

EDITORIAL

Pilgrimage to America

The overwhelming impression left on my mind after a purposive tour of the United States lasting nearly three months is one of the magnificence of that country. We travelled from the east coast to the west in a Chevrolet van and had opportunities to see and commune with the different and varied aspects of the land—its forests, rivers, mountains, oceans, deserts—and above all its great people.

Contrary to the common notion in our part of the world that the Americans are an extrovert lot engulfed in the materialist life, I was agreeably surprised to find them—at least a large section—alive to the demands of the Spirit. No doubt their life is one of material affluence, but that is not all. Even the plenty that they have is hard won. They are a most hard-working people and fully deserve the prosperity that has smiled on them. But they are not content to rest on their oars. There is a continuous effort to improve their standards—civic, hygienic, social, economic, political and also religious and spiritual.

There is an intense awareness of the inadequacy of material values *alone* and various attempts are afoot to infuse the Breath of the Spirit in their individual and collective life-structure. There are a number of groups and communities which are engaged in cultivating the values of the Soul in the midst of daily life situations. There are what are known as New Age groups which firmly believe that human consciousness is rapidly evolving into a new dimension and this process can be expedited by human collaboration.

Among the several movements in this direction are those that are researching and working in the field of transformation of the Body and in awakening to and articulating a New Consciousness through sport. Michael Murphy and his colleagues are of this group and their work promises to spearhead a new movement all the world over.

Another happy sign on the scene is the humility and understanding on the part of this awakened and awakening section of the society. I had occasion to visit several communities trying to practice a way of life governed by Love, Unity, Harmony, and Purity and prepare for the New Age that is to come. No group has a sense of elitism—that bane which has vitiated so many movements in religion,

occultism, spirituality. They are generally aware of other experiments and welcome coordination with them.

There is a noticeable enthusiasm for the project of Auroville and many—especially among the youth—are keenly watching for opportunities to participate in it. How does Auroville function? What is its economy? How are decisions made? How is it administered? Do all who believe in the New Consciousness need to come to India and join Auroville? Such were some of the questions that were repeatedly asked. Of that, later.

M. P. P.

A VISION OF THE UNIVERSE IN THE PERIODIC TABLE

Ram Ratan Agarwal

CONSIDERING THE UNIVERSE

The universe, as known nowadays, consists of approximately 750 thousand million galaxies, each of which contains about 10 thousand million stars. One galaxy of about ninety thousand light years in diameter and fifteen thousand light years in thickness is nearly 1.5 million light years apart from another galaxy. Our sun, a small star, is only 108 times bigger than the earth's diameter of 8,000 miles. The earth originated about 4.5 thousand million years ago and the universe is supposed to be 5 thousand million years old. These figures of substance, time, and distance absolutely overpower our imagination and are difficult to mentally grasp at all.

How such an infinite universe originated and evolved into the present form is a story which is very imperfectly known. The physical, and particularly astronomical, sciences are yet too underdeveloped to make any more of it than a kind of guess-work. To be able to state the story categorically in an acceptable form to all concerned in the various fields, it would be necessary to trace out some sort of a framework hidden in nature, to know the outlines of the universal scheme. What I mean by framework is something like that of the solar system which can tell us the story of our earth, like that of the human palm which tells the story of its person, and like the markings and fossils of living things in the records of rocks which have helped us to piece together the earth's natural history. Nature might have left some sort of framework to tell us the story of the universe also.

Let us attempt to discover this hidden framework in the universe. The universe is ultimately composed of only ninety-two chemical elements (the eleven additional ones of

A thirty year old electrical engineer and computer programmer in West Bengal, Ram Ratan Agarwal has for years been living another life in the worlds expressed by this article. About it he says, "At present my mind and soul are so much occupied with the ideas of my research that I cannot further concentrate on other interests." The first light of these thoughts "rushed into my mind at the age of sixteen . . . seemed to come from nowhere". He continues the work as his veiled vocation, confessing that "with the little knowledge which I have at the moment it is difficult . . . I would rather like the cooperation of greater thinkers in various fields . . ."

trans-uranium are man-made). From the study of spectra of stars and nebulae it is known that hydrogen comprises more than 90% of the atoms of the universe and about three quarters of the mass. Helium atoms account for most of the remainder. All the other elements together probably contribute only slightly more than one per cent of the mass. The hydrogen is always being converted into helium and helium is likewise being changed into the heavier elements. This chemical process, presumably not reversible, is continuously engineering the change of composition of the universe.

If the universe would have wished to "plan" its scheme, that planning might have been contained in its first constructive process—the forming of the elements. The elements were formed by spinning electrons, which made rounds about their nuclei, in a complex motion as endless as that of the mind, as if they were thinking of infinite planning. [Some particle physics research scientists have recently begun to use terms like *mind* and *thought* when attempting to describe the qualities and behaviour of sub-atomic particles—editor.] The electronic structure of atoms can be said to be the first and so the basic planning of the universe. All the regularities of forms and structures that we see in nature, ranging from the hexagonal shape of a snow flake to the intricate symmetries of living forms in flowers and animals, are based upon the symmetries of these atomic structures. The properties of various elements are also based on their electronic structures. The complete picture of electronic structure is shown in the periodic table, where all the elements are systematically arranged. Thus the periodic table, a result of lavish electronic planning, seems to be a framework of the universal scheme.

RELATING THE UNIVERSE TO THE PERIODIC TABLE

If the periodic table seems to be the framework of the universal scheme, the properties of elements in the table must have a relationship with the evolution of universal phenomena. This relationship is clearly seen in the following five points:

1. The constituents of the table and the universe are the same. All the ninety-two elements which are arranged in the table are also those of the universe. No elements have been found elsewhere in the universe that cannot be identified in the table.

2. The occurrence of elements is related to that of universal phenomena: We mentioned above that the first element, the gas hydrogen, is found abundantly in the universe (forming 90% of all atoms); after the occurrence of second ranked helium, which forms 8% of all atoms, heavier elements diminish in abundance gradually. The much heavier elements of the table's last period, like radium, are rarely found anywhere in the universe. Similarly, we can observe that the first phenomenon—nothingness (which will be explored a few lines later)—occupies most of the space of the universe; then matter, plants, animals and human beings in a gradually diminishing curve, occupy the rest. The pattern repeats itself in human beings: talented persons, geniuses, saints and *avatars* are rarely found among us.

3. The periodic re-occurrence of certain properties of elements into groups like gases or metals, a basic fact known as the periodic law, was established during chemical evolution. With the increasing magnitude of atomic numbers and the filling of successive "shells" of

successive atoms, some properties of elements were repeated after regular intervals. This is seen, for instance, in the table's top right-hand column headed "O": the elements, (reading down) are He (Helium), Ne (Neon), Ar (Argon) and so on, which are all noble gases—that is, the *group* of noble gases. This repetition (as the increasing atomic numbers progressing *across* the table line up such *vertical* groups) is not of course identical, but its similarity (of the gases group, then the alkaline metals group, and so on) goes in a progressive manner, *as if to attain a goal*.

This basic fact suggests that repetition in a progressive manner is a fundamental process of evolution. The spinning of an electron on an axis and its revolutions around the atom's nucleus are nothing but repetitions. This repetition can be observed in every process of the universe: the spinning and revolving of galaxies, stars, planets and therefore re-occurrences of day and night and seasons. Birth and death, the practices of things, memory, and behaviour also support this fundamental fact.

4. During each of the seven (horizontal) periods of the table, we find that the properties of elements (such as hardness) increase to a point and then gradually decrease—just like the wave motion of anything which rises to a high and then falls to a low. The elements of group IA, the alkali metals, are soft with low melting points. The alkaline earth metals in group IIA, like magnesium, are harder and have higher melting points. The hardness and melting points continue to increase through groups IIIA and IVA and "fall off" through groups VA, VIA and VIIA.

This type of wave behaviour—gradual increase and then gradual decrease—is also observed in every process of the universe, in familiar phases such as growing and decaying, rising and setting, constructing and destroying.

5. Each period of the table, then, consists of all the groups, and these groups form a complete wave of increasing and then decreasing behaviour of the elements' properties. Thus a period is equivalent to a complete cycle of evolution. There are seven periods to match our seven cycles of evolution (in the Indian vision) as detailed below:

Period Number	Description	Number of Elements	Cycles of Evolution
1	very short period	2 (H and He)	nothingness
2	first short period	8 (from Li to Ne)	energy
3	second short period	8 (from Na to Ar)	matter
4	first long period	18 (from K to Kr)	plants
5	second long period	18 (from Rb to Xe)	animals
6	very long period	32 (from Cs to Rn)	human beings
7	incomplete period	17 (from Fr to Lw and . . .)	super humans, nothingness

*[The chart of the periodic table will accompany the remainder of this article in the next issue—editor.]

As suggested in the above five points, the relationship between the properties of the elements and of universal phenomena might be established in the form of a law which could be stated as follows: *The evolution of universal phenomena is a function of properties of successive elements in the periodic table.* This law would be similar to the periodic law which can be restated as follows: The properties of elements are a function of atomic numbers. If established, the new law could be called the schematic law.

[To be continued]

PORTRAIT

It was dark down here,
In the midst of the roots
Of another day,
And in the darkness,
Things moved.
The hour,
Just before dawn,
Here and there
Points of light moved,
Slowly at first
And then
As their numbers increased
So did their speed,
Till moving in a blinding
Flash, together in the distance
Colliding and crossing each others' paths,
Like a gash of light,
In the whispering night
It grew,
And the points coalesced
To form a sphere:
White, radiating.
The light faded
But still one could see the ball—
It shone again,
Orange.

Hero Neogy

From a birthplace in Kampala, Uganda fifteen years ago, Hero Neogy came to Sri Aurobindo Ashram and then to Auroville's beginnings of the last eight years with his family. He is now building his house there and describes his occupation in these words: "I dropped out of school psychologically at 10 and physically at 14 and ever since have been spending my time writing poems and drawing semi-surrealistic and totally abstract pictures. . . . I can only describe myself as an arrogant idiot, trying to be free."

THE ROYAL PYJAMA'D HORSE—PART TWO, IV

Maggi Lidchi

Pomegranate was so delighted that she embraced Captain HO and then pecked him on either cheek. "Captain HO!" she exclaimed again and then, "I knew it the moment I saw you. I just said to myself, that Captain HO. He's the man for us. He must be the one the Tiger meant. It's funny how sometimes you just know. I had an aunt who had a premonition . . ." and she went on so quickly that it sounded like a tape being rewind.

It didn't disturb Captain HO however, who was calmly gathering up their picnic things and packing all sorts of articles into his kit-bag. When he had everything together he turned to face her, pale despite his resolution: "Let's go".

On each continent and in each country you will find, if you know how, a specially magical area. The part of Africa in which Chandrakant and Pomegranate had arrived was one, and no sooner had Captain HO accepted to be Chandrakant's rider than they found themselves being tugged in a direction which they were sure would lead them to the little imprisoned zebra. Before long they could hear his protests and his bad words.

"He'll never let me", Captain HO kept on saying as he and Pomegranate made their

way through the bush. "And I've never ridden anything, not even things that obey you like a motor cycle, not even," he gargled . . . "a cycle."

"You've never ridden a horse?"

