already accepted me and she had even given me a room.

At that time, there was a house where Golconde was later built. At the beginning of 1936 it was there that we had our first exhibition. There was a room upstairs and Mother gave it to me. I stayed there and did some painting work. Now, after a while, I felt that I was not really an artist—something obstructed me and I did not feel that kind of inspiration. I wrote to Mother, "Give me any other work and I will do it." Mother wrote to me saying, "If you feel like that, it is all right." So I worked in the dining room carrying food from the kitchen for some time.

I also looked after Arjava. He was extremely unwell, he had all sorts of diseases and his whole body was full of bedsores. So I used to go and attend on him. It was very difficult work to lift him up—he was a tall, wiry man but the bones were tough and heavy. That was early in 1939. He became so ill that some step had to be taken. He didn't want to go out. Now during one of the Darshans, Mother had seen a German doctor with René and his people. He had come here and Mother had kept him in mind. So Mother said, "We will contact him and ask him to come here and examine Arjava." So he was told to come. He came, he examined Arjava and it was decided to take him to Bangalore—he had a small nursing home there with 2-3 beds, his father

was a doctor, his mother was a doctor, they also had a dentist,—a beautiful set-up. So, since I was looking after Arjava, Mother told me to go with him. There was hardly a taxi available in Pondicherry. We went somehow to Madras. We rushed there and the train was about to leave. We told the station-master to delay it and we went in. It was about one o'clock in the afternoon. So, after all that, after we had arranged ourselves, Arjava told me, "My dear, you can sleep now. We will rest. I'm all right." I went to the upper bunk. Now, around 4 o'clock—we had come to a station and the train had stopped—the doctor said, "Let us order some tea." Then he asked Arjava, "Will you have some tea?" There was no response. He immediately felt his pulse and said, "It is serious," and gave him an injection. At the station itself, he informed the chief doctor to come and see us in the waiting room. We also informed the Mother about it. So we reached there [*Bangalore*] at about 7 or 8 o'clock and his condition was very bad. The German doctor said, "I won't take him home. We'll take him to the hospital"—to the General Hospital, the Government Hospital in Bangalore. We took him there. He was practically unconscious and I remained there with him till 12 o'clock or so, and went to the doctor's place for rest. Then, early in the morning, 5 o'clock or so, we got the news that he had passed away.

*Which year was it?*

1939, before World War II had started. Now, in the meantime we received a telegram from Sri Aurobindo. It said, "Why is there no further news about him?" So we sent back a message saying what had happened. Now, I didn't know anything about Arjava. We searched his box and found a diary with his mother's address. His mother was in England. We sent a telegram informing her. Once the patient had died, the doctor was not interested. He said, "Now, do what you want." But how could I do anything? I didn't know the place and Arjava was a Christian. So I said, "You must know who are the undertakers here." He was good enough to take me to an undertaker and in the evening we took Arjava's body and buried it. The next day I came away here. Mother had told Nolini (I had already sent a telegram to her about my coming), "As soon as he comes, bring him straight to me." So I went and saw Mother and told her what had happened. So that was the first incident.

Around that time, Krishnalal's brother, who was a sculptor, had come here and he suddenly became mentally disturbed and had to be sent away. He had to be taken to Madras and sent to Ahmedabad. Krishnalal asked me to help. So I asked Mother, or he asked Mother, if I could go. Mother said, "I don't know, I won't say anything." Mother's attitude was like that. Anyway, I decided to go with him. We took him to Madras, we were in Ambabikshu's house for one night. We went by train from here and put him on the train [*to Ahmedabad*]. For some time he was a little violent and it was very difficult to take him. When we were boarding a bus, he tried to run away. Now, it was evening in Madras and if he ran away, how would we find him?

So after that I continued my work here.

The design and construction of the Park was more or less completed in 1939, and I felt like sketching it. I did a sketch and sent it to Mother. So Mother replied, "I am glad you have taken up painting again." So I started painting again and got a lot of encouragement. For some years, every day, I used to do one painting and send it to her—a sketch or drawing or painting—and Mother used to preserve them.

Mother would tell me if she liked one of my paintings in particular. She would say, "Yes, this is very beautiful." Nolini once told me, "Mother liked very much what you sent to her." Like this we used to get some comments. But the real help was only from within. I already had some training before I came here. Krishnalal also had his training. Sanjiban and these people have learnt here. Nishikanto also had some training. He used to work in his own manner. But Nishikanto did not become a member of the Ashram for quite some time. They were not inclined to take him in. In '34, when I saw him, he was staying on Rangapillai Street, in one of those small rooms there—those houses are still there. It was later on, I don't know whether in '36 or '37, that Mother permitted him to come and stay because of Dilip. And then he was doing some painting and writing.

