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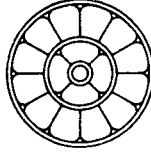
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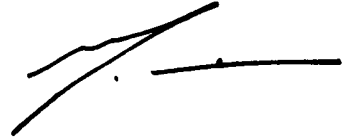
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Associate Editor R Y Deshpande
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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE SORROWING WOMAN THEY SAW NOT

HER quiet visage still and sweet and calm,
Her graceful daily acts were now a mask;
In vain she looked upon her depths to find
A ground of stillness and the spirit's peace
Still veiled from her was the silent Being within
Who sees life's drama pass with unmoved eyes,
Supports the sorrow of the mind and heart
And bears in human breasts the world and fate.
A glimpse or flashes came, the Presence was hid.
Only her violent heart and passionate will
Were pushed in front to meet the immutable doom;
Defenceless, nude, bound to her human lot
They had no means to act, no way to save.
These she controlled, nothing was shown outside:
She was still to them the child they knew and loved;
The sorrowing woman they saw not within;
No change was in her beautiful motions seen:
A worshipped empress all once vied to serve,
She made herself the diligent serf of all,
Nor spared the labour of broom and jar and well,
Or close gentle tending or to heap the fire
Of altar and kitchen, no slight task allowed
To others that her woman's strength might do.
In all her acts a strange divinity shone.
Into a simplest movement she could bring
A oneness with earth's glowing robe of light,
A lifting up of common acts by love.
All-love was hers and its one heavenly cord
Bound all to all with her as golden tie.
But when her grief to the surface pressed too close,
These things, once gracious adjuncts of her joy,
Seemed meaningless to her, a gleaming shell,
Or were a round mechanical and void,
Her body's actions shared not by her will.
Always behind this strange divided life
Her spirit like a sea of living fire
Possessed her lover and to his body clung,
One locked embrace to guard its threatened mate.
All night she woke through the slow silent hours
Brooding on the treasure of his bosom and face,

Hung o'er the sleep-bound beauty of his brow
Or laid her burning cheek upon his feet
Waking at morn her lips endlessly clung to his,
Unwilling ever to separate again
Or lose that honeyed drain of lingering joy,
Unwilling to loose his body from her breast,
The warm inadequate signs that love must use.
Intolerant of the poverty of Time
Her passion catching at the fugitive hours
Willed the expense of centuries in one day
Of prodigal love and the surf of ecstasy;
Or else she strove even in mortal time
To build a little room for timelessness
By the deep union of two human lives,
Her soul secluded shut into his soul.
After all was given she demanded still;
Even by his strong embrace unsatisfied,
She longed to cry, "O tender Satyavan,
O lover of my soul, give more, give more
Of love while yet thou canst, to her thou lov'st.
Imprint thyself for every nerve to keep
That thrills to thee the message of my heart
For soon we part and who shall know how long
Before the great wheel in its monstrous round
Restore us to each other and our love?"

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol 29, pp 470-72)

A FEW ESSAYS ON THE GITA IN BENGALI

(Continued from the issue of October 1999)

THE FIRST HINTS

As soon as the battlefield was shaken by the heaven-splitting sound of Bhishma's conch, there sounded on all sides of the huge Kaurava host the instruments of war music and the men in their chariots began to feel elated by the excitement of battle. On the other side, the greatest hero of the Pandavas and his charioteer Sri Krishna sounded their conchs as an answer to Bhishma's call to the fray, and Yudhishtira and the other heroes on the Pandava side awakened the war-lust in the hearts of their troops by blowing their own conchs. That mighty report resounded over earth and sky as if rending the hearts of Dhritarashtra's sons. This does not mean that it frightened men like Bhishma. They were heroic men, why should they be afraid of the fierce call to battle? In these words the poet has described the first powerful impact on the body of extremely high-pitched sound; just as the clap of thunder makes the hearer feel as if it were rending his head in two, exactly alike was the impact of this mighty report spreading over the field of battle. And this was as if an announcement of the impending doom of Dhritarashtra's men; the hearts that would be pierced by the Pandava missiles were rent asunder first by the sound of Pandava conchs.

The war began. Missiles began to fly from both sides. At this juncture Arjuna said to Sri Krishna, "You please place my chariot at a point between the two armies. I wish to see who are our antagonists, who are they who have come to this war to act according to the pleasure of the misguided Duryodhana, who are those with whom I have to fight." Arjuna's idea was that the Pandavas centred their hopes on him alone and it was for him to kill the principal fighters on the opposite side, therefore he must see who these were. So far, Arjuna's attitude was entirely that of a Kshatriya, there is not a sign of pity or weakness. Many of India's most heroic men were present in the opposing army; Arjuna was keen on giving to elder brother Yudhishtira undisputed empire by killing them all. But Sri Krishna knew that Arjuna harboured a weakness in his mind; if this mind were not cleansed now, that weakness might suddenly come up from there and occupy the higher intelligence at any moment and this would cause great harm to the Pandavas, perhaps even lead to their ruin.

For this reason, Sri Krishna set the chariot in such a place that those dear to Arjuna, like Bhishma and Drona, were just in front and at the same time all the other princes on the side of the Kauravas were within sight. And he said to Arjuna, "See and have a look at the Kuru clan gathered here." It has to be recalled that Arjuna himself belonged to the Kuru clan, was a pride of the Kuru family, all his relatives, the men dear to him, the companions of his childhood belonged to the same Kuru clan, that will make one realise the profound idea and significance of these few ordinary words from Sri Krishna's mouth. Arjuna could now see that those whom he

was to kill in order to found the undisputed empire of Yudhishtira were none other than his own dear relatives, teachers, friends, the objects of love and devotion. He saw that the Kshatriya families of the whole of India were bound together by ties of affection and yet had come to that terrible field of battle to kill one another.

THE ROOT CAUSE OF DEJECTION

What is the source of Arjuna's dejection? Many people are full of praise for this dejection of Arjuna and decry Sri Krishna as a supporter of unrighteousness and as showing the wrong path. The peaceful attitude of Christianity, the non-violence of Buddhism and the spirit of love in the Vaishnava religion are alone the highest and best laws of right living, war and the killing of men are sins, the killing of one's brothers and teachers are grievous sins: it is under the spell of ideas such as these that they make this improper statement. But all these modern ideas never even entered the mind of the great Pandava hero of that remote Dwapara epoch; there is in Arjuna's words no inkling of any signs that he even considered whether non-violence was to be preferred to war, or whether one should desist from war because the killing of brothers and teachers or homicide in general were grievous sins. He did indeed say that it would be better to live by begging than to slaughter one's elders, he said indeed that the sin of killing the relatives and friends would fall upon them. But he said these words not from a consideration of the nature of these works, but by judging them by the results. That is why in order to break his gloom, Sri Krishna taught him this lesson that one should not look to the fruit of works, one has to decide whether a particular act is right or wrong by looking into its nature.

Arjuna's first thoughts were that these were his relatives, elders, friends, companions of childhood, all were the objects of his affection, love or devotion; to obtain undisputed empire by slaughtering them and the enjoyment of such empire could never be a source of pleasure, on the contrary one would burn with life-long repentance and sorrow, for nobody would care to have dominion over an earth bereft of all friends and kin. His second idea was that to kill the dear ones was against the right law of living, to kill in battle those who were the objects of enmity was the law of the Kshatriya. His third point was that to perform such acts to gain one's own ends was against the right law and improper for a Kshatriya; and the fourth was that this antagonism and slaughter of brothers would lead to the destruction of clans and ruin of nations, to be the occasion for such untoward results was a grievous sin for a Kshatriya hero, the protector of the clan and nation. Apart from these four notions, there was none other behind the despondency of Arjuna. Not to understand this is to miss the purport of Sri Krishna's teaching and his aim. We shall speak later of the conflict or harmony between the Gita's law and that of Christianity, Buddhism and Vaishnavism. Here we shall elucidate Arjuna's attitude of mind by looking into the purport of his words by a careful scrutiny.

INVASION OF THE DIVINE MAYA

Arjuna first describes the state of his dejection. By the sudden revolt of affection and self-pity, the mighty hero Arjuna is overwhelmed and vanquished. All the strength of his body has dried up in a moment, his limbs have grown weary, he has no power to move about, his strong arm is incapable of holding the Gandiva bow. The sensation of heat produced by grief exhibits the signs of fever. The body feels weak, the skin is burning as if in flames, the mouth has dried up within, the body trembles violently all over, the mind is as if whirling under that attack. On reading the description of this state, we are at first satisfied only by enjoying its poetic beauty and regard it as an inordinate expression of the poet's imaginative power. But on looking at it with close scrutiny, a deeper meaning of this description comes to mind.

Arjuna has fought the Kurus before this, but such ideas have never occurred to him. Now, at Krishna's will, suddenly there is this inner disturbance. Lying hidden within Arjuna's heart are many of the most powerful instincts of mankind dominated and restrained by his Kshatriya training and high ambition. The heart is not purified by repression, the purification comes through self-control with the help of discrimination and a clear understanding. All the repressed instincts and feelings come up some day from the heart, either in this life or in another, invade the understanding and on winning it over drive all action along paths favourable to their own self-expression. This is the reason why one who in this life is full of kindness becomes cruel in another life, one who in this life is a vicious lustful man becomes pure and saintly in the next. Instead of repression, the impulses have to be rejected with the help of the discrimination and a purified understanding; this is how the heart can be purified. This is what is called self-control. Self-control is impossible until the tamasic feelings are discarded through the influence of knowledge. That is why Sri Krishna wants to purify the heart by removing the ignorance and awakening the dormant power of discrimination. But if the undesirable movements are not raised up from the heart and presented before the understanding the latter does not get a chance to reject them. Besides, it is only through a struggle that the inner enemies, the Daityas and Rakshasas, are killed and then the discrimination makes the understanding free.

In the first stages of Yoga, all the evil propensities that have taken root in the heart invade the understanding with great force and overwhelm the unwary seeker with fear and grief. This is what is known in the West as the temptations of the devil, these are the attacks of Mara, the Evil One. But the fear and the grief are the products of ignorance, the temptation is not of the devil but of God. The World-Teacher dwelling within us calls on those propensities to attack the aspirant, not for doing harm but for his good, for the purification of the heart.

Just as Sri Krishna in his physical body and in the visible world is the friend and charioteer of Arjuna, so he is within him the formless Godhead and the indwelling Lord. It is he who threw with great force the hidden movements and feelings all at once upon the understanding. At that terrific blow the understanding lost its balance.

and the acute mental disturbance was revealed instantly through the symptoms in the physical body described by the poet. We know that an acute unexpected grief or pain manifests thus in the body, this is not beyond the common experience of mankind.

Arjuna was overwhelmed in a moment by the divine Maya of the Lord with its entire force, hence this acute disturbance. When evil takes on the guise of tender feelings like love and kindness, when ignorance comes masquerading as knowledge, when the thick darkness of the Tamasic mode pretends to be a bright and clear purity and says, "I am Sattwic, I am knowledge, I am virtue, I am the cherished messenger of God, I am virtue incarnate, I come to establish the reign of Law", then it is to be understood that the divine Maya of the Lord has shown itself in the understanding.

THE SIGNS OF THE DIVINE MAYA

The main weapons of this divine Maya are affection and pity. In the human race, love and affection are impure movements, owing to distortions produced by the body and the vital sheath the purity of the love and compassion is tarnished and deformed. The inner movements have their seats in the basic mind-stuff (*citta*), the vital being (*prāṇa*) is the field of enjoyment, the body is the instrument of action, the understanding (*buddhi*) is the domain of thought. In a state of purity, all of these have their separate and yet mutually uncontradictory movements. Ideas and feelings arise in the mind, action takes place accordingly through the body, in the understanding there are thoughts in that connection, the vital being takes the pleasure of those feelings, action and thought, the soul (*jīva*) remains a witness and feels joy in looking on this delightful play of the outer nature (*prakṛti*). In the impure state, the vital becoming eager for physical or mental pleasure makes the body a means of enjoyment, the body becomes attached to enjoyment and clamours again and again for physical pleasures, the mind becomes engrossed with the desire for physical enjoyment and can no longer accept pure ideas and feelings, impure ideas and feelings stained with desire create disturbances in the mind-ocean, the understanding is overwhelmed and perplexed by that clamour of desires and is no longer capable of receiving pure and calm infallible thought, comes under the control of the unquiet mind-stuff and becomes blinded by delusions, confused thinking and the power of falsehood. The soul too forfeits its Knowledge through this failure of the understanding, is deprived of the poise of witness and its sense of pure delight; it accepts its identity with the outer man, and under the mistaken notion that "I am the life-being, I am the *citta*, I am the understanding", it takes pleasure and feels pain in mental or physical pain and pleasure. It is the unpurified *citta* that lies at the root of this confusion, hence the purification of *citta* is the first step to progress. This state of impurity does not stop with spoiling the tamasic and rajasic movements alone, it pollutes the sattwic movements as well. Such and such a person provides material for my physical and mental enjoyment, he pleases me, I must have him and no other, I feel unhappy in his absence—all this is impure love, it is a distortion of pure love through a pollution of the mind, body and

life. As a result of this impurity, the understanding becomes confused: it says, “Such and such is my wife or brother or sister, relative, friend or close companion, they alone should be the objects of love, that love is sacred; if I act contrary to that love, it is sin, it is cruelty, it is unlawful.” This kind of impure love gives rise to such a strong sense of pity that it seems preferable to throw overboard the law of right living rather than let the dear ones be aggrieved or harmed. In the end, we come to justify our weaknesses by calling the law of right living an injustice because it deals a blow to this sense of pity. The proof of this kind of Divine Maya can be had in every word of Arjuna

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated by Sanat K Banerji)

There is one divine Force which acts in the universe and in the individual and is also beyond the individual and the universe. The Mother stands for all these, but she is working here in the body to bring down something not yet expressed in this material world so as to transform life here—it is so that you should regard her as the Divine Shakti working here for that purpose. She is that in the body, but in her whole consciousness she is also identified with all the other aspects of the Divine

SABCL, Vol 25, pp 49-50

The Mother’s presence is always there, but if you decide to act on your own—your own idea, your own notion of things, your own will and demand upon things, then it is quite likely that her presence will get veiled; it is not she who withdraws from you, but you who draw back from her (25-3-1932)

SABCL, Vol 25, p 117

THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY

IN OTHER words,—and this is the conclusion at which we arrive,—while it is possible to construct a precarious and quite mechanical unity by political and administrative means, the unity of the human race, even if achieved, can only be secured and can only be made real if the religion of humanity, which is at present the highest active ideal of mankind, spiritualises itself and becomes the general inner law of human life.

The outward unity may well achieve itself,—possibly, though by no means certainly, in a measurable time,—because that is the inevitable final trend of the working of Nature in human society which makes for larger and yet larger aggregations and cannot fail to arrive at a total aggregation of mankind in a closer international system

This working of Nature depends for its means of fulfilment upon two forces which combine to make the larger aggregation inevitable. First, there is the increasing closeness of common interests or at least the interlacing and interrelation of interests in a larger and yet larger circle which makes old divisions an obstacle and a cause of weakness, obstruction and friction, and the clash and collision that comes out of this friction a ruinous calamity to all, even to the victor who has to pay a too heavy price for his gains; and even these expected gains, as war becomes more complex and disastrous, are becoming more and more difficult to achieve and the success problematical. An increasing perception of this community or interrelation of interests and a growing unwillingness to face the consequences of collision and ruinous struggle must push men to welcome any means for mitigating the divisions which lead to such disasters. If the trend to the mitigation of divisions is once given a definite form, that commences an impetus which drives towards closer and closer union. If she cannot arrive by these means, if the incoherence is too great for the trend of unification to triumph, Nature will use other means, such as war and conquest or the temporary domination of the powerful State or empire or the menace of such a domination which will compel those threatened to adopt a closer system of union. It is these means and this force of outward necessity which she used to create nation-units and national empires, and, however modified in the circumstances and workings, it is at bottom the same force and the same means which she is using to drive mankind towards international unification.

But, secondly, there is the force of a common uniting sentiment. This may work in two ways; it may come before as an originating or contributory cause or it may come afterwards as a cementing result. In the first case, the sentiment of a larger unity springs up among units which were previously divided and leads them to seek after a form of union which may then be brought about principally by the force of the sentiment and its idea or by that secondarily as an aid to other and more outward events and causes. We may note that in earlier times this sentiment was insufficiently effective, as among the petty clans or regional nations, unity had ordinarily to be effected by outward circumstances and generally by the grossest of them, by war and

conquest, by the domination of the most powerful among many warring or contiguous peoples. But in later times the force of the sentiment of unity, supported as it has been by a clearer political idea, has become more effective. The larger national aggregates have grown up by a simple act of federation or union, though this has sometimes had to be preceded by a common struggle for liberty or a union in war against a common enemy, so have grown into one the United States, Italy, Germany, and more peacefully the Australian and South African federations. But in other cases, especially in the earlier national aggregations, the sentiment of unity has grown up largely or entirely as the result of the formal, outward or mechanical union. But whether to form or to preserve the growth of the sentiment, the psychological factor is indispensable; without it there can be no secure and lasting union. Its absence, the failure to create such a sentiment or to make it sufficiently living, natural, forcible has been the cause of the precariousness of such aggregates as Austro-Hungary and of the ephemeral character of the empires of the past, even as it is likely to bring about, unless circumstances change, the collapse or disintegration of the great present-day empires.

The trend of forces towards some kind of international world-organisation eventuating in a possible far-off unification, which is now just beginning to declare itself as an idea or aspiration though the causes which made it inevitable have been for some time at work, is enforced by the pressure of need and environment, by outward circumstances. At the same time, there is a sentiment helped and stimulated by these outward circumstances, a cosmopolitan, international sentiment, still rather nebulous and vaguely ideal, which may accelerate the growth of the formal union. In itself this sentiment would be an insufficient cement for the preservation of any mechanical union which might be created; for it could not easily be so close and forcible a sentiment as national feeling. It would have to subsist on the conveniences of union as its only substantial provender. But the experience of the past shows that this mere necessity of convenience is in the end not strong enough to resist the pressure of unfavourable circumstances and the reassertion of old or the effective growth of new centrifugal forces. There is, however, at work a more powerful force, a sort of intellectual religion of humanity, clear in the minds of the few, vaguely felt in its effects and its disguises by the many, which has largely helped to bring about much of the trend of the modern mind and the drift of its developing institutions. This is a psychological force which tends to break beyond the formula of the nation and aspires to replace the religion of country and even, in its more extreme forms, to destroy altogether the national sentiment and to abolish its divisions so as to create the single nation of mankind.

We may say, then, that this trend must eventually realise itself, however great may be the difficulties; and they are really enormous, much greater than those which attended the national formation. If the present unsatisfactory condition of international relations should lead to a series of cataclysms, either large and world-embracing like the present war or, though each more limited in scope, yet in their sum world-pervading and necessarily, by the growing interrelation of interests, affecting even

those who do not fall directly under their touch, then mankind will finally be forced in self-defence to a new, closer and more stringently unified order of things. Its choice will be between that and a lingering suicide. If the human reason cannot find out the way, Nature herself is sure to shape these upheavals in such a way as to bring about her end. Therefore,—whether soon or in the long run, whether brought about by its own growing sentiment of unity, stimulated by common interests and convenience, or by the evolutionary pressure of circumstances,—we may take it that an eventual unification or at least some formal organisation of human life on earth is, the incalculable being always allowed for, practically inevitable.

I have tried to show from the analogy of the past evolution of the nation that this international unification must culminate or at least is likely to culminate in one of two forms. There is likely to be either a centralised World-State or a looser world-union which may be either a close federation or a simple confederacy of the peoples for the common ends of mankind. The last form is the most desirable, because it gives sufficient scope for the principle of variation which is necessary for the free play of life and the healthy progress of the race. The process by which the World-State may come starts with the creation of a central body which will at first have very limited functions, but, once created, must absorb by degrees all the different utilities of a centralised international control, as the State, first in the form of a monarchy and then of a parliament, has been absorbing by degrees the whole control of the life of the nation, so that we are now within measurable distance of a centralised socialistic State which will leave no part of the life of its individuals unregulated. A similar process in the World-State will end in the taking up and the regulation of the whole life of the peoples into its hands; it may even end by abolishing national individuality and turning the divisions that it has created into mere departmental groupings, provinces and districts of the one common State. Such an eventuality may seem now a fantastic dream or an unrealisable idea, but it is one which, under certain conditions that are by no means beyond the scope of ultimate possibility, may well become feasible and even, after a certain point is reached, inevitable. A federal system and still more a confederacy would mean, on the other hand, the preservation of the national basis and a greater or less freedom of national life, but the subordination of the separate national to the larger common interests and of full separate freedom to the greater international necessities.

