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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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DEATH IN THE FOREST

BUT little dwelt her mind upon their sense;
Of death, not life she thought or life's lone end.
Love in her bosom hurt with jagged edges
Of anguish moaned at every step with pain
Crying, "Now, now perhaps his voice will cease
For ever." Even by some vague touch oppressed,
Sometimes her eyes looked round as if their orbs
Might see the dim and dreadful god's approach.
But Satyavan had paused. He meant to finish
His labour here that happy, linked, uncaring
They two might wander free in the green deep
Primaeval mystery of the forest's heart.
Wordless but near she watched, no turn to lose
Of the bright face and body which she loved.
Her life was now in seconds, not in hours,
And every moment she economised
Like a pale merchant leaned above his store,
The miser of his poor remaining gold.
But Satyavan wielded a joyous axe.
He sang high snatches of a sage's chant
That pealed of conquered death and demons slain,
And sometimes paused to cry to her sweet speech
Of love and mockery tenderer than love:
She like a pantheress leaped upon his words
And carried them into her cavern heart.
But as he worked, his doom upon him came.
The violent and hungry hounds of pain
Travelled through his body biting as they passed
Silently, and all his suffering breath besieged
Strove to rend life's strong heart-cords and be free.
Then helped, as if a beast had left its prey,
A moment in a wave of rich relief
Reborn to strength and happy ease he stood
Rejoicing and resumed his confident toil
But with less seeing strokes. Now the great Woodsman
Hewed at him and his labour ceased: lifting
His arm he flung away the poignant axe
Far from him like an instrument of pain.
She came to him in silent anguish and clasped,
And he cried to her, "Savitri, a pang

Cleaves through my head and breast as if the axe
 Were piercing it and not the living branch.
 Such agony rends me as the tree must feel
 When it is sundered and must lose its life.
 Awhile let me lay my head upon thy lap
 And guard me with thy hands from evil fate:
 Perhaps because thou touchest, death may pass.”
 Then Savitri sat under branches wide,
 Cool, green against the sun, not the hurt tree
 Which his keen axe had cloven,—that she shunned;
 But leaned beneath a fortunate kingly trunk
 She guarded him in her bosom and strove to soothe
 His anguished brow and body with her hands.
 All grief and fear were dead within her now
 And a great calm had fallen. The wish to lessen
 His suffering, the impulse that opposes pain
 Were the one mortal feeling left. It passed:
 Griefless and strong she waited like the gods.
 But now his sweet familiar hue was changed
 Into a tarnished greyness and his eyes
 Dimmed over, forsaken of the clear light she loved.
 Only the dull and physical mind was left,
 Vacant of the bright spirit’s luminous gaze.
 But once before it faded wholly back,
 He cried out in a clinging last despair,
 “Savitri, Savitri, O Savitri,
 Lean down, my soul, and kiss me while I die.”
 And even as her pallid lips pressed his,
 His failed, losing last sweetness of response...

She knew that visible Death was standing there
 And Satyavan had passed from her embrace.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 563-65)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of December 2001)

WHATEVER the provocation given, it is utterly wrong to use aggressive physical violence, as you must recognise. The Mother does not punish, but you must see that if you cannot reestablish your control over physical reflexes, you will make the continuance of your work impossible. It will never do to be the slave of any impulse that seizes the body.

25 October 1932

The Mother: The idea of punishment never crossed my mind, but one who still feels the need of going to a third person to discuss Sri Aurobindo's yoga in order to form his own free opinion (!) about it, I cannot consider as a disciple, and it is only from the disciples that I can accept an offering of surrender.

29 October 1932

The Mother: I do not know why you are sending these things to me, so I return them to you.

30 October 1932

May I now send the things which I had sent to you the other day?

The Mother will take the things you offer, as she does not wish to be too severe. But an integral sincerity in all your being is the one thing she wants from you.

1 November 1932

It is very good if you keep this attitude and it should certainly be very favourable to a true inner progress. It is in the vital that is your difficulty, but also in the physical mind which should become wider and more plastic.

9 November 1932

Today's attitude: The first thing to be remembered always is that you are here to serve the Divine. For that alone practise purification through work, rejection of the lower nature, aspiration for Truth and the Divine and not for your own fulfilment, liberation or bliss or perfection. Is this a correct idea?

Yes; it is a sound attitude and the most helpful. The other (making fulfilment etc. the aim) encourages an ego-centric attitude. Fulfilment, liberation, bliss etc. will come, but as a

result of union with the Divine, not as a personal object of the sadhana.

11 November 1932

It is not, certainly, your own vital that engenders these movements, but its revolts seem to have made it subject to the suggestions of a hostile force from outside. If the suggestions had been confined to mental thoughts, that would have been normal, but it seems to have taken power enough to hold your mind and to push you to action. That means either an acute state of neurasthenia due to some wrong movements (the sexual habit you speak of, if you have been indulging that would explain it) or a vital inability to bear the pressure of a spiritual struggle. The Asuric idea of self-destruction or of a solution through violence on yourself is entirely false and a suggestion of the hostile force, as are too the imaginations against the Mother. If the neurasthenic condition has gone so far or if there is so acute a vital inability to bear the pressure of your inner struggle, the one immediate remedy would be a rest and relief from the struggle. A change of air and surroundings, the restoration of contact with ordinary life and the cessation of a constant preoccupation with your difficulties would seem to be urgent and imperative. An appeasement of the nervous system is needed and, at the moment, this seems to be the only way. I am not suggesting a permanent departure or giving up of the spiritual endeavour. It is quiet and repose that you need, a temporary relief and release from the inner struggle. It is better to do this than to go [on] in the condition you describe in your letter. Consider what I have written and reply to me in the morning so that something may be immediately decided; for the sooner you get the relief you need from these suggestions and their nervous pressure, the better.

29 January 1933

Do any of the following constitute a wrong movement or vital revolt?

1. Coming in the contact with people outside (non-Ashramites), but who have respect and devotion for you.

It depends on who they are and what influence they carry around them.

2. Taking tea etc. with them.

Not very safe.

3. Spending money for giving things to their children.

Not very safe.

4. Spending pocket-money for buying eatables to give Ashram friends.

Not very desirable.

5. *I went out for a walk to see the lake six miles from here.*

Not objectionable.

6. *Writing a letter to my wife just to console her and keep up her spirits.*

That is not objectionable.

Apart from these things, I do not know if I have been specially negligent in work. On the contrary I have been doing it very cheerfully, though not very carefully.

Why not carefully?

May I know which of the above movements are definitely wrong. If I have done them, I have certainly not done them with any attachment. I did not see any harm likely to come from them.

These things (most of them, to take a walk or write a letter home are different) can be described as not safe. If one has the strong spiritual condition secure in its basis one can do them without invasion from outside or a stumble; if one has the divine protection and can remain in it wherever he goes because the psychic being is in front and the vital obedient, then also one will not suffer. But otherwise in so acting one is opened to the influences that hang around these outside people, one enters by sympathy with them into the movement of other forces than those of spiritual life — and then it is quite possible that there may be untoward results as with X and Y and others too, in the physical or in the vital, wherever there is most weakness.

30 January 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of December 2001)

(Satyendra showed Sri Aurobindo some photographs of Pagal Haranath, the Bengali saint, and his wife. Below one of the photos of his wife was written that she was the Supreme Power and he was one of her forces.)

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the Tantric doctrine.

SATYENDRA: He was a Vaishnava.

SRI AUROBINDO: Maybe, but the doctrine is not a Vaishnava one. It is Tantric.

In principle the doctrine is true, for the Supreme Shakti is the Divine Consciousness and all the Gods come from her. It is said that even Shiva cannot act unless She gives him the power.

SATYENDRA: Haranath had an interesting life. He underwent a complete change of colour at Kashmir. It is said that Gauranga came to him in a vision and gave him his mission. But his later disciples consider him equal to Gauranga.

SRI AUROBINDO: Where is the contradiction? If the consciousness is ultimately and essentially divine, why should not both be one in consciousness?

SATYENDRA: They want to prove him an Avatar as great as Gauranga.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, competition for Avatarhood? But did he proclaim himself an Avatar?

SATYENDRA: No, Sir; but he behaved like one.

(For two days we had no conversation. Sri Aurobindo had suddenly developed some swelling on his injured leg and we were all anxious about it. Nobody was in a mood to talk. At last Sri Aurobindo himself came out with a reference to politics and the talk started.)

PURANI: X (Indian political leader) has sent a telegram to Y, saying this is the end of Fascism and the beginning of true democracy and declaring: "You will be a true President."

SRI AUROBINDO: Does it mean that the true President will follow his followers? That is true democracy! He will choose his followers and then follow them.

SATYENDRA: Instead of Fascism of the Right, what they perhaps want is a Fascism of the Left.

PURANI: The question of the Indian Princes and the States has become a live one now.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. If the Princes could come to a settlement with the Congress, things would be much better. My opinion is that there should be, as some Princes have suggested, an Advisory Board with all the interests represented, as in the old Indian democracies. But nowadays people want the modern type of democracy—the parliamentary form of government. The parliamentary system is doomed. It has brought Europe to its present sorry pass. It has succeeded only in the North—in England and the Scandinavian countries. That is because they are practical materialistic people: they don't live on ideas

and theories. In France you find about thirty parties and if a new man comes along, he starts the thirty-first. But it is difficult to see where one party differs from another.

PURANI: A friend of mine was telling me that in Norway and Sweden the Socialists and the Agrarians have made common cause and evolved a common scheme....

SRI AUROBINDO: Roosevelt has foreseen the whole thing and has taken his decision to back the democracies. But it is doubtful whether he can carry the American nation with him. The Americans won't come into the war unless some Americans are killed by Hitler, and Hitler won't do that. If they remain aloof, then it will be a question merely of being eaten up last. France will come first, then England, and finally America. Do you know of the three dreams Washington had? (1) War of Independence, (2) Civil War, (3) America attacked by many nations and by the Yellow Races, and her cities destroyed. He dreamt that by a supreme effort she shakes herself free. It seems at present as if the third dream were coming true. But if England, France and America stand together, they have a chance of success. For, America has the biggest navy, enormous economic resources and huge man-power. She may not have enough military strength on land, but the economic resources and man-power will make up.

PURANI: Roosevelt is supplying armaments to France and that he can do even if she doesn't come into a war.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but Americans may object to it because it may involve them in war.

PURANI: Jwalanti was praising Mussolini for what he has done for Italy. She hates his international policy but declares he has done wonderful work for his country.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh yes, especially at the beginning he did very good work. You haven't read Brailsford's article about what he did in Libya? Very great efficiency—of course without freedom: each house of the same pattern as the other—all regimented.

(After a pause) By the way, who is this Wazir Hossain we read of?

PURANI: He is a retired High Court Judge in U.P.—a leader of the Shias and a Congressman. His son is a Socialist and was imprisoned by the last administration. He comes from Aligarh University.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is Aligarh University nationalist?

PURANI: Yes, but Dara says its nationalism is very unreliable, like that of the Ali Brothers who remained with Gandhi as long as he was agitating for Khilafat.

SRI AUROBINDO: But now the percentage of nationalists among the Muslims is increasing. Look at U.P. and Berar. The number is surely greater than some years ago?

NIRODBARAN: Was Dara at Aligarh University?

PURANI: You seem to doubt it by your question.

SRI AUROBINDO: He wrote an article when he was there. He said that Newton discovered the Law of Gravitation when the apple fell, but he, Dara, would have been busy eating it rather than thinking out anything.

NIRODBARAN: He has written a short drama about the Cyclone and the Flowers—very amusing.

PURANI: His rhymes are most original. But he says that with "Supramental" only

“dental” can rhyme.

SRI AUROBINDO: That concerns Satyendra and establishes his connection with the Supramental. But why only “dental”? There is “transcendental”.

PURANI: That is again “dental”—at the end.

SRI AUROBINDO: What about “rental”?

SATYENDRA: That will be rather prosaic.

SRI AUROBINDO: “Oriental”? Is that all right? Sometimes Dara writes clever things.

PURANI: To return to the Princes. The States are not coming forward with any progressive policy. Bikanir is trying to crush the national movement. Udaipur also.

SRI AUROBINDO: Udaipur is understandable; he is old-fashioned. But Bikanir has knocked about in the world. If the Chamber of Princes give some reforms, they’ll forestall Vallabhbhai Patel. One should begin with the old Panchayet system in the villages and then work up to the top. The Panchayet system and the Guilds are more representative and they have a living contact with people. They are part of the people’s ideas. On the contrary, parliamentary system, with local bodies—the municipal councils—is not workable. These councils have no living contact with the people. The councillors make only platform speeches and nobody knows what they do for three or four years. At the end they reshuffle and rearrange the whole thing, making their own pile during their period of power. The old British parliamentary system was more representative. The man chosen belonged to the country and had a more living touch with his electors.

(To be continued)

(Nirodbaran: *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. I, pp. 161, 230-35)

PROMISE

A sky swept free of cloud;
 Tree whose true guise of growing
 Stayed, through all tempest blowing,
 Rootfast and uncowed;

Headland of rock that braved
 All through the hurl of winter
 Buffets that rive and splinter
 From sea-might, million-waved.

Drawing near of sun despite
 Serried griefs dim-shrouding,
 Then to silver glory prouiding
 Dawn-sky forestowed with light.

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: Very good indeed in diction, thought and rhythm.

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of December 2001)

सत्रासाहं वरेण्यं सहोदां ससवांसं स्वरपश्च देवीः।

ससान यः पृथिवीं द्यामुतेमामिन्द्रं मदन्त्यनु धीरणासः ॥

(Rigveda, 3.34.8)

“(They hymn) the supremely desirable, the ever overcoming, the giver of strength who wins possession of Swar and the divine waters; the thinkers have joy in the wake of Indra who takes possession of the earth and the heaven. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 219)

ससानात्याँ उत सूर्यं ससानेन्द्रः ससान पुरुभोजसं गाम्।

हिरण्ययमुत भोगं ससान हत्वी दस्यून् प्रायं वर्णमावत् ॥

(Rigveda, 3.34.9)

Indra wins possession of the Steeds, wins the Sun, wins the Cow of the many enjoyments; he wins the golden enjoyment, having slain the Dasyus he fosters (or protects) the Aryan *varṇa*. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 219)

इन्द्र ओषधीरसनोदहानि वनस्पतीरसनोदन्तरिक्षम्।

बिभेद बलं नुनुदे विवाचोऽथाभवद् दमिताभिक्रतूनाम् ॥

(Rigveda, 3.34.10)

Indra wins the herbs and the days, the trees and the mid-world; he pierces Vala and impels forward the speaker of the words; so he becomes the tamer of those who set against him their will in works, (*abhikratūnām*).” (SABCL, Vol. 10, pp. 219-20)

इन्द्रः स्वर्षा जनयन्नहानि जिगायोशिग्भिः पृतना अभिष्टिः।

प्रारोचयन्मनवे केतुमह्वामविन्दज्ज्योतिर्बृहते रणाय ॥

इन्द्रस्तुजो बर्हणा आ विवेश नृवद् दधानो नर्या पुरुणि।

अचेतयद् धिय इमा जरित्रे प्रेमं वर्णमतिरच्छक्रमासाम्

(Rigveda, 3.34.10)

“Indra, Swar-conquering, bringing to birth the days assailed and conquered by the de-sires (the Angirasas) these armies (of the Dasyus) ; he made to shine for man the knowl-edge-vision of the days (*ketum ahnām*), he found the Light for the vast enjoyment;....he made conscious in knowledge these thoughts for his adorer, he carried forward (beyond the obstruction of the Dasyus) this bright *varṇa* of these (thoughts), *acetayad dhiya imā jaritre, pra imāṃ varṇam atiracchukram āsām*. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 220)

महो महानि पनयन्त्यस्येन्द्रस्य कर्म सुकृता पुरुणि।
वृजनेन वृजिनान् त्सं पिपेष मायाभिर्दस्यूरभिभूत्योजाः ॥

(Rigveda, 3.34.10)

They set in action (or praise) many great and perfect works of the great Indra; by his strength he crushes, in his overwhelming energy, by his workings of knowledge (*māyābhiḥ*) the crooked Dasyus.” (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 220)

अया रुचा हरिण्या पुनानो विश्वा द्वेषांसि तरति स्वयुग्वभिः सूरौ न स्वयुग्वभिः।
धारा सुतस्य रोचते पुनानो अरुषो हरिः।
विश्वा यद्रूपा परियात्यृक्वभिः सप्तास्येभिर्ऋक्वभिः ॥

(Rigveda, 9.111.1)

“By this brilliant light he, purifying himself, breaks through all hostile powers by his self-yoked horses, as if by the self-yoked horses of the Sun. He shines, a stream of the outpressed Soma, purifying himself, luminous, the brilliant One, when he encompasses all forms (of things) with the speakers of the Rik, with the seven-mouthed speakers of the Rik (the Angirasa powers). (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 221)

त्वं त्यत् पणीनां विदो वसु सं मातश्भिर्मर्जयसि स्व आ दम ऋतस्य धीतिभिर्दमे।
परावतो न साम तद् यत्रा रणन्ति धीतयः।
त्रिधातुभिररुषीभिर्वयो दधे रोचमानो वयो दधे ॥

(Rigveda, 9.111.2)

Thou, O Soma findest that wealth of the Panis; thou by the Mothers (the cows of the Panis, frequently so designated in other hymns) makest thyself bright in thy own home (Swar), by the thoughts of the Truth in thy home, *saṁ mātṛbhiḥ marjayasi sva ā dame ṛtasya dhītibhir dame*. As if the Sama (equal fulfillment, *samāne ūrve*, in the level wide-ness) of the higher world (*parāvataḥ*), is that (Swar) where the thoughts (of the Truth) take their delight. By those shining ones of the triple world (or triple elemental nature) he holds the wide manifestation (of knowledge), shining he holds the wide manifestation.” (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 221)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

THEN A CHILD SHALL DESTROY HER

Europe prides herself on her practical and scientific organisation and efficiency. I am waiting till her organisation is perfect; then a child shall destroy her.¹

When these aphorisms were published in the Bulletin you said that this one should be omitted. It is a rather mysterious aphorism, which I would very much like to understand. But I would like to know whether now we should publish it or not?

