MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XX

No. 12

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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Pas de paroles : des actes

No words — acta
A REPORT OF WHAT THE MOTHER SAID ABOUT JANUARY 1, 1969

On the 1st January 1969 at 2 a.m. in the morning a Consciousness descended into the earth's atmosphere and settled there. It was a most marvellous descent, full of light, force, power, joy and peace and it suffused the whole earth.

This descending Consciousness was afterwards identified by the Mother as being the intermediate level between the present mental consciousness and the Supramental Consciousness. This descending Consciousness is that of the Superman which is still that of man but with a very enlarged range and power though not transformed into the gnostic being. This Consciousness of the Superman has not only descended into the earth's consciousness but is established there and is fully operating.

(Read to the Mother and approved by Her on 16-1-1969)

Udar
THE UNITY OF INDIA

It is only India’s soul who can unify the country.

Externally the provinces of India are very different in character, tendencies, culture, as well as in language, and any attempt to unify them artificially could only have disastrous results.

But her soul is one, intense in her aspiration towards the spiritual truth, the essential unity of the creation and the divine origin of life, and by uniting with this aspiration the whole country can recover a unity that has never ceased to exist for the superior mentality.

THE MOTHER

L’UNITÉ DE L’INDE

Seule l’âme de l’Inde a le pouvoir d’unifier le pays.

Chaque province a sa culture propre, ses tendences, son caractère, de même qu’elle a son langage, et vouloir unifier tout cela artificiellement ne pourrait avoir que des résultats désastreux.

Mais l’Inde a une âme unique, intense dans son aspiration à la vérité spirituelle, qui est l’unité essentielle de la création et l’origine divine de la vie, et en s’unifiant à cette âme et à sa réalisation, le pays pourrait retrouver une unité qui n’a jamais cessé d’exister dans les consciences supérieures.

LA MÈRE
PAROLES DE LA MÈRE A PROPOS D’AUROVILLE

Dans la civilisation moderne, les hommes travaillent à la surface. Le mental est la surface de l’existence ; ils travaillent à la surface et ils essaient par une étude de plus en plus approfondie de trouver la Vérité qui est derrière. Tandis que la vraie méthode, c’est d’entrer en contact direct avec la Vérité intérieure et, poussé par elle, dirigé par elle, de faire une construction extérieure qui ne soit pas une recherche de la Vérité mais une création de la Vérité, c’est à dire que la force de Vérité, à travers les instruments humains, se réalise extérieurement.

Les hommes font toujours des plans, des constructions mentales, et là-dessus ils essaient de créer, mais il n’est pas une seule des créations humaines qui soit la réalisation totale de leur construction mentale. Ils ajoutent toujours quelque chose, ou c’est toujours changé par une force qu’ils ne comprennent pas — qu’ils prennent pour le hasard, pour la chance, pour les circonstances, pour toutes sortes de choses —, mais qui est, au fond, la Force de Vérité qui essaye de se manifester sur la terre et qui fait une pression, et naturellement cela change les créations mentales et vitales, qui sont seulement des créations superficielles. Dans le Bulletin¹, il y avait une citation de Sri Aurobindo à ce sujet. Il disait : Il faut d’abord savoir et agir, tandis que les hommes agissent, puis essaienr de savoir à travers leur action.

LA MÈRE

CITATION DE SRI AUROBINDO

Toute cette insistance sur l’action est absurde si l’on n’a pas la lumière qu’il faut pour agir. “Le yoga doit inclure la vie, et non l’exclure”, ne signifie pas que nous soyons forcés d’accepter la vie telle qu’elle est avec toute son ignorance trébuchante et sa misère, ni la confusion obscure de la volonté et de la raison humaine, ni les impulsions et les instincts qu’elles expriment. Les avocats de l’action s’imaginent que l’intellect et l’énergie humaine en se précipitant toujours à nouveau peuvent tout arranger. L’état actuel du monde, après le développement de l’intellect et une formidable dépense d’énergie sans parallèle dans l’histoire, est une preuve évidente de l’illusion creuse qui les fait œuvrer. Le yoga affirme que c’est seulement par un changement de conscience que la vraie base de la vie peut être découverte ; du dedans ne signifie pas un quart de centimètre derrière la surface. Il faut aller tout au fond et trouver l’âme, le Moi, la Réalité divine au dedans de nous, et c’est alors seulement que la vie peut devenir une expression vraie de ce que nous sommes au lieu d’exprimer l’aveugle brouillage confus et toujours répété de cette chose inadéquate et impaire que nous fêmes. Il s’agit de choisir entre rester dans le vieux mélimélo et tâtonner ça et là dans l’espoir de tomber un jour sur quelque découverte, ou de se tenir en retrait et de chercher la Lumière intérieure jusqu’à ce que nous ayons découvert la Divinité et que nous puissions la construire au-dedans de nous et au-dehors.

¹ Août 1966, p. 21.
WORDS OF THE MOTHER APROPOS OF AUROVILLE

In modern civilisation, men work on the surface of things. The mind is the surface of existence, they work along this surface and try to find by more and more thorough study the Truth that is behind. But the true method is to enter into direct contact with the inner Truth and, propelled by It, directed by It, make an outer creation which is not a search for the Truth but rather Truth's own creation, that is to say, the power of Truth realises itself by way of human instruments in an external manifestation.

Men always make plans, mental structures, and attempt to create upon that base but there is not a single human creation which is totally a realisation of their mental structure. Always something else is added, always it is altered by a force that they do not understand but that they take to be chance, luck, circumstances, all sorts of things, yet at bottom it is the force of Truth which tries to make itself manifest upon earth and exerts a pressure and naturally this changes the mental and vital creations which are merely superficial. There was a quotation from Sri Aurobindo on this subject in the Bulletin.¹ He said that it is necessary first to know and then act, whereas men act and then seek to arrive at knowledge through their action.

THE MOTHER

QUOTATION FROM SRI AUROBINDO

All this insistence upon action is absurd if one has not the light by which to act. "Yoga must include life and not exclude it" does not mean that we are bound to accept life as it is with all its stumbling ignorance and misery and the obscure confusion of human will and reason and impulse and instinct which it expresses. The advocates of action think that by human intellect and energy making an always new rush, everything can be put right; the present state of the world after a development of the intellect and a stupendous output of energy for which there is no historical parallel is a signal proof of the emptiness of the illusion under which they labour. Yoga takes the stand that it is only by a change of consciousness that the true basis of life can be discovered; from within outward is indeed the rule. But within does not mean some quarter inch behind the surface. One must go deep and find the soul, the self, the Divine Reality within us and only then can life become a true expression of what we can be instead of a blind and always repeated confused blur of the inadequate and imperfect thing we were. The choice is between remaining in the old jumble and groping about in the hope of stumbling on some discovery or standing back and seeking the Light within till we discover and can build the Godhead within and without us.

¹ August 1966, p. 20
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM AS AN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH IN YOGA

PROJECT
The Ashram has a Yogic Project of Research, namely, the Divinisation of human nature.

OPERATION
The mode of operation of this project is a change of consciousness brought about by the descent of a New Force and the advent of a new race.

METHODS
The methods have been very fully described in various writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

ASSESSMENT
The criterion for assessment of the progress of the participants in the research work is as follows:

The more a person is quiet in front of all occurrences, equal in all circumstances, and keeps a perfect mastery of himself and remains peaceful in the presence of whatever happens, the more he has progressed towards the goal.

THE MOTHER
UNPUBLISHED POETIC FRAGMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S NOTE-BOOKS

1

Torn are the walls and the borders carved by a miserly Nature,
I have burst into limitless kingdoms of sweetness and wonder.
Breaking the fences of Matter’s gods and their form and their feature,
Fall’n are the barriers schemed and the vetoes are shattered asunder.

2

Oh ye Powers of the Supreme and of the Mother, the Divine,
I have come to you initiate, a bearer of the sign.
For I carry the name in me that nothing can efface.
I have breathed in an illimitable spiritual Space
And my soul through the unfathomable stillnesses has heard
The god-voices of Knowledge and the marvels of the Word.
It has listened to the secret that was hidden in the night
Of the inconscient infinities foreshadowing His might.
He arose out of the caverns of the darknesses self-enwrapped
And the nebulae were churned up like to foam-froth and were shaped
Till the millions of universes mystical upbuoyed
Were outsprinkled as if stardust on the Dragon of the Void.
I was borne\(^1\) then in the infinitesimal and obscure
As a seed soul in the fire seeds of the energies that endure.
I have learned now to what purpose I have laboured as His spark
In the midnight of Matter\(^2\) like a glow-worm in the dark
And my spirit was imprisoned in the muteness of a stone,
A soul thoughtless and left\(^3\) voiceless and impuissant and alone.

3

Silver foam in the dim East
And blood red in the brilliant Western sun.
Silver foam and a birth unseen,
Blood red and the long death begun.

\(^1\) Tentative reading (Ed.)
\(^2\) Earth
\(^3\) Tentative reading (Ed.)
4

God to thy greatness
Of utter sedateness
Has given a name
That fills it with light
Of His sovereign might.
He has lavished a flame
Of passionate fleetness
On thy stillness and sweetness.
His ecstasies seven,
O daughter of Heaven,
Have seized thy limbs
That were mateless dreams.

5

Seer deep-hearted, divine King of the secrecies,
Occult fountain of love sprung from the heart of God,
Ways thou knewest no feet ever in time had trod.
Words leaped shining,¹ the flame-billows of wisdom’s seas,
Vast in thy soul was a tide washing the coasts of heaven,
Thoughts broke burning and bare crossing the human night,
White star-scripts of the gods born from the presses of Light
Page by page to the dim children of earth were given.

¹ flashing
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(This is the opening instalment of Dr. R. S. Agarwal’s questions and Sri Aurobindo’s answers. Dr. Agarwal made his first pilgrimage to Pondicherry on July 2, 1934. While in the Ashram he used to visit a Maharaja, a non-Ashramite, who was an exile from the then-British India. In the Maharaja’s company he found his mind turning hostile to the Mother. So he wanted to run away from the Ashram after a few days. His inner struggle was reaching a climax when he met an old sadhka, Gopiben, who tried to help him see the Ashram life correctly. One day, after a talk with her, he returned to his room, fell asleep and felt a powerful light penetrating his chest. This was the beginning of a series of spiritual experiences and marked a revolution in his life. All the correspondence we are publishing was carried on during his short visits to the Ashram. Much of it is unpublished or else published for the first time in its original form. Dr. Agarwal has been a permanent resident of the Ashram since 1955 and runs there the School for Perfect Eyesight.)

6-8-1934.

Q: When in Pondicherry I feel your presence most of the time. But when I am on my way back to Delhi, even on reaching Madras it fades away. Why is that so? How could I preserve it everywhere?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is easier to feel the presence in the atmosphere of the Ashram than outside it. But that is only an initial difficulty which one can overcome by a steadiness in the call and a constant opening of oneself to the influence.

Q: A gentleman from Kashmir was staying in a hotel at Madras. He could read anything with the help of one of his fingers while his eyes were completely bandaged. I went to see him simply to gain some knowledge for treatment of the blind. He said, “All this is due to improvement in the inner vision. If you want to improve your inner vision, just try this: place a lighted candle in front and gaze at the bright colour of the flame as long as you can. When you feel any strain close the eyes and imagine as if it is quite dark before the eyes or imagine some interesting or pleasant object. This is better practised at bed-time.”

I tried it for the first time at Bangalore just before going to bed. Well, during the sleep some fearful object appeared before me. I got frightened and remembered Lord Krishna. The object soon vanished. After some time another came, and that too disappeared when I thought of Lord Krishna. Then I understood that all that was due to my gazing on the flame. So I decided not to practise it or, if at all, only at Pondicherry. Well, was that really due to the gazing at the flame? Should I attempt it here?
SRI AUROBINDO: This gazing on a flame or on a bright spot is the traditional means used by many Yogins for concentration or for awakening of the inner consciousness and vision. You seem to have gone by this gazing into a kind of surface (not deep) trance, which is indeed one of its first results and begun to see things probably on the vital plane. I do not know what were the “dreadful objects” you saw, but that dreadfulness is the character of many things first seen on that plane, especially when crossing its threshold by such means. You should not employ them, I think, for they are quite unnecessary and, besides, they may lead to a passive concentration in which one is open to all sorts of things and cannot choose the right ones.

Q: On the 4th August, at Madras, I felt as if there was a wooden temple. The light was passing out through its holes. When the door came in front of me, I saw Lord Krishna standing by the side of a cow. Is that all from an inner vision?

SRI AUROBINDO: You say you felt—it was only an impression or you saw in a mental vision or other image? If the latter it was the inner vision—if only a feeling, then the vision was deep within veiled by the mind and what you got was only an impression of it thrown upon the mind.

Q: On the 5th August, at Madras, while offering prayers I felt myself sitting under the trees and offering prayers to Lord Krishna. What does it mean?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was a mental experience—you put yourself in contact with Krishna and it took that form in your mind.

From DR. R. S. AGARWAL
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(These talks are from the Note-books of Dr. Nirodaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others, after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshanker. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)

MARCH 15, 1940

P: Sisir Mitra was praising the style of the revised chapters of The Synthesis of Yoga highly. He asks when you will complete it.
S: Its completion should logically follow that of The Life Divine.
SRI AUROBINDO: I have to finish The Psychology of Social Development and The Ideal of Human Unity. Herbert showed the former to his friends. They said it would have a very good sale in Europe if translated. But the danger is that it might be translated in a rather rigid style.
N: I hear the Mother's French style is very fine.
SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. And it is also very clear. Haven't you seen it in the Conversations?
N: I know very little French to judge.
SRI AUROBINDO: French style is always clear. It is very difficult to translate The Life Divine into French.
P: The Life Divine will be difficult to translate into any language.
SRI AUROBINDO: Except German. German is the language for philosophy.
S: How?
SRI AUROBINDO: It is hard and abstract.
N: Kant's language.
P: The Future Poetry also may sell well in England and America.
SRI AUROBINDO: Not in England. There the age of modernism is on, and my stand is quite different.
P: Amiya Chakravarti also praised the style of The Life Divine.
N: D finds the second volume finer than the first. He sees the proof with Sisir and says to him, "Wait, wait. Let me quote this." (Laughter) Amiya said to Sisir, "We want something new. Has Sri Aurobindo written anything recently?" Sisir asked, "Have you read The Life Divine?" Amiya replied, "No." So Sisir said, "Then it is new for you." (Laughter)
S: Has he got it?
N: He has bought a copy.
S: No, I mean: has he got the Life Divine itself?
N: Have you to change much in the Psychology?
SRI AUROBINDO: No—only adding a passage here and there, and one or two new chapters at the end. The Ideal I have to recast because of Hitler. He has brought new problems.

MARCH 16, 1940

N: Sahana has given me two letters of yours to her explaining her experience of ascent and descent. She wants to know if the ascent and descent spoken of is the usual one or the major ascent and descent we heard about from you the other day.

SRI AUROBINDO (after reading both the letters): The first one is the usual ascent and descent. The consciousness has not got fixed above in the higher planes. It is the mental opening through the head and going up. The second one is the major ascent, rather the beginning. It has to become fixed above and the descent of the higher consciousness has to take place and transform the nature. Her later experiences are a continuation of this, I suppose.

N: The first letter is dated 1931, the second 1936.
SRI AUROBINDO: Yes; in between she had a lot of troubles and disturbances.
N: Can’t one have experiences during such troubles and disturbances?
SRI AUROBINDO: One can but they may not be of the higher ascent and descent because when such movements take place there comes a turn in the sadhana and these troubles and disturbances do not happen.

