

A LOVER OF LIGHT AMONG LUMINARIES

DILIP KUMAR ROY

L. D. Series : 132

General Editor

Jitendra B. Shah

Dr. Amrita Paresh Patel



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Published By

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Director

**L. D. Institute of Indology
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Foreword

We are glad to publish Dr. Amrita Paresh Patel's doctoral thesis under the title : **A Lover of Light among Luminaries : Dilip Kumar Roy**, which is the first systematic study of a genuine seeker of Truth, Dilip Kumar Roy (1897-1980). He was brought up in one of the most cultured families of Bengal. Educated at the Cambridge University, he preferred music to civil services and received musical training in France, Italy and India, too. His search for Truth brought him into contact with many renowned intellectual and spiritual personalities of his times, like Bertrand Russell, Romain Rolland, Ronald Nixon (Sri Krishnaprem), Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Swami Ramdas, etc. He recorded the "jewelled sayings" of these **luminaries** in his Bengali as well as English books.

Dr. Amrita Paresh Patel, through her assiduous research, has derived that the chief object of Dilip Roy in writing numerous books, was not to cultivate different forms of literature for the sake of literary art, but it was to enlighten himself and his readers by presenting the concrete examples of those great spiritual dignitaries. The other intention, as many of his English books were published from America and Europe, was to show the peculiarities of the Indian spiritual tradition to the western readers.

Dr. Patel has found that Dilip Roy himself was a saint, oriented towards ancient wisdom, via the modern mystic philosophers. He loved greatness wherever it appeared. Persistent singing of the glory of the great transformed him also in due course into a genuine saint who had been, in a moderate sense, himself a philosopher. As Dr. Amrita Patel's work elucidates the literature of such a distinguished writer, it deserves publication.

We congratulate her for accomplishing the task of doing balanced and impartial research work after referring to various books on spirituality and literary criticism.

As a greater spiritual aspiration is the need of the hour, the present study, it is hoped, will create in inquisitive readers and seekers after spirituality an awareness about Dilip Roy's message and its continued relevance for all times.

We thank 'Neel Design' for neat type-setting. Our thanks are due, similarly, to Navprabhat Printing Press, for beautiful printing.

March 15, 2002

Ahmedabad.

Jitendra B. Shah

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PREFACE

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual and intellectual stature and his exceptional command of the English language have impressed number of scholars of global culture and attracted them with their various disciplines to the study of his voluminous work. I, too, with a moderate amount of learning and a keen desire to learn more about Sri Aurobindo had been contemplating a doctoral work of some sort on his plays or poems or prose. But then I realized that it was almost impossible for me to attain a fresh insight into Sri Aurobindo's work what with so many scholarly published and unpublished dissertations and theses of the universities in India and abroad.

I felt then that if I intend to do a meaningful work in the area of Sri Aurobindo-scholarship now, I must turn to some eminent disciples of his. K. D. Sethna, Nirodbaran, Dilip Kumar Roy, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Nishikanto are some of the well-known names. How can the tradition of Sri Aurobindo-scholarship ignore them if it has to go ever further and forward to enrich itself progressively ?

When I thus turned to the works of Dilip Kumar Roy, I found them too serious to escape easily critical notice. He is a versatile writer and a determined pilgrim of eternity. We discover in his works an expression of a sincere and burning quest of true spiritual knowledge, an authentic account of his encounters with great men of the East and the West, sweet and poetic prose and a strange vitality of style. A doctoral research on him is not only possible but also necessary in the interest of scholarship. In fact, he requires a number of thematic and stylistic studies. Yet, to my surprise, I discovered that his work has received no serious critical attention that it deserves so far. Hence, this thesis about an aspect of his literary art evident in his numerous biographies and an autobiography. A study of Dilip Kumar Roy, inevitably, though indirectly, also becomes a study of Sri Aurobindo, too. Hence, my work, I trust, prove to be supplemental to Sri Aurobindo-scholarship.

As critical books on Dilip Roy, to the best of my knowledge, have not yet been written, for some critical help I turned to a few old disciples of Sri Aurobindo, who had been Roy's contemporaries, and who, except Jayantilal Parekh, are still luckily for me alive. I have tape-recorded their conversations and presented them here as Appendix A. I also met Indira Devi, Roy's daughter-disciple, and have reproduced here conversation with her as Appendix B.

Dr. Jagdish Chandra Dave, (Professor and Head, Department of English, North Gujarat University, Patan) my supervisor, with his unusual scholarship and patience, guided my thought processes and inspired me to work when at times certain diffidence and dullness temporarily seized my soul. I gratefully

acknowledge his contribution to the making of this thesis. I thank Mrs. Vasantika J. Dave for constantly and lovingly inspiring me to finish the work in time.

I do not know if I should acknowledge my indebtedness to my husband, Paresh K. Patel, for his constant support to me all throughout the strenuous period of my work. All that I can say is that he has proved to be truly the other and better half of my self. I am obliged to my mother—Prabhavati Kapadia—for her constant goading to me to complete my work as early as possible. She enabled me to concentrate my entire mind on my work, by taking upon herself the responsibility of looking after all the household work. I thank my parents-in-law—Prof. Kanjibhai M. Patel and Prof. Jaliniben Patel—who have shown keen interest in my work. How can I forget Javanya, my ten year old son, who patiently suffered my work and inability to pay proper attention to him during the period ? I am truly thankful to him, for he always waited and never complained until I finished my work and was free to look after him properly again.

My thanks are due to Prof. N. V. Patel, Principal, Uma Arts & Nathiba Commerce Women's College, Gandhinagar, who permitted me to do my research work and helped me in many other ways.

I am grateful to Mr. Manibhai Prajapati, the librarian, North Gujarat University, Patan, for not only lending the books generously from the University Library, but also for making relevant books available to me from various other sources. I thank similarly Miss Mayuriben Patel, the librarian, Uma Arts & Nathiba Commerce Women's College, Gandhinagar, for her help.

When L. D. Institute of Indology, which has been devoted to the promotion of Indian culture, art and philosophy for last forty five years, accepted this thesis for publication, I found myself rewarded. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Jitendrabhai Shah, Director, L. D. Institute of Indology, for considering my proposal with a kind of seriousness and sympathy that any scholar may need and reasonably expect, and for sanctioning financial support for the publication of my doctoral thesis in a reworked form.

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Dr. Amrita Paresh Patel

PART ONE

Introduction

1 : DILIP KUMAR ROY

Dilip Kumar Roy (1897-1980) was one of the leading lights of the Indian Renaissance. The son of Dwijendralal Roy, a great Bengali dramatist, he was brought up in one of the most cultured families of Bengal. Educated at Calcutta and Cambridge Universities, he preferred music to the Civil Service and received musical training in France and Italy before returning to India. After returning to India, he also learnt Indian classical music. As a singer and musician of both Indian and European schools, Dilip Roy had few peers. Moreover, his search for truth brought him into contact with most of the great intellectuals of his times, like Bertrand Russell, Romain Rolland, Rabinranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi.

At the age of 31, he was initiated into spiritual discipline of Integral Yoga by Sri Aurobindo. He became one of the closest disciples of the master. Sri Aurobindo wrote more than four thousand letters to Dilip Roy till he passed away in 1950. In 1949, with the permission of Sri Aurobindo, he accepted Indira Devi as his daughter-disciple and began to stay at their temple-house, Hari Krishna Mandir in Pune in 1953, where till 1980 he passed his time singing devotional songs and inspiring number of people to live the life of love of Krishna.

Three traits of Dilip Roy's personality clearly emerge from his writings. He was primarily a seeker after spiritual truth. Secondly, he was an eminent musician of his time. Thirdly, he was a literary artist, too. Keshav Malik observes

“Musician, biographer, lyricist, dramatist, novelist, Vaishnavite devotee, Dilip Kumar Roy was all rolled into one”¹

Dilip Roy was a bilingual poet and writer who published his works both in Bengali and English. He was the author of more than seventy five books in Bengali and twenty four books in English. A quick glance at his Bengali works will be helpful in getting an idea of his prolific writings. It includes his novels, *Du dhara* (1927), *Aghatan ajo ghate* (1956), *Aghataner purbarag* (1966) and *Aghataner sobhayatra* (1967).

His other works, *Anami* (1933), *Edeshe odeshe* (1941), *Pratidiner tire* (1942), *Aurobindo prasange* (1942), *Abar Vrammaman* (1944), *Uadashi Dwijendralal* (1945), *Chhayar aloy* (1947), *Bhagvati giti* (1949), *Bhuswarga chanchal* (1949), *Vikharini rajkanya* (1952), *Mahanuyab Dwijendralal* (1966), *Dhusar rangin* (1967), *Yugashri Sri Aurobindo* (1967), *Madhur murali* (1968), *Dharma Vijnan O Sri Aurobindo* (1970), *Smritir sesh pathay* (1974) and *Ganga tire gitali* (1976), are among his memoirs, songs, travelogues and critical writings. His detailed treatise *Chhandosiki*, published in 1940, is a work of Bengali prosody. *Apad*, a collection of three one-act plays, viz. *Apad*, *Triankik* and *Jalatanka* published in 1934 and *Sad-a-Kolo*, a religious play published in 1940, established him as a playwright.

His English works are not less important. Many of them are translated from Bengali into English by the author himself. They may be described as good examples of transcreations.

Among his English works, *Upward Spiral* and *Miracles Do Still Happen* are his mystic novels. *Wings and Bonds* is again his novel which deals with the soul's evolution through the vicissitudes of its eternal God-quest opposed by the earth-pull of lesser loves.

Among the Great, Six Illuminates of Modern India, Sri Aurobindo Came to Me, In Memoriam Saint Gurudayal, Yogi Sri Krishnaprem, Netaji the Man:Reminiscences, The Subhash I Knew are the result of his contact with great persons not only of India but also of the world. *Sri Chaitanya, Mira* and *Mira in Brindaban* are his poetic plays in blank verse. *Eyes of Light* and *Hark! His Flute* his short poems are collected.

The Flute Calls Still, The Rounding Off, and Kumbha:India's Ageless Festival are replete with spiritual visions and experiences of Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi.

Pilgrims of the Stars is an autobiography, written by Dilip Roy and Indira Devi.

Dilip Roy was also a translator of other writers' works. Sarat Chandra Chatterji's *Mothers and Sons* and Dwijendralal Roy's *Fall of Mevar* are his translations from Bengali into English. He published his translation of Sanskrit couplets of *the Gita* into English blank verse in *The Bhagavat Gita:A Revelation*. *The Immortals of the Bhagavat* is the translation of a selection of tales from the *Bhagavat* rendered in free English verse by Roy.

Many of his works like *Yogi Sri Krishanprem, Miracles Do Still Happen* and *Among the Great* are translated into foreign languages like Spanish, French, Portuguese, German etc. and also into a number of regional languages of India like Gujarati, Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu and so on.

Dilip Roy's works published in Hindi are chiefly on music and Mira Songs. His *Geetashri, Sangitiki* and *Suranjali* are enriched with musical notations. His *Bhavanjali, Deepanjali, Shrutanjali, Premanjali, Sudhanjali, Vibhanjali* and *Ushanjali* contain songs of Mira dictated to him by Indira Devi, soon after her experiences of *bhava samadhi*.

His books, as they came out, were welcomed all over the world by the pilgrims of eternity. Some of his books saw four editions in two years and were ranked as the best-sellers in the book-market. This is the proof of his popularity. H.V.Kamath in his Foreword to Dilip Roy's *Six Illuminates of Modern India* writes :

"A book by Shri Dilip Kumar Roy needs no Foreword. His is a name to conjure with in the world of letters, of poetry and mystical

lore. For well over half a century, he has been a prolific, distinguished writer, and has attained such an eminence in the domain of English as well as Bengali literature that a Foreword to his book is almost like holding a candle to the sun.”²

But it seems that such a popular writer has not succeeded much in attracting the attention of modern Indo-English literary critics. Though K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar³ has taken a serious note of Dilip Roy’s work as a dramatist, poet and biographer, M.K. Naik⁴ has just mentioned Dilip Roy’s *Among the Great* as one of the excellent literary biographies of the period. It is surprising that writers of the survey books of Indian literature in English have ignored a powerful litterateur of Dilip Roy’s eminence. It should easily strike to anyone who reads his works that in many ways he is unique and extraordinary. His genius is nourished by the classics of the East and the West, by the Bengali, English and French. A special synthesis of the best of the East and the West is realized in his mental make up. He is not only a voracious reader, but also a prolific writer. All forms of literature he has tried—fiction, poetry, drama, biography, autobiography and essay. In each one of them he is free from imitation and strongly himself. There are notable positive features in his literature and equally notable flaws. He could be described as a good stylist, too. His English is mellifluous and poetic. It is the expression of his personality even like the content of his writing. It would be certainly a fruitful exercise to subject it to stylistic analysis also, if somebody thinks it fit to try. In a way, he is a class by himself, and not easily comparable with any other writer in the literature in English in India or elsewhere.

This project aims at satisfying the want of systematic study of Dilip Roy’s work. It endeavours to realize in critical terms the portrait of this great artist with his singular features. It is difficult to deal with the huge body of his works in all its aspects in a single book. The work would be too unwieldy if one tried to do it. Therefore, it is better to isolate a particular genre from it and to concentrate on its elucidation at length. Hence, the project confines itself only to the study of Dilip Roy’s biographical and autobiographical writings available in English.

Notes :

1. Keshav Malik, “Roy, Dilip Kumar,” *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature*, ed. Mohan Lal (New Delhi:Sahitya Academi, 1991), IV, 3706.
2. H. V. Kamath, “Foreword”, in Dilip Kumar Roy, *Six Illuminates of Modern India* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1982), p. v.
3. K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger, *Indian Writing in English*, 5th ed. (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1999), pp. 239, 616-619.
4. M.K. Naik, *A History of Indian English Literature* (1982; rpt. New Delhi:Sahitya Academi, 1989), p. 138.

2 : THE LIFE-HISTORIES AND THEIR RELEVANCE

A biography means an account of an individual's life. It was Dryden who introduced the word biography into the English language in 1683 and defined it as "the history of particular men's lives."¹ It is thought of, at times, as a part of 'non-imaginative literature.' It is also called 'non-fictional prose.' Many critics think that biography is different from other literary forms like novel and describe it as a 'non-literary form.' In our times, however, both history and biography are treated by post-structuralists as creatively and imaginatively interpreted and spatially structured narratives. They, too, like other forms of literature, are made to look fictional in character by them.

In ancient Greece and Rome the historians, Tacitus and Suetonius, of the 1st and the 2nd century A.D., had evolved the form of biographical writing. In 110 A.D. Plutarch produced his *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. The book covered twenty-three Greeks and twenty-three Romans, arranged in pairs. His object was to write of the lives of famous persons and also to compare the lives of the greatest men with one another. Later on Shakespeare borrowed plots of many of his plays from Plutarch's *Lives*.

In medieval times the focus of interest had shifted from martial heroes to paragons of piety. Hence, we have here not the lives of conquerors and emperors, but of saints and martyrs. But what we have here is not fully developed biography. It is just hagiography. J. A. Cudon writes about this genre :

"....it is, as a rule, the specialized study of saints, often inspired by veneration. There are two main groups of such works: the literary and liturgical. Notable examples of the literary are: Eusebius of Caesarea's record of the martyrs of Palestine (4th c.); Theodoret's account of the monks of Syria (5th c.)..... the Byzantine Menology (12th c.)-the menology (*q.v.*) being a sort of calendar of the Greek church which incorporates biographies of the saints; the Chronicle of Nestor (c.1113) written by a priest of that name and known as the primary *Russian Chronicle*, the *Golden Legend* of Jacobus a Voragine (13th c.). Liturgical sources are documents, very often calendars (*q.v.*), which record information about devotion paid to saints. These were local as well as universal calendars; also known as martyrologies."²

With renaissance-humanism, humanity of each man became important, and the account of any eminent person became interesting. From the 15th Century

onwards, a steady development in the art of biography is discernible. At the end of the 18th Century appeared Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* (1778) and Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791). With the Romantics inner life, the psychological portrait of the personality concerned, becomes more important. This was hence on an addition to plain historical account After Freud psychoanalytical approach has become more popular, and the biographers seek to relate external action to some internal emotional compulsion.

Thus, one can see that, in the initial stage, the biographers portrayed the character by outward details, then they struggled to get rid of the ethical intention so that they could give truthful portrayal of their subject and ultimately there came about the insistence upon the accuracy of facts.

In the East, biographical literature is not so cultivated as it is in the West. In China, biography was considered a by-product of historical writing produced in the tradition of the 'Historical Records' of Ssu-ma Ch'ei and Pan ku.

"In India it has been the enduring concern for spiritual values and for contemplation or mystical modes of existence that have exerted the deepest influence on literature from the first millennium BC to the present, and this has not provided a milieu suitable to biographical composition."³

However, there are in ancient Sanskrit literature, the instances of biographical writing. The tenth book of *Srimad Bhagavat* is two biographies in one: Krishna and his brother Baldeva. Ashvaghosha's *Buddhacharitam* is clearly a biography. *Lalitvistar*, too, is a biography of Buddha. Other instances are Bana's *Harshacharitam* and Madhavacharya's *Shankar Digvijay*. Biographical material is discernible in the histories and chronicles of the Muslim period, too. But it was all unsystematic and largely eulogistic. We Indians have not been good at history writing, and so we had been poor in the art of biography, too. The real art starts flowering only under the impact of English education and European culture. Here three clear stages could be seen.

In the initial stage of the development of biography in India, its subject was almost a model to be emulated. The religious leaders were depicted with a sense of reverence. The notable biographical works of the time are: Manmath Nath Dutt's *Prophets of Ind* (1894) and Kshetrapal Chakravarthy's *Life of Sri Chaitanya* (1897). Then, in the first half of the twentieth century, historiography became an important form of biography. R. P. Paranjapye's *Life of G.K. Gokhale* (1915), H.P. Mody's *Sir Pherozshah Mehta* (1921), P. C. Ray's *Life and Times of C R Das* (1927), R.P. Masani's *Dadabhai Naoroji :The Grand Old Man of India* (1939) and *Life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western disciples are important examples of this phase. During the third stage of the development

of biography in India, after independence, the lives of freedom fighters were attempted. Hence, political biography flourished in India. Noteworthy biographies of Lokmanya Tilak are those by Ram Gopal (1956), D. V. Tamhanker (1956), S. L. Karandikar (1957), Dhananjay Keer (1959) and N.G. Jog (1963). D.G. Tendulkar's *Mahatma. Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, 8 Vols., N. K. Basil's *My Days with Gandhi* (1953), J. B. Kripalani's *Gandhi: His Life and Thought* (1970) are important studies of Mahatma Gandhi. Biographies of Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Lajpat Rai, Vallabhbhai Patel, Sri Aurobindo and many of lesser eminence are, too, numerous to be listed here. What is obvious in all this is that the Indian biographer has now begun "to evoke an individual caught in the travails of life arising from acute moral, political and social dilemmas."⁴

Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *Scholar Extraordinary: The Life of the Rtn. Hon. F. Max Muller* (1974) is considered to be one of the best examples of Indian biography in English. Krishna Kripalani's *Rabindranath Tagore- A Life* (1962), and K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Sri Aurobindo: A Biography and History* (1945) too are well-documented and reliable. What we have here is the expression of the Indian view and Indian attitude to life and to history and to great men of India. But one can not help feeling that we do not see objectively men as men and do not try to see their realistic portraits. Unwittingly perhaps we glorify and idealize what is small and ordinary as truly great and blind ourselves to obvious faults. I do not recollect having read an Indian biography by an Indian with an authentic psychoanalytical approach. One may feel that a detailed comparative study of Indian and Western approaches to biography is very necessary.

We discern salient features of biography as it is practised all over the world today :

1. Biography can be called a branch of history when the author's aim is to record the outward events of the life of a person of eminence from his birth to death.
2. Biography assumes the form of hagiography when the biographer generally talks of the life of a pious or religious person with an attitude of reverence and refuses to see authentic and accurately produced picture of the life of that person. From the earliest medieval lives of the saints to the Modern portraits of the Victorian persons, biography was used as a source of moral instruction.
3. Biographies in the modern times are written from the view point of scientific objectivity. The biographer feels that he is quite capable of claiming that he is concerned with 'truth': not truth as a philosophical aesthetic concept, but truth in terms of demonstrable facts.

4. In the twentieth century, biographers in the West have used the psychological theories and practice of Sigmund Freud to come to know the 'truth' that may be existing in the personalities of their subjects. The explicit and enthusiastic use of the psychological method can be found in Katherine Anthony's *Margaret Fuller* (1920) and Joseph Wood Kruch's study of Edgar Allan Poe (1920). Leon Edel, in his biography, *Henry James* (1953-72), has used sophisticated psychoanalytic techniques satisfactorily.
5. In modern times, the complete objectivity on the part of the biographer, while giving the life of the subject, is emphasised. Writers like Carlos Baker and Bernard Crick have rejected in their works the great tradition of life-writing, balanced appraisal and psychological insight used by English biographers. Bernard Crick writes :

“None of us can enter another person’s mind; to believe so is fiction. We can only know an actual person by observing their [sic] behaviour in a variety of different situations and through different perspectives.”⁵

But it is felt by the critics that such objective biographical studies have exhibited a clumsy style, an absence of interpretation and a lack of perception.

6. As against this, certain biographers as Leon Edel (*Henry James*), Richard Ellman (*James Joyce*) and George Painter (*Marcel Proust*) have not remained totally objective. They have developed a kind of familiarity and intimacy with their subjects while trying to interpret minds. This is because they believe that, the authenticity of material in biography, springs from the close affinity between the biographer and his subject. Such a biographer often gives autobiographical details in his work.

This intimacy between the biographer and his subject produced two classics in biographical literature during the 18th century, viz. Johnson's *Life of Richard Savage* (1744) and Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791). According to Dr. Johnson, biography is essentially moralistic, but the moral is taught not through so called great events of the life of the subject but through 'the minute details of daily life' (*The Rambler* No. 60) He adds :

“Nobody can write the life of a man, but those who have eat (eaten) and drunk and lived in social intercourse with him.”⁶

Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* is regarded as a standard biography. What we see here is a balanced approach. Boswell does not blind himself to the facts that stare him in the face. But he also venerates and worships his hero. He is thus at once objective and subjective, misses no fact.

however unpalatable, and does not conceal his emotions. He has, consequently, succeeded in giving the readers a strong sense of Johnson's physical presence, and a correct idea of his living relationship with him. Though Boswell did not spend much time in Johnson's company, he has sustained his narrative anecdotes collected from friends and from Johnson's reminiscences and correspondence. Close acquaintance with the subject enabled Boswell to create his work which made both the author the subject immortal. It established the norms of biography as a literary form.

Yet Boswell's love of Johnson is not acceptable to Victorian notion of objectivity. According to it such closeness of relationship reduces the authenticity of the account. Victorians disapproved commemorative biography attempted particularly by a relative of its subject as in John Gibson Lockhart's biography of his father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott.

7. The tendency to avoid panegyric is becoming ever stronger in modern times. The readers now do not demand idealised biography. They want a truthful account, 'the life's tangled skein, good and ill together'. Walt Whitman, for instance, asked Horace Traubel :

"Some day you will be writing about me: be sure to write about me honest: whatever you do do not prettify me: include all the hells and damns... I have hated so much of the biography in literature because it is so untrue: look at our national figures how they are spoiled by liars: by the people who think they can improve on God Almighty's work—who put on an extra touch here, there, here again, there again, until the real man is no longer recognisable."⁷

8. And, biography, finally, parts company with history, morality and mere psychological analysis or even objective research and assumes the form of art when the biographer, through mastery of the material gives a complete and accurate synthesis of all the facts about the private as well as public life: friendships, conversation, dress, habits, tastes, food etc. Such biographer makes a selection—not merely a collection—of significant and relevant details and possesses a lively narrative style. He forms a sympathetic identification with the subject and presents a perspective, an interpretation of character. He provides a sensitive evaluation of the subject's achievement. In order to do so, a modern

"...biographer chooses a subject, uses biographical models, does archival research, conducts interviews, interprets evidence, establishes chronology, organizes material into a meaningful pattern and illuminates an author's work through a discussion of his life".⁸

“Biography, while related to history in its search for facts and its responsibility to truth, is truly a branch of literature because it seeks to elicit from facts, by selection and design, the illusion of a life actually being lived. Within the bounds of given data, the biographer seeks to transform plain information into illumination. If he invents or suppresses material in order to create an effect, he fails truth; if he is content to recount facts, he fails art.... His achievement as a biographical artist will be measured, in great part, by his ability to suggest the sweep of chronology and yet to highlight the major patterns of behaviour that give a life its shape and meaning.”⁹

Biographers have been frequently making experiments in the mode of treatment. At times, a biography seeks to reach the sphere of philosophy, or it may try to realize history; it may aim higher still, and including history and philosophy, become a work of an author’s literary criticism, too.

According to the mode of treatment, biography has been classified, tentatively, into certain broad categories:¹⁰

- (i) biographies written from personal knowledge of the subject, and
- (ii) biographies written from research.

We have already referred to the first kind earlier. This type of biography is also called *Source biography* because it preserves original material, the testimony of the biographer and intimate papers of the subject which have proved valuable for later biographers and historians. Tacitus’ life of his father-in-law in the Agricola, William Roper’s life of his father-in-law, Sir Thomas More, John Gibson Lockhart’s biography of his father-in-law, Sir Walter Scott and Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson* are some of the instances of this type.

There are two major kinds of biographies written from research

(a) *Reference Collections*: Since the 18th Century, in the western world, and in the 20th Century in the rest of the world, numerous compilations of biographical facts have appeared in various dictionaries of biography such as the *Dictionary of National Biography*, in Britain and the *Dictionary of American Biography* in the United States. Numerous ‘Who’s Who’ books, too, are well-known.

(b) *Character Sketches*: We have already mentioned earlier Ssu-ma Ch’ien’s “Historical Records”, Plutarch’s *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans*. We could call them in a way rather elaborate sketches of characters. Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Most Eminent Italian Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Thomas Fuller’s *History of the Worthies in England*, Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of the English Poets* and Lytton Starchey’s *Eminent Victorians* are recent examples of this type.

There are also six other categories of this form :

Informative biography is the most objective type of this form. The biographer in such a type of work avoids all forms of interpretation. He simply selects and seeks to unfold a life by presenting in chronological order the available documents pertaining to the subject. In the 19th century David Masson's *the Life of Milton: Narrated in Connection with the Political, Ecclesiastical and Literary History of his Time* and John G. Nicolay and John Hay's *Abraham Lincoln, A History* and Edward Nehls' *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography* (1957-59) are some of the examples of this type.

Critical Biography, unlike the first, offers a genuine presentation of a life. In such a carefully researched biography, sources are scrupulously set forth in notes and appendices. Accuracy and documentation are most important here. The purpose of this type is to facilitate biographical approach to literature. It is designed specially for the purpose of helping students of literature than to entertain an average reader. Outstanding biographies of this category are Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce* (1959), Ernest Jones' *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud* and Edgar Johnson's *Charles Dickens*.

The third and the central category of biography is **Standard Biography**. It is a balanced work between the objective and the subjective approaches. It represents the mainstream of the practice of biography as an art. From the antiquity to the present day, this kind of biographical literature has had as its objective, what Sir Edmund Gosse called, "the faithful protrait of a soul in its adventures through life." Gorge Cavendish's 16th-century life of Cardinal Wolsey, Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* and Lebn Edel's *Henry James* are a few remarkable examples of this kind,

In **Interpretative Biography** the biographer moulds his sources into a vivid narrative along with authentic scenes. He generally does not invent materials, but he freely manipulates or interprets them according to the promptings of insight, derived from arduous research to unfold his subject's life vividly. But the material is often exploited with such a freedom that the biography turns into fiction. Frank Harris's *Oscar Wilde* (1916) and Hesketh Pearson's *Tom Paine, Friend of Mankind* (1937) exhibit this type of biographical freedom. So does Sartre's *St. Genet*

The works of the fifth Category, **Fictionalized Biography**, belong to biographical literature only by courtesy. In it, materials are freely invented, scenes and conversations are imagined freely. The biographers of this type have created a hybrid form designed to mate the appeal of the novel with a vague claim to authenticity. Irving Stone's *Lust for Life* (on Van Gogh) and *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (on Michelangelo) and other works belong to this form.

The sixth category, *Ficition presented as Biography*, is outright fiction. It is only technically a biography. It has enjoyed great success. Such works imaginatively take the place of biography where there can be no genuine life writing. Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* and Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* may be cited as examples of this type. The writer makes the reader feel that what he reads is a real life-story. But both the writer and the reader know that the feeling is a literary illusion. The technique of such writing may be often autobiographical as in *Jane Eyre*, Robert Grave's *I, Claudius* and Manohar Malgonkar's *The Devil's Wind*.

Moreover, there is a large class of works which might be called "special-purpose" biography. In such works, the art of biography becomes the servant of other interests. This category contains potboilers written as propaganda or as a scandalous expose, campaign biographies aimed at promoting the cause of a political candidate, commemorative volumes commissioned by widows and also pious works which are known as hagiography written to edify the reader.

The object of this chapter is not to present an accurate and exhaustive information on biography as a literary genre. But enough has to be stated to show how variously this form has flourished and how Dilip Roy's practice partly resembles the existing practices and largely differs from them all.

Autobiography is in a way, a branch of biography. As it is dealt with at length in Chapter IX of this thesis, it is not necessary to elaborately write about it here.

Notes :

1. B. Prasad, *A Background to the Study of English Literature*, 3rd ed. (Madras:Macmillan India Ltd. 1955), p. 167,
2. J. A. Cuddon. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Delhi: Clarion Books, 1980), p. 299.
3. P(aul) M(urray) K(endall) "Biographical Literature," *Encyclopaedia Britanica*, 1985, XXIII, 202.
4. C. Vijayasree. "Indian Biography in English." *Indian Journal of American Studies*, XXVII, No. 2 (1997), 12.
5. Quoted in Jeffrey Meyers, ed. *The Craft of Literary Biography* (London:Macmillan Press Ltd., 1985), p. 2.
6. Alan Shelston, *Biography, The Critical Idiom* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1977), pp. 33-34. (Bracket mine)
7. Waldo H. Dunn, *English Biography* (New York:E. P. Dutton & Co., 1916). pp. 232-33.
8. Meyers, ed. *The Craft of Literary Biography*, p. 1.
9. *Encyclopaedia Britanica*, XXIII, 196.
10. Ibid. pp. 196-98.

3 : DILIP KUMAR ROY'S ART OF SPIRITUAL PORTRAIT PAINTING

A close study of all of Dilip Roy's works reveals that although he has expressed himself in various forms of literature, the basic instinct behind them all, is almost always that of a biographer. The roots of this instinct lie in one of his childhood incidents.¹ When Dilip Roy was nine years old, he happened to meet "Sri Ma" (Sri Mahendra Nath Gupta), a lay disciple of Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa who recorded the nectarous words of Sri Ramkrishna in Bengali in *Ramkrishna Kathamrita*. He showed Dilip Roy his own diaries in which he had kept the meticulous account of Sri Ramkrishna's precious utterances. Then, very lovingly and casually, he asked Dilip Roy to keep a record of his meetings with any great person into whose contact he might come. So, Dilip Roy developed the habit of keeping a diary and taking down important details from his memory of such a contact. Later on, it became almost a passion with Dilip Roy to meet great men all over the world. His ultimate object was to benefit by their inspiration and guidance in his own spiritual pilgrimage towards eternity. But he also wanted altruistically to invite all who cared to have the same benefit. Therefore, he published his private records in the form of books. In his 'Preface' to *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, Dilip Roy writes, "I have always loved to keep a record of my talks with those I have admired."² Such a habit of keeping record of the past meetings from his memory, he says,

"...has beautified my creations (such as they are) in literature, poetry and music. In other words, time and time again have I experienced that whenever I had imbibed anything through love it came subsequently to be assimilated by my heart to flower out eventually as inspiration. Which is perhaps one of the reasons why I have always felt so happy that I could retain the "jewelled sayings" of great men, seers, sages and saints.... I have been fortunate also in this that I have been able to draw out some of the greatest writers and thinkers of our age. I have always felt grateful to them for having materially helped me in my quest for Truth, by stimulating me with *their* findings and throwing light on problems which mystify the mind."³

To Roy, moreover, literary art even like his skill in music, is merely a means to the spiritual end of life, not end in itself. In this he follows his master Sri Aurobindo who wrote:

"Art, poetry, music, as they are in their ordinary functioning... create mental and vital, not spiritual, values, but they can be

turned to a higher end, and then, like all things that are capable of linking our consciousness to the Divine, they are transmuted and become spiritual and can be admitted as part of a life of Yoga. All takes new values not from itself, but from the consciousness that uses it; *for there is only one thing essential, needful, indispensable: to grow conscious of the Divine Reality and live in it and live it always.*"⁴

His constant love of Krishna can be observed in almost all of works. Even the titles of his works, *Hark! His Flute!*, *The Flute Calls Still*, *Sri Chaitanya* and *Mira* suggest the same preoccupation.

Understandably enough Dilip Roy's biographies are very different from traditional types. He does not present chronological events of his subject's life from birth to death. Ordinary historiography or research or psychoanalysis does not interest him. What fascinates him is personality of a spiritual genius. Therefore, he writes about the lives of "Seers, sages and saints". But you cannot say his purpose in writing is didactic in ordinary sense of the term. Therefore, his biographies are not reducible to direct handbooks of spiritual living though spirituality is an indispensable part of his works. What we find here is not tedious preaching but a passion that carries the reader along. That is what makes his portraits so fascinating.

In a loose sense Dilip Roy's portraits could be described as hagiographies, because they are about the saints. But strictly speaking they are not systematic narration in chronological sequence. They could best be described as impressionistic accounts of the personalities written about. In this kind of an enterprise he has a few peers like Mahendra Nath Gupta and probably no superior. He seems to be unique in singular sphere of literary activity.

His biographical works become autobiographical, too, because he is always recording the influence of his great subjects on his own personality and expressing his feelings for them. The titles of biographies such as *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, *The Subhash I Knew* suggest emotional relationship rather than an objective portrayal. What counts to him is not what these men are but what they appear to be to him. If he is in illusion about them, he does not appear willing to tear the veil of illusion to arrive at the truth so called.

He writes about one subject in more than one book. For instance, in order to study his pen-picture of Sri Aurobindo, one has to go through his books like *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, *Among the Great*, *Six Illuminates of Modern India*, *Pilgrims of the Stars* and so on.

His biographies can be classified into three types, though these types are not entirely exclusive of one another.

- (1) ***The Fuller Portraits:***Through different books, he has presented the extensive portraits of Sri Aurobindo, Yogi Sri Krishnaprem, Subhas Chandra Bose and Indira Devi.
- (2) ***Character Sketches:****His* contact with innumerable persons of the world has enabled him to draw brief sketches of such eminent persons as Romain Rolland, Bertrand Russell, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Ramana Maharshi etc.
- (3) ***Fictionalized Biographies:***Dilip Roy's love for literary art has led him to present biographies in the forms of drama (*Sri Chaitanya, Mira*), novel (*Upward Spiral, Miracles Do Still Happen*) and also poetry (*Hark! His Flute!, Eyes of Light*).

In the next two parts, the study of each of these types is undertaken.

Notes :

1. Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi, *Pilgrims of the Stars*, (1973; rpt. Porthill, Timeless Books, 1985),pp. 26-32.
2. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, 3rd ed. (Bombay:Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1992), p.xxii.
3. *ibid.*, xxii.
4. Roy and Devi. *Pilgrims*, p. 34.

PART TWO

Prose Portraits

4 : FULLER PORTRAITS

Dilip Roy has painted with great care and love the portraits of four persons who most profoundly influenced and shaped his own personality as a seeker after spirituality. He writes :

‘To have known such a lover’s love is blessedness, indeed— the love of a Guru like Sri Aurobindo, a friend like Subhash, a fellow-pilgrim like Krishnaprem, a daughter-disciple like Indira. When one meets such souls one does not even stop to ask if one has, indeed, merited it: one just accepts it all as a divine boon on bended knees.’¹

1:Sri Aurobindo

(A) Portrait

Of all the four the most impressive portrait is that of Sri Aurobindo. Dilip Roy’s intense love, reverence and loyalty towards his guru are reflected in almost all of his works. But he has written about him with concentration particularly in

- (a) *Among the Great*
- (b) *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*
- (c) *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*
- (d) *Six Illuminates of Modern India*
- (e) *Pilgrims of the Stars*

In his well-known collection of six biographical sketches, *Among the Great*, Roy has described how he came to know of Sri Aurobindo from a foreigner. Ronald Nixon, alias, Sri Krishnaprem and how he happened to meet him for the first time in 1924 at Pondicherry. During the two interviews he took of Sri Aurobindo, he asked him many questions about his spiritual practice, his vision of bringing the descent of Supramental consciousness upon the earth and his concept of the Integral Yoga. At that time, Dilip Roy expressed his desire to stay at his Ashram to quench his thirst for spiritual life. But Sri Aurobindo asked him to wait till his seeking for spirituality may mature and be transformed from mental to psychic level.

In his next book, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, after tracing his first meeting with Sri Aurobindo in brief, he describes how he burnt his boats behind in 1928 at the sudden psychic opening to fulfil his spiritual aspiration and sat down at the feet of his divinely-appointed guru to tread the difficult path of Truth in the light of his wisdom and guidance. The book also depicts the struggles he faced on this

path of spiritual achievement and the benign influence of his gurudev, through which the finer qualities of his character developed.

Six Illuminates of Modern India contains four articles written on Sri Aurobindo

1. Sri Aurobindo, Minstrel of Light and Dharma
2. Sri Aurobindo, Minstrel of Faith and Love
3. Sri Aurobindo, Minstrel of Harmony and Immortality
4. Sri Aurobindo, Minstrel of Vision and Intuition

By employing the word 'minstrel' repeatedly, Dilip Roy seems to stress Sri Aurobindo's extraordinary art of singing mystical and hymn like songs of optimistic future for the whole humanity. Here, he also touches upon various aspects of higher spiritual life with which Sri Aurobindo was concerned.

In his autobiography, *Pilgrims of the Stars*, Dilip Roy has devoted three articles on Sri Aurobindo, viz,

- (a) My First Meeting with Sri Aurobindo
- (b) At the Guru's Feet
- (c) Sri Aurobindo, the Seer-Poet

In this book, he restates almost all the details he has given in his earlier books.

By reading all these books, the reader can find those impressions of Sri Aurobindo's greatness which Roy has formed during his stay of almost 23 years at the feet of his guru in Pondicherry.

Dilip Roy, it seems, is always fascinated by 'multi-personality' which could be found in one individual—his master. He is thrilled to note that

"Sri Aurobindo... was a luminous corroboration of the truth of this multimoodedness of an evolved human being, having flowered out in life as a poet, savant, revolutionary, philosopher, yogi, critic of life, commentator of scriptures, lover of man, mystic and Messiah par excellence."²

These last two characteristics of Sri Aurobindo, 'mystic and Messiah', along with his vision of the higher future of humanity, appealed to Dilip Roy the most from the very beginning of his acquaintance with him. Sri Aurobindo's notion of bringing down the new Supramental light on the earth for the transformation and liberation of the human life was the hot topic of discussion among the intelligentsia of Dilip Roy's time. When Dilip Roy, during his first

meeting, asked Sri Aurobindo to tell him about the purpose of his yoga, he replied :

“Suffice it to say that I want to invoke here on earth the light of a higher world, to manifest a new power which will continue to exist as a new influence in the physical world and will be a direct manifestation of the Divine in our entire being and daily life.”³

According to Sri Aurobindo, when one rises higher and higher in the mystic knowledge, one has to bear the responsibility not only of one’s own self, but also of others. Such a *sadhaka*’s Integral Yoga

“...has much more of the nature of a battle than others; but this is not only an individual battle, it is a collective war waged over a considerable country. He has not only to conquer in himself the forces of egoistic falsehood and disorder, but to conquer them as representatives of the same adverse and inexhaustible forces in the world.”⁴

To illustrate this mystical practice, Dilip Roy feels, Sri Aurobindo, the seer-poet took up the popular legend of Savitri given in *the Mahabharata* and metamorphosed it symbolically into “a marvellous epic, luminous with the message of Immortality”.⁵ Dilip Roy has dwelt upon *Savitri* at length in his books to show how, Ashwapathy, the ‘columnist from immortality’, the ‘treasurer of superhuman dreams’ and the representative of the earth, aspires for the descent of Savitri to remove the Yoke of Death and to end the battle with the Night. So, he prays to the Divine Mother passionately to take birth on the earth.

The Divine Mother, hence, takes birth as Savitri, daughter of King Aswapathy. When she comes of age, she decides to get married with Satyavan, despite the prophecy that he is destined to die at the end of a year after the marriage.

Satyavan dies. Savitri encounters the God of Death bravely and asks him to change the cosmic rule of Death and grant immortality not to Satyavan alone but to the creatures of whole earth. The individual aspiration assumes the shape of collective aspiration of the whole human race. The *sadhaka* ceases to be a selfish seeker of personal salvation and looks for universal liberation from the yoke of necessity by total self-effacement. Savitri asks :

“Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
Thy Joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men.”⁶

Savitri, at last, is granted the One boon she has sought : “All thou asked I give to earth and men...”⁷ Dilip Roy remarks

“In *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo’s message as well as aspiration is voiced not through Aswapati alone but also through Narad, the Prophet, and Savitri, the final invoker of the New Gleam.”⁸

Furthermore, he adds :

“..... he—as a Divine Representative on earth—is sent to uplead us, earthlings, to Divinity by daring what none but a Divine Deputy, an avatar, can dare.”⁹

Sri Aurobindo, Dilip Roy thinks, really spoke of himself when he described King Aswapati as one who ‘made of miracle a normal act and his genius transformed life’s difficulties into opportunities at every turn. For instance, Sri Aurobindo was brought up and educated in an exclusively English atmosphere in England without having contact with any Indian. He did not know the culture and spiritual traditions of his own country. Yet, when he returned to India, he shone out overnight as a revolutionary who left high position to plunge himself into political activities for realizing freedom of motherland from foreign rule.

In his Utterpara speech, Sri Aurobindo refers to the incident in which Sri Krishna enjoined him to leave his politics and to dedicate himself whole heartedly to the spiritual life. According to that *Adesh* or command of Krishna, Sri Aurobindo had to go forth to tell his nation to arise and walk selflessly for the service of the *Sanatan Dharma*. Sri Krishna said: “It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists.”¹⁰ By Krishna’s grace Sri Aurobindo could see him in all things, places and persons. Krishna guarded Sri Aurobindo from all fears as his ‘Friend and Lover’ and sustained him in all of his trials and tribulations. He realised that, “All life is a yoga of Nature seeking to manifest God within itself.”¹¹

Hence, while practising the yogic path, as shown by Krishna, he did not renounce the world. He sought to harmonise this-worldliness with the other-worldliness and thus differed like Tagore from the traditional Hindu wisdom which required renunciation as precondition for personal deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Dilip Roy writes:

“.....Sri Aurobindo’s pronunciamento about the final victory of human aspiration over God-hostile titans is one of his most eloquent vindications of the immortality of Divinity pent in death-ridden humanity.”¹²

This mystic vision of Sri Aurobindo was based on his absolute in the Absolute who is beyond the ken of reasoning mind. All through his life, Sri Aurobindo stood for the greatness of faith in God in an age of science, antagonistic

to any spiritual belief. In fact, he proved by precept and practice the greatness of faith and intuitive knowledge. Yet should think that he was an irrational dogmatist. What he clearly sees is that, "Reason was the helper, Reason is the bar."¹³ It should be used where it rules, but abandoned in the higher realm above its limited authority. Again, in *Savitri*, II, x, he said :

"For not by reason was creation made
And not by reason can the truth be seen."¹⁴

When Dilip Roy wrote that it was difficult for him to believe in the miraculous power of Yoga, owing to his European education, Sri Aurobindo replied

"I suppose I have had myself an even more completely European education than you,...but...I could never take the attitude of doubt and disbelief."¹⁵

In this manner, almost always, Sri Aurobindo disapproved of his disciple's admiration for the Russellian type of rationalism and exhorted him to have faith in his own spiritual experiences.

Once Roy asked Sri Aurobindo if a stable faith could possibly be based on the hearsay evidence of saints, if an acceptance could be recommended before experience. Sri Aurobindo replied

"First of all, faith does not depend upon experience, it is something that is there *before* experience. When one starts the yoga, it is not usually on the strength of experience, but on the strength of faith. And it is so not only in yoga and the spiritual life, but in ordinary life also. All men of action, discoverers, inventors, creators of knowledge proceed by faith and, until the proof is made or the thing done, they go on in spite of 'disappointment, failure, disproof, denial,—because of something in them that tells them that this is the truth, the thing that must be followed and done."¹⁶

Sri Aurobindo never cared for any fame, publicity or earthly success. Once Dilip Roy wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo, appealing on behalf of Pramatha Choudhuri, to contribute an article to the Golden Book of Tagore. To that Sri Aurobindo answered :

"I am afraid Pramatha Choudhuri is asking from me a thing psychologically impossible. You know that I have forbidden myself to write anything for publication for some time past and some time to come I am self-debarred from the press, platform and public."¹⁷

Next time, Dilip Roy requested Sri Aurobindo on behalf of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan to induce him to contribute an article on philosophy to be included in a book of philosophy Radhakrishnan was going to bring out in the West. Dilip Roy tempted him to care for the publicity he might have in the West. Sri Aurobindo wrote

“As to Radhakrishnan, I do not care whether he is right or wrong in his eagerness to get the contribution from me. But the first fact is that it is quite impossible for me to write philosophy to order. If something comes to me of itself, I can write, if I have time. But I have no time... And the second fact is that I do not care a button about having my name in any blessed place. I was never ardent about fame even in my political days.... I am perfectly ‘rational’, I assure you, in my methods and I do not proceed merely on my personal dislike of fame. If and in so far as publicity serves the Truth, I am quite ready to tolerate it, but I do not find publicity for its own sake desirable.”¹⁸

Sri Aurobindo did not contribute any article for Radhakrishnan’s book, but he wrote plenty of letters tirelessly to his disciples like Dilip Roy himself for years together. This was baffling to the reason of disciples, although he claimed that he was perfectly ‘rational’. Perhaps he was interested in shaping the lives of those who came to him, not in approaching general public yet unawakened to spiritual need just for publicity and personal vanity.

Sri Aurobindo’s patience, Dilip Roy found, was limitless. When he began to stay at the Ashram, he found his guru remote because he had decided to live in seclusion and guide people through correspondence. Once Dilip Roy determined to end such a sterile relationship with his guru in which there was no possibility of having direct contact and guidance from his guru. Very patiently, Sri Aurobindo explained to him not to do so:

“It is quite impossible for me to dismiss you or consent to your going away like this from us. If the idea of this kind of separation is possible to you, for us it is inconceivable that our close relation should end like this.... I can only appeal to you not to allow yourself to be swept away by this attack, to remain faithful even in suffering to your soul that brought you here and to believe in our love that can never waver...”¹⁹

The author knew that his impulsiveness and impatience was his shortcoming, and that it was wrong of him to trouble his guru with such letters of restlessness. He also found that his gurudev always remained patient to him. So, once he wrote to Sri Aurobindo :

“You have told us Guru,... that every *sadhaka* here represents a type and serves a Divine purpose in not only getting something from you but evoking something in you on the rebound. I have often wondered what purpose was served by *my* irruption here till the answer flashed, apocalyptically:I was sent here by the Divine to test your patience in a way none else possibly could:to bring out, that is, the difference between the human patience and the divine.”²⁰

Sri Aurobindo guided Dilip Roy very lovingly on his path of spiritual seeking. Once Dilip Roy felt that his inner enemy was his lower vital and very frankly he confessed it. His guru promised him that he would render the help requisite in transforming his disciple’s nature.

At another time, Dilip Roy found it almost impossible to surrender himself completely to his guru because of the predominance of ego in his nature. Again, in his moments of darkness, he turned to his gurudev and very tenderly he explained to him what the real surrender is and how it could be achieved.

Even when Dilip Roy found that his desire and love for eating fish was uncontrollable, he saw his guru in his dream promising him to help him in controlling his instinct and really he had no hankering for fish then. Similar was the case of his love for drinking and the same patient help and guidance he had from his guru who was an alchemist for him. His ‘Guru, the Alchemist’ changed Dilip Roy’s baser or row metal into the pure gold. With the deep feeling of thankfulness, Dilip Roy says

“It was this innate tenderness of his incredible love that held me captive in his Ashram for over two decades, enabling me to fend off the “attacks” of the demonic forces which strove sleeplessly to wean me from him because he was appointed by the Divine to divinize our human nature. It is to fulfil this mission that he employed his Messianic power, in prose and verse, to convince us about the utter reality of the Divine Grace which alone could exhort the clod to claim kinship with God.”²¹

When Dilip Roy began to stay at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, he came to know from one of his guru’s letters that one can write great poetry or compose music from the inner being and for that one should have the passage clear between the outer mind and something in the inner being. Dilip Roy at that time, found that though he himself was known as a leading composer of music, he had written very few poems. Even in those poems, his style and rhythm were halting and Tagore, who appreciated his musical talents, never spoke well of his poetry. So, he began to translate Sri Aurobindo’s poems and later on wrote Bengali poems on

his own. He sent his poems to Sri Aurobindo and Tagore to seek their opinions. Sri Aurobindo responded :

“It is again a beautiful poem you have written, but not better than the other. But why erect mental theories and suit your poetry to them whether your father’s or Tagore’s? I would suggest to you not to be bound by either but to write as best suits your inspiration and poetic genius.... You have developed an original poetic turn of your own, quite unlike your father’s and not by any means a reflection of Tagore’s. Besides, there is now, as a result of your sadhana, a new quality in your work, a power of *expressing with great felicity a subtle psychic delicacy and depth of thought and emotion which I have not seen elsewhere in modern Bengali verse...* (The italics are mine.)”²²

Dilip Roy cites Tagore’s response, too:

“How did you manage to train your ears ? Now you have no cause to be diffident any more. But how a cripple can possibly dispense with his crutches one fine morning and start to run straight are what I find unfathomable deeps. At times I almost ask myself if you might not have had it all written by somebody else ?”²³

Dilip Roy, then, was regarded as one of the authorities on the Bengali metres. Next, he appealed to Sri Aurobindo to teach him English prosody including quantitative metres. Dilip Roy used to send a note-book up to Sri Aurobindo with his own poems and queries on various aspects of poetry. Sri Aurobindo was sending the note-book back with his answers, explanations and corrections to Dilip Roy. In this manner, he discussed with Dilip Roy English metres and modulations. Sri Aurobindo corrected the poems not only of Dilip Roy, but also of Nirod, Ramen, Nishikanto and other disciples and provided them with plenty of examples. All of them were convinced of his love, tenderness, patience and greatness because they knew that he spent much of his time to help them in their poetic experimentation when other important things were crying for his attention in vain. Dilip Roy informs his readers:

“I myself have written more than six hundred pages of English verse and produced at least two thousand pages in Bengali, and he not only found time to read *all* these carefully but to comment on most of them as well as throw out suggestions for improvement.”²⁴

Dilip Roy discovered that though Sri Aurobindo was tolerant and soft to his disciples, at times, he was very firm and unwilling to budge an inch from the path once he had decided to follow. While discussing the importance of style in creative writing, Nirodbaran argued that style could be manufactured by voracious reading

and he asked Sri Aurobindo to consider the contribution of his enormous reading in his own style. Nirodbaran was not ready to accept the contribution of Yoga in the development of one's writing. Sri Aurobindo tried to convince him that reading was not the only factor responsible in the formation of his style. He wrote

“...it is Yoga that has developed my style by the development of consciousness, fineness and accuracy of thought and vision, increasing inspiration and an increasing intuition, discrimination (self-critical) of right thought, word-form and just image and figure.”²⁵

Citing his own instance, Sri Aurobindo informed him that before he started yogic practices, it was difficult for him to understand metaphysical argument and even a page of philosophers like Kant or Hume, but when he began concentrating and practising *pranayama* daily, he could fill up pages and pages of philosophy. Rebuking Nirodbaran, he wrote:

“Kindly reflect a little and don't talk facile nonsense. Even if a thing can be done in a moment or a few days by Yoga which would ordinarily take a long, assiduous, sincere and earnest cultivation, that would of itself show the power of the Yoga-force. But a faculty that did not exist appears quickly and spontaneously or impotence changes into the highest potency, or an obstructed talent with equal rapidity into fluent and facile sovereignty. If you deny that evidence, no evidence will convince you because you are determined to think otherwise.”²⁶

Commenting on the letter written by Sri Aurobindo, Roy recollects:

“To me, personally, his letters radiating affection imparted something even more convincing—possibly because only such personal letters could convey to my sceptic mind the light of seerhood that hovered round him, through a receptive emotion which nothing short of an intimate contact with his soul of compassion could arouse.”²⁷

Tirelessly Dilip Roy wrote letters to Sri Aurobindo and with the same spirit his gurudev answered all of his queries. Among many peculiarities of Sri Aurobindo's temperament, two traits appealed to him very much. Firstly, though Sri Aurobindo guided his disciples, he was always reluctant to impose his views on others. Secondly, he knew the temperament of almost all of his disciples and wrote letters accordingly. Dilip Roy was wonderstruck to notice that when Sri Aurobindo wrote letters to Dilip Roy, he was always taking care of his supersensitive nature and, as such, his style remained mild, but when he wrote letters to Nirodbaran, they were often stern. Sri Aurobindo's replies to Dilip Roy were full of tenderness, humility and unassertiveness.²⁸

The Mother once said that there was only one person in the Ashram who was perfectly humble and that was Sri Aurobindo. This comment opened the eyes of Dilip Roy. He observed at various occasions how humble Sri Aurobindo was even to his disciples. So he tried to change his egoistic attitude and also to follow the living example of his guru. Dilip Roy frequently disagreed with the decisions of the Mother and the opinions of the other inmates of the Ashram. He, almost always, expressed such disagreement, instantly, in his letters to Sri Aurobindo. Dilip Roy, in his books, quotes a number of humble letters written by Sri Aurobindo to him as answers to his impudent and impulsive letters. Dilip observes:

“Whenever I got restive he wrote to me in that vein—firm but not overassertive, sure of his vision yet unwilling to impose it, persuasive but never insistent. That was always *his* way of being humble.”²⁹

Moreover, Dilip Roy notices that Sri Aurobindo had the capacity to pass from the serious to the light moods with an astonishing ease. In 1934, Roy wrote to him about the parable of the ass and the flood:

“Once upon a time, Guru, there was a foolish ass who lived in the neighbourhood of a wise Yogi. One day a sudden flood burst the banks of a river nearby and flooded the countryside. The wise Yogi, being wise, ran up till he reached the safe top of a hill at the foot of which he used to meditate day and night in a cave. But the ass— being foolish, not to say unmeditative—was swept away by the rushing tides. ‘Alas!’ he brayed, ‘the world is being drowned!’ ‘Don’t be an ass,’ reprimanded the Yogi in high scorn from up the hill-top. ‘It’s only you who are being drowned—not this great big world’. ‘But sir,’ argued the idiot, ‘if I myself am drowned how can I be sure that the world will survive?’ And the Yogi was struck dumb and wondered, for the first time, which was the deeper wisdom—the human or the asinine! And I too have started wondering on my own, Guru!” I added. “So I appeal to you to adjudicate: tell me whose is the more pitiable plight the Yogi’s or the ass’s? And incidentally, tell me also if my mind is going off the handle because I find the foolish ass’s argument nearly as rational as the wise Yogi’s?”

“To that Sri Aurobindo replied : ‘your wise but not otherwise ass has put a question that cannot be answered in two lines. Let me say, however, in defence of the much-maligned ass that he is a very clever and practical animal and the malignant imputation of stupidity to him shows only human stupidity at

its worst. It is because the ass does not do what man wants him to do under blows, that he is taxed with stupidity.

“But really, the ass behaves like that first because he has a sense of humour and likes to provoke the two-legged beast into irrational antics; and secondly because he finds that what man wants of him is quite a ridiculous and bothersome nuisance which ought not to be demanded of any self-respecting donkey. Also note that the ass is a philosopher. When he hee-haws, it is out of a supreme contempt for the world in general and for the human imbecile in particular. I have no doubt that in the asinine language man has the same significance as ass in ours. These deep and original considerations are, however, by the way—merely meant to hint to you that your balancing between a wise man and the wise ass is not so alarming a symptom after all.”³⁰

Lastly, Dilip Roy considers that Sri Aurobindo possessed a unique synthesising genius. He feels that Sri Aurobindo’s education in the Western culture has enabled him to grow into a spiritual personality of global importance. He unites in his vision the best of the East and the West, recognizes the beauty of temporal existence and recommends the quest of a spirituality which may include and transform it.

According to Sri Aurobindo the true message of the East to the West is that:

“Only by finding himself can man be saved... The West has heard the message and is seeking out the law and truth of the soul and the evidence of an inner reality greater than the material. The danger is that with her passion for mechanism and her exaggerated intellectuality she may fog herself in an external and false psychism such as we see arising in England and America, the homes of the mechanical genius.”³¹

Similarly, the Message of the West to the East is that man also is God and it is through his developing manhood that he approaches the godhead. He writes:

“The danger is that Asia may accept it in the European form, forget for a time her own law and nature and either copy blindly the West or make a disastrous amalgam of that which she has in its most inferior forms and the crudeness which are invading her.”³²

Again, in the *Life Divine*, he said: “All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony.” In *Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo observed that the *Tantra* philosophy of life was similar to his own outlook on life because in the *Tantra* they weld together alien elements of the human personality in the roles of

the cooperators as against antagonists. And in his works he synthesised various traditions of the past so that there could follow even greater future.

(B) Evaluation

This is the portrait of Sri Aurobindo that emerges from Dilip Roy's pages, too. Such intimate portrait with a focus on the spiritual self of Sri Aurobindo we do not discover in his exhaustive biographies like those written by A B, Purani (*Life of Sri Aurobindo*), K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (*Sri Aurobindo: A Biography and History*), and Peter Hees (*Sri Aurobindo: A Brief Biography*). These biographies contain documented information and accurate picture of this greatman. But there is no sense of life in them. Here, you feel, you are in the living presence of the master. You feel his smile, you hear his voice, you see him face to face as it were. It is indeed a literary experience rather than mere information of a splendid life. So, Dilip Roy has succeeded in presenting a pulsating portrait or a movie picture which is quite different from a still picture.

It is clear that Dilip Roy employs comparative method of evaluation without its critical aspect in his approach to Sri Aurobindo and others. He has tried to compare the greatness of his guru with the greatness of other illuminates of the world, like Vivekananda, Krishnaprem, Rabindranath Tagore, Romain Rolland etc.

According to Dilip Roy, Sri Aurobindo, like Vivekananda, had great love for his motherland and its spiritual role in the world history. Both of them tried to transmit India's spiritual message to the whole world in their own peculiar manners.³³ But Dilip Roy fails to note the difference between the two. Vivakanand blew like a cyclone through the East and the West in his short and tumultuous life in his god-assigned mission of awakening the motherland from her sleep. Sri Aurobindo, on the contrary, retired to the solitude of his Ashram in South India and spent his long life there practising yoga. Paradoxically, the *sannyasi* who is supposed to be retired and passive was more active than the prophet of the future 'fusion of the time and eternity' and an advocate of the love of life and action.

