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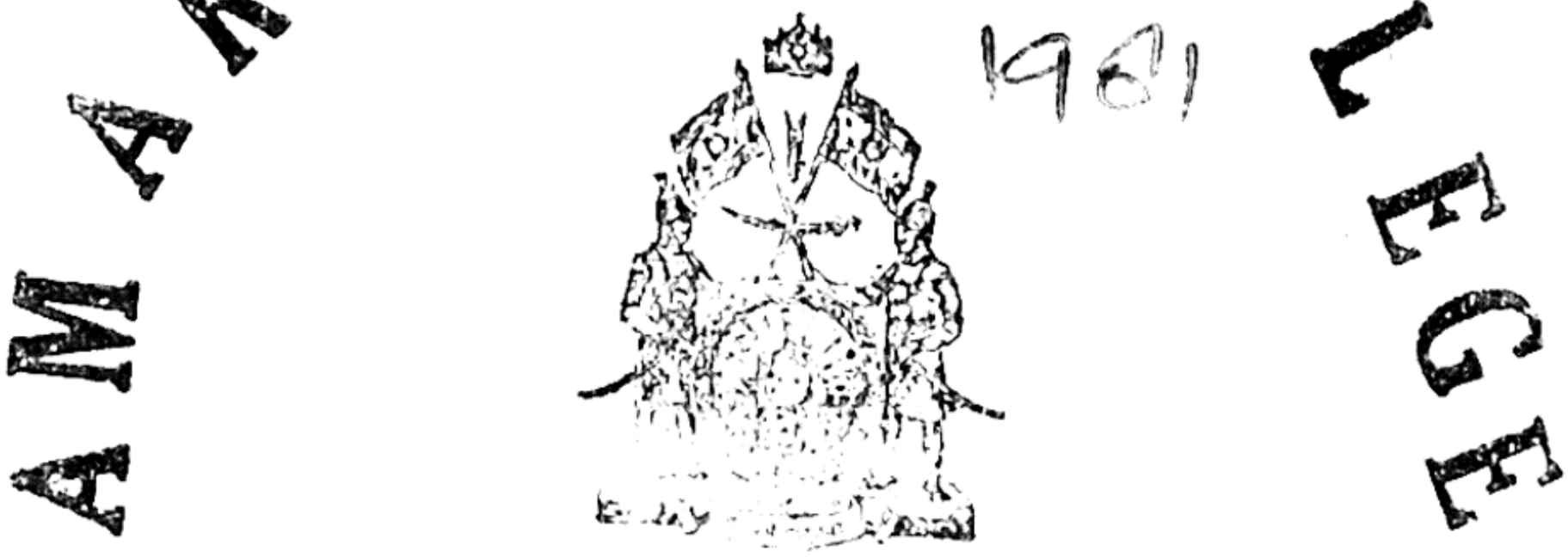

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THE SUBHASH I KNEW

BY

DILIP KUMAR ROY

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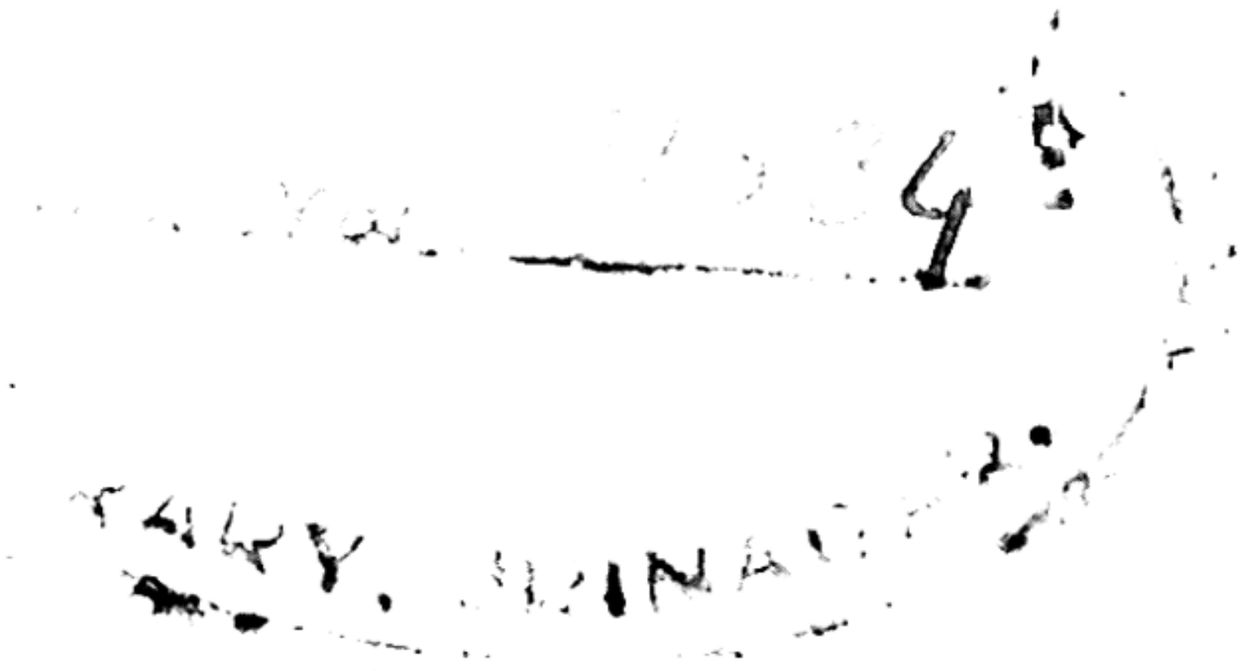

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Dedication

to

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar

Dear friend,

Romain Rolland once wrote to me that an author would be unwise to groan if different people read into his works different meanings. I agree and disagree. For when one writes on something one feels somewhat tender about, one can hardly resist echoing the great Bhavabhuti:

> *"Utpatsyatesti mama kopi samānadharmā*
> *Kalohyayam niṛavadhirvipulā cha prithwee";*
>
> *(An age must dawn when there shall walk a man,*
> *A kindred spirit, whose heart in unison*
> *Will beat with mine: and he, when I am gone,*
> *Must accept me truly—as but such souls can:*
> *For the earth is vast and Time no one may span.)*

But the earth being now much vaster than it used to be at the time when the great poet lived, even the lesser fry may now, sometimes, feel happier than he—in that *they* need no longer appeal so dolefully to the unborn for a right appraisement of their masterpieces. For although the world of today vaunts it has grown wiser than the ancients—in having discarded the gospel of God, Love and Beauty for that of science, class-war and politics—yet it so happens that a few still walk on two legs who are "wiser than the world". These at least will understand why

I felt inspired by Subhash: *not because he was a patriot on the surface, but because he was a mystic,* deep within. You belong to such a sympathetic coterie, a small coterie maybe, but still the only audience which gives a fillip to an author to say what is unlikely to be acceptable to all and sundry. That is why I dedicate my book to you. For the artist, sir, dies hard—Yoga or no Yoga—and till he does, one must ache for a "samānadharmā", a kindred spirit, who will read into one the right emphasis.

D. K. R.

Shri Aurobindo Asram,
Pondichery.
26—9—46.

Vyas

Swapādamulam bhajatah priyasya
tyaktwānyabhāvasya Harih pareshah
Vikarma yachchotpatitam kathamchid
dhunoti sarvam hridisannivishtah

Who loves the All-transcedent more than all
The World—if such a lover deviate
Through error from his Goal, he shall not fall:
For his heart's high Resident will rule out Fate.

Goethe

Sagt es niemand, nur den Weisen,
(Denn die Menge gleich verhöhnet):
Das Lebend'ge will ich preisen
Das nach Flammentod sich sehnet.

To none but the Wise confide this I implore
(Because the multitude will jeer at thee):
Only the restless spirits I adore
Who yearn for death in flames, and sleeplessly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe thanks to Srimati Bela Devi, a niece of Subhash, for some of his photographs printed here; to A. N. Shah for the group photograph of four of us in Cambridge (1920); to Sriman Narayan Bhattacharya for a photograph taken in Bombay which was kindly lent by the "Orient" Weekly; to Frau Hedy Fullop Miller, a former Opera-singer of (alias Nilima) for Subhash's photograph with herself; to my friend and publisher Sri Harischandra Bhatt who has procured a sketch of Subhash by the well-known artist Sri Ravishanker Raval, and an autograph message of Subhash from Sri Shanti Kumar Dani. I owe a debt to many others for valuable help and suggestions among whom I must mention my gifted friend, Professor Sisir Kumar Ghosh of Shantiniketan; Sriman Ashit Kumar Gupta, a brilliant scholar and lecturer of the Lucknow University; Sri Nalinikant Sarkar and Sri Hemanta Sarcar for some letters of Subhash and Sri Ashoknath Sastri who recorded the last words of Subhash's brave mother in a moving article. I have also received numerous letters from friends and strangers of encouragement and approval of my reading of Subhash. I thank all of them from the bottom of my heart.

D. K. R.

Sri Aurobinda Ashrama,
Pondicherry,
10—7—'46.

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Subhash Chandra Bose
A sketch by Ravishankar Raval.

As Congress President (1938)

In Cambridge (1919)
Khitish, Subhash, Dilip and Shah.

London (1920)
Subhash, Mlle Jane and Dilip.

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Dr. Dharmavir and Mrs. Dharmavir.

In Vienna (1935-36)
Subhash and Mrs. Muller.

Subhash Bose in Vienna (1935-36)

In Dalhousie—Calcutta (1937)

Subhash with Dr. and Mrs. Dharmavir.

Dilip Kumar with the late Uma Bose.

Dilip Kumar in (1919-21)

Facsimile of a letter from Subhash to the author

ERRATA

PAGE	LINE	INCORRECT	CORRECT
17	9	I almost forgot	I had almost forgotten
25	17	the requisite	my
25	18	load.....spontaneity	quota of devotional flowers
27	23	He.....effect	Thus did he exhort me.
27	24	only he.....people	he alone could do—he bent me
32	6	why	how
32	8	and	and persuaded to
36	21	chafing	chaffing
37	10	piteous	pitiful
49	16	sequentially	chronologically
50	last two lines	one's	his
51	4	nevermore	no more
53	19	never-do-weals	never-do-wells
78	6	But if	But even if
84	5	you	you yourself
84	10	who	that
85	7	shake keads	shake their heads
87	17	not	never
92	2	grieved	anxious
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124	13	be	go
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141	2, 17	don't/is	don't you/is even
143	17	in its essence yet	yet in its essence
144	8	attending	attending to
150	4	care to	care not to
152	7th from bottom	lengths	heights
154	21	nature	our nature
158	14	fair sex	the fair sex
173	15	certainly	equally
179	6	fear	fear that
185	3rd from bottom	romance	pictured romance
193	4	be devil	bedevil
193	14	immotional	emotional
196	3 & 4		bring him fees like an obedient vassal or a perfect gallant?
199	18	reborn	resurrected
199	25	Revocation	revolution
215	9	who	who are
224	4	affection	affectation

PRELUDE

PRELUDE

1

This fruitful earth so richly hued,
With gold and grain and blooms endued,
Still holds within a land surpassing
All others' glow and gleam:
It is girdled by irised memories—
Woven of halcyon dream.
You will never find in the world below
A land like our land of birth:
Queen of the continents is she,
Supremely fair on earth.

2

Where else do sun and moon and star
So sparkle and beckon from afar?
Where else thus flash in lightning-play
Cloud-eyes of darkling sky?
Where else do we wake to such carols of birds
And sleep to their lullaby?
You will never find in the world below
A land like our land of birth:
Queen of the continents is she,
Supremely fair on earth.

3

Where else can purl such cooling rills:
Stand sentinels the mystic hills?
Where else are such meadows lost in trance
On the marge of the marvel blue?
Where else do such seas of corn-blades ripple
When murmuring breezes woo?
You will never find in the world below
A land like our land of birth:
Queen of the continents is she,
Supremely fair on earth.

4

Where else do trees so flare with flowers,
And bulbuls sing in myriad bowers?
Where else do choral bees so hum
Dancing on the rose's breast?—
To drink her honey deep-enbosomed
And drowse in her nectar-nest?
You will never find in the world below
A land like our land of birth:
Queen of the continents is she,
Supremely fair on earth.

5

Where else do brother's and mother's love
Bend like the greeting heavens above?
O Mother mine! thy sacred feet
I fold to my heart and kiss;

I am born, thrice-blest, to thy cradle of beauty:
May I die in that cradle of bliss.
You will never find in the world below
A land like our land of birth:
Queen of the continents is she,
Supremely fair on earth.

(*One of Subhash's most favourite songs . . . .* Translated from the Bengali original of Sri Dwijendralal Roy).

THE SUBHASH : I KNEW

George Russell
(A. E.)

Your eyes are filled with tender light
For those whose eyes are dim with tears:
They see your brow is crowned and bright
But not its ring of wounding spears.

Chesterton

It is something to have wept as we have wept,
It is something to have done as we have done,
It is something to have watched when all men slept.
And seen the stars which never see the sun.
It is something to have smelt the mystic rose,
Although it break and leave the throny rods.
It is something to have hungered once as those
Must hunger who have ate the bread of gods.
To have known the things that from the weak are
furled,
Perilous ancient passions, strange and high;
It is something to be wiser than the world,
It is something to be older than the sky.

Cuttack unforgettable. I changed my hero overnight. Children may be childlike and frank and unsophisticated and what not but they are *by nature* decply disloyal. A greater idol they would invoke without a twinge of conscience even if it was a dead certainty that their long-cherished idols would be maimed beyond recognition by the new-comer.

Thus it began—my adoration of Subhash, the thrilling defeater of our undefeatable first boy. I strove in my own small way—a la Sherlock Holmes of whom I was very fond even then—to gather tit-bits of information about Subhash, relevant and irrelevant. Nibaran had, I may say, risen in my estimation. Prophecy, with adolescents, succeeds even more than success. So I lent him a reverent ear now, while he, proud and radiant, told me many things which I itched to know. What I gathered—from other sources as well—I append below:

Subhash—a great scholar (we used the word scholar pitilessly)—number one. A pure character—number two. No girl had ever dared to darken with her shadow even the shadow of his shadow—number three. A devotee of Vivekananda—number four. And last, though not least, had gone away from home once as a Sannyasi!* After this final, apocalyptic revelation—and how I thrilled to see myself, in fancy, evolved overnight into a half-baked if not half-naked *sadhu*—I had to capitulate. What chance had a normal Khitish against such a hydra-headed hero in each of whose symbolic heads

* I can't swear to it whether this piece of information I got then or afterwards when I came to know him better. But it certainly was, to me, the most important piece of information, so I risk putting it here.

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lay hidden a treasure—a glory of orthodox ascetism and askesis!

For I was already, at twelve, an ardent devotee of Sri Ramkrishna. So, I was fully persuaded then —a persuasion that was, subsequently, to ripen into a bedrock conviction—that there could not possibly be a greater message than the one given by that cranky priest of Dakshineswar: "To realise the Divine is the one object of life—the highest pursuit of the soul and beware, ye who aspire, He brooks no rival, the Sphinx who creates life's lesser ideals for his strange vast play—*lila*—so utterly beyond our pigmy self-important intellect!"

Coloured images rocketed in the sky of my imagination: surely some day Subhash and I would be scouring the Himalayas in search of a great Guru! I never stopped to think that he, Subhash, might not look upon it as a consummation so devoutly to be wished. Children are nothing if not dictatorial in imagination. I moulded Subhash with the clay of my desires into something picturesque. Not that he was not so already, in life-size reality. But when has real life even in its fullest plumage ever competed with the flawless flower that is imagination?

I saw him for the first time in the Presidency College where I had secured admission. But I dared not approach him: my heart beat nineteen to the dozen! So talking was out of the question. Besides, one never talks with an idol but at one's own peril —I had sense enough to realise this hard home truth

even then—when my boyhood was just beginning to bud into adolescence. For I may have been poor in many things, but not in wild riotous imagination.

I had gleaned many more pieces of information about him, and with greater ease, now that he had come to live in Elgin Road while I stayed—after my father's death, in 1913, with my grandfather Dr. P. C. Majumdar in his Theatre Road palace. Subhash's house was about half-a-mile from ours. I used often to pass along Elgin Road and, looking hungrily at his room on an upper floor, speculated how we would fare someday as a couple of beggar sadhus and sing:

'Koupinavantah khalu bhagyavantah'.*

2

JUST then, one fine morning, Subhash called on me—a bolt from the blue with the thunder dissolved in light! The mountain had to come to Mahomet as Mahomet was too shy. I read books in running brooks and sermons in stones in uncontainable pride—on that first day I talked with my latest hero and idol. And the first love-talk (so far as I was concerned—for he had barely noticed me as a singer) broke the ice, somehow. He had come to draw me into a debating club he had started. "Debates must be encouraged among us; the coun-

* The loin-cloth wearers are the only fortunate ones on earth.

try will need great debators, parliamentarians—when we are free, that is."*

"Debates!" I fell from the sky, as our Bengali idiom has it. "But didn't Sri Ramkrishna say: debates never got you a clue to truth?"

"Never mind what he said", Subhash cut in impatiently. "We must not remain everlastingly moored to the past. Traditions have been the bane of our Hindu culture. We must create the future. Did not your great father say:

"Before us still there floats the ideal of those
splendid days of gold:
A new world in our vision wakes, Love's India
we shall rise to mould."

(Of course he quoted from Dwijendralal's original Bengali:

"Chokher samne dharia rakhia atiter sei maha
adarsha,
Jagiba nutan bhabera rajye rachiba premera
Bharatvarsha".

The English couplet cited here is from Sri Aurobindo's translation).

"You know his poems?"

"By heart!" Subhash's eyes shot fire. "He has been a rare poet of Swadeshi. You should be more proud of your father than your ancient traditionalists".

I was in a dilemma. For while this certainly endeared Subhash more to me, I could not even

* Here I must state without apology that I will be putting his talks with me in my own language. For I can't possibly recall the exact words he said then as well as later. But the gist will be roundly faithful to what he said. This I venture to claim as I know his ideology too well and respect his personality too sincerely to misinterpret him.

dream of ranking my father (of whom I am rightly proud even today) with Sri Ramkrishna, traditionalist or not. The one was an *Iswarkoti*—the other a *Jivakoti*—a great *Jiva*, granted—a genius, a patriot, a man of the noblest attainments, but still—no, truth was greater than all the fathers in the world put together—I winced at the very thought of ranking a poet and a patriot with an Avatar, a soul of God held in matter. My view hereanent has not changed one tittle. But adolescence even at its summit-fervour lacks courage of conviction. So I was tongue-tied.

Subhash was pleased with my silence.

"Yes," he pursued, "we should burn only to serve our country. But mere emotion supplies little fuel. One must seek equipment and become modern."

I was crushed. He had come to the wrong shop. The article of modernity was not to be found in the then thin body of an emotional singer and a reader of the *Puranas* and Sri *Ramkrishna Kathamrita*.

He took pity—at long last.

"I don't want to be irreverent to Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa", he said to me assuagingly. "But I admire more his modern disciple, Vivekananda".

This was, surely, the last straw.

"I can't," I exploded, for I have never even dreamed that Vivekananda could come anywhere near his Master, as he himself said more than once."

"That's just his greatness", he protested. "For

who made Sri Ramkrishnâ famous the world over?''

I could feel blood spiralling up into my face.

''A God-lover does not need fame to get his market-value enhanced.'' I said, essaying in vain to temper the heat in my retort.

Subhash was never really irreverent by nature. In that sense he was perhaps *not* a modern. He appraised me for a little.

''Look here Dilip Babu'', he said in a conciliatory tone. ''Let's drop this discussion now. I want you to promise me that you will take an active part in our debating club''.

I was highly flattered and yet scared.

''I will'', I stammered out. ''Only—you see I am too shy to speak. I have never spoken. But I am a good listener''.

Subhash laughed. I never found Shubash more bewitching than in the grip of laughter. It always reminded me of the old simile of the grim rock overlaying a spring. Just a push, a thud—and lo, the entire scenery is transformed! Subhash looked impressive, always—but I never could bring myself to continue to live being stage-impressed all the time. My father was one of the great kings of laughter and satire and poetry and drama of modern India. He could be serious, even hard, yes—but also care-free and rollicking at will, as happens in a change of scene on a revolving stage. Where there was a desert ruled by rocks only a moment ago, shines now a sundawn rill bordered with avenues!

Subhash was indeed like that. His ordinary

exterior often made one wonder whether he had not asked in his cradle: "Mother, what *is* laughter?"

But one who has seen him laugh—laugh till his sides ached—shall never fail to recapture the impression. He was a man with a superabundant energy—a whole-hogger as well as a go-getter by nature. He would plump for whatever captivated him and pay for what he wanted with all his native aristocratic generosity. But aristocracy has a facet of shadow as well. So, Subhash could not hope to convince all he met about a very beautiful side of his personality—his simple love of fun and capacity for unlimited laughter. A man who has not loved laughter has always been emphatically repellent to me. So I was greatly relieved. For I did dread that he might prove an idol for whom I might find myself, in the end, unable to provide the requisite load of flowers of spontaneity.

"But though a debating society must have listeners," he said when his laughter had subsided, "I wonder how many would call you an *active* participator if your part were confined to that of an ideal listener only!"

"It's true", I said emboldened by his refreshing sally. "But you see my difficulty, don't you?"

(Was there ever a greenhorn on earth who didn't feel he was adding to his stature when he aped the gait of an adult and talked of problems and difficulties of life?)

"Well", Subhash, shook his head more wisely still. "I do and do not. For difficulties gain their

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edge and weight because we, Indians, are so absurdly diffident. Read Shakespeare: 'Screw your courage to the sticking-place and you'll not fail'."

A curious thing about Subhash was that even copy-book maxims somehow ceased to sound copy-bookish in his voice. We, moderns, (for do what we will a man cannot grow backward into the past any more than a horse can gallop backward on the turf) have perhaps been born with a somewhat hard epidermis of irony. A tender dart of a maxim, however flawless, can seldom find a flaw in such a skin to enter through and convert the impervious heart. But in Subhash's accent even his victorian Puritanism dressed up in the neo-Brahmo garb of standoffishness won a new ring which carried conviction. This was brought home to me years later in Cambridge when we were thrown much together and where, naturally, I saw more of him in a deeper and, I trust, clearer light—having in that period outgrown the attitude of a lachrymose hero-worshipper. But to resume.

"That's true enough," I said with a wry smile, "but the fact is I haven't yet stated my difficulty fully. Its crux is in essence the same as that of the 'Might-have-been Hero' my father immortalised in a song, the hero who might have shaped into all kinds of things but somehow didn't. But his greatest misfire was in the realm of speaking. Here is his dirge", and I hummed:

"I might have been a mighty platform-speaker
in my life,

But when I rise, my memory acts like a rebel wife.
And then the things I memorised just leave me in the lurch,
And nought but choice seditious phrases answer my frantic search.
It is because of this slight hitch I failed to rage and roar
In the open—and remained, alas, a drawing-room orator!"

Subhash dissolved again in laughter.

"But," he said reassuringly, "I am not asking you to blossom into a platform-speaker yet. And surely in the college debates sedition will remain a taboo till doomsday. What I want is that our boys should learn the art of thinking quickly. And then, the art of debate initiates one into the art of self-reliance which is surely a great gain. We, Indians, are too dependent on others—for action, views, initiative—everything. So I have decided that debating classes have got to stimulate us to stand on our own legs."

He did exhort me to this effect. But he did more—and that is what only he could do—bend people, for the nonce anyway, to his will. So, although I knew it wasn't my *swadharma** —I am even today deeply distrustful of oratory—I had to acquiesce.

I do not remember what other topics we discussed. It would be absurd, if not dishonest, to claim that one could remember in full all that was said to one by no matter who in an hour's tete-a-tete. Yet

* The part one is cut out for, temperamentally.

I have cited so much only to emphasise what a forceful personality he was even in those days—and how precocious, besides. For it must be borne in mind that we were hardly eighteen yet—legally, we hadn't yet attained majority. But when we, undergraduates, talked with Subhash we, somehow all looked up to him as our senior by several years. He had a native power to lead, and he knew it. I know this consciousness has its deep disadvantages and I will not say it never did Subhash any harm. But this I will say with confidence that he had never once made people who obeyed him feel they were his inferiors. Those who, during the last war, called Subhash an intolerant Fascist who would treat all human beings as animals tied somehow to the same harness, cannot have known him. I will cite an example to prove this.

3

I HAVE, I feel, brought it out lucidly enough that Subhash's natural line of development —*swadharma*—wasn't mine. We both knew we had been fashioned in radically different moulds. I realised more and more, somewhat to my sorrow I must confess, that Subhash was unlikely to flower out into a mystic—not in this life, anyhow. He was built of too robust and urgent a material. And he found out also that I was not as malleable as he

had taken me for. Yet we remained warm friends all along. No cloud of misunderstanding ever cast its hateful shadow upon the light of tenderness and sympathy with which we greeted each other from day to day. And yet—in one phase of our relationship—Subhash knew that he had only to insist and I would obey him. He loved politics. I disliked it. This must have stung him—causing a deep wound that could never completely heal. But save for once he never betrayed his pain—when I gave up worldly life and took to the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo in 1928—when he spoke publicly against escapist mysticism. But even then, and afterwards as well, he loved the delinquent tenderly as never before. So I contend he could not have been intransigent, far less domineering. To all who have known his radiant lovable self—in essence pure as the morning star; who have even once come under his affectionate glance of silence; who have worked with him or stayed with him even for a few days together on a footing of intimate sympathy—and I imagine many more besides—must have realised that he could be neither tyrannical nor autocratic against the free choice of those he would give much to convert. His faith in the liberal moral values was too luminous, his heart of affection too pure, his mental sympathy too genuine to suffer him to climb down a slope of hateful dictatorship, one of the deadliest scourges of our Godless age. But I will close this topic with a personal instance. In-

terested detractors of his goodness may not believe it, but to those who have known him, what I am going to relate will, I am sure, ring true.

I have said, temperamentally we had little in common. And the divergence between our outlooks on life only widened with time. I came more and more to value art and poetry and music while he came more and more to love his country, India. My patriotism grew thinner and thinner through lack of the heart's support: my heart fared gropingly in the direction of mystic art and, I will risk the word, Godwardness. The more I grew the more impossible I found this world of aimless activism, unscrupulous diplomacy and soulless organization of applied science. The more he grew the more divine seemed to him the cause of India's freedom. I failed to see that the political Indian was one whit better than the political Westerner nor retain my faith in political remedies with only a change of ugly names to serve as a camouflage for those who held the reins and citadels of power. Still I was attached to Subhash and he was responsive to my attachment—to the last. But to come to the incident.

It happened about the year 1923 or 1924; that is, just when C. R. Das had started his Swaraj party which rapidly grew in prestige and stature. Bengal went mad. Subhash was Das's ablest lieutenant, his "right hand" as we used to style him. Das wanted me to join his party and stand for election in my own constituency, against the Maharaja

of Nadia. I was disconcerted. For although I had always admired the stature of his picturesque personality—to say nothing of his sacrifice—I could never bring myself to like the ways of politics, his or anybody else's for that matter. Furthermore, I was growing into a deeper and deeper *vairagya* (distaste for the world) which made political games seem utterly puerile. I approached Subhash and told him again about my 'difficulties'. "But", I added in the end, "if *you,* Subhash, ask me to join politics I will, even if I have to go to jail for it—for your sake. But for political advantages I will never court prison. I have long lost faith in political patriotism, as you know and I am persuaded that whatever use it may have had for mankind in the past, today it has become the cancer of civilization. Now tell me what you want me to do."

Subhash was evidently pained that I abhorred patriotism so unqualifiedly. His eyes were dark with flitting shadows. He gave me a long look, then put a hand on my shoulder and said: "Dilip, do you think I am a fanatic or what? I know politics is not *your* line. I know also how deeply you love poetry and mysticism and music. How then can I ask you to sacrifice *your* ideal for *mine?* No. Follow your own bent—*swadharma.* I am not a narrow politician, Dilip. Nor have I ever shouted, as some have, that every son of India must work in the same way for the Mother's salvation. You could be most invaluable to India only if you were true to the deepest call of your nature".

I have not made him say what he didn't. And I must add that this made me see Subhash in a new light altogether. For I had come gradually to look askance at the ways of our young hopefuls. The absurd spinning-wheel as a message too left me cold and I never could understand why even great men like C. R. Das and Jawaharlal had been forced to flirt with *khaddar* and rationalise a mediaeval absurdity into a modern panacea. I repeated to Subhash one day what Tagore had once told me about the spinning-wheel: that it looked too puny and paltry to stir the souls of those who wanted to sacrifice their all. "For", Tagore had said in his inimitable vein with a delightful eye-twinkle, "the spinning-wheel might indeed create yarns, but how on earth it is going to create *swaraj*—and that within a year or thereabouts—is to me dark as a lampless moonless night. I am not joking," he had added quickly. "For it cannot possibly call to the soul as a message has to—for instance, whether you agree with Vivekananda or no—*his* was a message—a drum-beat inviting you to sacrifice, to stake your all. Those who think that the spinning-wheel can spur you on similarly do not understand the rudiments of human psychology. You sound a clarion-call: the majority may shut you out—but a handful will follow—but only if it is a call to stake your all, mind you. But how on earth is the spinning-wheel going to prove such a great call? Spin, spin, spin—just pronounce the word thrice and tell me honestly—does your pulse beat a thought faster? Do

you not feel disappointed, if not actually betrayed?" I have not misquoted Tagore: he did say these words and write to me even more—which I would rather not quote—and I know Subhash too thought likewise. Could it be otherwise? Was it really possible for a sane man, eager to do or die, really to believe that the spinning-wheel was going to survive save as a relic in our future national museums? But I am divagating—since this is not my line nor what I would underline. Politics I dislike and that is all there is to it. Let all shed their life-blood for politics, I can only shed mine for the Divine, and the mystic art. My point is that even when Subhash wanted to convert me to his view that politics was worth while, he did not press an advantage he could have at least temporarily gained if only he had touched the button. Does not that prove my contention that he had never been moulded in the clay of intolerant all-to-the-one-fold-ism of the Fascist philosophy?

But to take up the thread where I left it.