N: She says that now she doesn’t get disturbed.
SRI AUROBINDO: Then she has taken a decisive turn perhaps. In the struggle between the vital and the psychic, the vital may have gone under and the psychic may have triumphed—unless the psychic is not only in front but also strongly established to take control of the other parts, the decisive descent does not occur. There are cases in which even without the psychic opening there may be the ascent. Then the course is a more chequered one. If the psychic is strong, the mind and the vital go under; but when the psychic is strong it doesn’t mean that one has no more difficulties. There will still be difficulties but they are superficial, they don’t disturb one so much, and there are no major difficulties in which one is on the point of giving up Yoga. The mind and vital then go under. That is what I call a decisive turn. When the psychic is strongly established the Divine Consciousness can descend and do the work.

S: Her first experience of this kind was in 1931. 9 years have passed. She still speaks of egoism.
SRI AUROBINDO: Oh egoism! Even spiritual people have some sort of egoism.
Egoism goes only after absolute siddhi. Do you think 9 years too long?
S: Life is too short. (Laughter).
SRI AUROBINDO: 9 years is not too long for sadhana.
S (addressing N): What was Sahana’s method?
N: I don’t know.
SRI AUROBINDO: Like everybody else she was making effort and falling down.
N: She was having experiences in meditation before she came here.
S: I can’t meditate.
SRI AUROBINDO: Meditation is a great help because you can get into the inner
being and work on the other parts. Not that the work can’t be done from the surface,
but it is more difficult. That is why people lay stress on meditation.
S: I had also a few experiences. One of ascent, as I have told you. Another of
death. I knew that breathing was going to stop and felt I was going to die, while
my consciousness was above the head in a sort of an egg-shell.
SRI AUROBINDO: That is not death. It is the rise of consciousness from the body.
S: I had also the experience of light above the head.
SRI AUROBINDO: The light has to come down. Then the vital troubles will
disappear.
S: The difficulty is that I am not still settled here. Others have accepted this
path as their own. I have a great desire for Moksha.
SRI AUROBINDO: In spite of her experiences Sahana also was on the point of
going away about 2 years ago.
S: Of course I didn’t have such acute crises.

Evening

SRI AUROBINDO: About Indumati I may say that purna “God-meeting” is
possible by purna devotion, full self-giving so that nothing else matters to her although
she can get guidance from and communication with Krishna without that.
S: She seems to be a Vaishnavite.
SRI AUROBINDO: How?
S: She speaks of Goloka darshan.
SRI AUROBINDO: How does one get it?
S: I don’t know.
SRI AUROBINDO: By intensity of emotion. Isn’t that so?
S: She may be having Mirabai before her as example.
SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, Mirabai had the intensity of love.
C: Is there anything like Goloka? Is it true?
SRI AUROBINDO: It is true but it depends on how one sees it.
P (showing a book by Laurence Binyon): Binyon praises Chinese art and says
about Indian art that the subject matter of it appeals indirectly, not through the lines
and moods of the painting itself, while Chinese art is synthetic.
SRI AUROBINDO: That is not true. I don't agree. Western critics call Indian subject matter conceptual, by which they mean intellectual. Take for instance these two Javanese figures. Javanese art is practically Indian. They express very clearly the attitude of devotion and prayer through the lines and moods of the figures. No doubt, if one paints a man in an attitude of prayer without conveying any such feeling, it is different. Europeans like Chinese art the best among Eastern arts.

P: He says that in Chinese art there is the expression of the spirit in Nature.

SRI AUROBINDO: Europeans have no clear idea of the Spirit and the spiritual. What Binyon mentions is the expression of the Spirit of universal Nature and nothing truly spiritual. As I have said, Far Eastern art expresses the Spirit as Nature, as Prakriti, while Indian art expresses the Spirit as Self, the Spiritual Being, Purusha. That is too subtle for the European mind to understand.

Nirodbaran

1 Wood-carvings which stood on a table in Sri Aurobindo's room.
THE MOTHER OF LOVE

A SHORT STUDY OF WHITE ROSES

It was long ago. Sri Kapali Sastri was explaining to me how each Avatar comes to manifest on the earth one special Truth of the Divine, one particular Principle of Existence. Young and impetuous as I was then, I interrupted him and asked: “And what Truth has the Mother come to manifest?”

“LOVE,” he replied.

I had not thought of that. Thereafter a new vision and sensitivity opened in me and life has been a continual revelation of the Divine Love in the person of the Mother. Especially during the last few years none can have missed the overwhelming intensity of Love in the Mother’s touch. It has been predominating, and one simply melts in Her atmosphere.

Naturally this Love is not the self-regarding feeling that commonly passes under that name. It is something self-existent, not dependent upon anything outside. It is fundamental to creation and it is realised naturally as one gets closer to the basic Truth of existence—the Divine Self. This Love loves because it is its nature to do so, it cannot help it. Whatever be the response of the person on which it turns, it flows and flows irrespective of whether he is aware of it or not. We have seen it in action hundreds of times with the Mother. What then is this Love? How does it act? Why is it so powerful?

We get striking answers to these questions in the latest series of the Mother’s Letters to Huta issued under the title *White Roses* (III Series).

“When I speak of Love,” the Mother observes, “it is always of the Lord’s Love which manifests only in Truth.” And what is Truth? “The Lord’s will is the Truth in everything and everywhere always.” So it is the Love of the Supreme that is aflow everywhere like the ether and makes all progress possible. Only it is not palpable to thegrosser sensibility of men. But it is concretely manifest in the Mother, making its unmistakable impact wherever She turns Her gaze.

How does She pour this great Love? On whom? Has She preferences? Is She affected by the opinions or thoughts of others? Does She frown on our deficiencies and failings? How does She deal with the thousands of natures that come and flock wherever She is? These questions that arise naturally to an enquiring mind are also answered in these pages. The Mother, however, asks us: “read with your heart and you will understand.” For truth, spiritual truth, is many-faceted and cannot be grasped adequately by the reasoning faculty of mind which imposes its own narrow moulds on everything that it approaches. To understand the truth, this mind must fall silent; the intelligence in the heart wakes up and it comprehends what is offered to it. As She puts it. “The Truth is not always what we think it to be and the ways
of the Lord are innumerable.” And further: “Nobody knows the exact truth of things here. And each one speaks as if he knows, but in fact nobody knows. If the Truth were revealed one day to all, most of the people here, like everywhere, would be terrified by the enormity of their ignorance and of their wrong interpretations.”

First, here is Her assurance to everyone who looks up to Her for help to reach the supreme goal: “I will always do exactly what is needed to make you realise the Divine Truth and Love.” One should not allow the existence of defects in one’s nature to form a veil between the Mother and oneself. For, “I am not looking at defects but at possibilities.” One has to increase the awareness of the positive side instead of being obsessed with the negative. In Her dealings She is guided not by what others say or do: “As for what people say to me, you can be quite at ease. I believe only what the Lord tells me.” She has no likes and dislikes. There is “only the clear vision of what helps to come closer to the Divine and what does not; and this does not go by fixed rules, for each person and at each moment this can change.” She does not impose anything: “Everybody is free.” She does not demand and yet gives what they seek. “Those who do not tell everything do not do so, because they prefer to decide themselves what they will do, and they write only to get protection for what they are doing.”

How can anyone express gratitude to Her? She replies: “Be filled with the Divine’s happiness, it is the best way of making me happy.” She gives so much of Herself to those who come to Her, so much identified is She with them, that every action of theirs has its repercussions on Her. “In each and everyone of my children whenever they think, speak or act under the impulse of falsehood, it acts on my body like a blow.”

The Mother always goes straight to the root of the matter, She never pays attention to the details that crowd on the surface. To realise the Divine is the first aim. How to set about it? Naturally to become aware of Him first within ourselves. How to do it? “Go deep, very deep down in the silence of your heart, and you will find the Lord there radiant and merciful.” How to feel His constant Presence? “Peace in the storm, Calm in the effort, Joy in the surrender, a luminous Faith and you will become aware of the Lord’s constant Presence.” To be aware of Him is not enough. One must act according to His Will, and for that one must know what that Will is. The way to know it is given: “To know what the Lord wills is the supreme wisdom. This can happen only in perfect silence of the mind.” The Will reveals itself to the waiting soul in silence.

It is a universal experience that when one takes to the higher life and becomes more and more conscious, it is only one’s deficiencies that stare in the face and bring depression in their train. But that is the wrong way, the Mother points out. “To become aware of one’s deficiencies is a sign of great progress and the door open on the road to success in sadhana. So rejoice and keep confidence—all is well.”

Similarly with difficulties. There is a yogic way of meeting them which takes the sting out of them and turns them into opportunities. “If we look at troubles as
the most effective way to make us progress, then they lose their bitterness and they become easy to bear. And when we know how to call the Lord in all circumstances to make Him share in all the events of our life, then life becomes an Ananda because He covers all with His delight!” “When difficulties come it is to teach us to be peaceful and even cheerful in spite of everything.” “Difficulties are the sign of possibilities. So they must not upset us. To remain quiet and confident is the best way to make them pass away quickly.” Also, “never forget that the greater the difficulties the greater also our possibilities. It is only those who have great capacities and a big future who meet with great obstacles and hardships.” “The more there are difficulties the more you can be sure that the Lord is pulling you towards Himself as quickly as you can possibly go.” “There is only one way out of all difficulties—but it is a sure one. Keep your faith intact and living like a shining flame.” There is always help from the Divine when one is confronted with difficulties. The Mother assures, “The help from the Lord is proportionate to the difficulties.” And She adds, “He is always there, close to those who suffer and feel lonely; ready to welcome them and give them the supreme Comfort of His Love.” Only, one must have endurance. “The more we endure the more Force and the Love of the Lord are with us and the greater is the joy of the Victory.” “We must be more enduring than the opposition and all obstacles will disappear.” One must put trust in Her word: “Everything will come in due time; the true Power knows how to wait.” The endurance is supported by faith in the certainty of help and victory. “With faith and confidence even the endurance becomes easy.”

That brings us to the question of faith, which is indispensable in the spiritual life. The conditions of the world are such and the human limitations are so ubiquitous that faith is a must. “If there were no falsehood all around there would be no need of faith because everybody would live spontaneously in the Truth. It is with ardent and constant faith that we fight falsehood.”

Faith must be complemented by sincerity, otherwise it remains inactive. What is sincerity? “The whole being in all its parts and all its activities wants only the Divine, aspires only for the Divine.”

Naturally all this means the filling of the whole of life with the aspiration and inner effort. “Yoga is sufficient to fill a whole life if it is done seriously.” Once yoga is practised in right earnest, every circumstance, every event reveals itself to be full of significance. “It is at each instant of our life that the Lord saves us so wonderfully and so simply that in our blindness we do not even know it. It is only when we remain quietly in His arms, untouched by what comes from the others that we can see and feel His wonderful protection.” We see: “The Lord arranges our lives for the best of our souls and His wisdom is infinite and perfect.”

Each act is to be turned towards the Divine; the life-movement must cease to revolve round the ego, but flow towards the Divine. “To realise the Divine and unite with the Divine, you must lose your ego. If you dissociate from the ego, you will no longer feel miserable and soon you will become aware of your soul—and then you
will always be aware of the Divine Grace and its quiet happiness.” The impulsion must be from within. “If we want our consecration to the Divine to be total and perfect, it must be unconditioned and independent of all circumstances.” It must be the urge of love to consecrate oneself: “The true condition is to be absorbed in an all-embracing love for the Divine. Consecration is indeed meditation in action.” The Mother makes a revealing statement: “Never do I sit in meditation, there is no time and no necessity for it. Because it is not through meditation that one gives oneself to the Divine, it is through consecration and surrender—and it is through all activities of life that consecration and surrender are to be made.”

And there are so many other subjects touched upon, subjects that are at once topical and of eternal moment to the aspirant.

What is the ideal attitude of one who seeks for the Divine? It is in the spirit of this prayer: “O my beloved Lord, let Thy Will be done, Thy Will alone without any resistance or opposition, Thy Will is our happiness and our security.” Only so can one have “The Light, the Peace and the Love of the Lord always.” “The peace in your heart, the light in your mind and the joy of the Divine’s Presence in all your being.”

If that be the attitude towards the Divine from above, towards life around us the attitude must be governed by the knowledge that “material things ought not to be the cause of happiness or unhappiness. To be one with the soul is the only way of being constantly happy; all the rest is of little importance.” “The only way to pass through, is love and a smile!” Relations with friends, people in general, are an important point. On this point the Mother lays down: “One can have a quiet and harmonious relation with all those whom one knows, a relation that exists only in the Lord.”

“It is the Lord who creates the friendships. It is the Lord who ends the friendships; it is the Lord who makes us lonely to make us ready for this everlasting Friendship; when we are ready for it all loneliness disappears and we become constantly aware of His soothing Presence which dismisses all loneliness.” And one more guiding line: “I shall say from the Truth’s point of view there is nothing superior or inferior. The Lord alone is and only that which consciously expresses Him constantly is true.”

How is the seeker to face calumny, hostility? “There is only one remedy; it is not to listen to people when they begin to gossip and pay no attention to what they say. Never to be affected by all this talk—not to mind a bit what people say or do not say. Never answer to what they say. Never utter a word when you feel angry. And to be able to do that there is one way: think of the Divine, take refuge in the Divine, surrender all, your life, your feelings, your friends and your enemies, all and everything, to the Divine.”

For one who wants to serve the Divine, it is necessary that he maintains perfect health of body and mind. How to keep whole health? “For health the most important is an inner calm and peace that are not affected by the outer circumstances.” “Almost all of the physical troubles have their cause in an inner disorder. Get the inside quiet all right and everything will be all right.”
Fatigue is common in active life. But it is not due to physical exertion as generally thought. "The fatigue comes from inner tension and restlessness, not from physical work. If we keep quiet in our mind and vital we are never tired."

Among other subjects on which the Mother has made thought-provoking remarks is prophecy. "People are fond of prophecies, but I refuse to make any because, in order to be understood by the human mind, they limit the Truth and make it narrow."

On occultism: "In the night during sleep, it is with the subconscious that you get in touch and you get upset by all the fears accumulated there; this has to be cleared off before you can safely do any occultism. The first thing to achieve is to overcome the fears." "Each teacher of occultism has his own theory and declares that it is the most ancient teaching and tradition. In each teaching there is something true based on personal experiences and also something very relative which is the product of mental theories and additions."

Soul-relation: "A lasting relation between souls is the cause of their meeting in life, but not necessarily are they tied together and have the same destiny."

India’s destiny: "India ought to be the spiritual leader of the world. Inside she has the capacity but outside...for the moment there is still much to do for her to become actually the spiritual leader of the world."

There is a confident note in all the utterances of the Mother. Who can fail to be thrilled by her call?—

"Keep the certitude of the final Victory constantly present in your mind and the way will be much shorter.

The final Victory is already there, present in the Lord, waiting for the earth to become aware of it."

M. P. Pandit
SAVITRI, BOOK ONE CANTO ONE
SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I

Would you kindly help me to understand the following points in Savitri (International University Centre Edition, 1954)?

P. 3. "A power of fallen boundless self..." Is it the same as, "The huge foreboding mind of Night"?

Pp. 3, 4. The above-mentioned "power" longing "to reach its end in vacant Nought", "A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown" "Repeating for ever the unconscious act...", and the Earth wheeling "abandoned in the hollow guls"—are these movements successive or simultaneous? The doubt has come on my reading a certain published explanation.

P. 8. The single Call, the uncompanioned Power...
Is the Power "uncompanioned" because the Goddess of Light was alone, without the aid of Power, and now the Power is alone without the aid of Light?

P. 6. ...her luminous smile
Kindled to fire the silence of the worlds.
Does the word "fire" imply that all leapt to life or that all rose in aspiration?

Perhaps your first two points will be best clarified against the background of what seems to me the meaning in general of the difficult opening passage.