The portraits of Sri Aurobindo and Krishnaprem, too, look compared, and the outcome enlightens us on the peculiar features of both.³⁴ Both Sri Aurobindo, Dilip Roy's formally accepted guru and Krishnaprem, one of his informal gurus, are the birds of the same feather. Both of them believed in guruvad and had deep love and sympathy for Roy. Both of them were scholars of the Eastern and the Western classics. But Sri Aurobindo formed his own philosophy of the Integral Yoga based on the synthesis of the Eastern and the Western philosophies and was convinced that Krishna Himself had mandated him for the work he was doing. On the other hand, Sri Krishnaprem, as the name suggests, stood for his love of Krishna only. Though he was an English man, he was convinced of the greatness

of Indian *bhakti* cult. In sum, Sri Aurobindo was a *yogi*, while Sri Krishnaprem was a *bhakta*.

While comparing Sri Aurobindo with Rabindranath, Dilip Roy finds that both of them possessed finer qualities like the aspiration for higher spiritual existence, capacity to respect the greatness of others to spread the domain of Ananda by their subtle sense of humour and to write beautiful poems, to remain loving, tolerant and patient towards the queries of people like Dilip Roy himself. For Dilip Roy, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore were highly evolved personalities and they were very close to each other in their spirit and their outlook which emerged out from the illumined wisdom of the ancient Vedic sages. He came to such a conclusion after reading Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* side by side with Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan discourses. Dilip Roy writes:

“Here is an instance—a typical one among his jewelled sayings which are scattered here with a breath-taking profusion page after page (*Within and Without*) :

“We must, above all come to know intimately the solitary shrine in our hearts. We have grown too prone, alas, to have truck mostly with the outside world and so are straying more and more away from the inner paths. No wonder our lives have run to seed.” (Translation mine).

“Sri Aurobindo has given us the same message in his essays and poems time and time again. To give just one instance :

“In all spiritual living the inner life is the thing of first importance; the spiritual man lives always within to guard his inner life against the intrusion and influence of the darker forces of the ignorance:he is out of the world even when he is within it; if he acts upon it, it is from the fortress of his inner spiritual being where, in the inmost sanctuary, he is one with the Supreme Existence or the soul and God are alone together.” (*The Life Divine*, “The Gnostic Being”).”³⁵

Again Dilip Roy fails to note the difference which could more accurately define both. Tagore's philosophy is the philosophy of utter submission to the will of God. He accepts with open arms whatever fate brings. Light and darkness, life and death are equally god-given and welcome to him. But Sri Aurobindo temperamentally looks often the opposite of Tagore. The conquest of death is his aim. Specific is his means. He is, let us say, spiritually most ambitious. He has loftiness of high skies. Tagore is full of the beauties of the earth. Tagore's spirituality does not stray away from nature. Sri Aurobindo's plunges into depths of the skies. One commands love, the other, worship. Both are great. But the

greatness of each is strikingly different from the greatness of the other. Dilip Roy who wanted to see super-human aggregate of all possible excellences in his guru would not agree that he could be less satisfactory at any point than Tagore. Hence, he fails to note the difference.

Dilip Roy's record of Sri Aurobindo is thoroughly personal and truthful. That is why it is also autobiographically enlightening. It reveals certain characteristics of Dilip Roy's personality like his frankness, rational and sceptic intelligence, impatient, impulsive, wavering and hypersensitive nature, his habit of paying overmuch attention to opinions others held about him, too. It appears that he struggled so much with his own weaknesses that he found it difficult to have any remarkable Yogic experience when he was at Sri Aurobindo Ashram. All through his stay at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, he passed his time in fighting mental battles with his own self, with other disciples and also with the Mother of the Ashram. Moreover, his love of Krishna proved so strong that he failed to grasp properly the importance of Sri Aurobindo's experiment of bringing down the new Supramental consciousness on the earth. Yet, at the same time, his single-minded devotion for Krishna and his loyalty and reverence towards his guru can be observed everywhere. He, in fact, tried his utmost to establish his guru's greatness. For this purpose, he sent Sri Aurobindo's writings to many Western people. He requested Francis Younghusband, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, London, to recommend Sri Aurobindo's name for the Nobel Prize.³⁶

It should now be clear from the foregoing discussions that Dilip Roy is appreciative and not sufficiently critical. All the time, he tends to find out the greatness of his guru. Yet, certain ambivalence is obvious in his attitude. He loves his guru, yet, is not satisfied with his work or his approach to the disciples like himself. The ambivalence finds expression in his paradoxical behaviour. One might wonder that if he really found in his guru the incarnation of God, why did he yearn to leave the Ashram and live elsewhere as a free bird? Often it appears that his sincerity is at war with his love of his guru. His dissatisfaction is truth. But his love is also another truth. And instead of being reconciled to each other, they clash and conflict and make Dilip Roy miserable. He always felt that he must speak out what he actually felt and thought. Even to satisfy his great guru or brother-disciples he could not tell a lie. He could not equate Sri Aurobindo with Krishna while they regarded him as the embodiment of even higher consciousness. Dilip Roy openly told both him and them accordingly. While Sri Aurobindo could sympathise with Dilip Roy, they could not, and consequently he suffered in the Ashram from a kind of excommunication, yet, he held his ground.

Moreover, it is equally true that Dilip Roy's soul is torn by the rival pulls of the world and God. Instead of resolving the inner conflict or waiting for the resolution to materialise by God's and guru's grace, he feels like blaming as

much himself as his guru, without being able to decide clearly, as to whom he is blaming. Consider, for example, what Dilip Roy has to say :

'Thismakes me feel convinced that I am a misfit here that I am, as Tagore said to me once, an artist first and last—not a Yogi. But the trouble is, Guru, that though I loved art passionately once upon a time, I failed to find it completely absorbing. Besides, I believed sincerely that if I wanted the Divine He would make it possible for me to climb up to him however hard and steep the path: in other words, He would make me change. But I don't find that He is at all responsive or that He would even have me persevere here. So perhaps it would be wiser for me to leave such a hopeless endeavour and try something more practicable if not equally satisfying. But then I don't find the conditions around very satisfying either; so why not permit me to try something else—say courting prison patriotically as Subhas and Jawaharlal are doing? For you must admit at least that I am not very receptive to your helping Force, which shows (does it not?) that I am essentially unfit for your Yoga which aims at making us non-human?'"³⁷

What is clear here is only the confusion of Dilip Roy's mind and a lack of singleness of pursuit. It is the expression of the disturbance. But the expression is unmistakable as to what it is about. In such a situation, his mind would tend to blame his Guru and, absurdly, to absolve him of all the blame at the same time.

Dilip Roy's style here is elaborate, lengthy and repetitive. He writes about Sri Aurobindo in many, in almost all of his books, directly and indirectly and repeats a number of incidents time and again. He follows the trend of romantics who were careless about the form and concerned with only the content, which was chiefly expressionistic. He, now and then, digresses from his main subject of biography and begins to speak of himself, his emotions, reactions, experiences, his contacts with other great people. Often his lawless rambling is delightful as in the best of romantics. But at times it is very boring as in the worst of them. Often his digressions look senseless. For example, while Dilip Roy is talking about the transforming power of his guru in his chapter, 'Guru, the Transformer' in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, he suddenly turns to present a long dialogue which took place between Mr. Pontiff and Mr. Chadwick. Mr. Pontiff is the name Dilip Roy has given to an Englishman who criticizes the Ashramites as passive idlers though, he admits they are outstandingly intelligent. Mr. Chadwick is another Englishman who has now turned into an Ashramite. He replies logically and patiently, all the charges of Mr. Pontiff. One might wonder as to what Dilip Roy is driving towards in all this.

Dilip Roy's language is poetic and lucid. Often his work is the expression of the tumult his reading causes in his mind. Here, he frequently introduces Sri Aurobindo's Bengali and English poems and also their translations. He quotes from various ancient scriptures like the *Gita* and the *Bhagavata* to sustain his arguments.

2:Krisnaprem

Among the full-length portraits next in importance to that of Sri Aurobindo comes the portrait of Krishnaprem. Both Krishnaprem and Dilip Roy were intimate friends and pilgrims of almost the identical path of love of Krishna. 'Love of Krishna', in fact, is literal translation of the Sanskrit word 'Krisnaprem'. Dilip Roy can as meaningfully bear that name as does Ronald Nixon.

Ronald Nixon—that is the pre-monastic name of Krishnaprem. He was a brilliant graduate of Cambridge University. Before he came to India, he worked as an R.A.F. pilot in the First World War. At that time, he was assigned the duty of dropping bombs over the enemy territory. One day, as he was reconnoitring, he was about to steer his plane to the right, where half-a-dozen fighter planes zoomed. He wanted to steer his plane in that direction because he thought that those were R.A.F. planes. Just then some force simply caught hold of his wrist and made him veer right round to the left. It was almost a miracle. In a few minutes, when he returned to his base, he was informed that those were enemy planes which had just come into action. He realized that he had been saved by some unknown power. He was grateful to that power which his experience could not deny and reason might not accept. From that event onwards, he disapproved of reason as the ultimate criterion of truth. He began to take interest in philosophy and spirituality. He came to India and worked for a time as a Professor of English literature at the University of Lucknow. He learnt during the period Sanskrit and Pali to study the sacred books of Hinduism and Buddhism. He could speak fluently, besides, both Bengali and Hindi. Later he gave up his professorship in Lucknow university which earned him Rs. 1,200/- per month and accepted the job of a professor at the Hindu University, Varanasi, which fetched him just Rs. 300/- per month. His purpose in this was to be in the holy city of Benares in order that he might have deeper study of Hindu spirituality there which was more valuable to him than money. Soon after that, he was initiated into *Vaishnavism* in 1927 by Yashoda Ma whose former name was Monika Devi. Before she took the *sannyasa*, she was the wife of Mr. J. N. Chakravarti, the then Vice-chancellor of Lucknow University. Ronald Nixon retired under the aegis of his guru at their Ashram situated near Almora and passed his time in complete devotion of Krishna. A *sannyasi* is required to forget his past and put on a new name. So Ronald Nixon after his initiation into *sannyasa* became Krishnaprem.

(A) Portrait :

Dilip Roy has written in detail about Krishnaprem in

- (a) *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*
- (b) *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*
- (c) *Pilgrims of the Stars*

Dilip Roy held both Sri Aurobindo and Krishnaprem in almost the same high esteem. When he speaks of one, the other naturally comes in. We learn at length of Krishnaprem in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* even as we learn a lot of Sri Aurobindo from *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*. The chapter captioned 'Sri Aurobindo vis-a-vis Krishnaprem' in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* is the same as the chapter bearing the caption 'Krishnaprem vis-a-vis Sri Aurobindo' in *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, Part I, with only slight changes here and there. In this chapter, he speaks of the guidance he received from both Krishnaprem and Sri Aurobindo in solving the difficulties he felt on the path of spirituality. In Part II of *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, 'Reminiscences', we are told how Sri Krishnaprem spiritually grew under loving guidance of Yashoda Ma. In Part III, 'Letters', there are numerous letters written to Dilip Roy by Krishnaprem and Sri Aurobindo.

In his autobiography, *Pilgrims of the Stars* also Dilip Roy shows "Krishnaprem's swift flowering into a harmonious man of God."³⁸

In all of these three books the author has exhibited all those distinctive qualities of Krishnaprem's personality which impressed him the most.

Krishnaprem's versatile reading, his love of Hinduism and particularly his love of Krishna endeared him to Dilip Roy and many people in India. Remembering the first phase of his acquaintance with Krishnaprem at Lucknow Dilip Roy notes :

"His contact was delightful, conversation illuminating and faith in Hinduism inspiring. I was wont to listen with rapt attention when he discussed the Vedas, the *Gita*, the *Tantra* etc. ... He used to be a great admirer in those days of Buddha, Krishna, the mystic in Lawrence, the *Tantras*, the *Gita*... and the *Upanishads*".³⁹

He did the comparative study of the *Gnosis of Plotinus*, the Greek Neo-Platonists, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. From his own study of the original Sanskrit texts, he spoke of Shankara and Advaita philosophy.

But, by this variety of study, he arrived at last at the one goal of "*Nitya Vrindavan*—the eternal City of Love where Krishna plays his eternal flute of flame in an eternal garden of beauty."⁴⁰ As Haridas Chaudhuri writes :

“For Krishnaprem, there is only one true spiritual path, and that path is indefinable. It is the blossoming of the individual beyond his ego in Krishna’s light and Love.”⁴¹

Krishnaprem was absolutely sincere in his spiritual pursuit. His aspiration for the realization of Krishna was so unwavering that he could face all the difficulties of his path very bravely. He did not care for fame or fortune or any other worldly pleasure. He cared only for higher spiritual existence. For him *love-bhakti*— meant “the *ahuti*- offering-of the mortal in the flame of the immortal.”⁴² Such a self-offering, he was sure, would lead the *bhakta* to bliss. Once he wrote :

“Know Krishna, love Krishna and work for Krishna. Then you can leave all the blisses to take care of themselves. You will certainly not find any shortage of them. Of course there is bliss experienced in self-offering but do not offer yourself in *order to get the bliss* but offer yourself because He is Krishna and your being can only fulfil itself by being united to His Being”.⁴³

His single-pointed love of Krishna, Dilip Roy says, led him to experiences which can be called mystical. He frequently confided his higher and almost ineffable moments of bliss to Dilip Roy. Narrating a wonderful vision which he had at Trichinopoly in the Srirangam Temple, Dilip Roy writes

“ “It was a marvellous revelation, Dilip”, he told me. “As soon as I prostrated myself in the shrine before the Lord’s Image, I lost my outer consciousness and saw—O Dilip , it was—it beggars description !”

“I saw,” he went on in moving terms, “a vast ocean made of liquid light—the *apah* (waters) before the cosmic creation. was it ? I don’t know. For Time had stood still till a breath of Love started a ripple in the hushed ocean of Light, when countless white lotuses erupted on the blue waves, one after another, and on each flower stood a lovely Krishna with Radha—She smiling and He playing His magic flute. But O Dilip, what beauty, what music and ... and what bliss ! The music of the spheres ... from harmony to harmony ... the diapason ... !” He shook his head ruefully, “Pale, dead, frozen words... how could they outflash the living Flame that is Krishna, the throbbing Love that is Radharani...? He shivered as his voice trailed off into silence.”⁴⁴

It was possible for Krishnaprem to have such mystical experiences, he believed, only because he came to India. He had deep reverence for India and its ancient spiritual heritage as well as the ascetic sadhus. Dilip Roy records :

“He held that India was the only country in Asia which had stayed unconquered by the materialistic civilisation of the West because she could still boast her great saints’ holy aura to guard her like an armour. Sometimes, when the detractors bridled or scoffed at the sadhus as parasites, he would retort with a smile that if the West had a galaxy of such parasites today, the next World War might be staved off, and said provokingly : “The ones you call parasites I would rather endow with the epithet, *salt of the earth.*”⁴⁵

Many of Dilip Roy’s friends found intellect as the best antidote to faith. Krishnaprem answered them :

“But the proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof, my friends ! If blind faith could dower us with the *Shivanetra* (the Third eye) I would rather be blind to drab chimera and have angel glimpses of the thrilling Reality.”⁴⁶

Krishnaprem, like an Indian, realized that he could reach to the feet of Krishna only with the help of an enlightened and divinely-appointed guru. In Yashoda Ma he found his true guru. He always remained loyal to his guru, followed each of her instructions, took a great care of her when she was sick and dying. His guru too had great love and affection for him. In one of his letters to Dilip Roy, he said that there could be many teachers in this world from whom we might learn a few things, but a true guru is one:

“*Akhandmandalakaram vyaptam yena characharam
Darshitam tatpadam yena tasmai srigurave namah.*”

(“The Guru by whom is shown to us that Highest pervading all that is with its indivisible gyre—I salute.”⁴⁷)

He added :

“Every initiated *sadhaka*—who has taken *diksha*—should nail the flag of Sri Gurudeva to his mast before everything else. Fifty thousand people may have taught me, but one alone is my Gurudeva—*matprananathastu sa eva naparah*— he alone, and no other, is my heart’s Lord.”⁴⁸

This ‘fellow-pilgrim’ always guided Dilip Roy wisely with the warmth of friendly love during his moments of doubts and confusion when he was staying at Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He learnt many good aspects of spirituality from the illustrious life of Krishnaprem. Through his letters and speeches, Krishnaprem taught him how to live up to any difficult ideal, to be steady in his faith in guru and Krishna and also, to remain quiet after listening to others’ comments about his sadhana. He always inspired Dilip Roy to keep progressing in all situations of

life. On April 14, 1942, for instance, Krishnaprem wrote to Dilip Roy :

“Do not vex yourself with disputes as to personality and impersonality. Personality has no meaning apart from its polar opposite Impersonality and *vice versa*. They are mental terms and must always be linked together in thought. To overstress one in consciousness is to be haunted by a malignant ghost of the other. Be receptive to both movements, and Krishna, from whom spring both, will fertilise the soul. Do not think to affirm but aspire with your whole being (both sides of it) and you will *receive* that which cannot be affirmed and which is lost in all affirmation.”⁴⁹

“There are many reasons, too long to go into, why life in an Ashram causes these phantoms of our own creation to become more active and to come more out into the open. This gives us a chance to deal with them radically and it is a great advantage— if we take it. Let us not look with judging eyes at the shells of men but having first seen our own hearts look just with eyes of pity and understanding on the pathetic struggles of those timid children, the egos of men, with the phantom forms of their own ignorance and then, if we can, see deeper still the blissful self beneath, of whom these egos are but untaught children.... For God’s sake, don’t think I speak *de haut en bas* ! I am no *en haut* myself and what I have written is addressed to my own heart as much as to yours. Naked we must seek Krishna. Even a stitch of self-protecting clothing hides us from Him. For instance, you write and so do I: that is all right, but in that writing is not Dilip and is not Krishnaprem gratified ? We should write as the sun shines without any ego-gratification. Only then does He, the Light of lights, shine in our writing or our singing.”⁵⁰

Krishnaprem always inspired Dilip Roy to have peace in life and also one-pointed faith in his guru. On April 28, 1945, he advised, “... whatever ‘*inner conflicts*’ may trouble you, don’t let them be about your Guru. Whatever you have gained has been through him.”⁵¹ In another letter, very considerately, he wrote :

“I know or at least I can feel the difficulties you write about and I know that were I in your place they would be my difficulties also, and I can and do sympathise with *every line* you write about them. I know I should be in great difficulties—but there you are, we cannot escape from difficulties whatever road we tread.

“As for Guru being the same as Krishna, I think that perhaps you do not understand in what sense it is meant or you would not have written comparing physical appearances. But if you cannot feel that they are the same, can you not feel that Guru is a servant of Krishna—one with Him in the sense of being His Representative, one with Him as the sun’s rays are one with the sun?”⁵²

Being a close friend of Dilip Roy, it seems that Krishnaprem knew Dilip Roy more thoroughly than Dilip Roy might have known himself. For instance, when Dilip Roy accepted Indira Devi as his daughter-disciple and asked Krishnaprem to bless her when they met, he smiled compassionately to her and said :

“Of course I bless you—but more because you have come to look after Dilip than the other way about. For though I hope he will look after you, I may be hoping against hope. But you, Indira, I’m sure, will look after him and I’m glad because he needs being mothered.”⁵³

All the letters written by Krishnaprem to Dilip Roy and others are full of conversational flavour. In an unassuming way he expresses his views and ideas without any inhibitions. Apart from the guidance for Dilip Roy, these letters contain the graph of Krishnaprem’s own development into what Ramana Maharshi observed, “ a *bhakta* and *jnani* in one, a rare combination.”⁵⁴ There are plenty of similes and symbols containing mystical overtones, though he tries to be exact in expressing the truth which is beyond human expression. All of them bear testimony to his common sense, profound learning, scintillating intellect, clarity of thought, firmness of beliefs and courage of conviction.

Like all great saints Krishanprem was humble to the core of his existence. He held Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi in high esteem and visited their Ashrams to express his sense of veneration for them. He always avoided publicity. He often rebuked Dilip Roy for giving him publicity by writing about him or by printing his letters in his books. In one of his letters he wrote to Dilip Roy :

“But O Dilip, why did you write about me and, if at all, why so much? It’s ill, I fear, will be the result for me in the shape of letters and people wanting to visit such a ‘curiosity’ ! What good will it do to you ? Above all, you should not have hinted at the ‘happenings’: all these things only attract the mind of the foolish. I warn you that I shall deny it outright and say that it was just your eloquence ! O Dilip, Dilip ! I meant to go on scolding you for a dozen pages ! But the milk is spilt and it is

useless, so I will say no more. I begged you not to write about us but you just print my request and leave it at that ! You are incorrigible and if you were anyone else I should hate you, but I can't !"⁵⁵

Dilip Roy hardly followed Krishnaprem's instructions in this matter. Krishnaprem was very much concerned about it. So, at the end of one of his letters he requested to Dilip Roy emphatically, "...*please don't publish this letter.*"⁵⁶ At times, he reserved his descriptions of mystical experiences because of the fear of publicity. Once in the middle of his description of such an experience he stopped and said: " No, Dilip, don't ask me, please ! I won't tell you, for you *will* tell everybody, don't I know you ?"⁵⁷

Dilip Roy wished to write an entire book on Krishnaprem while he was living so that many people could learn a few valuable lessons of life from his knowledge, wisdom and renunciation. But Dilip Roy could not do so because of Krishnaprem's extreme dislike for publicity. Dilip Roy published the book, *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem* after his passing away in 1965. It seems that Krishnaprem really lived the philosophy of *sannyasa* in which a person's worldly self dies while he is still living. Once, somebody met Krishnaprem in a street. He, guessing his identity, asked him, "if he could tell him where "Professor Nixon" was. He merely turned away, answering casually, "Oh, he died long ago"⁵⁸

Dilip Roy was very much attracted towards Krishnaprem because the later's goal was the same as his own. It was seeing Krishna face to face. Dilip Roy writes:

".... Krishnaprem holds a unique place in my life in that, of all my dear friends, he is the only one who has trodden the same path as I have all along, to wit, the one that starts from and ends in Krishna. Of course no two persons' paths or problems can be identical all along the line; still, when all is said and done, there *is* such a thing as fellow-feeling or comradeship which can knit together two pilgrims of the spirit with a higher bond of psychic sympathy and love, thus forging one of the sweetest of affinities—as did happen between us despite the obvious divergence of rhythm in our outer gait"⁵⁹

(B) Evaluation :

Dilip Roy's portrait of Krishnaprem even like that of Sri Aurobindo is entirely emotional. It lacks a critical touch. None can dispute that Krishnaprem's renunciation is spontaneous, that his love of Krishna is whole-hearted and that his commitment to the chosen goal is total. But even the greatest saint may have

his human weakness, and Krishnaprem is no exception, though Dilip Roy fails to perceive or define the limitations of his more pious friend.

To think that Hinduism is all good is to be blind to number of its evils. It seems, he does not have a clear understanding of the complex phenomenon called Hinduism. It has excellent spirituality in its tradition of wisdom. But this tradition has been the tradition of a few people fired with the desire to stand face to face with the Divine beyond all darkness. Most people have never had anything to do with it. Most of the so-called saints are really hypocrites and worse than parasites. Hinduism, it cannot be denied, also means social practices of caste and untouchability, of satti and infanticide, of ignorance and sloth and superstitions. To ignore it all and to praise Hinduism without defining it, does not bespeak love of truth. One must call spade a spade and to call spade a spade one must perceive the spade first as a spade. Often, however, we feel, the foreigners drawn to India by the power or spell of her spirituality, fail to notice her ugly realities. Krishnaprem, too, looks like one of them. We must appreciate his piety. But we must realize also that living and moving first among the Indian elite and later among the solitary heights of Himalayas, he could never experience the pangs of poverty and disease and misery of inertia her people suffer from, harassed constantly by the 'mendicants' dressed in silk and wallowing in wealth in palatial houses called ironically 'huts'. Dilip Roy is himself no better than Krishnaprem in all this. He himself does not see India as she is. How can he then recognise Krishnaprem's failure in seeing all her complexity in all clarity?

Krishnaprem appears to be dogmatic as far as his views on the divinely-appointed guru are concerned. His insistence on absolute loyalty to guru seems to be incorrect. It may perhaps be true to say that one should have only one guru on the path of spirituality. But how should one find him out? Would it not require trials and errors? Should one not have the right to change a guru when one does not feel comfortable with the person one meets first? How to be sure that the guide you accept is the god-appointed guru for you?

The higher spiritual experiences which Krishnaprem described to Dilip Roy can be called mystical in nature. Such experiences are very rare and are available to those few who have advanced very far on the path of spiritual asceticism and wisdom.

Krishnaprem exerted a great deal of influence on Dilip Roy, though the latter was Sri Aurobindo's disciple. Krishnaprem always guided Dilip Roy very lovingly with the steadiness of mind. Dilip Roy's *gurubhais* were surprised to see Krishnaprem's hold over Dilip Roy and disapproved of it. But Sri Aurobindo did not mind it. He understood Dilip Roy and allowed him to keep contact with Krishnaprem because "he had faith not only in the spiritual wisdom of Krishnaprem but also in the purity of his love for"⁶⁰ Dilip Roy. Spiritual instruction does not require guru's ownership of the disciple. It is love that ideally should bind the two in

the spirit of freedom. Why should a true guru bother about whom the disciple meets and from whom he learns a few things as long as the latter's spiritual progress does not suffer? Gurus should not though often they do, behave like jealous lovers. They should be anxious only about spiritual well-being of the disciples. Sri Aurobindo had been such a guru to Dilip Roy. But his fellow-disciples could never forgive him for what they thought was his disloyalty to the Master.

The author is not interested in giving chronological facts of Krishnaprem's life. He has attempted to present his subject mainly in those situations in which he himself was present. This personal contact makes his portrait vivacious and authentic. We see it living before us.

Like other portraits by Dilip Roy, this one also reveals a few characteristics of Dilip Roy's own personality. His sceptical mind is reflected here which did not allow him to have faith in spiritual truths pronounced by his gurudev. Sri Aurobindo or his kind counsellor, Krishnaprem. He was very much troubled because of this trait of his nature. In utter disappointment, once he wrote to Sri Aurobindo:

“In my present state.... I often catch myself thinking, ruefully, that the man of faith—like his polar opposite, the sceptic—is born, not made. Otherwise why does my faith play truant so persistently?”⁶¹

He had a wavering nature. He did not know the real tendencies of his own mind. Though he had accepted Sri Aurobindo as his guru, he was not at ease at his Ashram. He needed support of one person or the other in his life to boost him on upon the path he had chosen. He, in this manner, had to depend on Sri Aurobindo, or Krishnaprem and later on, on Indira Devi.

Apart from these drawbacks, his talent as a great musician emerges out from this portrait, too. It is frequently noted in *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem* that Dilip Roy's music and his devotional songs were a source of utmost delight for Krishnaprem and also for many people associated with him. After listening to one of the songs sung by Roy, Krishnaprem commented:

“What *shakti* (vitality), Dilip ! I am a Britisher by birth and do know something about energy. But even I am truly amazed when I see you squandering your ‘fire’ with such a regal recklessness!”⁶²

In many of his letters he praised Dilip Roy's music. Out of many devotional songs sung by Dilip Roy to Krishnaprem, he always liked ‘Brinabaner lila’ very much. When Dilip Roy paid a visit to Mirtola at Yashoda Ma's Ashram, Krishnaprem asked him to sing that well-known song. When he was singing, Yashoda Ma saw the vision of Krishna, standing beside him, listening to his devotional song. Later on she told Dilip Roy:

“Yes, Baba... I... did see Him, with *open eyes* ... as I often do ... You didn't see?”

“No, Ma, But I did *feel*—”

But she went on as though she had not heard: ... And He was standing ... beside you ... in person ... looking so ... so tenderly ... at you ! ... And ... I ... I appealed to Him:”O *Thakur*, give him the ... the blessed boon of vision ... so ... so he may see that you ... you *yourself* have come down to hear his song ... blessed, blessed boy !”⁶³

So, if mystical vision of Yashoda Ma is to be believed, Dilip Roy's music could invoke Krishna, too.⁶⁴

Dilip Roy always liked to be among many people, perhaps, because he was an artist. Krishnaprem, once, described him as ‘a social lion’. He also delighted in sharing fruitful experiences of great men with many people of the world. So, without paying any heed to Krishnaprem's requests of not publishing his letters, Dilip Roy did so.

When one compares Krishnaprem with Dilip Roy, one can find that both of them look like the birds of the same feather, and to some extent, they are one. Both of them have imbibed the intellectual culture of the West. Both have natural interest in arts. Both appear to be equally the lovers of words and write beautiful and fully expressive English. Both alike look for spirituality, and particularly, the *Vaishnav* spirituality of the personal divinity of Krishna.

But the points of difference cannot be overlooked. Krishnaprem is what Dilip Roy wants to be, but is not. Krishnaprem really wants God. His devotion to Krishna is whole-hearted. He has turned his back totally to the world with the wholeness of heart and with the singleness of mind. He loves Krishna. He wants to be immersed in Krishna with the complete effacement of the self, forgetting all time and the whole world. That perhaps is the reason why he is actively guided and accompanied almost visibly by Radharani and Krishna.

Compared to Krishnaprem, Dilip Roy looks like a laodicean. His heart is divided between God and the world. He lacks Krishnaprem's wholeness of devotion. He wants to be famous and admired by all mankind as an artist. But at the same time, there is another Dilip Roy within him who wants to renounce everything as vanity of vanities and become a totally committed pilgrim of eternity. This conflict between rival pulls keeps him in a kind of chaos throughout his works. He constantly complains to Sri Aurobindo and Krishnaprem about the pain of the conflict. It is still not the pain of separation from God that a devotee might feel in the *Vaishnav* school of mysticism called *virahavastha*. It is the pain

of not having the passion for divinity in burning intensity. You may say, he still does not want God in Krishnaprem's manner, but he sincerely wants to want God. Krishnaprem is his ideal, and the ideal has to be perfect. Roy is simply an aspirant, seeking painfully, often crawling weakly with all his infirmity to reach that ideal.

It seems that Dilip Roy's style, in the portrayal of Krishnaprem, reflects his mental condition. He lacks harmony in his personality. So, how can there be any harmony or order in his writing? Clear mind finds expression in clear language and well-ordered form. But conflict and chaos of disordered and confused consciousness can only ramble, now in this direction and now in that. He fully illustrates the dictum, 'style is the man'.

Repetitions abound in his writings. As considered earlier, in Part I of *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, he has reprinted with very few changes an entire chapter, 'Sri Krishnaprem vis-a-vis Sri Aurobindo' from *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*. Many of the letters published in Part III of *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, too, appear in Dilip Roy's earlier books like *Among the Great* and *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*. He has not taken care even to publish the letters in chronological or logical sequence. Consider, for example, Krishnaprem's letter expressing his views on communism dated 25th August, 1943. What should follow it is Sri Aurobindo's letter dated 3rd September, 1943, commenting as it does on Krishnaprem's views. But it does not. In between comes Krishnaprem's letter to Abanibabu dated 6th July, 1938. In writing, editing and compiling letters, Roy just rambles on without any sense of order.

Dilip Roy also lacks terminological exactitude. In what sense could Krishnaprem be described a yogi? He does not clarify. There are six systems of orthodox Indian philosophy. One of them is called *Yoga*, based upon Patanjali's *Yogasutra*. Krishnaprem is certainly not a yogi of that school, practising *chittavrittinirodh* or quietening of mental modifications by meditation and japa. Yet, why does Dilip Roy call him a yogi? Perhaps, he uses the term loosely in the fashion of the *Bhagvatgita* where all approaches to divinity are described as a form of *yoga* or *meeting* of the soul with the supersoul, such as *Jnanayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga* and *Karmayoga*. In that case, Dilip Roy should clarify that he calls Krishnaprem a *bhaktiyogi* which he was, for without that clarification, yogi could mean only a practitioner of 'the Patanjali School'.

3. Subhas Chandra Bose

Next to Krishnaprem, there is the fuller portrait of Subhas Chandra with whom Dilip Roy remained in intimate contact for years together.

Subhas Chandra (1897-1945?), as it is known to all Indians, was an enthusiastic revolutionary who worked ceaselessly to release his motherland

from the yoke of the British rule. Since his early school days he yearned to realize this end. At the age of sixteen, he left his house in search of a spiritual guru but failed to find one. Then, he went to Cambridge university to study for the I. C. S. examination. He passed the examination but refused to accept the job. This act of renunciation of the most coveted position in British administration at once endeared him to his countrymen and annoyed the British rulers. He joined Indian struggle for independence led by Mahatma Gandhi, frequently courted arrest and served long terms of imprisonment. His health deteriorated in 1933 so much that he had to be sent to Europe for a few years for his treatment. The leaders of the Congress in India could not agree with Subhas Chandra's revolutionary agenda. After he had been expelled from Indian National congress in 1939, he established his own political party called 'Forward Bloc', which is still alive in West Bengal. In 1941 he quietly escaped from Calcutta where he had been under house arrest and reached Japan via Afghanistan and Germany. Those were the years of World War II. In Japan, with the help of the Japanese Government he took over the charge of Indian National Army founded by Ras Bihari Bose and led it to India with the war cry '*Chalo Delhi*' or '*Let us march to Delhi*'. The invasion altogether failed. That he died in plane crash is frequently asserted and yet doubted. The fact is that he disappeared after the failure of the I. N. A.

Mahatma Gandhi could not appreciate Subhas's view that the end of the Independence struggle could be realized through violent means. Older Congress leaders like Sardar Patel did not appreciate what appeared to be, to them, Subhas's arrogance and indiscipline towards the Party High Command. Jawaharlal Nehru did sympathise with him, but could not go beyond certain limits to support him in his political extremism. He strongly criticized Subhas when the latter sought the support of the totalitarian regime of Nazi Germany. For a time Subhas felt that he had been abandoned by everybody. It cannot be denied that his loneliness drove him to desperation and self-exile.

But throughout his life, while he was strongly disliked by the old, he was equally strongly liked by the young. The lone fighter defeated even Mahatma Gandhi's nominee, Dr. Pattabhi Sjtaramaiya, in the prestigious Tripuri election for the presidentship of the Indian National Congress in 1939. But the greatest success came to him after the defeat of the I. N. A. and his own death or disappearance. It was when in October 1945, three officers of the I. N. A., a Muslim, a Hindu and a Sikh were tried in the Red Fort of Delhi for treason, murder and torture. Nirad Chaudhuri writes:

“Even Gandhi and Nehru became champions of the INA, which was the strangest part of the matter. Mahatma Gandhi was a pacifist in principle, and his insistence on non-violence was a root of his dislike for Subhas Chandra Bose. As I have said, he

had driven Bose out of the Congress, and could be held responsible for Bose's flight to Germany and ultimate death. But he now changed his attitude. He wrote about him in glowing terms, employing even the term Netaji, which, being an exact equivalent of *Der Furer* or *Il Duce*, revealed Bose's political affiliations, and said: 'Netaji's name is one to conjure with. His patriotism *is* second to none' ... 'His bravery shines through all his actions.' About the INA he declared: 'The hypnotism of the INA has cast its spell on us.'

"Jawaharlal Nehru's championship of the INA was more unrestrained. But it was a greater paradox than Gandhi's. When Bose was on the borders of Assam, Nehru had declared that he would fight Bose if he came to India. He wholly changed his stance after the war, and, of course, it was noticed. When asked for an explanation, he gave a very unconvincing one.... He put on the barrister's gown which he had discarded for twenty-five years and sat among the other defending advocates."⁶⁵

Chaudhuri further adds:

"I had passed through all the phases of the Indian nationalist agitation from 1905 onwards, but never had I seen excitement and passion over the issue of political freedom which was greater than what I saw over the punishment of the officers of the INA."⁶⁶

(A) The Portrait

Subhas Chandra Bose, the man of outstanding vitality and courage happened to be a close friend of Dilip Roy. Both of them studied together at Presidency college, Calcutta and at Cambridge University, England. Dilip Roy paid his bosom friend a tribute from the bottom of his heart by publishing the book: *The Subhash*⁶⁷ *I Knew* in 1946. Roy found from his first hand experience that Subhas Chandra was not cut out to be a politician. In fact, he was an idealistic activist and a mystic at heart, who lost his way because of his concern for the sad plight of his country and excessive confidence in his own strength. He suffered a great deal and sacrificed his life in the service of the motherland. Roy evaluates the importance of Subhas Chandra's contribution to independence struggle and brings out the portrait of a patriot who renounced all pleasures of life for a noble cause and passed the life of a roving soldier. But the portrait we discover here is not simply the portrait of a political leader known to the people from a distance. Dilip Roy has brought out more intimate image of the great idealist both as a man and a friend.

The Subhash I Knew was published by Dilip Roy as *Netaji—the Man: Reminiscences* in 1966 with a few changes. The new title was suggested by Sishir Kumar Bose, Subhas Chandra's nephew. The 'Appendices' given at the end of the latter edition consist of the updated material available on the subject. The author has also included a few excerpts from Subhas Chandra's autobiography, *An Indian Pilgrim* which was published in 1965.

In *Pilgrims of the Stars*, too, Roy has written briefly about permanent influence Subhas Chandra Bose had left on his own life.

Though the paths chosen by Dilip Roy and Subhas Chandra Bose were different, they remained in intimate contact. The two met whenever Dilip Roy visited Calcutta. They also frequently corresponded.

Subhas Chandra Bose stood before Roy as an embodiment of various ideals. One of them was determination to dedicate everything to the service of the nation. In *Pilgrims of the Stars* he notes:

"Subhash... was so utterly one-pointed and dedicated to the ideal of achieving here and now India's political freedom that he said over and over again that first things must come first, and the first need of the hour was India's final liberation from the stifling alien yoke."⁶⁸

Dilip Roy felt that "Subhash was a born patriot and a man of action."⁶⁹ Subhas Chandra Bose used to tell Roy:

"Our spiritual message cannot be borne home to the world at large till we stand finally on our own feet. For the world at large just will not hearken to the psychic message of a race of slaves who subsist to do the will of a heartless bureaucracy of alien masters."⁷⁰

When Subhas Chandra Bose resigned from the I. C. S., all Indian students in England were elated. They wanted to lead a procession on horse-back, with him at their head before the Buckingham Palace. But he never approved of such admirations and pseudo-patriotism. He always put sincerity and solid organizing work above rhetoric. Once he told Dilip Roy: "To win to freedom is not a joke, Dilip!"⁷¹ For him, the cause of the Indian Independence rose above everything, even above his own self and his family. While resigning the degree of the I. C. S., he wrote emphatically to the authorities in England that "he could not work under an alien bureaucracy", and he also told them that he could not "be loyal to the British Raj and yet serve India honestly heart and soul."⁷² Subhas Chandra's father in India was very much worried fearing that Subhas might be arrested as soon as he arrived in India. But Subhas did not live for father and family alone.

He never approved of an easy and an Indian instinctive 'safety first' attitude. With a forceful irony he told Dilip Roy: "But if we build our ideals thinking first and last of our family happiness won't the ideals be wonderful?"⁷³

That is, in our scale of values the country must come first and the family last.

Afterwards, for many years, Subhas Chandra, through his powerful speeches and nobility of heart, inspired people to sacrifice their pleasure and leisure for the sake of the fulfilment of the ONE ideal of Indian Independence. In the Credo which he gave on 31-12-31, in Bombay, Subhas Chandra said:

*"Do you want the fragrance of the full-blown rose? If so, you must accept the thorns. Do you want the sweetness of the smiling dawn? If so, you must live through the dark hours of the night. Do you want the joy of liberty and the solace of freedom? If so, you must pay the price. And the price of liberty is suffering and sacrifice."*⁷⁴

Subhas Chandra's personality, almost always, remained prominent in the public eye because of his strength of mind and power of forceful expression. Roy recollects that even during their college days in Calcutta, Subhas Chandra always shined out in debates with his striking personality.

Then, as Roy remembers:

*"...when Subhas 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 debater! He commanded homage."*⁷⁵

Again, referring to their days in England, Dilip Roy adds:

*'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.'*⁷⁶

Later on, as a freedom fighter, he moved masses in India. His Indian National Army made even the British feel restless. He suffered a lot as he was all alone on his path but he was immensely loved by people who followed his leadership. Dilip Roy remarks:

“...it was Netaji’s spectacular achievement abroad, of recruiting an army, that had ignited the first spark of revolt in the heart of many a sepoy, a revolt which threatened to assume overnight the proportions of a country-wide conflagration... had not Netaji infected our troops with his dare-devil *Delhi-Chalo* barrier-blasting bugle, our freedom would have been delayed by a decade at the very least”⁷⁷

As Dilip Roy noticed, Subhas Chandra was a lover of truth. He always preached that which he himself had practised in his life. Hence, he hated pretentious people. He always appreciated good qualities of others and at the same time, he criticized severely the poses of people. For instance, he appreciated many qualities of the English character: their energy, love of discipline and natural ability to act in concert. At the same time, he abhorred the British people from the bottom of his heart for their imperial ambitions. All through his life he fought against them in one way or the other. His real intention behind going to England was not to pass the I. C. S., but to study the behaviour of the British in their own country. Similarly, he disliked the slave mentality of many Indians who had accepted the British rule naturally and never missed their freedom.

Subhas Chandra was quite independent in his temperament. But from the beginning of his career as a freedom fighter, he was highly inspired by Deshbandhu Chittranjan Das. Subhas Chandra liked his nobility of character very much. He accepted C. R. Das as his chief and joined his ‘Swaraj Party’. He was also known as the ‘right-hand’ of C. R. Das. When C. R. Das died in 1925, Subhas Chandra felt a real sense of bereavement and grieved for long. At that time, Subhas Chandra was in the Mandalay Central Jail. Referring to C. R. Das’s death, he wrote to Dilip Roy on June 25, 1925:

“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..... 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.”⁷⁸

Dilip Roy also informs the readers that Subhas Chandra was not on good terms with many Indian politicians of his times. Subhas Chandra was disliked by many for his radical views. Some of his political rivals succeeded in removing him from the presidentship of the Congress in 1939. He could never see eye to eye with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. According to Roy it was tragic that he had to tread his way all alone.

The author, being a close friend of Subhas Chandra Bose, witnessed his tough struggle through which he had to pass to serve his country truthfully. What is evident in Roy's portrait of Subhas is that the latter is a simple-minded and fearless patriot who could never become a shrewd politician. That was one reason why he could not keep his followers always together and always with him. Even those whom he helped cheated him when political expediency required them to do so. Dilip Roy cites the instances of some fanatical communists who sought help from Subhas Chandra. He helped them whole-heartedly because of the nobility of his character. But one such man from Russia who was helped by Subhas Chandra, betrayed him and Subhas Chandra had to suffer the consequences. Dilip Roy saw that the idealistic activist became a cynic. He writes:

“...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.”⁷⁹

Sarat Chandra, the novelist, used to warn him against ungrateful people. Subhas Chandra, then, found that he was almost powerless to make good of the damage. So, he was “sometimes harsh in his strictures on his colleagues, specially during the period of his deepening frustration in politics.”⁸⁰

Dilip Roy gives an account of the events which took place after the appointment of Subhas Chandra as the chief executive officer of the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta in 1924. He writes how Subhas Chandra was arrested under “the lawless law” and frequently shifted to different jails and how his health had deteriorated because of such sentence. He was released and arrested again and again between 1927 and 1931 when he was also elected Mayor of Calcutta. His health, again, gave way and the Government was forced to send him to Europe for treatment. At that Dilip Roy provided him with the addresses of his friends staying in Europe. Subhas Chandra stayed with Mrs. Muller in Vienna, who was an opera singer and friend of Dilip Roy. Subhas Chandra returned to India in April 1936. He was taken in custody the moment he landed under the same “lawless law.” Dilip Roy met him in Calcutta on March 17, 1937, when he was released. Roy reports:

“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 !... Years of struggle and disappointment on top of frequent incarcerations had mellowed the exterior austerity of the youthful ascetic.”⁸¹

According to the author, Subhas Chandra learnt, in the school of frustration, a lesson that one should not compare oneself with *avatars* like Vivekananda who are exceptional and so, should not be egoistic. Subhas Chandra, during his conversation with Roy one evening after his release in 1937, confessed that his agonies in the jail proved to be very fruitful as he learnt many things about himself when he lived in the seclusion of the jail. He said:

“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.”⁸²

Then, with melancholic smile on his face, he asked:

“But then Dilip 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.”⁸³

Dilip Roy also describes how Subhas Chandra was arrested for having started the Forward Bloc. Subhas Chandra found imprisonment unbearable this time and in 1940 he started hunger-strike. He was released for a while to be arrested again on January 26, 1941. He fled to Kabul so that he could go to his Russian friends in Moscow, but they were not eager to call him there. Disappointed Subhas Chandra went to Berlin and later on sought the help of Japan to realize Indian independence by any means. Now it was impossible for him to rescue himself from the British authorities. Roy comments:

“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.”⁸⁴

Dilip Roy felt that Subhas Chandra failed in his mission because he was not a born politician. Roy knew that politics was not an appropriate area of work for noble, honest and conscientious men like Subhas Chandra. Subhas Chandra was a misfit for it because he was not a seasoned and diplomatic politician. In fact, Dilip Roy was attracted towards Subhas Chandra “*not because he was a patriot on the surface, but because he was a mystic deep within.*”⁸⁵ Whenever

Subhas Chandra and Roy got a chance for heart to heart talk, Subhas Chandra complained of his loneliness to Roy. Once Roy suggested him to turn to spirituality and follow the lead of Divinity rather than to pursue the path of politics. At that time, Subhas Chandra said:

“.....I too have had the seeking you refer to. Yes.... 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.”⁸⁶

Roy often prayed to God to save his friend from “the dark and intricate tentacles of political adventurers and time-servers”, because he knew that “politics was not his native line-swadharma.”⁸⁷ Again, in Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen of *The Subhash I Knew*, Dilip Roy highlights the developed spiritual nature of Subhas Chandra and writes:

“...I want here to stress a highly significant fact about Subhash... 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.”⁸⁸

Dilip Roy shows how, at some unknown call, Subhas fled from his house at the age of sixteen to find out a *Guru* for himself. But he could not find out one. If he had, he could have given a different message to the world. Roy also quotes from Subhas Chandra’s letters written to him from various jails in which he had mentioned about his study of *the Tantra* philosophy which led him to believe that, “certain *Mantras* had an inherent *Shakti*—and that each mental constitution was fitted for a particular *Mantra*.”⁸⁹ Frequently, Subhas Chandra referred to “an ideal world of bliss within” in the midst of the hours of pains and torments of the prison life. Roy felt that :

“Subhas 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*.”⁹⁰

From his early youth, Subhas Chandra avoided the company of women. In fact, his copy-book maxim was: “And never court the company of women—no playing with fire if you please.”⁹¹ Roy comments: “Subhash was nothing if not naive about sex—till perhaps, near the journey’s end, when he knew better.”⁹²

Subhas Chandra was known as a ‘moralising prude’ or ‘puritan’ at Cambridge by many youngmen because he never talked of women, he never mixed with

them. He found only one woman Mrs. N. R. Dharmavir an appropriate one to keep friendship. Dilip Roy advised Subhas Chandra to pay a visit to Dr. Dharmavir and Mrs. Dharmavir in Lancashire. Mrs. Dharmavir who was born of English parents in Russia, married to Dr. Dharmavir, a Punjabi physician. Subhas Chandra stayed with them for some time in 1921. He called Mrs. Dharmavir 'didi'. He was fascinated by her beautiful personality and warm-hearted hospitality. She was the only English woman in England to whom he had opened himself emotionally. After his return from England he understood "the educative value of feminine contact and good will; but there he stopped: his almost ascetic aloofness precluded always any emotional response."⁹³ In 1931, when Subhas Chandra had to go to Vienna for the treatment of T. B., he stayed with Mrs. Muller, Roy's friend. Roy writes:

"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"."⁹⁴

While drawing Subhas Chandra's seriousness of goal and gravity of attempts, Roy also remarks now and again on his simple love of fun and capacity for unlimited laughter. Once, during Roy's conversation with Subhas Chandra at Calcutta, Roy saw him laughing for the first time. Roy remembers:

"Subhash laughed. I never found Subhash more bewitching than in the grip of laughter. It always reminded me of the old simile of the grim rock-overlying a spring. Just a push, a thud—and lo, the entire scenery is transformed! His ordinary exterior often made one wonder whether he had not asked in his cradle: Mother, what is laughter?"⁹⁵

Subhas Chandra knew that his love of laughter was always nourished by Roy's laughter. Being a true friend, Roy knew that:

"High seriousness had been almost the alpha and omega of his existence. Consequently he needed laughter more than the likes of us."⁹⁶

So, Roy took care to bring him into contact with men like Sarat Dutt, Sarat Chatterji, Krishnaprem, Gagan Vihari Mehta and others who had a vivid sense of humour.

Subhas Chandra, many people claimed, was temperamentally domineering and he liked to impose his views on others. But, during his personal contact with Subhas Chandra, the author found that the case was opposite. In 1923 or 1924 C. R. Das started his Swaraj Party, Subhas Chandra joined that party and he was working very hard for it. C. R. Das wanted Roy to join his party and stand for election in his own constituency, against the Maharaja of Nadia. Roy approached

Subhas Chandra and said that he had long lost faith in politics but if it was necessary for him to join politics and go to prison, he would do it only for the sake of his dear friend, Subhas. Subhas Chandra answered:

“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.”⁹⁷

When they were together in England, it was Subhas Chandra who inspired Dilip Roy to follow his career as a musician. He advised:

“....music—though I know very little about it—is *not* a sport: it is something uplifting, 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.”⁹⁸

He further continued:

“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.”⁹⁹

Subhas Chandra held Dilip Roy in high esteem. He liked to share all of his thoughts and emotions with his bosom friend, Dilip. He was very happy to find such a friend near him whenever he was released from jail. Moreover, he always expressed his feeling of gratitude for the smallest favour shown by Dilip Roy.

Hence, while painting the portrait of his close friend, Dilip Roy tried to fulfil

“... a threefold purpose: first, to substantiate my thesis that Netaji was nothing if not an idealist and dreamer in the essence of his being; secondly, to prove that even when he consorted with the Nazis he never forgot his heart’s one dream: that he felt himself missioned to achieve the political deliverance of his beloved land, not to exult in the petty pride of the cheap patriot who vaunts and blusters, but to make India great, nay, even greater than her past; and lastly, to show that he was a mystic at heart.”¹⁰⁰

These purposes are fully realized in the book.

(B) Evaluation:

Here we are given an authentic account of Subhas Chandra's life from the pen of his bosom friend. A living, pulsating man stands revealed before the readers. It is a commonly known historical fact that Subhas Chandra struggled hard to achieve the ideal of the freedom of his motherland. But one can come to know about his inner spiritual struggle to sustain ideals of truth, honesty and decency even in politics, only through such a throbbing story of friendship presented by D. K. Roy. Roy in his portrait depends entirely on his personal knowledge of his friend. So naturally the last and most famous years of Bose's life are excluded here. Roy observes:

"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"¹⁰¹

It appears in the above passage that Roy had nothing to do with Bose's political philosophy which evoked in India both applause and strong disapproval. In fact, it seems, Roy is more sympathetic to the voices of Bose's detractors who blamed Bose for unscrupulousness and ambition. Roy's views naturally leaned towards mildness and moderation of Gandhi and Nehru, though, by and large, Roy is indifferent to all politics. In Subhas he did not love a popular hero, but his personal hero. Bose's politics does not affect in the slightest Roy's pure affection for him.

Netaji — the Man: Reminiscences is a book on Subhas, but it also involves at places Jawaharlal Nehru. One was Dilip Roy's friend. The other had been friendly to him. Roy almost attempts a comparative study of these two noble personalities highly regarded both by himself and his compatriots. It reveals uniqueness of each despite some common qualities. Each of them clarifies and explains the other as much by comparison as by contrast.

Subhas Chandra disapproved of Jawaharlal Nehru on account of Jawaharlal's views on the service or disservice religion has done to mankind. In holding such views, Jawaharlal appeared to be an outsider to Subhas Bose. He felt that Jawaharlal's criticism of religion was not inspired by any real experience of religion but it was based only on the social effects of religion. Nehru appeared to be a poser to Subhas Chandra because he saw that Nehru, on the one hand, was fuming against idolatry and on the other hand, he himself was idolising Gandhiji and also Russian policies.

Roy did not hold Nehru in such a low-estimation. Until the end of his life, Roy was baffled as to why Subhas could not appreciate the nobility of Nehru. Evaluating the two, he writes:

“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?”¹⁰²

Roy says :

“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.

Such a difference in total outlook and perception could be attributed to an incompatibility 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."¹⁰³

Here, the biographer and his subject, too, stand compared and contrasted. Both, Roy and Subhash Chandra Bose had remarkable similarities of temperaments. Both of them were highly sophisticated, intelligent, active, idealistic and courageous.

Roy notes:

"The more I knew him, the more I loved him, till it became almost an exquisite adoration. Not that we never differed from each other. But even the difference of our individual viewpoints and tastes contributed to the deepening of our intimacy.... My ideal was Sri Ramkrishna, who had said that the object of life is to meet and live in the Divine. Subhash said that the object of life was to serve our beloved Motherland, India, by liberating her from the foreign yoke which bled us dry ruthlessly. It is not that I did not love India. I was wont to say to Subhash with a courtly bow and a theatrical smile (paraphrasing Shakespeare's Brutus): "Not that I love India less but that I love Krishna more."¹⁰⁴

Subhas Chandra was a man of strong will-power, quick decisions and aggressive and independent temperament. Apart from being a good orator, patriot, political activist, he was almost an ascetic. He always tried to look into the future and behaved according to the latest trends of politics.

While Dilip Roy was a man of wavering and indecisive nature. He frequently sought Subhas Chandra's help in taking decisions of his own life. He was shy by temperament. So, he found it difficult in his early youth to deliver public speeches. He had strong dislike for politics. He had deep-rooted faith in universal truths quoted in ancient traditional scriptures. He became disciple of Sri. Aurobindo and began to stay in his Ashram. He also gave himself to music and literary creativity. Above all, Dilip Roy was humble and always liked to appreciate good qualities of others. Subhas Chandra Bose was aware of this habit of Roy. Bose called Roy a born 'hero-worshipper'. Subhas Chandra being a fastidious person, praised a very few people in his life. The following conversation brings out the difference that lay between Subhas Chandra and Dilip Roy. On Roy's reference to the good qualities of Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose said:

“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.” ¹⁰⁵

As in other portraits, here, too, many other remarkable qualities of Dilip Roy’s personality are reflected. Like a true friend, he always stood by Subhas Chandra Bose in the hour of his need and provided him not only mental support, but financial help also. He organized a few music concerts to relieve the miseries of Bose’s friends who were helping him in his political life. When Subhas Chandra Bose resigned from his I.C.S., he was worried about how to go back to India without any financial support from his family. At that time, without caring for the consequences, Dilip Roy gave the revolutionary ninety pounds. Moreover, Dilip Roy, almost always tried to bring Subhas Chandra under the influence of Sri Aurobindo so that his suffering could be reduced and his restless heart could have peace, but, anyhow, Subhas Chandra failed to follow his friend’s advice. The portrait also reveals Roy’s deep reverence for the wisdom of his guru, his love of music and candid confessions of his own lapses and limitations.

Roy's style, as usual, is flowing naturally. While giving his impressions of Subhas Chandra's great character, he does not follow any chronological order of events. He jumps from one incident to another and often comes back to the same unmindful of repetitions. He frequently digresses from the main narration. While talking of Subhas, he begins to speak of himself and again comes to the main point.

Roy's style, at times, appears to be very loose. In Chapter Twenty One of *The Subhush I Knew*, he talks of the capacity of prayer and adds the letter he had received from his guru on prayer, but it appears to be an utterly irrelevant chapter, for it throws no light on Subhas. In *Netaji — the Man: Reminiscences*, Roy has included a play-'Fantasia' as Chapter Twenty Three with three characters-Mr. Morality, Chief Justice and Miss Art, which perhaps has nothing to do with the subject of the biography. One might wonder why such a 'Morality' piece is needed here. Perhaps Roy had some purpose in his mind. But he has not cared or has failed to reveal it. Be that as it may, the redundancy of the chapter looks too obvious to be disputed. It is clear that Roy lacks concentration in his method of writing. Perhaps he seems to have assumed that because he writes with remarkable fluidity, smoothness and sweetness, the reader would make allowance for his inability or even unwillingness always to be precise and to the point. One may say Roy is thinking aloud. He does not seem to be conscious that he is writing for the readers. In a way, it could be called a stream of consciousness. But it is the stream of conscious mind, flowing freely according to the level of the land. The author does not seem to be directing its flow very carefully. That is how it differs from the Surrealistic fiction of the stream of consciousness which is a free flow of the tendings of the unconscious mind, at the threshold of the conscious. That is why, it could more appropriately be called a romantic rambling at its worst.

It appears to the readers that Roy fails to be sufficiently frank at certain points. He reserves, all through the book, a few facts related to somebody referred to as "the Congress High Command." He never mentions the name of this person and the readers are likely to be baffled by such reservations.

Roy's tendency to find glory everywhere can be seen in the following description of heroes given in *The Subhash I Knew* :

"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 kindness. 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 pugrees 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 awe-inspiring and withal the most incongruous 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.”¹⁰⁶

When one compares Roy’s portrait of Subhas Chandra with his other portraits of Sri Aurobindo and Krishnaprem, one can easily notice a point of difference. Dilip Roy here finds himself on equal footing with his subject. So, he becomes a bit critical, at times, of Subhas Chandra’s imperfections. At times, he gives his own reasons for Subhas Chandra’s failures and also defends his mighty actions.

Unlike in his other books, in the two books on Subhas Chandra, Roy has taken care of proper documentation. The footnotes in these books are detailed and informative.

It is one of the features of Roy’s style that he includes opinions held by others about his subject to support his own understanding of his greatness. In ‘Appendices’ to *Netaji — the Man: Reminiscences* Roy presents the views of such prominent persons as Rabindranath Tagore, Romain Rolland and Bhulabhai Desai about Subhas Chandra.

4. Indira Devi

Each life that Dilip Kumar Roy presents in a book reveals also a relationship and a facet of the authorial personality too. What we see in his relationship with Sri Aurobindo, is a sincere seeker after spirituality approaching his guru for enlightenment and harassing him perpetually with questions that trouble his own soul. Here we see a true disciple, almost an ideal disciple of the definition of the *Bhagavat Gita*, seeking knowledge by *pāriprahsna* or questions and answers, by *pranipat* or worship and by service to be rendered to guru.¹⁰⁷ This is Dilip Roy in relation to Sri Aurobindo.

But Roy is much more than a mere disciple. His Krishna-love drives him to the company of Krishnaprem. The two birds have the same feathers, but one is an adult bird, the other is a youngling in the same nest with him. There is a difference of the degrees of maturity between the two. We see thus Dilip Roy as a bird with growing feathers with the full-fledged personality of Krishnaprem. This is another relationship and aspect of Roy's personality.

Then we see Dilip Roy as a youth vis-a-vis his equally youthful friend, Subhas. They are pals. One is not superior to the other in this relationship of friendship. Each reveals himself freely before the other in complete confidence. Here we discover Dilip Roy in a different light from the earlier lights.

We see now Dilip Roy in a unique relationship with Indira Devi. There is nothing customary about him. He does not want to become anybody's guru. groping as he himself is for light. Yet he is nearly forced to be one by a woman who sees in him her pre-appointed guru. As we shall see later, it is difficult to say definitely who teaches whom. Yet, it seems, this relationship has totally transformed him spiritually. It seems, in the ladder of spiritual progress that Roy has been climbing, his relationship with Indira Devi comes as the last rung. Beyond it, is the terrace of the highest achievement.

(A) Portrait:

Indira Devi, before she came to Dilip Roy, was known as Janak Kumari. Her father, Captain Kriparam Jauhar, had been a multimillionaire military contractor. He gave Indira Devi the best and the most expensive modern education. Since her very young age, she had been accustomed to move amid the most cultured and sophisticated society. She had already been married and had three sons before she met Roy. She had imbibed from her milieu the qualities of nobility, sincerity and generosity. But she also felt dissatisfied with the life of luxury she led and sensed a kind of hypocrisy in her class.

