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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
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The things that were promised are fulfilled.

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NEVER FORGET THE GOAL

A REMINDER FROM THE MOTHER

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing great or small once you have set out on this great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus before you eat, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the food you are about to eat may bring your body the substance it needs to serve as a solid basis for your effort towards the great discovery, and give it the energy for persistence and perseverance in the effort.

Before you go to sleep concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring calm and quietness to your brain so that on waking you may, with renewed vigour, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery.

Before you act, concentrate in the will that your action may help or at least in no way hinder your march forward towards the great discovery.

When you speak, before the words come out of your mouth, concentrate just long enough to check your words and allow only those that are absolutely necessary to pass, only those that are not in any way harmful to your progress on the path of the great discovery.

To sum up, never forget the purpose and goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there above you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.
"The metaphysical objection [to a teleological cosmos] is more serious; for it seems self-evident that the Absolute can have no purpose in manifestation except the delight of manifestation itself: an evolutionary movement in Matter as part of the manifestation must fall within this universal statement; it can be there only for the delight of the unfolding, the progressive execution, the objectless seried self-revelation. A universal totality may also be considered as something complete in itself; as a totality, it has nothing to gain or to add to its fullness of being. But here the material world is not an integral totality, it is part of a whole, a grade in a gradation; it may admit in it, therefore, not only the presence of undeveloped immaterial principles or powers belonging to the whole that are involved within its Matter, but also a descent into it of the same powers from the higher gradations of the system to deliver their kindred movements here from the strictness of a material limitation. A manifestation of the greater powers of Existence till the whole being itself is manifest in the material world in the terms of a higher, a spiritual creation, may be considered as the teleology of the evolution. This teleology does not bring in any factor that does not belong to the totality; it proposes only the realisation of the totality in the part. There can be no objection to the admission of a teleological factor in a part movement of the universal totality, if the purpose,—not a purpose in the human sense, but the urge of an intrinsic Truth-necessity conscious in the will of the indwelling Spirit,—is the perfect manifestation there of all the possibilities inherent in the total movement. All exists here, no doubt, for the delight of existence, all is a game or Lila; but a game too carries within itself an object to be accomplished and without the fulfilment of that object would have no completeness of significance. A drama without denouement may be an artistic possibility,—existing only for the pleasure of watching the characters and the pleasure in problems posed without a solution or with a forever suspended dubious balance of solution; the drama of the earth evolution might conceivably be of that character, but an intended or inherently predetermined denouement is also and more convincingly possible. Ananda is the secret principle of all being and the support of all activity of being: but Ananda does not exclude a delight in the working out of a Truth inherent in being, immanent in the Force or Will of being, upheld in the hidden self-awareness of its Consciousness-Force which is the dynamic and executive agent of all its activities and the knower of their significance."

The Life Divine, pp. 834-35
If one wants to state the problem in a way that's more easily accessible to ordinary practical thinking, one could conceive that everything exists from all eternity, and therefore simultaneously, but that this total, simultaneous, eternal existence is like the property, the possession of a Consciousness which would take pleasure in travelling through its domains, find its joy in an almost infinite or anyway indefinite journey throughout all its domains, and would go like this from discovery to discovery of things which already exist, which have always existed... but which the Supreme had never visited. And the path he follows in his discovery could be an entirely free, unexpected, unforeseen path according to his choice of the moment, so that, although his whole domain is there from all eternity, existing for ever, he could visit it in an altogether unexpected, unpredictable way, and so open the door to all relationships and possibilities.

And it is also his own self-discovery, for this domain is himself; and a discovery which could be made according to immediate decisions, without a preconceived plan such as would be mentally thought out, with all the delight of complete freedom and of the unexpectedness of every second—an eternal journey within his own being.

Everything is absolutely determined, for everything is from all eternity, and yet the path traversed has a freedom and unpredictability which is also absolute.

And this is how there can exist simultaneously worlds which have no apparent relationship with each other, and which nevertheless coexist, but are discovered gradually and so give the impression of a new creation.... Seeing things in this way, one could easily understand that simultaneously with this physical world as we know it with all its imperfections, all its limitations, all its ignorance, there are one or several other worlds which exist in their own zones and are so different in nature from ours here, that for us they are as if non-existent, for we have no relation with them. But the moment the great eternal Voyage passes from this world to that, by the very fact of this passage of the eternal Consciousness, the link will necessarily be created, and the two worlds will gradually enter into relation with each other.

Truly speaking this is what is actually happening, and we can say with certainty that the supramental world already exists, but the time has come for it to become the object of the journey of the supreme Consciousness, and then, gradually, a conscious link will be formed between this world and that, and they will have a new relation as a result of this new orientation of the journey.

This explanation is as good as any other and perhaps it is easier to understand for people who are not metaphysicains.... At least, I like it!

Mother, you said that everything was absolutely determined; then where does personal effort come from?

I told you just a moment ago that the Great Traveller chooses at each instant
the course of his journey, therefore it is an absolute freedom of choice, and this
is what gives the universal unfolding that unpredictable air and that possibility
of change, for the Supreme is entirely free to change his course if he wants to do
so. On the contrary, this is absolute freedom. But everything is there, and since
everything is there, everything is absolutely determined—it has always existed
but it is discovered in an altogether unforeseen way. And in this discovery lies
freedom.

You are taking a walk and, suddenly, well, you feel like going this way in-
stead of that, so the course you take is completely new, but in the places you are
going to, the things were already there, they existed and were therefore deter-
mined—but not your discovery.

Surely only a consciousness identified with the supreme Consciousness
can have this feeling of absolute freedom. So long as you are not one with the
supreme Consciousness, you necessarily have the impression or the feeling or
idea that you are subject to the law of a higher Will, but the moment you are
identified with this Will you are perfectly free.

This amounts to saying what Sri Aurobindo has always said: in union with
the Supreme true freedom is realised.

12 February 1958

Mother, since in each new life the mind and vital as well as the body are new,
how can the experiences of past lives be useful for them? Do we have to go
through all the experiences once again?

That depends on people!

It is not the mind and vital which develop and progress from life to life—
except in altogether exceptional cases and at a very advanced stage of evolution
—it is the psychic. So, this is what happens: the psychic has alternate periods
of activity and rest; it has a life of progress resulting from experiences of the
physical life, of active life in a physical body, with all the experiences of the body,
the vital and the mind; then, normally the psychic goes into a kind of rest for
assimilation where the result of the progress accomplished during its active exis-
tence is worked out, and when this assimilation is finished, when it has absorbed
the progress it had prepared in its active life on earth, it comes down again in a
new body bringing with it the result of all its progress and, at an advanced stage,
it even chooses the environment and the kind of body and the kind of life in which
it will live to complete its experience concerning one point or another. In some
very advanced cases the psychic can, before leaving the body, decide what kind
of life it will have in its next incarnation.

When it has become an almost completely formed and already very con-
scious being, it presides over the formation of the new body, and usually through
an inner influence it chooses the elements and the substance which will form its
body in such a way that the body is adapted to the needs of its new experience. But
this is at a rather advanced stage. And later, when it is fully formed and returns
to earth with the idea of service, of collective help and participation in the divine
Work, then it is able to bring to the body in formation certain elements of the
mind and vital from previous lives which, having been organised and impreg­
nated with psychic forces in previous lives, could be preserved and, consequently,
can participate in the general progress. But this is at a very, very advanced
stage.

When the psychic is fully developed and very conscious, when it becomes a
conscious instrument of the divine Will, it organises the vital and the mind in
such a way that they too participate in the general harmony and can be preserved.

A high degree of development allows at least some parts of the mental and
vital beings to be preserved in spite of the dissolution of the body. If, for instance,
some parts—mental or vital—of the human activity have been particularly de­
veloped, these elements of the mind and vital are maintained even “in their form”
in the form of the activity which has been fully organised—as, for example, in
highly intellectual people who have particularly developed their brains, the men­
tal part of their being keeps this structure and is preserved in the form of an
organised brain which has its own life and can be kept unchanged until a future
life so as to participate in it with all its gains.

In artists, as for instance in certain musicians who have used their hands
in a particularly conscious way, the vital and mental substance is preserved in
the form of hands, and these hands remain fully conscious, they can even use
the body of living people if there is a special affinity—and so on.

Otherwise, in ordinary people in whom the psychic form is not fully deve­
loped and organised, when the psychic leaves the body, the mental and vital
forms may persist for a certain time if the death has been particularly peaceful
and concentrated, but if a man dies suddenly and in a state of passion, with nu­
merous attachments, well, the different parts of the being are dispersed and live
for a shorter or longer time their own life in their own domain, then disappear.

The centre of organisation and transformation is always the presence of
the psychic in the body. Therefore, it is a very big mistake to believe that the
progress continues or even, as some believe, that it is more complete and rapid
in the periods of transition between two physical lives; in general, there is no
progress at all, for the psychic enters into a state of rest and the other parts,
after a more or less ephemeral life in their own domain, are dissolved.

Earthly life is the place for progress. It is here, on earth, that progress is
possible, during the period of earthly existence. And it is the psychic which
carries the progress over from one life to another, by organising its own evolu­
tion and development itself.

(Questions and Answers 1957-58, pp 264-70)
PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS OF THE MOTHER

AN INSIGHT BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(1)

The Prayers and Meditations of the Mother. It is Life Divine in song, it is Life Divine set to music—made sweet and lovely, near and dear to us—a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

To some the ideal has appeared aloof and afar, cold and forbidding. The ascent is difficult involving immense pains and tiresome efforts. It is meant for the high-souled ascetic, not for the weak earth-bound mortals. But here in the voice of the Mother we hear not the call for a hazardous climb to the bare cold wind-swept peak of the Himalayas but a warm invitation for a happy trek back to our own hearth and home. The voice of the Divine is the loving Mother’s voice.

The Prayers and Meditations of the Mother are a music, a music of the lyre—I say lyre, because there is a lyric beauty and poignancy in these utterances. And true lyricism means a direct and spontaneous outflowing of the soul’s intimate experiences.

This wonder-lyre has three strings, giving out a triple note or strain: there is a strain of philosophy, there is a strain of yoga and there is a strain of poetry. We may also call them values and say there is a philosophical, a yogic and a poetic value in these contemplations. The philosophical strain or value means that the things said are presented, explained to the intellect so that the human mind can seize them, understand them. The principles underlying the ideal, the fundamental ideas are elaborated in terms of reason and logical comprehension, although the subject-matter treated is in the last analysis beyond reason and logic. For example, here is true philosophy expressed in a philosophic manner as neatly as possible.

A quoi servirait l’homme s’il n’était pas fait pour jeter un pont entre Ce qui est éternellement, mais qui n’est pas manifesté, et ce qui est manifesté, entre toutes les transcendances, toutes les splendeurs de la vie divine et toute l’obscur et douloureuse ignorance du monde matériel? L’homme est le lien entre ce qui doit être et ce qui est; il est la passerelle jetée sur l’abîme, il est le grand X en croix, le trait d’union quaternaire. Son domicile véritable, le siège effectif de sa conscience doit être dans le monde intermédiaire au point de jonction des quatre bras de la croix, là où tout l’infini de l’impensable vient prendre forme précise pour être projeté dans l’innombrable manifestation....

1 Of what use would be man if he was not made to throw a bridge between That which eternally is, but is not manifested, and that which is manifested, between all the transcendences, all the splendid of the divine life and all the obscure and sorrowful ignorance of the material world? Man is the
Or again

Que de degrés différents dans la conscience! Il faudrait réserver ce mot pour ce qui, dans un être, est illuminé par Ta présence, s’est identifié à Toi et participe à Ta Conscience absolue, ce qui est “parfaitement éveillé”, comme dit le Bouddha.¹

En dehors de cet état, il y a des degrés infinis de conscience descendant jusqu'à l'obscurité complète, la véritable inconscience qui peut être un domaine pas encore touché par la lumière de ton amour (ce qui paraît improbable dans la substance physique), ou bien ce qui est, pour une raison d'ignorance quelconque, hors de notre région individuelle de perception.²

However, we note that the philosophical strain merges into the yogic, rather the yogic strain is already involved in the philosophical. Here is an obvious and clear expression of this strain:

Il faudrait que chaque jour, chaque instant, soit l’occasion d’une consécration nouvelle et plus complète; et non pas une de ces consécrations enthousiastes et trépidantes, suractives, pleine de l’illusion de l’œuvre, mais une consécration profonde et silencieuse qui n’est pas forcément apparente, mais qui pénètre et transfigure toute action. Il faudrait que notre esprit paisible et solitaire repose toujours en Toi, et que de ce pur sommet il ait la perception exacte des réalités, de la Réalité unique et éternelle, derrière les instables et fugitives apparences.³

We are given all the disciplines necessary for the growth of the spiritual life: the processes, the procedures that have to be followed—object-lessons are

¹ How many and different are the degrees of consciousness! This word should be reserved for that which, in a being, is illuminated by Thy Presence, identifies itself with Thee and participates in Thy absolute Consciousness, for that which has knowledge, which is “perfectly awakened”, as says the Buddha.

² Outside this state, there are infinite degrees of consciousness descending down to the complete darkness, the veritable inconscience which may be a domain not yet touched by the light of Thy divine love (but that appears improbable in physical substance), or which is, by reason of some ignorance, outside our individual region of perception.

³ Each day, each moment, must be an occasion for a new and complete consecration, and not one of those enthusiastic and trepiedant consecrations, overactive, full of the illusion of the work, but a profound and silent consecration which need not be apparent but which penetrates and transfigures every action. Our mind, solitary and at peace, must rest always in Thee, and from this pure summit it must have the exact perception of realities, of the sole and eternal Reality, behind unstable fugitive appearances.
given even for the uninitiated and for the very beginner, as well as instructions for those who aim at the highest heights thus:

Il est toujours bon de regarder de temps en temps en soi et de voir qu'on n'est et ne peut rien, mais il faut ensuite tourner son regard vers Toi en sachant que Tu es tout et que Tu peux tout.

Tu es la vie de notre vie et
la lumière de notre être,
Tu es le maître de nos destinées

Indeed philosophy and yoga go hand in hand. Yoga is applied philosophy. What is at first mentally perceived and recognised, what is accepted by the reason is made active and dynamic in life. The character embodies the abstract and general principles, the vital energy executes them, that is yoga. Philosophy brings in the light of consciousness, yoga the energy of consciousness. Here we have an expression of what may be called “yogic philosophy”.

Il faut à chaque moment secouer le passé comme une poussière qui tombe, afin qu'elle ne salisse pas le chemin vierge qui, à chaque moment aussi, s'ouvre devant nous.

Once again we see emerging the third note, the note of poetry. In fact the Prayers and Meditations abound in the most beautiful poetry, what can be more beautiful, even more poetically beautiful than these cadences?

Ta voix est si modeste, si impartiale, si sublime de patience et de miséricorde qu'elle ne se fait entendre avec aucune autorité, aucune puissance de volonté, mais comme une brise fraîche, douce et pure, comme un murmure cristallin qui donne la note d'harmonie dans le concert discordant. Seulement, pour celui qui sait écouter la note, respirer la brise, elle contient de tels trésors de beauté, un tel parfum de pure sérénité et de noble grandeur, que toutes les folles illusions s'évanouissent ou se transforment dans une joyeuse acceptation de la merveilleuse vérité entrevue.

1 It is always good to look within ourselves from time to time and see that we are nothing and can do nothing, but we must then turn our look towards Thee, knowing that Thou art all and that Thou canst do all

Thou art the life of our life and
the light of our being,
Thou art the master of our destiny

2 We must at each moment shake off the past like falling dust, so that it may not soil the virgin path which, also at each moment, opens before us

3 Thy voice is so modest, impartial, sublime in its patience and its mercy that it does not make itself heard with any authority, any potency of will, it is like a cool, soft and pure breeze, it is like a crystalline murmur that imparts a note of harmony to a discordant concert. Only for him who knows how to
Or more beautiful than the beautiful simplicity of these lines?

*Comme une flamme qui brûle silencieusement, comme un parfum qui monte tout droit, sans vaciller, mon amour va vers Toi*...¹

If one asks for a classical perfection, here is a line that is on a par with a Racinian verse—

*Mon cœur s’est endormi jusqu’au tréfonds de l’être*...²

And here is a line flowing with all the milk and honey of the Romantic muse—

*Et les heures s’évanouissent comme des rêves invécus.*³

which possesses furthermore the magic of an indefinable mysticism so rare in the French language. The mystic element gives a special grace and flavour, a transcendent significance serving as an enveloping aura to the whole body of these Prayers and Meditations.

One cannot, for example, but be bewitched by the mystic grandeur of this image:—

*Ô Conscience immobile et serême, Tu veilles aux confins du monde comme un sphinx d’éternité. Et pourtant à certains Tu livres Ton secret.*⁴

In fact three notes blend together indissolubly and form what we call ‘mantra’—even like the triple mystic syllable AUM.

Once, in connection with Shakespeare, I said that a poet’s language, which is in truth the poet himself, may be considered as consisting of unit vocables, syllables, that are as it were fundamental particles, even like the nuclear particles, each poet having his own type of particle, with its own charge and spin and vibrations. Shakespeare’s, I said, is a particle of Life-energy, a packet of living blood-vibration, pulsating as it were, with real heart-beat. Likewise in Dante one feels it to be a packet of Tapas—of ascetic energy, a bare clear concentrated flame-wave of consciousness, of thought-force. In the *Prayers and Meditations* listen to that note, how to breathe that breeze, it contains such a treasure of beauty and such a perfume of pure serenity and noble grandeur, that all extravagant illusions vanish or are transformed into a joyful acceptance of the marvellous truth that has been glimpsed

¹ Like a flame that burns in silence, like a perfume that rises straight upward without wavering
² My heart has fallen asleep, down to the very depths of my being
³ And the hours pass like dreams unlived
⁴ O serene and immobile Consciousness, Thou watchest on the boundaries of the world like a sphinx of eternity And yet to some Thou givest out Thy secret
the fundamental unit of expression seems to be a packet of gracious light—one seems to touch the very hem of Mahalakshmi.

The voice in the *Prayers and Meditations* is Krishna's flute calling the souls imprisoned in their worldly households to come out into the wide green expanses of infinity, in the midst of the glorious herds of light, to play and enjoy themselves in the company of the Lord of Delight.

(2)

We have spoken of the three notes or strains in the *Prayers and Meditations*. Apart from this triple theme which after all means mode or modulation in expression, there is a triplicity in depth. Along with the strains, there are strands. Besides the value or quality of the things, the thing itself is a composite reality containing different levels. It is not a single, unilateral, one-dimensional world, but it is multi-dimensional consisting of many worlds, one within another, all telescoped as it were to form a single indivisible whole.