"Not even a shetland pony, not even a donkey on the beach. I was always too frightened."

Pomegranate, who until that moment had high hopes, was given pause. At last she managed to say, "Ah well, we'll find a way I daresay."

"That's just what I dare not say, Pomegranate. You see I'll try as I said I would", his shoulders caved in even further towards his waist. "But I don't see much hope of my succeeding. It's just that I'll do it for you. I owe you my life. I mean I'd be d-d-d-dead."

"Fiddlesticks Captain HO. You'll see it'll be as easy . . ." she wracked her heart, "as easy as falling off a chair", she said. Captain HO's laughter echoed rather more tremulously than Pomegranate's, for now Chandrakant's voice could be heard loud and clear and what it was saying I would prefer not to repeat here.

You must remember that once away from the campfire Captain HO and Pomegranate were walking in darkness and if you want to know the difference between darkness and pure darkness go to the middle of Africa when there is no moon and no stars. Had it not been for the sound of Chandrakant's voice they

This concludes part two of The Royal Pyjama'd Horse, which began in the March issue.

might have wandered around in circles, but they soon arrived at a well-lit clearing.

This is what they saw: two beautiful white unicorns gleaming, one on either side of the gate of a high enclosure. It was such a magnificent sight that it fairly took their breath away. In fact Captain HO, who was the first to see them, gasped in such a way that Pomegranate thought he had been punched in the stomach and she would have screeched had she not immediately afterwards seen them herself. And then they were both very still, so still they could hear neither Chandrakant nor their own thoughts. And during this stillness a strange and beautiful thing happened to them. They discovered what it was to bow down with their hearts. They themselves were stockstill and quite incapable of moving a muscle but inside something bowed. It might have been for a short time or a long age, then quite suddenly the unicorns were gone and Chandrakant's voice began coming through again. They afterwards argued about what had actually happened, Pomegranate saying the unicorns had really been there and Captain HO saying they had been a vision. But the arguments always ended in the same way for when they tried to recall exactly how it had been they instantly both fell into a deep silence from which they came out much refreshed. All this was long afterwards. Now they slowly moved up towards the gate half-expecting the white unicorns to appear again. They did not. What the unicorns had left though was a cool dim light, enough for Captain HO and Pomegranate to see that before them towered a very high wall indeed, curving away from either side of the gate. They walked around it and came back to the gate from which they had started.

Pomegranate, who was still sitting on Captain HO's shoulder, peered around into

his eyes and whispered, for there was something about the place which made them not want to speak aloud, "There's only one way. I'll have to fly over the wall and see if the gate can be opened from the other side."

"Pome . . . No. You can't. Don't leave me." Captain HO's knees started knocking together. An avalanche started in his spine.

"Shh . . . the guards will hear you."

"The guards will kill me."

"It's the only way Captain HO."

"What?"

"Yes. By day the guards will be awake." You must remember that all this was said in fierce whispers and that from time to time some mad imprecation from Chandrakant made it difficult for them to hear each other.

"I said I would. But not at night, never, never, never . . ." Captain HO's voice drifted into a whimper. "Don't leave me."

"Now or never", said Pomegranate and fluttered up into the air, but to her dismay she could not fly to the top of the wall. She fluttered to within a foot of the top but every time she made a last desperate upwards thrust she fell back helplessly. Gasping, she settled back on Captain HO's shoulder.

"There's something wrong, I can't get over."

"Good. Let's stick together."

"Now that I'm flying," panted Pomegranate, "I should be able to take that wall in my stride any time."

"Perhaps now's not the time."

"I'm tired. Let's get some sleep. Still got that weeping cloth?"

"What? Oh my handkerchief." Captain HO covered her head for her, inflated his air mattress, turned on his ultrasonic mosquito repeller, and in a few minutes both were fast asleep. You may wonder why they made no attempt to speak to Chandrakant but then you

didn't hear him. Without saying anything they'd both decided that the only way to do it was to take him unawares. The truth of the matter was that Chandrakant was ranting and raving in a way that was entirely savage. The last thing they wanted was for him to know they were there and reveal their presence. They slept, a deep and exhausted sleep untroubled by Captain HO's rhythmic snoring. In fact Pomegranate slept so well under cover of her khaki handkerchief that Captain HO had to take it off in order to wake her. She blinked amicably but sleepily at him.

"So lovely."

"Yes. Heavenly morning. Not a guard in sight. Guess what's for breakfast?"

Pomegranate couldn't.

"There's crisp bread and peanut butter or anchovy paste and the water's boiling for tea."

"Should I help you?" she said blinking and still too sleepy to mean it.

"Yes by helping me eat it." Captain HO was always at his best when preparing food.

Pomegranate was half way through her first slice of crisp bread piled high with various jams, pastes and butters when she suddenly remembered.

"Captain HO."

"Yes."

"Today's the day."

"Yes", said Captain HO turning pale and putting down his own well-garnished slice. He looked at Pomegranate reproachfully. "Why did you remind me before I'd Finished?"

"I'm so sorry Captain HO. It's just... Isn't it strange. We haven't heard... Chandrakant."

"I know. That's why it seemed such a beautiful morning."

"Best to get it over with I always say."

"But not talk of it."

"I'm so sorry. It's awful. I've spoilt your breakfast."

"Never mind. You saved my life. It's only that it was lovely not thinking about it, it made the anchovy paste taste so good. No guards. No shouting and galloping around. I was pretending I wouldn't have to do anything and that it had all gone away."

"It was nice."

Captain HO thoughtfully picked crumbs out of his moustache. He had begun to look glum when he was suddenly struck by something.

"Still, why don't we hear him, Pomegranate?"

"It's just that he's a ferocious sleeper. There, don't look disappointed. What's more to the point is that I don't see or hear any guards. Isn't that strange. His Majesty the Lion said the place was well guarded."

"You see Pomegranate, perhaps they have all moved away." Captain HO picked up his slice of crisp bread and anchovy paste again.

"You simply must put that out of your mind dear Captain HO. The guards may have gone, but we'll soon be hearing from Chandrakant again." She cocked her head back and started shouting, "Chandrakant! Oh, Chandrakant! Yoo-hoo!"

"YOU. IF YOU EVER COME NEAR ME AGAIN WITH THAT BROKEN DOWN RIDER I'M NOT JUST GOING TO SNAP MY TEETH. I AM GOING TO STOP BEING A VEGETARIAN. I AM GOING TO FEED YOU TO THE LIONS. I AM GOING TO GET THE ELEPHANTS TO STOMP ON YOU."

"He doesn't really mean it", said Pomegranate to Captain HO. "Of course he's a vegetarian. It's just that being in lion country has given him ideas. No please Captain HO. Don't. I have no more tears", for Captain HO was about to faint again. He sat swaying

above the breakfast things, his eyes quite unfocussed in a very pale face.

"I beg you to pull yourself together." Pomegranate dashed a bowl of water which smelled faintly of Captain HO's iodine disinfectant pills over him.

He shook himself like a dog and suddenly said, "Come on. Let's get it over with. Only Pomegranate, I'm never going to be able to get myself in there. My legs will never obey me. You'll have to push me in somehow."

"Well I suppose we might as well give it a try. Suppose you were to climb that tree. I could encourage you all the way. And from the top its hardly any jump at all to the top of the wall."

"I'll never make it", said Captain HO. And he was right—he simply kept falling out of the branches with fright. He dented his sun helmet so badly that it was moulded to his head and he could not tug it off. He also sustained several painful bruises.

"There's only one way", said Pomegranate, and the decision made she pecked at the seat of his pants so fiercely that he was up the tree and had leaped the gap in a trice without even looking. He perched on the top of the wall like a nervous crow, looking from side to side.

"No, Pomegranate. No, I won't. Bite as much as you . . . Yerouch . . ." He had fallen into the enclosure for Pomegranate had delivered a final, savage nip to the already tender site of her earlier attentions.

Captain HO landed unhurt and was up and running a moment later with Chandrakant bearing down on him at full speed. If his old school mates could have witnessed Captain HO's performance on the first four laps, during which he set records (unofficial of course) for the 100 and 200 meter runs, they would scarcely have believed their eyes.

But even so it was to no avail. Chandrakant gained ground steadily, caught up with Captain HO, turned around and kicked viciously with both legs. The Captain, caught in the breeches once again, sailed high into the air.

"I'm sorry", he called bleakly to Pomegranate, as he passed her on the way up. "Good bye, friend", he said mournfully on the way down.

You may find this difficult to believe but by the time he came down again, Chandrakant had galloped twice around the enclosure and Captain HO landed squarely on the zebra's back. What's more, in the moment before sitting he realized, in a flash of understanding, that there was no point in trying to escape his fate. So he spread his legs and arrived in what, in horsey talk, is called a good seat.

You may find what I am about to tell you now even more difficult to believe. When Captain HO landed on Chandrakant's back, Chandrakant reared for one frenzied moment and Captain HO had to hold on to his short brush mane to avoid being thrown. But then Chandrakant slowed to a canter, then to a trot. His eyes were still bloodshot, his mouth was still covered with foam, but inside he was as quiet as a baby who has just been given his pacifier. For perhaps the first time in his life Chandrakant was entirely at peace.

As for Captain HO, he had never felt so at home anywhere ever before. He gripped Chandrakant's sides with his knees and rose and fell on his back as though he had been riding all his life and after a while he bent his head and put his arms around Chandrakant's neck and his cheek against Chandrakant's mane. Chandrakant half turned his face and smiled shyly. They now walked slowly around the enclosure in the sweet morning sun. All that could be heard was the song of

birds and after a while some other muffled noise.

It was Pomegranate sobbing. The sight of her two friends so at peace quite undid her and she fluttered down to her accustomed place on Chandrakant's head bathing him and everything around her in tears.

Together the three completed one slow circumambulation of the enclosure when, suddenly the walls fell away and they found themselves before His Majesty the Lion.

"I'm glad," he said to Captain HO, "to see that you managed it all so neatly. You have if I may say so a very good seat. Riding has done everything for your posture." Captain HO who was much gratified by this nevertheless felt far too indebted to Chandrakant and Pomegranate to let it pass.

"I did nothing", he said brushing his moustache down modestly. "It was all Pomegranate and Chandrakant. I got bitten and kicked into this."

"Well yes", said the lion. "That's not entirely untrue but you could never have gotten kicked up unless you had wanted to."

"Is that true?"

"Captain HO, have you never heard of the True Wanting Law?"

"No I don't believe I have. I've always been a great coward though what I wanted was exactly the opposite, to be a great hero."

"Now you are."

"Surely not. I feel exactly the same."

"*Exactly* the same?"

"Perhaps not exactly. I feel very happy."

"A sure sign. But don't you realise you're the first man ever to ride the unbreakable zebra." Captain HO was so surprised he nearly lost his seat though Chandrakant was listening intently and hadn't even raised a foreleg.

"How did I do that?" asked Captain HO

in a hushed voice.

Chandrakant was listening very hard and open-mouthed to what the lion was saying. He said, "I've been wanting to be a conqueror for such a long time."

"You are."

"Truly?" Chandrakant reared a little with surprise and pleasure.

"Aren't you very happy?"

Chandrakant had to think about this. "Yes", he said in surprise.

