

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LV

No. 10

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>		
THE FOURFOLD BEING (Poem)	...	831
INDIAN CULTURE AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCE	...	833
SOME LETTERS	...	840
ABOUT RELIGION	...	842
<i>Arjava</i>		
SACRIFICE OFFERED BY THE PHYSICAL (Poem)	...	845
<i>The Mother</i>		
A DREAM	...	846
<i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i>		
A LETTER	...	848
<i>Richard Hartz</i>		
THE COMPOSITION OF <i>SAVITRI</i>	...	849
<i>R. Y. Deshpande</i>		
CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?	...	853
<i>Manmohan Ghose</i>		
LINES (Poem)	...	861
<i>Manoj Das</i>		
JUBILATION OF THE BALD PARROT	...	862
<i>Roger Calverley</i>		
NO PLACE (Poem)	...	865
<i>N. Jayashanmugam</i>		
YAJNAVALKYA AND THE MEANS TO IMMORTALITY	...	866
<i>K. N. Viju</i>		
IF I WERE (Poem)	...	871
<i>Ramanlal Pathak</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO ON THE FIRST HYMN OF THE RIG VEDA—A GLIMPSE	...	872

<i>Dinkar D. Palande</i>		
INTIMATIONS (Poem)	...	877
<i>Prabhakar (Batti)</i>		
AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT — XV	...	878
<i>Bhushan Dhingra</i>		
A FEW DREAMS	...	882
<i>Allan Stocker</i>		
YOU COULD BE... (Poem)	...	883
<i>Kati Widmer</i>		
INTIMATE PORTRAITS	...	884
<i>Sunil Behari Mohanty</i>		
EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA	...	888
<i>Pradip Bhattacharya</i>		
DAKSHA AND KALI	...	895
<i>Nilima Das</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	...	899
<i>Goutam Ghosal</i>		
TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO	...	904
<i>Mangesh Nadkarni</i>		
ON LIBERATING ENGLISH TO BE A WORLD LANGUAGE	...	910
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>Sarani Mondal</i>		
<i>Review of</i> THE RENAISSANCE: NOTES AND PAPERS WITH COMMENTARIES ON SRI AUROBINDO'S CRITICISM <i>by</i> GOUTAM GHOSAL	...	916
<i>Pradeep Kumar Keshari</i>		
<i>Review of</i> BHAGAVAD GITA AND MODERN PROBLEMS — Compilation	...	917
<i>P. Raja</i>		
<i>Review of</i> GREAT SIR AND THE HEAVEN LADY <i>by</i> MAGGI LIDCHI GRASSI	...	918
<i>Ashalata Dash</i>		
NOTHING IS LOST (Poem)	...	921

THE FOURFOLD BEING

As one drowned in a sea of splendour and bliss
Mute in the maze of these surprising worlds
Turning she saw their living knot and source,
Key to their charm and fount of their delight,
And knew him for the same who snares our lives
Captured in his terrifying pitiless net,
And makes the universe his prison camp...
One whom her soul had faced as Death and Night
A sum of all sweetness gathered into his limbs
And blinded her heart to the beauty of the suns.
Transfigured was the formidable shape....
Night the dim mask had grown a wonderful face....
A marvellous form responded to her gaze
Whose sweetness justified life's blindest pain;
All Nature's struggle was its easy price,
The universe and its agony seemed worth-while....
Death's sombre cowl was cast from Nature's brow;
There lightened on her the godhead's lurking laugh.
All grace and glory and all divinity
Were here collected in a single form....
In him the fourfold Being bore its crown
That wears the mystery of a nameless Name,
The universe writing its tremendous sense
In the inexhaustible meaning of a word.
In him the architect of the visible world,...
Virât, who lights his camp-fires in the suns
And the star-entangled ether is his hold,
Expressed himself with Matter for his speech:...
His is the dumb will of atom and of clod;...
For its body is the body of the Lord
And in its heart stands Virât, King of kings.
In him shadows his form the Golden Child
Who in the Sun-capped Vast cradles his birth:
Hiranyagarbha, author of thoughts and dream,...
Discoverer of unthought realities,
Truer to Truth than all we have ever known,
He is the leader on the inner roads;
A seer, he has entered the forbidden realms;
A magician with the omnipotent wand of thought,
He builds the secret uncreated worlds....