When she met Roy for the first time in 1946, she intuitively felt that this man, so utterly different from the people around her, was destined to lead her from darkness to light. In 1949, therefore, she ran down to Pondicherry and besought Dilip Roy to accept her as his disciple. The very suggestion appalled Roy who knew his own limitations and imperfections too well to ignore them. How could he, who himself suffered from darkness, take upon himself the responsibility of leading someone else towards light ? Instead of accepting her, he prayed to Sri Aurobindo that he accept her as his own disciple. Sri Aurobindo too was prepared to accept her but she refused to recognize anyone other than Dilip Roy as her guru inspite of her high regard for Sri Aurobindo. Her intuitive awareness in this regard had been so clear and strong that ultimately it disarmed both Sri Aurobindo and Dilip Roy . Sri Aurobindo, then, permitted Dilip Roy to accept her as a disciple and the latter did accept her.

After the death of Sri Aurobindo Dilip Roy and Indira Devi settled down in their temple-house, Hari Krishna Mandir at Pune. After that, there has not been a single book of his authorship in which he did not write about her. Her image emerges, however, more clearly from :

- (a) *Pilgrims of the Stars.*
- (b) *The Flute Calls Still*
- (c) *The Rounding Off*
- (d) *Kumbha, India's Ageless Festival*

Roy also inspired Indira Devi to write about the unique spiritual experiences they had together in all of these books. So, they are written in collaboration.

Pilgrims of the Stars is an account of the lives of both Dilip Roy and Indira Devi. Its special distinction is that it is strictly speaking, neither a biography nor an autobiography and yet has the characteristics of both in one. It is divided into three parts. In PART ONE Dilip Roy has written about his life before he met Indira Devi. In PART TWO Indira Devi has given an account of her own life from her childhood to her meeting with her guru. In PART THREE Roy has shown how he came into contact with his spiritually evolved disciple and how they passed their lives together in Pune, witnessing one miraculous incident after another of Krishna's grace. (A separate study of this autobiography follows in Chapter 10 of this book.)

In the remaining three books, no chronological sequence of events of their lives is maintained. Instead of it, their spiritual experiences are recorded in a variety of manners in them.

In *The Flute Calls Still*, Dilip Roy has portrayed "a rare being.... as the central figure—like a star, again, among the fireflies."¹⁰⁸ The book is written as an humble tribute to Indira Devi's innate gift for spiritual experience and also to describe how she made her daily life a pilgrimage, like Savitri. It is a collection of letters written by Indira Devi and Dilip Roy to various renowned persons of their time and also to their own disciples. The letters written by their disciples to Dilip Roy and Indira Devi are also included here. Many disciples have submitted their accounts of beautiful spiritual and almost miraculous phenomena which they witnessed taking place almost everyday in the lives of Indira Devi and Dilip Roy at Hari Krishna Mandir.

The Rounding off was meant to be the sequel of *The Flute Calls Still*. It is again a collection of letters written by Roy and Indira Devi and also by their Indian as well as foreign disciples. Some of the reports of the spiritual happenings of Hari Krishna Mandir written by their disciples are also published herewith "to appeal not only to genuine believers and seekers but also to those who, living on

the borderline of faith and agnostic denial, approach the world of the supra-physical... with an open mind.”¹⁰⁹ When Dilip Roy completed the revising of the manuscript of *The Flute Calls Still: Second Part* on September 29, 1979, he told Indira Devi: “This is my last work, put it on the shelf among the files marked “Posthumous works”. and then he said: “It has been a good *rounding off*, hasn’t it ?”¹¹⁰ Hence, Indira Devi, after the passing away of Roy in 1980, published the book in 1983; but she dropped Roy’s title and called the book *the Rounding Off*. In ‘Foreword’ to the book, Nani Palkhivala notes:

“Collected within the compass of the following few pages, are letters and reminiscences of Dilip Kumar Roy and his disciple, Indira Devi — who are Exemplars of Excellence and Explorers of Brahma. These fragrant fragments of experience are both revealing and evocative. In them we see the warm hand of the philosopher, comforter and guide. Dilip Kumar Roy speaks of the eternal, timeless truths and the inquiring spirit that seeks them.”¹¹¹

In *Kumbha, India’s Ageless Festival* Dilip Kumar Roy has written about their meetings with various *sadhus* and seekers after spirituality during the Festival of Kumbha in 1954. The chapters are written almost alternately by Indira Devi and Dilip Roy. Here, they have attempted to vindicate the cause of spirituality and true *sadhus*. There are a few people, they have met at that time, who are evolved enough to crave for the lore of the spirit. Such few people, at times, live on the border-land of spiritual discovery. When they see the *sadhu* teaching through living the truth he stands for, their oscillation between the call of the soul on the one hand and Matter on the other can be removed. The book also reveals the authors’s quest of truth and their constant spiritual leaning.

Moreover, in his fictionalized biographies like *Mira* and *Miracles Do Still Happen*, Roy has beautifully woven the story of Indira Devi’s life in the forms of drama and novel. (Refer to Part Three : *IMAGINATIVE PAINTINGS* of this book for further details)

Dilip Roy, in these books, focusses his attention on all those spiritual faculties of his daughter-disciple which endeared her to him.

Indira Devi’s immense faith in guru and guruvad appealed to Dilip Roy very much. Indira Devi, since her first meeting with Roy, had been fully convinced that he alone was her divinely-appointed guru and nobody else. She rejected the idea of becoming the disciple of Sri Aurobindo, though she held him in high esteem. She refused the tempting proposals of Swami D., who, by hook or by crook, with his occult powers, wanted Indira Devi to be his disciple. Indira Devi had to suffer a lot because of the black magic used by that Swami to take her

under his control. But she did not yield. Her love and respect for her guru were exemplary. Her surrender at the feet of her guru was complete and her sacrifice was quite impressive. She left behind her in 1949, her three sons, the youngest son at that time was just one year old. She gave up all the comforts of her life and led the life of simplicity and hardships for many years in order to be loyal to her guru. Indira Devi remained true to her guru all throughout their stay together at the Ashram.

Dilip Roy observed that when he accepted her as his disciple, her capacity to have higher spiritual, almost supra-physical experiences, was revealed. She rapidly blossomed in the light of her spirit soon after her spiritual birth in 1949. Dilip Roy records:

“What happened was that directly after her initiation, whenever I sang songs on Krishna, she started going off, intermittently into a *samadhi* which sometimes lasted for hours. She would sit stone-still—often with a beatific smile on her lips, or with profuse tears streaming down her cheeks. Once I saw her sit like this, petrified, for more than eight long hours. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me in a letter that “her *samadhi* was of the *savikalpa* kind.”

‘Then she began to see, in her vision, a lovely lady in Rajput dress who sang to her beautiful devotional songs in a voice athrob with love’s yearning and pain—*viraha*.’¹¹²

Later on, she remembered the songs which, in her trances, she had heard that Rajput lady sing. Indira Devi began to dictate those songs to Dilip Roy. Then, he had no doubt that the woman who visited Indira Devi in her *samadhi* was no other than Mira Bai, Queen of Mevar. In this manner, Dilip Roy took down almost 800 songs and published many of them in collections entitled: *Shrutanjali* (1950), *Premanjali* (1953), *Sudhanjali* (1958), *Deepanjali* (1960) and so on. Dilip Roy was astonished, in the initial stage, to find her remembering Mira’s songs verbatim. Then he could understand why “Our Vedas were called *Shrutis* (meaning things heard) and the sages claimed that the messages came from on high and as such must be looked upon as *Apaurasheya*, Revelatory.”¹¹³

Dilip Roy was very much satisfied when Sri Aurobindo, whom he considered the most authentic person on ancient and modern mysticism, commented in favour of the sincerity of Indira Devi’s experiences. In two of his letters, he wrote to Dilip Roy:

“There is nothing impossible... in Mirabai manifesting in this way through the agency of Indira’s trance, provided she (Mira) is still sufficiently in touch with this world to accompany Krishna

where He manifests and in that case there would be no impossibility either in taking the part she did in Indira's vision of her and her action. If Indira wrote in Hindi with which she was not used to write and it was under the influence of Mirabai, that would be a fairly strong evidence of the reality of Mirabai's presence and influence on her." (7.5.50)

"It is evident... that Indira is receiving inspiration for her Hindi songs from the Mira of her vision and that her consciousness and the consciousness of Mira are collaborating on some plane superconscious to the ordinary human mind: an occult plane; also, this influence is not an illusion but a reality, otherwise the thing could not happen as it does in actual fact. Such things do happen on the occult plane, they are not new and unprecedented." (2-6-50)."¹¹⁴

After their stay at Hari Krishna Mandir, Dilip Roy writes: "A great has happened since then till now, 1972: Mira is woven inextricably into our lives."¹¹⁵ The inspiring songs of Mira and various parables associated with songs, dictated to Roy by Indira Devi, initiated an altogether new phase of *sadhana* for Roy. In *The Flute Calls Still* Roy has given Ekanta's record of the incident in which Indira Devi's identification with Mira took place. On August 25, 1959, Roy sang one of Mira's *bhajans* on the theme of Godmadness in the Temple Hall. At that time Indira Devi remained in trance for a long time. When she came out of her trance, she was sobbing silently. Then, she told people present there that she had seen Mira crying like a derelict for Krishna. When Roy encouraged her to tell in detail about her vision, she spoke as if she herself was Mira and was passing through the same pain which Mira might have passed during her experience of *viraha*. Almost at the end of her description, she said:

"What tears I shed for my Gopal, but He still stayed away! Then, one day..... as I was sitting in the sand..... crying..... crying..... the tears were streaming down for my Gopal..... and as I watched..... the tears began to shine ! And..... as I looked, inside every single tear was Gopal Himself..... smiling, in each tiny tear-drop !.... Yes..... (*clapping her hands in sudden joy*), Yes..... Gopal was smiling in each of my shining tears."¹¹⁶

Then, Dilip Roy explained to the audience:

"You have heard today a profoundly moving story—or, shall I say—Mira's message of love divine. It has come through Indira's consciousness and yet Mira's consciousness was, for a spell, one with hers. You may well say: Mira's message came filtering

in through Indira's consciousness, or you may simply say Mira was speaking through her. Whichever way you may put it, it remains a lovely message of true devotion, *bhakti*, of Mira's love revealing itself and evolving through her *viraha*—her pangs of separation. And she accepts the deepest pain as the price to be paid for Gopal, the be-all and end-all of her life."¹¹⁷

Later on Indira Devi could reproduce some of the beautiful original tunes in which she had heard Mira sing them. A few of the tunes were quite new in style and movement. So, Roy had to take them down in notation before he could sing them correctly. According to him it was a fresh miracle that happened in 1964 because Indira Devi, when she had come to Pondicherry, could not sing at all; so it was 'a veritable landmark in the evolution of her many-mooded personality.'¹¹⁸

Indira Devi's opening and flowering into spirituality enabled her to have visions of the future of people—their happiness or unhappiness. In all of these books, Roy has given accounts of many of such incidents which he himself had witnessed and verified. In *Pilgrims of the Stars*, Roy writes how Indira Devi foresaw the passing away of his loving gurudev Sri Aurobindo. Roy at that time, was in Benares and Indira Devi, in Bombay. On December 5, 1950, Roy received the news of Sri Aurobindo's demise on the radio at about 10 A. M. At noon, he received a telegram from Indira Devi sent from Bombay at 9.55 P.M. on December 4, 1950, in which she had mentioned about the terrible vision she had about Sri Aurobindo. She sought Roy's blessings in this matter. When both of them reached Pondicherry, Indira Devi showed Roy the diary in which she had recorded her visions which came true so soon:

"Bombay Dec. 2, '50. I was having a terrible pain in my body, and whenever I sat down to meditate I saw Gurudev Sri Aurobindo lying in bed. A dreadful chill in the atmosphere. Death hovering around. It was such an agony!

"Bombay Dec. 4, '50. At about midnight I saw Gurudev again lying stretched on his bed in his room at Pondicherry, when, suddenly, I saw his body rising up. I knew at once that he was leaving his body. I noticed a black mark on the back of his hand. [Later, we inquired and learned that there was, indeed, a black scar just there, the legacy of an injection.]"¹¹⁹

On August 9, 1951, Dilip Roy received a thick envelope from Dewan Surindar Lal, a dear friend of theirs. Indira Devi stopped him from opening the envelope and showed him what she had recorded in her diary on August 2, 1951. She had written:

“Saw Lal writing to Dada when Biji [Lal’s mother] requested him to enclose a little garland she had woven for Dada.”¹²⁰

When Roy opened the letter, to his surprise, he found enclosed in it a small *bakul* garland sent to Roy by Mr. Lal’s mother.

Many visions of Indira Devi, bearing her contact with the spirits of the dead and living took place at Hari Krishna Maridir, Pune. By such experiences of spiritualism, she could help many of the devotees of their temple. In *The Flute Calls Still*, Roy has recorded five such incidents of supra-physical import on pp. 237-240.

Even different gods, goddesses and saints appeared before Indira Devi. She had visions of Hanuman, Ganesh and Saint Saibaba who asked her to follow their instructions and Indira Devi did so. To one of their devotees Roy wrote on July 13, 1958, that Lord Ganesh

“...has been coming to Indira now and then. “I am at the foot of the Mother,” he said to her twice.” At the foot of the hill, you know, on which Her temple stands.” We had never been to this temple. So we went on June 1, 1958 and found on enquiry that there is a Ganesh temple at the foot of the hill. We went in and prostrated ourselves before Lord Ganesh. Indira saw Him there again (for the 6th time) and went into a *samadhi* inside the temple when she heard a Mira-bhajan.”¹²¹

At another place Dilip Roy writes: “On Good Friday, she had a vision of Christ bearing the Cross and..... His Resurrection.”¹²²

Even a greater miracle was witnessed by Roy and a few of their disciples on April 24, 1958, when, at Indira Devi’s touch, mud turned into *prasad*. Writing of this incident to Ambalal Sarabhai, Roy notes that when he finished his singing of a Mira Bhajan,

“...Indira, in a half-trance of ecstasy said: “Dada, shall we have *prasad*?”

“I wondered wistfully when she went down the steps to the garden, accompanied by Premal and then Srikanta. Premal, at Indira’s request, put into her palm a handful of black dry mud — just when Indira started swaying in her *bhav-samadhi* and poured into Srikanta’s hand what Premal had given her. He exclaimed:” It is sweet *prasad*, Dada !” Then I ran down, called by Premal’s startled cry, but there was nothing any more in Indira’s hand, as we all saw. Then she folded her hands again

and gave me the same granulated *prasad* and she gave it from an empty hand — out of nothing !

“There I took up a little mud in my hand and stowed it in one envelope and a little (transformed into *prasad*) in another. And, lo, the dry black mud, changed into *prasad*, was now moist and brown whereas the other envelope was dry with the hard clay, black as ever!

“But even this is not all. Listen.

“A few minutes later Indira said: “O Dada, the clay you kept in your other envelope has been partly changed into *prasad* by Divine Grace. Go and look !”

“We all went, agog, to my desk and then, lo and behold, the dry mud which had not even been touched by Indira was mud no more but shone, transformed into the same kind of granulated *prasad* !”¹²³

Roy, with the feeling of reverence for Indira Devi’s higher spiritual faculties, wrote:

“...she has been sent from on high missioned to reveal something of great value not to me alone but to authentic spiritual seekers of all climes.”¹²⁴

Indira Devi performed a very important role in Roy’s life. Roy, who had been influenced by Sri Ramkrishna’s ideas since his childhood, began to doubt the truth of spirituality when he grew into a young man because of his Western education. So, although he had always believed that miracles were performed by great yogis and messiahs in all ages, he often yearned to witness a few miracles so as to attest from personal experience that Divine Power can even change the laws of nature. The first miracle of his life took place in his life when he met a yogi named Barodakanta Majumdar who foretold him with proof that Sri Aurobindo was his appointed guru and nobody else. The same Yogi met Roy in Calcutta in 1937. He prophesied at that time:

“.... you won’t realize Krishna in Pondicherry. For that you will have to wait till the advent of a highly evolved lady. When she will come to cooperate with you as your disciple, then only will you get your heart’s desire.”¹²⁵

That ‘highly evolved lady’, Indira Devi, came into Roy’s life to fulfil his desire of watching miracles in his own life, as it is seen, by bringing in a train of supra-physical experiences. When Roy himself witnessed those mystical and miraculous happenings during their life together, a kind of conversion took place

in his mental state. All his doubts dispelled, and his agnosticism was truly transformed into an authentic faith. He became a firm believer in the reality of apparently irrational spiritual occurrences. In many of his books he highlighted such occurrences in one form or the other in a vivid and meticulous manner so that the readers can feel them.

Moreover, after the physical departure of Dilip Roy's guru, Indira Devi, through her intense love and reverence, supported Dilip Roy. Roy was very sensitive and touchy by nature. Though she was the disciple of Roy, she took a great care of him. Roy often found that their roles were reversed. The disciple became the guru frequently and taught many things of spiritual import to him. He writes:

"..... after her coming to me I have wondered, often enough, whether our roles had not been reversed by Dame Destiny: that is to say, whether she had not come to me more to teach than to learn."¹²⁶

(B) Evaluation :

We see here an image not of a human being but of a perfect saint. We do not discover here the swinging of consciousness between the extremes of light and darkness, normally discovered in course of long-drawn discipline in the life of a spiritual aspirant. We see here a consistent light, instead. Indira Devi has already passed the stage of *sadhana* or spiritual discipline and entered the domain of *siddhi* or consummate realization of the end of spiritual discipline: To such a person, purity of heart and perfect morality spontaneously come from inward spiritual springs. In Indira Devi we find besides modern education, aristocratic sophistication and intellectual brilliance. Miracles are a daily occurrence in her life.

Indira Devi saw Mirabai in her visions, singing her songs and narrating the parables of her conversations with Sanatan Goswami, her guru and also with Gopal. But, there appears to be certain discrepancy between what is revealed about Mira's guru in Indira Devi's vision and what we find in Mira's numerous biographies. Usha S. Nilsson, for instance, writes

"There is considerable controversy about Mira Bai's guru (teacher). The traditional belief is that the wandering mendicant who gave Mira Bai the idol of Krishna in her childhood was no other than Raidas, the well-known disciple of Ramanand. Mira Bai has mentioned in one of her songs the name of Raidas as her guru."¹²⁷

According to the biographical accounts, it was Jiv Goswami, not Sanatan, who refuses to see Mira in Vrindavan.¹²⁸ But in Indira Devi's vision, Mira tells

her that the incident happened between her and Sanatan. Indira Devi has noted in her diary:

“June 30, 1951 — Mira said: “I reached Brindaban at last on foot. But what was my disappointment when I heard that my guru, Sanatan, for whom I had come all this way, lived in seclusion and had taken a vow never to look at a woman. I sent a messenger to tell him that I had been given to understand that in Brindaban every soul was a Radha soul and so none could lay claim to masculinity except Krishna. He was disconcerted and sent for me. When he saw me he received me with open arms, saying ‘Mira, you are not a woman but a mountain-stream and anybody who comes into contact with you can only emerge clean out of it’

“Thenceforward I lived with him as his disciple in his hut which was so small that at night I had to sleep *under* his little cot. It was thus I stayed with him for seven and a half years.”¹²⁹

That Sanatan becomes Mira’s guru looks like entirely a new piece of information. No biographer tells us that Mira ever had a regular guru. Only the vision tells us that Mira used to live in the same room with Sanatan and slept under his cot. There is no confirmation whatsoever of this incident in any of her biographies. In fact, Mira had been too god-drunk to need any initiation into the path of devotion. She had been fired and inspired and thoroughly cleansed long ago in Mevar. Now she was driven under divine propulsion. She lived and moved and had her being in Krishna. This is the end and purpose of the entire *bhakti* discipline. Mira had already realized it. In fact, even like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, she is regarded as a perfect example of *Vaishnav bhakti*. Would she need, then, any initiation from a disciple of Sri Chaitanya ? Was she sane enough to be initiated at that time ? What further than her highest achievement would she realize by such an initiation ? The fact is that Mira is simply reported to have a brief and pointed exchange with Jiv Goswami. There seems to be some uncertainty in Indira Devi’s revelation. The thinkers like Bertrand Russell who do not regard mysticism as an acceptable way of knowing, point out that a mystic’s dreams and visions are sometimes wishful in character, sometimes, fear-inspired, sometimes altogether false and fictitious, and in any case, not at all dependable.¹³⁰

This may be an extreme statement. But it cannot be denied that there is some truth in it. Indira Devi’s revelation, anyway, regarding the relationship of Sanatan and Mira, does not look acceptable. There may be auto-suggestions in Indira Devi’s vision. The vision is dubious. It seems she has projected herself and Dilip Roy in Mira and Sanatan unconsciously.

In Dilip Roy's sketch of Indira Devi, one can notice that the subject and the author are closely associated with each other apparently as the disciple and the guru. Nani A. Palkhivala, in his 'Preface' to *Fragrant Memories* notes:

"Indira Devi was to Dadaji what the Mother was to Sri Aurobindo. There was between them a relationship of ineffable beauty, enriched and ennobled by their deep spiritual impulse. In Indira Devi's own words, it was a relationship not only of a guru and disciple, a father and daughter, a teacher and pupil, but the relationship between two friends, two fellow pilgrims of eternity, with one goal and one path."¹³¹

They began to live together to attain 'upward spiral'. As the title of their autobiography suggests, they called themselves 'pilgrims of the stars.' Their 'one goal and one path' was to realize Krishna 'face to face' in this life through their love of Krishna. So both of them possessed certain similarities of character. Both of them belonged to high aristocratic background. *They* were completely loyal to their gurus. They had great respect for Indian traditions to which they belonged. They tried to establish the greatness of Indian culture and tradition in the world when they went abroad on a cultural tour in 1953 and visited many places like Japan, Hawaii, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Carmel, Chicago, New York, London Zurich, Rome and Cairo.¹³²

Both of them were artists of the first rank. Indira Devi was a dancer, Dilip Roy, a musician. During their cultural tour, Dilip Roy sang songs with his music and Indira Devi danced to the accompaniment of his songs. In their Hari Krishna Mandir, Dilip Roy used to sing devotional songs with his music and Indira Devi was frequently dancing even during the moments of her trance. Dilip Roy's music, it was felt, was invoking almost unique spiritual experiences in his disciple and people around them, as it is frequently described in their books *The Flute Calls Still* and *The Rounding Off*, participated in the enactment of the Divine bliss.

Yet, they were different from each other in certain respects. Though Dilip Roy remained a spiritual seeker from his very young age, he was almost always sceptical of the authenticity of spiritual truths. He found that there was no remedy for his nature. On the other hand, Indira Devi had great faith in truths taught by spiritual persons. Though Dilip Roy was highly educated and highly knowledgeable, he always needed somebody to depend on. First of all, he depended on his guru. After his guru's physical departure, he leaned on Indira Devi for sustenance. If Indira Devi exhibits perfect saintliness, Dilip Roy reveals authentic yearning for such a life. Indira Devi is more divine than human. Dilip Roy is more human than divine. She commands our reverence, he, our affectionate regard. One is a *siddha* or an accomplished mystic. The other is a *sadhaka* or pilgrim on the path of eternity.

Dilip Roy's style in the portrayal of Indira Devi is quite different from that of his earlier portraits. *The Flute Calls Still* is divided into two parts. Part One consists of letters Indira Devi wrote to their foreign disciples, Richard Millar and Don Toxay about her own practice of *guruvad* and spirituality. In part Two, Dilip Roy's letters are given under the title- "Dadaji's Letters". Many letters received by Dilip Roy are also published in this part. In *The Rounding Off*, in the same manner, letters written by Dilip Roy and Indira Devi, along with their disciples's reports are published. The style is repetitive as usual. It lacks coherence at many places. No care is taken to maintain the proper form of the books. For example, in part Two, of *The Flute Calls Still* "Dadaji's letters", there is one letter written by Indira Devi on pp. 136-140. Poems and songs written on the occasions of Indira Devi's birthday by others are also published. The disciples, accounts of Indira Devi's supraphysical experiences are scattered through many places in this book. The incident of the transformation of clay into *halwa prasad* of Lord Krishna at the touch of Indira Devi is narrated repetitively in many of the books by Dilip Roy. In *The Flute Calls Still*, first of all, Dilip Roy writes of that incident to Ambalal Sarabhai and just next to it, he gives the account of the same incident written by Srikanta alias Brigadier Thadani. It seems that Dilip Roy has grown thoroughly careless about his style. So, all norms of good literature are ignored. The portrait, instead of becoming biographical, remains hagiographical.

From the study of these four fuller portraits, it can be seen that Dilip Roy was personally associated with each of his subjects. Sri Aurobindo was his guru whom he held in the highest esteem. Krishnaprem, for Dilip Roy, was a fellow-pilgrim on the path of eternity. Subhas Chandra was his friend. Indira Devi, a woman of advanced spiritual achievements, entered into Dilip Roy's life as his daughter-disciple.

Instead of giving chronological details of his subjects's life, Roy has drawn their portraits in almost all the situations in which he himself was present. Not external lineaments, but inner qualities such as aspiration for the realization of God or liberation of the motherland from foreign yoke, ethical endeavour inspired by this aspiration, humility, a healthy sense of humour, compassion, etc., impressed him at once. His spirit looked for and saw spiritual entities and ignored physical bodies. It was always the celestial in the rough and tumble of the terrestrial- that interested him. The four portraits considered in this chapter are conjurations of ethereal beings in active communion with the author. They look very real but non-physical beings. It is their divinity which means superhumanity which impresses us the most. It is not that these persons were themselves free from human imperfections. The fact is that the author's regard of them undid all their imperfections and weaknesses and turned them into paragons of spirituality.

Of all the four fuller portraits, he tried to draw that of Sri Aurobindo with utmost care and concentration in order to make it the most impressive of all. But often it is found that what an author consciously seeks to do he fails to achieve or succeeds only half in achieving it. His unconscious psychology acts against his conscious intentions. He may not be really loving what he claims to be loving and he may not be hating what he thinks he hates. It may perhaps not be true to say that Milton unconsciously identified himself with Satan and glorified him, looking to the total Christian pattern of the whole epic and the theme of the Fall. But it is quite well-known that Thackeray intended to make Amelia the heroine of *the Vanity Fair* and present Becky Sharp in villainous light. But in effect, against his wishes, he realized Becky Sharp as the central character of the novel and one of the most fascinating creatures of creative imagination in the world literature. Amelia, compared to her, looks dull and lifeless. For him, nevertheless, Amelia is the heroine. For the readers, Becky Sharp is the heroine. In creative process, thus, the impulse of the heart does not obey the command of the head.

This is what seems to have happened in the case of Dilip Roy's portrayal of Sri Aurobindo and Krishnaprem, too. Consciously he wants to prove that he loved Sri Aurobindo the most, that is; next alone to God whose deputy to him, his guru had been. He wants to portray him accordingly. Krishnaprem comes next in his conscious estimation. But, in effect, nevertheless, what we see is, that Krishnaprem's portrait is more affectionately drawn than that of Sri Aurobindo. In his regard for Sri Aurobindo, the predominant ingredient is reverence, though love is not absent from it. In his regard for Sri Krishnaprem, it seems, though reverence is not absent, it is relegated into the background, and affection rules the foreground. To Roy Sri Aurobindo looked like a distant Himalayan peak whom he could rarely meet and whose height he could never dream of reaching. Sri Krishnaprem, on the other hand, was a bird of his own feather, a fellow-lover of Krishna, with whom, he could be intimate and confiding and effusive. Naturally, love appears at its best in friendship that we find between him and Krishnaprem, between him and Subhas. Consequently, these portraits appear to be, though less elaborate than that of Sri Aurobindo, certainly, more interesting. It seems, these come entirely from the heart. The elements of head do not dilute their emotional force. But Roy would not agree were he told that he loved his friends more than he loved Sri Aurobindo.

Lytton Strachey, in his well-known biography, *Queen Victoria*,¹³³ has presented all the facts of the queen's life chronologically. But, he is completely objective in his presentation. Any kind of the biographer's own feeling for his subject has no place in his work.

Boswell's parallel naturally comes to the mind when we read Dilip Roy, for he, too, had been, a hero-worshipper, determined to make Dr. Johnson immortal.

Boswell remarkably succeeded in realising his project and laying the foundation of systematic biography writing. In *Advertisement to Life of Samuel Johnson*, Boswell notes:

*“An honourable and reverend friend speaking of the favourable reception of my volumes, even in the circles of fashion and elegance, said to me, “you have made them all talk Johnson,” — Yes, I may add, I have Johnsonised the land; and I trust they will not only talk, but think, Johnson.”*¹³⁴

But the parallel between the two hero-worshippers—Roy and Boswell—cannot be stretched much further. The differences between the two may appear to be the differences between the East and the West. You discover Renaissance painters’ close attention to every small detail of face, feature, figure and drapery in Boswell’s portrait of Johnson. What we see in Roy is portrayals similar to linear paintings of Bodhisattva figures in Ajanta. What is important here is not the physical realism, but an indication of the ideal. Boswell creates flesh and blood human being, who lived and moved on the earth. Roy reduces flesh and blood reality to intensely felt abstractions. Boswell had inherited the tradition of a critical spirit and a clear grasp of reality, evident in historiography and all the other creations of the Western culture. In Roy, we discover a clear lack of both, the critical spirit and the clear grasp of reality. Like the best of Indians, he can pray and worship in sincere emotional response to exceptional moral and spiritual excellences manifested in certain individuals. There is no insincerity and charlatanism in his effusiveness. Yet it must be admitted that Roy is writing in the tradition of panygirists and eulogists. He knows no other technique.

There is one more difference to be noted. The West regards individuals as very important. But, it has also developed what may be called a collective or communal self. Therefore, in the political philosophy of the West, there has been a controversy as to what is more important—individual or collective self. The democrats regard the dignity and freedom of the individual more important than the larger communal self. The totalitarians like Nazis and Fascists and Communists treat total communal self as the only important identity for every individual. The states have often run to this or that extreme in the history of the West. What is important, however, for our purposes, is that each Western man has two selves, individual and communal. That is why, each is careful to realize individual well-being and also the total well-being of all in a nation. The anxiety for totality has generated in due course in the West what may be called public spirit, the norms and mores of public behaviour. Instinctively, everyone feels that what is valuable for him, should be presented before all. And everything is looked upon from individual and communal points of view. That is how, Boswell found the life of Dr. Johnson most instructive to himself. But he was also anxious to keep the

philosopher alive for ever that the subsequent generations who did not have the living touch of the master, may not be altogether deprived of his profoundly instructive wisdom. He presented the portrait of Dr. Johnson as he appeared to him, and also as he might appear to anyone else. The concern for and awareness of others, the assertion of communal self dilutes even if it does not altogether undermine individual self and its purely personal tastes and dislikes. Inevitably, this generates in the outlook of each author a kind of scientific objectivity.

The case of Dilip Roy is somewhat different. In our tradition, there is a singular absence of the communal self. The controversy about individualism and totalitarianism has never troubled us. We have been only a loose collectivity of individuals rent apart from one another. We have the individuals at their best and the most shining and we have individuals sunk in inertia. But each one of us is for himself. Roy has cultivated the Western desire to present what he finds valuable for himself before the whole world. But he lacks the objective vision of what he sees. He cannot see his subjects also as all other men might see them. There is nothing to dilute his individual self. That is why, often one might feel, the centre of all his writing is the individual vision of Dilip Roy. He himself says, as we have noted earlier, "I"/"Me" remains very important for him. His own vision, his own view of all things, is important for him for his own reasons and purposes. If by the way, it happens to be useful and instructive to other people too, it is their luck. His writing is only thus partially an expression of a writer's public spirit which, it cannot be denied, had been partially generated under the impact of British education in India. One cannot help feeling that Dilip Roy should have cultivated proper care and patient industry of long years in the Western fashion to realize elegant perception and systematic writing. He should have in a still greater measure erased himself from the centre and implanted instead, the larger and more serene objective view. We have a feeling in reading Roy—which we do not have in reading Boswell—that a mountain stream meanders through the plains towards the sea at random. Boswell steers the ship towards the goal. This clearly is the difference between the East and the West even when we take up the best specimen of both the cultures such as Boswell and Dilip Roy.

Hence, Dilip Roy's portraits, as against those of Boswell and Strachey are spatial and not temporal.

Notes:

1. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*, 3rd ed. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1992), pp. xxiii-iv.
2. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Six Illuminates of Modern India*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1982), p.1.

3. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Among the Great*, 4th ed. (Pondicherry, All India Books. 1984), p.221.
4. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, 2nd ed. (Pondicherry, All India Books, 1984), p.395.
5. *ibid*, pp. 399-400.
6. *ibid*, p. 419.
7. *ibid*, p. 420.
8. *ibid*, p. 533.
9. *ibid*, p. 546.
10. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p. 11.
11. *ibid.*,p.36.
12. *ibid.*,p.38.
13. *ibid.*,p.45.
14. *ibid.*, p.46.
15. Roy, *Sri Aurobindo*,p.219.
16. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p.16.
17. Roy. *Sri Aurobindo*,p.240.
18. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, pp. 3-4.
19. Roy, *Sri Aurobindo*, p.63.
20. *ibid.*,p.66.
21. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p. 21.
22. Roy. *Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 222-223.
23. *ibid.*,p.224.
24. *ibid.*,p.241.
25. *ibid.*,p.245.
26. *ibid.*,p.246.
27. *ibid.*, pp. 263-64.
28. Refer to 'Appendix A', p. 239 of this book.
29. Roy. *Sri Aurobindo*,p.477.
30. *ibid.* pp. 271-73.
31. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, pp. 27-28.
32. *ibid.* p. 28.
33. *ibid.*, p. 7-8. In his conversation with one of his friends. Dilip Roy refers to this comparison between the two.

34. Roy, *Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 321-390. While Dilip Roy describes his relations with Sri Aurobindo and Krishnaprem in this chapter, one can find that the two stand compared indirectly.
35. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, pp.57.
36. Milan Sen, ed. *Varan Malika: A Garland of Homage to Sri Dilip Kumar Roy on His Eightieth Birthday* (Calcutta: Sura-Kavya Samsad, 1976), pp.204-5.
37. Roy, *Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 162-163.
38. Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi, *Pilgrims of the Stars* (1973; rpt. Porthill: Timeless Books, 1985), p. 101.
39. Roy, *Krishnaprem*, p.7.
40. Roy, *Pilgrims*, p. 101.
41. Haridas Chaudhuri, "Foreword," in Roy, *Krishnaprem*, p.ix.
42. Roy, *Krishnaprem*, p.31.
43. *ibid.*,p.32.
44. *ibid.*,p.122.
45. *ibid.*,p.56.
46. *ibid.*, p. 56.
47. *ibid.*,p.143.
48. *ibid.*,p.143.
49. *ibid.*, pp.209-10.
50. *ibid.*,p.211.
51. *ibid.*,p.239.
52. *ibid.*,pp.244-45.
53. *ibid.*,p.128.
54. *ibid.*,p.126.
55. *ibid.*,p.13.
56. *ibid.*,p.197.
57. *ibid.*,p.123.
58. *ibid.*, p.xix.
59. *ibid.*,p.xxii-xxiii.
60. *ibid.*,p.47.
61. *ibid.*,p.45.
62. *ibid.*,p.63.
63. *ibid.*, pp. 100-101.
64. Refer to 'Appendix A', pp.234-35 of this book.

65. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India: 1921-1952* (New Delhi: Time Books International, 1987), p. 788.
66. *ibid.*, p. 795.
67. Roy, it seems, for no reason, has changed the known spelling, 'Subhas' into 'Subhash' in both of his books on Subhas Chandra Bose. The researcher has retained the spelling 'Subhas' in this book except in quotations taken from Roy's books.
68. Roy, *Pilgrims*, p.61.
69. Dilip Kumar Roy, *The Subhash I Knew* (Bombay: Nalanda Publications, 1946). p.50.
70. Roy, *Pilgrims*, p. 61.
71. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Netaji – the Man: Reminiscences* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1966), p. 191.
72. Roy, *The Subhash.*, p. 71.
73. *ibid.*, p. 72.
74. Roy, *Netaji–the Man*, p. 168.
75. Roy, *The Subhash*, p. 51.
76. *ibid.*, p. 69.
77. Roy, *Netaji– the Man*, p. 197.
78. Roy, *The Subhash*, p. 213.
79. *ibid.*, pp. 111-12.
80. *ibid.*, p. 112.
81. *ibid.*, pp. 169-70.
82. *ibid.*, p. 178.
83. *ibid.*, p. 179.
84. *ibid.*, p. 190.
85. *ibid.*,p.6.
86. *ibid.*,pp.40-41
87. *ibid.*, p. 74.
88. *ibid.*, p. 101.
89. *ibid.*, p. 98.
90. *ibid.*, p. 204.
91. *ibid.*, p. 52.
92. *ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
93. *ibid.*, p. 61
94. *ibid.*, p. 160.

95. *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.
96. *ibid.* p. 89.
97. *ibid.*, p. 31.
98. *ibid.*, p. 84.
99. *ibid.*, p. 85.
100. Roy, *Netaji—the Man*, p. 214.
101. Roy *The Subhash*, p. 68.
102. *ibid.* p.115.
103. *ibid.*, pp. 117-118.
104. Roy *Pilgrims*, pp. 57-58.
105. Roy, *The Subhash.*, pp. 141-42.
106. *ibid.*,pp.120-21.
107. *The Bhagavat Gita*, IV/34.
108. Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi, *The Flute Calls Still*, 3rd ed. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1993), p.ix.
109. Dilip Kumar Roy, *The Rounding Off* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1983), p.xv
110. *ibid.*,p.xiii.
111. Nani A. Palkhivala, "Foreword", in Roy, *The Rounding*, p. ix.
112. Roy and Devi, *The Flute*, pp. xx-xxi.
113. *ibid.*,p.xxii.
114. *ibid.*,p.xxiii.
115. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 361.
116. Roy and Devi, *The Flute*, p. 154.
117. *ibid.*, p. 155.
118. *ibid.*,p.xxvi.
119. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 336.
120. *ibid.*, p. 336.
121. Roy and Devi, *The Flute*, p. 142.
122. *ibid.*, p. 167.
123. *ibid.*, pp. 132-33.
124. *ibid.*, p. 193.
125. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 329.
126. Roy and Devi, *The Flute*, p. xvi
127. UshaS.Nilsson.*MiraBai* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academi, 1969), p. 17.

128. Niranjan Bhagat, *Mira* (Gujarati) (Ahmedabad: Sadbhav Prakashan, 1982). p. 23.
129. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 396.
130. Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*, 2nd ed. (London: George Alien & Unwin Ltd. 1951). pp. 1-32.
131. Nani A. Palkhivala, "Preface", in Indira Devi, *Fragrant Memories* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1993), pp. vii-viii.
132. Roy and Devi, *The Flute*, p. 109.
133. Lytton Strachey, *Queen Victoria* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1921), pp.1-314.
134. James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (1952; rpt. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1978), pp.xii-xiii.

5 : SKETCHES

In addition to the fuller portraits, Dilip Kumar Roy has included in his works many brief sketches of those persons whom he held in very high esteem. Some of them are Indians and a few of them are foreigners. Let us consider each of them in some detail.

1. Romain Rolland

Romain Rolland (1866-1944) was a French novelist, dramatist and essayist. He was awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 1916. His well-known work, *Jean Christophe* (1906-12) in 10 volumes marked the beginning of the *roman fleuve* (saga novel) of the 20th century. It narrates the stormy career of a German musician who makes France his second home. His three plays on French Revolution—*The Wolves* (1898), *Danton* (1900), and *The Fourteenth of July* (1902) are considered valuable from the historical point of view. A second novel cycle, *The Soul Enchanted* (1922-23) has a woman as its central character. His biographies are more praised in the modern times than his novels. A lyrical biography of Beethoven (1903) was followed by those of Michaelangelo (1908) and Tolstoy (1911). They display his life long commitment to humanism. He was influenced by Marxism and Indian thought, too. He wrote admirable biographies of these great Indians— Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. The first of these includes also the lives of Swami Dayananda and Keshav Chandra Sen. The last includes a sketch of Tagore, too, and a comparative view of Gandhiji and Tagore.

His wide cultural interests are found reflected in his studies of music and art. His history of opera written in 1895 earned him a doctorate in art. He denounced the horrors of war in his works. His pacifist stand during World War I made him unpopular in France. But he was acclaimed as a hero within the European intellectual community. Gorky described him as “the Tolstoy of France.”

(A) Portrait:

Dilip Roy has very meticulously recorded the details of a few of his interviews with Romain Rolland in *Among the Great*. Besides, a few of Rolland’s precious letters are included in this book. In his autobiography, *Pilgrims of the Stars* Dilip Roy, in an outline, shows forth the impact of Rolland’s philosophy on his life.

When the author was pursuing his studies in Western classical music in 1920 in England, he came to know about this great French ‘musicologue’. Dilip Roy was extremely “enraptured by his lofty idealism and vindication of the mission of true art—especially music.”¹ So he sought an interview with Rolland.

Rolland invited him to be his guest at Schoëneck, a small village in Switzerland.

During their altogether six meetings, Rolland and Dilip Roy always had discussion on their “common friend, music”.² Rolland was dedicated to music because, he thought it could please many people and cross the boundaries of time and space. Whenever he listened to Dilip Roy’s melodious songs, he never failed to persuade him of the marvellous capacity of music to transcend all limits and touch the souls of people everywhere. He even urged Roy to publish Indian music in Europe because he had found that the Indian classical Raga-melodies were impressive. According to Roy it was not appropriate to do so because the Europeans were initiated first and last in harmony and counterpoint and choral singing. They were ignorant of the hidden depths and melodic sense of the Indian music. So they might get baffled by it

Arguing powerfully in favour of the universality of appeal of art in general and music in particular, Rolland said:

“I am persuaded that an art is never great but that it appeals to the most ignorant. Certainly, not completely, nor with its supreme appeal. But a great creation in art must contain in its rich granary aliment enough wherewith to satisfy the spiritual hunger of all....The illumination of a real song, like the inspired Word, falls where it pleases the Divine. Our role is not to choose our audience: our role is to sing away... But the profoundly universal essence in your music cannot fail to set any musical soul quivering. Let us endeavour to bring together once again the great Indo-European family which has been so criminally sundered by space. Won’t that be a proud achievement?”³

All through his life Rolland craved for the synthesis and harmony of the East with the West He had the hopes that art could be instrumental in fulfilling such a dream. So, once, initiating Roy into the cult of internationalism, Rolland wrote in 1922:

“No, there is no unbridgeable gulf between the musical art of Europe and that of Asia. It is the same Man whose soul, one and multitudinous like the tufted oak, seeks to embrace in its ramifications the endless and elusive Life. I love the oak in its entirety. Through it all I love to hearken to the sougning of its massive branches. I would glut my ears and heart with their composite and moving harmony.”⁴

Rolland knew that the Indian music was different from the Western in certain aspects. Indians, for instance, improvise continually, i.e. the musician creates at every step, while in the Western music, he just interprets. Moreover, in

the Western music they have the method of notation i.e. writing down their music. At that time, there was no such method of notation in India. According to Rolland, this method has both advantages and disadvantages. A piece of music gets stabilised and perpetuated because of this method of notation. It also reduces the soaring capacity of that piece and one can get very little by thus stereotyping a piece of music.

But, writing music down is not thoroughly inadvisable because the Western superstructure in the realm of music, erected on the basis of harmony, would not have been possible without some system of notation. Secondly, the process of writing down motivates the composer to create something new. In addition, the popular taste can be refined, Rolland thinks, through the one process of bringing it into contact with what is fine. So, written music shows what is best in the Pantheon of sound and thereby elevates the common man's taste slowly without its being aware of it himself. By the introduction of a notation system, Rolland here worries, Indians will have to travel farther away from their beautiful and glorious tradition of creative improvisation.

Thus, Romain Rolland was very clear about the noble mission of the artist in the realization of high ideals in human life. Egoism, Rolland tells Dilip Roy, cannot be applicable to a true artist because, often, he has to face personal hardships for the sake of art. The artist's creative attempt can prove a daily succour in human sorrow. He cannot be considered becoming insensitive towards the suffering human beings while he pursues art. By observing the effect of paintings, dramas and musical performances on the tired, pale faces of hard-worked people in ordinary galleries, theatres and concerts, he came to the conclusion that:

“A single symphony of Beethoven is certainly worth half-a-dozen social reforms. Then again, the more down-trodden a community, the greater its spiritual need of art. The more grinding the miseries from without, the more fortifying the consolation from within.”⁵

Moreover, he had trust in the division of labour and he explained to Roy that one person could not perform all the roles of a sailor, a mason, a carpenter, a humanitarian and so on in his desire to be concretely useful to society. He asserted: “An artist can achieve best in what he is cut out for.”⁶ A true artist, Rolland says, almost always has a very difficult path to tread. Rolland derived this truth from his study of the lives of many great artists of the world, like Beethoven, Michael Angelo, Francois Miller, Tolstoy etc.

Rolland learnt from his own experiences that the most important duty of the artist is to be true tirelessly to his inner call and urge. He must be receptive

to the inspiration he might get from his inner perceptions, “and must create whenever his daemon goads him to.”⁷ Then he can utilise his extra energy for the upliftment of social condition. He very firmly believes that a true art and culture flourish only when the artist, while creating his piece of art, keeps in his mind the interests of the masses. So, an artist can lead all people towards spirituality.

Like Mahatma Gandhi, Rolland, too, did not support the specialisation in art. He said

“...truly great art must appeal to the uneducated and the truly-educated nearly to the same extent, even though they may look at the same art from different standpoints.”⁸

Keeping in mind Nietzsche’s *Origin of Tragedy* he informs Dilip Roy that, while appreciating a piece of art, the educated can have a purely intellectual standpoint and the uneducated can have an emotional standpoint. But art can best be appreciated when the golden mean between the two attitudes is struck. He added :

“...with the born artist this power of harmonisation may be said to be almost native, instinctive. In Beethoven, for instance, one finds this happy harmony in its full, native spontaneity — this marriage of the intellectual appeal with the emotional.”⁹

Dilip Roy and Romain Rolland, then had discourse on another fine art— literature. According to Rolland, music may be called the carrier of emotional expression in the realm of art and it directly appeals through pure sound values. On the other hand, literature has to pass through the medium of live and effective words, thoughts and images before it reaches the reader’s mind. So, he tells: “...while music is more universal and direct in its appeal, literature is, somehow, more stable and less susceptible to the mutations of time.”¹⁰

Comparing the two Russian artists, Turgenev and Tolstoy, Rolland said that the former was undoubtedly a greater artist than the latter because he had much greater affinity to the Latin art. Turgenev, Rolland deduced, was a great stylist, too. But Tolstoy was more Russian, human and universal than Turgenev. He, very judiciously, said:

‘Turgenev was a genius too, but Tolstoy’s genius was of a higher order. Everything is great with him—his defects not less so than his qualities. Turgenev is fine: Tolstoy— magnificent’¹¹

In this French critic’s opinion, Balzac was a curious artist in that he hardly bothered about art and style of his works. He was a man of extraordinary vitality and enthusiasm. Rolland tells: “In a word, he wrote because he had to.”¹² Once, surprisingly, Balzac wrote almost a whole novel in twenty two hours. But Emile

Zola was quite different from Balzac. He was pursuing his writing activity very regularly everyday. Rolland also cited the examples of certain writers like Moliere who said that the end was immaterial as the artist has to portray types and once that is achieved, his task is over.

Rolland could not appreciate the realism prevalent in the Western literature of his time. In *Jean Christophe* he asked: "Art for art's sake?" and then said: "O wretched men! Art is life tamed. Art is the emperor of life."¹³ Rolland believed in indomitable idealism and importance of inner life of human beings. He was all praise for Beethoven because, "his music elevated the soul in a mystic way by taking us on its wings to dizzy heights, giving us thrilling glimpses of an unhorizoned beauty".¹⁴

Hence, Rolland can very well be put into the category of those artists who have freedom of spirit and who always try to transcend the limits of time and space and desire to have unity with the people of the whole world. For holding such a wide outlook towards the world community, Rolland had to face severe criticism of his own countrymen. He was not very hopeful about the bright future of internationalism in Europe because the number of sincere internationalists was very small at that time.

However, Rolland was not disappointed because his deep study of history had enabled him to infer that human civilization had not only its forward strides but its lapses as well. He believed in conscientious activity of the expectations of future fulfilment. He was interested in the struggle through which great people like Buddha and Christ underwent and not in the result of their struggle. He asked Dilip Roy:

"Progress? If by that word you mean our complete deliverance from all global evils, then I confess I believe that to be a fantastic Utopia, especially when we see that the human life has been built on the sepulchres of billions of creatures big and small."¹⁵

Undoubtedly, Rolland was a humanist. He stood for world-wide sympathies. In 1933, he wrote to Dilip Roy:

"What use is it to me to know that the One on high embraces and rules all the waves of the present? My first duty as a boatman is to save those who are drowning in these waves or else to perish along with them. Vivekananda's cry of 'My God, the miserables' is engraved in my flesh."¹⁶

Roy witnessed that Rolland always protested against oppression and injustice in his own peculiar manner. During last twenty years of his life, he lived almost

secluded in a Swiss village. But people visited him from all the parts of the world. He welcomed everybody whole-heartedly and helped them in solving their problems. Roy found that Rolland lived his life to realize an ideal, similar to that of Terence, the Roman poet. Terence's ideal was: "I am a man, I count nothing human indifferent to me."¹⁷

Rolland attained greatness in his life because he was always open to the influence of great people on him. He admired, as Roy lists, Sophocles, Euripides, Beethoven, Tolstoy, Gandhi, Shakespeare, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Russell, Einstein, Lenin and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He wrote biographies of some of these great persons too.

In addition, his love for Indian spiritual heritage and great seekers after truth was almost boundless. Dilip Roy saw the French translations of the *Gita*, the *Upanishads* and books on Buddhism in his library. He told the author that Hindu philosophy had ever been a source of inspiration to him. He yearned to visit India once, but his yearning remained unfulfilled. In one of his letters to Tagore, he wrote:

"Dear Friend, how much I would like to come and see you in India? All the movements of my mind tend towards that direction. I fear I shall not be able to carry out this plan this winter. But I hope for voyage to Asia and a stay at Santiniketan. I have so much to learn from you! And I believe that I shall have there a mission to fulfil, a predetermined duty till the end of my life. The union of Europe and Asia must be, in the centuries to come, the most noble task of mankind. As for myself, India from now on is not a foreign land, she is the greatest of all countries, the ancient country from which once I came. I find her again deep inside me".¹⁸

On October 1, 1924, he wrote to Dilip Roy:

"Among the Europeans I find myself rather isolated in so far as my outlook on India is concerned. The majority here repeat blindly and stubbornly: "Asia is Asia and Europe is Europe"....And I am persuaded, friend Roy, that I must have descended down the slopes of the Himalayas along with those victorious Aryans. I feel their blue blood in my veins."¹⁹

A few of Romain Rolland's letters printed in *Among the Great* express in their every line his scholarship and wisdom. They also mark the clarity and originality of Rolland's thinking. His refined style and authenticity of views impress the reader very much. His genuine concern for the bright career of the author is often reflected in them.

Dilip Roy, in the end, says:

“The most precious of his gifts to me was his personality radiant with a tinge of sadness even as the dying fire in a sunset cloud.”²⁰

His appearance, Dilip Roy felt, was disappointing in the beginning, but later on one might remain spell-bound when one could notice an ascetic aura of mysticism around him. Rolland remained impressive because of his faith in mankind and faith in something higher than mankind.

(B) Evaluation:

Here the discussion between Romain Rolland and Dilip Roy ranges from art and music to literature. Rolland, who attempted to answer the queries of his inquisitive interviewer, Dilip Roy, was an efficient critic of the Western music and literature. This apart, as it is observed, his interests were varied and he had high hopes for international community. So his outlook, in this discussion appears to be global and knowledge, very vast. Hence, his judgements on art, music and literature can be considered scholarly, and authentic. Rolland, realized in his own way the synthesis of the West with the East. Today people all over world have become receptive to alien influences. They enrich thus themselves by such openness. Many aspects of the Eastern art and culture have become famous in the West. Similarly, Western culture has become a part and parcel of the Eastern one.

Their discussion on music, at times, remains very technical. Often, Roy tried to explain various *Ragas* of the songs he had sung to Rolland. For example, once, after singing a Bengali song written by his father, Roy said: “...it was in the scale of what is known technically as *Yaman* in our *Raga*—music, corresponding to the ancient Lydian mode of Greeks”.²¹ He also showed him how a composer could improvise while keeping himself within the bounds determined by the *Raga*.

What is striking here is a remarkable resemblance between the painter and the portrait. A clear comparative view of both emerges from Dilip Roy’s treatment of Rolland. Both of them, for instance, had a deep love of music. They were highly concerned with the mission of artists and functions of art. They had humanitarian concerns also. Both Rolland and Roy were seekers of truth and were very much interested in spirituality. Besides, all through their lives, they echoed Vivekananda’s credo: “Wherever greatness in any shape or form has flowered I must bow my head in reverence”.²² Not only that they revered many great people of the past as well as of their own times, but they also wrote biographies. In their biographies, both of them leaned towards the merits of their renowned subjects and often failed to criticize their drawbacks.

There were differences between the two also. Romain Rolland, being a senior artist to Roy, obviously, appears to be more mature, balanced and confident in his judgements on any topic. But it seems that Roy lacks maturity and balanced judgement. He does not seem to be sure of anything. Moreover, Rolland is genuinely sensitive to the beauty of art and spirituality, wherever it appears. But it seems that Dilip Roy is slightly and often unconsciously, a Hindu nationalist, assuming that whatever is Indian, is greater than whatever is Western. This is evident in his views of the 'superiority' of Indian music to Western music. It is indeed a negative feature frowned upon nine centuries ago by Alberuni, the Arab scholar, and criticized by Tagore and Nirad Chaudhuri. Obviously, Rolland's internationalism of art and wisdom is healthier than Dilip Roy's.

2. Bertrand Russell

One of the brief sketches by Dilip Roy is of Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), the most famous of the twentieth century philosophers.

Bertrand Russell's outstanding intellectual achievements in various fields remained quite astonishing and influential. He came from a highly aristocratic background. His grandfather, Lord John Russell became twice the prime minister of England. He became the 1st Earl Russell; and Bertrand Russell, 3rd Earl Russell. All of Bertrand Russell's actions were guided by his deep human concern. He was a liberal anarchist and a left wing sceptical atheist. In his initial career he wrote books on logic and mathematics which had deep influence upon the Western philosophy. Then, his books on morals, religion, politics, education, pacifism and other subjects enlightened and encouraged the rebellious common people of the West. During the final stage of his life he very actively opposed the manufacture of H-bombs and the war in Vietnam. Hence, again, his movement became a source of inspiration to idealistic youth throughout the world. He received the Order of Merit in 1949 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. He was respected increasingly all over the world. Some of his well-known works on varied subjects are: *Principles of Mathematics, The Problems of Philosophy, The Philosophy of Pacifism, Why I Am Not a Christian, Has Man a Future?, Principles of Social Reconstruction, On Education, Marriage and Morals, German Social Democracy, The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism, Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare, The Scientific Outlook, History of Western Philosophy*, etc.

(A) Portrait:

Dilip Roy has paid his tribute to Bertrand Russell in three of his books. In *Among the Great* he shows how the Russellian philosophy was influential to those young people like himself who were studying at the Cambridge University. His later conversations with Russell which took place in 1920 are recorded in the

same book. *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* and *Pilgrims of the Stars* written long after his meetings with Russell, exhibit the difficulties caused by Russellian principle of scepticism on the author's path of spiritual seeking. His gurudev Sri Aurobindo's attempts to help Dilip Roy in undoing the impact of Russell from his mind are also noted in these two works.

Roy, first of all, was introduced to the Russellian thought in 1920 when he was pursuing his study at the Cambridge University. The young people of the time were fascinated by Russell's vision of a new world. He craved for a world which was less materialistic and therefore, more congenial to creative instinct of human beings. He foresaw: "Life might be happy for all and intoxicatingly glorious for the best"²³

He knew that the world in which he was living, was lacking all human values. It was full of the spirit of totalitarianism, envy and arid cruelty. But he had the hopes that this world would be destroyed by its own passions and, like a phoenix, from its ashes, a new world of illumination, youth and hope would emerge out. Such prophetic ideas made Russell famous as "one of the most suggestive thinkers of the West"²⁴

Roy's reading of Russell's writings enabled him to conclude that his nature was complex. One could notice many paradoxical traits in his temperament. In his *Freeman's Worship or Questions*, Dilip Roy discovered that on the one hand he made fun of mysticism and on the other hand, he was thrilled like a true mystic to a strange beauty. Once he would speak in favour of the old world and then he would wish America to abstain herself from the decadence of being old with the help of her science and organization. He considered machinery a misfortune to mankind and at the same time he advised every nation to adjust itself properly to the introduction of machinery, because he was convinced that it was not possible to get rid of machines though people like Mahatma Gandhi tried, to oppose industrialisation of any country. Hence, at times, he appeared to admire the West for the development of science and at times he seemed to look with respect towards the Eastern countries like China for their tolerance and contemplative peace of mind. He preferred socialism but he also denounced the totalitarian methods of Russia of establishing communism. Dilip Roy remarks: "He is a sceptic and yet a believer".²⁵

Bertrand Russell, it can be said, was a man of profound contemplation. He always tried to understand phenomena of the world with enough sincerity. He was against pretensions and was a disillusioned thinker. He was a man of reason and a true admirer of science. But, you cannot say he lacked noble sentiments. In fact, he was full of love and sympathy towards the suffering humanity. In his famous essay "Free Man's Worship" he passionately exhorted forgetting for a time his dispassionate logic, "the Free Man' (like himself) to do his utmost to

help other unhappy human beings, with his vision of compassion, patience and courage, in his long march through the night so that he could reach with all humanity the dawn of happiness.

Dilip Roy was very much impressed at that time by Russell's "love of sympathy and beauty founded on a large charity of the heart."²⁶ So, he wanted to meet such a magnanimous personality. He got an opportunity to meet him personally during Women's International League for Peace held at Lugano. Dilip Roy was invited to give a lecture-demonstration on Indian music and Russell was visiting it to deliver a series of lectures on China. Both of them conversed on various topics as they stayed in the same hotel for three days.

Dilip Roy had correspondence with him when he went back to India. Two of his letters are printed in *Among the Great*. Russell's replies, as Roy notices, were full of "his characteristic kindness and lucidity."²⁷ In one of his letters to Dilip Roy, Bertrand Russell guided him to pursue his career as a musician and not as a politician, though politics was the need of the day, because after independence India would need good musicians, too, to be proud of. At the same time, he informed the author that he could only give suggestions. Ultimately, it was for Roy to choose his course of action. He wrote: "No one but yourself can answer this question."²⁸

Again, the author had nice time with Bertrand Russell and his family for three days at Cornwall when he went to Europe on a musical tour in 1927. At that time, Russell answered Roy's queries on many of those topics which were aroused naturally during their conversations. Following is the portrait of Russell as it emerges from Dilip Roy's conversation with him. Needless to say, it is rather a sketch of his philosophy than that of his life and of his mind and over all personality lacking physical and temporal details.

Talking of schools where good education might be imparted, Russell said that the State could tackle successfully an expensive undertaking of an elementary school for all people. If the rich men were to come out with their donations to run such a school, they would impose their own conditions in the matters of regulations and educational policy. In that case it would be disastrous for the whole society. He had no faith in the fair intentions of the rich. He found the rich to be very calculative. He generally did not expect anything from them but lip-sympathy. To solve the problem, he felt that the public opinion could be stirred up sufficiently to force the State to take up the advanced schools in the teeth of the opposition from the idle rich, so that the stable reforms in the education system could be introduced. It might, in its turn, remould and remodel people's character.