It may be questioned whether past analogies are a safe guide in a problem so new and whether something else might not be evolved more intimately and independently arising from it and suitable to its complexities. But mankind even in dealing with its new problems works upon past experience and therefore upon past motives and analogies. Even when it seizes on new ideas, it goes to the past for the form it gives to them. Behind the apparent changes of the most radical revolutions we see this unavoidable principle of continuity surviving in the heart of the new order. Moreover, these alternatives seem the only way in which the two forces in presence can work out their conflict, either by the disappearance of the one, the separative

national instinct, or by an accommodation between them. On the other hand, it is quite possible that human thought and action may take so new a turn as to bring in a number of unforeseen possibilities and lead to a quite different ending. And one might upon these lines set one's imagination to work and produce perhaps a utopia of a better kind. Such constructive efforts of the human imagination have their value and often a very great value; but any such speculations would evidently have been out of place in the study I have attempted.

Assuredly, neither of the two alternatives and none of the three forms considered are free from serious objections. A centralised World-State would signify the triumph of the idea of mechanical unity or rather of uniformity. It would inevitably mean the undue depression of an indispensable element in the vigour of human life and progress, the free life of the individual, the free variation of the peoples. It must end, if it becomes permanent and fulfils all its tendencies, either in a death in life, a stagnation, or by the insurgence of some new saving but revolutionary force or principle which would shatter the whole fabric into pieces. The mechanical tendency is one to which the logical reason of man, itself a precise machine, is easily addicted and its operations are obviously the easiest to manage and the most ready to hand; its full evolution may seem to the reason desirable, necessary, inevitable, but its end is predestined. A centralised socialistic State may be a necessity of the future, once it is founded, but a reaction from it will be equally an eventual necessity of the future. The greater its pressure, the more certainly will it be met by spread of the spiritual, the intellectual, the vital and practical principle of Anarchism in revolt against that mechanical pressure. So, too, a centralised mechanical World-State must rouse in the end a similar force against it and might well terminate in a crumbling up and disintegration, even in the necessity for a repetition of the cycle of humanity ending in a better attempt to solve the problem. It could be kept in being only if humanity agreed to allow all the rest of its life to be regularised for it for the sake of peace and stability and took refuge for its individual freedom in the spiritual life, as happened once under the Roman Empire. But even that would be only a temporary solution. A federal system also would tend inevitably to establish one general type for human life, institutions and activities, it could allow only a play of minor variations. But the need of variation in living Nature could not always rest satisfied with that scanty sustenance. On the other hand, a looser confederacy might well be open to the objection that it would give too ready a handle for centrifugal forces, were such to arise in new strength. A loose confederation could not be permanent; it must turn in one direction or the other, end either in a close and rigid centralisation or at last by a break-up of the loose unity into its original elements.

The saving power needed is a new psychological factor which will at once make a united life necessary to humanity and force it to respect the principle of freedom. The religion of humanity seems to be the one growing force which tends in that direction; for it makes for the sense of human oneness, it has the idea of the race, and yet at the same time it respects the human individual and the natural human grouping.

But its present intellectual form seems hardly sufficient. The idea, powerful in itself and in its effects, is yet not powerful enough to mould the whole life of the race in its image. For it has to concede too much to the egoistic side of human nature, once all and still nine-tenths of our being, with which its larger idea is in conflict. On the other side, because it leans principally on the reason, it turns too readily to the mechanical solution. For the rational idea ends always as a captive of its machinery, becomes a slave of its own too binding process. A new idea with another turn of the logical machine revolts against it and breaks up the machinery, but only to substitute in the end another mechanical system, another credo, formula and practice.

A spiritual religion of humanity is the hope of the future. By this is not meant what is ordinarily called a universal religion, a system, a thing of creed and intellectual belief and dogma and outward rite. Mankind has tried unity by that means; it has failed and deserved to fail, because there can be no universal religious system, one in mental creed and vital form. The inner spirit is indeed one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development. A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. There must be the realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own life complete. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded. There must be too a discipline and a way of salvation in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself, so that it may be developed in the life of the race. To go into all that this implies would be too large a subject to be entered upon here; it is enough to point out that in this direction lies the eventual road. No doubt, if this is only an idea like the rest, it will go the way of all ideas. But if it is at all a truth of our being, then it must be the truth to which all is moving and in it must be found the means of a fundamental, an inner, a complete, a real human unity which would be the one secure base of a unification of human life. A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer self-expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence.

Could such a realisation develop rapidly in mankind, we might then solve the problem of unification in a deeper and truer way from the inner truth to the outer forms. Until then, the attempt to bring it about by mechanical means must proceed.

But the higher hope of humanity lies in the growing number of men who will realise this truth and seek to develop it in themselves, so that when the mind of man is ready to escape from its mechanical bent,—perhaps when it finds that its mechanical solutions are all temporary and disappointing,—the truth of the Spirit may step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Ideal of Human Unity*, SABCL, Vol. 15, pp. 548-55 The presentation of the theme of this article was proposed to be included by Anilbaran Roy in his unpublished book *The Prophet of the New Age*. — Editor)

OVERMIND-WORLD OF THE GODS

If all the stars were grapes that I might pluck
 We'd fill that goblet where no shadows twine,
 Not with sublunar fitfulness of wine,
 But with the golden ichor of the Blest,—
 That nectar which Tyndarian brethren suck,
 Castor and Pollux, whose comrade feet have pressed
 High paths too hard for wavering mortal zest
 Where no vows dwindle nor mutual loves decline.
 Still grant, O Shining Ones, our lives may bear
 The cup of unflawed light, soul harmony,
 Pellucid diamond that spreads no shade;
 There let the Wine of deathless gold appear,
 Distilled as themes of lovely music fade
 To a hush dew-drenched with immortality.

February 17, 1935

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment. A very successful sonnet—specially the opening and the close with its climax in the fine last line

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of October 1999)

एता अर्षन्ति हृद्यात् समुद्राच्छतवज्रा रिपुणा नावचक्षे ।
घृतस्य धारा आभि चाकशीमि हिरण्ययो वेतसो मध्य आसाम् ॥ (Rīg Veda, 4.58 5)

These move from the heart-ocean, penned by the enemy in a hundred enclosures they cannot be seen, I look towards the streams of the clarity, for in their midst is the Golden Reed (SABCL, Vol 10, p. 100)

सम्यक् स्रवन्ति सरिनो न धेना अन्तर्हृदा मनसा पूयमाना ।
एते अर्षन्त्यूर्मयो घृतस्य मृगा इव क्षिपणोरीषमाणा ॥ (Rīg Veda, 4.58 6)

Entirely they stream like flowing rivers becoming purified by the heart within and the mind, these move, waves of the clarity, like animals under the mastery of their driver. (SABCL, Vol 10, p 100)

सिन्धोरिव प्रध्वने शूघनासो वातप्रमिय पतयन्ति यद्वा ।
घृतस्य धारा अरूषो न वाजी काष्ठा भिन्दन्नूर्मिभि पिन्वमान ॥ (Rīg Veda, 4 58 7)

As if on a path in front of the Ocean (*sindhu*, the upper ocean) the mighty ones move compact of forceful speed but limited by the vital force (*vāta*, *vāyu*), the streams of clarity, they are like a straining horse which breaks its limits, as it is nourished by the waves (SABCL, Vol 10, p 100)

यन्न सोम सूयते यन्न यज्ञो घृतस्य धारा अभि तत् पवन्ते ॥ (Rīg Veda, 4.58.9)

they flow freely towards That from which the Soma-wine is pressed out and the sacrifice is born (SABCL, Vol 10, p 101)

धावन् ते विश्व भुवनमधिश्रितम् अन्त समुद्रे हृद्यन्तरायुषि ।
अपामनीके समिधे य आभृतस्तमश्याम मधुमन्तं त ऊर्मिम् ॥ (Rīg Veda, 4 58 11)

the whole of existence being triply established, first in the seat of Agni—which we know from other Riks to be the Truth-Consciousness, Agni's own home, *svam damam*, *rtam brhat*,—secondly, in the heart, the sea, which is evidently the same as the heart-ocean,—thirdly, in the life of man (SABCL, Vol 10, pp 98-99)

May we taste that honeyed wave of thine—of Agni, the divine Purusha, the four-horned Bull of the worlds—which is borne in the force of the Waters where they come together (SABCL, Vol 10, p 101)

तम आसीत् तमसा गूळ्हमग्रंऽप्रकेत सलिल सर्वमा इदम् ।
 तुच्छेनाभ्वपिहित यदासीत् तपसस्तन्महिनाजायतैकम् ॥
 त्रिधा हित पणिभिर्गुह्यमान गवि देवासो घृतमन्वविन्दन् ।
 इन्द्र एक सूर्य एक जजान वेनादेक स्वधया निष्ठतश्चु ॥ (Rig Veda, 4 58 4)

. the gods sought and found the clarity, the *ghrtam*, triply placed and hidden by the Panis in the cow, *gavi* . One Indra produced, one Surya, one the gods fashioned by natural development out of Vena (*SABCL*, Vol 10, p 99)

(*To be continued*)

SRI AUROBINDO

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

TO SRI AUROBINDO

HOWEVER I may meet thee
 On any lane or byway
 Swim the farthest sea
 Or travel an unknown highway

I'd track the meteor's flight
 Or walk through darkening night,
 Lord again to see thee
 Thy radiant smile to greet me

And yet to surrender desire—
 And turn from the beckoning mire,
 To tend a still wavering flame
 And with each conscious breath speak her name

Where can I meet thee great Sire
 If all is not cast in the fire
 For thee to remould and inspire
 The godhead to rise from the pyre?

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

ALIPORE BOMB CASE TRIAL

C. R. DAS DEFENDS SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of October 1999)

THE next question is when Arabinda came to Calcutta. He came sometime in May, 1906, and then he went to Baroda back again. It is very important to fix the date. Here is a letter from Arabinda to his father-in-law. It is marked 292-6 and dated 8th June. You will find the letter on page 5, first book. It is written from Calcutta. The letter states, "If you are anxious to send Mrinalini down to Calcutta I have no objection. Barin has fallen ill. I suggest that he may go to Shillong for a change. If he goes, I am sure, you will take care of him. Barin is somewhat erratic. He is specially fond of knocking about in a spasmodic fashion when he should stay at home and nurse his health. I have learnt not to interfere with him in this respect. If I interfere and try to check him, he is likely to go off at a tangent and become worse."

Commenting on this Counsel observed, my learned friend has made use of this letter and observed that Arabinda is a very affectionate brother.

On the 7th July, observed Counsel, Arabinda was at Baroda. Between the 6th July and August, there is no letter to throw any light. If you turn to page 254 of the first book, you will find at the bottom of the page, that Arabinda is described as a service-holder. This document is dated the 1st of August, 1908. So far as documentary evidence is concerned, you find that Arabinda was in Calcutta on that date.

It is clear—observed Mr. Das—that Arabinda had come to Calcutta shortly before the 1st of August. Witness Sukumar Mitter also spoke about this, but his evidence is rather hazy with regard to dates. It happens that he never went to Baroda after that. He must have sent his resignation. The National College was well established in the meantime and he became Principal of the College.

My learned friend calls the period between August 1906 and October of the same year the "period of great activities." Arabinda became the Principal of the National College within this period. Within this period of time the "Bande Mataram" was started. He was certainly one of the promoters of the "Bande Mataram" Company and the venture, the "Chattra Bhandar", was called into being. These are the three lines of his activities. I will prove here that so far as the "Chattra Bhandar" is concerned, he had no connection with it except that he signed his name as a witness. This was a mere formal matter. He was connected with both the institutions, the National Council of Education and the "Bande Mataram", if I am allowed to call the latter an institution. I do not admit for a moment that he was Editor of the "Bande Mataram." But I do not for a moment deny that he was connected with it and certainly he was connected with it as a contributor.

My learned friend speaking about the "Chattra Bhandar" observed that it is a limb of the conspiracy. Because Arabinda was connected with it, or Arabinda is a

conspirator, so the "Chattra Bhandar" is a limb of the conspiracy. The question is "Is Arabinda a conspirator?" The charge that he is a conspirator is laid at his door, because of his alleged connection with the "Chattra Bhandar". First of all, if you look at the Memorandum of Association of the "Chattra Bhandar", you find that Arabinda signs his name as a witness. My learned friend says that the organisation is a limited liability company, its Articles of Association and so forth are mere devices. He observes that they do not represent the real state of affairs. The argument is that the "Chattra Bhandar" became a limited liability company with a view to conceal its real object.

Mr Norton—I never said that.

Mr. Das—Perhaps it is owing to my weak intellect that I could not understand what my learned friend said. He said as a matter of fact that it is a cloak to conceal the design. Let us look at the document itself. I am referring to clause III of it. It says that the Company is started to carry on business as merchants, traders, importers, exporters, and general business merchants, both wholesale and retail. It shows that the "Chattra Bhandar" is not purely swadeshi. It proposes to import. As for exporting opinion varies. I am not, however, going to enter upon an economic discussion. If you look at "D" you find that it has no connection with any political design. It does not look like a conspiracy. Mr Norton remarks that this company was started as a cloak to conceal the dark design. The rules were framed in such a way as to conceal the nefarious design. But what do we find here, shareholders are restricted. It depends upon the directors to take shareholders in. Rule X declares that if a shareholder is indebted he cannot buy or sell his share to get rid of the debt. But if you read Rules VI and X together you find that there is no difficulty in selling or buying shares. There is also no difficulty for outsiders to come in. Still my learned friend holds that the "Chattra Bhandar" was a device to conceal its nefarious design.

My friend suggests that the "Chattra Bhandar" was intended to help the conspiracy. 40 per cent of its profit is to be divided amongst shareholders. My learned friend commenting on the clause which provides that 30 per cent of its profit is to be devoted to philosophic work, observes that it was to effectuate the nefarious design.

It is a custom in this country amongst people who start business as limited liability companies, or those who start business by themselves, to distribute a portion of the profit to the welfare of the community. I submit that is a perfectly good thing. You find this even amongst common shop-keepers who set apart something which they call "*brutti*".

Mr Norton—Is that evidence?

Mr Das—It is a common custom in this country. Can I not refer to that? Your Honour may have come across this in many civil cases. It is very usual amongst shop-keepers to keep portions of their profit. They do it in this way. For each article sold they keep one pice and this they devote to charitable purposes. We have the great institution at Sodepur which the Marwaris keep up in that way—the institution where your Honour sends your broken horse.

My submission is that if they really intended to start the "Chattra Bhandar" as

cover for their dark design, why did they start a limited liability company stall? Could they not start a partnership business for that purpose? If you start a company, you bring yourself directly under the inspection and supervision of the Director. The accounts are rendered liable to be inspected and checked, whereas if you start a shop, you have to avoid all that. However there is nothing to prove that the limited liability company was formed to devote the profits to the nefarious purposes. If they had that design, they could start a shop, there is absolutely no evidence to show that the profits were appropriated for any dark design.

Mr Norton—There was no profit at all.

Mr Das—If there was no profit, it cannot be said that they had any nefarious design. The whole thing is based upon suspicion. Assuming Arabinda had such design, what proof is there that Arabinda was connected with it? He simply signed his name as a witness. I desire to show that no suggestion of suspicion can be based upon the evidence adduced on this point. Witness No. 84, Pabitra Chandra Dutta said, “I went to Subodh Mullick and got him and Arabinda Ghose to sign as witnesses because they were big men.” Mr. Norton tried to get out from this witness Arabinda’s connection with the “Chattra Bhandar.” He says, “we decided to go there, as we thought they were big men. Subodh Mullick had made a donation of a lakh of rupees towards the Bengal National College. He was looked upon as a great man in Calcutta.” Pabitra said, “Arabinda used to live at that time at 12, Wellington Square. I went to Subodh Mullick and he told me looking towards Arabinda Ghose ‘You had better take his signature.’”

Speaking about Arabinda Ghose’s connection with the “Bande Mataram”, my learned friend observed, “I do not care whether he was Editor or not. I say he is the paper itself.”

Mr Das here read the deposition of Sukumar Sen. The witness said (he was at the time professor of the National College)—“Arabinda never advocated violence, or I would have remembered it. The Company was regarded more as a national organisation than as a commercial venture. The object was more political than commercial.”

Continuing Counsel said, I find that Arabinda was connected with the old “Bande Mataram.” He was present at some of the meetings of the company. He was not the manager of the paper. He was for some time the Managing Director of the “Bande Mataram” Company.

Counsel referring to exhibit 950D said that Arabinda was not connected with the “Bande Mataram” as Editor or Sub-Editor. He had nothing to do with the dealing with telegrams, reprints, etc. The prosecution of the “Bande Mataram.” I may tell your Honour was for having published an English translation of an article which had appeared in the “Jugantar.”

Judge—Does not the witness Sukumar Sen say who was the editor?

Mr Das—The witness stated that Bipin Chandra Pal refused to act as joint editor along with Arabinda Ghose. He wanted to have the entire control of the paper as the editor-in-chief. But there was difference of opinion. Arabinda Ghose was offered the editorship but he refused to take the sole responsibility. For he could not do that. He

was at that time the Principal of the National College. In only one issue his name was published as editor. But in the next issue it was taken off.

Judge—Some addresses were presented to him as editor.

Mr. Das—That was through the impression that he was editor. Arabinda was not responsible for anything that appeared in the “Bande Mataram.” There is no magic in the name “Editor.”

My learned friend says he does not care if Arabinda is editor. He says that he is the paper and that this paper was born in conspiracy. Let us look into it and see if we can find anything dangerous or anything that suggests bombs or conspiracy or waging war against the Government. Far from any such suggestion your Honour will find the suggestions which, I have said, are the ideals of independence, and the means suggested are those of passive resistance. The point on which the greatest stress is laid in the articles is national education, swadeshi and boycott. These points are typical of this paper. The fourth point was the general ideal of freedom. To reach that ideal of freedom they advocated the same policy I have mentioned up to the last day. You will find that they not only did not advocate the formation of secret societies but whenever anything happened which drew their attention they deprecated the secret societies in an emphatic language. I do not for a moment suggest that the ideal of the “Bande Mataram” was not “absolute independence.” It was that and nothing but that, and they always deprecated the ideal of improvement of the Government in this country by the putting in of one member in the Executive Council, or additional members in the Viceroy’s Council. It was repeated over and over again that they were not in favour of reforms, but what they desired was “a forming.” It would not serve the national ideal by legislation of a tinkering kind, that is to say giving some advantages here and some advantages there. All the articles read out by the prosecution in condemnation of Lord Morley’s scheme were in reference to that. Those are the honest views of the paper. If those views constitute in any way the waging of war against Government, I will have to say that Arabinda is guilty. My contention is that it is open to them to preach the ideal of freedom and lay down the methods in the way the “Bande Mataram” has done—the methods of passive resistance, boycott, national education and swaraj. Whenever any suggestion of any violence is made your Honour will invariably find that it is necessary for the purpose of repelling an attack. I shall read a few articles to show that it is not true that the “Bande Mataram” was born in conspiracy. I shall refer to an issue of the 18th September 1906 under the heading “That Sinful Desire” (Reads.) It refers to those constitutional troubles within the Congress itself. I submit that there is nothing felonious in that article unless my friend means to say that you must read between the lines.

Mr. Das then read an article entitled “The Idea of National Council” to show the attitude of the “Bande Mataram” towards secret societies. Counsel read a paragraph dated 3rd October, 1908, which he put to Purno Chundra Lahiri in cross-examination. The article was entitled “Golden Bengal Scare.”

(To be continued)

A PRAYER FOR THE ASHRAM SCHOOL CHILDREN



ASSOCIATION MONTESSORI INTERNATIONALE
INDIAN SECTION

' ROSE BANK ' KODAIKANAL.

To the Children of the Ashram School
P O N D I C H E R R Y.

Yours is the world of the Spirit.
In the midst of all that is high, grow in
the new world of freedom that is being constructed for you. grow, and give the possibility
to all the divine powers that God has put
into you, to expand and to uplift. This
will then be your way of offering yourselves to
God and to His will: you will, when grown,
be the ones that will keep the world bright
beautiful and happy.

Maria Montessori

A Note:

Dear Deshpande, Bonjour!

After reading what you had on Maria Montessori (*Mother India*, May 1999, p 561) I thought you might like to put the prayer which she sent with Prem-bhai when he was coming to join the Ashram and work in the school-to-be The Mother—I am told—had it read out for the opening of the School (2.12.43) I heard all this from his daughter who gave me this prayer

Richard

THE LATEST PHYSICS

A LETTER TRYING TO COPE WITH IT

I THANK you very much for the gift of the paperback, *A Brief History of Time* by Stephen W. Hawking.¹ I have read it with great interest and a bit of bafflement. I don't know whether I am scientifically quite competent to make comments, but some reflections of a general order may be hazarded. I'll start with a few remarks on certain points, philosophically scientific, made by Hawking.