"Do you realise you're the first zebra that's ever won a rider. What more do you want?"

Chandrakant thought about that for a while, rubbing his head against his shoulder in case the friction should produce ideas.

"Nothing", he said. "Just at the moment, nothing", he repeated in bewilderment.

Pomegranate blinked and tried to work it out. But working out was not her strong point and she soon decided to leave that side of things to Captain HO. She knew that things had turned out right and she was happy too, though nobody was asking her.

"What do we do now?" she asked, partly because she wanted to know and partly because she wanted to attract a little attention.

"Tiger instructions", said the lion. "He's the boss."

"But he said conquer the world," said Pomegranate, "and now Chandrakant doesn't want anything."

"Doesn't matter what he thinks he wants at this point", said the lion. "It's much too late for that."

"But his heart won't be in it", insisted Pomegranate.

"Oh shut up Pom", said Chandrakant purely out of habit, for he was really very happy and didn't at all mind her mentioning the word heart.

"Can I get off?" asked Captain HO anxiously for though he was happy too and had acquired a good deal of confidence and felt quite right at home on Chandrakant's back he was by no means sure that he wanted to get involved in anything as large as conquering the world.

"Try", the lion said. So Captain HO turned his head this way and that and lifted first one knee, then the other and settled down again looking quite foolish. "It's like getting off a cycle I suppose."

"You may suppose", said the lion.

"Only I've never ridden a cycle. I really must get off", and he was mopping his brow with his khaki handkerchief. There was a touch of frenzy in his voice. This time Captain HO did manage to dismount, though a method that begins with a violent and somewhat spastic jerking of the legs and ends with a headlong tumble to the ground may not deserve to be called "dismounting" or even, for that matter, a "method". Moreover, on his way to the ground Captain HO had tried to check his fall by grabbing two handfuls of Chandrakant's mane. Chandrakant responded automatically with a nasty bite at Captain HO's long-suffering derriere which at that moment was pointing skyward.

Now I should like to be able to tell you that this unfortunate little episode was soon passed and forgotten but that would not be quite the truth. In fact it was several days before Captain HO gave up the notion of a more or less immediate return to what he had begun calling "civilization" and admitted to himself that what he really wanted more than anything else was to ride Chandrakant again. Chandrakant's realization that he longed to be ridden again and that he wouldn't have stomped the man into jelly even if he got the chance came no sooner.

More days passed before the two were able to communicate their true feelings to one another. And do not imagine that even then it was easy for Captain HO to mount. It had been a hundred times easier the first time when they had both been resisting with all their might. And if it was True-Wanting that had kicked Captain HO high into the air and landed him on Chandrakant's back, they were now forced to realize that just wanting to be a mounted knight and noble charger was of another order. Not that Captain HO didn't finally get up on Chandrakant's back again. But it took him two weeks unless you count the times he got on for a few seconds and either slid down the other side or even the same side or was thrown by an involuntarily twitching or rearing Chandrakant. And even when he did get up and stay, the lion, whose name incidentally was Lemony, looked at them with his head to one side and said nothing about a good seat. In fact nobody said anything for quite some time, everybody being much too tired, almost too tired to even enjoy the victory when it came.

When somebody finally did speak it was, as you might have guessed, Pomegranate — who said in a cracked, almost unrecognizable voice, "We carried the day!"

She was quite justified in saying "we" for she had put much heart into both Chandrakant and Captain HO at moments when they were ready to give up and when indeed she herself would have liked nothing better than to throw Captain HO's khaki sleeping cloth over her head and retire for the duration.

But there they were, the three of them waiting in the sun for the next thing. The only one who looked fresh and happy was the fourth, Lemony, who had stayed out of the picture as much as possible.

When after another few days of practice

it was clear that Captain Ho could dismount and mount whenever he wanted to unless he was very tired or Chandrakant specially nervous or Pomegranate talking too much, Lemony finally commented. "Now," he said, "you know the difference between wanting and True Wanting."

"No", said Pomegranate.

"They go together", said Lemony.

"They may go together," Captain HO said, "but they don't happen at the same time."

"And which one do we use for conquering?" asked Chandrakant.

"Both or either", said Lemony. "One takes longer and is more painful but useful and not to be sneezed at when you don't have the other."

"But in that case, in that case . . ." It was Chandrakant but he stopped dead because he had begun to suspect that he was the stupidest of the three and he didn't want to make a striped donkey of himself.

"Yes", said Captain HO for there was now good communication between himself and

Chandrakant. "He's quite right. In that case we've already begun."

"Quite", said Lemony, at which single word they all felt very refreshed. "Now be on your way. And remember the rules: If you meet a dragon slay it. If you meet a beautiful damsel free her. If you meet a toad kiss him."

They had already gone a little way, tears blurring their eyes, for they had grown fond of old Lemony, when a voice reached them which might or might not have been his. "But if they meet themselves . . ." it said, and then each one was shown exactly what was going to happen and what they were to do and it was so beautiful that they trotted on in deep silence for a long time. The grass was green, the sun shone, the birds sang. They were neither hungry, thirsty nor anything else. There was not a single want in their lives.

And they went slowly towards their camping place, each one wondering what it would be like to meet a dragon, or a princess, or a toad . . . or . . . himself.

IN THE SHOWER

Why this pressing Pondicherry heat
If not to melt the ego-frozen heart?

Even tears congeal inside my head
Or drop like crystal cold on marble cheeks.

Hidden Flame
Penetrate this solid core,
Smelt this hard resisting lump of ore;
Let it flow

Change it into living, liquid gold.

AUROVILLE AFTERNOON

Eyes closed
Body stilled
I lie with thoughts
Of self sought.

Behind lids' darkness
Form tears that can't be cried.

For small selves I can weep:
But for you Divine Lover
The pool of longing is too deep
To spill out.

I wonder,
Baffled,
Then remember a promise:
"Her greatest progress is a deepened need".

Judy Ferris

July 1977

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A HIDDEN LIFE: RELIGIOUS DIVERGENCES

Promode Kumar Chatterji

It was the month of Kartic (October) which brought a sweet and pleasant touch of the approaching winter. With a sound body and sound heart, I set out on a pilgrimage in western India and was touring from place to place.

Now I am going to Mathura [Krishna's birth-town] on the way to Brindaban [Krishna's haunt] where I have a mind to visit the recently discovered sites of Kansa's prison where Sri Krishna was born, and the Keshav temple [Keshav is one of Krishna's 108 names]. I am quite alone with no one to accompany me.

Having put up in a rest house, I had my dip in the holy waters of the Jamuna River,

Promode Kumar Chatterji was born into the artistic and literary life of Calcutta in 1885, which he took up as a painter and short story writer. Still a traveller in India, he found many motifs for his stories in two decades of visits to living Tantric personalities and centres in the first third of the century. Also out of this period came his widely known three volume book, Tantravilashir Sadha Sanga (Company of Holy Men by One Thirsting for the Knowledge of the Tantras). Promode Kumar Chatterji is now residing in his birthplace, Calcutta. This story was translated from the Bengali by Jibendra of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

partook of some consecrated food in the temple attached to the river landing, and left for the site of the Keshav temple. The local people have not the least idea of the excitement in the outside world over the discovered sites of Kansa's prison and the Keshav temple. Besides, those localities are inhabited mostly by Muslims, who wouldn't be concerned about Hindu temples. They are places for the stands of horse-drawn light carriages and are the haunts of poor, working class people. Various kinds of small shops are located there within a covered enclosure.

I found the temple has long since gone into ruins, and is now converted into a cowshed for milkmen. It is proposed that a new temple to Sri Krishna be erected on the very site. What I found was quite contrary to my expectations, and I felt greatly disappointed and considerably tired after a futile rumbling for nearly three hours. Out of such feelings I stepped towards the shore of the Jamuna, with the intention of refreshing myself washing off the dirt and dust on my hands, legs and face.

Then came the time for vespers. Small candles illuminated for *arati* [evening worship] set off the river landing in such regal splendour that it is unmatched by similar sights elsewhere in India. There was a regular crowd which began to thin out with the passing hours—hundreds of men and women came and went. When it was near midnight,

I got up to return to my rest house.

Standing on the road near the landing was a Muslim; not an ordinary working class one, he looked like a gentleman and somewhat modernized. As is the custom with the Muslims of western India, he had a well-trimmed beard of sable silver colour. His face, though tanned, looked bright with a keen and piercing expression in two small eyes. They wore the look of an intense search for something lost. I felt he was gazing at me, too. As soon as our eyes met, a strange sort of curiosity filled me. I paced up quietly and stood before him. Even though he looked past middle age, there was a certain youthlike flow in his appearance. His lips were black with the juice of betel leaves and *zarda* [spices].

Turning the same keen look, he scanned me from head to foot and coughed a few times, covering his mouth with a fist—it was a cough indicating an asthmatic type. He then stared at me expecting me to speak first, as if it were my sole concern.

I asked him, "You must be looking for someone, I suppose."

"Yes, reverend sir." He paused; and after a while said, "Are you a Bengalee?"

Now this word "Bengalee" was so full of harshness and in such a tone of malice that I felt very uneasy. But in spite of it all I said, "Yes".

"Are you on a pilgrimage here in Mathura and Brindaban?" he inquired.

After I answered in the affirmative, he asked a third question: Did I belong to Calcutta? I had to admit I did, but had an inner suspicion of dealing with an intelligence agent. I had had enough of such experiences before—there was no immunity from police vigilance for a Bengalee, even outside Bengal.

Without adding another word, he just looked around him and then asked me in a

bland tone, evidently with a bit of effort, "My humble cottage is close to the big gate over there. I would have a talk with you. Will you kindly accompany me there?"

Was "cottage" said out of humility? As soon as I heard the word, I thought it must be a palace. The big gate was immediately nearby, so when we reached his "palace" in no time, the sight I was greeted with left me with no zeal to proceed further. It is impossible to believe there can be such a great and hideous disparity between a man's apparel and his place of residence. Even with an ocular proof one is not prone to believe it. However, let that go. My mind underwent such a wave of revulsion that I suggested we return to the shelter of the Jamuna landing where we could resume our talk. The man had anticipated my feelings, and instantly agreed to the proposal. So we came back: the railway bridge was close; a train passed over it, and the gentleman stared in that direction. I felt very uneasy and asked him to begin his tale.

"Yes, reverend sir, I am beginning. I have a son who is my only one. He has been missing for the last ten or twelve days." I did not know now I could help him in this, I replied. He said, a little plaintively, "First listen to me—then do whatever you like."

Then he began to narrate: "This story of my son is a bit strange. He himself was of a strange and peculiar nature. We are Muslims. You may not know that we belong to the lineage of *badshahs* [sultans]. We had great influence in Delhi from the time of Sultan Ahmed. There was a time when the whole of India used to be guided by our orders. Lord Dufferin [the English viceroy] settled us with rent free land in Agra. All these are recorded in official papers."

This was too much for me. I prayed to him

in a piteous tone to relieve me of this torture, by saying he had better confine himself to the story of his son.

"Yes, yes, I am coming to it. But if you do not know what folly he is about to commit, being an issue of such nobility as ours, how are you to understand what follows? That is why this preface . . ."

I pleaded with folded hands, "Now please, come to the point."