4

MY nascent enthusiasm for debates preparatory to "saving the country" with parliamentarian word-play (so admired by all who matter!) petered out soon enough. Not all the Subhashian energy could go on raking up a fire that had such

an ineradicable longing to die and be reborn to shed what warmth it could in other areas. I expect Subhash had been, initially, a trifle shocked by my lack of ardour. But probably he realised in time that a debator was as much born as a poet or a musician. In any event he did not exhort me any more to wax incandescent as a Disraeli or Gladstone in embryo. Possibly he deemed it more worth his while to flash out in debates with his striking personality, shining eyes and assertive voice syllabling words together in a foreign tongue slowly but tirelessly, mercilessly. I amiably collapsed in my maiden (or shall I say bachelor) attempt—all of a heap —never to be resuscitated again. I suppose Subhash took real pity on me and the mother in him woke up when he saw the plight to which his insistent initiation had brought his innocent friend and devotee. This element of motherliness in him had always been a salient feature of his character. He had been born with a strong streak of tenderness in his composition—or shall I say sympathetic indulgence for the weak? It brought him strange colleagues if not bed-fellows: roughs and rogues and parasites came to him and had only to squeak in a famished accent in order to be accepted. It is well-known how some of his best friends betrayed him secretly to the police who got the most damning evidence against him thanks to such traitors. But even these were always quartered by Subhash whenever they were in desperate straits. In fact Subhash was by temperament an *annadata* (giver of bread)

to a considerable congregation of molly-coddles and adventurers. Of course these were not the only ones who derived help from him. The deserving ones too were cared for no less. For instance, political detenus, many of whom were really noble souls, seldom appealed to him in vain, and he had them always in his mind and he did all he could to relieve the miseries of their derelict families. I had to organize a few music concerts in aid of these and for this Subhash was so absurdly grateful to me that it sometimes actually tickled me: he would take it almost as a personal favour. And one of the reasons of his exaggerated recognition of such service as I could render to the cause of his heart was his knowledge of my rooted dislike of politics and politicians, generally speaking. I used often to tell him, half in jest, that I could never bring myself to believe that he might ever shape himself into an authentic "country-saving" politician. Excluding him thus, I used to throw out broad innuendos against the bulk of his associates. Having by then learnt to take a joke he would say: "But Dilip, you remind me of old Dr. Anderson of Cambridge, and his love of Bengalis and the Bengali language. Wasn't he fond of telling us that some Frenchmen had told him they could never look upon him as an Englishman and how he always wondered whether he was to take it as a compliment or a back-hander? —Ha ha ha!"

"I remember" I said echoing his strong laughter. "But the French were right. For you see, old

Anderson had never been insular. I am right somewhat in the same way. *You* can't thrive on dishonesty, for if you told a lie you would be found out and brought to book in no time. Such men are not cut out for politics and diplomacy and bluff.'' Years afterwards I remember how one day he referred to it when he knew he was going to be arrested once more. I had come out of the Asram and was busy with my gifted pupil Uma Bose, the late nightingale of Bengal. He placed a hand on my knee in a motor-car as we were going out together —just on the eve of my return to our Asram—to a social and musical reception I was giving to him, in Barrackpore.

''Dilip,'' he said in an earnest voice, ''don't go back to the seclusion of your Asram just now. I need you.''

''But surely you can't mean it, Subhash!'' I said in genuine surprise. ''You are a busy man and a patroit. I am only a day-dreamer, as you often tell me chafing. And in Calcutta we meet but once in a blue moon''.

''Never mind,'' he said with a wistful glance. ''You don't know my life. I have to hobnob day and night with scoundrels, mostly. If you remained in Calcutta I would at least know that in the last resort there is one man I can go to and confide in who is not a scoundrel.''

None save those who knew Subhash's tragic life from within would be able fully to gauge the import of this remark. He was not cut out to figure

in life as a decorative man, far less one who would take life as he had found it. Nor was he a born politician in the sense that he would be content to look at life like a common cynic to whom all ideals were at best bubbled illusions; and least of all, was he a careerist, who turned out neat compliments by the dozen to arrive. That is why when, in later life, he tried to pay compliments he did not mean he bungled so hopelessly that he cut a really piteous figure. But it was so unmitigatedly piteous because he was by composition so robust—he was not merely boasting when he said in Burma he never could "admit defeat under any circumstances".* And that was precisely why he felt himself a derelict when his friends decided that all was lost, as for instance when the Congress had rusticated him for three years. He could have retrieved his position fairly easily if he had been a real diplomat. But he never had been, I repeat, an adept in the art of lying. To be able to shape as an eminent country-saving tuft-hunter you have got to have a lot of brass; and withal, be not a little thick-skinned. But he was by nature too reserved if not shy—even gawkish. This may sound somewhat curious so late in the day—especially after the Burma episode where he came into the white glare of romance intensified almost into a mythical lime-light; but still I would adhere to my reading: he was not a man who throve in or doted on publicity. That is one of the reasons why he always cut a sorry figure in a party tussle. Unlike the born diplomat he never could take to bluff with-

* Last special order of the Day dated 24-4-45.

out turning a hair. But the world of diplomacy and politics is so sickening everywhere because here a premium is generally put on the art of bluff. You have to know unerringly how much your opponents can be bamboozled; you have got to acquire the flair to know just where to draw the line—how to mix large dose of shameless untruth with small doses of 'noble uplifting truth'—about your own party being the most angelically self-effacing party on earth, and of course protesting always in a tone of injured innocence against your unfailingly corrupt adversaries. For to be a successful politician you have got to make it out that it was always the others, never you yourself, who made mistakes or hit below the belt.

I am sorry to say Subhash could not to the end retain his love of truth unimpaired. But for this one could offer real palliations and plead for mercy. My contention is that you could never remain long in any responsible office in active politics today if you were an uncompromising partisan of truth. Nay, you have not only to lie for the truth of the soul's welfare but you must, withal, behave like an adventurer to preclude misadventures. Yes, I would fail Subhash if I omitted to emphasize this supreme tragedy of his life, I mean the tragedy he referred to when he said, so revealingly, that it was sometimes a real comfort to feel that one could go sometimes to a friend buttressed by the confidence that your confidant was not just another scoundrel masquerading as an honest patriot.

I know how much he had suffered because I know that when he had come back from Europe in 1921 how flaming was his enthusiasm to sacrifice himself for Truth and Country. He did then believe, with every fibre of his being, that the two were but different aspects of the same Divine. For at that time he had a truly international outlook which had enabled him to transcend his country. That vision, alas, got blurred—progressively. To expect otherwise would perhaps be folly. The task to which he had dedicated himself heart and soul was derived from a conscience born of too impatient an idealism. He felt he had to bring off things here and now. Which necessitated temporising. "You could not both eat your pie and have it", he used to say with a sigh after his long illness which forced him in the end to go to Vienna. When he went there to be operated on, he was still far less a wiser than a sadder man. This he confided to me after his return from the continent. I can never forget a long conversation we had in his Elgin Road house when the evening shadows were closing in. I will try to reproduce it from memory. I can't guarantee the report's faithfulness in detail but I remember his tragedy too well to run the risk of misportraying him unconsciously.

5

WE were sitting on a terrace. The sun had just set and now stars began to bud here and there, like self-luminous petals in a soil of blue void.

"Dilip", he suddenly said after a sudden lull in our conversation. "I sometimes feel so lonely ....You can't imagine, *how* lonely!"

"Subhash", I said taking one of his hands in mine. "May I tell you something?"

He only gave me a look and smiled sadly.

"I have never presumed to advise you," I said. "Rather I have been habituated to look up to you for advice. But may I suggest that the loneliness you complain of is an ailment human flesh is born to—that is, you can never shake off your sense of human bankruptcy till you transcend humanity and lean on Divinity in some form or other?"

"I know what you mean," he said though not at once. "I know because I too have had the seeking you refer to. Yes," he dropped his voice, "I too once wanted to petition Divinity as a conscious Boongiver of Grace over-arching our orphaned Humanity—but of course I could not persist. The wailings of those I was leaving behind were too imperious. I could not be deaf to the miseries of our lovely India."

Here at once he struck the note of a mystic deifying a peninsula into a Goddess. This was far removed from the accent of a mere patriot! I was touched. He went on.

"I have told you many times that I have often felt like running away—'far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife', as Gray has it. And I too have been visited by mystic experiences though perhaps not of the kind which, if your claim is right, effects a lasting change in our outlook. But then....." he added more reflectively. "I don't know.....I wondered whether the contemplatives really meant anything as serious as their henchmen claimed. For mystics came and mystics went but didn't Man go on for ever—if you will allow me to alter the quotation? So I harked back. I did because....well, I could not decide whether it would not be wrong to go on unheeding....not lending the needy a helping hand."

"But *could* you help, really, till you.....you know what I mean?"

"Arrived?" he helped me out, smiling, "You are fond of quoting Narad's saying in the Bhagavat that a man could not possibly help others when he himself was in the coils of a serpent.* I admit the force of the simile. For do what we will we can only see a few steps ahead....the rest is darkness. I admit that. But still, Dilip, one can't sit by, can one? If one can't shake off the serpent-coils of Karma one must trudge along somehow carrying them clinging round one's neck.....if only to do one's bit even when one was not a master of one's own destiny. But perhaps, it is not a case of argument at all. There is a fatality in things, as Napolean used to say. Anyhow it is

* Kathamanyamstu gopayet sarpagraste yathaparam...Bhagawat, 1-1-46.'

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idle to deny that things seldom turn out in conformity with human logic. So I have taken to politics and activism. Could I do otherwise?"

"On that question none but you yourself can adjudicate", I said, undecided. "It is not my function to counsel you either. I can only repeat what I told you so often—that politics is not *your* line." And I qualified hastily: "You are too decent. No wonder you feel lonely when most of your associates are what they are".

"There you are perhaps right," he said more complacently. "But you know my views. I can't be persuaded to seek a truncated harmony through escapism."

"That's not a kind word, Subhash," I smiled "But I can't complain as I go for you much more ruthlessly. So we won't discuss philosophy. But don't you think that the loneliness you are speaking of is irremediable in *your* surroundings?"

"I wonder!" He didn't say more explicitly what he had had in mind, only added: "But the trouble is that our country needs selfless servants. And can you have a harvest of selfless workers when you only sow seeds of selfishness and prudence?"

"But that's just it," I caught up in high glee. "You can't bring in a Ram-rajya of unselfishness with an army of selfish ministers and slogan-repeating mercenaries. How then would you solve the problem?"

He evaded my question and set about amplifying the problem itself.

"But the problem of problems, Dilip, is not that of self. Perhaps, in the last analysis, self is too deep-rooted in human nature to be completely eradicated. The problem is, you can't make a man love such a thing as his country when this love has not first been brought to birth in his make-up."

"How often have I not seen," he went on after another pause, "young men come with a vivid fire to sacrifice their all for the country! How often have they acted like martyrs to start with! But for how long? Only till they get a safe start and secure a good job. As soon as this is assured they become turn-coats overnight interested exclusively in making their worldly position more and yet more secure. When you see this again and again, tell me, don't you catch yourself wondering whether all professions of serving the country were not mere masks which hide for the time being the ugly greedy faces of born careerists at worst and safety-seekers at best?"

I felt a profound sympathy for him.

"Is it really as bad as that?" I asked.

"It is worse. For I have seen even men of real worth with little to lose grow gradually into worthless ruminants *gaddalika-pravaha** to take the help of the current simile. The rut, the rut. They love the beaten track above everything else, and when they do, it spells—you know what?"

"Disaster?"

He nodded. "For you can't work successfully to get your country free with a band of poltroons

* Literally a wave of sheep; figuratively, as here, it means following the herd unthinkingly.

who are not only scared, stiff to stake the *dhruva*† for the *adhruva*,‡ but who actually grow into parasites: a safe job, a fat salary and then the eternal and faultless groove of banality—mediocrity. That is why I feel so forlorn sometimes, to use perhaps a strong word.'' He smiled ruefully.

I kept silent. The night was deepening.

''I saw young men who enthused over the ideal of the country's liberation,'' he continued. ''I don't think they were born hypocrites, mind you. They gushed with a fervour which was, at the time, far from a pretension. I mean the fervour, the fire was genuine enough when they spoke of its glow.''

''But,'' he added with a wry smile, ''the fervour was quickly damped, the fire soon petered out. Only the dying embers of solid security and time-serving good sense survived: never subscribe a penny more than you could spare, you know what I mean. It is not in such a spirit of cold rational calculation you served a country. And in a country like ours which is a vast continent of irreconcilable tangles one has to learn to serve one-pointedly, without counting the cost. But our youths grow quickly into hard old skins of prudence and sobriety. And then they won't budge an inch out of their orbit of 'safety-first'.''

This was one of his constantly recurring dirges in his later years of growing disillusionment; that is why I have been at such pains to restore an unpublished tragedy to the light of day.

† Certainty.
‡ Uncertainty.

But this was not his only tragedy. His life was becoming a frustration at every turn—so much so that even his brave lion-heart of a "born optimist" was on the verge of heart-break—as for example when he, instead of roaring, actually bleated in his piteous appeal at Tripuri to Mahatmaji. But I am edging too close to politics. I had better wend back to the days of his youth when the man was in the making and party politics loomed still too far and remote to matter, really.

6

THE next episode I can vividly recall is the famous one of thrashing an English Professor of the Presidency College. I need not name him as for my purpose his personality and doings are somewhat irrelevant.

The incident is well-known. This Professor had insulted some Indian students somewhat brutally and refused to apologise. The authorities turned a deaf ear to the protests of the humiliated students. We all had a presentiment of an explosion, felt something was brewing; and the ominously grim face of Subhash, sometimes scarlet with indignation, had been much in evidence as he flitted past our college corridors to appeal to the authorities only to be met by a summary dismissal.

And then, suddenly, the pent storm burst. It

had to.

Subhash had not taken me into his confidence as he did not want me to take any risk for *his* sake. It was like him. He had in fact taken the help of the minimum number of students to give a good belabouring to the English Professor. I was startled, one fine morning, to read in the papers an account of the sound hiding given to the haughty culprit. And of course all could see the hand of Subhash in it. Personally I never quite liked the idea of assaulting in a body a man who had not even been forewarned. So my heart could not applaud Subhash. But I could not help admiring, later, his attitude. He never let anybody down. He simply accepted the responsibility of a ring-leader even though they could prove nothing definite against him, though, naturally, all knew he was the arch hatcher of the plot.

Still he could have got off scot-free if he had only said in public (they had wanted only that much, to save their faces) that it was wrong to assault. But Subhash's abhorrence was mincing matters which he generally equated to hypocrisy. So he only said that the students had given their foreign castigator a belabouring "under great provocation." It was for this outrageous frankness that he was rusticated from the Calcutta University. He gave a smile but it was a silent and sardonic smile: he blamed none.

This made him at once a hero. Henceforward he was of course a marked man—to be converted

subsequently by the police into a hunted law-breaker, criminal and what not.

But though the beating episode had always been repugnant to my own nature I could not help but admire him for the remarkable equanimity with which he faced the hard punishment meted out to him.

Naturally, henceforth I saw less of him as he never "darkened" our college, as some martinets of high rectitude put it which made us all furious again and my heart bled for his loneliness. But at the time I was too busy with music to be able to attend to him. Moreover, he had ceased visiting me in order not to compromise me just then.

It was after he had passed B.A. with first class honours in philosophy that he visited me again. It was an unexpected call. I was preparing to sail for England to sit for the I.C.S. and qualify simultaneously as a barrister in London. I had decided also to take Mathematical Tripos. Subhash came personally and confided to me that he was likely to follow suit—to sit for the I.C.S. Would I secure for him a seat in a Cambridge college?

I could hardly believe my ears!

"You, Subhash! *you* propose to sit for the I.C.S.!!"

He only gave me a cryptic smile for an answer. I nursed a hurt till about a year later—when we were thrown together in Cambridge—he decided to draw me and a few others into his confidence. He had decided to sit for the I.C.S. because otherwise

he would not have been sent by his father to England. So he had taken a secret vow to resign his post—that is, in case he passed, of course.

About the certainty of his passing none had ever entertained any serious doubts. But we wanted him to pass just for the luscious thrill it would give us in the near future—the thrill crowned by the glory of spurning a post which is coveted by all to this day. Add to it that it was certainly a singular course of procedure, not only spectacular but bordering on the romantic, and it will be understood why we awaited the day of his resignation to come with bated breath.

But romance too has to be paid for. At any rate it had a ruinous effect on my long-cherished ambitions and I had almost insomnia for a brief spell. To put it in a nutshell, how could I go in for the I.C.S. after that? I had not even the excuse of a father to plead, nor alas, even a guardian who could compel me to sit for the I.C.S. I was a free son of India, free to dream my own dream and chalk out my own path with a considerable legacy to fall back on in case my dreams were shattered and path of roses overtaken by weeds and thorns. Besides, I had admitted Subhash to our college and felt proud as a plumed peacock ever since. But harbouring a lion had its disadvantages, to put it mildly. One felt rather ashamed even to sing thereafter. It sounded so disgraceful after one had got used to hear the lion roar next door against a *pucca sahib*. How Subhash used to curve his firm lips in

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strong contempt whenever he inflected the word *sahib* in a tone in which one pronounces vermin. And youth is a prolific season when seeds of contempt and rancour once sown multiply like mushrooms. This contagion of Subhash's fecund personality would surely have made me outpetal into a patriot had I not at this time met two men greater than he: Romain Rolland and Bertrand Russell. Subhash had at that time no soft corner for Rolland who was yet to write his book on Ramkrishna-Vivekananda. But Russell's robust and sound thinking he could not quite brush past as unimportant. He could not help admiring the intrepid free-thinker although his admiration was not one-tenth as vivid as mine.

But I anticipate. For this was, sequentially, a later development of mine after Subhash had left Europe. For it was only then I really came to profit by Russell's international outlook and Rolland's dislike of parochial patriotism, the root of the deadliest malady of the age. So long as Subhash was on the spot I could not raise my rebellious head. In Sanskrit there is a beautifully descriptive word *mantroushadhiruddhavirya*—a snake whose natural venomous instincts are numbed into harmlessness by the power of a mantra-incantation. My self-will and youthful pugnaciousness were always tamed by the magic proximity of Subhash. And not mine alone. I can hardly recall a Bengali in England who didn't, openly or tacitly, accept Subhash as the leader of our set. Even non-Bengalis began, gradually, to

warm up to him when it was made public that he would resign. But I had better record here some interesting and revealing details about his Cambridge life. It was interesting to watch his reactions to European civilization.

7

I HAVE said Subhash was a born patriot and a man of action. The *tamasic* inertia had ever been utterly abhorrent to his questful, sleepless nature. So he naturally admired many traits of the English character: their energy, love of discipline and natural ability to act in concert—*esprit de corps* as he loved to put it.* Somehow he used, often enough, to cull his phrases from the military dictionary. This must appear more significant in the light of subsequent events of his life when it became more and more obvious that he felt a deep delight in fighting a growing opposition against tremendous odds; so much so that it almost seemed that he not only loved to conquer opposition but almost courted it as it were—probably to enjoy more vividly the joy of courage and pride of indomitable initiative. A man born with an abundant vitality seldom quails to squander one's possessions even when it leads to misdirection of one's talents. Subhash

* In a letter from Cambridge (12-11-19) he wrote: "People here have a sense of time, and there is method in all that they do...Many are their defects but one must bend one's head to their merits."

wanted to organize debates, discuss the driest details of European diplomacy, study lives of absurd nonentities who strutted their brief hours on the hustings of politics to be heard of nevermore. I did the same in my own small way: I hobnobbed with artists of dubious reputation, read meaningless plays, wasted my time thumping on the piano and devoured Russian and French novels. Subhash did not like this and reprimanded me. "Why must you waste your precious time in trivialities, Dilip?" he said again and again. I dared not retort that I often felt like giving him the identical advice. For when Subhash came out to roar in protest there were few hearts leonine enough to out-roar him. Besides had he not passed the I.C.S. in eight months, secured record marks in the essay paper and blossomed into an indomitable debator! He commanded homage. Admiration also: he was always so tidy, never left a book lying on a sofa or a deep couch, as we, the lesser fry, always did. His papers and things were all neatly stowed away; his shelves scrupulously cleaned; his ward-robe never in dearth of clean stiff collars and gorgeous ties; his books always in their proper places; his dress, though not showy, always faultless; never could one remember having seen his trousers without their neat creases —never did his coat betray an accidental stain or give a frayed appearance. To me it was madness even to think of "behaving in Rome as the Romans did"—a favourite motto of his. No, I felt myself sane only when I behaved as an Indian first and last,

no matter where I was stationed. It may sound paradoxical, yet it will be true to say that Subhash, though an Indian to the core, was least Indian when he shone best as a flawless patriot. But his one idea was somehow to give India a good name. "India too, like England, expects every man to do his duty" was another favourite copy-book maxim of his which sounded strangely living and meaningful when his clear masculine voice furnished its commentary. "And never court the company of women—no playing with fire if you please," was another. The real wonder of it was that we obeyed him in spite of ourselves whenever he gave us such oral injunctions! I will give a few personal instances.

I had been fond from childhood of sitting cross-legged. Before Subhash's arrival in Cambridge I often put on my *dhoti* in my lodgings at night and sat huddled up—in an *asana*—just as we do in delightful India. Subhash protested and lustily: "You mustn't Dilip—no, not even behind closed shutters. For beware, murder will out some day!"

Another instance. I was given to talking somewhat loudly, with gesticulations. "It's not done here," said Subhash, the impeccable. "So you must learn to talk in a stifled voice and don't for God's sake fling your hands about like lassos."

This was indeed an ideal difficult for me to live up to. But I gulped down my resentment and prepared to follow the leader. For he *was* our leader. And didn't he say: "Let your one ambition be to leave behind an impression here of flaw-

less spruceness, for you must know these insular people lack imagination and can never separate the chaff from the kernel of culture."

"Why then try to make an impression on such muddle-headed philistines?" I pouted half-angry, half-amused by Subhash's inferiority complex.

But he never suspected this: he called it superiority. "We must prove it home to them that we are their superiors. We must beard the lion in his own den."

Such was his shout. I won't criticise it as it has its points. I will only say it never was mine. But whatever my own views, Subhash's inferiority complex* was not easily visible except to a small group of discerning observers (I was not one of these initially as I was put wise to it *after* he had left Europe). To the rest he always loomed as a big man. Some even claimed he was already "great". Only to a handful, mostly jealous never-do-weals, he appeared as a prig. But naturally these never counted—not in our estimation anyway. And Subhash, though anxious to please the English, ignored completely his compatriots. Perhaps here I am doing him an injustice. For it is possible he was so wholly preoccupied with the problem of India's political freedom that he seldom had the time to think clearly about things that were not germane to his heart's one dream and ideal. Besides, he often ignored his Indian critics as they had what he called, wither-

* He overcame this afterwards but at this time he had not yet, I think come to suspect that it wasn't a superiority complex which had prompted him to write: "What gives me the greatest joy is to watch the white-skin serving me and cleaning my shoes." (Letter dated 12-11-19, Cambridge)

ingly, a "slave mentality". Born to an incandescent love of freedom he could hardly pay heed to the views of those who had never missed freedom. He loved to quote a sigh of C. R. Das: "The pity is," the great leader had once said to our beloved novelist Saratchandra, "I have always had to fight more against my own countrymen than against the English when I preached *Swaraj.*" From Subhash's eyes sparks flew when he repeated this. In England he used often to hum a famous line of Rabindranath:

Life and death wait upon my feet like slaves
And my mind no dark misgiving ever depraves.*

Single-mindedness seldom fails to command respect because the commonalty of mankind are anything but single-minded. Subhash's character even in its temporary intolerances or aberrations, did not lose its impressiveness because round about us we spied none who could come anywhere near him in one-pointed ardour—specially in his college days in England. There were indeed a few brilliant students and book-worms but when all is said, there is something pathetic about such feckless creatures. You may at best *admire* them but seldom *respect* them. And then here was Subhash who had never crammed and yet beat the crammers in their own game, singingly. No wonder we had been overawed.

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* "Jibana mrityu payera bhritya chitta bhabana-hin."

8

I WOULD have hesitated to refer to an imperfection of his character had he not corrected it subsequently when he became a wiser though a much sadder man. I mean his strong antipathy to people whom he called 'immoral', to say nothing of cocottes and flirts whom he regarded as beneath contempt. I well remember a poet friend of mine of whom I used to be particularly fond. He sometimes drank heavily and had no reputation to lose in the world of sex. Subhash simply cut him dead in case he accidentally met him at tea somewhere. He used often to rebuke me for retaining a soft corner in my heart for this "impossible fellow!" "How can you stand him?" Subhash used to hiss with such a gesture of disgust that I dared not adduce the cogent arguments why the fellow might be dubbed perfectly "possible".

Years later suddenly Subhash called on me one morning at my Calcutta residence. "Dilip, I have a request to make".

"Yes?"

"X is going down. He is a fine fellow but this drink habit—you know what I mean. Didn't I always croak it was highly dangerous for us, Indians, to drink even moderately? I still hold to it. Look at X: you remember how he used to mouth the highbrow slogans of the innocent tyros of Western culture like: 'One mustn't have a prejudice against drinking since drinking was not synonymous with getting drunk' and all that sort of rot! O Dilip,

Dilip, how often have we seen giant sons of India split like frail oysters on just this rock of intemperance! X is only a case in point.''

''An unexceptionable tirade. But where do I come in?''

''Please do not make fun of me. I am serious—and sad, to boot. I want you to see more of X. Give him your company and help him. He must be weaned from this ruinous habit—by hook or by crook''.

The hard school of life had by now taught him the wisdom of charity and tolerance. But I must add here that a deeper reason was that he had come under the great and chastening influence of the incomparable C. R. Das. Apropos, I am reminded of a remark of his which did have the twang of unconscious humour.

It was in 1924 I think, a few months before the death of Deshbandhu. We two were discussing love in whispers. I was sad and anxious. So he had to outdo me in wisdom.

''Yes. I understand,'' he whispered pulling a long face, ''For in prison I read all the extant Vaishnava literature about love.''

''Bravo, Subhash!'' I laughed. ''Isn't it refreshing to know of the headway you have made overnight wading through book-lore! Let all who pooh-poohed you so far as a child beware now of his sudden coming of age!''

This conversation was revealing, I think. For Subhash was nothing if not naive about sex—till

perhaps, near the journey's end, when he knew better.

But to go back to Cambridge.

9

I HAVE mentioned that I got him a seat in our Fitz William Hall though not without difficulty. It happened like this.

I had arrived in London in June 1919 and secured a seat in the Fitz William Hall which subsequently became a regular college. Subhash wired to me that he was coming and sought admission in a college at Cambridge. I moved heaven and earth but, unfortunately, the few seats allocated to Indians had been more than filled already. At long last, to my great delight, I could get him admitted in our Hall. For this Subhash was almost absurdly grateful to me. He never took a friendly service as a matter of course, though his heart, always warm, was usually chary of betraying his gratitude. But those who have had, like me, the great good fortune to have basked in the radiance of his friendship could find thereafter little delight in testimonies of the effusive brand. He almost improved one's taste as it were. I myself was by nature inclined to expressing my emotion and admiration. Not Subhash —although he was not altogether out of sympathy for my ways. "You are an artist, Dilip" he would

often tell me playfully. "So you can afford to thrive on the exhibition of your emotions. Not we, the lesser fry."

Somehow, whenever he spoke thus, light-heartedly, we felt exceedingly elated; some almost took it as a favour, really. For Subhash carried with him such a high and aloof moral reputation born of unexceptionable Puritanism that we thrilled, generally, to come within his aura—though we had often, alas, to pay dearly for such thrills. For instance, we relapsed directly afterwards into frivolous talk, ribald jokes and what not, if only to shake off the sense of cramp which Subhash's propinquity generally engendered in the likes of us. My drift will perhaps be better illustrated by a seemingly insignificant instance.

10

THERE was among us a Punjabi youth—let's call him Singh—who lived *a la Boheme* and told brave bawdy stories. He didn't stick at stooping even to vulgarity. But as it was considered *de rigueur* among us, young iconoclasts, to hold nothing sacred, we held our heads high, proud of our emancipation and consequent superiority to genteel ways of talk. So we, even when we disliked Singh's flippant obscenities, simply had to pretend to the bravado of it all. But soon enough we had to own

we had had our fill of his continual harping on sex and absurd chuckling over his smutty inanities and none-too-witty anecdotes. But he had a froward tongue and, we never knew how to devise means of curbing it wtihout going the drastic length of cutting him. And that wasn't done. So we were on the horns of a dilemma.

Suddenly the remedy came to us like manna—from the skies, and a very simple remedy at that: Subhash's presence. For Singh would become almost tongue-tied and shy the moment Subhash materialised. Not that the *enfant terrible* didn't strive to rise superior to the 'Puritan', as he called him behind his back, but do what he would, he couldn't so much as open his mouth to achieve a joke. Once he told me ruefully that he could not explain it.

"What"? I asked.

"My feeling so impotent before Bose. The fellow simply acts like a bit between my grinning teeth and dare-devil tongue, ha ha ha".

We were all more impressed than ever. For Singh disliked Subhash because he had despised him from the very start. It was loathing at first sight—with Subhash. So it was only natural that Singh should itch to pay him back in his own coin. And he might have—if only he could have brought to bear his native gift of the gab. But try ever so hard as he would, he never could disembarrass himself of a single joke about cocottes and debauchees and sly pimps and reticent virgins in the presence of that "moralising prude"!

And this was not peculiar to Singh alone. There flourished among us many a tongue-wagger who felt somehow overawed in Subhash's presence. I had noticed this even in the Presidency College debating club. But that one could explain away. For when all is said, we, Indians, are at bottom not really an unruly brood. One realised this more forcefully when one saw the "ragging" feats of English undergraduates. It isn't merely drinking and rioting but they even kidnap people, while we at most shout 'Bande Mataram' or wave black flags. But even in Cambridge (and later, in London) Subhash could, by his mere presence, chasten rebels into models of good behaviour. He could learn to enjoy a joke and laugh uproariously at fun but tolerate anything smutty—unthinkable!

I sometimes thought, in those days, that he could thus browbeat people because he looked so high and mighty and pontifical when not in a mood of laughter. Also he was never garrulous. In debates, indeed, he took part enthusiastically, but that was of course scheduled speeches one came equipped with. But gossip etc. *we* indulged: not he. He used sometimes to criticise people harshly enough in all conscience but with the utmost economy of epithets. Gossip for interminable gossip's sake was utterly repugnant to his refined and upright nature.

And he never talked of women, far less mixed with them—in England, at all events. Only one English lady he conceived a real friendship for:

Mrs. N. R. Dharmavir. Let me try to portray a little his relationship with her.

11

MRS. Dharmavir, born of English parents in Russia, spoke both Russian and French. She married Dr. Dharmavir, a Punjabi physician, and they had settled in Lancashire where the doctor acquired a large practice. I persuaded Subhash to pay them a visit in 1921 when we stayed with them together. Subhash was charmed with Mrs. Dharmavir and called her *"didi"* (sister). A warm-hearted youth by nature, he was overwhelmed by her beautiful personality and flawless hospitality. She was the one English woman in England to whom he had ever opened himself emotionally. I deem it worthy of mention as it has always been difficult for Subhash to throw off his shyness and reserve in any give and take with women. He was unaccountably stiff with them—always, although after his return from England he learned gradually not to keep them at arm's length. Gradually, in the school of life he grew to appreciate the educative value of feminine contact and good will; but there he stopped: his almost ascetic aloofness precluded always any emotional response except perhaps to a niece or two of whom he continued to be very fond even when they grew up. But to return to his life in

England.

He used, often enough, to warn us—by us I mean a few friends in whose future he was interested—against two formidable temptations of so-called European culture: wine and women. He could seldom smile on a man he saw responding without bashfulness to feminine charms. And this disapproval acted on different people in different ways. There was a rich young lady-killer who was thus successfully reformed by Subhash's frowns and it is easy to recall authentic Bohemians who dared not dally with none-too-reluctant young ladies simply because Subhash would have no truck with those who did. I myself belonged to this second category. But although I was differently constituted and incorrigibly fond of beautiful women whose admiration I thrilled in with the pride almost of a nincompoop (for which I had sometimes to pay dearly, as I suppose nincompoops have to) so long as Subhash was there in England to lend his weight to the tug-of-war the lure of the thrill always lost in the end against loyalty to the Chief. For how could I bask in the soft glances of the fair when my *chittakash* (mind's sky) was unhappy with flitting clouds of shame rife with his sure eyes of lightning?