He refers to the Jewish-Christian-Muslim tradition according to which the universe started at a finite and not very distant time in the past. Of course there are popular computations, based on Old-Testament genealogies, which tell us the exact week-day and even hour when the world was created in 4004 B.C! But this is not what was argued by the philosophers of the triple tradition Hawking has mentioned. About that "finite time" Hawking writes: "One argument for such a beginning was the feeling that it was necessary to have 'First Cause' to explain the existence of the universe. (Within the universe, you always explained one event as being caused by some earlier event, but the existence of the universe itself could be explained in this way if only it had some beginning.)" (p. 6)

I don't think that either the Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages, Moses Maimonides, or the Muslim Averroes and Avicenna, or the Christian Origen, Krigena and Aquinas interpreted "First Cause" as operating at a finite time in the past. God was taken to be always creating. The universe continues because of His creative activity and there is no reason to believe that His creative activity had a start at any particular moment. He precedes the world and is the "First Cause" ontologically, as the eternal sustainer of whatever exists, a self-existent being beyond whom thought cannot go. To Thomas Aquinas, reason could only be satisfied with the assumption that the world had no beginning, that God as the *sufficiens causa mundi* must apparently always have His effect, and that the doctrine of a beginning or the non-eternity of the world is to be received *sola fide*, by an act of pure faith in deference to Church authority.

Etienne Gilson,² the expert on Medieval Philosophy, writes: "Thomas could not find in the world created by God, such as the world now is, any necessary reason to suppose that it had not always existed.... The long-range import of this doctrine is that the created world of Thomas Aquinas is identically the intrinsically necessary world of science." So Hawking has philosophically no ground for writing: "So long as the universe had a beginning, we could suppose it had a creator. But if the universe is really completely self-contained, having no boundary or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end, it would simply be. What place, then, for a creator?" (p. 149)

¹ Bantam Books, England, 1989

² *The Elements of Christian Philosophy* (A Mentor Omega Book, The New American Library, New York 1963), pp. 214, 219

Whether a creator in any sense is needed or not has nothing to do with the non-beginning or the non-ending of the universe. The argument for or against His existence is to be found outside Hawking's cosmology

Hawking has revolved the question. If there was a big bang, would it imply a God to make the start of time and space which the big bang would signify? He says that the laws which science has found to be governing the universe within the limits set by Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle "may have originally been decreed by God, but it appears that he has since left the universe to evolve according to them and does not now intervene in it" (p 129) This posited non-intervention disinclines Hawking to favour the hypothesis of God as the Creator of the big bang Secondly, Hawking conceives it possible to assert that "God chose the initial configuration of the universe for reasons that we cannot hope to understand.. but if he had started it off in such an incomprehensible way, why did he choose to let it evolve according to laws that we could understand? The whole history of science has been the gradual realisation that events do not happen in an arbitrary manner, but that they reflect a certain underlying order, which may or may not be divinely inspired" (*ibid.*)

What Hawking seems to be driving at is rather obscure If the universe is orderly and comprehensible, as Hawking holds, why should a creative God not have set it going? Einstein memorably said. "God may be sophisticated but he is not malicious." He meant that the universe, if considered as created by God, may be very complex in its working but is yet such that its complexity can be unravelled God has not made it completely baffling and taken malicious pleasure in confounding poor humans. Hawking's statement suggests an easily understandable universe, but his whole book shows the extreme intricacy of its processes God appears to have made it graspable with great difficulty on our part, as both relativity theory and quantum theory prove Still, nothing goes to justify our thinking He chose the initial configuration to be such that we would never be able to go on seizing it more and more in scientific terms. Again, if God is taken not to intervene in the universal process within the purview of the scientific method, how is His existence as the basis of the cosmos negated? Einstein felt a mighty intelligence involved in the orderly and comprehensible nature of the cosmos as science surveys it and he intuited a subtle ultimate harmony between the mind of man the scientist and this immanent super-intelligence. On purely philosophical grounds, Hawking's questions sound arbitrary, though Einstein's God may be hardly satisfactory to the non-scientist—to man the metaphysician, the religious seeker, the mystical explorer or the visionary artist Hawking begins to make sense only when we take him in the strict context of the big bang and its scientific implications. He invokes the spirit of science to rule out all thought on what may have preceded the big bang. Apropos of certain "Friedmann solutions" he writes

"All of the Friedmann solutions have the feature that at some time in the past (between ten and twenty thousand million years ago) the distance between neighbouring galaxies must have been zero At that time, which we call the big bang, the

density of the universe and the curvature of space-time would have been infinite. Because mathematics cannot really handle infinite numbers, this means that the general theory of relativity (on which Friedmann's solutions are based) predicts that there is a point in the universe where the theory itself breaks down. Such a point is an example of what the mathematicians call a singularity. In fact, all our theories of science are formulated on the assumption that space-time is smooth and nearly flat, so they break down at the big bang singularity, where the curvature of space-time is infinite. This means that even if there were events before the big bang, one could not use them to determine what would happen afterward, because predictability would break down at the big bang. Correspondingly, if, as is the case, we know only what has happened since the big bang, we could not determine what has happened beforehand. As far as we are concerned, events before the big bang can have no consequence, so they should not form part of a scientific model of the universe. We should therefore cut them out of the model and say that time has a beginning at the big bang." (p. 50)

To be more precise, it is not only events before the big bang that imply the breakdown of all scientific theory. Hawking has said. "We are fairly confident that we have the right picture, at least back to about one second after the big bang." (p. 125) Science stands dumbfounded at the big bang's first second of activity. This first second has "the initial configuration . that we cannot hope to understand" and, if a Creator is posited, this configuration constitutes for Hawking the paradox of a universe starting "in such an incomprehensible way" and yet evolving "according to laws that we could understand" and giving him the impression of non-interference from any agency outside natural operations exhibiting "a certain underlying order." To avoid what he considers a situation with which scientific theory cannot cope and which may call for a Creator's choice of conditions unamenable to the mathematical vision of science, he asks for a world-view which does away with the notion of both beginning and end. All the same he speaks of galaxies running away from one another as a result of the universe expanding and he informs us: "The present evidence suggests that the universe will probably expand forever". (p. 49) Such expansion abolishes the idea of an end of the universe. But what has Hawking to say about the time when the galaxies were closer to one another and even so close as to be fused at one moment? Would that not make a beginning? Or are we to think that limitless expansion implies no limit to contraction and hence no fusion of the kind that would make an infinite density whose explosion would form the universe as we know it today. In short, the big bang singularity?

In Hawking's opinion, somehow the big bang can be avoided if we combine "quantum gravitational effects" with the "classical" theory of general relativity for "it is possible in the quantum theory for the ordinary laws of science to hold everywhere, including at the beginning of time. It is not necessary to postulate new laws for singularities, because there need not be any singularities in the quantum theory." (p. 141) In Einstein's physics, heavy masses cause "curvature" in space and

along this curvature lighter masses slide towards the heavy ones as if they were drawn to them: there is no direct force of gravitation exerted by the latter on the former, no "gravitational field" caused by the heavy masses. Quantum physics appears to bring back the concept of "force" even while not rejecting Einstein altogether. In this "way of looking at the gravitational field, the force between two matter particles is pictured as being carried by a particle of spin 2 called the graviton. This has no mass of its own, so the force it carries is long range. The gravitational force between the sun and the earth is ascribed to the exchange of gravitons between the particles that make up these two bodies" (pp 74-75). Gravitons are supposed to make what classical physics would call "gravitational waves" (p 75). These waves are never detected (*ibid*), but through the concept of them quantum theory's gravitons get linked with relativity theory's space-curvature. How? Hawking tells us "General relativity predicts that heavy objects that are moving will cause the emission of gravitational waves, ripples in the curvature of space that travel at the speed of light." (p. 94). I am puzzled. Surely Einstein himself never spoke of "ripples": he spoke only of the curvature of space instead of Newton's force of gravitation. Neither did he associate the speed of light with this curvature. As far as I know, the famous observation of Eddington in 1919 during a total eclipse of the sun proved that light from a star passing through the curved space in the proximity of the sun gets bent like any physical object. Quantum physicists must have made relativity theory yield the predictions Hawking speaks of. They may be logical but I fail to understand how with the help of gravitons the big bang can be avoided.

However, I am prepared to accept conclusions even if they lie beyond my competence to understand in the sphere of physics. What I am not prepared to admit philosophically is the notion of an expanding universe in the sense that Hawking and all other physicists take it. They say that galaxies appear to run away from one another because space itself is expanding and they are seen as running away just as spots on a balloon will appear to run away from one another when the balloon is blown bigger and bigger. To the philosophic mind the expansion of space without anything to expand into is absolutely repugnant. It makes no philosophic sense to speak of space expanding whether when the density of the universe is "infinite" or when the universe has already a certain calculable density. Just as *ex nihilo nihil fit* (nothing can come out of nothing), nothing can explode *à la* the big bang, thereby causing space (and time) to come into being, if there is nothing to explode into. All explosion or expansion implies space for its occurrence. If space comes into being, all of it must do so at once. there cannot be a growth of space as such. If the theory of an expanding universe involves the expansion of space itself rather than the dispersal more and more of objects, it gets reduced to absurdity in the philosophic view.

The practical meaning of space being curved is that objects moving in space do not follow a straight line but a gradual curve, so that if any thing moved on and on it would return to its starting-point in the long run. The fact that it would never reach an end to its movement and could go on repeating it without being able to avoid

returning to its starting-point gave rise to Einstein's description of the universe as finite yet boundless. What may lie beyond its finitude cannot come into the discourse of science: hence it is useless to science to speak of it. But space as such cannot be finite. And if the galaxies are running away from one another forever the curvature of space must become less and less and it would be impossible for one to return to one's point of departure, since one would go farther and farther forever. That is perhaps why Hawking speaks of science assuming that "space-time is smooth and nearly flat". (p. 503) With the universe expanding forever it is doubtful whether Einstein's description—"finite yet boundless"—retains any meaning. A sphere with measurable dimensions would fit the phrase. With dimensions increasing without limit boundlessness must coincide with infinity.

(To be continued)

AMAL KIRAN
(K D SETHNA)

OUT OF THE VEDAS

OUT of the Vedas and across
aeonic time down starveling years

the herd of white and seeking
cows wanders in from the burning
plains and onto the new construction

site as if they sense some ever-
green, forever-watered ground,

its hidden grain and sacred
crops to browse that they may

give again into the waiting
future

golden

milk of Light.

SEYRIL SCHOCHEN

NAGIN-BHAI TELLS ME

(Continued from the issue of October 1999)

03:08:1994

Everything has stopped. It will take a long time, a very long time to start again. But the Mother is there. She had descended and she is there. Power also. But the nervous being is very weak. I do not know how to proceed. Why can't the psychic being or the spirit guide? I don't know what to do.

I should leave it to the Guru. He knows best. He will do whatever is to be done. It seems, it will take a long time to start again.

06:08:1994

Sadhana has stopped. I don't see anything happening. But it must be still going on. That is certain. I feel now great energy flowing in my limbs. It is very tangible, it is almost a physical sensation. Of course, it must be in the subtle-physical; but it is felt by the outer body too. There is energy and there is Power.

The Mother has descended and the work must be going on. But about the next step,—I have no idea, I know nothing.

To will, to ask for something, to go a step forward,—I don't know what to do. Perhaps the best is to aspire and leave everything to them. If the Mother has descended in me, the best is for the psychic being to get closer to her.

Perhaps that is the best.

09:08:1994

Nothing is happening at the moment, at least I don't see anything happening. The work might be going on, but—I don't know.

My nervous being is very weak and I don't want to force anything. I had to go to see the doctor; he wanted me to get admitted in the Nursing Home.

The matter is serious and I should be careful. I will leave everything to them. They will do the best and I am sure something will happen with the Darshan.

But now I will involve the participation of my psychic being. It must take the lead. This is very important.

You must have heard of Paul Brunton. Once he had gone to a magician. He wanted to know whether these magic tricks really mean anything. He wanted to have an actual demonstration from him. The magician asked him to bring a turkey the next day. Brunton did so. As soon as he was to enter the magician's house, he was told to strangle it to death; he also told him to make sure that it was done. The dead turkey was laid on the table. The magician did something and the dead bird revived. It flew to the ceiling and fell down on the table, once again dead. Brunton saw it and he was convinced. When asked how he could do it, the magician replied that he had brought from the universal a vital force and put it in the turkey that was lying dead earlier on.

the table. But the vital force could not stay in it for too long and disappeared. The bird was again dead

We are something of that sort. The supramental race is ready, but there is no superman yet Unless the superman arrives the new creation cannot appear and remain firm here. Our efforts must be towards becoming supermen. Then only will the Mother's work progress. She has done her part of the job, we have yet to do ours Her help is always there, of course. But it must be done

17:08:1994

Nothing is happening by way of sadhana. But I am happy I am involving more and more my psychic being in it I am living constantly in the delight of existence. I am not forcing anything; I am leaving everything simply to them Aspiration is there, but no forcing.

Sri Aurobindo knows the condition I have been in during the last couple of weeks. He has not told me anything directly; but he told me about it through one person. She came to my house specifically to tell me about it. Sri Aurobindo told it to her and she, without knowing anything about my sadhana, came and spoke to me.

I am happy he is taking care of everything I am very happy.

24:08:1994

Nothing yet. Nervous being is very weak. But I know Sri Aurobindo is taking care of my physical also. It will take some more time for things to begin happening

Everything is there,—all that was achieved is there in the background

07:09:1994

I am much better now See, I am a heart patient, I had two heart-attacks and for the last four years I have been taking medicine three times a day. The doctor has now asked me to stop it. I have discontinued it now My heart is quite good, in good shape It may not be as good as it was before the heart-attacks, but medicine is not necessary any more However, I go to the doctor for regular checkups, every fortnight or so No medicine,—that is his advice, the doctor's

You see, Sri Aurobindo is working I may not be conscious of it, but he is working There is no doubt about that, no doubt at all. He is working with all the foresight

The way he has fixed the Square is really wonderful. Nothing disturbs me now

He is aware that my birthday is coming soon, tomorrow. In earlier days I used to write to him. But now he knows it already.

When he was in his body he used to wait for my letter Nirod recently told it to somebody, it is through him I came to know about it. Why did not Nirod inform me earlier? Why did he not tell it to me directly? He should have informed me. It is not that he got the message from Sri Aurobindo now; he is not in touch with Sri Aurobindo Had he told me earlier, my approach would have been different.

I am not doing any sadhana now. I have stopped taking medicine But my head
is empty, I feel it empty. It will take time to be all right.
But he will do everything.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

PASSING MOMENTS

ONCE I went to the garden
And found that there were no flowers,
I looked at my watch
But from it had vanished all the hours.

From sky to deeper sky
In search of a home the birds flew;
Although twinkling in night
Depth of the night the stars never knew

I read many a book
Yet of meaning the words were devoid;
I saw in the nothing
Only strange reasons of nothing employed

But then I seized the arrow
Whizzing through the vacuous air;
And made it a rushing flame
Who could life's swiftnesses bear.

With a master-key in hand,
Oh to be active eternity!
I walk from peak to unseen peak
And claim that many-hued fire for me

R. Y. DESHPANDE

THE MYSTERY OF SRI AUROBINDO'S 'DEPARTURE'

VIS-À-VIS

THE IDEAL OF PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION

(Continued from the issue of October 1999)

THUS the Mother's body was kept alive through the direct intervention of Sri Aurobindo. But the crisis was not yet over. Trouble came from another quarter, a very serious trouble of a radical nature, and this was the diabolical contribution of the great Adversary who is dead-set to frustrate all efforts at the supramental transformation of the earth-consciousness. This is how it happened.

Sri Aurobindo placed the Task before the Mother, and she accepted it all right. But the question arose in her body-consciousness. "Is the supramental physical transformation at all feasible or even possible upon earth?" The Mother has thrown much needed light on the nature of this crisis of confidence and how it was finally resolved. On many different occasions and in many different contexts she adverted to this critical period when the dark Adversary was whispering all the time, day and night, with diabolical tenacity, most disturbing suggestions such as "Not possible! not possible! Sri Aurobindo came to realise it, therefore he has left. Why do you seek to succeed where he has failed? It is a vain delusion on your part to think that you would accomplish what he could not. You too better give up the attempt and depart."

The Mother happened to remember that in 1920 Sri Aurobindo had assured her that this time the supramental Realisation would be achieved and that he had come for that. But he had left his physical body! Then?

In this situation, the whole future of the Ashram as well as of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's Work was kept in abeyance. The Mother announced twelve days' suspension of all activities in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, she retired into quiet seclusion and almost stopped talking during this period, all the time seeking for a right Response from Sri Aurobindo.

The Mother had not to wait all that much. In three or four days' time the Answer came and Sri Aurobindo's material consciousness which was for so many years looking after the affairs of the Ashram and discharging all the responsibilities entered the Mother's body and assured her of his constant living presence and support for the successful fulfilment of the Work. And the crisis was resolved.

Now let us listen to the narration of the sequence of events in the Mother's own words pronounced on different occasions in different years:

"There is one thing which is so difficult, it is that Sri Aurobindo left his body. It is always upon that that all the adverse forces base themselves for their attacks, always. All the adverse suggestions, all the adverse forces, all the bad wills, all the disbeliefs, all, all are based upon that. "Yes, yes, but Sri Aurobindo himself has departed!"

“When I met Sri Aurobindo for the first time, he told me: ‘Others before came upon earth to prepare and they have gone away, but this time it is for achieving.’ And he too has gone away!”

“Sri Aurobindo used to speak in a way as if he would never leave. But he left. And this fact comes as something which tells you: ‘Look, all those high things are only dreams reserved for fulfilment after thousands of years.’ There is always a Voice, the Voice of the adverse forces, which comes to tell you. ‘You see, you see how you are deceiving yourself, how you are indulging in illusions; all that is just a mirage. Don’t you see it?’ ”

“The inner part of my being entered into a consciousness which saw and felt the things in accordance with the higher consciousness, but the body was saying all the time ‘These are only dreams, these are nothing but dreams: for us, the material bodies, the ultimate destiny is to be under the ground.’ ”

“And then really I thought. ‘Has the time for realisation truly arrived? Is it truly possible? Or is it for another time later on?’ ”

“Naturally all the habitual suggestions come with that ‘Well, Sri Aurobindo himself has not done that’ (I personally know why, but people do not know that, the general mass does not know that). Then, how do you expect to succeed where he has not succeeded? And did he not write, ‘I have come this time for THAT and I’ll do it’? Then?” ”

“So there was a difficult period after Sri Aurobindo’s passing. It was not long but it was difficult. I stopped all activities of the Ashram for a period of twelve days from 5 December 1950, the day of departure of Sri Aurobindo. At bottom, I fixed twelve days for the entire Work, to know if the Ashram with its mission would continue or be done away with.”

“Everything was like that, in suspense, till the moment when Sri Aurobindo appeared and made me understand the whole thing *completely*.”

“It did not take twelve days; by the 12th of December everything was clear, understood and settled. From the 12th I started seeing people. The activities of the Ashram were resumed only after twelve days counting from 5 December but the question was settled on the 12th.”

We may add here two significant statements of the Mother scribbled in her hand on pieces of paper in the days subsequent to the ‘Departure’ of Sri Aurobindo:

1. On 7 December 1950. “Lord, Thou hast given me the assurance, this morning, that Thou wouldst stay with us till Thy work is accomplished, not merely as a consciousness that guides and illumines, but also as a presence active and working. In clear and precise terms, Thou hast promised me that all of Thyself would remain here and not quit the earth atmosphere till the earth is transformed.” (Original in French)

2. “When I asked Him (on December 8, 1950) to resuscitate his body, He clearly answered:

'I have left this body purposely. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in the supramental way.' "

So the Mother was now ready to undertake in all seriousness her new mission of continuing Sri Aurobindo's unfinished part of the Work and bringing it to a successful completion. But everything was not easy as yet. To make the flow of her Work smooth and unimpeded, three other occult operations had to be resorted to, two by the Mother and one by Sri Aurobindo from behind the veil. The Mother has described in sufficient detail what followed Sri Aurobindo's Assurance as indicated above. As a matter of fact, what followed staggers our imagination. Let us see it.

Sri Aurobindo's Action The Mother has revealed that although she had realised the Supreme in her inner and higher consciousness even before she met Sri Aurobindo, her body as body had not done that. But the moment they met for the first time the Mother's body realised the absolute Supreme in Sri Aurobindo himself. For the thirty years they lived together in the closest spiritual intimacy and identification, she received everything through and from Sri Aurobindo. It was for her a life of absolute and total security and serenity and bliss but all centred in Sri Aurobindo. But the snag is that this won't do if the Mother's physical body was to be transformed. For that, it should not depend on anything or anyone else except the Supreme and that too directly, without any intermediary.

So Sri Aurobindo stepped aside and withdrew from the physical scene. And the Mother's body-consciousness reeled under this sudden loss of its support-base which it had taken and experienced as its most stable *point d'appui*, absolute and permanent, beyond any question of its wavering or disappearance. Now that *point d'appui* proved to be not so absolute at all! It was a terrible discomfiture for the Mother's physical consciousness. The question hammered itself with unceasing insistency. "Was not the great Buddha justified in his categorical assertion that nothing in the framework of Time and Space—nothing, nothing without exception—is really permanent and stable? Was it a mistaken idea to have assumed that at least Sri Aurobindo's physical presence upon this earth would prove an exception to Buddha's dictum? And if Buddha is correct, what need or validity is there for attempting any supramental transformation in Time and Space which will after all at some stage collapse and vanish in its turn?"