"Yes, I was speaking about our religion of Islam. A time will come when the whole world will have to accept Islam—otherwise there is no salvation for anyone. We belong to the same Muslim community. To us the Hindus are *kafirs* [infidels, having no true religious faith]. We regard all Hindus, whoever they may be, as *kafirs* and our priests do not even tread on their shadows. But if ever through the grace of Allah the *kafirs* take to our religion, we treat them as our brothers, make them one with us . . ."

What a torture! But there was no other way. I had to listen to him whether I liked it or not. The current of this religious fervour and enthusiasm in which I was thrown left me with no further curiosity about the strange story of his son. When it became absolutely intolerable I intervened, saying, "All right, you stay here. I am going", and got up and gave him an air of *salaam* [leave-taking] with upraised, folded hands.

The man stared at me as if he had done something heinous, and implored: "Please take your seat. I am going to speak about my son."

When I was obliged to sit down, he began, "Why, don't you know? There can be no comparison between our catholic religion and the idolatry of the Hindus. We believe in The Koran. It is written there that the Hindus can never go to heaven—they must go to hell.

That is the reason why we give early religious teachings to our children so that they may have faith in their own religion."

I finally saw that a great animosity was tormenting him from within. There could be no release from it without this unburdening of himself.

But by now I asked him impatiently, "Now please start with your son's affair."

"Yes, my son is named Dadar Rahman. He studied in the *muktab* [a primary school for Muslim children], and had read one or two English primers. He was of a very quiet disposition and everyone loved him. Being very shy, he was not adept in talking. Still we kept him under the strictest vigilance—that is the rule of our aristocracy. I had hoped that he would grow into a true Muslim one day.

"He was about sixteen years of age when one day he asked his mother a very curious question. Do you know what he said?" With this he looked agape at me wondering whether I, too, was surprised like him.

I replied, "How am I to know? I was not there then."

"Well, do you know what he said? 'Amma [Mother], why do you call the Hindus *kafirs*? Answer me, you must answer me today.' His mother is after all a woman—naturally she could not give any answer. At night she told me what her son demanded. I burned with anger on hearing this, dragged him by the ear to the courtyard and began to whip him mercilessly. 'Those who do not subscribe to our holy faith and who worship idols and images are called *kafirs* in The Koran. Will you ever again ask such a question?' He did not utter a word nor replied to my reproach. I got short of breath."

With this the father began to breathe quickly and exclaimed, "We have been created by *Khoda* [God] himself. Why should our

children utter this kind of sacrilege? But let that go. Now after that incident, he never asked anyone a single question and passed his days in grave silence. I thought he must have come to his senses as a result of that hard lesson.

"One of my nephews, Kasem, is his classmate. At teenage, Kasem attends prayers five times a day, which we ourselves cannot afford to do. He is an orthodox Muslim and we all have the conviction that in time he will become a great man. One evening a few days after the whipping incident, Kasem stealthily came to me after the vespers and said, '*Chacha* [uncle], Dadar has altogether become a *kafir*. He keeps looking at Hindu gods and goddesses in their temples, watching from the side entrances and muttering something with tearful eyes which I do not understand. Yes, tears appear in his eyes, I have seen them myself.'"

Here the redoubtable Muslim gentleman took a short breath and resumed: "Having heard all this from Kasem, I took him to our grand *masjid* [a Muslim Temple or a mosque] where our priest and other priests live. He questioned Kasem in detail about what he had witnessed. After confirming each detail there Kasem added, 'Day before yesterday when we were returning from school, Dadar told me to go home alone; he would follow shortly. I knew he wanted to get rid of me so he could visit the temples on the way.

"I told him: 'I won't allow you to go there; if you go there, you are sure to become a *kafir*.'"

"Do you know what he said to me? 'Brother, have you seen Kisenji [Krishna], the God and His royal consort in that temple?'"

"I objected, 'We are not supposed to see all those things. We are true and faithful Muslims.'"

"Dadar, however, paid no heed to my words and began to tell me a hundred different things, concluding that 'If God is the creator of everything, then why should we not see what appeals to us in His creation? If I enjoy these things, that does not harm anyone, no one suffers on that account. What's the harm in seeing?'"

"His questions infuriated me. I declared, 'You must have become a *kafir*. Our Allah will surely be cross with you and send you to hell along with those *kafirs*.'"

"He did not get angry at my words but merely said, 'God is looking at everything. Why should He then get angry with me when I have done no wrong?' Yes, then he even added, 'Is God subject to anger and hatred like weak and insignificant men such as ourselves? Is it possible to realize God without being great and forgiving? Can greatness coexist with these pettinesses?'"

The boy's father continued: "The priest, intently listening to all this, then remarked, 'Surely, some children of the *pandahs* [self-appointed guides of temples] must be after him and have taught him these sacrilegious things.'

"Dadar,' Kasem replied, 'has never been seen with the children of the *pandahs*. Besides, we do not mix with them nor they with us.' On this, the priest went away to consult Firuksar the fakir and we returned home.

"At our entrance we found my son Dadar sitting quietly alone. His face did not seem to indicate he had any sense of sin or guilt. He is a Satan, adept in concealing his real feelings and motives. I wanted to elicit information as to who was his counsellor, which son of a *kafir* had furnished him with clues to all those mysteries, and for that purpose gave him such a beating that he lost consciousness without betraying a single word."

I felt extremely bitter and disgusted as I thought of the extent of these things he had related about his lost son. I realized that they had suspected either some *pandahs*, or their children, of trying to convert this innocent and religious-minded boy to Hinduism. Although I felt it would not carry conviction and would be a mere waste of energy on my part, I could not help making one observation.

"Well, *mia sahib* [respected sir]," I began, "you must be above fifty."

"Yes, I finished fifty-five during this last *Ramzan* [the main Muslim festival]."

"Well then, have you ever seen a Hindu trying to convert a Muslim?"

He shrugged his shoulders and remarked, "True, I have not seen any such conversions before, but now *suddhi* [taking back after a ceremony of purification] has come into vogue."

"But that is not meant for a real Muslim. *Suddhi* is only for those who were Hindus but had been ostracized for some reason or other or had become Muslim converts. Isn't it so? If some of them wanted to return to the fold of the mother religion . . ."

"That's outwardly true and given out to the people, but who can guess their real motives? But this is absolutely certain: such conversion is impossible in the case of a genuine Muslim. So they may be trying with innocent and light-hearted children."

It was not possible to proceed after this, but still I said, "*Mia sahib*, have you not heard that the Hindus do not believe in conversions to other faiths? The Hindus cherish the idea that one cannot be a Hindu unless he is a born Hindu."

"Yes, I have heard that but . . ."

Now this "but" has brought all this confusion.

In any case he seemed to have thawed a

little. With a plaintive look he said, "Now listen to the concluding portion of the story. A day or two before his disappearance he showed strange manners. His mother accused me of neglecting the boy. She said, 'I think he is under the possession of some occult power, otherwise why should his eyes always look red? They are full of tears. When he speaks with someone, tears trickle down his cheeks. If someone approaches him, he goes away and wants to be left alone. I am afraid of his ways.'

"His mother's words induced me that very night to go to his room with a lamp but he was not there. Where could he go? Kasem and he lived together. I found Kasem asleep. When I woke him up he said after some reflection, 'I do not know when he got out. He is in the habit of doing this every night.' After a strenuous search I found him sitting by the well in the darkness. I brought him in and thrashed him like anything. I know how to exorcise ghosts with a sound thrashing. But even this brought about no change in him; he remained the same devil that he was. It is strange that after so much beating, he never vented anything in anger. After that, when I brought an occultist from Maulali under the counsel of my wife, he escaped.

"Before departure he had told Kasem to give up all hope for him, saying, 'Ladlie [Krishna] has called me. I have really become a *kafir*.'

"Since then he has been missing but I have not been able to give up hope. It is nearly two weeks now. I search for him daily in these places. Is such a fate possible to bear—that the issue of such an aristocratic family should become a *kafir*?"

"But what do you expect me to do?" I inquired.

"He is my only son", the *mia sahib* said.

"I want him to come back. Ever since you sat by the river landing I have been observing you, and when you walked up I thought you would be the man to help me find him."

"Your son has become a *kafir* out of his own choice," I replied. "Will you take him back when after so much torture he does not want to live with you?"

"He is a mere child; he has done something without understanding its implications", he persisted. "I shall point out his mistakes to him and take him to the great saints and fakirs that live in our mosques—for I am firmly convinced that their influence will change his mind."

"Very well", I agreed. "I shall inform you if by chance I get any clue to his whereabouts."

He gave me his address where I could drop him a letter. Thus our conversation ended. The very next day I left Mathura.

Brindabon is quite familiar to me and a very favourite haunt of mine. I have had occasion to come here several times. Not only that, the precious gems I have gleaned here during my probationship of spiritual life are a cherished treasure with me even to this day. I usually put up in the Brahmachari Ashram in Radhabagh. I have also stayed long in the ashram, Keshavananda [the ashram of Krishna], and this time I put up there.

That next afternoon I went out for a stroll on the banks of the Jamuna where the *sadhus* [spiritual seekers who renounce the world] live in seclusion. I was just wandering about. On the other shore of the river an extensive coastline was visible with a tree here and there; behind that the blue horizon was covered with thick lines of trees. A bit of a walking distance from the place where I sat were three big *sisem* trees. These grew in a clear grassless tract in such a straight perpendicular way that they gave the impression

of a well-shaped triangle. It looked as if it was the seat of some yogi but it was not empty—inside that triangle was a figure seated in a beautiful and ineffable way, dressed only in underwear. The sight was such a fascinating one it forcibly drew my gaze, appearing to be that of a *Vaisnav* [Vishnu worshipper] and yogi; his manner of sitting was like the yogi's.

Because of my restless nature, the figure of a *sadhu* has been an object of great attraction to me from very infancy. The sight of a calm and quiet recluse stirred in me the yearning for a greater intimacy, and I could no longer stay quietly in my place: I instantly walked over and presented myself before him.

What I found was a boy of rare figure with a fully formed healthy body and a dazzling white complexion. I saw in him Paramhansa Sukdev himself, the son of Vyasa. His beauty struck me dumb, and my eyes clasped him. Although this beauty was external, it was set off by the splendour of his inner perfection—there was an intense radiance in it. It is the beauty which artists worship.

It was a bit cold at that time and he had no clothing on his upper body. There was probably no need for any. But my gross body-consciousness attributed my feeling of cold to him and I wrapped a warm cloth around his trunk. He did not utter a word; his eyes were fixed towards the sacred Jamuna River, I thought he might be one of the young devotees of the *Vairagi* [world renouncing] class who lived in seclusion. I had seen many a young *brahmacharya* [celibate] among the *sadhus*. But what was exceptional were his eyes. Many have heard of lotus eyes—these eyes were of a crimson colour with glistening tears which were about to spill out.

Ever since arriving in Brindabon I'd been

thinking of Dadar, the son of that agitated Muslim gentleman. I was visualizing the efflorescence of divine love in him, his calm and heroic endurance of his father's thrashings and attitudes, his disappearance and escape from home and all such things. The moment I saw this figure, all those thoughts vanished and my mind settled upon him. I had no inclination to ask him anything, but just sat watching him.