But among us, young hopefuls, there were other types as well. In some, for instance, waited an ambushed Puritan who longed to behave rudely with women barring the pleasure of calling them "gates of hell". Others simply steered clear of them as wily assaulters of masculine chastity. And, last-

ly, there were the timid sort who longed for gay women's society, chid themselves for it and yet never could have the pluck to cut them dead. All the three categories turned up to tap Subhash as a source wherefrom to gather strength and glow with heroic virtue. Those who could not agree that such self-felicitation paid, either admired him for his relentless life of purity or else looked upon him as an interesting freak. For they saw none in England who rivalled him in such unswerving asceticism. In Subhash's case they marvelled more at his will-power because women ached to come near him and he knew they did and why: they ached not only because he was very virile and handsome but also because he was as good as unapproachable. I often felt Subhash liked such longing on their part though never for the cheap thrill of tantalising them. I intuited that what pleased him most was not their vital longing but its transformation into admiration plus despair which one must feel for something beyond one's reach. Of course *we* could never win a similar admiration from the fair sex because keeping aloof from them was not, with *us*, a spontaneous consequence of our will to chastity. We could at best ape Subhash and take broadly to his outward ways of dealing with women—but who could ever achieve his heights of aloofness where even stray tendernesses could never hope to find an abiding niche? To us he always seemed such a high plateau —not indeed unfriendly to the plains, but certainly reluctant to forfeit the native altitude for the easy

amenities from which all height must, necessarily, be shut out. In a word, he was a man you could not easily follow and yet desired breathlessly to emulate.

The result was—at least as often as not—that when he behaved like the rank and file he did cast a spell, and less often, move them for the nonce to their depths. The reason, we cogitated importantly, lay in his obvious superiority to the ordinary human weaknesses, though years later I was somewhat shocked to discover that aloofness did not necessarily infer strength. One could be aloof because one feared to be intimate. But we did not know enough of human nature then and so could not but take things at their face value. Anyhow to us Subhash was always a citadel of strength, a light-house of purity.

Consequently when he responded to human emotions like an ordinary human the latter could not help but feel somewhat flattered. How I thrilled on one occasion to see him react to feminine affection just in the way *we* would!

It was a few months after our departure from the Dharmavirs. Subhash had at the time resigned from the I.C.S. which had caused such an unprecedented stir in England and Bengal. Dr. Dharmavir who was a patriot of the deepest dye and a friend of Lala Lajpat Roy, the lion of the Punjab, came almost to adore him. Mrs. Dharmavir was in a somewhat difficult position. For though she had the sincerest sympathies with our Indian aspirations for political freedom she found it hard, as an

Lancashire 1921

Dr. Dharmavir **Mrs. Dharmavir**

English woman, to relish her husband's constant flings at her countrymen. Subhash who had conceived a deep affection for her managed to fend off the blows aimed by the husband at the English as he alone knew how. This ever-alert consideration on his part had endeared Subhash to the wife, so much so that when Subhash sailed home she was genuinely moved as she knew the youthful idealist's path was not likely to be one of roses. But to come to the episode.

Subhash and I, after about a week's stay at the Dharmavirs, entered an empty compartment. Suddenly as the train whistled Mrs. Dharmavir flung into our laps two neat little parcels. As she was waving her handkerchief to us I showed Subhash what they contained: some fried nuts and sweets. Subhash's eyes glistened. "Women" he said in a thick voice, "will always be women."

Afterwards he wrote to the only woman in England who had meant anything to him a long letter which she showed me with tears in her lovely long-eyelashed eyes. It was I think on board the ship he had finally sailed home in from England. In impeccable English he wrote thanking her warmly for her sisterly solicitude for him but apologised for his faults of omission. He could not express all he had felt which she mustn't take for insensitiveness. For, he sighed, he could not get the better of his shyness before women no more than "a leopard could change his spots". The simile sank into my mind because I had never suspect-

ed that Subhash could be so luminously conscious of his limitations. For he hated nothing as he hated self-pity. So he never expressed his mortification for his defects, like tongue-tiedness or awkwardness, before women. Only one instance must suffice.

In London I lived once with a French couple who had never been legally married. I did not tell this to Subhash, fearing his deep disapproval. So Subhash used to visit me radiantly as usual and expressed his warm approval of my frantic attempt to talk execrable French with atrocious fluency. My teacher had been my hostess' charming daughter of ten. I used to dandle her on my knee and play leap-frog with her. She was very fond of me. Subhash liked her but could never forget that she belonged to the dangerous sex. I have to this day a photograph I got taken by her mother in which my little teacher stands between me and Subhash. I used to chaff Subhash on his grim exterior. He made as if he was standing beside a siren Duchess and must be on his guard with all the hardly-won strength of his character. Nearly twenty years later I invited him to meet Lila Desai the well-known cinema-star at our residence in Theatre Road. I related to the beautiful actress anecdotes about Subhash's excessive anxiety to be blemishless of behaviour before the sex. "You can't imagine, my surprise, Lila," I told her, "to see how much he is transformed. For do I not find him actually speaking to you like a normal enough young man? Do you think the

little daughter of my French hostess in London would ever really believe were she told that Subhash could change so radically—beyond recognition?" Subhash gave me a playful fisticuff on the spine and said: "You liar!" He *had* changed indeed in two decades: to be almost natural if not spontaneous before a woman!

Notwithstanding the Subhash we knew in London had a charm all his own. What if he was awkward and shy and impossible before women? What if he could have no truck with either gossip or gaiety? What if he spent all his leisure hours in reading impossible English orators and unreadable continental history? What if he refused generally to go to fine theatres and lovely operas? Was he not what he was because he achieved such unachievable things? I cannot remember a single student in England who took life a tithe as seriously as he and strove as assiduously to make himself into a standard-bearer of free India. But all the mystic ardour of Subhash had been diverted and canalised to this one end. It is not everybody who could subordinate his whole life to *one* consuming ideal, who could burn his candles at both ends to serve *one* purpose and, lastly, to stake all for *one* great throw of the dice, specially when it was heavily loaded against himself. You may criticise the wisdom of such a spoil-sport, you may differ from him in most of the things that matter—you may even, if you like, laugh at him as a prince of cranks. But you can't help taking your hat off to

him if you guessed his inner make-up. Propriety and harmony may command the homage of the mind but moulding one's whole life into a design conceived and worked out sleeplessly from one's childhood with unswerving discipline—no matter how big the gamble and vivid the danger—must compel the heart's admiration unless of course the man admired was, like some dictators, a cruel fanatic out only for personal power.

Whether Subhash became such a fanatic in the end I cannot say. I did not see much of him during the last few years of his life, nor correspond with him after August 1939. I heard ugly rumours about his mounting ambition; getting too top-heavy; I heard he had started employing dubious means to gain temporary party successes. I am not competent to adjudicate on such tricky questions. I had neither the time nor opportunities to weigh the evidence. I will therefore confine myself to what I know, that is, to what I saw and felt in him, the inspiration I received from him and the strength I know he gave to many a weakling. I will be truthful, but I can be truthful only about the man, the idealist, the dreamer I saw in him having known him through a long and unbroken span of personal intimacy for intimacy's sake—since it was never exploited for an ideal or purpose common to both of us. About his political activities I will be silent and for this reason that one can seldom see a man in his true perspective when one views him in the light of his inferior activities, inferior in the sense

that they are illcalculated to evoke the best in the hidden strands of our nature. Such light has indeed often given me an impression of the light of phosphorescence: it shows him up in fortuitous crests of publicity which swiftly dissolve into dark troughs of inexplicable insignificance.

That is another reason why I am at such pains to emphasize the wide-spread impression Subhash created during his comparatively short stay in England (1919-21), because this impression had been made by the best part of his nature and not accidents of circumstance. For although it goes without saying that his resignation from the much-coveted I.C.S. had been not a little responsible for his swift flare-up into fame, yet it would be a wrong assessment of his personality to say that it was only the spectacular aspect of his patriotism that gave him the distinction he had achieved overnight. There was something in his face, pensive and resolute, something in his steadfast gaze, wistful and far-focussed, that compelled respect. I saw at this time even blaring bumptious high-brows dwindle overnight into pale anxious busy-bodies, eager to lionise him to ask silly questions about India to which the answers were obvious enough in all conscience. I saw flighty students mind their studies more to be able to serve India better. There were other kinds of reactions as well—in some quarters, reactions which often made Subhash anxious, even alarmed. I remember one young Bengali, who was at the time qualifying himself as an optician. He

came one day to me and boasted about having taken an "everlasting vow" to leave his hospital work just for the great privilege of being ordered about by Subhash. Heart-sick, I reported it to Subhash who became even more scared than I as he could not possibly venture to take in hand young hopefuls in this off-hand fashion specially when his own future was so uncertain, his foothold precarious. So he rushed to this young idealist and dissuaded him after much effort from his blood-curdling resolve. Subhash could be sweetness itself when he wanted to prevail upon people as he knew how. So the catastrophe was averted except that I was a loser to the tune of fifteen pounds I had to lend the greenhorn to pay for his re-conversion. Of course he never dreamed of repaying, then or afterwards—when he was making packets of money—but I suppose one must pay even for the delight of backing sentimental bankrupts repudiated by their sensible guardians. But my point is that even such a dog had his day when he barked at the wordly wise simply because Subhash was roaring about idealism and adventure next door.

12

I WILL end my brief reminiscences about Subhash in England with an unexpected struggle he had to go through when he finally re-

signed. When Subhash wrote to the authorities (to Lord Lytton, the then Under-Secretary of State for India, if my memory serves me) that he could not work under an alien bureaucracy, the high official sent for him and after having essayed in vain to dissuade him from such hasty action asked him why he wanted to resign.

"I told him," Subhash said to me describing the interview, "that I did not think one could be loyal to the British Raj and yet serve India honestly, heart and soul."

The news reached Subhash's father. In due course a cable came from him and then a long letter from one of his elder brothers. The long and short of it was that the father had taken it very much to heart that the son should have acted in such a hot-blooded fashion without once consulting him. Couldn't he at least have waited till he returned to India? Subhash wrote back that he found it impossible to take his oath of allegiance to the King of England: it would be starting with an unclean slate—wedded to a vow the heart loathed. One of his elder brothers wrote again that he was shortening the life of his old father who was actually losing his sleep over him because, surely, he would now be arrested the moment he stepped on Indian soil: Could it be conceivably otherwise when he was returning with such an openly hostile attitude to the British Raj?

I still clearly visualise Subhash's rayless face that morning as he showed me the letter. I was

much moved, but what could I say?

"What will you do now?" I asked after a long pause.

"Do?" he scanned me, surprised. "What do you mean?"

I hesitated.

"You can still withdraw your resignation, you know," I said, though the words almost got stuck in my gizzard.

"How can you think of such a thing Dilip?" he flashed back, indignantly.

I could only squeak.

"But your father is unwell, says your—"

"I know," he cut in and his fair face flushed. "But if we build our ideals thinking first and last of our family happiness won't the ideals be wonderful? I am only troubled about one thing. My father won't send me a penny now I very much fear. How shall I go back to India?"

"How can you talk of such things to me, Subhash?" I said hurt. "You seem to ignore the fact that I am living still. And," I added with a smile, "I have no father, you know, to stand between me and my free will."

Subhash gratefully borrowed ninety pounds from me but I was incomparably more grateful that he should have done me the favour.

A few weeks later he came to me one morning and said that the authorities had "traced the man behind Subhash", implying of course the man who had given him "damnable financial support" at the

psychological moment. His face had lost its amenity when he confided this to me. Because of his solicitude for having involved me. Of course I laughed it away but he couldn't. The same mother in him had stirred. Needless to say that I was touched.

It got about after this little incident--thanks to gossip's power to fare on wings in all climes--that the "man behind Subhash" had somehow won through to his confidence in a surreptitious way. I felt an unavowed grudge in some quarters for my having stolen a march over them. For there were of course many who would have loved to forestall me if only they had had an inkling that Subhash had needed help. I pointed it out to Subhash about generosity and jealousy living together under the same roof! He only laughed.

But I make mention of this incident chiefly to stress that Subhash was worried over me because he was so conscientious. He would not have talked of having involved me had he not felt that I was getting more and more cynical about human nature in politics. His intuition was right of course. For though I tried my best not to hurt him, he could hardly be deceived about the implication of my growing aversion to the atmosphere of politics. But I could not help this deepening perception which years later I felt delighted to find clearly stated as a historical fact by Aldous Huxley in his masterly book, *"Grey Eminence"* that "again and again.... pious laymen have become statesmen in the hope of

raising politics to their own high moral level, and again and again politics have dragged them down to their low moral level upon which statesmen, in their political capacity, are compelled to live.'' But as politics and politicians are beyond the purview of my book I will leave this unsavoury topic with just this irrepressible sigh that the more I admired Subhash the more I prayed that he might be rescued from the dark and intricate tentacles of political adventurers and time-servers. I reminded him again and again years later, when I saw him fighting with his back to the wall, that politics was not his native line—*swadharma*—but Subhash was born with an obstinate streak of rational madness. The more clearly he saw that our freedom could not be won through party tussles, the more he rationalised his failure into a kind of martyrdom. He failed to see that martyrdom didn't always pay real dividends in the field of politics where the worst instincts of man must get unbridled play. But let me now turn once more to the man I loved and admired and drew inspiration from in various ways since it is him I want to delineate and pay my homage to—not the politician.

For the *man* was admirable; and there cannot be the shadow of a doubt as to the steel-white glow and rocky firmness of his character, which might indeed scatter sparks when trampled on but could never be squeezed into clay. His will-power, unimpaired till the last moment, is the brightest testimony to this. He might sometimes have been unjust

(how many of us can claim we prefer always the ways of justice to those of our self-will?); he might have made blunders (which man would hare pretend he always saw his way lying straight before him when conflicting voices called); indeed, sometimes he might even have advocated somewhat questionable methods to achieve certain commendable ends (but isn't that one of the subtlest ways of the trickster human mind which adduces the most faultless arguments to defend the faultiest of cases?) But still, as I always used to say when they said bitter things against him, Subhash was born with a nature too exceptional to be warped much by such wrong movements because that alchemic virility of his dream-weaving capacity would redeem all his slips and backslidings put together. And that is what actually happened: he died dreaming not of his family or defeats, nor even of the clouds that had so often blurred his vision, but of the sun he had dreamed from his boyhood, of faith and courage that would free his great Goddess—his Motherland. It will be worth while to bring out what I mean when I talk of this dream-weaving nature of his.

13

WE were lying side by side in a room of the lovely house his elder brother, Saratchandra Bose, had built in Woodburn Park, Calcutta.

It was 1938 I think. He kept on asking me random questions about Pondicherry and Yoga. But obviously, he was only playing at being interested. So I suddenly stopped dead and asked him what the matter was.

"Nothing," he said and he dropped his eyes.

"No humbug, please," I said. "Why, you are simply not there!"

He then confessed it all laughing and blushing alternately, (he often flushed when taken unawares, like a school-girl caught making love) and told me things about the "Congress High Command" which I would rather not repeat.

I did not even try to console him. I simply told him for the millionth time that I had foreseen he would never fare well in Congress: so why not leave politics for something more worth while? I pleaded for a long time and earnestly.

"You have surely done enough Subhash," I rounded off. "Our *Shastras* speak of three kinds of debt a man must pay: debt to his parents, debt to the sages and, lastly, debt to God. You have paid the first debt with the best part of your life-blood; you have made your family famous already—so much so that even your father has changed and is now proud of you. Now the time has come for you, I feel, to pay your second debt."

"The sages?" he smiled. I could see all too plainly that my counsel had again been a misfire. But then he acted upon my advice nearly as seldom as I ignored his.

"You will have peace at least," I said after a pause of discomfiture.

"Peace? But what about the country?"

"Subhash," I said almost pleadingly: "I am reminded of a couplet in the *Mahabharat* where the great sage says:

Great God has willed that things shall ripen
and bloom
In a way He has ordained,
And Man must wait his hour when steeped in
gloom,
So sages recommend.*

You yourself are fond of quoting C. R. Das's famous lament that one has to fight harder battles against one's own kith and kin than against the foreign exploiters. Our people are not ready yet for freedom. They can't feel keenly that they are slaves. For whatever democracy may say the commonality of mankind can never feel as keenly about anything as the choice spirits do. But I want you to fulfil your life following the deepest call in your nature: why waste it? Come with me to Pondicherry. One who has the capacity to become a sage and a nation-builder should not fritter away his essential energy in building a futile party which cannot achieve anything worth achieving even in the best of times."

It went home—unexpectedly.

"I know Dilip," he said. "But I can't turn

* The original Sanskrit couplet :
Kalena sarvam bihitam bidhatra
Prayaya-yogena labhate manushyah.

to *Yoga* branded 'defeated' by life." His lips quivered and sparks leapt out of his eyes.

"But you are not defeated—yet. On the contrary you are the idol of young Bengal. But the way you tread will be barren, in the last resort. Man must wait his hour, I repeat. But if you don't want to give up the fight can't you at least come away with me for a few months if only to see your way clearer—to find a brighter light than you can command today?"

He wavered, but only for a brief moment, then said: "But no Dilip. Even that's impossible."

"May I enquire why?"

"Because I feel if I go with you into even a temporary seclusion I am afraid I may not be able to come out again into the open with the fire of the fight in me."

He did say these words. I remember them very clearly because it made me view his tragedy in a new, a deeper, light. He did not care to win peace nor even a truer vision because he loved the cause of his country too dearly. Although here we always differed—(for I could never regard the country's cause as the highest on earth)—I could not but respect his all-too-genuine solicitude for our famished, poor and exploited India. I well remember how his eyes glistened whenever I sang the last couplet of my father's song on Bharatvarsha.

Mother peace nests in thy bosom,
in thy voice Love's courage glows.
By thy hand are fed earth's millions,

from thy feet salvation flows.
Deep thy joy is in thy children,
deep thy suffering's tragic night:
Mother India, great World-Mother!
O World-Saviour, World's Delight!

I refer to his deep feeling for the tragic night of India because here one could feel the response of a mystic more vividly than that of a patriot. And I maintain it was this mystic and not the patriot that made him write an autograph (dated, 23-2-38, Vithalnagar) I chanced upon two years ago: "*There is nothing that lures me more than a life of adventure away from the beaten track and in search of the Unknown. In this life there may be suffering, but there is joy as well; there may be hours of darkness but there are also hours of dawn. To this path I call my countrymen.*"

I would not have taken the trouble to write all I still remember about him had I not felt in him the mystic whose soul's Quest through life was what he calls "The Unknown". And I believe that albeit he never gave this mystic in him the chance he might have, he could not possibly have staked his all for a lesser light—since all quests are lesser than the Supreme Quest—had he not been persuaded somehow that the lesser would eventually lead him to the Highest. That is why he could only thrill to India when the peninsula ceased to be a thing of clay and became invested with Divinity. And it was this Godhead that called him imperiously through the Motherland

whose heart throbbed for her children as vividly as did that of a mother in flesh and blood. I will even go farther and say that if he had not been the authentic mystic he *was* one would not have felt as though one was basking in some invisible sunshine of his personality. I have not only his personal friends in mind when I say this, I would include the dispossessed and the unfortunate also who were left out in the cold by capricious Life. Doubtless all men who bear the stamp of greatness do shed this warmth, more or less; but it is only in the case of a mystic that this warmth can radiate outside man's little world of self. As said the great mystic poet A.E. whom Subhash adored:

> When the Spirit wakens, it will not have less
> Than the whole of life for its tenderness.

Which is not to say, however, that it was only the disinherited—the insulted and the injured of the earth—who petalled in this warmth. So many derived from his moral support just the strength one misses most in life, specially when faced by the discouragements of teeming sceptics. I will make bold to give a personal illustration to testify to this fortifying power of his character.

I have said that I myself and a few others gave up sitting for the I.C.S. moved by Subhash's resolve to resign from the "heaven-born service" as he was wont to call it, ironically. I gave up studying law as well. Next I gave up Mathematical Tripos Part II after having passed Part I. Law, indeed, I bade good-bye to with genuine relief, but it cost me a pang

to abandon mathematics as I still had a lurking ambition to be titled a "Wrangler"—a silly ambition no doubt, but when all is said, we all have to grow up slowly to wisdom's stature from the rather pathetic cradle of folly. And it is a difficult growth because it is not easy to rise superior to our foolish faith in meaningless glory. But I was called to music, a hard task-master. An idealist friend of ours, now no more (a physicist who had won distinction as an engineer in Germany, Sarat Dutt by name) used often to exhort me to "burn my boats" as Subhash did. It went home. I felt I could not rightfully claim the honour to call him my friend if I continued to play for safety. So deciding to have first a grounding in the theory of music and accoustics in Cambridge, I took the Music Special. But the theory of music I found dull as stagnant water. It was the living throbbing heaven of melody—that had captivated my soul. So I passed only one part of the music special and failed in the second. I was depressed. But I had only myself to blame. I was constantly attending concerts and operas and thumping on the piano besides striving, secretly, to compose. That wasn't the way to pass a hard, stark examination in the prosy rudiments of sound-combinations like harmony and counterpoint and part-singing and what not. But I wanted to have practical training in music to be able to sing the "art-songs" of Germany. It was Schubert, Schumann, Brahm and the Italian operas that beckoned to me. I wanted to flower as a crea-

tive singer. So I resolved to leave Cambridge without a degree.

My people in India were all terribly scared. I do not blame them. For with all my foolhardiness I was perhaps just wise enough to know that I was not quite what I fondly believed myself to be. And then did I not look impulsive and mercurial enough in all conscience? I had parts, even my enemies admitted that; but fortunately, I was not likely to fulfil my early promise—the way I was shaping, they chuckled in delight.

At all events, my people in Bengal frantically appealed to me not to abandon the Tripos. "Come back at least as a professor in embryo if you won't come back a full-fledged *pucca sahib*", they thundered and wailed in chorus.

But I yearned to "burn my boats". I must, I argued, if only to follow in the footsteps of Subhash who had set the example of a "brave lack of foresight", as Dutt used to put it in his incisive way after having come to love the youthful rebel. We used to stay in his Golder's Green flat in London—Subhash and I—and Subhash came to conceive a genuine admiration for his bold nature and unimpaired spirit of enterprise. His admiration had not been ill-founded. Had not Dutt won eminence in Germany as an engineer during the World War I and did he not speak beautifully with inside knowledge about the creative spirit in science? Subhash used to revere Dutt warmly and Dutt, naturally, used to be tenderness itself to his distinguished ad-

mirer. He used also to be fond of my songs. So he kept on exhorting me in his trenchant style. But the dead-weight of discouragements of my friends and relatives in India and England had proved too heavy to be thrown off by my own unaided strength. Suppose, I brooded, I was really what they labelled me facetiously, "a view-changer" who was at the mercy of catch-words and battle-cries of the hour —what then? Nor could I deny that I was prone by nature to vacillate. No, I could never hope to emulate Subhash because he was built of a different clay and moulded by a will which had little kinship with mine. So said my cautious advisers, friends and relatives, unanimously.

Heart-sick with indecision and misgivings, I appealed, at long last, to Subhash.

"You must tell me Subhash, how I should act," I said, "For I am at the parting of the ways as you can well see."

"But I don't know anything about music Dilip," Subhash said non-committally.

I took it sorely to heart.

"But I am not asking you to pronounce about musical technique, Subhash," I pursued. "I am only asking you to tell me about your present reaction to my ideal. I want to take to music as my vocation and burn my boats like you. But while you are born with an iron will, I am a 'view-changer' as you know they call me. I want your honest and final opinion on the matter."

Subhash put a friendly hand on my shoulder.

"Do not take it amiss, Dilip," he said. "You know very well that I can never have any sympathy with those who decry idealism."

"Exactly," I said, heartened. "For wasn't it you who told me the other day that you could never understand a life in which idealism and adventure played no leading part?"

"And I fully meant it, I assure you," and his expression changed again to wistfulness. It was the dreamer in him who woke up once more.

"Listen Dilip," he said after a brief reflective pause. "You know I have high hopes of you. That is why I go out of my way constantly to nag at you that you may not waste your time with wastrels."

"But things are not always what they seem, dear Subhash—" He cut me short.

"Listen," he said, "you know very well I have little patience with psychological niceties, and I know too I have disappointed so many as a spoilsport in England. But music—though I know very little about it—is *not* a sport: it is something unlifting, as I have felt specially after I came to know you at close range. So you could never forfeit my unwavering support if you really proposed to take to it wholeheartedly. Only remember you have to be single-minded. For then only shall you have answered your critics best. Danton's dictum 'always audacity' (*toujours de l'audace*) appeals to me—you know that also. I have always cordially hated the beaten track. The argument of your critics that

music is not likely to prove paying as a career leaves me unimpressed. For, boiled down, it comes to this that music has not been taken up so far by our youths with anything like real seriousness. I do not know, mind you, how far music will help you in your spiritual evolution. But this I think I may say sincerely that when your advisers shake heads at your resolution to take to music as a vocation on the ground that 'it is not done', it makes my blood boil. Must we come to England only to fabricate clerks and bureaucrats and barristers—which is 'done'? No, and of course your idealism has my full support—for music, I am persuaded, can be an ideal in the real sense of the term."

That decided me. I left directly afterwards for Germany to have a good grounding in voice-training. But that is another story. I must come back to Subhash.

I have dwelt at some length on this episode only to testify to the strength-inspiring aspect of Subhash's personality. It is not always easy to assess the value of what we imbibe from our environments because although we owe a great deal to what we, often unconsciously, absorb from our circum-ambient atmosphere, we are a little too ready to claim as our own the strength that flows into us from without. The reason is that we are egoistic by nature. That is why ingratitude is so plentiful on earth in all climes. All the same, when one even espies a citadel in the distance one cannot but feel a trifle stronger. Subhash was, to many, a source

of just such a spectacular strength—the strength of a veritable citadel, good even to behold. I often remembered when I thought of him Chesterton's

> In a time of sceptic moths and cynic rusts
> And fatted lives that of their sweetness tire,
> In a world of flying loves and fading lusts
> It is something to be sure of a desire.

And indeed, it is. One meets refreshing artists, though not quite as often as one might wish. One meets saviour scientists and how often one wishes they were a little less blatantly in evidence. But when one meets a man who starts to erect the superstructure of his life on one single desire, one is not disappointed either way. One feels fulfilled, somehow; and grateful, besides. For cynics and sceptics as teachers only make us shiver and look sentimental. We need a counterblast. Subhash, to me at all events, was just such a force, an inspiration for strength to be reckless, to aspire for courage to count no costs. It is not often one meets a sudden lighthouse of certitude in the troubled waters of life. We paid him our tribute because he could, at least temporarily, act as just such a beacon.

14

ALL this may, however, have done Subhash a kind of injustice: those who have never known him intimately may, from my empha-

sis on the utter seriousness of his nature, have inferred that he had no sense of humour or love of laughter inherent in things. I have mentioned already how given he was to the lavish manly laughter. But I have yet to bring out his sensitiveness to humour. Years later he said in a public meeting that his sense of laughter and beauty and *rasa** grew rather slowly and in spite of himself. This is not quite true to fact. For Subhash, though serious enough in all conscience, had always had a pronounced streak of the childlike and the virgin in him. That is why he could go on replenishing his freshness for such a long time—except perhaps at the very end when he was involved in an unfortunate imbroglio with the "Congress High Command" as he used to call that body in an aggrieved tone. But not even then did the elasticity of his spirit ever fail him—the reason why he could still laugh uproariously at jokes and repartees with an abandon that surprised those who knew what he was going through at the time. But mere self-control or aristocratic pride, which pushes one to take one's hurts under its wings to hide them as it were, could never by itself prove equal to such a task. Only love of laughter can work the miracle. This is by no means an overstatement. "Laughter was given by the Gods to man," writes Sri Krsihnaprem (alias Ronald Nixon) in his book entitled *The Yoga of the Kathopanishad* "and it was one of their choicest gifts. No animal can laugh nor does it need to since it lives in the harmony of the purely instinct-

* The essence of things that give delight.

ive life. It is only Man whose possession of an ego introduces stresses and strains which cannot be avoided and for the healing of which, therefore, the Gods gave him this supreme gift. Time and again it will save us when otherwise all would be lost. He who cannot laugh, he whose devotions are too serious for the healing waves of laughter, had better look out: there are breakers ahead." In the public meeting referred to, Subhash also said that his love of laughter might perhaps have been stunted had it not been "so richly nourished by Dilip's laughter." I think he exaggerated the effect I had on him. All I did was to draw him out of his shell from his too strenuously "serious devotions" and leave the rest to his natural healthy susceptibility to song and gleam and laughter. That was why I took him, so often, sometimes by sheer force, to wean him from his dreary Dantons and gloomy Gibbons and moody Mazzinies and brought him in contact with men like Sarat Dutt, Sarat Chatterji, Krishnaprem, Gaganvihari Mehta and others who had a vivid sense of humour. And it worked. I will give here only a sample or two of Dutt's humour, in London, which made Subhash rollick in laughter even though he was at the time under a great mental strain induced by family troubles.

Dutt had a son who was none too intelligent. Whenever Dutt spoke of him he wound up with: "All fathers credit their children with matchless intelligence. I wonder how then to explain the countless roaring idiots on earth, among whom the

son of my grief happens to be one."

We all used to laugh heartily when Dutt cracked such jokes, the more heartened in our heartiness because of Subhash's whole-hearted response to laughter. How relieved indeed he looked the moment he reacted in this carefree manner to little witticisms! One reason lay perhaps in this that, unlike us, he had, since his early childhood, walked too many sombre avenues and dismal deserts of life. High seriousness had been almost the alpha and omega of his existence. Consequently he needed laughter more than the likes of us who also laughed, but not quite as unreservedly as he, at Dutt's simple jokes. I recall another. Dutt told us one day that he liked music so much that often he wanted to sing. "But", he added, dolefully,

I want my songs to please you all,
yet when I sing—my own
Self gets so cross that I surmise
they must have made you groan.

And how Subhash burst out laughing again—holding his sides for they ached—till he was all but breathless. It is unforgettable, his guffaw—so strong yet childlike, self-oblivious yet never cheap. I will skip a few years to relate another conversation we had at our house in Theatre Road, Calcutta, with our famous novelist Sarat Chandra Chatterji. It was in 1938 I think. Subhash looked rather fagged and pale. He was then the President of the Provincial Congress Committee of Bengal: I invited him and Sarat Chandra and a few others whom Su-

bhash liked. I tried to afford him some kind of diversion in this way from time to time—and rounded off with the easy help of musical soirees which I specially arranged to suit his taste. On this occasion, however, it was a simple friendly gathering under the auspices of our great novelist who was a fascinating talker and wit, to boot. Subhash loved to hear him talk and used to call him one of the most entertaining men he had ever met. I remember that day—almost as clearly as I could remember a thing of yesterday.

Our talks began with Khaddar. Saratchandra had then given up the homespun with a disappointment which contrasted ill with the enthusiasm of his earlier days. Subhash asked him the why and wherefore of his sudden collapse.