Thus the Buddha's realisation of the utter relativity and impermanence of everything gripped the Mother's consciousness at that time just after Sri Aurobindo's totally unexpected passing. Sri Aurobindo saw that for the proper furtherance of his Work through the Mother's body, two things were needed at that moment. First, the Mother's body-consciousness had to be pulled away from the brink of Nirvanic withdrawal; and secondly, it had to be provided with another *point d'appui* which would not crumble under any situation. Both these ends were met by projecting the Mother's physical consciousness directly into the Supreme, this time without any

intermediary And the Mother refound there the most stable and absolute support for her Work, also the Supreme's sanction for manifestation and supramental transformation

Now let us listen to the Mother's own narration of the prelude and postlude of her physical being's direct projection into the Supreme:

"My first meeting with Sri Aurobindo gave me the sense of having found the necessary Truth During the thirty years I was with Sri Aurobindo, I constantly lived in an absolute and this absolute was an absolute of security—a sense of total, total security, even physical, even the most material. A sense of absolute security because Sri Aurobindo was there in his body. And that held me all the time in a way as if I was carried along: that did not leave me even for a single minute during those thirty years. I used to do my work with a base of [that] absolute and of eternity."

"So long as I was living with Sri Aurobindo, my experience of the Absolute was in him and...(difficult to explain)."

"When Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, I had at that moment an experience analogous to that of Buddha when he discovered that everything is impermanent."

"Thus when Sri Aurobindo left, all on a sudden all the life foundered and one had fallen into a deep pit of nothingness Nothing, nothing—there are no words for that—nothing could describe the sense of crumbling down my body felt when Sri Aurobindo's own body disappeared from the view. I don't think there could be any physical destruction more grievous than this foundering."

"For during the thirty years Sri Aurobindo was there physically, my body had unified itself, in consciousness, with the Presence of Sri Aurobindo and it leaned upon that without the shadow of any anxiety. It felt that its life depended upon that, its progress, its consciousness, its action depended upon that, its power depended upon that, everything depended upon that And there was no question about it.

"For my body it was absolutely impossible that things could be in a different way, the very idea that Sri Aurobindo could ever leave his body and that this way of being in relation to my body could no longer exist was absolutely unthinkable "

"So with the patent fact of the disappearance of Sri Aurobindo's body and his physical presence, my body came to feel with great intensity that in the eternity of the Play everything is unstable, everything fails you. The experience was similar to the Buddha's when he discovered that everything is impermanent and it was necessary to seek and find *something else*

"My body was seized with this sense of absolute impermanence—the experience was so absorbing, so gripping—of the incertitude, instability, of the fugitive, inconstant and impermanent character of all things: one could not lean for support upon anything."

"It was at that moment, all of a sudden my body consciousness was taken up in its entirety and projected into the Supreme. It is, I insist, the consciousness of the

body, the consciousness of the cells, which was given this experience of direct entry into the Supreme. All other parts of the being had that experience long before and knew of it in a constant way.

“But the body? Yes, one had spoken of it to it, it believed it, but it had not till then had this sort of experience, so concrete, so total and so absolute that one can no longer forget it even for a second.

“Well, it was at that moment of utter loss that my physical being and the individual personal body was granted this experience in a definitive way. They came to feel that it was only the All which never fails you and that in an absolute way. The unique Absolute, it is the Supreme. The unique Permanence, it is the Supreme. The unique Security, it is the Supreme. And everything in manifestation has no other purpose except to lead you to this Supreme.”

“At present Sri Aurobindo is trying to give to my body the consciousness of Permanence, of Immortality and of the Certitude of absolute security, in Matter, in Life, in the action of every minute. And that is the bottom and basis of transformation.”

“Now I understand why Sri Aurobindo left. He had to step aside, first to confront my body with the sense of utter loss of support and then to restore to it the certitude of absolute support directly in the Supreme. And this was needed for my body for the proper discharge of its responsibility. Evidently, the sense of foundering visited my body to teach it something which it had not learnt before.”

So this was the Action done by Sri Aurobindo. The measure taken by the Mother herself was equally startling and cannot but defy our imagination.

(To be concluded)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

WHEN EACH FALL AND STUMBLING

WHEN each fall and stumbling
Is realised as a step towards him,
The ruin of a thousand dreams
Forces the eyes to see daylight;
When all calculated aims are wronged,
Life calls him in a clear voice
To clasp mind's rein in steady hands.

K N VIJU

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of October 1999)

Expansion and Division

IN ITS earliest form, *Savitri* was not much longer than *Love and Death*, Sri Aurobindo's youthful narrative poem on a related theme. Like *Love and Death*, it was not divided into books or cantos, but only into sections separated by blank spaces. As the poem grew, these sections were replaced by numbered divisions with significant names. In the course of time the structure became more and more elaborate. A glance at this development will provide an overview of the main stages in the composition of *Savitri*.

Let us begin with a more precise idea of the poem's original length and how much it later expanded. It will be useful to refer to an early version that has been transcribed and published. "Sri Aurobindo's First Fair Copy of His Earliest Version of *Savitri*" appeared in *Mother India* in 1981-82, with line-numbers that are convenient for our purpose. This version, from the end of 1916, is 1637 lines long. As now printed, *Savitri* has 23,837 lines. This is nearly fifteen times what it was in the beginning.

It did not expand evenly all through. Certain passages grew enormously, others very little. Hundreds of pages of new matter were accommodated in a massive evolving structure. Yet in some ways this structure remained surprisingly faithful to the original design.

The opening sections of the "first fair copy" consist of 98 lines covering roughly what is now "The Symbol Dawn" (Book One, Canto One) and "The Vision and the Boon" (Book Three, Canto Four), with a short connecting passage. These lines were ultimately replaced by the present Part One, which has 11,683 lines. This means that the beginning of the poem—what precedes the birth of Savitri—increased to approximately 120 times what it was in 1916.

On the other hand, what is now the Book of Death is not much longer than the equivalent passage of 133 lines in the first fair copy. In the final version it is 177 lines. And even of the 133 original lines, 108 were identical to what they are now. This means that Sri Aurobindo later changed only 25 lines and added 44. So this passage remains very similar to what it was in 1916. In this case, it may not be because in 1950 Sri Aurobindo found it impossible to improve upon what he had written so many years earlier. It seems that he left the Book of Death aside with the intention of returning to it, but never did so. We know this from what Nirod has told us about the last work on *Savitri*, shortly before Sri Aurobindo's passing.*

But there are some passages which Sri Aurobindo worked on seriously in the late 1940s, without changing them drastically from what they were in 1916. Book Nine,

* When informed that the *Book of Death* and *Epilogue* were still to be taken up for revision, Sri Aurobindo told Nirodbaran "About that we shall see later" —R Y D

“The Book of Eternal Night”, is a notable instance. Having worked on it early in the period between 1916 and 1920, Sri Aurobindo again gave it full attention around 1946. The revision was substantial, but only increased the length of Book Nine to about twice that of the corresponding sections in 1916. Book Ten, Canto Four, on the other hand, grew to something like eighteen times the length of the passage from which it started. This gives an idea of how much some passages expanded, while others remained similar to what they were from the beginning.

Even in passages that were altered almost beyond recognition through decades of rewriting, we do find lines where in the very first drafts Sri Aurobindo hit upon the perfect expression and never found any need to change it later on. In the opening of the 1916 version, which eventually grew into Part One, there are five or six such lines:

This was the day when Satyavan must die

Like a tired god into mysterious seas.

His soul drew back into the speed and noise
Of the vast business of created things.

...the thoughts that skim the fathomless surge
Of Nature and wing back to hidden shores

That is, of the 11,683 lines of the present Part One, these can be traced back unchanged to 1916. Another twenty lines are quite similar, sometimes differing by only a word or two. The rest is almost entirely new. Much of it was written in the 1930s and early 1940s, when Sri Aurobindo was concentrating on the Yoga of the King and the Book of the Traveller of the Worlds.

It was only gradually that he discovered the potential of *Savitri* for expressing occult and spiritual experience. This is the biggest difference between the content of the original poem and the epic as we know it. Just as in the early versions there was virtually no Yoga of Aswapati, likewise *Savitri*'s Yoga was not part of the conception of the poem until quite late in its formation. Except for its first canto, the Book of Yoga was added only in 1947, three years before the completion of *Savitri*.

Early “Books” and “Cantos”

It is instructive to see how the original continuous narrative poem was gradually divided and subdivided, ultimately into three Parts, twelve Books and forty-nine Cantos. This development of a complex structure out of a simple one reflects a vast change in the conception and scope of the poem. Yet the continuity through all modifications is equally striking.

The simplest division appeared in the first fair copy. This was a division into

“Book I” and “Book II”, with no titles. These “Books” had no connection with the Books of the epic as we know it, but corresponded to what are now called Parts. And since originally there was only a short prologue representing what is now Part One, the original “Book I” and “Book II” corresponded practically to what are now Part Two and Part Three.

This division, which is dropped in the next stage, reappears later in a division of the poem into two parts called “Earth” and “Beyond”. This persists until the early 1940s. The titles “Earth” and “Beyond” are significant, though they disappear in the final scheme which has three Parts instead of two. Earth and the Beyond are the two planes of reality, physical and supraphysical, whose interaction is necessary for the divine consummation in the material world envisaged by Sri Aurobindo. In terms of the story of *Savitri*, “Earth” included the events leading up to the death of Satyavan; “Beyond” referred to the passage through other worlds forming a symbolic background for Savitri’s struggle with the forces of denial represented by Death.

The next stage brings out this symbolism more clearly. Sri Aurobindo now divided the poem into six cantos and an epilogue, giving names to the cantos. These names correspond to those of several of the later “books”. They are. “Love”, “Fate”, “Death”, “Night”, “Twilight” and “Day”.

The previous twofold division is no longer explicit, but is still implied and will soon re-emerge. For Love, Fate and Death represent the principal elements, positive and negative, of the problem of earthly life as it is confronted in the poem, Night, Twilight and Day symbolise fundamental aspects of existence, from the Inconscient to the Superconscient, which are largely beyond our normal experience, but have to be taken into account in order to arrive at a solution.

The title of the first canto, “Love”, resembles that of the present Book Five, “The Book of Love”. But in those days the opening passage was so short that “Love” also included what eventually went into Books One to Four. The canto called “Fate” corresponded to what is now Book Six, “The Book of Fate”, but mainly to Book Six, Canto One, the dramatic scene in which Narad discloses the fate of Satyavan. Most of the more philosophical matter in Book Six, Canto Two, “The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain”, was introduced much later. “Death” included the year leading up to Satyavan’s death, as now described in Book Seven, Canto One, as well as the fateful day narrated in the present Book Eight, “The Book of Death”. The other cantos, “Night”, “Twilight” and “Day”, corresponded to the later Books Nine to Eleven: “The Book of Eternal Night”, “The Book of the Double Twilight” and “The Book of Everlasting Day”. The poem ended with an Epilogue, as it does now. In fact, the Epilogue has remained quite similar to what it was then.

There are four manuscripts of the first canto, “Love”. But there are only two of the third canto, “Death”, and two of the Epilogue. There are more than four manuscripts of some other cantos. Sri Aurobindo was evidently beginning to work separately on different sections of the poem, rather than writing it all out from beginning to end each time.

The next stage has the same divisions, but now they are termed “books” instead of “cantos”. “Book I” is “Love”; the other titles, also, are those of the previous “cantos”. There is at least a partial manuscript of each of these books, but Sri Aurobindo does not seem to have written them in sequence or finished a new version of the whole poem in this form. We find a complete “Book II: Fate”, a complete “Book IV. Night”, and so on; but a complete “Book III: Death” does not exist. The manuscript headed “Book III: Death” is half-finished. Sri Aurobindo revised this in the late 1940s and turned it into Book Seven, Canto One. But it stops before the beginning of what is now the Book of Death. When he eventually did some work on the present Book of Death, Sri Aurobindo had to take an old “Canto III” as his starting-point, because there was no “Book III” containing that passage.

The evolution of the opening

Up to this point, Sri Aurobindo’s work on *Savitri* has already been extensive, but has not been equally distributed over the various sections of the poem. This inequality will increase as time goes on, with some passages receiving immensely more attention than others. The passage with the largest number of manuscript versions—more than forty-five—is the opening. It is a good example of how *Savitri* changed over the years.

The “first fair copy” began like this:

In a huge forest where the listening Night
 Heard lonely voices and in the large hush
 Was conscious of the sigh and tread of things
 That have no sound for the rich heart of day,—
 For now her phantom tribes were not abroad,
 The panther’s eyes glared not, the tiger slept
 Prone in his lair of jungle or deep grass,—
 Startling the widebrowed dreamer Dawn arose
 Lain in her darker thoughtful sister’s robe
 She pushed away the loving cloak that sealed
 To rest her brilliant and imperious eyes
 And waved the dim kind guardian from her side.

There is not a single line in this that resembles any line in *Savitri* as we know it. What is in common is only the idea of starting the poem with a description of the dawn of the day of Satyavan’s death. But at the end of the passage we have the line:

This was the day when Suthyavan must die.

This line was there from the very beginning, and it is the only line in this passage that

has passed without change (apart from the spelling of Satyavan's name) into the final version. But a few lines were similar; for example, one just after the passage I have quoted:

Raised were the wonderful lids that open heaven.

Later this became

Parted the eternal lids that open heaven

Further on we find:

Once she half-looked behind for her great sun,
Then thoughtful turned to her immortal work

Later, "great" became "veiled" and "turned" became "went", but otherwise these lines have remained intact. Then, in the description of Savitri waking on that day, we have:

Sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom,
Nor knew why the close lingering ache was there,
So quiet, so old, so natural to its place.

This has changed somewhat in the final version, but substantially it is the same. A few lines below comes:

Daily oblation of her unwept tears

The preceding lines have been completely rewritten, but this line has remained as it was, with only the addition of a "The" at the beginning.

For six or seven manuscripts, the opening remains similar to this. The last version of "Canto One: Love" starts a little differently:

In a dense forest under moonless skies. ..

With "moonless", it begins to come nearer to the feeling of the later versions. "Moonless" may have suggested "starless" in the line that begins the next manuscript. But now the atmosphere is suddenly quite different:

A starless hush prepared epiphany
Near was the hour of the transfiguring gods

And so on. This change came when Sri Aurobindo substituted the heading "Book I"

for “Canto I” At this stage the opening passage becomes entirely different and starts to look more like *Savitri* as we know it. In fact, almost the whole opening has been replaced by something new. It continues:

Night lost below in leaves, on high enshrined
 In her own mantle of immensity
 Waiting upon the marge of silence sat
 Mute with the expectation of her change

These lines, except for the first, remained in some form for a long time, though some of them were eventually changed beyond recognition or discarded completely.

The line that comes second in this version, “Near was the hour of the transfiguring gods”, was shifted to the beginning after some time. And having become the opening line, it appeared again in slightly altered forms—first:

The hour was near of the transfiguring gods

Then

It was an hour of the transfiguring gods

Here Sri Aurobindo has put the words “It was” at the beginning This remains through several manuscripts. Then we have:

It was the hush of a transfiguring hour.

This is followed by something rather different:

It was the moment when the gods awake.

But Sri Aurobindo changed “moment when” to “hour before” and the line became:

It was the hour before the gods awake.

So here, in the twenty-first version of the opening passage, we have the first line in its final form Sri Aurobindo went on enlarging and perfecting the opening of *Savitri* through some two dozen more manuscripts But apart from capitalising “gods”, he did not again change the first line.

(*To be continued*)

BIRTHDAY WISHES

SUN-EYED, O clear ray!
Ever adorned with fancies gay
Loving and rapturous,
 Always gentle,
Bearing on your visage
 A cute sweet smile.

Conquering, O Soldier!
 All earthly sorrows
 By native good humour,
Ever radiant, O Soul joyous!
 Alert with ardent fervour.

Son of the Mother,
 Worthy of Her Grace,
Your presence simply will
 All glooms efface
Comrade of the Supreme
 Divine on earth,
Always blessed
 With heavenly mirth

On this auspicious
 Birthday of yours
Our prayers arise
 From a deepmost source,
A wish sincere and loving,
 Our hearts shall always cherish:

“May many more of this day
Occur again and again
 In a happy way.”

PUSHPA PRAVA DASH

A TRIBUTE TO THE “SACRED POET OF INDIA”: KAMALAKANTO-DA

It is just to express some of my unforgettable memories and heart-felt gratitude to the “Sacred Poet of India”, our dear teacher Kamalakanto-da who passed away on 29 April 1999 that I render this article.

Kamalakanto-da took birth in West Bengal (Shibpur, Howrah) on 14th October 1913. His father’s name was Kishory Mohan Mukherjee and the mother’s Basanti Devi (from the Ganguli family). He completed his graduation in English and Sanskrit from Calcutta University in 1933.

Kamalakanto-da was a teacher from 1933 to 35, a professor 1935-37, a secretary of the Board of Education, Bengal, 1937-42 and a factory executive from 1942 to 49

He had been contributing articles to different magazines even in his teens and in his youth he participated in the nationalist movement for the freedom of Mother India and was imprisoned. True to his nature he didn’t ask for freedom-fighters’ pension in the post-independence era, he followed the path of the veterans like Nolini Kanta Gupta and Sudhir Sarkar.

He became a devotee of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and came to the Ashram on 12 August 1949. Since then he never looked back and worked in the Ashram whole-heartedly for half a century, and he followed the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s teachings in every walk of his life. We get a glimpse of his Ashram-life which he has described in a very picturesque manner in his article titled “My Memorable Moments with the Mother” published in M. P. Pandit’s book *Breath of Grace*.

By the Mother’s Grace and also by his inherent genius he could pen poems which were brought out in various periodicals, such as *India Tomorrow*, *Advance*, *Pondy Observer*, *New Times Observer*, *Mother India*, *Beacon Light*, *Poet*, *Laurel Leaves*, *Writers’ Life Line*, *Srinwantu*, *Sri Aurobindo’s Action*, etc.

His friends were M. P. John, Amado Yuzon and his son Benjamin R. Yuzon, Stephen Hill, Ernest Key, Krishna Srinivas, K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), M. P. Pandit, K R Srinivasa Iyengar, R. Y. Deshpande, Kamal Gupta and many others with whom he had literary correspondence.

As a renowned oriental poet he was invited by Dr. Amado M. Yuzon of the Philippines, the Founder and President of U.P.L.I. (United Poets Laureate International) to join the 3rd World Poets’ Meet at Manila, in 1970. Though he could not go for the meeting three of his poems, sent by him, were recited there. For his contributions he received due recognition and was made an honorary member, he was also given the title “The Sacred Poet of India” for his exemplary services for world-brotherhood and peace through poetry.

Kamalakanto-da was a member of the World Poets’ Society International, (U.S.A.), Cinque Ports Poets’ Society, England, World Union, and Pondicherry Cultural Academy. He gave some radio talks which were broadcast from A.I.R. Pondicherry. His published book of poems and two plays, entitled *Petals and Sparks*,

was highly praised by many poets and critics of international fame.

Kamalakanto-da was a sincere sadhak who did gate-duty at the Ashram regularly. In my early youth when I came to the Ashram, I was very much interested to study Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings. I came to know that he was taking *Savitri*-classes for adults, with the knowledge of the Mother. So I approached him and forthwith he accepted me as his student. I used to attend the evening classes which were conducted in the Ashram School.

Kamalakanto-da not only brought us in contact with Sri Aurobindo's great epic *Savitri*; he also made us feel its inner meaning and consciousness. By reading its mantric lines again and again and explaining them in a most lucid and understandable manner, he infused interest and enthusiasm in his students. We continued to study *Savitri* regularly, though not religiously. We studied *Savitri* with him for twenty-four years from 1975 to 1999.

Kamalakanto-da was a teacher and a guide who never became tired. In spite of his frequent illness in his eighties, he continued to take our classes and carried on his day-to-day activities regularly. If by chance someone was absent in the class, he would enquire about him from others and whenever he met the latter he would ask the reason for his absence. To my utter surprise I found that he not only used to write the absentee's name but also the reasons of his absence if any, in his diary. From this one can perceive how much importance and emphasis he was giving to studying *Savitri* regularly.

I came across a folder of Kamalakanto-da on top of which he had pasted a printed quotation from Mathew Arnold; it reads as follows.

"Culture is indispensably necessary, and culture is reading; but reading with a purpose to guide it, and with a system. He does a good work who does anything to help this, indeed, it is the one essential service now to be rendered to education."

Now, I would say, Kamalakanto-da believed in it and practised it in his life.

The Mother's inscription on one of his birthday cards is reproduced on the facing page.