One may easily suppose that the description in this passage is of the beginning of the cosmos, the universal evolution from the Inconscient. But I believe that the description is not directly of any such thing, though certainly connected with it. Just as we get a clue to the dawn in the line,

This was the day when Satyavan must die,
we get a clue to the night preceding the dawn in the line:

As in a dark beginning of all things...

Attend to that "As". The night depicted is comparable to the beginning of the cosmos: it is not itself the starting-point of the universal evolution. It is, as a letter of Sri Aurobindo's¹ suggests, "a partial and temporary darkness". This darkness is made a "symbol", as that same letter indicates, of a state "of the soul and Nature". The symbolic character is referred to in the very passage in the line:

In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse...

One particular night, followed by one particular dawn which, like this symbolic

¹ P. 829.
night, is a "symbol dawn" (Canto-heading): such is the opening scene of Savitri’s drama. The particularity is clear when from the immense nocturnal space-scape we focus down to the wheeling Earth

Thrown back once more into unthinking dreams.

"Thrown back once more"—that is to say, forced to undergo a fresh fall like many a previous retrogression, like night after preceding night in the course of the long past.

And a similar turn in another letter by Sri Aurobindo directs us to the particularity as well as to the symbolisation. Saying that the description is not "simply of physical night and physical dawn" but that either of them is "what may be called a real symbol of an inner reality and the main purpose is to describe by suggestion the thing symbolised", Sri Aurobindo goes on to declare of the inner reality behind the nightsymbol: “here it is a relapse into Inconscience…” The word “relapse”, like the phrase “Thrown back once more”, is an indisputable index of a new setback, involving here an unconscious state, as happens every night in the twenty-four-hour cycle through which we repeatedly pass.

In the poem itself our interpretation is supported when “a nameless movement, an unthought Idea” stirred the Inconscience and it was as though even in the “dissolution’s core” there lurked a surviving entity

Condemned to resume the effort and the pang,
Reviving in another frustrate world.  

“Resume”, “reviving”, “another”—all these are signposts to a particular night about to end, a period of darkness with a before and an after of the same kind. A before and an after are implied also when, a little later, a “hesitating hue” on the eastern horizon, like a scout from the sun,

...conquering Nature’s disillusioned breast,
Compelled renewed consent to see and feel.

A disillusioning day preceding the night, a forced renewal of hope in the succeeding dawn, as in a past sequence again and again, are suggested.

It may be argued: “Though a cycle of darkness and light is there, precluding a direct account of a straight once-for-all evolution from a cosmic Inconscience, the cycle is not diurnal but aeonic. The Indian cosmogonic theory speaks of a repeated emergence of the universe from the Unmanifest and a repeated disappearance into it: there comes a pralaya, a dissolution, after which once more a manifesting process starts. Sri Aurobindo shows us a new cosmic relapse into Inconscience and a new cosmic emergence: the effort and the pang of evolution are resumed, a revival in another frustrate world occurs, an old disillusioning cosmic history is forgotten and a compulsion is felt to renew consent to grow conscious. An aeonic vision, directly expressed, of destruction and creation on a cosmic scale is before us in Savitri’s opening account.”

1 P. 907.
2 p. 4.
3 P. 5.
We should reply: “The Indian cosmogonic theory of pralaya does not envisage a relapse into Inconscience. The universe is withdrawn into a Superconscience of the Unmanifest and then reprojected. In Savitri we have no such passage into Superconscience, no return of the cosmos into the First Cause, the Divine. An Inconscience, symbolised by Night, is all that is there. We may, of course, think of a recurrent relapse into a primeval Inconscience, from which a new cosmic history takes its start time and again. But we cannot bring such a relapse into tune with the Indian cosmogonic theory. What is more important, we do not even come across this kind of relapse in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy. When Sri Aurobindo says that “from a dark immense Inconscient this material world arises and out of it a soul that by evolution is struggling into consciousness”, he conceives the process to be not repetitive at all but absolutely unique. For, considering the Why of it, “the origin of this phenomenon”, which “stands as it were automatically justified in a supra-intellectual knowledge”, he observes: “To the human mind one might answer that while in itself the Infinite might be free from those perturbations [i.e. division, disharmony, pain, evil], yet once manifestation began infinite possibility also began and among the infinite possibilities which it is the function of the universal manifestation to work out, the negation, the apparent effective negation—with all its consequences—of the Power, Light, Peace, Bliss was very evidently one. If it is asked why even if possible it should have been accepted, the answer nearest to the Cosmic Truth which the human intelligence can make is that in the relations or in the transition of the Divine in the Oneness to the Divine in the Many, this ominous possible became at a certain point an inevitable...” Sri Aurobindo unequivocally affirms that to work out a Divine Emergence from the very opposite of the Divine was just “one” possibility out of an infinite number. The remaining possibilities were all different from this. There can be no question of a cyclic evolution on a cosmic scale from a stark Inconscience in a struggling painfraught gradual manner through the ages. Savitri’s opening account, if it directly expressed an aeconic vision of this sort of universal destruction and creation, would be absolutely non-Aurobindonian.

Yes, we have to stop with a cycle which is not aeconic but diurnal. However, in the new night that has come—the last in the married life of Satyavan and Savitri—the poet reads not only a state of the subjective being that is temporarily caught in the darkness which it feels as if that darkness were universal and eternal. The poet reads also in the new night a picture of what happened once-for-all at the commencement of cosmic history. The pointers to that history are scattered all over. I have already mentioned one: “As in a dark beginning of all things.” Here is another immediately after it:

A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown...
A third goes with an earlier line already cited:

Almost one felt opaque, impenetrable,

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1 The Riddle of This World (1933), p. 99.
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abysm of the un-bodied Infinite...

So the night-symbol may be considered a double one. It is suggestive or representative not only of a temporary relapse into Inconscience but also of a fundamental fall which constitutes the God-oblivious state on a cosmic scale. From this fall, as from a bodiless infinite abyss, a slow difficult return has to start of a God-memory ultimately leading to a God-realisation in terms of an embodied existence within the very cosmos where the emergence, the evolution, takes place. The depiction of that fundamental fall is the central theme of the poem's overture, even though the direct depiction is only of a particular period of darkness lasting a short time. For, the "symbol dawn" unfolds the panorama of a gradual rousing of consciousness on its way to the archetypal Superconscience and then the advent of this Superconscience itself in a passing spell of spiritual light—presage of Earth one day receiving and embodying the Divine in a supreme transfiguration of Mind and Life-force and Matter through the Soul's full awakening to the Supramental Reality that has to emerge and evolve here. The work that Savitri will do, bringing Satyavan back from the clutch of Death, of Yama who is the godhead of Inconscience, and making possible to earth the immortality of the superconscient Gods of Light, is prophesied by this dawn of the very day on which Satyavan must die. And the prophecy is touched alive through the picture of the original Inconscience and its evolutionary history.

However, the setting remains one particular night. And a skilful blending of the particular and the general—this night and the primal Night—is in the passage where the "semblance" of the original Inconscience is mentioned. We have there a switch-over from the continued past tense everywhere to a sudden present tense: the particular night which happened at one time "cradled", as it had done repeatedly before, the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force

Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.

"Kindles" and "carries" are in the present tense, proving themselves to be generalities. They, as a letter\(^1\) puts it, "bring in a general idea stressing the paradoxical nature of the creation and the contrasts which it contains; the drowsed somnambulist as the mother of the light of the suns and the activities of life." What is packed into the lines where the two verbs occur "is not intended as a present feature in the darkness of the Night." In other words, there is no transition from a void Inconscience to a creative movement in the Night with which the poem opens. The "suns" and "our 'lives" are already there, and only the cradling goes on as ever of an ignorant Force's cosmic drowse. The creative slumber-movement belongs to the original Inconscience—it comes in here as but a truth for all time and not as a fact of the one special time whose tale Sri Aurobindo is recounting.

A truth for all time of another sort, blended with the fact of one special time, we

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\(^1\) *Savitri*, p. 847.
get also in the very first line of the poem:

It was the hour before the Gods awake.

The contrast of the past-tense "was" with the present-tense "awake" strikes, at the poem's sheer opening, the note of one particular night to which applied a truth valid for night after night as the darkness draws to its close—namely, the commencement of the cosmic functions of light, the constructive workings of the Nature-Gods. Doubtless, the past-tense "awoke" also could go with one particular night, but the particularity would not then be self-evident. The present tense leaves no alternative to the particularity. On the other hand, if the original Inconscience were meant by the Night, we should have exclusively the phrase: "before the Gods awoke." The past tense would show the once-for-all primal awakening, the once-for-all initial unfolding or evolving of consciousness-light. The present tense would be impossible, indicating as it does what would happen periodically at every dawning at the end of each night like the one which preceded the day of Satyavan's death.

Now we can come to your first two points. The various expressions employed—"The huge foreboding mind of Night", "A power of fallen boundless self", "A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown"—are all about the same thing. And the whole description shows different aspects of that thing. The aspects are shown successively but they do not constitute a series of successive happenings. Up to the line—

The impassive skies were neutral, empty, still...

we have a multitude of glimpses, on a particular occasion, of "the hour before the Gods awake", covering "the vain enormous trance of Space" and, within "the hollow gulfs" of this Space, the small Earth spinning like a shadow in forgetful sleep. The Space holds the once-kindled and still-burning suns: the Earth goes on carrying our lives, the innumerable generations from age to age.

As for

The single Call, the uncompanioned Power,

the sense of the adjectives emerges when we read a little analytically the rest of the passage as well as the line preceding that opening verse:

The message ceased and waned the messenger.
The single Call, the uncompanioned Power,
Drew back into some far-off secret world
The hue and marvel of the supernal beam...

What has come into the mortal's ken for a short while is not the whole of "some far-off secret world" but just a significant suggestion from it, a message embodied in a messenger who brings "the supernal beam" but not the entire mass of luminosity lying behind it—the Sun of Truth that has projected a herald of its light in the form of the Dawn-goddess. It is because the full glory is held back unmanifested that the Call kindled in our space and time is "single" and the Power looking out on our mortality is "uncompanioned". This phenomenon is expressed or rather indicated also in the lines:

1 P. 4.
A lonely splendour from the invisible goal
Almost was flung on the opaque Inane ...
A Form from far beatitudes seemed to near.
Ambassadress twixt eternity and change,...
Once she half-looked behind for her veiled sun...¹

The “splendour” is “lonely” because the “sun” is still “veiled”. The plenary Perfection remaining hidden in its “far beatitudes” and sending forth a flame-part to work by itself in the phenomenal universe is pictured also in the passage:

A glamour from the unreached transcendences
Iridescent with the glory of the Unseen,
A message from the unknown immortal Light...²

And a little later we read:

Here too the vision and prophetic gleam
Lit into miracles common meaningless shapes...³

The “prophetic gleam” rather than the fulfilled Sunhood is here: hence the solitariness of the Call and the Power. The solitariness has nothing to do with any distinction between the Power and the Goddess of Light and their being “unaccompanied” by each other.

The last quotation carries us naturally to your final question apropos of the phrase:

...her luminous smile
Kindled to fire the silence of the worlds.

The significance is not quite the same but there are keen affinities. In the latter phrase the terms contraposed are “fire” and “silence”: in the former they are “miracles” and “common meaningless shapes”. But the instrument at work is in both cases the divine light and, when we take into consideration the words preceding those cited by you and connect the “luminous smile” with its being “scattered on sealed depths”, we find that what results in either instance is a revelation. In one the revelation is of divine forms in shapes without distinction and meaningful content—“miracles” that express in a lustrous language the soul-sense lying concealed in dense earthly things. In the other the revelation is again of what lay sealed in silence in the recesses of our manifold world—something beatifically bright that shows itself under the impact of the Dawn-goddess’s “luminous smile” in a response of self-expression which Sri Aurobindo sums up as “fire”. You ask whether the meaning is: “all leapt to life” or “all rose in aspiration”. Both the senses are legitimate, but the immediate direct sense is offered in the very next line:

All grew a consecration and a rite.
Ordinary phenomena—air, wind, hills, boughs—became fierily activised, splendidously vitalised, into states and gestures of soul-elevating worship.

¹ Pp. 6-7.
² P. 6.
³ P. 7.
Actually, your quotation and my quotation are parts of one whole, two concordant as well as complementary aspects of a single brief epiphany. Yours refers to the domain of Nature on its more ethereal side, so to speak; mine bears upon this domain on its more terrestrial side, the side which is “our half-lit ignorance”, man’s “ambiguous earth”, “this anguished and precarious field of toil”.¹ The high “wideness”² responds in yours; “our prostrate soil”³ answers in mine—the transfiguring touch on both is the same “awakening ray”.⁴

12-12-1968

K. D. Sethna

¹ P. 7. ² Ibid. ³ Ibid. ⁴ Ibid.

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HOW?

BLIND vulture-beak—how can it ever taste
The delicate delicious wine of the Spirit Sun?
Servile to the low-lying lords of Time, the brain,
How can it climb the sheer God-Everest?

The unremitting toil of stars long-drawn—
The outbreak upon outbreak of marvellous dawn—
Can all be the idle mind’s fantastic gleam?
Will the wandering feet of Heaven find here no home?

Would you dare measure that tremendous stride,
Eternity on blue eternity piled?
Plumb then with the soul’s deep swift serpent-beam
The fire-fed rapture world of diamond dream,

In a gathered gold-mood, pure of self and still,
Surrendered to stroke on alchemist-stroke of undying Will.

VENKATARANGA
JULES SUPPERVIELLE: 1884-1960

Jules Supervielle is a French poet and a modern French poet. He belongs to this century and died only a few years ago. Although he wrote in French, he came of a Spanish family, having been born in a Spanish colony of South America (Montevideo). He came to France early in life and was educated there. He lived in France but maintained his relation with his mother country.

His poetry is very characteristic and adds almost a new vein to the spirit and manner of French poetry. He has bypassed the rational and emotional tradition of his adopted country, brought in a mystic way of vision reminiscent of the East. This mysticism is not, however, the normal spiritual way but a kind of oblique sight into what is hidden behind the appearance. By the oblique way I mean a side-way to enter into the secret of things, a lateral passage opening tangentially as it were.

The mystic vision has different ways of approach. One may look at the thing straight, face to face, being level with it in a penetrating gaze, piercing a direct entry into the secrets behind. This frontal gaze is also the normal human way of knowing and understanding, the scientific way. It becomes mystic when it penetrates sufficiently behind and strikes a secret source of another light and sight, that is, the inner sight of the soul. The normal vision which is the scientist's vision stops short at a certain distance and so does not possess the key to the secret knowledge. But an aspiring vision can stretch itself, drill into the surface obstacles confronting it, and make its contact with the hidden ray behind. There is also another mystic way, not a gaze inward but a gaze upward. The human intelligence and the higher brain-consciousness seeks a greater and intenser light, a vaster knowledge and leaps upward, so to speak. There develops a penetrating gaze towards heights up and above; to such a vision the mystery of the spirit slowly reveals itself. That is Vedantic mysticism. There is also a look downward below the life-formations and one enters into contact with forces and beings and creatures of another type, a portion of which is named Hell or Hades in Europe, and in India pātāl and rasātal. But here we are speaking of another way, not a frontal or straight movement, but, as I said, splitting the side and entering into it, something like opening the shell of mother-of-pearl and finding the pearl inside. There is a descriptive mysticism: the supersensual experience is presented in images and feeling-forms. That is the romantic way. There is an explanatory mysticism: the supersensual is set in intellectual or mental terms, in parables and allegories, making it somewhat clear and meaningful to the normal understanding. That is, I suppose, classical mysticism.