As I said earlier, the guidance for most of us was from within. They used to put forth their force and slowly [...]. Another important thing was that she wanted each one to develop in his own way and not imitate the other. Each one had to find his own way of expression. She did not mind if it was a little crude. She said, "You have to grow." And that was a very great help. Nobody was trying to copy the other. Once or twice, she remarked, "Oh, you are trying to do like him." But if we went and asked her, she would say something about it. Once Anil Kumar asked her, "Give us your frank opinion about our work." Then Mother said, "If I give my frank opinion, you won't be able to bear it. It would be so severe." (*laughter*) She was encouraging us like children. So it went on. But all these people developed in their own way. Anil Kumar, you see, he had been working in Rishabhchand's silk shop in Calcutta. Then he came here. He was a strong vital type and the imaginative kind. He had some Tantric appeal and he used to meditate. He began to write some poetry and to paint. He took to it seriously. There were crudities, but he was a very hard worker and he wanted to do things on a very big scale. Then he became enamoured of the Himalayas. So he went to the Himalayas for two or three months, made sketches, came back and began painting in a big way—big canvases. Lot of vitality in him. There is something vivid in his paintings. Not that they are a very high accomplishment, but you can see the life and his sensitivity to things.

Nishikanto's style also changed when he began doing things here. Just as in his poetry things changed, so too in his paintings. Formerly, he was too wild. Even in Shantiniketan, when he used to work, Abanindranath Tagore told Nandalal, "Don't disturb him. Let him do as he wants." Now there is no standard which you could impose on him—that he must do like that, his figures must be like that, or this balance

is not [*right*]. Here also, he was doing the same, and his style changed and he did some very interesting work in those days. So that is how things developed. We used to go out in the afternoon and do sketches and bring them back.

*How far would you go out?*

The farthest we had gone was to the Lake. Sometimes what we did—from here it was about one and a half hours to Villianur, the next station, and from there, we took a short cut to the Lake. So we used to walk about a mile and a half there. Later on, we went walking and came back walking.

*How long did it take?*

It used to take us 2 hours, 2 and a half hours.

*You spent the whole day there?*

We would go after lunch, because there used to be the Mother's Pranam in the morning. So we went after lunch taking some tea and bread with us.

*What time was the Pranam?*

It used to be at 8.30, 9 o'clock in the morning. People used to sit there and meditate. Each one went to the Mother. Where the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's painting is there...

*In the meditation hall?*

Meditation hall downstairs, there Mother used to sit. Nolini used to sit on Mother's right and Purani on her left.

*Was it not in Bula's room?*

It may have been there earlier. But when I saw it in '34 and onwards, it was there, in that place. The number of people was very small, and each one lived a separate life. All the women would mostly do embroidery work. Daily everyone would write a letter to the Mother either about his own inner movements or some other problems and Sri Aurobindo replied. Normally, there were two letters a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Sometimes even more—if there was something important, they would write in between and send the letter. There used to be a dish outside Mother's door where we kept the letter and somebody would pick it up and take it to

Mother and Sri Aurobindo. In the evening, there used to be meditation. In the morning, at about 10.30-11 o'clock, she used to come to the terrace, the top one, and walk with Chinmayee.

*Which terrace?*

Top one. The roof, you can say.

*On the Meditation house?*

The whole thing, up to Pavitra's room, as it is today. There is no change. Before the Mother's room was built, the staircase was there for going up. Mother used to go there sometimes and people used to gather in the courtyard to see her. That was there in the earlier years. Then sometimes she would peep out of the window. Just above Dyuman's room, there is a window—she used to peep out from there. Or sometimes she came out to feed a crow, give the crow a biscuit. People used to gather and see her. These were the changing phases of life.

*Would you say that this was the most creative period in your life?*

Which one?

*The period that you have just now described.*

I don't think it was very creative, but as far as painting was concerned, Mother began to admire and encourage me and I did some good work which may be appreciated. During those 3-4 years we did some paintings. Sometimes Mother used to come down [*to guide us*]. We also went upstairs and did some portraits. Four or five of us used to paint and sit as models. Once in a while Mother used to comment. There were no other activities in those days. You see, as I told you, Mother wanted each one to develop his own style. She was not interested in achieving any kind of perfection in the academic sense or ordinary aesthetic motive. Each one was developing in his own way. The other thing that was important and which should be considered as a part of our educational system is that she wanted people to understand form, to grasp the form as against the word and its meaning. The form also is a suggestive thing—it is that which speaks to the artist, just as for the poet, it is the word, the intonation, the sound value and the rhythm. The same thing is true about the form and colour and line, that is the basis of Art. After all, what you express or what is trying to express itself through you, has to be done through form, through line, through colour, or in the case of architecture, through the placement of mass, creating space and all that—these are the elements which go to make different arts. So *that* sense has to be

developed. That has not yet been done in the School to the extent that it should have been done. People paint this thing and that thing and it's all right, but to see everything in terms of form and colour and suggestiveness, when that comes and people begin to express through it, then you really create artistic forms.