Referring to pacifism, he observed that combativeness is so ingrained in human blood that children are far from pacifists. Besides, pacifism could not be

easily inculcated into children. Pacifism was still a very sophisticated and recent movement. In *Why Men Love War*, he says that human beings' excessive love for their nation and inherent desire to sacrifice their lives for its sake, cause difficulties for pacifism. Looking at the circumstances of his day, Russell did not find the future of pacifism very heartening. During World War I it was said that the modern means of warfare were becoming so horrible that human beings would grow sick of it in no time. But, Russell, to his disillusionment, found that the greater the fear of defeat, the greater would be people's hatred and ruthlessness under arms. He prophesied that in the next war the improved scientific inventions would equip people with a far superior technique for mutual international homicide, like spreading decimating microbes in the rank and file of the enemy's country. He found it a horrible condition and saw no way out. Russell's only hope rested on America. He thought if America or any such great nation could come forward to dominate the whole world, all countries might live at peace with one another under one flag.

Their conversations often turned to current political topics. According to Russell, England's late rupture of diplomatic relations with Russia following close upon the heels of the Arcos raid, was a mad action. This rupture, Russell felt, was caused by Russia's activities in China. The British might wage a war with Russia but it was not possible for them to do so as France did not want a war at that time. Moreover, Russia was already helping China and it might help India because the Russians were as ambitious as the British imperialists in establishing their modern Bolshevik imperialism. Russia was going to influence the world, Russell foresaw, in the near future, because of their crying down the church and also because they were vanguard of progress in the West. But Russell felt that real communism had failed there.

Speaking of the prospects of India's freedom in the near future, he said that India could not afford to refuse to accept Bolshevik Russian invitation to help simply because it was an atheistic nation. Mahatma Gandhi could not approve atheism. But he should know, Russell felt, that only Russia was interested in championing the cause of Asia against Western imperialism. He predicted the possibility of another Big War. Russell had the feeling that India would not be able to free herself before that war. He was never happy at the cruel treatment of the Indians by the British rulers. He painfully confessed:

"I have become deeply cynical of all Governments. I don't think any Government can be called 'good' today. And I don't believe you would have treated us any better if you had ruled over England."²⁹

At the same time, from his detailed study of history he had deduced that a foreign culture could be imparted to another nation only at the point of the bayonet. He cites the example of Romans who imparted their culture to England

and France at the point of the sword and the British were then repeating it in India. It was only when a people were held in subjugation that they had the necessary respect for an alien culture. Even a country like Japan was forced with the arms by the English and the Americans to open her ports for them. He held Japan in high estimation for her later assimilation of the Western science, political technique and militarism in a complete manner. Such an assimilation changed the face of the whole country. Japan's cruelty and ruthlessness, Russell thought, could be compared with those of a pupil who had outstripped the master in devilment. The military achievement of Japan, Russell observed, was simply "marvellous, incredible—almost unparalleled in world-history!"³⁰

Like political systems of the world, according to Russell, the religious organizations of the world too were not always helpful in fulfilling the interest of the modern humanity and, therefore, they were inadequate. Russell found that the inculcation of any ideas or doctrines among boys and girls by anybody or any religion is not fair psychologically because when they grow up, they tend to react against those very doctrines. To prove his point, he cited the illustration of Christianity. It painted in glowing colours the charm of submissiveness, but the result noticed was the opposite.

He accepted that some of the noblest and finest persons had been the products of religious or mystic beliefs. But he was sure that he could enumerate the same number of finest men among the irreligious. He was convinced that religion, on the whole, had "rendered the world definitely unhappier than it would otherwise have been".³¹

It seems, Russell was utterly against mysticism. He found the mystics self-centred and selfish, "Because through such mystic transports they become more and more subjective."³² Then they lose their interest of leading normal and healthy life of varied activities. Ultimately, their joys become similar to those of the voluptuary and the drunkard. Dilip Roy records an incident in which Tagore, once, invited Russell to go into a Catholic church to hear the beautiful hymns when they were passing by that church. He refused to do so by telling:

"The hymns and incense and coloured glasses make me confess to feelings my intellect does not approve; I want to keep my mental sky clear of the mystic clouds."³³

Among all religious figures of the world, he liked Buddha better. In his lecture, *Why I Am Not a Christian* he said:

"I cannot myself feel that either in this matter of wisdom or in the matter of virtue Christ stands quite as high as some other people known to history. I think I should put Buddha and Socrates above him in these respects."³⁴

He even went to the extent of telling Dilip Roy that “Christ has done far more harm than good to mankind” because, “It was he who injected Judaism into a Hellenistic world, which I think was a great pity.”³⁵

Russell appreciated many aspects of the Grecian civilization. One of them was their invention of geometry. Even more, he had two objections to Christ. First of all, he could not approve of Christ’s dogmatic assertions of hell and hell fires. He assumed the doctrine of hell extremely cruel. Russell also disapproved of Christ’s senseless asceticism. Christ has said that he who looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery in his heart. Russell had faith in the sublimation of sex-energy as it is practised by many great artists, but he also gathered that extremity should be rationally avoided, for sex takes its revenge. He strongly felt that imposition of too much restraint on sex has a warping effect on our whole outlook on life and that cannot be conducive to a healthy art. Russell held the notion that the work of scientists and purely intellectual men improved in quality when their sex was satisfied and the case of art was the opposite.

When they began to discuss about the status of man and woman in society, Russell again observed that religion could increase the miseries of people by opposing birth control and propogating the precept that sex without children is sinful. He found it strange that Mahatma Gandhi was opposed to birth-control as a principle. Very pointedly he said:

“Only, I should like to ask such religious Indian nationalists as oppose birth-control and prolong the slavery of women, whether they aim at a free community or a slavish one. For a community which makes slaves of women can hardly complain if the British makes slaves of them. For when we oppress those who are in our power we cannot very well grumble if the powers that be treat us in the same way, can we ?”³⁶

Russell, furthermore, never trusted the practice of spiritualism prevalent during his time. He took it as an altogether irrational and fallible practice. Russell presumed it to be more courageous and manly to look at life and its phenomena dispassionately. He objected to religion because it had always taught people to look at life passionately. As a result, he concluded, man was very much worse for it. He believed that when there was no religion, the savage took deep interest in his family, tribe and nature. He did not bother much to know whether nature was suitably disposed to his personal wishes and aspirations or not. It was religion, he asserted, which taught man to care only about himself and to be careless about others. Therefore, religion had made man more egoistic and exclusive.

Actually, Russell was all admiration for science. He held science to be a very great achievement of men. He reckoned that science had wonderful potentialities. If scientists were given sufficient freedom, Russell, believed, they could even improve the present breed of humanity. To cite a crude example of the immense power of science in changing the entire face of mankind, he told Roy that scientists would allow the mass of men to have sex naturally. But he said:

“Women would not be allowed to do without’ contraceptives except when they and the selected fathers were pronounced to be fit eugenically. The unfit must take proper measures for birth-control when they have intercourse.”³⁷

But, it would not be Russell, if he failed to show the other side of any subject in a balanced manner. Dilip Roy quotes a few passages from Russell’s books like *The Scientific Society, Power, Authority and Individual* in which he has weighed very efficiently both advantages and disadvantages of science. He wrote:

“No civilization worthy of the name—can be merely scientific. Scientific technique is concerned with the mechanism of life: It can prevent evils, but cannot create positive goods. It can diminish illness, but cannot tell a man what he shall do with health; it can cure poverty, but cannot tell a man how he shall spend wealth; it can prevent war, but cannot tell a man what form of adventure or heroism he is to put in its place. Science considered as the pursuit of knowledge is something different from scientific technique, and deserves a high place among the ends of life, but among these it is only one of several.”³⁸

A scientific society, Russell claimed, which did not promote the creation and enjoyment of beauty, the joy of life and human affection, could not be considered excellent, because, apart from the consideration of a community or society at large, individual things in human life could be understood equally valuable. He knew that like science, all religious leaders, great artists and intellectual discoverers too have felt both, a kind of moral compulsion to fulfil their creative impulses and a sense of moral exaltation when they have succeeded. Hence, it can be said that Russell, as such, was not against any religion but was against orthodox dogmatism that might creep in any of the religious or mystical ecstatic experiences.

Dilip Roy and Bertrand Russell also talked about the relative intelligence of men at different epoches in course of evolution. He did not agree with the popular view that evolution must mean progress towards a more and more evolved species. For him, it meant the change the species underwent in adapting itself to

its changing environment. He had high regard for the Greeks. He thought that they had far greater capacities than any average man of the modern times. To substantiate his argument he added:

“We have achieved more because today the sum total of our knowledge and equipment is much greater than what the Greeks had at their disposal. Just as Einstein has reached higher than Newton because he could stand on Newton’s shoulders.”³⁹

During their conversations, Russell’s bold and novel opinions about a few eminent personalities like Tolstoy, Freud and Shaw are revealed.

He told Roy very courageously that the Russian saint Tolstoy was a very vain man and more than that he was not cultured. Russell ‘felt that vanity and self-love unconsciously impelled Tolstoy

“...to fabricate a philosophy which encouraged him to feel superior to things he didn’t know or couldn’t understand He rationalized even his lack of comprehension into a merit.”⁴⁰

Freud was a great man but Russell did not agree with his theory that all the impulses of life are derived from sex. Russell felt that love of knowledge is not a sublimation of sex-energy though artistic creations are. Russell argued that human being’s desire to know more and more was due to the sublimation of their love of power rather than sex.

Bernard Shaw, Russell judged, was matchless. He was one of those genuinely humble men in the world whom fame and influence could not spoil. Reading of his works remained refreshing because of his truthfulness, fearlessness and fondness of cynical satire.

Galsworthy was a fine artist according to Russell. But he was not so important a figure in the world of action as Wells, though Wells wasn’t a great artist

This apart, Bertrand Russell did not agree with Rolland’s thesis that a great artist can’t possibly be a bad man. He cited the instance of Dostoievsky who was a great artist but who used to cringe before the authorities during his exile in Siberia. Russell said that he ‘was a notorious sneak, in fact’⁴¹

About his own writing process, Russell informed Dilip Roy that he often had to seek seclusion in country retreats to enable himself to write. He had generally not much time to correct because he had to write at a stretch and then to send it at once to the press. He confessed that he learnt the economy of words and restraint from his boyhood when he used to play with different ideas to see in how few words he could express them.

During their conversations they had light moments as well. Even during such light moments, Russell's learning and scholarship was reflected. Mrs. Dora Russell said that she had borne two children and two should be the optimum number in those days. Correcting her, with laughter Russell said: "No, Dora, statistics would have us bear 2.4 children per couple..... though it is somewhat difficult to manage."⁴²

Dilip Roy was very much impressed by the original and advanced thinking of Russell. But he would not forego his attitudes oriented towards mystical truth. He could not fully appreciate Russell's Western way of thinking which encouraged doubt at the expense of spiritual certitude. Dilip Roy grew fond of reading books by Russell even when he returned to India and joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram in order to fulfil his spiritual aspirations. Hence, it proved to be an obstacle and Dilip Roy found it very difficult to keep faith in his gurudev's mystical sayings. Sri Aurobindo, in his turn, wrote to him many loving letters to cure his disciple of the influence of Russell's philosophy. Once, for instance, Sri Aurobindo argued very coherently against Roy's admiration for Russell in the matters of spirituality:

"About Russell—I have never disputed his abilities or his character; I am concerned only with his opinions and there too only with those opinions which touch upon my province— that of spiritual Truth. In all religions, the most narrow and stupid even, and in all non-religions also, there are great minds, great men, fine characters. I know little about Russell, but I never dreamed of disputing the greatness of Lenin, for instance, merely because he was an atheist— nobody would, unless he were an imbecile. But the greatness of Lenin does not debar me from refusing assent to the credal dogmas of Bolshevism, and the beauty of character of an atheist does not prove that spirituality is a lie of the imagination and that there is no Divine. I might add that if you can find the utterances of famous Yogis childish when they talk of marriage or on other matters. I cannot be blamed for finding the ideas of Russell about spiritual experience, of which he knows nothing, very much wanting in light and substance."⁴³

During his *sadhana*, when Dilip Roy began to see various colours, he reported it to Sri Aurobindo to know about the authenticity of such experiences. Sri Aurobindo, very lovingly, asked him not to doubt such spiritual experiences and wrote:

"Develop this power of that inner sense and all that it brings you. These first seeings are only an outer fringe— behind lie

whole worlds of experience which fill what seems to the natural man the gap (your Russell's inner void) between the earth-consciousness and the Eternal and Infinite."⁴⁴

(B) Evaluation:

The string of Russell's views given here are in the context of questions asked by Roy. Most of Russell's notions on education, religion, science and social problems represent the age in which the author and the subject lived.

Roy's portrait of Russell is quite authentic as far as it goes. But he has missed his basic metaphysical and epistemological principles. Russell had been a neutralist in metaphysics and a sceptic in epistemology. According to him, the universe comprises a neutral stuff which is neither mental nor material and which is divided arbitrarily and empirically by human reason and sensation into mind and matter. The neutral stuff cannot be spoken of, because the moment we speak, we turn it into subject and object dualism of our language and experience. The existence in its real character cannot be known. This is epistemological scepticism. As to Einstein, so to Russell, existence is a mystery. All the statements that Russell makes on the subject have been tentative and modest, for a sceptic cannot truthfully say that he knows the Unknowable. He criticizes dogma and priestcraft in the name of the values of goodness, beauty and truth. But if these values are the characteristic features of the essential religion, we must understand that he pleads for, not against religion. He had been bitterly critical only of the evils of the institutional faith. Therefore, no seeker after spirituality need be disturbed by his assertions, as Dilip Roy unduly seems to be.

In fact, Russell's approach to religious organizations was thoroughly rational. Like a robust reformer, he rebelled against the orthodox elements prevalent in Christianity. He wished that people should use their own discrimination power before accepting any religious dogma blindly. He tried to teach them to raise doubts against the established precepts of any religion before following them loyally. Russell found a vast gap between the religious preachings and human psychology. He also observed that because of this gap religion often lost its purpose of humanitarian concern. His disagreement with Christian concepts of hell, asceticism and Judaism were very advanced. Today many of the Western thinkers have accepted the futility of such concepts. He had liking for only one religious figure—Buddha, for his dispassionate approach to life.

It is not true to say that Russell had been a complex personality, difficult to decipher. In fact, it is difficult to find a more clear-headed person than Russell in the history of philosophical thought. If style is the man, look at the style of Russell, which is always simple and direct, lucid and free from surplusage of words. This kind of simplicity and clarity come only from the mind which is free

from cobwebs and which is fully enlightened in the rational sense of the term. There appeared to be no paradoxes about him. We need not repeat here what is stated earlier that there is no obvious contradiction between Russell's essential humanitarian impulses akin to a true religion and his criticism of institutional faith.

There is similarly no contradiction in Russell's advice to America to shun decadence of age and to become truly young in figurative sense of the term. Simplicity of the older mode of life was desirable and Russell said so. But ignorance and superstition of the same were pernicious and should be abandoned. Where is contradiction here ? Consumerism which is the outcome of the modern technology has become a threat to all the resources of the earth, and to its flora and fauna. It is bad. But scientific understanding of everything is absolutely necessary. What is contradictory about his advice to shun consumerism and follow science ? It seems that Dilip Roy does not like the language of clear sense and reason unless it flatters his cherished emotions and confirms his own linguistic usages.

Russell did not like the inventions of machines and the industrial civilization. But he knew that the machines had come to stay. You cannot afford to be technologically backward and barbaric when the whole world is taking rapid technological strides. Therefore, he advised every nation to adjust itself properly to the introduction of machinery. He would never agree with Mahatma Gandhi that one particular country or community in the comity of nations must march backward towards a primitive state of living. Russell would never attempt the impossible as Mahatma Gandhi did. One has to keep pace with the changing world.

Russell's criticism of Mahatma Gandhi on the issues of birth control and machines looks correct and acceptable. Roy, too, does not contradict him.

Russell admits that the mystics enjoy blissful transports. But his objection to mysticism is that it makes mystics unfit for normal secular affairs. It is quite true. But is normality the right standard to judge of the desirability of the inward visions? Then you may have to dismiss even devoted artists and sometimes scientists as useless, because they, too, are essentially devoted to unworldly aims. Their creations inventions are only incidental. You cannot say that most deeply felt revelations of scientific truths or artistic beauty are useless when they don't find outward expressions. Moreover, the mystics too express themselves in prose and poetry and that way, play their role incidentally in the shaping of society even like scientists and artists. They, too, are the creators of culture. Russell fails to understand this. He must understand that creators of culture have never been normal or extrovert persons. Some of them like Vincent Van Gogh had been positively mad and abnormal. Russell's standard for the evaluation of

mysticism, evidently, is arbitrary and unsatisfactory. I wonder why Dilip Roy fails to criticize Russell on these lines ! In fact, he is too poor to understand Russell and poorer still to criticize.

When one compares Sri Aurobindo and Russell, one can find both of them were highly intelligent. They had Western education through and through. They were of the same age (They were born in the same year—1872.) Both of them were very confident and firm in their opinions. They were perfect masters of English prose. English was the first language for the both alike. They were very exact in their expressions.

The principal difference between Russell and Sri Aurobindo was that the former was purely an empirical thinker, while the latter had been a seer of higher and non-sensuous light in fair measure. Russell had been interested only in this world and was concerned only in its transient joys and sorrows. Sri Aurobindo sought to comprehend this world in spiritual light. He had been, moreover, an evolutionary dreamer rather than a secular thinker. Russell had been a critic of any form of evolutionary idealism.

3. Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore (1861-1941) was the most remarkable poet of the Bengali literature of his times. Apart from poetry, he also wrote plays, novels, short stories and critical articles both in Bengali and English. He was an actor, a musician, a painter, a philosopher and an educationist, too. He happens to be so far the only Indian Nobel laureate in literature. He was a towering personality. During the first half of the twentieth century he was one of the three great pillars of Indian culture—the other two were Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi. The man in him was much greater than the artist. He was a saint. You say still more truthfully, he illustrated in recent times the rishi ideal of the Upanishadic poetry and philosophy. *Shantiniketan* or 'the abode of peace', he founded, grew into *Vishva Bharati*, a true institution of the synthesis of the Eastern and the Western cultures of his vision. It has been a singular blessing to all lovers of arts.

(A) Portrait:

Dilip Roy, himself being a musician and a literary artist from Bengal, felt great affinity with this versatile genius of his time. So, he remained in Tagore's intimate contact and tried to derive inspiration from him. Dilip Roy wrote about him in three of his books, viz, *Among the Great*, *Six Illuminates of Modern India* and *Pilgrims of the Stars*. In *Among the Great* the author talks of his meetings with Tagore in Calcutta and England. Topics of their conversations during these meetings were related to the status of man and woman on the one hand and science and mysticism or spirituality on the other. *Six Illuminates of Modern India* consists of three essays:

Rabindranath, the Poet,
 Rabindranath, the Conversationalist,
 Rabindranath, the Letter-Writer.

There is one essay, 'Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath' in this book in which the writer attempts to indicate the similarities between the two celebrities of his time. In *Pilgrims of the Stars*, Dilip Roy recapitulates what he has said earlier about his subject. In all of these books, Dilip Roy admires those impressive qualities of Tagore which appealed to him very much during his contact with him.

Dilip Roy, first of all, was almost astonished at Tagore's generosity of temperament. Dilip Roy's father, Dwijendralal Roy and Tagore, being contemporaries, were friends, but later on there was a breach in their friendship and they avoided each other's company. Dwijendralal died in 1913. Dilip Roy, then, wanted to meet Rabindranath but he was hesitant. So, the celebrated novelist Saratchandra Chatterji took him to the poet at his Calcutta residence in 1919 and that ended Dilip Roy's fear and hesitation. The poet welcomed him whole heartedly. The author remembers: "I at once fell in love with him, captivated by his characteristic cordiality and harmonious personality."⁴⁵

During his other meetings in England with Rabindranath, Roy was fascinated when he took loving interest in his ideals and encouraged him with his personal support to follow his ideal of becoming a musician and not an I. C. S. officer. Even in his later life, Rabindranath showed personal care in almost all of Dilip Roy's activities. He forgave the author with great tolerance even if he wrote harsh letters to him.

Once Roy read Tagore's letter published in a Bengali magazine, *Prabasi* in which he had criticized *guruvada*. So, he immediately wrote a letter to Tagore to take him to task for running down *guruvada* forgetting that Sri Aurobindo was an ideal guru. Tagore answered his hasty letter in a calm and judicious manner. He informed Dilip Roy that he had great reverence for Sri Aurobindo and he could never dream of classifying him with those so-called modern professional *avatars* who were the target of his criticism in *Prabasi*. There were many mountebanks who were ready to gull the credulous by establishing themselves as great gurus. Very pointedly, Tagore argued:

"In all climes there is a deal of pseudo-poetry which caters for a large clientele. If you expose these shall I be entitled to complain that you have had a fling at me? Those whose greatness belongs to the heights are intrinsically invulnerable—of this much their admirers may rest assured. In any event, the starry throng can never be the butt of my ridicule: if you fail to

recognise this, you will be doing an injustice not to me alone but to them as well.”⁴⁶

Commenting on Rabindranath’s art as a poet, the author says that it was

“...the Supreme Flutist who had chiselled him into the exquisite flute he was, must have done so because he could play through him some of his mystic melodies to better advantage than through the others.”⁴⁷

He talks of various themes of Tagore’s poetry. According to Dilip Roy, Rabindranath sang on the constant theme of self-exploration as it can be seen from a few lines of *Jivan Devata*, in which he asked ‘the Lord of his Life:’

‘Thou cam’st to hail me, I know not for what end!

Did’st thou, from thy lone heights

Smile on my days and nights,

My plays and strivings, O my life’s one Friend?”⁴⁸

Rabindranath discovered marvellous aspects of himself when he harped more and more on this theme and he sang of what he had glimpsed in Nature, Man, Love, Faith, the world as it is and as it might have been if human beings had lent themselves to be Flutes in the hands of the Supreme Flutist. Dilip Roy highlights the spontaneity of expression as it is found in Tagore’s poetry.

Tagore frequently talked of heavenly existence men could have. But in this dreaming of heaven he did not become a Utopian, unrealistic, day-dreaming poet. He also criticized the flaws of the contemporary world in his poems, so that human beings could remove them from the ideal and heavenly world they aspire to have.

Rabindranath knew it very well that “he had been missioned to evolve into a poet, *kavi*, first and last.”⁴⁹ A *kavi* in the Vedic sense means a seer. Here, Dilip Roy quotes the definition of *kavi* as it is given by Sri Aurobindo in *the Future Poetry*:

“...the authentic *kavi* transcribes what he has actually heard, and that is why the Vedas are called *Shrutis*, it is this receptivity to revelation that entitles the *kavi* to the title of an *illuminate* I only want to stress that on their highest flights the sage and the poet become kin, fellow-pilgrims, bound for the same goal.”⁵⁰

Rabindranath had the rare gift to feel the pulse of the world with his own heart beat. As such, he received profound intuitions carrying the light of the eternal at every turn. He always aspired for freedom *mukti*, for instance:

“Know once for all: win freedom you **must**, my soul!
And tread the Way that leads beyond to the Goal.”⁵¹

But he knew that to be free means to be self-disciplined and not to escape from the responsibilities of life. He has voiced this feeling in one of the sonnets of *Gitaajali* which Roy has cited in *Six Illuminates of Modern India*, pp.64-65. Tagore wanted freedom for his country and his soul as well. And he found true freedom only in self-discipline. But, again, such a self-discipline does not mean the traditional renunciation for him. So, he never escaped from the earth.

Tagore had a mystic revelation of the Infinite while he was watching the sun rising, and he wrote of it in *Prabhat Utsav*. Tagore, during such a vision, experienced, the “marriage of the infinite with the finite.”⁵² In his poems, Tagore expressed his gratitude to God for whatever was given to him with its varied paradoxes as the Divine Will, and felt contented with it.

Dilip Roy quotes profusely from Rabindranath’s Bengali poems along with his own English translations to show that Tagore accepted our world in toto of laughter and tears, song and silence, light and shade. He believes that Rabindranath

“...was at home only in the Home of Beauty, as her welcome visitant, a grateful guest, who longed for nothing as ardently as for the freedom that accrues to one through one’s tireless worship of her all-redeeming loveliness.”⁵³

Noticing Rabindranath’s capacity to converse brilliantly, Dilip Roy says:

“...long before I had my first conversation with him years ago, he had risen to fame as a conversationalist who could, with a torrent of golden words pouring from his lips, cast a spell on his audience.... But he was not merely a great decorator and beautifier of life, he was also suggestive and original to a degree and did, at every turn, open new vistas before us whenever he came to hold forth no matter on what theme.”⁵⁴

The author accepts that oratory may be more powerful than conversation. Socrates, Demosthenes, Cicero etc. moved masses of people of their time through their oratory. But the conversationalists, the author feels, like Dr. Johnson, Goethe, Einstein, Shaw, Russell, Rolland, Sri Ramkrishna and Rabindranath, too, played an important role in appealing to the intelligentsia of their own respective times.

In 1927, Dilip Roy listened to Rabindranath’s discourse on theme of *Man and Woman*, which he published in detail in *Among the Great* in 1945 and its summary in *Six Illuminates of Modern India* in 1982. During their conversation, Dilip Roy asked numerous questions to Tagore to know whether he believed in

the equality of status of man and woman in the sphere of social rights and responsibilities or not. In Tagore's answers, Dilip Kumar traced out :

“...the deep suggestiveness and impressive originality of the poet's outlook which delighted his audience through the exquisite spontaneity of his utterance and the appositeness of his similies, never once failing to hit the target”⁵⁵

Responding to modern woman's clamour for equality of status with man, at the cost of being called old-fashioned, Tagore opined:

“...I do not think that woman stands to gain in the long run by rushing out into the open as a fellow-scrambler of her mate for the same laurels. For her soul cannot find any real satisfaction if she goes out of her way to grab things that do not beautify life. She must preside over *her* world which is *beauty*.”⁵⁶

According to Rabindranath, woman can have her proper place in society by being true to her nature—her *swadharma*. There is a fundamental difference, Tagore thinks, between man and woman. He says:

“...if woman had been but an exact counterpart of man, with exactly the same role to play, life, as we know it, would have ceased to exist long ago. Fortunately, woman is not man's replica but his fellow-pilgrim in their joint journey through life—and that is why the march still continues— the *lila*, the play.”⁵⁷

But this does not mean that woman is capable of creation only on the inferior planes. He further states:

“...she is as indispensable to man's mental creation as man is to her physical. It is only because on the mental plane she works unseen, behind the screen, that we do not visualise her contribution at this stage. But that is only because we are not sufficiently imaginative and discerning.”⁵⁸

The author sent a copy of this discourse of Tagore on *Man and Woman* to Havelock Ellie in 1927, and Ellie wrote back:

“It gives me joy to find that Tagore says clearly, at almost every point, what I have said, or tried to say clearly in my book, *Man and Woman*. On the whole, I could hardly desire to see a more beautiful presentation in a short space of a conception which corresponds to my own than the one Tagore has put into this conversation, with a skill in speech beyond me.”⁵⁹

Roy appreciates Rabindranath's art of writing intimate personal letters. When he compares Rabindranath's letters to those of Sri Aurobindo, he finds that one cannot find any personal intimacy in Sri Aurobindo's letters. He notes that Sri Aurobindo

"...has written to a few of us, his disciples, a good many letters (quoted in my *Sri Aurobindo Came To Me*) which can well be adjudged literary letters *par excellence*. For all that, Sri Aurobindo's genius could not take as spontaneously to letter-writing as the duck takes to water. It is here that Rabindranath scores."⁶⁰

Rabindranath could express his emotions and reactions to life through plenty of letters written in a spontaneous and heartwarming charm. Dilip Roy considers, was

"...born with a mind of delicate sensitiveness which, like the seismograph, was receptive to the slightest touch or quiver of the world of senses and perceptions of almost every nuance and amplitude."⁶¹

Dilip Roy has published, as an example, such an intimate letter written by Tagore to him in 1925 in *Six Illuminates of Modern India* on p.76.

Dilip Roy liked Tagore's spirit to feel always young and be one with those who were younger than him in age. He quotes from one of Rabindranath's letters:

"How do you propose to stow me away, installed on a high pedestal? ... Am I not of the same age as you all ? Have I not—in spite of my long white beard—sported and roistered with you, never keeping you at a distance?I cannot refrain from feeling a certain justifiable pride that I could, without turning a hair, make merry with you all as one of you. From which I conclude that I can never grow old... It is the representative Man, at once ancient and ever-new, who has inspired my poetry:therefore I must live in and through him right in the thick of you all who will sometimes sling mud at me and at others greet me with garlands and bouquets."⁶²

The author also enjoyed the characteristic refined humour of Rabindranath during his personal contact with him. As an instance, he publishes a humorous letter written to him by the poet in June 1931:

"Now-a-days I luxuriate regally in doing nothing a la lotus-eater. There was a time when I behaved almost like an addict of

correspondence who just has to reply to letters the moment he receives them. That obsessive self has all but left me. I have transferred him to Amiya (his quondam secretary). Now-a-days ever so many lion-hunters are treasuring his hand-writing, taking it for my own, thus supplying, in effect, material for the future archaeologist's learned researches! May be some pundit in 3013 A. D. will prove conclusively, in this very Bengal of ours, that Rabi Thakur was a solar myth, the Bengali name of his one-wheeled chariot was Amiya, the Rolls-Royce, and that is why Amiya, as Rabi's own car, used to be identified with the former. It will not prove difficult for them to show, from documentary evidence, that in the eastern sky of India Rabi Thakur's position was identical with Amiya Chakravarty's. In one of my future reincarnations I may even come to drive home this thesis against myself with an astonishing erudition and so be honoured, once again, with a doctorate by the Calcutta University to be. I can only hope, wistfully, that this letter I am writing may be suddenly discovered by a rival professor who will duly pounce on and disgrace that Rabindranath to be and, along with him, the Calcutta University which will have conferred the doctorate on him."⁶³

Rabindranath wrote humorous poems on Dilip Roy, too. A few of such poems are given in *Six Illuminates of Modern India*.

Dilip Roy came into contact with many great people of his time and he often tried to compare and contrast the qualities of one great person with those of another. (Generally he found the great people alike in many respects.) In his essay: 'Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath', as it is noted in the portrait of Sri Aurobindo, Roy brings out the finer qualities of both of them. Dilip Roy thinks that Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath were "the two great lighthouses"⁶⁴ of their time.

He also cites Rabindranath's Bengali poem, 'Varshasneha' along with his own English translation of it and also a few lines from *Savitri* in *Six Illuminates of Modern India* to show how close they were in their aspirations and how each of them flowered on earth as a rich 'treasurer of superhuman dream' in his own way. Dilip Roy was very much impressed by humility of Rabindranath when he found him writing poems and reviews in full appreciation of Sri Aurobindo. In his youth, Rabindranath revered Sri Aurobindo very much when he was sweeping freedom fighters like Tagore off their feet by his speeches and articles. But when Sri Aurobindo left his active political career and retired to Pondicherry in seclusion, Rabindranath regretted it thinking that he had become regardless towards

others. But Dilip Roy refuted the poet's charge by quoting a passage from Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga* in which he clarified his stand as a person who was not concerned with his individual salvation but also with: "the liberation and self-fulfilment of others."⁶⁵ He asked Tagore to visit Sri Aurobindo and check his claim on his own. Tagore did so in 1928 and wrote of his conversation in *Modern Review*. A few lines of it are:

"Years ago I saw Aurobindo in the atmosphere of his earlier heroic youth and I sang to him: 'Aurobindo, accept the salutation of Rabindranath'. Today I saw him in a deeper atmosphere of reticent richness of wisdom and again sang to him in silence: 'Aurobindo, accept the salutation of Rabindranath.'⁶⁶

He also paid a beautiful tribute to Sri Aurobindo by writing a poem: "Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee!"⁶⁷ Roy, after reading tributes, was very much impressed by "the poet's deep humility which made him bow so readily to one who had been so grievously misunderstood in his lifetime", then he adds: "only a Colossus can truly understand a Colossus."⁶⁸ Roy was happy to find that he was instrumental in bringing these two great persons together and also in removing misunderstanding prevalent about his guru.

In *the Future Poetry* Sri Aurobindo, too, wrote about Tagore's art as a poet:

"And at the subtlest elevation of all that has yet been reached stands or rather wings and floats in a high intermediate region the poetry of Tagore...in a psycho-spiritual heaven of subtle and delicate soul-experience transmuting the earth-tones by the touch of its radiance. The wide success and appeal of his poetry is, indeed, one of the most significant signs of the tendency of the mind of the age."⁶⁹

The author has dealt with various incidents of their tolerance, patience, and a fine sense of humour at different places in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* and *Six Illuminates of Modern India*.

(B) Evaluation :

What is evident from Dilip Roy's sketch of Rabindranath Tagore, is that the latter has impressed the former both as an artist and as a man.

When he evaluates Tagore as a poet, one can easily see that he has spoken of the major themes of Tagore's poetry in detail, but has not uttered a word about the form of his poetry. Moreover, he has remained silent about the difference between his Bengali poetry and his English translations, though he has given the examples of both while talking of the themes. Dilip Roy has given his own translations of many of Tagore's poems which is a mark of his good command of

the two languages and also his zeal to make Tagore's poems available to many readers through translations.

The author, by citing examples, claims that Rabindranath could converse brilliantly. Tagore's replies to Roy's queries bring out his clarity of thought and courage of conviction. Even Havelock Ellie, as we have seen earlier, appreciated Tagore's clarity of views. Moreover, Dilip Roy's quick wit shines out when one reads various questions asked by him so coherently and quickly to Tagore.

Roy liked to receive Rabindranath's personal letters very much. He was also fortunate to receive plenty of letters from Sri Aurobindo. Here, in his portrait of Rabindranath, he observes that though Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo are almost equally great contemporaries, they are different in their method of writing letters. He finds a kind of detachment in the letters written by Sri Aurobindo, though they are written in good linguistic style.

Dilip Roy compares Rabindranath's mind with the seismograph. The image obviously is modernist and indicates the spirit of the author's age.

Dilip Roy liked Tagore as a person very much. He appreciates Tagore's generosity and in so doing exhibits his own. It should be remembered that Roy's father, himself an eminent literary figure, and Tagore had not been for some reason or the other (Dilip Roy never tells us why exactly) friendly with each other, even if they were not clearly antagonistic either. Dilip Roy, yet, almost worships Tagore and never remembers the grievances his father had against him. There is in his reverence an unmistakable spontaneity and warmth.

From this portrait, it appears that there was a great affinity between the author and the subject. Both of them were Bengali aristocrats, interested in arts, culture and literature. Tagore was famous as a great poet, while Roy became well-known as a foremost musician of his time. Both of them had romantic style of writing. They had deep love for their country and yearned for its independence intensely. Both of them liked to communicate with as many people as it was possible for them. They also wrote long beautiful letters to many people.

But Rabindranath always appreciated the Western culture without caring for the criticism of the Indians. As against this, Dilip Roy stood for traditional Indian culture and religious heritage. He searched for a divinely-appointed guru and found one in Sri Aurobindo. Dilip Roy clearly lacked Tagore's width and depth of vision. He looks like an immature child when we compare him with the wisdom of the old poet. Tagore is a romantic poet, but he has a fine sense of form which Dilip Roy lacks. Tagore never aimlessly rambled as Roy seems to be doing. In everything, Tagore's genius had been synthetic and he synthesised in his poetry and other writings the best of romantic impulse and the classical sense of order. Roy looks only like the worst of romantic rovers.

Roy has tried to present the serious as well as the light aspects of the temperament of his subject. Here is the portrait of a personality and not a biographical sketch. Personality exists simultaneously as a picture and exhibits qualities, not events. A biographical sketch spreads out in time, as a movie picture and cannot show forth total achievement of the mind, radiating from the living presence. Dilip Roy's peculiarity in this sketch and others is that he is a portrait painter, not a biographer. That is the reason why he always ignores chronology of events to show forth how the great man was made. The history of his life does not interest Roy. Its ultimate outcome and raptures engross him completely.

4. Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) was the most prominent leader of Indian freedom struggle of the 20th century. Even Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, his political opponent, addressed him as "the Father of the Indian Nation" in 1944. From his very young age Gandhiji imbibed the strong influence of his mother's deep religious temperament. So, sincere piety grew within him naturally. His non-violence, vegetarianism and ascetic habits were the off-shoots of his religious faith. Fasting as a means of self-purification and fasting as a weapon to fight the enemy with clear conscience, too, had been the outcome of the same. He tried to reform society by silent persuasion rather than coercion. He tried to spiritualise even politics. So he accepted Truth as the pole star of his life, the Truth as he understood it, and he characterized the whole of his life as the story of his experiments with Truth. His another ideal was love which in substance is the same as the Christian love. He called it nonviolence. As a result, he became famous rather as a saint than as a politician or as a statesman. Through a long process of trial and error, aspiration and endeavour he achieved greatness.

(A) Portrait:

Dilip Roy has given the account of his relationship with "the Father of the Nation" in three books. In *Among the Great* he speaks of a few of his meetings with Mahatma Gandhi which took place in different cities like Pune, Delhi, Calcutta, etc. Through his conversations with Mahatma Gandhi during these few meetings, he came to know him intimately. *Six Illuminates of Modern India* consists of an essay: 'Mahatma Gandhi, The Human Saint,' which focuses on the loving and sympathetic human concern of this great leader of India. In *Pilgrims of the Stars*, the author, in the eve of his own life, reminiscences briefly those valuable moments which he passed with Mahatma Gandhi. The author, being a hero-worshipper, finds himself emotionally associated with this eminent national hero of his time. He admires those striking features of his subject which appealed to him the most.

Humility appears to be the striking feature of Mahatma Gandhi to Roy. Once he wrote to the author:

“Much of the reputation that I enjoy in the West is really undeserved and I often think that if I went to Europe or to America, the people there would be soon undeceived about their many exaggerated notions of me. You would believe me when I tell you that I write this not from any sense of false self-depreciation, but because I feel it that way.”⁷⁰

Mahatma Gandhi always felt obliged and not obliging. When Dilip Roy paid him his first visit in Sassoon Hospital, Poona, where Mahatmaji was convalescing, he was very happy to see the author. The author remembers: “His whole face softened in gratefulness, another well-known trait of his beautiful nature.”⁷¹

Later on, whenever Dilip Roy sang his melodious songs to him, he was equally grateful to him and never failed to appreciate him. Once the author extended his stay in Delhi for a few more days just to remain in the company of Gandhiji. When Gandhiji came to know of it, he expressed his gratitude with a child like joy and sincerity. One may say that childlike innocence was the dominant trait of his personality.

Roy was delighted when Gandhiji, during their first meeting, asked him to sing a song. But he was under the impression that art had no place in the gospel of Gandhiji’s austere life and as such, he might be against music. Gandhiji tried to remove the author’s doubts by telling that he had loved music, particularly devotional songs since his childhood days. He was all praise for Mira *bhajans* because of their sincerity and poetic appeal. He felt:

“Her songs well forth straight from the heart—like a spray. They were not composed for the lure of fame or popular applause as are some others’ songs. There lies the secret of her lasting appeal.”⁷²

Though, he said, he was not familiar with the technique of music, he always was moved by it. He informed the author that when he was convalescing in a South African hospital, his friend’s daughter often sang a famous hymn—*Lead Kindly Light* and he felt that music could give joy, peace and comfort. Mahatmaji informed Roy that there were many people like him who felt that he was against art. Actually, he claimed he was an artist himself, but people were not ready to accept it, they were treating his remark as a joke. According to Roy, his asceticism was somewhat responsible for such popular misconception, as people found it difficult to reconcile asceticism with art. But Gandhiji said:

“But I do maintain that asceticism is the greatest of all arts. For what is art but beauty in simplicity and what is asceticism but the loftiest manifestation of simple beauty in daily life shorn of artificialities and make-believes ? That is why I always say that a true ascetic not only practises art but lives it”⁷³

He said that he should not be considered an enemy of art like music only because he favoured asceticism. In fact, he knew that India’s religious life evolved with the help of her music. Mahatmaji held those certain values which were different from those held by others. So people had the impression that he was against art. For instance, he did not call that a great art which demands an intimate knowledge of technique for its appreciation. To him, art, in order to be truly great, must, like the beauty of Nature, be universal in its appeal. He was inclined to think that art “must be simple in its presentation and direct in its expression like the language of Nature.”⁷⁴

He loved the beauty of Nature and preferred it to art. He never needed pictures on the walls of his house for his inspiration. He inquired:

“Beside God’s handiwork does not man’s fade into insignificance?” He said further.

“Life must immensely exceed all the arts put together.... Is it not grotesque to claim—as so many artists do—that art is the crown of creation, the last meaning of existence? ...For to me the greatest artist is surely he who lives the finest life. It is therefore not art I repudiate, but the lofty airs it gives itself.”⁷⁵

Gandhiji, however, was not doctrinaire about what might sound his anti-art or ascetic view of art. He felt that Nature sufficed for him but if others were sincerely convinced that arts such as painting did any real good to humanity, so far so good. But the artist should guard himself against self-deception and self-love and he should be always alive to his duty towards the masses.

Gandhiji, the staunch humanist of his time, assumed that, like art, great philosophy or religion too must appeal equally to all. He favoured the masses and not the classes. According to him, specialization makes a few people eminent and grows in them hatred for the majority instead of “sympathy and understanding for all.”⁷⁶

Mahatma Gandhi, moreover, was always a man of firm determination. Citing an example, Roy lets his readers know that many political leaders were against his projects meant for the promotion of *khaddar* because they had doubts about the success of the spinning wheel in the modern times. But, in the midst of their opposition, Gandhiji remained firm in his insistence for the apparently old method and he, ultimately, met with success in convincing the reluctant leaders

by using different methods. For this reason, Deshbandhu Das commented that he had never come across in his advocacy of twenty years “a mightier advocate in a frailer frame.”⁷⁷

The scintillating wit of Gandhiji was responsible for spreading joy around him wherever he went. Dilip Roy was one of those fortunate people who had a few precious opportunities to participate in such witty conversations with him. Once, as Roy remembers, during a gathering at Deshbandhu Das’s house in Calcutta, a celebrity said that he simply loved to go to the council chambers in his coarse homespun in order to relish the dislike of punctilious Englishmen in the council for homespun. Dilip Roy records:

“ ‘Quite’, echoed Mahatmaji, ‘and do you know whom you remind me of?—A dear friend of mine, who loved to assure me that he stalked into the British councils in *khaddar* to spite the British and into Congress conclaves in mill-made cloth to spite me.’ ”

Some hero-worshippers, however, are profoundly shocked by the faintest suggestion of irreverence against Mahatmas. “But Mahatmaji,” started one of their brood, “that friend of yours couldn’t possibly have meant to spite *you*.”

“I know, my friend”, said Mahatmaji with his merry twinkle, “but why grudge me the bliss of imagining it?”

“The staid devotee was forced to smile as the others rollicked with laughter.”⁷⁸

Such conversations often continued for a long time and the author feels that when such repartees are put down on paper, they lose the actual vitality caused by the background and setting of Mahatmaji’s charming personality. Besides, Dilip Roy liked even more “the peals of laughter that rang out at every sally of his.”⁷⁹ Like Nehru, Dilip Roy too considered that nobody had known Gandhiji who hadn’t known his laughter. To give the idea of Gandhiji’s bewitching smile, the author has used numerous adjectives in these few pages: childlike smile, limpid smile, solvent smile of welcome, the old heart-warming smile, a lovely smile. He writes: “...his crystal laughter kept ringing in my ear like a cadence that lingers.”⁸⁰ Roy reports at one place, “And he chuckled once more in merriment”.⁸¹ Roy writes: “He smiled radiantly.”⁸² Quite long after the death of this great man, Dilip Roy, evaluating the effect of his laughter on his life writes in *Six Illuminates of Modern India*:

“Yes, his radiant laughter has more than once substantially healed my pain in not a few of my life’s dark crises and *contretemps* like an unexpected boon of manna from heaven.”⁸³

Dilip Roy was fond of writing letters to many people whom he knew intimately. So, whenever it was not possible for him to meet Gandhiji personally, he wrote letters to him. And however busy Gandhiji was, he always wrote replies to Roy “in his characteristic vein—genial, transparent and informal.”⁸⁴ As the author confesses, in one of his letters, he wrote critically to Gandhiji that it was painful for him to see Mahatmaji behaving like a political leader. He also gathered in the letter that many Indian people wanted that he should give up politics, but a very few, like the author himself, were courageous to tell him that politics,

“...was not his metier—swadharma: his line was social service equipped as he was with all the great qualities that went to the make-up of a noble social reformer.”⁸⁵

Quoting a passage from Sri Aurobindo’s *Synthesis of Yoga*, Roy stressed that Mahatmaji’s lack of real knowledge—jnana—of the Divine Reality and his ego were responsible for his failure as a true leader of the masses. But Mahatma Gandhi, as it is observed by many, was always gentle and courteous while dealing with his adversaries. So, with his endless patience, he tolerated Dilip Roy’s unpleasing remarks and presenting his own vision of Truth, wrote him back:

“My difficulty is fundamental. I do not believe that my present activity is less conducive to self-realisation or merger in the Divine than abstention would be. *Sannyas* is not cessation of all physical activity. It means to me cessation of all activity, mental or physical, that is *selfish*. If I could be convinced that cessation was the better way for me, I should adopt it at once.”⁸⁶

And Gandhiji’s loving, magnetic and baffling personality always captivated Dilip Roy. On October 29, 1947, the author met Gandhiji after the gap of almost a decade. At that time, Gandhiji welcomed him so warmly that he had the feeling as though he had met him only yesterday. Roy, it was true, could not appreciate Mahatmaji’s post-war politico-religious ideology. But, he states:

“In fact I was more drawn than ever by his baffling personality, and that also in a new way. For I realised, as never before, what a magic power he had of getting under the skin of others to feel the pulse of things.”⁸⁷

Gandhiji’s personality reminds him of Bhavbhuti’s famous line:

“*Bajaradapi kathorani mriduni kusumadapi :*”

“*Harder than the trump of doom
Yet softer than an opening bloom!*”⁸⁸

Mahatmaji endeared himself to the author also because of his habit of paying attention to the smallest details and paying proper tribute to deserving persons. When the stenographer wrote 'Sri Aurobindo' instead of 'Rishi Aurobindo' in his report, Gandhiji reprimanded him for doing so and personally inserted the epithet 'Rishi' before the saint's name. This made a deep impression on the author's mind who was Sri Aurobindo's close disciple.

Along with the jubilant moments of Gandhi's life, Dilip Roy also draws the attention of his readers towards his failure in politics. Roy attended the prayer-meetings on Gandhiji's invitation. There he noticed the growing discontent of people when *the Quran* verses were recited. As many Hindus suffered much during the time of partition, they had the ineradicable feeling of despair that Mahatmaji was a friend of the Muslims and not of the Hindus. Even in the tone of Gandhiji, Dilip Roy could notice sadness. Gandhiji was intensely disappointed to see that the national freedom was achieved at the cost of the unity of India. An incident portrayed by the author expresses Mahatmaji's feeling of poignant disappointment which he had to face after the realization of the Indian Independence. After one of the prayer-meetings, Dilip Roy informed him that he had cancelled his Lucknow trip to be with him; Gandhiji was very happy and said that he had wished to happen it like that. At that time, Dilip Roy said: "And how could anything *not* happen in our country which you wish to happen?" He dropped his eyes, and said: "How I wish what you say in irony were true!"⁸⁹ When on the next day, Roy sang a song, Gandhiji did not give him his usual look of greeting after the song. Hence, Roy became sadder and understood that "he was weary to the bones...world-weary and...longing for sleep."⁹⁰

Roy's sympathetic and emotional temperament is disclosed in this delineation of his last visit with Gandhiji which took place in October 1947. He concludes :

"When I left him, my eyes were moist with tears. I was moved by him as never before. And though I tried hard, I could not shake off the suggestion that I would never see him again."⁹¹

Soon after this meeting, he received the news of Gandhiji's assassination on January 30, 1948, when he was delivering a lecture on music at the Calcutta University. By co-incidence he had selected a song which contained a mystic dialogue between Mother and Child, in which the weary child longs to sleep in the lap of the Mother. The author's sorrows knew no bounds. He became gloomy and felt feverish during that night. To pay tribute to this great soul, Dilip Roy quotes the following lines from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:

*"My God is Love and sweetly suffers all
A traveller of the million roads of life."*⁹²

(B) Evaluation :

Roy's appreciation of Gandhiji's personality is interesting. But it has its merits as well as shortcomings.

It seems from this sketch that Mahatma Gandhi was never clear about his views on art. He had been influenced by two Christian thinkers of his time, Tolstoy and Ruskin. After listening to Gandhiji's humanitarian ideas, even Roy was reminded of Tolstoy's views on art and he found that Mahatmaji's philosophy had been influenced by the Russian artist's. Roy cites a passage from Tolstoy's *What's Art ?*:

“ The artists of various sects like the theologians of various sects, mutually exclude and destroy themselves. listen to the artists of the schools of our times and you will find, in all branches, each set of artists disowning others. In poetry the old romanticists deny the parnassians and the decadents, the parnassians disown the romanticists and the decadents, the decadents disown all their predecessors and the symbolists; the symbolists disown all, their predecessors and *les mages*:and *les mages* disown all, their predecessors. Among novelists we have naturalists, psychologists and 'nature-ists,' all rejecting each other. And it is the same in dramatic art, in painting and in music. So that art, which demands such tremendous labour-sacrifices from the people, which stunts human lives and transgresses against human love, is not only a thing *not* clearly and firmly defined, but is understood in such contradictory ways by its own devotees that it is difficult to say what is meant by art, and especially what is good, useful art for the sake of which we might condone such sacrifices as are being offered at its shrine.”⁹³

Mahatmaji's concept of *Sarwodaya* is a kind of translation of Ruskin's *Unto this Last*. Like Ruskin, he had a utilitarian view of art. Nothing was valuable to him that did not contribute directly to the social upliftment of the people and their spiritual well-being. Gandhiji's view of spirituality was ascetic. What we find mentioned here is a simple, didactic view of art akin to Ruskin's.

But Tolstoy, Ruskin and Gandhiji could not appreciate art as art, valuable in itself. Romain Rolland seems to be apologetic in his defence of art when he writes:

“It is indubitably evident that Nature is the supreme artist. Only, one would have a personality like his (Gandhiji's) supplement his apotheosis of Nature by some such remark as:

‘But may men also take a leaf out of her book and create beautiful harmonious things in lines, colours, sounds and thoughts!’ His conception seems to remain passive when confronted by Nature or the divine Principle immanent in her. If, however, God is in each of us, ought we not, according to our respective capacities, try to become the image of the Lord of Beauty?’⁹⁴

One might wonder why Rolland fails to vindicate art with enough vehemence. A true artist is gifted with the vision of beauty and creates beauty even where it is absent. Keats was not directly serving humanity in Gandhiji’s sense of the term when he wrote *Ode to Autumn*. To him beauty was truth and truth, beauty. Shall we say that such artists are avoidable parasites on society? An artist is interested in seeing beauty and creating beauty, in turning chaos into harmony in forms and tunes and thoughts. All these may be indirectly helpful to humanity in utilitarian sense of the term. It may not be. Yet it is valuable in its own right. A culture becomes rich by the richness of art. Gandhiji could not see this simple truth. Why does Dilip Roy refrain from criticizing the narrowness of his views plainly?

It is enlightening to consider here Tagore’s criticism of Gandhiji’s views on art. Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi were contemporaries and had great respect for each other. But Tagore did not agree with Mahatmaji’s views on religion, nationalism, non-co-operation, art etc. He frequently wrote articles criticizing Gandhiji’s views. Romain Rolland was almost the first to bring out this controversy between the two into light in a systematic and balanced manner in his biography: *Mahatma Gandhi*. Roy, it seems, has been benefited by this book in his portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi. Rolland, in his book, notes:

‘The controversy between Tagore and Gandhi, between two great minds, both moved by mutual admiration and esteem, but as fatally separated in their feeling as a philosopher can be from an apostle, a St Paul from a Plato, is important. For on the one side we have the spirit of religious faith and charity seeking to found a new humanity. On the other we have intelligence, free-born, serene, and broad, seeking to unite aspirations of all humanity in sympathy and understanding.’⁹⁵

Tagore craved for the synthesis of the culture of the orient with that of the occident. But by following the movement of non-co-operation, propounded by Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore suspected that people, instead of gaining anything, would lose the opportunity of getting enlightenment and cultural synthesis of the East and the West. In fact, he never doubted the sincerity of Mahatmaji’s intentions, but he feared the illogical Gandhists who were following Mahatma Gandhi blindly.

The poet could not agree with his humanitarian concepts of art. Romain Rolland brings out in detail the controversy between Tagore and Gandhiji. It has to be quoted at length:

“In older days, in our primeval forests,” says Tagore, “our sages, gurus, in the plenitude of their vision, called on *all* seekers of truth... Why does not our *guru*, who wants to lead us to action, make the same call?” But the only command that Guru *Gandhi* so far has launched is, “Spin and Weave!” And Tagore asks, “Is this the gospel of a new creative age? If large machinery constitutes a danger for the West, will not small machines constitute a greater danger for us?” The forces of a nation must co-operate, not only with each other, but with other nations. ‘The awakening of India is bound up in the awakening of the world. Every nation that tries to shut itself in violates the spirit of the new age.’ And Tagore, who has spent several years in Europe, speaks of some of the men he met— men who have freed their hearts from the chains of nationalism in order to serve humanity—men who constitute the persecuted minority of world citizens, *cives totius orbis* —and he classes them among the sannyasins, that is, “those who in their soul have realized human unity.”

“And should India alone, asks Tagore, recite the chapter of negation, dwell eternally on the faults of others, and strive for Swaraj on a basis of hatred? When the bird is awakened by the dawn, it does not only think of food. Its wings respond to the call of the sky. Its throat fills with joyous songs to greet the coming day. A new humanity has sent out its call. Let India reply in her own way! “Our first duty, at dawn, is to remember *Him Who is One, Who is indistinguishable through class or colour, and Who, by His varied forces, provides, as is necessary, for the needs of each class and of all. Let us pray to Him, Who gives wisdom, to unite us all in understanding.*”⁹⁶

Rolland further notes:

“In his answer to Tagore Gandhi displays more passion than he has so far shown in the controversy. On October 13, 1921, in *Young India*, his stirring rejoinder appears. Gandhi thanks the “Great Sentinel” (The title of the article) for having warned India as to the pitfalls ahead. He agrees with Tagore that most essential of all is the maintenance of a free spirit.

“We must not surrender our reason into anybody’s keeping. Blind surrender to love is often more mischievous than forced surrender to the lash of the tyrant. There is hope for the slave of the brute, none for that of love.

‘Tagore is the sentinel who warns of the approach of the enemies called Bigotry, Lethargy, Intolerance, Ignorance, and Inertia. But Gandhi does not feel that Tagore’s misgivings are justified. The Mahatma always appeals to reason. It is not true that India is moved by blind obedience only. If the country decided to adopt the spinning-wheel, this has been only after considerable reflection. Tagore speaks of patience and is satisfied with beautiful songs. But there is war. Let the poet lay down his lyre ! Let him sing when it is over! When a house is on fire *all* must go out and take up a bucket to quench the fire.

‘To a people famishing and idle the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. God created man to work for his food and said that those who are without work were thieves. We must think of millions who to-day are less than animals, almost in a dying state. Hunger is the argument that is drawing India to the spinning-wheel.

“The poet lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds in the early morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. Those birds had their day’s food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood had flown the previous night. But I have had the pain of watching birds who for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. I have found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir...

“Give them work that they may eat! “Why should I, who have no need to work for food, spin?” may be the question asked. Because I am eating what does not belong to me. I am living on the spoliation of my countrymen. Trace the source of every coin that finds its way into your pocket, and you will realize the truth of what I write. Everyone must spin. Let Tagore spin, like the others. Let him burn his foreign clothes; that is the duty of to-day. God will take care of the morrow. As it says in the Gita, *Do right!*”⁹⁷

It is clear in the controversy that Tagore's argument is quite sound. Gandhiji, instead of answering it, turns rather irrelevantly, to the uses of the spinning wheel for the starving masses of India. The spinning wheel, granted, is useful. But does it mean that art is useless? Does it mean that the inspired artists should not be busy creating the things of beauty? Gandhiji is silent on all these. The passion to feed the hungry has possessed his soul entirely. He is unable to see anything else.

In the present sketch, Dilip Roy gathers together the varying notions of different great people on art. But his one limitation is that he simply reports greatness and a great man's words without subjecting them to any critical examination. He fails to see, for example, that there was a lot of truth in Gandhiji calling himself an artist, and a lot of truth in the common view that he was an enemy of art. Bapu was an artist in that he used his life and personality as the material medium for the realisation of certain spiritual beauty which everyone around him immediately felt. With a sculptor's care and industry, he carved and chiselled his life into a desired shape, and he felt that the shaping process still continued even near the end of his life. Who can deny that Gandhiji was an artist in this sense?

But he could never appreciate any of sensuousness or intellectual or emotional beauty in any medium alien to his immediate consciousness and behaviour. You cannot imagine him standing before the portrait of Monalisa spell-bound by her charming smile. He discovered no beauty at all in Taj Mahal which was little more than an expensive tomb to him. He had no heart to respond to sensuousness such as Keats's or sublimity of Western epics and Shakespeare. He could never realise that in diverse media various artists seek to realise in varying measures the celestial sublimities and beauties manifested upon the earth. None can deny that Gandhiji had been an ascetic representing the monastic tradition of India which had been taught for centuries to see nothing beautiful in the transience of the temporal stream. That is how, Gandhiji is the other extreme of Tagore who saw eternity in time itself. Our reverence for the Father of the Nation should not blind us to the fact that his philosophy had been too simple to be sublime, and that his austere ethics was dry and negative and blind to the beauties of life and art. Dilip Roy should have seen this. But he does not. Perhaps he did, but dared not criticize a great man whom he worshipped. To him, it seems, reverence and criticism cannot co-exist. This is apparent in all his work. And it defines his constant limitation.

One can argue that Roy did criticize Gandhiji in one of his letters for pursuing politics and not social work which appeared to be his *swadharma*. But this kind of criticism appears mild and very cautious. Ultimately, he glorifies the greatness of his own subject by informing the readers that Gandhiji was very tolerant and he replied his letter with patience and warmth. So, the author's

limitation magnifies the greatness of his portrait and the reader does not get a thoroughly faithful portrait of his subject. Moreover, Gandhiji, at that time, replied to Dilip Roy's suggestion that he should become a *Sannyasin* but did not respond to the latter's saner suggestion that he should confine himself to social service and leave politics. Dilip Roy also does not comment on Gandhiji's silence. In fact, it seems, he has forgotten that he made such a suggestion. It is for the reader, therefore, to say that Dilip Roy was right in asking him to leave politics. The later course of history has only shown how crooked politicians used him as an instrument for the realization of power and threw him away when they found him useless. He was too saintly to be a politician.

