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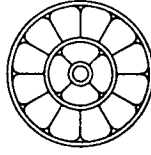
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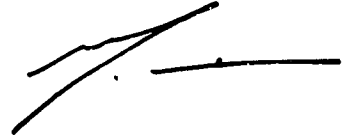
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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And, as the fruit of this mysterious joy,
She kept within her strong embosoming soul
Like a flower hidden in the heart of spring
The soul of Sullyavan drawn down by her
Inextricably in that mighty lake.

Invisible heavens in a thronging flight
Soared past her as she fell. Then all the blind
And near attraction of the earth compelled
Fearful rapids of downward bliss.

Lost in the giddy prowess of that speed,
Whirled, sinking, overcome she disappeared,
Like a leaf spinning from the tree of heaven,
In broad unconsciousness as in a pool;
A hospitable softness drew her in.

Into a wonder of miraculous depths,
Above her closed a darkness of great wings
And she was buried in a mother's breast.

RETURN TO EARTH

AMIDST the headlong rapture of her fall
Held like a bird in a child's satisfied hands,
In an enamoured grasp her spirit strove
Admitting no release till Time should end,
And, as the fruit of the mysterious joy,
She kept within her strong embosoming soul
Like a flower hidden in the heart of spring
The soul of Satyavan drawn down by her
Inextricably in that mighty lapse.
Invisible heavens in a thronging flight
Soared past her as she fell Then all the blind
And near attraction of the earth compelled
Fearful rapidities of downward bliss
Lost in the giddy proneness of that speed,
Whirled, sinking, overcome she disappeared,
Like a leaf spinning from the tree of heaven,
In broad unconsciousness as in a pool,
A hospitable softness drew her in
Into a wonder of miraculous depths,
Above her closed a darkness of great wings
And she was buried in a mother's breast

Over wide earth brooded the infinite bliss

SRI AUROBINDO

AN ALCHEMY WORKED

HER vision settled, caught and all was changed.
Her mind at first dwelt in ideal dreams,
Those intimate transmuters of earth's signs
That make known things a hint of unseen spheres.
And saw in him the genius of the spot,
A symbol figure standing mid earth's scenes,
A king of life outlined in delicate air.
Yet this was but a moment's reverie;
For suddenly her heart looked out at him,
The passionate seeing used thought cannot match,
And knew one nearer than its own close strings
All in a moment was surprised and seized,
All in unconscious ecstasy lain wrapped
Or under imagination's coloured lids
Held up in a large mirror-air of dream,
Broke forth in flame to recreate the world,
And in that flame to new things she was born.
A mystic tumult from her depths arose;
Haled, smitten erect like one who dreamed at ease,
Life ran to gaze from every gate of sense
Thoughts indistinct and glad in moon-mist heavens,
Feelings as when a universe takes birth,
Swept through the turmoil of her bosom's space
Invaded by a swarm of golden gods.
Arising to a hymn of wonder's priests
Her soul flung wide its doors to this new sun
An alchemy worked, the transmutation came;
The missioned face had wrought the Master's spell.
In the nameless light of two approaching eyes
A swift and fated turning of her days
Appeared and stretched to a gleam of unknown worlds
Then trembling with the mystic shock her heart
Moved in her breast and cried out like a bird
Who hears his mate upon a neighbouring bough
Hooves trampling fast, wheels largely stumbling ceased;
The chariot stood like an arrested wind
And Satyavan looked out from his soul's doors
And felt the enchantment of her liquid voice
Fill his youth's purple ambience and endured
The haunting miracle of a perfect face

Mastered by the honey of a strange flower-mouth,
 Drawn to soul-spaces opening round a brow,
 He turned to the vision like a sea to the moon
 And suffered a dream of beauty and of change,
 Discovered the aureole round a mortal's head,
 Adored a new divinity in things....
 An unknown imperious force drew him to her.
 Marvelling he came across the golden sward.
 Gaze met close gaze and clung in sight's embrace.
 A visage was there, noble and great and calm,
 As if encircled by a halo of thought,
 A span, an arch of meditating light,
 As though some secret nimbus half was seen;
 Her inner vision still remembering knew
 A forehead that wore the crown of all her past,
 Two eyes her constant and eternal stars,
 Comrade and sovereign eyes that claimed her soul,
 Lids known through many lives, large frames of love.
 He met in her regard his future's gaze,
 A promise and a presence and a fire,
 Saw an embodiment of aeonic dreams,
 A mystery of the rapture for which all
 Yearns in this world of brief mortality
 Made in material shape his very own
 This golden figure given to his grasp
 Hid in its breast the key of all his aims,
 A spell to bring the Immortal's bliss on earth,
 To mate with heaven's truth our mortal thought,
 To lift earth-hearts nearer the Eternal's sun
 In these great spirits now incarnate here
 Love brought down power out of eternity
 To make of life his new undying base..
 Rare is the cup fit for love's nectar wine,
 As rare the vessel that can hold God's birth,
 A soul made ready through a thousand years
 Is the living mould of a supreme Descent
 These knew each other though in forms thus strange....
 Amazed by a joy for which they had waited long,
 The lovers met upon their different paths. ..

SRI AUROBINDO

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 395-99)

THE POWER OF THE MANTRA

...WE have to invoke the Gods by the inner sacrifice, and by the Word call them into us,—that is the specific power of the Mantra,—to offer to them the gifts of the sacrifice and by that giving secure their gifts, so that by this process we may build the way of our ascent to the goal. The elements of the outer sacrifice in the Veda are used as symbols of the inner sacrifice and self-offering; we give what we are and what we have in order that the riches of the divine Truth and Light may descend into our life and become the elements of our inner birth into the Truth,—a right thinking, a right understanding, a right action must develop in us which is the thinking, impulsion and action of that higher Truth, *ṛtasya preṣā*, *ṛtasya dhītuh*, and by this we must build up ourselves in that Truth.¹

*

There is.. the consecration of the thoughts to the Divine In its inception this is the attempt to fix the mind on the object of adoration,—for naturally the restless human mind is occupied with other objects and, even when it is directed upwards, constantly drawn away by the world,—so that in the end it habitually thinks of him and all else is only secondary and thought of only in relation to him This is done often with the aid of a physical image or, more intimately and characteristically, of a Mantra or a divine name through which the divine being is realised. There are supposed by those who systematise, to be three stages of the seeking through the devotion of the mind: first, the constant hearing of the divine name, qualities and all that has been attached to them, secondly, the constant thinking on them or on the divine being or personality, thirdly, the settling and fixing of the mind on the object; and by this comes the full realisation. And by these, too, there comes when the accompanying feeling or the concentration is very intense, the Samadhi, the ecstatic trance in which the consciousness passes away from outer objects. But all this is really incidental, the one thing essential is the intense devotion of the thought in the mind to the object of adoration. Although it seems akin to the contemplation of the way of knowledge, it differs from that in its spirit. It is in its real nature not a still, but an ecstatic contemplation; it seeks not to pass into the being of the Divine, but to bring the Divine into ourselves and to lose ourselves in the deep ecstasy of his presence or of his possession, and its bliss is not the peace of unity, but the ecstasy of union.²

*

There is...a speech, a supramental word, in which the higher knowledge, vision or thought can clothe itself within us for expression. At first this may come down as a word, a message or an inspiration that descends to us from above or it may even seem a voice of the Self or of the Ishwara, *vānī*, *ādeśa*. Afterwards it loses that separate

character and becomes the normal form of the thought when it expresses itself in the form of an inward speech. The thought may express itself without the aid of any suggestive or developing word and only—but still quite completely, explicitly and with its full contents—in a luminous substance of supramental perception. It may aid itself when it is not so explicit by a suggestive inward speech that attends it to bring out its whole significance. Or the thought may come not as silent perception but as speech self-born out of the truth and complete in its own right and carrying in itself its own vision and knowledge. Then it is the word revelatory, inspired or intuitive or of a yet greater kind capable of bearing the infinite intention or suggestion of the higher supermind and spirit. It may frame itself in the language now employed to express the ideas and perceptions and impulses of the intellect and the sense mind, but it uses it in a different way and with an intense bringing out of the intuitive or revelatory significances of which speech is capable. The supramental word manifests inwardly with a light, a power, a rhythm of thought and a rhythm of inner sound that make it the natural and living body of the supramental thought and vision and it pours into the language, even though the same as that of mental speech, another than the limited intellectual, emotional or sensational significance. It is formed and heard in the intuitive mind or supermind and need not at first except in certain highly gifted souls come out easily into speech and writing, but that too can be freely done when the physical consciousness and its organs have been made ready, and this is a part of the needed fullness and power of the integral perfection.³

*

The knowledge of our inner subliminal and psychic nature, of the powers and presences and influences there and the capacity of communication with other planes and their powers and beings can be used for a higher than any mental or mundane object, for the possession and mastering of our whole nature and the overpassing of the intermediate planes on the way to the supreme spiritual heights of being. But the most direct spiritual use of the psychic consciousness is to make it an instrument of contact, communication and union with the Divine. A world of psycho-spiritual symbols is readily opened up, illuminating and potent and living forms and instruments, which can be made a revelation of spiritual significances, a support for our spiritual growth and the evolution of spiritual capacity and experience, a means towards spiritual power, knowledge or Ananda. The Mantra is one of these psycho-spiritual means, at once a symbol, an instrument and a sound body for the divine manifestation, and of the same kind are the images of the Godhead and of its personalities or powers used in meditation or for adoration in Yoga. The great forms or bodies of the Divine are revealed through which he manifests his living presence to us and we can more easily by their means intimately know, adore and give ourselves to him and enter into the different Lokas, worlds of his habitation and presence, where we can live in the light of his being. His word, command, Adesha, presence, touch, guidance can come to us through our spiritualised

psychic consciousness and, as a subtly concrete means of transmission from the spirit, it can give us a close communication and nearness to him through all our psychic senses.⁴

×

As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,
 Its message enters stirring the blind brain
 And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound,
 The hearer understands a form of words
 And, musing on the index thought it holds,
 He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
 But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth
 Then, falling silent in himself to know
 He meets the deeper listening of his soul.
 The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains
 Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
 Are seized unutterably and he endures
 An ecstasy and an immortal change,
 He feels a Wideness and becomes a Power,
 All knowledge rushes on him like a sea.
 Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
 He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
 Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech .⁵

*

One-souled to all and free from narrowing bonds,
 Large like a continent of warm sunshine
 In wide equality's impartial joy,
 These sages breathed for God's delight in things.
 Assisting the slow entries of the gods,
 Sowing in young minds immortal thoughts they lived,
 Taught the great Truth to which man's race must rise
 Or opened the gates of freedom to a few
 Imparting to our struggling world the Light
 They breathed like spirits from Time's dull yoke released,
 Comrades and vessels of the cosmic Force,
 Using a natural mastery like the sun's
 Their speech, their silence was a help to earth
 A magic happiness flowed from their touch,
 Oneness was sovereign in that sylvan peace,

The wild beast joined in friendship with its prey;
 Persuading the hatred and the strife to cease
 The love that flows from the one Mother's breast
 Healed with their hearts the hard and wounded world
 Others escaped from the confines of thought
 To where Mind motionless sleeps waiting Light's birth,
 And came back quivering with a nameless Force,
 Drunk with a wine of lightning in their cells;
 Intuitive knowledge leaping into speech,
 Seized, vibrant, kindling with the inspired word,
 Hearing the subtle voice that clothes the heavens,
 Carrying the splendour that has lit the suns,
 They sang Infinity's names and deathless powers
 In metres that reflect the moving worlds,
 Sight's sound-waves breaking from the soul's great deeps ⁶

SRI AUROBINDO

References

- 1 *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, SABCL, Vol 11, pp 17-18
- 2 *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol 21, p 549
- 3 *Ibid* , pp 806-807
- 4 *Ibid* , p 848
- 5 *Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, p 375
- 6 *Ibid* , p 383

If you want to be happy here, you must come with the will to do the yoga of self-perfection, for if you are not coming for that, you will be shocked at every moment by things that are contrary to your habits and to the principles of ordinary life, and it will not be possible for you to stay here, because these things are necessary for the work and organisation here and cannot be changed

30 September 1960

THE MOTHER

DYUMAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of January 1998)

My dear Mother,

L was getting suggestions that she would become mad It seems that many people said to her "Why do you laugh so much?"—even when she was not laughing. I told her "These are suggestions thrown upon you; you are not like that On the contrary, it is such a nice thing, this laughter, a sort of great release and liberation."

YES, she must not fear—it is all stupid suggestions and you spoke quite well

31 March 1935

My dear Mother,

I want You to interfere in all my movements, whatever they are; and Your interference will be promptly responded to with love and submission, with an earnest will to change as You would like I want You, I seek for You day and night, night and day—for Your Light, for Your Consciousness, for Your Force.

O Mother, come into my entire being, my smallest cell, the tiniest drop of my blood. Come, my dear Mother, and make the whole being Your seat

My dear child, with all my love I take you in my arms as my own child and assure you that you will become more and more mine.

3 April 1935

My dear Mother,

We have to find somebody for the washing and wiping of vessels. I do not know who it could be.

It seems to me that the only solution is that M should work himself, instead of throwing all the work upon others.

6 April 1935

My dear Mother,

A big disturbance is hovering over the kitchen. Twice it appeared a few days back, but it was controlled N has accused me directly of being unfair. I tried to explain to her each time, but the roots have not disappeared

The best is to ignore all these petty things. To want only what the Divine wants in us and for us, is the only important thing.

6 April 1935

Dear Mother,

I thought I had a very pure relation with the inmates, but today I see that it was all humbug. There is a still greater purity to manifest and to live.

When I go deep down and analyse myself, I find the lower vital impulses, the animal impulses of ordinary human life and its instincts. These things have no strength to make me act physically but I understand now that they creep in and govern the lower vital nature in a very subtle polished form

Yes, these things were to be seen. It is good that you have seen them; but now there is only to be quiet, happy and peaceful in a steady will that all the nature should be enlightened

6 April 1935

My dear Mother,

Blessed be the day when there will be peace, gentleness, kindness and the manifestation of Love

My dear Mother, may the Divine manifest

I would say: may the world become aware that the Divine is manifesting!

8 April 1935

My dear Mother,

The kitchen has not yet finished its troubles, and now the serving section has begun

We are not trained to resist all evil, nor disciplined enough to persist after the Truth, nor cultured enough to live a quiet and happy life.

Yes, the suggestion of disturbance and dissatisfaction has become very strong and many respond to it, but we have only to keep quiet, very quiet, more and more quiet as an answer to the growing restlessness and stand calmly until the storms are over

It is only a perfect Peace that can overcome all these excited fits

With all love and blessings always.

9 April 1935

My dear Mother,

Water supply: Aroumé consumes a good deal of water for drinking, cooking and washing. If it happens again like today that there is no water from the taps for many hours, what shall we do? We shall have to use the well. The water will be fetched from it, boiled, passed through a cloth and used for cooking, drinking and washing vessels

It is *absolutely impossible* to use the well water (even boiled) for drinking—the well water of the town is contaminated by infiltrations—this means *typhoid* and *cholera*—and for cooking also it is impossible because the well water has a filthy taste and smell.