"Very simple," said Saratchandra grimly, "No servant would stay. For the cloth they said, they could dip in a bucket of water but not lift thereafter." (meaning of course that it became too heavy).

I said, casually, when the general laughter had subsided: "Let's go on a steamer trip in the Ganges, Subhash! It is so refreshing and you do need a change, you know."

Subhash eyed Saratchandra: "If he consents to relieve me as the President of our Bengal Provincial Congress Committee I will consent—otherwise, impossible."

"I am not such a fool as I look Subhash," said

Saratchandra in his inimitable vein. "For don't I know what it will lead to, in the end?"

"Whatever do you mean?"

"Only this that they will handcuff me and lead me even God doesn't know where, and you will all yell in chorus 'Bande Mataram' behind my back and maybe throw some flowers. But that isn't calculated to compensate me for a year's incarceration —and they tell me they don't supply opium in jail."

(In Burma Saratchandra had become an opium-addict.)

Peal after peal of laughter broke out from Subhash, loud and lovely as bells.

But I must turn to more serious things.

15

IT is well-known that on his return from England in 1921 Subhash placed himself at the absolute disposal of the leader whom he soon came to adore: the late Chittaranjan Das. I read in the papers about the laurels he swiftly won one after the other. He was appointed the Principal of the Bengal National College and became also the Publicity Officer of the B.P.C.C. Later he was made the Captain of the National Volunteer Corps, a job very much after his heart, as is well-known. But he was arrested in December the same year (1921) along with his leader and sentenced to imprison-

ment for six months.

I felt grieved for him but of course I felt proud also. When he was released I was still in Berlin taking training in voice-production and learning violin and European singing in the Italian method. Subhash used to write to me now and then, but only brief notes: he had never much leisure to dally with writing as an art. Yet I seldom received a letter then or afterwards which did not disengage something of his delightful strength and abiding affection. And there was always in his letters some reference or other to little things I had done for him. I will quote from a letter he wrote in September, 1932, in reply to one of mine, which I had written from our Asram at Pondicherry as this will best illustrate what I want to stress: his essentially grateful nature. He was then in the Penintentiary, Madras, under detention.

"My dear Dilip," he wrote, "Your affectionate letter of the 15th August which reached me on the 29th ultimo .....

"In what you have done for me, you have acted like a true friend and you could not have done more."

(I pause here to add, by way of explanation, that I had only sent him a flower from Sri Aurobindo as a token of his blessing.)

"I do not know if I am sufficiently 'open' to receive yogic power—probably not. Nevertheless, I think that even those who rule out a supra-mental order have to admit the existence

and efficacy of what is popularly styled as 'will-power'. And this power—call it by what name you will—is bound to act, even if the receiver is not 'open' or adequately and consciously receptive. I am grateful to Sri Aurobindo.

"Yes, 'Madras *is* so near to Pondicherry'—but the walls intervene—and that makes all the difference in the world....

"It is not necessary to bother you with details about my 'physical' health....I don't think I have suffered from 'mental' ill-health as I have been suffering from the physical—and my usual 'spirits' are therefore unaffected.

"I have been studying a bit and thinking more; at times I feel as if *I am groping in the dark.* But I cannot go wrong as long as I am sincere and earnest—even if my progress towards Truth be more zig-zag than straight. After all life's march is not as straight as a straight line.

"Has not each of us a sphere of work allotted to us taking 'work' in the broadest sense? And is not this sphere conditioned by our past karma, our present desires etc. and our environment? Nevertheless, how difficult it is to understand or realise our proper sphere of work! This sphere of work is the external aspect of our nature or 'dharma'. It is so easy to say--'live in accordance with your *swadharma*'--but so difficult to know what one's *dharma* is. It is there that the help of a *Guru* becomes so ne-

cessary—and even indispensable.

"I know that you will continue to feel for me and I also know that in the long run this cannot prove unavailing. This is a great solace to me—no matter where I may happen to be confined. I have appreciated (I cannot find the proper word!) Sri Aurobindo's action. I shall not say more lest my language become conventional.

With best love

ever affectionately yours,

SUBHASH."

I have reproduced the letter in full because it is likely to convince at least some of Subhash's detractors (who said he was too conceited) that Subhash was not by nature a conceited fellow. Vanity, yes. It is undeniable that vanity is not exactly a quality one can afford to feel vain about. Yet I have often wondered how few of us might honestly claim they could act more unostentatiously if they were in his shoes! Popularity, after a point, is always dangerous as it feeds the fire of our self-esteem which is too reluctant, alas, to be dowsed. I have said Subhash was reserved if not shy. By shy I mean what, let us say, Jawaharlal was by nature, though this may sound somewhat absurd to those who would judge the indefatigable Kashmiri by his outward activities, speeches, fumings, etc. But he *is* shy by temperament, only the hammering and battering of politics have somewhat squeezed his native shyness out of him. Inevitably. To remain

in the lime-light for a long spell must always be detrimental to shyness, and shyness—in the sense of not wishing to exhibit oneself—is essentially an appanage of real refinement of character. The Subhash of maturer years could not possibly retain intact this shyness, no more than a famous artist could retain his reticence after having granted a million interviews to Press and been repeatedly lured on to reveal his reactions to delicate and sacred questions. Could a refined nature talk and talk in public about private things without having his finer sensibilities somewhat blunted in the process? I recall a long speech delivered by Shah Nawaz on Subhash's fiftieth birthday anniversary (23-1-46) where he said that Subhash had once boasted that no British bomb had been manufactured which could kill or maim a Subhash Chandra Bose. The public clapped in a frenzy of applause. But I felt sad and wished Shah Nawaz had not repeated so blatantly a boast which Subhash could only have made unwarily, in a wrong mood. For the Subhash I knew and adored would blush like a school-girl when people paid him even a casual compliment—and how unsophisticatedly, with an embarrassed smile trembling on his virgin lips! But, then, I asked myself, could our accent when we were in darkness possibly retain the ring it had in light? And could it be otherwise seeing that the power of darkness must substantially alter the inner rhythm of our perception which in its turn must modify our outer modes of expression? The Subhash ador-

ed by Shah Nawaz could hardly have been the Subhash cherished by Dutt. "Publicity in itself, of whatever nature," wrote a thoughtful writer, "connotes a disturbance of the natural equilibrium of a man....A title, a post, a decoration, let alone a name become well-known, have a tendency to create in them a greater measure of self-assurance, a heightened self-confidence and to seduce them into the conviction that special importance is their due in society, the State and the age, and involuntarily they inflate thmeselves in order to attain in their person the volume of their external achievement."* If this analysis be correct—as it undoubtedly is—then to expect the ideal self-appraisement in one who constantly sees his "heightened self-confidence" boisterously applauded would be to expect the impossible. Faith in oneself is not the same thing as assertiveness specially when what is asseverated happens to be demonstrably untrue. For surely thousands of brave idealists, not less defiant than Subhash, have got killed in battles and by worse bombs than Britain's.

I say this not to judge Subhash of the later period but to bring out the Subhash I knew before he came to live in the full glare of countless worshipping eyes focussed on his face. For he, I claim, was much the bigger man, the man, for instance, who had written to me (5-3-33) from on board an Italian steamer on his way to Vienna:

My dear Dilip,

I have not written to you for a long time

* The World of Yesterday by Stephan Zweig.

though you have been good enough to write to me nevertheless. During the months of January and February I was passing through a species of mental torture owing to repeated pinpricks of the Government and till at the very last moment I was not at all sure that I would be able to leave for Europe for treatment. Owing to the vindictive policy of the Government it was not possible for me to meet my parents or my friends. Only a few near relatives were allowed to interview me in Jubbalpore Jail. Many friends came from distant places to Bombay to interview me but they had to return disappointed. The police officers who escorted me up to the boat surrounded me like a pack of hounds till the ship actually sailed from the harbour. These pinpricks which continued till the moment of my sailing from Bombay caused me intense pain.

However, I do not think I should worry you with these petty affairs. It was so good of you to feel so keenly for me all the time I was suffering in custody. And it was so unexpected because you are supposed to have "given up the world" and taken to Yoga. To be quite frank, my dear Dilip, quite apart from *Yoga* and spirituality, your intensely *human* feeling for me has profoundly moved me. That you—who are supposed to have forgotten all earthly affairs and to have taken leave of your erstwhile friends—should feel so keenly and

intensely for one in my position was altogether unexpected.

In one of your letters, you asked me about my attitude towards *Shiva*—or something to the effect. To be quite frank, I am torn this side and that—between my love for *Shiva, Kali* and *Krishna.* Though they are fundamentally one —one does prefer one symbolism to another. I have found that my moods vary—and according to my prevalent mood, I choose one of the three forms—*Shiva, Kali* and *Krishna.* Of these three again, the struggle is between *Shiva* and *Shakti. Shiva,* the ideal *Yogi,* has a fascination for me and *Kali* the Mother also makes an appeal to me. You see, of late (i.e., for the last four or five years) I have become a believer in *Mantra-Shakti* by which I mean that certain *Mantras* have an inherent *Shakti.* Prior to that, I had the ordinary rationalistic view, namely that *Mantras* are like symbols and they are aids to concentration. But my study of *Tantra* philosophy gradually convinced me that certain *Mantras* had an inherent *Shakti*—and that each mental constitution was fitted for a particular *Mantra.* Since then, I have tried my best to find out what my mental constitution is like and which *Mantra* I would be suited for. But so far I have failed to find that out because my moods vary and I am sometimes a *Shaiva,* sometimes a *Shakta* and sometimes a *Vaishnava.* I think it is here that the *Guru* becomes useful

—because *the real Guru knows more about ourselves than we do*—and he could at once tell us what *Mantra* we should take up and which method of worship we should follow.

To come back to matters mundane. I reach Venice to-morrow. From there I proceed to Vienna to consult doctors there. Thereafter I shall probably go to some Swiss Sanatorium.

The voyage was a fairly pleasant one up to Port Said as the sea was calm. Since passing Port Said we have encountered very rough weather. My troubles (like abdominal pain) are still persisting—but nevertheless I have been feeling somewhat better. Before we reached Port Said I had been feeling decidedly better but the rough weather has upset me since we entered the Mediterranean Sea.

I shall stop here today as the rolling is making writing somewhat difficult.

With warmest love
I am
Ever affectionately,
SUBHASH

It is specially worthy of note that the Subhash who spoke so loudly about himself in politics, so sure of his way, speaks here with a real humility—real in the sense that it is not put on as a social veneer. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me that real knowledge only commenced from the moment one touched the nadir of one's self-assurance. One begins to know the heart of things only when one has learn-

ed a supreme lesson of life; that what we call knowledge is something very different from true wisdom and that it is only this wisdom that can teach us to steer clear of the hidden reefs and shoals in the uncharted waters of life. But to come back to the letter just quoted.

Sri Aurobindo commented on this (27-3-33):

"Dilip,

At Subhash's conscientious hesitations between *Krishna* and *Shiva* and *Shakti* I could not help indulging in a smile. If a man is attracted by one form or two forms of the Divine, it is alright, but if he is drawn to several at a time he need not torment himself over it. A man of some development has necessarily several sides in his nature and it is quite natural that different aspects should draw or govern different personalities in him: he can accept them all and harmonise them in the One Divine and the One *Adyashakti* of whom all are the manifestations."

16

IT is to bring to the light of day the developed spiritual nature of the pensive activist and thereby stress his mystical possibilities that I have published his letters. It is hardly necessary to comment on their sincerity so strong yet so ten-

der in its wistfulness. All the same, I am tempted to draw the attention of modern admirers of Western nationalism to just one sentence of his letter: "The real *Guru* knows more about ourselves than we do." For I want here to stress a highly significant fact about Subhash—a fact we are too prone to ignore in our appraisement of the total man—that he had been potentially a *Yogi*, a contemplative whom the growing accretions of *karma* of a life of frenzied activism progressively buried in this life, anyhow. Some indeed had inferred this inner potentiality in the outer man of sleepless action (from an aura of otherworldliness that on occasion hovered round about him) but I have often wondered if even these would ever believe were they told that the outer man had won cver the inner what could only be named a Pyrrhic victory! By which I mean the victory which men born to a deep spiritual seeking win when they manoeuvre a *paradharma* to win more spectacular but less lasting results than those they might have obtained had they stuck doggedly to their *swadharma*: in other words, when "they lose their insight and authority, and the society which it was their business to enlighten remains wholly dark, deprived of all communication with divine reality, and consequently an easy victim to preachers of false doctrines."*

It is not, however, to convert the fiercely patriotic over to my persuasion—about the mystic quest of the soul being more truly creative than the political—that I stress the *Yogi* in Subhash who

* **Grey Eminence** by Aldous Huxley.

might have come into his own even in this life had he given his will to the All-transcendent, the *Paresha,* rather than to the World He informs. That is next to impossible. In Bengali there is a homely proverb which says that it is possible to wake a man who sleeps but not one who clings to sleep while fully awake. If I underline notwithstanding this irrepressible trend in Subhash's deeper self it is in the hope that my emphasis may win today a new though perhaps a puzzling significance in the light of his subsequent evolution. In other words, I would submit that his political frustration would never have been reversed so miraculously, overnight, had he not invoked, through the sincerity of his unspoken aspiration, a Power of compassion he was always seeking but never could implore in total self-surrender. This is what Vyas meant when he assured us in the Bhagawat that

> Who loves the All-transcendent more than all
> The World—if such a lover deviate
> Through error from his Goal, he shall not fall:
> For his heart's high Resident shall rule out
> Fate.

Still this was doctoring or rescuing if you will, but not redeeming. And that is why I have always thought it a thousand pities that the mystic in Subhash should have deviated from "the All-transcendent" and through an error of egoistic worldly conscience. For had it happened the other way about he would have won through in this life to the supreme fulfilment he missed for a lesser love. But

perhaps here I am not as wise as I might have been albeit with an effort, remembering the Gita: *nehabhikramanashosti*—"no apprenticeship in high endeavour is wasted." Besides, who would dare plumb the Wisdom of the Sphinx who makes His devotees stumble even into deeper maws of Night than the rest; creates blind alleys of *maya* which few can suspect till it is too late; and last though not least, sanctions our self-love to make the subsequent self-discovery more ravishing, to quote a Sufi mystic:

I fell in love with mine own self
And marvelled....till I met in Thee
The One I'd wooed, and lo, it was
My own own personality!

17

WE cannot plumb, with the intellect, that is. But we are not born so unequipped as to be unable even to glimpse a thing. For even when we stand baffled by the Wisdom and, what is more, dismiss the mystery as null, we do meet its flying traces and sometimes when we least expect it: We are rapt in our songless routine, when lo, there sound mystic strains which both plough the rockiest souls and then fall like soft seeds on them so that a Love that passeth understanding may flower; or else some elusive sword of Beauty stabs away and there again outleaps a deep tenderness for

the nebulous Beloved than whom none is nearer on earth. Some such call or assault it was which had made Subhash flee his home at the age of sixteen in quest of a *Guru*. Had he met him then his subsequent life would have had a different message to give. But *Guru* or no *Guru*, the deathless seeds that had been planted in his adolescence had grown early into dream-trees which gave forth from time to time a murmur of nostalgic melancholy, so peculiarly Indian, which all his virile activism of later years could not effectually pervert into the robust jazz of Western secularism, let alone the blatant cacophony of scientific materialism. To give an instance.

He wrote to me a long letter from Mandalay jail, 2-5-25)* from which I will quote here just one paragraph:

> "I am inclined to think that the suffering in jail life is less physical than mental. When the blows dealt, of insult and humiliation, are not too brutal the pain and torments of prison-life do not become so hard to bear. ....But lest we forget too readily our outer material existence and conjure up an ideal world of bliss within, they will deal us these blows to waken us to our bleak and joyless surroundings."

It is noteworthy that such a note—redolent of mysticism—which was hardly audible in his life of hurry and hustle became almost always a dominant one as soon as he found some solitude in a prison cell. That is why he could swiftly recapture in jail

* See Appendix.

the authentic accent of spiritual humility, an accent so conspicuous by its absence in his public life. "At times I feel as if I am groping in the dark,"— this was his recurrent refrain in detention. But the moment he came out again this deeper note tailed off into tenuousness and a loud cocksureness was rehabilitated. To give another instance.

"When I pause to reflect calmly," he wrote in the same letter, "I feel the stirring of a certitude within that a Vast Purpose is at work in the core of our fevers and frustrations. Could only this faith preside over every moment of our conscious life wouldn't our suffering lose its poignancy and bring us face to face with the ideal bliss even in a dungeon?"

It is this hidden trend in his nature of feeling after the heart of things and refusing to be fooled by appearances and majorities that had drawn me so powerfully to him since my first adolescence. For even then I had categorically declined to undersign a resounding cocksureness and easy optimism. In those early days Subhash used to see my point and therefore, although he was then, generally more hopeful about things than I, he had roundly approved of my main outlook. But as years whirled past we found new orientations which grew inimical to the very basis of our friendship. Only one instance must suffice. Bertrand Russell once told me firmly: "I would die rather than teach patriotism." I felt the sum total of my blood danced for joy in my heart of emotion.. It was because I needed that hammer-

blow just then, and needed it badly, to be delivered finally from the sway of Subhash's patriotism which at once repelled me ideologically and yet attracted me because of the personality of its preacher. It was like a slight tilt that made the overloaded boat heel over. From that time forward, whenever I saw an honest man carried away by the mad eddies of patriotism, I could only echo Shakespeare: "O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!"

I make mention of this to emphasize that there would certainly have been an estrangement between Subhash and myself had there not been this redeeming streak of an equally ineradicable otherworldliness in him. If only he had nursed it a little more he might have arrived at the ideal humility which a brilliant writer has expressed with such graphic realism: "There is only one thing about which I am certain and this is that there is very little about which one can be certain."*

But a truce to such might-have-beens if only to revert to a more grateful duty.

18

THE letters I have quoted above will have shown how susceptible Subhash was to kindness and kindliness. It was like him, I repeat, to appreciate even small services which we seldom feel worth making a song about. Not that he

* The Summing up—Somerset Maugham.

recognised these with a loud vocabulary. He had, like most eminent lions, developed a technique, or shall I say purr, to testify to his appreciation. There might indeed have been a touch of the *noblesse-oblige* accent about it—since he was nothing if not an aristocrat to the manner born—but certainly never a tang of hauteur or conventional politeness which so often sickens the green idealist into a sere cynic. And of course he was too proud to be a snob.

The point I want to make is that whenever he was conscious of having received anything from anybody he felt he was under a debt to him even when the giver had no inkling about it. His attitude to art and artists would perhaps illustrate best what I want to convey. Congenitally, he had never been responsive to art. But whenever, accidentally, he thrilled to an artist he would go out of his way to do him a service. Our great novelist Saratchandra Chatterji whom I have already mentioned was an instance in point. But what was perhaps the most convincing evidence was his reaction to Kazi Nazrul Islam. I have said Subhash was by nature incapable of breaking bread with Bohemians who posed as tatterdemalions in order to be able to claim equality with declassed comrades of the proletariat. So he had never cared to meet Kazi and only listened indulgently to my enthusiasm about him because he didn't want to hurt me. It so happened that the two met one evening at a charity performance I was giving. (I forget where it was but I think it was in the Rammohan Library where C. R. Das pre-

sided.) Kazi began with his famous song of exhortation, "*durgama giri kantara maru dustara parabar—langhite habe ratri nishithe jatrira hunshiar.*" Subhash felt electrified specially when the rebel poet sang the last stanza. I give below the translation of the three best verses:

Grim mountains, pathless forests, deserts, spanless oceans' vast
We'll brave in the heart of Night, up voyagers!
the die is cast!

The boat is rocked, the waters swirl, the pilot
has missed the way,
The sails are torn, who will to the helm with
courage in high display?
Where are our stalwarts? Come to the fore!
calls Destiny at your door.
The storm is black, yet cross we must and lead
our bark to shore.

They who on the hangman's scaffold sang lone
hymns to life's sunrise,
Are watching now with spirit eyes, what will
you sacrifice?
Who will take up the gauntlet flung by Fate
and save the nation?
The boat is rocked, the waters swirl! up pilot!
to your station!

A few days later Subhash came to me and the talk we had was in substance something like this.

He seldom beat about the bush.

"Look here, Dilip! I have come—you know for whom: Kazi. What are you doing about him?"

I would have been amazed if it had been anybody but Subhash.

"Let me tell you a story, my dear Subhash," I said. "There was a High Court judge who once against the jury gave a queer judgment condemning an accused who was obviously innocent. The senior Counsel who had defended him kept silent, but his junior blurted out hotly that he was surprised that His Lordship should have decided as he did. Contempt of Court!" roared His Lordship. 'My Lord!' pleaded the senior Counsel, 'I beg of you to make allowances for my young friend. For believe me if he were as old as I he would not be surprised at any verdict Your Lordssip might give.' "

"Be surprised then to your fill, greenhorn!" Subhash said when our laughter had subsided. "But I insist we must do something about it. Kazi *must* be weaned from his undesirable associates."

"Surely it was a wise horse who neighed: 'you could take a horse to the water, sir, but you couldn't make him drink!"

Subhash scowled his darkest. "Surely, you are more witty than relevant," he said drily, "for the simple reason that a man is *not* a horse."

"Nor a dog either," I supplemented. "And that's precisely why a Frenchman who was both relevant and witty said 'The more you see dogs the less you like men.' Dutt used to assure us the

author was Voltaire, remember? No, Subhash, dear! Listen, for I am *not* irrelevant. You don't know Kazi: I do. That's why I say let him be."

"May I know your reason, please?"

"You may save a man from an enemy but not when the enemy is his own self."

"In other words, we must leave him to his fate, what?"

"Bull's eye, Subhash! Bravo."

"Please don't. I am not in a flippant mood. I say: you *can't* sit by when a friend you cherish is heading straight for disaster."

"I couldn't once but I certainly can *now*. No, listen, Subhash! I may have missed a great many lessons that life has to teach. But one I *have* learned which is that the reformer's is a bad business. Kazi is a charming fellow but he has his own desperate kinks and, what is more, happens to be somewhat fond of them."

"So you advise me to—to—"

"Take him as he is, of course."

But that was just what Subhash could never do: to accept anything passively, ranging from "law and order" to "sigh and suicide." He would take no end of pains to save a man who wanted a swift exit out of the world even if it necessitated his walking with him on the brink of a precipice. Often enough he had to pay dearly for it all, but he just hated to save his own skin. When I say this I have in mind some fanatical communists with whom he could never dream of hobnobbing, and yet, when

they came to him he gave them all the help they sorely needed, although he was not so blind as not to see that they would never lift a finger to help him were he to appeal to them in a similar plight. One such man came to me from Russia and though I took pity on him, I hastened—counselled by a dear friend of mine, Professor Satyen Bose—to see the last of him. But this man was subsequently quartered by Subhash which leaked out and he had to pay for it, in what way I need hardly indicate. I touch upon this unpleasant topic only to show up the innate nobility of his aristocratic nature because it was just for this aristocracy of insouciance that he was subsequently vituperated, and not the least bitterly by those whom he had helped most to tide over some grave crises.

But this type of experience must leave a legacy of cynicism in the mind of an idealist activist, generally speaking. So Subhash's outlook on life and things had to be modified as a result of such experiences. Inevitably. That is why in his thirties he used to quote, somewhat bitterly, what C. R. Das had said after just a year's leadership in politics: that he had not run across nearly as many scoundrels in his twenty-five years' experience in law-courts as he had in that one year of co-operation with the non-co-operators of India.

I would not have referred to this had it not been for the fact that Subhash felt his deepening loneliness in his later life as keenly as he did because he was persuaded he had few to count on

among his compatriots. The novelist Saratchandra used to tell us (with an artist's peculiar sigh) that ingratitude was so harmful to social well-being less because it injures the benefited than because it infects the benefactor's judgment with cynicism. In his remarkable novel entitled *Palli-samaj* he has brought out this thesis with his graphic pictorial art. Thus he used to warn Subhash again and again. But the crux of the problem in such matters of emotional psychology lies not so much in one's failure to see how one's faith in human nature is being sapped at its source as in one's powerlessness to make good the damage. "To be forewarned is to be forearmed" holds more in the world of commercial give and take than in the world of psychological reactions.

If this is borne in mind it may be easier to understand why Subhash was sometimes harsh in his strictures on his colleagues, specially during the period of his deepening frustration in politics. I would have passed it by had I not seen how the psychological kink prevented him from doing full justice to a man of such unimpugnable nobility as Jawaharlal, with the result that he could not, in the end, help feeling somewhat hard on him too. Otherwise I am confident he would have simply laughed it away, as he should have, when some of his associates would warn him against Jawaharlal's unconfessed anti-Bengali mentality. I could not but regard it as a great tragedy. For I never believed that Jawaharlal could be adjudged paro-

chial by anybody who knew how to put two and two together. I don't claim he had no limitations (didn't ego mean a setting up of frontiers—till at least it is completely liquidated, to use a modern verb?) but I do say that none who has even once seen Jawaharlal at close range can possibly fail to be impressed by his outstanding sincerity and integrity of character—to say nothing of his perspicacity and penmanship. In our derelict times he is perhaps the one man in political India who, with his clear grasp of the trend of forces, specially in the sphere of international politics, gives us at any rate some sense of direction and, even in the thick of the misleading poison-clouds of diplomacy, has so far successfully steered clear of the reefs of nationalism and shoals of communalism.

I wrote all this to Subhash in a long confidential letter (which I sent through a friend) when he insisted, against the wise advice of Jawaharlal, to stand for re-election in 1939—as President of the Congress. I risked it as I had feared that the wiser man's counsel would go unheeded, as, unhappily, it did, subsequently. I say 'unhappily,' because some henchmen of Subhash dinned into his ears pompously that he was "the man of destiny at this crucial hour of Indian history" till he came in the end to believe that "the country could not do without him." In my letter, referred to, I protested—very humbly but firmly—that it would be far wiser to believe that though "we all of us

are wanted but none of us is wanted much.''* Not that I was so naive as to think that he would be likely to listen to such philosophical nonsense hatched from an arm-chair aloofness; for I could very well imagine how hard it must be for him to rise to the occasion and resign gracefully when his blood had already caught fire thanks to his unfortunate collisions with the Congress High Command. But I had to make some attempt to show him, if I could, that he should stand ultimately to gain if he would just resign gracefully and make room for the next President. ''I know from experience, dear Subhash,'' so I wrote, ''how difficult it is to stand back even for a moment when fanfares of intoxication goad one forward—relentlessly. But when all is said and done, a man is great in action only when he is great in his decisions which have prompted the action. This may be beyond the capacity of the mediocre but surely not beyond yours. Besides, you can't afford to be blind to this obvious risk that even if one assumed that you were substantially right in your appraisement of the political situation this apparent eagerness to be re-elected would look too personal to be convincing. Furthermore, Jawaharlal was surely right when he wrote to you that you hardly needed to cling to the President's chair in order to make your great influence felt in the country.'' But humans, alas, being humans,—

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* A favourite saying of the late Lowes Dickinson—E. M. Forster's biography of Dickinson.

On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but passion is the gale!*

And we collide, as the gales collide—and then there are eddies which often suck us down the more effectively because of the haze which the gales bring in their wake. So it was, certainly, far from easy for Subhash to see clearly in the circumstances.

But what about Jawaharlal? I have often marvelled how *he* could avoid these eddies with such a conspicuous success! I have spent so much thought on him not for the pure fun of speculation, but because I could not but wish that they could be real friends not merely on paper. I propose to dwell for a little on my gradual discovery of the reason why this was rendered impossible if only to bring Subhash's character into a bolder relief through the helpful art of contrast.

It may, I think, be taken as obvious that these two eminent sons of India had a deal in common. They were both aristocratic to their finger-tips, generous, attractive, magnetic, authentic, ingenuous, unquestionably handsome, astonishingly healthy, incredibly energetic, naturally affectionate, essentially sincere and last, though not least, utterly inaccessible to fear that makes us falter and cringe and to meanness that makes us carp or bargain. What then could have been the cause that dug an unbridgeable gulf between them?

Realising full well that it is just when one itches most to figure as a wise man that one steps

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* Pope.....Essay on Man.

nearest to the brink of looking like a fool, I feel one might say with a fair amount of confidence—because it is borne out by the bulk of human experience—that the crux of the trouble in such matters is generally to be found in some kind of unnamable instinctive disaccord. Who can honestly plead 'not guilty' to the charge that the impeccable has repelled him nearly as often as the despicable attracted? It is one of our life's deepest mysteries why one is attracted by another. Moralists and psychologists have called it temperamental affinity. For long I had believed this till at last I had to reject the hypothesis as inadequate. What affinity could possibly be inferred, for instance, between a Jawaharlal and a Gandhi? Or, for that matter between Subhash himself and his chief C. R. Das? It is true temperament has *some* say in the business. But so has similarity of ideals, or community of financial interests, or even, to go still lower down in the scale, a sense of loyalty to the same chief among gangsters. In the case of evolved personalities like Subhash and Jawaharlal the right diagnosis of the trouble becomes, if anything, more difficult because, the more one ponders the less one understands why two men who had so much to gain and so little to lose through friendship never could subscribe to that feeling of instinctive liking which, in human relationship, makes all the difference in the world, one way or the other. Before I had come to practise *Yoga* I used to accept somewhat naively the current view about temperamental

affinity. I thought then that it was because Jawaharlal was temperamentally a man of intellect while Subhash was essentially a man of religion that one recoiled from the other. I knew then little about the dark knots of curious instincts that even hard disciplines of *Yoga* could only partially disentangle. Not till some at least of these were loosened could one rightfully call Man a master in his much-vaunted House of Reason. Only one thing I will venture to suggest. It is that Subhash's undeclared misgivings about Jawaharlal were not appreciably lessened by the latter's rapidly growing enthusiasm for "the oracle of Moscow": the mystic within him never could feel assuaged when the great Kashmiri repeated the communist *mantra* about religion being the opium of the soul. And without wishing to be irreverent to Jawaharlal's fine intellect it may I think be safely asserted that here it was always Subhash who scored and argued better because he delved deeper. There was another thing: Jawaharlal has said in his fascinating autobiography that somehow or other he never felt at home on the Indian soil: Subhash could have felt at home nowhere else. So while Jawaharlal could (at one time at least, for he is happily, getting more and more disillusioned about Russia) take his orders from Moscow, the Subhash I knew could never even dream of accepting any philosophy of life imposed on him from without: no, not even accept that sick and maimed India should be made whole by some prescription of the Russian dictators.

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Such a difference in total outlook and perception could be attributed to an incompatibilty whose roots can never be discovered in what we commonly call our visible personality or temperament. That is why I have set it down to what, in default of a better name, I have named "instinctive disaccord." In this context, however, I have used the word instinct in the sense which is connoted by our incomparably more pregnant word known as *samskara* which, with all its mystic wealth of implications and profound suggestiveness, is untranslatable in perhaps any European language. But a conversation I had with Subhash in 1939 will I think better elucidate the mystery.

19

IT was in Calcutta. We two were reclining after our mid-day meal nestling in a profusion of pillows and bolsters. We talked of one thing and another till I said with an air of casualness that Jawaharlal was a fascinating personality.

Subhash appraised me.

"You remember how deliciously Sarat Babu used to say: 'I am not quite the fool I look'?"