Roy, in addition, tells his readers that whenever and wherever Mahatma Gandhi met him, he always invited him to sing to the accompaniment of his 'music. And Roy was very much delighted when he sang to Mahatma Gandhi and also when Gandhiji praised his talent. For instance, during one of his prayer-meetings, when Dilip Roy finished his song, Gandhiji said:

“.....though I am no connoisseur of music, I may, I think, make bold to claim that very few persons in India—or rather in the world—have a voice like his, so rich and sweet and intense. And today his voice struck me as having grown even sweeter and richer than before.”⁹⁸

But here, again, one has to remember that Gandhiji's interest was limited to the singing of *bhajans* or devotional songs only. It was devotion rather than music that delighted him. It was a love of music as a means to the end of spiritual feeling. The subject matter of the songs primarily appealed to him. And music was only a powerful carrier or a rouser or an intensifier of the religious sense. It was not the love of music for its own sake. Neither he nor his guru Ruskin could appreciate art for its own sake. The aesthetic view of art which was prevalent in criticism under the influence of Wilde and Whistler had no affinity with Gandhiji's.

One may wonder if Roy himself had any clear notion of art though he himself was an artist. He seems to be a poor art critic. At least, in the books under study here, there is no evidence that he ever thought seriously about the nature, function, structure and philosophy of art. That perhaps is one of the reasons why he could not easily identify Gandhiji's clear limitation, that is, lack of clarity in his views on art.

Dilip Roy has described Mahatma Gandhi's tenacious efforts to make other leaders agree with him in his projects of making spinning wheel popular among people. But what was most remarkable and relevant to Mahatma Gandhi's *swadeshi* movement, escaped from the notice of the author. It may appear to be irrelevant

today but it was most necessary for the amelioration of the poor in starving villages who had no means of subsistence, no employment. Gandhiji took some steps for the first time during the British period of history to educate the villagers, to train them for what they could do in their situation and to provide them with some employment. All this is known as Gandhiji's constructive programme for the upliftment of villages. Perhaps this was the most important mission of Mahatma Gandhi's life which could have complemented the Liberal education of his time. (Though, Gandhiji, strangely, opposed the Liberal education strongly supported by earlier reformers.) Roy does not take notice of it. But he was quite right in thinking that straying into politics was his mistake. His constructive programmes suffered on account of his political agitations which unnecessarily antagonized the British rulers who had always been earlier sympathetic and helpful to the social reformers of India. In retrospect, we cannot but feel that unworthy politicians exploited Gandhiji's popular appeal for their own advantage and deserted him when Independence came.

5. Ramana Maharshi

Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) became well-known during his life time as a sage of matchless purity, without the least of worldliness. In 1896, sixteen years old boy Venkatramana was suddenly drawn towards the holy temple of Shiva on Arunachala Hill in Tiruvannamalai. So he left his home and relatives with five rupees in his pocket to reach there. He was not familiar with the way. But trusting entirely to the mercy of Shiva, he ultimately reached the temple. He went straight to the image of Lord Shiva. With tears in his eyes, he said :“I have come at last, Lord !”, and soon after that went off into *samadhi*. There after he lived on alms, eating but once a day and living most of the time in the bliss of *samadhi*. He spent the remaining five decades of his life in Tiruvannamalai only. In the earlier phase of his *sadhana*, he lived in a cave for eight years, observing complete silence, *mounam*. Then his devotees built him the ashram at the foot of the Hill.

In 1903, there came to Tiruvannamalai a great Sanskrit scholar, Ganapati Sastri. He found this sage very great as he could bless all, but could belong to none. Ganapati Sastri also saw that the sage was interested in everything, but was attached to nothing. Hence, he proclaimed Ramana to be *Maharshi and Bhagwan*. He composed hymns in Sanskrit in praise of the sage and also wrote the *Ramanagita* explaining his teachings. Ramana Maharshi became internationally known through Paul Brantan's popular work: *In Search of Secret India*.

Ramana Maharshi himself seldom wrote, and what little he did write in prose or verse was written to meet the specific demands of his devotees. *The Forty Verses on Existence* is considered the most important of his works. In his poem, the *Upadesasaram*, the quintessence of Vedanta is set forth. He also

composed five hymns to Arunachala. Sankaracharya's *Vivekudamani* and *Atmabodha* were rendered into Tamil by him. He wrote in Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam. The teachings of Ramana Maharshi are the same as those of Advaita Vedanta. It has for its aim self-realization. The inquiry into the nature of Self, the content of the notion 'I' is taught to the devotees.

(A) Portrait:

Dilip Roy came to know about Ramana Maharshi when he read Paul Brunton's book. According to Brunton, Ramana Maharshi was "a heaven-sent boon-giver who could communicate peace by his mere proximity."⁹⁹ Roy had also heard about Ramana Maharshi's greatness from his friend, Duraswami. So he paid two visits to Ramana ashrama during his stay at Pondicherry as the disciple of Sri Aurobindo. Dilip Roy, at that time, discovered that the charm of Ramana Maharshi's personality was irresistible. Even though it was not easy to portray what he exactly witnessed or experienced during these two visits, he tried to give the verbal form of his impressions in two of his books, *Pilgrims of the Stars* and *Six Illuminates of Modern India*.

Ramana Maharshi as Roy noted, was extremely simple in his behaviour. He always dressed himself in a bare *Koupin* or loin-cloth. He took his food daily with his disciples and visitors. He never appreciated any extra attention paid to him while the food was being served. He appeared to be indifferent towards the whole world. He sat in the Hall on his dais from morning till evening with only about an hour's rest in the afternoon. The disciples would come and go. They would ask questions. He gave answers if he felt like answering, if not, he made as if he had not heard. He kept gazing at the sky often with unseeing eyes. Sometimes he fixed his eyes just for a few moments on a visitor who prostrated himself before him.

But, he could not be criticized for his indifference and isolation because he stood for an ideal of liberation-jivanmukti. He was in human form and yet he was alien to all that was earthly. So, he appeared to Roy like Shiva, the great God of compassion and detachment. When Dilip Roy saw him sitting on his oblong dais, Roy found him "sat ensconced in a regal peace and egoless bliss, giving us a glimpse of another "mode of living."¹⁰⁰

Even kings went to Ramana Maharshi offering rich gifts, but he, without accepting their offerings, simply blessed them. Pointing at the golden temple, being built in his honour by his disciples, he said: "Just fancy, they insist on erecting this for me when all I need is the shade of a tree under which to sit and be."¹⁰¹ On one occasion, somebody suggested to Maharshi that he should put on a vest and a coat as it was getting cold. He smiled and replied:

“Our poor soul is all but suffocated under five robust coats—the *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya*. Must you still inflict two more?”¹⁰²

Ramana Maharshi gave importance to two things in life; to be far away from fear and flattery in their subtlest forms.

Once, a snake passed over his body while he lay in his dark cave at night. His attendant, a doctor, was terrified, so he jumped from his place informing Maharshi about the passing of the snake over his body. Maharshi told him quietly that he knew about it and he felt ‘cool’ when it passed over his body.

Ramana Maharshi narrated a story to Dilip Roy which showed the disadvantage of love for flattery. Once there was a rich man who wanted God. Hence, he renounced his worldly life and went into the forest. He practised all kinds of austerities for years till he reached to a Golden Gate. But the portals did not open to his knocking only because he was getting very much pleased when others paid homage to him.

The spirit of peace, harmony and harmlessness permeated the sage to such an extent that animals and birds made friends with him. Cows, dogs and monkeys found asylum in his ashram. Birds and squirrels built their nests around him. He would see that they were properly fed. When any of them died, the body would be buried with due ceremony.

Dilip Roy was very much interested in knowing about the *sadhana* of Maharshi. Maharshi felt that everything in his life happened so spontaneously that it was not necessary for him to practise any asceticism or *tapasya*. To one of his disciples, he said: “...I simply came and sat down in the temple or elsewhere in Arunachala and then lost all count of time.”¹⁰³ To Roy he confided:

“People call Him by different names, but He came to me with no name or introduction so I know not how to define Him. What happened was that my desires and ego left me—how and why I cannot tell—and that I lived thenceforward in a vast and timeless peace. Sometimes ...I stayed with my eyes closed and then, when I opened them, people said that I had come out of my blessed meditation. But I never knew the difference between no-meditation and meditation, blessed or otherwise. I simply lived, a tranquil witness to whatever happened around me, but never felt called upon to actively interfere. I could never feel any urge to do anything —except to be —just *be*. I saw that all had always been done by Him and Him alone, though we, poor puppets of *maya* [illusion], feel ourselves self-important as the doers, authors and reformers of everything ! It is the ineradicable

ego, the I-ness in each of us, which is responsible for the perpetuation of this *maya* with all its attendant sufferings and disenchantments.”¹⁰⁴

When Dilip Roy inquired about the remedy of this problem, he said:

“So all that you have to *do* is to get this *I*, the real *I* behind your seeming *I*, for then only are you rid forever of the illusive I-ness and all is attained, since you stay thenceforward at one with *That* which is the immutable you. That’s all.”¹⁰⁵

This was the lesson he taught to all of his disciples to go above one’s pseudo ‘*I*’ which is the ego and to learn about one’s true ‘*I*’ real ‘self’ and not to bother about other people’s practices, achievements and faults. Maharshi Ramana did not like to answer merely intellectual or sentimental questions asked to him out of absurd curiosity. For him, information was not knowledge. He felt that all true knowledge stemmed first and last from self-knowledge. If somebody asked him questions about the worlds beyond this one, or life after one’s death, he would only evade them, or ask them in turn,

“Why this itch to know about the other worlds? Do you know even the crucial and basic things about *this* one? If not, why not wait till you do before you start delving into the next? Why do you want to know what happens after death? Do you really know what is happening before your very nose?”¹⁰⁶

Maharshi always taught to his disciples that human language could be more inadequate in communication than the expressions of silence. He often added that “the ‘silence’ of egoless state does not stem from indolence or *tamasic* inertia: it flowers into intense activity.”¹⁰⁷ It was not necessary for Ramana Maharshi to move around the world and preach people how to save themselves from suffering. Like Vivekananda, he too believed that “if you thought a good thought in a cave it would have repercussions in the whole world.”¹⁰⁸ In this context a message printed in his book, *Maharshi’s Gospel*, was read out to Dilip Roy at Maharshi’s bidding:

“That state which transcends speech and thought is *Mounam* (Silence); it is meditation without mental activity. Subjugation of the mind is meditation: deep meditation is eternal speech. Silence is ever speaking; it is a perennial flow of language interrupted by speaking: for words obstruct this mute language.”¹⁰⁹

Dilip Roy asked him if it was true what people said that he was for *jnana* and not for *bhakti*. He answered with a smile: “The old misconception! I have always said that *bhakti* is *jnana-mata* (that is, *bhakti* is the mother of *jnana*)”¹¹⁰

Dilip Roy also wanted to know from Ramana Maharshi if a guide or a guru was necessary to show human beings how, to be one's true self. Ramana Maharshi considered that some people did need a guru. So, he was not against guru-vad. He was surely against ego-vad, the *I-ness* which he felt was the root of all evil. One has to rend this illusion and then one can find oneself "into the lap of the One Eternal Reality: *That*—the one solvent of all our questioning and ailments."¹¹¹

Moreover, Ramana Maharshi possessed a fine sense of humour as well. He often joked freely with the visitors. One day, a Muslim friend of Dilip Roy asked him why God did not answer to his prayer even though he was praying to him only to make him humble, pure and selfless; so that he might serve him appropriately. Ramana Maharshi answered merrily: "Probably because He is afraid that if He did you wouldn't pray anymore."¹¹² Whenever a baby was brought by their parents to him, his eyes twinkled merrily almost claiming kinship with it. Sometimes he made faces at them or comic grimaces and they answered breaking out into peals of laughter. The author liked his beautiful laughter very much.

He was very quick-witted and wise. Once somebody asked him why, if all were the one Shiva, did he accept the pranam of other people? The sage replied instantly: "But why shouldn't I? ...Don't you know, before they prostrate themselves in front of this body, I prostrate myself before the Shiva in each of them?"¹¹³

What might appear to be Maharshi's endless capacity for the endurance of physical pain, was actually a complete freedom of what he called *atman*, from the clutches of body and mind. He never felt what others thought was pain to his body; or sorrow or elation or insult or honour to his mind. After his arrival to Arunachala, he was hardly conscious of his physical existence. During the hours of his *samadhi*, in the initial stages, mischievous boys often threw stones on him. He was frequently moved during his *samadhi* from one place to another by other sannyasies of the temple to protect him, but he was not aware of such shifting. He lived in a cave on Arunachala Hill for eight years, observing complete silence without caring for the weather around. During the last two years of his life, he had to suffer excruciating physical torment because one of his arms had become cancerous. His disease did not yield to any of the treatment. But the sage was quite unconcerned. He sat as a spectator watching the disease waste the body. Once he was to be operated on his arm. He declined the use of any anaesthetic treatment. He stretched out his arm to the doctor. While the doctor was operating, his face remained calm and serene. His disciple, Duraswami, could not bear the sight. So he went away with tears in his eyes. Maharshi, at that time, smiled and told a disciple standing nearby:

“Duraswami is crying because he thinks I am suffering agonies! It is true that my body is suffering. But oh, when will he realize that I am not this body?”¹¹⁴

Dilip Roy, during his two visits to Maharshi’s ashram realized that Maharshi was “not merely a great Guru, come with *His Kindly Light*, to lead us back home but a human friend and divine sponsor rolled into one.”¹¹⁵ He experienced peace and harmony afterwards. He writes: “After just being near him for a little while my relentless gloom melted away like mist before sunrise.”¹¹⁶

(B) Evaluation :

The author found that there were such traits of the sage’s personality which could be called paradoxical. On the one hand, he appeared simple and indifferent towards the whole world. On the other, he was compassionate, caring even for the cow-Lakshmi. His *sadhana* seemed spontaneous to him, but it looked severest to others. He would talk of the importance of silence at one moment. On the next, he would say that silence does not mean mental inertia or passivity. Knowing of one’s real self was important according to Maharshi, but, how one could avoid the importance of the real selves of others was left to be decided by the individual on his own. On one occasion, he would appear an intimate friend, on the other, a *bhagavan*, who had come to uplift the whole humanity from its ignorance and ego. He appeared to be a sage and a saint combined into one, because he talked of Illumination (*jnana*), but he also accepted love (*bhakti*) as the mother of Illumination. He seemed to be concerned for all people around him, but, like Paul Brunton, Dilip Roy also felt that

“...he did not belong to us, the human race, so much as he belonged to nature, to the solitary peak that rose abruptly behind the hermitage, to the rough tract of jungle which sketched away into distant forests and to the impenetrable sky which filled all space.”¹¹⁷

It was not easy to understand Ramana Maharshi’s behaviour with human intellect. Even C. G. Jung admits that “the identification of the self with God” as expressed in Ramana Maharshi’s consciousness and utterances, is so strange that even

“Psychology cannot contribute anything further to it, except the remark that it lies far beyond its scope to propose such a thing. However, it is clear to the Indian that the Self as spiritual Source is not different from God; and in so far as man abides in his Self, he is not only contained in God but is God Himself. Sri Ramana is quite clear in this respect.”¹¹⁸

M. P. Pandit, one of the scholars of Indian scriptures and a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, also observed that Bhagavan Ramana's personality was unique,

“And yet he was supremely impersonal: an Impersonal Person. He functioned apparently in the frame of Time and Space. And yet his was a Consciousness that ever breathed of the Eternal; his was a gaze that scanned the Infinite.”¹¹⁹

M. P. Pandit described Ramana Maharshi as “Mighty Impersonality” and added:

“Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi was no evolutionary being, like any of us, who came to birth under the compulsion of some past karma. He did not belong to that line of manifestation. He was a direct Emanation from the Divine Being in its aspect of conquering Knowledge, Skanda Sanatkumara, as affirmed by the great Tapaswin and Seer, Vasishtha Ganapati Muni. He was a direct Descent of the Divine Consciousness with a special mission: to give the direct route to the Self, Atman, to a humanity that stood bewildered in the profusion of pathways and philosophies staring before it”¹²⁰

Dilip Roy, in the beginning of his essay, ‘Sri Ramana Maharshi’, given in *Six Illuminates of Modern India* does refer to the eloquent dialogue between Narad and Sanatkumara but any how, unlike M. P. Pandit, he does not inform his readers that Ramana Maharshi was an emanation of Sanatkumara.

Marking the inexplicable power of Ramana Maharshi, the first of his Western devotees, F.H. Humphrys wrote in *International Psychic Gazette*: “It is strange what a change it makes in one to have been in his presence!”¹²¹

Like others, Dilip Roy, too, noticed a subtle change occurring in him by his physical closeness to Ramana Maharshi. He wondered:

“...why he moved me to my depths with eyes where no soft light of emotion presided and yet it bathed me when I met his gaze with a peace that I find as unaccountable as it was delectable.”¹²²

Dilip Roy asked in amazement: “Did he not blossom like a flower stemming from earth, yet alien to all that was earthly?”¹²³

The author has added the account of Krishnaprem's mystical impressions of his visit to Maharshi Ramana in *Six Illuminates of Modern India*.¹²⁴ A gist of it is given herewith. Krishnaprem told Roy that when he sat in front of Maharshi, he heard a voice, questioning him over and over again:

“Who are you? who are you?” He tried to avoid the question but it continued. So Krishnaprem answered: “I am Krishna’s servant”. The question instantly got changed: “Who is Krishna?” Krishnaprem formed many answers to that question. But the question was repeatedly asked to him by that voice. Ultimately, he evoked Radharani who revealed the answer to Krishnaprem.

On the next day, when he closed his eyes to meditate, he felt as if a deep peace descended and settled as a block of ice till every cell of his became numb with an exquisite bliss. Then, suddenly, he asked a question to Ramana Maharshi in silence: “And who are you, may I humbly seek ?” When Krishnaprem opened his eyes, he found that Maharshi who was sitting on the dias two seconds ago, was not there, as if he had melted into thin air. So, Krishnaprem closed his eyes again for some time and when he opened them again, he saw that Maharshi was reclining there, tranquil on his seat. Smilingly, he gave a meaningful glance to Krishnaprem.

Dilip Roy asked Krishnaprem if he could be called the one beyond “*Nam-Rup*, ...The Nameless and Formless manifesting Himself through name and form”. Krishnaprem deduced that Maharshi could be called:

“The one beyond all maya. The Star beyond the phantoms, the Last Reality beyond the ephemera, the Silence beyond the songs—you may exploit any simile you fancy. Personally, I look upon it as a sign of his Grace—his giving me the answer in a way only he could have given.”¹²⁵

Dilip Roy wrote four poems on Maharshi’s supraphysical powers. Three of them are published in *Six Illuminates of Modern India* and one of them is given in *Pilgrims of the Stars*. Dilip Roy’s poems are dealt with in detail in Chapter 8 of this book.

On the whole, it can be said that Dilip Roy’s sketch of Ramana Maharshi is one more attempt to draw attention of his readers towards great mystic sages and saints of his time who could remove ignorance and suffering of people and lead them towards illumination and bliss.

His sketch fully agrees with the portrait of the personality that we know from diverse other sources. The sketch does not look coloured with Dilip Roy’s subjective views. His attitude of worship to Maharshi as also to all other great men in whom he finds a special manifestation of Divine splendour, however, is as clear here as it is elsewhere.

6. Saint Gurudayal Mullick

Dilip Roy has delineated the portrait of Saint Gurudayal Mullick in his book, *In Memoriam Saint Gurudayal*, to reveal something of Mullickji’s “true self.”¹²⁶ In another book, *The Flute Calls Still* a few of his intimate letters to Roy and Indira Devi are published.

A brief outline of Saint Gurudayal's life as it emerges from Dilip Roy's book is as under:

Saint Gurudayal (1896-1970) was born in Dera Ismail Khan. He loved to call himself a Pathan. From his very young age, he had deep-rooted faith in God. He wanted to serve the suffering humanity by seeing in them the visage of God. So, at the age of 19, he wrote to Rabindranath Tagore to admit him in Shantiniketan as he was very much fascinated by his ideal of service to Man, that is above all caste, creed, race and colour—*Vishvamanav*—the Universal Man. Rabindranath advised him to finish his study and then to go there. Hence, after completing his graduation, he joined Shantiniketan and worked as an English teacher for 22 years. After the death of Rabindranath Tagore, following the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi, he began to serve Harijans. He frequently stayed for long time in the Harijan Ashram, Ahmedabad. At the same time, on the invitation of his Quaker friends, he visited Europe twice and America once. He was a scholar. He knew many languages, too, like Hindi, Urdu, Pustu, English, Gujarati, Bengali and Persian. He was also interested in the literatures of these languages. He wrote a few books to express his love and devotion to God through songs like *Hounds of the Heart, Divine Dwellers in the Desert*. He wrote a Gujarati book, *Prabhu Kripakiran* on Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. He also authored an Urdu book, *Dilki Bat*. Whenever he visited Bombay, he stayed generally at Dr. Setalvad's house or with his niece on Mount Pleasant Road. In 1969, when he was in Bombay, the Harijans at Ahmedabad Ashram appealed to him to go to their help. So he went there. Later on the riots broke out. He was very much pained by their occurrence. He fell terribly ill. He returned to Bombay. Later on it was declared that he was suffering from the cancer of throat His loyal friends nursed him devotedly till his last moments. He did not take any medicine. He knew on April 12, 1970, that he would pass on to the beyond on April 14, 1970.

Dilip Roy, as soon as he met Saint Gurudayal, for the first time in 1947 was attracted by his "saintly" personality. He could see at that time that outwardly Gurudayal was a reserved man. He always endeavoured to express himself more through his deeds than through his speech. He was very humble, modest and refined person. He was quietly working for many philanthropic institutions. Moreover, he was an "*akinchan*, that is, a destitute who depends utterly on the Divine."¹²⁷ Though he was a great scholar and a humanist, Roy found at once that he was an embodiment of humility. Moreover, a few of very impressive traits of Mullickji's personality impressed Dilip Roy immensely.

Gurudayaji had deep-rooted faith in the reality of God. All of his actions exhibited his love of God. He always aspired to live only for Him and His creations. All through his life, he strove to see "the One in all and all in the One."¹²⁸

He worshipped God as an emanation of Truth, Beauty and Love. But like Sufis, he always preferred to worship God as love because he knew that love was always followed by Truth and Beauty. According to Sufism, Love is the essence of the Divine. The Sufis repudiated all formalism, ritualism, and book-learning. Singing of the greatness of love above all, Gurudayaji wrote in one of his songs :

“Love is divinity

And, everlastingly,

Makes the galaxies in their orbits run. Love fashions fire and makes the angels

sing in unison.

A mystic sword that cuts the chains, Forged by the ignorant self, and on

earth reigns. Lastly, Love is a pillar on which rests the universe.

And the kingdom of the stars.”¹²⁹

Dilip Roy speaks of two of Saint Gurudayaji’s idols, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Appreciating their achievement, the Saint said in one of his lectures :

“Man lives truly by love. Gandhiji embodied and expressed *Love of Truth* manifested in action while Rabindranath embodied and expressed *Truth of Love* as revealed in beauty.”¹³⁰

Gurudayaji realized that after achieving the higher plateaus of consciousness, the din of the world recedes into background and a new universe of harmony and rhythm of melodious songs is revealed to the Lovers of God. Talking of Gurudayaji’s ardent aspiration, Dilip Roy notes:

‘The master desire and dominant aspiration of Saint Gurudayal’s radiant personality was to be coloured in *His* colour—the only colour which never fades and which, acting as a magic leaven, transforms life’s grey deserts into a flowering fulfilment”¹³¹

His ardent aspiration was fulfilled and he had rare experiences of His gracious presence. Everybody around him knew that he was a mystic. He never liked to speak of his mystical experiences which were above the understanding of human mind. He did not leave any autobiographical record of his life, too. But he spoke of three of his early experiences of the indubitable reality of the Supreme in his book *Hound of the Heart* (1948).

During one of such experiences, at the age of twenty seven, he, in a secluded spot, suddenly

“ ...‘saw’ a Being, whose stature stretched from the sod to the sky. He looked like a veritable pillar of light, and from Him radiated forth a perfume, the strength and the sweetness of which were surcharged with the electricity of ecstasy. The vision lasted just for the twinkling of an eye.”¹³²

After that vision, he burst forth into a song which, for the first time, was complete with text and tune of his heart and lips. Forgetting the world around him, he sang at that time in tears of blissful pain for many hours. When he stopped singing at midnight, the whole of his body was full of joy. The impact of this experience lasted for a long time. He narrates:

“The benediction of the Presence I had seen, however, sustained me through a number of bereavements, the loss by death of a very dear friend, the dwindling of the family’s limited financial resources and other similar deprivations which followed in quick succession. I had all along a very strong feeling that the pool of my personality had opened itself out to an inlet and an influx from the Ocean of the Oversoul.”¹³³

Dilip Roy has quoted many songs from Gurudayalji’s *Hound of the Heart* and *Divine Dwellers in the Desert* in which such mystical experiences are woven. For him, as he himself says: “The song is merely the text, nor is the song everything. *It is the singing which is all*, that is why the stars sing every night.”¹³⁴ Roy has also taken into account a few miraculous incidents which Gurudayalji witnessed in own life.

This apart, Saint Gurudayal gave much importance to joy and laughter in life. For him,

“...laughter is the best of tonics, because it lightens the burden of the so-called woebegone existence of man, on the one hand, and lights up the sorrow-darkened spirit, on the other. Laughter is the sunlight of the spirit.”¹³⁵

(B) Evaluation :

Here, Dilip Roy has given the biographical sketch of a saintly person in a ‘hagiographical’, manner.

The author speaks of three of mystical experiences of Saint Gurudayal’s life. They can be called his glimpses of the Higher Reality, which in their turn, brought joy, peace, happiness and a kind of intoxication for him. In his later life, it is possible that Gurudayalji might have other experiences too. But he had left no record of them because it is generally believed that such experiences are to be kept secret.

The similarities between the author and the subject are obvious. Both of them had faith in the reality of God. They worshipped God through the path of Love, that is *bhaktimarg*. Both of them had emotional attitude to the world. They knew that laughter was essential to human life. They gave much importance to actual seeing of the presence of God in all human beings. So, their actions were devoted to the service of humanity in one way or the other.

They differed from each other in a few respects. For many years of his life, Gurudayaiji was a teacher, while Dilip Roy was one of the leading musicians of India. The former did not accept anybody as his guru or disciple, while the latter accepted Sri Aurobindo as his guru and Indira Devi as his disciple. Gurudayaiji was a reserved person. On the other hand, Dilip Roy liked to be social. The saint did not like to speak much about his spiritual experiences. Dilip Roy, on the contrary, talked of such experiences freely, thinking that other people might get inspiration from such utterances.

On the whole, it can be said that the author was delighted to find in Gurudayaiji one more fellow-pilgrim like Krishanaprem, Ramdas etc. What mattered the most in their relationship, according to Roy, was

“...the spiritual intimacy, love’s give-and-take and the call of the Lord’s mystic flute to which we had both responded that cemented our friendship and ripened into a spiritual communion.”¹³⁶

7. Swami Ramdas

Dilip Roy had the opportunity to develop close relationship with another contemporary saint, Swami Ramdas. Hence, he drew his brief sketch stressing the prominent peculiarities of his temperament.

Swami Ramdas as the name suggests, called himself a servant of Ram (by Ram he meant Krishna). In his young age, his father gave him a mantra which Ramdas repeated constantly. When he grew up, following his inner call, he decided to wander all through India, depending only on God—Ram—for his sustenance. So, he renounced his worldly life and moved like a beggar from Kashmir to Cape Comorin. All his experiences and trials are recorded in his autobiographical books, particularly, *In the Vision of God* and *In Quest of God*. Some of his other well-known works are: *At the Feet of God*, *Krishnabai* and *Gita Sandesh*. His books are also translated in other languages like Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Kanarese etc. Ramdas refers to himself in the third person singular in all of his writings. In the later stage of his *sadhana*, he lived in a cave situated on Arunachala Hill. Then, he accepted Krishnabai as his disciple. He established an ashram—Anandashrama—near Manglore in South India and guided many spiritual seekers like the author himself.

(A) Portrait:

The author remained in intimate contact with Swami Ramdas after the physical demise of his Gurudev, Sri Aurobindo. He grew fond of him and derived inspiration and illumination from his company. In *Pilgrims of the Stars* and *The Flute Calls Still* Dilip Roy has chronicled the details of his precious relationship with him.

Swami Ramdas, as Dilip Roy narrated with appreciation, was one of those few saints of his time who had revealed most about himself and his *sadhana* in his talks as well as his writings. He did not write to impress others but to reveal his vision of Truth. He always had faith in the existence of God. He declared boldly to people that he had, once, the realization of God which changed the entire course of his life. He had attained that realization after a very long spell of arduous self-discipline and austerities.

When Swami Ramdas went to Poona and stayed with Dilip Roy for three days, Roy asked him to describe that incident of his final Realization. Very lovingly, he told Roy how, when he was staying in a cave of Arunachala Hill, he went to Bhagwan Ramana Maharshi to seek his blessings for the fulfilment of his goal of God-realization. By merely looking compassionately at him, Maharshi blessed him. So, he returned to his cave and began repeating the Name of Ram. Suddenly, one night, he saw the vision of Lord Ram, his Murlidhara who appeared before Him and danced maddeningly for a long time. Ramdas claimed that he had seen Him with open eyes. But he was not satisfied with this temporary vision of God. because after such a vision, again, Ramdas would have to live in his earlier darkness. Dilip Roy quotes Ramdas's own words:

"...Ramdas yearned only to see Ram always in everything, nothing less would satisfy Ramdas.... And it came one morning apocalyptically—when lo, the entire landscape changed: All was Ram, nothing but Ram—wherever Ramdas looked! Everything was ensouled by Ram—vivid, marvelous, rapturous—the trees, the shrubs, the ants, the cows, the cats, the dogs—even inanimate things pulsated with the throbbing Presence of the one Ram! And Ramdas danced in joy, like a boy who when given a lovely present can't help breaking out into a dance. And so it was with Ramdas: he danced for joy and rushed at a tree which he embraced because it was not a tree but Ram Himself ! A man was passing by. Ramdas ran toward him and embraced him, calling out 'Ram, O RAM!' The man got scared and bolted. But Ramdas gave him chase and dragged him back to his cave. The man noted that Ramdas had not a tooth in his head and so felt a little reassured:at least the 'looney' would not be able to bite him !"¹³⁷

After that realization, bliss and joy became permanent in his life. Ramdas modified:

“In this experience you can never be cut off from the consciousness of being one with the One who has become all, in which you feel you are one with all because you have perceived that all is He, the One-without-a-Second.”¹³⁸

Such a man of God-realization, Dilip Roy witnessed, was very simple, humble and childlike. In fact, he called himself a child of Ram and talked and lived like a child. He loved children very much and played with them as one of them. Showing his bare gums with not a tooth in his head, Ramdas, laughingly, told Dilip Roy: “I was born a baby—without a single tooth, and look! ...Ram has so ordained that I simply had to revert to my babyhood again”¹³⁹

Moreover, his unpretentiousness was striking to anybody. During Dilip Roy’s stay in his ashram, they discussed many kinds of doubts and questions which were afflicting the author at that time and Ramdas helped him much by narrating unreservedly how similar doubts had arisen in his mind and how they were solved by Ram himself. He talked about his realization of God, and about his disciple, Krishna Bai, who had also attained self-realization through Ram’s grace. He told the author about many miracles which he had witnessed. He delighted the author by telling him different amusing anecdotes of deep spiritual import. He also spoke of his disappointments especially with regard to the ashram he had established. But he never criticized anybody who held different views from his. Commending Ramdas, Roy notes that he was

“...such a pure and humble soul whose every gesture exuded spontaneous goodwill and friendliness, who refused to be offended and, to crown all, who hymned his great Caretaker even on those occasions when he might well have complained of having been let down.”¹⁴⁰

With warmth of heart he tried to remove the doubts of Dilip Roy. Ramdas assured him that any one who aspires can have vision of Krishna if he becomes God-mad, Krishna-intoxicated and loves him not among other things but above all things. He advised:

“Let Him be your one goal—first and last—and let everything else be secondary..... If your *vyakulata* [restless longing] to meet Him takes precedence over all other desires, you can be sure He will be waiting for you there around the corner”¹⁴¹

But the aspirant must not be satisfied with the mere vision of Krishna, because after the temporary vision of Krishna, the person falls back to ignorance again. The aspirant must insist on seeing Him in all and all in Him so as to be

delivered permanently from downpulls and sorrows of the ego.

From his own instance, he told Dilip Roy that the Grace of Ram cannot be described but it can be experienced with one's whole being. He was convinced that if the aspirant appeals to him to teach him to love him, all will be revealed to him. He suggested that the aspirant must trust him absolutely and then he will take him in hand and mould him to his will. He will draw him under the wings of his love if he seeks refuge in him alone. But the person has to tread the whole way, the long steep ascent on his own, with all the power and tenacity of his own aspiration. The guru can stimulate the process, but the flame of the individual's aspiration has to be fanned ceaselessly by his own effort and vigilance.

He firmly asserted that one can understand very little with the mind. When one goes above the mind, one can understand the grace of God. He described one incident to Dilip Roy which happened during the initial stage of his *sadhana*. One of Ramdas's intellectual friends had many questions in his mind to which he could not find convincing answers. So, he went to Ramdas. But Ramdas did not know how to answer the mental queries of anybody. So, he avoided him at that time. Then he appealed to his one extractor, Ram, who, at night, formulated some questions and answered them point by point through Ramdas's own voice. He kept the record of those questions and answers and showed it to his friend the next morning. His friend exclaimed: "You take my breath away! For these were just the questions I came to put to you myself!"¹⁴² Ramdas's faith in Ram became deep-rooted and he began to accept all the incidents of life, pleasant as well as unpleasant, happening to him as the Grace of God.

Once he stayed in Central India as a Raja's honoured guest. In the royal palace, Ramdas received everybody, the rich and the poor with the same spontaneous welcome. After a few days, he wanted to proceed on his journey. The Raja offered to reserve a saloon for him in the train. But Ramdas wanted to travel on a third-class compartment. So they had to buy an ordinary ticket for him.

When the train arrived, it was crowded. There were Muslim roughnecks in the compartment in which there was room. They did not want a Hindu sadhu among them. But the Royal guards compelled them to allow Ramdas to enter into it. Ramdas went inside, relying on his protector' Ram. As the train moved, more passengers entered that compartment, till Ramdas had to sit on the dusty floor. Those rowdies had taken him for a beggar and a coward, so they laughed at him and also kicked his shins in contempt. At that time, tears rolled down from Ramdas's eyes and in his ecstasy he spoke to himself:

"O Ram, your *lila* [play] is indeed inscrutable ! Last night Ramdas was fawned upon by royalty and today he is kicked by all and sundry ! How you love to play with your devotees !"¹⁴³

Ramdas, as Dilip Roy testifies, was “an indefatigable correspondent”.¹⁴⁴ By writing loving and beautiful letters to Dilip Roy, he helped him on his difficult path. He wrote tirelessly to people around the world to answer their queries and follow their aspiration, constantly. Collection of such letters, too, are brought out by the authorities of Anandashrama.

Such a saint of simplicity, faith and illumination blessed Dilip Roy, who began to call him Papa Ramdas like his devotees. The article published in *Pilgrims of the Stars* is entitled: ‘Papa Ramdas’. Once Ramdas went to Poona and stayed with Dilip Roy in a cottage. He met endless devotees in the mornings and evenings. Dilip Roy recollects:

“...during their brief stay with us, each day was replete with thrills, especially during the eager talks of the devotees with dear Papaji: the questions asked, the answers given the clarifications sought, the implications of the statements brought out through his illuminating smiles, and last though not least, challenges flung to be met by his ready repartees which evoked ripples of laughter intermittently.”¹⁴⁵

When Swami Ramdas left Poona, Dilip Roy was reminded of “a famous saying of Acharya Shankar: *Asya jivanmuktasya dehadharanam lokasyopakarakatham*’ [*The liberated soul lives only to serve others.*]”¹⁴⁶

Swami Ramdas’s impact on Dilip Roy was everlasting. He frequently turned to Swamiji in the moments of his doubts and despair. He was very much benefitted by Ramdas’s beautiful thoughts. His love, Dilip Roy felt, came to him as a sign of Lord’s grace. In Dilip Roy’s Bengali novel, *Aghatan Ajo Ghate* and its English translation *Miracles Do Still Happen* there is one character of a saint, Ananda Giri. Many people had written Dilip Roy hundreds of letters asking him questions about the identity of that saint. After Swami Ramdas’s death, Dilip Roy declared: “...it was Sri Ramdas, who, by and large, had inspired the central Saint.. I can only say that I feel blessed that he had loved and blessed us.”¹⁴⁷

(B) Evaluation :

Here, the reader can have another hagiographical picture of a truthful and inspiring saint from whom the author received love and guidance. The portrayal is very brief. Hence, all the traits of a fully-developed personality are not available.

Swami Ramdas and Dilip Roy appear similar to some extent. They were the followers of Truth and aspirants of God-realisation. Both of them had their moments of doubts and difficulties. They were childlike in their manners and were lovers of laughter. They travelled profusely and contacted many people. In fact, both of them loved to meet many people to share their spiritual experiences

with them. They established their ashrams in the Southern part of India. Both of them had their daughter-disciples, who, with their spiritual capacities, helped them on the path of Truth.

But Dilip Roy, it seems, had always to seek support from others, because of his diffidence and doubting intellect. He did not have the experience of god-realization like Swami Ramdas. He aspired all through his life to see Krishna face-to-face, but he could not. So he was very unhappy. Ramdas frequently tried to soothe him. Dilip Roy held him in high esteem because his loving guidance and solace were very useful to him.

8. Mahayogi Anirvan

Dilip Roy has sketched in brief the unique achievement of Mahayogi Anirvan who was one of the most prominent saints of Bengal of his time.

Mahayogi Anirvan (1896-1978) was a revered scholar, philosopher and spiritual seeker. He wrote commentaries on the *Vedas*, *Upanishadas*, *Tantras* and *Gita* in Bengali. He had accepted in his adolescence Swami Nigamananda as his guru. For years he lived in his ashram in Assam. He served his Guru with complete sincerity and loyalty. But, afterwards, he decided that he must stand on his own away from his Guru as he had heard the call to follow his own light. He began to live as a recluse in his solitary retreat in the Himalayas. He accepted his niece, Narayani Devi, as his spiritual colleague. His knowledge, scholarship and spiritual discipline attracted many seekers of Truth. They were very much enlightened by his affectionate letters and wise discourses. Anirvan's name was Nirvanananda. When he retired to the Himalayas, he changed his name from Nirvanananda into Anirvan. He had to suffer a lot physically to bring Lord's bliss on the earth. He passed the last seven years of his life in bed. But the last moments, as it is described, were very peaceful.

Roy, after the passing away of his gurudev, Sri Aurobindo in 1950 and his friend, Krishnaprem in 1965, turned to Anirvan to solve his queries and was very much impressed by Anirvan's illumined answers. He wrote about Anirvan in Bengali in his book, *Smriticharane Anirvan*. Then, a few of his friends, asked Roy to write about him in English, too. Roy consented to do so because he wanted that Anirvan's greatness should be appreciated by non-Bengali readers also. Hence, in *Six Illuminates of Modern India*, he published an English article about him. Here the author informs his readers that Anirvan, being a spiritual seeker, lived his life within. So there was nothing remarkable in his life from the historical point of view. Hence, Roy confines himself to delineating those inner qualities of Anirvan, which emerge out from his discourses, commentaries and letters.

Dilip Roy discovers from his writings that the ultimate aim of Anirvan's life is not to get any miraculous powers by his daily askesis, but to realize the

vision of the call, “*Vasudevam sarvam*”, that is, “All is God, all is Vasudev,” or “Vasudev pervades all.”¹⁴⁸ For this purpose

“...you have to manifest in your life the Gita’s knowledge as well as the Bhagavat’s Love—and all this through karma in life’s Kurukshetra (battlefield). In other words, you must take to Karma founded on Knowledge and Love, which may be assimilated to realising the Divine in daylight... You are His celestial manifestation—as Arjun in Kurukshetra, and Gopi in Brindaban.”¹⁴⁹

It seems that Anirvan stressed the importance of all the three paths of action, knowledge and love in the realization of God. All true inner progress, Anirvan assumes, is prompted by *atmadeep* (soul’s flame) which once lit, cannot be put out. This flame sustains the individual through all obstacles and helps him progress towards Truth. He attempted to realise in his life the gospel of *karma* taught by Sri Krishna to Arjun in the Gita (11/40). Sri Krishna assured Arjun that:

In the Yoga of action nothing you undertake
Can ever be in vain, nor obstacles prevail.
For even an iota of righteousness
Friend, shall deliver you from cosmic fear.¹⁵⁰

Anirvan saw people around him working tirelessly. He worked with the same zeal at his Guru’s monastery. He did not work to get God-realization or self-realization, but as he worked ceaselessly, selflessly, and with love, he affirms, he got “self-realisation, God-realisation and experiences of *shakti*.” He adds:

‘There is one ‘Narayan’ (God) and innumerable ‘Naras’ (human beings). God is beyond time, birth and death. Everyone accepts this truth according to his or her capacity. This is the play and counterplay of the many.’¹⁵¹

Anirvan has faith that our every single impulse derives from Him who pervades everything and everywhere for ever. Hence, all of our actions, he informs Roy, should be done as the duty and worship to Lord to attain perfection. The doer should surrender completely to Lord with the prayer that He should mould him as He wills.

He preaches this from his own practice. When he was staying in his guru’s ashram, he worked for twenty one hours daily like a veritable peasant. While working, he heard a mystic song in his heart: “It is your work, my Lord, give that I may do it to perfection.”¹⁵² He served Him as a loving wife serves her husband. Then Anirvan experienced that He caressed his eyes with light, his heart became full and in every vein currents of power flowed continuously. He unveiled His own mystery to Anirvan. Anirvan, very tenderly suggests to Roy:

“Don’t ask anything from Him—liberation, knowledge, austerity in yoga, plenitude, miracle power—no, none of these, my friend. Only tell Him: ‘I want to love you.’”¹⁵³

Whether one wins Him by love or knowledge, so long as one lives sundered from Him, one has to stay in pain, unappeased, because of the power of illusion (*Maya*). Quoting from various scriptures, Anirvan advises Dilip Roy, not to work as a doer or non-doer, but as His own instrument, to take birth every time with Krishna as His orderly. So, Anirvan seems to be a traveller on both paths also, as radiant in knowledge as heartwarming in love.

He asserts that the One in whom we all reside, directs our intelligence (*dhi*). So, when our intelligence becomes spontaneous, it has communion with Him and Man both. ‘To know the Whole means, in the last analysis, not knowing myself alone but this our earth-life as well.’¹⁵⁴

According to Anirvan, if the light is lit in human heart, it will definitely repeal the darkness of ignorance and the aspirant will find himself united with the whole universe. He exhorts us: “Let us all, aligned with the sun’s lustre, manifest ourselves, spread ourselves generously all round, which manifestation is, surely, the perfect Revelation.”¹⁵⁵ If it is done, there will not be any discord and He, the One-in-all will draw us all to tread the highway of truth in his own unpredictable manner. One has the right to love other human beings, but not to judge them.

Anirvan has trust in the utter selfless Love for God and his creatures. He likes Mira’s *bhajans* very much because they contain in them an outflowing of true love. The following lines were very much appreciated by him:

“*Premi na magen mukati shakati, magen aan na man,
Bhoga na magen, moksha na magen, magen na nirvan.*”

That is,

“Power nor liberation, glory nor fame
Is sought by the blessed who love and long to be His:
They seek not the senses’ joy, nor would fain claim
Even nirvan’s eternal and flawless bliss.”¹⁵⁶

But at the same time he warns his disciples against that distorted form of *bhaki* which leads to pseudo emotion. He remarks:

“In our country, *dukhavad* and *bhaktivad* have both suffered distortion and so been degraded. I am only against this distortion, first and last. Otherwise I do hold that pure *bhakti* is the brightest jewel of the soul and, personally, I regard the illuminate-devotee (*jnani-bhakta*) as the highest ideal in yoga.”¹⁵⁷

For Anirvan, a *sadguru* never wishes that his disciples should bow down to him and flatter him. But it is human nature to adore and worship Form, so in all yoga, the disciples surrender themselves to the Guru. From his study of various scriptures, Anirvan came to know that the Guru, in the Vedic Age, was not considered an *Avatar* (incarnation). So, at that time, there was a difference in the worship of the Divine and that of the human Guru. At that time, the Guru was not considered as a Saviour. He only ratified the disciple's own experiences and showed him the sure way to mystic knowledge. But during the time of Vedanta, the Guruvad was accepted to promote self-realization. Anirvan writes:

“Everybody can say: ‘God is the Guru’—but only one in a million can claim that his Guru is God. Nevertheless those people who have no right to say it make a hullabaloo turning our poor Lord Shiva into a monkey.”¹⁵⁸

Anirvan was highly influenced by Sri Ramkrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. He frequently quotes from their writings in his personal as well as impersonal letters. For example, in one of his letters, he declares that the highest cult is that of *Shakti* (life-energy). In the modern age, this cult was begun by Vivekananda and then it was blossomed in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of ‘Integral Yoga’, when he said that the aspirants, have to transfigure the Inconscient into the Superconscient. Anirvan holds Sri Aurobindo in high esteem because in his philosophy Anirvan found the synthesis of all—Action, Knowledge and Love. Sri Aurobindo came, he thinks, to give that same Sanatan message of our Upanishads which we had forgotten. According to Sri Aurobindo *jivanmukti* (liberation) can be achieved both within and without—that is, in one's inner consciousness as well as outer movements. Anirvan considers himself as a *baul* of Bengal and calls his yoga as *Sahaj* (simple) yoga. His yoga is not new, nor it is different from Integral yoga as it comes directly from the glorious spiritual tradition of India. That is why, he does not feel any urge to patent his outlook. His yoga, like other yogas, is meant for blossoming of the one unique thousand petalled lotus. For Anirvan, the *bauls* are ‘incomparable mystics’. The *bauls*, he writes in one of his letters, do not belong to any sect. Whosoever proceeds on that path, becomes a *Sahaj* i.e. a *baul*. One can find Vedic *bauls* in the *Atharva Veda*. There are Buddhist, Jaina, Shakta, Shaiva, Vaishnava and yogi *bauls* as well. So *bauls* are nonpareils, their religion is the universal religion of the world.

Anirvan has abundantly written about the place and status of woman in spiritual life. According to the prevalent Indian notion, woman cannot be the equal companion of man in spiritual search. But Anirvan firmly asks women disciples and admirers to claim the status of equality with men in the arena of spirit also. He has paid high tributes to the great Vedic yoginis like Gargi and to the Western women saints like Nivedita or Modern Indian female saints like

Saradmoni Devi. Like the Tantric illuminates, he, too, believes that “women can not only win to the peak realisation in yoga, but be real Shaktis (religious helpmates) of saints and sages as well.”¹⁵⁹ Anirvan, being proficient in the *Tantra*, vindicates it very powerfully in his discourses. The message of the *Tantra*, Anirvan surmises, is to win *jivanmukti* (liberation), here and now, in the earth life. He finds its philosophy in Shaiv-darshana as well as Vedanta. He agrees that if the followers of the *Tantra* are likely to indulge in immorality, then the illuminates of any other path may similarly get debased. Very emphatically, he says:

“... you are urged not to stave off women to conquer lust but to seek her help and cooperation to be purged of all cravings of the flesh. In India many a dauntless aspirant has striven to achieve this difficult feat and was singularly successful—way back from the Vedic age.

“Need I add that in our country people have made such an unnecessary hullabaloo about this lead of the Tantra that they have made confusion worse confounded. But then the edifice of human civilization stands on the union of man and woman. So unless we divinize this relation how can the Divine Man put in an appearance?”¹⁶⁰

It is said that when Anirvan was seven or eight years old, he saw the vision of a girl which changed the course of his life. He was walking down on a village road one day. At that time, he suddenly saw a girl walking in front of him. She was not one among those he knew and yet not wholly unknown. He was surprised. The girl turned back slightly, and alluringly smiled. Then she began walking. The boy followed him. After a while, the girl disappeared into thin air, leaving behind her the flash of an ineffable beauty and a maddening call. The boy gave his entire life in search of that impossible she. Anirvan saw her, his life’s passion, in different forms. He called her by many names like “Haimavati, Champa, Nanda, Uma, Sivasimantini, Kanyakumari, Sudakshina, Sagarika, Shatarupa, Rajrajeshwari, Shorhasi, ...Kaveri, Kajari..., Parvati...”¹⁶¹ He found her a mystery Indescribable, an Immanent that is in the body and yet not in the body. Anirvan’s description of her is similar to the one given in *Devisukta* (10.125) of *avasana, anagna Vak*. As he was elected by the *WordiVak*) whenever he was explaining the Vedas, his disciples could see that a single phrase of his was piercing through the luminous realms. In one of his letters he wrote:

“Champa is indeed the Queen of my world (*Bhuvaneshwari*). With what nectar she overflows this receptacle during these autumnal years, I cannot explain that to any one. My Vedic exegesis continues, it has a thrill of its own hard to convey. And

she is the source of the ecstasy. If she did not reveal herself to me, it would not have been possible for me to know the secret of Vedas. The vision in which Matter becomes Spirit, in the dim, hoary past to the ancient seers had come the form and the revelation of the Word. That form I have seen. And ever since my life's rhythm has vibrated to that vision. A tuft of her loosened chignon touches me and a fountain outwells from the heart."¹⁶²

Anirvan on his road to Truth, had to pass through endless ordeals of pain, doubts, self-conflicts etc. But he never lost his faith in God and he turned defeats into victories. He knew that this path of spirituality was not easy to pursue for his disciples as well. Hence, he wrote to them inspiring and, at times, autobiographical letters so that they could learn from his own practice and experiences. Very tenderly, he wrote to his disciple:

“Don't give in to self-pity. In our soul is everything: courage, strength, intelligence, knowledge—all is there. Only by day to day *tapasya*, (askesis) can one break finally into the golden consciousness of an ineffable glory—of a dream come true ... Do not pay heed to sceptical critics. How can men who walk on two legs or crawl on all fours conceive of the rapturous fulfilment of those who, like birds, unfurl their wings to soar to the zenith?”¹⁶³

Anirvan never approves of the banning of the raptures and thrills of human life. He exhorts his followers to listen to Krishna's Flame-Flute because his music of love only can restore to human beings to their lost bliss. At the same time, he teaches them to detach themselves from Illusion (*Maya*).

Like others, Dilip Roy, too, learnt many things from the encouraging letters he received from Anirvan. Anirvan often proved to be “a lighthouse in an ocean of darkling sighs”.¹⁶⁴

The summit of Anirvan's genius, Roy deduces, is revealed at its best through his marvellous delineations of spiritual experiences. When the author read Anirvan's letters and discourses, he was quite overjoyed by the beauty of his soul's raptures and philosophical reflections and also his unflinching aspiration for the gleaming Goal of achieving God-realization.

Roy dedicated him his novel, *Aghataner Shobhajatra (A Procession of Miracles)*. Anirvan, like many other intellectuals of his time, did not reject those miracles described in the book as figments of the human imagination. Such supraphysical miracles, Anirvan feels, “stem from “*Shunyam*”—the Void he calls *nirupadhi*, (i.e. without any attribute of Name and Form.)”¹⁶⁵ In the age of

reason and science, the sharing of spiritual and miraculous experiences by Dilip Roy was not appreciated by many. But Anirvan, with his discrimination power, accepted Dilip Roy's evidence in the favour of miracles as authentic.

Roy has quoted a few of Anirvan's beautiful letters printed in *Pravachan*, *Snehasis* and *Patralekha*. They are the best examples of his style and the clarity of his mental analyses. Roy was always attracted by the felicity of Anirvan's Bengali diction along with a rare power of looking beyond the surface. He utilised this power freely to see into the heart of Reality.

Anirvan has written many books on the vision of the *Vedas* and the *Gita* in his inimitable vein. His *Vedamimansa* has been praised for his Vedic wisdom. His last book, *Gitanuvachan* consists of his message on the *Gita* with marvellous beauty. He attained his peak in prose in this book.

(B) Evaluation :

This sketch is again hagiographical in kind as many saintly qualities of the subject are mirrored in it. Anirvan calls himself a *baul*, or a *Sahaj* mystic and follows his practice in his own spontaneous and peculiar manner. Anirvan's declaration that women hold equal status with men in the spiritual life is quite courageous and true to the Vedic age as well as human nature. Anirvan's ideas are original and from this sketch it seems that he always preferred to be true to his nature. When he saw that it was necessary for him to part company with his Guru, to follow the lead of his inner voice, very humbly he did so and changed his name to mark the transformation. He was *sahaj* in the real sense of the term. He guided his admirers and followers from his own personal practice and experiences. So there is no difference between his preachings and practice. In fact, he did not preach, he simply suggested. There was no room for hypocrisy in him. His personality was transparent. There was no difference between his inner and outward existence.

Anirvan is criticized frequently for quoting excessively from scriptures to support his argument. But Roy opines that he cannot be called a religious diehard. It is true that he had deep reverence for scriptures but, at the same time, he was aware of the fact that the laws and canons laid down by the religious leaders need to be changed according to the changing requirements of people. As a thinker one must admit, he exhibits Western critical spirit rare among Indians, when he very correctly observes :

“For years I have felt a pain, which I have expressed many a time, that there is a void in the medium zones of India's consciousness. Our ideal has been to take a heroic leap from here to high heaven, postulating that there is only one truth: that I am a human being and the Lord is the Divine in the Empyrean,

in between there is no such thing as society, State or the world. The only thing is the liberation of the soul. What is the use of trying to liberate society or the country, since this liberation is not eternal ? Only the soul and the Divine are free for ever. Living in this earthly kingdom of illusion who can hope for everlasting freedom ? This is the reason why the social consciousness of India has always remained lack-lustre. Pavhari Baba chased the thief who had stolen some of his utensils and, holding on to his feet, said: 'Lord, why are you running away, robbing only half of my things ? Take everything I have.' No doubt this shows the greatness of the saint, and perhaps the thief, too, was a little moved by the saint and may have profited by this forgiveness, but by endorsing the antisocial proclivity of the thief, did not the saint insult the householder's ethics of right and wrong ? It is contended that as Pavhari Baba was a saint and as such outside the pale of society, his right to be supramoral cannot be questioned. In other words, though the Householder's dharma is to wage war against wrong-doing, the saint's dharma is to forgive... But what right has the latter, as a Brahmin, to force the former, as a Kshatriya, to kowtow to the saint's dharma ? Nevertheless, our scriptures brand sonorously the householder's ethics as a spawn of sinful worldliness. I do not approve of such scriptures; neither did Krishna Himself. If He had, He would not have mocked at Arjun's jeremiad as *klaibyam (cowardice)* stemming from faintheartedness, *hridayadaurbalya.*"¹⁶⁶

Anirvan correctly perceives here that in Indian outlook the saints have to take a leap from darkness or *Tamas* to the light or *Sattva*, the middle level of Twilight or *Rajas* does not exist. This is where most people abide and they need right kind of social ethics which is not the same as the moral code of a *sannyasi* or the extremist morality of 'the Sermon on the Mount'. Here the wrong doers have to be punished and law has to be strictly enforced. But, there is still some confusion in Anirvan's argument. Pavhari Baba is a *sannyasi* and should be welcomed to his extremist ethics of forgiveness. But when did he say that the state should have no law codes and that the criminals should not be brought to books ? Gandhiji is the only saint who has committed the mistake of making the code of a behaviour of a *sannyasi*, the universal code of conduct. It is true that medieval saints have ignored social ethics and there is a singular absence of public spirit and communal aspirations among Hindus. But only post-Buddhist books have praised *sannyasi* at the expense of householders. The *Shruti* tradition, the *Upanishadas* and the *Bhagavatgita* do not do so. In fact, all the wise men

and mystics in this tradition are householders, and the middle level of Twilight does not look neglected here as it is in subsequent periods of Indian history.

Here one can notice the points of similarity between Sri Aurobindo and Mahayogi Anirvan. Both of them were eminent spiritual figures from Bengal. Anirvan, being younger than Sri Aurobindo, is naturally influenced by Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. That is why he has paid his heartwarming tribute to Sri Aurobindo. Anirvan visited Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1960. He found no difference between Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and his own practice of *Sahaj* yoga. Like Sri Aurobindo, he, too, had deep faith in the *Tantra*. Their notions of the importance of women on the path of spirituality were similar. Both of them followed the lead of their 'inner voice' and helped their disciples from their own practice. He held Sri Aurobindo in a very high esteem and liked his synthesis of Action, Knowledge and Love very much. Anirvan also had developed that synthesis of the three in his own life.

Roy observes the similarity between Buddha and Anirvan in the expression of their knowledge and achievement. Like Buddha, Anirvan, too, had expressed in words very little of his vast knowledge.

Roy was similar to his subject as far as his interest in spiritual life was concerned. But he was different from Anirvan in his temperament. Anirvan was always confident and stood on his own even without the help of his Guru. He also guided other spiritual seekers. But Roy always needed support. When his Guru left his physical body in 1950, he sought guidance and mental support from Krishnaprem. When Krishnaprem passed away, as Roy himself confesses here, he turned towards Anirvan for solace and guidance. This sketch, in fact, is his tribute to Anirvan's kind support which he got in the moments of his crises. Roy even needed confirmation of Anirvan in the matter of miracles he had recorded to publish in a book form.

Anirvan is a great mystic. But he is somehow not very famous. Except Roy's account of him, it is difficult to find any other piece of writing on him.

9. Sant Gulab Singh

The briefest of all brief sketches written by Dilip Roy, is that of Sant Gulab Singh.

Sant Gulab Singh was a Khalsa Saint from Punjab. He was born in 1872 and was a centenarian in 1974 when Roy met him for the first time. He was deeply spiritual and a highly selfless person. He offered his house as an asylum to the refugees of the partition. But, once, a mob raided it. To elude that mob, his brave wife, Lajwanti, jumped into a well with 106 women and girls. But, even after such a horrible experience of pain, he never lost his faith in man and God.

Afterwards, he lived in just one room as the cherished guest of one of his disciples in Chandigarh. He was an extremely learned saint who dreamt of the realization of universal love and unity.

Dilip Roy happened to meet Sant Gulab Singh on a few occasions. In order to acknowledge his saintly characteristics, Dilip Roy wrote an essay in *Six Illuminates of Modern India*. The book also consists of an Appendix written by Mr. Hoon on Dilip Roy's visit to Sant Gulab Singh.

Sant Gulab Singh, as it is observed by the author, became a great luminary of his time only after passing through plenty of trials and tribulations of life. He was a man with such a strong faith in God that his difficulties got transformed into great spiritual opportunities. He was the victim of the horrible incidents of partition. But his heart never knew ill-will towards anybody. He was very generous temperamentally and had emancipated himself from all religious dogmas and sectarianism.

Here Roy quotes profusely from Mr. Vishwanath Hoon's biography of Sant Gulab Singh, *Evolution of the Soul*. For the first time, the author uses a secondary source on his subject in this manner. He cites here to inform his readers about the large-heartedness of this loving personality.

Mr. Hoon has reported how, once, Sant Gulab Singh, spoke at a gathering of the followers of the Persian Saint Baha'ullah. Santji was familiar with all the qualities of Baha'ullah which made him great. He told the gathering that Baha'ullah dreamt of a world organisation which could be free from all prejudices and sectarian and narrow shibboleths which divided the races, peoples and communities of the world, setting one against the other. Baha'ullah always emphasised the need of truthfulness in conduct and thought because the loyalty to truth could lead human beings to the indubitable experience of the divine. Even 170 years ago, Baha'ullah struck a note of the equality of men with women which was revolutionary in his time. Then, Sant Gulab Singh recited Baha'ullah's moving prayers verbatim which marvelled the listeners very much. A few of them were also astonished to see similarity between Baha'ullah and Guru Nanak.