12 April 1935

My dear Mother,

P bought some things last month and did not pay for them. Today R gave me the money to pay on her behalf. After that I began to think: so many people are buying things in their own capacity. Do they all pay cash or do they remain as debtors? Can they not be stopped?

I have tried several times but never succeeded and the result was only that they began hiding things from me, which made their case much worse.

13 April 1935

My dear Mother,

Feeding animals in Aroumé: crows, squirrels, etc. come in a very big number. They not only eat up what is thrown to them by S, but also what is put for drying in the sun. They even eat up raisins and cashewnuts and spoil the sugar and such things, it is too much. I feel we should stop this feeding and lessen the number of animals in Aroumé.

Now that they have taken the habit of coming it may be difficult to stop them, but you may try

21 April 1935

My dear Mother,

More peace brings more Light, and that sets everything right. O Lord, more peace

Yes, it is in peace that the knowledge and the power can manifest.

Always with you

24 April 1935

(To be continued)

GRATITUDE

VISHNUBHAI came and gave me two beautiful bunches of the flower “Gratitude” and left without uttering a single word. Soon after he left, I realised that I should have given him one flower. Now he is gone. From where did he get such beautiful flowers? I have seen many “Gratitude” flowers, but today for the first time I saw such rare ones. Normally, “Gratitude” flowers have very little fragrance, but these were full of fragrance which filled the whole room. What a sweet fragrance!

I took them to the Mother. She had just entered the room, and she started looking around very happily. While offering my salutation, I put my head in her lap; she patted my head with both her hands and pressed it frequently.

When I raised my head both my hands, with the flowers, were seen pressed by her against her chest.

She said, “Champaklal! This is your gratitude. How did you manage to get it? From where?” I narrated the whole incident. Then she happily gave me one of the two bunches, looking continuously into my eyes and from the other bunch she selected one flower and asked me to give it to Vishnubhai. I stretched my hand to give it to Vishnubhai and the vision ended.

5.1 1980

CHAMPAKLAL

(Visions of Champaklal, p. 112)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S SPIRITUAL SYSTEM AND THE MOTHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO IT

(Continued from the issue of January 1998)

(e) contd

SRI AUROBINDO, in his writings, conceived a further rise in the earth's evolutionary scale which has so far produced man the mental being. The answer to a question put to him gives to the earth-consciousness the capacity to receive the Supramental into it and finally undergo a transformation by the Supramental. It focuses at the end the result of evolution he had in view: "...the whole earth-consciousness will not be supramentalised—there will be first a new race representing the Supermind, as man represents the mind" (13.8.1933).¹

The power called supramental by Sri Aurobindo is the all-creative as well as the all-transformative divinity to which he attaches several names besides Supermind—"Truth-Consciousness", "Gnosis", "Gnostic Being", "Vijnana", "Mahas"—and which he considers to have never before been directly manifested. It is by the descent of this power into the figure of humanity with the co-operation of the aspiring soul that man's entire complex of mind, life-force and body will be altogether divinised to bring about evolution's fulfilment: the Superman. For, as Sri Aurobindo says repeatedly, "supermind is superman"²

The nucleus, with which the supramentalisation or divinisation or transformation will begin what ultimately will be a racial step forward, is designated by Sri Aurobindo as the Gnostic Community, a small group organised harmoniously according to a perfect inner light, love and liberty.

Sri Aurobindo also conceived the appearance of a semi-supramentalised group, "a new humanity", possessing what he called the Mind of Light. In this context he labelled that humanity as "the new race", and told us: "Its mentality...at its highest...would be capable of passing into the supermind and from the new race would be recruited the race of supramental beings who would appear as the leaders of the evolution in earth-nature",³ a community entirely Gnostic, totally transformed. Sri Aurobindo adds: "Even, the highest manifestations of a mind of Light would be an instrumentality of the supermind, a part of it or a projection from it, a stepping beyond humanity into the superhumanity of the supramental principle."⁴ The word "recruited" indicates that "the race of supramental beings" would grow by enlisting and

1 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953), p. 434

2 *The Life Divine* (American Edition, 1949), p. 44. Also, *SABCL*, Vol. 17, pp. 7, 76

3 *The Supramental Manifestation* *SABCL*, Vol. 16, p. 67

4 *Ibid*

including members of the ‘‘new humanity’’ ready to rise higher and perfect themselves. Both the batches have the common base of the terrestrially human, even though Sri Aurobindo distinguishes the former as ‘‘superhumanity’’.

That ‘‘the race of supramental beings’’ consists of the human turned into a divine quality all-round is precisely stated by him when he ponders what ‘‘the descent of Supermind into our earthly existence’’ would have as its ‘‘consequence’’.¹ He writes ‘‘It would certainly open to man the access to the supramental consciousness and the...supramental beings would be created, even as the human race itself has arisen by a less radical but still a considerable uplifting and enlargement of consciousness and conversion of the body’s instrumentation and its indwelling and evolving mental and spiritual capacities and powers out of a first animal state’’²

In the original plan Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were to be the initial representatives of a ‘‘superhumanity’’ resulting from an accelerated evolution. As Avatars of the Supermind, they were to form the double centre of ‘‘the race of supramental beings’’, men grown Supermen by practising the Integral Yoga with their help. This plan is obvious from a pronouncement like ‘‘What is being done is meant to prepare the manifestation of the Supermind on the earth-consciousness down to Matter itself, so it can’t be for the physical of myself or the Mother alone. If it comes down into our physical it would mean that it has come down into Matter and so there is no reason why it should not manifest in the sadhaks’’ (15.9.35).³ For occult reasons Sri Aurobindo chose to pass through the process of physical death, thereby removing as if with a strategic self-sacrifice some block in the way which would have taken very much longer to demolish otherwise. The moment he left his body the Mind of Light was realised in the Mother. Six years later (1956) the manifestation of the supramental light, consciousness and force on a universal scale was brought about in the subtle-physical layer of the earth. (This layer, which the earth possesses just as it possesses a vital and mental layer, must be demarcated from the subtle-physical plane as such, although the two have a connection. That plane, being typical, exactly like the independent vital and mental ones, has no need of any other light, consciousness and force than its own.)

Generalising from her realisation of the Mind of Light and applying to the Ashram’s Yogic life Sri Aurobindo’s view of ‘‘a new humanity’’ moving forward to become a ‘‘superhumanity’’, the Mother refers on 29 December 1954 to ‘‘what Sri Aurobindo has written in his last article which appeared in the *Bulletin*’’, and tells us: ‘‘He says that if you want to prepare for the descent of the Supermind, first of all your mind of ignorance and incapacity must be replaced by a mind of light which sees and knows. And this is the first step! Before this step is crossed, one cannot go forward’’⁴

Then the Mother proceeds to a dimension of future achievement which is nowhere quite explicit in the Master’s books. With Sri Aurobindo not on the material

1 *Ibid* p. 50

2 *Ibid*

3 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 358

4 *CWM* Vol. 6, p. 451

scene, the Mother, under the inspiration of his inner message to her, after his passing in the supramental way, saw the fulfilment of their work under two aspects. Taking a cue from his latest writings and developing it along novel lines with a nomenclature not actually used by Sri Aurobindo but attributable to him from the drift of his utterance, she declares: "Sri Aurobindo said that there would be an intermediate race (a race or perhaps a few individuals, one does not know), a kind of intermediate stage which might serve as a passage or might be perpetuated, following the needs and necessities of creation. But if one starts with a body formed as human bodies are now formed, the result will never be the same as in the case of a being formed wholly according to the supramental method and process. It may be farther on the superhuman side, in the sense that all animal expression might disappear, but it cannot have the absolute perfection of a body purely supramental in its formation."

The opposed aspects projected here in general she defines more particularly though still in a broad manner thus: "There are two possibilities, the possibility of a purely supramental creation and the possibility of a progressive transformation of a physical body into a supramental body or rather that of a human body into a superhuman body, this progressive transformation might take a number of years, probably a very considerable number of years and produce a being who would not be a man in the animal sense of the word, and yet would not be the being properly called supramental, formed wholly outside animality, necessarily it would have an animal origin"¹ In short, on the one hand there would be the human supramentalised and on the other the supramental humanised—in the sense of assuming a man-like shape. The former would mark the evolutionary consummation, with the Mother being, as the leader of the earth's "Yoga of supramental descent and transformation", its prime exemplar. The latter would be a non-evolutionary epiphany, an embodiment of the Supermind from its own level without the ordinary birth-process and without an earthly past of human as well as pre-human history. Sri Aurobindo returning to our world would be the prime exemplar of the direct divine self-expression

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

1 *Bulletin*, February 1963, p. 43

“INSPIRATIONS FOR PROGRESS”

(Continued from the issue of January 1998)

IN the path of transformation what has to be done has to be done. It cannot be shirked. The sooner it is understood and done the better it would be.

The Lord does all, but the condition for it is effective surrender [by leaving everything] in His Hands. That surrender has to be done, merely the idea and the wish of it are not enough. By a constant sincere offering of the whole being and all movements gradually a transfer is made by which He takes more and more control of them. Till that is fully accomplished, surrender cannot be said to be really complete. Until that is done personal effort is necessary, more and more supported by His Power.

The present need is to get rid of inertia of the physical consciousness of mind, vital and body and to convert the lower vital. Both these are immensely difficult tasks but with persistent endeavour and the Lord's help they can be done. However difficult, this part of the work of transformation has to be done if the Victory is to be realised. The supramental Force is now available to accomplish it swiftly. The need is to open to it more and more and let it remove the resistance in these parts. All indolent procrastination and drifting must be given up. The consciousness and energies must be kept awake, alert, upright and focused on the things to be done.

There should be no straining, no struggle, no haste, no excess, but there should also be no indolence, drifting, disorganisation, forgetfulness, waste. Especially there should be no feeling of incapacity, doubt and no yielding to wrong movements.

Always the consciousness must be kept very quiet and steady and self-possessed, the mind very clear and the will confident and resolute and effective.

Very quietly and clearly to see what is needed to be done and with a self-possessed, confident, resolute will to do it and go on doing it steadfastly—that is the right attitude.

The Victory is certain but collaboration is necessary.

Always to remain awake and with a confident and resolute will always to move forward, onward, upward.

But not to depend on oneself for victory. All the endeavour must constantly be offered to the Lord on whom alone one should rely for Victory. And to remember always that He is always with us and that His All-Powerful Love is sure to win the Victory.

11 12 1962

†

The work of transformation has to be done—not for its own sake but for integral union with the Lord.

It has to be done thoroughly and completely, without shirking or shrinking from the difficulties that arise on the way.

In so great a work as this difficulties are bound to arise, persist for long and recur

till they are finished All that has to be patiently faced and worked out

But *now* it is the Supramental Force, very close at hand, which is helping the sadhana.

In this yoga all the work has to be done not by oneself but with the help of the Power which is constantly with us at every step on the way

But *now* the Supramental Power has manifested up to the subtle physical plane and from there it is acting on the material plane to remove the resistance that is still there

When that resistance is removed the direct link between the Supermind and Matter will be established and Supermind will be directly able to act on Matter.

That will be the great Victory for which all that we have done so far has been a preparation

That Victory is absolutely certain.

And it will be soon

Then all these pressing resistances will disappear like clouds and the Bright Sun of Supramental Truth will shine permanently

Then the New Birth and the New Life

The work of establishing the link has to be done without shirking or shrinking from the difficulties.

But, whatever the difficulties, it has to be done with the absolute conviction of the Victory which will come soon.

For so great a victory, why mind some difficulty that remains to be faced for a while?

“The Victory is sure if we persevere, and what price of difficulty or endeavour can be too great for such a conquest?”

One has only to be sincere, resolutely persevering in the needed endeavour and be sure of the near Victory

But even through the passage that remains to be crossed we must remember that not only the Power but the Lord Himself is with us at every step—holding our hand, carrying us through every obstacle and resistance to the New Light.

Constantly to remember Him, turn to Him, call Him in everything, give up all [in] His Hands, and let Him do everything—that is the great secret

He is not distant He is close, intimate. Do not fold upon yourself; turn to Him, give yourself up in His Hands, and leave everything to Him—that is the thing to be done

If this change in attitude is made then all will become smooth, easy, straight, sunlit.

It must now be made. Giving up everything, simply say in all sincerity to the Lord

Let Thy Will be done

21 3 1963

(*To be continued*)

KISHOR GANDHI

(Compiled by Arvind Akki)

INTEGRAL YOGA IN THE ERSTWHILE U.S.S.R.

Extracts of Letters from Russian Correspondents

(Continued from the issue of January 1998)

[About Maxim, his friend Roman D Maxim wrote]

FROM the evidence of the literature of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and Satprem, there are inner processes which are going on in Maxim in his sadhana. But a lack of understanding by Maxim's father or simply a lack of desire to understand prevents these processes from developing and there is no possibility of his being left alone. Attempts to solve this problem have so far ended in failure. Maxim is being threatened that he will be locked up in a psychiatric institution.

The processes are going on in his sadhana and also his difficulties are increasing. According to me, the stream of "shakti" has already reached Maxim's centres. Communication with other people is becoming more and more difficult. That is why he is writing to you.

Undated, c. January 1994

[From Maxim]

I am still in the same consciousness. My heart is giving me to understand that I am dead. I have faith in the Supreme. I do not hear or see anything and my memory is completely gone. It is very difficult to act and impossible to speak. Please understand that through the heart I have been thrown out into a different dimension of consciousness.

[Maxim's friend Roman added:]

I would like to add something to Maxim's letter. From the summer of last year, Maxim has been trying to meditate using the technique of concentrating above the head. There were also attempts to surrender the mind to God. One of these attempts was successful; the mind has left altogether with the consciousness of the eyes. As far as I understand he is in a state of contemplation, "passive Brahman". He remains without the mental functioning and he is conscious of the surroundings only through the heart. If he is addressed on the level of the mind, he simply does not react. Because of this change, conflicts arise with the surroundings. Attempts have been made to get rid of him from the house. He is only seventeen years old.