He is the carrier of the hidden fire,
 He is the voice of the Ineffable,...
 A third spirit stood behind, their hidden cause,
 A mass of superconscience closed in light,
 Creator of things in his all-knowing sleep.
 All from his stillness came as grows a tree;...
 He is the Wisdom that comes not by thought,
 His wordless silence brings the immortal word....
 Because he is there the Inconscient does its work,
 Because he is there the world forgets to die....
 Above was the brooding bliss of the Infinite,
 Its omniscient and omnipotent repose,
 Its immobile silence absolute and alone.
 All powers were woven in countless concords here....
 Things hidden by the silence of the hours,
 The ideas that find no voice on living lips,
 The soul's pregnant meeting with infinity
 Had come to birth in him and taken fire....
 His gaze was the regard of eternity;
 The spirit of its sweet and calm intent
 Was a wise home of gladness and divulged
 The light of the ages in the mirth of the hours,
 A sun of wisdom in a miracled grove....
 As from the harp of some ecstatic god
 There springs a harmony of lyric bliss
 Striving to leave no heavenly joy unsung,
 Such was the life in that embodied Light.
 He seemed the wideness of a boundless sky,
 He seemed the passion of a sorrowless earth,
 He seemed the burning of a world-wide sun.
 Two looked upon each other, Soul saw Soul.
 Then like an anthem from the heart's lucent cave
 A voice soared up whose magic sound could turn
 The poignant weeping of the earth to sobs
 Of rapture and her cry to spirit song...

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 678-83)

INDIAN CULTURE AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCE

IN considering Indian civilisation and its renaissance, I suggested that a powerful new creation in all fields was our great need, the meaning of the renaissance and the one way of preserving the civilisation. Confronted with the huge rush of modern life and thought, invaded by another dominant civilisation almost her opposite or inspired at least with a very different spirit to her own, India can only survive by confronting this raw, new, aggressive, powerful world with fresh diviner creations of her own spirit, cast in the mould of her own spiritual ideals. She must meet it by solving its greater problems,—which she cannot avoid, even if such avoidance could be thought desirable,—in her own way, through solutions arising out of her own being and from her own deepest and largest knowledge. In that connection I spoke of the acceptance and assimilation from the West of whatever in its knowledge, ideas, powers was assimilable, compatible with her spirit, reconcilable with her ideals, valuable for a new statement of life. This question of external influence and new creation from within is of very considerable importance; it calls for more than a passing mention. Especially it is necessary to form some more precise idea of what we mean by acceptance and of the actual effect of assimilation; for this is a problem of pressing incidence in which we have to get our ideas clear and fix firmly and seemingly on our line of solution.

But it is possible to hold that while new creation—and not a motionless sticking to old forms—is our one way of life and salvation, no acceptance of anything Western is called for, we can find in ourselves all that we need; no considerable acceptance is possible without creating a breach which will bring pouring in the rest of the occidental deluge. That, if I have not misread it, is the sense of a comment on these articles in a Bengali literary periodical* which holds up the ideal of a new creation to arise from within entirely on national lines and in the national spirit. The writer takes his stand on a position which is common ground, that humanity is one, but different peoples are variant soul-forms of the common humanity. When we find the oneness, the principle of variation is not destroyed but finds rather its justification; it is not by abolishing ourselves, our own special temperament and power, that we can get at the living oneness, but by following it out and raising it to its highest possibilities of freedom and action. That is a truth which I have myself insisted on repeatedly, with regard to the modern idea and attempt at some kind of political unification of humanity, as a very important part of the psychological sense of social development, and again in this question of a particular people's life and culture in all its parts and manifestations. I have insisted that uniformity is not a real but a dead unity: uniformity kills life while real unity, if well founded, becomes vigorous and fruitful by a rich energy of variation. But the writer adds that the idea of taking over what is best in occidental civilisation, is a false notion without a living meaning; to leave the bad and take the good sounds very well, but this bad and this good are not separable in that way: they are the inextricably mingled growth of one being, not separate blocks of a

* *Narayan*, edited by Mr. C. R. Das.

child's toy house set side by side and easily detachable,—and what is meant then by cutting out and taking one element and leaving the rest? If we take over a Western ideal, we take it over from a living form which strikes us; we imitate that form, are subjugated by its spirit and natural tendencies, and the good and bad intertwined in the living growth come in upon us together and take united possession. In fact, we have been for a long time so imitating the West, trying to become like it or partly like it and have fortunately failed, for that would have meant creating a bastard or twy-natured culture; but twy-natured, as Tennyson makes his Lucretius say, is no-natured and a bastard culture is no sound, truth-living culture. An entire return upon ourselves is our only way of salvation.