On one occasion Sant Gulab Singh was persuaded to speak at a big conference of the Sanatanists, who believed in the purity of the ancient Truths from the *Vedas*. According to Santji,

"...The name 'Sanatana Dharma'... had become somewhat a sectarian name, but in its original and pure form it represented those fundamental truths that were given by the Vedas to man ages ago. Sanatana Dharma meant the Eternal Religion, whose foundations were the Srutis— messages which were heard, and the walls were the Smritis— injunctions which were remembered."¹⁶⁷

From his own experience, Sant Gulab Singh learnt that there is but one Infinite, Eternal, Changeless Existence, the All, which is given different names by the followers of various religions and sects.

In 1949 he delivered an enlightening lecture on Christ at a church in Simla on 'The Practice of the Presence of God'. He asserted that if once an individual believed that the Omnipresent God dwelt within each of human beings, he would never go wrong. A monk or a householder needs to depend exclusively on God to safeguard himself against evil, pain and unhappiness. When one realises the presence of the spark Divine in one's own heart, one gets the meaning of one's existence. Otherwise he or she is insignificant. A soul that has realised the self can command all light, all influence, all fate. He cited from Christ's sayings and stressed the importance of simplicity and purity in life. From his wide knowledge, he affirmed authentically:

'The Sermon on the Mount... is the quintessence of the teaching of Jesus Christ. It embodies those imperishable truths that had been enunciated in the Upanishadas and discoursed in the Gita and Guruvani. These are the eternal truths derived from the experience of the soul and expressed in immaculate language.'¹⁶⁸

When he visited Dilip Roy's temple-house, Hari Krishna Mandir in Poona, in January 1979, Roy was impressed by his childlike simplicity. When somebody requested him to give his message to the devotees of 'Hari Krishna Mandir', he replied:

"...when we pray to Him to rain on us His Grace, we must never think that we are superior to others. The more we ascend the more humble we should be—we must indeed be lowly as grass... one must never judge people, nor find fault with others. One must be severe to oneself but tolerant to others."¹⁶⁹

Striking the note on his final favourite ideal, he said:

"So our constant prayer must be: Teach me, Lord, how to love and serve all we meet on the way, with our feet on earth and grow to love earth in our hearts.' We must bring down heaven with our love remembering all the time that we have been sent by Him so that we may transform our earthly home into a peer of paradise. Yes, we must establish heaven here, on earth."¹⁷⁰

(B) Evaluation

Through this sketch, Dilip Roy pays homage both to the saint as well as the sainthood. In the beginning of his article, Roy quotes a few lines from the poem written by the mystic poet, A. E. and also from Aldous Huxley's biography of

Father Brown to indicate the role saints and sages play and they should play by their selfless service to humanity and by presenting their lives as living examples. Father Brown's disloyalty to the mystic call brought about his downfall. Then Huxley studied the experiences of various sages and saints described in hagiography. This study removed his earlier misconception about the mystics and even in the age of materialist philosophy of science, he assumed that

"The attainment of God is the true object of all human effort for which all the other efforts—political, social, literary, intellectual—are only a necessary condition and preparation of the race."¹⁷¹

Roy's direct contact with Sant Gulab Singh lasted for a very short period of time. So, while drawing his portrait, he depends on Mr. Hoon's book frequently. Hence, the reader is likely to get the impression that this portrait is not impressive enough. It lacks the original style of Dilip Roy, and looks like a copy of someone else's sketch of the Sant. A kind of haste can be seen in the narration.

In 'Appendix' to Chapter XI of *Six Illuminates of Modern India* a tribute written by Mr. Hoon to Dilip Roy on his visit to Chandigarh, is published. It delineates how for one week Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi filled the hearts of people present at Sant Gulab Singh's residence with the feelings of devotion and love to God. Mr. Hoon's account is full of superlative epithets for the author as he was extremely grateful to their singing of devotional songs. Mr. Hoon's deep devotion to God, too, is obvious here.

Dilip Roy's article, 'Sant Gulab Singh', published earlier in Bhavan's Journal, is also printed in this book, in which all the details given in the earlier chapter are repeated.

Following points clearly emerge from detailed study of these nine sketches by Dilip Roy:

- ❖ All of them are the outcome of the author's personal contact with the personality portrayed.
- ❖ The author is emotionally attached to all of them. He looks to them for inspiration, guidance and support on his path of spirituality and indicates how he has been helped by them during different phases of his life.
- ❖ Love of spiritual truth is common characteristic of them all and also of the author himself.
- ❖ In his extreme hero-worship, Dilip Roy fails to notice human weaknesses of his spiritual heroes. The reader cannot help feeling that the author unwittingly exaggerates what is good in them and overlooks the qualities that might be bad or just neutral.

- ❖ Like Dilip Roy, Winston S. Churchill in *Great Contemporaries* and Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians* have drawn sketches of their great contemporaries. But they are compact and to the point. Roy lacks their skill and brevity. Superfluity is the characteristic of his writing. He lacks discipline. Churchill wrote in the Preface to *Great Contemporaries*: "In their sequence they may perhaps be the stepping-stones of historical narrative."¹⁷² Dilip Roy's sketches exhibit a current of his contemporary Indian spiritual seeking. But could it form a stepping stone for any systematic narrative ?
- ❖ Dilip Roy's character-sketches are similar to his fuller portraits. They differ only in the measure of space provided and the degree of closeness of contact.

Notes :

1. Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi, *Pilgrims of the Stars* 1973; rpt. (Porthill: Timeless Books, 1985) p. 61.
2. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Among the Great* 4th ed. (Pondicheny: All India Books, 1984) p. 50.
3. *ibid* pp. 1-5.
4. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 62.
5. Roy *Among*, 10.
6. *ibid*. 10.
7. *ibid*. 13.
8. *ibid* 15.
9. *ibid* 16.
10. *ibid* 37
11. *ibid*. 22
12. *ibid*. 22.
13. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 63.
14. *ibid* p. 63.
15. Roy, *Among*, p.27
16. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p.64.
17. *ibid*. p. 65
18. Roy, *Among*, p.x.
19. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, P. 62.
20. Roy, *Among*, p.42.
21. *ibid*.p.9.

22. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p.64.
23. Roy, *Among*, p. 115.
24. *ibid.*,p.116.
25. *ibid.*,p.117.
26. *ibid.*,p.119.
27. *ibid.*,p.121.
28. *ibid.*,p.120.
29. *ibid.*, p. 158.
30. *ibid.*, p. 159.
31. *ibid.*,p.129.
32. *ibid.*, p. 129.
33. *ibid.*,p.117.
34. *ibid.*,p.130.
35. *ibid.*, p. 130.
36. *ibid.*,pp.138-39.
37. *ibid.*,p.132.
38. *ibid.*, p. 132.
39. *ibid.*, p. 147.
40. *ibid.*,p.153.
41. *ibid.*,p.156.
42. *ibid.*,p.138.
43. Dilip KumarRoy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, 2nd ed. (Pondicherry:All India Books, 1984) p.42,
44. *ibid.*,p.43.
45. Roy, *Among*, p.163.
46. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Six Illuminates of Modern India* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1982), pp. 54-55.
47. *ibid.*, p.61.
48. *ibid.*,p.62.
49. *ibid.*,p.62.
50. *ibid.*,p.63.
51. *ibid.* p.64.
52. *ibid.*, p.66.
53. *ibid.* p.66.
54. *ibid.*,p.69.

55. *ibid.*,p.70.
56. Roy, *Among*, p. 75.
57. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p.72.
58. *ibid.*, p. 73.
59. *ibid.*,p.70.
60. *ibid.*,D;76.
61. *ibid.*,p.76.
62. *ibid.*,p.77-78.
63. ***ibid.***, .78-79.
64. *ibid.*,p.49.
65. *ibid.*,p.5L
66. *ibid.*,p.52.
67. *ibid.*,p.50.
68. *ibid.*,p.52.
69. *ibid.*, p. 56.
70. Roy, *Among*, p.59.
71. *ibid.*, p. 60.
72. *ibid.*, p. 63.
73. *ibid.*, p. 64.
74. *ibid.*, p. 65.
75. *ibid.*, p. 66.
76. *ibid.*, p. 81.
77. *ibid.*, p. 73.
78. *ibid.*, p. 71.
79. *ibid.*,p.69.
80. *ibid.*, p. 88.
81. *ibid.*, p. 96.
82. *ibid.*, p. 98.
83. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p.109.
84. Roy, *Among*, p.88.
85. *ibid.*. p. 91.
86. *ibid.*, pp. 92-93.
87. *ibid.*, p. 95.
88. *ibid.*,p.III.
89. *ibid.*, p. 107.

90. *ibid.*, p. 109.
91. *ibid.*, p. 110.
92. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p. 105.
93. Roy, *Among*, pp. 67-68.
94. *ibid.*, p.75. (Bracket mine)
95. Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi* (1924; rpt. New Delhi: Government of India press. 1969), p.77.
96. *ibid.*, pp. 86-87,
97. *ibid.*, pp. 88-89. (Bracket mine)
98. Roy, *Among*, p.100.
99. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 167.
100. *ibid.*,p.169.
101. *ibid.*,p.169.
102. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p.90.
103. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 174.
104. *ibid.*,p.174.
105. *ibid.*,p.175.
106. *ibid.*,p.172.
107. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p.86.
108. *ibid.*,p.87.
109. *ibid.*,p.87.
110. *ibid.*,p.95.
111. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p.175.
112. *ibid.*. p. 172.
113. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p.90.
114. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 178.
115. Roy, *Six Illuminates* , p.95.
116. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 176.
117. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p.86.
118. C. G. Jung, 'Sri Ramana and His Message to Modern Man,' *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 2nd ed. (Tiruvannamalai: Ramanasramam, 1949), p.82.
119. M. P. Pandit, *Mighty Impersonality* (1988; rpt. Pondicherry:Dipti Publications, 1992), p. 13.
120. *ibid.*,pp.12-13.

121. T. M. P. Mahadevan, *Ten Saints of India* 3rd ed. (Bombay: Bharatiya VidyaBhavan, 1971),p.131.
122. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p.92,
123. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 169.
124. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, pp.99-101.
125. *ibid.*, p. 101.
126. Dilip Kumar Roy, *In Memoriam, Saint Gurudayal*, (Bombay: Dr. K. G. Phulwar, 1970), Foreword. (Page number is not given.)
127. *ibid.*,p.19.
128. *ibid.*. p.2.
129. *ibid.*.pp.34-35.
130. *ibid.*, p.29.
131. *ibid.*.p.61
132. *ibid.*,p.23.
133. *ibid.* p.24.
134. *ibid.* p.28.
135. *ibid.* pp.83-84.
136. *ibid.*, p.
137. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims* pp. 324-25.
138. *ibid.*.p.325.
139. *ibid.*,p.31:
140. *ibid* p.3L8.
141. *ibid*, p.313.
142. *ibid* p.315.
143. *ibid.*.p.319.
144. *ibid*, p.325,
145. Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi, *The Flute Calls Still*, 3rd ed. (Bombay: BharadyaVidya Bhavan, 1993), p.345.
146. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p:326.
147. Roy and Devi. *The Flute*, p 353
148. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p. 156.
149. *ibid.*,p.156.
150. *ibid.*,p.128.
151. *ibid.*,p.129.
152. *ibid.*.p.167.

153. *ibid.*,p.167.
154. *ibid.*,p.171.
155. *ibid.*,p.172.
156. *ibid.*,p.169.
157. *ibid.*,p.178.
158. *ibid.*,p.139.
159. *ibid.*,p.147.
160. *ibid.*,p.150.
161. Smt Gouri Dharmapal, "Anirvan, the Mystic," in Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p. 196.
162. *ibid.*,p.197.
163. Roy, *Six Illuminates*, p. 151.
164. *ibid.*,p.159.
165. *ibid.*,p.163.
166. *ibid.* pp. 158-59.
167. *ibid.*,p.119.
168. *ibid.*,p.122.
169. *ibid.*,p.125.
170. *ibid.*,p.125.
171. *ibid.*, p.117.
172. Winston S. Churchill, *Great Contemporaries* (London: Readers Union Ltd. & Thomson Butterworth Ltd.. 1939), p.9.

PART THREE

Imaginative Pictures

6 : PLAYS

In a way, it can be said, Dilip Roy is a lover of dreams and always unwittingly invests the persons he portrays with an idealistic halo. He sees them as he loves to see them rather than as they are. He beholds a phantom instead of a physical person and often facts are unconsciously transformed into fiction. He does not live mentally in the physical world though he is tied there unbreakable, and he does not see in his heroes flesh and blood individuals.

Hence, his easily discernible trait for the idealised view of things finds proper mode of expression in fictionalized biographies. Here, his fancy has more freedom to fly and drag the galvanized facts along.

Fiction may find expression in prose or poetry, it could be embodied through dramatic or narrative technique. It could assume any of the various forms of the plain prose or verse. Thus, Dilip Roy writes plays and poems and novels. In each of them, he seeks to portray a historical personage who commands his love or a contemporary great man or woman. Consequently, he realized creations of art which are formally rather loose but emotionally intense. Here he rambles like a romantic at his worst into a sort of visionary world.

All these fictionalized biographies of Dilip Roy justify M. Subba Rao's observation that :

“In all ages in India, the Unknown has exerted a strange irresistible pull on the poet, and philosophy and poetry have often come together to their mutual enrichment. A poem like the *Bhagavad Gita* (like *The Divine Comedy*) is not simply philosophy with poetry superadded: or vice versa. The poetry is alone the reality, the philosophy being now wholly consumed in the poem. In Tagore already there is this significant dimension, and God is seen involved in the life-ways of man and the movements of nature. In some of Vivekananda's poems—'Kali the Mother', for example,—there is a leap even towards the mystical sublimeBut it is in the formidable Sri Aurobindo canon—poetry, philosophy, yoga—that Indo-Anglian literature has put forth its manifold ambrosial fruits.”¹

And Dilip Roy, being a close disciple of Sri Aurobindo, made his music and poetry “...part of his *sadhana*, and thereby he added new dimensions to his aspiration and achievement”²

In addition to this, it has been observed again and again in this thesis earlier that Dilip Roy had been a hero-worshipper and that he loved and worshipped any striking manifestation of intellectual, moral or spiritual brilliance. But, he

loved the devotees of Krishna with greater intensity and fervour than he loved others. This is evident in *Mira*. His treatment of *Sri Chaitanya* exhibits even greater fervour perhaps because Sri Chaitanya is considered to be the greatest of all Vaishnav mystics in his intensity of the love of Krishna. Sri Chaitanya is also regarded in Bengal as the Incarnation of Krishna and the most complete example of Radha's ideally perfect love of Krishna. Moreover, one may feel, a special reason of Roy's special regard of Sri Chaitanya, may be that both of them hailed from Bengal and also may be that one of Roy's "ancestors was the famous saint Advaita Goswami, a staunch follower of the Messiah Sri Chaitanya."³

(A) *Sri Chaitanya* :

Sri Chaitanya was one of the most powerful propounders of the *bhakti* movement which swept the country during the dark period of Muslim rule in India. He called all men to love Krishna, forgetting all cast and credal differences among men which are baseless and irrational. The whole of Bengal responded to the call, other eastern parts of the country, like Orissa, too, responded, and the echoes of the call and the response reverberated through out the length and breadth of the Indian sub-continent. Sri Chaitanya popularised the path of love, leading towards the Divine and taught indifference to bigotry and fanaticism. His movement softened the hearts of the people and made them more sensitive and poetic and less pedantic and dogmatic. Sri Chaitanya is undoubtedly one of the greatest spiritual luminaries produced by India.

Roy is writing a play about Sri Chaitanya. Obviously, it is impossible to embody that long and eventful life within a limited presentation. 'A two hours' traffic on the stage' cannot do justice to it. According to Aristotle's advice even an epic should not attempt at presenting the whole biography of a man, but should confine itself to the presentation of a limited action with complete thematic unity like Achilles's wrath in *the Iliad*. His prescription for drama is that it should represent one single incident and action, much more limited than that of an epic. In saying this, Aristotle only asks us not to do what cannot be done successfully, not to bite more than what satisfactorily be chewed.⁴

Dilip Roy knew all this. That is why, he, too, has presented in this play, only the events of pivotal importance in the life of Chaitanya. His purpose is, as always, to paint a spatial picture rather than a temporal action. You can call him successful, if a living and loving portrait of Sri Chaitanya emerges from his plays, and none would deny that it does.

In Act I called 'Aspiration' we see how Sri Chitanya approaches his mother—Sachi—to seek her permission to renounce the world and become a monk. It is not that he has rationally decided to become a *sannyasi*. In fact, he is inwardly driven to do it. He lives and moves and has his being in Krishna. He is a Krishna-

driven consciousness. His call has come compulsively and he must quit the world in compliance with the call. Yet, formal permission of both mother and wife, according to the tradition of sannyas, is necessary. So, he says to his mother :

‘Then, mother, listen: I want to leave my home
To sing the name of Krishna, my Beloved,
From door to door—a wandering mendicant’⁵

He further requests :

“I only know: my yearning to my heart’s
One Lord is authentic even as the mother’s
For her child she worships and adores, and so
I adjure you, mother mine, to-let me go.”⁶

The mother, naturally, is deeply pained. Which of the mothers would permit such a talented son to leave the comforts of a happy household and court privations and suffering of a Hindu monk ? She displays, nevertheless, heroic fortitude, when, for the well-being of the people, she grants her permission to leave. Sachi, in fact, was given a foreknowledge when she was yet a virgin of the birth of this Divine Child from her womb and also of his leaving the world ‘to redeem the world’. She had already sanctioned that unborn child the permission to leave in her vision with these words :

“I will, my darling ! I’ll defy
Aeons of torture if I may but hold
And nurse you at my breast for a single hour.
I will hail you and promise, in return,
I will not falter now in self-love nor
Claim to possess you and will let you go
When you, to companion those who have need of you,
Will consign me to my utter loneliness.”⁷

She has simply to repeat what she has already said to him before his birth :

“And abide I will now by my word—if I
Be blinded by the tears, I know, I’ll shed
Abandoned by you.”⁸

All drama sets forth a problem or a conflict and this drama is not an exception. In the first half of Act II, ‘Conflict’, we find a conversation among three persons, Keshav, Murari and Roma.

Keshav is a scholar of Sanskrit language. He is very much proud of his learning. He does not like Murari and Roma’s praising of Sri Chaitanya’s scholarship and learning. Contempt and irony are powerful in his utterance when he says of Chaitanya :

“A mighty authority, indeed, this green
Infant of yesterday ! And pundit ! Tut !

Who knows not even the rudiments of grammar !”⁹

Murari and Roma are full of reverence for Sri Chaitanya. For them, Sri Chaitanya is an avatar of both Radha and Krishna. To the scornful Keshav, Roma says :

“I meant no harm, sirI....I....only wanted
To plead that our great Lord Gouranga is
Not a common man, but a holy Avatar
A God incarnate in the human mould.
And may I humbly add: he too can lecture
On the three worlds and the mysteries divine.”¹⁰

She further tells :

“Oh be not angry, good sir, I implore you.
But what to do we know of God’s ways after all ?
We may indeed be versed in human things :
But the things divine, because they are divine,
Can hardly be I meanwithin our reach.
So how can you presume, sir, to assert
That the high Almighty could not for His own
Lila accept a human mould on earth ?
The other day, while singing in ecstasy,
Our Lord Gouranga danced as though on air
And as he cried:”O Krishna, art thou come ?”
His body did become self-luminous
As countless witnesses will testify.

(Her voice trembles)

And then.....Oh, how can I with human words
Portray the superhuman miracle ?
For as he went on singing, we saw a halo
Girdle his shining brow and all fell down
Prostrate at his twin feet acclaiming him.
As an incarnation, in one human frame,
Of Radha and Krishna in mystic union !”¹¹

Keshav, in extreme rage, curses Roma

“O horrible blasphemer ! You are doomed
 For ever you shall be roasted in black hell
 On a frying pan in the stinking oil of sharks
 And the dread demons shall belabour you
 With red-hot tridents burning all your hair
 Till you’ll be bald as—as this fool Murari
 Who will insult me and yet bend his knees
 To a callow youth and call him my superior.
 Yes, he too shall be haled to Hades with you.”¹²

Roma is scared when Keshav curses her. But Murari, who himself is a learned man, who also owns a ‘tol’ (Sanskrit school) like Keshav, is not afraid of Keshav’s curses. He tries to console Roma by telling that he, too, has the same feeling as Roma has about Sri Chaitanya’s being an Avatar.

“I feel within my heart
 A nameless beat of hope...an exaltation...
 A sudden wing-waft of a Bird of Fire...
 A momentary glimpse of a mystic Truth
 Through some chance opening... rending of the curtain...
 An adventitious vision through a fissure
 In our granite wall of jealous Ignorance.
 I fail to account for what I see or why.
 But this I know: it’s something rich and living
 Which is at war with its antipodes:
 The phantom falsehood which yet seems more real
 Than the great Reality while it holds out
 And so I too have lived a citizen,
 Even though sick of its hollow make-believes,
 Of words, words, words—of soulless pedantry
 Till it has grown now into a deafening blare.
 No wonder we hear nought else but words today
 In this our age of din. No wonder we
 But grasp at shadows letting slip the form.
 No wonder Krishna has to be born on earth
 Again and again and wounded by our arrows
 That He may heal our wounds with his own blood:
 To simulate our blindness that He may

Deliver us from our blindness grown so dear.
 Who knows—our Nimai might be He Himself!
 How can they who have not once glimpsed the King
 Depose he has not come incognito?
 So have no fear of hell nor listen, awe-struck,
 To our arrogant friend, but follow your heart's one leading."¹³

In the due course of their conversation, there comes Sri Chaitanya, singing a song in praise of God. Keshav tries to humiliate Chaitanya by indicating his junior position in learning to himself and asks Chaitanya if he can sing a Sanskrit song or not. Politely, Sri Chaitanya replies that he can sing a hymn or two, but he cannot venture to sing in his presence. So, erudite and arrogant Keshav says:

“But I'll correct you. Ignorance is no crime,
 Unless, like mist, it clings to its native blur.
 It's never too late to mend, my boy!”¹⁴

But when he listens to Sanskrit couplets sung by Sri Chaitanya in flawless language, he remains wonderstruck. He asks about their authorship. When he is told that they are composed by Sri Chaitanya himself, again he is surprised. When Sri Chaitanya declares of his decision to leave the worldly life in order to sing of love of Krishna, Keshav again tries to teach him lessons of worldly wisdom and implores him not to do so. But very humbly and yet firmly Sri Chaitanya shows the appropriateness of his own supreme goal of life. Keshav becomes mellowed at Sri Chaitanya's arguments. In the end, he folds his hands to Sri Chaitanya and tears trickle down his cheeks. During their conversation, once he confesses:

“I confess I judged you harshly from reports.
 For I see in you potentialities
 Rare as diamond. If a trifle wayward,
 You are lovable and gifted and endowed
 With humility: I was unfair to you.”¹⁵

The central issue is the conflict between Keshav's proud claim that spiritual knowledge can be attained by his scrupulous scholarship, and Sri Chaitanya's living example of true love of God which blissfully realizes its object. Roma and Murari strongly advocate Chaitanya's path of worship. Keshav on the one hand and Roma and Murari on the other, constitute the two opposed terms of conflict.

Sri Chaitanya himself enters the play in this act only to resolve the conflict. He comes and conquers Keshav without hurting his pride with absolute love. Should not this act be more properly entitled, 'Conquest' ?

Act III – ‘Illumination’ – takes place a year after Sri Chaitanya’s accepting the sannyasa. After preaching the message of love of Krishna in the far off areas, he has returned to Navadwip with the intention of calling on his wife and mother for a while.

In Sri Chaitanya’s house, his wife, Vishnupriya is shown praying before the image of Vishnu. She becomes completely involved in her prayer and in the intensity of the moments of trance, she sees the vision of Sri Chaitanya’s encounter with Jagai and Madhai who are the notorious ruffians of that area. They are very hostile to Sri Chaitanya because he attempts to change the nature of people like them. In extreme hate, Madhai spits on Sri Chaitanya’s face. Jagai also says:

“A truce to ranting — and posing as oracle.
Nor are we here to be improved by sermons.
Rather we come to improve you, my false prophet,
Till you know better than to confound and wreck
Good citizens of respectability.

(He brandishes his bamboo stick)

And this is what will put sense into you,
So either mend your ways, fool—or—beware ! ”¹⁶

But Sri Chaitanya remains unperturbed by their rude and indecent behaviour. He does not allow his followers like Murari to attack the two. Sri Chaitanya’s calm and composed response to Jagai and Madhai disturb them more. So, enraged Madhai strikes Sri Chaitanya on his forehead with the sharp end of the broken pitcher. Blood rushes out from his forehead. Sri Chaitanya’s adorers now cannot control themselves. They pounce on Jagai and Madhai to beat them. They fling the both on ground. Both of them cry for help. Sri Chaitanya does not allow the crowd to be violent against the hostility of these two roughs. He asks Jagai and Madhai not to be afraid any more but to feel secured :

“Now you come to me.
I will take you home. But wait, my brothers, first
Let me embrace you. Have no fear: none will
Lay hands on you now that you are armoured in
My love my Lord gave me to soothe and heal
All suffering souls who cry, for they are blind,
Alas, to His compassion. Come, you both
And claim from me but what belongs to you:
Sri Krishna’s Love, the only refuge and harbour
In this our derelict, unhappy world’.”¹⁷

Again, Sri Chaitanya’s patient love succeeds at the end and both of them, now completely transformed, fall prostrate at Sri Chaitanya’s feet and cry out, “Forgive us. Lord, our sins—we cry from Hell.”¹⁸

When Vishnupriya, in her trance, observes Sri Chaitanya embracing his assailants, she understands the greatness of her husband and also realizes her folly in claiming possession of him. After the moments of trance she says:

“And so I failed to see
 That the one thou gavest me I could not claim
 As my sole possession for all time on earth.
 I see now by Thy Grace which opens my eyes
 That he was vouchsafed to me but for a spell,
 A magic interlude, which I shall cherish,
 Across the sad, bleak years that lie before me,
 As the greatest boon conferred on me by life.
 I see now I received far more than I
 Could ever hope to claim—far less retain
 For my own puny world which does not count
 The lonely oyster nurses the pearl of pearls
 In the blind void of her heart; even so,
 The pearl of his love was ensconced in mine.
 But how could he let it be housed for ever
 Where it had never belonged ?”¹⁹

Vishnupriya’s vision bears the testimony of her constant inner contact with Sri Chaitanya. When Sri Chaitanya arrives at his own house, very sympathetically, he tries to show to Vishnupriya the superiority of the Divine Love to the human love. He explains how human love, which, generally, is a form of selfish desires, is illusory. Hence, he says he surrendered all human attachments at the feet of Sri Krishna :

“The message of true love which, in its essence,
 Is a message of surrender unbargaining
 Which whispers in the heart: “Give all you have
 And are to Krishna and never in return
 Ask even for the meed of his answering Love.”
 But, alas, it sounds like madness to the wise,
 And so I sing now only for the crazy
 Whom I adore today since none but they
 Will respond to Folly’s message which declares
 (Reversing the prudent values of sanity):
 “None but the fool who squanders all he counts
 As the most precious of this earth-life’s boons

Shall win to His last pinnacle of Bliss
 Through Love which, starting as a flickering flame
 Must grow till its apocalyptic sun
 Will burn away the dross of our desire
 And this shall be achieved when we will learn
 To merge, like moths, in Krishna's Fire—of Love.”²⁰

Dilip Roy appears to be influenced by his father, D. L. Roy in writing his fictionalized biographical plays. D. L. Roy was a patriot and also a Bengali poet, a dramatist and a mystic. Roy, in his young age read D. L. Roy's historical plays like *Rana Pratap*, *Durga Das*, *Shahjahan*, *Chandragupta*, *Nurjehan*, *Mevar Patan* and the like. During his stay in England in 1927, Dilip Roy translated *Mevar Patan* into English as *Fall of Mevar* with the help and guidance of *Sir Ernest Rhys* and *Bryan Rhys*. Later on *Miss Joyce Chadwick*, too, revised the translation. All these English people and also *Nehru* found it great, powerful and extremely moving. All those historical figures produced by D. L. Roy in his plays, according to Dilip Roy, possess intense emotional fervour.

It is obvious that Roy followed his father's footsteps in attempting a couple of plays based on historical personages. The difference between the father and the son, however, is that the former's heroes are proud nationalists or the persons who, during the British period, were regarded as the historical heroes embodying Indian nationalist pride, while the latter's heroes are spiritual personages who transcend all divisions of creed and nationality. Both the father and the son express in their plays an emotional fervour. But, again, the difference is that the father's emotional intensity is nationalist, and the son's spiritual.

Sri Aurobindo, too, inspired Roy a great deal to write well in English. After listening to *Sri Chaitanya* which was read out to *Sri Aurobindo*, he advised Dilip Roy not to bother much if it is not very accurate from historical point of view because,

“Poetry, drama, fiction also are not bound to be historically accurate; they cannot indeed develop themselves successfully unless they deal freely with any historical material they may choose to include or take for their subject. One can be faithful to history if one likes but even then one has to expand and deal creatively with characters and events, otherwise the work will come to nothing or little.”²¹

Quoting *Shakespeare's* practice, *Sri Aurobindo* observed that though *Shakespeare* remained true to his sources to a great extent in some of his historical plays, he never allowed the play of his imagination to be fettered by historical facts.

Here a biography is presented in the form of an exquisite verse play. It is, one might feel, a lyrical drama, for it is more expressional than representational. What is more important here is Sri Chaitanya's love of Krishna and Roy's love of both Sri Chaitanya and Krishna. Naturally, it looks, consequently, more like a poem than a play and needless to say, such a form absolutely suits the subject who lived poetry, the highest and most sacred and blissful poetry, and never knew the prose of humdrum realities of worldly life.

The titles of the three acts are misleading. One might feel 'Aspiration', 'Conflict' and 'Illumination' might be three stages like 'Exposition', 'Complication' and 'Denouement' in the development of the plot. But the fact is that this spatial portrait does not have a plot. The central character of Sri Chaitanya does not aspire for Divine Truth in Act I. He has already been an accomplished mystic at that time. Then what does 'aspiration' signify? About whose aspiration is the author talking? Sri Chaitanya's initiation into the sannyas is a simple formality, for he has already realised in the fullest measure both dispassion and detachment which are necessary and difficult prerequisites of sannyas. With the permission of his mother, what remains to be done now is putting on the ochre coloured garb. Could it reasonably be called an aspiration? In fact, the progress from aspiration towards achievement is singularly absent in this play.

When one reads 'Conflict' as the title of Act II, after 'Aspiration', the title of Act I, one might feel that the path of aspiration must be running into conflict, which could be either between himself and other people around or between rival forces of the soul divided against itself. But we soon discover that there are neither internal nor external conflicts of these kinds in the play. It is difficult to imagine a drama, tragic or comic, where there is no conflict. But in this play, there is none unless you call intellectual opposition to Chaitanya's message of some of his contemporaries an element of conflict. The violence of Jagai-Madhai incident might sound like a conflict. But it happens in Act III, which is inappropriately entitled 'Illumination'.

Yet the plot such as it is here, is handled with passable skill. As in Greek and Shakespearean and classical Sanskrit drama, so also here, a well-known story is woven into a drama. The lack of skill and invention, however, is off set by melodious diction and rhythm. That is how, the bare skeleton or what J. C. Ransom might call, the 'structure' of the drama, is richly embellished with a variety of 'textural' elements.²²

The characters of this play are carefully drawn. Chaitanya stands at the centre of the action of the play quite vividly and commands reverence. His character is neither reduced to mere historical delineation as in Jadunath Sarkar's *Chaitanya's Life and Teachings* nor spoilt by the writer's excessive sentimentality

of reverence as in Prabhudatta Brahmachari's *Sri Chaitanya Charitawali* (Hindi). Other characters, too, are flesh and blood individuals. They are distinguishable from one another. All of them are appropriate, i.e., they are true to their nature. They are consistent as individuals in their behaviour. Sachi differs from an average mother in giving her consent to her son to become a monk restraining all her intensity of love for him. All the characters are also typically Indian, to be still more precise, Bengali. Sachi and Vishnupriya behave tenderly and look over-emotional like all Indian women more or less. While Sri Chaitanya, though he is full of love for everybody, is capable of austerity and detachment like great Indian mystics. There are no sudden and unconvincing changes in any of the characters. The changes that appear in Jagai and Madhai are credible transformations of bad characters at the touch of a saint.

The author's clarity of thought emerges from the utterances of various characters. All characters speak appropriately according to the occasion.

The playwright, being a poet and musician, is very careful in selecting proper words to express different moods. His capacity to describe different objects, persons, situations and emotions with picturesque epithets is remarkable. His language could be reflective or argumentative in keeping with situational requirements. The talk of Keshav with Sri Chaitanya is quite contemplative. At the same time, simple and lyrical diction is used to create emotional situations between the son and the mother in Act I and between Sri Chaitanya and Vishnupriya in Act III.

The dialogues of the play are at times witty and pregnant with layers of meaning. The sparkling intelligence flashes in the speeches of Sri Chaitanya. But his intellect is fused with his general concern for humanity and intense love of Krishna as well. His tone remains persuasive and, at times, is modest and yet emphatic. The conversation between Keshav and Murari is witty and humorous. Murari spares no means to tease the proud pedant.

For instance, soon after Keshav's recitation of a hymn, the following humorous exchange of words takes place at the beginning of Act II:

"MURARI

But have you not, sir, mispronounced a word?

KESHAV (*nettled*)

What ?

MURARI

I only mean sir..

KESHAV

You need not, I say.

For nothing that you mean has any meaning.

MURARI (*ironically*)

But you behave like a judge who has gone deaf
And hangs the witness taking him for the robber!

KESHAV (*furiously*)

You dare—

MURARI

But sir, in daring who can beat you ?
For if I have affronted a sombre human,
You insulted the hoariest God in Heaven,
Although the wicked sceptic may indeed
Ask if the Gods live not too far to notice
Your grievous accent you now flaunt so boldly !"²³

Songs are a peculiar feature of this play as of Greek tragedy and Shakespearean comedy. They certainly add to its beauty. All of them are sung in praise of Krishna. In one of the two songs sung by Sri Chaitanya in Act II, he wonders why people do not hear the call of Krishna. The best of the three songs included in Act III is the one which Sri Chaitanya sings when the blood from his forehead streams down his face because of the assault of Madhai. He, then, sings in ecstasy:

*Your ways are strange, my Lord, You come
To play in ever new guises.*²⁴

He appears to be a god-intoxicated singer who moves masses to devote themselves to the feet of Krishna.

The setting of this fictionalized biography is 1510 A. D. In Act I, the place is Sri Chaitanya's house at Navadwip. Act II takes place next morning at a bathing ghat in the river Ganga of Navadwip. Act III takes place in 1511 A. D. in the vision of Vishnupriya who is praying before the image of Lord Vishnu in which she sees Sri Chaitanya at the bathing ghat spreading his message of love, tolerance and forgiveness. Roy succeeds in reproducing the devotional atmosphere of the medieval India by showing crowds of people ready to follow the example of Sri Chaitanya. Their reverence to Sri Chaitanya, eagerness to argue with Keshav to prove the greatness of Sri Chaitanya's knowledge and to react to the violence of Jagai and Madhai in the same terms, create the picture of the immense

influence Sri Chaitanya might have exercised on the masses of his times. *Sri Chaitanya*, thus illustrates almost all the essential features of drama.

Sri Aurobindo liked Act III of *Sri Chaitanya* for its design, structure and especially its idea of "...a whole scene of action with many persons and much movement shown in the vision of a single character sitting alone in her room."²⁵

He commended the strict observance of the three unities of the Greek drama. This apart, he also tried to convince Roy not to pay much attention to critics if they object to the great length of discussions included in the play because,

"...where the dramatic interest is itself of a subjective and psychological character involving more elaboration of thought and speech than of rapid or intensive happening and activities, this kind of objection is obviously invalid.... Here it is great spiritual ideals and their action on the mind and lives of human beings that are put before us and all that matters is how they are presented and made living in their appeal. Here there is, I think, full success and that entirely justifies the method of the drama."²⁶

Though Sri Aurobindo has defended the lengthy speeches delivered by characters from the viewpoints of art and seriousness of spiritual import, they definitely hinder the interest of ordinary readers or audience. At times, one may be tempted to consider *Sri Chaitanya* as a closet play, similar to Shelley's *Cenci* (1819) and Hardy's *Dynasts* (1903-8) because of the elaborate and, at times, instructive harangues delivered by the main characters of the play.

Sri Chaitanya is written in blank verse like the plays of Aurobindo, viz. *The Viziers of Bassora*, *Eric*, *Vasavdutta*, *Rodogune* and *Perseus the Deliverer*. Its fluidity and malleability are remarkable. Almost all the characteristics of the dramatic blank verse, such as enjambment or continuation of the sense over from one line into another, variety of pause in lines, the use of feminine endings and inversion of rhythm, are evident in *Sri Chaitanya*.

Moreover, the play abounds in the figures of speech. In fact, there is not a line of Dilip Roy's which lacks a metaphor. Some metaphors, however, are specially striking. Consider, for example, the following lines, where Sachi addresses her son

"Could I help but know
That I am a mere lamp whose flame you are,
A dim frail stem whose one mission is to help
The hundred-petalled lotus to bloom in light ?"²⁷

Dilip Roy thus has given the biography of Sri Chaitanya's life in the form of a poetic play. It covers a time span of two years of its subject's life. By paying

attention to the smallest details in the construction of the play, Roy has turned a biographical sketch into a beautiful piece of drama.

Sri Chaitanya is a historical character. The incidents of his life presented in this play, too, are historically true. Could we, therefore, call this play a historical drama? A comparison with Shakespeare may naturally suggest itself to us, for he has written a few immortal history plays. He has, obviously, imaginatively treated history and presented

“...a kind of truth which is sometimes higher than truth to fact... His histories are always true to the spirit of the age even when they are false in details.... Whatever is universal in the mind and character of entire ages and people is brought closely before us. The general temper of the times is faithfully reflected in the historical plays and the incidents that affected the common fate of our country are brought prominently into view. The poet has, moreover, breathed the breath of life into dead heroes, and endowed them with all their natural gifts and characteristics so that they reappear before us as distinct and vivid personalities.”²⁸

Dilip Roy, too, seems to have the same intention of exhibiting imaginative truth of Sri Chaitanya in his play. In the ‘Preface’ to *Sri Chaitanya* he explicitly writes:

“In a work like this I do not feel obliged to being a bondsman to history as such, since what I set out to write is not history embellished but to express dramatically my heart’s vision of one whom I have regarded as an Avatar of Krishna since my childhood, whose songs I have passionately loved and sung and whose Presence I have felt while singing of his divine humanity. That is why, historically, I have been.... more faithful to the spirit that moved Sri Chaitanya, the spirit which has, alas, been often misunderstood even by many of his followers.”²⁹

The difference between Shakespeare’s view of history and Dilip Roy’s view should be clear here. Shakespeare was principally a dramatist. He had an eye for oddities and eccentricities of real human personages which he discovered in his historical figures, too. All of them are impressively drawn flesh and blood individuals. Who would ever forget heroic Hotspurr or spoilt Prince Hel, the companion of Sir John Fallstaff?

Roy is not a dramatist at all. He lacks an objective artist’s insight into the complexity of human character. His world is peopled only with Dilip Roy’s. He sees no one else. It is difficult to distinguish one character from another when

they are purely fictitious beings or when they belong to a distant period of history. Even when these characters are his real contemporaries, each of them appears to be having only one particular aspect which Roy loves to see in him. He fails to delineate sharp differences and points of contrast.

In this play also Sri Chaitanya is god-like throughout, and gods have a simple nature and they do not change. Roma and Murari are as devoted to Sri Chaitanya at the end as they are at the beginning. Keshav ceases to be a dry pundit and becomes a true *bhakta* in the course of drama. But do we know any other facet or element of his personality ? Sachi is an idealised version of a typical Hindu mother and Vishnupriya is an idealised version of a typical Hindu wife like Sita. Do we learn anything more about these two characters? In what way do they become memorable if you are not a devotee of Sri Chaitanya but simply well-versed spectators with properly trained and sophisticated taste ?

Some of Shakespeare's history plays do become what may technically be called 'political morality plays'. *Henry V* is an instance in point. But Shakespeare is a dramatist first and everything else next. Dilip Roy simply uses drama to express his devotion for Sri Chaitanya. Such devotion plays are singularly absent in the Western tradition of drama though 'miracle plays' do have a touch of such devotion.

A drama must have a definite pattern. Northrope Frye writes:

"A tragic or comic plot is not a straight line: it is a parabola following the shapes of the mouths on the conventional masks. Comedy has a U-shaped plot, with the action sinking into deep and often potentially tragic complications, and then suddenly turning upward into a happy ending. Tragedy has an inverted U, with the action rising in crisis to a peripety and then plunging downward to catastrophe through a series of recognitions, usually of the inevitable consequences of previous acts."³⁰

Sri Chaitanya is neither a tragedy nor a comedy as far as the design is concerned. But we do discover Roy's usual design in this drama, too. In every work of Roy's we find round about an enlightened person who naturally does not grow, a few aspirants, who strive to reach the highest height. They do not appear to be fully successful. But a development towards the goal is unmistakably discernible in all of them. Hence, it is not in the principal character's life and fortune, but in other characters around him that we discover movement. This movement is neither in a 'U' pattern nor in an inverted 'U' pattern but in an arrow pattern that shoots to the sky without completely reaching it.

(B) Mira:

Mira, like *Sri Chaitanya*, is another verse play by Dilip Roy. It dramatizes the life of a Medieval Vaishnav woman saint of Mevar. There are two versions of the play. The first published in 1968, as *Mira in Brindaban*, consists of two acts. The next version appeared as *Mira* in 1979. It is a three-act play. The first act is new here. The following two acts are the same as those of the earlier version. No titles are given to the acts in any of these versions. A study of the later version is attempted here.

In Act I, we see Mira, Sanatan, her guru, Pundarik, the temple priest, a few pilgrims and four other pundits at Mira's temple in Brindaban. The pundits ask Mira by what right could she claim to have been cradled in the love of Gopal or Sri Krishna who is almost unattainable, in spite of her illiteracy. Through their high erudition and yoga of knowledge, they have come to know that He can be attained after years of stern meditation and an intensive study of the *Vedas* and not through 'puerile, sentimental rhapsodies.'³¹

Mira, after politely accepting their charge that she is an ignorant "unlettered woman"³², poses a number of pointed questions to them which leave them nonplussed. She asks them how the memorised scriptures can heal the carvings of the flesh or curb the passions that lay human beings under the yoke of Fate or how the learning can help one glimpse Gopal who resides not in books but in one's soul. She advises the pundits to rise above mere words because his Grace can be experienced beyond the world of words. The *Vedas*, she says, are written in order that people might follow the footsteps of great saints and not in order that people might learn them by heart. She boldly claims that she has really found him, "the world's evergreen beloved", who gave her refuge at his feet because she always approaches him with "Full faith in His all-comprehending love."³³

A gradual change begins to occur in the attitudes of these stern pundits. The mystic voice of Mira brings about their complete conversion. The First pundit, the most powerful of the four, goes to the extent of confessing that he saw Radha's face behind Mira. He, then, accepts the insufficiency of pedantic knowledge and necessity of the intuitive and experiential knowledge of Mira.

The same controversy between love and knowledge appears in Act II. Pedant Ajit, a proud aristocrat, who always loves to flaunt his wealth and erudition, expresses his distaste and disapproval of Mira's singing of a song on the superiority of love of Krishna to the verbal meanings of Vedic verses. He thinks:

"Only knowledge, propped by the soul's deep strength,
Can serve as the diamond stairway to His peak."³⁴

Mira, again, argues enthusiastically in favour of single-minded love for the Divine which consumes everything that is foul and human in the devotee. She explains to Ajit that she does not stand for renunciation, but according to her, one must love Gopal and live for Him and do His Will in joy. From her long experience, she has discovered that when she moves a step towards her 'Gleaning Orient', she, inevitably, puts behind her this world of senses because she finds it as a 'stagnant bog.'

Ajit is wonderstruck by the logical arguments put forward by Mira in favour of love of the Divine. To the amazement of other devotees present there, Ajit folds his hands and prays :

"Forgive me:I, too, cannot..at all.explain...
 But you... your voice... your tears and ... above all
 Your unmistakable sincerity.
 Has touched a chord... and so continue, I pray.
 And believe me, I am not quite what I seem.
 A time was... when I, too, had faith and fervour.
 But pride has been my downfall... so go on:
 I have found my long-lost mother in you again !"³⁵

The conversion looks convincing.

In Act III, Mira, at her guru's bidding answers various queries of Ajit and Pundarik. Ajit asks her how an earthly person can aspire to win 'the blue beating against one's bars.' He wants to know why we have to cry in vain for Him when He is our lover or beloved. Through the three stages of learning in her own life, Mira has realized that on this path, one has to stake everything one owns only to be owned by Gopal. It is not easy. The path towards divine bliss is most painful.

Ajit finds it very difficult to understand how the infinite Godhead who is self-fulfilled, could seek to be born as a mortal to make love in the human rhythm to us. Sanatan explains how, out of love for human souls, He assumes an avatar and delights human beings by his glorious lila, *narlila*:

"Oh, how He assumes our ways, comports Himself
 Like a mortal, seeks us out, in Grace, even deigns
 To laugh and parley with us, so we may learn
 To play at hide and seek with Him in rapture,
 As one of us and—loving Him—open ourselves
 To His victorious light that quells the inherent

Darkness of our unregenerate nature!
 Our God seeks birth as a human so we may
 Be the more swiftly divinised till our
 Flawed natures, become one with His, merge all
 Their taints and blurs in His love's gold-incandescence!"³⁶

Sanatan asks the pundit to learn from Mira about the greatness of his Grace:

"Accept her lead and you shall win to the Peak
 Where He will come, in Grace, to play with you
 Unfolding vistas of His bliss and beauty
 Such as you dare not even dream of now."³⁷

One must give up, Sanatan believes, mental exercise to have 'the apocalyptic Vision' in which a drop holds the deep.

Again, at the bidding of Sanatan, Mira elaborately describes how Sanatan was guided by his guru Sri Chaitanya on his difficult path of god-realization and how, ultimately, he had that realization of Krishna's Grace. Sanatan accepts that though Mira came as his disciple, she has turned out to be his guru because of her deep-rooted faith in the reality of Krishna and her intuitive knowledge:

"SANATAN (*amending, with a laugh*)

Nay, cried in a tearful voice:

"I capitulate to you in deep disgrace."

(*To Ajit, breezily*)

Which was only the beginning of the end
 For lo and behold, in the first Act she enters
 As an ideal disciple, bowing in deep
 Humility—only to culminate,
 In the last Act, as she herself sang once:

(*humming*)

"Charanki kinkini bani vo sirka taj ho gayi:
 "She came to Him to tinkle as His anklets
 Only to end by gleaming as His crown!"³⁸

Mira delineates very vividly to Ajit how, Krishna, at that time, used to come to Sanatan and her, how they gave bath to Him in Yamuna and fed Him, rebuked Him and then made Him sleep by their side everyday. Mira says :

“It was, indeed, a great experience
To have to protect One who protects the world !”³⁹

Here, one might suspect, the character of Mira is emancipated from actual stream of history and idealised as a model to be followed for spiritual progress.

Mira, too, is a historical play. Whatever we have said of *Sri Chaitanya* on this point applies to Mira as well. We need not repeat it here.

The plot of the play is complete, logical and of certain magnitude, One can notice here a gradual development of action from conflict to solution. The exposition of the action takes place in Act I when Mira sings in ecstasy a beautiful song expressing her love of Krishna. The reactions of the pilgrims and also of the four pundits towards Mira are described here.

The conflict of two philosophies practised by people in approaching Krishna is the part and parcel of Act I and Act II. The four pundits in Act I and Ajit in Act II stand for the importance of knowledge about Krishna which is available only after assiduous efforts of day and night. But, according to Mira, selfless love of Krishna is the appropriate means to achieve His Grace. Mira's views constitute the element of 'thought' in the play.

But it must be noted that, as in *Sri Chaitanya*, so also here, Aristotelian plot or what Northrope Frye calls 'U' pattern or inverted 'U' pattern does not exist. Since both *Sri Chaitanya* and *Mira*, as Roy's other fictional works, repeat the same pattern, let us call it a special Roy pattern, i.e., the arrow pattern we have spoken of in evaluation of Sri Chaitanya. The central eternity here speaks in the form of Mira. She is light at the beginning and light at the end of the drama. She does not grow from darkness to light, nor does she develop in any other way. But her light inspires the persons around her to aspire for the highest light. So they move out from their darkness and struggle to mount higher towards the sky. They are Ajit, Pundarik, four pundits and others. Even Sanatan's imperfections are perfected by Mira's touch, the guru becomes the disciple's disciple. The autobiographical overtone here is quite clear. Roy had learnt the wisdom suitable to his nature from Indira Devi.

We have called the pattern an arrow pattern. But it must be remembered, the arrow here indicates the vertical direction and straight movement, not the speed of an arrow. The goal is the highest height or what may be called in Christian terminology, 'the Most High'. The aspirant's devotion for him should be single-minded. But, his progress is normally very slow. At least, in Roy's plays and fiction, it is slow, because he does not show the speedy process of illumination of such powerful mystics as Mira and Sri Chaitanya, but of the rather sluggish kind of aspirants that we will discover among the followers of these towering figures in Roy's plays and fiction.

The characters of the play disclose all the four aims enumerated by Aristotle in the *Poetics*. He writes:

“There will be an element of character in the play, if.... what a personage says or does reveals a certain moral purpose; and a good element of character, if the purpose so revealed is good. Such goodness is possible in every type of personage, even in a woman or a slave, though the one is perhaps an inferior, and the other a wholly worthless being.”⁴⁰

It should be clear from the foregoing discussion that all the characters of *Mira* are good in the Aristotelian sense of the term. They are good in ordinary sense, too. But they lack roundness and individuality.

All the characters are made “appropriate”⁴¹ to their types. Mira is somewhat different. She is an ideal beloved and tender caretaker of Gopal. She is more divine than human. Her songs inspire common people to turn to Gopal’s Grace. Her individuality lies in her spontaneous renunciation of everything dear to ordinary human beings for the love of Krishna and also in her readiness to bear the severest pain and hardest tests to deserve His Grace. Sanatan expresses his incapacity to bless her. Instead, he prays for her. Sanatan, as an individual has realized Gopal in his own life. He was instrumental in Mira’s realization of Krishna, and yet he is a man similar to other men who find it very difficult to have a faithful heart. It is not that he lacked faith altogether. But his faith was not strong enough and quite unshakable. Mira came to Brindaban as his spiritually more mature and steadfast disciple to teach him how to realize absolute submission to Krishna’s Will. Needless to say, the character is a historical personage, a real saint-poetess, who has influenced spiritual transformation in the lives of millions of her countrymen. She appears here as adoring eyes of Roy saw her, and history appears transformed into a dramatic pattern. This is the peculiarity of this particular biography as it is also that of *Sri Chaitanya’s*.

The dialogues of the play express high intelligence and wit of its main characters like Mira, Sanatan, Ajit and four ‘pundits. As in *Sri Chaitanya*, so also here, the speeches are too long to look like dramatic dialogues. But their poetry is remarkable. The language is lucid. The Pundits employ reflective language. Their tone is serious. But the playful behaviour of Gopal is described interestingly and fascinatingly. They take the readers into the world of imagination.

Mira’s speeches are tender. Her tone remains polite and persuasive when she answers to the dissident pedants. She uses simple language which is ‘carried alive into the heart by passion’ in Wordsworthian phrase. When Sanatan and she talk, their deepest reverence and love for each other is reflected. Mira’s intense devotion to Krishna is at the centre of all of her utterances.

The songs of the play are very important in emphasizing the importance of the theme of love of Krishna. They are enchanting and sung by Mira in rapt ecstasy. She often dances while singing. These songs have the capacity to carry the readers on to the sublime. In fact, Dilip Roy has translated Mira's Hindi bhajans into English with great mastery of that language. While listening to Mira's songs, the devotees experience the same sentiment of love of Krishna. Her guru addresses her as 'the minstrel of Gopi love' and also as 'His(Krishna's) beloved minstrel Maid'. Pundarik is fascinated by her 'angel-voice' and bows down at her feet.

The time of the action of the play is not mentioned, but it can be guessed that the action might have taken place in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The place of the action is Mira's temple situated in Brindaban. The unity of place is thus fully observed. Act I takes place on the full moon night of Jhulan Purnima, Act II, on the full moon night of Ras, and Act III takes place a month later. Thus unity of time, too, is observed well.

Mira, too, like *Sri Chaitanya* is a lyrical drama. It exhibits all the figures and flawless blank verse discussed at length in *Sri Chaitanya*, Consider, for example, the following lines:

"I submit that He came to greet me
Like moon's kiss on eve's brow. 'T was so I came
To know through Love the miracle of His Love."42

Sanatan describes Mira as 'daughter of divinity and stainless purity' and a "minstrel of Gopi-love, to whom our Lord/Of bliss and loveliness, comes to reveal/His inviolable self of harmony."⁴³

Thus on the 'structure' of the biography of Mira are overlaid all the textural elements of drama and lyric. Hence, the play assumes an extraordinarily artistic form.

Roy came into contact with Indira Devi, his daughter-disciple in 1948. At that time, she had frequent experiences of *samadhi* during which she had visions of Mira. At times, Mira was narrating her parables of Love of Krishna, at other times, she sang her devotional songs to Indira Devi. After such experiences, Indira Devi used to dictate those songs to Roy. A detailed account of these experiences is included in Chapter IV of this work. This intense internal contact of Indira Devi's with Mira, inspired Roy to write this play. They also staged this play at their temple-house, Hari Krishna Mandir, Pune, in which Indira Devi performed the role of Mira and Dilip Roy himself, that of Sanatan.

* * * * *

A few points of similarity can be observed in these two plays. Both of them are three-act poetic plays in blank verse. In both of them the biographical sketches of two towering spiritual personalities of the medieval India are drawn. Both of them emphasize the importance of Love of Krishna over the Knowledge about Him. These dramatic biographies are written with the special purpose of helping the spiritual aspirants like Roy himself on their difficult path of Truth.

But they are different from each other in certain aspects. While *Sri Chaitanya* shows need of renunciation of the world for Krishna, Mira illustrates grace and *lila* or Divine sport of Krishna. *Sri Chaitanya* appears to be more compact than *Mira* because Act I of *Mira*, added later on and the earlier Act I of *Mira in Brinadavan* have the same repetitive theme. Arguments presented by Sri Chaitanya in favour of the 'Love Divine' seem to be more coherent than those put forward by Mira.

Both the plays are perfect pieces of literary art and an expression of what may be called *bhav* or pure love of God in Vaishnav terminology.

Notes :

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2. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, 'Foreword', in Dilip Kumar Roy, *Hark! His Flute!* (Poona: Hari Krishna Mandir, 1972), p.vii.
3. Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi, *Pilgrims of the Stars* (1973; rpt Porthill: Timeless Books, 1985), p.15.
4. Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, trans. Ingram Bywater (1920; rpt Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1978), p. 42.
5. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Chaitanya and Mira* (1950; rpt. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1979), Act I, p. 10.
6. *ibid.*, Act I, p. 12.
7. *ibid.*, Act I, p.15.
8. *ibid.*, Act I, pp. 15-16.
9. *ibid.*, Act II.p.21.
10. *ibid.*, Act II, pp.23-24.
11. *ibid.*, Act II, p.24.
12. *ibid.*, Act II, pp. 24-25.
13. *ibid.*, Act II, pp.29-30.
14. *ibid.*, Act II, p.33.
15. *ibid.*, Act II, p.38.

16. *ibid.*, Act III,p.60.
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18. *ibid.*, Act III,p.66.
19. *ibid.*, Act III, p.67.
20. *ibid.*, Act III, p.82.
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24. *ibid.*, Act III, p.66.
25. *ibid.*, p.191.
26. *ibid.*, p.191.
27. *ibid.*, Act I,p.7.
28. Stanely Wood and Rev. F. Marshall, eds. *The Oxford and Cambridge Edition of Shakespeare's Richard II* (London: George Gill & Sons Ltd., n.d.), p. xiii.
29. Roy, *Sri Chaitanya*, p. 3.
30. Northrope Frye, "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement," *Literary Criticism: A Reading*, eds. B.Das and J. M. Mohanty (1985; rpt Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 354.
31. Roy, *Sri Chaitanya*, Act I, p. 98.
32. *ibid.*, Act I, p. 100.
33. *ibid.*, Act I, p. 107.
34. *ibid.*, Act II, p. 125.
35. *ibid.*, Act II, p. 134.
36. *ibid.*, Act III, p. 158-59.
37. *ibid.*, Act III, p. 164.
38. *ibid.*, Act III, pp. 170-71.
39. *ibid.*, Act III, p. 185.
40. Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, pp.55-56.
41. *ibid.*, p.56.
42. Roy, *Sri Chaitanya*, p. 108.
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7 : NARRATIVES

(A) *Upward Spiral*

Dilip Roy's novel *Upward Spiral* was first published in 1949. As he informs the readers in the "Preface", he wanted to call it a mystic novel, but he dropped the idea thinking that the popular meaning of

"...the word 'mystic' is... far too often associated with the mysterious and the intangible, whereas the fact of the matter is—as the wisest of men have proclaimed with one voice down the ages—that the things we call concrete and tangible appear so in proportion as they mirror the mystic Light beyond land and sea that informs them."¹

The novel, in five parts, covers the miraculous incidents which happened in life of a girl named Mala, she is inclined towards spirituality from her very childhood, under the serene influence of her cousin, Asit. He is a musician and a spiritual seeker who generally stays at the Yoga-Ashram of his Gurudev Swayamananda in Dumel. Swayamananda is a man of profound spirituality and occult wisdom. With his mystic knowledge he patiently helps people to come out of their ordinary existence to aspire for love of Krishna. The child Mala dances and sings before the image of Krishna in their temple-house and frequently visits the Dumel Ashram with Asit. Suniti, Mala's practically wise mother and Prabal, her cunning distant relative do not approve of such fits of Mala. So, by hook or by crook, they succeed in taking Mala away from the Ashram. Mala, when taken away from her real aspiration for Krishna, wanders in the mundane world of ordinary pleasures. When she attains majority, she decides to get married with Amar Singh, a young, handsome Punjabi flutist, who is apparently a patriot, an idealist and almost a revolutionary. Later on, Mala comes to know about his affair with Lisa, an Anglo-Indian girl, who died a fortnight after delivering a dead child. Mala begins to dislike Amar now.

Tapan, Amar's Bengali friend and a revolutionary, tries to attract and impress Mala by posing his superiority to Amar. He pretends to be a man of spiritual interests with his visions of Higher Reality called God. But, ultimately, it is revealed that Tapan also is unreliable and crafty. He has been having an affair with a married woman, Lina. He commits decoity to prove his idealism to Mala and gets arrested. Amar tries to persuade Mala at his house to get married to him and not to think of unscrupulous Tapan. Mala is in great dilemma. At that time, Amar behaves very rudely with Swayamananda and Asit who have come there to meet and bless the sick and repentant Prabal. Mala is extremely angry with Amar. With the help of the British Police Commissioner, Sir Eric, Swayamananda and

Asit enter into Amar's house. Amar, finding the police in his house, flees. Mala is completely disillusioned. She understands the futility of human relationships and the truth of the only reality that is Krishna.