*Did Mother really insist on this point?*

This is the basis of Art. I know she insisted on the perception of form. Say you have two vessels—they are different in form and the eye must be trained to see the difference. Most of the people here don't distinguish it or they don't understand the principle of Art, in the sense that we express in Art through form and colour and the position of colours and movement and a sort of feeling which goes with it, something which is trying to express itself through this movement. That has not been made very clear to people and that is very important. We are teaching like any other School—put something on the board, etc—but the thing is left open. People are understanding and trying to imitate. Some of them have developed a sense or skill to reproduce. But the real understanding of Art in the sense in which a poet understands the word and meaning and vibration and rhythm—this has to be done in Art and Architecture also. Some of these things were taught in Shantiniketan to some extent, but not fully. As far as my own understanding is concerned, this became more clear to me here. Although I had very great respect for my teacher [*Nandalal Bose*]*—he was really a great teacher and a very fine artist—but once I began to understand what Mother and Sri Aurobindo were trying to do in Art, that kind of thing disappeared from me and I would criticise Nandalal's work, see whether there was a certain defect or whether certain things were not all right.*

*Can such a thing be taught by anyone here? Do we have people who can teach such a thing?*

They are there, but we have not been taking any classes. In those days, we were, at least, four or five people working more or less together and showing our work to Mother. Actually, once I wrote to Sri Aurobindo about it. I said, "Although we are doing this work, we have not arrived at something which we can show to the world and claim as something new." And Sri Aurobindo said, "Yes, it is true." It was an attempt but to come to a position where you create something and you can say... as in the field of poetry there are quite a number of people who have done something. Not in all cases or in a big way, but something did happen through poetry.

*Do you mean some sort of tradition?*

Tradition, no, it is not a question of tradition. The consciousness of Art has to be

awakened in the man who is doing it. I began to see things like that—the form and the colour and the atmosphere filled me—and then I was able to express. Krishnalal did some good work, Anil Kumar and others have also done some work. Chinmayi did some work which was very interesting. Mother used to teach her because she used to stay there [*upstairs*] and so Mother used to help her in certain things, how to render; she followed the impressionist style because she directly learned from Mother who had followed it. So her work is quite different.

*Did Mother give you any books to read?*

No, not for that. You see, what she did in earlier times.... There used to be a French magazine called *Illustration* and many paintings of French masters appeared in it, Monet and Cézanne, and Mother used to show them to us. This “pointillism” which is there, I did some work in that style in those days. She showed us those things and some of her own work and spoke on Art.

*I read a letter of Sri Aurobindo’s in which he says that literary activity cannot replace sadhana. If you apply that to artistic activity, it means that artistic activity cannot replace sadhana.*

No, that statement should not be taken in any absolute sense. It depends on the individual. Any artistic activity can be a part of sadhana. You may not meditate but you may sing. You see, this is a very interesting question and it has a very interesting answer. Now Sanjiban, he could sing but his paintings in the beginning were very crude, though he had the ability and intention of becoming an artist. Now, one night, he was singing before going to bed, and during the singing or just after it, something opened up in him. He said that he was going from inner depth to inner depth.... So it depends upon the attitude of the person who pursues the matter.

*Can you give us some more examples?*

As I told you about Sanjiban, this opening came to him when he was singing and it happened not once but several times. I also felt, while doing this work, a sense of peace. Now the sense of peace also comes through work. It does not come only through meditation. That quietude can grow within while you are doing some work and you feel suddenly that everything is quiet. You forget everything else and you are concentrated on the work and do it well. The rest of your personality, your ideas... don’t come at all into the atmosphere. Like that, several things have happened here to different people.

*So artistic activity can be a part of sadhana?*



Yes, but you must make this distinction. The artistic activity is only a means of expression, there is something behind it, and when that something behind is trying to express itself in the right manner or it makes you an instrument, then it can be a part of sadhana. It is even possible that it will make you an instrument without your fully realising it.... All these various possibilities are there. That is why if you take any sentence like that and make it an absolute rule, it is not true. The other side also is true.

*Would you consider artistic training important?*

According to Mother, training also has to come from within. It is not by any academic training that all of us have painted at different times. I told Mother that if I had learned oil painting when I was a student, I could have done better. She said, "No, because what you are trying to express does not come through training. You may develop the skill, but what has to come through the skill is a different thing. So for that you have to develop an inner attitude and inner openness and a kind of feeling." All artistic work is not done from a very great vision. It is through feeling that things are done and express themselves and that feeling is very important in the development of Art. It may not be great Art but you can see that there is some feeling in it. My teacher Nandalal used to say, "There is some feeling in this." or he would say, "There is no feeling in it." Now it is that feeling that gives value to Art.