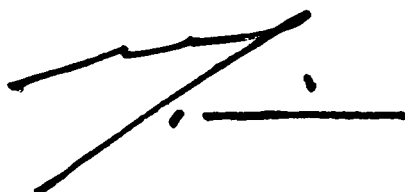
(To be concluded)

RAMCHANDRA PANI

THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY BLESSINGS
TO KAMALAKANTO

14.10.69

Bonne Tête
to Kamalakanto
with
blessings



AT THE MOTHER'S FEET LIFE FALLS IN PLACE

ONE day in the second week of November 1998, I could not bow down in front of the Mother's Feet with the quotation from *Savitri*:

All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life,

—because there were other devotees doing their pranam. This was in the Ashram Meditation Hall. I didn't wait and came out saying to myself, "I have no aching throb right now so it is alright if I don't do my pranam today."

That very week I developed pain in the chest. Yes, a severe ache as if any time it would develop into an attack! I was feeling weak, afraid and helpless. I took to bed, doing only the bare minimum of housework. I felt an urge to pray to the Mother. So, lying on my bed for three days I only chanted:

To heal with her feet the aching throb of life.

I felt better and organised my study table. Under the glass covering it I have placed pictures of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo with their messages. I removed the glass, dusted and re-arranged the pictures till I was satisfied. However, one area remained empty where no picture would fit in. I tried my best in various ways to fill up the empty space but it wouldn't work so I had to leave it that way till something better came along.

Then on the 16th of November I went for the Mother's Room Darshan and received the card with the picture of the Mother's feet—in attractive shades of blue—with the following lines.

All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things.

I was awe-struck! I went within myself into communion with the Mother. A little while later standing on the footpath in the sun I read and re-read these four magical lines—my mind became completely vacant of thought! Something mysterious was happening. The Mother's feet were following me, chasing me like the ones in *The Hound of Heaven* I had read in my schooldays.

Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet.

I came home and wanted to put the card somewhere where I could have a look at the Mother's feet and read the verses every day. Spontaneously, I went to my study table and lifted up the glass and placed it on the empty space. Lo! it covered up the space so perfectly well that once again, awe-struck, I went within myself and expressed my gratitude to the Mother for Her Divine Ways of stepping into my life.

In the evening, after the day's revelations, my heart full of love and adoration for the Mother, I sat down to read *Savitri* and opened the book on *The Adoration of the Divine Mother*. I read on . To my utter surprise I landed on the following lines.

All Nature dumbly calls to her alone
To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things
Savitri, p 314

At the day's end I grasped, once for all, that only clinging on to the Mother's Feet, *at all times*, is the very best thing to do, for life then falls in place in perfect harmony

SHYAMOLI KAPOOR

JOY, THE SPLENDOROUS RADIANCE

Oh, but can joy be
Permanent in Mahananda's
Manifestation?
Were this so, the Creator
Would rest in his own delight
And there would be no movement,
No labour and strife
To achieve progress
For betterment.

This is the fief of the Creatrix—
The Supreme Mother's...
It is within her mighty arms
That the Creator's will
And design manifest

Hers is the burden and
The sacrifice—
Hers is the glory
And the ecstasy!

The Gods worship her,
The Avatars serve her
In their multitudinous
Capacities

What magnificently concerted
Orchestration resounds
Throughout the universe!

Listen, listen to it in your heart,
Be intuned to its melody .
And watch the sun rise
On the awakening shore .

Do I hear it sing
As it ebbs and flows?
Will the morning raga
Uplift my soul
To a splendid Paradise?

GEORGETTE COTY

THE VEDAS AND THE FUTURE OF INDIAN CULTURE

THE Vedas are traditionally considered as the bedrock of Indian culture and civilisation. But what is the basis of this traditional reverence for the Vedas? Is it based on some truth or is it a traditional superstition like many other beliefs? Even if there is some truth in the Vedas how far are they relevant to the future of Indian culture or the progress of human culture in general? These are important questions which have to be satisfactorily answered to understand the value of this ancient scripture. The present article examines this issue in the light of Sri Aurobindo's thought.

Is there at all anything of value in the Vedas? If we are to accept the ritualistic interpretation of Sayana and the naturalistic interpretation of the European scholars then there is nothing deep and profound in the Vedas which can be of much value to the present or future of mankind. The Vedas in these conceptions are either a manual of religious rituals or the "babblings of a child-humanity", chantings of primitive barbarians. But Sri Aurobindo, with his spiritual and psychological interpretation has opened a new chapter in Vedic interpretation. He has given to the modern Vedic scholar a new approach and a deeper light to look into this ancient scripture. In this new light shed by Sri Aurobindo the Vedas present themselves as a great saga of spiritual quest, adventure and victory.

The Vedas in the Indian spiritual tradition are held in great respect as an expression of the highest spiritual inspiration. The men who revealed the Vedas are considered as Rishis, spiritual seers possessing the highest spiritual wisdom. The Vedic hymns are considered as Mantras, sacred words breathed out from the depth of the heart by a process of spiritual contemplation. "Mantras are the products of spiritual contemplation" says Yaska the ancient commentator on the Vedas. And a constantly recurring theme in this ancient Vedic tradition is that there is a deeper spiritual meaning to the Vedas which can be fathomed only by the seer and the yogi. The Vedic sages themselves speak of their utterances as secret words which reveal their entire significance only to the seer *kavaye nivacanāni nityāni vacāmsi*. Yaska remarks in his epilogue to the Nirukta: "Concerning the mantras none can claim to have perceived their truths if one is not a rishi and a tapaswi" ¹ Most of the ancient traditional commentators of the Vedas, though predominantly ritualistic in their approach, admitted the possibility of a spiritual or *ādhyātmic* interpretation of the scripture. But Western scholarship led by Max Muller ignored all these suggestions inherent in the ancient Vedic tradition and succeeded in foisting on the academic community a naturalistic interpretation based on a mass of ingenious but superficial scholarship. And the result is that a whole generation of Vedic scholars was misled into the bypaths of Vedic enquiry instead of proceeding with a penetrating intuition straight into the heart and core of the Vedic secret.

One of the major defects of modern Vedic scholarship and interpretation on the lines set by Western scholars is that too much importance is given to secondary and non-essential factors like philology, linguistics, history, comparative religion, etc.,

while the most important and primary thing needed is totally ignored. For example, a modern scholar writing on the qualifications needed for Vedic exegesis observes: "The widening scope and fields of modern knowledge make severe demands on the equipment of the interpreter of the Vedas. He should not only be conversant with the Veda and Vedāṅga in the traditional way, but also possess an expert knowledge of text-criticism, comparative philology, comparative mythology, religion and philosophy, ancient history, anthropology, archaeology, assyriology and several other relevant sciences."¹ A Vedic scholar may possess all the qualifications listed here but if he doesn't have the spiritual intuition or at the least psychological insight he may totally miss the inner meaning of the Vedas. So what is needed most for deciphering the Vedic secret is not so much a vast and varied scholarship—though that is very helpful—but a spiritual intuition of the seer which can to a certain extent identify itself with the consciousness of the Vedic rishis, relive their essential experience and vision and therefore penetrate with holistic insight into the very spirit of Vedic culture.

This does not mean that only persons with spiritual intuition are fit for Vedic scholarship. For a Vedic scholar who doesn't have this spiritual intuition or experience there are two possibilities: either he must try to acquire the deeper insight of the mystic through a deep and silent contemplation on the Vedic mantras or else humbly accept his limitations and base his scholarship on the works of mystics who had this deeper insight. The great respect given to the authority of the Vedic revelation by the Hindu thinkers, philosophers and scholars was an expression of this humility. One of the solid supporting factors in favour of Sri Aurobindo's psychological interpretation of the Vedas is the immense respect with which the Upanishadic sages and thinkers treated the Vedic revelation. If the Vedas were only the outpourings of primitive barbarians then the respect shown to the Vedic authority by the great thinkers and sages of the Upanishads with the highest intellectual and spiritual accomplishments becomes inexplicable. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

"The sacred verses [of the Vedas], each by itself held to be full of a divine meaning, were taken by the thinkers of the Upanishads as the profound and pregnant seed-words of the truth they sought, and the highest authority they could give for their own sublime utterances was a supporting citation from their predecessors with the formula, *tad eṣa rcābhyuktā* 'This is that word which was spoken by the Rīg-veda'. Western scholars choose to imagine that the successors of the Vedic Rishis were in error, that, except for some later hymns, they put a false and non-existent meaning into the old verses and that they themselves, divided from the Rishis not only by ages of time but by many gulfs and separating seas of an intellectualised mentality, know infinitely better. But mere common sense ought to tell us that those who were so much nearer in both ways to the original poets had a better chance of holding at least the essential truth of the matter and suggests at least the strong probability that the Veda was really what it professes to be, the seeking for mystic knowledge, the first form of the constant attempt of the Indian mind, to which it has always been faithful,

to look beyond the appearances of the physical world and through its own inner experiences to the godheads, powers, self-existence of the One of whom the sages speak variously—the famous phrase in which the Veda utters its own central secret, *ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*’’⁴

This is also the reason why someone who denies the Vedic authority based on mere reason or sense-experience is not given much respect in the ancient Hindu religious culture. If someone dares to deny the Vedic authority and wants to preach something new, it cannot be based on reason which is inferior to spiritual intuition, but on an equally authentic or greater spiritual intuition. The importance of Sri Aurobindo’s psychological interpretation of the Vedas lies precisely in this crucial spiritual factor needed for discovering the Vedic truth. Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation is not based on intellectual scholarship—though he had that in abundance—but on his own vast and rich yogic experience, especially on a very specific intuition into the Vedic symbolism. As Sri Aurobindo, describing some of his own inner experiences which led him to the study of the Vedic lore, says

“My first contact with Vedic thought came indirectly while pursuing certain lines of self-development in the way of Indian Yoga, which, without my knowing it, were spontaneously converging towards the ancient and now unfrequented paths followed by our forefathers. At this time there began to arise in my mind an arrangement of symbolic names attached to certain psychological experiences which had begun to regularise themselves...”⁵

“.. I found. .that the mantras of the Veda illuminated with a clear and exact light psychological experiences of my own for which I had found no sufficient explanation either in European psychology or in the teachings of Yoga or of Vedanta, so far as I was acquainted with them, and, secondly, that they shed light on obscure passages and ideas of the Upanishads to which, previously, I could attach no exact meaning and gave at the same time a new sense to much in the Puranas.”⁶

(To be concluded)

M S SRINIVASAN

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SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of October 1999)

WE are now going to give a comprehensive analysis of the all-absorbing theme: a study of Indian culture, historical as well as interpretative, illuminated by revealing beams of comparative criticism. an eighteen-chapter sequence entitled “A Defence of Indian Culture”, yet much more than a “defence”,—rather it is a re-statement, a robust stock-taking. The four roughly equivalent sections are devoted to “Religion and Spirituality”, “Indian Art”, “Indian Literature” and “Indian Polity”, respectively. Four self-sufficient sections these, but united by the underground waters of the spirit. one power, one inspiration is seen to achieve varied self-expressions; a satisfying play of multiplicity originating from a single fount of all-sustaining energy. It is like wave following wave, advancing and retreating and advancing again, the chapters had originally appeared in the *Arya*, month after month, and this alternate glancing backward and cantering forward became necessary to call the reader’s attention and carry it easily onward. There is thus a rhythm in the seeming reiterations, and this too is a part of the fascinations of the work and the arguments, its expository charm and power of persuasion.

The initial difficulty that militates against an understanding of Hinduism is that it seems to be many things to many people. Has it a single scripture like the Bible or the Koran? a single Founder like the Buddha, Christ or Mahomet? asks Sri Aurobindo. “The only thing fixed, rigid, positive, clear is the social law, and even that varies in different castes, regions, communities.”¹

To help us out of our perplexity, Sri Aurobindo describes certain essential points of Hindu religious thought and practice. He writes.

“I have described the framework of the Indian idea from the outlook of an intellectual criticism, because that is the standpoint of the critics who affect to disparage its value. I have shown that Indian culture must be adjudged even from this alien outlook to have been the creation of a wide and noble spirit. Inspired in the heart of its being by a lofty principle, illumined with a striking and uplifting idea of individual manhood and its powers and its possible perfection, aligned to a spacious plan of social architecture, it was enriched not only by a strong philosophic, intellectual and artistic creativeness but by a great and vivifying and fruitful life-power. But this by itself does not give an adequate account of its spirit or its greatness. One might describe Greek or Roman civilisation from this outlook and miss little that was of importance, but Indian civilisation was not only a great cultural system, but an immense religious effort of the human spirit.

The whole root of difference between Indian and European culture springs from the spiritual aim of Indian civilisation. It is the turn which this aim imposes on all the rich and luxuriant variety of its forms and rhythms that gives to it its unique character. For even what it has in common with other cultures gets from that turn a stamp of

striking originality and solitary greatness. A spiritual aspiration was the governing force of this culture, its core of thought, its ruling passion. Not only did it make spirituality the highest aim of life, but it even tried, as far as that could be done in the past conditions of the human race, to turn the whole of life towards spirituality. But since religion is in the human mind the first native, if imperfect form of the spiritual impulse, the predominance of the spiritual idea, its endeavour to take hold of life, necessitated a casting of thought and action into the religious mould and a persistent filling of every circumstance of life with the religious sense; it demanded a pervading religio-philosophic culture. The highest spirituality indeed moves in a free and wide air far above that lower stage of seeking which is governed by religious form and dogma, it does not easily bear their limitations and, even when it admits, it transcends them; it lives in an experience which to the formal religious mind is unintelligible. But man does not arrive immediately at that highest inner elevation and, if it were demanded from him at once, he would never arrive there. At first he needs lower supports and stages of ascent; he asks for some scaffolding of dogma, worship, image, sign, form, symbol, some indulgence and permission of mixed half-natural motive on which he can stand while he builds up in him the temple of the spirit. Only when the temple is completed can the supports be removed, the scaffolding disappear. The religious culture which now goes by the name of Hinduism not only fulfilled this purpose, but, unlike certain other credal religions, it knew its purpose. It gave itself no name, because it set itself no sectarian limits, it claimed no universal adhesion, asserted no sole infallible dogma, set up no single narrow path or gate of salvation, it was less a creed or cult than a continuously enlarging tradition of the Godward endeavour of the human spirit. An immense many-sided and many-staged provision for a spiritual self-building and self-finding, it had some right to speak of itself by the only name it knew, the eternal religion, *sanātana dharma*. It is only if we have a just and right appreciation of this sense and spirit of Indian religion that we can come to an understanding of the true sense and spirit of Indian culture.

Now just here is the first baffling difficulty over which the European mind stumbles; for it finds itself unable to make out what Hindu religion is. Where, it asks, is its soul? Where is its mind and fixed thought? Where is the form of its body? How can there be a religion which has no rigid dogmas demanding belief on pain of eternal damnation, no theological postulates, even no fixed theology, no credo distinguishing it from antagonistic or rival religions? How can there be a religion which has no papal head, no governing ecclesiastic body, no church, chapel or congregational system, no binding religious form of any kind obligatory on all its adherents, no one administration and discipline? For the Hindu priests are mere ceremonial officiants without any ecclesiastical authority or disciplinary powers and the Pundits are mere interpreters of the Shashtra, not the law-givers of the religion or its rulers. How again can Hinduism be called a religion when it admits all beliefs, allowing even a kind of high-reaching atheism and agnosticism and permits all possible spiritual experiences, all kinds of religious adventures? The only thing fixed, rigid, positive, clear is the social

law, and even that varies in different castes, regions, communities. The caste rules and not the Church; but even the caste cannot punish a man for his beliefs, ban heterodoxy or prevent his following a new revolutionary doctrine or a new spiritual leader. If it excommunicates the Christian or the Muslim, it is not for religious belief or practice, but because they break with the social rule and order. It has been asserted in consequence that there is no such thing as a Hindu religion, but only a Hindu social system with a bundle of the most disparate religious beliefs and institutions. The precious dictum that Hinduism is a mass of folklore with an ineffective coat of metaphysical daubing is perhaps the final judgment of the superficial occidental mind on this matter.

This misunderstanding springs from the total difference of outlook on religion that divides the Indian mind and the normal western intelligence. The difference is so great that it could only be bridged by a supple philosophical training or a wide spiritual culture; but the established forms of religion and the rigid methods of philosophical thought practised in the West make no provision and even allow no opportunity for either. To the Indian mind the least important part of religion is its dogma; the religious spirit matters, not the theological credo. On the contrary to the western mind a fixed intellectual belief is the most important part of a cult, it is its core of meaning, it is the thing that distinguishes it from others. For it is its formulated beliefs that make it either a true or a false religion, according as it agrees or does not agree with the credo of its critic. This notion, however foolish and shallow, is a necessary consequence of the western idea which falsely supposes that intellectual truth is the highest verity and, even, that there is no other. The Indian religious thinker knows that all the highest eternal verities are truths of the spirit. The supreme truths are neither the rigid conclusions of logical reasoning nor the affirmations of credal statement, but fruits of the soul's inner experience. Intellectual truth is only one of the doors to the outer precincts of the temple. And since intellectual truth turned towards the Infinite must be in its very nature many-sided and not narrowly one, the most varying intellectual beliefs can be equally true because they mirror different facets of the Infinite. However separated by intellectual distance, they still form so many side-entrances which admit the mind to some faint ray from a supreme Light. There are no true and false religions, but rather all religions are true in their own way and degree. Each is one of the thousand paths to the One Eternal.

Indian religion placed four necessities before human life. First, it imposed upon the mind a belief in a highest consciousness or state of existence universal and transcendent of the universe, from which all comes, in which all lives and moves without knowing it and of which all must one day grow aware, returning towards that which is perfect, eternal and infinite. Next, it laid upon the individual life the need of self-preparation by development and experience till man is ready for an effort to grow consciously into the truth of this greater existence. Thirdly, it provided it with a well-founded, well-explored, many-branching and always enlarging way of knowledge and of spiritual or religious discipline. Lastly, for those not yet ready for these higher

steps it provided an organisation of the individual and collective life, a framework of personal and social discipline and conduct, of mental and moral and vital development by which they could move each in his own limits and according to his own nature in such a way as to become eventually ready for the greater existence. The first three of these elements are the most essential to any religion, but Hinduism has always attached to the last also a great importance; it has left out no part of life as a thing secular and foreign to the religious and spiritual life. Still the Indian religious tradition is not merely the form of a religio-social system, as the ignorant critic vainly imagines. However greatly that may count at the moment of a social departure, however stubbornly the conservative religious mind may oppose all pronounced or drastic change, still the core of Hinduism is a spiritual, not a social discipline. Actually we find religions like Sikhism counted in the Vedic family although they broke down the old social tradition and invented a novel form, while the Jains and Buddhists were traditionally considered to be outside the religious fold although they observed Hindu social custom and intermarried with Hindus, because their spiritual system and teaching figured in its origin as a denial of the truth of the Veda and a departure from the continuity of the Vedic line. In all these four elements that constitute Hinduism there are major and minor differences between Hindus of various sects, schools, communities and races; but nevertheless there is also a general unity of spirit, of fundamental type and form and of spiritual temperament which creates in this vast fluidity an immense force of cohesion and a strong principle of oneness.

The fundamental idea of all Indian religion is one common to the highest human thinking everywhere. The supreme truth of all that is is a Being or an existence beyond the mental and physical appearances we contact here. Beyond mind, life and body there is a Spirit and Self containing all that is finite and infinite, surpassing all that is relative, a supreme Absolute, originating and supporting all that is transient, a one Eternal A one transcendent, universal, original and sempiternal Divinity or divine Essence, Consciousness, Force and Bliss is the fount and continent and inhabitant of things Soul, nature, life are only a manifestation or partial phenomenon of this self-aware Eternity and this conscious Eternal But this Truth of being was not seized by the Indian mind only as a philosophical speculation, a theological dogma, an abstraction contemplated by the intelligence. It was not an idea to be indulged by the thinker in his study, but otherwise void of practical bearing on life. It was not a mystic sublimation which could be ignored in the dealings of man with the world and Nature. It was a living spiritual Truth, an Entity, a Power, a Presence that could be sought by all according to their degree of capacity and seized in a thousand ways through life and beyond life This Truth was to be lived and even to be made the governing idea of thought and life and action This recognition and pursuit of something or someone Supreme behind all forms is the one universal credo of Indian religion, and if it has taken a hundred shapes, it was precisely because it was so much alive The Infinite alone justifies the existence of the finite and the finite by itself has no entirely separate value or independent existence. Life, if it is not an illusion, is a

divine Play, a manifestation of the glory of the Infinite. Or it is a means by which the soul growing in Nature through countless forms and many lives can approach, touch, feel and unite itself through love and knowledge and faith and adoration and a Godward will in works with this transcendent Being and this infinite Existence. This Self or this self-existent Being is the one supreme reality, and all things else are either only appearances or only true by dependence upon it. It follows that self-realisation and God-realisation are the great business of the living and thinking human being. All life and thought are in the end a means of progress towards self-realisation and God-realisation.