"What on earth are you insinuating?" I packed all the innocence I could summon into my voice.

He met me with his old guffaw. "We don't consult a dictionary when we already know the meaning of a word, do we?"

"But when I said Jawaharlal was fascinating it was merely a leading note to a word beyond all dictionaries. Only you never gave me the chance to say it that you were irresistible!"

I only got a fisticuff for my pains.

"O horror! And you say that I lie like a bungler when you do it like a bigamist? But no, spare yourself another prevarication, for," and his face instantly changed, "I'll play into your hands with eyes open."

"That means?"

"Tell you plump my opinion of Jawaharlal."

My heart beat nineteen to the dozen. "Will you really?"

But there again he had suddenly relapsed into a brown study as was his wont whenever he had something significant to say. There was that old remoteness in his eyes too, once more. I felt a malaise gnawing within me, or shall I say a nameless fear?—Was he going to blurt out something unacceptable to me? Wouldn't it be embarrassing if he did! For I could not but own to myself that I had found Jawaharlal more than "fascinating." And then didn't I owe him a deep debt for having rescued me in a most awkward situation. The episode I saw again in my mind's eye:

20

ONE thousand nine hundred and twenty-three (or was it 1922?) It happened at Subhash's house under the aegis of chief C. R. Das. I had been invited to sing before a galaxy of political leaders who deigned for once to be entertained. Here was God's plenty: there was the leonine Das, strong and massive, radiating strength and kindliness. There was Jawaharlal with his Hamlet smile. There was Sarat Chandra Bose a pillar of moral support to wherever morality rocked on its foundations. There were a few turbaned Olympians who condescended to smile at me deeply conscious that it was so good of them to find music "interesting".

There was Surendramohan Ghosh with an aerial smile round his lips and a grim determination in his heart to go where there is no laughter nor marriage: the jail. There was a tall Pathan, a fire-eater, whose every word was instinct with Croce's battle-cry: "It's just opposition that rejuvenates." In one shy corner murmured T. C. Goswami, a born aristocrat with a velvet heart and Oxford accent who was going soon to prove an all-too-willing victim for every vulture round the corner. There were also the lesser fry, giants with puggrees and topees, dwarfs with bald heads and top-knots, non-co-operators nodding assent in Gandhi caps and co-operators tossing defiance in Turkish Fezes. It was, indeed, an owe-inspiring and withal the most incon-

gruous company that ever assembled to save an ancient country with a modern motto: "We shall all hang together or, assuredly, we shall all hang separately."*

I felt a thrill: was I, a thing of earth, going to sing to such a starry consistory?

"Silence please!" roared the stentorian Das. "Dilip is going to give us a famous martial song composed by his father Dwijendralal Roy: *dhao dhao samarakshetre*".

I give below a literal translation in the same metre and rhyme-scheme

I

March onward, onward, all to the front
with high-born songs of victory.
Hark, Mother India calls: "My sons!
redeem your *dharma* in agony."
Who will now quail his life to stake
For his brother's or his sister's sake?
Up comrades! fly all all to arms!
Hark, the air resounds with the boom of drums!
We will to the War and rain heart's blood:
Glory to Motherland and God!

II

Which craven will nest in twining arms
when dark hordes burn our hearth and home?
Which woman will hug her lover's body
spurned by foemen? Soldiers! come:

* Benjamin Franklin at the Declaration of Independence on August 4, 1776.

Shall swords not flash when tyrants tread
On the honour of the Indian maid?
Up comrades . . . etc.

III

Never in battle flee or falter,
  never the enemy's prisoner be.
No fate can daunt our tameless hearts,
  no parley with Iniquity!
Our souls no power shall enslave:
To death nor triumph of the brave!
Up comrades . . . etc.

IV

March onward, onward, all to the front:
  annihilate their phalanxed hordes!
Our Holy of holies, lovely Ind.
  will suffer no more Hell's overlords.

Their blood must flow and we shall win
And Hindusthan incarnadine.
Up comrades . . . etc.

I had a habit, when Subhash was present, to shoot sudden furtive glances at his face while singing. I knew this was a wrong movement but I could never resist the temptation to assess the effect my music was having on him.

I have hinted already how deeply Subhash used to be moved by music but it is impossible to depict how I was affected myself when I felt that my music was moving him. So I might well have confined myself to this that I was on dizzy heights of

rapture, but on this occasion my world of bliss burst alas, too soon, like an irised bubble. For it so happened that just when I was soaring in the Empyrean I found my wings, suddenly clipped: I was met by a hum of voices—the great politicals were talking! Stung to my core, I stopped dead, leaving the last verse unsung.

"I am sorry Dilip," apologised Subhash in a low voice for he was sitting close to me. I shot a glance at him. His face was tender with pain. "I exposed you to this," he added. "I ought to have known better."

Suddenly we were all startled: a clear incisive voice rang out.

"Gentlemen," thundered Jawaharlal with flashing eyes, "if you don't care for music please at least let those have a chance who do."

There was an abashed silence, instantly. And I had to sing again.

Since that day I have loved Jawaharlal with a sense of gratefulness that time could never completely erase. And so far as I myself was concerned it was surely a case of love at first sight. Of course I knew he could never really care for a man like me who disliked the pretensions of science and adored what he so scathingly condemned as medieval: the religious ardour; but this consciousness on my part had never made any difference to my love and admiration for him. And yet I wonder if I would have felt so tenderly for him, however noble his character, had it not been for my startled awareness on that fateful

night of humiliation when it was obvious that he had come to my rescue notwithstanding his utter lack of interest in me or the quality of my music. Time has only deepened my regard and solicitude for him in a steady crescendo till it culminated in 1936 in a profound sympathy for his loneliness and ruthless honesty. His Autobiography had stirred me as few books have in my life. Realising, however, that he had had no experience of real peace I wrote to Sri Aurobindo whether he would support my praying for him. He acquiesced and added: "He (Jawaharlal) is a man with a strong psychic element and in this life or another that must be beyond the mind to find its source."

21

SO I started praying for him. It so happened that just about this time Princess V wrote to me in a sudden and deep bereavement. I put her in touch with Gurudev and started praying for her as well even though my sceptical mind had not yet been fully convinced of the efficacy of prayer. What happened next had better be revealed through the correspondence that follows.

"Guru," I wrote on 7-10-1936, "on that evening when I prayed rather warmly for Jawaharlal and Princess V why did the latter have this vivid experience at that identical hour? For, she writes from

Bangalore, she actually visualised me in meditation with Mother after which her eagerness to visit Pondicherry made her quite restless again. And she got so much peace, she assures me—so much so that she starts thanking me for having helped her through my prayer in whose efficacy I myself could not fully believe. But Jawaharlal, I am fairly certain, never felt it. My question: why on earth do some prayers act in this vivid way while others leave none a bit the wiser?''

''Dilip,'' wrote Sri Aurobindo, ''As for Princess V's experience it is quite natural since you see from her own statement that she has always had a natural tendency to go beyond the physical into supra-physical experience. That is what she means by 'having imaginations'. When one is living in the physical mind, the only way to escape from it is imagination (incidentally, that is why poetry and art etc. have so strong a hold); but these imaginations are really shadows of supra-physical experience and once the barrier of the physical mind is broken or even swung a little open, there come the experiences themselves if the temperament is favourable. Hence visions etc.—all that are miscalled psychic phenomena.

''As for prayer, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. An example? The eldest daughter of my maternal uncle, Krishna Kumar Mitra (editor of the daily paper *Sanjivani*, not by any means a romantic, occult, supra-physical or even imagniative person) was abandoned by the doctors after using every

resource, all medicines stopped, as useless. The father said: 'There is only God now, let us pray.' He did and from that moment the girl began to recover—typhoid fever and all its symptoms fled, death also. I know of any number of cases like that. Well? You may ask why should not then all prayers be answered? But why should they be? It is not a machinery: put a prayer in the slot and get your asking. Besides, considering all the contradictory things mankind is praying for at the same moment, wouldn't God be in a rather awkward hole if he had to grant all of them?''

Oscar Wilde was hardly right when he said that the best way of resisting a temptation is to yield to it. The truth lies the other way about: the insatiable fire of temptation grows by what it feeds on. So I feel now an irresistible impulse to complete the picture by quoting a little more from the correspondence that had passed between me and Sri Aurobindo—in September, 1936, to be precise.

22

"GURU," I wrote, "I have of late been engrossed in Jawaharlal's autobiography. It *is* a moving book, truly, Guru! And one of the things that have impressed me most is his power of loyalty. It has made me re-view him in a new light, or, shall we say, from a new angle of vision? For I remem-

ber how often in the past we used to criticize him —Subhash and I—because his personal devotion to Mahatma Gandhi should have so effectively cured him of his devotion to his own faults. Subhash used to argue—and I half agreed—that one's duty to a personality should never take precedence over one's duty to the Impersonal whatever that may mean. For as days passed I caught myself wondering more and more whether the impersonal aspect of the Divine necessarily stood for deeper values. In the *Bhagwat* the Godheads are described as envious of humans because these were comrades in play with Krishna, the *Purushottama*. Wasn't that why Vivekananda upbraided Nivedita: "You do not yet understand India. We, Indians, are Man-worshippers after all. Our God is Man....You may always say that the Image is God. The error you have to avoid is to think God the Image."* The reprimand almost overawed me. For Western rationalism is, intrinsically, too bankrupt in true wisdom to be able ultimately to prevail upon the pauper heart to jettison all its beloved cargo of faith in the Personal side of the ultimate Truth just for the fun of travelling light. Aridness is a cross so hard to bear that some day the heart must decline it, when the bell will toll for the westering prodigal's homecoming back to the East's mystic worship of the Personal Divine. Anyhow Jawaharlal's book made me feel that *his* way of reaching for Truth has a curious kinship with ours, like a sort of *Guru-*

* Quoted from Nivedita's *My Master as I saw him.*

vad in politics, why not?—Wouldn't he shudder though were he to overhear this?"

"That is all right," Sri Aurobindo wrote back the next morning. "As for the question of personality there is always the personal and the impersonal side of the Divine and the Truth and it is a mistake to think that the impersonal alone true or important, for that leads to a void incompleteness in part of the being while only one side is given satisfaction. Impersonality belongs to the intellectual mind and the static self, personality to the soul and heart and dynamic being. Those who disregard the Personal Divine ignore something which is profound and essential."

"Guru" I wrote again, "I have just come to the end of Jawaharlal's Autobiography. The result: I can't meditate—in fact I couldn't meditate much during a whole week: the book gripped me. But he is so English in his outlook, isn't he? Not only in his habits of living, (we are, all of us, more or less westernised for that matter) but, what is incomparably more important, in his way of thinking and feeling after Truth if you know what I mean. If you don't, here is a citation from the last chapter, titled Epilogue:

'Indeed, I often wonder if I represent anyone at all, and I am inclined to think that I do not, though many have kindly and friendly feelings towards me. I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my

thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me, as she does to all her children in innumerable ways; and behind me lie, somewhere in the subconscious, racial memories of a hundred, or whatever the number may be, generations of Brahmans. I cannot get rid of either that past inheritance or my recent acquisitions. They are both part of me, and, though they help me in both the East and the West, they also create in me a feeling of spiritual loneliness not only in public activities but in life itself. I am a stranger and alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling.'

'Beautiful and moving? None the less, one almost catches oneself wishing he could have delved a little deeper if only to discover what is this India that 'clings to her children in innumerable ways'! The India of millenial wisdom, the India rich with the deathless and fadeless Lotus of the Spirit, the India—and only India—which could have fashioned in her deep womb of Love Divine 'children of Immortality'—*'amritasya putrah'* and continued through long dynasties of true Kings among men. Forgive me, Guru, for thrusting my sorrow on you, but I have loved this beautiful soul too genuinely—at long range though it be—to resist this urge risen in me to ask you to help him, as you once helped Subhash, with your blessing and *kalyana-shakti*. And it is peace I would like you to give him first.

For, on his own showing, he has had no taste of peace; I do not have in mind here the highest Peace, the *Yogic* peace of God and Bliss and Love which you wrote about in 1932* when I doubted whether they could be as concrete as sensory perceptions. No, for of course that Peace that passeth understanding cannot be *given*: one has to win it, to grow into it just as the chick within its shell has to grow till it bursts into life outside the shell. But surely he can hope for some presage of its sustenance because he surely merits it far more than many, like us, who have got it through your Grace doing nothing or very little. Somewhere he writes how before an image of the Buddha he had a deep nostaglia for the peace† which could transfigure a human face so. That Subhash had hints of this peace, I know, though it was only in jail he could hold on to it: as soon as he came out he lost it again. But let me finish first what I have begun.

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* "I will begin not with Doubt," Sri Aurobindo wrote to me (25-7-32) "but with the demand for the Divine as a concrete certitude, quite as concrete as any physical phenomenon caught by the senses. Now, certainly, the Divine must be such a certitude not only as concrete but more concrete than anything sensed by the ear or eye or touch in the world of matter; but it is certitude not of mental thought but of essential experience. When the peace of God descends on you, when the Divine Presence is there within you, when the Ananda rushes on you like a sea, when you are driven like a leaf before the wind by the breath of the Divine Force, when Love flows out from you on all creation, when Divine Knowledge floods you with a Light which illumines and transforms in a moment all that was before dark, sorrowful and obscure.....when everywhere you see, hear, touch only the Divine, then you can much less doubt it or deny it then you can deny or doubt daylight or air or the sun in heaven—for of these physical things you cannot be sure that they are what your senses represent them to be; but in the concrete experience of the Divine, doubt is impossible."

† Years later he wrote to me in a lovely letter: "When, if ever, I shall achieve any real peace I do not know. My way is to seek it through action. Sometimes, though rarely, one has glimpses of it." (dated 3-12-45, Allahabad).

Referring to Gandhiji's withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience movement in 1935 for what seemed to him 'metaphysical and mystical reasons' in which he 'was not interested', Jawaharlal writes in his chapter titled DESOLATION:

'With a stab of pain I felt that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped..I realised that I held clear and definite views about many matters which were opposed to his. And yet in the past I had tried to subordinate them, as far as I could, to what I conceived to be the larger loyalty—the cause of national freedom for which the Congress seemed to be working. I tried to be loyal and faithful to my leader and my colleagues, for in my spiritual make-up loyalty to a cause and to one's colleagues holds a high place. I fought many a battle within myself when I felt that I was being dragged away from the anchor of my spiritual faith. Somehow I managed to compromise. Perhaps I did wrong, for it can never be right for any one to let go of that anchor. But in the conflict of ideals I clung to my loyalty to my colleagues, and hoped that the rush of events and the development of our struggle might dissolve the difficulties that troubled me and bring my colleagues nearer to my view-point.

'And now? Suddenly I felt very lonely in that cell of Alipore Gaol. Life seemed to be a dreary affair, a very wilderness of desolation.

> Of the many hard lessons I had learnt, the hardest and the most painful now faced me: that it is not possible in any vital matter to rely on any one. One must journey through life alone; to rely on others is to invite heart-break.'

"I felt so affected Guru that I felt like asking him to come and stay with me for a few weeks in my peaceful flat overlooking the sea. But if Subhash didn't come it is unlikely Jawaharlal would. Besides as *Vyas* says in the *Mahabharata; "Kalena sarvam vihitam vidhatra,"* (The Divine withholds everything till the hour is ripe). And the right hour may come sooner through disillusionments! To quote from one of your own letters: 'Ambition and need to act in the vital, in the mind, a mental idealism—these two things are the great fosterers of illusion. The spiritual path needs a certain amount of realism: one has to see the real value of the things that are, which is very little except as steps in evolution.' So I had better leave Jawaharlal to his approved way of proceeding "to meet his destiny by the roads one takes to avoid it,"* and pay more heed to ours approved by faith and worship.

"But I long to have your opinion on his reading of religion. Please read first his chapter entitled, 'What is Religion,' and then 'Desolation,' where his 'accumulated irritation turned to religion and the religious outlook.' And note how he sums up:

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* Pt. Jawaharlal writes at the end of his chapter entitled "Struggle": "Only life itself with its bitter lessons forces us along new paths and ultimately, which is far harder, makes us think differently. Perhaps we may help a little in this process. And perhaps

On recontre sa destinee
Souvent par les chemins qu'on prend pour l'eviter."

'What an enemy this (religion) was to clearness of thought and fixity of purpose, I thought: for was it not based on emotion and passion? Presuming to be spiritual, how far removed it was from real spirituality and things of the spirit. Thinking in terms of some other world, it had little conception of human values and social justice. With its preconceived notions it deliberately shuts its eyes to reality for fear that this might not fit in with them....It condemned the violence of the sword, but what of the violence that comes quietly and often in peaceful garb and starves and kills; or worse still, without doing any outward physical injury, outrages the spirit and breaks the heart....' etc. etc. O Lord of thunder and confusion, since when did you abdicate your kingdom of cloudland in favour of the mental whirlpools of 'irritated humanity'?

"Apropos, Guru, please suffer me to tell you about a curious vision I saw just as I was marvelling at the wealth of invectives exploited by noble friend to discredit such a poor thing as Dame Religion.

• • • •

The Court-room is full of a motley crowd eager to attend the trial of Miss Art who sits in the dock. Mr. Morality, the Public Prosecutor, glowers at her in front. On a dais sits Mr. Justice Commonsense surrounded by Jurymen, all appraising the accused in sepulchral silence.

Mr. Morality: My Lord! This impossible slut should be put immediately out of harm's way.

Justice Common Sense (nettled): No un-Parliamentary language if you please! The accused hasn't been convicted yet . . . Now what are the charges against her?

Mr. Morality: They are ever so many my Lord—

Justice Common Sense (sternly): To the point please!

Mr. Morality: I stand rebuked your Lordship . . . I'll drive straight to the target . . . Well, she is—er—(counting on his fingers) an enemy by nature and temperament I mean—to ordered living. That's charge number one. Number (with a lift in the voice) two: she unsettles all fixity of purpose, despising as she does middle class tidiness and respectability. She pooh-poohs the value of disciplining the sense, that's number—er (bends down to his junior) Four your Lordship. Then Number Five (impressively) her mind being naturally at home only in the world of nebula and fancies which she dubs Beauty with a capital B and which she calls—Elusive with a big E again—er (pauses and frowns and then suddenly) I was going to say: this fantastic thing Beauty has made her throw to the four winds all sense of proportion and decency—only—er—the trouble or rather the danger is this that whosoever once breaks bread with her, your Lordship, starts raving as senselessly. (His voice quavers) My Lord, she is more than wicked, she's sinister and she knows it. She is a reverser of values—that's number—er—six. SIX. For she would paint a debauchee into

an angel without the least shame or compunction and naturally a devil deified becomes even more captivating than the Divine scoffed at.

Justice Common Sense (covering his ears): O blasphemy—stop it. (Murmur among the Jury because the Public is manifestly tickled).

Mr. Morality (undaunted): That's just I am here for, your Lordship! (he enjoys his own joke and chuckles but turns sombre as the Judge gives him a stare) and remember my Lord, that this is by no means the most hair-raising of her achievements. (Carried away). For with her damnable (The Judge frowns)—I mean—er—with her topsyturvy conception of right and wrong she claims there is no such thing as morality in her precious art—Art with a big A my Lord—there's only good art and bad art. she says. Consequently she pretends—er—I mean she is so degenerate that she can't even see that it isn't good art or sensitiveness to beauty that keeps society going but (warming up) give me right conduct, ordered living, moral sense. (Lively murmur of satisfaction among the Jury); the Public looks glum. So (clearing his throat emphatically). My charge is —is it number eight or nine?—'it makes no matter —what I mean is (thumping the table) in front that lost to all sense of shame, the wretched thing tirelessly holds up to ridicule codes of universal decency because these are man-made, she says and therefore she can have no truck with these. And why? (He shakes his fist at her) because she stands for Inspiration and not convention, that's *her* jargon my Lord.

confound her impudence! (Turning to the Jury among whom a few smile unwarily). But gentlemen of the Jury! It's no laughing matter I can assure you. For the sad fact is that she *has* a following and somehow always succeeds in encouraging the youth to laugh at what should have brought tears to their eyes. (The Jury look at one another uneasily). But she hasn't had the last laugh yet, your Lordship! Because she is (he smiles) even more ridiculous herself than morality—since—er—morality is at least consistent, but she is damned inconsistent (A titter is heard among the women, the Judge smiling perfunctorily) Here's an instance. She lampoons our good old citizen, Mr. Public Censor whose hoary beard, has all but covered his eyes, she says. (The Public Censor coughs in embarrassment as the titter grows more audible and the Policemen restive). That is why, she argues, she has grown blind as a hirsute puppy. (The Judge tries not to smile). But to be serious once more, my Lord, what I mean is, she condemns this venerable keeper of our conscience as an upholder of violence and she calls him moral (the Censor fidgets) since he bans by force what she is pleased to call things of beauty. (He pauses for breath). But what of the terrible force she exercises —a force almost hypnotic I should say, since it works subterraneously through suggestions? What for instance of the fascinating power of a beautiful nude or of a lovely virgin who talks lightly of chastity? How long can the high pillars of our white respectability be kept erect if such dark subversive forces

are unleashed or even permitted on the specious plea of art and beauty! (His voice trembles) Gentlemen of the Jury! I adjure you to remember what Christ enjoined: not to judge by appearances. So let us not be betrayed by pity or moved—well—(embarrassed) by the feminine charms of the accused. Beware! For take it from me—she is quick in the uptake and can employ her siren charms well enough. She knows how to look *un etre mal compris* and can at will trick you all by—er—appearing flower-like—almost virginal. But remember: social security is a serious thing, morality is a serious thing, and last though not least (sententiously) respectability is a serious thing —the most serious thing I should say, because if it were shaken the structure of our age-long civilisation would be shaken to its very foundations and we will revert to a barbarism worse than cannibalism. (He thumps the table as his peroration comes to an end: great commotion in the Court-room).

Policemen: Silence! (The hum dies down).

Justice Common Sense: Hm (turning to Miss Art) Well Miss! (With cold courtesy) Where is your Counsel?

Miss Art: I can't afford one, your Lordship.

Justice Common Sense (unaccountably embarrassed): I see (With decision) Well then, have you got anything to say? (Pause) Why are you silent? (Pause again) You can defend yourself you know—that is, if you care to. . . . (Impatiently) Am I to take it then that you are guilty?

Miss Art: You may, my Lord! Only—(she sighs and lowers her head).

Justice Common Sense (patronizingly): Come come woman! We are here to administer justice—but fairly, on the evidence. For (sententiously) this high Tribunal of Common Sense is as faultlessly perfect and perfectly flawless you know as the White man's sense of fairplay when he is among the coloured races.

Miss Art (taking heart): I have this to say, my Lord, that Mr. Morality has indeed judged me to perfection; only—(she pauses undecided).

Justice Common Sense (sternly): Only?

Miss Art (appraising him): Only my Lord, he knows me as little as a husband knows a loveless wife by whom he has had a dozen children and yet remains fundamentally a stranger to her because she has opened her body to him—but not her soul. But suppose, your Lordship, the unhappy woman were hauled up here like me today: what evidence could she adduce to prove to the Court that her husband of morality has had no admission into what is the quintessence of her being? But he would *be* able to prove to the hilt, mind you, that he knew her intimately because he would be able to describe to the minutest detail even the hidden parts of her body which you and the Jury might verify to your complete satisfaction.

(Chorus of scandalized protests from the Judge and Jury, titter of laughter among the Public).

Mr. Morality (indignantly): Wasn't I right, my Lord?

Justice Common Sense (shocked beyond measure): Yes, indeed! (To Miss Art) Look here, Miss! Your language and taste—well the less said about them the better. (To the Jury) Gentlemen of the Jury? What is your verdict please?

The Jury (with one voice): Guilty, my Lord!

Justice Common Sense (gravely): I agree with your unanimous verdict. (To Miss Art): I sentence you to be first branded as a corrupter of public morality and then to be hanged by the neck till you are dead.

The vision ended at this moment. I do not know what happened afterwards. I believe she was duly hanged: what I doubt is whether the rope held till life was extinct."

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"Dilip," wrote Sri Aurobindo, "I do not take the same view of religion as Jawaharlal. Religion is always imperfect because it is a mixture of men's spirituality with his endeavours that come in in trying to sublimate ignorantly his lower nature. Hindu religion appears to me as a cathedral-temple half in ruins, noble in the mass, often fantastic in detail but always fantastic with a significance—crumbled and badly outworn in places, but a cathedral-temple in which service is still done to the Unseen and Its real presence can be felt by those who enter with the right spirit. The outer social

structure which is built for its approach is another matter.''

23

SUCH was the man about whom I approached Subhash for an opinion. I repeat, I felt diffident, for somehow or other I cannot quite help some misgivings in discussing one whom I happen profoundly to admire——almost afraid as it were lest my interlocutor should damp my ardour with his casual ways. But I persuaded myself that it was no use meeting evil half way and tried to meet with my robust optimism the lowering clouds of misgivings.

''Jawaharlal!'' Subhash muttered. ''It's deuced difficult, you know. I hardly know how to put it—my total reaction to him and all that he stands for!''

My heart beat too fast for my tongue now.

''Difficult,'' Subhash repeated ''because . . . his good fortune, though enviable in a sense, is not yet fully comprehensible to me.''

(I am *not* putting into his mouth what he didn't mean nor imply. Doubtless I put it all in my own language, but what he said was so novel—almost striking, I should say—that I could not distort it unless I wanted to, deliberately.)

''Good fortune did you say?''

Subhash nodded.

"Let me explain," he said picking his words now with deliberation. "But don't butt in with your comments till I invite them. No offence Dilip, only you see it's difficult to say something and be quite sure it hasn't conveyed just the opposite of one's interior feeling about it."

"But what is this my dear, Subhash?" I said. "Give me your hand. Why, for *you* to traffick in psychological niceties!"

Subhash gave me his old endearing laugh as he gave my hand his answering pressure.

"The moralist can't influence the artist without being himself a little influenced in the process," he said breezily. "The eater himself is eaten, you know." Then in a more sober key: "Yes. The school of life has taught me one thing at any rate: that the right idiom is more helpful than it sounds. But listen now, and with total attention, if you please.

"Of course it goes without saying," he went on, his face suddenly become grave as gloom, (his expression never needed transition, like ours, his cheery tone no cadence to pass on from one phase to its opposite) "that a man who has attained the eminence he has cannot have been made of the common stuff, let there be no mistake about that. None can possibly doubt that he has a rare intellect, perspicacity, penmanship et cetera—I need hardly carry coals to Newcastle—making a list of his manifold gifts to you, a born hero-worshipper."

"Now, now, Subhash," I cut in, "It is hardly fair to give a dog a bad name when one has already decided to hang it. If I admired Das you wouldn't call it hero-worshipping, just because the adoring dog then would be dear to you. But if I admired Jawaharlal a little warmly—"

"But there you are," he laughed. "For when you mention him and Das in the same breath you give your case away—"

"But but but Subhash, that's even worse than unfair. I never said that in greatness Jawaharlal had the same stature as Das."

He laughed outright.

"Thank thank thank you Dilip. For you have taken a load off my chest. For now I'll be able to be as frank with you as I want to be."

I laughed at his mimicry.

"But I had to thank you thrice as I was thrice-happy, don't you know," said Subhash bursting out laughing again. "For do what I would, I simply couldn't lump it were you to add another so soon to your long bag of heroes. But a final farewell to levity. For Jawaharlal is a serious proposition as you must know."

"I do," I agreed, "and perhaps even more disquieting than serious seeing that he talks about religion without having troubled to investigate how its heart beats."

"But there I don't agree with you," Subhash said with a touch of asperity. "For when a man hasn't felt the heart-beats of a movement his criti-

cisms must be superficial. To expect Jawaharlal or a communist to say anything profound about religion is like expecting a moderate to say something inspiring about the spirit of youth which stakes everything for complete independence. No, I am *not* hard on Jawaharlal,'' he anticipated me duly. ''For he gives one the impression of an outsider when he airs his views on the service or disservice religion has done to mankind. And that is why he has never said anything striking about it. His criticisms are not inspired by any kernel experience of religion but based only on the observation of its social effects.''

''You are coruscating, Subhash! For though religious experience has influenced society—because any experience of man living in society is bound to influence it for good or for evil—in its essence yet it is not a social phenomenon. Jawaharlal doesn't understand this simple fact because, as you say, he hasn't yet got to the kernel of religion. But that is precisely why I thought his inveighings against religion rather disquieting, because few people realise that the fact that a man has attained greatness in one sphere doesn't necessarily make him great in another, as Tyndal put it so lucidly in his Belfast address.''

''But why, disquieting, Dilip? You, as a devotee of Sri Ramkrishna, must realise that his verdict in favour of religion can well afford to set at naught such superficial criticisms of a score of outsiders and ignorants. No: Jawaharlal may.

create an impression I admit, but not in a province in which he hasn't been able to secure a passport yet.''

''In what province then——?''

''Why, in politics, social organizations, in his ideas of loyalty, his outlook on ethics, communism, science—there are so many. And when he speaks about such things he is always worth attending, whether you agree with him or no. Besides, he *is* a fascinating man, as you say, even though a man can't become a leader of the people on the strength of his personal charms alone—no, don't, for I haven't finished yet. Listen: I am far from insinuating that he has no other power. But as I told you just now, I have sometimes felt that he has attained to his unique position because somehow he has managed to get into the good graces of Madame Luck.'' (Here I must pause and say that Subhash used the Bengali word *bhagya* which like so many other similar Sanskrit words are untranslatable. Luck is too light a word, almost banal in its connotation while *bhagya* has a rich association of dignity which accrues to eminence preordained by a Divine Decision of some sort.)

''Luck?''

''What other term can possibly explain his inexplicable popularity everywhere? He is with everyone. I would be almost tempted to say vernacularly that he was a *barer gharer mashi kaner gharer*

*pishi**—if he hadn't been what he is: a man of integrity. And yet....you can't get away from the fact....a rather strange phenomenon in the world of today....that he is looked upon by almost everybody in India as an infallible guide on everything even though on his own showing he vacillates at every single step of his. All the same you find the peasant hails him as his spokesman, labour as their protagonist (Trade Union Congress actually elected him as their President, with what effect we all know**) the communist patronizes him,*** the capitalist dotes on him, the artist hails him as a pathfinder in belles lettres, the mill-owner gushes over him ignoring the disconcerting fact that he is actually spinning away without conviction to prove a worthy heir to Gandhiji and a friend to the *daridranarayana*,**** a word he abhors."

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*Literally: a maternal aunt of the bride groom and, withal, a paternal aunt of the bride. It may be rendered into English by the proverb, running with the hare and hunting with the hounds.

**"At the Nagpur Congress," writes Jawaharlal in his auto-biography, "this question of the boycott of the Whiteley Commission became a major issue.....and the Left Wing triumphed. I played a very undistinguished role.....I avoided acting with any group and played the part more of an impartial speaker than a directing President. I was thus an almost passive spectator of the breaking-up of the T.U.C." (Chapter XXVII).

***I don't think this would be true now, for, fortunately, Jawaharlal has since taken good care to dissociate himself from the communist ways though he still subscribes to the main gospel of socialism. And even in those days he seems to have entertained deep misgivings about Russia and all that she stands for: "I am very far from being a communist," he writes in his auto-biography. "My roots are still perhaps partly in the nineteenth century. This *bourgeois* background follows me about and is naturally a source of irritation to many communists. I dislike dogmatism.....and the regimentation and heresy hunts which seem to be a feature of modern communism. I dislike also much that has happened in Russia, and especially the excessive use of violence in normal times." (Chapter LXVII).