*Could you tell us about cases where artistic activity came in the way of sadhana?*

No, I don't think we had such artists here. That happens only when your inspiration is from a lower region and you have the skill. It happened in Harin's case. Mother was not very fond of his music. In his poetry the [*higher inspiration*] came. But she didn't encourage his music.

*Was he a good singer?*

He was a very fine singer. You see, from ordinary standards, you would be fascinated by the way he played the harmonium and sang or acted and all that. He was a *tremendous* singer. You can't imagine the abilities he had. But it was a thing in which the best of him did not come through. This one case is there, that of Harin. There was a lady with him, I forget her name, she did some painting. She was encouraged to paint. Tazdar also. They all did some work. Mother did not mind where the skill is developed. But when you make an effort to express yourself through Art and if the source of inspiration is not.... I had once an argument with Sri Aurobindo. Nandalal Bose had sent some cards here and we had sent them to Mother, and Sri Aurobindo remarked that they were very ugly. So I told Nirod, "But I don't find them ugly." So

he narrated this to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Aurobindo said, "Oh, he thinks like that because I am not an artist but Mother also thinks like that." [laughter] But I would ask him this question even today because I knew Nandalal Bose's intention, not that what Sri Aurobindo said was wrong. I knew with what sort of ideas Nandalal was doing those paintings. He was following a kind of Chinese calligraphic style. But otherwise Sri Aurobindo appreciated his work even if it was a little vitalistic. Abanindranath's inspiration was vitalistic but he appreciated it because it expressed itself in the form of Art which has the aspect of beauty. The colour and harmony and all those things were there. Otherwise, you won't be able to appreciate even Shakespeare because he wrote about the vital world. So I wanted to emphasise that Mother wanted this kind of training to be given here or to grow here, so that people become aware of it. Then only can there be real Art.

*Why is it that in the Ashram we have never had this tradition of people who have achieved something to pass it on to the younger generation?*

Actually, they were not anxious to build any tradition. Because the development is on individual lines, different lines. They were against such an establishment of tradition. Tradition binds you down, it doesn't give you freedom. Here, in this new creation, they wanted each one to develop. That is why I said they did not want Pondicherry to become a School of Art, as in the case of Shantiniketan where you can say by seeing the work, "Oh, this is Shantiniketan School of Art." They did not want this kind of a thing.

*Can you not teach in such a way that you will not impose your own style?*

That is what Mother did with us.

*But why don't you do that for the younger generation?*

You see, I got involved in so many other things. But as far as I am concerned, my interest in Art has grown, not lessened. Actually, my reaction to things even today is in terms of form and colour. When I go about or see or look out of the window, it is the colour, the harmony or these things that still excite me. It has grown here.

*What was the basic difference between the way Nandalal Bose taught and the way Mother taught?*

Mother wanted a deeper element of genius to come out. Nandalal Bose stressed the formal aspect. Now I will give you one example. Once he heard that I was inclined towards the western style of painting. I went in for what they call the realistic aspect

of it. And he said, “That means he has not understood the artistic Indian way of looking.” Now, what happened there was that it had become formalised, it had lost the.... In Art, there must not only be expressiveness, but also life—there is a living element. Once you formalise it into a kind of pattern, it loses the life. There have been great traditions, say, if you went to Konark or Mahabalipuram, there the tradition has been the active force, not an individual genius. Individual genius would help to make it in a particular manner, but it is the tradition that has grown there. In earlier times, it was like that. In modern times, the spirit has changed. More individualistic trends have set in and there is more variety and different ways of expression. That is the change from the medieval and the earlier period. What they have taught us is extremely great and that could not have been done without a tradition. See, in a temple, there are five hundred pieces of sculpture and most of them are of good quality. It means there must have been at least a hundred people who were doing the sculpture, and that has grown out of tradition.

*Did Nandalal insist on his own tradition?*

No, he did not. But he was very keen on studying all the traditions. He had acquired a lot of knowledge of the Indian tradition; he went to China and Japan and learned their traditions. I consider it even as a kind of a drawback in his case. He acquired very great skill in other techniques. But a full artist is not concerned with that. His primary object is to create. It is the inspiration that will awaken if he is experimenting and trying to do it. It is a different thing. When Michelangelo did his work, it is the inspiration that drove him. He took an eight or nine-foot piece of stone and began carving it every day and, in a year and a half or two years, he finished one of his masterpieces. Behind that, you can say, there was a tremendous creative force that guided every hammer stroke and chisel. While Rodin, he did it in clay. Other people did it in marble or bronze. Like that, in India, you see in Mahabalipuram or Elephanta—those people were artists of a very high calibre. The kind of expression they brought in, could not have been done by ordinary...it must have been done under very great inspiration. For that, the tradition was there, the whole culture, the religious tradition was there, the religious knowledge was there. They were asked to meditate before doing it and the whole paraphernalia was there in those days.