With the story of Mala, is related the story of Raka, a Bengali woman, who out of infatuation, has got married to, Kishanchand, a doctor and uncle of Amar. Raka, after the birth of her baby-boy, Shukla, finds that she has been mismatched with her life-partner who is totally Westernised in his approach towards life. Because of Shukla she comes into close contact, first of all, with Mala and later on, with Asit. She, along with Asit, vainly tries to help Mala to lead a spiritual life. She, then, begins to stay at the Yoga-Ashram of Swayamananda as the spiritual colleague of Asit. Along with her attempts to aspire only for the love of Krishna, her struggle to forget the pleasures of the flesh is depicted.

The part of the Himalayas situated near Jhiliam is the setting for many incidents of the novel. Swayamananda's Yoga Ashram is situated there. In fact, it appears to be at the centre of many events. Asit, the narrator of the story, generally stays there. Raka also goes there to stay permanently. Mala, too, likes to live there. Prabal and Suniti, who were opposed to the place earlier, are changed. Suniti begins to visit the Ashram frequently in order to solve the problems of her daughter's life. Asit's stay in the pious atmosphere of the Ashram and the Himalayas shows his own spiritual temperament. Jhiliam, the river and the Himalayas are the constant backdrop to the action of the novel. Jhiliam stands throughout the novel as a symbol of the ever changing flow of life. The heights of the Himalayas also symbolise holiness and spiritual heights, and they inspire the inmates of the Ashram with spiritual aspirations. Mala's search begins from here. She also returns here after her own disillusionment

The plot of the novel covers the time span of sixteen years and a few months. During this period many characters like Mala, Raka and Suniti are shown developing. The hypocrisy of Amar and Tapan is exposed. Prabal suffers and repents for his error. The spiritual progress of Asit, Raka, Mala, Suniti and even of Prabal at the end of the novel can be seen clearly. Thus the end becomes different from the beginning.

The motive of the narrative is to show the restoration of Mala from mundane life to that of spirituality to which she belonged earlier. Raka also reaches the same destination after having bitter experiences of worldly life. Swayamananda plays a major role in bringing about this restoration. Asit and Raka are pained at Mala's straying away from spirituality. But Gurudev, while solving their queries, give a kind of philosophical theory of causation explaining to them why men behave as they do. In fact, in an occult manner, he has helped Mala to reach the place of her soul's seeking. Gurudev, because of Mala's aspiration for Krishna,

“...had been able to help her here meeting her not “horizontally” ...in the limited give-and-take mode of humans, but “vertically”, spiralling up into the infinity of Krishna, slipping and grasping again and again and yet finding a better foothold every time after a backsliding!”²

The symbolic titles of the parts of the novel, “Dawn”, “Noon”, “Dusk”, “Night” and “the New Sun” suggest the changing phases of Mala’s life from her childhood to her attainment of majority, her conflicts and her restoration to spirituality.

Like many other narratives of the world like *Huck Finn*, *Moby Dick*, *Pickwick Papers*, *Upward Spiral* has the plot of journey. Mala goes from Calcutta to Dumel or from Calcutta to Dakshineswar. Swayamananda and Asit travel from Dumel to Lahore. Almost all the characters travel by land. Like *Pilgrim’s Progress*, their spiritual journey is also included here. Therefore, again, one can locate here the theme of quest like *Sri Chaitanya* and *Mira*. All the personae are in search of ideal human existence. So, they aspire to rise higher towards the Divine Reality. The pattern of ever mounting aspiration of human beings like Mala, Raka and Asit towards Krishna can be seen in the pages of this novel also, which shows the significance of the title of the novel, *Upward Spiral*. Such aspirants are helped and guided by the deputies of Krishna like Swayamananda in their difficult quest. This type of the theme of spiritual quest can also be observed in great works of the world literature like *the Divine Comedy* by Dante, *the Waste Land* by Eliot and *Savitri* by Sri Aurobindo. Such a pattern can be observed consistently in all of Dilip Roy’s works, because he himself is consistent in his quest of the realization of Krishna face to face. The author himself, along with many of his characters is growing from weakness to strength.

Mala’s story in *Upward Spiral* is a realistic element. But Roy involves also with it higher reality and deeper psychology like a romantic poet. The arrow-pattern is clear here. Swayamananda is the unchanging eternity central to all other lives revolving around him. He does not develop, he has already reached the highest height. But Mala grows higher in spiritual sense and so do Asit and Raka, while Amar and Tapan seem to be sinking lower. It should be clear from foregoing pages that both external conflict between persons inimical to each other and the inner spiritual conflict are present here.

The characters of the novel have meaningful names. Gurudev is named ‘Swayamananda’ meaning ‘Bliss itself. Raka means ‘full moon’.³ Roy describes his characters well. Of Raka he says: “She was a Bengali by birth; quite modern and up-to-date, yet rather obdurately shy and reserved. I mean that with her, the ice took rather long to thaw.”⁴

But he also makes them speak and reveal their inner realities. For instance, in the following dialogue between Raka and Asit, Raka expresses peculiar feminine weakness:

“Raka raised her tear-stained face and wiped her eyes.

“No, no softness, Asit, I implore you. You don’t know me,” she steadied her voice with a supreme effort. “Oh don’t protest: if you want really to be kind to me, only believe me when I say that I knew I had never been an ethereal being nourished on rainbow thrills and sunset lyrics although... I loved to pose as a sylph, and most, when I hungered for the daily meat of human beings.... yes, yes.”

“You know you don’t mean to be taken seriously, now.”

“Which proves my thesis that we, women, are poseurs by nature—to the manner born; and that is why we can take others in so completely. No, it isn’t fanciful.”⁵

Roy analyses the moral and psychological natures of his characters. About Asit and Swayamananda, his guru, Dilip Roy writes:

“What drew him to the Ashram and made him love it despite its imperfections was the great Alchemist, Gurudev, who was changing the natures of men and women who had gathered around him. It was his unfathomable personality that made his Yoga so catholic and daring; it was his courage that struck out a new path whenever the beaten tracks were tested by him and found wanting. He felt an exaltation. There Raka lay recumbent so near to him and so beautiful in body and mind! Would any other God-mooded Guru in India have allowed him to mix so freely with such women shunned generally as the veritable “gates of hell” :*narakasya dwaram* ? He smiled to himself as he speculated what they would comment, the serious Yoga-initiates of India, did they come to know through some kind of clairvoyance, that he was about to receive feminine confidences tonight ! This had been rendered possible because Gurudev was a giant and saw that the lion had to be bearded in his own den: sex could not be squelched by taboos nor dodged by escapism. The old austere monasteries might have been all right in the “good old days,” but the fundamental problem could hardly be solved thus by rigid segregation. That was why, Asit gratefully felt, he had his deeper life of the emotions enriched which flowered in his poetry and music. If he had fought shy of the

fair sex he would have grown into a desiccated specimen of manhood, strong may be (after a fashion) but certainly not into a many-mooded personality — exhibiting at will, a poet, a musician or a composer.”⁶

He also indicates certain gestures of characters so that they can be identified immediately by the readers as their peculiar habits. Asit, for instance, has the habit of speaking in staccato. Sir Eric’s speech, during their travelling in train, remains halting because of the severe pain of his stomach. The characters also comment on one another to make them clear to the reader.

Thus Roy uses both dramatic and narrative techniques to realize his fictional beings in his novels. Almost all the characters of *Upward Spiral* are dynamic. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, in their *Theory of Literature*, note:

“In the nineteenth-century English and American fiction, one finds brunettes, male and female (Heathcliffe, Mr Rochester, Becky Sharp; Maggie Tulliver; Zenobia, Miriam; Ugeia) and blondes (female instances— Amelia Sedley; Lucy Dean; Hilda, Priscilla, and Phoebe [Hawthorne]; Lady Rowena [Poe]. The blonde is the home-maker, unexciting but steady and sweet. The brunette—passionate, violent, mysterious, alluring; and untrustworthy—gathers up the characteristics of the Oriental, the Jewish, the Spanish, and the Italian as seen from the point of view of the ‘Anglo-Saxon.’ ”⁷

We in the Indian context, do not have brunettes and blondes in the physical appearance, but in this special sense suggested by Wellek and Warren, we have both ‘brunettes’ and ‘blondes’ in the present novel. Tapan, Amar, Lisna and Prabal can be called brunettes. Mala, Raka and Suniti can be considered blondes. Dilip Roy’s women characters are attractive.

Asit, the narrator of *Upward Spiral* is Dilip Roy himself. From his autobiography, *Pilgrims of the Stars* one can learn that like Asit he, too, had lost his mother at the age of six. Asit is a musician, the author, too, was a prominent musician of his times. Pramila is Asit’s former pupil of music. Roy also had such rich and aristocratic music students like Premila (e.g. Uma Bose).

Asit stays in the Yoga-Ashram of his gurudev Swayamananda at Dumel. The author stayed at the Ashram of his gurudev Sri Aurobindo in Pondicheny. Raka who has left her husband and son, is Asit’s spiritual colleague at the Ashram. Indira Devi was Roy’s spiritual colleague at Sri Aurobindo Ashram. She also had left her home, husband and children, like Raka, for the sake of the realization of Krishna.

Mala, it seems, is Esha Mukherjee, Dilip Roy's niece who has been staying at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry for many years.

Swayamananda represents Sri Aurobindo or rather Sri Aurobindo as saw him. In Roy's conception he is an ideal guru, established upon the highest height of spirituality, beckoning all the comers to reach there where he stands from their special positions on the slopes. He encourages each one, exhorts all those who are tired by steep ascent and tries to cheer up those who despond. This is how, Roy saw Sri Aurobindo. To him his gurudev was perfection. There are no faults in him. One cannot help feeling though that here is not the portrait of a historical being, but a timeless ideal, portrayed by the author. He is the light of the novel and fit guide to the characters who look for the light. The name Swayamananda, is like the names we find in morality play. It means 'bliss itself'. It is intended to describe literally the consciousness of the character. character, then, is not a human being but a personification of an abstraction. Sri Aurobindo's views are expressed as it is seen through Swayamananda's speeches in this novel.

But Sri Aurobindo ashram here is shifted from South to extreme North. The author has also changed certain other details. The description of the evening artis and the direct guidance of gurudev to his disciples like Asit and Raka appears similar to the description of the Ashram of Yashodama and Krishnaprem situated near Almoda, given in Roy's biography: *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem*.

It is very difficult to hazard a guess about other characters. It might require further research work to know who is who of Roy's fictionalized works.

The third person narrative technique used by the novelist here is the traditional and natural mode of narration. The author remains always present by the side of his work, commenting and explaining. With this method, the novelist can speak of the mental conditions of his characters, too. He, while describing the outward actions of a character, can also speak of his or her inward thoughts. Roy puts forward his views through the character of Asit.

The novel tells a story in a flash-back manner. It is Mala's story told by Asit to Premila and Nirmal. Swayamananda analyses the ideas and attitudes of people around him and effects the necessary change in their attitudes. But at the end, the author does not anticipate what lies ahead. He leaves it to his readers to imagine.

The novel is rich with graphic descriptions. Consider, for example, the following:

"The blue curve of the river scintillated, weaving an ineffable magic... Now and again pretty *shikaras* brushed past, often, alas, carrying strident pleasure-seekers, utterly out of harmony

with the scene. For was not the lofty temple of Shiva presiding over all, like a shimmering grace, on the russet Hill of Shankaracharya? A winding pathway spiralled up to its summit, festal at night with arcs of gleaming lanterns, at once illusive and beckoning.”⁸

Amar’s escape from his own house is narrated vividly by the author. The narration is interspersed with dialogue:

“The door was pushed open and Ruma entered followed by Amar’s Musalman door-keeper.

“*Maf kijiyege Huzur*” said the latter. “*Khud Police aab.*” Mala looked at her maid. “What is the matter?”

“Red Sahib, *didimoni*—very red—with a sepoy—” she faltered out in a scared voice.

The last drop of blood was drained from Amar’s face. “What do you mean ?” he rasped.

The two servants both spoke at once wanting to throw an immediate flood of light.

Man: “Police—police, *Huzur !*” Maid: “And a sepoy— with a shiny *banduk, didimoni!* ”

Amar suddenly swayed, grasped at a chest of drawers; his legs shook visibly; then with a supreme effort he said: “All right, t— tell them I’m coming.”

The servants withdrew, leaving the door a-jar. Mala sought Amar’s eyes in vain....

“What on earth is the meaning of this?” she asked.

But Amar offered no explanation. He stood awhile transfixed, his eyes wild and face blanched for sheer terror. Then suddenly, as one possessed, he sprang to the door, bolted it and then leapt out through the window down into a flower-bed eight feet below. Mala rushed to the window with a yell. But Amar ran like mad towards the low hedge which he took like a stallion in the flickering of an eye and vanished into the twilight shadows.”⁹

Many of the speeches delivered by Gurudev Swayamananda are reflective in nature. Guiding Raka, once, he said:

“.....it has been seen and testified to that desires, when they make the aspirant feel that he is weak by himself, end by strengthening him; for only when you feel helpless, will your stubborn ego consent to seek help. And what help could be more reliable than the Divine’s?... But the trouble is that this is just the realisation the ego dreads because it destroys its self-respect, don’t you see ?”¹⁰

Many letters written by Mala to Asit or Tapan to Mala or Amar to Mala are included in the novel. Letters written by Mala to Asit and Tapan to Mala are very long. While Amar’s letters are very brief.

The language of *Upward Spiral* is poetic. Almost all major characters belong to high aristocratic class. So, their speeches are refined. Proverbs abound in the speeches of Asit and Raka. Asit, for instance, says: ‘The only fly in the ointment was Prabal.’¹¹ Referring to Prabal, Raka asks: “For do you think he could mean white when he said white?”¹²

On the whole, it can be seen that the novelist has elaborately given the details of lives of Mala, Raka and Asit in particular to trace out their spiritual growth. But the modern reader may find it too lengthy and tedious on certain occasions though all the features of a well-built novel, be found in this work.

But, we must remember, Roy is a biographer, not a novelist, although he might use the novel for his biographical and autobiographical purposes. He is excellently successful in his purposes.

(B) *Miracles Do Still Happen*

Miracles Do Still Happen was first published in 1961 as a rendering in English of Dilip Roy’s Bengali novel, *Aghatan Ajo Ghate*. The author has attempted here to focus emphatically on those mystical experiences of a few persons which can be called miraculous. While touching this delicate topic of miracles in the modern age of science, Roy is aware of the diverse interpretations of the term prevalent among people. So, to specify his own definition of miracles, in the “Preface”, he explicitly writes that

“...only those miracles which are wrought by Divine Grace to enlighten, remould or transform the nature of an aspirant are most worthy of our attention in that they help our consciousness evolve by purifying us and teaching us to be humble. I care little for the other kind of miracles which are often performed by so many occultists, not to mention jugglers and thaumaturges.”¹³

In his self-vindication, he further states that though he has presented his findings in the form of a novel, he does not wish it to be treated as mere fiction meant for entertainment. He says:

“I have also wanted, while marshalling the data, to be honest and truthful, because a mystic novel of this nature could hardly pass even as a work of art if the essential data were false. That is why I have accepted only such accounts as I have known to be absolutely authentic and, more often than not, attested by my own senses and ratified by Indira Devi’s ”.¹⁴

Hence, this novel can be called an autobiographical novel, in which the author has only changed the names of persons and places, but has tried to preserve the facts as they were.

Asit, the narrator of the novel, was unexpectedly invited to San Francisco after his Guru’s demise. During his tour to America and Europe with Tapati, his daughter-disciple, he gave musical presentations, sang devotional songs and delivered discourses on Indian tradition and spirituality. In New York, Barbara, a devout Christian, comes to Asit with her queries about Eastern beliefs in God which are entirely different from Western beliefs. So, Asit describes those miraculous incidents of God’s grace which happened in the lives of a few persons with whom he was intimately related.

Amal, one of those fortunate seekers of the Divine grace, was an M. A. in Sanskrit. He was working as a tutor to an eight year old son of Sheth Sri B-Parekh, a Gujarati millionaire merchant. Shethji was a known worshipper of Krishna . Amal did not have faith in the reality of God. So he refused to pray before the Image of Lord Krishna for the sake of the recovery of his master’s wife. She died on the next day. The disappointed Shethji threw away the Image in the dustbin. Amal picked it up, cleaned it and kept it with him as a thing of beauty. So, out of fury, Shethji terminated Amal from his services. Asit arranged for his job in Patna as a school teacher and always remained in the contact with this truthful and sincere young man. Amal, then, began to love the Image of Krishna. His faith in Krishna became concrete and had visions of Krishna’s presence around him. Once, in his attempts to extinguish fire and save the lives of people of a burning hut, he got terribly burnt. His face became so ugly that he was misunderstood for a leper and was again removed from his job. But his faith in Krishna was not diminished at all. During one of his visions, as Amal reported to Asit, Krishna came and promised him even without his asking, to give him the gift on His own birthday, ‘Janmashtami.’ On that day, when Amal came out from Ganga water after his bath, everybody around him, including Asit, witnessed in utter astonishment that he had regained his previous beautiful face.

Shyam Thakur, Amal's uncle, was another recipient of Krishna's miraculous grace. He was a householder. At the bidding of his guru, Ananda Giri, he gave up all his means of earning in his village, Anantpur and took to *akashvritti*, that is: "...to depend for *everything* on God and God alone."¹⁵ With Kamala, his wife, and Annapurna his daughter, he went to Varanasi and began to deliver discourses on *the Gita* and *the Bhagavat* there. People who invited him would collect a small amount for him on the spot from the listeners.

It was extremely difficult for Shyam Thakur to run his household from such a meagre amount he was getting. Kamala was getting restless by the fact that they were not able to arrange for their grown up daughter's marriage. Shyam Thakur wrote to his guru frequently of his troubles. But his guru, in his replies, exhorted him to wait patiently for the intervention of the Divine Grace. Sad Annapurna, once, went to their rich neighbour, Atul Babu's house at night, to commit suicide by throwing herself in their big water tank. She was noticed and stopped by Jamuna, Atul Babu's daughter, who also happened to be her friend. It was revealed, then, that Anil, Atul Babu's son had liking for Annapurna and wanted to marry her. Asit also narrated other incidents of Shyam Thakur's life during which his guru had exhorted him to rely on God and wait patiently even during the most critical moments. And true to his Guru's words, Shyam Thakur's problems were solved miraculously.

On the following day, Asit tells Barbara about Mandira, the daughter of Shyam Thakur's first cousin, Moni Babu. Mandira was born and brought up in the religious atmosphere caused by the aspiration of her grand father, Phani Roy and mother, Bimla Devi. She had to suffer a lot when Bimla Devi died and Moni Babu got married again to Manju Devi. Manju Devi stopped all religious, and charitable activities which were taking place in their temple house. She forced Moni Babu to transfer all his property on her own name. Mandira was extremely unhappy. Moni Babu was unhappy, too. Moni Babu died of heart attack, leaving the amount of Rs. 15000/- at the disposal of Shyam Thakur for the dowry of Mandira. Shyam Thakur was insulted badly by Manju Devi. Mandira was not allowed to dance in their temple house. One day, while she could not resist and began to dance in worship of Krishna, Manju Devi came and began to scold her in the presence of many people, including Shyam Thakur and Asit. Mandira, out of fear, told her a lie that it was not she who was dancing, but it might be Radha Rani. Manju Devi argued that Radha Rani, being in marble, was white, while Mandira was dark-brown. Mandira answered that the goddess did change her colour to be like a dark goddess. Furious Manju Devi dragged her to the room where the Images were kept. All people present there followed her and to their surprise, they found that Radha's life-size marble Image was changed in colour from white into dark-brown, matching Mandira's own. Mandira was full of

gratitude towards Radha and decided to devote her life to the Divine and not to enter into the worldly life of marriage. This miracle transformed Manju Devi's heart as well. She made their temple-home 'Radhashram' where almost a hundred orphan girls lived dedicated lives, served by Mandira and her mother, presided over by Shyam Thakur.

Sati's is the most interesting and concrete example of an aspirant's sincere faith in God and also God's instant reply to it.

Sati was the niece of Asit's neighbour, Kalipada Babu in Calcutta. From her childhood, she was visiting Asit's house and she learnt to sing devotional songs from him. Because of her ardent aspiration for Krishna, she vowed to be the Lord's maid, but her father, staying in Assam chose Arun as her 'life-partner. Once, at midnight, Sati had a dream in which she

"...saw that everything was rocking, buildings crumbling like houses of cards, trees shrieking hysterically and the sick earth spewing out inky filth."¹⁶

When she got up, she was instructed by a deep, low voice, to run out of the house without delay. She rushed to her father's door and asked them to come out. But they did not. Sati, by an unseen hand, was pushed towards the door. As soon as she went out, there was an earthquake. She thought it was an end of the world. Just at that time, she found Krishna's Image lying at her feet. She gathered the Image to her breast like a mother and she felt as if He was a living child who clung to her helplessly for protection. A strange peace pervaded her being. Later on, her apparently happy married life with Arun did not give her the peace she aspired for. So, Asit advised her to go to any good ashram for peace. But Arun requested her not to go to an ashram but to go to Rawalpindi where his mother and sister were staying in their large house where she can stay in seclusion for a few months. But after her stay at Rawalpindi for a fortnight, Muslims started massacring the Hindus. Meanwhile, Sati met a sadhu from Haridwar, named Ananda Giri, who guided Sati to follow her heart's aspiration and not to lead the ordinary life of worldly pleasures and responsibilities. Moreover, he suggested Sati either to fly with him to Delhi or leave Pindi for Kashmir or Amritsar, but not to stay there any more because, with his occult power, he saw a deep shadow brooding over that city. As Sati was waiting for Asit's arrival, she could not leave with Ananda Giri.

But, on the next day the communal violence increased in the city. Sati's brother-in-law informed her that the condition was out-of-the control of police and it was necessary for them to leave the city. The earliest plane was to leave in an hour. An omnibus was to be sent by the airport authorities to pick the passengers up in about twenty minutes. Every one was instructed to carry only

one hand-bag weighing not more than five pounds. Sati found that her Lord's Image weighed almost ten pounds and she was not ready to leave the place without it. She did not listen to any advice or taunt inflicted upon her by her in-laws. She did not go with them. She, in fact, wanted to test whether Lord Krishna really meant it when he said it in *the Gita* that his devotees shall never come to grief. She began to pray to Krishna to help her in her hour of need.

After some time, a group of a few Muslim ruffians broke into Sati's house and started looting it. They were about to misbehave with Sati when an elderly Muslim gentleman, addressed as Rahmat, came and sent them into other rooms to loot. He asked Sati in Bengali to go with him if she wanted to save her life. He made Sati wear a *burkha* prepared instantly out of a bed-sheet. He took Sati with her Image of Krishna in her Daimler out of the house. On the way, Sati saw a blue air-liner omnibus stood wrecked, surrounded by vicious-looking ruffians and also her injured brother-in-law and crying mother-in-law. After facing many ordeals, Rahmat and Sati reached Delhi. Later on, they went to Ashram of Ananda Giri in Haridwar and began to stay there as his disciples.

Lastly, Ananda Giri's multi-faceted personality as an ideal guru is presented. How Ananda Giri, with his higher knowledge helps Sati, Rajat, her son and Arun, settling down in his ashram is also described in detail. His miraculous powers to know thoughts of others, to turn sand into *halva prasad* of Lord Krishna and also to guide people like Asit to their own predestined, divinely-appointed guru like Swami Swayamananda, are shown meticulously by the author.

At the end of the novel the authorial purpose is realized. Barbara, Asit's interlocutor, is fired with enthusiasm to see God face to face. In a letter, she seeks Asit's blessings to realize "...the Supreme Lord whose Love expresses itself through Beauty to lead us all to Bliss."¹⁷ She expresses her desire to go to India, the holy land of *Dharma* after such a realization.

Barbara's character undergoes a change. From a doubting intellectual, she becomes an ardent aspirant. The same progress can be seen in the lives of those persons whose biographical sketches are drawn by Roy. Amal, from almost an atheist, becomes a man of God realization. Shyam Thakur, with the help of his guru, is able to give up an ordinary life of self-sufficiency and take to *akashvritti* with utmost faith in God. When Mandira's lie turns into truth, her faith becomes stronger and she gets her marriage cancelled to devote her time to the service of God. Sati's faith in Krishna enables her to save herself from earthquake and later on from the atrocities of the Muslim ruffians. Her example inspires Rahmat, Rajat and Arun to rely more and more on God. So, at the end of each sketch and at the end of the novel, the reader can notice a change of situation for the betterment of all those who are concerned.

Miracles Do Still Happen, as Dilip Roy has stated, is based on those incidents which he himself had witnessed. So, this realistic stuff makes it a novel. But at a deeper level he speaks of the truth of the Higher Reality of Krishna and the blissful effect of His grace on the human lives. Hence, it can be called the narration of Krishna's romance with his ardent and loyal devotees on the human stage.

The conflict, in this novel, is generally between a person versus his or her own self. Actually, there is a conflict between ordinary human existence versus the spiritual one. Shethji, Kamala, Manju Devi, Arun, and his relatives are persons of ordinary human existence, having hopes only for a prosperous social life. But at the end, they turn towards spirituality. They thus move higher. On the other hand, Amal, Shyam Thakur, Mandira, and Sati are persons of strong aspirations for the realization of God and their aspirations, as it is emphatically shown, are fulfilled by the miraculous incidents of their lives. They had been higher and they still keep moving higher. Asit stands as a witness to these miracles of their lives. Roy wants to reaffirm faith in the spiritual happenings which are beyond the ken of the reasoning of human mind and which are, as a result, known as miracles.

The symbolic couplets quoted at the beginning of each story from diverse Indian scriptures like *Kathopanishad*, *Mahabharata*, and *the Gita* are suggestive of the themes of the stories.

As in *Upward Spiral* and many other novels, here, too, persons like Amal, Sati, Shyam Thakur travel from one place to another. Again, their spiritual journey and its realization are depicted here. The pattern of ever mounting aspiration for Krishna is present in almost all of Dilip Roy's works, but in this novel, he has worked very hard to show the realization of the aspirations of even ordinary human beings like Amal. At the centre of them all is Anand Giri here who is changeless eternity inspiring all constructive changes. The arrow pattern discussed earlier at length is clearly exhibited here, too. The narrator, though he is a witness to the miracles within this novel did not find any one happening in his own life. But at the end of his severe struggle, he has succeeded in getting himself accepted by his divinely-appointed guru, Swayamananda.

Miracles Do Still Happen can only very loosely be described as a single narrative. It is supposed to be a historical account of the things that have really happened. Each miracle is, in a way, independent. Any chapter could be at random read and enjoyed independently. It is not a part of a well-made plot. The novel is many stories and not one single tale. The author, however, has tried to combine them all in a loose frame, somewhat similar to that of *the Canterbury Tales* or the *Arabian Nights* or the tales of *Vaitalpanchak* in *Kathasaritsagar* or *Jatak Tales*. In each one of these works, many tales are held together by a loose

connecting thread. In one, each pilgrim of the group of pilgrims tells a tale. In the second it is the princess condemned to die in the morning tells her tale, in the third, King Vikramaditya, taking the body of Vaital to the place of destination hears the tale of Vaital and is forced to answer his questions. In the last, Buddha tells the tales of his previous lives. In *Miracles Do Still Happen*, similarly, the loose frame is the frame of conversation between Asit and his American interlocutor. Barbara is curious about the possibilities of miracles in modern times and Asit narrates to her the miracles that he has himself witnessed.

Dilip Roy introduces his characters to his readers by describing their physical appearance. Introducing Bimla Devi and her beloved daughter, Mandira, he writes:

“Bimla Devi, though a beautiful woman, was not fair. She was what we call shyamli: that is, almost dark in complexion. In our country such beauties are not widely appreciated. So when she gave birth to Mandira—who, if anything, was a shade darker than herself—she could not repress a sigh. But as, with years, the little girl grew more and more lovely till she just dripped beauty and grace, her maternal disappointment gave place to thrilled delight, the more so as Mandira took to the Lord as birds take to the sky.”¹⁸

Dilip Roy indicated gestures of his characters for their instant recognition. Asit’s habit of smoking and going on thinking meditatively while smoking is frequently referred to with such sentences:

“Asit paused and blew a cloud of smoke meditatively.”¹⁹

“Asit pulled at his cigar a little absently for a space.”²⁰

“Asit paused and pulled at his cigar meditatively for a few seconds”²¹

“Asit puffed meditatively at his cigar.”²²

Like *Upward Spiral*, one can find here both ‘brunettes’ and ‘blondes’ in the distinctive sense, suggested by Wellek and Warren. Kamala, Manju Devi, Sati’s brother-in-law and sister-in-law and the Bengali actress can be classified as brunettes. While Sati, Mandira, and Annapurna can be called blondes. Roy’s characters are simple and not complex, flat, not round. The characters are not clearly distinguishable from one another.

As this novel is allegedly subjective, the sketches of many characters can be considered autobiographical and biographical. Asit, the narrator, is Dilip Kumar Roy himself. Tapati, Asit’s daughter-disciple, is Indira Devi. Their guru, Swayamananda, represents Sri Aurobindo. One can say Barbara stands for a real woman who met Dilip Roy in America and her name began with ‘B’ because

Roy's letter to her is published in Appendix I. The character of Ananda Giri, as Roy himself has revealed during the last phase of his life in his book, *The Flute Calls Still* is drawn from the personality of Swami Ramdas. Roy was personally connected with all the remaining characters of the novel. He has simply changed their names to hide their identity.

The writer has mingled facts with a little element of fiction to convert them into a delightful material for a novel. With the parallel study of his autobiography, *Pilgrims of the Stars* and even other biographical works one can find that the element of fiction is almost negligible. The veil is very transparent. For instance, in the story of Ananda Giri, he has taken liberty with time. On the one hand, he talks of the events of partition which took place in 1947, while on the other hand he talks of his own crises about the search for his guru which actually took place in 1928. He claims that this Anand Giri is Swami Ramdas. But one can find from *Pilgrims of the Stars* that the saint who told Dilip Roy about his predestined guru was not Swami Ramdas, but Baroda Kanta Babu. Such changes, however, do not matter when the reader approaches it as a work of art and loses himself or herself in the free flow of the narration. Roy does not try portraits in the novel, but miraculous events. Therefore, narration becomes more important than portraits. The element of fiction appears in the imaginative treatment of events actually witnessed by the author. Roy has used the traditional third person narrative technique. It has enabled the author to remain present everywhere with his characters while he, as Asit, retrospectively, relates the stories of miracles to Barbara. The "Appendices" given at the end of the novel add to the veracity of the miraculous events described in the form of novel.

The structure of the novel becomes extraordinarily delightful when one notices Roy's command of the English language. His prose is very poetic. His style, as usual, is poetic and metaphorical. The flow of the narrative remains lucid throughout the novel. Various Hindi devotional songs and Sanskrit dictums included in the original form as well as in English translation, exhibit the author's talent as a musician, as a scholar of various languages and as a translator as well. It seems that the author has also tried to keep his Western readers in his mind. Here, as in all other works, the author has given letters written by himself to others and also by others to himself.

The book, both in Bengali and English, was on the one hand criticized for its theme of miracles and on the other, appreciated. As Dilip Roy reports in the "Preface", his Bengali "...book saw four editions in two years and was ranked as one of the best-sellers in the book-market"²³

A few literary critics took a serious note of it in their articles. Indian P.E.N. (February 1959), wrote

“The artist and the devotee dwell here side by side and the passage from one to the other is easy. A great intellectual turns a real *bhakta* and speaks of a world where communion with Godhead is a fact of indubitable, vivid experience. The reader is overwhelmed by the simple expression of faith and does not stop to question its authenticity.”²⁴

Srikumar Banerjee in his essay, “Dilip Kumar’s Mystic Novels” noted:

“It is in its singular contemporaneous appropriateness that the rare merit of Dilip Kumar’s book lies. He has revealed the mystery of the Divine presence in the familiar setting of Modern life and amidst the tortuous mental processes of the self-conscious modern man Dilip Kumar has wonderfully recaptured the heart-beats of the past without producing its distended heart. Never has there been such a deft combination of trenchant logic with soaring faith, and never the inner history of spiritual *sadhana* with its conflicts and contradictions, been brought home so intimately to the rationalising spirit of the age.”²⁵

On the whole, it can be seen that *Miracles Do Still Happen* is different from Roy’s general work. It illustrates his love of the wonderful and the incredible. In fact, all along it attracted him more. He never said it explicitly, that miracles are the part of spirituality, but he always expected them. This shows a streak of childishness in his character, you may say, a love of magic and fairy tales. In terms of Indian Poetics, you may say, there is in this novel the *Adbhut Ras* in plenty. We have little reason to contradict a sincere person like Dilip Roy when he says that he is simply reporting what he saw, and he is not concocting tales. But the miracles strain our credibility and we should rather suspend our judgement about their veracity. Aristotle’s advice is that the content of literature should be probable and necessary. In loose works of the sort Dilip Roy is writing, we cannot expect the observance of the law of necessity, for there is hardly anything like artistic plot or pattern. But an enlightened reader would want that the law of probability should be followed, and see great sense in the Aristotelian adage that likely impossibility is preferable to improbable possibility. Dilip Roy disregards this advice. In fact, he has little reason to think of it when he knows that he is freely, in a rambling style, expressing himself and narrating what he saw, and not writing what we call literature. It is we who discover some elements of literature in his writing and expect more of them from him. What we find is life and superlife and want of art in the sense of careful weaving and designing. Yet, in our response, we cannot but note that the miraculous is rather irksome to us. We do not doubt the integrity of the author, but we also know that he is likely to see

more than what is evident, and likely to exaggerate what he finds. Coincidence could be interpreted as miraculous timing of certain events, for example, one may read without justification a Divine design in ordinary drifts of events. How far could miracles be trusted or regarded as true events ? We should rather suspend our judgement about them than speak anything in defence or opposition of them. Moreover, we must admit that we adults do not cease to be children altogether and find delight in fairy tales and magic. It must be admitted that Dilip Roy serves this kind of delight in abundance.

(C) *Wings and Bonds*

Like *Upward Spiral* and *Miracles Do Still Happen*, *Wings and Bonds* is one of the spiritual novels written by Dilip Kumar Roy. He wrote this novel in Bengali in 1976 and later on translated it into English in 1977.

Here, the novelist shows how Nandaraj Chakravarti, from the man of reason and self-complacency, turns miraculously into a believer in the Divine Reality and a devotee of Maheshji, their guru. Fullara, Chakravarti's wife is instrumental in his transformation.

Nandaraj, after building a large fortune for twenty years, has retired from his business. He lives luxuriously in a garden house on the bank of the Ganga a few miles away from Calcutta. Fullara, his second wife, is very pious. She passes her life as a dutiful wife also. She frequently sings devotional songs which, at times, are composed by herself in their private temple as well as in the Radha-Krishna temple, situated near their house. She gets absorbed in *samadhi* while singing and improvising her own singing in diverse 'ragas' of the Indian classical music. Such fits of *bhakti* perhaps have caused her angina and low blood pressure. Neglecting the doctor's advice she goes on singing her songs and also teaching her songs to Ekanta, her step-son and Pari, her neighbour's daughter.

Nandaraj is very much against Fullara's devotional activities. He considers them as illogical, sentimental fits of the Indians. He frequently argues with Fullara in favour of the Western rational approach to life and he, like his friend Sushanta, believes in the superiority of the intellectual attitude of the Western people to the emotional attitude of faith and devotion of the Indians. Nandaraj is also against Ekanta, who, under the influence of Fullara, has decided to live the life of spirituality and not of the successful life of any practical man of this world. Fullara always asks Nandaraj not to impose his view on his son who is cut out to be a free thinker.

Moreover, Fullara's strong determination to rely only on God for all of her physical troubles and not to rely on any human being proves exemplary for Nandaraj who was saved from a serious accident by the grace of God in Kashmir when he fell down while stepping out of the boat-house. When Maheshji comes

from Brindaban, Fullara invites him to visit their house. She realizes that he is her divinely-appointed guru. Nandaraj and other members of the family, too, accept him as their guru. Mahesh, through his occult powers, foresees a shadow over Nandaraj. He prays to Lord Ganesh to save him from his trouble. In the "Epilogue", the readers are informed of Nandaraj's miraculous rescue from the fatal plane crash when he came back from the plane, which was to carry him to Madras, to bring back the locket with his guru's photograph which he had forgotten in the bathroom of the aerodrome.

Wings and Bonds can be called a novel as it is an imaginative presentation of a real story of Fullara and Nandaraj's life. But when the author sets out to speak of spiritual reality, the work also takes the shape of a romance of the Divine with the aspiring human beings. When Roy refers to Goswami and Mahesh and also the influence of Mahesh in changing the attitudes of many people like Nandaraj, Swarna and Sukhendra, he, as a literary artist, presents, his own views of ideal human existence.

Here there is room enough for conflicting views. Fullara, Goswami and Mahesh stand for the importance of spirituality in human life. On the other hand, Nandaraj, Sushanta and Swarna initially do not believe in the Higher Spiritual Reality. They are prudent men of the practical world. But the conflict is resolved at the end of the novel when, due to the miraculous incidents caused by the influence of Mahesh, Nandaraj turns into a man of complete faith in the Divine Reality. Nandaraj's attitude to Ekanta also becomes mature and positive at the end of the novel. Later on, Swarna, too, allows Pari to learn music and devotional songs from Fullara. The indication of the union of these two young aspirants, Ekanta and Pari, in marriage, is that Divine Grace will prevail everywhere in their future.

Dilip Roy's motive in this narrative, as he states in the "Preface", is:

"...to delineate the soul's evolution through the vicissitudes of its eternal quest for the ultimate end of life, to wit, the One who goes on with his everlasting Cosmic Play, *lila*, of joy and pain, hope and despair, ascents to the heights and descents into the abysses. I have taken my stand on faith founded on the testimonies of Godrealised saints, but leading ultimately to the experience of Divine Grace which our faith accepts on trust at the outset but verifies through the soul's progressive realisations."²⁶

As in the other novels of Roy's, so also here the element of journey is involved in the plot. Nandaraj, first of all, goes to Delhi and Kashmir from Calcutta. Later on, he begins his journey from Calcutta to Nagpur and when he is about to leave in the plane for Madras, he is miraculously saved from the tragedy

of the plane crash. This journey, as in all other works of Roy, signifies the internal quest of the main characters for Truth which leads them from rationality to spirituality. Almost all the characters of the novel are in search of such an ideal existence in which they can realize, through the grace of their guru, the Grace of the Divine. The design of the plot here is again the same as that of 'the upward spiral', that is, one-pointed aspiration of the major characters towards the realization of Krishna. But this design is very loose. One reason why Roy's plots are episodic, is that he presents faithfully facts in terms of fiction. What he writes about is real life and real life lacks literary design. Roy is the least inventive artist and therefore, the most episodic. He does try to reduce the chaos of life to order and does impose a design upon the material of his work. But how far would one succeed ? Dilip Roy realizes as much success as it is possible for him to realize in such a situation.

The significance of the title should be clear. Man is chained to *prakriti*, living mechanically under the compulsions of his inner nature. This condition is called the state of being *yantrarudh* or 'being mounted on machine', in the terminology of the *Bhagavat Gita*. To be free from the shackles of *prakriti* or nature is the aim of all spiritual disciplines of Indian thought. You may call it *mukti* or *moksha*. Rise towards it is enjoined by all thinkers and saints. The 'wings' in the title signifies such a rise. If the 'bonds' signify the chains of *prakriti* and the *yantrarudh* condition, the 'wings' signify the flight towards freedom and the *yogarudh* condition in *the Gita* terminology.²⁷

In this brief novel, Dilip Roy introduces his characters with very few words. Introducing Ekanta he writes: "Fullara was overjoyed to have such a handsome and gifted son to look after."²⁸

Later on, he informs his readers that:

"Pari, a thirteen-year-old daughter of her neighbour Sukhendra, was a prodigy. She had won many a prize at different functions and was passionately fond of Fullara's singing."²⁹

He analyses the moral and psychological natures of his characters. Analysing Swarna's attitude towards Fullara, Dilip Roy notes that she

"...admired her Didi's various gifts, but felt a trifle jealous of the tributes she received from all and sundry. She was certainly delighted at Pari's flowering out in music under Fullara's tuition, but had some misgivings' about Pari's growing enthusiasm for religion and singing devotional songs, especially in the Temple . But she was helpless, as everyone she knew panegyrised Fullara's grace, generosity and manifold gifts. So, willy-nilly, she had to toe the line.

She had to give in for another reason: she had her eyes on Ekanta, the brilliant boy, born with a silver spoon in his mouth and liked by everybody. Where could she get a better husband for Pari? It almost looked as if destiny had stepped in and thrown them together. The only fly in the ointment was the Temple, but after all one could not have everything. So she had to encourage Pari to be trained in music along with Ekanta and all her alarm faded when she thrilled to the prospect of the 'perfect' marriage. She didn't realise the irony of the paradox: that she at once objected to God installed in the Temple and thanked Him in heaven for being such an ideal matchmaker."³⁰

Many characters of *Wings and Bonds* are dynamic. Almost all of them, like Nandaraj, Ekanta, Sushanta, Pari are progressing spiritually. But Goswami, Mahesh and Fullara are static characters as they, it seems, have attained a higher spiritual status because of their one-pointed aspiration and asceticism from where they can guide others to achieve similar heights. In this short novel, there is no scope for the author to show the full development of his characters with abundance of details. Moreover, almost all the characters are good at heart, though there prevails difference of opinion between the husband and the wife and also between the father and the son. Fullara and Pari are 'blondes' in the sense suggested by Wellek and Warren, that is, the blonde is the "...home maker, unexciting but steady and sweet"³¹

Roy lacks an insight into human psychology. And his characters look like puppets, mostly the embodiment of ideals. They don't have 'roundness' and flesh and blood realism.

Moreover, as Dilip Roy has proclaimed, *Wings and Bonds* is an autobiographical novel: "...broad-based by and large, on our experiences."³² So, he has drawn almost all the characters of this novel from his first hand contact with the people around him. Hence, all of them are based on real persons. The novelist has merely changed their names.

After the study of *Pilgrims of the Stars*, the autobiography written by Dilip Roy and Indira Devi, one can tell with certainty that Fullara, the central figure of this novel, is none other than Indira Devi. She, too, was an ardent aspirant of Krishna. She, like Fullara, was tirelessly singing songs of Mira. She was getting experiences of *samadhi*. She was also suffering from angina and low blood pressure and also from many other diseases. She was unable to sing songs because of her ill health. Like Fullara, she also felt that Dilip Roy was her destined guru. Indira Devi's husband, like Nandaraj, was very rich and intelligent. But he, too, was sceptical about the reality of spiritual experiences of Indira

Devi. He had great reverence for Dilip Roy whom Indira Devi had accepted as her predestined Guru. Mahesji of this novel who is described as ‘...the great *bhakta* singer’³³ is Dilip Roy himself. Mahesh says that he is having an Ashram at Brindaban and he sings at various places to raise fund for the dispensary of his Ashram. Dilip Roy also gave the musical presentations at different places of India to collect money for the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo, his guru.

Similarly, one of the devotees of Roy and Indira Devi at their Temple-house— Hari Krishna Mandir, Pune, was given the name Ekanta by Roy. His former name was Richard Miller. Indira Devi liked him very much and guided him a lot on the path of spirituality. He, too, like Ekanta of this novel doted after Indira Devi as a son dotes after his mother. Goswami seems to be Swami Ramdas in disguise.

In this novel, too, Dilip Roy has adopted the traditional third person narrative technique. That enables him to be present everywhere around and inside his characters and to comment on their actions and thoughts alike.

Here, the descriptions of places are not so elaborate and frequent, as they are in *Upward Spiral*. Yet, Nandaraj describes the beauty of Kashmir and Jhilm in his letters. Roy, as in his other works, here, too, succeeds in reproducing the religious atmosphere of the Medieval India when plenty of people were participating in the singing of devotional songs composed by Mira and Chaitanya. Fullara lives in the same background where people bathe themselves in the Ganga, go to temples and sing songs of devotion.

Roy, almost always, includes letters in his works. *Wings and Bonds* is not an exception. Nandaraj’s letters to Fullara and Fullara’s replies to his letters are added in this narrative. Ekanta also writes letters to his father in which he favours his step-mother’s spirituality and rebukes him for his worldly wisdom. All of these letters are short.

The language of this novel, as usual, is poetic. All the characters belong to high aristocratic class. Hence, there is a tone of decency and refinement in their speeches.

Notes :

1. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Upward Spiral* (New York: Jaiço Publishing House, 1949), (Page number is not given).
2. *ibid.*, pp. 143-44.
3. *ibid.*, (Page number is not given).
4. *ibid.*, p.26.
5. *ibid.*, p.171.

6. *ibid.*, pp. 174-75.
7. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 3rd ed. (London-Penguin Books, 1993), p. 220.
8. Roy, *Upward*, p. 2.
9. *ibid.*, p. 530.
10. *ibid.*, pp. 384-85.
11. *ibid.*, p. 80.
12. *ibid.*, p. 82.
13. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Miracles Do Still Happen* (1961; rpt. Bombay: India Book House, 1984) , p. 16.
14. *ibid.*, p. 16.
15. *ibid.*, p. 67.
16. *ibid.*, p. 173.
17. *ibid.*, p. 342.
18. *ibid.*, p. 110.
19. *ibid.*, p.48.
20. *ibid.*, p.48.
21. *ibid.*, p.70.
22. *ibid.*, p. 74.
23. *ibid.*, p. 17.
24. *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
25. Srikumar Banerjee, "Dilip Kumar's Mystic Novels," in Milan Sen, ed. *Varan Malika, A Garland of Homage to Sri Dilip Kumar Roy on His Eightieth Birthday* (Calcutta: Sura-Kavya Samsad, 1976),pp. 95-96.
26. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Wings and Bonds* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1978) p.vii.
27. *The Gita*, XVIII/61, VI/4.
28. Roy, *Wings*, p.3.
29. *ibid.*, p.6.
30. *ibid.*, p.12.
31. Wellek and Warren, *Theory*, p.220.
32. Roy *Wings*, p. vii.
33. *ibid.*, p.83.

8 : POETRY

Dilip Kumar Roy's first collection of English poems, *Eyes of Light* was published in 1948. Then, in *Hark ! His Flute !* all the poems published in *Eyes of Light* along with his later poems were collected in 1972. Roy's *ista devata* was Krishna and he always sang in praise of this "Magic Flutist of Brindaban" in his poetry. As Krishna is the theme of many of his poems, the collection is entitled: *Hark ! His Flute !* The poems chosen for the present study are from this latter publication.

Apart from being an ardent spiritual aspirant, Dilip Roy was an eminent musician of his day. As such, he was deeply influenced by the rich heritage of the devotional poetry of India. So, he wrote plenty of poems, both in Bengali as well as in English to express his intense worship of the Divine. Many of the poems in this volume are written to sing the glory of gods and goddesses like Krishna, Ganesh, Radha etc. But some of them could be called broadly biographical in Roy's sense of the term as they sketch briefly the Messengers of God, like Buddha, Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramkrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi etc.; or great spiritual seekers like Saradmoni, Nivedita, Krishnaprem etc. All these lyrical poems reflect different aspects of his search for spiritual realization.

His determination to listen to the voice of Krishna, can be seen in the very first poem of the volume, 'The Everlasting Yes'. The first and the last quartrains are:

“When thy flute calls, how can I fail
 To keep my tryst with thee?
Though dark's the world how should I quail
 When thy light flowers in me?
They make me smile, the wise, who swear
 By the everlasting No:
For the everlasting Yes I hear
 Thee hail incognito.”¹

The age in which Dilip Roy wrote was torn in the conflict between the two forces, the quest for spirituality and scepticism about the possibility of its fulfilment. Science was supposed to be true light and the criterion of truth was materialistic. This was not only Roy's dilemma. The West, too, suffered from it. The expressions 'Everlasting Yea' and 'Everlasting Nay' come from Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. He, too, was fighting the demon of materialism under the influence of German romanticism. He suffered from negation first and then realized a powerful affirmation of spiritual truth. The only difference between Roy and Carlyle is that the former's spirituality is the personal divinity of

Krishna, the latter's is impersonal spiritual immanence and transcendence. Dilip Roy's firm belief in the superiority of spiritual truth to the sensuous and materialistic facts is expressed in the lines like those quoted above. He recognizes the limitations of the reasoning capacity of mind and acknowledges the greatness of intuitive faculty of heart or soul for the apprehension of the Divine Reality. In 'Mind's Folly', for example, he asserts:

'The Mind grows blind because the haze
Of its self-will bars the way:

So 'twill not scale the heights nor blaze
A trail to His bounteous day."²

Or, in 'A Hymn to Sri Aurobindo, Poet of *Savitri*', he sings:

"O thou, illumined by His light
beyond the ken of the reasoning mind,
Who cam'st to us to elucidate
what none before thee had defined:
Who attainedst to summit-vision, scaling
viewless heights, we bow to thee
In fervent acclaim of thy aspiration
for Eternity."³

And Dilip Roy, giving beautiful poetic form to his guru's claim, writes:

"Not in the miracle feats of science
will man ever find Salvation's key,
Only His Grace can guide the soul
back home to His feet everlastingly."⁴

In a way this could be called a very brief sketch of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. In other poems, too, Dilip Roy shows unhappy existence of ordinary human beings of this world with their limited capacity of apprehension. In still other poems he delineates gracious God and the greatness of his deputies who have attained sublimity through their practice of spirituality. In great humility, Dilip Roy puts himself in the first category of men and expresses his constant aspiration for spiritual transformation of his ordinary existence. In 'Sri Ramana Maharshi', he says:

"Can we, Sage, ever give a name
To the Self that in our depths we want?
Can we, Fate's puppets, own to shame
Because we are so ignorant?

Not knowing of life's goal supreme
We thrill in Vaniti's displays,

With tongue deny the heart-lit Gleam:
 When have fools worshipped Wisdom's ways?
 In such an age of darkness thou
 Art come to meet us with thy Light
 Inscrutable—come to endow
 Us with a spark to pierce the Night"⁵

This, too, is both a philosophical sketch and an expression of the author's devotion to Maharshiji.

In 'Suppliant' the poet expresses his aspiration to give up all that is dear to him to take a plunge in Krishna's 'vast radiant sea', and sings:

"My lesser loves, illusion's brood,
 Sweep, sweep away by thy Love's flood:
 Burn burn, my all beyond recall
 By thy Flame-flute's deep minstrelsy."⁶

A few of the lyrics are on the subject of divine grace. Consider, for example, 'Grace Worthy', 'Grace and Responsibility', 'Hymn to Grace', 'Grace the Mediator'. Grace, according to Dilip Roy, is available to those whose hearts are full of humility and gratefulness towards the Divine. In 'Radharani, Goddess of Grace', he says:

"And then it is not true, O friend,
 That the vaunting elect attain to Grace:
 Her ambrosial flower will only blend
 With humility and gratefulness."⁷

In the last stanza, the poet addresses to Her directly:

"O Grace, I know thee not, nor seek
 To grasp with Reason what's beyond
 The mind: I only know—to the weak
 Thy heart of mercy must respond."⁸

This grace also works through the selfless executors of the Divine Will, through illuminated personalities of the world, who by the power of their love for Truth, their virtues and austerity, try to help the miserable humanity to rise from its down-trodden plight to the state of everlasting bliss. So, it is one of the most striking traits of Dilip Roy's nature that whenever he finds any truly great or pious person, very humbly, he remains in touch with him. He also seeks to write about him for the benefit of other people. Hence, though his devotion is the dominant feature of his poetic creations, his instinct to present biography is not at all absent from these short lyrical poems.

One might feel that what one finds elsewhere in his biographical, fictional and dramatic works, is further amplification of what is succinctly stated in these poems. For him, the emotion is everything. The object, the personality he adores,

is important only in that it awakens and draws his fervour. One thing noticeable is that when the scope is larger, as in a detailed biographical sketch or a novel, the concentration of the force of emotion is scattered and diffused. In many poems of this collection, Roy has succeeded in giving pointedly his impressions of the notable qualities of such great persons. Paying a tribute to his loving guru in his poem, 'Sri Aurobindo', the poet sings:

“Knowing thee once, do we not know the Truth,
However fragmentary? For though we may
Still fail to glimpse thy New Dawn which can soothe
Our famished eyes with His unsullied Day,

Yet once thou mak'st our half-lit consciousness Reverberate thy
fire-thrilled melody,
Will not its rapture lead us to His Grace
Resolving our discord with thy harmony ?

Who once have seen thy Face have known, O Friend:
Tis not a myth that Love is one with light”⁹

Or, about his dear friend and a fellow pilgrim, Krishnaprem, in 'Sri Krishnaprem' Dilip Kumar says:

“O Reason's elect, withal, a citizen
Of Stellar climes no mind has ever trod:
Who saw your radiant face could never again
Doubt faith's deep power of leading us back to God.”¹⁰

In very few words, he has created the exact pen picture of his daughter-disciple in 'Indira Devi':

“Earth's arid thirst to slake she's born
As Mira's soul again and again
And teaches through her love—how, vowed
To love, we can Dream's peak attain.”¹¹

How can Dilip Roy forget his bosom friend, Subhas Chandra Bose? In 'Netaji' he writes:

“O son of strength, who spurned on earth the lures of lesser love's
delight,

And, to help us worldlings, gave up all for which we clamour, fret
and fight !

You lived to achieve India's freedom in our homeland and abroad

And we hailed you as our country's leader, by your sunrise
overawed.”¹²

Brevity is an indispensable characteristic of lyrical poetry. Dilip Kumar Roy, in a few strokes creates a picture of a well-known person which anyone can see and recognize, even when he is not named.

* * * * *

All of these poems are short lyrical metrical compositions. It is a rare achievement of Dilip Roy that he has succeeded in writing metrical verse in a foreign language like English which is quite different from his mother tongue. Even Tagore preferred to translate his poems published in *Gitanjali* in prose.

Dilip Roy was very much interested in music and poetry for a long time before he became Sri Aurobindo's disciple. But, as he informs his readers in *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, his style and rhythm were halting in the earlier career. Even Tagore, who spoke highly of his musical talents, never spoke favourably about his poetry. But Sri Aurobindo explained to him that through yogic or occult power people could write a great poem or compose great music because poetry and music come from the inner being and to write or to compose true and great things one has to have the passage clear between the outer mind and something in the inner being. Yoga helps one in clearing the passage. Hence, Dilip Roy, who wanted to flower into a poet, first of all, translated Sri Aurobindo's poems. Then he wrote his own Bengali poems and sent them to Sri Aurobindo for his comment. Sri Aurobindo advised him not to follow the methods of any great poet like his father, Dwijendralal or Tagore, but to write in his own peculiar manner which might suit his inspiration and substance. He also exhorted Roy not to become too simple and direct and also to avoid obscurity, artifice and rhetoric and to follow the inner movement.

When Roy sent his poems to Tagore, as we have seen in Chapter 4 of this book, he was very much surprised to see Roy's progress and praised him for acquiring rhythm so soon in his poetry.

Almost all the poems of the volume are composed in quatrains:

"*Quatrains*, stanzas of four lines, are the most common of all, and show great variety of pattern... The staple arrangement is the *ballad stanza*, used in medieval folk poetry and revived in the late eighteenth century for modern ballad-writing."¹³

The metre is alternate iambic tetrameters and trimeters rhyming in the second and fourth lines, generally, with the rhyme scheme of a, b,c,b. Dilip Roy has employed this stanzaic form in a few of his poems 'Come Krishna' and 'Indira Devi'.

"When all four lines rhyme, a, b, a, b, we have *common measure*, a favourite rhythm for hymn-tunes. If all the lines are tetrameters and rhyme alternately (a, b, a, b,) the stanza is *long measure*."¹⁴

Many of Roy's poems, like 'Mind's Folly, 'Sri Aurobindo', are written in these two measures. As a rule, the lines composing the quatrain may be of varying length. A few of his poems are written in quantitative metres, for example, 'Invocation to Ganesha'. The use of these metres has added to the rhythm of his lyrics, and, as a result, to music that they create.

Even he chooses such words and images which are related to music. He has predilection for some images like flute and minstrel. The frequent use of alliteration adds to the music of his poetry. The use of certain sounds like /h/and /s/, which are often used in music recurs here. His symbols are related to spirituality. His favourite symbols are 'ray' (which stands for enlightenment), 'dusk', (which means gloominess caused by ignorance), 'blue' (which suggests heaven or kingdom of God), 'clouds' (which stand for ignorance and also obstacles which are faced by the aspirant on the path of spirituality), 'dream' (which suggests aspiration). The use of figures of speech like apostrophe, simile and metaphor adds to the charm of his poetry. In 'Radharani Goddess of Grace' there is an example of an apostrophe and simile both:

"O marvellous Moon of tenderness!

O star-poise indefinable !

O Miracle who com'st to bless,

Like mountain-whiffs in an exile's cell !"¹⁵

Here is an example of a striking metaphor:

"Earth is the cradle of the gods
the heroic spirits' battleground."¹⁶

His epithets are compound epithets like half-lit consciousness, fire-thrilled melody, science-fostered strife, dark-enarmoured moods etc.

Most of his poems are related to Indian life and ethos. He wrote his poems, mystical novels and also dramas in English with a view to introducing rich heritage of Indian tradition to the readers of the West. He succeeded a great deal in doing so and his works were translated into many foreign languages like German, French, Spanish, Portuguese etc. He was declared "ONE OF A HUNDRED WORLD CELEBRITIES" by the Mexican journal, EL NORTE in October, 1948.¹⁷ So, Dilip Roy, by remaining true to his roots, gained universality of appeal in his works.

K. R. Srmivasa Iyengar appreciates the beauty of Roy's poetry:

"Dilip is neither a Romantic aping Victorian models nor a modernist addicted to imagism, ventriloquism and personal symbolism. His is the poetry of the soul—of the vicissitudes of the soul's commerce with the Divine. Dilip has no use for

obscurity, sophistication and intellectual gymnastics; God-intoxication simplifies and clarifies the *bhakta's* relationship with the Divine, and his lyric voice could be as disarming and as compelling as a child's cries at the sight of the mother, or the lover's at the sight of the beloved."¹⁸

He adds:

"Dilip sings, not because he wants to instruct, exhort or to edify, but simply because, being a *bhakta* in love with the Divine in Its diversity of forms and manifestations, he cannot help singing. He has neither time nor inclination for laborious word-hunting, image-making or symbolisation. As the leaves come to the tree, the songs seem to come to his lips. His is the simple, pure, traditional, perennial poetry of the soul—the human soul seeking the Divine in ecstatic adoration and love. It is a modern variation of the ageless poetry of India."¹⁹

What the critic misses, however, is Roy's fondness of biographical sketches in his special sense of the term, manifest as much in his poems as in other longer works.

Notes :

1. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Hark! His Flute!* (Poona: Hari Krishna Mandir, 1972), p.1.
2. *ibid.*, p. 3.
3. *ibid.*, p. i.
4. *ibid.*, p. ii.
5. *ibid.*, pp. 75-76.
6. *ibid.*, p. 28.
7. *ibid.*, p. 16.
8. *ibid.*, p. 17.
9. *ibid.*, p. 74.
10. *ibid.*, p. 77.
11. *ibid.*, p. 78.
12. *ibid.*, p. 79.
13. Bernard Blackstone, *Practical English Prosody* (1965; rpt. Bombay: Longman, 1994), p.97.
14. *ibid.*, p. 98.
15. Roy, *Hark!*, p. 17.
16. *ibid.*, p. ii.
17. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Immortals of the Bhagavat* (Pune: Hari Krishna Mandir, 1957), p.vi.
18. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, 'Foreword' in Roy, *Hark!*, p.vIII
19. *ibid.*, p. xiv.