Where did Sri Aurobindo write that?

In the Aphorisms.

Yes, but he did not write a special book; these texts were collected from here and there.

No, no, not at all. Sri Aurobindo had a special notebook in which he wrote the aphorisms as they came.² And this one was among the others.

(Silence)

“A child”... What did he put in English at the beginning?

“Prides herself.”

Prides herself...

I would put it in.

But what did he mean?

I don't know.

Of course, only the power can be destroyed, because one cannot destroy the earth.

Yes, the earth cannot be destroyed, but a civilisation can be destroyed.

Yes.

He says: Europe will be destroyed.

1. The following conversation took place in December 1971, nearly ten years after the Mother's commentaries on this group of aphorisms.

2. There is, in fact, one notebook which contains all the aphorisms, but it is in all likelihood a fair copy and not the first draft of the aphorisms.

Yes... but which child?

I have the impression that it came as something absolutely true, an absolutely true prediction—but I don't know.

You had said that it would be better to leave it out.

But now, on the contrary, I feel that it *must* be said.

But I do not think that the time has come yet, I mean “come” for the realisation; the time has come to say it, but not for the realisation.

“The child”... perhaps it is the child of the new world—with a smile, he will bring the whole thing tumbling down.

Yes, it is possible—it is possible.

(Silence)

There is a terrifying power in it... something tremendous. You cannot imagine the power that is in it; it is really as if the Divine himself were speaking: “I am waiting”... I am waiting...

11 December 1971

THE MOTHER

(On Thoughts and Aphorisms, CWM, Vol. 10, pp. 141-42)

YOUR BEST FRIEND

YOUR friend is not one who encourages you to come down to your lowest level, encourages you to do foolish things along with him or fall into bad ways with him or one who commends you for all the nasty things you do, that's quite clear....

We don't like the company of someone who has a contagious disease, and avoid him carefully; generally he is segregated so that it does not spread. But the contagion of vice and bad behaviour, the contagion of depravity, falsehood and what is base, is infinitely more dangerous than the contagion of any disease, and this is what must be very carefully avoided. You must consider as your best friend the one who tells you that he does not wish to participate in any bad or ugly act, the one who gives you courage to resist low temptations; he is a friend. He is the one you must associate with and not someone with whom you have fun and who strengthens your evil propensities. That's all....

Indeed, you should choose as friends only those who are wiser than yourself, those whose company ennoble you and helps you to master yourself, to progress, to act in a better way and see more clearly. And finally, the best friend one can have—isn't he the Divine, to whom one can say everything, reveal everything? For there indeed is the source of all compassion, of all power to efface every error when it is not repeated, to open the road to true realisation; it is he who can understand all, heal all, and always help on the path, help you not to fail, not to falter, not to fall, but to walk straight to the goal. He is the true friend, the friend of good and bad days, the one who can understand, can heal, and who is always there when you need him. When you call him sincerely, he is always there to guide and uphold you—and to love you in the true way.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 55-57)

DEALING WITH OTHERS

To discourage anybody is wrong, but to give false encouragement or encouragement of any thing wrong is not right. Severity has sometimes to be used (though not overused), when without it an obstinate persistence in what is wrong cannot be set right. Very often, if an inner communication has been established, a silent pressure is more effective than anything else. No absolute rule can be laid down; one has to judge and act for the best in each case.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 710)

A LETTER

I AM glad that the urge towards self-perfection has not left you yet. As long as it is there, you remain the Mother's child, no matter how many defects may persist.

A development of a constant inner accompaniment of the outer life is a great progress for all followers of the Mother. If one just turns one's mind inward, one should be able to feel a stream of self-giving to the Mother spontaneously flowing on. You strike me as going on in the right direction in a natural way.

That's a fact to be happy about. Never doubt that the Mother is taking you forward all the time.

July 2001

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. Sethna)

THE BALLAD OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of December 2001)

PART IV

As still Savitri sat beside
 Her husband dying,—dying fast,
 She saw a stranger slowly glide
 Beneath the boughs that shrunk aghast.
 Upon his head he wore a crown
 That shimmered in the doubtful light;
 His vestment scarlet reached low down,
 His waist, a golden girdle dight.
 His skin was dark as bronze; his face
 Irradiate, and yet severe;
 His eyes had much of love and grace,
 But glowed so bright, they filled with fear.

A string was in the stranger's hand
 Noosed at its end. Her terrors now
 Savitri scarcely could command.
 Upon the sod beneath a bough,
 She gently laid her husband's head,
 And in obeisance bent her brow.
 "No mortal form is thine,"—she said,
 "Beseech thee say what god art thou?
 And what can be thine errand here?"
 "Savitri, for thy prayers, thy faith,
 Thy frequent vows, thy fasts severe,
 I answer,—list,—my name is Death.

And I am come myself to take
 Thy husband from this earth away,
 And he shall cross the doleful lake
 In my own charge, and let me say
 To few such honours I accord,
 But his pure life and thine require
 No less from me.' 'The dreadful sword
 Like lightning glanced one moment dire;
 And then the inner man was tied,
 The soul no bigger than the thumb,

To be borne onwards by his side:—
Savitri all the while stood dumb.

But when the god moved slowly on
To gain his own dominions dim,
Leaving the body there—anon
Savitri meekly followed him,
Hoping against all hope; he turned
And looked surprised. “Go back, my child!”
Pale, pale the stars above them burned,
More weird the scene had grown and wild;
“It is not for the living—hear!
To follow where the dead must go,
Thy duty lies before thee clear,
What thou shouldst do, the Shasters show.

The funeral rites that they ordain
And sacrifices must take up
Thy first sad moments; not in vain
Is held to thee this bitter cup;
Its lessons thou shalt learn in time!
All that thou *canst* do, thou hast done
For thy dear lord. Thy love sublime
My deepest sympathy hath won.
Return, for thou hast come as far
As living creature may. Adieu!
Let duty be thy guiding star,
As ever. To thyself be true!”

“Where’er my husband dear is led,
Or journeys of his own free will,
I too must go, though darkness spread
Across my path, portending ill,
’Tis thus my duty I have read!
If I am wrong, oh! with me bear;
But do not bid me backward tread
My way forlorn,—for I can dare
All things but that; ah! pity me,
A woman frail, too sorely tried!
And let me, let me follow thee,
O gracious god,—whate’er betide.

By all things sacred, I entreat,
 By Penitence that purifies,
 By prompt Obedience, full, complete,
 To spiritual masters, in the eyes
 Of gods so precious, by the love
 I bear my husband, by the faith
 That looks from earth to heaven above,
 And by thy own great name O Death,
 And all thy kindness, bid me not
 To leave thee, and to go my way,
 But let me follow as I ought
 Thy steps and his, as best I may.

I know that in this transient world
 All is delusion,—nothing true;
 I know its shows are mists unfurled
 To please and vanish. To renew
 Its bubble joys, be magic bound
 In *Maya*'s network frail and fair,
 Is not my aim! The gladsome sound
 Of husband, brother, friend, is air
 To such as know that all must die,
 And that at last the time must come,
 When eye shall speak no more to eye
 And Love cry,—Lo, this is my sum.

I know in such a world as this
 No one can gain his heart's desire,
 Or pass the years in perfect bliss;
 Like gold we must be tried by fire;
 And each shall suffer as he acts
 And thinks,—his own sad burden bear!
 No friends can help,—his sins are facts
 That nothing can annul or square,
 And he must bear their consequence.
 Can I my husband save by rites?
 Ah, no,—that were a vain pretence,
 Justice eternal strict requites.

He for his deeds shall get his due
 As I for mine: thus here each soul
 Is its own friend if it pursue

The right, and run straight for the goal;
But its own worst and direst foe
If it choose evil, and in tracks
Forbidden, for its pleasure go.
Who knows not this, true wisdom lacks,
Virtue should be the aim and end
Of every life, all else is vain,
Duty should be its dearest friend
If higher life, it would attain.”

“So sweet thy words ring on mine ear,
Gentle Savitri, that I fain
Would give some sign to make it clear
Thou hast not prayed to me in vain.
Satyavan’s life I may not grant,
Nor take before its term thy life,
But I am not all adamant,
I feel for thee, thou faithful wife!
Ask thou aught else, and let it be
Some good thing for thyself or thine,
And I shall give it, child, to thee,
If any power on earth be mine.”

“Well, be it so. My husband’s sire
Hath lost his sight and fair domain,
Give to his eyes their former fire,
And place him on his throne again.”
“It shall be done. Go back, my child,
The hour wears late, the wind feels cold,
The path becomes more weird and wild,
Thy feet are torn, there’s blood, behold!
Thou feelest faint from weariness,
Oh try to follow me no more;
Go home, and with thy presence bless
Those who thine absence there deplore.”

“No weariness, O Death, I feel,
And how should I, when by the side
Of Satyavan? In woe and weal
To be a helpmate swears the bride.
This is my place; by solemn oath
Wherever thou conductest him

I too must go, to keep my troth;
 And if the eye at times should brim,
 'Tis human weakness, give me strength
 My work appointed to fulfil,
 That I may gain the crown at length
 The gods give those who do their will.

The power of goodness is so great
 We pray to feel its influence
 For ever on us. It is late,
 And the strange landscape awes my sense;
 But I would fain with thee go on,
 And hear thy voice so true and kind;
 The false lights that on objects shone
 Have vanished, and no longer blind,
 Thanks to thy simple presence. Now
 I feel a fresher air around,
 And see the glory of that brow
 With flashing rubies fitly crowned.

Men call thee Yama—conqueror,
 Because it is against their will
 They follow thee,—and they abhor
 The Truth which thou wouldst aye instil.
 If they thy nature knew aright,
 O god, all other gods above!
 And that thou conquerest in the fight
 By patience, kindness, mercy, love,
 And not by devastating wrath,
 They would not shrink in childlike fright
 To see thy shadow on their path,
 But hail thee as sick souls the light.”

“Thy words, Savitri, greet mine ear
 As sweet as founts that murmur low
 To one who in the deserts drear
 With parchèd tongue moves faint and slow,
 Because thy talk is heart-sincere,
 Without hypocrisy or guile;
 Demand another boon, my dear,
 But not of those forbad erewhile,
 And I shall grant it, ere we part:

Lo, the stars pale,—the way is long,
Receive thy boon, and homewards start,
For ah, poor child, thou art not strong.”

“Another boon! My sire the king
Beside myself hath children none,
Oh grant that from his stock may spring
A hundred boughs.” “It shall be done.
He shall be blest with many a son
Who his old palace shall rejoice.”
“Each heart-wish from thy goodness won,
If I am still allowed a choice,
I fain thy voice would ever hear,
Reluctant am I still to part,
The way seems short when thou art near
And Satyavan, my heart’s dear heart.

Of all the pleasures given on earth
The company of the good is best,
For weariness has never birth
In such a commerce sweet and blest;
The sun runs in its wonted course,
The earth its plenteous treasure yields,
All for their sake, and by the force
Their prayer united ever wields.
Oh let me, let me ever dwell
Amidst the good, where’er it be,
Whether in lowly hermit-cell
Or in some spot beyond the sea.

The favours man accords to men
Are never fruitless, from them rise
A thousand acts beyond our ken
That float like incense to the skies;
For benefits can ne’er efface,
They multiply and widely spread,
And honour follows on their trace.
Sharp penances, and vigils dread,
Austerities, and wasting fasts,
Create an empire, and the blest
Long as this spiritual empire lasts
Become the saviours of the rest.”

"O thou endowed with every grace
 And every virtue,—thou whose soul
 Appears upon thy lovely face,
 May the great gods who all control
 Send thee their peace. I too would give
 One favour more before I go;
 Ask something for thyself, and live
 Happy, and dear to all below,
 Till summoned to the bliss above.
 Savitri ask, and ask unblamed."—
 She took the clue, felt Death was Love,
 For no exceptions now he named.

And boldly said,—“Thou knowest, Lord,
 The inmost hearts and thoughts of all!
 There is no need to utter word,
 Upon thy mercy sole, I call.
 If speech be needful to obtain
 Thy grace,—oh hear a wife forlorn,
 Let my Satyavan live again
 And children unto us be born,
 Wise, brave, and valiant.” “From thy stock
 A hundred families shall spring
 As lasting as the solid rock,
 Each son of thine shall be a king.”

As thus he spoke, he loosed the knot
 The soul of Satyavan that bound,
 And promised further that their lot
 In pleasant places should be found
 Thenceforth, and that they both should live
 Four centuries, to which the name
 Of fair Savitri, men would give,—
 And then he vanished in a flame.
 “Adieu, great god!” She took the soul,
 No bigger than the human thumb,
 And running swift, soon reached her goal,
 Where lay the body stark and dumb.

She lifted it with eager hands
 And as before, when he expired,

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of December 2001)

The Symbolism of Night in “The Symbol Dawn”

3

WE have seen that the huge mind of Night, in the opening lines of *Savitri* as revised in the late 1930s, seems related to the “cosmic mind” of Death later in the poem. This does not mean that the figure of Death that appears in Books Eight to Ten should be imagined as one reads the first page of “The Symbol Dawn”. In any case, we must recall what Death himself says about this form:

I have no body and no tongue to speak,
I commune not with human eye and ear;
Only thy thought gave a figure to my void.
Because, O aspirant to divinity,
Thou calledst me to wrestle with thy soul,
I have assumed a face, a form, a voice.¹

Neither Savitri nor Death is explicitly present in the first section of “The Symbol Dawn”. Yet the struggle between the “great opponents”,² which lies at the heart of the story of the epic, is already foreshadowed in the first few lines where the “foreboding mind of Night” is stretched across “the path of the divine Event”. If the mind of Night is the mind that later assails Savitri with devastating logic, Savitri herself represents the transformative power that dissolves darkness into Light and is the agent of the divine Event. The struggle reaches its climax at the end of Book Ten when She who had taken birth as Savitri gives the command to Death:

But now, O timeless Mightiness, stand aside
And leave the path of my incarnate Force.³

The parallelism between “the path of the divine Event” and “the path of my incarnate Force”, words separated by nearly 22,000 lines, is a detail that suggests the unity of the colossal architecture of *Savitri*, a unity of design arising from a unity of experience rather than from artistic calculation. The similarity in the wording can be taken as the sign of an identity in the underlying vision of the confrontation between the powers of transformation and resistance. This correspondence would seem to confirm our theory that the mind of Night lying across the path of the divine Event is none other than the spirit of the great denial who, under the name of Death, blocks the path of the Force missioned to incarnate supernal Truth in a human body.

“Foreboding” before “mind of Night” adds another dimension, akin to Fate. The only other occurrence of the word “foreboding” in the poem refers to Savitri’s foreknowledge of the death of Satyavan:

Thus swaying in strong gusts of happiness
And swimming in foreboding’s sombre waves
And feeding sorrow and terror with her heart,—
For now they sat among her bosom’s guests
Or in her inner chamber paced apart,—
Her eyes stared blind into the future’s night.⁴

Savitri’s calamity is a typical instance of the role of fate in human life, underlining the close connection of fate with death, the “one fate” by which all creatures are “pierced”.⁵ Her foreboding is the dwelling of her mind on the prospect of the catastrophic intrusion of fate and death into her life. It is a form of mental fear, unlike Narad’s luminous and impartial prevision of the same event. When she finds her soul, foreboding is replaced by an entirely different outlook:

Above the cherished head of Satyavan
She saw not now Fate’s dark and lethal orb;
A golden circle round a mystic sun
Disclosed to her new-born predicting sight
The cyclic rondure of a sovereign life.
In her visions and deep-etched veridical dreams,
In brief shiftings of the future’s heavy screen,
He lay not by a dolorous decree
A victim in the dismal antre of death....⁶

In her foreboding mood, it is as if Savitri had opened herself to the influence of the mind of Night which stares perpetually at the face of a bleak future. Forever contemplating “the dark Ideas of the Abyss”⁷ that emerge from

An ancient womb of huge calamitous dreams,⁸

this mind is the fallen counterpart of the ideal Mind of which it is said:

Dreaming its luminous creations gaze
On the Ideas that people eternity.⁹

The negativity of the foreboding mind of Night, projecting the great denial into the unlit eternity of Time, is a force for the perpetuation of that denial and the materialisation of “huge calamitous dreams”. This, we may suppose, is why the word “foreboding” figures

so prominently at the outset of *Savitri* in Sri Aurobindo's statement of the obstacles to the movement from darkness to Light.

Depending on whether she is in contact with the mind of Night or with the truth of her soul, Savitri sees the future in two very different ways. These can be understood in terms of a distinction made by Sri Aurobindo in his *Record of Yoga* on 14 December 1914:

There is a struggle between static perception of event & dynamic perception of event (passive & active Chit). The latter which alters the event predestined by the ensemble of forces by a personal intervention (ie of higher forces) is becoming rapidly stronger....¹⁰

In the poem, the "event predestined by the ensemble of forces" is the death of Satyavan. Narad, with his faculty of *trikāladṛṣṭi*, voices the "static perception" of the event, later fulfilled by Death. Narad hints that this is not all, but leaves the dynamic perception and intervention of higher forces to Savitri, declaring:

It is decreed and Satyavan must die;
The hour is fixed, chosen the fatal stroke.
What else shall be is written in her soul....¹¹

Knowledge of the future is possible by several means which vary in their reliability. Sri Aurobindo's extensive experiments with *trikāladṛṣṭi*, the "vision of the three times" (past, present and future), are documented meticulously in the *Record of Yoga* and suggest the importance he gave to this branch of the Yoga of self-perfection. But it was not his aim to become a prophet. Prophetic power, though it was the aspect of *trikāladṛṣṭi* that interested him most, was valued primarily in connection with the power to act upon events. In the *Record of Yoga*, this is called *tapas-siddhi*. *Trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas-siddhi* together formed a union of knowledge and will whose highest form, mentioned in January 1927 not long before the *Record* was discontinued, was seen to be "of the nature of omniscience and omnipotence".¹²

The ancient legend of Savitri and Satyavan, revolving around the prediction of a fated event and the alteration of its outcome, was ideally suited for a symbolic presentation of Sri Aurobindo's preoccupation with changing the course of destiny. No doubt this was one reason for his taking up this story as the subject of a major work and for his increasing involvement with the poem as time went on.