*I have one last question. Which was the biggest hurdle in the way of your artistic development?*

As I told you, in the beginning, I felt that I was not an artist because I did not feel that kind of joy. It may have been partly because of my mind. Once Mother remarked about me to somebody, “His vision is analytic. But in Art the vision has to be of the whole.” If I create something by putting several things together and the mind plays a part in arranging them, it may be a good arrangement but it is not [Art]. And for that

the thing perhaps which I lacked was enough vitality in the nature. You also need, apart from genius and purity of expression, a great vitality behind it. Because it is the vitality that gives the creation its vibration. I think, I don't have or, at least, I did not have that kind of vitality to drive my art. I may succeed in a certain way by feeling certain things. I did one painting which Mother liked, I know why—because I could create a certain vibration in that painting which had an artistic value. But any kind of big work needs more vitality.

*By vitality, do you mean drive?*

No, not drive, but your intention to create comes with a natural force.

*Sustained energy?*

It has to be also a sustained energy, but even if it is not sustained, it is that energy that drives you and, through it, something gets manifested.

*But is that involved or acquired?*

No, but you can to some extent acquire it, in the sense that certain obstructions which are there in your nature can go away by yoga and that flow is given a free play.

*Did you at any time achieve that energy?*

No, I don't think I have, in any measurable way, achieved that. But things have come through a certain feeling in my work. If you see my paintings, those which are successful have a feeling in them. But the kind of energy that creates great Art is different, such as in Michelangelo or some of the ancient sculptors. But energy is also not sufficient. What exactly is the element that is trying to express itself, is also important. This Spanish artist, Dali—you can see the tremendous energy these people had. You will be staggered by the work he could do, though I don't think it was always of the same order or calibre. That is why Sri Aurobindo makes this distinction. I will give you an example. Sri Aurobindo said Ramakrishna's realisation was greater than that of Buddha, greater in the sense of having more aspects. He could see the Mother aspect or the Impersonal, and he had various approaches [*to the Divine*]. But the creative power in Buddha was much greater than in Ramakrishna. Even after 2500 years, Buddhism still vibrates in the consciousness of people. I'm not talking of the purely religious side, but of the discipline and Buddha's personality which have a certain impact even today. Just as in the case of Krishna... So that is the distinction which is very important whether in the creative field or the social and other fields. Take the case of Gandhi. There was a certain amount of vital power in him and that is why he could achieve so much. He was determined about certain things and he went ahead with full drive and he could stand against any opposition.

We don't realise today, but in South Africa for a single man to stand against the whites... Even today, after so many years, they still cannot stand up against the supremacy of the whites.

*How did your artistic activity stop?*

Actually, in my case, my personal interest is more in the aspect of Truth than the aspect of Beauty. The aspect of Beauty is there to some extent, but if I find a certain truth or I understand a certain aspect of it, it gives me much greater joy today. So I got more absorbed in Sri Aurobindo's works and then circumstances...

*What circumstances?*

Publishing Sri Aurobindo's works, microfilming these things—from 1950 I have been doing it. Then I did whatever other work came to me. I did a lot of purchasing work, I used to go to Madras, go to the government and get this permit, that permit, whatever came my way. But I am very much interested in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision of truth and that attracts me tremendously. It gives me more excitement today if I read something like that. Or even if I am reading something from outside... I have absolutely no scientific background but there are aspects of scientific knowledge that excite me tremendously, how the modern mind is finding a particular solution. I am more interested in the overall understanding of it.

*(To be continued)*

*"True art is a whole and an ensemble; it is one and of one piece with life."*

What I have said? Nothing else but that true art is the expression of beauty in the material world; and in a world entirely changed spiritually, that is to say, one expressing completely the divine reality, art must function as a revealer and teacher of this divine beauty in life; that is to say, an artist should be capable of entering into communion with the Divine and of receiving inspiration about what form or forms ought to be used to express the divine beauty in matter. And thus, if it does that, art can be a means of realisation of beauty, and at the same time a teacher of what beauty ought to be, that is, art should be an element in the education of men's taste, of young and old, and it is the teaching of true beauty, that is, the essential beauty which expresses the divine truth. This is the *raison d'être* of art. Now, between this and what is done there is a great difference, but this is the true *raison d'être* of art.

*The Mother*

(CWM, Vol 5, pp. 332-33)

## THIS LITTLE SELF

No lightning dances in my eyes,  
In my arms stirs no python might,  
No skylarks soar in my mind's skies—  
Sun-drunk skylarks of delight.