Now these prayers—who prays? And to whom? These meditations—who meditates? And who is the object of the meditation? First of all there is the apparent obvious meaning, that is on the very surface. It is the Mother's own prayers offered to her own beloved Lord. It is her own personal aspiration, the preoccupation of the individual human being that she is. It is the secret story, the inner history of all that she desires, asks for, questions, all that she has experienced and realised and the farther more that she is to achieve, the revelations of a terrestrial creature of the particular name and form that she happens to possess. Thus for example, the very opening passage of these prayers:

*Quoique tout mon être Te sois théoriquement consacré, Ô Maître Sublime, qui es la vie, la lumière et l'amour de toute chose, j'ai peine encore à appliquer cette consécration dans les détails. Il m'a fallu plusieurs semaines pour savoir que la raison de cette méditation écrite, sa légitimation, réside dans le fait de Te l'adresser quotidiennement. Ainsi je matérialiserai chaque jour un peu de la conversation que j'ai si fréquemment avec Toi; je Te ferai de mon mieux ma confession...*

But we notice immediately that these are not exclusively personal, absolutely individual assertions. While speaking of herself, spontaneously she seems to be speaking on behalf of all men. The words that she utters come as it were from

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1 Although my whole being is in theory consecrated to Thee, O Sublime Master, who art the life, the light and the love in all things, I still find it hard to carry out this consecration in detail. It has taken me several weeks to learn that the reason for this written meditation, its justification lies in the very fact of addressing it daily to Thee. In this way I shall put into material shape each day a little of the conversation I have so often with Thee, I shall make my confession to Thee as well as it may be...
Prayers and Meditations of the Mother

the lips of all mankind. She is the representative human being. She gives expression to all that man feels or might feel but is not able or does not know how to express and articulate. Here is how she describes her function as a representative person—as beautifully, so poignantly:

Alors j'ai pensé à tous ceux qui veillaient sur le bateau pour assurer et protéger notre route, et avec reconnaissance, dans leur cœur, j'ai voulu faire naître et vivre Ta Paix; puis j'ai pensé à tous ceux qui, confiants et sans souci, dormaient du sommeil de l'inconscience, et, avec sollicitude pour leurs misères, pitié pour leur souffrance latente s'éveillant en eux en même temps que leur réveil, j'ai voulu qu'un peu de Ta Paix habite leur cœur, et fasse naître en eux la vie de l'esprit, la lumière dissipant l'ignorance. Puis j'ai pensé à tous les habitants de cette vaste mer, les visibles et les invisibles, et j'ai voulu que sur eux s'étende Ta Paix. Puis j'ai pensé à ceux que nous avions laissé au loin et dont l'affection nous accompagne, et avec une grande tendresse, pour eux j'ai voulu Ta Paix consciente et durable, la pleine multitude de Ta Paix proportionnée à leur capacité de la recevoir. Puis j'ai pensé à tous ceux vers qui nous allons, que des préoccupations enfantines agitent et qui se battent pour de mesquines compétitions d'intérêt, dans l'ignorance et l'égoïsme; et avec ardeur, dans une grande aspiration pour eux, j'ai demandé la pleine lumière de Ta Paix. Puis j'ai pensé à tous ceux que nous connaissons, à tous ceux que nous ignorons, à toute la vie qui s'élabora, à tout ce qui a changé de forme, à tout ce qui n'est pas encore en forme, et pour tout cela, ainsi que pour ce à quoi je ne puis penser, pour tout ce qui est présent à ma mémoire et pour tout ce que j'oublie, dans un grand recueillement et une muette adoration, j'ai imploré Ta Paix.1

Or again:

Ce que j'ai voulu pour eux, avec Ta volonté, aux moments où j'ai pu être en

1 I then thought of all those who were watching over the ship to safeguard and protect our route, and in gratitude, I willed that Thy peace should be born and live in their hearts, then I thought of all those who, confident and carefree, slept the sleep of innocence and, with solicitude for their miseries, pity for their latent suffering which would awake in them in their own waking, I willed that a little of Thy Peace might dwell in their hearts and bring to birth in them the life of the Spirit, the light which dispels ignorance. I then thought of the dwellers of this vast sea, visible and invisible, and I willed that over them might be extended Thy Peace. I thought next of those whom we had left far away and whose affection is with us, and with a great tenderness I willed for them Thy conscious and lasting Peace, the multitude of Thy Peace proportioned to their capacity to receive it. Then I thought of all those to whom we are going, who are restless with childish preoccupations and fight for mean competitions of interest in ignorance and egotism, and ardently, in a great aspiration for them I asked for the plenary light of Thy Peace. I next thought of all those whom we know, of all those whom we do not know, of all the life that is working itself out, of all that has changed its form and all that is not yet in form, and for all that, and also for all of which I cannot think, for all that is present to my memory and for all that I forget, in a great ingathering and mute adoration, I implored Thy Peace.
communion véritable avec Toi, permets qu'ils l'aient reçu en ce jour où, tâchant d'oublier les contingences extérieures, ils se sont tournés vers leur pensée la plus noble, vers leur sentiment le meilleur. Que la suprême sérénité de Ta sublime Présence s'éveille en eux.

But the Mother is not merely a representative, she has become all men, the entire humanity itself. She has identified herself with each person in her being and consciousness, she is one with all, all are merged in her. Her voice utters the cry of the human collectivity. The Mother's Prayers and Meditations are the prayers and meditations of man. Thus again:

...il m'a semblé que j'adoptais tous les habitants de ce bateau, que je les enveloppais tous dans un égal amour, et qu'ainsi en chacun d'eux quelque chose de Ta conscience s'éveillerait.

She has so clearly and unequivocally expressed her oneness with all men. She mentions specially the miserable, the poor and afflicted mankind:

Lorsque j'étais enfant—vers l'âge de treize ans et pendant un an environ—tous les soirs dès que j'étais couchée, il me semblait que je sortais de mon corps et que je m'élevais tout droit au-dessus de la maison, puis de la ville, très haut. Je me voyais alors vêtue d'une magnifique robe dorée, plus longue que moi; et à mesure que je montais, cette robe s'allongeait en s'étendant circulairement autour de moi pour former comme un toit immense au-dessus de la ville. Alors je voyais de tous côtés sortir des hommes, des femmes, des enfants, des vieillards, des malades, des malheureux; ils s'assemblaient sous la robe étendue, implorant secours, racontant leurs misères, leurs souffrances, leurs peines. En réponse, la robe, souple et vivante, s'allongeait vers eux individuellement, et dès qu'ils l'avaient touchée, ils étaient consolés ou guéris, et rentraient dans leurs corps plus heureux et plus forts qu'avant d'en être sortis.

1 What I willed for them, with Thy will, at the moments when I could be in a true communion with Thee, grant that they may have received it on the day when, striving to forget external contingencies, they turned towards their noblest thought, towards their best feelings.

May the supreme serenity of Thy sublime Presence awake in them.

2 It seemed to me that I adopted all the inhabitants of this ship, and enveloped them in an equal love, and that so in each one of them something of Thy consciousness would awake.

3 When I was a child—about the age of thirteen and for about a year—every night as soon as I was in bed, it seemed to me that I came out of my body and rose straight up above the house, then above the town, very high. I saw myself then, clad in a magnificent golden robe, longer than myself; and as I rose, that robe lengthened, spreading in a circle around me to form, as it were, an immense roof over the town. Then I would see coming out from all sides, men, women, children, the old, the sick, the unhappy, they gathered under the outspread robe, imploring help, recounting their miseries, their sufferings, their pains. In reply, the robe, supple and living, stretched out to them individually, and as soon as they touched it, they were consoled or healed, and entered back into their body happier and stronger than they had ever been before coming out of it.
But her being and consciousness are not limited to mankind alone. She has identified herself with even material objects, with all the small insignificant physical things which our earthly existence deals with. This is how she takes leave of the house where she had lived, and the things it had sheltered, on the eve of a long journey:

> Je les remercie avec reconnaissance de tout le charme qu'ils ont su donner extériorlement à notre vie; je souhaite que, s'il est dans leur destinée de passer plus ou moins longtemps en d'autres mains que les nôtres, ces mains leur soient douces et sachent tout le respect que l'on doit à ce que Ton divin Amour, Seigneur, a fait surgir de l'obscur inconscience du chaos.

It is to be noted how even a material object is taken up, purified and transformed almost into a living being by the Mother's loving touch.

The same feeling of unity and oneness extends to the dumb plant world also. It is oneness not partial or vague but total and absolute:

> Une grande concentration s'est emparée de moi et je me suis aperçue que je m'identifiais avec une fleur de cerisier; puis à travers cette fleur avec toutes les fleurs de cerisier; puis descendant plus profondément dans la conscience, en suivant un courant de force bleutée, je devins tout à coup le cerisier lui-même, dressant vers le ciel, comme autant de bras, ses innombrables branches chargées de leur offrande fleurie. J'entendis alors distinctement la phrase suivante:

> “Ainsi tu t'es unie à l'âme des cerisiers et tu as pu de la sorte constater que c'est le Divin qui fait au ciel l'offrande de cette prière de fleurs.” Lorsque je l'eus écrit, tout s'effaça; mais maintenant le sang du cerisier coule dans mes veines, et avec lui une paix et une force incomparables; quelle différence y a-t-il entre le corps humain et le corps d'un arbre? Aucune vraiment, et la conscience qui les anime est bien identiquement la même.

1 I thank them with gratitude for all the charm they have been able to impart from the outside to our life; I wish, if they are destined to pass for a long or a brief period into other hands than ours, that these hands may be gentle to them and may feel all the respect that is due to what Thy divine Love, O Lord, has made to emerge from the dark inconscience of chaos (3.3 1914)

2 A deep concentration seized on me, and I perceived that I was identifying myself with a single cherry-blossom, then through it with all cherry-blossoms, and as I descended deeper in the consciousness, following a stream of blush force, I became suddenly the cherry-tree itself, stretching towards the sky like so many arms its innumerable branches laden with their sacrifice of flowers. Then I heard distinctly this sentence

> “Thus hast thou made thyself one with the soul of cherry-trees and so thou canst take note that it is the Divine who makes the offering of this flower-prayer to heaven.”

When I had written it, all was effaced; but now the blood of the cherry-tree flows in my veins and with it flows an incomparable peace and force. What difference is there between the human body and the body of a tree? In truth there is none, the consciousness which animates them is identically the same.

2
Indeed the Mother’s voice is the voice of all men, all creatures, all beings, all things. She stands for the entire earth, not only so, she is the Earth itself: the total terrestrial being is embodied in her, earth’s aspiration and pain and yearning find utterance in her.

Le monde douloureux s’est agenouillé devant Toi, Seigneur, en muette supplication la matière torturée se blottit à Tes pieds, son dernier, son unique refuge; et en T’implorant ainsi, elle T’adore, Toi qu’elle ne connaît ni ne comprend! Sa prière s’élève comme le cri d’un agonisant; ce qui disparaît sent confusément la possibilité de revivre en Toi; la terre attend Ton arrêt dans une grandiose prosternation ...

This is the second status of the Mother’s being, the first is the personal and individual, the second is this collective and universal being. But she is not merely the universe, she is the Mother of the universe. Hers is not merely earth’s prayer, but the prayer of the Mother of the earth. It is not merely the prayer of the universe but the prayer of the Universal Mother to the Supreme Lord for the deliverance of the universe, for the re-creation of the earth—for indeed, for the deliverance of herself for the re-creation of herself out of the present ignorant manifestation:

Ô Mère, douce Mère que je suis, Tu es à la fois ce qui détruit et ce qui érige.
L’univers entier vit dans Ton sein de sa vie innombrable et Tu vis dans le moindre de ses atomes inmensément.
Et l’aspiration de Ton infinitude se tourne vers Cela qui n’est point manifesté, afin d’implorer toujours une plus complète et plus parfaite manifestation.

Or again:

Je suis les bras puissants de Ta miséricorde. Je suis la vaste poitrine de Ton amour sans limites... Les bras ont enveloppé la terre douloureuse et la pressent tendrement sur le cœur généreux; et lentement un baiser de suprême bénéédiction est posé sur cet atome en conflit: le baiser de la Mère qui console et guérit ...3

1 This sorrowful world kneels before Thee, O Lord, in mute supplication, this tortured Matter nestles at thy feet, its last, its sole refuge, and so imploring Thee, it adores Thee, Thee whom it neither knows nor understands! Its prayer rises like the cry of one in a last agony, that which is disappearing feels confusedly the possibility of living again in Thee, the earth awaits Thy decree in a grandiose prostration

2 Mother, sweet Mother, who I am, Thou art at once the destroyer and the builder.
The whole universe lives in Thy breast with all its life innumerable and Thou livest in Thy immensity in the least of its atoms
And the aspiration of Thy infinitude turns towards That which is not manifested to cry to it for a manifestation ever more complete and more perfect

3 I am Thy puissant arms of mercy I am the vast bosom of Thy limitless love The arms have enfolded the sorrowful earth and tenderly press it to the generous heart, slowly a kiss of supreme benediction settles on this atom in conflict the kiss of the Mother that consoles and heals
And once more:

Toute la terre est dans nos bras comme un enfant malade qu’il faut guérir et pour lequel on a, à cause même de sa faiblesse, une tendresse toute spéciale.\(^1\)

The triple status of the Mother, the individual, the collective and the transcendent (or, in other words, the personal, the universal and the supra-personal) has been condensed and epitomised in the magical note describing her first meeting with the Lord:

Peu importe qu’il y ait des milliers d’êtres plongés dans la plus épaisse ignorance, Celui que nous avons vu hier est sur terre; sa présence suffit à prouver qu’un jour viendra où l’ombre sera transformée en lumière, et où effectivement, Ton règne sera instauré sur la terre....\(^3\)

And the reality that Their manifestation upon earth has to establish, the supreme achievement of Their terrestrial existence is chanted, as it were, in these wonderfully mystic-sibylline lines:

La mort a passé vaste et solennelle et tout s’est tu religieusement durant son passage. Une beauté surhumaine a paru sur la terre. Quelque chose de plus merveilleux que la plus merveilleuse félicité fait pressentir sa Présence.\(^3\)

(3)

I have spoken of the triple status, the three levels of her ascending reality these are in view of her manifestation of world labour. There is however, yet, another status beyond—beyond the beyond—it is the relation between the Supreme Lord and the Divine Mother in itself apart from their work, their purpose in manifestation, it is their own ‘Lila’ between themselves, exclusively their own. The delight of this exclusively personal play behind and beyond the creation sheds a secret aroma in and through all this existence here and it is also the source of the hidden magic that these utterances of the Prayers and Meditations contain, it is to this status surpassing all wonder that Sri Aurobindo refers so wistfully

\(^1\) All the earth is in our arms like a sick child who must be cured and for whom one has a special affection because of his very weakness

\(^2\) It matters not if there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance He whom we saw yesterday, is here on earth; His presence is enough to prove that a day shall come when darkness shall be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be indeed established upon earth

\(^3\) Death has passed, vast and solemn, and all fell into a religious silence during its passage

A superhuman beauty has appeared on the earth

Something more marvellous than the most marvellous bliss has made felt the impress of its Presence
and so sweetly in those famous opening lines, in “A God’s Labour”:

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
   Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there
   My jewelled dreams of you.

The delight of delights, the purest delight that exists up there in its self-sufficiency overflows, spills as it were, and a drop of that nectar of immortality is what constitutes these universes here below.

Collected Works, Vol 4, pp 224-236

1 Sri Aurobindo, Collected Poems and Plays

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INTO THE NIGHT

CALL me not back
To the beaten path
Trod by countless souls
Life upon futile life.
Today the shadows vibrate
With mystic whispers,
Towards Your calm lagoon
The moon now softly glides.
Someone is weaving enchantments
For me on unknown ways
With the wonder-hues of butterflies.
Today, O Love,
Let my frail boat
Sail into the night.
Some goddess of the deeps
Perchance may answer
My soul’s cry
For Thy secret suns
In the nether worlds.
Let me fathom for once
The mysterious core
Of the night.

SHYAM KUMARI
The subject of my talk today is ‘A few words on Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga.’ It may come to you as a big surprise and you may murmur, “It is not a Nirodian subject such as we have been accustomed to.” Well, having lived within the aura of the Master and the Mother for more than half a century, I thought I could dare to philosophise a bit on Yoga. Hence the venture.

Once during our talks with Sri Aurobindo, he said, “I have given three new things to the country.” The first two are: ‘Demand for the total freedom of India’; and ‘A new Yoga’. The third one I don’t remember. It may be ‘A new Interpretation of the Veda’. I can’t think of any other probability except Savitri. But Savitri was not completed then. It was on the anvil. So I may not be wrong in my choice. After naming the third, he added, “What more do you expect from one man in a single life?” We were struck dumb.

Before I plunge into my subject I shall quote a talk given by Acharya Kripalani on the All India Radio, New Delhi, on August 5, 1948 about Sri Aurobindo’s first contribution. Kripalani was one of the prominent leaders of the Indian Congress. The country has forgotten today Sri Aurobindo’s vibrant call to the nation. Kripalani was a young man at that time and remembered very well indeed Sri Aurobindo’s role in awakening the people from their slumber in slavery. Here is what he says:

“...As a young man just leaving college, I was familiar with his writings through the Bande Mataram and later through the Karmayogin. In the columns of the former Sri Aurobindo, then the youngest of the politicians and fresh in the field, poured forth daily his thoughts and comments on current events. He gave them a significance that was original and illuminating and he brought to bear on them the light of the most mature wisdom. His writings gave his readers a glimpse of the passion that was consuming his heart. He wanted nothing less than the absolute and unfettered freedom of this ancient and once glorious land—a land that had made the highest spiritual, cultural and material contribution to the advancement of the human race and which, given the opportunity, could, even today, make a still greater contribution to the advancement of human knowledge, experience and happiness. In Sri Aurobindo, patriotism rose from being a sentiment of group selfishness to the heights of passionate love that prostrates itself in adoration to the Motherland whom he simply called the ‘Mother’. This ‘Mother’ appeared arrayed in variegated glorious garments—the embodiment of all wisdom, virtue, faith, love and beauty whose image, we, her children, worship in every temple in the land. All this may appear to the so-called realist of today as mere romanticism and sentimentalism. But for those who
then felt the uplifting influence of the new idea, it had the effect of strengthening the new idea, it had the effect of strengthening their moral fibre and moulding their character so that they forgot their narrow personal ego and merged it in that of the country and the race. This enlargement of the ego had its invigorating effect upon national life. It created a new movement in art and literature and produced new patterns of thought, action and experience. It made us familiar with the idea of suffering and sacrifice as a joyful offering at the sacred altar of the Mother. Therefore, when after some years Gandhiji appeared on the Indian horizon, he did not find the field fallow. There was something to build upon and most of those who joined him were the remnants saved from the terroristic repression of a foreign Government. They were those who had been inspired by the new passion created in them chiefly by the writings of Sri Aurobindo.

Now, about our present subject. Please note that I have said ‘a few words’. For Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is as vast as the Pacific ocean and as high as Mount Everest. I don’t know of any individual, however enlightened he may be, who can fathom its mysteries, so two or three of its striking features are all that I shall offer to your attention. The first big jolt that I received was when he said that his Supramental Yoga begins where all other Yogas end. And we are the common stuff from which the sadhaks of the Supramental Yoga are to be fashioned!