****Jawaharlal writes in his auto-biography (page 192): "I had no desire to confine myself to khadi propaganda, which seemed to me a relatively minor activity in view of the developing political situation." And writes elsewhere that he never liked the word *daridranarayan* (even though Gandhiji loved it) because the word in effect glorified poverty. What the word really means is that the Divine exists in the poor also, not exclusively, as Jawaharlal has taken it to mean for an incomprehensible reason, but ubiquitously. The point is to have the vision that does not miss the Divine in the lowest of

"What you say, Subhash," I said, "amounts when boiled down to this—isn't it?—that Jawaharlal has more than one side to his nature. But I don't see how that in itself is a disqualification. For the fact that he is wooed by different organizations and various types of men is surely not anything essentially reprehensible. For instance why should it have been wrong for him to preside at the T.U.C. at Nagpur? Because he could not prove helpful, that's the trend of your argument, it seems. But at that rate you might criticize his hobnobbing with men of science who ask him so often to preside at their Science Congresses. For surely there too he has never yet proved himself to have been spectacularly helpful. Then his admiration of Gandhiji has made him spin away even when his heart was not in it. This I admit is a more serious charge. But then Subhash, he has loved Gandhiji and we haven't. Not-love seldom understands love's gambit. Take my own case. Sri Aurobindo is surely as far apart from Russell as the heart's worship is from mind's intransigence. But I have experienced love for both for which both Aurobindonians and Russellians have called me names. But how could I help loving both, tell me that—since love is independent of the will?

"You are making a fundamental mistake, Dilip," Subhash said conceding a smile. "In the world

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the low —an attitude that can hardly be taken exception to even from the common sense point of view. But then, as Subhash pointed out to me, when a man does not understand the essence of an experience he can hardly be expected to understand its ideology and vocabulary.

of theory and speculation and dream—that is where action is not involved in the same sense as it hourly is in politics or statecraft—one can be perfectly free to follow one's various predilections. But when your action is going to influence vast masses and you seek that influence, as a political leader must, then I say you can't go on indulging your various whims in public. I know well we are not always consistent nor even wish to be, but once one chooses to lead an activist's life one has to come to conclusions with one's own self and decide to act at least with a plausible harmony if not flawless uniformity. Otherwise it will be chaos! Practical politics, my dear Dilip, is not quite a stage set for art: nor is it a field where chameleons are bred. If a politician changes his hue and persuasion every third day he will only make confusion worse confounded. You as an artist may be influenced by Russell and then be as readily subjugated by Sri Aurobindo. Your personality may be enriched in the process; I don't know if it always is, for I am ignorant of even the fundamental lilts of your *maya* called art. But this I know that politics of a public character requires of its adherents a mastery of warcraft rather than of art-craft. At any rate this is certain that what is play to the artist may well be death to the statesman. I will give you an example and it gave me a shock I can tell you. Listen.

"You know very well that Jawaharlal and I are both supposed to be firebrands in that we have set our minimum demand at complete independence.

Mark the word complete. Now recall what happened in the Lahore Congress in 1929 under the august presidentship of your many-mooded hero. A joint resolution had been agreed upon among the Leaders of all dyes offering servile co-operation to the Vice-roy's announcement about a new mummery: a Round Table Conference. The Congress had never been under any illusion about the prospective farce —least of all Jawaharlal, who, whatever his short-comings, failure to see the inner trend of things has never been one of them. You know of course what it came to, the shameful compromise which only let the Congress down just to conciliate those we could well afford to ignore: the Moderates under a changed label. Liberals, whom Jawaharlal, by the way, so refreshingly exposes in his book. We were to pro-mulgate at the Lahore Congress that we were ready, even eager, to co-operate on the basis of Dominion Status. We were to throw overboard what Tilak called our 'birthright',—and for what? A tempo-rary tactical advantage when even that loomed doubtful to say the least. I read somewhere about the chance of a semi-blind man of spotting a black cat in a dark room on a moonless night. Our chances of getting some advantage through jet-tisoning our ideals seemed almost as bright, and Jawaharlal knew it full well, as he confessed him-self in his autobiography, mind you. I refused to sign the hateful manifesto as he too, had, at the start. But later he was 'talked into signing' what he had

known and spotted as 'wrong and dangerous.'* You remember his childish apology, don't you?''

"Softly, softly, dear Subhash," I replied though now a little impressed in spite of myself--- the fire of his speech was somewhat difficult to dismiss as mere heat because it did shed some light as well. "You forget that I never read his biography from *your* angle, nor had I your searchlight. For, unlike you, I focussed my attention more on his personality than on his official achievements and failures. What you say today has certainly shaken me, somewhat. But I can't for the life of me see Jawaharlal as I see so many among his associates: a temporiser and diplomat."

"Neither do I," Subhash acquiesced. "But that is just why I must complain more against his amorphousness thus letting himself be shaped by Gandhiji and others into any shape and pattern *they* choose. You talked just now of his loving Gandhiji. I have no quarrel with him on that score. He may love him or adore him or do genuflexion to him day and night, that is none of my business. But this so-called talk of personal loyalty which forces one continually to cramp oneself can't be right—spe-

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*To put Subhash's case more clearly I give below what Jawaharlal himself has to say hereanent: "And yet that joint manifesto was a bitter pill for some of us. To give up the demand for independence, even in theory and even for a short while, was wrong and dangerous; it meant that it was just a tactical affair, something to bargain with, not something which was essential and without which we could never be content. So I hesitated and refused to sign the manifesto (Subhash Bose had definitely refused to sign it), but, as was not unusual with me, I allowed myself to be talked into signing. Even so, I came away in great distress, and the very next day I thought of withdrawing from the Congress presidentship, and wrote accordingly to Gandhiji. I do not suppose I meant this seriously, though I was sufficiently upset. A soothing letter from Gandhiji and three days of reflection calmed me." (Chapter XXVII. Jawaharlal's Auto-biography).

cially in politics where such movements are so contagious. Compare Gandhiji himself. Didn't he love Gokhale? But whenever it came to the point he took good care to follow his idol. An artist may afford to be decorative, Dilip. He may even hug the charming inconsistencies to cut a picturesque figure. But for a man of action, a statesman, an administrator and above all for one who bids fair to grow into a world-figure—it were madness even to dream that one could do without a backbone."

"You have certainly set me thinking, Subhash," I said after a pause. "For I confess I never even thought of the possibility that Jawaharlal can be—well, what you have decided he is. But if I may still squeak a protest, (a la Jawaharlal himself vis-a-vis Gandhiji) may I submit that when you are incorrigibly fair-minded you may ridicule Sir Roger de Coverley's dictum that 'much can be said on both sides,' but all the same you do feel a sneaking sympathy for the fellow's liberality. But perhaps this too you would laugh away as an artist's incurable penchant for making any figure look convincing through the magic of his wizard art."

"I shouldn't if I saw it in an *artist*, but only on one condition: that he would never toy with politics. For *paradharmo* is nothing if not *bhayabahah*.* If Jawaharlal really cares to be fair to all sides like an artist, then to prove a lighthouse of fairness in this partisan world he should leave politics alone and follow art. Well he has a remarkable capacity

*The Gita: it means the dharma of another is fearful.

for literature; why doesn't he take to it as his *swa-dharma?*"

"What is *your* answer to the poser?"

Subhash laughed.

"That's good, Dilip. For he often appears to me as baffling as a poser. Take for instance his fumings against idolatry and yet look at his help-less genuflexion to Gandhiji, (though of course always under protest) and, simultaneously, wanting to superimpose on us the idolatry of Moscow. Wait —I haven't finished yet. I don't mean his idolatry of Moscow is of the same family as his idolatry of the Mahatma. I am not such a fool as I look—ha ha ha! Besides, any fool can see he idolises Moscow with his brain and the Mahatma with his heart. Add: he protests and changes his postures to feel more comfortable about it. But after all, Dilip, when one has to lead people one can't go on extolling ruthlessness and non-violence in the same breath. One must take sides in the sphere of action. No Dilip," he added in a lower key: "You may admire Jawaharlal heart and soul, and he is an admirable man on many counts; but one thing I will beg leave to prophesy: if he really wants to serve India through politics he must first of all make sure of his foundations. For if he doesn't take care to seek solid ground under his feet, the ground won't seek his feet either: consequently he will never be able to stand perpendicular—anywhere."

24

ABOUT Jawaharlal the politician I will not venture to comment, not only because it is not my line but also and chiefly because I roundly agree with his sober view that those who are unwilling to put their shoulders to the wheel can do little good merely by picking holes from an easy chair. Subhash as a colleague had a right to criticize him. But I myself, though I have a right of a sort (since, willy-nilly, we are all intimately concerned with two major human activities: science and politics) I have too genuine a respect for Jawaharlal's sincerity and magnanimity not to feel conscience-stricken about criticizing him harshly. My only regret is that Jawaharlal should not have felt as uneasy about criticizing religion especially after having communioned with such a man of religion as his master for well over two decades. It is all the more a pity because he suffered fourth-rate critics from Moscow with no kernel experience of religion to cajole him into apodeictic inconsistencies. This was borne home to me, rather through the trick of contrast, by the personality of Subhash who could visit us as he did, like a mountain whiff, because he had occasional contacts with the aerial lengths of the spirit. Jawaharlal on the other hand gives one the impression of an honest passion-flower in an wilderness of inertia and iniquity, or shall we say a petulent bud which disowns the sky as irrelevant and claims kinship with its parent wilderness which is Humanity in politics.

When I essay thus to bring out Subhash through the helpful device of contrast I do not at all imply like an ecstasist that in actuality he could *always* give off this mystic scent. That is possible only with those whose personality has climbed up to an ideal consistency after an arduous uphill discipline. For it is only then that the irrelevancies evaporate so that the essence of the personality can crystallise on the summit into the harmonious nucleus it is. But till this summit achievement is reached man must remain the sad and inexplicable tangle of anomalies, and a tussle must go on in his total nature during which war-period the higher aspirations will have often got the worst of it and the light and perfume of the higher nature will stay imperceptible precipitating only an impression of darkness and turbidity. And it is in such moments of deep dereliction, as Subhash often realised in gaol, that one could get the greatest help from Gurus, saints and seers. In the *Bhagwat* Sri Krishna assures Uddhava:

> The sun to mortals gives their earthly eyes:
> Sages—the vision of Truth that cleaves the skies.*

It is no mere poet's fancy. Only for this to be rendered possible some conditions have to be fulfilled by the aspirant. One of these is *dinata*, humility. Not for nothing did Christ say: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Jawaharlal would probably protest again

*Santo dishanti chakshumshi vahirarkah samutthitah (11-26-34.)

in irritation that the religious spirit only damages the nature by putting a premium of lachrymose self-abasement. That is why it is clamied in our *Mahabharata* that the arcana of true spirituality lie hidden in the heart*—a truth Subhash could see at once in his hours of anguished aspiration—but Jawaharlal never because he wanted the vast truths buried in the cavern of the heart to be attested by little rushlights of the mind.) And not for nothing has it been laid down as one of the first tenets of *Guruvad* that the disciple must unquestioningly accept the Guru's leading. For this alone can create the right mood in which the right vision can be lasting.

This has to butt in as a preface to a sudden *volte-face* in Subhash's attitude which I could only explain as a set-back in his spiritual evolution. I was at the time a little pained, but I could get over it comparatively easily because I had come to learn from personal experience that when the egoistic part of nature was too hard pressed it had to have recourse to monkeyings to win some *Lebensraum*, as it were. That is why (especially in dynamic natures like Subhash's) unexpected revolts are born which seem so opaque to the eye of reason. It was this I meant when I said that Subhash could not be expected to behave always with a flowless consistency any more than he could remain unwaveringly loyal to his highest lights. But to proceed.

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*Dharmasya tattwam nihitam guhayam—guha meansa cave, symbolising the heart.

25

IN 1924 the Swaraj Party, under the aegis of C. R. Das, captured the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta. Subhash was appointed in April as its Chief Executive Officer a role he filled with remarkable efficiency. Nevertheless he was arrested in October under Regulation III better known as "the lawless law," because the person taken charge of under this law may neither defend himself nor even know what he is accused of. Subhash was first taken to Alipore Central Jail, then to Berhampore Jail wherefrom he was transferred to Maudalay where gradually his health gave way.

I used to feel worried about disquieting rumours that reached us about his contracting some mysterious incurable disease. There was, however, nothing I could do about it, but I kept on writing to him and mostly about the message of spirituality and my reactions to *Yoga* because I thought it might help him in his lonely cell. He wrote back beautiful letters in reply* in one of which he wrote:

> "I subscribe to most of what you write about Sri Aurobindo if not to all. He is a *dhyani*—a contemplative,—and I feel, goes even deeper than Vivekananda, though I have a profound reverence for the latter. So I agree with you when you say that one may from time to time—and on occasion for a long spell—need to remain withdrawn in silent contemplation

*See Appendix.

in perfect seclusion. But here there *is* a danger: the active side of a man might get atrophied if he remained cut off too long from the tides of life and society . . . This need not apply to a handful of authentic *sadhakas* of uncommon genius, but the common run, the majority, ought to take to action and service as the main plank of their *sadhana*."

When I had first sought the comparative seclusion of an Asram in 1928 I still held more or less the same views as he regarding seclusion and service to humanity. By and by, however, as my outlook began to change due to a new orientation, such worldly wisdom as expressed in the above letter appeared to me less and less sustaining and I fell more and more in line with the Sri Ramakrishna's standpoint that none could possibly act or serve best till one received injunction—*adesh*—from the Divine. Also it was borne home to me through vivid experience that without the Guru's help the inner ear could not be sure of having heard the *adesh* correctly because of the strange kinks of our egoistic human nature. I wrote to this effect to Subhash and he agreed with me at least as often as not. But even when he disagreed, he was—I noticed—profiting by his solitude in that his inwardness was deepening progressively in jail, as his letter written from Madras Penitentiary in 1932 too was subsequently to testify.

But, unlike Jawaharlal, he never could keep fit in a cell. The rumours which had been in the air for some time past now swiftly crystallised into

a public alarm. The doctors had begun to suspect incipient T.B. The press raised a hue and cry: he had lost forty pounds in weight! Thereupon, the Home Member of the Government of Bengal intimated to him that he might proceed straight to Europe for treatment if he would—only he would not be allowed to visit Calcutta or any other Indian port. He declined indignantly.

Just then C. R. Das died suddenly, in May 1925. Subhash was deeply cut up and wrote to me from Mandalay (25-6-25):

> "You can imagine what dominates my thought to-day. I believe there is but one thought in all minds now: the death of our great Deshbandhu. When I first read the news in print I could hardly credit my eyes. But, alas, the report is cruelly true! Ours is indeed an unfortunate nation."

His health after this went on deteriorating faster till at last he had to be released unconditionally in May 1927 on medical grounds.

In January, 1930 he was again sentenced for sedition to nine months' rigorous imprisonment. In August the same year he was elected Mayor of Calcutta, though he was still in detention. Next month he was released and in 1931 arrested once more under Regulation III of 1818. Once more his health went to pieces till his condition became so alarming that the Government after a year's detention allowed him to proceed to Europe for treatment. I had

appealed to him to accept. He wrote back that he had already decided to the same effect and added that he would like me to furnish him with a few letters of introduction to my friends in Europe. He regretted he had profited but little by his first trip to Europe which he would like to make good now if he could. In his later twenties he used often to tell us privately that he envied me and Rudra* our deeper understanding of the heart of Europe whereupon we two used to retort that he might have grown into a parallel wisdom if only he hadn't with such consistent bravery shied at the very shadow of European woman. It had possibly gone home. In any case, in his letter now he wanted to know fair sex also. I was delighted and gave him a few letters among which there was one addressed to a very dear friend of mine, an opera-singer. She was a Hungarian by birth and had married a famous Austrian writer Rene Fulop Muller. I had been very happy as their guest in Vienna, first in 1922 and next in 1927.

* * *

(A few years later, in 1937, she visited India and was our guest in the Asram. Her singing made such a profound impression on my late friend Chadwick that he wrote a lovely poem which I cannot resist the temptation of quoting:

MOUSIKE

The air grows one with a voice;
Some magical sway

*Sudhir Kumar Rudra, now a professor in Allahabad University.

Has utterly changed the paltry hour
To a strangeness which is yet our own true
home.
The calyx of the song no longer laps
The slowly opening silence that is Light.
Now the silence is a calm blue sky:
The song has become three dazzling doves
Of whiteness, and they wing with a lovely
motion
Of a rapture unmingled and unmarred.
O harmony of incorruptible form
Stay further—in the hour-glass every sand-
grain
Is of gold—Time's metronome
Is changed to the subtlest weaving
Of the Life Dance and the Hymn of Love.

Sri Aurobindo wrote to me on 24-2-37: "She is indeed what you described her to be" and then: "I have thought of the name 'Nilima' for Heddy Fulop Muller as a symbol of her aspiration").

* * *

26

A FEW months later, Subhash wrote to me that Mrs. Muller had been "an angel" to him in his illness. She also in her turn wrote to me enthusiastically that so many things about him were *wunderbar and fablehaft* (wonderful and fabulous) and was deeply impressed by his *Seelengrosze*

(greatness of soul). If only a few more ambassadors of such nobility would visit Europe, she wrote, India would need no further propaganda. She gave a great reception to him and Udayshankar also about the same year, if my memory is loyal to me. She sent me photographs of both of them, but with Subhash she was, naturally, more intimate. I mention this to underline the profound psychological change that had overtaken Subhash in the course of a decade's suffering in the school of life. He had come to realise that a stolid indifference to all that is best in the sex he tabooed once as "woman" must mean a dead loss to all that is best in a "man". If I had ever been of any real help to him in his evolution I would have liked to believe it were here. But so long as one scans one's achievements through the convex lens of one's egoism wouldn't it remain risky—as I often asked Subhash playfully—to assess the nett value of one's contribution in anything under the sun? And how he used to laugh when I quoted Pope's

To observations which ourselves we make
We grow more partial for the observer's sake.

"But then," he used to palliate, "when the lens refuses to be scraped level how to cure this partiality, tell me that?"

"Well," I would reply feeling important. "There *are* ways, you know. Didn't our dear old Dr. Johnson say: 'Much may be made of a Scotchman if he be caught young?' The only trouble is

we would set about scraping the lens even later than the Scotchman."

"There you are at it again! Starting to untie knots with a moon-calf simplicity—you *are*, Dilip. For mystics are born not made—and even when they are born their convex lens won't always suffer to be tampered with. Look at Vivekananda: he wasn't quite a model of humility, was he?"

There he silenced me touching me in the raw. For in those days I did find it difficult to understand Swamiji's too emphatic ways. It was only years later that Sri Aurobindo elucidated the mystery for me, the mystery of Vivekananda's obvious sense of superiority over his fellows. "As for the sense of superiority," he wrote to me, "that is a little difficult to avoid when greater horizons open before the consciousness unless one is already of a saintly and humble disposition. There are men like Nag Mahasay (among Sri Ramakrishna's disciples) in whom spiritual experience creates more and more humility, there are others like Vivekananda in whom it creates a great sense of strength and superiority—European critics have taxed him with it rather severely—there are others in whom it fixes a sense of superiority to men and humility to the Divine." In Vivekananda's case, Sri Aurobindo explained with an illustration, it was not "mere egoism, but the sense of what he stood for and the attitude of the fighter, who, as the representative of something very great, could not allow himself to be put down or belittled. This is not to deny the necessity of

non-egoism and of spiritual humility, but to show that the question is not so easy as it appears at first sight. For if one has to express one's spiritual experiences one must do that with truth—one must record them, their *bhava*,* their thoughts, feelings and extension of consciousness which accompany it."

But in those days I didn't know how complex things of the spirit were—Subhash wasn't far out when he nagged at my "moon-calf simplicity" as he was fond of putting it. So I had, for sheer self-preservation, to evade the issue. And I wriggled out of the awkward situation by the safe device of calling Vivekananda an "exception". Since such *avatars* of strength didn't visit our planet of mediocrity in shoals, I argued, it would be worth while for the likes of us to smooth the convex lens of egoism.

In any event this was the lesson Subhash had been learning, willy-nilly, in the school of Frustration: I could feel it through his letters. Also Nilima used often to write to me from Vienna of this unpretentious character of her charge when she tended him in his sick bed. I was indeed delighted and wrote to that effect to Sri Aurobindo wanting him to work more on him for his spiritual transformation, though, I must confess, my native scepticism croaked from time to time that Nilima's report sounded a little too good to be lastingly true.

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*Bhava in Bengali is a difficult word to translate. It means the central idea with its associations and implications. It also connotes the thought-substance.

But I refused to be forewarned. Wasn't Nilima writing to me enthusiastically about this trait of his character? And she assured me that Subhash was not only *niedrig*—humble—like a *Mystiker* but also *unverfalscht*—unspoilt—like a child. "For instance," she added, "you cannot imagine how overjoyed he is whenever you send him Sri Aurobindo's holy flowers of benediction."

Such tidings naturally encouraged me greatly and I opened myself more and more to him till I came—alas, a little prematurely—to persuade myself that he was indeed one of our circle. The result was disastrous in that I, somewhat unwittingly, rubbed him the wrong way through my unwarranted over-confidence in his conversion. It happened thus:

Elated with success and sense of power returning, Subhash lost sight of a fact he had almost come to accept while in prison, that such noise as we constantly made in our puny worlds of egoistic make-believe and self-interest seldom precipitated any solid good out from the turbid waters of life. So he once wrote off a letter to me, rather unceremoniously, that I had better come out of my seclusion now since it was 'necessary' to establish personal contacts - such as he was doing in Europe—in order to be able to achieve anything solid to one's credit.

I was a little shocked at this all-too-sudden reversal of front on his part and I wrote back somewhat assertively that I had long ceased to believe in action for action's sake. The only valuable lesson to

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be derived from human contacts generally, I added, was that till we humans changed a little, these contacts were not likely to change things very much. Furthermore, I wrote, I had already had more than my fill of human contacts and that was why I had turned finally to the Guru's. I then gave him the last verse of my poem on *Guruvad*:

"The Guruvadi sings his hymn round you, O Guru, seeing daily the shadow of the Impersonal in the mirror of your personality.

"He seeks to worship you again and again in the temple of his soul to fashion in himself ever more faithfullly the image of your perfection.

"He says not that the rainbow is the shadow-form of a moment, nor that all forms are undivine.

"He says not that all embodiments must needs be transient and chimerical because the incorporeal could never seek a finite mansion."
....etc., etc.*

I do not remember what else I wrote but I am certain that there was nothing in my letter that could have touched him, personally. Naturally I had to demur to his championship of *disinterested action* (*nishkama karma*) of the *Gita*, contending that the action approved of by the Gita had little in common with what is called *disinterested* by persons deeply interested in the success of their activities.

*This poem, with the original Bengali, was published subsequently in my book entitled, "Anami." The title of the poem is "*Guruvadi*."

I suppose Subhash took it amiss. For he wrote back to me what was perhaps the most passionately expostulating letter he had ever penned with me for a target. Unfortunately I lost the letter but I remember very well its contents as here he hurt me for the first and last time in his life. What he wrote amounted to this that he "despaired" of our country when "men of the calibre of Dilipkumar and Anilbaran" could plump for blind faith as against enlightened reason. How could one possibly invest a "human *Guru* with attributes that belonged to Divinity?" His position was that faith lacked finality in that each might concoct a credo utterly different from that of everybody else. Only reason could coax people into some sort of fertile harmony. The "incarnate Gods" who battened in India on the superstitious minds of the credulous had done untold harm and we, the wakeful, should have known better in the twentieth century than to swell the herd of such weak-kneed adherents, and so he went on in an access of exasperation. In a letter previous to this he had written that he failed to see how Sri Aurobindo's great *bani* (dictum) that "*Yoga* must include life and not exclude it" could possibly square with the life of seclusion we were leading. I infer the dazzle of European activism had contributed not a little to his blindness.

For the reader's convenience I will sum up in one letter Sri Aurobindo's rejoinder to the charges set forth above.

"Dilip," he wrote, "but why on earth does your despairing friend want everybody to agree with him and follow his own preferred line of conduct or belief? That is the never-realised dream of the politician, or realised only by the violent compression of the human mind and life, which is the latest feat of the men of action. The 'incarnate Gods—Gurus and spiritual men of whom he so bitterly complains—are more modest in their hopes and are satisfied with a handful or, if you like, an Asramful of disciples. And even these they don't ask for, but they come, they come. So are they not—these denounced "incarnates"—nearer to reason and wisdom than the political leaders?—Unless of course one of them makes the mistake of founding a universal religion, but that is not *our* case. Moreover, he upbraids you for losing your reason in blind faith. But what is his own view of things except a reasoned faith? You believe according to *your* faith, which is quite natural, he believes according to *his* opinion, which is natural also, but no better, so far as the likelihood of getting at the true truth of things is in question. His opinion is according to *his* reason. So are the opinions of his political opponents according to *their* reason, yet they affirm the very opposite idea to his. How is *reasoning* to show which is right? The opposite parties can argue till they are blue in the face—they won't be anywhere nearer a decision. In the end *he* prevails who has the greater force or whom the trend of things favours. But who can look at the world as it is

and say that the trend of things is always (or ever) according to right reason—whatever this thing called right reason may be? As a matter of fact there is no universal infallible reason which can decide and be the umpire between conflicting opinions, there is only my reason, your reason, X's reason, Y's reason multiplied up to the discordant innumerable. Each reasons according to *his* view of things, *his* opinion, that is, *his* mental constitution and mental preference. So what is the use of running down faith which after all gives something to hold on to amidst the contradictions of an enigmatic universe? If one can get at a knowledge that knows, it is another matter; but so long as we have only an ignorance that argues,—well, there is a place still left for faith—even, faith may be a glint from the knowledge that knows, however far off, and meanwhile there is not the slightest doubt that it helps to get things done. There's a bit of reasoning for you! Just like all other reasoning too, convincing to the convinced, but not to the unconvincible, that is, to those who don't accept the ground upon which the reasoning dances. *Logic, after all, is only a measured dance of the mind, nothing else.*

"Your main point is of course quite the right answer: all this insistence upon action is absurd if one has not the light by which to act. 'Yoga must include life and not exclude it' does not mean that we are bound to accept life *as it is* with all its stumbling ignorance and misery and the obscure confusion of human will and reason and impulse and

instinct which it expresses. The advocates of action think that by human intellect and energy making an always new rush everything can be put right. The present state of the world after a development of the intellect and a stupendous output of energy for which there is no historical parallel is a signal proof of the illusion under which they labour. *Yoga takes the stand that it is only by a change of consciousness that the true basis of life can be discovered.* From within outward is indeed the rule. But 'within' does not mean some quarter inch behind the surface. *One must go deep and find the Soul, the Self, the Divine Reality within us and only then can life become a true expression of what we can be—instead of a blind and always repeated confused blur of the inadequate and imperfect thing we are.* The choice is between remaining in the old jumble and groping about in the hope of stumbling on some discovery or standing back and seeking the Light within till we discover and can build the Godhead within and without us."

Soon after, he returned to his native land, the land of his dream—*amar janmabhumi* as he used to hum so often—in April, 1936. He knew for certain he would be arrested again, but—unlike Jawaharlal, I repeat—he had struck far too many roots deep into the "land of his birth" so that he could not help but languish, literally, outside India, like a suckling weaned from its mother. Besides, it hurt his pride to have to stay away to dodge prospective imprisonment.

He was duly taken in custody the moment he landed—in Bombay (April 1936)—and under the same 'lawless law'. In my anxiety I wrote to him again but this time it was only silence that met me from the other side.

I felt a growing malaise. Had I hurt him? Should I not have apologised? Ought I not to try to see him in prison—? I could not decide.

Early in 1937 a rumour got abroad once more that Subhash was going to be released unconditionally. I asked Gurudev's permission to visit Calcutta. I pleaded for my eagerness: had I not been eight years already in seclusion, so did I not deserve a little outing and relaxation? Gurudev must have smiled his deep smile, but he was tolerance itself: *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*—so I was allowed to take it easy for a brief interlude.

It so happened that only a few days after my arrival in Calcutta—on the 17th of March to be more precise—I got a telephone message from Elgin Road that Subhash had just been released: I was summoned at once.

I drove instantly to his place—the same dear old Elgin Road house—and no sooner had I entered the front room than he came out. I was shocked to see how much he had thinned away. But he looked more spiritual than ever in spite of the rings of shadow under his keen eyes. He threw his arms round me and wept like a child. I was moved, too, but I must confess I was even more surprised. For Subhash to lose his grip over himself! I set it down

to the stiff letter he had written to me. Could the phenomenon of *his* weeping bear any other explanation?

But as we talked on I was more struck by a deeper change in him or rather in the atmosphere that hung about him. Years of struggle and disappointment on top of frequent incarcerations had mellowed the exterior austerity of the youthful ascetic. For an ascetic he had always been, temperamentally: I do not mean of the far-too-common phlegmatic brand—for he was surely not built of the stuff solitaries are made of. None could ever dub him world-weary. Nor did he ever care to claim kinship with the *mayavadis* who, he used to say, somehow failed to convince even when there could be no question about their sincerity. Notwithstanding, he looked an ascetic for two obvious reasons: first because his reaction to home-life was one of shirking, and secondly, he gave one an impression that it was men of his type and temper who had inspired the famous Sufi couplet:

Sara husool ishkaki na kamion me hai
Jo umr raigan hai wohi raigan nahi.

"When I waste my years to win thee, Friend!
'Tis then I best achieve my end.
Only that life was rich in gain
Which strove and strove for thee in vain."

As I looked intently at his wistful yet determined faced that morning I felt a deep joy that I had not been mistaken in my estimate of him. For he was a

mystic in the essence of his being who counted the world well lost for God, only he had, for the nonce, put his Motherland on his dream-throne of Divinity. I cannot of course prove this home but then has it not been admitted even by a great rationalist (Lowes Dickinson) that "nothing that is important can be proved!"

And I never wanted to prove it either. My object in writing my reminiscences of the man I loved most as a friend who was, withal, an idol of my adolescence and early youth is only to strive to repay the deep debt I have owed him. And it is because this debt would not have grown so sacred had he not been a mystic that I have essayed in my own small way to depict him as I have known him. Whether my delineation is convincing or not is not germane to my aim. "You have a right to action —not to fruits thereof"—"Karmanyevadhikaraste ...." So to proceed.

He didn't talk much that morning. He had never been a great talker even in his most expansive mood, specially in company. There were a few other friends present that morning. Nevertheless he dropped a few words now and then hinting at what he had gone through; said laughingly that if he had failed to grow wings he had, he hoped, grown a wee bit in wisdom. Which was true. For his eyes had won to a new expression softened indeed with unspoken sorrows but irradiate with a lustre that had not been there eight years ago in the hey-day of his activism. What I imply by this I will

endeavour now to explain in his own words, as far as possible.