Many things indicate that he is going through a process of transformation. In books, conditions similar to his are described, specially in Satprem's book *The Mind of the Cells*, in which there is a description of the process of transforming matter. We are

all worried that if it is really a transformation, it may not be allowed to complete itself
 Undated, c March 1994 Maxim Vlasov (age 18), St Petersburg, Russia

[There has been no further communication and so we have no knowledge of the present condition of Maxim]

*

[A long letter in Russian was received from Alexy on 22 October 1993 describing his dream experiences It was given to a Russian friend living in Auroville for translation, but was misplaced and lost We wrote to him about the loss of his letter on 25 February 1994, asking him to write again, preferably in English Extracts from his letter in English follow]

Thank you very much for your letter It gave me more strength Being under the impression from your letter, I went to bed and woke up at 6 a.m after a dream experience. Such experiences I have very often They happen before falling asleep, during my sleep or before awakening as in this case They remind me of shocks of electric current Once my ears were stuffed with a whistle and my eyes were full of red light as if somebody had pressed on them. Sometimes I hear rolls of a drum or low claps of thunder At first I could not cope with my fear, now I am almost accustomed to it. Always I have a very high pulse rate and heart beat, and I am wet with sweat afterwards

I began to read the books by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from May 1993

About five years ago, when I was fourteen years old, I got the book *Opening of the Third Eye*. I did not take it seriously then, but I began to practise some exercises described there During one of my sleepless nights, at 3 a.m., I recognised in the darkness a silhouette of a face watching me from behind a bush I said to it with sarcasm. "Can you open your third eye?" Then the eye began to open slowly. A stream of luminescent energy came down into me. My body stopped obeying me. I could not even cry, I was pressed into my bed feeling the vibrations of energy and the din of a drum. I was coming down into an emptiness After some period of time I saw from the ceiling my body lying in bed. Then everything stopped I was in bed again. But the "Eye" began to open again I did not want to experience it again and switched on the light I was wet with cold sweat and was shivering for about fifteen minutes It was my first such experience.

The experience of 22 October 1993 was similar I was sleeping I felt myself growing huge and wide, but I was feeling well Then this space began to soak into my body With an increasing speed I had flown into my chest At that moment I woke up In a silence I was flying to small "stars" of similar sizes It was like a starlit sky, but the stars were put into boxes In such a state I was not long, I was pulled out from there I tried to soak into myself, but failed. I was pulled out from there I tried again to soak

into myself, but failed. I was simply lying in bed and feeling some strength in my legs

Do not think that I am mad or something I want to add that sometimes I experience shaking during my dreams The Light, the Peace, the Unity, all these three experiences warm my heart

14 March 1994

Alexy Kobiakina, Vladimir, Russia

~

I am a Russian, but because of circumstances I have been living in Germany for three years I have changed my world-view entirely quite recently. I have understood that the role of man is in spiritual development and seeking spiritual perfection. To this end I have read quite a bit of occult and religious literature and have talked to all kinds of people I have come to the conclusion that my road is that of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

21 March 1994

Vladimir Leotjew, Vollersode, Germany

~

I am a sadhak of Integral Yoga and have been practising it independently The works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the spiritual method of Satprem and Pavitra and a growing inner necessity have been leading me to look for a guru of Integral Yoga, perhaps in a society of sadhaks who have advanced

Undated, c May 1994

It seems to me that my mind has a similar level of self-knowledge as Pavitra had in March 1926 when Sri Aurobindo told him about a mental division into two parts: an active part and a passive part. Sri Aurobindo also told him about changes that would come in the future when the lower centres had been awakened

In my two years of sadhana I have achieved a degree of mental silence, which I feel not only in meditation but even at this moment. At first there were many hostile forces, stormy reactions and fears But one and half months ago a change took place in my inner attitude. The reactions, difficulties and battles are over and my life is changed. All efforts are directed to attaining mental calm and the witness attitude. Some progress in gaining the witness attitude has led to self-surrender At times I feel the Mother's Power It is intense and stays with me every night I am not conscious of myself and no thought arises in my mind Is it the effect of the Mother's work?

17 March 1995

Mikhail Gollosiouk (age 16), Artemovsk Ukraine

(To be continued)

EARTH IS THE CHOSEN PLACE

ALMOST half of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is concerned with the Triple Sadhana of Aswapati. It occupies this dominant position in the Epic primarily because of the divine issue involved in the evolutionary manifestation upon the earth. Life facing death, light the darkness of Inconscience, joy and happiness the travail of pain and suffering and the agony of sorrowful becoming, truth subdued by utter falsehood,—such are the powers that rule the present state of ignorant existence. Quintessentially, the issue is the ancient quarrel between Love and Death on the battlefield of the Earth. *Savitri* handles it multifoldly. It takes the traditional story, given more or less as in the Mahabharata, to present, and represent, these several aspects in their deep spiritual sense. In fact the story, even in the Mahabharata, is more than a story, it is a legend. It has all the shades and nuances of the fundamental truth with an element of historicity making things and matters tangible as well as definite. The definiteness and tangibility bear their full significance even as the expressive Word establishes what it expresses. It is the Truth-realising and Truth-realised Word that brings to Time the full dynamism of Eternity.

In *Savitri* the sadhana of Aswapati is really the great Creator's Yoga itself. If Brahma created the World by Tapas, by brooding upon himself as the Puranas say, by the Force of Concentration, the Will-to-be, then it is by doing Yoga that he will be in the World. To enter into the World, to be in it,—that is indeed the divine issue. To accomplish this difficult and arduous task he takes birth and does the Yoga-sadhana here; it is on this foundation that the supreme executive Power, the divine Shakti, will do the Yoga of Transformation and bring about the marvel of a life that knows no death, a life of endless progress in knowledge. If Aswapati's sadhana in the earth-consciousness is towards establishing a base for the wide-ranging world-action of the supreme Shakti, then her world-action lies in conquest of the dark and obdurate regions of Inconscience,—that in it may manifest, in the full infinity of its growth, the triple splendour of Existence and Consciousness and Bliss. Thus, in another expression of delight, will the World created by Brahma become habitable for Brahma.

How to achieve this? What is the *modus operandi*? To describe such a complex occult-spiritual process resort to the technique of a symbolic legend may prove to be the most effective one. It can be best narrated in the manner of a story, the story of Satyavan and Savitri. It is, in a way of speaking, a wonderful artistic device to focus creatively the problem of creation itself. If so, we must at once admire, and acknowledge, how the poet has well exploited it and achieved remarkable success in the attempt. Its aesthetic and revelatory character yet heightens that which it tries to focus and delineate. It has the contents which reveal the dimensions of the transcendent operative in its universal as well as individual modes. And then, more appropriately, it has a happy delightful form which gives a certain luminous shape and definiteness to matters occult-spiritually so esoteric. It gives an established concreteness to what otherwise would remain abstract or ineffable. In its poetry there is a rare beauty, a charm, a felicity, with the very quality of mystery of its soul itself. It is the Word which

establishes what it holds in its splendid potentiality

King Aswapati, ruling in ancient times over Madra on the banks of the Alacananda, is aware of the affliction of his daughter Savitri. She has already chosen Satyavan for her husband and she is not going to alter her decision even when his death, on the completion of one year of their marriage, is foretold. Savitri is least deterred by such a heart-rending pronouncement. On the contrary, in the depth of her soul, she has suddenly become aware of the great mission she is to fulfil through this hazardous possibility. In fact, she has immediately realised that her lover and husband's death is not all her fate. But if this death is inevitable, even irremediable, then she is quite prepared to die, and she knows how to die,— in order to change it. This kind of unshakeable conviction she acquires not in any small way from the rich and wholesome life of the Vedic upbringing when great souls live in truth-conduct of the spirit itself. Aswapati is one such soul, with exceptional Yogic attainments. But it is the coming out of Savitri's soul, at the very moment she meets Satyavan in the far-off Shalwa lands, that is more significant. She at once sees the entire meaning of her life in his and she is willing to go to the extremest end possible to make that meaning true and creative. The guardian wings of Aswapati are also ever spread over her. The issue is profound and his awareness belongs to that of the Profound itself. His patriarchal gaze is vast and is full of understanding. It is not made of any worrying concern, but is charged with a Yogin's power, it surrounds her and protects her always. Earlier, before she had set out on her unknown quest, he had told Savitri that there is a force who is her mover and her infallible guide, that there is a light around her and within her and, carrying it, she should go abroad to discover her life's partner. In fact, she was bidden to ascend from Nature to divinity's height. Aswapati shows the almost divine awareness of it even in the face of the doom Savitri is soon going to meet and he remains calm and unperturbed. In that rare marriage he sees Heaven's large question immediately posed, as if for its final solution. In the mortal world the question of Love, always under the yoke of Death, has to be tackled in an immortal way. This meaningless and defeating anomaly has to be dismissed and the haunting problem resolved conclusively. The problem is of existence, but it cannot be handled existentially. A more fundamental solution has to be found for it, a solution that traces the origin in the divine creation itself.

Savitri's deep soul has at once accepted the prophecy of Satyavan's death,—to make her personal calamity a sharp cleaving instrument to decisively strike at the thick dark roots of this sorrowing world. She has as though unknowingly realised that the powers arising out of Inconscience are presently dominating the earthly travail, that the conflict of Love and Death is intimately connected with the Earth. At the moment of her intense pain, when she was with her lover, her benumbed body responded to a voiceless call and

Her strong far-winged spirit travelled back,

Back to the yoke of ignorance and fate,
 Back to the labour and stress of mortal days,
 Lighting a pathway through strange symbol dreams
 Across the ebbing of the seas of sleep

(Savitri, p 9)

The pang divine has cut through the occult sky and is standing like a crescent pointing to her the giant figures wrestling in the night. The ancient memory awakes in her and she at once recognises the connection between the three disputants, the *raison d'être* of their existence in the grandeur of a divine creation. If Death is the intruder between the Lover and the Beloved, it is Inconscience that is holding back the soul of the Earth from the arms of the Divine. The stubborn Refusal is standing across the path of the wondrous Event keeping at its back Truth-Light of the never-setting Sun.

Savitri's Love without Earth is incomplete. Nor can she claim him without fulfilling her—because he has taken her burden upon himself. It is he who upbears her, as does, from within, the fire of the sun the sun itself. He has entered into her womb to take an earthly birth in order to give to his sweet and dear Mother, the Darling of God, the immortal glory of transformation. If Satyavan is such a soul accepting the ignominy of death in the world, Savitri comes to make that death an occasion, a fit means for the advent of the triumphant marvel ushering in an everlasting gain for the Earth. Such indeed is her wondrous mission and ministry, such is the nature, the very character, the remarkable build-up of Savitri, the Power who has incarnated here as Aswapati's daughter. In the Hour of Death the fiery Princess stands in full splendour on the border of the last Void and forces it to open out its dense and dark spaces to make room for divine manifestation for which her Yogin-father had willed. Earth is going to be its proud recipient. Earth is the "significant centre" for this revelation to materialise, a centre created to concentrate the entire effort. From it shall radiate the divine Glory to all the worlds.

In the occult Battle waged by the Supreme's Power against the mighty Antagonist the Victory is won. Death has retreated and Satyavan and Savitri are standing with a luminous veil between them. Soul has seen Soul, but the Unknown's Will is yet unknown. Savitri is waiting there for the fulfilling command to give back Satyavan for the Earth. She has now an offer of living in the spiritual skies "lit by an unsetting sun". Savitri can now walk into the regions of felicity and stay there in an inseparable union with her Satyavan. She refuses the offer. Instead, she speaks out her heart's desire by saying.

Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
 Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield.

(Savitri, p 686)

and that it is Earth who needs the beautiful spirit of Satyavan to spread delight throughout. But she is told to leave the entire matter to the process of Time

O too compassionate and eager Dawn,
 Leave to the circling aeons' tardy pace
 And to the working of the inconscient Will,
 Leave to its imperfect light the earthly race
 All shall be done by the long act of Time

(*Savitri*, p. 691)

Things will take care of themselves in their natural sequence and she should not force the issue. She need not worry about Earth. On the other hand, as she has now won the supreme felicity, she should rise to it and live in it. Such is the suggestion made to her

Break into eternity thy mortal mould,
 Melt, Lightning, into thy invisible flame
 Clasp, Ocean, deep into thyself thy wave,
 Happy for ever in the embosoming surge
 Grow one with the still passion of the depths,
 Then shalt thou know the Lover and the Loved,
 Leaving the limits dividing him and thee
 Receive him into boundless Savitri.
 Lose thyself into infinite Satyavan,
 O miracle where thou beganst there cease!

(*Savitri*, p. 692)

She was also told

If thou must indeed deliver man and earth
 On the spiritual heights, look down on life,
 Discover the truth of God and man and world,
 Then do thy task knowing and seeing all
 Ascend, O soul, into thy timeless self,
 Choose destiny's curve and stamp thy will on Time

(*Savitri*, p. 695)

But then Earth would have been left behind, unfulfilled. Earth would have remained abandoned in the hollow gulfs. "forgetful of her spirit and her fate", she would have remained oblivious of what really is meant for her and what her spirit is supposed to accomplish in this death-bound fate-ridden creation. Savitri was offered several boons of exceptional merit and she could have moved with Satyavan in the majesty of Heaven's splendours. That would have, however, frustrated the purpose for which

Satyavan had accepted the travail and the ignominy of mortality that presently rules over the Earth

Finally, the desire of Savitri's tranquil heart is fulfilled For the sake of the Earth she has surrendered herself fully to the Will of the Lord Her thoughts have become one with the Supreme's. And she gets what she wants

Descend to life with him thy heart desires
O Satyavan, O luminous Savitri,
I sent you forth of old beneath the stars,
A dual power of God in an ignorant world,
In a hedged creation shut from limitless self,
Bringing down God to the insentient globe,
Lifting earth-beings to immortality

(*Savitri*, p 702)

A promise has been given to her that

The incarnate dual Power shall open God's doors.
The superman shall wake in mortal man
And manifest the hidden demi-god
Or grow into the God-Light and God-Force

(*Savitri*, p 705)

Indeed,

All earth shall be the Spirit's manifest home .

(*Savitri*, p 707)

Such is the reward held out for the Soul of the Earth by Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. Which only means that the Poem is a recordation of all that he did, and is doing, for the Earth. It is a symbolic narration, a double biography, of his triple Tapasya with the Yoga of Transformation carried forward by the Mother in the very physicality of this Earth itself. In the wake of the Yoga of the Adya Purusha proceeds the Yoga of the Adya Shakti

In the Poem Savitri comes as Aswapati's daughter Although we see her presently only as the Princess of Madra in the epoch of the Truth-fulfilling Time, Satyayuga, her birth is not really a new birth It is not a new birth in the world. She has been coming here again and again to meet the Lord of her Soul staying permanently in this home of the Spirit But now she has to join him in a deathless oneness This can happen only when the sun of creation itself shall illumine its thousand chambers, when all earth shall be the Spirit's manifest home That moment has arrived and she has to take in her hand the sword of the last conquest in order to vanquish the dark God who keeps her away from the Lord There were made many attempts earlier and many dawns had come and

gone, unfulfilled, without bringing with them the everlasting day. These always proved to be partial and the triple knot had found no surer knoter to loosen it. This has to end by unlocking the doors of Fate. Satyavan's death is the meaning of that unlocking of inexorable Fate's doors.

The divine Glory had come here repeatedly, with her very exceptional gifts of God-light and God-strength. But every time she had to withdraw, finding the mortal race not ready to receive the felicities of true life she was carrying with her. Not only that, she was not wanted by it and always there was the ignorant stubbornness in sticking to its own miserable lot. Something was there in the earth-nature which ever resisted her arrival. The Presence used to come and again step back, "fading from the mortal's range". Earth could not open her bosom to it. This was the most difficult part of the problem and without further postponement it had to be attended to. Aswapati's triple Yoga is the foundation in order to tackle this most fundamental issue.