Hope looms not large before my life,  
All its roads lead to caves of despair,  
Yet in my being, torn by strife,  
Behold Immortality's heir!

My dim eyes peer through the veils of Time,  
Undazzled at Eternal's face,  
My dwarf self, smeared with gore and grime,  
Is clasped in His taintless embrace.

ANIRUDDHA SIRCAR

*Let beauty be your constant ideal.  
The beauty of the soul  
The beauty of sentiments  
The beauty of thoughts  
The beauty of the action  
The beauty in the work  
so that nothing comes out of your hands which is not an expression of pure  
and harmonious beauty.  
And the Divine Help shall always be with you.*

*The Mother*

(CWM, Vol. 12, p. 234)

## QUARKS: THE REAL STUFF OF MATTER

MANKIND'S curiosity about nature has been the dominant source and force in the development of our civilisation. Speculations as to the ultimate structure of matter and the laws governing the universe are certainly very old, maybe more than three thousand years old. A new dimension was added about 500 years ago when people began to base their ideas on experimental observations. It was Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) who pioneered the new era of modern physics by his investigation of freely falling bodies (as the legend goes Galileo dropped two objects, one heavy and the other light, from the top of the leaning tower of Pisa; both objects hit the ground at the same time) and his experiments with celestial bodies using a telescope which supported the hypothesis of Copernicus (1474-1543) that the earth and the planets are revolving round the sun. Since then there has been a rapid progress in our understanding of the universe. Astronomers and astrophysicists studying stars and galaxies using very powerful telescopes have discovered very many new objects (pulsars, quasars, black holes, etc.) and are able to calculate the age of the universe (about fifteen billion years). It is also known that atoms were formed when the universe was about three hundred thousand years old and our sun is about five billion years old.

Let us now consider the atom. Everything that we see around us, including ourselves, is made of atoms or of compounds of atoms called molecules. These atoms are very tiny in size, so small that it would take one hundred million atoms to make a line one centimetre long. There are 92 different atoms seen in nature. The next question is: what is the structure of the atom? Towards the end of the nineteenth century, in 1897, J.J. Thomson was able to identify the electron as a fundamental constituent of the atom by his study of the passage of a high voltage electric current through a very low pressure gas inside a glass tube; this tube was very similar to our modern TV picture tube. The electron is a negatively charged particle and is about two thousand times lighter than the lightest atom, which is the hydrogen atom. It took another 14 years for Rutherford to discover, in 1911, that the entire mass of an atom resides at the centre now called the atomic nucleus. The nucleus is about one-hundred-thousand times smaller than the atom. Between the electron and the nucleus there is empty space. To get an idea for the gap between the electrons and the nucleus in an atom, let us increase artificially the size of the nucleus to the size of a cricket ball, about seven centimetres; then the electrons will be at a distance of about seven kilometres with nothing in between. This means that there is a vast empty space between the electrons and the nucleus inside an atom. Further investigation revealed that the nucleus consists of two types of particles: positively charged protons and electrically neutral neutrons. The electric charge of the proton is exactly equal in magnitude but opposite in sign to the charge of the electron. Thus the atom is electrically neutral. Protons and neutrons are nearly of the same mass, a neutron is



slightly heavier, and about two thousand times heavier than an electron. Thus the picture of an atom is that of a positively charged nucleus at the centre surrounded by negatively charged electrons circling round the nucleus (in reality the motion of electrons inside an atom is very complex which is appropriately described by the relativistic quantum mechanics; the classical mechanics, which describes the planetary motion around the sun, is a good approximation to the quantum mechanics when applied to large objects). By the early 1930's we had a picture of three building blocks of the atom: proton, neutron and electron. As an example, a helium atom consists of two electrons rotating round a nucleus of two protons and two neutrons.

Before we go further, let us briefly outline a fundamental and revolutionary idea of physics which is the theory of relativity. A very important consequence of relativity is the equivalence of mass and energy. Up to the nineteenth century nobody had ever imagined that matter could be produced directly from energy. It was Albert Einstein in 1905 who began to ponder over the idea and came out with his famous formula:  $E = mc^2$ , where  $E$  is the energy,  $m$  is the mass and  $c$  is the speed of light (300,000 km per second). This is probably the only equation in physics which is widely known even among the common man on the street. Let us give two examples of its consequences: (i) Fissions of uranium atoms into two nuclei with a slightly lesser total mass will release a tremendous amount of energy; this is the basic mechanism of fission reactors, and (ii) the fusion process in which four protons combine into a more tightly bound helium nucleus, called the hydrogen burning reaction, is responsible for the shining of the sun. In both these processes the initial mass is slightly more than the final products, and this excess mass of the initial state is equivalent to the energy released via  $E = mc^2$ .