The theme of *Savitri* is usually formulated in terms of the heroine's struggle with Death. This is certainly correct as far as it goes; but by substituting Fate for Death as the principal adversary we get a coherent alternative formulation that brings out another aspect. Sri Aurobindo himself once explained "The Issue", the title of the second canto, as meaning "the issue between Savitri and Fate", although he went on to admit the other interpretation:

or rather between the incarnate Light, the Sun Goddess, and Death the Creator and Devourer of this world with his Law of darkness, limitation, ignorance.¹³

If Death is the creator of this world and it is his law that governs it, Fate must evidently be regarded as his instrument. But the world is also said to be “the enormous scene that Fate has built”.¹⁴ In this case Death would become subordinate to Fate—unless they are considered to be two ways of looking at the same thing.

The importance of the Fate aspect is obvious. What Aswapati prays for in Book Three of *Savitri* is “one great act” that would “unlock the doors of Fate”.¹⁵ He is granted the boon:

Fate shall be changed by an unchanging will.¹⁶

When Narad’s revelation sets free “the spring of cosmic Fate”,¹⁷ Savitri echoes the very words the Goddess had spoken to Aswapati before her birth, proclaiming:

Fate’s law may change, but not my spirit’s will.¹⁸

The decisive encounter is depicted as being between Savitri and Death. But Savitri triumphs only after “the Force that alters Fate”¹⁹ has been awakened in her by the descent of the Power that reigned on her being’s summit.

If the “foreboding mind of Night” is Death, the god of the Inconscient and creator and overt master of the material world, surveying a dark map of Fate that leaves no place for a divine Event, the discovery announced symbolically in *Savitri* is that this is not the only possible map of the future. Death’s map is valid so long as the human consciousness remains on the physical plane. As regards the individual, Sri Aurobindo points out in *The Life Divine* that

destiny is not simple but complex; the destiny which binds our physical being, binds it so long or in so far as a greater law does not intervene.... but behind our surface is a freer Life-power, a freer Mind-power which has another energy and can create another destiny and bring it in to modify the primary plan, and when the soul and self emerges, when we become consciously spiritual beings, that change can cancel or wholly remodel the graph of our physical fate.²⁰

The psychic and spiritual change brings us into contact with a “higher fate”²¹ which is not automatic, like the fate proposed by Death, but depends on our conscious choice. The Mother spoke similarly of a hierarchy of “determinisms” that correspond to an ascending series of planes of consciousness, culminating in total freedom:

The highest plane is the plane of absolute freedom. If in your consciousness you are capable of passing through all these planes, so to say in a vertical line, and reaching

the highest plane and, by means of this connection, of bringing down this plane of perfect freedom into the material determinisms, you change everything.²²

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

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1. *Savitri* (1993), p. 593.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 639.
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4. *Ibid.*, p. 469.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 533.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
10. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 738.
11. *Savitri*, p. 458.
12. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1263.
13. *Mother India*, November 1982, p. 718.
14. *Savitri*, p. 427.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 345.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 346.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 429.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 432.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 665.
20. *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 19, p. 809.
21. *Savitri*, p. 448.
22. *Questions and Answers 1953*, CWM, Vol. 5, p. 87.

THE ASCENT OF SIGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of December 2001)

Part Three

Vision in the "Higher Hemisphere"

1. Beyond the Reach of Sight:

The central theme of our essay has been the study of the itinerary of the ascent of sight. Following this course we have travelled from the "sightless sight" of the Inconscient up to the "cosmic gaze" of the Overmind. But all these belong to what was called by the ancient Indian mystics the "Lower Hemisphere" of our existence. But the reach of the Reality far transcends the borders of this Overmind zone of consciousness.

Now, there are three unified principles of the Divine, viz., the Existence principle (*Sat*), the Consciousness-Force principle (Chit-Shakti) and the Bliss principle (Ananda), and finally a fourth principle, Supermind (Mahas or Vijnana). These four supernal principles constitute the "Higher Hemisphere" of our being. Now the question is: can sight travel to this Higher Hemisphere, or, has it to stop at the upper border of the Overmind? Already the Rishi of the Isha Upanishad complained that the golden Overmind was blocking his vision from advancing farther upward. In fact, this Overmind links the lower hemisphere of Knowledge-Ignorance with the supramental Gnosis or Truth-Consciousness, but at the same time veils from our sight the greater Truth of the Supermind. The cosmic Vision of this overmental plane of consciousness, proceeding luminously from the truth, constitutes the "golden lid covering the face of the truth" (*hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitam mukham*). (Isha Upanishad, 15) In order to seize the truth in its unalloyed and unmitigated Glory, we have to make a last supreme ascent in the climb of our spiritual consciousness and break through the shining shield of Overmind into the realm of the supramental Gnosis. But will our power of sight be able to follow the climb of our consciousness into the four-rung zone of the higher hemisphere? Apparently not. Our "mortal" sight which has functioned in different ways on all the levels up to the Overmind abruptly avows its impotence and bows out. Conclusion: All that is above and beyond may be an object of knowledge but surely not of vision. This is apparently supported by the following verses of Savitri:

- (1) "Veiled by the Ray no mortal eye can bear" (57)
- (2) "Thought and sight can never know" (97)
- (3) "But what That was no thought or sight could tell" (308)
- (4) "Beyond the sight, the last support of form" (320)

(5) “An Omniscient knowing without thought or sight” (81)

But for sight the situation may not be so hopeless as that. For already the Vedic seers indicated that in the Supermind of the higher hemisphere one does not see the truth “by reflection in a mental organ of vision, but with the Sun of gnosis itself as his eye...” (Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 462)

So, can it be that sight itself will undergo a supreme transformation and appear in another essence in the divine world? The following passage from one of Sri Aurobindo’s letters leads us to believe that the answer may indeed be a ‘yes’:

“The supermind is an entirely different consciousness not only from the spiritualised Mind, but from the planes above spiritualised Mind which intervene between it and the supramental plane. Once one passes beyond overmind to supermind, one enters into a consciousness to which the norms of the other planes do not at all apply and in which the same truth, e.g. Sachchidananda and truth of this universe, is seen in quite a different way and has a different dynamic consequence.” (*Letters on Yoga*, pp. 240-41)

So possibly there can be a “supramental sight” in the higher hemisphere far beyond the overmental zone which represents the last rung of the lower hemisphere and closes the series in the ignorance. But before we come to the characterisation of this supramental sight, it would be better for our appreciation if we indicate a little more fully what the two hemispheres of existence actually signify.

2. Hemispheres of Existence:

Our total being has a higher and a lower hemisphere of functioning, the *parārdha* and the *aparārdha* of the ancient mystic Wisdom. There is a separation between these two hemispheres, very much acute in practice although unreal in essence.

In reality, the origin, the continent, the initial and the ultimate truth of all that exists anywhere in the universe is the triune principle of Sachchidananda: it is a transcendent and infinite and absolute Existence-Consciousness-Bliss which is the very nature of the divine Being.

Thus Sachchidananda is the One with a triple aspect functioning differently in three statuses.

In the Supreme the three are not three but one. Existence, Consciousness and Bliss are there not only inseparable but so much each other that they are not distinct at all.

In the superior planes of manifestation in the higher hemisphere they become triune; that is to say, although they remain inseparable, one aspect can make itself more prominent and base or lead the others.

In the lower planes below in the lower hemisphere, they become separable and even separate in appearance, though not in their secret reality.

The Sachchidananda can be experienced in either of its two aspects, static and dy-

namic. But “the full dynamic truth of Sachchidananda and the universe and its consequence cannot be grasped by any other consciousness than the supermind...” (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 241)

Sachchidananda contains all in a passive transcendent consciousness but becomes, sustains and governs everything by an active constituting consciousness.

The higher hemisphere is the realm of the Spirit's perfect and eternal reign. There it manifests its infinities, the unconcealed glories of its illimitable existence (Sat), its illimitable consciousness and knowledge (Chit), its illimitable force and power (Shakti) and its illimitable beatitude (Ananda).

The creative action of Sachchidananda, of the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute, has its centre in a fourth medial principle called Supermind (Mahas or Vijnana). Thus supermind is between the Sachchidananda and the lower creation. It alone contains the self-determining Truth of the Divine Consciousness and is necessary for a truth-creation.

Supermind is Sachchidananda's “... power of self-awareness and world-awareness, the world being known as within itself and not outside. [It is] the Truth-Consciousness whether above or in the universe by which the Divine knows not only his own essence and being but his manifestation also. Its fundamental character is knowledge by identity, by that the Self is known, the Divine Sachchidananda is known, but also the truth of manifestation is known, because this too is That...” (*Letters on Yoga*, pp. 242-43)

Thus the supermind is the divine Gnosis which creates, governs and upholds the worlds. And it is the supramental power that can transform mind, life and body — not the Sachchidananda consciousness which supports impartially everything.

Mind, Life and Matter which constitute the lower hemisphere of existence are a triple aspect of the higher principles of the upper hemisphere but working here in subjection to the principle of Ignorance, and in apparent self-forgetfulness of the Divine One in his play of division and multiplicity.

The lower being begins where a veil falls between spirit in supermind and spirit in mind, life and body. (Note: this whole section “Hemispheres of Existence” is a free adaptation of various passages from Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *Letters on Yoga*.)

Here are just a few verses from *Savitri* referring to this divine Gnosis, the Supermind:

- (1) “Now Mind is all and its uncertain ray,
Mind is the leader of the body and life,
Mind the thought-driven chariot of the soul...
Mind is not all his tireless climb can reach,
There is a fire on the apex of the worlds,
There is a house of the Eternal's Light,
There is an infinite truth, an absolute power....
There is a consciousness mind cannot touch,
Its speech cannot utter nor its thought reveal.

It has no home on earth, no centre in man,
 Yet is the source of all things thought and done,
 The fount of the creation and its works.
 It is the originer of all truth here..." (704-05)

- (2) "There is a world of everlasting Light,
 In the realms of the immortal Supermind
 Truth who hides here her head in mystery,
 Her riddle deemed by reason impossible
 In the stark structure of material form,
 Unenigmaed lives, unmasked her face and there
 Is Nature and the common law of things." (661-62)

3. Supramental Sight:

Knowledge by identity between the subject and the object, between the seer and the seen, is the basic attribute of the supramental gnosis but this supramental knowledge or experience by identity carries in it as a secondary part of itself a supramental vision. This vision can come even before there is any identity, as a sort of emanation of light from this secret underlying unity. This vision may at times be detached from the identity as a separate power. The truth or the thing known is then felt as an object subjectively seen in the self.

The supramental eye can see a hundred converging and diverging motions in one glance. It can envelop in its harmonising vision all that seem to our fragmenting mind nothing but clash and opposition and the collision and strife of numberless contending truths and forces.

Truth to the supramental sight is at the same time single and infinite and the complexities of its play in time and space bring out with an abundant facility the rich significances of the Eternal's many-sided oneness.

The supramental gnosis starts from the truth and shows the appearances in the light of the truth. It sees the thing in itself first, penetrates to its original and eternal essence and nature, and places its processes and properties only as a self-expression of this fundamental nature. Thus the supramental vision would see not merely the thing but all its truths, forces and powers and all the eternities within it.

The supramental gnosis has the direct contact, the immediate vision and the undiluted possession of the truth and has no need of seeking or any kind of procedure. The conclusion, if any, would be seen at once in its own right, by its own self-sufficient witness. All the so-called evidence would be seen too at once, along with it, in the same comprehensive figure, not at all as its "evidence" but as its inseparable "wings of circumstance".

The supramental gnosis dwells in the unity and knows by it all the very various diversities. These diversities are to it not diversities making up a constructed unity but a

unity constituting its own multitudes.

The supramental gnosis lives in the infinite and views finite things only in their relation to the infinite and in the sense of the infinite and never as something divorced and different from the infinite.

Finally the supramental gnosis dominates time in one view and links past, present and future in a single continuous map of knowledge and in an unpartitioned time-vision. (Note: This introductory section on "supramental sight" is adapted from various passages of Sri Aurobindo's writings.)

Now, as usual, we quote below some illustrative verses from *Savitri* showing the character of supramental sight:

- (1) "Above the stretch and blaze of cosmic Sight" (661)
- (2) "A universal vision that unites" (325)
- (3) "All was uncovered to his sealless eye." (83)
- (4) "Spirit no more is hid from its own view" (298)
- (5) "A single and infallible look comes down" (27)
- (6) "A wide tower of vision whence all could be seen
And all was centred in a single view" (514)
- (7) "He is the vision and he is the seer" (61)
- (8) "A kindling rapture joins the seer and seen" (112)
- (9) "Sight was a flame-throw from identity" (301)
- (10) "This seeing was identical with the seen" (546)
- (11) "A plan in the occult eternal Mind
Mapped out to backward and prophetic sight" (342)
- (12) "The long flow of its manifesting course,
Was held in spirit's single wide regard." (299)
- (13) "Bare in that Light Time toiled, his unseen works
Detected, the broad-flung far-seeing schemes
Unfinished which his aeoned flight unrolls
Were mapped already in that world-wide look" (442)

4. The Divine's Self-Vision:

The ascending march of sight continues even beyond the supramental gnosis and arrives at the point where the cosmic manifestation has not yet begun and the static Sachchidananda is still absorbed in himself. What is the nature of sight there?

By adapting what Sri Aurobindo has said in his commentary on the Isha Upanishad we may venture to say that we arrive, in the status of non-manifestation, at the light of the supreme superconscious in which even the intuitive knowledge of the truth of things based upon the total and integral vision — so characteristic of the supramental sight — passes into self-luminous self-vision of the one Existent. This status of sight is referred to by the following verses from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:

- (1) "Inspired by silence and the closed eyes' sight" (36)
- (2) "Watched by closed eyes, mute faces of the Unborn" (80)
- (3) "All light is but a flash from his closed eyes" (681)
- (4) "The eyes with their closed lids that see all things" (41)

We remember here that significant utterance of the Katha Upanishad: "For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness and by His shining all this shines." (Sri Aurobindo's translation of the Upanishadic verse: *tameva bhāntam anubhāti sarvaṃ tasya bhāṣā sarvaṃ idaṃ vibhāti.*)

Then Sachchidananda "decides" to initiate manifestation and opens his eyes. How does his supreme gaze look? Let the *Savitri* verses speak:

- (1) "His gaze was the regard of eternity" (682)
- (2) "A diamond purity of eternal sight" (297)
- (3) "... the Omniscient's eyes" (691)

Sachchidananda becomes the "sole Seer" (*ekarṣi*, Isha Upanishad); he is the only *draṣṭā*, "He alone who sees". To cite a telling aphorism of Patanjali: *tadā draṣṭur svarūpe avasthānam*, "The Seer dwells then in His own status." His unblinking Eye shines extended in the heavens: *divī cakṣurātataṃ* (Rig-Veda). Here are some relevant *Savitri* verses:

- (1) "A still all-seeing Eye above" (493)
- (2) "And intolerant flames the lone all-witnessing Eye" (343)
- (3) "The movement watched by an unsleeping Eye" (509)
- (4) "... in the vigil of a deathless gaze" (99)
- (5) "And guards the world with its all-seeing gaze" (317)
- (6) "An Eye immense regarding all things done" (322)

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

N.B. Jugal Kishore Mukherjee's book *The Ascent of Sight in Sri Aurobindo's Savitri* has been recently published by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry. Pages 92. Price: Rs. 70.00. —R.Y.D.

OVERMAN —THE TRANSITIONAL BEING BETWEEN MAN AND SUPERMAN

(Continued from the issue of December 2001)

What was to be done, is done

AT the beginning of April 1962, the situation became so critical that some thought the Mother had passed away. As in 1958 and during the following grave ordeals, she was attacked by black magic. Who were the attackers? Powerful beings from the invisible worlds who used human instruments. One of those hostile beings was a “titan” who had been a threat to her life since her birth and who, according to her own report, had actually been born at the same time. Another was the Lord of Falsehood who called himself the Lord of the Nations; he had assured her that he would cause all possible havoc until she had destroyed him. The “Lord of the Nations” had been the origin of the great wars and all evil in the past century; he was the being by whom Hitler was possessed.¹

Who were the human instruments? We do not know and it is risky to guess. It is much easier to become the medium of the forces of evil than it is to put oneself at the disposition of the Force of Good. “There are a group of people ... who want to create a kind of religion based on the revelation of Sri Aurobindo. But they have taken only the side of power and force, a certain kind of knowledge and all that could be utilised by Asuric forces. There is a big Asuric being that has succeeded in taking the appearance of Sri Aurobindo ... This appearance of Sri Aurobindo has declared that I have been a traitor to him and to his work, and has refused to have anything to do with me.”² It is not difficult to imagine the religion the Mother here talks about: one has only to think of the superman as conceived by Friedrich Nietzsche.