Indian religion never considered intellectual or theological conceptions about the supreme Truth to be the one thing of central importance. To pursue that Truth under whatever conception or whatever form, to attain to it by inner experience, to live in it in consciousness, this it held to be the sole thing needful. One school or sect might consider the real self of man to be indivisibly one with the universal Self or the supreme Spirit. Another might regard man as one with the Divine in essence but different from him in Nature. A third might hold God, Nature and the individual soul in man to be three eternally different powers of being. But for all the truth of Self held with equal force, for even to the Indian dualist, God is the supreme self and reality in whom and by whom Nature and man live, move and have their being and, if you eliminate God from his view of things, Nature and man would lose for him all their meaning and importance. The Spirit, universal Nature (whether called Maya, Prakriti or Shakti) and the soul in living beings, Jiva, are the three truths which are universally admitted by all the many religious sects and conflicting religious philosophies of India. Universal also is the admission that the discovery of the inner spiritual self in man, the divine soul in him, and some kind of living and uniting contact or absolute unity of the soul in man with God or supreme Self or eternal Brahman is the condition of spiritual perfection.”²

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

- 1 *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol 14, p 123
- 2 *Ibid*, pp 121-26

BEHAVE AS IF THE MOTHER WAS LOOKING AT YOU

WHILE I lived in the Ashram during my childhood and early adulthood, I had not quite fully understood what Sri Aurobindo meant by these words. As always with his words, until you experience them yourself and discover their value you do not comprehend the full significance

Over the years of working outside the Ashram, gradually I began to understand the value of these words. Actually it is a formidable weapon to fight through the difficulties of life

There have been various times in my life when I have used this mantra and, to my surprise, with astounding results. Let me cite some examples

First in action. I am very angry with a junior officer in my company and I am about to sack him. Then I tell myself—the Mother is watching your behaviour. The moment I think of the Mother, I feel distanced from the problem. I become careful in my assessment of the person and begin to see things in a different perspective. I share my point of view with the officer. He admits his fault and I am glad to report that he is working out fine. My forgiveness had a deep impression on him which is what brought him to change. Now I have made it a practice to imagine that the Mother is standing there watching me. This immediately puts me on my guard and I am on my best behaviour

Life, frankly, offers a lot of temptations—many of them totally unnecessary and some of them even harmful. For many years I never smoked. Once I reached a senior position in the company, I began to feel it necessary to smoke a cigar—as a signal to people around me that I had arrived in life. I began to be known as a ‘cigar person’. As gifts, I used to receive expensive boxes of cigars. But whenever I visited the Ashram I never ever smoked a single cigar—be it for a week or two weeks at a stretch. One day I wondered why I never felt like smoking in the Ashram, while I merrily puffed on elsewhere in the world. It dawned on me that I feared that the Mother was looking at me and would have been shocked to learn about this bad habit of mine. I gave it up instantly and have never gone back to smoking.

Now to thoughts. Sometimes I have dangerous thoughts that cause turbulence in my environment—my drive to improve things dramatically in my company and punish people who are not on my wavelength. Then I think the Mother is standing there. This puts me on the defensive and brings soberness in my thoughts and prevents me from taking wrong actions. It is not just about praying to her, it is a more concrete step. If you can imagine her presence physically standing by you and watching over your actions and thoughts, it really puts the brakes on you. First of all, you begin to question yourself before you take any action. Am I doing the right thing/am I being unfair, jealous, envious, greedy, ambitious/am I making myself a smaller human being than I should be or need be? Invariably I find that there is an

alarm system at work in this practice. In case you have forgotten about the Mother's presence while making a decision, a sudden uneasiness develops and you at once remember the promise you made to yourself: "Remember the Mother is looking at you"

I must admit that sometimes this frustrates me because I feel I am robbing myself of the freedom of action. But on balance, and bounce, I find that I have benefited by it and I will definitely vote for the Mother's presence.

It is a mantra that saves you a lot of trouble!

RAMRAJ

(NB Much more than the social context, the Mantra is for spiritual life. The full statement is: "Always behave as if the Mother was looking at you, because she is, indeed, always present" See *The Mother*, SABCL, Vol 25, pp 108-109 —R Y D.)

I WAS SEARCHING ME

EACH and every breath was in search of me
And all around myself I was in search of me

When bylanes of how and why were dissolved
Roads themselves travelling were in search of me

I had to wear the noose of many a word around my neck
Every one of them was specifically in search of me

Again a search I have begun for a boat
The furrows in the sea have been in search of me

I couldn't do away even with a pinchful of gloom
Though for ages radiance was in search of me

BHARAT BHATT 'Tara'

(Translated by M. R. Dave from the original in Gujarati)

(Courtesy *Skylark*—84/85)

A TALE OF TWO YOGIS

It is widely known that Sri Aurobindo refused to meet Mahatma Gandhi. For some people, this has signified a tussle between 'other-worldly' spirituality and social activism rooted in the everyday problems of life. There is certainly a substantial difference between the two realms of engagement, but is there necessarily a conflict?

Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on the assassination of Gandhi did not indicate any conflict. This is what Sri Aurobindo wrote at the time. "I would have preferred silence in the face of these circumstances that surround us. For any words we can find fall flat amid such happenings. This much, however, I will say that the Light which led us to freedom, though not yet to unity, still burns and will burn on till it conquers. I believe firmly that a great and united future is the destiny of this nation and its peoples."

He continues: "The Power that brought us through so much struggle and suffering to freedom, will achieve also, through whatever strife or trouble, the aim which so poignantly occupied the thoughts of the fallen leader at the time of his tragic ending; as it brought us freedom, it will bring us unity. A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and united people."

Yet, at least three generations of political activists, who have admired Gandhi as an inspiration for radical action, have virtually dismissed figures like Sri Aurobindo. For the activist, struggling against social injustices here and now is a far more worthwhile goal than undertaking the uncharted quest for the self. Similarly, those who seek the self feel a deep dissatisfaction with the hustle and bustle of struggles for social transformation.

As the lives of Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo demonstrate, this is only apparently a divide. Gandhi remained a householder and politician while striving for the purity and rigour of a *sanyasin*. Even in old age, when the inner yearning for tranquillity was deeply compelling, he did not flinch from the field of hands-on, worldly action. Thus the journey to riot-torn Noakhali where he, at the age of 78, walked from village to village to restore communal harmony.

Sri Aurobindo gave up the life of a bureaucrat and later a revolutionary, to delve deep into the spirit. For the last four decades of his life, he remained within his Ashram, apparently aloof from worldly affairs. His contact with other people, including disciples, was restricted to the bare minimum.

He answered queries in writing and composed large volumes of poetry and prose on the inward journey.

Jayantilal Parekh, a member of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram since 1938 and the head of the archives, has suggested that Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo represented different kinds of light. Each was destined to play a vital, distinctive role. Thus it is futile to attempt any facile comparison between the life-work of the two figures.

Yet there is fertile ground for those who seek the complementary elements in

these great lives. For the *raison d'être* of Gandhiji's worldly involvement, after all, was the possibility that the self can be perfected and the ultimate truth sought within.

And at the core of Sri Aurobindo's life-journey, correspondingly, was the exploration of ways by which the consciousness of humanity could be raised

This is why, even half a century after they both left this world, it is relevant to address Sri Aurobindo's refusal to meet Gandhiji. The observations of Jayantilal Parekh on this issue offer valuable insights. Parekh, who recently passed from this world, believed that Sri Aurobindo's decision was born "out of a deep spiritual consideration for him [Gandhiji] and the work he had come to accomplish." Parekh appealed to his readers that, in order to grasp the truth of this statement, they ought to understand the nature of spiritual consciousness and how it moves and acts

"Social etiquette has no room in spiritual culture. Sri Aurobindo's seeing Gandhiji would have introduced a disturbing wave in a set field in which Gandhiji worked," writes Parekh.

"It would have disturbed the work Gandhiji was doing and in which he was being led by a moral force. Sri Aurobindo represented a different Light, a different Force perhaps, if not quite a different and contrary nature. . It was better to have left Gandhiji alone to run through his own time and course of events and actions."

The precise nature of these differences may not be easy for most of us to grasp. However, the very attempt holds a promise of enrichment and deeper perception. But, as Jayantilal Parekh cautions, the ways of spiritual consciousness can only be understood by those who approach the spiritual path in a spirit of humility

RAJNI BAKSHI

(Courtesy *The Times of India*, New Delhi)

THE LIGHT OF PANINI

(Continued from the issue of October 1999)

10. The date of Panini, Yajnavalkya and Janamejaya and Girindrasekhar

ONE of the later Brahmanas was Yajnavalkya Brahmana. Katyayana, Patanjali and Kasika tell us that Yajnavalkya was a contemporary of Panini. This is the most important clue to ascertain the age of Panini. The Vishnu Purana says, Yajnavalkya was a guru of Satanika (a leader of a hundred-fold army) Satanika was the son of Janamejaya (a shaker of people, *ej*, to shake). Janamejaya himself was the son of Parikshit (a ruler of all he surveys, *kshi*, to rule) who was born at the close of the Bharata War. Parikshit died at the age of sixty, says the Mahabharata. After Parikshit, Janamejaya ascended the throne of Hastinapura.

With this information, let us consult Purana Pravesha (an introduction to the study of the Puranas) by the great psychologist Girindrasekhar Basu known for his psychiatric study of the Mahabharata. He studied in detail the date of the war.

He starts with the puranic date, which says that 1015 years intervened between the birth of Parikshit and Nanda's coronation to the throne of Magadha. The coronation took place in 401 B.C. So Parikshit's birth and the close of the war took place in $1015+401 = 1416$ B.C.

The discrepancy of 2700 years between our astronomical calendar and the historical Pauranic Calendar he has discussed in full. Interested readers may refer to it

Following his table of kings, we get that $1416-60$ years = 1356 B.C. was the date of Janamejaya's coronation in Hastinapura. As Yajnavalkya was the Vedic guru of his son, Janamejaya and Yajnavalkya were more or less of the same age. And Panini being a contemporary—probably senior—of Yajnavalkya, they are all more or less of the same age. So they were born in 1386 B.C., taking the average of 30 years for a prince to become a king. This estimate is a rough one. But we can say that Panini was born about 3400 years ago.

By a further study of Purana-Pravesha, we come to know that the sovereign of the epic was Janamejaya II, son of Parikshit II. Both were weak kings. So we presume that Vyasa projected the glory of the former kings of the same name to awaken the nation through the epic. This is just as Bankim's novel (*Anandamath* with its immortal song *Vande Mataram*) was composed to awaken the nation.

Bankim assigned Panini's date as 'not later than' 11th century B.C. Had he guessed the subtle difference between Bhasha and Sanskrit, he would have gone to an earlier date. Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) assigns 1149 B.C. on other grounds.

11. Patanjali: Maurya—The Controversy of Image and Non-Image

Patanjali's date was fixed at 150 B.C., based on three vague words and events 1) Maurya; 2) Pushyamitra, and 3) the siege of Saketa by a Yavana.

'Maurya' has been misunderstood for not knowing the grammar and the language. Explaining Panini 5.3.96, Patanjali says, Mauryas are artisans who make *muras*, *murtis*, images of different gods for worship. They get *hiranya*, gold, money in exchange of their art and make a decent living out of it.

This has nothing to do with the Maurya Dynasty in a far distant future. 'Mūra' with the affix 'ya' makes the simple formation 'maurya', as we have 'sundara' becoming 'saundarya'.

The art of making images out of clay, wood, stone or metal was prevalent long before Panini. Certain passages in the Veda condemn the *mura-devas* (people who worship images) and *śiśna-devas*, indicating the Shivalinga-Gauripatta, a symbol of cosmic-to-animal and animal-to-cosmic creation. In the Veda, Yajna had taken such a prominent place, that they condemned the worshippers of images. This raging controversy of image or non-image can be set at rest by saying that both are possible without clash, depending on the make of the mind of the worshipper. Is any creation possible without image out of imagination, mental, verbal or emotional? Every thought is an image.

Ramakrishna was established in Advaita and yet worshipped Kali. Vivekananda worshipped Kali, though he forbade the picture of Ramakrishna at Mayavati. Rabindranath in his creed was a non-image-worshipping Hindu (census report), but invoked Surya, Saraswati, Usha, etc. in word-images, moving to Nature, God and boundlessness, throughout his writings and songs. Sri Aurobindo, an agnostic in the beginning, was possessed by Krishna Vasudeva. His poem *The Stone Goddess* sees the World-Mother in an image of Kali.

Along with this a remark of Yaska in Nirukta that *devatas* are both *purusha-vidha* (like human bodies) and *a-purusha-vidha* (not like human bodies) will make us ponder for a moment when we think of separate cults and isms round great personalities of Mother India, in the lap of Mother Prithivi. Instead of quarrelling we should think of the 'immense uprise' to which human Speech can go. With this necessary digression, let us switch back to *Pushyamitra*.

12. Patanjali: Pushyamitra

Nowhere it is written in his great commentary that he was a priest of Pushyamitra, the king of the Shunga Dynasty who overpowered the Mauryas. Pushyamitra is a common name—a compound of the star *pushya* and the appellation *mitra* later used as a surname. Some affluent house-holder (*yajamana*) invited Patanjali to be a priest in his sacrifice.

13. Patanjali: Seige of Saketa by a Yavana

Panini's *Yavana* meant people of the borderland of Prithivī. It is proved by the usages of couples called 'Yavana' and 'Yavanānī'. A mixed language, mixed culture, as all borders are. *Yu* in Veda is a bipolar root, meaning both to 'unite' and to 'part'. Is Jew connected with Jehova, Vedic jihva, tongue as God? Katyayana's interpretation of *yavanani* as 'a script of the yavanas' indicates a period when a happy exchange of culture ceased to be.* Some *yavanas*—probably a *pars-u* (Persian) chief—had advanced as far as Saketa (Ayodhya) where people lived in harmony. In the Ramayana the city is named Ayodhya, invincible. In the Atharva Veda it is an adjective to the body of a spiritual man.

Saketa and Madhyamika (*mādhyaṃika*) are two cities, where the *yavanas* laid a temporary siege. Patanjali gave it as an example of a recent event. Kalidasa relating history makes Raghu conquer *yavanas*, i.e., *parasikas*. So a long conflict had been going on between the Indians and the Persians.

14. The language of Aryavarta: Veda, Panini and Patanjali

Who is an Arya? Arya is mentioned 36 times in the Rīg Veda. It means a straightforward spirited person ever-moving to more light for himself and for like-minded others. From *ri*, to move, to go, by a simple grammatical change (lengthening), '*ri*' becomes '*ār*', with affix '*ya*'—*ār-ya*. An *ārya* becomes a Rishi by the pathless self-path of Satya-dharma. A Rishi becomes a Ribhu, an *ardha-deva*, half-divine man. This is the Vedic chart of Progress. No racialism, no casteism. Only character makes a man *ārya*.

The Aryas live in Āryāvarta, says Patanjali, bounded by the Himavan in the North, Adarsa-parvata in the West, Kalakavana in the East and Pariyatra in the South-West. The South is left in the boundary-list, because it is bound by the sea with no landmark to count. This has led people to infer—but not established as truth!—that the South is excluded from the land of the Aryas!

(To be continued)

GAURI DHARMAPAL

* Patanjali's *yavanas* became aggressors. The border had advanced.

A VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER DURING MY PILGRIMAGE TO KA'ABA

OWING to the grace of the Divine, I had the luck of going on the pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj) in 1994 A.D. There, I had prayed to the Divine and had completed all the rituals. This was two days before I was scheduled to start for Hindustan, the land of my birth. During these days, I visited the house of God, the Ka'aba, for the last prayer. Hazarat Mohammad Payagambar has ordered that every person should say a special prayer for his/her native land after completing the Haj. For fulfilling this duty I visited the Ka'aba. While I had been walking to the Ka'aba, all along the road I had been feeling that some conscious presence, which I felt as Sri Aurobindo's consciousness, was accompanying me and providing me protection. There, at Ka'aba, I prayed: "O God! Make our Hindustan prosperous; grant it peace and tranquillity; grant that Hindustan gets linked with all other countries of the world by bonds of love and brotherhood." When I was engrossed in the prayer with eyes closed, to my utter astonishment I saw Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the Ka'aba. I felt: "Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are busy with uniting Hindustan with the countries of the world."

The objective in expressing this experience in words is that, according to me, only Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are the Twin Vibhutis who have been putting up a constant labour for world unity by pouring love on every religion.

NAFISA AFRICAWALA

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT — X

DARA, PRASHANTA AND CHINMAYEE AND OTHERS OF A FAMILY

DARA was born into an aristocratic family of Hyderabad (on 24 October 1902) Hyderabad was then a princely state ruled by the Nizam. He was named Aga Sayed Ibrahim. He came to Pondicherry for the first time in 1926. He was hooked, yet he went back several times, but finally settled here. Other members of the family too came here—around 1927—Dara's step-mother Tazdar Begum (a very beautiful woman), sisters Mehdi Begum and Zahara Begum and brothers Aga Sayed Ishaque and Aga Syed Yaqoob. Only Dara and one sister Mehdi Begum lived here, and served the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, till they breathed their last.

They were all given "Ashram names" by Sri Aurobindo—Sayed Ibrahim was renamed Dara. He was in one of his previous births Aurangzeb's elder brother Dara Shukoh of the Moghul dynasty whom Aurangzeb imprisoned and killed. Dara Shukoh was a scholar. He translated the Gita and the Vedas into Persian. Dara Shukoh was, in a much earlier birth, in the 5th century B C, Darius Hystaspes of Persia. He was the greatest of his dynasty. Tazdar Begum remained Tazdar, Mehdi Begum became Chinmayee and Zahara Begum was changed to Sudhira. The brothers Ishaque and Yaqoob were named Prashanta and René.

I have not seen Sudhira or Tazdar. They and the others, when they arrived, were lodged in the part of the Ashram (main building) which is now the Mother's Store Room (near the Rosary Gate, to the East—ground floor). Later, of course, changes took place. Tazdar and Chinmayee lived for a time in the corner house North East of the School block. Purna lives there now.

Chinmayee came at the young age of 20 or 21 in 1927. She looked very "muslim" (at least that's what we imagined a muslim woman would look like). She had a gentle-looking face, usually a smile played on her lips. We caught only glimpses of her when she accompanied the Mother when She appeared on the Terrace for what was called Terrace Darshan (over Pavitra-da's room). I think she held a parasol over the Mother. Chinmayee was the personal attendant of the Mother. She was a meticulous worker, and showed some others how things should be arranged for the Mother. She passed away, not very peacefully, a victim of cancer, sometime around 1948.

Sudhira and Tazdar Begum came and went but could not or would not stay here permanently. René was often here till, maybe, the early '50s. He even worked in our printing press. He was a handsome man, of fair complexion with a slightly Roman nose (in fact all the brothers had the nose said to be aristocratic). He was of an average build. He was a good worker. He often fell back to his old aristocratic style of living and working: pleased with someone (worker or friend), he would reward him off-hand, off-account and off-proportion. He probably suffered from sleepless-

ness, in those days when he was living in the Mother's Store Room, he would restlessly pace the Ashram courtyard through much of the night. I heard it said that once he suggested to the Mother: "Mother, you have given very high and significant names to flowers. Why don't you do the same with fruits and distribute them to us? We will enjoy them much more." Not much is known about him. He left this place, as was his usual practice. But then he went over to Pakistan and never returned. He passed away there.

Dara was one of the earliest legendary figures that I got acquainted with—and what a figure! It was because of his figure that one came to hear of Dara. He was a colossus. It was proverbial to say of anyone of big dimensions, "He is a Dara." I too when I saw him back in 1945 was, like many others, a bit awed and, being a 9-year-old, also amused. But there was more to Dara than just great size. He was as large-hearted as he was large. This fact was well-known. He helped many a person in need of monetary help. We kids too knew of his large-heartedness.

In 1945 Dara lived in the building to the East of Golconde, across the road. He lived on the first floor. The building is now named "Ressuscité" (Resurrected—I wonder why). The name came much later. Dara hardly came out of his rooms, not even downstairs. Whether he wouldn't or couldn't was, and is, a very justifiable and unanswered question. Passers-by could see some of him, sitting at his window, filling its frame. He would sit there and hail someone he knew. He would then request him to come below his window and let down a string with a clothes-clip at its end. Clipped to it hung a newspaper or a chit that he would like to be passed on to someone or some place. Most obliged, for most knew Dara. We boys too did run such errands for him, but later we drew our wages. Once in a while two or three of us went up to his room and started a conversation, mostly about ourselves, all about what we did in school or the playground. Dara heard all we said patiently and with interest. He seemed very impressed and pleased. When we judged that he was sufficiently mellowed, we struck! We pleaded with him saying, "Dara, please, we have not had toffees for a long time. Do give us some." He was so touched. He would take a piece of paper and write: "Standard Stores—please give the bearer 1/4 lb of toffees." Off we would run to the Stores (Standard Stores was a general stores, then newly opened, in the present Book Store below Ira Boarding—Dara had a credit-account there).