The second astounding feature is now a by-word, but no less revolutionary than the first one: the acceptance of life, not its abandonment, not the ‘Refusal of the Ascetic’. It is because of this refusal, Sri Aurobindo avers, that the world has remained the same, without any radical change in its nature. You will recall that when a friend of Sri Aurobindo asked him to take up Yoga, he refused thinking that Yoga meant rejection of life. His being was totally averse to the acceptance of the Vedantic philosophy that posited Brahman alone to be satya and took jagat, world, to be mithyā. And the other dictum I utter with a certain fear lest I should wound the feelings of a big part of the present audience; it is: नानी नरकगा चन्दन्—‘woman is the gate to Hell.’ When I see so many sweet ladies, dressed in fine saris and wearing gold ornaments, seated before me to listen to my talk on Yoga, I cannot but wonder at the change that has come over the country since this world-shaking utterance by Shankara. Perhaps his soul would be pleased to witness this change brought about by our Divine Mother who said that one need not go to the forest to practise Yoga; it can as well be done at one’s own home. In Sri Aurobindo’s great Upanishadic experience, Brahman is true but jagat also is true and all here is Brahman sarvam idam brahman. Therefore he accepts life, but adds, “All life must be taken up, but all life must be transformed; all life must become a part, a form, an adequate expression of a spiritual being in the supramental nature. This is the height and crowning movement of a spiritual evolution in the material field.”
I might avow in passing that if I and many others were called upon to do the old Yoga, we could not imagine ourselves wearing sackcloth or no cloth and wandering in the heart of the Himalayas without a cup of tea and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* by our side. No, his new brand of Yoga is very well in keeping with the modern spirit, acceptable, even palatable. It looks as if Sri Aurobindo came down as a modern Avatar to suit our materialised upbringing.

As a corollary to the above, Sri Aurobindo adds, “Accepting life, the sadhak has to bear not only his own burden but a great part of the world’s burden too along with it as a continuation of his sufficiently heavy load. Therefore his yoga has much more of the nature of a battle, it is a collective war waged over a considerable country. He has not only to conquer in himself the forces of the egoistic falsehood and disorder, but to conquer them as representatives of the same adverse and inexhaustible forces in the world.” It means that our personal *mukti* is not the aim of his Yoga, though we must have it first. Its ultimate purpose is the change of the world itself; hence it is called a world-changing Yoga. “We set out not only to conquer ourselves, but conquer the world for God.”

This can be done only by bringing down the highest spiritual power, the Supermind, and making it operative in our physical consciousness which will eventually create a new supramentalised race and establish the kingdom of God upon earth.

The last crowning newness of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga lies in the Divine Mother’s coming and joining Sri Aurobindo as his supreme Shakti to take up the charge of the Yoga and giving it an unparalleled practical form. “Without me, he is unmanifest,” said the Mother. His Yoga would have remained unfulfilled or half-fulfilled.

Her very presence ushers in a new world-cycle. Sri Aurobindo says that Indian Yoga, the child of immemorial ages, preserved by its vitality and truth into our modern times is now emerging from the secret schools and ascetic retreats in which it has taken refuge, and is seeking its place in the future sum of living human powers and utilities. Today, along with various sciences and philosophies, the knowledge or the science and practice of Yoga is becoming an imperative necessity—and it is being admitted now that it can solve radical problems of life which all other activities like politics, economics, sociology or even religion cannot do. “Life is a paradox with God for key.”

And Sri Aurobindo is the pioneer Yogi who has conquered and mastered the knowledge of the two worlds—sacred and profane—by his gigantic sadhana. He has “drunk the Infinite like a giant’s wine” and brought down its knowledge, power and truth upon earth. His global knowledge on the one hand and his power of divine expression on the other have stirred the assembly of great world-scholars to its depths. About the expression I shall quote only one sentence which is equal to a million. The reviewer of the *Times Library Supplement* of London says “...He writes as though he were standing among the stars with the
constellations for his companions...."

All this is spiritual philosophy, new no doubt, but to my mind the most amazing novelty of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is in the fact that he has reversed, as it were, the whole process and method of Yogic practice. For, it is the Mother and Sri Aurobindo who are really doing the Yoga, not we, his disciples. To say and believe that we are doing his Yoga now appears to me a most childish self-deceiving myth. Our tapasya pales into insignificance by the side of the most arduous tapasya done by the old Yogis for years together. Sri Aurobindo dubbed us “rose-leaf princess sadhaks”. At any rate, if we are at all doing sadhana, it is intimately linked with and depends greatly on their sadhana and its results. In countless letters Sri Aurobindo has been telling us that he was rising higher and higher in his consciousness—“My consciousness climbed like a topless hill” as a poem of his puts it—and bringing down light, power, etc. from above to change earth-nature and that he was supramentalising the Overmind and eventually bringing down the Supermind itself without which the world cannot change. And precisely to bring it down was the reason of his retirement. There were also adverse Forces to conquer, those who were opposing the forces of light—

“Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone...
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence’ marge.”

We know to our cost the cause of the accident to Sri Aurobindo while he was trying to protect the Mother from hostile forces. These are unquestionable facts to prove that their sadhana did not cease after what we call the supreme realisation of the Self. People were amazed to hear that their sadhana had not finished.

Now, I shall cite a number of instances to show how our sadhana was linked with theirs. The late ’twenties were supposed to be the most brilliant period of the Ashram when they were bringing down higher Powers into the sadhaks, but when it had to be followed by their plunge into the subconscious all that brilliance vanished and was replaced by inertia, reluctance, depression among the sadhaks. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me that he sadhaks who were working for hours without any fatigue began to complain of tiredness, lack of zest and vigour, and added that I had come at a time when the Yoga had descended into the subconscious. We find a telling description of it in his poem A God’s Labour: coercing his Godhead, he says, he came down,

“Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth...
I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire...”
Sri Aurobindo wanted to make a "bed for the Golden River's song/And a home for the Deathless Fire." And what necessity drove him to take that plunge, one who needed nothing for himself?

"He who would bring the heavens here
   Must descend himself into clay—
   And the burden of earthly nature bear
   And tread the dolorous way."

This is what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did till the last moment of their lives and are doing even now.

I asked him once: "You say that you are running fast. You have been doing that all your life. How is your running going to help our sadhana?"

He answered: "Rubbish! If my being able to solve the problem of the sub­conscious is of no importance, then of course it won't affect anybody. Otherwise it may."

I continued: "I don't see the prospect of our being speeded up by your running." He answered: "That is of no importance at present. To get the closed doors open is just now the thing to be done and I am doing it. Speeding people through them can come in its own time when the doors and the people are ready."

In the early days, Sri Aurobindo was bringing down during the Darshan time Divine Love, Force, Peace, and so on. He said that Darshan time was a period of great descents. But instead of these higher things, what followed at times was all "an upsurging of the subconscious mud". Thus when I wrote to him: "hot speculations are in the air about near descents", he answered, "No, thank you, sir! I have had enough of them...." But again when I asked later on if the uprush of mud had subsided, his answer was very encouraging. He added: "It is still there, but personally I have become superior to it and am travelling forward like a flash of lightning, that is to say zig-zag but fairly fast...."

All these statements prove my thesis that our success or failure, depression or elation depended a great deal on our gurus' cosmic action. That was mainly the clue to my frequent bouts of depression, doubt, etc. in the early years. For, later on, once Sri Aurobindo remarked that our Yoga is a collective Yoga, that each one of us here is a type and, if that type were liberated, the others belonging to that type would share the victory. This is what is meant by the Yoga of the one for all. Then addressing me he said: "This is how your difficulties are explained."

Coming to small examples, some of us were writing poetry moved by the inspiration sent by Sri Aurobindo and we were doing very well, indeed. But after his accident he stopped sending it. As a result, our writing, all our inspiration dried up. Sri Aurobindo's attention was engaged elsewhere. It was the period of the Second World War. He said that the time was too serious for him...
to divert his attention to literary productions. Let me finish these episodes with a humorous example, which yet contains a profound truth illustrating my theory. When Dr. Manilal arrived for Darshan, he explained to Sri Aurobindo in his usual naive manner: “Sir, the condition of my sadhana is bad. I can’t meditate, can’t make my mind quiet. Formerly meditation would visit me without my asking. I used to feel so much peace, love, ananda! Now the opposite is the case.” Sri Aurobindo began to hear his tale with an amused smile, then said, “Well, then, that means that you have made progress—the Inconscient!” We laughed and at the same time were stumped. He wrote to me also: “If you are absolutely in the physical consciousness so much the better. It shows you are on the way....” What he meant was that since the sadhana had come down to the subconscious, we were becoming in a way subconscious and were following closely the Yogic movement. When that work would be over, the Yogic Force would lift us up to the “superconscient”. The only question would be: “How long will that phase take? Shall we survive till that phase?” Whether we survive or not is not of capital importance. That their work is going on unabated is what matters.

Meanwhile, “What is our own part?” you may ask. Well, it is a difficult question to answer, made more difficult by the Mother’s physical absence. The situation has changed considerably. We recall Nolini-da’s strident words: “We have used the Mother’s body as a ladder, but now that she is no longer physically with us we have to make personal effort and start again from scratch. There will be no further descent.” It was a true insight indeed. We remind ourselves of Sri Aurobindo’s trenchant triple demand on us: aspiration, rejection, surrender. Do these statements annul or modify my proposition that it is the Mother and Sri Aurobindo who are doing the sadhana? I should not think so. For, the work that has been going on in the subconscious, in which we are also deeply involved is so hard that our effort counts for little. We have to wait on the Breath of their Grace to rescue us from the Morass of Despair. Once when after being stuck in the mud of the subconscious for years, I lamented and pleaded to the Lord to save me, I heard a voice saying, “Only the Divine Grace can help.”

The Mother in the later period of her life stressed the dictum: “Endure and Surrender.” I am also reminded of Sri Ramakrishna’s parable of the baby-cat and the baby-monkey. The parable seems particularly apt at our present juncture. Ultimately we have to resort to the Gita’s mahavakya: māme kaṁ saranam vraja —“Take refuge in Me alone.”

To end our talk with a passage from the Synthesis that will illustrate my standpoint about our individual effort. Sri Aurobindo writes: “The divine strength, often unobserved and behind the veil, substitutes itself for our weakness and supports us through all our failings of faith, courage and patience. It ‘makes the blind to see and the lame to stride over the hills.’ The intellect becomes aware of a Law that beneficently insists and a succour that upholds; the heart speaks of a Master of all things and Friend of man or a universal Mother who
upholds through all stumblings. Therefore this path is at once the most difficult imaginable and yet in comparison with the magnitude of its effort and object the most easy and sure of all."

Sri Aurobindo also says: “Open yourself and everything shall be done for you.”

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**MOON-MOTHER**

The Moon from her star-studded throne was gone,
Vanished into vastness of the night,
But a footfall behind me drew near.
Sensing a halo of magic Light,
I turned to face a Beauty pure,
A delicate rhythm of silver line,
The marble queenly brow of Peace
And the exquisite feminine.

Our eyes met, yet she spoke no word,
But only a touch of silent calm
Blossomed within the soul and woke
A soft and lingering mystic psalm.

I knew her daughters here on earth
Have only this as their ancient ache,
The violence that Beauty brings,
The errors which her votaries make.

Her hand swept away my moonlit tears,
She touched my breast with sweetness cool,
Left me a Knowledge that must grow with years
Under eyes that watch from Wisdom’s School.

*Arvind Habbu*
THE MOTHER WHOM WE ADORE

IN THE LIGHT OF HER PRAYERS AND MEDITATIONS

According to the Mother, before consecrating service to the Divine, the first cardinal principle for the fulfillment of the work is that one ought to be unified with the Divine Consciousness. This unification will lead one to open all the members of the being both outer and inner. Eventually this state will make ready the whole of oneself to receive the call from the Divine.

The Mother recounts in the course of her prayers that she invariably gets the command from the Divine about her mission and work to be accomplished on earth. In the prayer dated May 12, 1914, she writes:

"More and more it seems to me that we are in one of those periods of activity in which the fruit of past efforts becomes apparent—a period in which we act according to Thy law in the measure in which it is the sovereign controller of our being, without having even the leisure to become conscious of the law.

"This morning passing by a rapid experience from depth to depth, I was able, once again, as always, to identify my consciousness with Thine and to live no longer in aught but Thee;—indeed, it was Thou alone that wast living, but immediately Thy Will pulled my consciousness towards the exterior, towards the work to be done, and Thou saidst to me, 'Be the instrument of which I have need.' And is not this the last renunciation to renounce identification with Thee, to renounce the sweet and pure joy of no longer distinguishing between Thee and me, the joy of knowing at each moment, not only with the intellect but by an integral experience, that Thou art the unique Reality and that all the rest is but appearance and illusion. That the exterior being should be the docile instrument which does not even need to be conscious of the will which moves it, is not doubtful; but why must I be almost entirely identified with the instrument and why should not the 'I' be entirely merged in Thee and live Thy full and absolute consciousness?

"I ask, but I am not anxious about it. I know that all is according to Thy will, and with a pure adoration I trust myself joyously to Thy will."

Sri Aurobindo, interpreting the Gita, says: "...universal being, says the Veda, is the sacrifice of the Purusha. All the action of the perfected soul will be even such a constant divine giving of itself and its powers, an outflowing of the knowledge, light, strength, love, joy, helpful Shakti which it possesses in the Divine and by his influence and effluence on all around it according to their capacity of reception or on all this world and its creatures. That will be the complete result of the complete self-giving of the soul to the Master of our existence."

On her birthday on 21 February 1914, the Mother got the definite intuition of how her work was to be done. She wrote:

"Every day, every moment should be an occasion for a new and completer
consecration and not one of those enthusiastic and flurried consecrations, over-active, full of illusions about the work, but a deep and silent consecration which is not necessarily visible but penetrates and transfigures all action. Our mind, solitary and peaceful, should always repose in Thee and from that pure summit have the exact perception of realities, of the sole and eternal Reality behind all unstable and fleeting appearances.

"O Lord, my heart is purified of all uneasiness and anguish; it is steady and calm and sees Thee in all things; and whatever our outer actions may be, whatever the circumstances the future has in store for us, I know that Thou alone livest, that Thou alone art real in Thy immutable permanence and it is in Thee that we live..."

(To be continued)  

NILIMA DAS

REFERENCE

1 Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol 13, p 474

TO DIE TO EGO

I saw a greatness within me,
    But that greatness I did not become,
Only I tried to exploit it to my small self’s end
And smaller still I became though great I feigned.

At last I have found this secret, O Lord!
    I must give myself to that greatness and lose my all;
To be possessed by that which I sought to possess
And merge my frontiers in its global embrace.

As the fuel is fulfilled in the flaming fire,
    As the stream bequeaths its right to the ocean vast,
As a rocket is spent to send the satellite higher,
    I would spend myself to relive in Self and ever-last.

ABANI SINHA
HOW THEY CAME TO THE ASHRAM

16

X’s mother was a truly devout Hindu lady. She did Japa, worship, etc. for three to four hours every morning and then gave to her children as prasad a pinch of temple earth. X, the youngest amongst his brothers and sisters, was the cherished pet not only of his parents but also of his elder brothers and sisters. Their father was a businessman. X never saw him take part in any worship or ritual. But he used to write something. Later on, X realised that his father was translating the Veda and Upanishads into Bengali, and was a scholar no less than a devotee. One day he asked all his children: “What is your impression of God? How can you attain him?” X, a youngster, replied without realising what he was saying. “You can attain God if you depend upon Him.”

This answer pleased his father. His father had known Sri Aurobindo during his revolutionary days. He died in 1946 and the burden of the family fell on the shoulders of X’s brother who was a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and used to come to the Ashram.

In his early twenties X became an agnostic. He was afraid in his heart that if his brother became an Ashramite nobody would look after them all. Then a simple event altered the course of his life and brought him to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and swept away his scoffing attitude. It all happened so simply, so sweetly.

X’s brother was away in Assam. He had earlier asked X to look after Shri Anil Bhatta who was coming to Calcutta from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. X received the guest and drove him to Chandannagar as he wanted to meet Shri Motilal Roy. Anil Bhatta had a nice meeting with Motilal Roy lasting about forty-five minutes while X waited outside.

On their way to Calcutta X stopped at his friend’s Cinema Hall to give his guest some refreshments. While having tea with X and his friend, Anil Bhatta suggested, “Why don’t you come to Pondicherry for Sri Aurobindo’s Darshan?” The suggestion came at the right moment. It seemed the thing to do. Then and there X and his friend wrote a letter requesting permission for Darshan and gave it to Anil Bhatta. In those days prior permission was needed to visit the Ashram.

X went out of station. A few days later he received a telegram from his brother asking him to come back to Calcutta. A little apprehensive, X rushed back. His brother showed him a telegram that said permission had been granted him and his friend for the November Darshan. That evening while sitting in the Coffee House X and his friend told another friend about their impending visit to Pondicherry. Pondicherry was yet a French enclave and this friend, who lived in Chandannagar, another French enclave, and thus knew French, said, “Well, I’ll come along, for my knowledge of French may help you.” X protested that
he had no permission. This friend waved aside the objection, “If I don’t get permission I’ll stay outside but at least I would visit the holy place.” They sent a telegram to the Ashram that three of them were on their way and then began “the Journey”.

It was 8 p.m. when they reached Pondicherry. The station was lit by kerosene lamps. On the twilit platform the person who came to receive them had to call out their names. Next day they stood before the Lord. X says the grandeur and the sweetness of that Darshan is beyond his power to describe. For who can describe the Lord and the World-Mother?

Next morning the Mother distributed flowers and tulsi-garlands to the devotees. X was in the queue. He saw the Mother was giving a flower to one person and a tulsi garland to the next. X worked out from the number of people in front of him that he would receive a flower, while his whole being wanted a tulsi garland. When he reached the Mother he managed to pray, “Mother, may I touch your feet.” The Mother graciously nodded her assent. After the pranam when X stood up to receive the flower the Mother asked her attendant, “Give a tulsi-garland.” While giving the garland to X the Mother kept X’s hand on her lap and, with her hand on his hand, went into a trance for a few moments. X was overwhelmed with the Grace and touched his precious tulsi-garland to his forehead.

Some time after this happy occasion came the blow—the shock: the passing of Sri Aurobindo. The disciples of Calcutta hoped for a resurrection, but in vain. On 8th December Pradyota Kumar Bhattacharya, the then president of Calcutta Path Mandir, chartered a Dakota plane. X’s brother was to come by the plane, but there was no place for X.

X went to Dum Dum airport to see off his brother and other devotees. There Pradyota Kumar told him, “One seat is vacant. Are you ready to come?” X had gone to the aerodrome in his every-day dhoti-kurta-chappals. He at once boarded the plane and asked their chauffeur to inform his mother.

They reached Pondicherry late at night. For there was the usual delay at the Customs. On the ninth their batch was the last to have the Darshan of the Lord’s body before the Mother stopped it and started preparations for the Mahasamadhi.

In 1956 before going to the Edinburgh Film Festival X came to take the Mother’s blessings. He felt as if the Mother had put a ring of protection around him and nothing could harm him. From Edinburgh he went to Paris. The Mother’s son André came to the airport to receive him. X went to see the house in which the Mother had lived and took a photograph of it. On coming back to India he showed the photograph to the Mother. The Mother asked X, “You remember the address?” “No, Mother, I was too excited,” confessed X. Then the Mother herself wrote on the photograph—No. 9, rue Val-de-Grâce.

In 1958 the Calcutta Path Mandir celebrated the 80th birthday of the Mother
and X's corporation made a documentary film, paying homage to the Mother. X had the honour of presenting it to the Mother in the Playground. After the screening of the film X went to see the Mother in her room in the Playground. There she gave him a blessing-packet and he felt he was truly blessed and it became his most precious possession. Pankaj Malik had sung a short hymn of adoration in that film. The Mother asked about him, "Is he also a devotee?" "Yes, Mother, he is a pious sort of man," X replied.