“I am no longer in my body. I have left it for the Lord to take care of it, to decide if it is to have the Supramental or not. I know and I have said also that now is the last fight. If the purpose for which this body is alive is to be fulfilled, that is to say, *the first steps taken towards the Supramental transformation*, then it will continue today. That is the Lord’s decision. I am not even asking what he has decided. If the body is incapable of bearing the fight, if it has to be dissolved, then humanity will pass through a critical time. What the Asuric Force that has succeeded in taking the appearance of Sri Aurobindo will create is a new religion or thought, perhaps cruel and merciless, in the name of the Supramental Realisation.” When the transcript of this talk was read to the Mother on one of the following days, she commented: “The fight is within the body. This can’t go on. They must be defeated or this body is defeated. All depends on what the Lord will decide. It [her body] is the battlefield ...”

“Several weeks of grave illness threatened the Mother’s life”,³ read the introductory words to the following bulletin: “Suddenly in the night I woke with the full awareness of what we could call the Yoga of the World. The Supreme Love was manifesting through

big pulsations, and each pulsation was bringing the world further in its manifestation. It was the formidable pulsations of the eternal stupendous Love, only Love ...

"And there was the certitude that what was to be done is done and that the Supramental Manifestation is realised.

"Everything was personal, nothing was individual.⁴

"This was going on, and on, and on, and on.

"The certitude that what was to be done is done ..."⁵

The Sixties

The Sixties were happening. The Twentieth Century, the most surprising, eventful and bloody century in human history, was taking a turn towards the unknown. The Mother said: "According to what I am being told — I mean by people who listen to the radio and read newspapers, all things I never do — the whole world seems to be undergoing an action which for the moment is disconcerting ... In America, for instance, the entire youth seems to be in the grip of a sort of curious vertigo, disconcerting to reasonable people but certainly an indication that an unusual force is at work. It implies the breaking of all habits and all rules. It is good. It may be somewhat strange for the time being, but it is necessary ...

"The best one can do is not to have any prejudices, not to have preconceived ideas or principles — you know: the moral principles, the preconceptions concerning the rules of conduct, what one must do and what one must not do, and the preconceived ideas concerning morality, concerning progress, and all the social and mental conventions. There is no worse obstacle ...

"To stick to something one believes one knows, to stick to the way one feels, to stick to what one loves, to stick to one's habits, to stick to one's supposed needs, to stick to the world as it is: that is what ties you down. You must undo all that, one thing after the other. All the ties must be undone. We have said this thousands of times and the people continue all the same. Even those who are most eloquent and preach this to others, how they remain stuck: they stick to their way of seeing, their way of feeling, their habit of progress, which seems to them the only one. No more ties — free! free! Always ready to change, except one thing: to aspire, to thirst.

"I understand it well, there are people who do not like the idea of a "Godhead" because it gets immediately mixed up with all kinds of European or Occidental conceptions which are terrible, and this complicates their life to some extent. But one does not need that! What one needs is the Light, what one needs is the Love, what one needs is the Truth, what one needs is the supreme Perfection, and nothing else! Formulas ... The fewer formulas there are, the better. But this: a need which *That* alone can satisfy. Nothing else, no half-measures: *That* alone. And then: godspeed! Whatever your way, it does not matter. It does not matter! Even the extravagances of the modern American youth may be a way. It does not matter."⁶ The radical spirit of the beginning had, if possible,

grown still more radical.

The Mother founded Auroville on 28 February 1968. The principles of this utopian “City of Dawn” were those of the Integral Yoga, and so was its goal. Then how did it differ from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram? It might be put as follows: the tender shoot of the Integral Yoga planted in the well-protected greenhouse of the Ashram had flourished into a strong young tree. Now the time had come to plant a first shoot of this tree in the open territory of the world. In the Charter of Auroville, a universal township-to-be which started from nothing in the middle of nowhere, the Mother wrote that the new city “belongs to nobody in particular”, but “to humanity as a whole”; that it would be “the place of unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages”; that it “wants to be the bridge between the past and the future”; and that it “will be a site of spiritual and material researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity”.

However, the key to the whole charter and therefore to Auroville was contained in its first paragraph: “to live in Auroville one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness”. The Mother was, of course, very much aware that this was the touchstone of the whole enterprise. No wonder then that from the very beginning, even before Auroville’s inauguration, the squabbling started precisely around this point. Which Divine? Which Divine Consciousness? Were the vision and the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to be accepted in order to be an Aurovilian? Were Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to be accepted as the Divine? How can one formulate things like that without making a religion out of it? And so on.

No doubt, the Mother foresaw it all: the material difficulties to be conquered in a very tough terrain; the spiritual ignorance and confusion; the egos of the individuals and the different groups – national, racial, cultural, and others — dancing their dances; the cultural and financial problems. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother herself had already pointed out on several occasions that the chief condition for the overman and the superman to come into being was an invincible occult protection against all the visible and occult influences which would try to make their presence impossible. Auroville was to be “the cradle of the superman”, wrote the Mother; this implied that, for the time being, it was also to be the cradle of the overman. The fact that after thirty-two years it is not only still there but even growing and expanding is proof that a Force is very concretely protecting it, for otherwise the whole project would have come to nothing because of its internal and external tribulations.

Perhaps the power poured into the atmosphere of the earth to establish Auroville caused a chain reaction elsewhere. Nanterre University, in the suburbs of Paris, was occupied by the students on 22 March 1968. And after March followed “May ’68”, with the barricades in Paris and repercussions all over the globe. And there was the Prague Spring, when a few intellectuals stood up against a communist totalitarianism. A spirit of freedom, novelty, daring, improvisation and hankering for something better because more authentic, more honest, more sincere, wandered over the planet and inspired hundreds and thousands who never fully realised what was driving them. One cannot but recall the Mother’s prophetic insight when she said some four years earlier: “In America, for in-

stance, the entire youth seems to be in the grip of a sort of curious vertigo, disconcerting to reasonable people but certainly an indication that an unusual force is at work ...”

She followed the events with keen interest. She said that it was “the highest Power” that forced the people to do what they had to do, and: “This has not at all the character of a strike, it has the character of a revolution ... It is clearly the future that is awakening and that wants to chase away the past”.⁷ These words sounded almost pitifully inflated when, after a few days, the student’s movement in Paris fizzled out, when the wild waves abated everywhere, and still more when in the following years most grandiloquent leaders of the events fell in step with the establishment. At that time “May ’68” was “cruelly vilified” (Bernard-Henri Lévy) by the media.

But not any longer. For its importance has gradually grown evident and now even academic historians (like Eric Hobsbawm) concede that it was in the Sixties that the century took an unexpected turn into a future which nobody is yet able to interpret.

But: what has all this to do with overman? Everything. For there is no doubt that the external global events were the physical expression of the ongoing spiritual transformation. Sri Aurobindo once wrote that the French Revolution of 1789 was made possible because of the *siddhi* of Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood realised by some unknown yogi in the Himalayas. (“If the French Revolution took place, it was because a soul on the Indian snows dreamed of God as freedom, brotherhood and equality.”⁸) An Avatar has more power than a yogi; he does not come to write great literature or say impressive things and build castles in the air, but to change an era. Speaking of overman, a surprise was in store.

(To be concluded)

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

Notes and References

1. See the chapter “The Lord of the Nations” in *Beyond Man* by the author.
2. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 408.
3. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, pp. 411-12.
4. The Mother apparently means that everything was an experience of her universal personality as the Universal Mother, not of her physical incarnation on the earth.
5. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, pp. 411-12 (first and second emphases added).
6. The Mother, *Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol. 11, pp. 1 and 6-7.
7. *Mother’s Agenda*, 22 May 1968.
8. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 460.

N.B. Georges van Vrekhem’s book *Overman—The Transitional Being Between Man and Superman* has been recently published by M/s. Rupa & Co., New Delhi. Pages 200; Price Rs. 195. —R.Y.D.

A LETTER

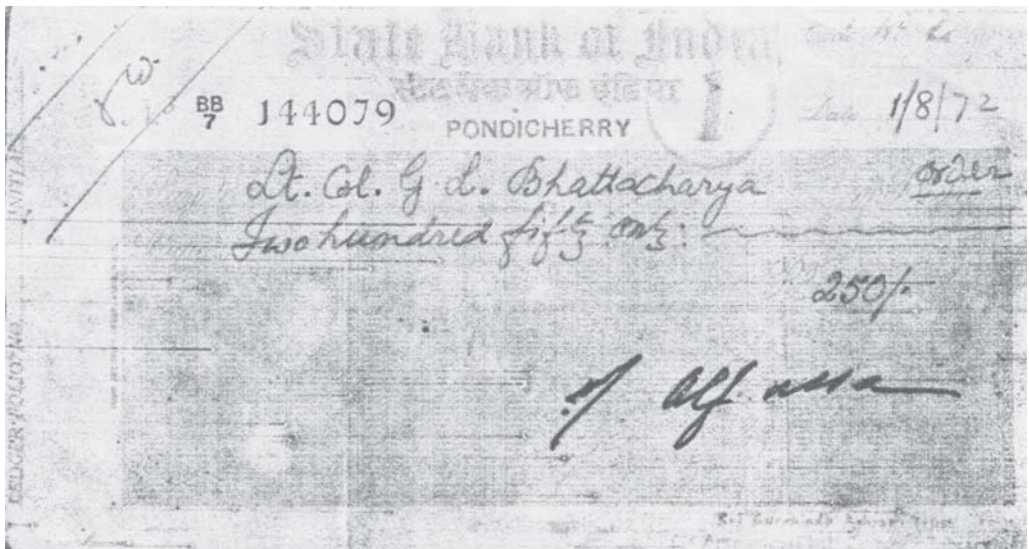
APROPOS Mangesh Nadkarni's *Remembering Mrinalini Devi*,* readers will notice that the references are entirely to the letters Sri Aurobindo wrote to her. What about Mrinalini Devi's letters? The total silence regarding this is intriguing when one finds that in the Alipore Bomb Case exhibits a lengthy letter running to 8 pages from her to her husband was filed by the police as part of the prosecution case.

It was in the late 1960s that Jayantilal-ji visited us in Calcutta and requested my parents, Lt. Col. Gunindra Lal and Smt. Suprobbhat Bhattacharya, to obtain copies of the Alipore Bomb Case papers from the records of the District Court, Alipore so that these could be exhibited during the Centenary and be included in the Collected Works. To me he gave the assignment of contacting Sri Arun Dutta, Secretary of Motilal Roy's Prabartak Ashram in Chandernagore, for identifying the unsigned articles written by Sri Aurobindo for *The Standard Bearer*. The Mother sent a cheque signed by her for the expenses incurred which my father refused to encash and lose her precious signature. After he passed away, my mother searched it out from his papers and I have had it laminated and framed. [The cheque is reproduced as a facsimile on the next page.]

I remember how excited we were when my parents came upon a letter from Mrinalini Devi to Sri Aurobindo dated 20 December 1907 from Deoghar. Besides the original in Bengali, the police had prepared an English translation for the court proceedings. This letter, along with those of Sri Aurobindo, were carefully copied by my mother from the court records. The translation caused a lot of puzzlement because of the frequent occurrence of the phrase "name so". Only when one reads the original does it become clear that this is the Bengali "na-mesho" (fourth maternal aunt's husband)! The letter is extremely important because Sri Aurobindo did not destroy it despite the anguish his wife expresses so frankly. That he treasured it is clear from the fact that he did not preserve any of her other letters. That is why the police found it among his papers during the raid. It reveals the extreme humiliation Mrinalini Devi felt in the absence of monetary support from her husband. The intimacy of their relationship is reflected in her upbraiding him without hesitation, and in his preserving this letter so full of wifely resentment. It richly deserves publication to complete the one-sided picture of Mrinalini Devi we have seen so far.

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

* See *Mother India* July-August 2001 issues. The said letter of Mrinalini Devi will be soon published in this periodical. —R.Y.D.



A cheque signed by the Mother to obtain copies of the Alipore Bomb Case papers.

SPIRIT OF BEAUTY

I MET a spirit of beauty in Auroville
 Where peacocks cried in pleasure from flower-hung trees,
 And a memory hold of a silver smile from still
 Clear depths of soul that blossomed in delight.

I met a spirit of tenderness sublime,
 A heart of strength that held its happy beats
 Mid the coming and going of the impetuous feet of time
 And in whose hands the lifeless clay breathed life.

From the deep and settled peace of her inward stance
 A sweet and warm communion gathered all
 Into the radiance of her welcoming glance
 And the wondrous silence of her spirit's call.

Might all our days dawn brightly as her eyes
 And love divine unmask our human guise.

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

“REMEMBER WHY THOU CAM’ST”

(Continued from the issue of December 2001)

Living Communion with the Divine

Q: Sri Aurobindo has said in his book The Mother that one must be in “living communion” with the Divine. And you have said: Find out your soul, open yourself to the Divine and then the Divine will work in you. You have also said that it is not that easy to open yourself to the Divine or to find your soul — but only if you find your soul will you be in touch with Divine. Now I feel that this is true. But then how to attain that living communion with the Divine which Sri Aurobindo is talking about. Can you guide us?

YOU see, there are various ways to this goal. Much depends on your *swabhāva*, your nature. That is why the Indian spiritual tradition does not insist on any one particular way, nor does it shut out any possible avenue that leads to God. In the choice of your way to God, your nature is the best guide—your nature at its highest and widest and not at its lowest and narrowest. Now either you find it yourself or you leave it to a Guru to show it to you. Sri Aurobindo has laid down the general principles of yoga; your success will depend on finding the right path for your nature and also on the intensity of your commitment to spiritual life.

For some people the heart may be the most dominant part of their nature. For such people the tapasya of the mind is not very important at the early stages, and they need not be overly concerned about the fact they are not well read and haven’t tried to understand the philosophical lore. But for other people the leading role is assumed by their mind. This is the way of Jnana Yoga. There you begin with the query, “Who am I?” Then gradually, through long years of inquiry, you arrive at the realisation that you are basically the deathless immortal Self. But this is a path which only a few people can follow, because it needs a very powerful mental discipline and it is a path of hard tapasya. Then there is the Yoga of Works, in which the will assumes the dominant role.

According to the popular Indian tradition, the way of Bhakti is the easiest. In fact, it does look easy on the surface since it does not demand any hard austerities. But real Bhakti is not very easy. The Bhakta begins by saying, “O Lord, I am totally surrendered to you, I regard you as my all.” But in saying this, there is something he has not said but has in fact assumed, namely that God will look after all his personal and private projects. “God is almighty, and since I am surrendered to Him it is His responsibility to give me the success I desire in all my schemes and plans.” This is what most of us believe.

As the first step on the path of Bhakti, such an attitude is all right because you cannot rise to a lofty level of self-giving to the Divine at the very beginning. Now as you progress in life, you find that God is really kind; many times He grants you your desires. But after a while you find that this business relationship with God does not take you very

far. You are not making much progress spiritually. You see that your faith in God has become deeper, your gratitude to God has become deeper, but your nature has not changed. This is because you are still pursuing things which do not bring you deep inner peace, unchanging happiness and lasting satisfaction. So a time comes when you pray to God and say, “O God, give me the real spiritual attitude, give me *viveka* and *vairāgya*, discrimination and detachment.” Then, in regard to worldly matters, you are willing to accept whatever God thinks fit to give you. That is the second stage.

So as you advance, gradually a third stage comes when you say to God, “O Lord, I want to belong to You wholly, I wish to consecrate to You all that I am. I do not even know what is good for me. You decide what is good for me and let that happen. I am ready to accept happily whatever You grant me, whether it is victory or failure, happiness or sorrow, life or death. All that comes to me from You is the gift of Your Grace.” From then on, your mind is not thinking any more of your projects as your personal projects. You have handed over to God all you have and all you are. Whatever work God chooses for you, you are happy to execute it for whatever result He intends. The energy to do this work is given to you by Him. You begin to realise more and more that everything here is done by God and that you are only a manifesting centre of the Divine. This is how you achieve a living communion with God. Most of us wish to please God so that He will be available to our ego as an efficient assistant. But as long as you are doing that, you will be in living communion not with God but with your ego.

So these are the various stages. Bhakti is not really a path on which you can take it easy. On this path you need the same inner consecration to your spiritual ideal as you do on other paths. Surrender may seem to be an easy path to follow. Surrender is the beginning of the path, true, but it is also the culminating movement of the sadhana. Please remember that in the Gita the famous verse *sarvadharmān paritajya mām ekam śaranam vraja* (Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone), comes in Chapter 18, the final chapter of the Gita, and there it occurs almost towards the end of the chapter. This suggests that surrender is the beginning, surrender is the sadhana, and surrender also is the Siddhi.

To establish communion with God, we have to untangle the tentacles of the ego which are spread everywhere in our being. It is true that the ego was very necessary during the early stages of our evolution. That is why God has made it so deep-rooted in us and that is why, no matter what you do, without an intense personal effort which calls forth God’s Grace, you cannot get rid of it. This removal of the ego is in one sense the aim of all the yogas. They all try to lift you beyond the ignorance which, through the agency of the ego, has alienated you from your own deepest being, from your fellow beings and from God.

The Mother has spoken of another way, the way of the psychic, the soul in us. There is in you the psychic, a projection of your Jivatman, which is the individual Self or Atman. The Jivatman is in fact a power of the Supreme, and the Supreme as Consciousness-Power is another name for the Divine Mother. Thus the psychic in us is the representative of the Divine Mother. Your psychic is the one thing that travels with you as you

travel from one life to the next. That is the eternal being in you. The Mother has said: Try to bring the psychic to the front and hand over the control of your life to this representative of mine in you. The psychic in us is trying to reach out to us, but our attention is focussed elsewhere. Our ears are filled with so much outer noise, the noise made by our desires and cravings, that we are not able to hear the quiet voice of our own psychic. When you are watching television in the drawing room, can you hear a child crying in the bedroom? No, there is too much noise. So the sadhana we need to do is to make sure that our ears are not too distracted by outer noise so that we have some time to listen to what our soul is saying to us. Once we begin to receive its voice, it will slowly and surely guide us on the right path.