All these are more or less direct ways, straight approaches to the mystic reality. But the oblique is different—it is a seeking of the mind and an apprehension of the senses that are allusive, indirect, that move through contraries and negations, that point to a different direction in order just to suggest the objective aimed at. The
Vedantic (and the Scientific too) is the straight, direct, rectilinear gaze—the Vedantin says, "May I look at the Sun with a transfixed gaze"—whether he looks upward or inward or downward, the eyes are wide open, winkless, steady. But the modern mystic is of a different mould. He has not that clear absolute vision, he has the apprehension of an aspiring consciousness. It is a gaze askance as it were, yet ardent and wistful. His is not religious poetry for that matter, but it is an aspiration and a yearning to perceive and seize truth and reality that eludes the senses, but seems to be still there. It is the agnostic trying to be a believer.

We shall understand better by taking a poem of Supervielle's as an example. Thus:

**Alter Ego**

Une souris s'échappe  
(ce n'en était pas une)  
Une femme s'éveille  
(Comment le savez-vous?)  
Et la porte qui grince  
(On l'huila ce matin)  
Près du mur de cloture  
(Le mur n'existe plus)  
Ah! je ne puis rien dire  
(Eh bien, vous vous tairez!)  
Je ne puis pas bouger  
(Vous marchez sur la route)  
Où allons nous ainsi?  
(C'est moi qui le demande)  
Je suis seul sur la Terre  
(Je suis là près de vous)  
Peut-on être si seul  
(Je le suis plus que vous,  
Je vois votre visage  
Nul ne m'a jamais vu).  

**Alter Ego**

A mouse runs out  
(It was not there)  
A woman wakes  
(How do you know?)

1 All the translations are by James Kirkup.
And the squeaking door
(It was oiled this morning)
Near the cloister wall
(There is now no wall)
Oh! I can't say a thing
(Well, now you'll be quiet!)
I cannot move
(You are walking along the road)
Does all this get us anywhere?
(I'm asking you)
I'm alone on Earth
(I'm here beside you)
Can one be so alone
(I'm more alone than you,
I can see your face,
No one has ever seen mine).

It is a colloquy between "I" and the other-I. The apparent self sees things that appear so concrete and real, but in the other they vanish and become airy nothings. Still if things have any reality it is there in that other self.

We are reminded of a parallel experience and imagery found in another French poet, the famous romantic Alfred de Musset who speaks of someone accompanying him, shadowing him, pursuing him constantly without respite, sharing his joys and sorrows throughout his life, who looked almost like his own brother, someone unknown yet so close:

Un étranger vêtu de noir
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère.

A stranger robed in black
Who resembled me like a brother.

Or again, take this from Supervielle:

Lui Seul

Si vous touchez sa main c'est bien sans le savoir,
Vous vous le rappelez mais sous un autre nom,
Au milieu de la nuit au plus fort du sommeil,
Vous dites son vrai nom et le faites asseoir.
Un jour on frappe et je devine que c'est lui
Qui s'en vient près de nous à n'importe quelle heure
Et vous le regardez avec un tel oubli
Qu'il s'en retourne au loin mais en laissant derrière

Une porte vivante et pale comme lui.

_He alone_

If you touch his hand it is quite without knowing,
You remember him, but he had another name.
In the middle of the night, in the depth of sleep,
You speak his real name and ask him to be seated.

One day there comes a knock and I guess it is he
Who comes to be beside us at any time
And you give him such an empty stare
That he turns and goes far away, but leaving behind him

A living door, as pale as he himself.

The Reality is so real that it is always there, and it is not always altogether intangible, invisible. You touch it often enough but you do not know that it was the reality. You give it another name: perhaps imagination, illusion, hallucination. Yes, at the dead of night when you have forgotten yourself, forgotten the world, nothing exists, you call out his true name and set him in front—O my soul, O my God!

In the next poem that I quote, the mystery is explained, that is to say, described a little more at length.

_Saisir_

Saisir, saisir le soir, la pomme et la statue,
Saisir, l'ombre et le mur et le bout de la rue.

Saisir le pied, le cou de la femme couchée
Et puis ouvrir les mains. Combien d'oiseaux lâches
Combien d'oiseaux perdus qui deviennent la rue,
L'ombre, le mur, le soir, la pomme et la statue.

Mains, vous vous userez
A ce grave jeu-là
Il faudra vous couper
Un jour vous couper ras.

**
Grands yeux dans ce visage
Qui vous a placés là?
De quel vaisseau sans mâts
Êtes-vous l'équipage?

Depuis quel abordage
Attendez-vous ainsi
Ouverts toute la nuit?

Feux noirs d'un bastingage
Etonnés mais soumis
A la loi des orages.

Prisonniers des mirages
Quand sonnera minuit
Baissez un peu les cils
Pour reprendre courage.

*  *  *
Saisir quand tout me quitte,
Et avec quelles mains
Saisir cette pensée,
Et avec quelles mains
Saisir enfin le jour
Par la peau de son cou,
Le tenir remuant
Comme un lièvre vivant?
Viens, sommeil, aide-moi,
Tu saisiras pour moi
Ce que je n'ai pu prendre,
Sommeil aux mains plus grandes.

To seize

Seize, seize the apple and the statue and the night
Seize the shadow and the wall and the end of the street
Seize the foot, the neck of the lady in bed
Then open your hands. How many birds released
How many lost birds that turn into the street,
The shadow, the wall, the apple, the statue and the night?
Hands, you will wear yourselves out
At this dangerous game.
You will have to be cut
Off, one day, off at the wrist.

**

Great eyes within this face, who
Placed you there?
Of what vessel with masts of air
Are you the crew?

**

Who boarded your decks,
That you must ride
The darkness, open wide?

Black flares on the bulwarks,
Astonished, you complied
With the law of storms and wrecks.

Prisoners of a mirage,
When the strokes of midnight settle,
Lower your lids a little
To give yourself courage.

**

Seize when all else fails me,
And with what hands
May I seize that thought,
And with what hands
Seize, at last, the daylight
By the scruff of the neck,
And hold it wriggling
Like a live hare?
Come, sleep, and help me,
You shall seize for me
What I could not hold,
Sleep, in your larger hands.

These hands do not grasp that thing, these eyes do not see that. Try to capture
through the senses that tenuous substance, you find it nowhere. You cannot throttle that reality with your solid fists. Chop off your hands, pluck out your eyes, then perhaps something will stir in that darkness, something that exists not but yields a sovereign power. The eyes that see are not these winkless wide eyes, blank vacant and dry, before which blackness is the only reality. One must have something of the bedewed gentle hesitating human eyes; it is there that the other light condescends to cast its reflection. The poet says, man with his outward regalia seems to have lost all traces of the Divine in him, what is still left of God in him is just the "humidity" of his soul\(^1\)—the 'tears of things' as a great poet says.\(^1\)

The sense that seizes and captures and makes an object its own is not any robust material sense, but something winged and vast and impalpable like your sleep—the other consciousness.

The poet speaks obliquely but the language he speaks is by itself straight, clear, simple, limpid. No rhetoric is there, no exaggeration, no effort at effect; the voice is not raised above the normal speech-level. That is indeed the new modern poetic style. For according to the new consciousness prose and poetry are not two different orders, the old order created poetry in heaven, the new poetry wants it upon earth; level with earth, the common human speech, the spoken tongues give the supreme intrinsic beauty of poetic cadence. The best poetry embodies the quintessence of prose-rhythm, its pure, spontaneous, easy and felicitous movement. In English the hiatus between poetic speech and prose is considerable; in French it is not so great, still the two were kept separate. In England Eliot came to demolish the barrier, in France a whole company has come up and very significant among them is this foreigner from Spain who is so obliquely simple and whose Muse has a natural yet haunting magic of divine things:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Elle lève les yeux et la brise s'arrête} \\
\text{Elle baisse les yeux la campagne s'étend.}
\end{align*}
\]

(She lifts her eyes and the breeze is stilled, 
She lowers her eyes and the landscape rolls on.)

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

---

\(^1\) God says to man "L'humidité de votre âme, c'est ce qui vous reste de moi."
Now the curtain rises on Ayodhya Kanda, in which Rama is deprived of the crown by the machinations of Mandarai, the hunchback, and of Kaikeyi, the youngest wife of Dasaratha. By the banishment of Rama to the forest the ground is prepared for the abduction of Sita by Ravana and the final extermination of Evil and Tyranny.

Kamban begins the Ayodhya Kanda with a lovely song of invocation which is as perfect of its kind as anything in the language.

Matter,
Which is descended from Ether,
pervades
the whole of the limit-disdaining
expanse of Space;
And God dwells in this expanse,
infusing and transcending it,
even as Soul and Consciousness
infuse the Flesh, yet transcend it.
This Godhead is no other
than that Prince of Princes,
that wearer of the warrior’s anklets,
who, teased and ill-treated
by his queenly step-mother and
a hunch-backed hag,
abdicated the sceptre,
crossed jungle and sea,
and saved the celestials
from tyranny.

The original of this poem, which has been tortured out of shape and rhythm by the sadistic mechanism of translation, would give us a measure of Kamban’s capacity to fuse scientific thought with religious emotion and beatific vision.
THE CABINET MEETS

After his return from Mithila, Dasaratha spends many happy days at Ayodhya. With the weddings of his able and virtuous sons, his secular life has become rich and full. One day he leaves his palace for his Council Chamber on an elephant’s back, the drums rattling like thunder. Reaching the Chamber, he gently entreats the kings, kinsmen and friends surrounding him to leave him alone. After their departure he is solitary, like God who, while sustaining the Universe by being in it, is still able, by Yogic concentration, to be apart from it.

He then directs his ministers to be fetched to the Council Hall. Vasishta, his Prime Minister, arrives first. He is so able an administrator that Kamban says that if Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra are the three Deities presiding over creation, sustenance and destruction, Vasishta can be regarded as the fourth Deity presiding with equal efficiency over administration. Under his regime the citizens have attained such a degree of civic discipline as to be able to govern themselves without the aid of any outside authority. Evidently, by idealizing the administration of Vasishta, Kamban paints his vision of a Utopia in which an ordered Anarchy prevails.

The other Ministers of Dasaratha follow Vasishta into the Chamber. They are born of families enjoying an unbroken hereditary tradition of good breeding; they are men of culture and refinement, versed in practical learning and possessed of the fruits of such learning. They would not, even if their lives were put in peril, swerve from fairness, and impartiality. They have conquered the passions and are uncompromising champions of Virtue. They would weigh the pros and cons of a policy and prescribe, like the physician, just the measure beneficial and appropriate to the body politic. Were a crisis to confront the State suddenly, they would tender counsel which would be as soothing as the accumulated effect of virtuous deeds. Though they are sixty thousand strong, they rise like one in saving the interests of the State. Everything they touch turns to good purpose.

These Ministers enter the Council Chamber in the order of precedence, bow to Vasishta first and then salute Dasaratha with folded hands. After Vasishta and Dasaratha greet them, they take their appointed seats. Looking at them with benevolence, Dasaratha says,

I have conceived a plan
of momentous benefit to the State.
Please listen, you Ministers,
who are as intimate to me
as my thoughts.

The speech of Dasaratha, which follows, is marked by intense earnestness, and interspersed with gentle humour,
Thanks to your efficiency,
I have ruled this Kingdom
for sixty thousand years
and I have ruled,
without a stain on the glory
of my ancestors,
who are descended from the Sun.

Throughout the long period of his reign, he has been devoted to the service of others. With the elemental and uni-directional energy with which woman protects her chastity, he has protected his citizens. How about serving and protecting his own Soul?

With the protective chastity of Woman
have I protected this Realm,
with Virtue stoutly supporting my efforts.
All my energy have I expended
doing good to others.
Now am I resolved to do good
to my soul, too.

"The burden of ruling the Earth has become oppressive. I have been shouldering this burden, which Adisesha and the Eight Mammoth Elephants and the Eight Hills have been together bearing with difficulty. Now that I have arrived at old age, which is another name for refuge from responsibility, and which I have been looking forward to, I will not endure this burden a whit longer."

Dasaratha wishes to emulate his spotless predecessors who, after reaching old age, handed over the kingdom to their sons and went away to the forest in search of spiritual enlightenment. Spiritual Reality cannot be beyond the grasp of men who have shown unflinching courage in the affairs of the world. So, says Dasaratha,

I, who have vanquished
my Foes external in the three worlds,
would I flinch from giving battle
to my Inner Foes such as Lust,
which, like thieves, prowl
stealthily inside me?

Dasaratha reinforces the same idea by alluding to a thrilling adventure which took place long, long ago. While he was driving along in a chariot along with his pet wife, Kaikeyi, ten giants came from different directions in ten chariots and made a surprise attack on Dasaratha. At once Kaikeyi took over from him the reins of the chariot, leaving Dasaratha free to fight the giants, single-handed, and to kill them
with his arrows. After scoring this victory, Dasaratha hitched the ten chariots
to his own and marched them triumphantly round the streets of Ayodhya. Dasaratha
reminds his ministers of this heroic episode.

To the one, who,
with his dainty, slender-footed wife as charioteer,
vanquished the ten chariots
of the frenzied giants,
should this be difficult,
this business of vanquishing
the five sense-chariots,
upon which rides the volatile Fool called the Mind?

Dasaratha tells his ministers that withdrawal from secular activity could alone
do him good.

Having you for my ministers,
well have I guarded
all the worlds;
and well have I performed
acts of virtue.
I appeal to you,
who have assisted me Here
and earned me fame,
to assist me, too,
in securing the bliss
of the Hereafter.

The king argues that his renunciation would cause no prejudice to his subjects,
either.

Sonless, I was in distress
for a long, long time
and Rama has arrived
to relieve me of my distress.
Let him suffer in my stead
and let me run far, far away
and, making good my escape,
save my soul.
This is my desire.

Dasaratha requests the Council of Ministers to ponder over his proposal and
offer advice.

Vasishta, who was intently listening to the king’s words, considers his proposal
in the light of the wisdom and understanding behind it, of the unanimous opinion of the ministers and the interests of the citizens. Then he speaks:

Your royal ancestors, oh King!
    have brought glory to your dynasty;
but which one of them
    had Rama for his son?
What you have proposed
    is meet,
and to an enlightened one like you
it is indeed a virtuous duty.
Your utterance is worthy of your nobility.

Vasishta continues:

What more is there to say
except
that the God of Virtue has descended to the Earth,
    incarnated as Rama,
who can improve upon the very improvements
of the triple deities
of creation, maintenance and withdrawal
of all things.

Dasaratha is overjoyed that his proposal has met with Vasishta’s approval.

Hearing the sweet speech of the Prime Minister,
the King became happier far
than on the day Rama was born,
than on the day Siva’s bow was broken,
than on the day Parasurama was humbled.

The faces of the elder statesmen looked like outstretched letters on which approval was writ large.

Minister Sumantra, who is Dasaratha’s great friend and charioteer, speaks next.

The heart that rejoices
    at the imminence of Rama’s coronation
gets burnt and scalded
    by the imminence of your renunciation.
It is not right, either,
that you should stray from the virtuous trail
blazed by your ancestors.
Can there be anything
more unkind than Virtue?

Dasaratha hails these words of Sumantra and tells him, “Let us crown Rama first. Let all other things wait. Hurry up and bring him hither.”

Sumantra takes leave of Dasaratha and drives his chariot along the Palace road to the mansion of Rama. He enters the mansion and sees the enchanting spectacle of Rama sitting beside Sita. Sumantra drinks in with avidity the loveliness of this spectacle, as if its loveliness were honey and his eyes and mind were the sucking bee.

Saluting Rama, Sumantra says, “Sir, the Emperor wants to meet you on business.” At once, the lotus-eyed Prince springs up like a cloud and mounts Sumantra’s beflagged chariot.