Later X and his company started making a film on Sister Nivedita. Before leaving for England for further shooting X brought to Pondicherry an album of film photographs of Sri Aurobindo's meetings with sister Nivedita. Nolini-da sat on one side of the Mother and X on the other. The Mother examined each photograph meticulously with the help of a magnifying glass. Pointing to one photograph of Sri Aurobindo she asked, "Is the costume all right?" "Yes, Mother," X could assure her, since thorough research on the subject had been done. The Mother was speaking in French and Nolini-da was translating her words for X's benefit. Then the Mother returned the album to Nolini-da. X said, "No, Mother, it is for you." The Mother graciously said, "Very good." X felt now their labour was truly rewarded.

Once X's wife became very ill. An unending round of treatment, hospitals, doctors and medications began. Months passed and still she was an invalid. One day X took a decision. He said to the doctors, "Let us stop all treatment. Let us depend upon the Mother. If the Mother wills, my wife will be cured; if not, we will accept it as Her will." They decided to come to the Ashram but X's nephew and niece who were doctors did not allow them to travel to Pondicherry for his wife was too sick for a long journey. One night she and X wept and implored the Mother to enable them to come. And then emboldened from within, they bought tickets for Pondicherry. Y from the Ashram received them on the station platform with an invalid's chair for the wife. But on reaching the Ashram she walked up to the Samadhu, then to the Meditation Hall, and later to the Dining Room and, on 17th November, declining help, climbed on her own to the Mother's room.

X always feels a ring of the Mother's protection around him.

Compiled by K
A PILGRIMAGE

In this pilgrimage the unseen guide led the pilgrim towards the goal, only vaguely felt, in different forms and in varied ways. From early childhood through adolescence and youth, he was taken in hand and attracted by personal examples, words of wisdom within the family circle, in the school and college, by books and periodicals, in meetings and movements, rare Satsangs small and large. He progressed through successes and lucky failures towards the goal set for him by the little understood but directly felt presence of the guide.

His aged grandfather's daily regular Puja, readings from manuscripts of stories of the Bagavadis and Vaishnavas contributed to the early nourishment of the emotional and the spiritual growth leading smoothly to the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavata; to the teachings of the Avataras and the Rishis and the Yogis and the Siddhas and then to the medieval and modern teachers, heroes and leaders and finally to Sri Aurobindo. But meanwhile there were hills and rivers and temples and ashrams and Haradwar and Rishikesh, Gangaji and her tributaries, the sunrises and sunsets, morning shimmers and evening shadows, visual and oral grandiose scenes and far-ringing sounds, as well as crossing cold, shallow, swift, unknown rivulets alone, climbing steep mountainsides through small villages to the snow-clad ranges and their mist-covered valleys.

Then back to the plains, the village home, to Pondicherry and Sri Aurobindo. A distant glimpse of the Mother and the Master's darshan and His hand of blessing on the fortunate head. But not yet the Ashram life.

On to foreign lands and studies of law and democratic ways; stories of revolutions, violent and swift and slow reforms and arguments; debates, agitations, political parties and forms of Government.

The legal professional activity feeding involvement in public work, pleading causes of less fortunate individuals and communities in their struggle for racial equality and freedom—all along keeping alive the spiritual lifeline to Pondicherry. This link alone provided the necessary strength and inspiration over the years, finally bringing the pilgrim back to the Ashram for deeper and steadier studies and for sharing the benefits with people in villages, towns and cities of the ancient and venerable Motherland.

SHIVABHAI AMIN

MIRACULOUS GRACE OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

By Kripavikshu Anil Mohan. Price Rs 40/- Discount 20%. Available at SABDA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605002

From The Indian Express “The non-believers and rationalists confine all knowledge to the parameter of the senses, and to the process of logic and human reasoning. To them the occult experiences described here as playing a great role in making the author a yogi are highly instructive…”
GOLCONDE: A LOOK BEHIND

(Continued from the issue of January 1989)

2: The Structure

Everyone admires Golconde, but as a building it has not yet had the influence one might expect upon later construction in Pondicherry—perhaps because the uniqueness of this example has not been widely understood.

Shortly after the completion of Golconde in late 1948, a photo-essay and description of the building appeared in the American journal *Progressive Architecture* of March 1949. A similar, but shorter, photo-feature and description came out in the *Indian Concrete Journal* of June 15, 1949. Putting these two accounts together we get a fairly complete description of the special features of the building:

Pondicherry is an old 18th century town some hundred miles south of Madras on the Indian Ocean, and the seat of Sri Aurobindo Ghose, one of India’s foremost spiritual teachers. Salt winds blow from the sea, there are typhoons and periods of rainy weather, but mostly there is a blazing sun and the climate is hot and damp. The problem before the architect, Antonin Raymond, was to design a dormitory for the disciples of the Ashram which would include living and sleeping accommodation, workrooms and utility rooms (dining facilities are provided elsewhere) and design it in such a way as to keep the inside as cool as possible, without mechanical aid. Raymond has solved the problem by covering the entire wall surface with operable horizontal louvers [shutters] which afford protection against the sun and wind, but allow through-ventilation.¹

The plan of the building is strikingly simple. Its two long staggered wings are set at an angle on the narrow plot, thereby making the most of rather limited space. Each wing consists of a series of single rooms that are strung out along a north-facing gallery which runs the length of the building. On both north and south sides, the entire building-surface is equipped with operable horizontal louvers to afford protection from the sun and from violent winds and rain, while allowing for ventilation, there is no glazing in any portion of the building. Bedrooms are separated from the galleries by sliding panels. High ceilings throughout ensure maximum air-circulation. The body of the building is of reinforced concrete, left natural except for native white plaster on the east and west end-walls. The simple landscaping of the surrounding garden, with its trees and grass and shallow pools, carries out the effect of coolness that is realised structurally in the building itself. Its rather specialised purpose aside, the dormitory achieves architectural distinction by thorough integration of plan, struc-
ture and final design. The fundamental principles of architecture—simplicity, economy, directness and closeness to nature—have been consciously and consistently observed.

What are the points here that one might expect to have been noted and integrated into subsequent buildings in the neighbourhood?

1) The angle: Golconde is not built parallel to the street on which it stands, but has been turned slightly to face south-south-east. This has several effects. One is aesthetic: an interesting tension between the lines of the building and the outline of the plot it stands on. Others are functional: an effective use of limited space and, above all, every room thus gets the full benefit of the south-eastern breeze from the sea, which in Pondicherry's hot season provides the only relief from the heat; in addition, this slight turn of the building means that the intense afternoon sun—which causes the most discomfort, because it is difficult to screen out as it sinks towards the horizon (many west-facing rooms in Pondicherry are practically unusable in the afternoon and early evening) shines not into the rooms but onto the narrow western wall, which has been specially plastered white for extra insulation.

2) Many other aspects of the building have been designed to take full advantage of the pleasant sea-breeze. As the *Progressive Architecture* feature points out, a cross-section of Golconde looks something like a section through a ventilating mechanism: the cool air is channelled right through the building; the slatted sliding panels which act as doors to the rooms allow a free flow of air even when they are closed for privacy. The building is only one room deep, with a single corridor running the whole length of it on each floor. On each of the long sides—south-east and north-west—the movable louvers can be regulated to control the flow of air, and even when closed against direct sunlight, rain or violent wind, allow some ventilation. These louvers act as walls when closed and windows when open. The corridors run along the north-west side—the side from which driving rain and strong winds can come in winter; so this gallery is not only a corridor linking the rooms, but an insulating, protecting zone. Thus the building is protected against rain and sun, yet permits the maximum air flow.

3) The utility rooms are in a semi-basement; here their outer walls, only a few feet above the surrounding garden, are protected from sun and rain by the projecting floors above them; yet these walls, made of perforated slabs of concrete, allow a free passage of air and light. At this basement level, open passages under the building provide airy, shaded open space.

4) The roof is double: its top layer, made of thin, curved concrete slabs, provides extra insulation and creates channels for air-flow. A special area for drying clothes is provided at one end.

5) The high protecting wall around the entire plot not only provides seclusion but holds in the air that is cooled by the plants, green lawns and shallow
pools of the attractively landscaped garden, and keeps out the heat of the surrounding "ecological desert" of unshaded streets.

6) Inside, not only the doors, but the furniture—teak with cane-bottom for chairs and beds—has been specially designed for comfort and coolness under tropical conditions.

7) The materials: (1) High quality reinforced concrete for the structure; this concrete is almost everywhere exposed. (2) Polished black granite for the floors and window-ledge; this granite does not collect dust and can be easily cleaned, its dark colour is elegant and soothing to the eyes. The continuous wide window-ledge, which runs throughout all the rooms, can be used for sitting, sleeping or as a table or shelf. (3) Teak for the doors and furniture. The simplicity of the furnishings and finishing allows easy maintenance and discourages insects. Only the short outside walls, east and west, have been finished, with a high-quality white "egg-shell" plaster made according to an ancient traditional Indian formula, it is extremely reflective—again a protection against heat.

These are all functional features which could be made use of by other builders in the area. In the case of Golconde, these features and other structural needs have been brought together with great harmony: the practical details and the overall concept have been worked out with such consistency and sensitivity that one cannot help being struck by the serenity and beauty of the building, even if one does not know how the effect has been achieved. An entrant in a photographic competition organised by the International Asbestos-Cement Review in 1959 noted:

In Golconde, severity has melted into dream-delicacy; sensitive lines, varied yet harmonious surfaces and a simple distribution of simple masses have magically combined to create a visual poem in space... a photographer’s dream.³

Yet the simplicity of Golconde is not the simplicity of bareness and poverty, but of refinement and a conscious use of materials. This is a typically Japanese approach. And, indeed, Golconde was conceived by a man who lived fifteen years in Japan. Raymond was a Czech who trained and practised in America. But in 1923 he went to Japan. From his books (two are in the Ashram library) we can see his effort (in which he was very much helped by his wife, Mme. Noémie F. Raymond) to understand thoroughly the traditional Japanese approach to architecture and to apply its principles and aesthetics to modern materials and techniques. In the foreword to his Architectural Details 1938, Raymond states:

The first principle which all great architecture teaches us is to regard local conditions as the one known basic factor from which to start, and to
allow the structure to take the most logical shape dictated by these local conditions....

From the Japanese we have learned the value of the natural substance and surfaces of materials, and we avoid artificial finishes and condemn imitations. When selecting materials we consider not only their practical values but also their natural colours and textures, creating in that way true harmonies which outlast any fashion. This requires excellent workmanship which is as essential in a truly good modern building as is its pure and perfect structural engineering.4

These Western architects (for even Nakashima, a Japanese, was born and trained in America) combined modern "knowhow" with Japanese aesthetic and functional insights, to design a building that is appropriate to Indian climatic conditions and fosters a way of life that aspires to transcend local cultural limitations.

To live in harmony with this building requires a special attitude and discipline on the part of the residents; and behind the harmony is the support of a highly-organised service-structure. Mona and her staff are an essential aspect of Golconde. In a revealing letter, Sri Aurobindo makes this clear:

But all this had to be kept up and carried out in practice; for it was easy for people living there to create a complete confusion and misuse and to bring everything to disorder and ruination in a short time. That was why the rules were made and for no other purpose*.... Mona has taken the responsibility of the house and of keeping things right as much as possible. That was why she interfered.... If I had been in the doctor's place, I would have been grateful to her for her care and solicitude instead of being upset by what ought to have been for him trifles, although, because of her responsibility, they had for her their importance.5

Many people, like the doctor whose complaints prompted Sri Aurobindo's letter, would find the disciplined way of life that Golconde demands most uncongenial. The very design, which has so successfully solved the problem of keeping a building cool in a hot climate, creates an inevitable noise-problem: air flows throughout the house—so does sound. Though there is some indication that the Mother originally intended Golconde to provide studios for artists, one would have to be a most exceptionally orderly kind of genius to be able to paint, sculpt or even draw, while still respecting the rules which provide for the material care of the building and its furniture and fittings; to make music is clearly out of the question. People who love to create their own ambience by arranging their living

* In the Archives file there is a little booklet giving over thirty rules for visitors to Golconde—all regarding the care and proper use of the building and its furnishings
space with many personal touches and belongings would hardly relish the austere atmosphere and firmly ordered simplicity which Golconde’s design imposes. All this reminds us that Golconde was conceived as a dormitory for sadhaks—and for sadhaks of an Integral Yoga: forty individuals who would be willing to put reverence for the divine consciousness in matter into the smallest details of their daily life.

Clearly, to live amid these surroundings is at once a privilege and an education. Most of us are not yet ready for that; but to all who value beauty and order in daily living, and who sense the consciousness in material things, Golconde remains a lasting inspiration.

(To be continued)

SHRADDHAVAN

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NO MYTH

A myth’s no myth—the Jesus archetype, Recurrent souls—construed by only one Myopic eye. Once more, once more a ripe Evolving time wheels round, a proper sun: A rabbi out of Galilee gives way To lonely existential Christs within; A teacher’s great I AM of yesterday Attests all selfhoods’ selfless origin. The primitive dreads coming back again An ant, a dog, an ox: the child’s afraid Of karma’s whip. Great cycles roll and men Outgrown their nurse reject the masquerade, The “There, but for the grace of God, go I”: They are all things that live, that dumbly die.

WILLIAM JONES
HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is the youngest of all social sciences. Auguste Comte describes Sociology as the queen of all social sciences and, according to him, if all sciences oriented their thought to the service of sociology, they would be humanized. Sociology may be described as the science of society in so far as it studies human society and human social relations. It is comprehensive of all human activities in their interrelation with the society. It is the science of group and group interaction.

Sociology and Psychology are inextricably intertwined. As such, from the study of the psychological constraints that bring human beings to live together, analytical study of the behaviour of groups such as crowds and masses constitutes the field of study for the sociologists. Marriage, family, the community and their respective patterns and problems form a fertile area of study for the sociologists. They not only analyse various modes of behaviour in each of these spheres but also suggest measures as to the improvement of any of these institutions or organizations.

Sociologists are also concerned with the study of the processes of industrialization, urbanization and modernization, the problems arising from the relevant processes and their implications in social life in general. Sociologists also deal with social pathology. They may turn their eyes specifically to the problems of ‘Social deviation’ and its correlation to law and its sanctions. Thus, today it may be necessary to consider whether or not prevention of a crime may be more useful than its punishment in order to keep society in proper shape.

Important spheres of study for the sociologists would also include all aspects of human population grouped under the science of “demography”, that is, the study of the growth and decay of population, with its birth rate, its death rate, its patterns of density, the distribution and the adjustment or otherwise of the sex ratio. Sociologists also deal with the composition of the society—racial, religious, etc.—as well as with the concepts of acceptance and toleration, of prejudice, discrimination, authoritative control, etc.

It cannot be gainsaid that there is any matter relating to human society left which has not been taken up by sociological endeavour.

August Comte introduced the word ‘Sociology’ in his Cours de Philosophie Positive, which he published in 1839. Comte believed in the natural order of development in society and found that society has developed in three distinct stages, namely, the theological stage, the metaphysical stage and the positive stage. In the theological stage, everything was taken as a product of the immediate action of supernatural beings. This stage was dominated by feelings and imaginations. In the metaphysical stage, the unknown powers that influenced man’s world were looked upon as spirits and deities. Although Comte maintained that even in the first stage of development there was something of science ingrained
in human thought, it was in the second stage that the human mind reached the semi-critical stage. The positive stage, as viewed by Comte, is a stage characterised by a purely intellectual way of looking at the world. It consists in observing phenomena, in analysing them and in discovering the laws, governing the relations among them. The principles of causation belong to this stage and are of very recent origin.

After Comte, several Sociologists have progressively contributed to the growth of the science of sociology. Hegel considers a unitary principle of development in society, which accommodates contradictions and oppositions blended together as a whole to represent a reality. According to him development came in three stages: thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Following the ‘historicist’ theory of development, he found growth in these three stages in Oriental culture, the Graeco-Roman Civilization and then in new emergent Europe, with Germany having to play an important role. In the view of Ferdinand Tonnies, society has changed from small, unspecialized communities to large and complex urban ones. Howard Becker maintains that society has evolved from the sacred to the secular. Inspired by Condorcet and followed by Darwin, Spencer believed in the theory of evolution of society. He found that society has moved from “indefinite, incoherent homogeneity” to “definite, coherent heterogeneity”. He deserves credit for developing the concept of social evolution as a phase of natural evolution and for stressing the idea of natural sequences in societary matters. Spencer also observed that, on the functional plane, society has developed from the militant type to the industrial one in which there is free association, religious freedom and privately owned and operated industry.

According to Hobhouse, social development is linked with ethics, and he finds that human purposes can be materialized keeping the following criteria in mind: (i) the scale of organization in society, (ii) the degree of efficiency in control over natural resources and direction of activities, (iii) the degrees of cooperation of the people to their mutual advantages; and (iv) freedom of scope for personal development. Following the tradition of Comte and Spencer, Durkheim laid stress on the relationship between institutions and also on the relationship between institutions and their setting. Social facts, in Durkheim’s view, refer to: (a) an entity possessing certain definite characteristics which are dependent of human observation; (b) an entity, the existence of which is independent of human volition; and (c) an entity which can be known only through external observation and not by introspection. They have to be related to their specific social environment and to the type of society to which they belong. They play an important role at any given stage of social development.

The historicist method has been rejected by Radcliffe Brown and Max Weber. Radcliffe Brown has rejected the conjectural method and has introduced the belief in the structures in societies as natural systems. He has given us the com-
comparative method with which he tried to understand the similarities and diversities in various social practices. Weber believes, on the one hand, in looking for causal explanation of the social phenomenon. On the other hand he believes that sociological studies can be value-neutral and highly systematic just like any natural science. To Weber, objective knowledge of human subjectivity is possible and desirable. Ethical neutrality forms an essential element of a valid sociology. For making objective studies of social action, Weber identifies Verstehen and ideal types as the methodological tool. Weber's approach of subjective understanding becomes scientific by its integration into causal explanation. It is in this manner that Weber combines positivism with human subjectivity.

The conflict-perspective is most directly based upon the work of Karl Marx. In his Communist Manifesto, Marx has emphasized the development of society according to one single phenomenon only, that is, the conflict between the classes. For Marx, a man's belief, his ideas and his status in his class are all determined by his own place in the economic arrangement of the society. He believes society to be a battle-ground between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The development of modern society is largely determined by the outcome of this chief class conflict. But modern conflict theorists like Lewis Coser, Dahrendorf, etc. take a less narrow view. They see the struggle for power and income as a continuous process in which many categories of people appear as opponents—classes, races, nationalities and even the sexes.

The functionalist perspective has been propounded by sociologists like Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, etc. According to this perspective, the social structure is distinctly related to its functions and each part of it contributes to the survival and effective functioning of the whole, just as in the human body each part of the organism contributes to the survival and functioning of the whole.

Each perspective is used, to some degree, by most sociologists and is needed for a full understanding of society. Whatever school of thought the sociologist may belong to, his principal concern today is with regard to three distinct areas, namely, (a) social structure, (b) social control and (c) social change.

Sociology as a science contributes to the welfare of the society in a myriad ways. Scientific study of social behaviour is instrumental for obtaining knowledge about the diverse phases of man's social life. Moreover, knowledge about social norms of one's own society accelerates the growth of learning in all other important spheres dealing with the physical and natural world in a society. Just as scientific knowledge of human behaviour is a good guide to mental health, knowledge pertaining to the social world through sociology proves a good guide to social health. Sociology is pre-eminently a human science consecrated to serve humanity in all fields and in all respects.