Coupled with this Yoga-Tapasya is the most difficult sacrifice of Savitri. She has completely surrendered herself to the Will of the Lord; even then, however, she did not forget her Lord's mighty holocaust by which he took the burden of the Earth upon himself. When Savitri was given the "supreme choice" to enter and stay in the felicities of the everlasting Day, she stood for the "magnificent soul of man and earth" and asked for the "magic flowing waters of deep love" for them. Savitri's love, Satyavan's death, and Earth's mortality have therefore become much more than universal symbols. Now all the three have gathered here in the unfoldment of a new possibility in the seeming impossible. They have been conjured up as if to work out the miracle of a marvellous life emerging from the heart of the strangest Void which is there behind everything, supporting all, the supporting All. When the face of that great supporting All shall be seen, then perhaps shall the meaning of creation be grasped. Then shall the purpose of the Satyavan-Savitri love be fulfilled—if love has a purpose—

Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,
Then shall the divine family be born

(Savitri, p 521)

and there shall be light and peace in all the worlds. There shall be peace in all the worlds including the world of Brahma, as the Vedic prayer invokes, *śāntirbrahma*

What is the upshot of this Adya Purusha and Adya Shakti's Yoga in the context of the Earth? It is presently the coming down of the full Sun of Truth-Light at our doorsteps. All that we have now to do is to open the door for him to step in and receive him in our house. He is there, with the whole world of his creative spirit, ready to manifest in the material creation. In the words of the Mother

This wonderful world of delight waiting at our gates for our call, to come down upon earth

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol 15, p 190)

It has been there always, but now the time has come for it to enter this House of Matter. It is just waiting to be called in and ushered in. That indeed is the fruition, *phalasiddhi*, of this entire Yogic effort, the fulfilment of the earthly creation for infinite progress in the depths of divinity. Not only such an earthly fulfilment, as the Vedic prayer invokes peace even in the world of Brahma, there shall be such progress, in the depths of divinity, even in the world of Brahma. Earth's transformation is the golden key for such a new creation.

R Y DESHPANDE

INDIAN ROPE TRICK

JUXTAPOSITION of strange ideas jolts the mind
 Even as an illness,
 A challenge to rise, nay, a swift kick,
 Providence placing one beyond one's ken
 While I complain about the pain
 Help me overcome this inertia, O Newton,
 Lest I bootstrap myself into complacent shoes,
 And tumble down the hill carrying myself in a bucket
 Give me the saw to cut the branch on which I sit
 And yet not fall
 I will rise from the earth as sap
 And shoot forth from the bud
 In the light of the sun, towards my high abode.
 Even as the rays descend I climb
 On their gossamer trail,
 An Oriental mystic on the rope
 Disappearing into the beyond
 Where my fingers reach if I stretch my toes

AKASH DESHPANDE

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT—VII

POORNANANDA SWAMI

What's in a name?

POORNANANDA was a colourful character—literally and otherwise. He left us very recently. Many present now must have seen him, even if just a shadow of his former self. Some would have heard of him.

He was given the name Poornananda by his guru, meaning Poorna=Full and Ananda=Joy. The ananda, if any, was well disguised or hidden deep within—not to speak of the “fullness” (poorna) of it. He was irascible, critical and seemed ever dissatisfied. A name or sobriquet nearer the mark, relished by the boys (the authors), unrelished by the gentleman himself was “ORANGE”. A kindlier appellation was ‘Swamiji’. Why all this ado about a name? Let us proceed, and maybe find him a name he can fit into. (Rare is the head that is big enough for the crown it wears—so it is with names we tag onto people for a life-time.)

Poornananda was not an inspiring figure. Small, dark and scrawny, with a small head, with longish sparse hair ending in an apology for curls. A pair of small close-set eyes that flanked a nose of sorts. Hardly any cheeks—only bones covered by skin. A mouth filled with large, irregular, well-spaced teeth. Not an ounce of fat to spare anywhere. Not a beauty by any stretch of kindly imagination. He could be a man not worth a second glance, met anywhere in our country—but for the dress. This dress claimed that second glance and earned him the name ‘orange’. He was clad (with never a change) in an orange dhoti (South Indian style) and an orange kurta. His handkerchief was orange, even his gamcha (towel) was often orange. This orange is more meaningfully termed ‘Ochre robes’—fashionable in ‘Sadhu’ circles. Poornananda was indeed a sadhu—so was he called “swamiji”. All his life he wore khadams (wooden sandals) except for the last one or two years of his life. He too, like Bholada and many of the old lot, carried an umbrella. He too used it as a multipurpose tool, *i.e.* support, sun-rain shade, weapon and extended appendage. What next struck one was his walk—the frequency, the speed and the style. He always walked. Never took a vehicle, no car, no cycle, no rickshaw. He always moved at a fast unrelenting clip. The lower gears did not exist. One could hear the ‘clack-clack’ of his khadams as he sped by—3 or 4 to a second. He was fuelled and propelled by an impatience. He covered his area of work—from near about the Press to the Sports Ground—an unmistakable dark figure, orange robes flying, curls dancing to the ‘kadam’ (rhythm) of his khadams. Yet what really set him apart was a raspish tongue with two cutting edges, honed by regular and impartial use. This spiced the man—he was one of those last angry men—sincere, intolerant and outspoken.

Poornananda was born sometime in 1902—so say some records. Others claim 1893 as the year! The dates are very uncertain. He himself would not clarify, saying,

“sadhur ābār jonmodin kiré?” (“What is or what for a birthday to a sadhu?”) All that we know is that he was pretty old when he departed

Poornananda left home at 16 and joined the Vedanta Ashram, a creation of Swami Abhedananda who was a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and a co-disciple of Swami Vivekananda. He was initiated along with four other youngsters. It was a cold winter night. They had to start on the right note – strip and dip in the cold Ganga, and not much to wear. Then followed the daily life of the Ashram. No ready-made meals with servers and dishwashers. The five boys went out in the morning in five different directions. They carried a ‘jhoola’, a vessel slung on the shoulder by a hammocklike piece of cloth. They had to beg at three different houses each day, and only three, accept whatever the housewife offered into the one jhoola. You may well guess what a pot-pourri of meat, fish, rassagolla, etc., made up the day’s takings. When the five young initiates returned, all five jhoolas were emptied into a large vessel to make a super-pot-pourri. This was doled out to each as the fare for the day. “Mondo chhilo nā!” (“It was not bad”) commented Poornananda.

After some years, Poornananda set out from the Vedanta Ashram to traverse the length and breadth of the Motherland. Many sadhus had strict discipline or codes to follow when undertaking such perambulations. They carried no money, nor made any effort to earn or beg some on the way. They did not take recourse to free rides on vehicles either, offered or stolen (ticketless travel). They neither cared where or what they ate, or whether they ate at all. They put up where they could—under a tree, a verandah or a shed. Thus did Poornananda travel, from the Himalayas of Kashmir to Kanyakumari, and from the eastern Border with Burma to Kabul in Afghanistan. It’s a pity that none of us were thoughtful or curious enough to know more about his travels—Grand Padayatras. They must have been very eventful, beyond our modern conception—no roads, jungles with animals abounding, uninhabited areas free of noise and pollution and unspoiled simple villagers. Once he reached a Shiva temple somewhere in the North. He was asked to give pooja to the deity. He agreed, and as he approached the deity to offer some flowers, he was rather stunned to see the figure of Sri Aurobindo sitting in place of Shiva. (It is not certain whether this happened before his first visit here or when he went back from here after a short stay.)

Sri Aurobindo Ashram—Poornananda wished to come and settle here. He sought the permission and blessings of his Guru Abhedananda. The Guru readily gave him both, saying, “Go, my son. My blessings will be with you wherever you go. You must be as devoted to Sri Aurobindo as you were to me, else no need to go.” He arrived here on 15.1.1935. He tried to adapt himself to this Ashram’s way of life. It was difficult. His old sense of morals was rubbed the wrong way. In the Dining Room men and women ate together. Everyone used spoons to eat with. Such shahebi (Western) mores roused his ire. He left Pondicherry—just walked away, all the way to Calcutta! He reached Chandernagore in 30 days! There he had a forced break-journey. He was arrested, suspected of being a spy of the Freedom Fighters (Terrorists, to the British). He was put in jail. For him probably it was just another wayside shelter. He settled in

for the night. An Indian inspector who came on his rounds peered in and called out: "Swamiji, what are you doing in here? Why have they put you in?" It so happened (why it happened—who can say?) that the inspector was an old acquaintance of Poornananda. He had him "freed", took him home, fed him and wished him well to continue his journey. Poornananda used to say, even in the 80s, that in India people still respected sadhus and would always give them food. He had a strong faith in his Motherland—so he could walk away from anywhere to anywhere—untrammelled by luggage and apprehensions, undelayed by planning sessions. He may have roamed and revisited his old haunts, but his mind would not rest. It was haunted by the presence of Pondicherry. Poornananda's feet retraced the outward journey and he reached here on 9th February 1938—end of one search, start of another.

Poornananda was always a man on the move. He had to be always doing some work. At that time the greatest and biggest work (in Ashram) was going on—the construction of Golconde. Times were different. Attitudes were different. Means were less but meanings were more. The sadhaks, therefore, achieved much with very little. Their assets were faith, devotion and persistence or perseverance.

Yogananda (maybe another candidate for ATNSG) was Poornananda's friend. Both were very good workers, working in B.S.—Building Service. Yogananda was to allot work to Poornananda. The latter pestered the former for work, for a great deal of energy was being dammed up inside that frail frame. It had to be spent! Yogananda took his friend to a godown full of old iron items—rods, hinges, nettings, etc. They were mostly used items salvaged to be re-used. Those days, and for a few years after, nothing was thrown away, even nails were extracted, straightened out and put in barrels according to size for "re-use". The "throw-away" mode of life was not yet the craze. Yogananda put a wire brush into Poornananda's hands and asked him to clean all the rust off the old steel items. He hoped the work would take a month or a month and a half, and he would have peace. He was hopelessly off the mark—in half the estimated time Poornananda was again after Yogananda for work. Yogananda, a little surprised, a little more suspicious, went to inspect. He was in for another kind of surprise. All the old iron was shining like stainless steel (this was before the advent of stainless steel). Yogananda, himself a hard worker, was often moved to say (in later years), "O to daityar moton kāj koré" ("He works like a Titan").

Many were they who worked at building Golconde. Tulsibhai, Lallubhai, Khirodda etc., and of course our Poornananda. They were the stalwarts of those days. Work for them was not something to be got over with and forgotten. Work was for them life and life was to do the Mother's will—their sadhana. The Mother took keen interest in every detail and stage of the work. They, whether engineer or plain worker, poured not only their sweat but also their heart-felt love into the job. They took great pride and derived greater joy working. They could, after long years, say with the same pride and joy "I was there." Poornananda was given the job of keeping stock and taking care of all the steel rods used for the building. It seems the rods were always neatly stacked according to size and there was not a spot of rust on them! He needed no assistant

(anyway none could have satisfied him) and kept no stock-book. He had it all in his head. Any item moved or removed at once caught his eye—or was it some other sense that was teased? It was common knowledge then that his godowns were so well kept that even rats—familiar co-habitants in many a household—could not find accommodation there. He often claimed, referring to the construction of Golconde, that no other work had been done with the same spirit since then in the Ashram. Nothing that we do now can match that period's fervour, meticulousness and sincerity. He used to say that often when a day was fixed for a concreting job and the weather seemed to threaten (with rain) either to force a postponement or the ruining of the newly poured concrete, the engineer or whoever was in charge would approach the Mother and pray for her intervention. She would look up at the sky and say: "Go on, proceed with the work." The workers forgot their worries and set to work—and lo—no rain!

Another interesting fact recounted by Poornananda with a mixture of nostalgia and indignation was what the Mother expected then and what or how work is done now. The steel for the Golconde construction was brought by ship and unloaded on the shore. The old faithful bullock cart—now losing ground to more noisy, polluting but speedier modes, was the only transport available. The carts brought the steel to the site. The Mother had stipulated that there should be no noise when unloading the steel! So it was done! Tons of steel bars, not just a dozen or so,—brought down from the carts without noise! How they did it I cannot envisage. I can only lose myself in admiration. Then Poornananda continued. "Aar ekhon dèkh—Dining Roomé bāshon mājé, jèno biér bājnā bājé!" ("Now—just go to the DR and see them wash the vessels, sounds like a wedding party's band is on.")

Often Poornananda took a short cut to the godown through the Sports Ground (Back Gate to Front Gate). The godown is situated in front of the Sports Ground across the M.G. Road (now under Jagadishbhai's care). His ever critical and sharp eyes would swoop down on any bit of rust (or other defect) on an iron handle, pipe or door. He would stop dead in his tracks, look around for me and—"Ei shālā (a preamble of endearment)—é lohā noshto hochché kèno? Mā dékhlé, érokom kortish kī?" ("What sort of work are you doing here? This iron is rusting. Would you let this happen if the Mother were looking on?") I usually kept silent. I knew the answer. Fortunately he knew that I knew. So, he did not wait for a reply, but hurried on. I, on my part, tried to remove that offending patch of rust before the next inspection. He was a good man and it did one only good to pay heed—a lick or two with that raspy tongue was good medicine. Moreover he liked me and our work in the Sports Ground. Sometimes, being an old hand, he would call me aside and say. "O godowné lohār netting podé āché. Swimming Poolér jonné kēnā hoyéchhilo—niyé né." ("There is an iron netting in that godown. It was bought for the Swimming Pool, go—take it.")

A friend of mine was once teasing me in his presence. He said, "Batti is now in charge of the Pool. Soon he will be moving around well dressed—trousers and .". Poornananda cut him short saying: "Hobé nā, or ār Pranaber kokhuno full-pant hobé nā" ("It won't happen. He and Pranab (Dada) will never wear trousers")

Poornananda was a terror to the local rickshawallas, coolies, beggars, etc. They in their country-side innocent ways would squat down on any roadside to answer nature's call. If Poornananda happened to be anywhere within striking distance—woe to the squatter! For, all on a sudden, he would find his neck hooked to an umbrella handle and he was pulled up like a helpless fish. At the other end of the umbrella would be Poornananda spitting, like a cobra, choice Bengali and Tamil vocabulary. He would drag the squirming victim to the nearest Ashram house, get him to fill a bucket with water and drag him out again to flush the polluted patch of earth, and then only let him go. This could happen in those old days, until Democracy took over and razed all, the good, the bad, the mediocre, to the same level. None now can be better than the other without being tripped up or bowled over. So, Poornananda's umbrella was laid to rest. It only served the usual, mundane, less violent purposes.

Much of what has been said about Poornananda shows only one aspect of him—the angry critical side of him. But one should not conclude that he was devoid of joy and that his face never succumbed to a smile. It is just that a great deal of what met his eye could not pass muster. Yet it was not very difficult to please him. One had only to work hard and he would stretch a smile and a helpful hand towards the worker. Some of us were privileged to witness and feel this other mood of his, when he would visit us (Mona, Kittu, Vishweshwar and some others), when and if we were working after 11 p.m. We were working at building Parikshit's House (Mona, Kittu and Vishweshwar were the appointed workers, and the "some others" were willing or shanghaied volunteers. This House has since been demolished to make place for its three-storied successor.) It was then that he would get into a great mood, settle down and talk sense into us or tell some old stories. His laughter rang true, childlike. But this privilege was granted only to a few and that too seldom.