Suddenly a *brojobasini* [local lady] with upper underwear and a *choli* [sari blouse] all blue appeared before him, with some food covered in a dish in one hand and a bright brass bowl in the other. Her face was supremely graceful.

She took her stand in a charming posture before the boy and placed the things in front of him saying, "Now do have something, my darling. I am in a hurry to return home after your meal and then after finishing my work I shall come to take you there."

Having spoken these words she affectionately gazed at the boy. She did not care to notice the stranger present in my person and behaved as if no one was there except the youth. Her words were wonderfully sweet and, added to her lyrical voice, created a fine music.

But there was no change in the attitude of the young *sadhu*. He continued gazing at the Jamuna with the same unblinking eyes.

The lady called aloud, "My darling, my darling", and tenderly touched his chin.

Then from his trance he started, gazed at her face and was about to get up as he said, "Champa, take me there."

With the tenderness of a mother the lady took hold of his hand and said, "Not now, my boy. Just take a little; I shall take you there in the evening."

With this she took a handful from the dish

and pushed it inside the mouth of the boy who could hardly take more than two mouthfuls. Even after various persuasions she did not succeed in inducing him to take more. The youth then drank a little milk from the bowl and as before continued to gaze at the other shore of the Jamuna in deep contemplation.

The lady now turned a plaintive look towards me and asked if I did not mind staying there for some time to look after him. She was pleased at my reply and told me after a mournful glance at the boy: "Ladlie [Krishna] told me yesterday that he is in constant trance and has no sense of external things. That I should feed and take due care of him, otherwise he will leave the body. Yes, for the last ten or twelve days he is practically living on nothing except a little milk. How can the body survive?"

Then she gave a surprised gazelle-like look at the boy and said, "What can I do? Stay here, my darling, while I go home to attend to my work. I shall come back towards the evening to take you. All right?" The speechless, immobile, entranced youth sat without stirring.

The disappearance of the *brojobasini* was a mystery. While I was looking at the figure of the yogi, she turned to go away with the dish in one hand and the bowl in the other. Then she completely vanished from my sight in only a few steps, while I distinctly remember there was nothing between us, neither a tree nor any other form.

From what I saw of the coming and going of the lady and her short stay, it appeared that a supremely delightful and unearthly drama was being played on the banks of the Jamuna around this youthful ascetic. We intellectual people are accustomed to hear of religions of love and devotion from sages,

and sometimes out of sheer egoism we think we have understood them and their significance. But God alone knows whether we have. What transpired here before my very eyes forces on me the conclusion that everything here is strange, unique. Ever since setting foot in Mathura this time, I've come across things which are singular, unprecedented. I am simply bewildered.

It is almost dusk now. A strong wind is blowing from the side of the river. But it does not appear that all these external happenings are having any affect on the yogi's senses. I am now seized with a strong desire to speak to him. Will nothing emerge out of my questioning?

I uttered, "Hari, Hari" [Krishna, Krishna]. When those words reached him, he turned towards me as if in fulfilment of my desires. "Babaji [holy man], are you in trouble?" I asked.

His reply came slowly. "There's no trouble at all now that I am in Brindaban. When I lived with my own people—my father, mother and brothers—they all used to thrash me without understanding me just because I could not come up to their expectations. Ah, but that is a tale of the past." He continued after a short pause, "They have no idea what religion is. So they are afraid lest I should lose it and become a *kafir*. That is why Ladlie [Krishna], that is why Kanaiah [Krishna] . . ." thus far only, and then tears poured from his eyes. He resumed, "What compassion . . . Govindaji Shri Radhika Ra— [Sri Krishna, Radha, Ra—]" Words failed thereafter.

I found him in the same state as when a man loses consciousness, but with eyes open and winkless. One is afraid of those eyes; they are so unnatural.

I was observing him when he suddenly turned towards me saying, "Friend, do you

know where Radhakund [a sacred hot spring] is", and stared at me with great eagerness.

When I said, "Yes, I know", he seemed greatly excited.

"Then will you take me there?" And the very next moment he suddenly cried out, "No, no. You can't go there. Nobody can go there without the grace of the Queen of Brojo [Radha, Krishna's completely devoted one]. Champa, her companion, will take me there. Will she be long in coming?" These he slowly spoke halting at every word.

Then I asked, "Will you tell me something about Radhakund? One is delighted to hear it."

As soon as he heard these words of mine, a strange and ineffable glow lit up his face. It is impossible to describe that effulgent light.

"How can I describe it? The whole atmosphere there is surcharged with Love, with the wind of Love blowing everywhere. Male and female companions move about in rhythmic dance. Each word, each song, each tune induce complete self-forgetfulness. Even a short stay there makes one almost mad with joy. Ah, ah . . ." Here he fell into a sort of trance and then resumed, "What a light is there! If only you saw their images with divine faces and heard the sweet jingling sound of their steps! Oh my Kishenji [Krishna], my life is blessed", and he fell into complete silence.

I was going to say something when he asked me, "Have you ever heard the sound of his flute in Bansipith? That tune, that music will strike a familiar chord in your heart. I must go there, yes I must go and shall no more return". Copious tears literally trickled down his cheeks and he once more became silent. I was also about to fall into a swoon in the unspeakable delight of his companionship, but that state did not last.

Is there any man with the stony heart of a

beast who is not seized with a strong, even irresistible desire to visit those places of which experience bears such direct and vivid testimony to their living truth? I became conscious of my mounting desire to go there and again cried out, "Hari, Hari", to make him hear. The moment he became externally conscious, I said, "*Babaji*, all are not equally fortunate like you. Have some pity on me and show me a little". These words brought him to the realities of the situation.

He said, "Well friend, it is beyond my power, how can I? My companion, Champa, can alone take you there. She is my guru—the pupil of my eyes. I can never go there unless she takes me along with her".

Champa now appeared at a distance. As soon as he saw her, he exclaimed, "Now I shall go there and see them, Shyamsundar [Krishna] and Radhika Rani ...". He had

hardly uttered these words when his eyes became fixed and words failed him.

When Champa came, I was simply struck dumb by her beauty. It was not that *brojobasini* who had asked me to wait here. Nor was her dress the same. I never saw any one in such a dress before—all were fine raiments floating in the air. Her unique gait was filled with a strange and ethereal beauty. The moment she touched the boy, he stood up. Champa preceding, followed by that young recluse, they disappeared before my very eyes.

I became still, like a fossil, and sat there for a long time. No words came to me.

The next day when I again came to the same triangle near the Jamuna with the seat of the yogi inside, I found it empty. After this will it serve any purpose to inform his father?

ON THE TOUCHING DOWN OF AUROVILLE—III

Ronald Jorgensen

This part of "The Touching Down", moving into the physical beginnings of Auroville, comes from Aurovilians themselves.

Bob and Deborah, a young American artist and dancer who established Auroville's community of Forecomers, were the first ones to actually build and live on Auroville land. Although this was begun in June, 1968—about four months after the inauguration of the city in February—Bob felt moved to keep a record of his correspondence with friends in the United States after leaving that country, which reveals something of the process he went through in discovering the Yoga, the Ashram, Auroville, and certainly himself.

"Dear A and B,

March 5, 1966

I have discovered for myself what C had told me long ago, that timeless travel, though sometimes good as a means of stepping back from the entanglements of one's own life, can develop into a meaningless opiate of avoiding oneself. There are literally hundreds of young people eighteen to twenty-five from America, England, Canada, Australia, on the binge of perpetual travel over well-beaten trails through the "undeveloped" nations, making it around the world on 300 dollars or less. It's now to the point of being like a table game, like say, "Monopoly": for free room and board—stay at temples in India; or advance to Kuwait, sell pint of blood at hospital, pick up \$25.00. Perhaps it will serve the purpose, as I think it has to some extent for me, of concretely proving to people that there is nowhere to go to escape oneself, and perhaps some will stop and see the direction of the real journey.

"I have stopped in India. I am living in a beautiful hut of bamboo and woven coconut leaf in the middle of a two-acre garden of which I am now in charge. I live alone as I have during most of the trip and have come into a state of peace and calmness and slow but very positive changes in health. My health now is unbelievable to me. I'm digging in the fields, bicycling for miles, discovering and exploring many new areas of myself. It is not, of course, just the food and exercise, but this wonderfully magical place I've come to. The garden I'm in charge of is connected to a yoga ashram with a population of 1400 people from a great many nations. It is a largely self-sufficient community founded on the teaching of a great Indian yogi, Sri Aurobindo, and is "run" to a very great extent by a woman known as "the Mother", French by birth, who was something like Sri Aurobindo's spiritual partner. Sri Aurobindo died in 1950. Much of his teaching is similar to the Yoga taught in the Gita.

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The key idea is detachment rather than rejection of action, so people here do not just meditate, exercise and practice breath control, but carry on the activities of full life. The difference is that there is a persistent effort made on the part of each to detach his ego, self-involvement, personal ambition and vanity from his life and work to make his total effort and being an offering to the Divine, each individual striving not to answer the call of lower physical and emotional nature but to surrender to a force from above of greater transparency and expansiveness. It is, as you can imagine, a rare experience to live in a world of people turned this way. The effort of constantly examining and attempting to expand your own consciousness is greatly enhanced, the vibration of life is somehow on an intense totally symbolic pitch and well, I can explain no further now, but I'm day to day becoming more deeply involved here.

"The Ashram is now in the process of laying the foundations of a new city, Auroville, in which Sri Aurobindo's vision will be translated into life on a larger and wider scale than is possible in the Ashram: the city is intended for 50,000 people. There is a slow influx of people from all over the world to work for this city, and it becomes increasingly clear that my arrival here is part of it! Because I'm so deeply immersed in the total climate here, I have of course been unable intellectually to evaluate it, but probably that is not important now. What is important is I feel for the first time the surge of energy that comes from being under the influence of hope and aspiration, arising from something larger than purely personal interests . . ."

Also among the first to settle in Auroville was a twenty-seven year old Swedish woman named Shyama. She had met Frederick from West Germany in Pondicherry and, together with her three children of a previous marriage, they had moved out there to build a proper house in late 1968. But before then, at about the same time that Bob wrote his letter of discovery to America, Shyama met the City of Dawn. As in the subsequent descriptions which we are grateful to have in these pages, her remembrance was shared with Michael Zelnick of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, who tape-recorded a series of such interviews with Aurovillans in late 1974. Shyama begins.

"There was an exhibition on Auroville in 1966 which somehow touched me very deeply. This was, of course, before Auroville was founded in 1968, the exhibition was in the Ashram. It was still just in idea, but taking shape so concretely that they were actually building models . . . and it touched me . . . in fact, I had then one of the very few real visions I've ever had in my life: after the exhibition I went to the Samadhi [the spiritual centre of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, which holds the physical bodies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother] and while I was sitting there, meditating I suppose, I saw this *huge* wave. It rose, a very huge wave, and its top, just when it would curl and break, it started spinning and took off! And somehow I connected this with Auroville, somehow this wave that instead of curling and breaking somehow gathered itself and broke free was Auroville.

"By then I had met Frederick and we were staying together and he also had had some experiences of Auroville. We asked Mother if we could build in Auroville and she said yes."