There is much to be said here, it seems to me, both in the way of confirmation and of modification. But let us be clear about the meaning of our terms. That the attempt in the last century which still in some directions continues,—to imitate European civilisation and to make ourselves a sort of brown Englishmen, to throw our ancient culture into the dust-bin and put on the livery or uniform of the West was a mistaken and illegitimate endeavour, I heartily agree. At the same time a certain amount of imitation, a great amount even, was, one might almost say, a biological necessity, at any rate a psychological necessity of the situation. Not only when a lesser meets a greater culture, but when a culture which has fallen into a state of comparative inactivity, sleep, contraction, is faced with, still more when it receives the direct shock of a waking, active, tremendously creative civilisation, finds thrown upon it novel and successful powers and functionings, sees an immense succession and development of new ideas and formations, it is impelled by the very instinct of life to take over these ideas and forms, to annex, to enrich itself, even to imitate and reproduce, and in one way or in another take large account and advantage of these new forces and opportunities. That is a phenomenon which has happened repeatedly in history, in a greater or a lesser degree, in part or in totality. But if there is only a mechanical imitation, if there is a subordination and servitude, the inactive or weaker culture perishes, it is swallowed up by the invading leviathan. And even short of that, in proportion as there is a leaning towards these undesirable things, it languishes, is unsuccessful in its attempt at annexation, loses besides the power of its own spirit. To recover its own centre, find its own base and do whatever it has to do in its own strength and genius is certainly the one way of salvation. But even then a certain amount of acceptance, of forms too,—some imitation, if all taking over of forms must be called imitation,—is inevitable. We have, for instance, taken over in literature the form of the novel, the short story, the critical essay among a number of other adoptions, in science not only the discoveries and inventions, but the method and instrumentation of inductive research, in politics the press, the platform, the forms and habits of agitation, the public association. I do not suppose that anyone seriously thinks of renouncing or exiling these modern additions to our life,—though they are not all of them by any means unmixed blessings,—on the ground that they are foreign importations. But the question is what we do with them and whether we can bring them to be instruments and by some characteristic modification moulds of our own spirit. If so, there has been an acceptance and an assimilation; if not there has been merely a helpless imitation.

But the taking over of forms is not the heart of the question. When I speak of acceptance and assimilation, I am thinking of certain influences, ideas, energies brought forward with a great living force by Europe, which can awaken and enrich our own cultural activities and cultural being if we succeed in dealing with them with a victorious power and originality, if we can bring them into our characteristic way of being and transform them by its shaping action. That was in fact what our own ancestors did, never losing their originality, never effacing their uniqueness, because always vigorously creating from within, with whatever knowledge or artistic suggestion from outside they thought worthy of acceptance or capable of an Indian treatment. But I would certainly repel the formula of taking the good and leaving the bad as a crudity, one of those facile formulas which catch the superficial mind but are unsound in conception. Obviously, if we “take over” anything, the good and the bad in it will come in together pell-mell. If we take over for instance that terrible, monstrous and compelling thing, that giant Asuric creation, European industrialism,—unfortunately we are being forced by circumstances to do it,—whether we take it in its form or its principle, we may under more favourable conditions develop by it our wealth and economic resources, but assuredly we shall get too its social discords and moral plagues and cruel problems, and I do not see how we shall avoid becoming the slaves of the economic aim in life and losing the spiritual principle of our culture.