As he drove,
the drums rattled like thunder;
shell-bangles slipped from the hands
of infatuated maids, and chimed;
the celestials shouted,
“Our griefs are at an end,”
and the bees around Rama’s garland buzzed and droned.

The variety of auspicious sounds heralded the great events that were to follow.

Girls throng to have a look at Rama. Some look at him, standing close to the pillars at their thresholds. Others look at him from bushy bowers, half-hidden by creepers. Yet others look at him from open courtyards and through windows. Their looks express different moods—dazed looks, admiring amorous looks, longing languorous looks.

Some eyes look like long spears, and some others like blood-stained daggers, and yet others like darting fish or flitting bees. Their faces are like lotus blossoms, fresh and fair. Kamban focuses his camera upon these eyes that speak and faces that bloom. He says:

In the long-pillared portals,
in the bowers,
where creepers unfurl their leaves,
and in the moonlit courtyards,
long spears sparkle with blood-shot daggers,
flashing fish mingle with flitting bees
and swoon,
and even in the casement-windows
the lotus flowers are in bloom.

This poem is marked by a rare rococo charm, with its delicacy of colour and freedom
of brushwork and the gay magic it weaves out of women's eyes and faces.

With equal ardour men look up to Rama like the calf looking up to the mother-
cow. Rama and Lakshmana dismount from the chariot and enter the Council Cham-
ber escorted by Sumantra.

Rama bows before Vasishtha and then salutes the feet of Dasaratha, who is over-
whelmed by love and embraces Rama, with tears gushing from his eyes.

"Did I say he embraced him?" asks the Poet, who adds,

Why say he embraced
his darling son?
He plumbed in fact Rama's ability
to rule the Realm;
with his shoulder and chest
he gauged Rama's rock-like shoulder
and garlanded chest,
in which Lakshmi dwells.

Dasaratha seated Rama by his side and told him,

"Sire, you who have arms long enough
to give short shrift to Parasurma's great fame,
the father that has begotten you
has something which he hastens to beg of you
and obtain from you."

Dasaratha explains the tradition of his royal ancestors, who, in the evening of
their lives, handed over their crowns to their sons and then set forth to save their own
souls.

"Therefore,
think not that the King
has cunningly inflicted upon you
this agnozing burden.
Put on the crown
and rule the kingdom.
This is the favour
I expect from you..."

As the father made this request, the lotus-eyed son neither coveted the crown nor
disdained it. He realized it was his duty to rule. Thinking to himself, "Whatever is
commanded by the King is law unto me," Rama accepted the royal command.

At once Dasaratha embraced Rama again and left for his palace, surrounded by his ministers. Rama went back to his mansion in Sumantra’s chariot, followed by the kings, the sages and the rejoicing people of the city.

Invitations for the coronation were sent to the sovereigns of different countries of the earth; they were sealed with gold-plated seals bearing the inscription of Garuda.

Dasaratha made a public announcement that by law and custom his wealth and kingdom would devolve upon Rama. The kings, who heard this announcement, became drunk with joy; they broke the protocol and their ecstasy filled their hearts and overflowed through their hairs standing on end. They felt as if bodily transported to Heaven.

The reactions of four maidens to this happy announcement are recorded by Kamban in the following songs.

Hearing this news,
those dear women
rushed headlong
brushing one another,
their blouse-knots loosening,
their long hair falling,
their slackened robes borne up in their hands;
They ran so fast
that it was a wonder
their subtle waists
broke not in twain.

They dance, and
without tune or time
they sing; whomsoever they see
they salute with folded hands upstretched over their heads,
they know not what they babble.
Thus do they approach Kausalya,
these maidens four.

Kausalya, the mother of Rama, is intrigued by their behaviour. She asks them if they have any exciting news to convey. They tell her, “The King has announced the coronation of your worthy son.”

The news fills Kausalya with joy, but the fear that the King would renounce the world kills her joy.

The sea of intense joy
that welled up in her heart,
as she heard of the glorious
coronation of her son,
became transformed
into a dessicating, ocean-sucking
sub-sea volcano,
as she was seized with the fear
her husband would renounce the world.

Concealing this conflict between the Mother-heart and the Wife-heart, Kausalya presents the four maids with gold and jewels, and then leaves for the temple of Vishnu, accompanied by her loving co-wife, Sumitra.

As Kausalya prostrates herself before the idol of Lord Vishnu, she is filled with concern over the future of her son, who would have to govern the realm unaided by his father.

"Yours is the responsibility
to shower grace
upon the son born of my loins"—
thus prayed Kausalya,
who had preserved in her blessed womb
that magic Power
which preserves
the entire Universe in its womb.

Kamban knows—what Kausalya does not know—that she is the mother of God; and he is quick to exploit, with aesthetic and religious fervour, the magnificent fallacy of the mother of God praying to God for the welfare of God.

THE FESTIVE CITY

Rama is getting ready for the crowning ceremony. Vasishta, after consulting the astrologers, fixes the very next morning for the coronation and gives intimation to Dasaratha. Thereupon the King issued a proclamation that Rama would be crowned the next day and the people might decorate the city. The proclamation that Rama, whose fame would inspire poetry, would be crowned the next day, though perceptible only to the ear, tasted as sweet to the citizens as the ambrosia of the gods. They drank and danced and shouted with joy; they sweated, bulged and horripillated; they eulogized and blessed the King and showered gems and diamonds on all those who purveyed the good news.

They beautified the beautiful city as if they would polish the Sun or dust the resplendent jewel on the broad chest of Vishnu, the Protector of the worlds.

Chariots and elephants studded the streets. As the gold-caparisoned elephants
walked, they looked like the hill of the Rising Sun, walking with the glittering Sun on their foreheads.

As the city was thus scintillating with joy, Mandara, the malignant hunchback, came on the scene like the embodiment of all the evils perpetrated by Ravana. The festivities roused her envy. Her mind quivered, her anger struck roots deep into her, her heart ached, her eyes sparkled with fire, her words boiled up with rage.

This woman, who could plunge the three worlds into grief, burst into the palace of Kaikeyi, the third wife of Dasaratha and the mother of Bharata. She pursed her lips and recalled to her mind and fixed in her memory the scene of child-Rama playfully shooting clay pellets from his bow at her hump. She could not bear to see the urchin, that had mocked at her deformity, ascending the throne. She entered the bed-chamber of Kaikeyi in a bid to persuade her to thwart the impending coronation of Rama, her step-son.

(To be continued)

S. Maharajan
THE TREE

1

The tree stands in front of the window of my first floor room.
The leaves move, light shines on them, the green light of health and vitality
When I saw the tree first, it was very small.
Long before, as I once looked below from the window,
I saw it standing there with two tender green leaves stretched upwards.
It was as if a little child calling lovingly, “Lift me up.”
In reply I lowered my hands and asked affectionately, “Come up yourself.”
It came up—day by day, month by month, season by season;
it bathed in rain, basked in sun and shivered in cold
and finally it came up and stood in front of my window.

2

The tree stands in front of the window...
Heavy traffic passes through the street—bus, motor, lorry...
Their rolling wheels raise up storms of dust.
The tree shoulders all the attack,
will not allow even a particle of dust to enter my room.
I sprinkle water in the morning and in the afternoon
and wash away the dusty deposit from its shining healthy leaves.
A summer night.
The moon pours on earth the contents of its silvery heart.
All nature is saturated with the love and light from above.
But I am sleepless: unbearable heat.
I lie down on the cold floor of my room.
The tree stealthily enters inside
and caresses me to sleep by the soothing touch of its shadowy leaves.

3

The tree stands in front of the window...
One afternoon I see a black and massive cloud
coming up from behind the horizon.
Gradually the black changes into brownish red,
the colour of a drunkard’s eye.
After a while the dumb and dense cloud covers the whole sky.
Lightning flashes from all corners.
 Abruptly the sea bursts forth into a thunderous roar.
 Storm starts, a cyclone.
 The boats sink, the houses break;
 The roadside trees bow down at the feet of the Lord of Destruction,
 never to rise again...
 The tree in front of my window also bows to the Lord.
 It bows in front, bows backwise and sidewise
 and cries in supplication—
 "Be quiet, calm down, O Vairaba!
 Enough of destructive dance.
 No more of death; Life.
 Let me live, O Lord!"
 The storm stops, the rain ceases.
 Only in the darkness of the night
 an unusually bright star sheds its heavenly light
 through the madly flying broken clouds.

The tree stands in front of the window...
 It stands, a wounded soldier—
 its branches broken, leaves torn and roots shaken.
 The day breaks, the darkness recedes.
 The sun rises and feeds the tree every day
 with the red tonic of its rays.
 In time the roots become strong, the branches heal
 and the head gets covered once again with fresh green leaves.
 One morning I wake up very early to the sound of a sweet and soft music.
 I open my eyes, I see the tree.
 O what a beauty! What a joy!
 Smiling yellow flowers are peeping through the leaves.
 I get up, go near, stretch my hand through the window.
 I touch the petals...
 How tender, smooth and sweetly affectionate are they!

The tree stands in front of the window...
 Just as I go out one morning for the day's work
 I find a number of people in the street.
 They talk, argue and discuss.
Perhaps they are labourers busy settling something.
In the afternoon I feel within me a strange anguish.
I become restless; I look at the sky.
The sky is cloudy...
I go to the seaside.
A sobbing sound comes from the bosom of the sea...
I rush towards my house, I unlock the door and enter my room.
I open the window as usual.
Suddenly my being laments in pain and despair.
The tree stands no more...
I look down from the window.
I see the chopped trunk of the tree.
It smiles on seeing me.
It smiles! Is it smiling?
O yes, there stand out from the side of the trunk
two tender green leaves.
A child calling in earnest, “Lift me up...”

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

(A free English rendering by the author of his own Bengali poem)
THE CALL OF THE MOUNTAINS

A SHORT STORY

NESTLING against the rude mountain-side was a small cottage. It appeared like a little child hiding near the apron of its gigantic, stern yet sympathetic nurse against the chilly winds. Small trees and tall grasses grew on this slope, near this cottage, offering colourful relief to the distant peaks. As a rule, none lived on this uninhabited mountain-slope, for it was too sheer for tea-plants to thrive and too wet for apple or cherry orchards. Yet as if defying all these hostile conditions a hut stood, a bold reminder of man's urge to progress and to overcome impossible-seeming difficulties.

Inside the hut were heard two voices: the high treble of a child and the bass drone of a weather-beaten, shrunken old man. They sat at a rough table and it seemed a very interesting topic was at its height. A small bed in one corner of the room, two small tables, one for meals, and the other for study, a small wardrobe and a few chairs were all the furniture. A few utensils on a shelf, a cask of water, a jug and a small inoffensive fire-place decorated the cottage and made it look more habitable. The grandfather apparently was in the middle of a very exciting narration. "And I came," he continued, "to a ridge overlooking the sheer wall of ice. A sharp cold wind came in gusts. At every step jutting rocks and fallen roots of trees hurt my already raw and bleeding feet. It was the extreme end of my capacity to bear. The sharp and unpredictable climb, the unsureness of the goal, my natural ill-health made conditions difficult." He stopped. "But all this perhaps is too hard for you to understand," he continued; "but once you have grown up and are strong, then perhaps you can venture out and succeed, where I have failed." He sighed deeply and was silent. Nothing was heard except the distant murmur of pines and a small fire crackling in the grate.

The child woke from his reverie and questioned, "What is beyond that wall of ice?" Slowly the old man turned to the child. "None is sure of that," he answered; "there are only wild ideas or rumours." "What are they?" queried again the child. "A slow meandering river of liquid gold," the old man replied, "is on the other side. Or perhaps a secret cave where some ancient giant has accumulated an inconceivable amount of wealth; some say he is dead fighting with another giant, others assert that all these treasures are stored by a king whose palace was here." "To find them," the child again questioned, "you came here, didn't you?" The old man did not immediately reply. After some hesitation he finally spoke: "I was not eager for money or adventure. Perhaps, you are too young to understand that I felt a strong call towards these
mountain-peaks and I felt that beyond them was a man who could answer my deeper needs.”

Suddenly like a gust of strong wind someone entered the cabin, bringing with him a cold draught. The spell was broken. A dark young man came with energetic strides and exclaimed, “How can you remain cooped up in this hole?” The old man welcomed his son. The child sprang up and rushed to his father and in an excited voice said, “Daddy, daddy, grandpa was telling me his adventures—Oh how thrilling!” But the young man did not reciprocate the child’s enthusiasm; he spoke drily to the old man, “Is it not enough you have ruined our life and yours by your tomfoolery? You are bent on spoiling the life of my child as well!” With a wry face he flung himself on a chair and, mopping his brow with a handkerchief and heaving a sigh, he continued, “I’ve come to speak of hard facts and not wild dreams.” The old man was silent; the child, dejected and at a loss, went near the window and peered outside, unable to gauge the depths of an adult’s mind. He absent-mindedly heard the following dialogue.

Old man: “I have done you no harm; I expect nothing from you. Only I intend to have some peace. Therefore I am here.”

Young man: “What you do is your affair. But you cannot take away our child from us. There is his education.”

Old man: “I do not keep your child by force. If he remains of his own accord, I cannot stop him.”

Young man: “That is only words, you really intend to keep him here and sow the seed of impossible dreams. This you could not do to me owing to my mother’s strong will.”

Old man: “Don’t be sarcastic. Remember I am your father. If you want, take your child away.”

Young man: “Munna, come here! I want you to come with me immediately.”

The child, instead of obliging his father, rushed to the old man. “Oh let him not take me away from here! How severe is granny, and mummy is always busy with friends. I feel so lonely there,” he exclaimed. What was said was only too true. Hence the young man grumblingly left the hut, but not without some more depreciative remarks and veiled threats.

It is the dead of night. The cottage is dark. Nothing stirs except the deep and rhythmic sounds of breathing. Then the spell is broken. Across the far mountain-range rises the waning moon. The pale light casts its beam on the edges of the peak and the tips of dark rows of pines. A faint gimmer enters the hut across the window and makes the place unearthly. Then, as if from nowhere, is heard the distant flapping of wings, adding to the strange enchantment. Then there is wafted, at first like a far-off drone, the note of a flute. The music seems to draw near and a sweet, haunting
heavenly melody breaks the utter stillness. The child wakes up startled. He whispers, "Grandpa, Grandpa." The old man does not wake, but merely grunts. Next, the boy hears a jingling of anklets, keeping time with the music of the flute. Now the music and the sound of the anklets grow faint. The moonlight gradually recedes, leaving the place in gloom. The child relapses into slumber.

Again another mystery is unveiled. The mountain-peaks reflect the faint grey glow that precedes dawn. Another type of enchantment and charm follow. And a single star shines just above the peak and the slow long-drawn-out note of a weird inhuman voice is heard at a distance. It echoes and re-echoes among the hills and dies away. Again another wave of sound arises and passes. The child again is roused. His hairs stand on end. He tries to speak out. But some powerful hand seems to check him and bereave him of his speech. Yet he listens fascinated. The voice appears to draw near and then recede, and rise from another valley and come from behind. By now the pale intangible dawn has been replaced by a greater promise of light. And the mysterious voice at last stops. The mystery of the night is replaced by the beauty of a hilly morning, with fresh breeze, distant voices of birds in the next valley and a sudden display of colours in the sky like an outburst of fire-works.

The old man, after a refreshing sleep, wakes, stretches his limbs, yawns and sets aside his counterpane. As yet he misses nothing nor feels anything strange. The child is not at his side, or at the window. Neither is he playing with the small mountain kids that come to graze outside their cabin. His pair of small shoes are near the bedstead. His day-garments are neatly piled upon a chair nearby. The basin of water at the corner of the room is untouched. Unbelieving, the old man peers around; he goes out and searches all possible places: nooks and caves, high boulders and the rock-face behind a waterfall, the lone leaning pine-tree a few yards below his hut, which were his usual haunts. At last the truth dawns on his mind. The mountain that has lured him all his life and given no peace to him has also taken away the child, his one bond in the world.