The simple picture of three building blocks of matter did not last long. In the 1940's it became clear that one can make protons move with very high speed close to the speed of light. This is achievable by the application of electrical and magnetic forces in circular ring-shaped machines called particle accelerators. Tiny particles like protons thus acquire very high kinetic energies in accelerators. These very fast-moving protons are then allowed to pass through a thin target consisting of a block of matter, like a metal sheet of copper or iron, or through a liquid like hydrogen or helium. These targets basically contain protons, neutrons and electrons. Thus incoming fast-moving protons make collisions with the protons or neutrons of the target (collisions with electrons are extremely rare). What is the outcome of these collisions? Imagine hitting one brick with another; the outcome will be very many small pieces of bricks. But when two protons collide, part of the kinetic energy of the fast-moving proton gets transformed into producing a number of new particles which did not exist initially (that is, there is a creation of matter as per Einstein's equation  $E = mc^2$ ) and the two colliding protons remain intact. By the 1970's more than two hundred new particles were discovered in this way. Through high-energy collisions one is thus able to probe the inner structure or the constituents, if any, of a proton, and

therefore higher and higher energy accelerators are being constructed to study the structure of matter. The complexities in technologies have necessitated international collaborations in building these accelerators—major accelerator facilities exist at CERN (Geneva), Fermilab (USA), KEK (Japan) and HERA (Germany).

The direct confirmation of the inner structure of the proton came from a series of experiments conducted at SLAC, USA, during 1969 in which high-energy electrons were made to collide with protons. The 1990 Nobel Prize in physics was awarded to the experimenters Friedman, Kendal and Taylor. The constituents are named Quarks: up (u) and down (d) quarks. If the electron is treated as having (-1) charge, then u-quark has (+2/3) charge and d-quark has (-1/3) charge. Protons and neutrons are made out of three quarks each: proton as (uud) quarks and neutron as (udd). Note that the 'uud' combination gives a charge of +1, while the 'udd' combination gives a charge of zero as expected for a proton and a neutron respectively. Further experiments during 1970-1990 led to the conclusion that there are in all six quarks in nature. These six quarks are: up (+2/3), down (-1/3), charm (+2/3), strange (-1/3), top (+2/3) and bottom (-1/3); the bracketed numbers refer to their fractional charges. The 1975 Nobel Prize was awarded to experimenters Richter and Ting for the discovery of the charm quark in 1974. The six quarks are of varying masses. The lightest one is the up-quark which is about ten times heavier than an electron, and the heaviest is the top-quark which is about three-hundred-fifty-thousand times heavier than an electron (or nearly two hundred times heavier than a hydrogen atom). Where do all these masses come from? This is one of the major problems of particle physics. Like the quarks, our electron is also a part of a bigger family of six particles called Leptons. In the lepton family there are three neutral particles, called neutrinos, and three charged particles called electron, muon and tau-lepton. The neutrinos can be taken as possessing zero mass (recent experimental indications are that they may possess a tiny mass), and among the charged ones, the electron is the lightest particle and the tau-lepton the heaviest with a mass three-thousand-six-hundred times that of the electron. Thus the building blocks of matter consist of six quarks and six leptons. Here is another puzzle of particle physics: why are there only six quarks and six leptons in nature?

Quarks have the peculiar characteristics that they cannot exist as free particles, like protons or neutrons or electrons, but are permanently confined inside particles like protons and neutrons. The force that confines quarks inside particles is called a 'strong force'. This strong force between quarks is due to particles called Gluons. A gluon acts like a spring glued to a pair of quarks and thus the quarks are held firmly inside protons or neutrons. The strong force is about a factor of hundred times stronger than the 'electromagnetic force' responsible for keeping electrons circling around a nucleus in an atom. There are two other forces of nature: the 'weak force' (responsible for radioactive decays) and the 'gravitational force' (responsible for planetary movements around the sun, etc.). The strong force is a million times (that is: one followed

by six zeros) stronger than the weak force, while it is infinitely stronger (the actual factor is: one followed by thirty-nine zeros) than the gravitational force. The Nobel Prize in physics for 2004 went to three theoreticians, Gross, Politzer and Wilczek for their contributions towards the understanding of the strong force.

This, by no means, is the end of the quark story. The world's highest energy particle accelerator, called the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), is under construction at CERN, Geneva, and is expected to be operational in the year 2007. The circumference of this machine is 27 km. In the LHC two very fast counter-rotating beams of protons will collide head-on. Taking the velocity of light to be 300,000 km/sec, the velocity of protons in LHC will be: 299,999.997 km/sec, which differs from the speed of light merely by 0.003 km/sec. (Note that the speed of light is the limit of speed for any particle according to the theory of relativity.) There are going to be four gigantic experiments in which several Indian groups are also participating. One of the major aims of these experiments will be to understand the mechanism responsible for giving masses to the particles. It is believed that this mechanism generates a new particle called the 'Higgs particle', named after its inventor Peter Higgs. So far, all searches have failed to detect this particle. Hence, the search for the Higgs particle will be the major challenge for the experimenters at the LHC. Let us wait another three years for the new and exciting results from the LHC.