Frederick himself had, unlike many Aurovillians, come to the Ashram after hearing of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—so the then twenty-nine year old's trip to Pondicherry was the pilgrimage of a devotee. Before Frederick and Shyama built their house they were among the large group of persons at the inauguration of Auroville, where the now well-known charter was read in twelve languages and a boy and girl from each of 121 countries and 23 Indian states placed a handful of their native earth in a lotus-shaped urn, sealed at the centre of the city. Frederick speaks of the beginnings and development of Auroville from that point.

"I suppose it really must have started much earlier, but we can take for convenience the inauguration as the start of Auroville and I can tell you, and I think anyone who was there would also say, that something big, *big* in every sense of the word, happened then. Something really was born, a new consciousness "came down" and, as I say, I think that everyone who was there felt this.

"And I suppose that we all felt, certainly we all hoped, that this new thing that had been born would simply stay and continue to grow and develop here; but it was not that way. It was like after a delivery, the periods of contractions which I suppose are painful—it was like a glimpse of the future, as though we had been taken into the future for a moment and shown something of what that could be, but then we had to go back and go back and go back very far, and perhaps we have even yet not gone back as far as we must go, to prepare the conditions so that this future could happen here. It was as if Auroville, this new consciousness were floating on some higher plane and even after the inauguration it was not absolutely rooted, localized here—it was waiting for conditions, conditions of consciousness, to be created which would let it take root here, but it was also possible that these conditions might not develop and then this consciousness would be fragmented, dispersed and go off and come up in bits and pieces wherever in the world there was an opening.

"But now I feel this rooting, this localization, has taken place: I myself experienced at one point this incredible archaic response to the Divine descent by the earth itself and then it was clear to me that it *was* going to happen here, that it *has* happened here, that now the choice has been made, that the earth here has now accepted to be the site of this development.

"But still it is only at one point, as it were, that these two planes have come together and fused and we do not all live at that point—of course I am not speaking of a physical point—so there is still a great deal of a kind of tension, the force from above bearing down, putting pressure on matter to force an opening, and the resistance from the earth—and we are in a way stretched between them. But the fusion has occurred at one point and one can feel a great love, a love that heals, flowing from that point and gradually making things easier. For me at least it was always . . . you had to push and push to get anything done—and now I am speaking in both physical and psychological terms—you had to push and push, it never gathered its own momentum. And that has changed now. It is as if the whole earth is gradually beginning to respond. You plant something and the chances are that it

will grow. You initiate something and it goes, not necessarily in the way you planned, but it goes, it gathers its own momentum and rolls by itself. It was not like this before. Every time I visit some place in Auroville which I have not been for a few weeks, I am amazed at how rapidly everything is moving, changing now. It used to be that we had to push all the time to make Auroville go, but now we have trouble keeping pace, keeping it from breaking out always in a dozen different directions that we are not yet ready for.

"And one sees now something perhaps of the collective consciousness developing. I don't know how it works, I'm not aware of how or when I receive it, but there are days when suddenly an idea comes, let's say, "sports", and it is like everyone I speak with (and I check myself to see if I have introduced the idea and usually I haven't), everyone is onto the same thing—"We should have a physical education program", or "Can't we organize sports?" or "Let's play some tennis"—it is like something which establishes itself in you and establishes itself in others and there may or may not be this interpersonal confirmation, but you *know* that at that time if you do something, buy a couple of balls or put up a volley-ball net, or build a tennis court—it will work. Then the problem becomes to be able to distinguish the ideas which have that collective force behind them from the ideas which are just your own and which perhaps you wish were made collective."

And just how this collectivity of persons gathered, from wherever each lived on the earth, what got them here—we began with Shyama in a sort of flash back.

"I had heard of Sri Aurobindo long ago. I was married to an Indian man and my mother-in-law was a devotee, but still it didn't mean anything to me personally. Then, in 1962, I met A who came to East Africa—we were living in Zambia at that time, and I saw that he came from . . . somewhere where the light was. That was all. Then the turn my life took, it became . . . I did something stupid—I started asking too many questions. And I never had any answers, and it became for me imperative to have the answers. I began corresponding with A and that went on for a few years, difficult years, with sort of classical existential problems and answers: "Why am I here?" "What's life?" "Is there nothing?" But these letters from A, maybe it wasn't so much what he wrote, but there was a steady contact, he was a friend . . . In the meantime, of course, the marriage was breaking down at the same time as these questions were pressing, and it was decided that I would take a holiday and come here. That was in '65—March-April '65.

"And I met the Mother. And . . . I knew who she was and . . . she knew who I was, and I knew that she knew much more about me than I knew about myself. And then there was a whole series of experiences. I encountered for the first time my soul—I hadn't even known I had one. And with that—there were some other experiences of a very fundamental and necessary nature, I couldn't describe them in much detail—I knew what I had to do with my life.

"But I thought I could go back to Africa and do it within that framework. So I returned. But it turned out—there was again, a half-year with many drastic changes—I had returned to the darkness and chaos and half a year later it was not solved, so I returned to Pondicherry

with the three children and I've stayed here ever since. When I came, it was at first to be just for one year. It was to get a bit clearer, a bit quieter. I had found something here, but I had still no idea that my whole life was to be . . . dedicated to the yoga. But then very soon there was again a very strong experience of the Mother, within . . . and then I knew that actually I belonged to her and always had . . . I just hadn't known it . . . and that this was my place. It's a very funny feeling because, you know, how could I not have seen it all along?"

Frederick, Shyama's companion, describes an opening directly to Auroville.

"I experienced Auroville as a possibility, as a reality existing on a higher plane seven years ago, when I had only been in Pondicherry, in the Ashram, for a couple of months; and I experienced it as a very personal challenge, a very personal call, like a call by a guru [one who represents the Divine to you, and so is your spiritual teacher and guide]. I brought this experience to the Mother and she confirmed it. And everything which applies to one's relationship with the Guru applies to my feeling, my experience of Auroville: all the idiosyncracies, all the paradoxes, all the things which don't seem to make sense, all the seemingly unnecessary obstacles and hindrances and difficulties are part of the work of the Guru on me.

"It is difficult for me to compare Auroville with other communes because for me, Auroville *is* this relationship and is not tied to or dependent upon the successful realization of a township or even upon the growth of the community: this relationship is as valid for me alone or within my immediate family as it will be if after ten years we really have 50,000 people here in a thriving township—it's independent of that. So to try to compare Auroville with another commune is like trying to compare one person's relationship with the Guru to another's—it is impossible. It is for me something very personal. I'm not especially after anything collective, after a community—it just happens to be that Auroville, my Guru, is at this time presenting itself as a community which grows. And as I do not question the being, the peculiarities of the Guru, I do not question this but try to fit myself into it. So the best way I can explain is that . . . life here in this particular place, this geographical location we call Auroville, is a "teaching". I don't know if that makes sense: being in a place = a teaching—but it often seems to be so. Very often I find that certain happenings that come during the day, situations that arise in the work, certain failures, certain successes, have direct, intimate relation, a certain validity with regard to my inner state of consciousness: it is like constantly, twenty-four hours a day, being exposed to the teaching of the Guru."

Vikas, now about thirty-three, has been working on the Matrimandir, the central work of Auroville, for several years. He tells the story of his unforeseen voyage here.

"I had left England with the idea of doing a world tour. I'd been working as an architect, and I chucked [gave up] my job—that was after someone had laid an acid trip on me, without my asking for it, during a vacation on a Greek island . . . and that kind of changed things for me . . . I proceeded with the idea that I would eventually come to India . . . for the

obvious reasons: when you've been through a thing like that, you want to get into touch with something that can make you understand what's happened to you. Well, after about a year of travelling, I got here.

"I heard about Auroville from a young Swede that I met on the way up to Kathmandu; we talked for about six hours on the top of this truck on the way up to Kathmandu . . . and he was just telling me about Mother and Sri Aurobindo and Auroville the whole time. He'd only been here for a little while, a couple of months maybe, and he's not come back since, but it doesn't matter. He had, at seventeen, this incredible light, this wisdom, and I think, more than anything, this strength . . . it was so beautiful that somehow it represented what I was looking for . . .

"I went to see the Mother. Once.

"And even then it was curious, because my first reaction after seeing her, the first thought that came into my head, before I got to the bottom of the stairs, was that I was not worthy to be here. By then I had sort of got to know one person in the Ashram and I told this to him, that this was my reaction, and he said to be careful of not jumping on it, just to wait and see what came . . . It was very powerful, this meeting with Mother . . . when I look back on it now (the whole thing took maybe 10 seconds), it seems as though she grabbed hold of my eyes and said, "Just look, from this side, at yourself" . . . And what I saw was a mess . . . I think it was that which made me think I wasn't worthy. But gradually I came to see that staying here was the only, or at least the very fastest way, to do anything about it, about the mess I was."

Six and a half years ago Jocelyn Elder came to Auroville from a number of countries. She was about thirty-three then. Jocelyn goes back to the beginning in her narration.

"I was born in Burma. I received my early education in India. Then my family moved to England and I finished my education there. After that I lived in France, Spain, Switzerland, Scandinavia— so I really don't associate myself with any one place or country. . . .

"While I was in Switzerland I was living with my husband and another woman as an experiment, the three of us living as a family unit, and we were looking for some place where we could live together and raise our children and we couldn't find any place that would accept all three of us as residents—we were of three different nationalities—my husband was Swedish, Carol, the other girl was American, and I had an English passport.

"Then one day some friends of ours showed us an article that some friends of theirs had sent from India. It was an article from *Equals One* [a quarterly journal published in Pondicherry and dedicated to the vision of Auroville], and upon reading it I felt that if only 25% of what it said was anywhere near the truth, then this was the place we were looking for. I managed to persuade the others that this was where we should head for; other people we knew became interested, and eventually a group of seventeen of us decided to make the trip as a caravan. Three months later it was down to ten and finally only four of us made it to the East, and only three of those four people ever got to Auroville.

"The magazine I had seen had spoken of Auroville as a place in which there would be

no rules, a place where everyone was just to live out the truth of his own nature—that sounded ideal. We'd tried other communes, some of which were moderately successful, but most of them had been politically oriented and I'd gotten to feel that wasn't what I wanted. I suppose it was the idea of an international city based on the principle of human unity and offering this complete freedom that appealed to me about Auroville; but at first, and even for a long time, it had nothing to do with spirituality. . . .

"One of the things that I hadn't been prepared for by the article was the presence and the authority of the Mother. I'd never in my life been able to accept any authority before and had come here very much to get away from all that, and now suddenly I found myself in an environment where every other word was "Mother" and everything was done because "she" said it should be this way or it should be that way. This was the hardest thing for me to accept: to have come all this way to build the city, the utopia that's been in everybody's mind, in everybody's dreams their whole life, and discover that the whole show was being run by this little old lady—which is all she was to me then. It was just a bit too much. There seemed to be nothing that was done without her say-so, no house where you didn't see her picture looking down at you . . . I rejected this immediately.

"I was determined to leave as soon as I could, promptly got very sick, discovered that I didn't have enough money to just turn around and go back . . . I was trapped! Well, while I was waiting for money to come, slowly things began to change. People kept talking about "forces" being at work: "the Mother's force", "the yoga force". I was feeling incredible pressures, but had absolutely no idea what they were, what to call them; I wondered if these were "forces", but you know, I didn't have the slightest idea of what was going on . . .