Romen
PROSPECTS FOR WORLD UNION

For due assessment of the prospects for world union it is advisable to attempt to understand certain historic processes and forces at work. First: let us understand that our Earth is an evolutionary planet and has, since its birth many millions of years ago, constantly changed, evolved and manifested newer and higher forms, planes of consciousness and principles of existence. There have been epochs in Earth's life when the evolutionary process has made rapid strides and undergone revolutionary changes. We are living in a unique and remarkable era in which there are very radical alterations taking place. New knowledge, new truths, new scientific discoveries, new organisations of life, new ways of thinking, new solutions of problems, etc. are ceaselessly dawning in the minds of men.

Second: through very swift transport and communications the world has become small, and events in one part of the world affect the life of the rest in a way impossible even at the beginning of this century. Every nation feels in its culture, its political movements and economic development the influence of events and trends in other parts of the world and of policies pursued by other nations. Continent has no longer a separate life from continent; no nation can any longer isolate itself and live a separate existence. Science has created a functional international society. An ever increasing number of international organisations and gatherings, Governmental and non-Governmental, striving to deliberate and decide international problems with world points of view are constantly, slowly and steadily helping the development of the sense of a world community.

Third: highly evolved thinkers and idealists of all ages and climes have dreamt of human unity. During the Vedic period, the spiritual dawn of humanity, the great seers affirmed that all humanity is one family. Avatars, prophets and sages of all times and countries have affirmed the oneness of creation and the essential unity of mankind.

Fourth: Nature and its evolutionary process have experimented in spite of repeated failures and created larger and more complex human aggregates, from family to clan or tribe to city, and other larger groups of varied nature and finally national units. The legitimate question is whether the nation, the largest present natural unit which humanity has been able to create for its collective living, is its last and ultimate unit or whether evolutionary forces will compel man to form a greater aggregate which will include all nations in its united totality. It appears that Nature has been gradually training man by a progressive approach to ever larger units so that he becomes ready for the final universality.

Out of the suffering and anguish during the First World War of 1914 to 1918 the League of Nations, an imperfect, incomplete and hesitant beginning of a world union, took shape. "It was not happy in its conception, well inspired in its formation or
destined to any considerable longevity or a supremely successful career. But that such
an organised endeavour should be launched at all and proceed on its way for some
time without an early breakdown was in itself an event of capital importance and
meant the initiation of a new era in world history; especially, it was an initiative which,
even if it failed, could not be allowed to remain without a sequel but had to be taken
up again until a successful solution has safeguarded the future of mankind, not only
against continued disorder and lethal peril but against destructive possibilities which
could easily prepare the collapse of civilisation and perhaps eventually something even
that could be described as the suicide of the human race."

Accordingly, out of the

suffering and anguish of the Second World War the United Nations Organisation took
birth on 24th October 1945, replacing the League of Nations and “now stands in the
forefront of the world and struggles towards some kind of secure permanence and
success in the stupendous endeavour on which depends the world’s future”. Though
in its conception and formation U.N.O. is a great improvement on the League of
Nations, a strong surviving element of oligarchy has remained in the preponderant
place assigned to the five great powers in the Security Council and by the pro-

vision of the Veto. “They have done more to create trouble, hamper the action and
diminish the success of the new institution than anything else in its make-up or the
way of action forced upon it by the world situation or the difficulties of a combined
working inherent in its very structure. A too hasty or radical endeavour to get rid of
these defects might lead to a crash of the whole edifice; to leave them unmodified
prolongs a malaise, an absence of harmony and smooth working.”

To reach the goal of a world union of free and independent nations in which
unity in diversity would be accepted as the largest principle of life and freedom would
be its corner stone and in which no nation is subordinate to another and all enjoy an
equal legal status, an important first step, in the present conditions of the world, is to
establish the principle of a cooperative peaceful co-existence for governing relations
between nations. A competitive, much less a combative, peaceful co-existence cannot
serve any such purpose.

There are many individuals and organisations all over the world that are
working on spiritual, cultural or political levels for an evolution from national con-
sciousness to world consciousness and from state loyalty to world loyalty. But the chief
obstacle to that stage of Evolution is man’s attachment to old ideas and habits. He has
scarcely, in psychology or practice, attempted to become a world citizen. He is still
the family man, the caste man, the tribal man, the party man, the political man,
the sectarian, the fanatically national man. The greatest obstacles to the growth
or evolution of U.N.O. into a world union is a false sense of national interests in
opposition to the interests of humanity as a whole, unwillingness to transfer man’s
paramount loyalty from one fragment of the human race to the human race itself and

1 Sri Aurobindo, The Ideal of Human Unity.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
unwillingness of the national states to invest a portion of their sovereignty in a world body for the common good of the inhabitants of this earth. Man has to become conscious that the world has become one and that nationalism in the old sense, which served its purpose in the evolutionary ladder, is now an obstacle to the realisation of the long cherished dream of world union. The sovereignty of a national state has also served its purpose as a step in the evolutionary ladder but is now an obstacle to the progress towards a world unification.

The United Nations has possibilities of evolving into a world union, in spite of certain weaknesses, defects and failures in its working and functioning. It represents the highest and boldest stage reached so far towards world union by human aspirations and endeavours. It can look back on a record of substantial achievements during the last 23 years working against tremendous difficulties. It is essential that there should be conscious efforts by world statesmen to free the deliberations and decisions of the United Nations, its organs and specialised agencies from cold war tactics, power politics and selfish interests of the member states; and all decisions taken by the United Nations must reflect the truth of the situation and merits of the subjects handled.

An organisation named “World Union” was constituted ten years ago on 26th November 1958 to work for the realisation of one of the five dreams of Sri Aurobindo which as a young man he hoped to see fulfilled in his lifetime or on their way to fulfilment. One of these dreams was “a world union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind.” In March 1960 the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, who is the President of World Union, gave to the workers of the organisation the following message:

The World is a unity—it has always been, and it is always so, even now it is so—it is not that it has not got the unity and the unity has to be brought in from outside and imposed upon it.

Only the world is not conscious of its unity. It has to be made conscious.

We consider now is the time most propitious for the endeavour.

For, a new Force or Consciousness or Light—whatever you call the new element—has manifested into the world and the world has now the capacity to become conscious of its own unity.

Inspired by that message and Sri Aurobindo’s book The Ideal of Human Unity, World Union is endeavours for the realisation of human unity and world peace on a spiritual foundation. We say to people everywhere that the world is one and call upon them to live this oneness.

Let me end with a quotation from Sri Aurobindo’s postscript chapter to The Ideal of Human Unity written in 1950, which forms an optimistic basis for an endeavour with firm faith for the realisation of world union:

“We conclude then that in the conditions of the world at present even taking into consideration its most disparaging features and dangerous possibilities, there is nothing that need alter the view we have taken of the necessity and inevitability
of some kind of world union the drive of Nature and the compulsion of circumstances and the present and future need of man make it inevitable. The general conclusion we have arrived at will stand and the consideration of the modalities and possible forms or lines or alternatives or successive development it may take. The ultimate result must be the formation of a World-State and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities in which all inequalities and subordination of one to another would have disappeared and, though some might preserve a greater natural influence, all would have an equal status."

Jai Jagat.

A. B. Patel
CONQUEST OF ANGER

Not for months but for years my only prayer at the Balcony Darshan was for the conquest of anger. Anger is the root of a thousand evils, a generator of disharmony and discord. Until 1938 the impact of the higher forces was so strong that I looked like a saint. But when the sadhana touched deeper levels and the spell of meditation was over, all that lay hidden in the nature came up to regain its lost ground.

There is another side to it. Before 1938 we were shut up in our own cells, as it were; mostly busy with our own affairs, our own individual sadhana. There was practically no mixing even with one other. So the forces had no chance of play.

When work was entrusted to me—work which required hired labour,—then my ego began to assert itself and there arose clashes and conflicts. This gave birth to resentment and along with it came at times the feeling of retaliation.

Anything that went against my will made me flare up. Up rose all the forces in arms. It affected the whole body: hard breath, reddened face, fierce eyes, thundering voice were the common symptoms of the malady. Sleeplessness has all along been my long-standing companion. At times the brain got so heated that I had to pass the night pacing up and down the courtyard. Nothing, no pouring of cold water over the head, gave relief or removed the tension. Thus continued for more than a decade despite setting my heart to prayers daily at the Balcony Darshan.

When almost broken, one day I saw something coming out of me, holding the Mother's feet and praying to be rescued from the clutches of this monster. The very next day, to my utter surprise, an incident which would have made me fly into fury brought no reaction. I breathed a happy sigh of relief. However, it proved a passing phase. Just the first check.

The Mother's writings in the Bulletin are always practical. But practice requires patience. Nothing can be done in a day. No patience, no perseverance, no gain! Somewhere She has said, "Try to speak as little as you can, allow the things to adjust themselves, then you will see an inner harmony established." (I don't remember the exact words but the idea is something like that.) I took a resolve to tolerate everything and speak as little as possible. This proved very effective and served as the first brake. It had its effect on the general psychological atmosphere too.

In my stupidity I thought that without raising the voice, showing temper, work could not be exacted from the workers. If there is no fear created, the performance would slow down. It was just the contrary. Wounded feelings, I found, made the workers grumble all day and the work suffer more.

But the brake could not keep the anger in check for more than 10 or 15 days. Forceful suppression led to a sudden outburst. I began to keep a note as to how long I could keep free from the attack of anger. This helped me to be always vigilant. The
moment there was a vibration of anger, I grew conscious. And the moment I grew conscious it lost its force.

Formerly such a result was not at all possible; the attack was so sudden that nothing could check it, not even pricking the body with a pin. My own imperfection became the source of trouble to the family and to others. My ego always found fault with others. Due to regular irritation there was no tolerance, no forbearance in me. While there was no peace in my heart, how could there be peace at home? When I had control and no part in me gave way to anger, I came to realise that I myself had been the source of trouble to others.

A time came when I felt the attack at a particular part of the body; first below the navel ("the lower vital") and then in the stomach ("the vital proper"). As a stir was created there, I could at once detect that an undesirable element had intervened. The storm over, I came back to my normal state and remained in my poise for a week or two.

It was not that in this period nothing untoward took place, rather more violent things occurred. Could I smilingly face a furious man, half his heat would cool down. As years rolled on and I learnt to ignore, to tolerate or bypass, my temper found no chance to assail me. Many a time my inner being refused to respond and the forces of anger could not prevail.

When calm reigned in the atmosphere, the departmental work went on smoothly. It was so pleasing to see things getting adjusted by themselves, calling for hardly any interference. In the peaceful atmosphere, there arose at times a feeling that it was the Mother's force working through us all.

This happy trend is increasing day by day. But a little slackness and the forces of wrath pop in. Years after, the attack was felt somewhere only in the mental region. When this part also refused to be its pawn and still there was a loss of temper, then I could not perceive where lay the fault.

Much later, on calm analysis I realised it must be the outer being which, in the words of the Master, is like a stone and refuses to change.

Now begins another phase of development. Though 90% of control is there, yet it is a control, not a conquest. It is this deficiency that breaks the continuity of the period of peace and does not allow it to settle in the being.

Usually when desire is hit, it rises in the form of anger. No desire, no anger. So let us turn to the problem of the conquest of desire. "The soul, says Sri Aurobindo, "cannot be free when subject to desire."1

The higher stage is yet a far cry.

Dhruva

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1 The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 419.
I am essentially a devotee by temperament. I learnt to meditate when I came in touch with the Mother and breathed her atmosphere. On coming here, in no time there developed in me a tendency to remain absorbed in meditation. It was an atmosphere of peace and bliss in which everyone lived, moved and had his being.

A little way off from the ever-unresting sea was the sea of unruffled calm that was the Ashram. This calm became a visible reality on Darshan days. Hours I would pass sitting motionless. The moment I closed my eyes I felt the action of the Mother’s force in the lower parts of the body. This was followed by a sound like the chirping of crickets.

“The sounds of bells and the seeing of lights and colours are signs of the opening of the inner consciousness which brings with it an opening also to sights and sounds of other planes than the physical. Some of these things like the sound of bells, crickets etc. seem even to help the opening. The Upanishad speaks of them as brahma vyakti karōṇi yogā.”

By fixing the mind on the sound I would keep thoughts away and this helped the spontaneous flow of meditation. “It means,” says the Master, “that the Yoga force is beginning to take up the sadhana.”

In his reply to my first letter the Master wrote:

“At present you can go on with your meditation and see what develops in you. There is no reason why you should not aspire for the steady descent of the light. But it is the receptivity and the sincerity in the call and the growth of a true consciousness that must increase, the number of hours given to sitting in meditation does not in itself matter.”

I have three or four letters about meditation and sleep. I quote them all here.

QUESTION: Unable to sit due to rheumatic pain I am compelled to take some support and often meditate in a reclining position. Sometimes I fall asleep but when the eyes open I find that the body was fully possessed by the Mother’s force. Is this sort of sleep a help or a hindrance? Sleep is always said to be a sign of tamas?

SRI AURIBINDO: This is not correct. One kind of sleep is tāmasic, but sleep in which one is conscious, or in which sadhana continues or in which there is action on

1 Letters of Sri Aurobindo, Fourth Series, p. 280.
other planes or in which one meets with a spiritual experience is not tāmasic. It is a help and not a hindrance. (13-3-1933)

**QUESTION:** There is too much tendency to sleep. Should I avoid it?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** It is better to let the body have its rest.

**QUESTION:** Is any working possible in sleep?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** That is only when the sleep is conscious. (7-2-1934)

Once during most part of the night I felt the touch of the Mother. And it roused repeated feelings of surrender. It seemed as if the heart had become a receptacle with the Mother’s Feet in it. Then it felt soft as butter. The next day I felt the descent of the Mother’s force like a torrent; though in deep sleep, I was conscious that the body was full of joy. When I wrote all this the Master commented:

“These experiences indicate close contact with the Mother and the action of the force or consciousness or Ananda in sleep.” (19-10-1936)

The following extracts from two letters may throw some more light on the subject:

“The true consciousness comes at first in the waking state or in meditation, it takes possession of the mental, the vital, the conscious physical but the subconscious vital and physical remain obscure and this obscurity comes up when there is sleep or an inert relaxation. When the subconscious is enlightened and penetrated by the true consciousness this disparity disappears.”

“When one has gained the enduring rest and passivity of the consciousness then it is easy to concentrate and receive when walking or doing anything. One can accustom oneself to meditate walking, standing, lying but sitting is the first natural position.”

**QUESTION:** Once I saw someone meditating in my lower vital being. Who was it?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** When there is this sense of somebody meditating in a part and its receiving and welcoming the higher influence, it indicates a full opening in that part. (9-7-1934)

On September 22, 1936 I wrote:

During the last evening meditation I saw something like a white liquid flowing through the heart and filling the stomach; the latter became full of it and began to shine like light falling on snow. The passage in the heart through which it flowed also became white. A little after, I saw a white pigeon dancing with joy with out stretched wings.

**SRI AUROBINDO:** Descent of the Mother’s consciousness through the heart in the vital. The white pigeon must indicate the resultant freedom of the Mother’s consciousness there.

My next question was: I saw something coming out from me and clasping the feet of the Mother. Its colour was white and white light was falling on it.

**SRI AUROBINDO:** Surrender of the being steeped in the Mother’s light.

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On October 10, 1936 I heard two voices (i) 'the psychic of your mental, vital and body has surrendered' (ii) 'your consciousness is being psychicised'. In reply to the first Sri Aurobindo wrote:

"Certainly."