PART FOUR

Self-Portrayal

9 : THE FORM AND THE HISTORY

While biography is defined as “an account of a person’s life” or as “literature which consists of the histories of individuals,”¹ autobiography is called: “the story of a person’s life written by that person.”²

The coinage of the term ‘autobiography’ (Gk. self-life writing) is quite modern. Murray’s *New English Dictionary* notes that

“...the first recorded use of the term occurred in 1809. Before this date, the autobiographical form passed under various names: *life narrative written by the author himself, memoirs, journal, diary, biography by self, history by self* etc.”³

(Robert Southey used it for the first time in *Quarterly Review*, Vol. i. p. 283, May 1809).

“James Olney breaks the word “autobiography” into three different parts: “autos”, the self, the “I”, stated or implied, without which the work would become meaningless. The “bios” or the “life”, which is the entire life of the individual upto the time of writing. Lastly the “graphe”, or the act of writing has assumed great importance because it is through writing that the self and the life take a specific dimension and image.”⁴

There are three main types of autobiography:

- 1) *Informal autobiography,*
- 2) *Formal autobiography, and*
- 3) *Specialized forms of autobiography.*

Informal autobiography consists of extremely intimate writings, often, not written for publication. Letters, diaries and journals, for instance, reveal the personal life of the author very consciously. Publication of collected letters of some eminent persons such as the volumes of W.S. Lewis’s correspondence with Horace Walpole, an 18th century man of letters. (34 vol. 1937-65), can enlighten the reader about different ways in which a person can reveal himself or herself. Similarly, Mozart and Byron have revealed themselves in an uninhibited fashion in their letters. The diarists, too, have become very popular in the Western world. In the 20th century, the young Jewish girl, Anne Frank wrote her diary in such an effective manner that, later on, a script was prepared for a drama and a film. Records of the personal experiences in journals have offered a confidential history of their writers. Leonardo da Vinci’s notebooks reveal his teeming and ardent brain. Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Journals* (1897) bear the proof of her sensitive

nature. Memoirs and reminiscences emphasize what is remembered rather than who is remembering. In the 15th century Philipp de Comynes, in his memoirs, speaks more of the life of Louis XI, master of statecraft, than himself. He is present only as a witness to the actions of Louis. In the 20th century Sir Orbert Sitwell's volumes of recollections are noteworthy.

Formal autobiography

“...offers a special kind of biographical truth: a life, reshaped by recollection, with all of recollection's conscious and unconscious omissions and distortions.”⁵

One can find the examples of formal autobiography in the literature of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages also. In the 2nd century B. C. the Chinese classical historian Ssu-ma gives a brief account of himself in *Shihchi*, “Historical Records.” Julius Caesar's *Commentaries* speak little about himself and more about the conquest of Gaul. *The Confessions* of St. Augustine of the 5th century A.D. is a remarkable early example of this genre.

In Europe, autobiography begins with the Renaissance. Margery Kempe, an Italian mystic, dictated an account of her life during this period. Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who became Pope Pius II in 1458, wrote his autobiography *Commentarii*. In England, the 17th century is rich in autobiography. The autobiographies written by Richard Baxter and Bunyan are examples of religious life-accounts. In the 18th century, Colly Gibber's *Apology for the Life of Colly Gibber, Comedian* attracted the readers and critics as well. During the later 18th century three major autobiographies were written by the distinguished authors, viz. Benjamin Franklin, Edward Gibbon and Rousseau. Rousseau's *Confessions* inspired Wordsworth to write the *Prelude* and Byron to write *Childe Harold*.

Specialized Forms of Autobiography are classified under four heads: thematic, religious, intellectual and fictionalized autobiographies. Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1924) and Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) can be called thematic autobiographies. St. Augustine's *Confessions* and Peter Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* in the Middle Ages and a few chapters of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* are instances of religious type of autobiography. John S. Mill's *Autobiography* and Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* (1907) are intellectual autobiographies. Fictionalized autobiographies are thinly disguised as novels. Such works as Samuel Butler's *Way of All Flesh* (1903), James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and George Santayana's *Last Puritan* (1935) are some of the notable examples of this kind of autobiography.

The forms of biography and autobiography were alien to the Indians before the British arrived. Earlier, we, Indians were not aware of the importance of

systematic documentation of the events of history like the Western people. Hence, though the forms of informal autobiography or confessions could be discovered in the Vedic literature (*The Gambler's Lament, Rigveda*, (10, 34.2). 1500 B. C.) or in the Buddhist literature (*Theragatha*, 6th cen. B. C. to 3rd cen. B. C.), or in the later Sanskrit literature (Bana's life given in the first few chapters of *Harshcharitam* (7th century A. D.) or in the Mughal literature (*Babur nama, Tuzuk-i-Jahangir* etc), they appear to have been written either to promote spirituality or to glorify the autobiographer himself. The systematic development of autobiography in various languages, including in English in India can be found from almost the second half of the 19th century.

The first piece of autobiographical writing in English was Raja Rammohan Roy's short autobiographical sketch (1833) which is a matter-of-fact document. Kashiprasad Ghose's letter published in James Lang's *Handbook of Bengal Missions* (1848) is of greater literary interest. The first extensive autobiography was written by *Lutufullah*, a tutor in Persian, Arabic and Hindustani to British officers in 1857. He was not only a well-read, enterprising observer, but was also very bold in his judgement of British character and society. Novelist Lal Behari Dey's *Recollections of My School Days*, serialized in the *Bengal Magazine* (1873-76), proclaims the superiority of English education to oriental learning. Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya's *Reminiscences of German University Life* (1892) and Rakhal Das Halder's *The English Diary of an Indian Student* (1861-2) were the only attempts at autobiographical writing by Indians in the 19th century.

The overwhelming question in the first half of the 20th century was the quest for independence. So, many people devoted to the freedom-struggle, wrote of their own experiences expressing various shades of political thinking. Surendranath Banerjee's *A Nation in Making* (1925) is an apologia for moderate politics. Mahatma Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927), written in prison at Yeravda and later in South Africa, appeared first in a Gujarati weekly, *Navajivan*. In 1940 it was translated into English by Mahatma's secretary, Mahadev Desai. *The Story* is often compared with St. Augustine's *Confessions* with all its pre-occupation with spirituality. Lala Lajpat Rai's *The Story of My Deportation* (1908) and Jawaharlal Nehru's *An Autobiography* (1936) are important autobiographies by two Congressmen. Though Nehru's *Autobiography* does not cover the last twenty five years of his life, it is an important document of self-analysis. It is a living record of the Indian history written in chaste English prose.

Barindrakumar Ghose's *The Tale of My Exile* (1928) and B. K-Sinha's *In Andamans: the Indian Bastille* (1939) are notable autobiographies by revolutionaries.

Dhan Gopal Mukherji's *Caste and Outcaste* (1923), Mulk Raj Ananda's *Apology for Heroism* (1946) and K. Subba Rao's *Revived Memories* (1933) can be considered literary autobiographies of high merit. Mulk Raj Ananda's autobiography, besides offering an objective analysis, also provides a valuable aid to the understanding of his fiction.

Other autobiographies of the period include social reformers like D. K. Karve (*Looking Back*, 1936) or men of spirituality like Swami Ramdas (*In Quest of God*, 1923) an educationist like G. K. Chattur (*The Last Enchantment*, 1933).

Suniti Devi, Maharani of Cooch Behar, was the first Indian woman to write an autobiography. Her book, *Autobiography of an Indian Princess* was published in 1921. Vijayalakshmi Pandit wrote three autobiographical volumes, viz., *So I Became a Minister* (1936), *Prison Days* (1945) and *The Scope of Happiness* (1979), while Krishna Huthee Singh wrote: *With No Regrets* (1944) and *We Nehrus* (1968).

After Independence, one can notice a rich harvest of autobiographies. Among the most outstanding of these are Morarji Desai's *The Story of My Life* published in three volumes between 1974 and 1979 and M. R. Masani's *Bliss was in that Dawn* (1977).

One of the most remarkable autobiographies is Nirad C. Chaudhuri's entitled: *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* published in 1951. The book has become a classic on account of its linguistic and literary excellences. Other autobiographies which have attracted the attention of readers are *Face to Face* (1963) by Ved Mehta, *My God Died Young* (1967) by Sasthi Brata, *My Son's Father* (1968) by Dom Moraes and *My Days* (1975) by R. K. Narayan. Among the women autobiographers Nayantara Sahgal (*Prison and Chocolate Cake* 1954 and *From Fear Set Free* 1961), Kamala Das (*My Story*, 1976) and Lady Dhanvanthi Rama Rao (*An Inheritance*, 1976) are noteworthy. Moreover, Ravi Shankar's *My Music, My Life* (1968) reveals his career as an artist. Hazari's *An Indian Outcaste* (1951) presents the life-story of a member of the depressed classes.

Whether in the East or in the West, autobiography is described as a form of non-fictional literature as it is a record of the events of an individual's life. But, it can easily pass from history into fiction if the author is inventive like Kamala Das seems to be. Imaginative reconstruction itself anyway is an element of literature rather than history. The autobiographer becomes almost a stranger to himself when he thinks of his life in retrospect and orders and arranges the past events in the light of what he is at the moment of writing. He does not merely describe what happened to him in the past, but he also records how, he became

what he is out of what he had earlier been. The narrative pattern imposed upon the facts, too, falsifies history. Autobiography is rather a recreation of his personality from his memory. Autobiographical writing, as a result, instead of becoming a mere historical record, becomes a work of art.

The autobiographer's interpretation of any event of his life depends upon the period of his life during which it is written. An event recorded in the autobiographer's youthful journal is likely to be somewhat different from that same event recollected in later years. Memory being plastic, the autobiographer regenerates his materials and shapes them as he uses them sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously.

The difference between a biography and an autobiography should be noted. A biography is a studiously prepared well-documented account of some one's life. Normally a trained historian does it. It is supposed to be objective and truthful.

An autobiography on the other hand is an account of the life of its writer built up by him with the help of his memory. Its one great limitation, consequently, is that memory may fail at times and factual errors may vitiate the account. Another is that the writer may often try consciously or unconsciously to magnify his little merit, if he happens to be egoistic, or may belittle his merit if he happens to be very humble. Too much of humility or pride may falsify the account. But one great advantage the autobiographer has over the biographer, provided he is sincere, is that he is able to present the interior side of the life, the consciousness of the subject as it has grown through conflicts and trials and struggles. Rightly read, an autobiography may prove to be complementary to the objective biographical account of a life.

A close study of the well-known autobiographies of the world reveal that an autobiographer writes the story of his own life to justify himself and his actions before the public (Morarjibhai Desai's *The Story of My Life*), at times to spite or annoy the readers (Kamala Das's *My Story*) or just for the pleasure of self-revelation (Nehru's *Autobiography*), often to confess his past errors and moral lapses (Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth*). He could present a chronicle of life around him in his age. (Nehru's *Autobiography* and Nirad Chaudhuri's *Thy Hand Great Anarch*). He could even include in a way the whole history of the nation. (Nirad Chaudhuri's *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*). He writes to tell people some of the events and facts of his life so that they can understand him properly. But how far does he exhibit himself and his history? The answer to this question will change from autobiography to autobiography. The autobiographer may achieve success in varying degrees in realizing his purpose.

But the ideal autobiography should be one where the author narrates the events of outward life with reasonable historical accuracy, and also at the same time enables the reader to peep into his inward shape of consciousness called personality and thus partake of both the author's wealth of mind and eventful terrestrial career.

Notes :

1. Martin Gray, A *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (1984; rpt. Beirut: Longman York Press, 1990), p.33
2. *ibid.*, p.28.
3. Quoted in Waldo H. Dunn, *English Biography* (New York: Dutton & Co., 1916), pp. 130-131.
4. Quoted in Meena Sodhi, *Indian English Writing: The Autobiographical Mode* (New Delhi: Creative Books, 1999), p.37
5. P(aul) M(urray) K(endall), "Biographical Literature", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1985, XXIII, 199.

10 : PILGRIMS OF THE STARS

It is often observed that when a biographer writes about somebody's life with whom he is personally connected in one way or the other, inevitably, he reveals the facts of his own life, too, directly or indirectly. The biographer thus becomes partially an autobiographer.

This applies to Dilip Roy, too. All of his biographies, in English or Bengali, reveal the traits of his own personality. The peculiarity of Dilip Roy is that his autobiography, too, reveals biographies. What we discover here is portraits of some personalities who had been shaping influences at work upon his mind. Thus there are the sketches of Subhas Chandra Bose, Romain Rolland, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo and others. Here as nowhere else so completely, he has presented things in a proper chronological order. In his 'Introduction' to *Pilgrims of the Stars*, he says:

"It was under the illumined aegis of my guru Sri Aurobindo that I first blossomed into a writer of novels, plays, poems and biographies, impelled through it all by my inveterate urge to limn the human greatness that seemed to accost me at every turn. I have never considered this inclination of mine to be mere hero worship, especially as Krishna Himself declares in the Gita:

*yad-yad vibhutimat sattvam shrimad-urjitam eva va tat-tat
evagaccha tvam mama tejomsha-sambhavam.*

(10:41)

Which means:

Wherever thou findest a flowering of grace,
Glory or opulence that thrills the eye,
Know: they all stem from a gleam of My sun-splendor."¹

He adds:

"Some of our readers will be familiar with my older work *Among the Great* where I have written at length about the great personalities whose ideas and friendship have had a significant impact on my life. For reasons of space as well as to avoid needless repetition, I have here greatly curtailed such biographical material, except, of course, in the case of Sri Aurobindo."²

It should be clear here that his object of writing both biographies and autobiography is almost the same to love the manifestation of divine splendour wherever it appears and to strive for the realization of the highest light

Pilgrims of the Stars seems to be a unique piece in the history of autobiography, for it is a tale of two lives—the lives of Dilip Kumar Roy and his daughter-disciple, Indira Devi. In his 'Foreword' to *Pilgrims of the Stars*, Frederic Spiegelberg, too, has noted:

“Actually, this is the autobiography of a remarkable couple of artists: Dilip, the musician and philosopher, and Indira, the dancer and visionary poetess. What a combination ! One would have to search a long way to find again such an account of a combined life of inspiration.”³

The book contains three parts. In PART ONE, Dilip Roy reminisces how he has been sustained on his difficult path of Truth seeking, from his childhood to the middle age by 'seen' and 'great' personalities of the world and also by the 'unseen hand of God'. He rewrites briefly about those great persons who played crucial roles in giving form to his life till the death of his loving gurudev, Sri Aurobindo. Here he has talked of great persons like his father, D. L. Roy, his friends like Subhas Chandra Bose and Krishnaprem, a few elderly persons who were source of inspiration for him and who were also international figures like Romain Rolland, Bertrand Russell, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore and some of the spiritual giants of India like Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi, to show how such mighty personalities of the world from diverse walks of life impressed him.

In PART TWO Indira Devi recounts her life from childhood upto the point when she meets her gurudev, Dilip Kumar Roy. She also tells us of her stay at Sri Aurobindo Ashram with him.

PART THREE contains information about their stay at Poona in their own temple house, Hari Krishna Mandir after the physical departure of Sri Aurobindo. Dilip Roy writes how he was helped by Papa Ramdas and Indira Devi after the death of Sri Aurobindo. He records how Indira Devi got visions of Mira, the medieval Queen of Mevar and a Vaishnav saint in her life.

In 'Epilogue' we have a poem by Dilip Roy captioned 'Mira's Message'. 'Appendix A' has 'Biographical Notes' on Mira's life. 'Appendix B' is written by Gopinath Kaviraj on Indira Devi's 'Bhav Samadhi' during which she saw Mira singing her songs. 'Appendix C' has excerpts from Indira Devi's Diary in which her conversations with Mirabai are noted day by day.

What runs consistently through all parts is the devotion of both the persons for Krishna. The two here emerge as one. Two parts written by Dilip Roy and one by Indira Devi are consequently organically and inseparably interconnected.

Almost all the prominent traits of a good autobiography as well as a few new features can be noticed in *Pilgrims of the Stars*.

In a story of spiritual struggle an account of outward events is not very important. Therefore Roy has paid less attention to them than to the elucidation of inner strife. It seems that Roy, in doing so, has been inspired by one of the letters written to him by Sri Aurobindo in which he talked of the life of Krishna:

“What matters is the spiritual Reality, the Power, the influence that came with him or that he brought down by his action and his existence. First of all, what matters in a spiritual man’s life is not what he did or what he was outside to the view of the men of his time (that is what historicity or biography comes to, does it not?) but what he was and did within: it is only that that gives any value to his outer life at all.”⁴

Dilip Roy’s aspiration to live a life of Truth from his very childhood forms one of the major characteristics of his personality. While writing this autobiography at the age of about seventy six years, Roy feels retrospectively that an ‘unseen’ hand of God always played a role in pushing him to the front of spiritual goal of rising higher and higher towards Truth. In fact, in his other works of biography he always chose to show the pattern of the ever-mounting aspiration of a lover of God. In his own life, too, it is evident. In the pages of his autobiography he shows how he had to struggle with himself and also with others to walk on this path of ‘upward spiral’. He tells us how his scepticism did not permit him to believe not only what ‘others’ said or experienced, but his own direct spiritual experiences. He tried to follow the path of austerity and meditation from his very young age under the inspiration of Sri Ramkrishna. He had been frantically looking for his divinely-appointed guru. He found none for a long time. He met at last Sri Aurobindo. But his doubting nature did not cease to doubt. He could not credit in the Master’s notions of higher reality and the possibility of the descent of the supernatural force.

We learn of a few events in his external life, too. He tells how his determination not to marry clashed with his grand-father’s desire to see him married. Owing to his scepticism he could not see eye to eye with his fellow-inmates of the Ashram. Moreover, he had been temperamentally at once, both, extrovert and introvert. He needed to stay alone in the seclusion of the Ashram, but on the other hand he also loved to be in the midst of people entertaining them with his songs and music. He was very much social by nature.

The reader also learns about Dilip Roy's remarkable talent as a musician and a composer and a singer of devotional songs. He inherited these qualities in his life from his father. When Dilip Roy went to Cambridge to study for I. C. S., like Subhas Chandra Bose, he felt a powerful urge to give up the study for dedicating himself to the service of the nation. On Subhas Chandra's advice, he started learning the Western music and left his study. He travelled far and wide in Europe to learn it. On his return to India, he roamed through the country, in search of musicians and learned mostly devotional songs of famous mystics like Mirabai, Tulsidas, Kabir, Surdas and others.

Of all the people Roy met, two left indelible influence on him. One was his guru Sri Aurobindo and the other, Indira Devi. Like all other books, *Pilgrims of the Stars*, too, reflects Roy's intense love and reverence for his guru. It also shows his guru's patient care and love for his disciple. Roy writes that Sri Aurobindo was "...my guru and the one fixed point in my otherwise kaleidoscopic life ...it was he who, in his infinite compassion, moulded me into whatever I may amount to now... To be with him was to enjoy a forestate of heaven."⁵

For Sri Aurobindo, Dilip Roy was "...a friend and a son, a part of my existence."⁶ As it is seen in his portrait of Sri Aurobindo, for Roy, his guru's word was final in all the matters of his life, so he always sought advice from him through letters. The same details he has given in his earlier books.

Another person on whom Roy depended after the passing away of his gurudev was Indira Devi. About her he writes:

"She was a highly gifted mystic and never failed to sustain me with her luminous experiences which Sri Aurobindo fully endorsed, acclaiming her *samadhi* or superconscious trance, as "authentic" and her visions as "beautiful".⁷

It was Sri Aurobindo who asked Roy to accept Indira Devi as his disciple telling him that she would be a help, not a hindrance to his yoga. Roy did accordingly. After receiving her as his disciple, he felt:

"And the more I came to know her, the more gratified I felt because her spiritual help and personal example proved a corrective to my incurable tendency to vacillate and doubt. Indira had her own difficulties but indecision was not among them. She did need the support of my strength but no other prop. She looked to me somewhat like a helpless daughter who, paradoxically, leaned on her father in order to help him."⁸

He often felt, "...the teacher has become the disciple."⁹

As it can be seen from the above quoted lines, Roy has exposed the weaknesses of his own character very firmly. One can notice, in fact, from the study of all of his books that he always discovered good qualities of others and found out faults and drawbacks from his own personality. He becomes confessional here. He was, as he himself has observed, indecisive, vacillating and sceptical by temperament. He frequently needed advice or confirmation from others while taking decisions in his own life. He always had doubts regarding the authenticity of the spiritual experiences of himself as well as of others. Being a spiritual aspirant, he was humble, but his humility, it appears, often led him to feel diffident about his own capacities.

Dilip Roy has indicated his difference of opinion with the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram in his book, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*. But he is quiet silent about it in his autobiography. 'Appendix-A' attached at the end of this book contains a few interviews with those inmates of Sri Aurobindo Ashram like Nirodbaran and K. D. Sethna who were Dilip Roy's 'gurubhais'. They throw some light on Dilip Roy's crises of that time about which he himself has preferred to be silent in his autobiography.¹⁰ This leads us to believe that Dilip Roy might have concealed many other things also in his autobiographical account. He does not look frank enough to confess everything.

Again and again, Roy is expressing his high estimate of his guru and his own indebtedness to him. But the question is, what precepts of Sri Aurobindo does he follow? In all of his books Dilip Roy does not appear to be talking of the philosophy of 'Integral Yoga'. In fact, there is hardly any philosophy here. What we find pervasive in his work, is simply, his love of Krishna. Has he learnt anything at all from his guru? What? If nothing, why does he go on praising Sri Aurobindo, and calling him his guru? Obviously, there is reluctance to admit on his part that Sri Aurobindo was not the right person to give him the vision of Krishna in the way he sought it. He does not have courage plainly to confess as much. He never mustered up courage earlier, respectfully, to leave Sri Aurobindo in search of a person who could satisfy his longing for Krishna. One may often feel that his love for Sri Aurobindo appears to be neither genuine nor rational. An element of affectation, a play of mere lip service in his reverence for his guru is discernible.

Dilip Roy's style, as it is also noted earlier, is repetitive to a fault. He has repeated all the material given in his earlier books in his autobiography. Very few new details become available to the reader who has gone through his earlier books.

His language is refined and lucid. Spiegelberg notes: "...Dilip does not write his autobiography, he sings it."¹¹ His use of words remain musical and melodious. This is the first book by Dilip Roy in which he has consciously tried

to realize brevity for “reasons of space as well as to avoid needless repetition.”¹² Yet it abounds in repetitions obviously and the bulk of the book is far from brief. In fact, Roy can never be constrained by the question of space. If botheration about space has ‘restrained’ Roy’s rambling fancy here, one has simply to imagine what the bulk of the book would have been, had he not been thus restrained. His spellings in this work are Americanized as the publishers are Americans.

While reading *Pilgrims of the Stars*, the reader might be inclined to compare Indira Devi with Mirabai and Dilip Roy, with Sanatan Goswami, her guru. Like Mira and Sanatan, Indira Devi and Dilip Roy endeavoured to live the life devoted to love of Krishna.

Indira Devi’s contribution to *Pilgrims of the Stars* is written in a very simple manner. She has given all the facts of her life in a chronological order. She has adopted third person narrative technique in the delineation of her own life like Swami Ramdas. Her narration informs the reader about her highly prosperous family background, her happy life with her husband, the yogic and miraculous experiences which she had from her very childhood, a sudden opening of her spiritual self, her experiences of *samadhi* and of Mira’s singing of *bhajans* in the language unknown to Indira Devi during her *samadhi*. She had to struggle with her ordinary self which cares for worldly pleasures and her real spiritual self which tries to rise high and unite with God. Her meeting with her predestined guru, Dilip Roy, is described. Like Dilip Roy, Indira Devi, who discovered the greatness of her guru, has attempted to bring it out before the public in the PART TWO of the autobiography written by her. She, too, had intense love and reverence for her guru as Dilip Roy had for his guru.

None of the Indo-English critics has ever cared to consider this unique autobiography by Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi, perhaps, thinking of it as a mere handbook of spirituality and not a piece of literature. It is indeed a presentation of a spiritual journey. But this does not reduce its value as a work of literature. Its prose and poetry are powerful expressions of the authors’ personalities in romantic sense.

Notes:

1. Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi, *Pilgrims of the Stars*, (1973; rpt. Porthill: Timeless Books, 1985). p.1.
2. *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
3. Frederic Spiegelberg, “Foreword,” in Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. ix.
4. *ibid.*, p. x.
5. Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. 2.

6. *ibid.*, p. 4.
7. *ibid.*, p. 2.
8. *ibid.*, p. 352.
9. *ibid.*, p. 359.
10. Refer to 'Appendix-A given at the end of this research work.
11. Spiegelberg, "Foreword," in Roy and Devi, *Pilgrims*, p. ix.
12. *ibid.*, p. 2.

THE CONCLUDING NOTE

Nirodbaran was a personal friend and brother-disciple of Roy. When he was asked to appreciate Dilip Roy as a literary artist, he observed:

“Literary artist ? I don’t know. I don’t see that he is a novelist. Novelist in the sense of common knowledge, common acceptance of the word novel. They are all psychological, mental, so he could not pass as a novelist... But his biographies are very good—very good biographies. About his poetry itself I have said, in Bengali, it struck a new line. That is also intellectual—his poetry—and he was a great prosodist... All you can see in the correspondence between him and Sri Aurobindo.... He was a great lover of poetry, lover of literature, literature, not philosophy, so much, like Bertrand Russell etc.”¹

Nirodbaran is right. Roy was not a gifted thinker, nor was he a professional literary artist in spite of his mastery of English prosody and spontaneously sweet and singing mind. But he was a biographer of note, of note, again, because he is not a traditional biographer either.

It should be clear now that Dilip Roy, as a writer, is not easily classifiable strictly according to known genres of literature. His art of biography also is not much concerned with the history of concerned individuals. Yet, it can not be denied that he is an artist. He may be an artless artist and yet an artist, because the primary characteristic of literary art is a strange power to move the reader, which may arise from peculiar personality or from linguistic skill or partially from both. Such power we discover in Dilip Roy. He has the qualities of a good writer as a man according to Longinus’s requirement, though he lacks the skills as an artist laid down by Longinus.² Roy, we have repeatedly stressed, has the faults and merits of a romantic poet.

He presents an impressionistic account of each of his heroes and invests him with a halo. It is a spatial portrait delivered from the flux of time. There is nothing of the chronological development and the history of an individual is not turned into a plotted story in any of them. Then how shall we call them biographies? But if we do not call them biographies, how shall we describe them in critical terms? Shall we say they are just elaborate portraits or more than living spirits as they might appear in the visions of a mystic ? Okay, then that is what they are, and we call them biographies only in that sense. Can anyone deny that they make a pleasant reading ? The fact that the works of Roy had been best sellers, proves that they moved a large number of readers to intense delight. And it is not cheap delight of sensational tales but higher intellectual and emotional

delight. His works of high seriousness had a powerful appeal because they sprang from the author's passion for truth and love of Krishna. What easily touches the hearts of the people is not dry reasoning, but such passion and emotion as those of Dilip Roy. Very few works of non-fictional prose could be so popular, even more popular than fiction, as those of Roy's, those of what may well be called Roy's biographies.

As an individual, Dilip Roy is a very interesting and very complex character. He accepted Sri Aurobindo as his pre-appointed guru and worshipped him as such. Yet, it is clear from his writing that he is least Aurobindonian of all the followers of Sri Aurobindo. In fact, you can call him a non-Aurobindonian, for it seems, he has learnt nothing from Sri Aurobindo as far as his spiritual quest is concerned. He loved to see God as Krishna in traditional Vaishnav sense of the term. We do not see his thinking or understanding of Sri Aurobindo's Integralism or the most ambitious and futurist project of realizing a 'fusion of time and Eternity'. He never talks about it.

It should also be clear from the foregoing pages that Roy is a very mild and humble personality. Such a person, one might expect, should be also docile and tractable, but far from it he is recalcitrant and least accomodating.³ In Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the Ashramites regarded Sri Aurobindo as the latest incarnation of God, higher than even Krishna. Sri Aurobindo did not object to this kind of belief. But, Roy plainly refused to regard Sri Aurobindo even as Krishna's equal, much less superior. He told him so plainly. He understood Roy, but Roy by his unbelief antagonised the Ashramites. That is how, he was self-alienated in the Ashram. He could live alone thus but could not oblige his fellow Ashramites with even the slightest profession of the belief he did not actually cherish.

Another issue that sets him at variance with Sri Aurobindonians is his peculiar attitude to the Mother. The Ashramites and the followers of Sri Aurobindo regard the Mother as important as Sri Aurobindo as the caretaker of their sadhana. Sri Aurobindo, himself encouraged such a piety. But, somehow, Roy did not find the Mother acceptable. He himself has confessed it⁴ and Nirodbaran and K. D. Sethna, his *gurnbhais* at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, too, have confirmed it.⁵

Was it simply Roy's male Chauvinism ? It is quite likely that he could not passively believe in anything, and demanded an experiential clarity. But this also cannot be true, for there are number of things such as 'guruvad' which Roy accepted unquestioningly and one may feel, superstitiously. The fact is that Roy found himself a complete misfit as much in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as in the ambience of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Normally, a study of the disciple would reveal chiefly the personality of his master. In case of any other disciple of Sri Aurobindo or of Sri Ramkrishna

Paramahansa, this would be true. But to study Dilip Roy's work is to study Dilip Roy's personality. Sri Aurobindo, it can easily be seen, is not the sole occupant or even the chief occupant of the foregoing pages. Everywhere we see the author's inward reality, his sincerity, doubts, despair, hopes, joys, sorrows and above all, his exultant and emotional appreciation of greatness wherever it appears. Hence, one reason, why we find Dilip Roy's writing so interesting is that it is autobiographical revelation of a very remarkable and pleasant consciousness.

What is clearly discernible in the study of Dilip Roy is a kind of progress in his career as a thinker. Initially, we find him restless in his quest of spiritual Truth. That he is a hero-worshipper cannot be denied. Another thing is that he cannot blindly follow the lead of one whom he has accepted as his guru. And he does not have his own solid ground to stand upon. He appears to be tossed about by the arguments of his great men. But he loves them and they love him, too. Therefore, the situation appears to be funny rather than pathetic.

But as he advanced in years, and his works gained in maturity, stability and steadiness also grew. Advent of Indira Devi appears to be a turning point in his life. In his disciple, he found a true guru who talked his language with the experience he aspired for. And it was, and was not leaving one guru for the other. It was because in reality it appears true, yet, it was not, because Sri Aurobindo permitted him to accept her as his disciple. That is why, he never felt the guilt of having left the guru who had looked after him so long and so lovingly. Nominally, Sri Aurobindo remains his guru. Practically, Indira Devi has taken over from Sri Aurobindo. That is the turning point, the beginning of a new phase of the life of Dilip Kumar Roy. There is hence on a growing steadiness. He does meet great people, does talk with them and records their conversations, but he no longer is swept away by them. His humility is permanent. But his self-confidence has grown. And now he talks only to the birds of his feather, not to the creatures quite unlike him, like Subhas and Russell. His *Krishnabhakti* has taken deep roots in him. The guru-disciple listens with rapt attention as the disciple-guru sings *bhajans* inspired by Mira. This is the most constructive period of Roy's life. In that, mere talking of spirituality ends and real experiences begin, leaving no room for doubt and disbelief. These are the experiences of blessed love of Krishna within him and of real incredible miracles worked by Krishna's active grace that he himself witnesses. One might feel the pilgrim has at last reached the gates of his destination and is waiting for them to open. These are the last serene, sober and thrilling days of Dilip Roy's beautiful evening, vibrating Divine music.

What one can find in Dilip Roy is a typical Indian attitude of worship. He can only praise and eulogise the great men and feel too humble to question or even to understand the peculiar nature of their greatness. A genuine critical spirit

is altogether absent. Before the advent of the British in India, not a single critical biography or autobiography had been written. There used to be now and then bardic eulogies and panegyrics which were full of incredible exaggerations and even falsehoods and fiction about whatever merits their subjects had. What you find in them generally is that both truthfulness and criticism are singularly absent.

In Western literature, we discover rational and critical spirit at play in everything. If it is history, it has to be truthful and critical version of the events in time. If it is a biography, it has to be again, a critical account of the history of one single individual. The author of the biography does not fail to highlight the faults and errors of the great man he is dealing with. The aim is critical appreciation, not mere praises born of a sense of veneration.

In Dilip Roy, what we find is that he is a sophisticated native bard, writing in the language of the British people but lacking their rationality, critical spirit and courage. As it is usual with us, the Indians, English education is only skin-deep in him. There is no absorption of the Western quest of truth, the spirit of inquiry. Credulity rules everywhere. One might wonder, what then is the difference between Cambridge educated Dilip Roy and an ordinary Indian ? He sincerely means to be sincere and truthful. But his excessively emotional Bengali nature, fed perpetually with the myths of spirituality mingled with mystical truth, would not permit him to see reason and secular truths with clarity. What one finds in Dilip Roy's works is that while he is talking about his subjects, he is often carried away by the force of his varied emotions of love, reverence, self-reproach, scepticism, repentance etc. and forgets about the proportion of his writing and also the aesthetic design of his works. Hence, he can be called a romantic in style in the spontaneity of his works and the expression of his personality, as against a classicist, for whom literature "is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality"⁶, and who cares more for the beauty of form than for that of the substance of literature.

J. Middleton Murry describes the rhetorical style thus:

"Instead of condensing your emotion upon the cause, which becomes the symbol; instead of defining and making concrete your thought, by the aid of your sensuous perception; you give way to a mere verbal exaggeration of your feeling or your thought. Instead of trying to make your expression more precise and true, you falsify it for the sake of a vague impressiveness. The result is that you forfeit all power of discrimination; instead of taking your emotion down to a solid and particular basis, which differentiates it permanently, you raise it up to an infinite

power. You try to replace quality by quantity, and forget that all quantities raised to an infinite power are the same.”⁷

This is exactly the description of Dilip Roy’s style. Dr. Srikumar Banerjee, however, eloquently justifies Roy’s style thus:

“A torrent of emotions, a tempest of phrases, tornado of images and metaphors, a sweeping, impetuous energy of utterance can alone drive home the shaft of the spiritual faith into the recalcitrant heart insulated against the mystery of Divinity. If, as Keats said, poetry should surprise by a fine excess, the spiritual idea should convince by a more absolute intoxication, a richer and rarer frenzy of mood. So it is out of a singularly appropriate sense of strategy that Dilip Kumar has pitched his key so high and laid on his colours so thick to convey the mystic thrill to unregenerate ears. Conrad, a Pole naturalised in English literature, employed a style too colourful, emphatic and overwrought to transmit the romance of alien, far-away tropical seas. Dilip Kumar has used English somewhat with the same kind of over-laboured intensity to communicate the far more thrilling romance of the Divine mystery as visualised by Hindu religious masters. His supreme justification lies in his effectiveness, in the remarkable success with which he has carried out his crusading mission. The scripture, as interpreted by him, carries its own ineffable appeal to his Western readers as a memorable monument of the unfathomable sublimity and sheer loveliness of the Hindu conception of God.”⁸

You cannot say that Dr. Banerjee is wrong, and you have to admit that in Roy’s excesses there is a kind of beauty we rarely encounter in the Indian English prose.

Notes:

1. Refer to ‘Appendix A’, p. 236 of this book.
2. David Diaches, *Critical Approaches to Literature* (1956; rpt. London: Longmans, 1965), p.48. According to Longinus, (1) impressiveness of thought and (2) vehemence of emotion are the qualities of a good writer as a man, and (1) ability to handle “figures”, (2) nobility of diction, and (3) the ability to put the whole composition together so as to produce dignity and elevation, are the artistic skills he is required to cultivate.
3. Refer to ‘Appendix A’, p. 234 of this book.

4. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (1952; rpt. Pondicherry: All India Books, 1984), pp. 453-529.
5. Refer to 'Appendix A', pp. 232,236-37 of this book.
6. T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and Individual Talent', *English Critical Texts:16th Century to 20th Century*, eds. D. J. Enright and Ernest De Chickera (1962; rpt. London:Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 300.
7. J. Middleton Murry, *The Problem of Style* (1922; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1976). pp. 118-9.
8. Dr. Srikumar Banerjee, "Introduction," in Dilip Kumar Roy, *Hark! His Flute!* (Poona: Hari Krishna Mandir, 1972), p. xix.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX-A

The Preface of this work makes it clear that Dilip Kumar Roy's English works have received little critical notice. This, to the best of my knowledge, is the first full-length critical work on Dilip Kumar Roy as a biographer. I had to depend almost entirely on my own ability to comprehend Roy's art.

I thought I might get some critical help from the old inmates of Sri Aurobindo Ashram who had been also Roy's contemporaries, who knew him personally and frequently had exchange of views and arguments with him. I put some questions about Roy to them and tape-recorded their answers. But this could not yield much, because none of them had taken Roy seriously. They had to remember Roy with some effort and had to remember also one or the other work of his to comment on. The remarks they made are not, consequently, of much critical importance. However, I am reproducing below the conversations. The persons I talked to were K. D. Sethna, Nirodbaran and Jayantilal Parekh. All of them, when I interviewed, were aged and infirm. Jayantilal Parekh died in 1999. Moreover, in very low tone they spoke. Hence, everything is not clearly audible in the tape. Whatever is clearly audible, is clearly stated here. The gaps are marked with 'inaudible' into bracket.

Answers of the above said persons are faithfully reproduced, but here and there the language of the questions is corrected without affecting the substance of the questions.

(1) Conversation with K. D. Sethna

(K. D. Sethna was born on 25th November, 1904. He was educated at St. Xavier's School and College in Bombay. Following an inner urge, he left his studies of M. A. and joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. At present he lives there. He has been editing 'Mother India', a Review of Culture, since 1949. He is interested in literature, philosophy, spirituality, science as well as Indian history. Some of his important works are: *The Problem of Aryan Origins: From an Indian Point of View*, *Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, *The Obscure and the Mysterious: A Research in Mallarme's Symbolist Poetry*, *The Secret Splendour: Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran)*.

K D. Sethna was a friend of Dilip Roy at Sri Aurobindo Ashram. About their common interests, Sethna notes

"We had several things in common. There was the intense love of literature, especially poetry. There was also the itch for writing, the urge in particular to write poems of a new beauty—

what Sri Aurobindo, adapting a phrase of Meredith's, had called in *The Future Poetry* the expression of "our inmost in the inmost way" "1

Q. : When did you meet Dilip Kumar Roy for the first time ?

A. : I couldn't gather the exact year. It was the third year after I came here. Once Dilip Kumar had come on a visit here. At that time I met him. And I think, that was not so, I am sorry. First time I met him when he began to settle down here. It was Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, another poet, who had come on a visit here and Dilip Kumar had gone to him and afterwards he reported to me his experience there. Harindranath lay on the sofa there in a hotel and he began to recite lines of poetry as if they were coming to him for the first time and Dilip Kumar was writing down. Then he came to me. Dilip Kumar, after Harindranath had gone away, told me those lines. I said those lines already appeared in print several years ago and Harindranath was a very good actor, you know, he was acting as if those lines were coming to him. He remembered the lines also.

Q. : After you met him for the first time, what was your impression of him

A. : Of Dilip Kumar Roy ? He was a very pleasant person, extremely pleasant, full of humour and interested in not only poetic themes but also turned to philosophic themes. He had known Bertrand Russell personally and he had corresponded with him, too! Yea!

Q. : Would you like to narrate any peculiarity or oddity of his character that you might have noticed at that time ?

A. : You know, one of his outstanding qualities was his sense of humour, Yea, and he had a certain generosity. Wherever he saw talent, he was held. He would be very quick to go to such a person. There was a certain generosity like that. He was a very good musician, of course ! Harindranath was more expert at musical technique, but when he sang, he created the atmosphere of a *gawiya*, you know, as if he was conscious of the audience. When Dilip sang, he was absolutely lost, something came from his heart, yea!

Q. : While I was reading his works, I noticed one thing. It is that he goes on asking questions to Sri Aurobindo. I mean, he had a number of doubts in his mind. I recollect having read at one place that he actually wanted to test Sri Aurobindo's patience to realize whether his power was human or divine. You knew him at that time. Would you comment ? (I was still saying further when he interposed.)

A. : Yes, I know that..., yea !

Q. : What did you think at that time ? Was it not the kind of doubt he had towards the guru ?

A. : No, I don't think. He doubted the guru never. But there was a time when he was in a sort of divided mind about the Mother.

Q. : Yes, that's true.

A. : At that time, I don't know towards the end, it changed again, but there was a period when it struck me as absolutely illogical to think that Sri Aurobindo was a great person with a powerful, incisive intellect and who made the greatest mistake of his life to put in the Mother as the centre of his work. The two things are not compatible. You see, if you have so much reverence for Sri Aurobindo, you try to understand why the Mother formed the centre of Sri Aurobindo's work. And to see that Sri Aurobindo made there the capital mistake was very irrational.

Q. : That's true.

A. : I have heard, recently, I heard that he had become mellowed towards the Mother towards the end of his own life. Is it true ?

Q. : I mean.... I haven't read so. In his autobiography, I didn't come across such statements, No.

A. : No! Then he unmellowed remains.

Q. : Somewhere he writes in his autobiography that after the departure of the Guru, the place does not become very pleasant to the disciple. That's what he writes somewhere. So I found that it was difficult for him to accept the authority of the Mother in the Ashram.

A. : Well, he was in a divided mind as regards her.

Q. : Was it because of this reason only that he left the Ashram in 1953?

A. : I don't know why exactly he left the Ashram. He was travelling in the West, in Europe and America and at that time I had heard from him. You know, I spoke to the Mother that—I said that I had the feeling that he won't stay long in the Ashram. (The) Mother said. "I also feel like that." Then Dilip came and stayed here and we all had appearance that he was not quite at home.

So he apparently once asked :

"Why do you think that I would go away from the Ashram ?" I said: "I never told you that, when did I say it ?"

He said: "No, no, I don't know why I feel like that ? There is no reason why I should leave ! I have full liberty here to live my own life." But within a very short time he left after that.

Q. : Have you read any of the works he has written ?

A : Where is the paper ? (The list of Dilip Kumar Roy's books.) I know only *Among the Great, Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* and *The Beggar Princess*, perhaps I have read. Then, *Miracles Do Still Happen* has a big situation. *Pilgrims of the Stars* also I know. *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem* I have read. And, of course, *Upward Spiral* is his poem.

Q. : No, it is his novel.

A : It is the novel ? Yes, I serialised that novel in 'Mother India', so I remember, yes, yes.

Q. : What do you think of him as a literary artist ?

A : Well, he is an artist of some quality, surely. Possibly in Bengali field more a master than in his English works. That *The Subhash I Knew*, I serialised too, I am not very sure now. And *Eyes of Light* I have read and that is a poem, *Eyes of Light*.

Q. : Did you remain in his contact even when he left the Ashram ?

A : Yes, yes. He was a little displeased with me, once, I remember. He wanted to send his poems to me for correction or revision or appreciation. Then, when I criticized him for omitting a chapter on (the) Mother from his book, I said in the future you may not write about her but when you have written about her in a book which belongs to a period when you were a disciple, you should not cut it out. It is like the Soviet way with history. If somebody falls off power, they simply cut out his period from that history. So, he did not like that, yea ! But we always had a friendly feeling for each other.

Q. : Now, the last question about Dilip Kumar Roy. In his works he frequently writes that he was not satisfied with the disciples in the Ashram. When it was related to Sri Aurobindo, it was okay. But the disciples in the Ashram were rigid and they were asking him to do certain things which he did not like and he was complaining about the dissatisfaction he had towards other inmates of the Ashram. What do you think about it?

A : In his book, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* he has two chapters devoted to two disciples, one was Chadwick, at that time he was in the Ashram and other is myself, yea !

Q. : Yes, but in the book *Yogi Sri Krishnaprem* he writes about the dissatisfaction he had towards others. Is it not intolerance, on his part, about other disciples ?

A. : It showed only that he could very easily get upset, yes. He was over sensitive. Things like that. When I once spoke to him: "Dilip, our friendship has gone on for so many years, ten, twelve years", then he said: "It is due entirely to you. I am not a very ...(inaudible)... friendly person, all the time tolerant of things." He said about himself, yes.

(recorded on November 1, 1995.)

(2) Conversation with Nirodbaran

(Nirodbaran, born on 17th November, 1903, is still alive. After qualifying himself as a doctor from England, Nirodbaran joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry in the early thirties. Like other disciples of the Ashram, he, too, took to poetry as a means of *sadhana*. Under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo, there was a constant progress in his art of writing poetry. Some of his well-known publications are: *Talks with Sri Aurobindo, Vols I, II, III, Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo, Sweetness and Light, Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, Vols I & II, Sun-Blossoms and Fifty Poems with Corrections and Comments by Sri Aurobindo.*)

Q. : What was your first impression of Dilip Kumar Roy?

A. : We find him very lucky, generous and very helpful and very handsome.

Q. : Would you like to narrate any of the peculiarities or oddities of him?

A. : Oddity ?

Q. : If you think he had any...

A. : I don't think... He himself has said he has very love of praise. If he gets praise from somebody, he is very happy. If you don't like his work or so, he is not very pleased. That is how, great men, I think, have their habit. He is a great man indeed, so that is oddity, he himself has said. He is ...(inaudible)... by a little flattery, but if you don't like his works and you criticize him, he avoids you. He was not the *yogi*. So, that quality he himself has said even in his books. He was a lover of beauty, he was an artist and a great, great man,

Q. : What do you think of him as a musician ?

A. : He was a great musician that I have heard. The Mother said he had the power of invocation. (The) Mother has heard his music but he does not like non-spiritual music. (The) Mother has said she saw that Krishna used to come during his musical ...(inaudible)... He, of course, did not know about it, but (the) Mother has said. (The) Mother has explicitly seen it and (the) Mother has told Dilip also. And I think through music he could have done a lot of work for (the) Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Q. : Though he was a close disciple of Sri Aurobindo, he always tested his patience by posing a number of questions and doubts. What was your reaction at that time ?

A. : Doubt about what ?

Q. : About his spiritual capacities.

A. : Not about others ?

Q. : No, no... about himself.

A. : Yes, he was a doubter. He was a doubter about himself.

Q. : Yes, about his spiritual experiences.

A. : Spiritual experiences... His peculiarity he has written in a book. In his approach he did not accept Sri Aurobindo as the Divine.

Q. : Yes, that is true.

A. : He accepted Sri Aurobindo as the Divine avatar, but the Mother... he could not accept. He accepted Sri Aurobindo as a guru. His Divine was Sri Krishna. And he always questioned Sri Aurobindo: "If I am disliked in this aspect, I can go." So, Sri Aurobindo said: "No, if you accept me as your guru, you remain here. And if you want Sri Krishna, I would lead you to him. But you listen to me." He gave him assurance. But he could not listen to him. He had many personalities. You understand it. He has a personality of a ...(inaudible)... You understand ? If you have read his letters— "I do this, I do that"— And he had a personality of a Vaishnav. Vaishnav, that is why he wants to see Sri Krishna: you can see, all these conflicts in him. So he could not harmonize. And he was a very staunch believer ...(inaudible)... He could not stick to one thing for a long time. So, that is ...(inaudible)... in his spiritual path. It was a great hindrance. He was a great personality. Of course, Sri Aurobindo allowed him as much in that as possible. And, you see, he said he had treated him as his son and as his great comrade. And he had said he had been with him for many lives, not today, and all that. What time you want to go, I won't allow you to. I have done so much for you, I have a right on you. So, in this way, from time to time, he advised a sort of mutual life. So what difficulty he had was, he was very impatient.

Q. : Intolerant ?

A. : Impatient. But he had a great love for Sri Aurobindo, very great love. So, he could not remain, I should say, it is Sri Aurobindo who took him up, as you say, who kept him here. And after Sri Aurobindo's passing he lost that support. Still he tried to remain here and do the Yoga; but he couldn't.

(The) Mother told him to stay. If you have read all these details in his books very frankly, still he could not. So, finally, as he could not fit in this atmosphere which was completely, quite different from he was, he could not adjust himself, so he had to go.

Q. : Is it true that it was very difficult for him to accept the authority of the Mother?

A. : In a way, in a way. Authority not in... what I should say? In many decisions, for instance, the national song, *Vandemataram*, you know. The *Vandemataram* we practise here is the tune given by Timir Baran. Mother accepted it because of the reason that it was more easy for us to make it a chorus. Other songs were good, very good, very powerful, but they were too, what you call, too difficult for people like us, young people, to learn it because that way, there are so many ragas and suras, difficult to learn it. So, he could not approve of it. He wanted the orthodox one which had been accepted by his music and others. So, there was much discontent about it, but (the) Mother had stuck to her decision. That was all the reason I know.

Q. : Have you read any of his literary works ?

A. : I have not read many. I have read his poetry, of course, quite a number of poems. I have attended his songs. And among his books, I don't know all these Krishna and others. I have not read them. One or two of his novels I have read.

Q. : Have you read *Upward Spiral* ?

A. : Not in English so much, in Bengali, ...(inaudible)... very psychological.

Q. : What do you think of him as a literary artist?

A. : Literary artist ? I don't know. I don't see that he is a novelist. Novelist in the sense of common knowledge, common acceptance of the word novel. They are all psychological, mental, so, he could not pass as a novelist. But it is very interesting. This is the modern trend, psychological. But his biographies are very good—very good biographies—About his poetry, itself I have said, in Bengali, it struck a new line. That is also intellectual—his poetry—and he was a great prosodist. He was very much interested ...(inaudible).... All you can see in the correspondence between him and Sri Aurobindo. You have seen it. He was a great lover of poetry, lover of literature, literature, not philosophy, so much, like Bertrand Russell etc.

Q. : What do you think of him as a man ?

A. : As a man he was very fine. But all great men have their egos.

Q. : Yes.

A. : It is his ego not being able to accept Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as the Divine. He himself was in conflict. But he was a great man, ..(inaudible)... many parts etc. But there are always difficulties also.

(recorded on November 2,1995.)

(3) Conversation with Jayantilal Parekh

(Jayantilal Parekh (1913-1999) visited Sri Aurobindo Ashram for the first time in 1928 when he was 15 years old. Reading of Sri Aurobindo's works changed his heart. After finishing his study of painting at Shantiniketan, in order to pursue his inner quest, he settled permanently in the Ashram in 1935. He worked in the Publication Section at Sri Aurobindo Ashram for many years. Later on he was also in-charge of Archives Section of the Ashram.)

Q. : When did you meet Dilip Kumar Roy for the first time ?

A. : See, I came to Ashram, I joined Ashram in 1935. I came before that in 1934. I was attracted by the grace, so I joined the Ashram in 1935. I came directly from Shantiniketan where I was a student. And at that time Dilip Kumar was here and we used to see him from time to time in the evening. We used to attend his musical soirees and at that time the community here was very small community, hardly two hundred people lived here at maximum. So we knew each other very well and I also used to meet him afterwards. Nirodbaran and Anil Kumar and Nishikanto and a few people were there.

They were also from Bengal. They were literary people, so I used to see them. Then afterwards in 1938, after Sri Aurobindo met with an accident, we used to go very often to Nirod—Nirodbaran and whatever talks he had with Sri Aurobindo, he used to narrate and we used to listen to that. So sometimes Dilip was also there, like that. So, usually in the evening we used to meet, like that— (inaudible)... So, that was the contact ...(inaudible)... But the greater contact was that the letters which he wrote to Sri Aurobindo and the letters of Sri Aurobindo—replies Sri Aurobindo gave to his letters. They were very often circulated, you see. And we used to read those letters, collect for our own files also. And also Harindranath was there and then other people's letters also. Arjava was there and Amal Kiran was there. So their letters and their poems and other things, they used to come out in this way, they were not published. So, in that way, we had the good contact, just as in a small family we used to meet, like that.

Q. : What was your first impression about him ?

A. : You see, he was a man with very great vitality, you see, with the perceived vitality. That you could see in his music also, very powerful voice and very rich voice. They create a lot of impression on people. He had great vitality— He had that vitality, I think so. That is the impression we had of him because he used to do lot of writing work, letters and poems and dramas and correspondence. So, all the time busy and bubbling with these things. That is the impression we had of him, a man of great vitality and he had met all these greatmen. Gandhiji had met him three times. Sri Aurobindo met him in 1922 or 23. It is referred to in his book *Among the Great*. So, there he has narrated these things. So, that aspect of vitality was very strong. As far as his literary writings (are) concerned, we were more interested in the letters that were exchanged between him and other people which he brought out in *Anami* and his two books in which he brought them out. They were very interesting.

Q. : These are his Bengali books, perhaps ?

A. : *Anami* ? Yes, his poems are there but in the last he has published several letters of Sri Aurobindo, and also he was in contact with Bertrand Russell and Romain Rolland and all these things are there. Sri Aurobindo's replies to those questions are there. Those literary letters of Sri Aurobindo are there. ...(inaudible)...

Q. : Would you like to narrate any of the peculiarities or oddities of his character ?

A. : It is very difficult to say ...(inaudible)... There is not much oddity. In one sense he was self-centred. Self-centred in that he was busy with whatever he has to do. He has to write and meet people all the time. He used to meet people often.

Q. : This question has arisen in my mind only because he himself accepts at times, his own oddities.

A. : Because those moods would be there, you see. He may get certainly angry or like that. These things were there in his mood, like that. And certainly he has specified also. He writes strong letters to Sri Aurobindo why he is doing like this. This is his oddity. His reactions were very strong and immediate to things.

Q. : Would you like to tell something more about him as a musician ?

A. : A musician ? I cannot because I do not know music and all that but we liked his voice. He had a very powerful voice and sometimes the original songs which he sang of his father and we all felt that there was vitality behind it. ...(inaudible)... And people liked also the 'bhagini song' which

he sang, like that. They created atmosphere. His voice was very strong and many people were impressed. We were all impressed by the atmosphere created. In the evenings from time to time we used to hear his songs.

Q : Have you read any of his literary works ?

A : Literary ? I don't know. Perhaps one or two poems in Sri Aurobindo's translation, ...(inaudible)... We were interested in his correspondence, you see! Sri Aurobindo translated some of his poems also and helped him also in literary ways. Some poems we have read. They are really good poems in English. All of them are translated then into English. But all of them in Bengali, I have not read much.

Q : Would you like to comment on the language he has used in his poems?

A : See, as far as his poetic works are concerned, they have a sense of rhythm and metre because he was a musician and he experimented a lot in this field, you see, he tried to sing in foreign music also. So, his sense of metre and other things and as far as English is concerned there are a very few people, very few. ...(inaudible)... But about Bengali, I don't know, I can't say also. We only heard that they were made into songs ...(inaudible)... He used to write a lot. I met him later in Poona also, when he began to stay there. I went there and collected all his letters and microfilmed them in Poona itself. Then I came here and again he wanted those letters and wanted to microfilm them for second time and then returned them. I also helped him in publication of his books also. So I had some correspondence with him. *Among the Great* was published by Jaico. So, I was instrumental in doing these things. .

Q : Though he was a close disciple of Sri Aurobindo, he went on testing Sri Aurobindo's patience by raising questions and doubts and queries. What was your reaction at that time ?

A : You see, those were the days when everybody wrote to Sri Aurobindo. You see, he received letters in a day very often and his letters were long. ...(inaudible)... If there was any question, personal question, regarding *sadhana* or any kind, Sri Aurobindo replied him personally, like that. Three times a day he replied. And in the case of Dilip, there used to be more often. Immediately he used to reply them. And his replies were longer. He was very ...(inaudible)... He did not mind it. You see, Sri Aurobindo was that way very good to Dilip and very friendly to Dilip. He can raise any question with him ...(inaudible)... and he can argue with him also.

- Q. :** Dilip Kumar writes in his work somewhere that he raised questions frequently to realize whether Sri Aurobindo's power was human or Divine. What did you think of him at that time ?
- A. :** That way, he spent a lot of time in writing. But we are the gainers for that because most of his letters which Sri Aurobindo replied were circulated at that time. He was instrumental in making Sri Aurobindo write the letters. He and Amal were there and there were some others also. But his correspondence is in about four volumes. So, that way, we are also gamers.
- Q. :** Soon after the physical departure of Sri Aurobindo, Dilip Roy left the Ashram. What could be the reason in leaving the Ashram ? Was it because he was unable to accept the authority of the Mother in the Ashram ?
- A. :** We can't say that it was so. He could not get on but he used to have this kind of mood and he used to argue with Sri Aurobindo. He said: "I don't understand your Supramental business and all that, I want Krishna, "all that It was going on at that time. So, he was always tilting from one side to the other but he confesses it in his letters to Sri Aurobindo. Otherwise he had fairly good relation with (the) Mother not as thick as with Sri Aurobindo. But even then the Mother was very kind to him. ...Cmaudible)... But he was also a very touchy person, you see. With anybody he may get angry or mistake his intentions and like that. But we can't say that he had not high regard for the Mother also. ...(inaudible)...

(recorded on November 4,1995.)

APPENDIX-B

I visited Hari Krishna Mandir, Pune, between September 1 and 4, 1996, to seek an interview with Indira Devi, the daughter-disciple of Dilip Roy. At that time, her health was very delicate, so I was permitted to meet her only twice, each time for a very short period. Once she only saw me, but did not talk. Second time she did talk. She answered the questions about Dilip Roy gladly, but did not allow me to tape-record her interview. So, the conversation had to be hurriedly noted down on paper. Naturally, as I do not know shorthand, I could not catch every word of what Indira Devi spoke. Hence the conversation reproduced below cannot be called an accurate reporting. Yet I believe that I may have missed some words only, but not the substance of the answers.

Conversation with Indira Devi

- Q. : How was Dilip Kumar Roy keeping the record of 'the jewelled sayings' of great persons whom he met ?
- A. : Dadaji (Dilip Kumar Roy) kept the record of his meetings with great men in a diary. His memory was remarkable. He could remember a poem he came across fifty years ago. He could also be called *shrutidhan*. He remembered all the details of his meetings with great persons.
- Q. : In how many languages are Dilip Kumar Roy's books translated ? Which are they ?
- A. : Dadaji's works are translated into Gujarati, Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Sanskrit. He himself translated his work into Sanskrit. Once his professor gave him 110 marks out of 100 as Dadaji had correctly answered his questions and also rendered a prose piece into verse though he was not asked to do so.
- Q. : Dilip Kumar Roy exerted immense influence on the people of his time because of his threefold achievement as a musician, as a spiritual seeker and as a literary artist. Will you please kindly tell us how he influenced people with these outstanding qualities ?
- A. : Dadaji influenced people not by what he had achieved but from above his achievements. When I saw him performing his programmes, I felt as if I was in an unbelievable dream, as if I was witnessing something that one had never imagined. It appeared that there happened a double thing as if one lives one's life according to one's ideas and yet sees a beautiful fire that suddenly starts giving heat. It was something to be experienced which cannot be expressed in words because as Shankar² says, "Spirituality is not a debatable reality, it is an experiential reality." Dadaji believed in the

motto that greatness can be seen in small things. He cannot be taken for granted. I have seen him in this Ashram getting up at midnight to change the word of his composition and even to change the punctuation mark in his work.

Q. : What is the message you would like to leave for the readers admirers and even critics of Dilip Kumar Roy's works?

A. : Dadaji was always kind even to his critics. There was one person in Calcutta who was thinking of Dadaji as his great rival in the field of literature. When Dadaji went to stay at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, he criticized him bitterly in a newspaper. Later on, he came to Dadaji requesting him to write a letter of recommendation to the Director of the Radio so that he can have a job there. Dadaji wrote a letter of recommendation to the Director telling him that the person was the right man for the job. I asked Dadaji why he wrote such a letter for his critic. Dadaji said that he had all the right to dislike him but he could not condemn him for that. That person got the job for that post and he was totally changed afterwards.

Notes :

1. Quoted in Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* (1952; rpt Pondicherry: All India Books, 1984), pp. iii-iv.
2. Shanker Benrji is one of the inmates of Hari Krishna Mandir, Pune and also one of the closest disciples of Dilip Kumar Roy and Indira Devi.

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