"Finally I decided that I'd better see Mother, so I wrote to her and had my first *darshan* [which literally means, "to see"]. How can one talk about one's first meeting with Mother? . . . She was still this little old lady, but she sat there looking into my eyes and she looked so deep that . . . I stopped it, I got afraid and pulled back and wouldn't let it go any farther. And I kept thinking that nothing had really happened: the change that began there was so subtle that at first I didn't notice anything. But then gradually I began to notice that when the Mother said something—about anything—if I looked as deep into myself as I could, I would find that she had simply expressed what in my own heart I knew to be the truth. So gradually I got to be able to accept that whatever she said was the truth, because even on the occasions when she said something that I totally disagreed with, sooner or later I came to see that she was absolutely right. After some time I had a second *darshan* about which I can only say that I was more ready that time . . . I lay down at her feet . . . and I guess I've been there ever since."

Moving into the then present of September, 1974, Jocelyn Elder talks about something that isn't limited to that time insofar as Auroville is Auroville—the question of freedom and its relation to such a deep guidance from one personality, the Mother. The word *personality* may seem inappropriate to some, for after all, the Mother's ordinary physical existence ended almost a year before these interviews were conducted. But, as Jocelyn is about to imply in the next excerpt, the Mother's active influence in the lives of Aurovilians does not depend

upon her physical embodiment. I could almost say that she was physically present for the physical beginnings; and now she is subtly present for the subtle beginnings that are taking ten years to work through the unexpected difficulties between the inauguration promise and its fulfilment. Jocelyn.

"In terms of external compulsion, rules, Auroville really is very free, the freest place I've ever seen.

"The whole freedom thing gets a bit complicated because . . . Mother used to say that what people usually mean by *freedom* is the freedom to follow their impulses and that's not freedom at all; real freedom means being in a consciousness where one isn't bound by the movements of the lower nature. To the extent that you are open and the Mother gets to work on you, I guess you lose that bogus freedom more surely than if we had a whole code book full of rules and laws and the most elaborate machinery to enforce them. But then, you get real freedom in its place . . .

"It's like I said before, about how when I came, after a while I began to see that whatever the Mother said, if I looked deep enough into myself, I found that she had expressed my own truest understanding. When she takes over it's your own truest self taking over—something loses its freedom but that something isn't you anymore . . ."

Prompted by Michael's questions she goes on to touch the next larger realm of this: interpersonal relationships.

"You could almost say that the very crux of life in Auroville or at least a major aspect of it, is to work out a new basis of interpersonal relationships.

"I can only speak very generally—I mean, Auroville is a place for doing yoga, and the object of doing yoga is to change oneself. If you become something different from what you were, then obviously the way you relate to other people is going to be different. But I don't think any of us have gone far enough yet to be able to say anything more than the general direction in which we seem to be moving. Something less egotistical . . . a sense of unity with other people, like children of the same Mother who are all in this thing together, who all have our own hang-ups and our own trips to go through, but that somehow it doesn't matter because at some level there really is a unity. But this moves around a lot, at least for me, like sometimes I feel it very strongly and sometimes I don't, I just have a memory of what I felt before. And sometimes I just have a memory of a memory of feeling, so it's not like really established; but it seems to be there more and more often as time goes on."

At this point there is an exchange between Michael, the interviewer, and Jocelyn.

Michael And how does it manifest?

Jocelyn What do you mean?

Michael I mean this feeling, when it's there, how does it express itself?

Jocelyn I'm not sure I really know what you mean—it expresses itself in the way you

smile at someone, or the tone of voice you speak in, or the way your food tastes. Or you can go and build a Matrimandir as a symbol of human unity, or a city—the whole life of Auroville is supposed to be its manifestation.

Now it feels like we are looking toward the difficulties of the subtle beginnings; and it may be, the subtle beginnings of the manifestation.

[*To be continued*]

REVIEW

The Sepher Yetsira, Including the Original Astrology According to the Qabala and its Zodiac, by Carlo Soares. Translated from the French by Micheline and Vincent Stuart. Boulder: Shambhala, 1976. Softcover, 176 pages, \$5.95.

Carlo Suarez' *The Sepher Yetsira* is an insightful study born of sheer delight, eloquently put forth in this book. The author, who had been dealing with other texts of the Qabala (Kabbala), has now been studying The Book of Formation (The Sepher Yetsira) in his conviction that this is the key text of the entire corpus.

I believe he has risen to profound intuitive heights, thus enabling something of the creative sounds and rhythms of the Eternal to embody itself in this work. One may say the author has taken on the likeness of his beloved. He himself has become a living wave of the Qabala. *The Sepher Yetsira* is printed in the original Hebrew language with a phonetic transliteration into the Roman alphabet, and the rest into English a literal translation, abundant commentary, decoding, and deciphering of its substance

In a very simple, direct, and comprehensive manner, the author shares with us the process of decoding, deciphering, and meditating upon the self-revealing movements of cosmic energy via the medium of the Autiot (the letters of the Hebrew alphabet) as they combine and act upon each other and the consciousness of the initiate. (We may assume that anyone seriously interested in this work has some of the initiate in him.)

As we read along and absorb something of this highly detailed yet surprisingly organic and unified vision and interpretation of The Sepher Yetsira, we cannot help but playfully imagine, along with the author, the many implications and applications which a proficiency

in the language of cosmic sound may arrive at. We find ourselves swiftly moving into the present and future realms of physics, art, psychology, philosophy and yoga. And indeed this seems to be the very business of this study—to show us that *The Sepher Yetsira* (also translated as *The Book of Structuration*) is not merely “a precise and accurate treatise on the structure of cosmic energy written in hidden code”. It is also an art, a psychology, a physical and metaphysical and psychic dance, revealing the formation of the universe created and maintained by the One and of everything emanating from him.

The Sepher Yetsira, which is composed of 250 lines, deals with the concept of “transformers” of infinite energy on all planes of existence and the text itself is constructed from these transformers. Then it goes on, still charged with mantric energy, describing the function of the twenty-two Hebrew letters (the *Autiot*), the basis and nature of the letters, their connections with the functioning of the human body, and their relationship with the physical and subtle planes of the universe via the twelve signs of the zodiac. Those of us who wish to contact and experience the spirit of *The Sepher Yetsira* will find it can best be done with patience and with joy, for it is only delight that can know delight.

This book demonstrates that amidst variety and multiplicity there are a harmony and sequence which derive from a single coordinator. Reading *The Sepher Yetsira* is very much like listening to the musical fugue of the universe, and also being taught how to compose it.

Michael Spector

Michael Spector is an Israeli dancer connected with Sri Aurobindo Ashram who is exploring the possibilities of spiritual growth through dance. He worked four years with the psychology of audio-visual technology in the Israeli military before, as he says, “dancing my way to the Ashram” at the age of twenty-three.

FOCUS

THE FORCE OF THE FUTURE

The future repels us even while it irresistibly attracts. The repulsion lies partly in our own natural recoil from the unknown, because every step into this unknown is a wager between life and death; every decision we make may mean either the destruction or the greater fulfilment of what we now are, of the name and form to which we are attached. But also it lies in the future itself; for there, governing that future, there are not only powers which call us to fulfil them and attract us with an irresistible force but other powers which have to be conquered and do not desire to yield themselves. The future is a sphinx with two minds, an energy which offers itself and denies, gives itself and resists, seeks to enthrone us and seeks to slay. But the conquest has to be attempted, the wager has to be accepted. We have to face the future's offer of death as well as its offer of life, and it need not alarm us, for it is by constant death to our old names and forms that we shall live most vitally in greater and newer forms and names. Go on we must; for if we do not, Time itself will force us forward in spite of our fancied immobility. And this is the most pitiable and dangerous movement of all. For what can be more pitiable than to be borne helplessly forward clinging to the old that disintegrates in spite of our efforts and shrieking frantically to the dead ghosts and dissolving fragments of the past to save us alive? And what can be more dangerous than to impose immobility on that which is in its nature mobile? This means an increasing and horrible rottenness; it means an attempt to persist on as a putrid and stinking corpse instead of a living and self-renewing energetic creature. The greatest spirits are therefore those who have no fear of the future, who accept its challenge and its wager; they have that sublime trust in the God or Power that guides the world, that high audacity of the human soul to wrestle with the infinite and realise the impossible, that wise and warrior confidence in its ultimate destiny . . . 1

Sri Aurobindo

One of the most active contributors to last January's conference, *The Next Future*, was Alexander Brodt—a twenty-three year old member of Sri Aurobindo Ashram from West Germany who does research and writes in a number of fields as part of his work in the Ashram

1. "Conservation and Progress", *The Supramental Manifestation*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library edition, volume 16 (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1972), page 318.

Archives and Research Library. An enthusiast about the future, he not only participated in the seminar of the conference but was part of the six month study group to prepare for it. Following is his note to us, a preface to another of his many offerings toward the future, entitled "What Concerns Us Most in Our Present Time?"

Dear World Union,

In line with the aim of the last World Union conference, which sought to inspire all participants as regards the future, to intensify our collaboration with the future and to establish contacts and exchanges conducive to these ends, I would like to share with all who participated directly or indirectly some afterthoughts evoked by our meditations, studies, and activities in the preparatory study group and in the seminar, as an expression of their dynamic and continuing influence.

Alexander

WHAT CONCERNS US MOST IN OUR PRESENT TIME?

It is of vital interest for us, if we want to understand our times and give to our lives the most meaningful direction, to investigate what is the main preoccupation of humanity today. This central object of our application reveals itself when we look for the area in which all our interests and concerns converge and overlap. Our main preoccupation is naturally that which all the major fields of life and culture have in common, is the center which they share in common, just as the spokes of a wheel share the hub. What then is the hub central to the spokes of the wheel of present human existence?

It seems to me that this common ground is *the future*, which exerts a central attraction and influence in all the capital domains of life and culture. While formerly the future played only a very minor role in human existence, in this century it is beginning to come out in the limelight as the sovereign goddess of our modern life, our nascent era of material progress and spiritual self-development. A new literature, art, and entertainment, such as science fiction and space art; the new science of futurology; a new future-oriented social and material management represented, for instance, in emerging international and global institutions of all sorts; scientific and technological research in areas such as, among others, the new astronomy and cosmology, ecology, genetic engineering, space travel, nuclear energy, cybernetics and electronic intelligence, ESP-faculties; philosophy and psychology focussing more and more on the implications, the sense, and the direction of evolution; a new spirituality seeking to realize a higher dimension of consciousness which will bring about the future transformation of terrestrial life itself—these are some of the most prominent illustrations of the emerging forms in which the preoccupation with the future has taken birth in our century for the first time. Those who are interested in a more comprehensive investigation will find that all the areas of human existence have indeed undergone in our century a radical transmutation, which has not only produced a clean break with the past, but automatically forced us to direct our attention to the future. An overall comparison of culture and life today with their counterparts a hundred years ago will show

that our present world is totally different in its very roots, that it actually is a new dimension of existence: the well-known fourth dimension of modern physics has also been added to all the other aspects of life.