DR. BISWANATH MOHANTI
YOUR letter with the two poems came a few days back. "A Heart's Call" will usher in the New Year or should I say the New Ear? Indeed the old habit of audition, bent towards outer voices, has to change and what more likely to bring this about than a call of the heart? But this summoning has to be repeated before the tympanum turns its vibratory response inward and grows intent on discovering the true needs of the being instead of letting the being get moulded by the demands of the world around. The Upanishads have spoken of the Ear behind the ear. This has to be awakened. How? Of course, the regular spiritual discipline is the full answer. But short of it the best answer is: poetry and music.

They seem to hail from outside us but they have come from the poet's and the musician's depths and if one listens with a quiet mind they will reveal their secret source, the God-haunted movement which runs below the echoes they make to the roaring, the purling, the whispering, the kissing by which the cosmos communicates with us. Nor is that movement something alien to the cosmos. The cosmos itself has a presence in it which behind the communications made by a million differing forms waits to commune from a divine wideness with a superhuman profundity within us. When that communion takes place, there is no division left between outer and inner. But, for this division to go, a certain practice of inwardness is needed. In the terms of what I have indicated here, more music is to be heard, more poetry is to be read aloud.

The latter act admits of two modes: the declamatory and the soft-toned. Both have their uses, but when there is no audience except oneself the soft-toned mode is naturally the most effective. What should be guarded against is a slurring of the words. As one knows what one is reading, one is likely to blur one's articulation. If this is done, the very purpose of the loud reading is subverted. Each word should come out clear and keep its right connection with its fellows. Catching the general rhythm is not enough. The poet is said to be "a miser of sound and syllable". All has been most carefully, most sensitively fingered, caressed, collected. The rhythm in all its minute particularity has to be realised so that the special vowels or consonants on which the poet has doted may come endeared to us also and touch our heart.

Shakespeare will have wasted his inspiration on us if we do not respond like a lover, with detailed attention, to the exquisite overtures to us by that stanza in one of his sonnets:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves or few or none do hang
Upon the boughs that shake against the cold
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

Or take single-line examples: Tennyson's piercingly felt

Tears from the depth of some divine despair

or on a sublimer scale Wordsworth's meditatively discovered

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Not only do such lines with their directly subjective suggestion require close loving attention. Even those that seem to have a purely objective reference have to be relished for their magic: Gerard Manley Hopkins's strikingly structured evocation of nineteenth-century Oxford—

Towery city and branchy between towers—

or Burgon's single-phrased entry into poetic immortality with his softly spell-binding conjuration of ancient Middle-East Petra, now in picturesque ruins:

A rose-red city half as old as Time.

The littérateur in me has let himself stray too far afield apropos of the opening words of your poem. I must be on guard against a similar temptation offered by your "Helen"-lines which I have reserved for the Mother India of February 21, the anniversary of our Divine Mother's birthday. They are liable to set me off on another trail of enchanting quotations starting with Marlowe's never-stale ecstatic confrontation of the spirit invoked by his Faust:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burned the topless towers of Ilium?—

and Vaughan's less picturesque yet equally thrilling appeal to the intuitive aesthete in us:

Rapt above earth by power of one fair face.

(29.10.1988)

* 

Your letter has been lying with me for 12 days—rather a good number since it is Sri Aurobindo's. The very name "Sri Aurobindo" runs to 12 letters. This number is also representative of the Supermind's creative and transformative power which
is at the basis of the cosmic manifestation and whose secret presence there must have led Sri Aurobindo to say in one place that the light of our sun has 12 and not 7 rays as well as that our solar system has really 12 planets (though only 9 have so far been discovered). It is also a fact that at least from 1902 onwards events of capital importance have happened in Sri Aurobindo’s life in every 12th year: 1914, his first meeting with the Mother—1926 the descent of the Overmind Consciousness into his body—1938 about which the Mother has said that in that year she used to see the Supermind entering into his physical substance without yet getting fixed there—1950 when Sri Aurobindo gave up his body in a tremendous fight to bring the realisation of a new consciousness which would pave the way towards the final victory. Do we not know that for five days after the certified clinical death his body was charged, as the Mother declared, with the Supramental Light as an overflow from the subtle-physical plane? We have also the Mother’s statement that the moment Sri Aurobindo left his body the Mind of Light was realised in her—the consciousness which she has defined as the physical mind receiving the Supramental Light—an experience which, according to her, has been revelatorily expressed in the two opening lines of a poem by me:

The core of a deathless sun is now the brain
And each grey cell bursts to omniscient gold.

To turn now to less exalted themes: I hope my 12-day delayed letter will have for your life some sort of importance, however shadowy from the Aurobindonian plane of vision. At present your life seems to be a curious mixture, if not a medley, of various pulls. My hoping is perhaps not unjustified when I understand, from what you write, that when your life gets Amalgamated with mine in your imagination you feel better. I too feel happy whenever you are in my thoughts and I renew my knowledge of your presence in my heart.

The exchange of calm and unrest is nothing peculiar to you: it is part of the general human condition, as long as one has not realised the truth which St. Augustine set forth when he spoke to God at the beginning of his famous Confessions: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” What you have to do is to let the spells of calm outnumber those of agitation. Don’t harbour too many regrets when “things like anger, resentment, etc.” crop up in you. These are difficult moods to manage—people who have lived in the Ashram for years are not free from their occasional visits. The right course is always to reject the sense that you are justified in having them. On the other hand, you mustn’t indulge in too much remorse. Just catch them whenever they come and, without thinking any more, offer them to the Mother and keep offering them to her until you feel clear and calm. You must also learn to look at their causes—namely, as you say, “not having things the way I wanted”—as carrying secret messages to you from the Divine. I have always held that we
can let the Divine reach us through everything. And if we look for the hand of Grace even in adverse circumstances it will extend to us and bring us benefits we have never dreamt of. I don’t say that we must never want circumstances to be different from what they are. We may work towards a different denouement and yet reap profit from a situation that seems to cut across our plan. Everything becomes a gift of God in one way or another when we offer it to Him and await in our hearts His touch through it. This is one of the great lessons I have learnt and it is one of the paths to permanent peace. You have a deep sincere aspiration to live quietly and joyously as the Mother’s child. It will carry you safely through all the ups and downs of earthly days. Have faith in your destiny of inward light.

(5.11.1988)

*  

You write of borrowing a “walking stick” from me in the form of Equanimity. But at present I am using two sticks to help me walk, the so-called Canadian Canes. Symbolically they stand on one side for Equanimity and on the other for the accompanying principle and practice of “Remember and offer”. Equanimity serves as the vast background, the standing back by the consciousness from the sensitive surface self, giving no ordinary responses to the touch of things, the impingement of persons—freedom from all reaction of hurt feeling, resentment, anger, frustration, despondency, sorrow. This is a pose of what I may call “positive passivity”—positive because here is no mere indifference which is a turning away from life, no avoidance of contacts. Life is faced but from an inner farness where the small complex tangled-up ego disappears or, at the most, hovers like an inefficent ghost. I am speaking, of course, of the ideal condition aimed at. The actuality may be a mixture of deep peace and a faint haunting presence of the ego’s reacting habit. Especially because of such mixture another movement of Yoga is needed. In itself too this movement is necessary because ours is not a Yoga of withdrawal: it is a Yoga of what in French military terms would be the strategy of *reculer pour mieux sauter*—“drawing back in order to leap forward better.” Balancing the “positive passivity”, there has to be an “uplifting activity”. In our ordinary traffic with the world the activity is always horizontal, a pull or push on the common human level. Now, everything done, whether on one’s own initiative or in answer to a stimulus from others or by confrontation of circumstances, has to be raised above that level: Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are to be remembered and made the receiving-end of all our doings. Inwardly we must offer to the Divine whatever activity is ours, praying to the Divine to take it up and turn it to a luminous spiritual use in accordance with the highest Vision and Will.

Particularly when something we don’t like is to be met, this gesture of remembering and offering must spring from us without any thought of our own personal grappling with the problem. If there is a call on us to take any measure,
our move must come after the moment of utter surrender of the occasion to the Divine: calmly, as if we ourselves were not concerned at all, we must wait for the higher inspiration and behave at its command. If our behaviour, however dynamic-seeking, passes swiftly from one point of peace to another, we may be sure that we are guided from a level beyond the purely human. Even when we are alone and there is no question of being related to the presence of others or to a public situation, the same remembrance and the same offering have to take place. No doubt, I am putting before you a counsel of perfection. We are bound to fail now and again. This must not discourage us. But an effort must be made to weave every occasion into the pattern of consecration I have suggested. That weaving I do my faltering best to carry out against the background of the attempted equanimity.

Shall I picture how one may feel such a double endeavour going on? At some distance behind one a wide silence may hang like an eternal self-existence, unaffected by anything. It would be linked to one as if one’s inmost heart were a small projection from the centre of that infinite expanse. From this projection into the time-world may go forth a cry to the Mother and a submission to her of all that happens—one’s own actions or what is done to one. One feels the cry to be a constant movement, the submission to be intermittent in the natural course. There may be times when one has deliberately to put upon the “flow” of the constant cry some problem which has become acute. And it is not just once that the deliberate offering may have to be made. Again and again it is required if one expects a result.

I may add that the inmost heart and its gestures may themselves be a mode of the Divine—they may be like a part longing for the whole. The inmost heart in each of us is the core of earth-existence, the pure psyche which, as I recently wrote to a friend, Sri Aurobindo has characterised as sweetness that is at the same time light, an emanation or delegate of the Supreme Ananda and Truth in the midst of the evolutionary grope. I quoted to my friend three lines from a poem of mine. There I have called the delegate

A Flame that is All,
Yet the touch of a flower—
A Sun grown soft and small.

I am writing this letter on November 24, the recurrence of the date sixty-two years ago which made a special milestone on the path of the Aurobindonian Yoga. On that date in 1926 there was the descent of the Consciousness of the plane Sri Aurobindo calls “Overmind” or the plane of the Great Gods, into Sri Aurobindo’s body. According to him the Overmind is the highest step of the Cosmic Ladder, the top of the series of the Worlds, from where the Transcendent is to be attained. This descent is also termed the coming
of the Krishna-Consciousness to aid Sri Aurobindo’s work. Krishna, the greatest Avatar of the past, manifested himself from the Transcendent through the Overmind. The time has arrived now for the Transcendent to manifest directly from the plane designated by Sri Aurobindo the Supermind, the level where the Transcendent has formulated an archetypal or ideal cosmos which is to be worked out evolutionarily in the terms of the present physical universe. Sri Aurobindo is the Avatar of this Supermind with all the rest of the Transcendent waiting its turn in the distant future of our earth. Spiritual manifestation as an evolutionary phenomenon is a slow systematic process. Now that the mind-grade has been reached it is possible to co-operate in evolution consciously. The accelerated co-operation is what we know as the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, though that also is a systematic process which cannot be rushed if it is to gain established results. In the event on November 24, 1926, the foundation was laid for the fulfilment to begin of Sri Aurobindo’s mission proper. The mission is the divinisation not only of the inner being but also of the outer, including the very body at the ultimate stage, by the descent into us of the Supermind’s perfect originals of all our parts.

In the course of this gradual fulfilment, a radical step is the gathering up of our varied self-awareness into the poise of our true soul—“the psychic being” in our Yoga’s terminology. Along with the movement towards this poise, there has to be the aspiration for the Supramental Consciousness to make that poise the fount of its transcendent all-divinising radiation here below. That is indeed a far prospect, but it is also far from being impossible if we set ourselves sincerely to live in and from the soul which the ancient Upanishad has described: “The being within us that is no bigger than the thumb of a man is like a blazing fire without smoke; he is lord of his past and of his future; he alone is today and he alone shall be tomorrow.”

I hope I haven’t lectured out of turn. To do so is the danger always besetting fellows like me who are professional pen-drivers. (24.11.1988)

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)
TWO QUOTATIONS FROM BASHŌ

BASHŌ is the pen-name of one of Japan's greatest and best-loved poets—one who is considered to have brought the distinctively compact form known as haiku to unique perfection. He lived from 1644-94, became a Zen adept, and wrote in prose as well as poetry. He wrote several 'Travel Sketches' in the mixed form known as haibun. His last work, The Narrow Road to the Deep North was in this genre, and is regarded as a milestone in the development of Japanese literature.

Here are two quotations from his writings, taken from the introduction to the Penguin edition of this classic, which has been translated and presented by the distinguished Japanese scholar Nobuyuki Yuasa.

What is important is to keep our mind high in the world of true understanding, and returning to the world of our daily experience to seek therein the truth of beauty. No matter what we may be doing at a given moment, we must not forget that it has a bearing upon our everlasting self which is poetry.

BASHŌ said that there is a permanent, unchangeable element in all true poetry; and he gave this advice to the poet on how to come into touch with it:

Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise you impose yourself on the object and do not learn. Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object have become one—when you have plunged deep enough into the object to see something like a hidden glimmering there. However well-phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural—if the object and yourself are separate—then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit.

Every sincere artist knows how difficult it is to clear away the many layers of 'subjective counterfeit' and reach a truly spontaneous expression. Perhaps this is also true for sadhaks of an integral yoga, whose whole lives may be regarded as their work of art. These insights from an artist who was also revered as one who achieved a state of enlightenment may remind us why the pursuit of 'the truth of beauty' through poetry or any other art has in many cultures been regarded as a sadhana, and the true poet or artist as one who had won access to higher truths.

That this is no longer the case, at least in the dominant materialistic culture of our day, is both the result and the perpetuation of an excessive preoccupation, not with 'our everlasting self which is poetry', but with the 'subjective counterfeits' which veil it.

SHRADDHAVAN

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Splendorous spring was in full swing. It was lovely to take a long walk in different Parks. One day Ursula and I found ourselves relaxing into a lazy,—almost somnolent mood as we strolled in St. James’s Park in a soft May sunshine.
She asked me to visit her place at 47 The Drive Ching-Ford London E.4. She said that she would come to fetch me. I agreed.

Afterwards we bade “Au revoir” and took the Circle Line.

I was going round and round—got down at the last station, again climbed the train, got down at the same station. There was no other way—no end to my journey. I grew nervous, and asked several people who answered evasively.

I alighted once again. Then eventually I asked a guard to find me the way. He was highly amused and told me in his perfect Cockney style: “Miss, don’t worry, wait here. I’ll tell you of the right train with a wink.” I told myself: “With or without a wink I must reach home.”

I smiled and thanked him.

At last I arrived safely in my bed-sitter—this was the dramatic end!

If I had not been muddled up in the Circle Line, it would have taken only fifteen minutes to get home.

I have learnt from this incident: if we go turning in the same rut of life, in the same consciousness, it never leads us to our destination. It goes round and round indefinitely and there is no liberation.

The next day when Ursula and I met in the college, I inquired how she felt that morning. She made a face and answered: “Oh, I am still alive after a dreadful struggle in the wretched Circle Line. You know, I reached my place after three hours. And what about you?”

I said: “Ah, one hour earlier!” Then we laughed until tears streamed from our eyes. We vowed to keep away from such adventures.

* 

The most fascinating event Sudha and I witnessed on the TV at my place was the Royal Wedding of Princess Margaret Rose which took place on 6th May 1960.

We sat with our eyes glued to the screen. For, we hated to miss even a second of the breath-taking ceremony.

The street-decorations were in tune with the abundance of spring flowers.

The Princess descended from the carriage to enter Westminster Abbey along with the Duke of Edinburgh who gave her away. She looked very lovely in her white wedding dress—although the horses were wearing much more jewellery than she was.

Later she and her husband Lord Snowdon greeted countless people from the balcony of Buckingham Palace.

Then the wedded couple were enveloped in a cloud of rose-petals and coloured confetti as they drove away for their honeymoon.

They boarded the Royal Yacht H.M.S. BRITANNIA. A few petals of roses were caught on Lord Snowdon’s well-cut jacket. The Princess brushed them off.
Whenever Sudha and I got the chance, we never missed watching pro-
grammes on the TV—B.B.C. and I.T.V.

One day we saw an advertisement on the TV—a new bar of chocolate. Soon
we switched the TV off to buy the same chocolate from a nearby shop. My place
was close to many shops.

Once more we started the TV and ate bars of delicious chocolate.
We were real crackers!

I received a telephone call from Mr. Harkissandas Chawala and his wife
Mrs. Shantaben. They invited me to lunch at their posh Washington hotel.

That day it was raining heavily. I was drenched by the time I reached the
hotel.

We greeted one another. Shantaben gave me a silk sari to replace mine which
was put on the bars of the central heating to dry.

I was very pleased to meet them. They had been constant visitors to Sri
Aurobindo Ashram, because their son Gautam had dedicated his life to the
Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

We had lunch together. I enjoyed the dessert—luscious strawberries and
thick cream—the first and fresh treat of the season!

Mr. and Mrs. Chawala whom I called Uncle and Aunt were extremely kind
to me. They asked me several questions regarding my studies. They also asked
me when I would return to the Ashram. I said that after my studies I would go
first to East Africa, because my parents wished me to do so. Then I would go to
the Ashram.

I inquired about their health. I was sorry to learn that Shantaben had to
undergo an operation in one of the famous London Nursing Homes near Harley
Street.

Later, several times I went to see her carrying with me flowers and fruit.
She wanted me to bring chestnuts which I failed to do, because they were not
available at that time.

Once or twice Sudha accompanied me. Aunt Margaret also visited Shanta-
ben and gave her magazines and chocolates.

It was a big Nursing Home. There seemed to be many patients but all around
there was a hushed solemnity as of a sacred place. Everything was spotlessly
clean.

Mr. Chawala invited Sudha and me to lunch at his hotel.

We went but could not stay long, because Ursula was coming to pick me
up and Sudha had another appointment.

No sooner did I reach my house than Ursula came. She flung her arms
around my neck and embraced me.

She wore an attractive dress and charming silver filigree bracelets which
gave a musical jingle each time she moved her hands.

After a long journey we got to her place where her landlady greeted us. The little sons of hers—Steven and Andrew—were darlings. I gave them a box of chocolates which they started gorging with squeals of delight. Their mother tweaked their ears and warned them not to eat too many chocolates.

The boys seemed to take a liking to me. They sat on my lap and examined my sari with great interest.

We had high-tea together. Then the landlady rose and, gracefully perching her younger son on one hip, led me to a patch of garden at the back of her house where the fragrance of apple-blossom filled the air. The boys collapsed on the lawn with howls of laughter as Ursula began tickling them.

I went down on my knees and put my arms round them. Ursula took our photographs which are still with me. The boys were full of glee and giggles.

Finally Ursula showed me her room. She was staying in the house as a paying guest.

When I gave my thanks and said adieu to them, the boys hugged me and would not let me go. I adored them.

Ursula laced her fingers with mine and saw me off at the tube-station. I had to change the train twice to get home.

The sun had already disappeared, and the sky assumed a soft purple sheen and steadily grew darker. Before going to bed I turned the pages of the *Bulletin of April 1960* the Mother had sent me. I came across this very interesting comment the Mother had given on *Thoughts and Aphorisms* written by Sri Aurobindo.

Hallucination is the term of Science for those irregular glimpses we still have of truths and shut out from us by our preoccupation with matter; coincidence for the curious touches of the artist, in the work of that supreme and universal Intelligence which in its conscious being, as on a canvas, has planned and executed the world.