Time passed, and the Ashram grew. More and more departments came into being. The old Building Service was split, so were the stores. Poornananda was moved around a bit. For a while he was, I think, in charge of all the brass in Harpagon. He slept in the Harpagon Office Room as a night watchman. It was no hardship for him. This place was a palace compared to his "Room"—if room it could be called. The Room where he lived for 50 or more years is worth a mention. It was a small hole of a place 2m × 2.5m (maybe). The ceiling was within one's reach. The entrance was the only opening. A cot, a table and chair were filled in and then the man too fitted in. A table fan was a much later addition. The Room itself is situated in an enclosed backyard of the old Building Service building—now our Drawing Office. Not much could a gale do to steal in a whiff of itself into that room. In the present day to suggest that cubby hole as living quarters would raise a storm such as never entered that place. It may do good to most of us to go and see the place. One may gauge better the man who lived there and also oneself and maybe also to sift our needs from wants. It now serves as lavatory cum bathroom for the new tenants of the building—the Patil Brothers.

Days passed. Days into months, months into years. Poornananda for a long time seemed not to be weighed down by the passing years. Then one day we heard that he

had been taken to JIPMER. There, he was well looked after. The doctors knew him and respected what they knew of him. They took it on themselves to serve him. He came out of that bout a winner. But something had left. Probably some of the heat was turned inwards. He resumed his work, but the work did not seem to befit him.

Time flowed on and by and by Pournananda too was caught up in the flow. He was nearing 100 years! His scrawny figure grew emaciated. His mind too wandered. He lost all sense of time. He moved around, but aimlessly. The feet could not hold on to his famous khadams (he had to take to chappals). Only now did he shift to a slow sedate speed of locomotion—yet walking—no vehicle. For a long time one family (late Raghunandan's) took care of him. He was their family friend. Later he had to be shifted to the Senior Service Home (under Dr Dutta's care). He tarried not too long there. He passed away peacefully on 3.9.96—reputed to be 100 years old—without that hurried step he had practised a lifetime. It was a quiet departure noticed by only a few. Those few had a feeling of emptiness in their hearts and minds.

His "ananda" seemed always "Ardha"—half, for, he always gave away half to make ours "Poorna".

Hail Swami Ardhananda Orange

BATTI (PRABHAKAR)

THE CORE

FROM whose lightning was a flame born?
 From whose flame an endless wave was released?
 I have touched the core of naked light
 And felt the lightning-mass invade
 And burn up my substance—paradise
 Then I grew a blank entity of bliss
 And the gates of the unseen revealed its eyes
 And the doors of silence unbarred its ears
 And within that loneliness I gazed
 At the dawn to be, the noon-day of thy shape.

21-8-1960

ROMEN

(From the late poet's unpublished diaries)

THE GATE SWUNG INWARDLY...

THE MAHALAKSHMI VISION

THE gate swung inwardly and opened wide
Upon a marbled City white as snow;
What was a breast upon its either side
Grew to a cool-fire concentrated glow
Of moonlight that in slumbrous beauty rippled
Across the domes and turrets chiselled nude
As though out of milk-marble, rarely-nipped,
Illumined to this City of Her Motherhood.
A flight of creamy steps of dreamy shine
Led to the central Palace which did seem
An imagery of moon-glinted wine
Upbuilt in a poem of a dream
And every step was dappled green and blue,
Violet and grey, white shadows of dark slaves
Who, swart and naked, climbing two by two
Did bear trayed treasures on their curly heads
Of fruits and flowers,—sheer wealths of yellow-reds
Deep purples, ripe cerises, mellow mauves,—
Plucked from unrifled orchards, secret groves,—
Jewels and incense, drawn from fiery caves,
Thrice precious eyeballs of gold-mailed dragon
And scented breath of paradisal monster
Clear wandering wines in many a carved flagon
In whose wild flow I saw the noon and dawn stir
Rich-glimmeringly ... These they bore and seemed
While moving towards their Queen, that they were single-dreamed.
Lo! Wondrous music ran across the air
As though each note were silver-saddled mare
Prancing in the still moonlight, curbed unseen
By the pale angel-riders of the Queen.
Then on Her breath's soft undulating breeze
Time floated like a solitary boat
Laden with undiminished treasures
Of diamond, emerald, sapphire, peridot,
Warm countless gems wrenched from unmined Infinities
The gate swung to again upon the Vision
Of that lone City lambent and elysian.
Then what were breasts on either half of it

Became half-spheres with fiery vapours lit,
 And curling clouds of smoke as though they came
 From cloven chaos, and the funeral-flame
 Of worlds reduced to cinders,—and behind,
 Their correspondences of half-spheres held
 Twin lotuses untroubled by the wind
 Of outer worlds reeling with mist and mirk
 Veiling their own, white symbols of Her mystic Work

23rd Sept, 1933, 8 morning

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

Harin: Has the Mahalakshmi Vision been rendered well enough—Why have certain colours come in—(they were vivid in the Vision)—and what level does it have.. Can it be included?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the high level is there It is magnificent poetry.

WHO AM I?

I OFTEN sit here quietly still and glowing
 before the boundless silence within.

And as I sit, I observe my countless selves
 coming and going, dying and being reborn—
 changing every second of every moment

All these selves wear my face
 and emerge as my thoughts, words, actions—
 but I know that I am not they
 I know that I am closer to my Self

Who am I?

MIREK

ASCENT AND DESCENT

O POOR, selfish, ignorant mind!
Arise, awake to go up high
Into the all-embracing sky,
Where reigns pure Bliss, celestial, unconfined.

Discover the beautiful, All-merciful Lord;
In the *Tapasya* of the *Rishis*, free from strife,
Where knowing God meant also knowing life;
The realised Souls never turned away from the world

O 'Sun-eyed children' of the new Dawn!
While performing daily chores you can still ascend
To the World of Bliss and, smiling, attend
The 'honeyed banquet' of Music in the Spheres;
Then return to Earth like the ancient Seers
To join the spiritual adventure for the New Creation

SURESH

BACKGROUND MUSIC

JETS streak screeching overhead
Highway traffic drones and roars
A train whistles and whooshes sirening past,
The neighbour's tractor chugs and clatters,
His sprinklers zap like water-cannons round and round

Amidst all this hubbub, undisturbed
Bees are foraging
And throngs of birds—
Finches, warblers, swallows—
Are energetically building nests
In bushes or eaves .
Getting on with the business of Spring

And on moonlit nights
The nightingales are practising
Tweets, chirps, trills—
Preparing enchantment
For the high Summer season

SHRADDHAVAN

FIRE WITHIN AND WITHOUT

It was fire's long red tongue
Spreading everywhere with cosmic thirst,
It ignored the screaming of people,
The wailing of trees and the hissing of houses
The whole earth, fire-hooded, walked on to the stage
To enact the macabre drama of destruction
There was no protecting hand in view,
No scope for love and hate,
Fate seemed an absurd story worthy to be forgotten,
But the heart's space remained unaffected:
Trying to collect oneself in a last desperate move,
One suddenly felt all was calm and cool
As if, after a scorching summer, rain had come,
The cataclysmic scene had disappeared fast,
One saw all external fire
Had turned into a sacred flame
Burning within with a gesture of love.

SEIKH ABDUL KASAM

SOMEONE

WHAT a solace
in self-centred days
to imagine
"SOMEONE is for me!"
O what bliss is there
to gain care
and concern
from that SOMEONE!

What certainty,
peace mighty
lie in communion
with that SOMEONE
while light fails
and life wails
in a criss-cross
of distrust and disunity!

ASHALATA DASH

EVOLUTION

WHEN the sun glows red in the western sky,
The crimson clouds gently westward float
For a longer glimpse of the sinking sun,
A remembrance to guide them through
The long dark hours of the night.
The rustling leaves are stilled by a touch,
The din of the day sinks to silence.
Homebound birds cry out to the light
Lest their wings of freedom be netted by the night

Then from the very bottom of the roots upwards,
Through the trunk, the branches and the leaves,
An intense aspiration rises up from the trees—
Creating a vibration in the lifeless soil,
The inert rocks and lucid waters—
A quenchless thirst for the delight of light;
A tremendous push which plunges forward
The mighty wheel of evolution

With the last embers of the dying dusk
The earth in a silent moment of contemplation
Reviews the day gone by, feels yet imperfect,
And implores the sun to retrace its light
And wipe clean the slate of today
For a fresh attempt at a purer morrow

Thus the cycle of night and day,
Of death and life in a different sphere,
Of breaking and remoulding of the Artist Divine,
Until the time when the deformation of becoming
Brings forth the Eternal Dawn of being

D L

CRESCENDO

The Lord let the house of the brute to the soul of man
And the man said—"Am I your debtor?"
And the Lord—"Not yet" but make it as clean as you can,
And then I will let you a better "

Tennyson

THE history of man's evolution is marked by cycles in which he completes a stage of development—or better said, in which the Divine allows time to act out his play.

The Age of the Commandments was such an Epoch—as indeed many before it—and others that followed which had found their way into the Records of God—whilst others were hidden in secret caves, difficult to find.

Man was ever in search to understand the forces that directed his life, and tried diligently to penetrate their mysteries. But how could he give comprehensive form to the formless, or measure the way of the immeasurable by his limited capacity? Yet, try he did to grope his way toward it in many diverse and varied ways.

To uplift his soul he endeavoured to remove the veil that covered it. Some attempted it through holiness and meditation—even through occult practices—good or otherwise. Others sought heroic action in patriotic deeds—and the humble householder lifted his eyes heavenward in day-to-day living.

In a more subtle way the artist, the poet, transmitted the inspiration that came to them from higher regions—and men are indeed indebted for the role they played throughout the ages to uplift their spirits.

Oh, but the Divine Truth finds its way to the hearts and minds of men through its own subtle channels, though those great beings who came to teach may have differed—what they came to say was always the same and one in essence—befitting the needs of the time.

The teachings of Sri Krishna, Zoroaster and Lao Tse and Mohammed were no different in essence from those of the Hierophants in Egypt or Solomon or the teachings of Jesus the Christ. The unbroken chain—including the Druid priests and the Greek philosophers, and those who possessed the higher wisdom, passed on their knowledge to those willing to learn—has never ceased to provide a reservoir of spiritual truth to benefit mankind.

Having marked this and the culmination of all former epochs or cycles and their messengers, we now lift our souls toward the coming Age of Truth. This, when all the mistaken side-roads will no longer wind around in futile exhausting circles, but be transformed by the Light of Ananda, God-Love and Truth that will embrace all existences by their Transforming Might.

And thus we greet the new Avatars descending—the gold-radiant Sri Aurobindo, bringer of the Supramental Light, and the diamond-white Divine Mother dispensing it to the worlds. As the glowing disc of the Sun at dawn emerging from the

sea, this emergence will not go down at dusk as of old but bathe the worlds with radiance

And we pray from the lotus of our hearts let the old glory and purity of the Vedic times return to this sacred land of India to greet the Coming Dawn. . May its renewed spiritual splendour be a shining beacon to all the worlds ever calling for it, awaiting the Hour which is to come!

GEORGETTE COTY

THE POETIC HORIZON OF SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO himself once said that he had been first and foremost a poet and a politician, and only later he became a yogi. He is a prophet and seer *par excellence* and is better remembered for the integral philosophy which he has expounded through his works such as *The Life Divine* and *The Human Cycle* than for his poetry. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar evaluates the many-faceted personality of Sri Aurobindo and finds *multum in parvo* ("much in little"). He aptly expresses his view: "To acknowledge and salute the poet and the master of the 'other harmony' of prose is not, of course, to deny the teacher or the fighter or the patriot, the yogi, the philosopher or the prophetic engineer of the Life Divine."¹

His poetry, however, covers a long span of time from 1890 to 1950 when he withdrew from his physical body. His vast spectrum of writings includes lyrics, narrative poems, a cosmic epic, a large body of philosophical poems and a few poetic plays, besides translations; this well illustrates the range of his poetic genius. It is considered that his earliest poems, such as *Songs to Myrtilla* and *Night by the Sea*, bristling over with sensuous imagery, were written under the spell of Shelley and Keats.

Sri Aurobindo's early poetry bears the stamp of classical learning, classical myths and allusions. Sensuousness along with them was the earliest style of his poetic work. It can be seen or analysed through an illustration.

The vernal radiance of my lover's lips
Was shut like a red rose upon my mouth,
His voice was richer than the murmuring leaves,
His love around me than the Summer air.

Sisir Kumar Ghose argues that in the beginning of his poetic career Sri Aurobindo was writing like an Englishman. Later he switched over to Indian myth and ethos. Writing about his early sonnets on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rajnarayan Bose, Ghose writes: "They are more English than Indo-English, work of Mr. Ghose rather than Sri Aurobindo. But he soon turns homeward."²

Though it is not a complete break, we find in his later poetry instances of the perfect mingling of Western and Indian mythologies. References to 'Eden' occur times without number. In *Urvashi*, on the banishment of an apsara from 'Swarga's streams and golden groves', Indra intercedes and raises a question:

Her wilt thou banish
From the felicity of grove and stream
Making our Eden empty of her smiles?