Still the sadhana has not reached its realising phase.

(To be continued)

A Disciple
THE CONQUEST OF DEATH

THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO’S YOGA

(Continued from the issue of October 1968)

CHAPTER IX

The Mystery of Life and Death

Birth is the first spiritual mystery of the physical universe, death is
the second which gives its double point of perplexity to the mystery of
birth; for life, which would otherwise be a self-evident fact of existence,
becomes itself a mystery by virtue of these two which seem to be its begin­
ing and its end and yet in a thousand ways betray themselves as neither of
these things, but rather intermediate stages in an occult processus of life.

SRI AUROBINDO. The Life Divine, p. 661.

Our mortality is only justified in the light of our immortality...

Ibid., p. 606.

Immortal life breathe in that monstrous death.

SRI AUROBINDO, Last Poems. p. 43.

Although Death walks beside us on Life’s road,
A dim bystander at the body’s start...
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face:
Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,
A whip to lash us towards our deathless state.

SRI AUROBINDO, Savitri, Book X, Canto I.

To make a terror of death
Who smiling beckons us to farther life,
And is a bridge for the persistent breath,
[Is] born of folly...

SRI AUROBINDO, More Poems, p. 18.

We now come to the question of questions, praśnam uttamam, the ultimate problem
that all embodied life has to face:

“What is the raison d’être of death, this cruel and monstrous jest played with immortal life by some mysterious necessity of things, or by some diabolical Power, as some in their exasperation would like to declare?”

Nachiketas, the young aspirant of the Kathopanishad, asked Yama for the solution to this problem of death—Yama “the knower and keeper of the cosmic Law through which the soul has to rise by death and life to the freedom of Immortality.”

Even when asked by Yama, the Lord of Death: “Another boon choose, O Nachiketas; importune me not, nor urge me; this, this abandon,” the seeking soul of Nachiketas stood firm and declared: “This of which they thus debate, O Death, declare to me, even that which is in the great passage; than this boon which enters into the secret that is hidden from us, no other chooses Nachiketas.”

And Gilgamesh of the ancient Babylonian lore, who set out on the quest after the Plant of Everlasting Life but failed in his attempt, raised the same insistent cry to the departed soul of Enkidu: “Tell me, my Friend, tell me, reveal to me, the mystery of death.”

As the Mother has remarked: “Why is there death? This question has been put, at least, once in their life, by all persons whose consciousness is awakened in the slightest degree. In the depth of each being there is such a need to prolong, develop, perpetuate life that contact with death produces a shock, a recoil; in some sensitive beings it produces horror, in others, indignation. One asks: ‘What is this monstrous force in which one has to take part without wishing for it or understanding it? Why to be born, if it is to die? Why all this effort for growth, for progress, for the development of faculties, if it is to arrive at an impoverishment and finally at decline and decomposition?’ Some submit passively to a fate that seems inexorable, others revolt or, if they are less strong, despair.”

While discussing the necessity and justification and the culmination and self-fulfillment of the process of death, we must at the very outset try to get rid of a basic and besetting error of perspective that tends to vitiate a proper and unbiased evaluation of the phenomenon of death. For, if we can contemplate this sombre phenomenon, not from the limited and necessarily distorted angle of vision of the finite terror-struck ego-bound individual, but from the perspective of cosmic Becoming, we cannot fail to discover that death and dissolution is not such an unmitigated evil as it appears at first sight to be. As a matter of fact, death as death has no separate or intrinsic reality: it is there solely to serve the purpose of life. We can even go farther and state that death is a process and phase of life itself, and that the latter, and by no means death, is the fundamental all-pervading truth of existence.

1 Sri Aurobindo, Eight Upanishads, p. 47 fn.
2 Katha Upanishad, I. 1. 21. (Sri Aurobindo’s translation).
3 Ibid., I. 1.29
4 The Epic of Gilgamesh composed around the beginning of the second millennium B.C
But what is Life, what are its criteria? Biological sciences know no definite answer to these questions. As a matter of fact, the more profoundly men of science have sought to probe the mystery of the essence of life, the more it has eluded their grasp, so much so that life at times appears to them to be immanently present everywhere, its overt manifestation depending upon some favourable conditions which alone Science can hope to study and specify. To modern biological thought there are no universally valid criteria of life. Baffled with the task of defining what a living organism is, Biology seeks at times to proceed in a roundabout way, as in the following definition offered by Prof. George E. Hutchinson:

“The necessary and sufficient condition for an object to be recognizable as a living organism, and so to be the subject of biological investigation, is that it be a discreet mass of matter, with a definite boundary, undergoing continual interchange of material with its surroundings without manifest alteration of properties over short periods of time and, as ascertained either by direct observations or by analogy with other objects of the same class, originating by some process of division or fractionation from one or two pre-existing objects of the same kind.”

To cite a few observations reflecting the sense of biological predicament before the task of delimiting the field of Life and of Mind:

(i) “While there is little difficulty in telling whether a higher organism is alive, there is no agreement as to what characteristics would be required for the most primitive organisms in order to call them living.” (Prof. Stanley L. Miller, “Origin of Life” in McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology, Vol. VII, p. 496.)

(ii) In recent years, the “study of viruses has become intensive, leading to a blurring of the conception of the ‘vital’ phenomena. It is still doubtful whether a virus can be described as living and, indeed, as to what we mean by living.” (Prof. Charles Singer, Biology.)

In fact, as the faint glimmerings of recent scientific research suggest and spiritual experience and vision certify, “Life reveals itself as essentially the same everywhere from the atom to man, the atom containing the subconscious stuff and movement of being which are released into consciousness in the animal, with plant life as a midway stage in the evolution. Life is really a universal operation of Conscious-Force acting subconsciously on and in Matter; it is the operation that creates, maintains, destroys and re-creates forms or bodies and attempts by play of nerve-force, that is to say, by currents of interchange of stimulating energy to awake conscious sensation in those bodies. In this operation there are three stages; the lowest is that in which the vibration is still in the sleep of Matter, entirely subconscious so as to seem wholly mechanical; the middle stage is that in which it becomes capable of a response still submental but on the verge of what we know as consciousness; the highest is that in which life develops conscious mentality in the form of a mentally perceptible sensation which in this transition becomes the basis for the development of sense-mind and intelligence. It is in the middle stage that we catch the idea of life as distinguished
from Matter and Mind, but in reality it is the same in all the stages." Thus, "there is no break, no rigid line of demarcation between the earth and the metal formed in it or between the metal and the plant and...there is none either between the elements and atoms that constitute the earth or metal and the metal or earth that they constitute. Each step of this graded existence prepares the next, holds in itself what appears in that which follows it. Life is everywhere, secret or manifest, organised or elemental, involved or evolved, but universal, all-pervading, imperishable; only its forms and organisings differ."

It is this prāṇo sarvāyusam, "the omnipresent Life that has manifested and inhabits the material universe" that the Mother has in view when she refers in one of her articles to a "a few fundamental notions...needed to help us in our endeavour" to conquer the fear of death. As she says:

"The first and the most important thing is to know that life is one and immortal. Only the forms, countless in number, are transient and brittle. This knowledge one must establish securely and permanently in the mind, and as far as possible, one must identify one's consciousness with the life everlasting that is independent of any form but manifests itself in all forms. This gives the indispensable psychological basis from where to face the problem..

"Life then does not die; but the forms are dissolved, and it is this dissolution that physical consciousness fears. And yet the form changes constantly and there is nothing that debars this change from being progressive. This progressive change alone can make it possible that death would no more be inevitable." [Italics ours]

But since, due to reasons that we shall presently explore, this progressive change of the body and the physical being of man, responding fully to the demands made upon it by the divine Inhabitant in His infinitely progressive self-Becoming, could not be so far effectuated, death has been put forward and made to play its role as an agent of life itself to serve the ends of cosmic wisdom.

That death is no more than a temporary curtain placed against eternal life—mors janua vitae—or that death is but the obverse of the coin of Life, as hinted by the Osirian Mysteries, has been known to the mystics throughout the ages. This knowledge has been variously given literary expressions of which a few representative ones may be cited here:

(i) "Death is life." (Novalis)
(ii) "Life is death and Death is life." (Euripides)
(iii) "All Death in Nature is Birth, and in Death itself appears visibly the exaltation of Life." (Fichte).
(iv) "For birth hath in itself the germ of death,

1 The Life Divine, p. 172.
2 Ibid., p. 166.
3 "Prana, the Life-stuff of the All" (Tattvya Upanshad, II. 3).
4 The Life Divine, p. 173.
But death hath in itself the germ of birth...
For they are twain yet one, and Death is Birth.”
(Francis Thomson: “Ode to the Setting Sun”)
(v) “Life and Death—two companions who relieve one another in the leading of the soul to its journey’s end.” (Paul Richard).
(vi) ‘Life [is] a figure of death and Death of life.”
(Sri Aurobindo, Eight Upanishads, p. 51. fn.)

So we see that the opposition that our mentality makes between life and death is no more than an error of perspective brought about by the superficial view of things deceived by the appearances. As a matter of fact, death is there simply to serve the purpose of life, and disintegration of substance no less than renewal of substance, change of form no less than maintenance of form are the constant process of life itself. Death is the vaulting-board that life has chosen in order to pass from birth to greater birth, till the hour comes when there will be The end of Death, the death of Ignorance.

(Savitri, Book XI, Canto I)

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

A TALK

Said the pearly drop of dew
To the mighty rolling ocean:
“I think that both I and you
Are kin to Heaven’s ageless motion.”

Said the humble lamp to the silver stars:
“The sun, the moon and you and I
Have the kindred vein that stirs,
—The same goal given by the High.”

The tiny bud peeped from the leaves,
And said to the ugly irate thorn:
“To see you angry—oh it grieves
My heart! To love were we not born?”

Said the shy and errant Life
To the husky and lonely Death:
“I see harmony and no strife
Between us, to cherish the mortal’s breath.”

KAMALAKANTO
CAN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD BE PROVED?

(Continued from the issue of September 1968)

(This is a discussion between three philosophers: (1) an Anselmian (A) who believes that the existence of God can be rationally and strictly demonstrated; (2) a Kantian (K) who holds that all arguments that claim to demonstrate God's existence are fallacious; and (3) a Critical Philosopher (C) who agrees with K, but at the same time holds that the proposition 'God exists' is self-evident to the wise.)

K. I think that now C should make good his claim to show that 'God exists' is self-evident to the wise.

C. I must begin by saying that, like K, I reject all the traditional arguments for the existence of God. I reject them because they all operate with a notion of 'proof' or 'demonstration' which has no validity outside mathematics and formal logic and no validity particularly where concrete existence is concerned. I would therefore like to make it clear that it would be very misleading to say that I am proposing a new proof of the existence of God.

A. Would you say that your argument proves the existence of God in some other sense of the word 'proof'?

C. I would rather avoid the word 'proof' altogether because it might suggest that 'God exists' follows from premisses which are to be accepted by all since they are self-evident. In philosophy there are no self-evidently true premisses. Or it might suggest that 'God' is the presupposition of thought as such, that is, what is common to thought at all stages and levels, whereas I think that 'God' is the presupposition only of thought at a certain level, i.e., the metaphysical level, which again can be defined only with reference to the concept of God as its central idea. This, if offered as a proof, would be dismissed (and rightly) as a circular argument. It is valid only as a process of evocation rather than proof, a method of bringing to a consciousness of itself a way of thinking in which the totality of actual experience and its built-in norms are transcended, accompanied with the suggestion that this act of self-transcendence is possible only through the reorganization of thought and experience round the idea of God. Either one accepts the idea of God or one rejects metaphysical thinking as spurious, or, as in the case of atheism, one uses only the outer shell of metaphysical thought devoid of its informing spirit.

K. And yet, without following from self-evidently true premisses, the proposition 'God exists' is, according to you, self-evident.

C. To the wise! It is not self-evident in the sense in which a logical law or a
mathematical axiom is self-evident. It becomes self-evident on two conditions: (1) that the concept of God is intelligible and (2) that our thought becomes fully self-conscious. Without this new level of awareness, transcendent metaphysics is not possible and not ultimately intelligible.

K. Perhaps this is what Kant meant when he said that Metaphysics is not possible as a science.

C. He could have meant that and, if he did, it is perhaps because he had a vague intimation of the truth that Metaphysics can only be reconstructed at a higher level of thought, but in trying to give effect to this insight his thought merely shifted horizontally from the theoretical to the practical mode of consciousness. It did not go inwards and upwards to the true critical standpoint where thought becomes fully conscious of itself. The roots of thought remained opaque for Kant and hence he also misconstrued its form.

A. This deepening of awareness of which you speak reminds me of the Idealist view that in philosophy thought does not move outwards towards conclusions, but inwards towards its own presuppositions, and that hence all the conclusions of philosophy are necessarily foregone.

C. I hold this view of philosophical reasoning once, and though I do not reject it I think it contains only a partial truth. I still think that philosophical conclusions lie in our presuppositions and are hence foregone, but not in the way in which, for instance, the principle of syllogistic reasoning is presupposed by every syllogistic argument, or the way in which one premiss of a syllogism is presupposed by the other premiss and the conclusion. The trouble is that different philosophers have different foregone conclusions! In the backward movement of thought one arrives at different presuppositions. This means that the 'inwardization' which philosophical thinking consists in is different from that which we find at the level of logic. At this level one merely looks for the presuppositions of thought as such and this can only lead to the discovery or recovery of the fundamental laws of thought and rules of reasoning which are common to all systems and are philosophically neutral. What is required is that we must move backwards to the presuppositions, not of thought in the abstract but of the concretely diversified points of view. This is not merely a movement backwards but also in a new dimension, not merely from the implicit to the explicit, but, more importantly, from the conscious to the self-conscious level.

A. But if we merely uncover diverse presuppositions or different foregone conclusions the result would be an irresolvable deadlock or an ultimate pluralism.

C. That would be so if the movement were merely from the implicit to the explicit, but there is also a new awareness and this consists partly in recognizing that the ultimate presuppositions of any system of thought consist not only in a commitment or a basic outlook which is alogical, but also in a key concept which functions as the immanent criterion of that system.

K. You mean that what is presupposed by a system is not merely something taken
for granted but is or contains that in the light of which the system is constructed and which functions as the criterion of truth?

C. Yes, the ultimate presupposition contains what I call the basic criterion-concept.

A. But the deadlock still remains, for there would be alternative basic criterion-concepts and hence alternative criteria of truth.

C. True, but then, in my opinion, priority must be given to that system which can give some justification for the truth-claim it advances for its own system and for the truth-value of philosophical systems in general.

A. But this would lead to infinite regress. The attempt to justify the truth-claim of a system or the truth-value of systems in general would presuppose another criterion and this, in turn, would stand in need of justification.

C. You are right. The only way to terminate the regress would be to appeal to a supra-rational, self-authenticating experience which would in some way ‘verify’ the rational system which rests on an alogical foundation. Such a justification can only be provided by an ‘open’ system of metaphysics which regards its own rational construction as merely a transitional stage and itself indicates a higher spiritual experience in which thought, at one and the same time, fulfils and loses itself.

K. But how would one prove the validity of this alleged self-authenticating experience which, it is claimed, transcends reason?

C. The question is not one of proof but of providing an intelligible explanation of the truth-claim which is implicit in every philosophical system. The words ‘proof’ and ‘disproof’ ought, I think, to be banished from the vocabulary of philosophy.

A. It occurs to me that even if your ‘open’ metaphysical system can account for the truth-claim which it implicitly makes, that gives it an advantage only over those systems which doubt or deny the existence of God. If ‘proof’ and ‘disproof’ are to be ruled out these systems cannot then justify their claim to be true or the claim of philosophical systems to have truth-value.