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HE asked me to spend an evening with him a few weeks later. I accepted with alacrity as it was always difficult to catch him alone: whenever I visited him he was "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes," of friends, relatives and admirers. We badly wanted a *tete-a-tete.*

So he set apart one evening for me. I found him a little improved physically. The shadows under his eyes were less pronounced, but he looked a trifle tired still—and brooding.

I referred to it but, as was his wont whenever we talked about his health, he waved it away with his characteristic nonchalance. He warmed up only when I muttered something about his accepting suffering with such a high aloofness.

He laughed and said: "But please don't let off the portentous word 'martyr' I see trembling on your lips."

Let me explain the reference with an extract from a letter he had written to me from Maudalay Gaol (2-5-25):

"You have given to my incarceration the name of martyrdom. This only testifies to the sympathy native to your character as also to your nobility of

heart. But since I have *some* sense of humour and proportion—I hope so anyway—I can hardly arrogate to myself the martyr's high title. Against hauteur and conceit I want to be sleeplessly vigilant.''

I had been touched because here the intonation had had no tang of conventional modesty. He had indeed been always sincere to the core, by nature; only, in the first flush of youth—directly after his return from England in 1921—he had grown for a time a little too sure of his way and outlook on things in general. This I told him, for the first time, that evening.

He gave a low laugh tinged with sadness.

''Of course self-confidence one must have,'' he said reflectively, ''but one should certainly be on one's guard against cock-sureness.''

This gave me the opening I was seeking to remedy the unfortunate misunderstanding.

''But don't you think,'' I said, ''that is easier said than done?''

''What are you driving at?''

''You can guess very well—can't you?''

''But go on all the same'' he exhorted.

''Well,'' I hesitated. ''But it's best to be frank, I think. What I wished to ask you was: if you were at one with me about the need of being on one's guard against self-esteem and cocksureness, how on earth could you possibly misunderstand me about *Guruvad?* Couldn't you see that the only point I had wanted to make was that human judg-

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ment being so liable to err, a wise *Guru's* guidance could not but help?"

"I saw that all right," he said. "But then didn't you see what I on my side wanted to put you on your guard against? You know very well I never discountenanced *Guruvad* at its best: how could I, admiring as I do the great romance of Ramkrishna-Vivekananda? But that doesn't mean there's no danger involved in the cult one makes of this. Do you not see how *Guruvad* is accepted, generally, by the man in the street and why? Just to have the delectable feeling that the Guru will do everything for you—from *jutoshelai* to *Chandipath** as our Bengali proverb has it? Hasn't the *purushakara* of India been sapped too often by petitioning *Daiva*,† and hasn't *Guruvad* in practice served too often as a cloak for our national inertia?"

"There few will decline to go with you," I said, "though how I wish you had looked at such things not so much from the national as from the individual point of view! In the *Mahabharat* Bhisma tells Yudhisthira that just as without a fertile soil the seed sown cannot sprout even so without *purushakara*† *Daiva* becomes abortive.* That is why, says Bhisma, the wise have assimilated *Purushakara* to the ploughed soil and *Daiva* to the seed, which means that they are interdependent. I felt much struck by the simile when I was re-read-

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* The phrase means literally—from making a shoe to reading Scripture.

† *Purushakara* means personal initiative as contrasted with fatalism which denies the value of personal effort, since all is done by *Daiva*, the Gods who plays with humans as they will

* *Yatha vijamvina kshetramuptam bhavati nishphalm Tatha purushkarena vina Daiva na sidhyati.* (*Anushasana Parva*)

ing the great epic lately. I quote this only to conciliate you, Subhash, not to chide you with high authorities. My point is that our ancient wisdom never really awarded in favour of inertia when it hymned *Guruvada*. Let me add also that no real Guru will encourage a disciple to grow into a lack-lustre ruminant whose mass of flesh is at war with his bones. And then you should have had at least this much faith in me that I wouldn't take to a *Guru* like a supine bondslave unwilling to sweat for his own salvation. Besides, so far as I know, in things of the spirit you have never followed Jawaharlal who will always prejudge the issue without taking the trouble to have some real experience of the heart of the mystic lore. In wisdom a mere surface-view will seldom give one the clue to Truth. But the way you are talking now has a curious resemblance with our esteemed friend, who makes such unwarranted statements about religion having been the ruin of India."

It went home. He flushed.

"Leave him alone," he said. "What have I in common with him, ideologically?"

"But that is precisely why you should not indulge in generalisations about the ruinous consequences of the wrong kind of Guru-worship, for that would be arguing from false premises. What I mean is, you should not start with a select data about the pseudo-religious and false prophets. You wrote to me from Mandalay once that you looked upon Sri Aurobindo as going even deeper than Vive-

kananda. How then could you think that such a man would smile on disciples who truckle to him like milksops to be saved trouble? Didn't you read in his book called *The Mother*:

'Your surrender must be self-made and free ....the surrender of a living being not of an inert automaton'?

He waggled a finger warningly as he gave me a wry smile.

"Now now Dilip," he said, "you are at it—again, making it look as if it was Sri Aurobindo I chose for my target practice."

"But but Subhash," I returned, "would you have wasted so much of your precious breath and fire if your target had been a mere artist and hero-worshipper?"

He gathered a hand of mine and held it in his.

"Please do not take seriously, dear Dilip, all that I wrote in a huff." His voice trailed off into a tender cadence. "You are too alert psychologically not to be aware that we don't always mean the things we say in the heat of the moment. I would even go so far as to say that our *dushta Saraswati** loves in her playful moods to make us say just the opposite of what we cherish in our heart of hearts."

This new note of tolerance and self-criticism was perhaps the dominant one in the course of our conversation that evening. I can't record here

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* In Bengali the *dushta Saraswati* (literally the wicked Goddess of Garrulity) is supposed to perch now and then on the tongue to make it say things the speaker must regret afterwards. "The Old Adam" in English would be a very inadequate rendering of such a picturesque mischievous deity.

what I told him that day about my own trials and tribulations in *Yoga*, my strange strivings and frustrations from day to day and a new perception that grew through it all. Suffice it that I told him how I could only reach out for Truth through submission. (This I mention only because it serves as something like a leading note to what he said about his own experiments with truth and how he had reacted to such experience.)

He said: "In my gaol-life, Dilip, I learned a great deal—and naturally about my own self. For you can now understand—since you too have been in seclusion for a long time—how a new world opens within when the world without is shut out. But unlike you I had to submit to it all, chafing—though even that was submission, which taught me humility and resignation. But the strange thing was that this attitude which had looked so hurtful, proved incredibly helpful. For it brought a light. And in that light I saw my own self revealed to me in a new way! You talked just now of surrender. I don't claim I have ever felt quite equal to the task. But then the question probably didn't ever arise, in my case. For what *I* was up against was a rebellious spirit which eroded my very vitals. So much so that I felt it was eating into my health I was so keen on preserving. But I coulda't. I was restless within and aching all through.

"Yes, I could see my health ebbing away, under my nose. But what was I to do? I had no Guru to guide me. So I started watching my move-

ments. It's too long a story and too personal. Besides, my discoveries were not full-formed and identifiable. So I will pass them by for the present and only tell you that through my tribulations I realised from day to day as never before why humility and charity had been counted by the Ancients as among our chief pathfinders in life. For these two helpmates of mine showed me, as none else could, why we should not judge others too harshly since at bottom we are all blind . . . and weak. I'd stress we are weak. And the marvel of it is that it's only when we realise how essentially weak we are that real strength comes to us from depths we know nothing of. But every realisation brings in its wake a change. The change in me was this that I decided to be honest. I resolved that I must, as I watched my own movements, pass judgment on them as I would on those of any outsider. And I can tell you that the practice taught me not a little tolerance—till it really came to this—though I do not know if I'll be able to achieve it in practice—that even in the thick of the fight (since fight one must) I felt one was obligated not only to be lenient to one's antagonists but also to love them. "Of course" he paused as he gave me a smile of pensive irony: "I need hardly tell you that I am not nearly so naive as to claim that to feel it is to be up to it any more than to desire something is to have it. Also I know full well why it is so difficult: because our self-love is too exacting to suffer the neighbour for long within its orbit. I don't imply it can't stand him

at all, for had it been as bad as that the world would have tumbled to ruin long long ago. What I mean is that we are faultlessly moderate only in one thing: cultivating love of others. Could we but break the back of our fear the others were not a standing menace to our self-love at the centre, then we might perhaps act with more real abandon. So you see, I know to my cost how difficult it is to love our neighbours, let alone loving our enemies. When I was an adolescent I read somewhere that Buddha had said that one should love all creatures with the same intensity as the mother loves her only child. I can still recapture the joy—the wings it gave me. "But," and his voice dropped, "as I grew in total knowledge I diminished in power of love—of the type Buddha spoke about. But then Dilip," and he gave me a melancholy smile, "when you look at life don't you find a warning writ large, here there and everywhere, that there is no royal road to any realisation worth having? No, there never gleamed for me a path leading anywhere that was strewn with roses. You have elected to tread the path of *Guruvad*. I have, I confess, been often dubious of your wisdom. But the moment I saw you the other day I had my misgivings dispelled. If the tree is to be judged by its fruit—and there is no better touchstone that we know of yet—you can't be dismissed out of hand as a phantom-chaser, whatever Jawaharlal's dear Russia may say." A faint smile of irony hovered on his lips but only for a moment. The next moment he resumed, serious as sepulchre: "If

I have learnt tolerance and charity you have learnt —shall I tell you my reading? All right then: listen.'' He gave me a smile again and resumed:

''You talked to me at some length to day about your trials and tribulations, your flights and falls —no no, how can you think I will babble about it to others, not having your gift of the gab either—''

''Subhash—''

''Oh laugh it down, man!'' And we laughed.

''But listen,'' he broke the lull that ensued, What was I saying? Yes. I was watching you keenly, registering every word, accent and stress that escaped you when you spoke without reserve about what you thought of your own possibilities. You have given vent to your doubts; you have hinted at your disappointments; you have even tried to fob me off with your growing cynicism: but not once did even a catch in your voice betray the faintest inflexion of disloyalty to your God and Guru, not once did you convince me, with all your doubts, that you lacked faith, for not once did you vent a passing regret about having thrown away chances of a bright career. Man alive! how can I, after this, still take you at your word that you were a born sceptic? But listen, I don't embarrass you further: let's change the the subject by all means. Only I must tell you, the other day I read somewhere about a saying of Yeats that God has everything to give to Man, but Man's unique gift to God is Faith. I was strangely moved, for Christ was surely right when he characterised the common run of humanity, the scribes and Pha-

risees, as men of little faith, specially men of today. That is why, Dilip, even when I feel deep down in my soul that I should love even my enemies in the thick of the fight I catch myself doubting about its feasibility. But then, when all is said, to keep the end up *is* difficult whatever path we tread." He paused once more as his deep-timbered voice quovered. But he was himself again in a moment.

"I thank you Dilip, that you came out of your seclusion to see me," he went on. "Only do stay with us for a while, don't revert too soon to your shell. *You* may not need us but *we* need you."

As I returned home that night under the eyes of light that peeped through passing clouds I marvelled who was the wiser of the two?—The Irishman who had sighed:

Come away
With the fairies hand in hand:
For the world is more full of weeping
Than you can understand.

Or the Englishman who laughed:

"The world is hot and cruel,
We are weary of heart and hand:
But the world is more full of glory
Than you can understand."

And then I suddenly remembered, in the hush of the night when all had gone to sleep, an unforgettable quatrain of Sri Aurobindo:

We will tell the whole world of His ways and
His cunning,
He has rapture of torture and passion and pain,
He delights in our sorrow and drives us to
weeping,
Then lures with His joy and beauty again.

And I saw Subhash in a new light, a richer light that only vigils through dark nights of the soul may win. Not that I could bring myself to approve of dark pain and suffering with which "our earth is soaked from crust to centre"—to quote a great mystic novelist,* since that would be morbid. For, I mused, if the realist's perception that "all imperfection is to us evil'† was true, the mystic perception must be truer still that "all evil is in travail of the eternal good; for all is an imperfection which is the first condition—in the law of life evolving out of Inconscience—of a greater perfection in the manifesting of the hidden divinity.'‡ I confess I still fail to understand why it could not be ordained otherwise, but in the last analysis, how much *do* we really understand of the fathomless "laws of life evolving out of Inconscience?" As I paced the terrace on that night under the stars that seemed to deride the puny self-important intellect of man, I visualised the mellowed face of the activist who had told me that evening how strangely it had been borne home to him through the very ruin of his hopes that he must learn "not only to be lenient to

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* Dostoievski in his novel, *Brothers Karamazov*.
† Quoted from Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine*.
‡ *Ibid*.

one's antagonists but also to love them." And I saw, however dimly, a new meaning and augury of the "eternal good" that was progressively "manifesting the hidden Divinity" through life's fire and shadow, ecstasy and anguish. I felt grateful to Subhash as never before on that night of silent sleeplessness.

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I HAVE often wondered, while I have discussed my monitor with my friends who could not concur with my estimate of him, whether I have been partial to him because of this my deep sense of indebtedness. All I can say is that I have tried my best not to be even though I cannot too loudly assert that here I have been successful. I do indeed feel tempted, sometimes, to call in the great Goethe to plead for me:

> Sincere I will be—that I promise thee
> But who achieves impartiality?*

Tempted because I see the force of his honest confession. All the same, I can, I think, claim with equal honesty that I do not feel I have limned Subhash not as he actually was but as I wished him to have been. But even when I say this I glimpse again the eyes of stars on that night which seemed to tease me: "How much *do* we know, my

* *Aufrichtig zu zein kann ich versprechen, unparteiish zu zein, aber nicht... Ms. imen und Reflexione ..... Goethe.*

friend, to be at all sure about what we feel?'' which does disconcert me. For I can clearly recall Subhash's feeling of certainty about me that I could not be a born sceptic. Here, at least he was definitely mistaken. (I am taking my stand, in default of a better guide, on the probability, that when all is said and done X knows himself better than Y knows X.) In the same way, I ask myself, may not a similar mistake have been responsible for my belief that he was this and that which he perhaps never had been? It is difficult in this world of ebb and flow to be quite sure of solid ground under one's feet. And yet I cannot persuade myself that those who have an impression of Subhash different from mine are necessarily nearer the truth in their estimate of the man simply because their judgment is less warped by the bias love is supposed to induce. For love may have many limitations but it has this supreme compensation that it endows one with an insight which no gift of the human mind can command. I am not talking here of the helpless attachment which is blind. For my experience tells me that love which evokes the best in our nature can never be blind. The reason is that the light that such love sheds shows up relentlessly the limitations of the loved one because it is by its *swadharma* keenly alive to imperfections. I cannot therefore concede that my loving loyalty to Subhash had woven a veil which shut out from my view his failings and lapses, for that is *not* a fact.

Only, I have not spoken about these too loudly because my object in attempting this pen-portrait is to depict not *all that I saw in him* but only *all that uplifted me, inspired me and helped me* to get the better of my own weaknesses and vacillations.

All the same, in order to obviate a serious misunderstanding I feel, I ought to put it on paper that I cannot but look upon his going over to the Axis powers as anything but a most stupendous and grievous blunder. For it is impossible for any sane man to believe that his move was at all calculated to achieve the one dream of his heart: Indian independence. It is indeed a melancholy thought for me still that Subhash could have been so utterly deceived as to believe that a ruthless and unscrupulous power like the Japanese might be prevailed upon to aid him in freeing India without cunningly grabbing their "pound of flesh!" Here it is difficult for a man of sanity not to subscribe to Jawaharlal's view that had India been invaded by an army of no matter what extraction, the very fact of the Japanese being behind it should have made it suspect and consequently, as he rightly said, every Indian must fight such an army. Fortunately India has been spared the horrors of such an invasion and, what is more heartening still, out of evil has come good. By good I do not mean a debatable abstraction: I only mean that Subhash's suddenly amplified figure added to the romance of an Indian army marching singing to Delhi galvanised a frustrated nation out of its torpor and substantially damaged the in-

sulation of the Indian army from the magnetic currents of popular enthusiasm for immediate independence. This all-too-sudden awakening of the Indian fighting forces has been so pronounced and widespread that even our present Prime Minister had to admit in his historic speech the other day (15-3-46) that "Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and Mahrattas, politicians or civil servants—among all of them the conception of nationalism has been growing stronger and today I think that the national idea has spread right through, not the least perhaps among some of those soldiers who have done such wonderful service in the war." Of course it is obvious that if the British have turned so sympathetic overnight to the justice of our demand behind the "national idea," it is not so much because these soldiers did "such wonderful service in the war" as because they might otherwise do some surprising disservice in peace. But be that as it may, it is undeniable that this unexpected *volte face* on the part of our obliging rulers cannot but be of good augury—the more reason why we should agree now with Jawaharlal that it would have indeed been a dark day for us if the British in India had been displaced by the I.N.A. under the aegis of the Japanese. For after their treatment of China, Korea and others under them* nobody but a man

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* A famous patriotic friend of mine told me in North India a few months ago that it was such a pity that the Japanese and the I. N. A. should have lost the battle of Imphal because if they hadn't we would have surely become free Indians with the Japanese for our loyal allies. His view was that the Japanese could be depended upon, as Asiatics, to behave with us in brotherly way. I tried vainly to argue that the Japanese conduct had never been conspicuous so far by fratarnal gallantry to non-Japanese races whether in the East or West. He dismissed it all as British propaganda. I wonder

totally blind with British hatred could fail to see what a disaster would have overtaken India if Subhash had succeeded in his rash project: Nippon would then have kept India safe and groaning under its octopus tentacles aided and perhaps shared by Germany and then, for decades to come, we would be exploited and enslaved in a way compared with which our present enslavement would feel like a nursery mimicry of cheerful servitude.

Now, Subhash could never be blind to this extent. It was never in his nature to cherish ill-will against any race (though he sometimes did feel embittered against certain groups, like the Congress High Command, for example). What then, it may well be asked, could be the explanation of his decision to cast in his lot with imperialist Japan? I think it might not be nearly so opaque to the eye of the mind if it were properly focussed. What happened must have been something like this.

I have said Subhash had always been rather impatient by nature; and impulsive to boot. Consequently he had been growing restive his peacelessness getting more and more intolerable as days, months and years wheeled heedlessly by. Nor was

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if the account published since of the Japanese treatment of Malaya labourers who built for them the Burma-Siam "Death Raliway" is going to make any impression on my large-hearted friend. One has only to read the dismal description of T. G. Narayan (a correspondent of the *Hindu* of Madras and consequently not an agent of the British propagandists,) who writes 'that out of a lakh of labourers who had been dragooned by the Japanese ' an estimated 45,000 Indians perished building the railway, not due to lack of food so much as due to lack of medicines, doctors, shelter and the heavy toil. This constitutes perhaps the blackest chapter in the history of Japanese rule over Indians in South East Asia." (*The Hindu* dated 23-3-46, dak edition) I would not have laboured this point had I not found this amazing belief obtaining even among large sections of intelligent Indians that Japan would have treated Indians much better than have the British because of our common Asiatic origin.

the load of oppressiveness lightened by his declining health. Then came his rustication by the Congress High Command which he took bitterly to heart. But as he was too proud to admit defeat he impetuously organized the luckless Forward Bloc only to discover —soon enough—that he had hastily taken upon himself a burden which was more than he could carry in the teeth of the organised Congress opposition. And last, though by no means least, came an emotional frustration that served perhaps as the last straw.

But tragedies, as the poet has said, come in battalions. He was arrested again for having started the Forward Bloc. The same inactive meaningless life again in prison all but maddened him till towards the end of 1940, he started hunger-strike. The authorities released him. But yet another trial impended on January 26, 1941, and he knew well what the verdict was going to be. Then he decided, at a venture, to circumvent fate if he could and planned to flee his country. From the account recently published by Uttamchand, his host in Kabul, it is already possible to have a fairly accurate picture of his mental outlook in 1941, and one cannot but be materially relieved to learn that his original plan had been to go to Russia, and not to the Axis powers: Not that he disliked Communism less but that he disliked Fascism more, if I may alter a famous passage.* But it appears that there had been some bungling somewhere. For when he had

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* *Not that I love Caesar less but that I love Rome more.* Shakespeare.

reached Kabul according to schedule he was surprised to learn that his Russian friends were no longer over-eager to have him in Moscow. Then, as he had already burnt his boat beyond recall, he had nothing for it but to make straight for Berlin. Here is what Uttam Chand has to tell us (*The Indian Express*, 21-3-46) :

"For forty-five days Bose Babu was with me and not once during this period did I hear one good word for the Axis from his lips. He hated them as much as the British. I am sure when he reached Berlin he must have made another attempt to get to Russia through the Russian Embassy. But he must have failed again and the declaration of the Russo-German War must have finally dashed his hopes of reaching Russia. He reached Berlin on March 28, 1941 and on June 22 the Russo-German War broke out."

I have entered into such dry details because these are I think, valuable evidence in vindication of my contention that Subhash could never have had any Fascist leanings even though, by a conspiracy of accidents, he had to seek the aid of Japan. I am not pleading that he was a mere puppet of Fate from the beginning. But I do maintain that it is possible to be led by a single false step into an eddy from which it becomes impossible to be rescued. In any event it is always more paying to understand people than to judge them. As Sri Aurobindo wrote to me once :

"Human beings are much less deliberate and responsible for their acts than the moralists, novelists and dramatists make them and I look rather to see what forces drove them than what the man himself may have seemed by inference to have intended or purposed. Our inferences are often wrong and even when they are right touch only the surface of things."

Subhash was a victim of a conspiracy of forces which, by exploiting his heart-sickness, induced him to seek a kind of catharsis through adventure. I do not suggest his decision had been right, for I cannot but think that he should have remained here and faced the music—as Jawaharlal and others did—rather than shake hands with the contaminating Fascists. But a sense of loneliness is a cross hard to bear even for the stoutest loins and till one learns the supreme wisdom of submission to a Guiding Wisdom overarching the shipwreck of human calculations, one can never be too sure of one's gambits. So he made a *faux pas* at a very critical moment and then the wheel of *Karma* saw to the rest.

All this I say neither to judge him far less to plead for him. My reminiscences are chiefly inspired by a two-fold desire: first, to pay our homage to *the man he was at his most authentic*, and secondly, to help people understand him even when alas, he stumbled through a sense of phantom strength, lured by phantom laurels.

Perhaps I should not have used a purple word like phantom. It reeks too much of our traditional

Mayavad, Illusionism. But after all, in life, when one repeatedly chases a form only to clasp a shadow, can one resist the word which so graphically portrays an experience of Man from the dawn of his spiritual consciousness? Furthermore, has he not, from time immemorial, glimpsed a Reality (though only a handful attained it so far) beside whose ravishment the puny joys of our world of fact seem infantile if not pitiful? When one takes stock of these two dateless perceptions of humanity, isn't one reminded of the unsurpassed mystics of the *Upanishad* who said:

'Tadeva Brahma twam Viddhi nedam yadidam upasate.'

'Know that for the Brahman and not this which men cherish here.'

The mystic in Subhash did not take long to discover this on his own. For all his treasures of optimistic makebelieves could not reconcile him to the stark staring penury which faced him after he had served his country for full sixteen years—risking his life, staking his all, in fact counting no cost to achieve emancipation from a soul-blasting serfdom. Nevertheless, the nett recognition of those who mattered, the Congress High Command, came in the form of a total expulsion from the country's most evolved political organisation. It was then only that he came to realise with a shock that things were not as adorable as they had seemed to youthful idealism and that to expect much from men was to expect skele-

tons to behave like flesh and blood. I am not overstating my case. For I have *seen* Subhash first wince, then grieve and lastly grow hardened under the blows and disappointments of politics. It could hardly be otherwise when one felt, as Subhash certainly did, that his countrymen had maligned him, his colleagues had betrayed him and even his friends had read in his burning aspiration to serve his country an unconfessed lust for personal power.* I do not insinuate that in such cases the others are *always* in the wrong. For if one learns to be dispassionate one finds, as often as not, that what one's enemies say contains a much larger measure of truth than one would believe possible. But here the snag lies in this that in the thick of the fight it is always difficult for a man of Subhash's make-up to admit that the light in which others see us, however hurtful to our self-love, cannot be altogether a mischievous light. It is doubtless true as Sri Aurobindo puts it in his "*Life Divine*" that "all ignorance is a penumbra which environs an orb of knowledge, every error is significant of the possibility and the effort of a discovery of truth, every weakness and failure is a first sounding of gulfs of power and potentiality, all division is intended to enrich by an experience of various sweetness of unification the joy

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* During Subhash's exile in Burma when his mother lay on her deathbed someone, wanting to console her, congratulated her as the Queen-mother of the would-be King of India. "Don't say such things," she admonished him. "I never wish even in my dreams that my Subhas be made a king. He Always knew service to his motherland for his life's mission. May I too always see him as a servant of his country."

(From an article on Subhash by Pundit Ashoknath Sastri in *Parag-Yuga-Jayanti*, 1946.)

Dilip Kumar in 1919-1921.
No unhappiness under Subhash's tutelage

of realised unity." But the trouble is that although when our passions are dormant this seems obvious enough to tranquil vision, yet when they are suffered to rise they be devil the atmosphere too much with their milling sprays for right vision to have a chance. At any rate that is what has happened again and again in history to all robust activists, specially in the field of politics where our turbid vital nature has perhaps the freest play. An inescapable consequence of this was that Subhash felt a growing disharmony and restlessness because life insisted on giving him the contrary of what he explored it for, till it became so intolerable that he sought some solace through an immotional release, but there too he failed—which was, I repeat, the last straw. Otherwise I do not think he would have even dreamed of joining hands with the Devil's disciples in order to wrest phantom laurels from reluctant hands of Destiny. It is difficult not to be impressed by an indomitable will-power, however misdirected—specially when we learn from the highest wisdom, namely the mystic, that even going wrong is exploited by the Great Manoeuvrer to subserve a Purpose. How this applies to Subhash's political blunders is too obvious to need commentary. So, I would only add that the miracle was effectuated by his unbending will-power and faith in idealism which, to the likes of us, often seemed too mythical to be true. I still remember *how* his face used to glow when, with his youthful blood a-tingle, he used to recite Shakespeare's:

Our fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars
But in ourselves that we are underlings.

Even on the brink of fifty, my heart warms up just as of old when I feel that here Subhash was not mistaken, since, with all his limitations, he was no underling but a master designer, all his life, and, let us add a born revolutionary—necessarily—because he was a born mystic. I shall never forget a memorable night nearly twenty-five years ago, when he first revealed to me this his deepest persuasion.

27

IT was in the house of Dr. Dharmavir in Lancashire. We often talked far into the night with a glow of heart that only youth can command. Sitting before the crackling fire, we fell to discussing the portents of the rise of the Labour Party in England and Communism in Russia. I may say, in those days I used to be an ardent believer in the gospel of Marx and was all but convinced that the Millennium of the visionary could never come in any other—that is, less blood-thirsty—way.

"When Labour comes into power in England, it's surely going to be great, don't you think?" I said, alas, too fervently.

Subhash sniffed. "In what way?"

I felt the hose on my blood-lit warmth.

"Well," I stammered. "I—I mean it will be easier for us to get our asking, of course, what else?"

"In India?" he said. "Don't you believe it."

There was a hint of mordancy in his tone which worked me up. I said: "But why not? Aren't the exploited and the disinherited of all races one?"

He fixed on me his keen gaze of scrutiny.

"Or, without beating about the bush, the dictatorship of the Proletariat, what?" But before I could think of a more sonorous slogan he waved me aside.

"I would sooner believe in the tale of Aladin and his wonderful lamp."

I was stung. "But Subhash—"

He had risen and was standing with his back to the mantelpiece.

"Listen Dilip," he awarded pontifically. "Those of us who still fondly believe that India is going to win her independence by raising vast echoes to such clichés of alien countries are blowing hope-bubbles of illusion. They don't know what they are talking about."

"In other words, things that are happening outside are not going to influence our destiny?"

"I won't go so far. I only meant that others can't work for our salvation and, what is more, to the point, they won't."

"May I know why?"

"For the obvious reason that nobody helps another disinterestedly—not in politics. Recall Mirzafar.* Didn't he believe as fondly as you believe

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* He used often to quote the Bengali metaphor, *khal kele kumir ana*—that is, literally, digging a canal to invite an alligator from a river. His view on this question was so categoric that I cannot but feel that he must have had deep qualms of conscience about his unhappy alliance with the Japanese. He was never tired of indicting Mirzafar.

in English Labour or Russian Communists that Clive would help him on to his throne and then like a perfect gallant bring him fees like an obedient vassal? No Dilip, Aurobindo Ghosh was perfectly right when he said in the Swadeshi days that no outsider would help India. If we can't win our freedom it's nobody else's business. Remember Hamlet: 'never a borrower nor a lender be.' That should be our guiding motto in our dealings with parties and politicians outside."

"It's all very well to say that," I said sullenly, "but the fact remains that we are too disorganized and disunited to be able to act in concert."

"Just the reason why we should learn to."

I didn't know what to say. "And—then?"

Subhash looked intently at my face and smiled. But his eyes looked far away, all too suddenly—as was his wont, when dream overtook him, unawares.

"Then—revolution," he syllabled forth slowly.

My heart leapt up. For I had never yet run across a revolutionary in life. But I felt ashamed of my nervousness and forced a smile to my lips.

"But now," I said trying in vain to be cool as cucumber, "who is it that favours importing Russian ideas into India?"

"Man alive!" Subhash gasped. "Have you never heard of such a thing as Partition of Benga! and *Ananda Math* and Aurobindo Ghosh? Russia! Her revolutionaries had only just been weaned when we were full-grown adults."

"Of course I know all that" I said indignantly.

"Didn't I sing with my father his national songs in the streets?"

Subhash softened, but only to go off again at a tangent.

"Yes, those were wonderful days. I was then only a stripling. But I can still hear in my blood those wonderful *swadeshi* songs of your father: *dhana dhanya pushpabhara, Banga amar janani amar, dhao dhao samarakshetre, Mevar pahar* etc.—Really Dilip, you had a wonderful father."

I felt proud notwithstanding the implied antithesis of the son. But I bravely decided to shine in borrowed light.

"I agree" I echoed. "But haven't we wandered far from our theme? I mean that.....well..... those days can't be revived, can they?"

"But why *not*?" There was a challenge in his voice. "What man has done man can do." This was another favourite copy-book maxim of his.

"That's true," I said irresolutely. "Only—well, wouldn't it be equally true to say that a great movement, like genius, is born—not made? I mean isn't a great movement an inevitable result—a culmination of the spirit of an epoch?"

"What on earth are you talking about?"

I was in a quandary. I had read a remark like that in some book on Russia and had just aired it to sound impressive. For the fact was I had never yet thought seriously about anything except literature, music and Sri Ramakrishna Paramhamsa. But in England the *grande passion* of everyone then was

politics and socialism. So I had to memorise a few phrases hollow enough to sound resounding, without being at all clear about their meaning or implications. But now I felt myself in deep waters, and, terribly scared about being drowned, I fought bravely with weak strokes of a bad swimmer.

"I mean," I said, "that our Bengal revolutionary movement in the Swadeshi days was primarily an underground one, don't you agree?"

"What if it was?" he asked looking me full in the face.

I had to rise to the occasion. My whole reputation for intelligence was at stake.

"I mean first, that it was somehow inevitable *then*. But would it be *now?* And secondly....well, I was going to say....even when such a movement didn't deliver the goods—" I floundered hopelessly and gave up.