On the few occasions that we had a close and whole view of Dara, we were on these "toffee-procurement" ventures. What most people saw enframed in the window was, as the saying goes, "the tip of the iceberg." What we saw when we entered his room was a white dhoti and kurta-clad colossus. The tip was impressive enough. The whole could have been unnerving—but no, it was not. The face though large, with the hooked nose, was charmingly reassuring. Two large kindly eyes, round cheeks and an innocent, trusting smile large enough to split those cheeks, took us close to him. He wore his hair long. He had, in earlier times, a thick well-groomed beard, now shorn off, leaving a clean shaven chin. His dress was always white dhoti and kurta—except for a short period when he joined the Playground and donned a pair of shorts and

sleeveless banian—a further treat for our eyes. Why was he so fat? Probably physical inactivity and love of good food helped him attain those proportions. The short stint at the Playground didn't do much to produce any changes. We never saw him or heard of him participating in any physical work. The only regular job I heard of, that he held, was supervising the milking of a couple (or more) of cows in a remote past (when cows were brought to the house and milked in front of the consumer/customer) This was done in the Ashram main building. (It had a very different topography then)

Dara had other dimensions too—of a different kind. He was a poet of sorts. He often wrote 2-4 rhyming lines addressed to the Mother. Some are lost, one or two are remembered by a few:

Mother, Mother, come to the pier
Do not fear
I am here.

or

Mother almighty
Finished is all my tea.

He surrendered everything to Her. He sold a huge house, and much of the money from the sale he gave away to the Mother along with chuddars, and some of the furnishings like chandeliers, and other items that he brought over. (I believe some of the things are exhibited in "Sri Smriti" opposite the Playground) But he was simple enough to ask her for some money to buy himself (and incidentally us) something more and different than that offered by the Dining Room. He would even send a friendly rickshawalla to get him some biryani.

Dara had, in his student days, managed the canteen. Consequently he had formed his ideas as to the quantity and quality of food to be served to others and to oneself! This, coupled with his large-heartedness, often put him on a collision course with Dyumanbhai. A classic case of "the irresistible meeting the immovable". It was as well they took different paths. Dara was given means to satisfy, at least himself.

He was very simple—maybe too simple. Once, troubled by mosquitoes, he bought some mosquito coils to repel them. But he did not know about or did not have the little tin stand that goes with the coils. So, he lit one, held it between his toes and lay down. Fortunately Puraniji came to know of this unusual method and told him "Why don't you ask the Mother for a mosquito net?" He asked for one, may have written "Mother, Mother, give a net for mosquitoes—else I'll burn my little toes!" The Mother gave him a large blue net. He was so glad! He showed it off to whomsoever he met.

Last, but certainly not the least of all, Dara was, let us say, the Adi-photographer of the Ashram. His father was a good amateur photographer and Dara learned enough

from him to shoot away here and there, thereby leaving us a vast and valuable pictorial history of the old Ashram, its inmates, and the times. The photographs are surprisingly clear and well preserved to this day. This is one priceless contribution of Dara's to us and to the Ashram. And this he accomplished with an ordinary box-camera! So lived Dara simply and quite peacefully.

He was shifted from Ressuscité to a house near the present State Bank and then again to the house where the Oriya Karyalaya Press is now located. He lived more or less like a recluse. He was also afflicted by some rare disease. The Mother asked Prashanta to serve him and look after him. The Mother also asked a Reddy lady, Bharati Reddy (husband Venkata Reddy and daughter Jyoti) to help Dara. The disease whittled down Dara and, I think, also affected his speech. One day, I can't recall how or who called me for help—I reached his house. When I reached there, Dara was sitting in the bathroom, a towel just draped across his thighs, and a minor cut on his forehead. A servant was there; he said Dara could not get up. Dara himself could not say much—he only made some incoherent noises and made signs with his hands. We tried to help him up, but he waved us away, with a bit of annoyance (so it seemed). For a while I was puzzled. Then a thought struck me—maybe prompted by his actions. I asked the servant to get out of our (Dara's) sight. Then I turned to Dara; he smiled and let me help him stand with a support. I then wrapped a dhoti around him and helped him to his cot. I left after seeing that he was made somewhat comfortable. Later I got a letter from Dara, thanking me for my help—an unexpected and unusual gesture from a dying man, for indeed a short time after (maybe a month or two) I heard Dara was no more. (The letter, alas, was never preserved—I didn't even think of doing it.) He passed away on 8 February 1966. The Great Helper of all had reached out and helped him "UP".

What conclusions to draw on Dara? Or should we do so at all? To do so, looking at his physical life, may or may not amount to much. He did practically nothing—his life was rather notable for that. But the man was more than just his (rather big) physical self. There were depths in him which would be difficult to fathom. He had his share of difficulties and his share of experiences, all of which are borne out by his correspondence with his Guru. How did Dara come here and why? Let us go back two generations. His grandfather hailed from Lucknow. He had a fortuitous misadventure in Bombay—he missed a ship—and had to wait for 15 days for the next one. (Something to do with the Haj pilgrimage.) So, for some reason or other he drifted to Hyderabad. There he had a fortuitous adventure, saving an influential and rich man from drowning, which led to a friendship and his writing up a petition for the newly-found friend. The letter was to a highly-placed governmental official or minister, who found the drafting of the letter admirable and called the author (Dara's grandfather) over to meet him. This event got him a good post. He rose higher and higher and settled in Hyderabad. Dara was now a Hyderabadi; during his studies he had a Bengali professor who presented to him a book of Sri Aurobindo. This small seemingly unimportant event brought about by a devious route through two generations

(missed ship, drowning man, drafted letter, high post and shifting from Lucknow to Hyderabad) brought Dara in touch with Sri Aurobindo and changed the course of his life and of his family.

Dara wrote to Sri Aurobindo. The following correspondence took place between Sri Aurobindo and his to-be disciple (I have paraphrased it):

DARA: Sir, I would like to come to the Ashram to settle there

SRI AUROBINDO: No, you are not yet ready.

DARA: When and how shall I know that I am ready?

SRI AUROBINDO: The “Call” will come to you

Dara was then readying to go to England for his studies. So again a letter to Sri Aurobindo

DARA: Sir, I am leaving for England for my studies. If in mid-ocean the “Call” comes, I will jump over and swim back.

SRI AUROBINDO: Now you are ready. You can come over to pursue your Sadhana.

Would this be a good enough pointer to the real Dara—his surrender and sincerity?

Dara may have let down a thought of his, clipped to a string, from a window UP THERE, and it hit me. So began this tale of a gentle giant and his family. The string is drawn up again—so passing on the story, I finish here my telling—until the string is down again!

Dara came to Pondicherry and Prashanta went to England.

Prashanta too arrived in 1927 but went away in 1936, or maybe earlier. He was not here in 1945, but came some time later—that’s when I met him. He was an interesting character. Physically, and I may venture to say even mentally, he was very “un-Dara”-like. Some facial resemblance persisted, but then, he was as thin as Dara was fat. He would walk a mile while Dara took three steps.* Prashanta would be satisfied chewing a few peanuts while Dara may go in for a chocolate bar. When Dara, on a rare, rare occasion, thought of fasting to reduce, Prashanta chided him saying, “*Aré theek sé khāo, aur dund bathak lagāo!*” (Eat well, but do exercises,

* I am reminded of the Puranic story of the competition or race between Ganesha and his brother Kartikeya—one fat, sitting on a rat, the other slim, seated on a peacock. The race was to start from Kailash, the abode of Shiva, three laps round the Universe and finish at Kailash. On the word “go” Kartikeya flew off in a flurry of bright feathers while Ganesha sat on his rat. After one lap Kartikeya saw Ganesha still in Kailash, and flew on. Second lap over, yet not much change. Third lap over, Kartikeya made a triumphant landing and saw Ganesha there waiting, no sweat but a smile broke out on his face—and he claimed to have won the race! Kartikeya protested, but lost the case. Ganesha’s circumambulations of the Universe were thrice around his mother Parvati, the Mother of the Universe, who contained the Universe, while Kartikeya in a hurry did what is usually done.

push-thrus and deep knee bends) Prashanta was himself scrawny, of good height and a fair complexion but tanned well (he roamed around with a banian or without it and a pair of shorts). Same aquiline nose as Dara's. They both were soft-spoken but spoke of different things.

Prashanta was a very qualified man. He had done quite well in his studies at Oxford. He returned to Hyderabad and maybe tried to settle down and failed. He was offered good lucrative posts but refused to accept them. When one to-be-employer raised the pay, Prashanta was not very pleased. He said, "*Mai kuttā kyā* ..? (Am I a dog?) that you hang a piece of meat in front of me and I am expected to run after you "

Prashanta was also offered marriage proposals. He would not surrender his bachelorhood. Many a prospective bride and party had to leave disappointed. On one of these efforts to entice him into marital bliss, friends and relatives extolled the virtues and advantages of married life. Prashanta agreed and seconded all their ideas. He seemed to give in. People around were just sensing success when Prashanta dropped a bombshell. He smiled and said, "Look here, I too am a believer in love, marriage, etc. etc. But I have one weakness (or habit), that I cannot get over once it comes " All, especially the bride's party were thinking, "Oh, what now?" Prashanta continued, "From time to time I get an urge to travel. I cannot resist it. I leave everything, home, hearth, family, friend and wander off." This put an end to all marriage proposals. Who would wed their girl to such a gypsy? This wanderlust must have overtaken him and he walked out of his house and arrived here again, probably in the late 50s or early 60s. He recounted that he would, when leaving a place, follow the railway tracks. His theory being that the tracks would lead to a station—any station was good enough. There you could get some food. His favourite form of food, on these wanderings, was "*munghphalli*" (peanuts). He would munch those and walk on and on. For most of his travels were done on foot, or ticketless travel. When he arrived here he was put up somewhere near Parc-à-charbon (if not at the Park itself, before it took its present posh form). He had many old friends here and Bihari-da of the D.R. must have been one of his closest. He joined him in his work, washing bananas and lemons. He worked and moved around, scrawny, in old khakhi shorts and sleeveless banian, shaved head and usually with an unshaven chin, hunched shoulders—he looked every inch the hobo that he was. He couldn't care less as to what he looked like. Not many would take notice of him, much less think of engaging him in conversation. He considered it a blessing that people did not take notice of him. He said, "As soon as people take notice of you—you are in trouble " But those who, undeterred by his appearance, did talk to him found him exceedingly interesting. He talked slow and soft. His English was as you may guess the "King's"—spiced with an occasional "*sālā*" or some other Urdu or Hindi word (expressive if not expletive)

His work in the D.R. over, he may come out and head East, West, North or South—as fancy took him. Once I happened to meet him heading from the Ashram

North I asked him, "Where are you going?" He replied, "Home." I said, "I thought you lived in Parc?" He said, "Yes, I do. But who says I should go by this road and not by that and reach by the shortest route?" He could be found walking away from his destination to reach it.

One day as I stood in front of the Ashram, enjoying a fine drizzle, Prashanta happened by. He was in his usual attire, but perched on his head was a folded newspaper that he held pressed down with one hand. I plucked it off his head. He stopped and pleaded with me to return it. I happened to glance at the date—it was a recent—a "yesterday's"—edition. Feigning surprise, I asked why he was wasting so recent an edition. Someone could still be interested in reading it. Prashanta in reply said, "What, you call this news? De Gaulle pulls Churchill's nose. He in turn twists somebody's ear." Intrigued I asked him, "Then why are you holding on so dearly to this paper?" He smiled a bit shyly and said, "Oh, some well-wisher gives me the papers. When a sufficient number are collected, I sell them and Behari and I go eat some ice-cream." I couldn't but return his precious paper. I thought "How childlike—innocent and secretive these two old men are!" In fact they were two of the best men I came across. Not only I, but many who knew them hold the same opinion. I recount a strange paradoxical story. Each one has to draw his or her own conclusion.

The story unfolds in or around the D.R. There was a lady who took her breakfast in D.R. every day. She did not eat the bananas—but took them and gave them as alms. This was reported to the Mother. The Mother had, often enough, said that each one should take only what he/she needs. So the Mother instructed Ravindraji to stop giving her breakfast. She pleaded with the Mother. The Mother sent her to Ravindraji telling her to plead with him, as it was his domain of work. Be that as it may, what was more interesting and mysterious (or meaningful) was what followed. Prashanta and Bihari-da washed the bananas. Prashanta would keep aside the bananas which he thought were not good enough to be distributed at the counter. Sometimes there were quite many. On his way out Prashanta would distribute them to the urchins—just outside the D.R. This happened not long after the "lady's" incident. So, Ravindraji dutifully reported the matter to the Mother. The Mother told Ravindraji, much to his astonishment, not to admonish him. "Simply tell him not to distribute just outside the D.R. He should go a distance away and do it." She then added, "You just don't know how lucky we are and from where we get all these things." What to make of this? Maybe best not to use our ever fallible Reason—just swallow the information and wait.

Prashanta was an avid cricket fan. The Nawab of Pataudi had been his classmate. He had seen him play (play more and study less). India's late President Zakir Hussain was also one of his classmates.

Prashanta was, it is said, the much-disliked Aurangzeb in one of his previous births. Strangely enough he was given the duty of taking care of Dara—which job he did to the best of his ability till Dara's passing away. (Paying for sins committed 300 years ago.)

Prashanta spent his days simply, doing his work, taking walks and telling stories if and when we needed him. Then, one fine day, he just weighed anchor and walked away, again on his wanderings—bitten by the migration bug. Maybe he followed the railway tracks. We came to know that he reached his niece's house (Sudhira's daughter). He lived a few years doing practically nothing (except smoking), then he too was gathered up—he may have followed a subtler ‘rail track’ to reach his final Station and destination.

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

You have only to aspire, to keep yourself open to the Mother, to reject all that is contrary to her will and to let her work in you—doing also all your work for her and in the faith that it is through her force that you can do it. If you remain open in this way, the knowledge and realisation will come to you in due course

SABCL, Vol. 25, p 122

The Mother's Force is not only above on the summit of the being. It is there with you and near you, ready to act whenever your nature will allow it. It is so with everybody here (15-11-1936)

SABCL, Vol 25, p 157

The lights are the Mother's Powers—many in number. The white light is her own characteristic power, that of the Divine Consciousness in its essence (15-7-1934)

SABCL, Vol. 25, p 83

REMEMBERING GOPAL DASS GUPTA (1912-1998)

THAT UNASSUMING MAN

(6)

(Continued from the issue of October 1999)

GOPAL DASS was a born ascetic (fellow trainees at the N.C.C. camps toasted him as *lāl langotiwālā**) His morning and evening routine included a long cold bath (even in fever), exercises, study of scriptures, prayers and concentration. He had noted all he found useful in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in two diaries and made indices for easy reference—until the last week of his life he meditated daily on the day's entry. Regular work was as indispensable—hung prominently in his room was Mother's "Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body's best prayer to the Divine"'. When he stopped Archives work, he took up the blessings packet work from Krishna-dī.

Bouts of giddiness and ear-block, bestowed by long courses of antibiotics in 1992-94, became increasingly more acute, and by 1996 it became difficult to go out unchaperoned. He permitted the servant to accompany him, only so that she and I may not be hanged by the Ashram authorities. That December I was away for a fortnight, the first time my friends peeped in they were forbidden to come again and when he urgently needed a doctor he waited until his afternoon servant came. Doggedly he would totter to the Samadhī, the doctor's or barber's; a few times I held him by one hand and pushed an empty wheel-chair by the other, for sitting in a wheel-chair was humiliating. "Who knows, Mother may give back my former strength and balance?" Finally, in keeping with India's socialist philosophy, his body went on frequent strikes—dozing off while he was reading or eating, but he fought on. By sheer will-power, he got rid of the ungentlemanly dribble at the mouth and the body's habit of dropping into namaz (a few times he even toppled over) while he read the newspaper sitting on his cot. From 26 April 1998 his walks were confined to the passage outside his room and finally to the room itself. In the last few months he did lie down during the day, for my sake.

Thousands of times I argued "Your body has served you better than any slave; can't you give it some concession now? Is asceticism our ideal?" The rare times he chose to reply, he shot back "And how long have you indulged your body and vital, which ought to have been instruments of your sadhana? Haven't they now enslaved you to animal instincts? Is *that* our ideal?" One evening in September 1997, the misdemeanours of my vital-physical broke the camel's back. After a sleepless night, he wrote me a note "I cannot help telling you how uneasy, almost guilty I feel letting you use my place the way you did last evening. There is a limit to everything. After all it is I who am responsible to the Mother.... You know my nature and also

realise my position and so I am sure you would now act wisely. It is better to avoid an exchange of thoughts with me on the matter. What is needed is your unexcited attention and dispassionate thought followed by sustained action.”

He never spoke about the long years of his own sadhana, but his mastery over *kāma, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, mātsarya*: desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride, jealousy, was obvious. He wished to see me achieve the same. To suit my nature he chose this precept from the Panchatantra for me: *āhāra nidrā bhaya maithunancha, sāmānyametad pashubhir narānām; dharmo hi tesham adhiko vishesho, dharmena hināḥ pashubhiḥ samānāḥ*: Food, sleep, fear and sex are common to animal and man. It is only dharma⁶ which distinguishes one from the other.

Gopal Dass insisted on eating only the food from the Dining Room and tea from the Dispensary at fixed hours and quantities and avoided discussing them. I could not always provide his evening meals on time, but he taught himself to accept that; this is not easy, for due to a natural shrinking of their stomachs the old cannot eat much at a time and get unbearably hungry between mealtimes. How many of them are humiliated daily because their attendants do not understand this! Sometimes the servant who was to replace me failed to come, but however late his dinner became he never lost his calm. Only twice and only because the reason for my delay was a TV film, he mildly asked “Have we come here to watch these films?” There was no third time on that score.

His practical sense, founded on a vast experience of life, made his judgement of characters surprisingly accurate and his advice heaven-sent. Often when I was depressed by personal or social problems he recited from a Ramacharitamānas couplet: *Hāni lābh jīvan maran yash apayash vidhi hāth*⁷ A habit of mine he strongly objected to was criticising: “Even noticing defects or shortcomings brings them *imperceptibly* into oneself. Neither must you degrade yourself, that is as harmful as denouncing others. Therefore,” he would conclude with his favourite Rigvedic advice, “let us hear and see only the good.”⁸ From this psychic attitude sprang his forbearance, unfailing optimism and good humour.

Whatever he did, his concentration was total. In the street he never noticed what did not concern him. I could always enter and leave his room without his knowledge—whether he was sitting on his meditation mat with eyes closed conversing aloud with his Ishta, or working at his table, or doing something else. When not occupied with any work, he recited some scriptural quote or other from memory. No wonder he never understood how sadhaks can feel bored, lonely or neglected and need tonics like socialising, gossip, light reading, TV—to mention only the milder ones.⁹

*

Gopal Dass’s unpretentious humility and courteousness led Dr Dutta to label him “unassuming”. But to be truly unpretentious one needs what Sri Aurobindo calls common sense “. looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation”.¹⁰ Gopal Dass knew well the various hierarchies prevalent here, but concerned himself

with only one—spiritual knowledge and self-mastery.¹¹ Pretensions engendered by position, knowledge, money etc or their lack neither fooled nor troubled him. And his relationship with me, I took too long to realise, he had based on an undemanding, uncondescending love only in the last two months of his life, did he point out our relative places in spiritual knowledge and self-mastery.

We first met in 1973 when I was shifted to the general stores in the Ashram Press. Work brought us together since he kept the Publication Department's accounts and stocks of paper. Our acquaintance deepened over the years due to his love and knowledge of Ramcharitamanas and the Gita until the crisis in his health brought us into each other's lives. Around 1992, with his body not responding fully to homeopathy, with no Ashramite to support him, his self-control and confidence weakened and the unexpected gnawed away his planned future. He never tired of repeating his gratitude to Sumantra and Dr Dutta whose intervention helped him get a good room in Tripura House where, he was told, a young resident was in charge of its dozen elderly inmates. But this arrangement turned out to be only on paper. In this predicament he asked me to take charge of his physical needs, so demoralised was he that in the next couple of years he often pleaded: "Give me full instructions on how, when and what to do" Alas, in the storm and darkness created by "the Powers and Appearances that still rule the earth-Nature"¹² the oak and the lion imagine they need the help of reeds and mice! Unwittingly, he invited a great problem—my unregenerate nature. But even after he began "to see things as they are" (*koi kisikā nahin!*) he did not back out. He worked on me so silently that only now do I realise the service *he rendered me*!

Barring similarity in our physical features, the backgrounds, natures, habits, interests, views, manners were worlds apart: a highly disciplined nature pitted against an impulsive, disorganised one. Like his education his speech was literal and straightforward, meant for serious practical life. Clever talk spiced with rhetoric, metaphors, exaggerations, innuendos, irony, satire etc. left him dry. Not that he was humourless. One of his most memorable jokes was: *keslava keshun yass karī, jass ripu hī na karī; chandramukhī mrigalochani baba kahī kahī jāyī*. Lord, these hairs have done to me what no enemy could have done, doe-eyed beauties pass by greeting me with "Hi, Grandpa!" No, desisting from clever jokes was a yogic decision—the most innocent exaggeration in a most casual conversation may invite dangerous consequences. What then did his imagination feed on? Inspiring images, descriptions, precepts and advices that he had memorised from Ramacharitamanas, Gita, Upanishads and the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Endlessly he chewed on them, derived endless peace and strength and joy. He had too a keen interest in collecting facts in literature, science, history, politics, sports, etc. But unfamiliar subjects (how do you explain the computer to one who has only seen a couple of neat boxes and a keyboard, much less cd-rom, internet, cyberspace?) and his tendency to take the printed word at face value often misled him. This triggered off arguments between us that were bound to remain inconclusive.