How do you become aware of your psychic? How do you bring it to the front? When desire is rejected and does not govern your thought any longer, when you aspire steadily and constantly for the Divine alone, then the psychic begins to come to the front. Also, whatever you do out of genuine love will help to lift the veil hiding the psychic. Another important thing is the poise of the consciousness behind all your thoughts, feelings and actions. The same act can be done from different poises. Cutting someone's body, for example, can be done by a surgeon or by an assassin. The act is the same; the attitude behind it is not. The attitude behind the act is important. Take the example of someone like you who is a great giver. The right attitude is this: let not the left hand know what the right hand is doing. Your right hand is giving, but let not the left hand know it. Give, but do not "know" it, do not take credit for it. All wealth belongs to the Lord, He has given you some of it. Now you are giving it to someone else or to an institution as guided by the Lord. So where do you come in? The Lord has given it to you; you are the giver as an instrument of the Lord; the receiver of your gift is also the Lord.

There is an anecdote connected with the Muslim saint Rahim, a contemporary of Tulsidas. It seems that every day Rahim would sit outside his house with a big sack of rice and give away handfuls of rice to whoever came for it. But then people noticed that when he gave away the rice, he would never look at the receiver's face, but only at his feet, and that too with great reverence! Someone mentioned this to Tulsidas, so he too got curious about the unusual behaviour of this great giver and sent him a *dohā*, a little poem, asking him why he was acting this way? In reply, Rahim sent another little *dohā* in which he said, "I know that the rice I am giving away comes from the Lord who remains invisible to me, but I also know that the person who comes to receive it from me is also the Lord. I then am able to see Him in the receiver and so I look only at his feet."

God has put you in a position which enables you to give and you have been doing that wonderfully well for several years now. But make sure that each time you give something, you do so in the spirit in which the great saint Rahim gave handfuls of rice. If you can do that, you will find that this giving will not create any disturbance in you. It will give you detachment, it will give you real peace and joy within. Don't calculate, don't let the ego play its monkey tricks; leave the whole thing to the Lord. You will then realise that the Lord Himself comes and receives things from you.

I have given you this example of selfless giving because you are in that line; you

have been a great giver. But basically no matter what your profession in life, what counts is whether you are able to cultivate detachment from your ego. And this can be done through various ways; one of the best ways is through love—love of truth, love of beauty, love of goodness, love of men and God. All acts motivated by love help in lifting the veil cast by the ego over your psychic being. Anything done in opposition to this spirit of love, anything based on selfishness, desire, vanity, jealousy, hostility, falsehood, increases the distance between you and your psychic being.

Now to determine each time whether what we have done has been selfish or selfless is not easy. That is why the Mother has said that sincerity is the highest spiritual virtue, not sincerity to other people alone but sincerity to oneself as well. Spend some time each day reviewing what you have done during that day; see whether you have been sincere. There are the hazards created by the ego in everybody’s life; you have to recognise them. For example, I give speeches, and I must examine myself to see whether giving these talks helps me spiritually or merely tightens the grip of the ego over me. I should be saying to myself, “O Lord, you have given this opportunity to me. Let me be concerned about how sincere I was in delivering Your message as effectively as I could. Let me not bother about what people think of my performance as a speaker.”

Do not bother about what the world thinks of you. I have never come across any person about whom the world always has good words. Today someone may have good words for you, but tomorrow this may change. What should matter to you, really, is what the Divine thinks of you. The Mother used to say: Why are you worried about X’s opinion and Y’s opinion? What is the value of their opinion? Instead ask yourself each time: “If I do it this way, what will the Lord think of me?” This is important because you are now interested in forging as close a link as possible with the Lord. The link with the world outside should have no value to you except as a way of strengthening your link with the Lord.

Allow nothing to distract you from your single-minded consecration to the Divine. Somewhere Sri Aurobindo has said that the secret of success in yoga is to regard it not as one of the aims to be pursued in life but as the only aim worth pursuing. You will be able to establish a living communion with God only when you belong entirely, in all the parts of your being, to the Divine. God is not interested in your money, your talent or your ability to put in hard work. He wants your consciousness to be open to Him alone so that He can work through you in the world.

(To be concluded)

MANGESH NADKARNI

GOD'S ANSWER TO A TRAVELLER

O TRAVELLER, which path does thee lead?
The feet are swollen and weak;
Eyes tired, and thou possesseth a strange shadow
of profound sorrow and grief.
I see thou stumbling on the thorn-fested road;
Hath none rendered thee any support?
Thy rueful visage, thy tear-staned face,
Happiness deserted, without any trace,
O traveller, which path dost thou tread?

Yes traveller, thou hast shattered thy head
on the walls of deceit,
Thou hast faced men, who have pierced thee with spears,
Thou hast faced many who did blow
The bitter gale of winter,
Oh to extinguish thy guiding lantern's luminous glow.
I know, traveller, speak no more,
The misfortune that fate had for thee stored;
Thou hast seen many with a smile on their face,
And later kick thee into the heap of waste.
Thou hadst friends when the sun was high,
But as the horizon grew dark,
None remained to pay heed to thy cries.
Thou hast seen men who caught thy hand
To help thee;
But instead pushed thee
Into the strange,
Into hostile and misfortune-filled land.

O traveller, thou hast been a twig laid astray
By the dark gale of dogmas, fierce and big.
I say to thee, O traveller, thou hast been with arrows shot,
And yet thy injuries thou knowest not.

I have seen thee, O sorrowing traveller,
Who hast walked along the precarious road,
Yes, I feel keenly thy sufferings have been too much;
But come, ride my chariot, we shall go together.

I shall heal thy wounds with fragrant oil;

Shall confound thy breath with perfumes,
And welcome thee to the land of everlasting light.
This is God's answer to a traveller,
A promise for a life much more bright.

AURODEEP NANDI

NEW REALITY

A NEW regard, it takes root in time,
Upheld by a homogeneous conscious-substance.
There is a new sense of being, of Reality touched,
No more subtly removed from body, but directly there,
As if a layer of vapour had dissolved
And direct-touch-seeing knew without recourse to mind,
In sudden clarity, real self.
It's a knowledge unmirrored, echoless, whole,
No more the mind at mind looking, knowing that it looks, and looks while knowing,
A conflict of mental interest in warped self-consciousness,
As if a stray laser ray seeking its origin,
Rebounded, trapped, between two mirrors facing, helplessly, ad infinitum.
No!
In unqualified awareness, egoless, pointless,
Aware from within itself, so there is no echo;
Being.

ARVIND R. HABBU

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of December 2001)

The American Warp

IF WE practise American science we run along the principal American warp. A large-scale corporate operation is the hallmark of the system. Companies have grown into empires with assets which even the vast kingdoms of the mediaeval ages did not possess. The armies of professionals march in the imperial manner of the Roman legions. The network is cast on a global dimension and the resources of the entire world come under its control and use. The state machinery as much as the social order is always at its service. Whether we like or not, we start accepting all the merits as well as the pitfalls of the system. This can accelerate the progress in a definite manner; but it can also lead to imbalances that we may not be able to correct. Assimilation of something that is wholly foreign to the organic functioning leads to its own problems of anabolism, for which there has to be again the same American medicines. We cease to be ourselves. We come under the sway of technological slavery, slavery in every respect and not just that of acquiring the state-of-the-art. But before we come to these aspects let us examine the warp in some microscopic details and discover its worthwhileness in our context.

Big science has given rise to elaborate industrial and managerial organisations. This is a phenomenon altogether new in the history of mankind. Our universities, technological institutions, training centers, management schools, our commerce, industry, banking, trade, insurance companies are all geared up towards one goal, the goal of production of the high-volume money. Political apparatus, legal functioning, international relationships, diplomacy, all are at the disposal of the Servers of Mammon. The perfected infra-structural development and unprecedented turnover of the strident capital have brought about a new generation of people in a complex running of the business of the world. Life might have become lop-sided but the spirit of material adventure has also its own rewards. The problems of society are in this view only the problems of commerce. We are under the exclusive rule of the Vaishya.

If the post-World War II science has become gigantic and universal, it has also affected almost irreversibly the lifestyle of countries and societies. This Rule of the Vaishya has brought to us another kind of globality which is welcome in many respects. It has invented a mechanism by which it furthers its own enterprises in quite a systematically organised manner. The proliferation of business management schools is an aspect of this post-World War II phenomenon. A high degree of professionalism has entered into career-based outlook of skilled and inventive systems. Training of specialised personnel thus becomes a part of the setup. In the process management concepts themselves acquire a new level of sophistication and awareness of human nature. We come upon psychological parameters that are more subtle and therefore also more difficult to handle. Be it a research organisation, or a factory, or an assembly unit, or a government office, or

a commercial establishment, or even a defence department, there is now the necessity to look adequately into the human angle. To provide motivation and needed conducive working conditions becomes the responsibility of the managerial group itself. It has to have another way of seeing things. Of this epochal adventure let us take an example.

In an Online Meeting conducted recently by the IBM Corporation about 50,000 out of some 320,000 of its employees met in New York. The brainstorming session continued for four days. The purpose was to “brew fresh business ideas and demonstrate the feasibility of such a massive virtual gathering” to promote prospects of a worldwide operation. “We’re going to be doing fairly extensive research of a variety of sorts into what people’s experiences were and how the various tools were used,” said Michael Wing, the director of IBM’s internal Web site and the leader of WorldJam’s development.

If such is the level of operation of the multinationals, then what chance for a lesser enterprise? That would forebode continued business servitude and whatever innovative-creative work shall be done elsewhere it will get drawn willy-nilly into the swift-rushing capitalist bloodstream. Industry aided by science shall displace thought and feeling and will-to-be. In the process values of life shall be honed to promote one single objective: Capitalism. Even the leadership development shall be guided by the new science. This shall reflect models that will be no more based on the “Newtonian images of the universe.” Presently “we manage by separating things into parts, we believe that influence occurs as a direct result of force exerted from one person to another, we engage in complex planning for a world that we keep expecting to be predictable, and we search continually for better methods of objectively measuring and perceiving the world.” This 17th century science shall no more be valid for us. In that sense we should be happy that through the pursuit of enlightened business methods the shackles of old rigid science are getting loosened. This is a welcome progress. We may go even further than that.

Margaret Wheatley in her book *Leadership and the New Science* argues that as science has given rise to our present-day world view, science itself should provide a radically different model of organisation. If there are shortcomings in the Newtonian cause-effect rendering to meet the demands of our system, they should be removed by applying the approach of new science. It gives to us “a new kind of freedom, where it is more rewarding to explore than to reach conclusions, more satisfying to wonder than to know, and more exciting to search than to stay put.” It may be a difficult proposition if science can furnish such a methodology of freedom, but with it an altogether new way of looking has certainly come to us. The freedom that we have won through modern physics has thus opened a new world of reality for us to live in. As Pravir Malik in his review of the book says, “the idea that there is one right answer that can be applied universally is invalid. Instead, our own vision and commitment will create reality, because we are part of a Systemic Whole that itself creates in response to every element that is a part of it.” (*Mother India*, September 2001) In the deepest sense even the Chaos Theory becomes in the time-domain an unfoldment of an implicit order that is always there behind things. There are laws of freedom and that is the foundational guarantee that we can proceed on the path safely. In it the deterministic fetters have disappeared which has a moral for the

human collectivity that can live in the freedom of individual choice. The old-time dichotomy can be resolved in the deeper truth of non-mechanistic approach towards life.

As Ilya Prigogine, the 1977 recipient of the Nobel Prize for chemistry, demonstrated that “any open system has the capacity to respond to change and disorder by reorganising itself at a higher level of organisation,” we have a similar possibility in the free organisation of an industrial system. Threat, danger, stimulus help the system recreate itself. Entropy even in a non-reversible system can be reduced in a localised operation. This can provide a greater and desirable gain. Prigogine coined the term “dissipative structures” to describe the contradictory nature of these newly discovered systems. Prigogine came to the conclusion that “dissipative activity of loss was necessary to create new order. Dissipation was part of the process by which the system let go of its present form so that it could reorganise into a new form better suited to its changing environment. If anything disturbed the system, it would bring it inside its network. Once inside it may continue to become a larger disturbance until it crosses a certain threshold and disturbs the system to such an extent that the system dissolves. However, because the system has an innate sense of identity, it leverages the situation caused by the disturbance to evolve a more complex form of itself that is better able to deal with similar disturbances in the future. So in fact, in living systems disorder is a source of new order.”

The application of scientific concepts and discoveries in industrial management is a welcome feature, indicating a definite advance in rationalised human relationship on a collective basis. There may be other factors, but we have here for the first time a sane and sensible system. When well founded, in its course shall follow the “Goethean methods, based on developing intuitive, holistic thinking, for entering into a different kind of relationship with life.” The quantum ‘fuzziness’ of physicists is fruitful indeed.

One consequence of this fuzziness of physics is the intimate connection between the part and the whole of a system. Each of the parts is intricately connected to the whole; further, at some deep level it seems to determine and be determined by the whole. Then the idea that one’s intent can create the environment acquires a meaningful validity. This may lead to the chicken-and-the-egg problem of what came first. “Was it a necessity in the evolution of the Whole,” asks Pravir Malik, “that has manifested an idea which finds expression in an individual, or is it that the individual has come up with an idea, which then in some sense puts pressure on the Whole to create a certain environment where that idea can find fulfillment? Either way, if the idea has originated from a deeper layer of being, where the separation between part and Whole collapses, because of the ‘depth’ of its intent, it will probably manifest and an environment will be created where it can work itself to completion. If, however, the idea or intent originated from a more surface layer in the individual, then it is likely to be tied to a personal and possibly selfish need, and will be only one intent vying against the myriad selfish intents of countless parts, and will therefore find expression with far greater difficulty.”

Another important idea Margaret Wheatley has is a connection with observations in the world of neo-physics. According to some of its novel concepts small local actions on the physical plane can have global effects. “There is a predisposition to imagine that a

critical mass is required for any change to occur. However, Wheatley points out, quantum view explains the success of small efforts quite differently. Changes in small places have an effect on the global system because every small system participates in an unbroken whole. Thus, if one organisation makes some change, it is now easier for all organisations to make the same change, because in a sense the 'imprint' of that change is now subtly available in the appropriate layer of the Whole. This idea is akin to Sheldrake's idea of 'Morphic Fields', from his work in biology. Morphic fields are built up through the skills that accumulate as members of the same species learn something new. Behavior collects in the morphic field, and when an individual's energy combines with it, the field patterns the behavior of the individual. Skill thus, is pulled from the field."

The implication is that organisational behaviour gets influenced by many invisible fields. This provides a method towards improvement of a corporate system. To bring about a change one will have to become more conscious at every moment. Each behaviour that is projected forward creates a resonant field that spreads its vibration into the atmosphere. We can thus allow certain behaviours such as compassion, brilliance, joy to effect change in the organisational working. The management guru thus becomes an American Rishi to propose scientific-commercial idealism in societal conduct.

"Wheatley points out that instead of having traditional organisational charts, what would be more interesting is to plot 'reaction channels',—places where energy meets up with other energy to create new possibilities. This idea is rooted in the physicist's S-Matrix Diagram. These map particles coming into being as intermediate states in a network of interactions. The energy of any particle can combine with other energy sources to create new particles. Lines in the diagram represent particles as 'reaction channels' through which energy flows." In the process of the flow of information creative energy of the universe brings into play another dynamical factor. "Where there is not a free flow of information, there is stagnation. Where energy is constantly created, assimilated, responded to, there living systems exist." Deeper layers of being are consciously tapped to influence life, thus leading to a higher degree of complexity. The result is the happy evolution of another sense of perception in the social functioning.

Modern technological, industrial and commercial systems need a certain critical size for their meaningful functioning and success. At the same time they cannot be mammothian to be unwieldy in operation at the cost of innovative-creative spirit and individual freedom. There has to be optimisation which itself can grow when further progress is achieved in the scale of performance. A new balance has to be struck which itself can be pitched up at higher and higher levels. That is the lesson of American approach towards well-ordered life. In that discipline we have the fruits of activities offered to us by the Big Science. Exploration of Space, as a specific example, is undoubtedly one of the visible results of this effort. We cannot have such programmes in the absence of a vast complex machinery involving innumerable parts and components. And that is why it becomes typically American, be it in Europe or Japan or India. That is what makes science all over the world American science. That is why we might as well say that all the Nobel prizes essentially belong to American science.

It looks as if the business world were facing the Darwinian truth in the nature of the survival of the fittest. In a moment of circumstantial crisis species either adapt themselves to changed environment or perish. Punctuated evolution is a fact of life and there cannot be any advanced preparation to meet eventualities. The appearance of man himself is said to be the result of such a happening. It seems to be the same in the world of dog-eat-dog markets. In business billions of dollars are being spent on working out management strategies. But then even "the most successful organisations cannot keep pace with their more nimble competitors. That which is targeted to change, remains unchanged. More is required by less. Organisations are required to cannibalise or be eaten..." Only they who can take lessons in the complex adaptive systems will survive and flourish.

While the force of financial conditions and returns will invariably impose such policies of approach in the sophisticated jungles of commerce, a more perceptive-sensitive, a more idealistic-visionary society will not wait in helplessness till things run out of hand. After all, such intrusive requirements or demands to govern its workings are impositions, are external impositions which can be deleterious in the totality of reckoning. Although we may prefer to call these impositions the pragmatics of life, there have to be decisions also based on certain indisputable principles. We have to discover the truer springs of activity and live in their spontaneity. That itself will have a certain degree of integrality in its methodology to assure wholesomeness of life.

This cannot happen in the cut-throat world of today's business and one gets trapped in the ingenuousness of an urbanised capital-intensive civilisation. The root of evil lies in the vitalistic mode of life, of which one outward manifestation is the indelicate and ugly modernity, called consumerism. We have lent ourselves totally to it. The unparalleled growth of science, technology, industry and commerce has in fact its own pompous origin in it. Which also implies that it has the seeds of corruption of values, the elements of degradation of a more subtle kind present in its constitution. This does not mean that we should jump into the harsh ascetic or monkish mode of living. It is good we got rid of the credal religion but, unfortunately, the danger of religion has now got transferred to the danger of science pervading society in all the walks of life. The multiple evil that vaults from it gets hardened in the refinement of tools that have come in our hand.