"That is hardly the way to look at such movements," he chimed in. "You might just as well say that the Sinn Fein movement is a failure also since it hasn't delivered the goods yet. When De Valera was sentenced the other day to death who ever thought that he would be released and then reimprisoned again in 1918 only to escape from Lincoln Jail and visit America where he would raise six million dollars for the Irish Republican movement? A revolutionary movement for national liberation is not like a chance detonation which makes the age-long prison-walls topple once and for all. It is a slow laborious work of building up brick by brick

a citadel of strength without which you can't possibly challenge the powers that be. The Bengal revolutionary movement at the dawn of this century was the first real movement, real in the sense that it gave our helpless prostrate people the first hint about the reality of their own, unaided strength. It was the first movement that created a nucleus of national consciousness, the consciousness that not only have we got the strength in us to struggle against a vastly superior organized power but—how shall I express it—it....it....sort of convinced us that unless we learnt to be the architects of our destiny others were hardly likely to stir a finger to help the orphans. History's verdict is that a nation gets the government it deserves."

I felt infected by the glow of his hot faith while he thus declaimed. But when he had finished I felt again the cold fogs of doubt reborn within.

"Excuse me, Subhash," I said after a pause, "but do you really mean to say that the way to deserve freedom lies through....you know what I mean?"

"Why are you so terrified by the word which begins with a R?" He laughed.

"It isn't quite Revocation I have in mind. It is....terrorism with all its ugly atmosphere of...." I broke down again.

"Dear dear Dilip! As if life was a procession of roses and waterfalls and rainbows and moonbeams. I wish it were. But we, earthlings, are not all artists, Dilip, we have to reckon with hard real-

ity—weekly, daily, hourly reality. I admit it is regrettable even ugly if you will—though it has also a terrible beauty of its own, but maybe that Beauty does not unveil her face except to her devotees: but what would you have? Even Lord Krishna had to devise stratagems when he found the enemy could not be circumvented otherwise.''

''But you forget Krishna had a regular army. We have only tides of patriotic emotion. Fine tides to look at, admitted—but only when they surge ahead. But then—when they recede?''

Subhash suddenly met my eyes straight.

''Did you ever live beside a river?''

''No. Why?''

''Because I happen to know having passed my childhood days in Cuttack. It is very curious though —for you have given a simile which spells your own ruin. For the tides do recede but only to come back again, specially in the rains, with mounting force. I used often to watch in curiosity. They strike the solid walls for some time at flood-tide but, it seems, only to troop away—shame-faced, defeated. After a time they appear again hurtling with a stronger impetus when this play of rising and subsiding is repeated. But the assaulting continues mind you, and the banks, their enemies, get weaker and weaker, imperceptibly—till the fateful day when chunks of them fall plop into the surging eddying tides and the battle is won: where there was a reign of solid land gurgle along radiant, triumphant crests. You take it from me Dilip, that all this isn't mere talk.

It may seem rather quiet now, but it's only the lull before the storm.''

''You mean things are being hatched?''

''Of course. Only this time the birds will not be let off till they are full-fledged. And then there will be such music at that new dawn—won't your artist heart love to lead that chorus?''

His face flushed and looked almost diaphanous in the fire-light. I can recapture even the twitches round his firm lips. My heart beat nineteen to the dozen.

''But let's come down to earth, O artist,'' he smiled. ''Remember Bible: for it won't be only choral choirs of course: there shall be *weeping and gnashing of teeth* as well.''

My heart-beats became unruly.

''But....I mean....are you sure, Subhash?''

''Sure? What do you mean? I know the people, or at any rate, some of them....And I would have joined them too. But frankly, I didn't at the time feel that I could go the whole hog, I mean.'' He paused and there was again that fly-away look in his eyes when he said, somewhat sadly: ''Who knows....we may have to wait yet....till....till the time is ripe.''

I sat like one petrified. He darted a sudden glance of sympathy for my plight and laughed. ''But for this to have been conceivable, Dilip, those stalwarts of the Swadeshi days just *had* to be. And you call them failures? Man alive, can't you imagine the beauty of it all, the appalling beauty of that

courage—of an infant organisation of a tiny handful—which dared to throw the gauntlet to the mighty might of the roaring British lion—O Dilip, it sounds too romantic to be true and yet too....too real to be incredible."

28

YEARS later when during the War I heard rumours about his organising the Indian National Army in Burma I often recalled this memorable scene. Often have I visualised his hard-tender face of that night glowing in the amber light of an English fire-side, grim with determination yet mellow with love and ardour, the like of which I have seldom seen in my life of varied experience. Often have the unruly breezes of my imagination wafted to my ears two of his favourite mottos: Rabindranath's

Life and death wait upon my feet like slaves
And my mind no dark misgiving ever depraves.

And Danton's

*"Pour les vaincre, il nous faut de l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audacc."**

And I could feel it in my veins that he was built of a stuff dreams are made of, and dreams worthy of one who hungered to burn his boats for

* "*To vanquish them we must have audacity, yet more audacity, always audacity*" .....Danton's famous speech at the time of the French Revolution given on 2-9-1791.

an ideal inspired by the ineradicable mysticism in his fearless nature. I know this is likely to be questioned by our modern up-to-dates who have no nonsense about them. These will simply laugh and call my reading tendencious. "Subhash was a revolutionary, all right," they will concede, "but mystic! What arrant nonsense! He was what one would call a robust hero, a practical organizer...." etc.. etc.

But as years passed I have had the good fortune to learn at the feet of the wisest man and the greatest Yogi I have known that not only is the authentic revolutionary a nursling of mysticism but when such a one comes of age he can reach the zenith of his stature in the sky of mysticism alone. This summit evolution may not indeed be reached by him in one life, but once the seed of the revolutionary ardour is sown in an aristocratic blood, the tree of dream cannot rest till it touch the starland of mystics. For these have been on earth the greatest revolutionaries man has ever known. That is why they have been in all ages and in all climes the most misunderstood as well as the most persecuted handful on earth. Misunderstood because they always confound our little moral values and persecuted because we dread nothing as the call to stake our lesser loves for the highest. Subhash's character which I had the privilege to be allowed to scan at close range has convinced me anew of the truth of an early perception of mine of a fundamental kinship between revolutionary ardour and mystic fervour. And it is

because this *is* quintessentially true that he used to oscillate so often between the call of the revolution of consciousness through a spiritual aspiration and that of adventure deep into the heart of the Unknown through organized insurrection against heartless exploitation. I cannot but think—though I kow many will decline to undersign this reading—that Subhash would have risen to far greater heights of self-fulfilment if he had harked to the former call. But since, evidently, he couldn't—or, rather didn't—choose to respond to the profoundest call of his soul, he had to shape in the way he did—*in this life.* As to why one elects to tread the path of a lesser love when the higher lies open before one will perhaps remain a mystery to man till he finally arrives, but whatever be the ultimate solution to this anguished query of the self-haunted soul this much is certain —to quote a quatrain of one of Subhash's most beloved poets, the mystic A.E. of Ireland:

> Though the crushed jewels drop and fade
> The Artist's labour will not cease
> And of the ruins shall be made
> Some yet more lovely masterpiece.

APPENDIX

[Subhash had written to me a number of letters from different prisons before I came to Sri Aurobindo Asram in 1928. Unfortunately these I lost, along with many more valuable letters which I had left in Calcutta. Of these three have, happily, survived through translation—dated, May 2, June 25 and October 9, 1925. The first two had been translated into Bengali and printed in a Bengali monthly entitled *Bangabani* in the Kartic issue of the Bengali era 1333. The last—in a journal whose name I cannot recall from which it was reprinted in my "Anami" a few years later. These I have had to translate back into English, a rather curious procedure, but, I hope, not too unsatisfactory. For though in the English version given here a good deal must have evaporated through what may be described as the process of double distillation, the thought-substance remains. Rabindranath's letter commenting on the last is translated directly from his original Bengali.]

Mandalay Central Jail
2-5-25

My dear Dilip,

I was delighted to receive your letter dated, 24-3-25. It didn't have to reach me this time through a process of "double distillation"—to use your locution, which makes me feel happier still.

Your letter has touched such a tender chord in my heart....that it is not easy for me to give an adequate reply by way of reciprocation. Besides, all I write has to pass through the censor's hands, which, too, acts as a damper. For none cares to see the deepest articulation of his heart published in the light of day open to the scrutiny of all and sundry. So much of what I have been thinking and feeling today behind the stone walls and prison-bars must remain unspoken for ever.

It is quite natural for a man of your susceptibilities to feel outraged that so many should be detained in jail on an unknown charge. But since accept it we must as a fact, we might as well look into the matter from a spiritual standpoint.

I cannot say that I would like to stay in a jail, for that would be unadulterated humbug....The whole atmosphere inside a jail tends, if anything, to pervert and dehumanize a human being; and I believe this must be true of all jails, more or less. I

think the majority of convicts undergo a moral deterioration while in prison. After having been the guest of so many jails I must confess my eyes have been opened to the urgent need of a radical reform of prison-life and in future I will feel obligated to help bring about such a reform. Indian jail regulations are a bad imitation of a bad model—the British, even as the university of Calcutta is a bad imitation of London.

What is most urgently called for is a new outlook based on sympathy for the convict. His wrong impulses must be regarded as symptomatic of a psychological derangement and remedies should be devised accordingly. The penalising mood which may well be assumed to be the inspiration of jail prescriptions has to give place to a new orientation guided by a flair for true reform.

I do not think I could have looked upon a convict with the authentic eye of sympathy had I not lived personally as a prisoner. And I have not the least doubt that the production of our artists and literateurs, generally, would stand to gain in ever so many ways could they win to some new experience of the prison-life. We do not perhaps realise the magnitude of the debt owed by Kazi Nazrul Islam's verse to the living experience he had of jails.

When I pause to reflect calmly I feel the stirring of a certitude within that some vast Purpose is at work in the core of our fevers and frustrations. Could only this faith preside over every moment of our conscious life wouldn't our suffering lose its

LLOYD TRIESTINO

Dilip Kumar.

Pro.. Gange

5/3/33

My dear Dilip.

I have not written to you for a long time though you have been good enough to write to me nevertheless During the months of January and February I was passing through a species of mental torture, owing to the repeated pinpricks of the Govt and till the last, it was not sure at all that I would be able to leave for Europe for treatment Owing to the vindictive policy of the Govt: it was not possible for me to meet my relatives or my friends Only a few ~~friends~~ were allowed to interview me in Yerwada Jail. Many friends came from distant places to Bombay to interview me, but they had to return disappointed. The Police officers who escorted me up to the Boat, surrounded me like a pack of hounds till the ship actually sailed from the harbour. These pinpricks which continued till the moment of my sailing from Bombay caused me intense pain

However, I do not think I should worry you with these petty affairs. It was so good of you to feel so keenly for me all the time that I was suffering in custody. And it was so

unexpected — because you are supposed to have "given up the world" and taken to yoga. To be quite frank, my dear Dilip, quite apart from yoga and spirituality —— your intensely "human" feeling for me has profoundly moved me that you — who are supposed to have forsaken all earthly affairs and to have taken leave of erstwhile friends — should feel so keenly and intensely for one as my position — was altogether unexpected.

In one of your letters, you asked me about my attitude towards "Shiva" — or something to that effect. To be quite frank, I am torn ~~away~~ this side and that — between my love for Shiva and Kali/Durga and Krishna. Though they are fundamentally one — one does prefer one symbolism to another. I have found that my moods vary — and according to my prevalent mood, I choose one of the three forms — Shiva, Kali/Durga and Krishna. Of these three again, the struggle is between Shiva and Shakti Shiva, the ideal Yogi, has a fascination for me and Kali the mother also makes an appeal to me (i.e. for the last 4 or 5 years) You see, of late, I have become a believer in "mantra Shakti" by which I mean that certain "mantras" have an inherent "Shakti". Prior to that, I had the ordinary rationalistic view viz. that mantras are like symbols and they are aids to concentration.

But my study of Tantra philosophy gradually convinced me that certain "mantras" or Stavas had an inherent "shakti" — and each mental constitution was fitted for a particular "mantra". Since then, I have tried my best to find out what my mental constitution is like and which mantra I would be suited for. But so far I have failed to find that out because my moods vary and I am sometimes a Devi sometimes a Yogi and sometimes a Deva. I think it is here that the Guru becomes useful — because the real guru knows more about ourselves than we do — and he could at once tell us what mantra we should take up and which method of worship we should follow

To come back to matters mundane now. I reach Venice tomorrow. From there I proceed to Vienna to consult doctors there thereafter I shall probably go to some Swiss Sanatorium.

The voyage was a fairly pleasant one up to Port Said as the sea was calm. Since passing Port Said we have encountered very rough weather. My troubles (like abdominal pain) are still persisting - but nevertheless I have been feeling somewhat better. Before we reached Port Said I had been

feeling decidedly better but the rough weather
has upset me since we entered the Mediterranean
Sea.

I shall stop here today as the Nothing
is making writing somewhat difficult

With warmest love

Yours

Subhas

poignancy and bring us face to face with the ideal bliss even in a dungeon? But that is not possible yet, generally speaking. That is why this duel must go on unremittingly between the soul and the body.

Usually a kind of philosophic mood instils strength into our hearts in prison surroundings. In any event, I have taken my station there and what little I have read of philosophy superadded to my conception of life in general has stood me rather in good stead here. If a man can find sufficient food for contemplation then his incarceration need hardly hurt him much unless of course his health desert him. But our suffering is not merely spiritual—there is the rub—the body too has a say in the business, so that even when the spirit was willing the flesh might be weak. Lokamanya Tilak wrote out his commentary on the Gita while in prison. I can say with certainty that he spent his days in mental happiness. But withal, his premature death was as certainly attributable to his six years' detention in Mandalay Jail.

But the enforced solitude in which a detenu passes his days gives him an opportunity to think down into the ultimate problems of life. In any event I can claim this for myself that many of the most tangled questions which whirl like eddies in our individual and collective life are edging gradually to the estuary of a solution. The things I could only puzzle out feebly or the views I could only offer tentatively in days gone by are crystallizing out more and more presentably from day to day. It is for

this reason if for no other that I feel I will be spiritually a gainer through my imprisonment.

You have given my detention the same of martyrdom. This only testifies to the sympathy native to your character as also to your nobility of heart. But since I have *some* sense of humour and proportion—I hope so anyway—I can hardly arrogate to myself the martyr's high title. Against hauteur and conceit I want to be sleeplessly vigilant. How far I have achieved this it is for my friends to judge. At all events martyrdom can only be an ideal so far as I am concerned.

I have felt that the greatest tragedy for a convict who has to spend long years in prison is that old age creeps upon him unawares. He should therefore be specially on his guard. You cannot imagine how a fellow gets prematurely worn-out in body and mind while serving a long sentence. Doubtless a variety of causes are responsible for this: lack of good food, exercise and life's amenities. segregation, a sense of cramped subordination, dearth of friends and last, though by no means least, absence of music. There are some gaps which a man may fill from within, but there are others which can be only filled from without. To be denied these is not a little responsible for ageing before one's time. In the Alipore Jail musical entertainments are provided every week for the European prisoners; not so here, for the likes of us....

I should not omit to mention that to a detenu the goodwill and sympathy of his friends and rela-

tions and the general public can indeed be a source of sustenance. Although the influence of such imponderables is a subtle and subterranean one, yet when I scan myself I realise how it is not a whit the less real for all that. There is here a difference between the hardness of lot of a political prisoner and a common convict. The former is sure of his welcome back into the fold of society. Not so the latter....To me such a state of affairs seems anything but satisfactory. Why shouldn't a civilised community feel for these unhappy men?

I could go on filling pages registering my thoughts and experiences of prison-life. But after all a letter must come to a terminus some time. If I had a surplus of initiative left I might have written a whole book on Indian jails. But just at present I lack the strength adequate to such a task.

I am inclined to think that the suffering in jail-life is less physical than mental. When the blows dealt, of insult and humiliation are not too brutal, the torments of prison-life do not become so hard to bear....But lest we forget too readily our outer material existence and conjure up an ideal world of bliss within, they will deal us these blows to waken us to our bleak and joyless surroundings.

You write you are getting daily a sadder if not a wiser man to contemplate how our earth is soaked by tears of humanity from crust to centre. But then these tears are not all of pain and anguish: there are drops of compassion and love as well. Would you really decline to traverse the shoals of

pain and suffering if you knew there were richer tides of bliss waiting? So far as I am concerned I see little warrant for pessimism or despondency. On the contrary, I feel, sorrow and suffering should impel us to courage for a higher fulfilment. Do you think what you win without pain and struggle has any lasting value?

I received the books you had sent. I won't be able to return these as there is a considerable circle of readers here. It is hardly necessary to add that more such books will be welcome—yours being a beautiful choice, always.

Affectionately yours, Subhash.

Mandalay Central Jail,
25-6-25.

My dear Dilip,

After my last letter I have received in all three letters from you so far, dated, May 6, May 15, June 15.

I am in receipt also of the parcel of books you sent, with the sole exception of Turgenev's *Smoke*. The parcel was opened in the office, so I have asked our Superintendent to look into the matter.

I left behind Bertrand Russell's *Prospects of Industrial Civilization* in Berhampore whence I was transferred here. Quite a group of my fellow prisoners were eager about keeping the book. But Russell's *Free Thought And Official Propaganda* isn't with me. You never sent it, did you?

I thank you, Dilip, for selecting the books for me. We all hope the work you have started will fare famously, God willing. I need hardly tell you that your own writing I will read with the respect it deserves. But do see to the get-up of your books, for it should leave nothing to be desired.

You can imagine what dominates my thought today. I believe there is but one thought in all minds now: the death of our great Deshbandhu. When I first read the news in print I could hardly credit my eyes. But alas, the report is cruelly true. Ours is indeed an ill-starred nation.

The thoughts that are running riot in my mind today must remain unvoiced although sometimes I feel like publishing them if only to get some reprieve. But they are too sacred and precious to be shared with strangers—and the Censor is worse than a stranger. So I will only say that if for the country the loss is irreparable, for the youth of Bengal it is cataclysmic, appalling.

I am desolate with a sense of bereavement. For I feel so vividly near to the great departed in the world of memory that it is impossible for me just now to write something about him analysing his great qualities. I hope when the time comes I will be able to give the world some idea of the glimpses I had of him in his unguarded moments as I watched him at close range. There must be a good many like me who, though they know a great deal about him, yet do not feel equal to writing about it all lest

through vocal praise, they diminish the stature of his outstanding nobility.

When you say, roundly, that the last residue of pain and sorrow is not suffering, I am at one with you. There are certain tragedies in life—like the one mentioned just now—which I cannot acclaim. Being neither a sage nor a humbug I cannot declare that all kinds of affliction are acceptable to me. At the same time it has often made me pause to think that there are a few unfortunates (they may indeed be fortunate for all we know!) who seem to be born as targets for flings of Fate of every description. But leaving aside this question of degree I may say that if some must drain to the dregs the cup of sorrow it were better if they drank the potion in a spirit of self-surrender. For even if we admit that such a spirit may not withstand, like a Chinese wall, the assaults of destiny, it must, for all that, greatly heighten our natural powers of fortitude. When Russell says there are tragedies which men would be spared if they could, he only speaks for the typical worldling. For I believe that a stainless saint—or his polar opposite, the mountebank—will disown such a statement.

But I wonder if you are right in holding that those who are neither philosophic nor thoughtful meet in pain nothing but pain. For even the unphilosophic (I call them so from the abstract point of view) may have an idealism of their own which they will cherish and love as a thing to be worshipped. When these are up against pain and sorrow

they derive their courage and hope from their source of adoration. Among those who are with me bearing up against the suffering of jail-life, there are some who are neither thoughtful nor philosophic, and yet they affront pain calmly, even like heroes. These may not be philosophic in the common acceptation of the term, but you can hardly class them as aliens to the world of ideas. Probably this applies more or less to all who activists by temperament, the world over.

My eyes have opened not a little through a study of the criminal psychology. When I was jailed, in 1922, a convict used to work in our yard as a servant. At that time I used to live in the same room with Deshbandhu. His heart of tenderness went all out to the fellow albeit he was an old hand having had already eight previous convictions to his credit. None the less, he felt unconsciously drawn towards Deshbandhu till he became exceedingly attached to his master. When Deshbandhu was released he asked his devotee to go straight to his house at the expiry of his term shunning even the shadow of his old comrades in crime. The poor wretch acquiesced and, subsequently, was as good as his word. You will be surprised to learn that the man who had been a felon all his life has been living in our great leader's house ever since and though he does sometimes revert to his tantrums still, yet roundly, he is today a different man altogether living a harmless enough life with the rest. I have no doubt that he is among those on whom the blow

of this bereavement has fallen at its heaviest. Some say the greatness of a man were best judged through his little acts, little things. On this criterion too Deshbandhu must be adjudged a great soul even if you reckoned without his great service to the country.

I have divagated....I have not been able yet to answer your letter fully. But I shall have to cry halt here if I mean to catch today's mail which I must because I know you will be anxious to have tidings of me. More in my next.

Ever affectionately yours,
Subhash.

Mandalay Central Jail,
9-10-25.

My dear Dilip,

Never think that my vision is narrow or parochial. I do indeed believe in the "greatest good of the greatest number." But that good I do not equate to the purely material. Economists say that all works are either productive or unproductive. But the question which of these are really productive gives rise to furious logomachies. I for one cannot look upon art and its kindred activities as unproductive nor despise philosophic contemplation or spiritual quest as futile and pointless. I may not be an artist myself—to tell you the truth, I know I am not—but for that it isn't I who am responsible, it is Nature or God if you will. Of course if you say

that I am reaping in this birth what I sowed in my last then I go to the wall. Leaving it at that, the real reason, in a nut-shell, why I did not shape into an artist is: I couldn't. But this does not mean, mind you, that a layman is debarred even from enjoying art. And the amount of training necessary to a proper appreciation of an art isn't, I think, hard to acquire for a cultivated person.

Do not sigh regretfully that you have been wasting your days on music when, to put it in Shakespeare's language, "the time is out of joint." Flood our whole countryside, my friend, with songs and recapture for life the spontaneous joy we have forfeited. He who has no music in his composition, whose heart is dead to music is unlikely to achieve anything big or great in life. Carlyle used to say that he who had no throb of music in his blood was capable of any misdeed. Whether this be true or no, I am persuaded that he who cannot respond to music can never scale heights of thought or action. We want that the experience of *ananda*—sheer causeless delight—should quicken every drop of our blood, because we only create in the fullness of *ananda*. And what is there that can outwell *ananda* like music?

But we must make the artistic and its kindred joys amenable to the poorest of the poor. High research in music will, of necessity, continue in small expert coteries, but simultaneously, music must be dispensed as a spiritual pabulum of the masses. Just as the high ideals of art are stultified through lack

of adequate research, even so art must wilt when, sundered from the life-soil of the masses, it is made inaccessible to all and sundry. I think art joins up with life through folk-music and folk-dance. The Western civilization has hewed away this isthmus between the two continents, of art and life, without substituting anything in its place. Our *jatra, kathakata, kirtan** etc. survive today almost as relics of the past. One shudders to think of the poverty of life that must ensue if our artists and musicians fail to restore the connection between art and life. You may remember I told you once how fascinated I had been by the beauty of the *gambhira* music of Maldah. In it music is happily blended with dance. I do not know of any other province in Bengal where such a happy union has been effected. But in Maldah it is sure to die away soon unless, first, new vitality be injected into it and in the second place, people in other parts of Bengal come forward to take it up. You ought to visit the place once if only to give a fillip to the folk-music of Bengal. I warn you though that *Gambhira* has little or no element of complexity or grandeur about it. Its salient features are spontaneity and simplicity. Our indigenous music and dance of the people still survive, I think, in Maldah alone. So those who would revive such folk-art may as well start work from there.

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* *Jatra* = folk-dramas played in the open under a pandal where there is no stage set, the audience and the actors occupying the same level area. *Kirtan* = devotional dramatic music where Krishna and Radha figure in the main. *Kathakata* = mythological sagas or legends recited by pundits alternated with songs.

From the point of view of folk-music and folk-dance Burma is a marvellous country. Pure native dance and music is in full swing here and they cater for tens of thousands zigzagging deep into the heart of remote villages. After having mastered the different idioms of our Indian music you may as well study the Burmese. It may not be an evolved art, but its capacity of delighting the illiterate poor has somehow, appealed to me. I am told that their dance too is very beautiful. Furthermore, its art is not confined to select coteries, because, I imagine, there is no caste system in Burma. (As a result art here has infiltrated everywhere.) And probably also because folk-music and folk-dance have always had a tremendous vogue in this country. So the common folk have won to a deeper understanding of beauty than the Indian.

I echo all you write about Deshbandhu as also your remark that the innate nobility of a man shines better through little private incidents of his life than through his public activities or political achievements caught up in the lime-light. In fact I gave him my heart's deep adhesion and reverent love not so much because I happened to be his follower in the arena of politics, as because I had come to know him rather intimately in his private life. He had no family, properly speaking, outside that of his colleagues and adherents. Once we lived together in jail for eight months: for two months in the same cell, for six in adjacent ones. I took

refuge under his feet because I came to know him thus through a very close relationship.

I subscribe to most of what you write about Sri Aurobindo, if not to all. He is a *dhyani* (a contemplative) and, I feel, goes even deeper than Vivekananda, though I have a profound reverence for the latter. So I agree with you when you say that one may from time to time—and on occasion for a long spell—remain withdrawn in silent contemplation in perfect seclusion. But here there *is* a danger: the active side of a man might get atrophied if he remained cut off for too long from the tides of life and society. This need not indeed apply to a handful of authentic seekers of uncommon genius, but the common run, the majority, ought, I think, to take to action in a spirit of service as the main plank of their *sadhana*. For a variety of reasons our nation has been sliding pauselessly down to the zero line in the sphere of action; so what we badly need today is a double dose of the activist serum, *rajas*.

I say ditto to you again when you say that each of us must strive to develop his powers to their fulness. Real service is only achieved when we dedicate what is the best in our composition. Not till our inner being, our *swadharma*, has fulfilled itself, shall we have won through to our inalienable right, *adhikar*, to what I call real service. To put it in the language of Emerson, we must be moulded from within. This does not mean that we all have to tread the same path, though it is possible that the same ideal may inspire us all. The artist's *sadhana*

is not the same as the activist's, no more than the contemplative's *sadhana* is the same as the savant's though I think, in the last analysis, the ideals of all are one. But in the practical field of self-realisation I wouldn't put a round peg in a square hole. One who was true to oneself could hardly be false to humanity. The nature of each must indicate the clue to the path that is his, the path that leads to his self-amelioration and self-expansion. If each of us could fulfil himself following his native capacity and temperament then a new sunrise would outbreak over the entire life of the nation. It is indeed possible that a man may have to lead, during a particular phase of his *sadhana*,* a life which looks on the surface like selfishness or ego-centricism. But while he is passing through that phase he must follow the dictates of his own conscience—not those of public opinion. The public shall not judge till the results of the *sadhana* are published. Consequently, once you choose to tread the true path of self-unfoldment you may well ignore public opinion. So you see we are much less at variance with each other than you seem to think.

Yours ever affectionately,

Subhash.

Dilip,

I was very glad to receive your letter. Subhash's letter is very beautiful. I was delighted to contact

* *Sadhana* :: originally, spiritual discipline, askesis; now-a-days it has come to mean any disciplined endeavour for a high ideal.

through it his heart and intellect. All that he has written about art is unexceptionable. Artists and connoisseurs build their towers on the summit plateaus of art. It is idle to hope that all and sundry will climb up there easily. It is because multi-coloured and multi-savoured clouds confer there on the heights that the plains get the benefit of their fertilising showers. It is only in this way that the commonalty join hands with the rare spirits which cannot be achieved if you dwarf the heights so that these may always mate with the plains. Those who are creators of *rasa** could only take orders from all on penalty of shipwreck. They can take orders from none other than the Supreme Resident of the heart, and once this is done, when they succeed in fashioning things of beauty for all times, then these must come automatically within the right of enjoyment of all. To say that all have this right is not to say that all can profit by it here and now—good things are not so cheap as all that. The spring blooms petal indeed equally for all, but can one therefore argue that they are appreciated by all? Can one blame it upon the poor mango-blossoms which open after winter if the majority ignore them? Shall we say to them: "Why couldn't you become gourds?"—or: "In a poor country it were silly to grow jasmines since there it is the moral

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* *Rasa* = the essence of things whose nature is to afford delight. The word has been translated also as aesthetic emotion which inspires ecstacy. Originally the word was almost synonymous with *ananda* (*e.g.*, *raso vai sah* = he is the essence of *ananda*, bliss) but such words (ananda, rasa, sadhana, swadharma, samskara, bhava, etc.) are untranslatable in the last analysis: the only way to understand them is to enter into the associations that have crystallized round them.

duty of all flowers to yield place to brinjals?'' I say: may the jasmine wait for ages till the philistine who ignores today may learn to respond properly rather than try to change herself overnight into tamarind, disheartened by the disapproval of humanitarians. If you respect the masses and go on supplying them with things of quality then by and by their minds grow more and more sensitive to the quality. Let us appeal to the poet: ''May you give us only of your very best, without an afterthought:'' And to the public, should the poet so succeed: ''May you learn to accept what is of the very best.'' Those who are artists and creators of *rasa* can only own to two distinctions: authentic or counterfeit, good or bad: they do not distinguish between the élite's food and the rabble's. It is popularly broadcast that Shakespeare was a poet of the common man. But *is* Hamlet? I do not know for which type Kalidas wrote his poetry, but he is universally accepted as a *poet*. But there again may I ask whether it would not be a penal offence if his *Cloud-messenger* were to be recited in every village to a gathering of gaping yokels. Had the Advocate of the Common Man dethroned King Vikramaditya and constrained his court-poet Kalidas to compose to order, then do you thing the Lord of Eternity would have tolerated the doggerel that would have supplanted *Cloud-messenger?* If you asked me for a solution to this poser I would say that the *Cloud-messenger* was meant for the delectation of the common man but it is part of the presiding élite's obliga-

tion to make him alive to his right of enjoyment. But the poet is *not* obligated to strike sparks of cheap assonance in place of his love-lyrics because these will not go down with the common man. Affection is reprehensible everywhere, but to contend that whatever is easily comprehensible to all is unaffected and what only appeals to a cultivated sensibility is the reverse is to argue like a sophist. It is because we have little reverence for the commonalty that in a festivity of *rasa* we prescribe for them a cheap repast of curd and fried rice and reserve the delicacies for those we call aristocrats. Because we pooh-pooh children, the task of turning out juvenile literature is devolved on blunt literary boors who fancy that to ape the infantile lisping is to create literature for infants. I respect children and that is why I provide real literature for them when I teach them in my school—literature meant for everybody's enjoyment. Of course I have to take care that they may be able to take in the *rasa* of the literature provided but I can't confess to having failed here. I need hardly have laboured the point to *you*, but when garrulity ripens into a habit one seldom knows where to halt when discoursing with friends. Anyhow, you have delighted me so much by sending me Subhash's letter that for sheer gratefulness I had to write at such unconscionable length notwithstanding a gash I made in my first finger a little while ago.

Yours affectionately,
Rabindranath Tagore.