It was not at all easy for us to steer through the inevitable misunderstandings, frictions and flare-ups that arose. As Bhartrihari says, *sevā dharmo parama gahano yoginām api agamyah*.¹³ Inmates of Tripura House and adjacent houses were involuntary auditors of my thousand blow-ups. Yet inexplicably, not even the worst of them created a real fissure between us; my declarations, while stomping out of his room, that I will not step into his room again, never lasted longer than an hour. One of the Tripura House inmates, Sumitra-ben, was often a concerned spectator and always she laughed away my rantings with: “Cool down. You two cannot survive without each other. Don’t you see that your relationship is rooted in past lives?” She knew very well his attachment to me—she had borne its fiery brunt the day I, being sick, had to send a replacement; she knew that his room rather than mine was my “home”. Yet our empathy failed to prevent these skirmishes, during which surfaced the blind stubbornness of our inherited prejudices, the equally stubborn ignorance of our egoistic thoughts and habits, our subconscious or suppressed emotions, our blind spots, etc. But, being fully attentive, fully trained to receive this “rain of God’s bounty” Gopal Dass benefited more than I did.

Srī Krishna brushed aside Shishupala’s insults and taunts until they touched one hundred; then off flew Shishupala’s head. Even so, his disciple and namesake gave me a very long rope—until, in the middle of 1998, after a long violent monologue I had begun to cool off. Like Srī Krishna, he too cut off the arrogant head with the love of the *śhitaprajna*. It was his strongest and longest admonishment. I give only a gist: “The real question is not who is right in the present issue but whether you are aware, when succumbing to such outbursts, to whom you are talking. No one has ever dared treat me the way you have done. Sometimes you have abused me in front of servants. Do you realise that I will die soon and that the opportunity the Grace gave us to learn from each other will soon end? At first I could not bear your taunts and insults and wept at my helplessness. But I taught myself to remain calm and offer all you were saying and doing to the Divine. But have *you* learned anything? You are conscious of your defects and weaknesses and often speak to me about them and are contrite, but have you mastered them yet? Do you know how hard I have worked to correct the shortcomings and defects in my nature? For decades I have plucked out detail after detail of my nature, identifying, analysing, purifying, offering them up for change, regularly, relentlessly. And you? Your resolutions, enthusiasms, efforts never last. You will weep when you recall all this. You will repent you wasted this rarest of opportunities.”

And it was *that* last and most loving *upadesha* with which Gopal Dass concluded when I started applying ghee and sandalwood powder to his body in the cremation ground. A stream of joy invaded me, tangible and unmistakable, it was the backward glance of one who has reached the Mountain peak, the Mother’s arms of Bliss. And as I lighted the flame on his chest, helping him abandon the *vāsānsi jīrnanī*, my heart echoed, vibrating my entire body with his recitation of the crux of the Gita: “*Mām*

anusmara, yuddhya cha... Mām anusmara, yuddhya cha.. Mām anusmara, yuddhya cha . Mām anusmara, yuddhya cha . ”¹⁴

(Concluded)

SUNJOY¹⁵

Notes

4 One wearing a red loincloth—customarily worn by renunciates

5 *Collected Works of The Mother*, 14 321

6 Here dharma would be “ to lift all the movements of the being to the level of the highest consciousness and realisation already attained ” *Collected Works of The Mother*, 14 67

7 *Sunahu Bharat bhāvi prabal, bilakha kahyo munināth, hāni lābh jīvan maran vash apayash vidhi hāth*

Hear O Bharat, Destiny is all-powerful, said the sage full of emotion, harm, gain, life, death, fame, ill-fame are all in its hands

8 *Bhadram karnebhih shrunuyāma deva, bhadram pashyema akshibhih yajatrūh*

May we hear with our ears what is pure, may we see with our eyes what is holy *Rigveda*, 1 89 8

9 “One who fears monotony and wants something new would not be able to do yoga or at least this yoga which needs an inexhaustible perseverance and patience ” *SABCL* 23 630

10 “Common sense is not logic (which is the least common-sense like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation—not imagining wild imaginations—or for that matter despairing ‘I know not why’ despairs ” *Nirodbaran’s Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, 1983, pp 156-57

11 The central mantra of his life was this couplet from *Rāmacharitamānas*

Jāhi ja ruche so karo, moko to Rāmako nāma kalapataru, kali kalyāna pharo

Let each do what he will, for me the Lord’s Name is the wish-yielding Tree, which brings forth the surest well-being in the Kali Yuga

12 *SABCL* 25 2 Cf “ what we most suffer from in our outer life and its reactions upon our inner life is the imperfection of our relations with the world, our ignorance of others, our disharmony with the whole of things, our inability to equate our demand on the world with the world’s demand on us ”—*SABCL* 19 974

13 *Maunānmuka, pravachanapatuh vārtulo jalpāko vā, dhrishah pārshwe vasati cha, sadā duratash cha apragalbhah Kshāntyā bhirur yati na sahate prāyasho nābhijātah, sevā dharmo paramagahano yogināmapī agamyah*

If he is silent he is dumb, if eloquent is flattering, argumentative, garrulous even, if he sits near is rude, if keeps a distance is immature, if he endures insult is a coward, if does not is of low birth, the path of service is supremely difficult even for the yogi —*Bhartrihari, Nitishataka*, no 58, Cf *SABCL* 8 185

14 The context needs at least two shlokas of chapter eight

yam yam vāpi smaranbhāvam tyajati ante kalevaram, tam tamevanti kaunteya sadā tadbhāva bhāvitaḥ (6)

Whatever form of being one remembers while leaving his body at the end of his life, to that very being, O Kaunteya (son of Kunti, here Arjuna), does he go, his consciousness being always full-of-that

tasmāt sarveshu kāleshu mām anusmara yuddhya cha, mayi arpita manobudhhih maam eva eshyasi asanshayam (7)

Therefore at all times *remember Me and fight*, with thy mind and understanding given up to Me, to Me verily shalt thou come beyond any doubt

15 With unstinting editorial help from Ganapati-bhai and Bob Zwicker

REMEMBERING KAMY (KAMALESH PATEL)

(A friend remembers his senior in the Ashram School whose life was recently cut short by an untimely death)

It was in the mid-sixties that some of us joined the Ashram School; we came from different classes, regional and linguistic backgrounds, from different parts of the country. A significant section of our classmates, however, came from elsewhere. These were the Indian children from the exotic East Africa. Their Gujarati parents, as lawyers, businessmen, teachers and other professionals, served the British East Africa: Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and less frequently Tanzania. We did not then know of the term diaspora—the Indian people and culture spread in different parts of the world: Fiji, Malaya, Guinea and the West Indies. For me it was a mystery, and a matter of pride, that my friend Kanu Mistry's architect father could erect buildings as prominent landmarks in the heart of far-away Nairobi, or that other Indians like A. B. Patel could exercise so much influence in the cultural and political life of their adopted country. That was before the xenophobia of a Kenyatta or the "hate Asians" campaign unleashed by Idi Amin of Uganda in the seventies. The sixties were comparatively idyllic. The Gujarati children, like the Bengalis during the war years in the forties, contributed enormously to the composite culture of the Ashram community. Later, we shared the pain and anguish of their parents who as the citizens of the Queen were reluctantly accepted by England. The images of the homelessness of the Asians jostled for space in the pages of *Time* and *Newsweek* with the pictures of horror that emanated from Vietnam around this time.

The life of all the expatriate families that came to the Ashram from East Africa was not a bed of roses. Calamity struck early my friend Kamy (Kamalesh Patel) who had lost his parents when he was a mere fifteen. That is the time he learned how to cook so that he could feed and take care of his brother and sisters. He had of course heard of the Ashram. His uncle (father's younger brother) Chimanbhai Patel who later became a French teacher in the Ashram school and led a dedicated life till his recent passing, had a call for the life of yoga. Kamy too was bitten by the same bug. With the permission of the Mother granted through Chimanbhai in 1966, he moved to Pondicherry with his whole family—his brother Nalin and two sisters, Ila and Geeta. Jayabharati was already there. Later in life, whenever we met in England, in reflective moments, Kamy would reminisce about his early life. How brave and intrepid must have been the young lad who could take such a courageous decision single-handed, I often wondered. We had returned to the same topic last week as I left him at Heathrow airport in London. He had thoughtfully come to drop me despite his busy schedule. Last night, the phonecall came that Kamy was no more! He had passed away, the message said, by a second heart attack.

What does the sudden death of a schoolmate mean? To us in the Ashram, as we grew up in the community, deaths basically meant older Sadhaks and Sadhikas

passing away at ripe old age. We felt sad, and on occasion, grieved when we were particularly close to some. But there was perhaps a sense of inevitability of the event and acceptance of the fact of death. However, the death of a contemporary comes violently, often causing bafflement about the meaning of such events and the strange ways of God! The first news of the death of a senior in the Ashram school came in the seventies. The death of Niladri Banerjee, by all accounts, came as a shock. Bright and unconventional, Niladri and his group caused a strange fascination in some of us.

The news of Kamy's passing, equally jarring, was somewhat different. Our generation of the Ashram students left the Ashram school in the seventies. Initially, Kamy took up a private sector job in Baroda with Tulu Chem and excelled. He married Indu (Indira Patel), a friend from the Ashram School who came from Zambia. Later both left for England. By the time I met Kamy in London in 1990, both had good jobs, were established at Harrow, with two children. Kamy had distinguished himself at the middle management cadre of the British Telecom, a rare feat for an immigrant to break through the class, race and cultural prejudice of the British bureaucratic system.

All those who came in contact with Kamy knew him to be an unusual personality. Mature, balanced, sharp and perceptive, he was well-read and articulate. However, it is not these attributes that made him stand apart. It was his deeply moral and spiritual qualities that did! We have rarely received so much of love, generosity and consideration from anyone else! For any visitor from the Ashram, Kamy was always there. His job did not matter, his duties and responsibilities towards his wife and children did not come in the way of his characteristic and special warmth. This seemed to be his yoga, his single mission in life.

Regardless of the number of trips one makes, there is nothing more disconcerting for a visitor from India than to face the impersonality and anonymity of the West. Time too is a rare commodity there. Remarkably, and quite inexplicably, Kamy always found time for his friends and visitors. He was always the last to retire at night, to do the dishes, the laundry and to lock up the house. He was also the first to get up. The visitor at his Pinner Hatch End residence may not have recovered from jet lag, but Kamy would have planned out with meticulous care the plan for the day for the visitor. "Take the blue line in the 'underground', get off at Victoria, go to Trafalgar Square. And take care to return by 6 p.m. Give me a call and I will pick you up. Or come straight and pick up the keys to the house. You'll find them beneath the doormat." Alternately, during the busy hours of the day he would call from his office. "Have you had your lunch? Help yourself! Or wait for Viku or Sachu to serve you some sandwiches!" On the other hand, one's foolishness and occasional stupidity always met with an understanding smile, never a reprimand.

Kamy was always like a rock! His presence remained with us during the entire trip and beyond. Cambridge, Nottingham, Oxford and even far away Texas. Early one morning in February 1991, Kamy was answering a long distance call to Austin.

Texas, as I was preparing to leave for the airport. He assured me that he would be there at Heathrow to receive me. And he was there on the dot!

How could a person give so much of disinterested love, I wonder. Kamy always kept an 'open house'. Indi and the children, Viku and Sachu admired and followed in his footsteps. They, along with the other family members—Bababhai, Ila, Bharati-ben, Geeta and Nitin—always worried for his health, the strain caused to his body and mind by his constant exertions. But Kamy would not hear anything of it. Nor did the first heart attack—as a danger signal—make any difference to him, or his desire to help others.

It was in the small things of day-to-day life that one saw the real quality of Kamy's heart, his deep sense of generosity and sensitivity to fellow human beings. When perfect strangers would pile you with items to take back for their relatives, Kamy's constant worry was "How will you carry your load of books? What would you do for excess baggage? Do you have enough money? I shall make sure that you depart safe." He would brush off all our disclaimers.

His sisters always say that Kamy was like a father and mother to them. This is entirely true! His daily life would not be complete without a call to Bharati-ben, Geeta and Nitin, or periodically to Ila at Pondicherry. Despite differences in temperament, he always had a special bond with his brother Nalin in Germany. All these, a visitor easily noticed. As for the other Ashram children in London—Dharmi, Malu, Poppy, Bharat and Chitu—they too always relaxed because Kamy was always there as a brother.

Today, Kamy, you are in another world. Like the pure at heart, you too have hastened your departure. You have left us to a poorer world. It is to the Patel family you were born. But you departed as a member of the "golden chain". What could be a greater gift to life than this?

SACHIDANANDA MOHANTY

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

From the Editor's Desk: Some Socio-Spiritual Perspectives. *Shyam Sunder Jhunjhunwala* Sri Aurobindo's Action, Pondicherry, 605 002. 1998 126 pages Rs 95

THERE has always been a problem in introducing Sri Aurobindo to the newcomer. He is generally considered to be a great scholar who gave up the worldly life to become a recluse and set up an ashram for yoga. Now what is this yoga? Sitting silently in meditation for hours and hours? Or is it something more? Such a question seems to have assailed Surendranath Jauhar when he went to Pondicherry in 1939 out of curiosity. He was surprised by what he saw.

“We saw no such distinctive feature in the design and architecture of the building which could even faintly suggest that it was an Ashram. When we got into the building, we saw a number of people, all in simple and neat dresses, and some even in pants, coats and neckties but no saints or *sannyasis*, no monks or *mahants*, no shaven heads or *jatādhāris*, no bare-bodied *bhaktas* or saffron-robed *sādhus*, no *tilak-dhāris* or *kan phātās*. Neither did we spot any temple, *moortis* or *granthas* (scriptures).”

The ultimate aim of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo was to transform the human into gold, and this cannot be done in isolation. Every particle of human endeavour had to be taken up for the transformatory process. Editing was one of them. The Aurobindonian aegis has given us some brilliant editors. Nolini Kanta Gupta, K. D. Sethna, M. P. Pandit, Karunamayee, Shyam Sunder Jhunjhunwala.

To be an editor under the Aurobindonian banner is no easy task. Lofty idealism by itself will not stand. One has to keep one's ears close to the ground reality while the eyes must need peer into the beyond, far above the mental planes of consciousness. This definitely calls for some delicate balancing act. It is hard to walk on the mud of humdrum life without getting patches of scandal-clay on the feet; nor is it easy to zoom to the stars without being scorched by the fires of spiritual advancement. The armour of total faith in the Mother alone saves the Aurobindonian editor all the time. Shyam Sunder has that faith. This is what has made *Sri Aurobindo's Action* a presence in the magazine industry of India.

The aim of the magazine has been the same as that of *Arya* when it was published more than eighty years ago. As the Publisher's note for this selection of editorials (1986-97) says, the magazine is published “to promote India's resurgence in the light of the spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and to present Aurobindonian perspectives for the solution of problems being faced by human society.”

R. Y. Deshpande's foreword deftly touches the nerve-centre of the collection. Here is an editor who goes beyond journalism and brings forth an “Indian affirma-

tion'' to his writings. What are ''Indian values''? Not to live for oneself but for the Divine that has manifested as the commonalty. The idea is best expressed by one of Shyam Sunder's anecdotes.

''Once a boy received, for reciting a poem, a gift from the king of the land, it was a gold necklace. He gave it to his mother. The mother had promised to give the first earning of her son to the maid-servant. It was too much of riches for her. She got a pond made for the village.''

Commenting on this anecdote about the *dāi kā tālāb* retold by Shyam Sunder, R. Y. Deshpande says with infective sincerity:

''This is more than a mere anecdote; it is a part of our history. It is the spirit of India. Yes, it is in that spirit we proclaim the glory of India. The young Dhruva did intense and steadfast tapasya for years and pleased Brahma. A boon was granted to him. He desired the well-being of the world, *swastyastu vishvasya*. Such is the Indian tradition. Such is the boon for which the Indians have to do national tapasya. In it the Indians have to identify themselves with India.''

Shyam Sunder provides a golden work-book for undertaking such a national tapasya. We begin with a concern for the ecological degradation in India and in the course of reading the volume learn a lot about the nation, the world, Pondicherry and the Ashram. The mosaic patterns yield a certain organisation: politics, religion, economics, art, architecture, Indian culture. Whatever the subject, we come away elevated a little. Shyam Sunder does not shy away from seemingly ticklish questions. ''Who is an Ashramite?'' The Mother's definition of an Ashramite is one who has ''resolved to consecrate his life to the realisation of the service of the Divine.''

Usually it is a pleasant adventure to walk with Shyam Sunder observing the spaces of India, analysing the thought processes of people, and promising oneself to be an ideal warrior in the Mother's camp to usher in a better tomorrow. It is true there is a world crisis, asuric forces do wander in idealist places, pseudo-gurus flourish and men crave for instant riches. But Shyam Sunder will not allow himself to be drowned in gloom. He would rather listen to Rishi Narad answering Savitri's mother Queen Malavi: ''Was then the sun a dream because there is night?''

What makes these brief articles so eminently readable? It is the certainty: ''Peace will come from within the disarmament within.'' There are the brief insertions of self-criticism. Shyam Sunder does not care to speak of ''you''; it is always ''us''. These insertions come not in the style of *prabhu samhita* but as ruminations in the spaces of one's own silence.

''If Mother has said something which suits our liking or desire, we quote Mother's Divinity. If Mother has said something which does not suit our liking or desire, we say that we should not make a religion of what she has said.''

Like the parables in the Bible, Shyam Sunder has a fund of stories to dramatise right thinking and chase away wrong attitudes. The Mahabharata is a favourite haunt for gathering tales. There are other spaces too. You never know what the next entry is going to bring. Effortlessly the teacher uses his pen. The Italian artist Domenichino

struggling to please the hardest taskmaster in the world, who is none else but himself the Zen master Nan-in teaching others how to avoid self-opinionated gabblings; the emperor Augustus receiving instruction from the Greek philosopher not to take important decisions when angry without first counting all the letters of the alphabet, and the fisherman's wife who could not sleep in the house of her friend who had married a gardener because of the fragrance of flowers.

Some of the ideas that have been confounding us in recent times are also touched upon by the author 'Who is a Hindu?' Often it is used in derogatory terms and the word 'Hindutva' has become a stigma lashed around by self-styled 'secular' Indians. How has this come about? The attempt to please the non-Hindu vote-banks is not the only factor that has led to this loss of pride and esteem on the part of Hindus to call themselves as such. Shyam Sunder takes a pragmatic view.

"The most important cause seems to be the erosion of values from our life. For, Hinduism enjoins a life of discipline and high values, and in this century we have now taken to a life of material ease and comfort and luxury, regardless of and at the cost of all other values. Once having become votaries of this exclusively materialistic and vitalistic life of money and pleasure, the contradiction of calling oneself a Hindu became too obvious. In a way it is but fair—even though unconsciously—to renounce the Hindu nomenclature in these circumstances."

The two articles titled "India and Pakistan" are superb. The brief jottings challenging us to "Think it Over" gift us with a sense of discovery after we go to our day-to-day work with the mind experimenting in the laboratory of thought. For instance this spray as we step forward towards the new millennium.

"'Love thy neighbour.'

The 20th century is passing since Christ said it

Yet neither the Christians nor the non-Christians have been able to live up to this commandment. Neither the developed nor the undeveloped communities love their neighbours. Think it over."

But such thinking could also envelope us in gloom, since not all of us have a helping hand in the spiritual realms of yoga. For these aspirants too, there are lines that can be memorised and repeated within:

"Man's most precious offering
is of oneself"
"Excelsior.
Go higher
And deeper
And wider"

From the Editor's Desk is a definite help to go high, go higher, dig deeper, grow wider. And to aspire.

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

Students' Section

THE NEW YEAR

THE moon had risen in the sky,
Ever as dazzling and bright
Never did I wonder why
It was so beautiful tonight
It was like a maiden in gold
Staring into my eyes,
I would give my life just to hold
Her tears, when she cries
O yes, it was like heaven,
Enchanted as I stood there
Watching the clock past eleven
And I would dare,
To whisper to the winds about my love,
Which is so soft and tender
Like a loving white dove
With feathers of splendour
The moment I was to remember,
And to cherish in my heart,
Even in my dreamy slumber
It shall haunt, never to part
The night or the New Year eve,
The moment shall forever last,
A time when one shouldn't grieve
About the long-gone past
Minutes fly, minutes are few
And minutes continue,
Towards the year so fresh and new
When the sun's rays shine on the dew
The sun wakes the entire sleeping world
To get up and wish the New Year,
And everyone utters out a word
Without shedding a single tear
Happy New Year 1999'

PAVAK K MITRA