*Sweet Mother, what does “artist” represent here?*

Sri Aurobindo here compares the work of the Supreme Lord, creator of the universe, to the work of an artist who would paint, with great strokes of brush, the picture of the world in his conscious being as on a canvas. And when by the fact of a ‘curious technique’ he superimposes two strokes of brush, that makes a ‘coincidence.’

Generally the word ‘coincidence’ suggests the idea of an unconscious meaningless chance. Sri Aurobindo wants to make us understand that chance and unconsciousness have nothing to do with this phenomenon; on the contrary, it is the result of a refined taste and consciousness such as artists possess and it can reveal a deep intention.
I rose from my chair, opened the window and looked at the garden strangely lit by the crescent moon. The sky was cloudless and star-spangled. There was a warm breath of spring air.

Indeed the Supreme Lord was the perfect Artist who created the whole Universe.

I fell into a dreamy contemplative mood when I pulled the covers of my bed over me and switched off the table-lamp. A few minutes later I slid into a welcome oblivion.

(To be continued)

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O HELEN

O Helen,
How many more Troys to burn?
Another and yet another
I find within my worlds,
Eager to flourish and perish,
Each more glorious than the earlier.

More warriors come from afar
With ever stranger weapons
Of smiles and kisses.

After each conflagration
Peace and joy reign longer
In the realms of Zeus after Zeus.

Each new building of the newer city
Is built of lighter bricks and purer marble.
Walls and roofs and floors too
Shrink and expand, change colours and shapes
In rhythm with some strange beat.

O Helen, tell me—
When will I awake in the last Troy,
The always Troy where you ever are?

DINKAR PALANDE
I do not have constant personal contact with Champaklal, but I know that he has been a most loving and faithful child of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

He served as an intermediary between the Mother and me.

In the beginning the Mother sent cards and bouquets of white roses with different people. Afterwards she sent them through Champaklal for years.

It was amazing how artistically and beautifully Champaklal made cards on which the Mother wrote luminous words!

When the Mother started teaching me painting, I received from her various objects to paint. They were brought to me by Champaklal. One day she sent her white sandals and bottle-green velvet cushions. She had shown Champaklal how to compose the sandals on the cushions and asked him to arrange these things for me in my room at Golconde.

There were other objects too which needed settings. He conveyed the Mother's instructions precisely.

Much later, after the Mother passed away, Champaklal came to my house and sat for quite some time in the Meditation Room. He was completely lost in the atmosphere. I told him that the Mother had promised me when she had come that Sri Aurobindo's Presence and her Presence would be here for twenty-four hours. He was very happy to know this and affirmed his own feeling about it.

Since he was observing absolute silence, he wrote down many pleasant things about my relationship with the Mother, my soul and other revealing and encouraging things. He admired and appreciated my work with the Mother, for which I am ever grateful to him.

I found him full of good will.

The Mother's words are quite apposite:

“True nobility, true superiority lies in good will.”

HUTA

CORRECTION

On p. 18 of the January Mother India, the translation of the Latin quotation Quorsum haec putida tendunt? towards the end of Sri Aurobindo's letter to his poet brother Manmohan Ghose should run in footnote 2: “whither is this rubbish tending?” The last word was misprinted as “ending”.

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SAVITRI’S HOUSE OF MEDITATION

(Continued from the issue of January 1989)

Part Three

A.B. Keith in his long introduction to the Taittiriya Sanhita belonging to the Veda of the Black Yajus School mentions that it, like the Shatapatha Brahmana, identifies Agni with Death which "leads to the suggestion that the sacrificer as Agni, as time, is death and as the sacrificer dies he becomes immortal, for death is his own self."22 It is doubtful whether this is strictly a Vedic concept. Agni as a Vedic god has his own status and standing in the pantheon of these ancients. As tapas-energy in evolution carrying it forward, he has almost a fixed role which he plays variously. He is described and extolled as the seer-will, the messenger of the gods, the Bull with four horns, the Male, the great Aryan, the house-lord, the Lord of the Worlds, the knower of the births, the priest of sacrifice, the immortal in mortals leading them and protecting them on the path of heaven. As a will in the material world it is he who shapes and moulds forms and brings concreteness to the things ethereal. Agni is the creative principle or power of immortality in Matter. Identification with him is the certain and effectuating means of attaining the beatitude of deathlessness, but not presently in the embodied form; his form has not yet evolved to that stage. “Agni manifests divine potentialities in a death-besieged body; Agni brings them to effective actuality and perfection. He creates in us the luminous forms of the Immortals.”23 Agni is indeed the presiding deity here and also the divinity that grows in the physical universe making it grow in his own growth. We cannot therefore identify him in this sense with Death who is but the power of disintegration. Time as kala-purusha is again that agent of dissolution; it is he who destroys the order of the worlds. True, Death is known to be the son of Vivasvan, the Sun-god, and in him does the Dharma abide and by that does he protect or guard immortality. “Surya the Lord of Light is born as the guardian of the divine Law and the Yama-power.”24 That is the positive aspect of Yama in the creation; therefore is he also known as the ordainer of the worlds. On the other hand, Death as a dark power in the material creation leads it to its entire dissolution in the Void of the Unmanifest. Sacrificer’s death cannot then take him to immortality; it would rather be his complete disappearance into the gloom of a darkness where no ray of light or hope can ever reach. Into the sunless worlds of the Isha would he sink, beyond redemption. There no sacrifice is performed and therefore doomed would he always lie. But the sacrificer as Agni identifying himself with the Sun-god shall tread the upward path progressing into knowledge and stepping into a blissful luminous living. The seers follow this path of the gods, the path that has been paved by sacrifice and made safe for treading.
On this path of sacrifice Savitri herself sees the supreme Reality as Maha Purusha standing behind the figure of Death, the dark Terrible. He abandoning his fourfold divinity, by making a sacrifice of his supreme Person, took on that shape in the Void. Only then from that sacrifice did progress become possible. It was that shape in the Void which confronted Savitri as she was claiming back Satyavan's soul.

The Vedic Hymn of Creation is the sublimest laud of the Sacrifice of the Purusha. He immolated himself at the beginning of existence to give birth to creation. Thus the Vedas were born and the four austerities and the great rhythms set into movement. In the darkness that was engulfed by darkness he moved as the Demiurge and soon the gods found the means to build up the existent; they stretched it between the two oceans, one below and the other above. The Purusha, by accepting Darkness, grew in many forms superconscient. He expressed himself manifoldly in the material and the supramaterial universe.

Prajapati in the Brahminic tradition is the Lord of Sacrifice. It was in building up the body of Prajapati that the creative act of sacrifice was long ago performed. In order that from the Supreme's dismemberment the divine body be built, the fires of the sacrifice were kindled and the chants were raised and the oblations poured. The sacrificer by sacrificing himself created innumerable sacrifices. The five Yajnas born of the Maha-Yajna maintain a fulfilling relationship, a mutually enriching harmony in different parts of this vast creation. If in Brahma-Yajna the supreme deity is invoked by chanting the Riks of the Vedas, by Manushya-Yajna the sacrificers grow by helping each other. The devas take of the offerings of the sacrifice and grant boons in full measure to its performer. Even the departed and the beings of the vital world get their share in this daily sacrifice. The Law of Sacrifice proves not only to be all-pervasive but also inexorable the way in which the Greek gods were subject to the Law of Ananke. All is established in the great Sacrifice and, indeed, all these sacrifices have been extended, as the Gita says, "in the mouth of the Brahman".

Sacrifice is the noblest dharma. The social and spiritual order, even the occult, is founded in it; the universal harmony and concordance grow and flourish in those mighty flames. As much the seers and Rishis cherish it as do the heavenly gods themselves who are the guardians of the Truth that is obscured in the night here. When Savitri got the soul of Satyavan back from Yama, the Dharmaraja, he himself blessed her by granting to Satyavan a life of four hundred years for performing the holy Yajnas, the Fire-Sacrifices in the conduct of the glorious dharma in which the creatures grow to plenitude. Even today every household engaged in sacrifice echoes and re-echoes the famous chant of Rishi Dirghatamas for the fulfillment of life in that Worthy Act. In a "deep and mystic style" he proclaims:

यज्ञ यज्ञयज्ञं देवास्तानि यमो यमो यज्ञार्थात्सत्यं। (I. 164.50)
By sacrifices the gods worship the Sacrifice which is the foremost of the dharma. Such a law of fundamental importance must have had its origin in the person of the Supreme himself, in the all-potentiality of the transcendent to bring forth the secret or hidden possibility of a world-movement in the rhythms of the Truth.

The Gita enjoins us to be engaged in works and make them a sacrificial offering to the Lord of Nature in whom they get purified for growth and progress. The deathless Flame, Agni Pavaka as the purifier of action, is the leader of the march through the terrestrial ways.

With sacrifice the Lord of creatures of old created creatures and said, By this shall you bring forth (fruits or offspring), let this be your milker of desires. Foster by this the gods and let the gods foster you; fostering each other, you shall attain to the supreme good.

Fostered by sacrifice the gods shall give you desired enjoyments; who enjoys their given enjoyments and has not given to them, he is a thief. The good who eat what is left from the sacrifice, are released from all sin; but evil are they and enjoy sin who cook (the food) for their own sake.

From food creatures come into being, from rain is the birth of food, from sacrifice comes into being the rain, sacrifice is born of work; work know to be born of Brahman, Brahman is born of the Immutable; therefore is the all-pervading Brahman established in the sacrifice.\(^{25}\)

In the most esoteric sense, and in the grand incantatory verse,

Brahman is the giving, Brahman is the food-offering, by Brahman it is offered into the Brahman-fire, Brahman is that which is to be attained by samadhi in Brahman-action.\(^{26}\)

\begin{quote}

\textbf{व्रह्मापणं व्रह्मं हृविवर्ग्यन्ति व्रह्मणं हृतम् ।
व्रह्मवेत गतवेव व्रह्मकर्मकंसर्विना ॥ (IV. 24)}
\end{quote}

While commenting on this verse Sri Aurobindo explains it as follows: “The universal energy into which the action is poured is the Divine; the consecrated energy of the giving is the Divine; whatever is offered is only some form of the Divine; the giver of the offering is the Divine himself in man; the action, the work, the sacrifice is itself the Divine in movement, in activity; the goal to be reached by sacrifice is the Divine.”\(^{27}\)

When the Yogagni, the fire of a concentrated will, is kindled and when it mounts to heaven a new transformation takes place in the person and soul of the aspirant. The darkness of Nature is left behind and thought and feeling and the physical activities become suddenly spirit-charged; occult invisible domains of light and force open out. The deathless Flame aspires to reach “the Being’s absolutes”.
In a veiled Nature’s hallowed secrecies
It burns for ever on the altar Mind,
Its priests the souls of dedicated gods,
Humanity its house of sacrifice.

But who is this Yajna-Purusha, the Yajneshwara of the Puranas, the Fire of the Yogins, the Tapas of the doers of austerities, the God of worship of the ritualists, the sacramental divinity of the religious, the bringer of the heavenly riches to the terrestrial creatures, the leader of the Aryans, the fulfiller of the purpose of the Supreme in the cosmos, in whom the wheels of Time move like great rhythms of happiness and joy and expansion into the Future claiming its abundances? Is he the alchemist in the cave experimenting with the baser materials to transmute them into the luminous self of his own gold? the physicist feeding the atomic faggots to set ablaze the cosmic conflagration in the very womb of Matter? the occultist who by his magic spell shall build the body of God with the nerve-centres of his own person? “Serene as the Antarctic silence,” who is it that burns in Hegel on his death-bed? In the non-violent march of the “naked fakir” or in the Blitzkrieg of the Titan is it the same Purusha strident like a fire and roaring in the loudness of a colossus of might? When was this Yajna-Purusha born and where does he abide? If he is in the night do the stars send their distant signals to guide him on the right path or throw their little energising brightnesses into his flames and, if in the day, do the suns pour their radiances to kindle his leaping greatnesses beyond the domains of the Truth-Knowledge? If he is the Breath sublime does he survive in abysses of the inconscient Horror? Is he smouldered by the black Demon or accosted by Kumbhanda, the goblin, or slain by Vritra, the terrible Enemy? Is it not true that the potency of Yajna is exploited even by the asuras to battle against the gods? Did not Indrajit, the son of the demon King Ravana, hide himself in a secret cave and initiate the fearsome sacrifice to obtain weapons and chariot to fight against Laxmana, the younger brother of Sri Rama? And knowing the efficacy of the ghastly Yajna, was it not that in time it was thwarted and the victory decisively turned in favour of the Avatar?

But then what is the satyasya satyam, the truth of truth, of the Yajna-Purusha? If Yajna on this physical plane is a celebrated fact, a cherished institution, an ever-living reality, if it is enduring here in spite of the travails of time, then surely it must have had its origin, the first birth, in some imperishable celestial world above, in a form splendid like that of the gods, if not more, beyond the reach of death. The Yajna-Purusha is someone greater than Agni or Prajapati or Brahma. His dwelling is in the Transcendent, he himself is the Transcendent turned towards creation. If Savitri is the incarnation of the Divine Mother and if it is in her House of Meditation that she sees the sacrifice being performed, then it must certainly be some immediate or closest aspect of the Supreme him-
self who has become the Yajna-Purusha. Indeed, who else can perform this Maha-Yajna in her heart?

The Yajna-Purusha is the transcendent Supreme himself, the Supreme in the poise of a great creative Action. From the Tapas of Brahma the worlds were born, the Puranas declare. The metaphysico-spiritual sense emerges clearly in Sri Aurobindo’s analysis when he discusses the very first verse of the Rig-veda: “Who is this Yajna and what is Yajna in Himself?”, asks he and sets forth to answer as follows: “Yajna is Being, Awareness and Bliss; He is Sat with Chit and Ananda, because Chit and Ananda are inevitable in Sat. When in His Being, Awareness and Bliss He conceals Guna or quality, He is nirguna sat, impersonal being with Awareness and Bliss either gathered up in Himself and passive, they nivrtta, He also nivrtta or working as a detached activity in His impersonal existence, they pravrtta, He nivrtta. Then He should not be called Yajna, because He is then aware of himself as the Watcher and not as the Lord of activity. But when in His being, He manifests Guna or quality He is saguna sat, personal being.

Even then He may be nivrtta, not related to His active awareness and bliss except as a Watcher of its detached activity; but He may also by His Shakti enter into their activity and possess and inform His universe (praviṣṭya, adhiṣṭhita), He pravṛtta, they pravṛtta. It is then that He knows Himself as the Lord and is properly called Yajna. Not only is He called Yajna, but all action is called Yajna, and Yoga, by which alone the process of any action is possible, is also called Yajna... This Yajna, who is the Saguna Sat, does not do works Himself, (that is by Sat), but He works in Himself, in Sat by His power of Chit,—by His Awareness... When Chit that is Power begins to work, then She manifests Herself as kinetic force, Tapas, and makes it the basis of all activity.”

The Yajna-Purusha is therefore Sachchidananda Himself in His world-creative Action, the Sat-Purusha in His own Person setting forth the World-Force in a dynamic movement of Manifestation. If this Action is the Yajna, then the Sat-Purusha is the Yajman and the World-Force His Grihapatni, the Consort participating in the Sacrifice. Shakti acting in the Will of Ishwara is the Yajna in the Transcendent; but as World-Creatrix when she rules over the quiescent Being, Prakriti mightier than Purusha, he subject to her action, then the Yajna in the terrestrial processes assumes an altogether different character. It is this terrestrial Yajna that has then to be lifted up, with the help of the gods, to its original pristine glory and grandeur. In the wake of the sacrifice of the Purusha, sung by the Vedic Rishis, she as the Adya Shakti has actually made a greater sacrifice by coming down to this creation that it may grow in pure being, awareness, and joy; she gave up her royalty of transcendence and chose to be here because it is in the folds of inconscience that she must search or discover her lost beloved. In that search “...she has consented to put on herself the cloak of this obscurity, condescended to bear the attacks and torturing influences of the powers of the Darkness and the Falsehood, borne to pass through the portals
of the birth that is a death, taken upon herself the pangs and sorrows and sufferings of the creation, since it seemed that thus alone could it be lifted to the Light and Joy and Truth and eternal Life. This is the great sacrifice called sometimes the sacrifice of the Purusha, but much more deeply the holocaust of Prakriti, the sacrifice of the Divine Mother." In the epic passage:

Our life is a holocaust of the Supreme.
The great World-Mother by her sacrifice
Has made her soul the body of our state;
Accepting sorrow and unconsciousness
Divinity's lapse from its own splendours wove
The many-patterned ground of all we are."  

The incarnation of Adya Shakti in the human body to do the Yoga of the Supreme in the earth-consciousness foreshadows a certitude of its success here.

This Adya Shakti in the name of Savitri, "the patroness of magic priestcraft, Brahmanhood" is, as Heinrich Zimmer rightly says, "the female counterpart and divine energy, shakti, of Savitar-Brahmā, the Creator of the world; she is the all-moving, all-inspiring divine principle of creation." But when the philosopher fails to recognise her incarnate in the person of Savitri, "the human princess, daughter of King Asvapati, who, according to the legend, rescued her husband, Prince Satyavan, from the domain of King Death", then this Adya Shakti's direct participation in the world-processes gets denied in the reckoning. In actuality, however, without that participation world-transformation would be impossible. She has been here since the beginning of the earth in one form or another. It is she who has moulded all the major events in the history of consciousness taking the evolutionary march towards God-fulfilment in material creation. The human Savitri, on entering her House of Meditation, witnesses the divine reality of her own self, that reality vaster and mightier than Death whom she is presently confronting as a dark terrible Shadow. Savitri now merges her will with the will of the transcendent Power who is ever burning in the depth of her soul, in the jewel-bright cave of her heart. That Adya Shakti herself is Savitri's soul, luminous in the Yajna of the Divine.

In the deepest sense, therefore, the occult Fire that burns in the central hearth in Savitri's House of Meditation is the eternal Yajna itself, the Yajna being performed by the Sat Purusha as the house-lord with his mate Adya Shakti seated to his right in the great Action of upholding the Creation that the Transcendent may dwell in it with its full threefold beatitude.

(Concluded)
THE DIVINE MOTHER TO THE RESCUE

A Letter to the Editor

This incident took place on the 12th May 1988. As usual I was going for a walk in the evening on the beach. I left my house and reached the Ashram and then took the road to the beach via Nehru Street near the Raj Bhavan and turned to the Public Garden. Then I turned to the small lane between A.I.R. and the Exhibition Hall leading to the beach. I definitely remember a spot near the Exhibition Hall. From this place the beach was just across the main road.

Then to my great astonishment I found myself suddenly sitting in an easy chair on the first floor of the Ashram Nursing Home, surrounded by nurses and other inmates besides the resident doctor. They told me that I had had an accident; and I was shocked to find blood spots over my face and body. I was told that two girls had brought me there and left the place.

I had absolutely no knowledge of the accident, where it had taken place, in what position I had fallen, who had brought me in a rikshaw, who had paid the rikshaw-man. Then the doctor took my B.P. and E.C.G. and found both normal. I was quite conscious in the Nursing Home and looking over my body and talking to the persons present. All the injuries were of a minor nature. Still, ten stiches were put on face, nose, etc.

My consciousness was a blank between the spot near the Exhibition Hall and the Nursing Home. In my utter helplessness, I inwardly approached the Mother, "Mother, how is it that this thing should happen when I am always aware of Your Presence?"