We find a wonderful discourse by Narad on the problem of pain in *Savitri* containing a

reference to Christ's crucifixion along with general references to the sufferings of earth-saviours. This suggests the lofty message that "Pain is the hand of Nature sculpturing men / To greatness"

Sri Aurobindo was no doubt soaked in Western and Hindu myths and traditions, but the narratives *Urvashi* and *Love and Death* are like *Savitri* Indian in setting, sentiment and expression. In these works Sri Aurobindo deals with the theme 'Love conquers Death'. We find a gradual or chronological development of this theme. If we come across it in the first two poems then it is further enlarged in *Savitri* and attached with the vision of divinity on earth. The tapestry of *Savitri* is woven in such a way that it moves on a physical as well as a spiritual plane. On the physical plane there is the story of how the heroic Savitri wins back the soul of her husband Satyavan from Death. On the spiritual plane we find the bliss of divine or superconscious life. The pivotal point of the epic is dawn which in the Veda is Savitri, identical with Gayatri, the holiest of the Vedic mantras. Savitri herself is not merely the wife of Satyavan, but also the incarnation of the Divine Mother. Thus Amiya Chakravarty rightly expresses his opinion about the thematic excellence of this poem of Sri Aurobindo. He says: "If the dominant problem in modern poetry both as a subjective concern and as revealed in its manner of expression is the problem of self-consciousness, the dominant theme in Sri Aurobindo's poetry is self-transcendence"³

Sri Aurobindo, like Milton, has made a successful experiment in the use of blank verse. Although he may be criticised for his high-pitched style by the common readers and is classified as Johnsonian, yet like Wordsworth he is also of the opinion that the language of poetry must be related to everyday speech. If it is devoid of contemporary rhythms and current idioms it will be deprived of vitality. So, it can be stated that the language of poetry is a language distilled out of the language of common speech. No doubt, a degree of 'ossification' has overtaken the blank verse of certain poets. In relation to this C. Paul Verghese very rightly comments upon the style and technique of Sri Aurobindo: "A study of Aurobindo's narrative poems makes it clear that instead of trying to explore the musical possibilities of blank verse vis-à-vis the changes that have come over the speech rhythms since the seventeenth century, he allowed himself to be influenced by Milton's poetic techniques. In the manner of Milton, Aurobindo uses epic similes, high-sounding proper nouns at a stretch and also involved constructions and inversions."⁴

Sri Aurobindo attempted to naturalize some of the classical metres in English. He also desired to achieve something of the Vedic Mantra, for, according to him, the Vedic Mantra is the natural medium of mystic poetry. His *Ahana*, one of the longest and most celebrated poems, gives us the message of divinity or eternity. *In Horis Aeternum* is also an embodiment of mystic union and divine consciousness. Similarly, *The Bird of Fire* expresses the idea of divine consciousness in inner and outer action. Poetry achieves greatness when it effectively combines the highest intensity of rhythmical movement with the highest intensity of verbal form and thought substance and the highest intensity of the soul's vision of truth. Poetry endowed with these three

intensities voices a supreme harmony of five eternal powers. Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and Spirit, the five 'Suns of Poetry'

Thus it becomes apparent that Sri Aurobindo's poetry is the poetry of yoga. Sisir Kumar Ghose, the late eminent critic, observes the unity and growth of the poetic sensibility of Sri Aurobindo in this way. "Sri Aurobindo is always a call to spiritual adventure and it is primarily in this light that his poems should be viewed. But the poems *qua* poems should not be neglected. He has written poems, not yoga illustrated in verse."⁵

Poetry is not the thing said but the way of saying it. Sri Aurobindo is being interpreted as a kind of mystic. But the thought-stirring content of his poems also deserves to be studied. He is judged as overwhelming, with genuine mysticism having a universal appeal. Sri Aurobindo himself is very critical when he examines a poetic work of art. "The work of the poet depends not only on himself and his age, but on the mentality of the nation to which he belongs and the spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic tradition and environment which it creates for him."⁶

Similarly M. Taine, the French literary historian, says: "Literature is the creation of three factors: the race, the milieu, the moment."⁷ In fact, this need not be accepted as a total truth, for the individual too has his own part to play in literary creation. But in sociological perspective it can be accepted or analysed. Regarding this, K. D. Sethna rightly expresses his view: "Generally the plane on which the individual mind operates is a reflection of the level at which the nation or the race lives—at least this mind's ultimate system of symbols answers to the realities most vivid at that level."⁸

As a seer Sri Aurobindo is most distinguished because of his poetic output which is charged with the ageless spirituality of India. K. S. Srinivasan rightly observes the spiritual elements of Indian literature which constitute the very soul of India. He says: "A reassessment of the Indian heritage through Indian perception is overdue, it must include a readiness to reckon with realities as manifest in tradition. For instance, the recurring theme of Karma in the literature of every language, the motivation of the four goals of life and their paths (Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha), the belief in five elements (earth, water, fire, air, space) and in rebirth should all be seen as part of the life that shaped India."⁹

A normal human being is bound to have the feeling of conflict and frustration, pain and suffering, sense-images and sense-pleasures. But the Aurobindonian stance is almost above the human planes of duality and conflict from the very outset. Primarily we find in it a metaphysical theory gradually culminating in realized knowledge, the knowledge of the supreme Self, in the manner of St. Augustine and Vivekananda. The perusal of his poems establishes the notion that he is one who can see the present, past and future. To quote Blake's terminology, the poet now holds Infinity in the palm of his hand and Eternity in an hour. In his critical observation K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar underlines this fact in this way: "His recent poems are an attempt to achieve in English something equivalent to the mantra."¹⁰

What Iyengar says is itself an echo of what Sri Aurobindo wrote in a different

vein: “ everything I wrote came from Yogic experience, knowledge and inspiration. So too my greater power over poetry and perfect expression was acquired in these last days not by reading and seeing how other people wrote, but from the heightening of my consciousness and the greater inspiration that came from the heightening ”¹¹

In fact, poetry as heightened perception takes form in the artist because of his identification with some significant aspect of Reality. The artist disengages a theme or object from all its external associations or superficial qualities and “stands face to face with its inmost core, its essential self ”¹² It is this identification that helps to uncover or discover Reality “Beauty is Eternity gazing at itself in a mirror,” says Kahlil Gibran.¹³ What makes poetry great is the poet’s inmost response to the flux of Reality. This intense and integrated response can be termed as touched by saintliness, for it silences personality and has the quality of prophecy. All great poetry is inevitably numinous in character. In order to describe the nature of poetic delight, Sri Aurobindo introduces a set of Sanskrit terms: *rasa*, *bhoga* and *ananda*. And to describe the various levels of poetic inspiration, he uses terms like Sattwic, Rajasic and Tamasic. On the basis of a letter written by Sri Aurobindo to his Anglicized brother, Manmohan Ghose, G. N. Devy, a modern critic, evaluates him as a poet-critic “Sri Aurobindo attempts a passionate defence of Indian art and art values.... He was clearly reacting to this Indological conception of Indian literature. His need to ‘Indianize’ himself and to decolonize his critical idiom are fully evident in his early critical comments.”¹⁴

Thus, it can be summed up that through his poetic output Sri Aurobindo creates a cosmos of ‘spiritual reality’, ‘intuitive intellect’ and ‘intuitive vision’ which provide a body of mantric poetry or ‘the Mantra of the Real’. This all ‘came as a proper culmination of his long, sustained and inspiring career as a poet in the English language’.

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POLITICAL VEDANTISM— ITS CONCEPT AND PRACTICE

Chapter IV

(Continued from the issue of January 1998)

IN no dubious terms Sri Aurobindo expressed the views of the Nationalists on the Reforms in the *Bande Mataram* before his imprisonment, as also in speeches delivered at various places in Calcutta and district towns after his release. But the Moderates were in favour of the Reforms. The issue assumed paramount importance in the Agenda of the Hooghly Conference held from 4 to 6 September 1909. Later Sri Aurobindo commented about it as follows: “At the Hooghly Provincial Conference we met again to consider the Morley-Minto reforms. The Moderates urged in favour of accepting the reforms. We were against. We were in the majority in the Subjects Committee, while in the Conference they were so. S. N. Banerji was very angry with us and threatened that he and his party would break away from the Conference if their resolution was not accepted. I didn’t want them to break away at that time, for our party was still weak.”²⁷

In his appraisal of the deliberations of the Conference, as it appeared in the *Karmayogin* on 11 September 1909 under the title ‘The Hooghly Conference’, Sri Aurobindo expounded: “The Nationalist Party intended to put forward a formal protest against any acceptance of the reforms. . The Moderate leaders came determined on four things, not to allow any resolution recognising general passive resistance, not to allow any resolution amounting to an absolute refusal of the Reforms... On all these points it was made quite evident that if the Nationalists pressed their points the Conference would be broken up by the secession of the Moderate leaders.”²⁸ Therefore, in the interest of taking some definite step to hold the Congress united, the Nationalists gave way to all those disputed matters.

Elucidating the Nationalists’ stand Sri Aurobindo reiterated: “We were never in favour of shams. It is only righteousness that exalts a nation and righteousness means going straight, nothing can long endure which is based upon unreality and hollowness. If therefore there is any union it must be one which recognises that there are two parties in the country and that each has a right not only to exist but to make itself felt. This is a right we have not refused to the Moderate Party when we were in the majority: if they refuse it to us, then the talk of unity must cease.”²⁹ Thereafter all negotiations for the reconciliation of differences between the two parties failed.

When the Hooghly Conference failed to yield any encouraging result, Sri Aurobindo once again began to contemplate on how to revive the national movement. In his own words, “He [Sri Aurobindo] glanced at the possibility of falling back on a Home Rule movement which the Government could not repress, but this, which was

actually realised by Mrs Besant later on, would have meant a postponement and a falling back from the ideal of independence. He looked also at the possibility of an intense and organised passive resistance movement in the manner afterwards adopted by Gandhi. He saw, however, that he himself could not be the leader of such a movement.”³⁰ This was one side of the whole scene—gloomy and uncertain.

On the other side the scene was a wee bit enthusing, for the Government, leaving aside the idea of deportation, began to look for some opportunity to prosecute Sri Aurobindo on sedition. It was about this time that Sri Aurobindo wrote another letter, signed by himself, under the same title ‘An Open Letter to My Countrymen’. It appeared on 25 December 1909 in the *Karmayogin*—five months after the first letter. In the second letter also he rejected the Reforms as inadequate and advocated continuance and reorganisation of the National movement. This gave the Government a chance, though the letter was written in a sufficiently moderate tone. Long after this event, when the case of sedition was sued, the High Court refused to regard it as seditious and acquitted the Printer. Unlike the first letter, the second letter did not contain any suggestion to the Nationalists. But its demand, its ultimate goal and the way to achieve it as propounded in the letter were considered by the Government to be sufficiently seditious. It had stated

.. We have two things made clear to us, first, that the future of the nation is in our hands, and, secondly, that from the Moderate Party we can expect no cordial co-operation in building it. Whatever we do, we must do ourselves, in our own strength and courage.

What is it for which we strive? The perfect self-fulfilment of India and the independence which is the condition of self-fulfilment are our ultimate goal. . . What we seek is to evolve self-government either through our own institutions or through those provided for us by the law of the land. We demand, therefore, not the monstrous and misbegotten scheme which has just been brought into being, but a measure of reform based upon those democratic principles which are ignored in Lord Morley’s Reforms. Until these demands are granted, we shall use the pressure of that refusal of co-operation which is termed passive resistance. We shall exercise that pressure within the limits allowed us by the law, but apart from that limitation the extent to which we shall use it, depends on expediency and the amount of resistance we have to overcome.³¹

By the middle of February 1910—after a month and a half of the publication of his second letter in the *Karmayogin*—one night Sri Aurobindo, while at the *Karmayogin* office, “received information of the Government’s intention to search the office and arrest him. While considering what should be his attitude, he received a sudden command from above to go to Chandernagore in French India. He obeyed the command at once, for it was now his rule to move only as he was moved by the divine guidance and never to resist and depart from it; he did not stay to consult with anyone,

but in ten minutes was at the river *ghat* and in a boat plying on the Ganges; in a few hours he was at Chandernagore where he went into secret residence. He sent a message to Sister Nivedita asking her to take up the editing of the *Karmayogin* in his absence. This was the end of his active connection with his two journals. At Chandernagore he plunged entirely into solitary meditation and ceased all other activity. Then there came to him a call to proceed to Pondicherry. A boat manned by some young revolutionaries of Uttarpara took him to Calcutta; there he boarded the *Dupleix* and reached Pondicherry on April 4, 1910.”³²

Thus Sri Aurobindo disappeared from the scene, and consequently the search was not made and the warrant was held back. The prosecution was postponed till his reappearance. “This happened in February, a month or more after the appearance of the second letter. Sri Aurobindo wanted the police to disclose their hand and act, and the stratagem he wrote about was an answer to a letter forwarded to him at Chandernagore which he knew to be from a police spy asking him to reappear and face his trial. He replied that he had no reason to do so as there was no public warrant against him and no prosecution had been announced, he thought this would have the effect of the police coming out into the open with a warrant and prosecution and in fact it had this effect.”³³

We have already noted (in the beginning of this chapter) that on 16 May 1908, when the ‘Alipore Bomb Case Trial’ was going on in the Session-Judge’s Court, a letter from the Government of Bengal was despatched to the Governor General and then circulated among his top advisers. In it, the former, apprising the latter of the threatening situation then prevailing in Bengal, requested him to consider if Aurobindo Ghose could be deported. This question assumed grave proportion after Sri Aurobindo’s acquittal. But the question could not be decided because there were strong arguments both for and against deportation. Then, nearly after two years, the Government of Bengal gave its sanction on 2 April 1910 for prosecution. The warrant was issued two days later, on 4 April 1910, for the arrest of Sri Aurobindo because of an article which had appeared in the *Karmayogin* on 25 December 1909, under the title “My Countrymen”

We may now take note of what was recorded by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives in regard to this interesting episode

ON THE KARMAYOGIN CASE AND ISSUE OF WARRANT FOR THE ARREST OF SRI AUROBINDO

The Government of Bengal gave its sanction to a prosecution on 2nd April 1910 (Document No 1e, p 91, Mo 1956 p. dated Cal 7th April 1910). Two days later, on 4th April 1910, warrants were issued against Sri Aurobindo, the writer of ‘To My Countrymen’

In fact Sri Aurobindo was a thousand miles away. The very morning the warrant was issued, he arrived at the South Indian town of Pondicherry. A month and a half

earlier, late in the evening of 15 February, warned of a planned Government action against him, he had, in obedience to a command from above, left Calcutta for the nearby French enclave of Chandernagore. Here he spent six weeks absorbed in yogic sadhana while the Bengal Government was (supposedly) investigating his connection with the *Karmayogin* and (certainly) trying to find out where he was. On 1st April, the day before local sanction to prosecute was obtained, Sri Aurobindo departed in exciting circumstances from Calcutta for Pondicherry, the sleepy port in the south that was the capital of the French Establishment in India.

In fact the very day Stuart (H. A. Stuart, Secretary to the Government of India, Home Dept.) sent his telegram (9th April)—‘Sri Aurobindo was located. A certain Deputy Superintendent Paupa Rao Naidu of the Madras C.I.D. informed his superiors that the man they wanted was in Pondicherry.’

Below is a copy of a Press release, in regard to an article on Sri Aurobindo, which appeared in the ‘Times (London)’ on 7th April 1910 explaining the reason why the warrant against Sri Aurobindo had been issued.

THE INDIAN PRESS WARRANT AGAINST A NATIONALIST LEADER

“A warrant for the arrest of Mr. Arabindo Ghose has been issued because of an article published in his newspaper, the *Karmayogin*, on December 25 [1909].

In this article he contends that the moderate policy has failed; if the Nationalists hold back, either the Nationalist movement will disappear or the void will be filled by sinister and violent activity. He asserts that if the Government crush the Nationalists and give a desperate, sullen nation into the hands of fiercely enthusiastic and unscrupulous forces, theirs will be the responsibility. The Nationalist aims at independence, but, as incomplete self-government is a preliminary, he demands democratic reforms, failing which passive resistance must be practised by the Nationalists as against the Government. Education must be promoted, arbitration must be practised, and British Law Courts avoided; the boycott must be continued.

These doctrines have been frequently preached in the *Karmayogin* and Mr. Arabindo Ghose’s last will and testament, which is much more violent in tone, is sold by hundreds in a price reprint.”*

Under compelling circumstances Sri Aurobindo had to announce through *The Hindu* that he was in Pondicherry. For interested readers his letter to *The Hindu* is reproduced.