S. N. GANGULI

## THE BALL OF RADIANT GOLD

A towering height  
 Saw the waves,  
 Steadily advance to the shore  
 Bringing a morn of promise  
 That sang the unsung,  
 Proclaimed the unproclaimed,  
 Caught the unmanifest,  
 In its virgin formation.  
 In a moment of inspiration,  
 It etched out itself in itself,—  
 As though prefiguring centuries:  
 It was a heavenly ball of radiant gold.  
 This day was the new beginning,  
 And the unexpectant sun  
 Took possession of the day.

N. SHAKUNTALA MANAY

## VOICES OF LIGHT

Beneath the sky and earth,  
Beyond the self and worth,  
In the mystery of nothingness,  
And the beauty of everything,  
Colours rise,  
And voices are heard,  
Voices of Light.

The sky floats in the heart,  
And the inner eye swings from the moon.  
Lotuses rise from the waters of illusion  
That reflect the soul's true nature.  
Inner ladders hold the trees and birds,  
And secret doors dangle in space.

And in the riddle of the Unknown,  
Diving into the void,  
These voices of Light  
Are really images,  
Seen inside the beyond.

GOPIKA KARTHIKEYAN

## NAVANIT STORIES

### THIS DAY TOO SHALL PASS

A SAGE had come to town. He had travelled through many kingdoms, helping and blessing all, yet perfectly detached from everything. Day and night crowds thronged around him: many seeking consolation in their sorrows or cure of disease, some desiring worldly, some other-worldly gains; some just to adore in him the Light that manifests in realised souls; and a few aspiring to develop the capacity to make grow this Light in themselves.

The badshah was a pious man. Honouring all saints and fakirs who came to his capital, he served them selflessly, forgetting his royal status in those sacred moments. Pleading with due reverence, he persuaded the sage to grace his palace and took him there with great pomp. He served him daily in every way possible and the sage imparted to him the highest truths through discourses, legends and anecdotes.

Three months flew by. The sage decided to move on. At the moment of parting, choked with emotion, the badshah fell at his feet. Sweetly, with affection, the sage asked, “Badshah! Don’t forget the words of divine light and wisdom you have heard. Meditate on them and you will prosper.”

“O Baba, in your compassion, you have bestowed a vast store of deep and high knowledge, holding back nothing. But I am dull-witted, my right to such knowledge is trivial. Everything you imparted was nectar for my soul; but weak of intelligence and memory, what I heard one day, I forgot the next. Kindly tell me something that is within my capacity to retain, something I will never forget.”

The sage took the king to his royal bed-chamber and on the wall facing his bed wrote in large letters: “This day too shall pass.” And said, “This is sufficient. Read it every morning on waking up and remember it always.”

From the next day the badshah began reading and contemplating on it daily. Any time of the day or night it would flash in his mind. In due course he realised that nothing is permanent: *Nīcāir gatcchatyuparī ca, daśā cakranemikrameṇa*. Like the rim of a wheel, one’s situations rise and decline: in times of prosperity and happiness, therefore, be not puffed up with arrogance and pride; when misfortune comes, don’t bewail your fate or despair. Bear every event and circumstance with equanimity, do your duty with detachment, keep striving always towards the Goal—that is the ideal way.

As time passed, more such perceptions arose from his daily meditations.

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One day an enemy invaded with a huge army. The badshah was defeated and captured. With hands and feet bound in chains, he was brought to the enemy king—to his own palace.

Instead of being darkened by despair, his face was lit with a smile. Instead of melancholy, mirth frolicked in his eyes. Instead of being bowed in shame his head was upright. He stood majestic as always, disdaining the chains that bound him.

The enemy was stunned. “What? You have lost everything and your life or death is in my hands, and yet you smile!”

“This day too shall pass; as all the others when I possessed everything—kingdom, opulence, authority, power. So too will this day pass.”

The victor was no fool. His mind opened to the Light behind the maxim. He restored all he had won to the badshah. Instead of the pomp of ephemeral treasures, he took home with him an inexhaustible source of knowledge.

PUJALAL

(Translated from *Navanit*, published by Shivasadan Granthamala Karyalaya, Maddhada, Gujarat, 1945)

*This too must now be overpassed and left,  
As all must be until the Highest is gained  
In whom the world and self grow true and one:  
Till That is reached our journeying cannot cease.*

(*Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 238)

#### **A correction:**

In the January issue, the reference on p. 17 should have carried the additional information:

“An English rendering of a portion of the Mother’s conversation of 23 June, 1954.”