The moral is: Big Science, that is American Science, has also its own socio-psychological vices and perversions. If sometimes stresses of an unusual kind are developed, if there are competitive factors, if excessive specialisations have the danger of introducing a vaster dimension of ignorance, the gains of life have other rewards too. But we have not yet learnt to do the balancing act. Therefore we are also very far from the harmonious working of the four limbs of a healthy social organisation. The pyramid stands on a single point, the inverted apex whose name is commerce. The situation is so precarious that even a gentle tap with a finger will make it fall into the abyss. The weight of technology itself can destroy the commanding superstructure of technology. Paradoxically, the robustness can be so untrustworthy, so fragile that it shall at once prove fatal. Perhaps that was the difficult lesson given to us on 11 September 2001. There shall be such a material

perfection and precision that even a child will destroy it.¹ Technology is a two-edged sword and can be as devastating as constructive and edifying.

Time has forced upon us the problem of terrorism,—perhaps for its final resolution. We cannot be smug anymore about it. It seems that time itself has changed not only its pace but also its modality. We no more live in the succession of movements. The classical linearity has given place to interactive elements. There is an interpenetrativeness wherein even the aspect of the future reflects back on the present, shaping it for its own realisations. Perhaps it is becoming instrumental in the march of humanity itself. Whatever is crude and retrograde has to disappear. The hand of Mahakali has to strike. The destruction of evil is an aspect of it. Therefore the Asura must arise, so that his self-chosen doom clears the way for a truer progress. If there is a higher destiny leading us on, then this shall be done for us even without our knowledge or participation in any conscious way. But it is also necessary that we become willing collaborators in that godly task, we prove ourselves “an armour in the fight, a bow of God.” (*Savitri*, p. 626) That is the desired role of commercial disciplines. We have to win back science and technology in the cause of an expressive intent. Matter at the disposal of Spirit is its genuine fulfilment. But American science has no genius of this sort: the American warp ends in technology and commerce, leaving the loom only one-fourth done. But nor can anyone else simply pick up the thread and complete it. What we witness is that the full length of nylon fiber of the petro-technology has already been used up and that now we should look for other threads, other yarns. Commerce-driven science has to go.

Another dimension has to enter into the picture, another battle has to be fought. But this is a fight, a battle which should remind us of the very first word of the Gita: Dharmakshetra. We are counseled to fight the war of Righteousness. It is on the ground of dharma that the battle has to be fought. What is noble in us, is charged with values, is in the dynamics of the spirit, it is that which must emerge and be upheld. This cannot be done by holy dicta or edicts, by stipulations and prescriptions, but by recognition of the creative greatness in us, by awakening to the sense of enduring truth-idealism, by conjoining ourselves with the real-idea. No price is too great for it. We must live in our inner reality and act. That is the meaning of the dharma. Human rights, democracy, freedom of the individual at the service of society are some of the visible signs of this loftier virtue. By holding on to them we shall have participated in the War of Righteousness, Dharma-yuddha.

But how is dharma going to stand against all that is dehumanising? By summoning our best into action. The dharma of the individual, the dharma of each nation, the dharma of the world, each has to invoke that which sustains it. Painful may be the path and full of danger. Long may be the course and heavy the price. But there cannot be a shortcut. We

1. “Europe prides herself on her practical and scientific organisation and efficiency. I am waiting till her organisation is perfect; then a child shall destroy her.” Sri Aurobindo, *The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol. 17, p. 87. See also, The Mother, *On Thoughts and Aphorisms*, CWM, Vol. 10, pp. 141-42, or, pp. 12-13 in the current issue of *Mother India*.

have to invoke our best and act in sincerity by abiding in the dharma.

Take again the American example. Its greatness flows directly from a deep source, “a spirit of respect for the individual, a spirit of tolerance for differences of faith or politics, a respect for freedom of thought as the necessary foundation for all creativity and a spirit of unity that encompasses all kinds of differences. Only a society which worships freedom could constantly renew itself and its sources of power and wealth.” This is what *New York Times* wrote editorially on 2 October 2001 in connection with the rebuilding of America after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. That is the American dharma and it shall always prove rewarding if followed right earnestly.

But if practical considerations are going to force on us compromises, then we shall have failed in our commitment to dharma. If consumerism, for instance, has to be sustained by the flow of oil we shall have abandoned the course of dharma. Are we willing to make a sacrifice? Perhaps time will force us to make that sacrifice. The idea of remaining atop a hill cannot be maintained without hard choices. The assumption that for “me and my use the universe was made” (*Savitri*, p. 511) must be dismissed.

The exclusive concentration on technology and commerce has done considerable harm to the soul of mankind. In it the element of being “wiser than God” has the arrogance that makes the downward path swift and easy. Even in terms of social and natural degradation the hurt inflicted is enormous. It is now imperative that we redefine the objectives of technology and commerce. These have to widen to take care of our fuller personality. From the age of rational thinking we have to move on to the age of intuition.

Perhaps here the Indian spirit can be the leader of the march. But before she can take up the leadership, she must hearken to the call of her national dharma. India was alive, says Sri Aurobindo, to the greatness of material laws and force. She also had the sight to see the invisible that surrounds the visible. She knew that man has power to exceed himself. She saw the myriad gods beyond man, God beyond the gods, and beyond God his own ineffable eternity. Then with a calm audacity of her intuition she declared that man could become the spirit, become a god, become one with God, become the ineffable Brahman. Man’s manhood lies in his becoming godly. In the sequel God’s godhood shall be in making our manhood worthy of habitation for the Truth-conscious glory.

This means that we must get back to the native power of the spirit. We must discover it and live in it. This is the great agenda for us to work with. If spiritual unfolding is the hidden truth, then man as he is cannot be the last term of his evolution. His mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it. Therefore there is a possibility that man will arrive at supermanhood. This is what Sri Aurobindo asserts.

If in our daily life we are led to this conclusion in a negative way, we should also accept the positive gains that abound in this mysterious creation springing out of Matter. If we have really recognised the shortcomings of the material life without spiritual foundations, if this is the lesson of the triumph and tragedy of America, then we better search our own souls, better discover our own national dharma and live in it. Science, technology, the information highways, commerce, industry, management schools, all have to be

put at the service of a greater manifesting reality in the physical world. The wondrous powers of Mahasaraswati and Mahalakshmi are pouring their bounties. When combined with the heroism and resplendence of Mahakali and Maheshwari there shall be the possibility of the higher Mahashakti bestowing on us the boons of her divinity. (See Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother*, chapter VI.) We should get ready to receive those boons. For that the first thing which should happen is to disentangle ourselves from the American warp.

(To be continued)

R.Y. DESHPANDE

THE MESSAGE OF 11TH SEPTEMBER

ON this very day in the year 1893 Vivekananda, till then an unknown monk from India, delivered his historic Chicago address explaining the true significance of the Hindu religion which was also the message of spiritual India to the whole world. The huge international gathering was thrilled with a pleasant surprise. Vivekananda's voice spoke of universal brotherhood and spiritual peace for the whole of mankind. That spiritual message took by storm the entire world in a short time. That message still rings in the heart of humanity.

On 11th September, again, in the year 2001 another historic event took place. This time not a thrill but a chill ran through the spine of humanity when a superlative surprise attack on the super-power United States of America took place—a meticulously prepared surprise attack. It brought another message, the message of universal and total destruction.

God is not what some people think Him to be. God is the supreme Truth, the supreme Good, and also supremely Beautiful. Ugliness and hatred in thoughts and deeds lead one away from the Truth, the Good God and the Beautiful. God is also the supreme Wisdom which penetrates the very heart of the Falsehood, the Ignorance and the Ugliness. God is not a private property of anybody. God is no copyright for a scripture. God cannot be patented by any financial magnet. God cannot be hoodwinked by the cleverest.

The message of 11th September is Sri Aurobindo's message—"The Hour of God":

"In the Hour of God cleanse thy soul of all...hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it. All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow."

In one of his aphorisms, written in the earlier part of the last century, Sri Aurobindo also cautioned the Western Civilisation about the perfection of its material organisation. Sri Aurobindo predicts that the moment it is perfectly organised it will be destroyed by a child. Without a spiritual perfection a material organisation, however perfect, is doomed to die. How true! Two towers of the mighty U.S.A. crumbled like a house of cards in a trice! The whole world was bewildered! A benumbing chill gripped the heart of humanity.

Now, to conclude: The time we live in, its future is not foreseeable. According to Sri Aurobindo, only those are safe who keep God in their hearts. This 'God' is the supreme Truth. To reach this 'God' one must be sincere from top to toe.

This is the message of 11th September.

ABANI SINHA

IMPRESS OF THE NEW...

Towards a Time-shift

1

A GREAT acceleration and an increased rapidity mark our lives. We witness the tremendous speed with which technology advances. Innovations become obsolete before they have been fully explored. Newer models compete for place and are as quickly overpassed. The global organisational systems cannot absorb all the new elements at once. They evince cracks on all levels—material and psychological, even ideological. Systems are rigid and partial and can only stretch out on the surface of life. They are not flexible and multi-dimensional enough to re-create themselves in their entirety each time, as change confronts them.

This lack of ability to move with equilibrium seems to result from the new modality of Time, something of which our experience is still partial. We need to deepen this experience.

As we try to do so, we find—in the inner recesses of our consciousness—that Time has changed its own modality. Its pace is not the same—its constituents are not *patterned* in the manner in which they used to be. Its constitutiveness consisted of a succession of moments or time-elements. The succession has given way to a kind of *interpenetrativeness*—where all is there together. It is not just a more rapid movement that we experience—it is another mode of *becoming* that Time seems to have moved on to.

All *is*—with an interpenetration at a central point, a point of high speed, packed with energy. Time itself is changing. This seems to be the first impress of the new millennium.

Essentially, this points to one thing: it makes it possible for man to operate within his consciousness a far quicker pace of *qualitative* change—of his very consciousness. A change in him as a conscious being.

The imbalances of our time—in life and in systems—stem from the fact that at the material plane of technology, this possibility of rapid change follows a given course, according to the laws that govern matter. But in the realm of consciousness, this increased pace of change can only show partial results, unless man's willed effort and conscious participation in the process become a fact. This is not the case so far.

We are not even aware, for the most part, that this universal pressure for change essentially represents an action on man's consciousness, and not only on his external environment. So far we have mostly concentrated on the latter, it is this therefore which has benefited more from the pressure of change. If, however, we were able to shift our focus, with a sincere intensity, to the possibility of a real inner change, not only in the *quality* of our being, but also in our very *substance*—what would be the correspondences with the outer, material substance of our time? What results could it give? These are some of the questions that come up and can no longer be avoided.

In the new millennium, what can man *become*?

2

At this point, one wishes to turn to the presence of Sri Aurobindo, born in India, like the great *rishis* of yore. His presence covers the twentieth century in giant and luminous strides—creating a vision for the future of man. At the beginning of the century, he wrote:

“At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way.... [this] call for a new, a greater consciousness to meet and master the increasing potentialities of existence and harmonise them. Reason and Science can only help by standardising, by fixing everything into an artificially arranged and mechanised unity of material life. A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life.”¹

To this Sri Aurobindo adds:

“This cannot happen without a veritable transformation and a transformation of the mind and life and very body is indeed the change to which our evolution is secretly moving...”²

It is moving towards the transformation of Matter itself, till it can reveal the Spirit hidden in its core. To discover its process and its path was the one all-encompassing work to which Sri Aurobindo devoted his entire life.

In this work he was joined by the Mother, who came from France and whose collaboration, at this deepest level of work for the future of man, gave to it the fullness it called for.

India has a cumulative energy of millennia born of such pursuits and she has nourished with her past experiences these attempts for the future. But, for the present, she has yet to recover her distinctive identity and push ahead towards a new creation. The power of the knowledge she holds is still hidden. One could say that the movement of the world is still tardy or unbalanced because she has not yet assumed the dynamic role that she has to play. This must be her contribution to mankind.

3

Almost contemporary to Sri Aurobindo, there were two personalities, both in France, who raised similar questions and whose work evolved in a parallel manner—Henri Bergson and, later, Teilhard de Chardin. Keenly aware of the increasing complexity of man’s external life and the need for a corresponding growth in his consciousness, they also pointed to the need for an integration of the two domains, of Spirit and Matter. A future for man, greater than the past, was part of their vision.

And yet the work of both Bergson and Teilhard de Chardin proceeded on a base of knowledge, distinctive of the tradition to which they belonged. This is striking in its

possible conclusions, a unity of perceptions concerning man's future but a diversity of approach and premise.

A mutation of the human species even is what this Time-shift may set in process for the new millennium. Not in any visionary sense, but as an actuality of our present consciousness.

It is interesting to refer to a recent comment by M. Jean Guitton, who pursued most actively the experience made by Bergson. He spoke of a "mutation of the human species." And when asked "Whither mankind?" he replied: "It is on the threshold of a major transformation. Yes, a mutation. An optimistic statement!"³

No longer just change, but the possibility of a veritable mutation is what Time puts before us now. Not only a qualitative change of consciousness but a mutation of the physical too, the possibility of a *transformation of Matter*. Matter—whatever we may finally find it to be, the single substance, the single body of the universe—is one more arrowhead of time pointing towards the new millennium.

The twentieth century has incessantly widened its physical base and pushed its exploration of matter to a point of depth where it must touch its soul.

Matter and Spirit—they are a totality of conscious existence.

Time itself is on our side.

ASTER

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INDIA, FROM DESTINY TO DESTINY

MOVING towards the gradual emergence of a more spiritual age in India, the history of human society might be considered in four stages:

First—The Symbolic Stage—basically religious where all life is shaded by a mythical and mystical sense of the Divine... The Vedic period in Indian history.

Second—The Conventional Stage—basically ethical and psychological...the caste system in India.

Third—The Individualistic Stage—a period of reason, revolt, material progress, and the search for a certain kind of freedom...the modern day, and an evolved Democracy.

Fourth—The Subjective Stage—a period when man begins to look within to find new meaning and new directions in existence...a period which could end in a much more spiritualised society.

The symbols of the first stage have faded, and the conventions of the second stage have become almost meaningless. The material progress and the so-called freedom of the third stage is now being questioned all over the world, so India now stands on the edge of a true subjectivity with the possibility of moving with confidence towards a more spiritualised society. This seems to be the new challenge of her “tryst with destiny”. India and the East can move much faster through the Age of Individualism and then move faster, more directly and more consciously into the Age of Subjectivity (Interiority), re-awakening their deep foundations in the psychic life and an unabashed admission of their true spirituality.

In the Age of Subjectivity the four great Lions of India can look without fear out towards the four corners of the earth and welcome with full warmth all of the other cultures and religions of the outside world. The government of India could become completely secular because of the rich humanism of its people achieved through contact with the inner soul of their nation on its sure path to a spiritual destiny.

In India, and in all of the East after a while, man would begin to realise that he must look within to become conscious of his true self, his soul, all the deeper levels below the surface. The nation, like the individual, has a soul, a deep spiritual principle and law of being. It can be found through this deep and thorough interiority.

To move into subjectivity correctly and without fear is to look for something far deeper than the individual or collective ego. It is to try and find the true self and to see how the individual and the collectivity is participating in the one, pervading Self of the Divine, which is at one time the same and different in all. It is to begin to realise the full implications of the mysterious process of evolution, in which each takes part and in which each will find the full flowering of his being. It should be remembered also that the real meaning and law of our being cannot be found first outside, but rather within, in the self. It can be found by seeing and by living in the depths of the true self, in a real participation in the outflowering of the true Self, luminous, filled with love, with power, beauty and bliss.

In the process of finding the true self (which, it must be clearly admitted, is united with the Divine) the individual, the group and the nation should each protect strongly their own individuality at the same time that each protects, with equal strength, the individuality of others. This, of course, would be the ideal law of social development, but this has certainly not been entirely the case so far. If science and technology have put an end to physical barbarism, for the most part, economic barbarism is still a live threat. The bully has been replaced by the plutocrat, and self-realisation remains unrealised by the majority of men. Philosophy, art and religion must rediscover their foundations in the true self.

We have evolved through matter, plant and animal to man, and man has evolved through brute barbarism, through sensual egoism and hypocrisy (the philistine with his deep down contempt for culture of any kind). Man is now evolving through mental egoism with a democratised culture and a more subtle hypocrisy (the modern philistine consumer who begins now to buy everything for investment: art, clothing, furnishings, even homes), but it is reaching a point where there is at least a beginning openness to true self-knowledge, and perhaps the hope, at last, of a truly cultured humanity, aesthetic and ethical. To rise above the hypocrisy and frustrating ignorance of the modern philistine we must live in an atmosphere of the deeply beautiful, and move according to a broad and open knowledge which aspires constantly for the highest truth. To do this and to begin experiencing the joys of a full human culture, we must exert an intelligent discipline and strength of will, to realise the source of true delight and to hold on to it after it has been found. It should help to remember that all delight and no discipline leads to disorder and disintegration, while all discipline and no delight leads to the loss of creative freedom—"Jack, the dull boy!"

It has been reason and the intelligent will which have led man to whatever heights he has achieved so far, and to denigrate these great faculties immaturely is folly. However, reason has simply never been able to grasp all of human life and power, nor has intelligent will ever been able to set up a satisfactory system. Reason and will cannot rule because they are only a means of ruling and being ruled. Only after reason is faced for what it is, capable of holding opposite views, but incapable of holding any view which is completely sufficient for man, when it is seen as a brilliant and faithful servant, a means to an end, only then can it lead us to a point where the psychic atmosphere can open. Only then can we stand constantly in an attitude of pure faith, waiting only to experience the spiritual depths in existence—the soul, the self, the God with us, the God in us, the God in the Universe.