* Since the whereabouts of Sri Aurobindo could not be ascertained the warrant remained unexecuted.

BABU AUROBINDO GHOSE AT PONDICHERRY A STATEMENT

Babu Aurobindo Ghose writes to us from 42, Rue de Pavillon, Pondicherry, under date November 7, 1910:

I shall be obliged if you will allow me to inform everyone interested in my whereabouts through your journal that I am and will remain in Pondicherry. I left British India over a month before proceedings were taken against me and, as I had purposely retired here in order to pursue my Yogic sadhana undisturbed by political action or pursuit and had already severed connection with my political work, I did not feel called upon to surrender on the warrant for sedition, as might have been incumbent on me if I remained in the political field. I have since lived here as a religious recluse, visited only by a few friends, French and Indian, but my whereabouts have been an open secret, long known to the agents of the Government and widely rumoured in Madras as well as perfectly well known to everyone in Pondicherry. I find myself now compelled, somewhat against my will, to give my presence here a wider publicity. It has suited certain people for an ulterior object to construct a theory that I am not in Pondicherry, but in British India, and I wish to state emphatically that I have not been in British India since March last and shall not set foot on British territory even for a single moment in the future until I can return publicly. Any statement by any person to the contrary made now or in the future, will be false. I wish, at the same time, to make it perfectly clear that I have retired for the time from political activity of any kind and that I will see and correspond with no one in connection with political subjects. I defer all explanation or justification of my action in leaving British India until the High Court in Calcutta shall have pronounced on the culpability or innocence of the writing in the *Karmayogin* on which I am indicted.

(To be concluded)

SAMAR BASU

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SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of December 1997)

MENTION has already been made of Sri Aurobindo's translation of the first six chapters of the *Bhagavat Gita* when he was at Baroda. He took the *Gita* as his companion in the Jail at Alipore and followed its directions in his yoga-practice. Later he wrote his interpretative *Essays on the Gita* (in two series) in the *Arya* (August-1916 to July-1920). The first series (revised) was published in book-form in 1922, the second (revised) in 1928 and both together in one volume in 1950. It is perhaps his most widely read work. His commentaries on the *Gita* is a grand synthesis of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* based on the intuitive experiences of the previous Rishis. Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the *Gita* is contained in these essays and in various parts of the *Synthesis of Yoga*. It is necessary for us to understand the real nature of this interpretation. It is not what we may call a merely rational interpretation—a commentary in only the light of mental intelligence. Sri Aurobindo has seen with the subtle and integral vision of a Seer and understood things with the luminous comprehension of a truth-conscious sage. What he has realised and verified in the inner Self, he has given us in a language that is comprehensible to the human mind. This is true of his teaching generally. He has grasped the ultimate Truth of things and has applied it for the elucidation of man's many-sided life. In his presentation of Indian culture as well as in his exposition of man's social and political life, he has dealt with human existence as an evolving whole,—as a steady movement towards the highest principle of the Sat, Chit and Ananda—pure Existence, Consciousness-Force and Delight.

Within the short compass of this article it is not possible even to touch on all the varied aspects of the *Gita* as presented by Sri Aurobindo. We shall have to restrict ourselves to the most salient features thereof. To those of our readers who desire to go to the original, we would suggest, as a preliminary, the perusal of Chapter III of the *Synthesis*—"Self-Surrender in Works"—and of Chapters I and IV of the *Essays*—"Our Demand and Need from the *Gita*" and "The Core of the Teachings", respectively. In the former, Sri Aurobindo calls the *Gita* the greatest gospel of Spiritual works ever given to the race, the most perfect system of Karmayoga known to man in the past.

The *Gita*, holding as it does a pivotal place in India's scriptural literature, has been stretched on many a doctrinal Procrustes's Bed, and trimmed or extended to fit its exacting dimensions. In modern times, Lokamanya Tilak has expounded the *Gita* as a gospel of Karma-Yoga, and Mahatma Gandhi has read into it his own Ahimsa-Yoga. Sri Aurobindo's aim in his *Essays on the Gita* was not to add one more scholastic study or doctrinal tract to the existing Himalayan heap, but to discover and present the essential message separated from the simply local and temporal. In words that cease to be merely words but vibrate like a flotilla of the Spirit, Sri Aurobindo has set forth in his *Essays* the ancient and perennial and forever pertinent wisdom of the *Gita*. "the

living message it still brings for man the eternal seeker and discoverer to guide him through the present circuits and the possible steeper ascent of his life up to the luminous heights of his spirit ”¹

If the Gita is a great manual of spiritual philosophy, it is also philosophy with a difference the teacher is a divine personality, the pupil is his comrade and kinsman, and the occasion is the moment of a sanguinary clash of arms Arjuna and Krishna have been compared to Nara and Narayana who do tapasya together, or else to the two birds of the Rīg Veda (1 164 20) that cling to a common tree, one eating the sweet fruit and the other regarding it and silent

The fighter, Arjuna, suddenly and inexplicably acts unheroically, he declines to fight with his own kinsmen and elders and preceptors The fighter will not fight Such is the external situation of the Gita

The arguments between Arjuna and Krishna span the eighteen chapters of the Gita. There are three high arches—Works, Knowledge, Love—that make a single Bridge of Transcendence and Realisation, for, it leads Arjuna from irresolution to determination, from bewilderment to enlightenment

In this connection Krishna makes a very important remark to Arjuna “Even for the keeping together of this world you have to engage in action ” That is to say, not only for the keeping up of your own bodily life but also for the maintenance of corporate existence—for your Family, your Society, your State you have to work assiduously. What the superior type of man does in this direction is an example to the inferior. The Teacher commands his disciple to pick up the bow and arrow and perform his martial duty He exhorts: “Abandon all other *Dharma* (standard of conduct) and seek shelter with me alone. I shall give you protection from all vice and evil ”

What the Gita teaches, then, is clearly not an outer renunciation of the act, but the inner renunciation of desire by an equality of the soul and the offering of all Karma to the supreme Lord of the universe The colloquy between Arjuna and Krishna unfolds many a philosophical concept, many a specious argument and many a familiar stance of sensibility come up and Arjuna is helped to breast the waves of half-understanding and half-confusion, till he safely comes through at last and is ready to engage in battle, not merely as an Aryan fighter who has been awakened to the call of his dharma, but even more as one lit up by the higher knowledge and charged with irresistible power by the assurance of the Lord’s absolute protection.

The systems of Sankhya and Yoga and Vedanta, the Ideal of Works as Sacrifice to the gods and to the supreme Divine, the Determinism of Nature, the concepts of *svabhāva* and *swadharma*, the purpose of Avatarhood, the three Gunas and the two Natures and three Purushas (Kshara, Akshara and Purushottama), the Divine Vibhūtis and the Vision of the World-Spirit, and many other themes are taken up in the Gita, and all are covered in eighteen chapters of the work

Sri Aurobindo brilliantly sums up the teaching of the Gita in a single paragraph in the early part of the *Essays on the Gita* “The argument of the Gita resolves itself into three great steps by which action rises out of the human into the divine plane leaving

the bondage of the lower for the liberty of a higher law First, by renunciation of desire and a perfect equality works have to be done as a sacrifice by man as the doer, a sacrifice to a deity who is the supreme and only Self though by him not yet realised in his own being This is the initial step. Secondly, not only the desire of the fruit but the claim to be the doer of works has to be renounced in the realisation of the Self as the equal, the inactive, the immutable principle and of all works as simply the operation of universal Force, of the Nature-Soul, Prakriti, the unequal, active mutable power. Lastly, the supreme Self has to be seen as the supreme Purusha governing this Prakriti, of whom the soul in Nature is a partial manifestation, by whom all works as directed, in a perfect transcendence, through Nature. To Him love and adoration and the sacrifice of works have to be offered, the whole being has to be surrendered to Him and the whole consciousness raised up to dwell in this divine consciousness so that the human soul may share in His divine transcendence of Nature and of His works and act in a perfect spiritual liberty ”²

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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UMA HAIMAVATI

I

A Dance-Drama in Five Scenes Based on a Story from the Kena Upanishad.

Synopsis with Relevant Passages from Sri Aurobindo's Commentary
on the Upanishad

THE gods have found themselves victorious in their eternal battle with the powers that deny. It is Brahman that has stood behind the gods and conquered for them, it is He who has put down His darkened children and exalted the children of Light. But the vision of the gods is as yet sealed to their own deeper truth, they know themselves, they know not the Eternal. They see the victory as their own, they do not realise that their greatness is the victory and greatness of Brahman. In order to show them the real truth Brahman manifests Himself before the exultant gods, He is seen and felt by them as a vague and tremendous presence, the Yaksha, the Spirit, the unknown Power. The gods feel that they must know Him. And so Agni is sent to discover His nature. The Yaksha asks, "Who art thou? What is the force in thee?" And Agni replies that he is Agni Jatavedas, the Power that is at the basis of all birth and process in the material universe, and embraces and knows their workings. And the force in him is such that all that is thus born, he as the flame of Time and Death can devour. But this all-devourer cannot devour with all his force a fragile blade of grass so long as it has behind it the power of the Eternal. Agni is compelled to return, not having discovered the reality.

Another god rises to the call. It is Vayu Matarishwan, the great life-principle, he who moves, breathes, expands infinitely in the mother element. All things in the universe are the movement of this mighty life, and the power in him is this that he, Life, can take all things in his stride and grow and seize on them for his mastery and enjoyment. But he too fails to seize the tiny blade of grass and returns, not having discovered the reality.

Indra next arises. He is the power of the Mind; the senses which the Life uses for enjoyment, are operations of Indra which he conducts for knowledge and all things that Agni has built and supports and destroys in the universe are Indra's field and subject to his functioning. If then this unknown Existence is something that the senses can grasp or, if it is something that the mind can envisage, Indra shall know it and make it a part of his opulent possessions. But it is nothing that the senses can grasp or the mind envisage, for as soon as Indra approaches it, it vanishes.

Still, Indra does not turn back from the quest like Agni and Vayu, he pursues his way through the highest ether of the pure mentality and there he approaches the Woman, the many-shining Uma Haimavati, from her he learns that this (Yaksha) is the Brahman by whom alone the gods of mind and life and body conquer and affirm themselves, and in whom alone they are great. Uma is the supreme Nature from whom

the whole cosmic action takes its birth, she is the pure summit and highest power of the One who here shines out in many forms From this supreme Nature which is also the supreme Consciousness the gods must learn their own truth, they must proceed by reflecting it in themselves instead of limiting themselves to their own lower movement For She has the knowledge and consciousness of the One, while the lower nature of mind, life and body can only envisage the many

UMA HAIMAVATI

Mangala-verses

That which is hearing of our hearing, mind of our mind, speech of our speech, that too is life of our life-breath and sight of our sight The wise are released beyond and they pass from this world and become immortal.

(Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, SABCL, Vol 12, p 145)

All this is Brahman immortal, naught else, Brahman is in front of us, Brahman is behind us, and to the south of us and to the north of us and below us and above us, it stretches everywhere All this is Brahman alone, all this magnificent universe

(*Ibid* , p 280)

Scene 1

(Heaven Enter a number of gods, running)

Gods (*in chorus*)

What a terrible disaster has befallen Amaravati!
Heaven shudders to hear the demon-roar
At the eastern gate rings the clangour of weapons.
O, grasp your spears and your invincible swords,
put on your armour, take up your shields;
make yourselves ready for the battle.
now has come the time for the test of godly valour
Marshal the chariots, beat the war-drums;
kindle the heroic flame in your hearts:
now begins the great drama of demon-destruction.

(*Gods go out*)

(From another side enter a group of goddesses and nymphs)

Goddesses and nymphs (*in chorus*)

Oh, what is going to happen, oh!

What a calamitous day has come!
 The parijata-flowers are all withered,
 Our flower-ornaments have dropped down.
 Oh, what is going to happen, oh!

The bees have left their humming
 and the gathering of nectar from flowery chalices,
 they have stopped their frolicsome dances
 Oh, what is going to happen, oh!

Listen, listen to the drum-beats of the demons
 Has the sun set before its setting time?
 Thunder falls from the cloudless sky
 What a calamitous day has come!
 Oh, what is going to happen, oh!

(The goddesses and the nymphs are looking at the battle-march of the gods)

(chorus)

The Thunder-wielder is going to the war,
 the hoof-beats of his horse Uchchaishravas
 are raising the dust of meteors.
 The Thunder-wielder is going to the war
 Hearing the call of the divine conch
 the heavenly Ganges is leaving its banks

(They dance with music)

At the sacrifice of demon-destruction
 Vaishvanara is the officiating priest
 Mounted on his ruddy horse
 the Lord of Fire is going to the war,
 and in his intensely flaming eyes
 burn the quarters of the sky
 The Lord of Fire is going to the war

(They dance with music)

The wild storm is flying through the sky.
 the hearts of the demons are trembling.
 The dire Wind-god is going to the war.
 Thunderous incantations
 are piercing the body of darkness.
 The dire Wind-god is going to the war

(They dance with music)

(Enter Agni and a Demon fighting)

The flames of the Fire-god are gushing forth,
his seven tongues are swaying to and fro
The hair of the demon is burning,
his bracelets and earrings are melting
The fire-bodied death is dancing, he is dancing,
the flames of the Fire-god are gushing forth, they are gushing forth

(Agni and the Demon go out fighting Enter Vayu and another Demon fighting)

The wind of the last day has risen today,
heaped darkness is being blown away,
the messenger of annihilation is roaring in the demon's heart
The house of falsehood is breaking down,
the wind is blowing and whistling,
the clothes of the demon are fluttering,
the restless storm-wind has arisen,
the messenger of annihilation is roaring in the demon's heart

(Vayu and the Demon go out fighting. A loud rumble is heard approaching)

What is this sound? What is this tumult of tandava!
What is this surge uncontrollable?
Who are coming? Who are coming? Who?
The world is shaking under their feet,
and the clangour of their arms
is drowning the confused noise of the world
The stars and the planets are running helter-skelter

(Enter Indra and Vritra fighting)

The heavenly light is covered up by the magic of Vritra;
an immense darkness has filled the universe,
but Indra, the lord of heaven, bright-bodied, is coming
to destroy all obscurity with his divine arrows

Indra's enemy is coming holding a scimitar in his hand,
his heavy foot-falls are making the three worlds tremble,
and meteors are shooting forth from the weapons, hitting and defending
Oh, what a terrible orchestra of annihilation!

(They dance with music)

What a wonderful spectacle of war!
 Drums are rumbling, conchs are booming,
 roars of warriors and twangs of bows are echoing.
 And the demons are fleeing
 What a wonderful spectacle of war!

(They dance with music)

(chorus)

No escape, there is no escape for Vritra,
 he will surely die, surely,
 at this sacrifice of death
 No escape.
 The thunderbolt is flashing in the hands of Purandara,
 it is flashing,
 and the demon is staggering on unsteady feet.
 No escape for him
 The skiey quarters are all quiet
 It seems that centuries are held in one sole instant
 The skiey quarters are all quiet

What a wonderful spectacle of war!
 The thunder is rushing forth
 and waves of light are waking up.
 Vritra's breast is shattered.
 What a wonderful spectacle of war!
 The moment of fear is past
 and the demon-forces are fleeing.