I got the reply from her, "Child, you were being harassed by an adverse force and I took you in my arms and handed you over to my instruments to take you to the Nursing Home for proper care!".

P. S. I was in the Nursing Home for six days. About four days after my discharge from it, I discovered half a dozen linear scratches on the left side of my sun-glasses. I am unable to account for this phenomenon. My denture and reading glasses were all safe.

D. S. Pathre
History is not enough to record, conserve, and understand what has happened. It cannot assess the nature and direction of momentous forces working through the different ages of India. Sri Aurobindo has gone to the depth of the true Indian history and the true intrinsic forces working in Aryavarta, Bharata, the land of the eternal light.

Says Sri Aurobindo: “India has lived much, but has not sat down to record the history of her life. Her soul and mind have left their great monuments, but so much as we know—and after all it is not little—of the rest, the more outward things, remains or has emerged recently in spite of her neglect; such exact records as she had, she has allowed to rust forgotten or disappear.”

Sri Aurobindo has discovered the national soul of India by a deeper insight into history. He finds that nation and society are living powers of the eternal truth and its self-manifestation. He says, “The nation or society, like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist.”

He has said again that history keeps the superficial statements of external data, dates, institutions, rites, customs and laws. They are, according to him, surface accidents of the forces at work. He has explained: “Scientific history has been conceived as if it must be a record and appreciation of the environmental motives of political action, of the play of economic forces and developments and the course of institutional evolution. The few who still valued the psychological elements have kept their eye fixed on individuals and are not far from conceiving of history as a mass of biographies. The truer and more comprehensive science of the future will see that these conditions only apply to the imperfectly self-conscious period of national development. Even then there was always a greater subjective force working behind individuals, policies, economic movements and the change of institutions; but it worked for the most part subconsciously, more as a subliminal self than as a conscious mind. It is when this subconscious power of the group-soul comes to the surface that nations begin to enter into possession of their subjective selves; they set about getting, however vaguely or imperfectly, at their souls.”

From Sri Aurobindo’s verdict the surface of life is easy to understand. Of course some practical utilities are there to be considered. But they are very objective in nature. His approach to history runs on the following lines: “The surfaces of life are easy to understand; their laws, characteristic movements, practical utilities are ready to our hand and we can seize on them and turn them to account with a sufficient facility and rapidity. But they do not carry us very far.
They suffice for an active superficial life from day to day, but they do not solve the great problems of existence. On the other hand, the knowledge of life’s profundities, its potent secrets, its great, hidden all-determining laws is exceedingly difficult to us.”

A critical study of Indian history shows us that the historical process, like the physical life, has undergone a cycle of birth, growth, youth, ripeness and decline. This decline does not mean death. It gives the race the chance of a fresh start with all the experiences of the past. In India the decline of one age does not mean an end. The perishability of one age brings the new birth of another flourishing age with different perspectives.

Dr. Munshi says of the Classical Age, “Politically, this was the age of integration in India. After more than three hundred years of fragmentation and foreign domination, northern India was again united under the vigorous rule of powerful monarchs of versatile talents.”

Dr. Munshi further tells us: “This period saw a springtime efflorescence in all spheres of life. The creative urge of the time has contributed both character and richness to the evolution of the national mind in every succeeding century with the rise of Imperial Prāthīhāras in the East and Rāstrākutas in the South about the middle of the eighth century. They began the next distinctive period.”

Of the Classical Age Sri Aurobindo’s vision is: “It is the period of logical philosophy, of science, of art and the developed crafts, law, politics, trade, colonisation, the great kingdoms and empires with their ordered and elaborate administrations, the minute rule of Shastras in all departments of thought and life, an enjoyment of all that is brilliant, sensuous, agreeable, a fixing and systemising of all that could be brought into the compass of intelligence and practice,—the most splendid, sumptuous and imposing millennium of Indian culture.”

Sisir Kumar Mitra in his book Resurgent India states: “Never in her history has India seen such a many-sided blossoming of her force of life. Culturally, she has never been so rich, so colourfully creative. No other age has given her such a plenitude of experiences, because, apart from other things, she lived her life literally to the full.”

Sri Aurobindo shows a continuous creative activity of the ancient period of India despite the depressed outward life due to rigorous asceticism in the following words: “India has not only had the long roll of her great saints, sages, thinkers, religious founders, poets, creators, scientists, scholars, legists; she has had her great rulers, administrators, soldiers, conquerors, heroes, men with the strong active will, the mind that plans and the seeing force that builds. She haswarred and ruled, traded and colonised and spread her civilization, built politics and organised communities and societies, done all that makes the outward activity of great peoples. A nation tends to throw out its most vivid types in that line of action which is most congenial to its temperament and expressive of its leading idea, and it is the great saints and religious personalities that stand at the
head in India and present the most striking and continuous roll-call of greatness just as Rome lived most in her warriors and statesmen and rulers.”

NILIMA DAS

(To be continued)

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2 Ibid, Vol 15, p 29
3 Ibid, p 29.
4 Ibid, pp 30, 31
5 Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan’s History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol III, Foreword, p xi
6 Ibid
7 Sri Aurobindo, The Foundations of Indian Culture, pp 333-34
8 Resurgent India, by Sisir Kumar Mitra, p. 21.
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THE GITA AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YOGAKSEMA

1. Does the author of the Gita teach asceticism?

We come across the word *yogaksema* (getting and having possessions) for the first time in the second chapter of the Gita, entitled Samkhya-yoga. The word occurs in verse 2-45 where Arjuna receives several instructions from Krishna. On the negative side, Arjuna is asked to be without the three gunas, the dualities, and *yogaksema*; on the positive side, he is called upon to abide in the true being and possess the Self. The verse obviously refers to the conquest of the Self by giving up all that is listed on the negative side. Of the three things to be given up, we are mainly concerned with the last as it is related to an essential aspect of human life, *nir yogaksema*.

Before we turn to the subject of *nir yogaksema*, we have to digress a little in order to understand the full implications of verse 2-45. According to the Mahabharata, the Pandavas were rulers of Indraprastha. They were very successful and also unparalleled in their talents. Irritated by their growing name and fame, the jealous Kaurava prince Duryodhana wanted to destroy the Pandavas without openly challenging them. His idea was to invite them to play the game of dice, induce them to risk their kingdom and deprive them of all belongings. His plan worked perfectly in his favour and the Pandavas were brought to the level of destitutes at one stroke. Humiliated and dispossessed, they had to live in exile for thirteen years, a condition imposed on the loser of the game. At the end of the exile, Krishna proposed that the kingdom of Indraprastha be restored to the Pandavas, as it was unjustly taken away by the Kauravas. When Krishna asked Duryodhana to return the kingdom to the Pandavas, Duryodhana said that he would rather die on the battle field than surrender it to his enemies. There was thus only one alternative left to the Pandavas: to kill the Kauravas in battle and recover the lost kingdom. This led to a great war on the field of Kurukshetra. For eighteen days the war went on without a break and finally the Pandavas were crowned with magnificent success.

For us the most relevant part of the Epic is how Arjuna was persuaded to fight when he decided not to. On the first day of the war, Arjuna requested Krishna, who was his charioteer, to place the chariot right between two contending armies, so that he could have a look at the heroes who were arrayed against the Pandavas. As soon as his eyes fell upon Bhishma and Drona, whom he held in great respect and reverence, Arjuna was overcome by a great pity, *kṛpayā parayāvīṣṭoh*. He was disgusted with the very thought of killing the Kauravas who were his own people. He felt that he would be committing a great sin if he killed them, *mahatpāpatī*. He even felt that it was better for him to be slain by them when he was unarmed and unresisting, *mānapratikāramasāstrām*. Overwhelmed with sorrow and depression, he abandoned his weapons.
and said to Krishna, "I will not fight."

But Krishna would not approve of what Arjuna said or did. Krishna's first words were words of rebuke: "Whence has come to thee this dejection in the hour of crisis? It does not befit thee at all; give up this weakness of the heart and arise." When he realised that Krishna was not in favour of his decision not to fight, he confessed that his mind was completely confused about the right course of action, dharmasamāmūḍhacetāḥ, and requested Krishna to tell him that which was good for him.

Krishna began to show from several points of view that he should never give up his appointed work. At the end of each argument, his conclusion was always in favour of fighting the opponent. "Therefore, Arjuna, fight, tasmādyudhyasva bhārata; therefore determine to fight and rise, tasmāduttisthα kaunteya yuddhāya kriṣṇisćayah." As for the best way to perform his task, Krishna advised him to become equal in both success and failure and do the appointed work having fixed himself in yoga, yogasthāh.

Finally Arjuna agreed to act according to Krishna's advice, thus putting an end to his confusion and hesitation. And indeed Arjuna exterminated all his enemies and emerged victorious in the battle.

Let us now return to the subject of nityogaksema. If, as the author of the Gita says, Arjuna were to renounce yogaksema, then there would be no justification at all for the war, much less for his presence in Kurukshetra. In fact, Krishna should have allowed Arjuna to give up fighting the Kauravas and return home. But Krishna was at great pains to persuade Arjuna not to withdraw from the battle field until he had carried out the appointed task. He promised Arjuna success in the war and enjoyment of an opulent kingdom, bhuikṣva rājyaṁ samrddham.

If Arjuna was to practise nityogaksema, then why did Krishna bring up the subject of restoration of Indraprastha to the Pandavas at all at the end of their exile? Why did he approach Duryodhana on behalf of the Pandavas and ask him to return Indraprastha? What is more confusing is Krishna's reference to king Janaka, while calling upon Arjuna to follow the example of royal sages, for Janaka never gave up his possessions in order to attain spiritual perfection. The complexity of the issue reaches its peak point when Krishna says that he brings yogaksema to his devotees who worship him (i.e., worship him by doing works as a sacrifice) and are always united with him, yogakṣeṁ vahāmyaham. (Evidently, Arjuna is included in the category of Krishna's devotees, bhaktā ast me.) If yogaksema is considered harmful in the practice of yoga and, therefore, to be given up, why does Krishna reverse his own teaching and say that yogaksema is brought to his devotees? In short, the whole issue boils down to one fundamental question: Does the author of the Gita intend to teach asceticism in respect of personal possessions when he refers to nityogaksema? If not, how to understand this expression?
2. Sacrifice and Vedavada

Before resolving the above contradiction let us try to understand the context of verse 2-45.

According to Vedavada, as popularly understood, man is regarded as essentially a soul of desires, kāmātmānah. His aim in life is to satisfy the desires and achieve wealth and objects of enjoyment, bhogaisvayyagatīṁ. All works are a means to realise this aim in life.

In fact, there are two ways of achieving the aim of life: one way is through sacrificial works, yajñā; and the other way is through ordinary non-sacrificial works, karmano'nyatra. Performance of sacrificial works is governed by the view that man’s life depends entirely upon the gods in their universal workings. All prosperity comes to him when he worships the gods with sacrifice. His part is to worship the gods; and it is for the gods to fulfil his desires in return. So, fulfilment of desires is regarded as the fruit of sacrifice and the gift of the gods. In other words, man prospers by subordinating his desires to the law of sacrifice. This way of life enables him to reach the supreme good, śreyah paramvāpsyatha, not only here but in the world of the gods, surendralokamakṣanti.

The other way of realising the aim of life is through ordinary non-sacrificial works. This is based on the belief that man’s life is a separate thing to be pursued for its own sake without reference to the gods or without the idea of thankfulness to them. This is contrary to the law of sacrifice, vidhihinamasrṣṭānnam. He who favours this way of life is on the path of evil and incurs sin, bhuiijate te tvagham.

The right and proper way to perform works and realise the aim of life is to act according to the law of sacrifice for it ensures freedom from all sins, mucyante sarvakīlbiṣaiḥ.

3. Sacrifice and the Gita

Though the Gita appreciates the inherent value of sacrifice in the pursuit of wealth and enjoyment, it does not fully subscribe to the traditional view which has its own limitations. The Gita does not look upon man as a soul of desires; nor does it think that his ultimate aim is to achieve wealth and objects of enjoyment.

The Gita regards man as an immortal soul identical with the supreme Brahman, tamātmānah. But the soul in him remains enveloped by desires as fire is enveloped by smoke, dhūmenāvriyate. His ultimate aim in life is to conquer his true self by throwing away all desires from his mind, kāmāsvarvānpartha manogatān, and become an instrument doing God’s works in the world, matkarmakṛṇmatparamo. And works done as a sacrifice gain importance only as a means to achieve this difficult but great aim.

The Gita insists that works should be offered as a sacrifice to the supreme
Divine, \textit{svargalokamahesvānam}, and not to the gods who are only inferior forms and powers. For the all-pervading Brahman established in sacrifice is the only enjoyer and the lord of all sacrifices, \textit{aham hi yajñānāṁ bhoktā ca prabhu saryareva ca}. Secondly, works that are offered to the supreme Lord should include all works, \textit{sarvāni karmāni}, not just those done in connection with the Vedic sacrifice. Thirdly, works thus offered to the highest Divine should be free from desire and egoism, \textit{nirāśinirmamo}, because to offer works, as the Vedic sacrifice does, to the gods out of desire and egoism is to do works in ignorance of one’s true self and ignorance of the supreme Lord, \textit{na tu māmabhijānti tattvenātaścyavanti te}. As a result, the old idea of sacrifice undergoes a complete modification.

When works are performed without desire and egoism, they culminate in knowledge, knowledge of the Self and the supreme Lord, \textit{karmākhilāṁ pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate}. With the rise of knowledge the Lord takes up the works and uses the human being as a faultless instrument, \textit{nimittamātram}, for the helping of the world, \textit{lokasaṁgrahave ṛpi}.

The Gita’s view of sacrifice is presented as a corrective to the twofold error to which the Vedavadin is subject. First of all, the Vedavadin does not possess the knowledge of the work in its entirety, \textit{karma cākhilāṁ}, and so believes that its effects are restricted to this world. But the Gita points out that the effects of work not only lead to the supreme good here, \textit{sreyah parādharmo}, but also go beyond this world and reach the Highest, \textit{paramāpnoti}. Secondly, the Vedavadin does not follow the true law of sacrifice, \textit{yajñiyavidhupūrvakam}, and hence his votaries do the works for the sake of the ego and for the sake of the fruits. But the Gita says that the true law of sacrifice, \textit{vidhūtro}, consists in doing the works for the sake of God without attachment to the results, \textit{mā karmaphalahaṭeḥbhūrmā}, for God alone determines the results and confers them upon the doer, \textit{dhātāham}.

(To be continued)


NEW AGE NEWS

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Supramental-Solar Age

There will be a time, the Mother once said, when nobody will bother any more to dig deep into the earth in order to get fuel and energy from there. We will take it directly from the sun. As for nuclear energy, the pessimists were right in warning that it cannot be safely handled by human beings. Moreover, getting rid of nuclear wastes will always remain a problem, not to speak of dangers such as the threat from terrorists.

The advocates of solar energy have long found it difficult to prove that it could be really economical. So far only about 6% of the sun-energy could be converted into electric current by photo-voltaic cells and, furthermore, there was the problem of how to store the energy so that it would be available at those periods when there is little or no sun.

Recently, there have been two sensational breakthroughs to solve just these problems. Scientists at the Sandia National Laboratories (USA) have found ways to increase the effectiveness of energy absorption up to 31% through a new technology of multi-layered cells, each layer absorbing a different stretch of the sunlight's spectrum. And German scientists at the Max-Planck Institute, Mülheim, have discovered, in collaboration with a private enterprise at Lörrach, an entirely new technology which stores solar energy with the help of magnesium for unlimited periods, almost without loss and without any pollution. Thus it will be possible for you to use energy, gained from the July sun, in December for baking your Christmas cake.

It will still take several years before the new technologies are ready for mass production, but eventually the solar age will be there, as one inevitable consequence of the supramental manifestation.

Vegetarian Food—A Scientific Viewpoint

Arguments on the pro and contra of vegetarian food have mostly been exchanged on an emotional level. Quite generally, vegetarians claim that their food (apart from philosophical and ethical considerations) leads to better health and facilitates meditation and spiritual life. The non-vegetarians say that meat is necessary to build a strong body with proper muscles. Then again vegetarians refer to elephants (not exactly known as a weak species) or to a former Russian champion weight lifter who used to avoid meat, and so forth.

The right time has come now to examine the issue from a sober scientific viewpoint. The research was done by Prof. Klaus Leitzmann at the German
University of Giessen. His team selected 260 vegetarians between the ages of 17 and 87, who had been avoiding meat (with only occasional exceptions) for at least five years. 80% of them took milk products, but no eggs.

Very thorough medical tests were taken and the results showed that the vegetarians had a markedly better health profile than the average German (who consumes 100 kg of meat per year). “Weight, blood fat values and blood pressure were optimal with all participants.”

Most of the participants had become vegetarian for health reasons. 25% took additional vitamin or protein pills, since they feared that otherwise their body may miss something. However, the Professor said that in case of right and balanced nutrition this was not necessary: “You have to take care that you take sufficient proteins. That is mainly done through cereals. Nuts can also be helpful, but especially pulses such as peas, beans and lentils.”

Sanskrit on CD

20 years ago it would have been an impossible dream: you are somewhere in Europe and have a desire to listen to Sanskrit mantras; you walk into a music shop, buy a disc and hear the magic sound. It’s a sign of the New Age that precisely this is possible now, at least in major cities. The flutist Chris Hinze has brought out CDs (digital compact discs) such as “Meditation and Mantras” or “Flute and Mantras”. In the brochure of the latter title he tells us:

music and meditation are so much alike
that I hope you will, while listening to this record,
gain part of the tranquillity and
the timeless happening
which is still taking place in the spiritual India.

He has recorded this title live at the Ellora caves, Aurangabad. The chanting is done under the guidance of Indians so that there is a proper intonation and pronunciation. (Some records prepared by Westerners on their own contain awful mistakes.) In “Meditation and Mantras” the leadvoice is that of Sri Ganapathi Sachchidananda Swamiji and the seven items include “Sri Ganapathy Namavali”, “Sri Visnu Namavali” as well as “Pavamana Suktam”. Here and there the chanting seems to be too much in the background, with the instrumental music dominating. Nevertheless, the idea is brilliant and so is the performance.

Rock music and Dolphins

Millions of youngsters flock into the concert halls in America or Europe, when famous rock musicians tour the big cities. With rapt attention fans listen to their gods, go into ecstasy and are mad with enthusiasm.

The enthusiasm is not shared by many other citizens who rather feel like
running away when this so-called music (particularly “hard rock”) blares through the thickest walls from powerful loudspeakers.

Now a team of scientists has made an interesting experiment. They have installed underwater loudspeakers (with which you can transmit sounds underwater) in a large basin and played different kinds of music to dolphins whose reaction was closely observed. The result was surprising: whenever rock music was played, the dolphins swam away from the loudspeaker, whilst Bach and other classical music clearly attracted them.

It is interesting to note in this context that the Mother once said rock music brings down the level of consciousness and is ruinous to spiritual growth.

Perhaps one day scientists will succeed in decoding the language of the dolphins (which they have recorded with underwater microphones). In that case we might learn many more things from them.

**A Heart for Children**

Every year a jury of artists, designers, photographers elects a Miss Universe from candidates who are considered the most beautiful women in their respective countries. Often they are full of vanity and spend all their time thinking about their dress, hair, make-up and other related matters.