There are aids to finding this new attitude. For example, religion can be a legitimate and fruitful means for man to maintain contact with his spiritual nature. Reason can be helpful in this endeavour if it helps the religious man stay on the right track and to justify his faith as much as possible. In their most enlightened state reason and religion will encourage a journey beyond themselves towards intuition and higher kinds of direct knowledge, towards a more direct and dynamic experience of the Divine. True art would be another aid towards attaining the new psychic attitude. The full experience of great art is

direct contact with the suprarational realms of Absolute Beauty. Here too, reason is most helpful when it leads man in his response to the beautiful towards direct experience, towards artistic intuition, catharsis, the direct suprarational touch. Striving for the Absolute Good is another aid. This Good is sought after by man in his ethics. This ethical drive is like the aesthetic drive and the religious drive in that it is seeking after the Eternal, here with an emphasis on absolute purity, absolute right, absolute strength, absolute love and self-giving. Another aid can be the very Force of Life itself. It too is seeking its suprarational absolute and ultimate fulfilment. It is only when the Life Force begins to achieve its more spiritual goals that the frustrating dualities which now flood our lives (consumerism, money, power, sex, drugs and rock culture) can be resolved. Only then can our new lives in the spirit begin to take on a more definite shape.

A true spirituality which takes up into itself all of man's varied urges and will inevitably lead to a spiritualised society has its seeds even in man's first infrarational stages. But now these seeds, these bursts of true spirituality, must be universalised in the race for growth in evolution to continue. Therefore, a natural movement into the *rational* age must take place before a suprarational or spiritualised society can begin to exist. In his attempt to direct human society through his reason man has passed—is still passing—first, through a system of individualistic democracy ending in the ordered conflict of free, materialistic, darkly motivated, unfair competition; next, through a system of socialism ending in an unfree totalitarianism; and now he seems to be moving towards a kind of classless society, and reason will be put to its ultimate test.

While democracy seems headed towards a materialistic, vital, unhealthy competition and socialism is ending in its totalitarian loss of freedom, a classless society (sort of spiritual anarchism) will also fail if its solution to the problem of the one and the many in the human race is not based in deeper roots than a vital or mental brotherhood. The prevalence of transformed love as the ground for true growth and freedom must be based on the inner realisation of man and the race that each is a self meant to be perfected individually as it participates consciously in the Self of the Divine.

The true aim of the spiritual life is not a move 'away from' but a move 'within'. The more man and the race now become subjective, move within themselves, the more they will be able to grasp heartily all the aspects of life, and to allow all the drives and powers of our human being to assert themselves and, in their transformation in the spirit, to find their right direction and largest fulfilment. There should be no fear, even of inevitable mistakes, and we must find at last that everything on this earth is Divine, including our own selves. Man will realise that all his frustrations and unhappiness in the past have happened because he has never constantly, fearlessly moved within to find and live in the divine participation of his true self.

The closer mankind approaches normalcy in the current stage of evolution (through clear reason, high ethical and aesthetic sense, and the dominance of human will) the more man realises that he is being led to an Absolute Normality and Absolute Success only in some higher state of being. To human consciousness this absolute normality and success must now seem abnormal in the extreme and so the time has come for man to go beyond

his human self. He is at a crisis where human enlightenment and the dominance of the human will must be enlarged and ultimately replaced by a total transformation in the spirit. To begin leading mankind towards this transformation will be the fulness of India's destiny. From the "tryst with destiny" which India kept 50 years ago, she is now challenged with facing the continuation of this destiny in the modern world. The solutions on this path are extreme and would seem almost impossible, but the new leaders of India must rise above any timidity and try to actuate the "Hour of God" which is trying to manifest its Self.

For the actual coming of the spiritual age there must show themselves on earth, and simultaneously, both a group of individual leaders who really 'see', and who have a new pioneer strength to live entirely in the spirit, and, at the same time, a large mass of human beings ready to see and to be led into a new spiritual age. There would also have to be signs of subjectivity in all the various areas of human life such as philosophy, art, ethics, politics and economics, science and religion. There would have to be a sophisticated domination by mankind of its life powers and mind powers so that these powers would at the same time be exerted to their fullest, and be used constantly as instruments of the spirit. The mass of mankind would begin to admit, at last, and with a dynamic realisation in their manner of life, that the sole reality is participation in the Eternal, Divine Spirit, finding this within as true freedom and new joy, and without in the joy and true freedom of their brothers and sisters united with the one Self of the Divine.

Impossible as it seems, once this vision of a spiritualised society is realised as the real hope for the future of mankind and its ultimate destiny, there should at least be a dynamic restlessness until this ideal begins to become the lived reality in the world. Without worry about when the new spiritual age in evolution will come, or exactly how many will be admitted to it when it does, India must go after it now with full vigour and with all her powers directed towards helping the Divine reveal its Self to as many of us as possible, soon. From Destiny to Destiny, and on to "A New Human Order for the Next Millennium".

WILLIAM NETTER

(After reading *The Human Cycle* by Sri Aurobindo)

KNOWLEDGE-MINING—SEARCH FOR SCIENCE IN ANCIENT INDIA

KNOWLEDGE-mining is a relevant exercise to be undertaken by scientists as well as others to inspire national self-confidence and to get new ideas for scientific research. The wealth of information contained in ancient Indian texts starting from the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas is worth exploring. The purpose of such an exploration is not to claim that Indian scholars (Rishis) knew everything or to interpret that all Sanskrit texts contained science. The aim should be to inform ourselves that Indians too had discovered many scientific truths. This will have to be a collaborative effort of Sanskrit scholars as well as scientists, guided by the spirit of search for truth and science to lead to a renaissance of science in India.

Continuity of knowledge and imbibing a certain level of scientific knowledge in the day-to-day life of the people is an essential environment for the progress of science and technology. The scientific knowledge prevalent in the ancient Indian texts does not lend itself for classification according to the different branches of modern science. Knowledge had been looked at in a holistic manner without being split into different branches of science. Further, the methodology, the presentation of proof, etc., may be missing in the ancient texts but the factual information and truth available in them can be identified and understood. This is an essential step towards writing the history of science in ancient India and providing the much needed national self-confidence in our intellectual pursuits.

Rig Veda and Atharva Veda contain a vast amount of general knowledge and general science in them. Some of the examples of scientific truth embedded in Rig Veda are as follows:

(1) Rig Veda refers to the high speed of light when it states that the Sun quickly invades the whole world (R.V.I.50-4):

तरणिर्विश्वदर्शतो ज्योतिष्कदसि सूर्य ।
विश्वमा भासि रोचनम् ॥

Sayanacharya has commented on this: “Sunlight travels two thousand two hundred and two yojanas in half a Nimesha”:

योजनानां सहस्र द्वे द्वे शतं द्वे योजने एकेन ।
निमेषाधैन क्रममाण नमोस्तु ते ॥

One Yojana is equal to 9 miles. Velocity of light according to this comes to 1,86,413.22 miles per second, very near to the scientifically proved 1,86,300 miles per second. Sayana knew this in the 15th century, whereas modern science determined it only in the 20th century!

R.V. refers to seven rays of light:

एको अश्वः वहति सप्त नामाः ।
सूर्यस्य सप्त रश्मिभिः ॥

Both R.V. and A.V. have similar verses about the single ray of light travelling in 7 names.

(2) Further, according to the astronomical code embedded in Rig Veda, the sun is 108 sun-diameters away from the earth and the moon is 108 moon-diameters away from the earth. This corresponds with the modern astronomical figures of 107.6 for the sun and 110.6 for the moon (Dr. Subhash Kak).

(3) R.V.I.184-34 questions: “Where is the end of this Earth? Where is the mid-point of the Earth?”

Yajur Veda (23:59,61,62) and Atharva Veda (Bhumi Sukta 12) both had conceptualised the Earth as spherical. A.V. (12) refers to the great speed of Earth (महान वेग) and the tremors of the Earth.

(4) Yajur Veda (24:20) lists a number of birds and animals according to the seasons in which they are found.

(5) Yajur Veda (22:26) contains a classification of clouds into 8 types.

(6) Yajur Veda (17:2) contains in the second stanza of Chapter 17 the origin of the decimal system. The system of measurement of long spans of time in terms of Mahapadma, Shankha, Samudra, Madhya and Parardha has its origin in Y.V. Arithmetic progression of numbers from 1 to 33 (17:24,25) and progression of even numbers (17:23) are also found in Y.V.

(7) Among the Vedas, Atharva Veda has the largest amount of general knowledge compilation in its following 8 parts:

Bhaishajya—about medicine;

Aayushya—about span of life;

Paushtika—about nutrition;

Abhichaarika—about psychological phenomenon (witchcraft?);

Prayaschitta—about atonement for sins;

Shrauta Karma—about household activities;

Rajakarana—of statecraft;

Brahmanya—of Brahma, the ultimate energy.

A.V. which was probably the seminal work for the Upaveda of Ayur Veda lists about 70 herbs and medicinal plants, many of which are yet to be identified. Bioprospecting in this area will be of great benefit.

A.V. has a description of different kinds of illnesses like fever, tuberculosis, urinary problems, mental illness, etc. It has a list of disease-causing germs, with their morphology and characteristics (A.V.8-6-1-26).

A.V. (10-2) in its Brahma Prakashana Sukta deals with human anatomy and life. Life is conceptualised as an energy or light within the eight circles of the five senses, the Will, the Mind and the Ego. Life as a luminous faculty (energy) exists in the body having

eight circles (अष्टाचक्र) and nine doors (नवद्वार).

A.V. has 100 stanzas on time (काल) and 62 on astrology (फलज्योतिष).

A.V. (13th chapter) deals with the description of poisons and snakes: see the names of some snakes: Kairata, Upatrinia, Pingala, Krishnapakshi, Urugula, Viligi, Pradatucharkota, Krishnanudha, Paitava, Taponasi, Kantaka.

A.V. (12—Bhumi Sukta) contains ideas similar to the Gaia Theory about the environment and has reference to mining and conservation.

(8) In relative terms, Sama Veda contains verses which are set for singing and is considered as the source of Gandharva Veda (one of the Upavedas). Perhaps, Soma and Yajurveda have less secular content as compared to A.V.

(9) Now, let us briefly touch upon the scientific content of the Upanishads. Although the Upanishads are considered to be highly philosophical and abstract, some of the basic concepts have come out of the Vedas. Nasadiya Sukta of R.V. (Tenth Mandala) is a rationalistic search for the origin of the Universe and its meaning. These seminal thoughts have been contained in the Upanishads. Purusha Sukta's concept of Purusha has also similar continuity. The concepts of "Purna" or wholeness and infinity in Ishavasya Upanishad are notable. The *pindānda* and *brahmānda* link life and the Universe together. The questioning method of Nachiketa in Kathopanishad is essentially scientific. Similar is the analytical method of *neti* (not this) which was used for elimination of the irrelevant and isolation of the ultimate fact.

(10) Dialogue and deduction are used as the techniques of search for knowledge in the Upanishads. Bhrigu Valli of Taittiriya Upanishad is a dialogue between Bhrigu and Varuni. Kathopanishad is about Nachiketa's dialogue with Yama. Kenopanishad begins with a dialogue between the disciple and the teacher. Prasnopanishad is a dialogue between Sukesha, Satyakama, Kausalya, Bhargava and Kabandhi with Pippalada, the Rishi. All these Upanishads have attempted to ask about the origin of the Universe and life, questions which are yet to be fully answered.

The above references have been quoted with a view to enabling the interested persons to refer to the original and make their own assessment. The interest of institutions dealing with science as well as with Sanskrit is not probably what one can appreciate. Nevertheless, those who are individually interested, irrespective of their belonging to such formal institutions as well as amateurs in the society, have started coming together to explore these areas. But such attempts are inadequate. Without the intellectual resources of formal institutions like universities, colleges and non-governmental organisations getting into a network, such knowledge-mining will be delayed. If the intellectual property rights of the people in this country are to be protected and used for the benefit of society, institutional networking for research in this area should be undertaken on priority.

V. V. BHAT

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(*Continued from the issue of December 2001*)

THE Sri Aurobindo Ashram is a laboratory where yoga had to be all-embracing, which is the reason why they called it integral. The thing to be done is “as large as human life”. Sri Aurobindo wrote: “... the individuals who lead the way will take all human life for their province. These pioneers will consider nothing as alien to them, nothing as outside their scope. For every part of human life has to be taken up by the spiritual,— not only the intellectual, the aesthetic, the ethical, but the dynamic, the vital, the physical; therefore for none of these things or the activities that spring from them will they have contempt or aversion...”¹

This Yoga “is new as compared with the old yogas: 1. Because it aims not at a departure out of the world and life into Heaven or Nirvana, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object.... Even the Tantra and Vaishnavism end in the release from life; here the object is the divine fulfilment of life. 2. Because the object sought after is not an individual achievement of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement.... 3. Because a method has been precognized for achieving this purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, viz., the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as a part action and present aid to others that are distinctive.... Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.”² This is what Sri Aurobindo wrote.

He also wrote something to be remembered by all traditionalists and fundamentalists: “The traditions of the past are very great in their own place, in the past, but I do not see why we should merely repeat them and not to go further. In the spiritual development of the consciousness upon earth the great past ought to be followed by a greater future.”³

While reading the accounts of some aspirants who became disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, we have seen that, in every case, the time was given to them to think over their decision, even when they knew from the very first moment of meeting Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that their destiny lay with them. “I never push anyone to take the path,” said the Mother. “When you have started, you must go to the very end. Sometimes... to people who come to me with enthusiasm I say, ‘Think it over, it is not an easy path. You will need time, you will need patience. You will need much endurance, much perseverance and courage and an untiring goodwill. Look and see if you are capable of having all this, and then start. But once you have started, it is finished, there is no going back any more; you must go to the very end.’ ”⁴

Sri Aurobindo in the course of a letter dated 12 July 1911 wrote to his disciple over a year after his arrival in Pondicherry: “I am developing the necessary powers for bringing down the spiritual on the material plane, and I am now able to put myself into men and change them, removing the darkness and bringing light, giving them a new heart and

a new mind. This I can do with great swiftness and completeness with those who are near me, but I have also succeeded with men hundreds of miles away. I have also been given the power to read men's characters and hearts, even their thoughts, but this power is not yet absolutely complete, nor can I use it always and in all cases.... I have been kept busy laying down the foundation, a work severe and painful. It is only now that the edifice is beginning to rise upon the sure and perfect foundation that has been laid."⁵

In the Integral Yoga all aspects of life have to be tackled. The prescription of fixed rules and guidelines was not feasible. The simple reason is that every human being is a unique and extremely complex whole. Not only does he consist of different layers and parts proper to him and nobody else, he is also the outcome of a whole range of experiences through many lives, which may be momentarily hidden and forgotten, but which are constituents of his soul, his adhara. All this is the material given to the human being to work out his yoga.

Sri Aurobindo said: "Each sadhak has to be dealt with according to his nature, his capacities, his real needs (not his claims or desires) and according to what is best for the spiritual welfare."⁶

(*To be continued*)

NILIMA DAS

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A TREASURY OF THOUGHTS

THERE is nothing more blessed to remember, than suffering overcome in solidarity with God; this is the mystery of suffering.

—*Kierkegaard*

Through the tragic something new speaks to us; something that is no longer tragic.

—*Karl Jaspers*

Without the Resurrection, Good Friday would only be the triumph of evil.

—*Maurice Nedoncelle*

The Prophet said, "If you know God as he ought to be known, you would walk on the seas, and the mountains would move at your call."

—*Sufi Tradition*

...one has sometimes to deny God in order to find him; the finding is inevitable at the end of all earnest skepticism and denial.

—*Sri Aurobindo*

All life is only a lavish and manifold opportunity to discover, realise, express the Divine.

—*Sri Aurobindo*

Be humble if you would attain to wisdom. Be humbler still, when you have mastered wisdom.

—*H. P. Blavatsky*

For when the divine light shines, the human light sets, and when the former sets, the latter dawns and rises... it is not lawful for mortal and immortal to dwell together.

—*Philo*

He who lives by the cross dies by the sword.

—*Simone Weil*

If man will not know willingly the God of love, then he will know unwillingly the God of wrath.

—*Gregory Vlastos*

(Presented by Fali Choksi)

THE FUTURE OF INDIA

ADDRESSING a meeting of the Indian Civil Service Dinner Club in London, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Clement Attlee, said he was sure that India's relationship with Britain would continue fruitfully for which the Indian Civil Service had done a great deal to lay the foundation. He observed, "I would like to say how much we are indebted to all those who have done this great service."

Mr. Attlee continued, "India has had to feel, in the course of a few decades, the impact of the movements which had passed over us (in Britain) in centuries—the fight for religious freedom and moving away from the violence of political strife to the more orderly political strife of to-day... One of the lessons we have learned in India is that there is a limit to what can be done by one people to help another people. What I consider as the social and economic evils of India are evils that can only be cured by the Indians themselves. We have done India a great service but that service has henceforth to be carried on by the Indians themselves... We looked at the political, social and economic problems there, and we saw it was inevitable for there to be a change... I am anxious to-day over what may happen to the great masses of the people in India. I would not prophesy; it would be very unwise for me to say any word on the Indian situation to-day. I prefer to leave that to the man on the spot, the Viceroy, who is doing wonderful service.

"I am quite sure we shall gradually move away from the political problem into dealing with the social and economic questions of India. I believe that there will still be great work left for us to do. I am quite sure that Indians will need our help and will ask for it, and I am sure that that help will be given willingly from this country... Whatever may be the changes in future, we have created behind us in these long years of association the history of a service that has been done in India by the love of many people in India for the Indian people... I am quite sure that all those who have served in India have the deepest anxiety and the greatest hope that out of these present struggles they will get to see an India which is free, contented, and moving forward to higher standards of life, and to a greater degree of tolerance between caste, creed and humanity."