Thus, although our world-view may be coloured by diagonally opposite fields of culture—say, technology and psychology—we are all united in our common concern about the future. (Oppositeness does not here mean mutual exclusiveness, of course, but polar complementarity.) Why, we will naturally ask, should our capital concern be the future? Because our time-dimension clearly has expanded and we live today in a wider time-range than before. For example, we are now aware of the often gigantic consequences—gigantically progressive or gigantically lethal—of our present actions as regards the further destiny of mankind. Among the spectres which haunt our generation, to name only some of the most visible instances which have an impact on the future, are the imprudent (even peaceful) utilization of nuclear energy, the possible perils of genetic engineering, national egoism, ecological problems. On the other hand, the same instances also contain miraculous possibilities for the shaping of a better future: the effective and safe harnessing of such an enormous energy-source as nuclear power; the fantastic potential of genetic engineering, of a conscious creating of life; the planetary culture of a unified humanity (but, of course, not a uniform one); a conscious manipulation of the biosphere to actualize its latent resources, material and other.

In contrast, who, a century, or more ago, really thought about the vital future consequences of current life-forms and styles, activities and occupations, and how far these things could drastically alter life in such a way as to bring a new dimension into the future? Whereas our responsibility for the future—sudden emerging human responsibility for what used to lie solely in the hands of Nature or some god—confronts us in the daily news. The difference between the past and the present is that in former epochs, the future had generally been a continuation of the present, in the sense that essentially the same category of life had been prolonged, even though the forms embodying this life had changed to some or even a large extent. In this epoch, we have found that the future which we see taking birth intrinsically transcends the past and is a breakthrough, a quantum jump to a new dimension.

Our expanded time scale is also clearly visible in the geological and astronomical time-ranges of modern material science on one side, and on the other, of Reality's evolutionary cycles in modern spiritual science. And even the nature of time has radically mutated: we live now in a space-time continuum, where space and time are one and interchangeable and fuse into a third "something" underlying them both and manifesting dually as time and space. So, in dealing with the future, we have to ask: "Is the future later in time or wider (or further) in space? Or does the real key lie in that mysterious third 'something'?" Perhaps the *real* future is simply a more evolved existence, an advance on the ascending spirals of evolution. And what is it that has really evolved up to now? The fundamental difference between the stone, the plant, the animal, and man—to a clear vision, is—evidently their consciousness. We have here embodiments of different levels of consciousness in an ascending order, and therefore an evolution of consciousness: a development of ever higher levels of awareness in matter.

As we live in a space-time continuum, our vision of new time-ranges is inseparable from

the vista of new realms of space. Our space-scale, as we know, has also expanded tremendously in our century, whether it is the microspace of the waves/particles constituting matter, or the four-dimensional curved macrospace of the universe, or the subtle space of our own psyche and inner being, disclosing itself as we set out on the inward journey into the great unknown world that is ourselves. And the same holds true for all the other facets of our reality, as this is a continuum where everything is relative and interacts with everything else, whether we mean the Einsteinian continuum of relativity and the observer-observed interaction of Heisenberg, or the vaster Aurobindonian model, extending in dynamic interchange from Spirit to Matter while passing through intermediary grades. A change in one part of the omni-interrelated network of existence has everywhere its repercussions and leads everywhere to corresponding changes.

The importance which, in our age, the future has gained in all domains of culture and life thus stems from the expansion of our dimension of reality, produced by our evolutionary advance and therefore by a growth, a heightening, deepening, and widening of our consciousness. It is clear that an enlarged awareness automatically gives us an enlarged *field* of awareness: a wider world, a vaster space and time (that is, space-time), a more comprehensive understanding, experience and action—a whole extended life.

Consequently the true key to the future is consciousness, the expansion of our awareness and therefore also of that Alpha and Omega of the whole evolutionary game, that ultimate secret which moves the stars and the life they nourish—of our delight, the delight of the whole creation growing in us towards a greater fullness of consciousness.

ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITY

World Union Centres

Baranagar Student members decided on 29 May 1977 to hold their meetings on the first Sunday of each month at 28/1 Manna Para Road in Calcutta, and appointed Sri Mantra Bhattacharya as their convener. They have opened a library of their own and elected Sri Sankha Bhattacharya as librarian. Having their own musical instruments, they organized a concert group and elected Sri Buddhadeb Dutt as its convener. A special programme has been planned by them for 13-15 August 1977, which will include an oratorical competition, a drawing competition on the formation of the continents, an essay competition on "The World Is a Family", a recitation of Sri Aurobindo's sonnets, and a special lecture, "Yoga for World Union". Details regarding these programmes will be included in the Centre's report afterwards.

Butwal World Union Butwal Centre's members and friends met on the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th of May 1977 at Sri I. M. Mal's residence. On the 28th a special gathering took place when the families of members and friends were also invited. After a group meditation of two minutes, Miss Diksha, a student member, recited a Sanskrit sloka in reverence of Mother Saraswati. General discussions followed and President Bhende expressed his appreciation of members' enthusiasm and his satisfaction at the progress of the Centre. Secretary Mal, in a different vein, suggested a silent hour for all every day. Light refreshments were served.

New Delhi During his visit to Delhi, Sri Ranjan Karunaratne of the International Centre gave a talk on 1 May 1977 at 6:00 P.M. at Sri S. K. Bhattacharya's residence, 270 Tagore Park. The talk was highly illuminating and dwelt on the polarization of the mundane and the Divine based on the Copernican "cosmic box" theory. He stressed the need for the integration of people of different countries as one-world inhabitants. Then he related anecdotes of his school days in England and answered various questions of those present. His talk was tape recorded and is available for use by other World Union centres.

Uttarpara World Union Uttarpara Centre celebrated 24 April 1977 as the fifty-seventh anniversary of the Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry at the house of Sri S. K. Gupta—6:30 P.M. Members offered flowers with devotional songs to the Mother. The significance of this memorable date was explained; it was stated that 24 April is the foundation day on which the bridge between humanity and Divinity was erected. The members of the women's and youth wing took part in the function which was presided over by Sri S. K. Gupta, who orally read passages from *Mother India*.

The forty-fifth monthly seminar of Uttarpara Centre was held on 14 May. The subject discussed was "Sri Aurobindo and Rabindra Nath". Sri Samar Basu explained the comment of Sri Aurobindo on Rabindra Nath, that "Tagore has been a wayfarer towards the same goal as ours—in his own way". Nabanita, Shampa, Banani and Indrani offered songs in support of his explanation. It was a very pleasant and meaningful discussion.

Burdwan World Union Burdwan Centre held its second monthly meeting on 15 May in the hall of Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, where Sri Samar Basu presided. After a group meditation of three minutes, Sri Samar Basu spoke on "The Role of Human Unity in the Situation of the Present World", and answered questions. Questions arousing special interest were about the outer image of a united world in the light of spiritual unity and the time when such a world would appear. They were asked by Sri Alokemoy Banerjee, the honorary secretary. Sri Samar Basu answered them briefly and to the point. The meeting ended with thanks expressed by Sri Jayanta Kumar Hore, the joint secretary.

The third monthly meeting was held on 5 June at 5:00 P.M. in the hall of Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Sri Samar Basu presiding. At the request of those present, he interpreted this message of the Mother: "The unity of humanity is an underlying and existing fact. But the external union of mankind depends on man's goodwill and sincerity." Goodwill and sincerity and the feeling of oneness in daily life are the bases of external unity, he offered. On behalf of the members, Sri Jayanta Kumar Hore expressed good wishes and success to Sri Samar Basu, who was due to participate in the World Constituent Assembly at Innsbruck, Austria, and another world order conference in Paris.

Bangalore World Union Bangalore Centre held a meeting on 8 May under the presidentship of Professor N. S. Govinda Rao, when Dr. H. S. Lakshminarayana gave a talk on "Doctors, Drugs and Devils".

Here is the summary of the talk. Each epoch puts its own seal on human beings. And

our individual physical form is moulded by our physiological habits and even our usual thoughts. The body becomes more and more pregnant with the feelings, the appetites and the aspirations of the whole being. In this open book one can read not only the vices, the wishes, the intelligence, the stupidity, the most carefully concealed habits of an individual, but also the constitution of his body and his tendencies to organic and mental disease. So a doctor is not only a healer, but a preacher and a guide. He does not cure by himself, but helps nature to counter ailments. His role is that of a sympathetic counselor, explaining the balancing and restoring power of nature and advising his patient on the do's and don't's of health. A drug is a powerful, double-edged weapon. Avoid it if you can. If you have to use it, use it with full knowledge. The devils of this generation are poverty, opulence, superstition and tension. Man can survive them only if he respects and obeys natural laws.

International A surprise visit on 24 May 1977 from New Delhi's S. D. Pandey was the occasion of a quickly called meeting in the international office. Sri Pandey is the secretary general of the Indian Federation of UNA (United Nations Associations) and out of his discussion came two proposals: that World Union and the UNA affiliate with each other, and that a correspondence course on international relations be extended to World Union members. The course is conducted by the Institute of UN Studies and International Affairs, which in turn is operated by the UNA. Those interested in taking this certificate course may write:

Indian Federation of UN Associations
12 Janpath Barracks A
(Behind Central Cottage Industries Emporium)
New Delhi 110001

The UNA itself is a kind of peoples' movement of the United Nations. It is voluntary, comprising local associations of itself in forty-five countries. Participants in the UNA may and do offer their services in education, disaster relief, and other efforts which facilitate peoples' contacts with each other in a global span. Some countries have very substantial associations of the Association in action: in England about 90,000 persons are involved, including students in schools and universities; and the government provides grants for UNA work. Membership is open at dues of Rs. 100 per year, through writing the above address.

Bombay On his way to the World Constituent Assembly in Innsbrook, Austria, due to meet on 16-29 June, A. B. Patel stopped in Bombay. This occasioned a meeting of the Centre, which doubled as a send-off function for World Union International's general secretary on 8 June.

In addressing the gathering, Sri Patel said it may sound impractical to think of a world government and of a world constitution today, but world government will come into existence by the imminent force of circumstances—not even by choice. He declared that the solution to problems like world-wide pollution and destruction of natural resources, malnutrition and the struggle for distributive justice is precisely that of a world decision centre or a world govern-

ment. And he not only hopes but feels that such a world organization will inevitably start functioning by the turn of the century. A. B. Patel concluded this part of his talk in affirming that it is a global or universal approach which will aim principally at the improvement of the quality of man, that will overcome these problems—not merely political, economic, religious or ethical approaches.

Sri Patel also informed the meeting that Innsbruck intended to make preparations for the South Asian Regional Conference in 1978, and Sri Lanka has been proposed as the most likely place to hold this assembly. Plans about the same will be further discussed there. He significantly went on to say that the second part of the conference is to help in the formation of strong movements within each country for attaining the objectives of the Association, which include the campaign for ratification of the world constitution and the organization of a provisional world parliament during the next few years.

Sri N. S. Rao, vice chairman of World Union International, enumerated the services rendered by Sri A. B. Patel and extended felicitations to him on completing eighty years of age on 1 May 1977. Sri Rao and other members wished A. B. Patel good health and a happy journey and successful participation in the conference.

The honorable deputy speaker of the Lok Sabha, Sri G. Murhari, is also participating—among others—in the Indian delegation at Innsbruck, while Sri A. B. Patel represents World Union.

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Ronald Jorgensen
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