Victory, victory, victory to Vasava!
 The enemies of the gods are vanquished.
 Victory! victory!

Scene 2

(The royal court of Indra Indra is seated on his throne. On either side are seated Agni and Vayu.)

Nymphs (dance and sing in chorus)

Victory, victory to Vasava!
 The enemies of the gods are vanquished
 Victory! victory!
 The heaven and the earth are free from fear

Victory! victory!
 Hear the sama-chants of the Seven-Sages,
 the dark night has come to an end,
 and the sun appears at the eastern gates
 Victory! victory!
 A ruddy light now touches our eyes,
 hear the birds singing in the heavenly gardens
 and the breeze from the Malaya-mountains blowing softly, softly
 Victory! victory!
 Victory to Vasava!
 O destroyer of the demons,
 O killer of Paka,
 Victory to you!

(An apsara sings a hymn to Indra)

O Lord of heaven, who can ever sing your praise?
 O wielder of the thunderbolt, who is there in heaven or earth to equal you?
 Your thunderbolt that dispels all darkness burns the bonds of our delusions
 You are the mystic gayatri, the trishtup, the rhythms that conquer all evil
 You are the supreme refuge of gods and men, you are the incarnation of the heroic
 strength,
 and it is you who are also the lightning-flash in the heart of the poet and the thinker.
 The night and the day are the two wheels of your chariot,
 you are the luminous, the invincible, you are Shakra, the demolisher of the demon-
 fortresses

(Another apsara sings a hymn to Agni)

Agni, Indra's companion with the flaming face,
 we offer our faith and obeisance at your feet
 You pervade the heart of the world, O shining Vaishvanara
 You are the light that burns all darkness from the path of our progress.
 Heaven is your father and Earth your mother,
 how can we sing your glory?

Agni, you are Jatavedas, the knower of all things born, O mighty devourer of oblations,
 you are the poet who gives in our heart the death-conquering Word
 You make the earth sacred with your boons, and our waking becomes a wonder
 Heaven is your father and Earth your mother,
 how can we sing your glory!

(Another apsara sings the praise of Vayu)

Thousand horses draw your golden car,

your swift storms sweep away all dregs and make our paths clean,
you are the ever-restless!
You move unrestrained between the earth and the sky,
the rumble of your chariot-wheels echoes in all directions,
you are overflowing with life-energy
O friend of the Fire, we bow down to you,
You shatter the demoniac pride and selfishness,
you are mighty and grandiose!

(All together, in chorus)
Victory, victory to Vasava!
The enemies of the gods are vanquished
Victory! victory!

(To be continued)

RANAJIT SARKAR

THE LIFE DIVINE BY SRI AUROBINDO*

- 1 *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus, is a landmark in the history of human thought and aspiration, embodying the highest, most comprehensive and creative philosophy of spiritual experience. It has the character of a perfectly natural and inevitable synthesis of the deepest, ancient and the most progressive modern thought of the East and the West
- 2 In the course of a letter to a disciple written in 1930, Sri Aurobindo drew a distinction between Western metaphysics and the Yoga of the Indian saints. In the West, an excessive importance has been given always to thought, intellect, the logical reason as the highest means and even as the highest end. "Thought is the be-all and the end-all in philosophy, and even spiritual experience has been summoned to pass the tests of intellect,"—if such experience is to have any validity at all! In India the position has been just the reverse. In the East generally, and in India purposively and continuously, while no doubt the metaphysical thinkers have tried to approach ultimate Reality through the intellect, they have assigned only a subordinate status to such mental constructions. On the other hand, "the first rank has always been given to spiritual intuition and illumination and spiritual experience." Without their corroboration or, rather, unless they are made the base, mere intellectual constructions have been dismissed as no more than brain-exercises. Further, the Indian metaphysical thinker—a Yajñavalkya, a Shankara, a Ramanuja—has almost always been a Yogi and a Rishi, one who has armed his philosophy with a practical way of reaching the supreme state of consciousness, so that even when one begins with Thought, the aim is to arrive at a consciousness beyond mental thinking.
- 3 It is to the credit of a modern German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, that he too has come to realise the limitations of mere Reason, "thinking," he says, "only begins at the point where we have come to know that Reason, glorified for centuries, is the most obstinate adversary of thinking." Through the isolation and analytical scrutiny of detached things and phenomena the ancient Greeks started the movement of the physical and biological sciences, and the result is the impressive edifice of modern civilisation. But this gain has also meant, according to Heidegger, the decline and fall of Being. We manufacture so-called understanding of "things" in their minutiae (or, shall we say, of Being artificially atomised) yet manage to miss the meaning of the background, the Field of Being. The microscopically efficient way of Reason helps us perhaps to con every letter in the Book of Nature—or the Writ of Being—and yet fail to seize the sense of the whole. It is impossible for questing Man to leap towards the Truth so long as he is

* Speech delivered at the Nehru Centre, High Commission of India, in London on 11-7-97, commemorating Sri Aurobindo's 125th Birth Anniversary year. The speech, being extempore in nature, draws freely from Sri Aurobindo's writings, as such no references to the original text are given and there are likely to be minor departures in the quoted texts.—Ed

content to remain locked up in the prison-house of his intellect. If, for the lower knowledge, Reason was the helper, for the higher knowledge, Reason is the bar. The true metaphysician must not only master the uses of the intellect, he should be able to go beyond them too, "self-lost in the vasts of God"

- 4 The central problems of philosophy were formulated by Kant in the form of three questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope for? These questions carry the content of the Indian concepts of *tattva*, *hita* and *purusārtha*. Perhaps the simplest way of describing *The Life Divine* would be to call it Sri Aurobindo's answer to the interlinked questions of Philosophy in the steady light of his own spiritual experiences at Baroda, Alipur, Chandernagore and Pondicherry. As he explained in one of the later issues of his monthly review, *Arya*

The spiritual experience and the general truths on which such an attempt should be based were already present to us. But the complete intellectual statement of them and their results and issues had to be found. This meant continuous thinking, a high and subtle and difficult thinking on several lines, and this strain, which we had to impose on ourselves, we are obliged to impose also on our readers.

- 5 K. D. Sethna once wrote about Sri Aurobindo to a Western correspondent

His is not an integral philosophy for the sake of philosophy, his is an integral Yoga, and all his philosophising is a statement in mental terms of what he has realised. *The Life Divine* is nothing except a setting forth of his experience, his realisation. Having attained in constant waking life, and not merely in a sealed samadhi, the reality which he terms Gnosis, he has but laid out in intellectual exposition what the gnostic consciousness is and what yogic possibilities it holds and what the results of its full descent into our earth-existence will be... There is a mighty intellect in *The Life Divine* which we at once feel to be no whit less than Plato's or Spinoza's or Hegel's, but none of these giants was a full-fledged Yogi. Sri Aurobindo's intellect is an instrument used by a spiritual realisation: not one sentence anywhere is inspired by the intellect alone.

- 6 Even a cursory look at the rich outline and majestic synthesis of *The Life Divine* will make one understand how marvellously it is all planned, with what extraordinary certainty it has been completed. There are two volumes, each of twenty-eight chapters, but the second volume is nearly three times as big as the first, and is itself divided into two parts, each of fourteen chapters.

Volume One—"Omnipresent Reality and the Universe"

Volume Two—"The Knowledge and the Ignorance—The Spiritual Evolution"

Part One—"The Infinite Consciousness and the Ignorance"

Part Two—"The Knowledge and the Spiritual Evolution"

From an inquiry into the place of man in the universe, the argument proceeds to a discussion of the ‘how’. How did the movement from the Knowledge Divine to the Ignorance (*avidyā*) of mental man take place? and this, again, is followed by the fundamental question. ‘How, then, shall avidya-ridden man conquer his ignorance, reclaim the sovereignty of the Divine Knowledge or supramental Truth-Consciousness?’ Man the thinker is a transitional being in the evolving history of the earth. He has behind him the geological and prehistoric ages of inanimate or animal existence, but ahead of him lie the glory and exaltation of the Life Divine

The first volume opens magnificently; it sets the tone of high seriousness to the entire work

The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thought and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,—for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,—is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality. The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be its last,—God, Light, Freedom, Immortality

Man seeks happiness, harmony, fulfilment, felicity—call it the *summum bonum* of life—he has sought it unavailingly down the corridors of time, or he has found it only to lose it soon after

- 7 Between the two negations—The Materialist’s Denial and the Refusal of the Ascetic—there is the even sharper attitude of immediate rejection of life, like Hamlet’s

who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?

- 8 Sri Aurobindo recognises that modern materialism, in the main a Western phenomenon, has given signal service to questing man by providing him with a considerable body of knowledge regarding the lower planes of existence, just as asceticism, in the main an Eastern phenomenon, has served aspiring man by boldly

adventuring into the unknown and giving him intimations of the infinitudes of the Spirit. It is also clear that neither the Western revolt of Matter against Spirit nor the Indian recoil of Spirit from Matter can yield a harmony. The Materialist's Denial is one version of Reality, the Ascetic's Negation is another. The problem therefore is to reconcile the two in a larger and truer synthesis. A hint of such a synthesis is found in one of Sri Aurobindo's aphorisms

Life, Life, Life, I hear the passions cry; God, God, God, is the soul's answer.
Unless thou seest and lovest Life as God only, then is Life itself a sealed joy
to thee

Life is not divorced from God, and God is never aloof from Life. And the supposed irreconcilables, Matter and Spirit, are not really irreconcilable, after all, Matter links up with Life and Mind and Spirit stretches across Sachchidananda that is Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss, towards Mind, and so Matter to Spirit is a whole one of unity. As Sri Aurobindo said, "The two are one. Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter; Matter is a form and body of that which we realise as Spirit."

- 9 Reality thus comprises both Matter and Spirit, and also the realms between. It is like a stairway, and the way up is but the reverse of the way down. We perceive that our existence is a sort of refraction of the divine existence, in inverted order of ascent and descent, thus ranged,—

Existence	Matter
Consciousness-Force	Life
Bliss	Psyche
Supermind	Mind

The Divine descends from pure existence through the play of Consciousness-Force and Bliss and the creative medium of Supermind into cosmic being, we ascend from Matter through a developing life, soul and mind and the illuminating medium of Supermind towards the divine being. The knot of the two, the higher and the lower hemisphere, is where mind and Supermind meet with a veil between them. The rending of the veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity, for by that rending, by the illuminating descent of the higher into the nature of the lower being, and the forceful ascent of the lower being into the nature of the higher, mind can recover its divine light in the all-comprehending Supermind, the soul realise its divine self in the all-possessing all-blissful Ananda, life repossess its divine power in the play of omnipotent Conscious-Force and Matter open to its divine liberty as a form of the divine Existence. And if there be any goal to the evolution such luminous and puissant transfiguration and emergence of the Divine in a creature such as man must be that high-uplifted goal and that supreme significance.

Of the "eight principles" from Existence to Matter arranged in an order of descent (or from Matter to Existence in an order of ascent), the three-in-one

Sachchidananda is omnipresent Reality it is pure Existence that is both will and force, and above all it is blissful Existence And yet it is this Sachchidananda that causes, as a result of the descent or involution, the multiplicity, the disharmony, the terrible spectacle of suffering and frustration that we seem to witness in the world of everyday phenomena

- 10 After dismissing the philosophies—the noumenal and the idealistic—which recognise the Mind alone as the creator of the worlds of appearance, Sri Aurobindo put forward his hypothesis, born of his own spiritual experience

The view I am presenting goes farther in idealism, it sees the creative Idea as Real-Idea, that is to say, a power of Conscious-Force expressive of real being, born out of real being and partaking of its nature and neither a child of the Void nor a weaver of fictions

It is beyond the pale and flickering firmament of the Mind that true knowledge waits “throned in the luminous vast of illimitable self-vision” This principle, being above or beyond the mind, could be called Supermind, but since the term is susceptible to misunderstanding, Sri Aurobindo specifies its connotation by recalling certain Vedic limitations

Vast all-comprehensiveness, luminous truth and harmony of being in that vastness and not a vague chaos or self-lost obscurity, truth of law and act and knowledge expressive of that harmonious truth of being

- 11 The link-principle is therefore described as Truth-Consciousness or even as supramental Truth-Consciousness, and it operates between the unitarian and indivisible Sachchidananda above and the analytic and dividing Mind or mental activity below This mediating Supermind is both the child of Sachchidananda and the parent of the Mind, by its poise of identity it has total comprehension, and by its power of differentiation it precipitates the processes of the Mind Further, in Supermind there is no hiatus between knowledge and will, for Supermind is “Real-Idea”, which is both knowledge and will for the Idea, for now knowledge is power and to think is to bring the thing itself into being And, finally, Supermind is no elusive entity but is right here all the time, “Wherever Mind is, there Supermind must be”, for Supermind is involved in Mind even as Mind is involved in Life and Life is involved in Matter
12. Of the lower triad, Mind-Life-Matter, Mind sheds its separativity and divisiveness as it sends out its creepers towards the Supermind, and so allies itself more and more with the cosmic intelligence. But how about the other two terms, Life and Matter? At the deeper subliminal level, of course, Life and Matter too break through the bars of their isolationist cages and send out their tentacles of cosmic kinship A little reflection and a close look at the latest discoveries of atomic

physics and molecular biology make it clear that Life and Matter are inextricably involved in the cosmic play, "Life is essentially the same everywhere, from the atom to the supercivilised man, the atom containing the subconscious stuff in the animal, with plant life as a midway stage in the evolution. In all manifestations of life—insect, bird or animal—the tension is between the two pulls", the necessity or the will of the separate ego to survive in its distinctness and guard its identity and the compulsion imposed upon it by Nature to fuse itself with others. The predicament of man in this respect is no different from that of any other living creature whatsoever, for his ascent from Matter through Life to Mind has only trapped Man in the precarious imbalance of a middle state. As the English poet Pope said:

Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great.
With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride.. .
In doubt to deem himself a God or Beast,
In doubt his Mind or body to prefer,
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err

What are the new elements in Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics of life-transformation and world-transformation? Firstly, the conception of the inter-linked processes of evolution-involution or ascent-descent, secondly the principle of integration at every state of the forward movement of consciousness; and thirdly, the identification of the sovereign creative role of the Supermind. Unlike the orthodox scientific evolutionist, Sri Aurobindo affirms that Life cannot emerge from Matter unless it is already involved in it, for it is not a spurt of unpredictable chance that throws up the emergent but rather a preordained event in the cosmic plan. Thus even in Matter (that heavy concentration of inconscience, that triple knot of ignorance, inertia and inconsequence) all the higher emergents, the highest not excluded, are latent, hence the declaration in the Taittiriya Upanishad that "Matter is Brahman".

(To be concluded)

GOPAL BHATTACHARJEE