(The Hindu, 14 June 1947)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Lu and Badali by *Chandra Singh Badali*. Translated by I.K. Sharma. Pub: Aalekh Publishers, Duggar Building, M.I.Road, Jaipur - 302 001; 2001. Pages: XVIII + 53. Price: Rs. 250.

A Sip from Rajasthani Literature

To readers like me who know no Rajasthani, Rajasthani literature in the original is as good as Greek or Latin. But I must rush to say that I have enjoyed the literature produced in the classical languages in admirable translations. In a country like India where every nearby and far away state has a language of its own, it is only through translations into English (English being the link language) that Indian literature can be read.

Translations of various works from Indian languages into English were started by the Christian Missionaries who took the trouble of learning them. The wealth of regional literature would have remained the property of the native speakers had there been no such device called translation.

Following the footsteps of the learned Missionary translators, several Indians well versed both in their mother-tongue and English began to churn out translations. Some gave a literal translation of the original text, some added to the beauty of the original and some transcreated the text.

While it is true that several translations are unreadable, we can't but agree with the common readers who say that some dedicated translators have done their job well. Admirers of *Arabian Nights* will definitely prefer Sir Richard Burton's translation to any other.

To the long list of able and efficient translators, I would like to add the name of Dr. I.K. Sharma, a poet in his own right, with four collections of English poems to his credit. He has been consistently translating from Rajasthani into English. Dr. K.M. George's 'Foreword' to the elegantly produced book under review serves as ample testimony to the fact that Sharma is a veteran translator: "...I feel that the readers of this translation will be happy to get a feel of the Rajasthani atmosphere and its peculiar graces as reflected in the poems. It is certainly a part of Indian poetry and one should feel obliged to Dr. Sharma for the competent rendering".

There are valid reasons for Dr. Sharma's choosing of Chandra Singh Badali's poems for translation. What is great poetry? The only answer could be: Even if a single line of verse is quoted from a poet's work oft and again by the common folk, then that line is great poetry. I remember to have read this somewhere. And when Chandra Singh (1912-1992), Father of Nature poetry in Rajasthani, published his long poem *Badali* in 1941, it took the poetry lovers all over the state by storm. Apart from awards, rave reviews and undiluted praise, the poet bagged something more and that would remain the envy of every pen-pusher. People in the fields and at home began to recite couplets from *Badali* without knowing the poet. *Badali*, meaning cloudlet, became a household word in the

region and small wonder that the poet was affectionately called 'Badali' which in due course became his respectable sobriquet.

Well then! What is special about *Badali*? Written in 130 quatrains, the poem is a magnificent presentation of the cultural life of Rajasthan. It is true that ever since Mahakavi Kalidas sent a cloud as messenger, clouds have been at the centre of literary imagination in India. They were also employed by poets as a medium for philosophical musings. But Chandra Singh views the subject from an altogether different angle. He treats the cloudlet as a young maiden who is given a formal invitation to come and help the one who has been begging at her door. At first she hesitates and shows no desire of joining him at a new place. The lover cajoles her in a plethora of ways and requests her to show mercy for he has been pining for her for long.

Cloudlet takes pity on the poor fellow. She hangs about but is hesitant to part with her wealth. After repeated requests and cajoling, she melts and thereby sends waves of delight in the hearts of men and birds. But the lover is selfish, like all human beings. He tries to tie her down to his own region. But she makes her escape. And all that the lover could request her is to "come down uninvoked in the rains".

Rajasthan being "a paradise of sands", the poet highlights the importance of Badali in the desert state. Here are a few quatrains in Dr. Sharma's admirable poetic rendering, taken sporadically from the poem:

On fire is the earth in summer,
its heart is beating fast,
you who bring us rains, Badali,
come soon to wet us all. (4)

Your coming fills our heart with joy
but seeing you go overhead
without giving a drop
saddens our heart. (10)

Thick clouds rise high in the sky,
they engage our wandering eye,
merry peacocks then weave a dance
on terraces, lost in a trance. (37)

Children, hand in hand,
playfully form a ring,
they then pray to Badali:
Fill our ponds to the brim! (38)

Your gesture of thunder I cannot read,
your winking of no avail,

write if you can, in drops of rain,
The tidings of my mate. (52)

Sure, my love has sent Badali here,
it's beyond any doubt,
she hears the wailing of women
and weeps in the form of rains. (61)

After a long silence of ten years, Chandra Singh came out with his second book of poetry, *Lu*. It means hot winds that blow hard in summer. In this book too, the poet imagines the awe-inspiring force of nature as a woman and succeeds in conveying through her the reality of his region as he has witnessed it.

To me *Lu* is in every way a better poem than *Badali*. It is more mature, more poetic and immensely readable. All the 104 quatrains of this book are real visuals that one could feast one's eyes upon.

Lu has a travel plan of her own. A vandal to the core, she begins her 'Operation Grill' from the plains. She finds delight in taking life out of smiling flowers and chirping birds. Poor nestlings too meet with gory death at her hands. She spares no animals. Camels, the pride of Rajasthan, lose their glory in a jiffy. Such is the power of the blistering *Lu*, painted superbly in words by the poet. Thanks to the translator Dr. Sharma for his lovely rendering into English:

With love immense and care
creepers nurse the buds,
they all sob now, watching:
Lu robs them of their wealth. (7)

Flowers—the fond sons of vines—
sway gaily in the Southerly wind,
the crazy Lu without heart
singes them one and all. (8)

Madly, the Lu-beaten deer runs for water
to ponds that promise nothing but sand,
they fall, they rise; they rise and fall,
wearied, they know not where to get refuge. (27)

The camel that knows no thirst
for four days together,
runs mad in the reign of Lu
three times a day to water. (48)

So sleek was the buffalo skin once
 even a fly would slide down,
 now water does not a little move
 since the onset of Lu. (54)

The fleet-footed Lu blows hard,
 soaks water at the deepest source,
 all beings find wells dried up,
 see death at their door. (58)

About the original poems, I can do no better than quote the translator from his 'Introduction' to the book:

"Taken together, the two poems *Lu* and *Badali* (they should be studied in this order and not in the order they had appeared) give us intimate glimpses of the general life in Rajasthan during the first five to six months of a year, from Chaitra to Sawan-Bhadon. They truthfully unveil the region before the external world. In them, history (in the broadest sense), imagination, and geography, mingle without an iota of conflict. What ordinarily seems so familiar and therefore uninteresting wears a new dress of multiple colours.

"The rich variety of details the poet gives is simply astounding. His roving lens covers all aspects of life. He observes fledglings opening their beak for feed, sees bulls playfully goring the sand dunes, watches heat rising from the body of a buffalo, looks at vipers and Varanus lying on the heap of sand, and so on. Also, the activities of the human world do not escape his notice. Maidens swoop and soar high on swings, milkmen come back without a drop of milk in their pail, children form rings and plead for rains and such other details make the reading of poems a stimulating experience."

As a translator and book reviewer and also as a one time jury member for the Central Sahitya Akademi to select the best book for the translation award, I consider 'readability' as the hallmark of good translation. Judged by this yardstick, Dr. Sharma's translation of *Lu and Badali* "faithful to the idea behind the words and not merely to words in the text as such...but nothing at the cost of clarity" is certainly a book for anyone interested in Indian literature in English translation.

P. RAJA

Of Another Dimension by Tarun Banerjee. Publisher: the author. Price Rs. 50, pp. 64.

The title appears very attractive and the readers would rightly expect something new. But the author's attempt to keep up the substance of the book with its title has not been very successful. An attempt has been made in the Foreword to emphasise upon the reader his need "to be inspired into nobler thoughts and feelings... if possible, into a revelation of the future." Of course the need is genuine. But expressions like "an entry (for the reader)

into a world of love and hope and peace of another kind”, “a journey with the author into a realm of *ananda*” and “I will not disappoint”, “an author who is educated and brought up in Sri Aurobindo Ashram” smack of a self-imposition of superiority that is not in good taste. Such high-flown expressions used for oneself speak of one’s attempt at self-praise. Let the book speak for itself. This reviewer, therefore, is of the opinion that the Foreword here is totally redundant and the book would have been much better without it. The greatness of an author lies in not announcing himself to the reader with a “gentle knock (at his door) turned into beats of a loud tattoo in the form of requests for more... and still more.” Greatness lies in concealing such things. In the excitement of writing the first book such lapses creep in and they have to be overlooked.

The book includes two short stories and both are good, especially *The Happy Headmaster* with its element of human feelings. *End of Journey* is true to the genre of writing to which it belongs, a Memoir. *An Encounter* is fairly good reading. The two travel articles are just passable. The rest need no comment.

The language and expressions of the author are good enough but the style lacks smoothness and is at times a little jarring. It needs some polishing.

ASOKA K. GANGULI

The Essential Writings of Sri Aurobindo, edited by Peter Heehs. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. xxx+388. Price Rs. 195.

Sri Aurobindo: An Insight into His Many-Sided Writings

I

All major aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s writings appear in this compilation, *The Essential Writings of Sri Aurobindo* edited by Peter Heehs (1998)—his articles on the Congress and national progress, his speeches on Nationalism, his commentaries on Veda and Vedanta, his metaphysics of evolution, his system of integral yoga, his theory of poetry and his epic *Savitri*. It is an attempt to put the immense output of Sri Aurobindo in a single volume so that one can understand and appreciate his many-sided teachings without having to wade through several thousands of pages of his original works. But yet it is a compilation and meant to serve as a royal road to the large estate of Sri Aurobindo.

Originally the Indian National Congress was considered by its members to be national in character. But through a penetrating analysis Sri Aurobindo shows that it was not so because “it did not represent the mass of the population.” (p. 8) In another article he points out that only under the twin conditions of political freedom and a strong central authority a true national progress is possible. He defines Nationalism as “a religion that has come from God.” (p. 18) According to him, a nationalist should have faith, selflessness and courage and consider himself as “an instrument of God.” (p. 19) Speaking at

Uttarpara in 1909, he identifies Sanatana Dharma and Nationalism. He says that on this Sanatana Dharma alone depends the fate of the nation. To him the ideal of the *karmayogin* consists of doing India's work, a work not separate from the world's work, and God's work. The first qualification for being a *karmayogin* is to be free of European ideas and become an "Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything." (p. 46)

In 1910 Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pondicherry which was then a French territory. This marked the end of his political career. But ten years later there were calls to re-enter politics. The two letters he wrote in this connection show very clearly that his withdrawal from political activity was not due to ascetic disgust for active life but other considerations which were more important.

II

The advent of English rule in India opened in course of time a cultural attack on "her distinct spirit, essential principle and characteristic forms." (pp. 60-61) As a result, she was compelled to "recover herself and defend her cultural existence." (p. 60) In this struggle India did show signs of recovery and self-assertion. On noticing them Sri Aurobindo said that her attempt at self-recovery was bound to be renewed as soon as more favourable conditions were created.

An examination of our ancient documents—the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita—shows the real source of India's strength and the large aim for which she lives and towards which she is gradually moving. For her "the Spirit is the highest and inmost thing, but all is manifestation and creation of the Spirit." (p. 70) Her aim is "not only to raise to inaccessible heights the few elect, but to draw all men and all life and the whole human being upward, to spiritualise life and in the end to divinise human nature." (p. 70) Nature's evolutionary future points to the final emergence of a civilisation which makes a perfect harmony of spirit, mind, and body possible here. Viewed from this supreme goal, the civilisations of Europe and India, says Sri Aurobindo, are only "infant dawns." (p. 133) Neither of them can claim to represent the real and perfect civilisation which is yet to be born.

III

A perfect civilisation is inconceivable without a perfect society, a society where the life of the individual and that of the race develop in a condition of freedom. When a religion of humanity is born in the present society, the society is on its way to become perfect and develop according to the law of freedom. "A religion of humanity means," says Sri Aurobindo, "the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which all are 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." (p. 154)

If we analyse the process of social development, we find that a perfect society, even

though it is a distant goal now, will be an inevitable outcome of the process. There are, according to Sri Aurobindo, three stages in the development of a society—symbolic, conventional and subjective. In the symbolic age all things associated with man's life are symbols which express an unnameable, a hidden and mysterious truth behind the world; in the conventional age "the spiritual and religious idea" (p. 162) ceases to dominate the society and is replaced by the psychological idea and the ethical ideal; in the subjective age man circles back "towards the recovery of his deeper self ." (p. 166) "the truth the society has lost or buried in its whited sepulchres." (p. 166) And the emergence of the religion of humanity is the beginning of "a new revolving cycle of civilisation" (p. 166) which will eventually bring about a perfect society.

In the subjective and spiritual age the spiritualised individual plays a decisive role. His ascent into heaven "is not the key, but rather his ascent here into the spirit and the descent also of the Spirit into his normal humanity and the transformation of this earthly nature." (p. 171) Sri Aurobindo declares that it is for this new birth that "humanity waits as the crowning movement of its long obscure and painful course." (p. 171)

IV

What Sri Aurobindo holds before us is "the affirmation of a divine life upon earth and immortal sense in mortal existence." (p. 185) Is it really possible here? The answer is generally in the negative. Both the materialists and ascetics deny that it is possible here. The former believe in the sole reality of Matter and reject Spirit as a product of imagination. The latter to whom the Spirit is the sole reality reject Matter as the illusion of the senses. The opposition between Matter and Spirit disappears when we recognise that the Spirit is "the inhabitant of this bodily mansion" (p. 185) and uses Matter "as a fit and noble material out of which He... builds recurrently the unending series of His Mansions." (p. 185) Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution proceeds out of this harmony between Matter and Spirit and justifies through the harmony the possibility of a divine life upon earth.

In the evolution there is a graduated succession, "first the evolution of Matter, next the evolution of Life in Matter, then the evolution of Mind in living Matter, and in this last stage an animal evolution followed by a human evolution." (p. 215) Sri Aurobindo points out that there is a decisive change in the process of human evolution. In the stages previous to the evolution of man the process was a subconscious evolution. But in the human evolution it becomes a conscious aid to Nature, a process by which Nature evolves through his conscious cooperation and seeks to go beyond him and manifest Superman on earth. In Sri Aurobindo's view man is not the last term of evolutionary Nature, but merely a middle term she uses for bringing about a type far superior and far greater than the type of man. If this is the intention of Nature, then man fulfils his destiny by becoming her conscious instrument. "Man's greatness," says Sri Aurobindo, "is not in what he is but in what he makes possible." (p. 230)

Rebirth and Karma are the means by which the soul develops. By passing from

birth to birth it carries its own past. But it is not bound by its past, for it works upon the past and recreates its future existence. This is the crowning factor in the soul's growth. However, it is wrongly held that rebirth is related exclusively to an individual's development. For when he develops, he also helps "in the surrounding creative evolution." (p. 255) Therefore Sri Aurobindo dismisses the above idea of rebirth as "an excessive individualism." (p. 256)

V

According to Sri Aurobindo, the original yoga is the Yoga of Nature. She "attempts in the conscious and the subconscious to realise her perfection in an ever increasing expression of her yet unrealised potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality." (p. 268) By studying this original yoga Sri Aurobindo has discovered that all main yogas—Karma, Jnana and Bhakti—can be synthesized and a larger result produced. The yoga which he has modelled on Nature's Yoga is known by the name of Integral Yoga. He says that the results of this yoga can be extended to the whole world in such a way that they are generalised in mankind.

If one elevates himself and elevates others through the method of extension, what will be his standard of conduct? He will not be bound by "personal need" (p. 289) nor by "the law and good of the collectivity" (p. 284) nor even by "an ideal ethic." (p. 284) His law will be "the highest divine law of the nature." (p. 284) This divine law is twofold: (i) the law and truth of "a great spiritualised collective life" (p. 293); (ii) the law and truth of "the direct expression of the Divine in the soul, mind, life, body of the individual creature." (p. 293) This is the standard of conduct he will adopt towards himself and towards others.

All this is possible for us only when we possess the cosmic consciousness. But perfection in the consciousness is difficult to attain. Our mentality breaks existence into two opposites—on one side "the Infinite, the Formless, the One", (p. 304) and on the other side, "the finite, the world of forms, the jarring multiplicity." (p. 304) So we seek "the peace of the Transcendent, but not the cosmic bliss of the Transcendent." (p. 304) By doing so we have not yet possessed "all the rights of the Spirit", (p. 305) not yet subjected the cosmic manifestation to "the law of the all-mastering Spirit." (p. 305) But when we attain to the level of the ideal Mind, the Truth-Consciousness of the Veda, we are in possession of the cosmic consciousness in which the One and the Many are no longer divided but perfectly harmonised and united. This is the ideal which is held before the *sādhaka* of the Integral Yoga as his object of realisation.

VI

To us mortals mind is the source of ideas. Through yoga we discipline them and heighten them and reach the Real Idea of God. Similarly, emotions and willed actions in us can be used through yoga to open the gates of immortality and reach the Lord of the world. Apart from these, there is the word, the word we speak. This also can be made a powerful

means of reaching God and manifesting Him in us—in soul, mind and body. When words are transformed into “the natural speech of Truth” (p. 367), they become vehicles of divine rhythm and fall into the category of *mantric* speech. They are, as Sri Aurobindo says, “the magic islands of form and name.” (p. 350) His epic *Savitri* is a sustained attempt at creating a series of such magic islands. To reach the highest level of Truth and unfold it in the powers of human soul through the magic of *mantra* is what *Savitri* is meant to accomplish in us. Its *mantric* side waits to be discovered and utilised by us. It is therefore appropriate to close the selections with a passage from the epic where Savitri seeks “the dwelling of the secret soul.” (p. 360)

Of Sri Aurobindo’s writings there are many compilations. But none is as comprehensive as the present volume. It is hoped that the volume will draw the attention of the world pointedly to the original works of Sri Aurobindo.

N. JAYASHANMUGAM