But not so this year’s (’88) winner, P. Nakirunkanok from Thailand, who grew up in Southern California from the age of two. After she had been elected, she started a foundation for needy children and helped to collect donations for that purpose. At a press conference in Bangkok she said it was “an absolute nightmare” to see how children were being treated. And she assured the children they would not be left alone after her one year’s reign as beauty queen would be over.

A rare beauty...
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Integral Psychology: The Psychological System of Sri Aurobindo (In Original Words and Elaborations) by Dr. Indra Sen. Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry. Pages: 383. Price: Rs. 90/-

An illuminating book and a timely one too, it is concerned with setting out the psychological system which Sri Aurobindo developed as part of his Integral Yoga. The book, the culmination of decades of work, is clearly the magnum opus of Dr. Indra Sen, a profound scholar of all the important philosophical systems and a trained and knowledgeable psychologist. It is a successful and commendable work for it presents not only many of the psychological insights of Sri Aurobindo and some of the Mother but also those of quite a few Indian seers. Apart from this, Dr. Indra Sen has also taken into account the views of various Western psychologists like Freud and Jung (especially the latter) and also those of many modern Indian psychologists.

Of the three parts into which this book is divided, Part One consists mainly of extracts from Sri Aurobindo’s writings which have a special bearing on psychology. These extracts have been interspersed with Dr. Sen’s introductory remarks and recapitulations wherever necessary.

If we now turn to one of Sri Aurobindo’s signal contributions to Indian philosophy and psychology—his theory of personality—we find that he often talks of four levels of consciousness: 1. The subconscious and the submental level which constitutes the material basis of man’s life and body and appears to us to be inconscient; 2. The subliminal level which is made up of the inner life, inner mind, and the inner physical and is supported by the soul or the psychic entity in man; 3. The normal waking consciousness which the subconscious and the subliminal “throw up on the surface, a wave of their secret urge”; 4. Most important of all, the superconscient which overarches and envelops the submental, the subliminal, and the waking consciousness.

While we can find the counterparts of the first three levels of consciousness in modern psychology, the concept of the superconscient is one of Sri Aurobindo’s many original contributions to current Indian philosophy. Sri Aurobindo says that it is about the experiences at the superconscient level that “humanity speaks of vaguely as spirit, God, the oversoul”. We should also note that Sri Aurobindo coined terms like “subconscient” and the “inconscient” since he wanted to make it clear that what he was referring to were not states of consciousness but its processes.

As Dr. Ganguli very perceptively points out in his scholarly introduction to this book, Sri Aurobindo’s most significant contribution to human psychology is the manner in which he has extended human consciousness upwards. What Freud did for the lower levels of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo did for the higher
level. Dr. Ganguli’s remarks on this matter are worth quoting at some length:

The superconscience is above and beyond our present level of awareness and in which are included the higher planes of mental being as well as the heights of supramental and pure spiritual being. The normal waking human consciousness is hedged between, it seems to me, the twin forces of the Freudian Id and the Aurobindonian superconscient. If Freud’s contribution to psychology has been to bring the primitive, instinctual urges within the boundaries of the psychological man, Sri Aurobindo’s contribution has been to bring the concept of the Transcendent, the Divine and its pull within the boundaries of the same psychological man. Like Freud again, Sri Aurobindo has depended heavily on clinical experiences for evidence. Freud’s case histories have been the neurotic personalities visiting his Vienna clinic and Sri Aurobindo’s have been the yogic aspirants residing in his Ashram. Personal clinical experiences have been important for both.

While we are on the subject of Freud, we may note that Sri Aurobindo was very unsympathetic to the general approach of Freud. Thus, while talking of Freud, Dr. Indra Sen quotes his Master: “The psycho-analysis of Freud is the the last thing that one should associate with yoga. It takes up a certain part, the darkest, the most perilous, the unhealthiest part of the nature, the lower vital subconscious layer, isolates some of its morbid phenomena and attributes to it an action out of all proportion to its true role in the nature.” Later on Sri Aurobindo points out: “the exaggeration of the importance of suppressed sexual complexes is a dangerous falsehood and it can have a nasty influence and tend to make the mind and vital more and not less fundamentally impure than before.”

This book also contains the illuminating interpretations given by Sri Aurobindo of various Indian philosophical concepts like the Chakras, Koshas, and the Kundalini Shakti. Above all it contains many profound statements like the following: “The passage from the lower to the higher is the aim of yoga; and this passage may effect itself by the rejection of the lower and the escape into the higher—the ordinary viewpoint—or by the transformation of the lower and its elevation to the higher Nature. It is this, rather, that must be the aim of an integral yogi.” In the same context Sri Aurobindo points out that yoga mainly consists of purification, concentration and liberation.

Dr. Indra Sen has highlighted Jung’s concepts like the ‘Centre’ or ‘Self’ and Sri Aurobindo’s concepts like the ‘Psychic Being’ and the ‘Silent Mind’.

Dr. Sen’s aim in writing this book is twofold. One is to bring Sri Aurobindo’s views on the mind within the reach of all ardent seekers. The other is to make psychologists embark on the rewarding task of integrating Western psychology, traditional Indian psychology, and Sri Aurobindo’s views on the mind of man into a unified whole. Dr. Sen has succeeded in achieving both his aims.

P. S. S. Sastry
LITERATURE: A SURVIVAL GUIDE


Italo Calvino died, in 1985, as he was about to go to Harvard to deliver six lectures on the future of literature. He had written only five of them. The sixth was no more than a title, “Consistency”; it reads now like a last exhortation, an encouragement to would-be creators of literature to digest the rules of survival Calvino has given them and, above all, to keep scribbling.

As a writer all his life, Calvino has no real doubts about his art. Certain trends bother him: the triumph of fantastically fast media, “flattening all communication into a single homogeneous surface”; the sheer deluge of words, as of images, that threatens to suffocate both expression and imagination; loss of immediacy, whether caused by “politics, ideology, bureaucratic uniformity, the monotony of the mass media, or the way the schools dispense the culture of the mediocre”. Yet literature in fact holds the cure for each; it is the natural palliative for all modern sickness. Rather than levelling out the world and annulling differences, literature connects the different in a way that deliberately makes contrasts and sharpens distinctions. Rather than creating bland clouds of words, literature discriminates, giving words their due weight and edge; it contains the exact corrective to the verbal inflation of the age.

Calvino’s five qualities, his “list of values to be saved,” are, he believes, to be found only in literature. Most can be found in music, too, but there they are intrinsic; in literature, they have to be laboured over. The first quality is lightness, described as a lightness of thought, not of frivolity; as Paul Valéry, one of Calvino’s favourites, wrote, “the lightness not of a feather, but of a bird.” Modern science, here as elsewhere, can actively encourage literature, for it shows that the fabric of the world—apparently so heavy—is made up of weightless neutrinos and quarks. (Lucretius, in his “De Rerum Natura”, more or less discovered that too; he delights, as Calvino does, in dissolving the solidity of the world into gossamer threads or letters on a page.) This is a world in which nothing should weigh the writer, or the reader, down:

Were I to choose an auspicious image for the new millennium I would choose... the sudden leap of the poet-philosopher who raises himself above the weight of the world... showing that what many consider to be the vitality of the times—noisy, aggressive, reviving and roaring—belongs to the realm of death, like a cemetery for rusty old cars.

In order to seize on lightness, Calvino recommends the scene from Ovid’s “Metamorphoses” where Perseus places Medusa’s head “with refreshing courtesy”
face-down on the water weed which becomes coral; Cyrano de Bergerac’s “Voyage dans la Lune”, and Giacomo Leopardi’s poems of moonlight. Leopardi, together with Jorge Luis Borges, is Calvino’s exemplar of the best in literature, the endlessly subtle and inventive survivor; he is recommended again and again, but especially in the second lecture, on quickness.

By quickness Calvino means both the power to convey speed, and the ability to escape time by dodging and digression, as Sterne does in “Tristram Shandy”. He celebrates both the instantaneous connections and agility of literature (from which he deduces that the god of literature should be Mercury, not Saturn), and the merits of brevity. “In the even more congested times that await us,” writes Calvino, “literature must aim at the maximum concentration of poetry and thought.” He himself had a wish (subversive to almost all literature) to edit a collection of tales consisting of no more than one sentence. He tried the trick continually, but always felt that the best had already been written by Augusto Monterroso, a Guatemalan. “When I woke up,” runs Monterroso’s story, “the dinosaur was still there.”

From conciseness, Calvino moves to structure; in his lecture on “Exactitude” he considers literature as a framework for the world, a way of creeping into infinite space by attempting to describe most exactly the most infinitesimal parts of creation. In this quality, as in the last lecture on “Multiplicity”, literature is seen as an organic, living growth which becomes encyclopedic (as in Proust or Flaubert), surpassing the specialisation of science in making sense of the universe. Even the babble of different tongues in T.S. Eliot or in Joyce is, says Calvino, “a guarantee of a truth that is not merely partial.” He does not believe, however, that by describing a thing, the writer or his reader knows that thing. Literature is more playful and dangerous than that; by describing, it gradually unleashes possibilities that stretch outward or inward to infinity. Oddly, some of the most prolix authors (chief among them, Balzac) wished to write novels about nothingness.

Literature, above all, is a dare. Words are “a frail emergency bridge flung over an abyss” between the visible and the invisible. Poetry (of whose intelligence and precision Calvino is in awe) is “the great enemy of chance, in spite of also being a daughter of chance and knowing that, in the end, chance will win the battle.” In his lecture on “Visibility” Calvino traces the act of daring to the imagination, which in the best neo-Platonic and Jungian fashion he links to the world-soul. Imagination, he writes, is “a repertory of what is potential, what is hypothetical, of what does not exist and has never existed... but might have existed.”

Whether imagination can survive the next thousand years, amid the growing flood of pre-fabricated images, Calvino is not sure. He presents two depressing alternatives: the recycling of stock images in a new context, or a return to nothingness, “a clean slate”, as Samuel Beckett has tried. One suspects he does
not believe in either. Surely the brave, leaping, mercurial daemon of literature will find some unexpected third way out.

(Courtesy: *The Economist*, April 9, 1988, pp. 87-88.)

**WISDOM FOR ALL TIME**

**The Kural**—English translation by *P. S. Sundaram*; Sales Agents: Higginbothams. Madras-2. Rs. 50.00

The best known Tamil Classic and the most widely accepted Tamil scripture, the Kural has had the doubtful blessing of many ancient commentaries, many annotated modern editions and several translations into English and other languages. In venturing to present the maxims in their flame-like purity through a clear, transparent English medium, pushing the clouds of smoke into 14 pages of Notes at the end, Sundaram has displayed discretion and valour in equal measure. Having by long experience known the pleasures and perils of translation and after a thorough study of earlier “Englishings” of the Kural, he has succeeded in producing a readable and adequate (though by no means definitive) English version, which brings out the universality, informality and striking modernity of this unaging book of counsel which pulls down the barrier between sacred and profane. Its worldly wisdom provides no escape into moksha, but sheds much mellow light on the royal road of dharma and the by-lanes of artha and kama.

It is a hard choice between faithfulness to the letter and faithfulness to the spirit, and Sundaram tries to meet this challenge by conveying not only the meaning but the music and movement of the original. Here are some good examples of such successful transcreation:

(279) The lute is bent, the arrow straight! judge men Not by their looks but acts.

(332) Great wealth, like a crowd at a concert, Gathers and melts.

(333) Wealth never stays: use it on the instant On things that stay

(334) A day, so called, if rightly understood, Is a sword hacking at life.

(350) Cling to the One who clings to nothing; And so clinging, cease to cling.

(391) Learn well what should be learnt, and then Live your learning.

Men in power should avoid flatterers and welcome critics:

(447) Who can injure a king who employs Men who can rebuke him roundly?
(448) A king unguarded by trenchant counsel
Needs no foes to come to grief.

Trust the man on the spot:

(517) Assured this man will do this task this way,
Leave it to him.

(518) Having found the man for the task,
Make him responsible.

Growth consists in heroic goodness:

(596) Always aim high—failure then
Is as good as success.

(772) Better the spear that missed an elephant
Than the arrow that killed a hare.

(987) What good is that goodness which does not
Return good for evil?

(999) The world is dark even at noon
To those who cannot laugh.

No wonder Kural couplets are used by the Tamil Nadu Government to teach bus passengers some civic sense. The only wisdom worth learning is worldly wisdom, what’s wrong with the world except us?

K. SWAMINATHAN

(Courtesy. The Hindu, 13 10 87, p 23)
THE AVATAR OF THE NEW AGE

Speech by Deepa Hariharan and Somosree Biswas

Sambhavāmi yuge yuge—"I am born from age to age" These few words of Krishna in the Gita express the manifestation of God as an Avatar in a human body upon earth age after age. In the Gita Krishna also tells us why the Avatar manifests upon earth. The function and purpose of the Avatar is to lead the evolution to a higher stage, to create a new age in terrestrial history. Because Avatarhood is connected with the evolution it has so much meaning for humanity.

Evolution is a progressive movement that through a succession of stages or epochs leads the terrestrial existence to higher levels of consciousness and life. Because it brings about radical changes in the earth's history, the succeeding age in comparison to the preceding one is usually called the new age. Evolutionary history has witnessed many such new ages which are of unique significance for the human race. Today, we are at the threshold of another new age, the age of the Supramental Truth.

Ordinarily the working of the evolutionary movement is not noticed because it is a very slow, gradual process of Nature, making each event the normal follow-up of the preceding ones, though there is always the secret hand of God working behind the veil of natural events. But when Nature alone cannot bring about the transitional change, then the direct and unveiled intervention of God is needed. It is at this critical stage that God incarnates upon earth in a human body to prepare, manifest and establish each new age in evolution. As Sri Aurobindo says: "The Avatar is necessary when a special work is to be done and in crisis of the evolution. The Avatar is a special manifestation while for the rest of the time it is the Divine working within the ordinary human limits as a Vibhuti."  

According to the Hindu tradition there are ten Avatars, representing the

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1 Gita, IV, 8.
pioneers of the new ages. Sri Aurobindo has given the significance of each of these Avatars. We have first Matsya, the fish Avatar; second Kurma, the amphibious animal between land and water; then the land-animal—Varaha avatar. After that comes the Man-Lion Avatar—Narashimha, bridging man and animal, who is followed by the Yamana-Avatar, man as dwarf, small and undeveloped and physical but containing in himself the godhead and taking possession of existence. The next two Avatars lead the human development from the vital rajasic to the sattwic mental man: they are Parashurama and Rama. The last three Avatars are the founders of the last three spiritual stages of evolution. Krishna is the overmental Avatar. Buddha tries to go beyond to the supreme liberation, but this is only an escape, not returning to the earth to complete positively the evolution. Kalki is to manifest himself to correct this movement by bringing the Kingdom of God upon earth.\(^1\)

The crisis through which humanity is passing at the present stage is of a very special character because the new order of life which is pressing to be born is radically different from all the other past orders witnessed by history. These other crises which have already taken place have never demanded the exceeding of the human consciousness itself. Even if the change has been most revolutionary, it has always been within the present bounds of the human consciousness. The past Avatars never attempted to lift the earth consciousness beyond human nature in order to transform it. That is where lies the significance of the present crisis: it is a conflict between the powers that still rule the present human consciousness and a new Force that seeks to vanquish these powers and raise up the human consciousness beyond its human level and transform the human life into the divine life.

This new Force is that of the Supramental Consciousness which is the succeeding stage of evolution after that of the mind. It has often been said that man is a mental creature and mind is the last rung in the ladder of evolution. But the evolutionary process does not stop, and we are of course very conscious of the imperfection of the human mind. How can evolution stop at so imperfect a being as man? There must be a higher being than the mental man, and Sri Aurobindo has come to assure us of a consciousness which is higher than that of the mind and named it the Supermind. He has not only spoken of its existence but has come down to establish it on earth.

When Rama established the mental consciousness on earth he was called the mental Avatar. Then when Sri Aurobindo comes to establish the Supramental Consciousness, he ought to be called the Supramental Avatar, because this time the Supreme Lord, who has repeatedly incarnated himself in one form or another, has incarnated as Sri Aurobindo, in order to bring about the new age of the Supramental Consciousness. That is why the Mother says: ‘Since the beginning of earth history, Sri Aurobindo has always presided over the great

\(^1\) See Ibid, p 402
Every time the Supreme Lord incarnates himself to create a new age, he reveals a greater glory of his power than before. So we can say that every new Avatar is greater and superior to the others preceding him even though they are all incarnations of the same Supreme Lord. In the Hindu tradition, each new Avatar is greater than those who precede him because he establishes on earth a plane of consciousness higher than those manifested by the others. In that way, Buddha and Krishna are greater than Vamana or Parashurama. So also, if we admit that Sri Aurobindo came to manifest the Supramental Consciousness which is greater than the mental and the overmental established by Rama and Krishna, then it is obvious that Sri Aurobindo is superior to them. Not only so, but we must accept Sri Aurobindo as the greatest Avatar in earth’s history because the Supramental Consciousness is the greatest of all the levels of consciousness so far manifested upon earth. This is not only a very important but a very delicate point because, even when it is so obvious, people find it so difficult to accept it. There are many people who believe that Sri Aurobindo realised the Divine Consciousness; yet they consider him only as a great Yogi but not as the greatest Avatar. They worship some former Avatar as their God and therefore find it difficult to accept the superiority of Sri Aurobindo. But, they are blind to the fact that the Supreme Lord reveals his full glory progressively in a series of incarnations, and every time in a greater degree of his glory. If they keep this in mind then they should not hesitate to accept Sri Aurobindo as the greatest Avatar. Then his message would not meet the same opposition as it is facing today.

To many people this idea that Sri Aurobindo is trying to go beyond the Avatars of the past is very shocking. But Sri Aurobindo himself, when asked about it, said that it does not trouble him at all. If that is so shocking, then, he asks, what about all past sages and seers who all did the same thing? In order to start new philosophies or religions they all had to do the same thing. In this connection Sri Aurobindo says: “The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not go farther. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future.”

According to our Hindu tradition, the last stage of consciousness which will be established upon earth, will bring about the transformation of the human nature into the divine nature. It is Sri Aurobindo who has come as a pioneer of that new age. If we look back at earth history we see that none of the Avatars has come as yet for accomplishing that transformation. According to the Puranic mythology, it is the Kalki Avatar who is supposed to bring about this transformation. Some Hindus believe that till now Buddha has been the last Avatar.

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1 Collected Works of the Mother (Cent Ed.), Vol 13, p 10
2 Letters on Yoga (Cent Ed. Vol 22), p 88
That is because they either do not know about Sri Aurobindo and his achievement or they do not accept him as an Avatar. We know that the Kalki Avatar is supposed to come for the purpose for which Sri Aurobindo also came, and not only came but achieved. Then perhaps we may say that Sri Aurobindo corresponds to Kalki in the Puranic list of the ten Avatars.

The popular idea of the Kalki Avatar pictures him as a heroic being riding on a white horse with a sword in his hand. According to this idea Sri Aurobindo cannot be the Kalki Avatar; but why go by this popular image which is only a symbol? If we look at the purpose and the achievement of this last Avatar, then Sri Aurobindo can surely be compared to the Kalki Avatar. Of course, while making this comparison we must remember Sri Aurobindo's own warning about Kalki. He says: "Too much importance need not be attached to the details about Kalki—they are rather symbolic than an attempt to prophesy details of future history. What is expressed is something that has to come, but it is symbolically indicated, no more."\(^1\)

\(^1\) *Ibid*, p. 403.