C. Yes, I think atheism and agnosticism can be ruled out, for these systems do not operate with a concrete criterion-concept but only with the abstract principle of self-consistency. Their ultimate presuppositions are empty in the sense that they do not contain basic criterion-concepts in the light of which their systems are matured and internally justified. But why do you restrict the superiority of the open metaphysical system only to atheism and agnosticism? Do you think that positivism or the view that metaphysical statements are meaningless can justify its claim to be true? Obviously it cannot appeal to a verification in a higher spiritual experience!

A. It does not have to. For the positivist, positivism is the only possible theory. There is no conceivable alternative to it and hence to him it stands self-justified. The problem of accounting for the truth-value of philosophical systems would arise only if there were alternative points of view each resting on a basis which is alogical. But for the positivist there are no alternatives to his way of thinking.
CAN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD BE PROVED?

since transcendent metaphysics and equally atheism and agnosticism are neither true nor false but meaningless.

C. That is a good point, but it will not leave the positivist secure. He can only say, metaphysics is meaningless to him, or, perhaps more strongly, he cannot see how metaphysical propositions can have meaning for anybody. But so long as he cannot give logical reasons for demonstrating the meaningfulness of transcendent concepts he has to admit that the logical possibility of meaningful metaphysical discourse is open. That is sufficient to set up an alternative to his point of view.

A. Only a possible alternative. Which in actual fact he rejects.

C. Very well, but there are philosophers for whom this alternative is more than possible; it is actual. The metaphysician has neither been argued nor shamed out of existence. To the positivist, therefore, the metaphysician is mistaken in thinking that metaphysical propositions are significant. He therefore attributes a truth-value to a point of view other than his own. What justification can he give of this?

A. He would say that the metaphysician does not so much propound a mistaken philosophical theory as that he is deluded, for in saying that metaphysical concepts are significant he is not making any significant statement which can be true or false. What he says is simply nonsense piled on nonsense.

C. Yes, I see what you mean. Even if the positivist admits that on purely logical grounds the possibility of metaphysics must be regarded as open, he does not regard a metaphysical theory as a rival theory. He does not have to show that it is false, since for him the alleged theory is not a theory at all. For something to be a theory it must be cognitively significant.

A. And the metaphysician's claim that his theory can be verified in a supra-rational, self-authenticating experience would then, for the positivist, be just one more move in a game which, as a whole, merits no consideration from the philosopher as it cannot be put forward as a philosophical theory, or, at least cannot be considered as such.

C. It is an impasse, but of a very peculiar kind. It is not like a parting of the ways when a dispute cannot be settled and the two parties agree to differ, for in this case one of the two parties, the positivist, neither agrees nor disagrees with the other. In fact he denies that there is any dispute at all, for in order that a dispute may arise the two alleged disputants must agree that both of them are talking sense. The other party, the metaphysician, recognizes the dispute and has his own way of resolving it. And there is not even a dispute about a dispute, at least not for both parties. This is a situation in which X joins issue with Y but not Y with X, since for Y there is no issue to join; and X cannot make an issue of this and persuade Y to join him in it! The metaphysician may say to the positivist, 'We must part company since, though from my point of view your point of view is limited and mistaken, it is hopeless for me to show that it is so.' To this the positivist
may retort, 'We must part company since from my point of view you do not even have the merit of holding a mistaken point of view, for you have no point of view at all and I can do nothing to cure you of your delusion that you are propounding a philosophical theory.'

A. And there the matter should end!

C. Perhaps; I don't know. I feel the positivist cannot let the matter rest there with an easy conscience, once he admits explicitly that he cannot eliminate metaphysics on logical grounds and that therefore the ghost of metaphysics can never be laid. Besides, we are merely anticipating the situation that will arise when the metaphysician and the positivist carry on the dialogue at the metaphilosophical level. It would be interesting to find out how the positivist would actually meet the challenge to raise thought to the level of self-consciousness. I wonder if any philosopher can rest satisfied with the situation in which there are two theories and two theorists from the point of view of one theorist and only one theory and one theorist from the point of view of the other theorist, so long as the claim to existence of the other theory and theorist is not ruled out on strictly logical grounds.

K. I propose that we now leave the positivist to exult in solitary splendour or to come to terms with his uneasy conscience, if he is troubled by one. None of us is a positivist. We can therefore profitably discuss the question of God's existence as an issue between the theist on the one hand and the atheist and agnostic on the other.

C. I think I have already undermined the position of the atheist and the agnostic by pointing out that their thought does not rest on any basic criterion-concept but only on the general principle of logical self-consistency. This puts them out of court in a philosophical discussion.

K. This sounds a little arbitrary if not high-handed. It is not likely to have the effect of making these philosophers withdraw and leave the theist in sole possession of the field.

C. Let us then go through the process which will culminate in the elimination of the atheist and the agnostic. I would first like to begin by defining our terms, God and existence. God by definition is the Perfect Being. By God I do not necessarily mean a Person, but the Infinite, that in which all things come to rest, that which explains all things and is self-explaining.

A. I suppose as a definition of God this would be unexceptionable.

C. You will notice that the definition of God brings out clearly that 'God' is a criterion-concept, i.e., metaphysical thought must be guided by the principle that all things can ultimately be explained only by that which is self-explaining. And the self-explaining is what we mean by God.

A. Your point is that nothing is satisfactorily explained unless it is referred back to that which is self-explaining. One who is not a theist could well question this method of explaining things.

C. Let's go slowly. At no stage do I propose to offer a demonstration of anything.
I am merely presenting a pattern formed by a constellation of concepts.

K. And the atheist may present another?

C. That is what I am questioning. When thought is made self-conscious it will, I believe, reveal only a single structure of concepts which is in essence the structure of theism.

K. Please go on.

C. I have mentioned before that in our logical vocabulary there are certain words which I have called criterion-words like 'logical', 'valid', 'satisfactory' and others. 'Explanation' also belongs to this group of words. Their use presupposes a criterion and hence as occurring in different frameworks of thought they do not have a univocal significance. The content we give to the ideal of explanation is determined not in abstracto but with reference to the concrete system of thought which is matured in the light of it. The analysis of metaphysical thinking, the concept of God and the ideal of explanation implicit in the concept of God itself all hang together and form a coherent system. At the level of thought that is all that we can do and that is all that is needed.

K. Well, then, let me put it this way. If the sense we give to the phrase 'the ideal of explanation' is not univocal, why cannot the atheist operate with a different ideal of explanation which will fit into and determine his own system of thought?

C. What can it be? He cannot show that to account for the totality of experience on the principle that there is nothing 'ultimate' to which thought points is, on the face of it, inherently and self-evidently a satisfactory way of conceiving things. Consider the theist's way of looking at things: the Infinite is that which is self-contained and self-existent. It is that, reaching which no further questions arise, since, as the self-existent, it does not point beyond itself. In the case of anything finite its 'what' transcends its 'that' and hence thought cannot come to rest except in that in which essence and existence are one. Such a being we call God. The denial of God's existence does not, in like manner, provide us with a basic criterion-concept in the light of which we can organize our experience.

A. The atheist may perhaps reply that even granting that the abstract principle of self-consistency is not sufficient to construct a metaphysical system, one may nevertheless arrive at a denial of God's existence because certain facts of experience are incompatible with the existence of a Deity who by definition is both benevolent and omnipotent.

C. The problem of evil? That is, I think, the only argument in the armoury of the atheist. The argument is that the presence of evil and suffering shows that God is either not all-powerful or not all-good.

A. Well, how can the existence of evil be reconciled with God's alleged goodness and omnipotence?

C. In order to maintain a belief in the existence of God the theist is not confronted with the problem of showing how what we call evil can be reconciled with God's goodness, but that in principle it can be so reconciled. He need not answer the
admittedly difficult question, what is the place of evil in the working out of a Purpose conceived and executed by a Being who is all-good and all-powerful? It is sufficient for him to show that there is no a priori ground for regarding the presence of evil as irreconcilable with the working out of a Divine Purpose.

A. The atheist would claim that he has a priori grounds for denying the existence of God. It is true a priori that if a theory contradicts a fact then the theory has to be rejected. Evil and suffering have been called 'atheistic facts', i.e., these facts contradict the theory that a benevolent and omnipotent Deity exists.

C. It would be begging the question to call evil and suffering atheistic facts. They are no doubt facts of some kind but in philosophy there are no brute facts. What we make of the facts, the significance we give to them in the scheme of things, will be a matter of interpretation, and we can only interpret facts in the light of a philosophical theory. In philosophy all 'facts' are part of an interpretative scheme which is determined by one's basic point of view.

A. You mean that evil and suffering could have the metaphysical sting taken out of them by being fitted into the theistic framework of thought?

C. There can be no a priori objection to this procedure and that is sufficient to block the atheist's argument based on the confident appeal to these apparent disvalues. These are merely phenomena which, if one takes the line of least resistance, can be fitted conveniently into the atheist's framework of thought. They become atheistic facts only if we first accept atheism. A theory-neutral contemplation of these phenomena does not lead to an atheistic conclusion.

K. The view that the existence of God and human suffering are incompatible has a prima facie plausibility.

C. To the unreflective mind. The philosopher cannot remain satisfied with surface impressions and apparent inconsistencies. I suggest that the atheist has not gone beyond this 'prima facie plausibility'. He has not asked himself what is the nature of the opposition he finds between God and evil and whether he would be prepared to say that the denial of the proposition 'the existence of God is incompatible with the presence of evil and suffering' is self-contradictory. Are God and suffering irreconcilable in principle? Or would the simultaneous presence of the two merely pose for the philosopher the problem of reconciliation? Unless the atheist clarifies his position and tells us whether or not he regards the issue as a purely logical one it would be fruitless for the theist to discuss with him any further. If the atheist admits that the issue is not a logical one, i.e., God and evil are not in principle irreconcilable, then his argument against the existence of God collapses. It would at best raise the specific problem of reconciliation, i.e., how God and evil are to be reconciled. If he tries to stand on surer grounds by insisting that the issue is a purely logical one then he must first give reasons to show that it is so and admit that till he has done so the argument from evil against the existence of God has, at best, no more than a specious plausibility.

K. What about the agnostic?
C. If the agnostic's case is that neither the existence nor the non-existence of God can be demonstrated, starting with neutral and universally accepted premisses, I would call myself an agnostic. But on my view the agnostic is mistaken if he thinks that the fact of evil should make us doubt the existence of God or that in absence of demonstration belief in God must be withheld. The agnostic's thinking is at the pre-critical level as it does not rest on the recognition of a basic criterion-concept.

K. It seems to me that according to you no one can have an idea of God and yet not believe in His existence. Isn't that somewhat similar to what A has been persuading us to believe?

C. There is a difference. I do not try to establish the existence of God as a theorem deduced from the idea of God. As I am trying to bring out the truth of A's argument it is natural that there will be similarities in our ways of thinking. I would say that when thought is raised to the self-conscious level the mere idea of God is sufficient to justify belief in the existence of God, and this because the idea of God is seen to function as the basic criterion-concept of metaphysical thinking. I think that neither the atheist nor the agnostic have a live idea of God or appreciate its peculiar metaphysical flavour. They have at best a schematic, or, shall I say, a cataloguist's idea of God.

K. What is that?

C. It is as if someone were to make a catalogue of things in the Universe and say that among the many things which are in the Universe, such as tables and chairs and stones and mountains and stars, there might be or might have been also another item, viz., God, if He exists or if He had existed. They fail to see that God is not just one thing among other things, but the ultimate Ground of all things.

K. It seems to me that C's way of thinking is a possible way of thinking and it is internally coherent, but the question still remains, is it true?

C. You would want me to provide a demonstration...

K. Let me explain why I feel dissatisfied. C's argument is that belief in God is independent of demonstration, but if belief in God lacks the coerciveness of a demonstration it must, to be justified, appear as self-evidently true. And this it does at what C calls the self-conscious level of thought. C's method of raising metaphysical thought to a consciousness of itself consists, partly, in pointing out that the concept of God functions admirably as a criterion-concept. As he says, in it and in it alone thought comes to rest, since when we reach the self-contained and the self-explaining no further questions arise. Now it may be objected against this argument that, lacking demonstration, it remains inconclusive. The concept of God, C argues, gives us what we may call the Principle of Sufficient Reason. But may it not be objected that this Principle is at best a Regulative Principle in the sense that it guides our thought by laying down an ideal towards which all things must be regarded as approximating? Whether it is a Constitutive Principle or not, i.e., whether the ideal is realized in actual existence, which would be the
existence of God, remains an open question.

A. It is not clear in what way the idea of God would function as a Regulative Principle.

K. It would enable us to order thought and existence with reference to the principle of degrees of truth and reality. The criterion of the reality of a thing would be its approximation to self-sufficiency: the more self-contained a thing is the more real it is. And a system of thought is true to the extent that it is coherent and comprehensive. But absolute self-sufficiency in things and the maximum of comprehensive coherence in thought may remain mere ideals and hence we cannot pass from the concept of God to the existence of God.

C. I suspect this distinction between a Regulative Principle and a Constitutive Principle reflects the hankering after an underpinning of demonstration! What, in your view, is required to turn the Regulative Principle into a Constitutive Principle?

K. You are right in thinking that what was in my mind was that the passage from the Regulative Principle to the Constitutive Principle is provided by demonstration. But it seems to me that you have not answered the objection. How will you guarantee that the concept of God provides more than an idea of thought? God’s existence need not be presupposed in order that the concept of God may function as a criterion-concept.

C. But if we leave the question of the existence of God open how shall we decide it? What criterion shall we now use to determine whether God exists or not?

K. I see your point. You want to suggest that the idea of God is real since it satisfies the criterion of metaphysical thinking which is itself derived from the idea of God.

C. That’s it.

K. But the objection still remains. Let me put it this way: if we treat the idea of God as a Regulative Principle then we should say, not that the question of God is an open question, but that the question of God’s existence or non-existence does not arise.

C. Why does it not arise?

K. Because there is no way of answering it. If a question is undecidable it is not a genuine question or, at any rate, it should not be treated as such.

C. The old habits of thought die hard. The question is undecidable only in the sense that we cannot reach a demonstration of either the existence or non-existence of God.

A. Yes, I think that what K is doing is not raising an objection against C’s argument but simply pitting one whole way of thinking against another. It is a conflict of two philosophical perspectives. We should therefore let C continue his argument.

C. At this point I think we may adjourn. So far I have stated only half my case. I have approached the analysis of the proposition ‘God exists’ by examining the
subject term 'God'. It is necessary to take up the analysis of the notion of 'existence' to see more clearly that 'God exists' is what I have called a luminous tautology.

(To be concluded)

NOTE

1 To say that a proposition or theory has truth-value means that it is either true or false, i.e., it is cognitively significant.

J. N. CHUBB
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE


Sisir Ghose is always entertaining, whether he writes or speaks on profound subjects punctuated by relieving lighter touches or on fleeting interests of the day with an undercurrent of seriousness drawing attention to their larger implications. The present collection of his addresses, articles and travel notes during his recent assignment in the United States is typical of his approach. Describing a meeting with school-children or his encounter with an American Swami or an interview with a controversial figure like Huxley, his sense of humour and his keen eye for the core of the situation are equally unfailing. There are papers on Sri Aurobindo's Future Poetry, Education, Existentialism, Tradition and Modernity, etc. which are highly enlightening. His description of his meeting with the Beatniks in California and his studied attempt to draw them out culminating in their confession of escapism is interesting. The account of the Freedom Ride show, underlining the colour problem in the States, is deeply moving.

A balanced book recording the reactions of a cultured mind from the East to the impact of a young militant society in the West still searching for some basic eternal values.

M. P. Pandit