But, besides, these terms good and bad in this connection mean nothing definite, give us no help. If I must use them, where they can have only a relative significance, in a matter not of ethics, but of an interchange between life and life, I must first give them this general significance that whatever helps me to find myself more intimately, nobly, with a greater and sounder possibility of self-expressive creation, is good; whatever carries me out of my orientation, whatever weakens and belittles my power, richness, breadth and height of self-being, is bad for me. If the distinction is so understood, it will be evident, I think, to any serious and critical mind which tries to fathom things, that the real point is not the taking over of this or that formal detail, which has only a sign value, for example, widow remarriage, but a dealing with great effective ideas, such as are the ideas, in the external field of life, of social and political liberty, equality, democracy. If I accept any of these ideas it is not because they are modern or European, which is in itself no recommendation, but because they are human, because they present fruitful view-points to the spirit, because they are things of the greatest importance in the future development of the life of man. What I mean by acceptance of the effective idea of democracy,—the thing itself, never fully worked out, was present as an element in ancient Indian as in ancient European polity and society,—is that I find its inclusion in our future way of living, in some shape, to be a necessity of our growth. What I mean by assimilation, is that we must not take it crudely in the European forms, but must go back to whatever corresponds to it, illumines its sense, justifies its highest purport in our own spiritual conception of life and existence, and in that light work out its extent, degree, form, relation to other ideas, application. To everything I would apply the same principle, to each in its own kind, after its proper dharma, in its right measure of importance, its spiritual, intellectual, ethical,

aesthetic, dynamic utility.

I take it as a self-evident law of individual being applicable to group-individuality, that it is neither desirable nor possible to exclude everything that comes in to us from outside. I take it as an equally self-evident law that a living organism, which grows not by accretion, but by self-development and assimilation, must recast the things it takes in to suit the law and form and characteristic action of its biological or psychological body, reject what would be deleterious or poisonous to it,—and what is that but the non-assimilable?—take only what can be turned into useful stuff of self-expression. It is, to use an apt Sanskrit phrase employed in the Bengali tongue, *atmasatkarana*, an assimilative appropriation, a making the thing settle into oneself and turn into characteristic form of our self-being. The impossibility of entire rejection arises from the very fact of our being a term of diversity in a unity, not really separate from all other existence, but in relation with all that surrounds us, because in life this relation expresses itself very largely by a process of interchange. The undesirability of total rejection, even if it were entirely possible, arises from the fact that interchange with the environment is necessary to a healthy persistence and growth; the living organism which rejects all such interchange, would speedily languish and die of lethargy and inanition.

Mentally, vitally and physically I do not grow by a pure self-development from within in a virgin isolation; I am not a separate self-existent being proceeding from a past to a new becoming in a world of its own where no one is but itself, nothing works but its own inner powers and musings. There is in every individualised existence a double action, a self-development from within which is its greatest intimate power of being and by which it is itself, and a reception of impacts from outside which it has to accommodate to its own individuality and make into material of self-growth and self-power. The two operations are not mutually exclusive, nor is the second harmful to the first except when the inner genius is too weak to deal victoriously with its environmental world; on the contrary the reception of impacts stimulates in a vigorous and healthy being its force for self-development and is an aid to a greater and more pronouncedly characteristic self-determination. As we rise in the scale we find that the power of original development from within, of conscious self-determination increases more and more, while in those who live most powerfully in themselves it reaches striking, sometimes almost divine proportions. But at the same time we see that the allied power of seizing upon the impacts and suggestions of the outside world grows in proportion; those who live most powerfully in themselves, can also most largely use the world and all its material for the Self,—and, it must be added, most successfully help the world and enrich it out of their own being. The man who most finds and lives from the inner self, can most embrace the universal and become one with it; the Swarat, independent, self-possessed and self-ruler, can most be the Samrat, possessor and shaper of the world in which he lives, can most too grow one with all in the Atman. That is the truth this developing existence teaches us, and it is one of the greatest secrets of the old Indian spiritual knowledge.

Therefore to live in one's self, determining one's self-expression from one's own centre of being in accordance with one's own law of being, swadharma, is the first neces-

sity. Not to be able to do that means disintegration of the life; not to do it sufficiently means languor, weakness, inefficiency, the danger of being oppressed by the environing forces and overborne; not to be able to do it wisely, intuitively, with a strong use of one's inner material and inner powers, means confusion, disorder and finally decline and loss of vitality. But also not to be able to use the material that the life around offers us, not to lay hold on it with an intuitive selection and a strong mastering assimilation is a serious deficiency and a danger to the existence. To a healthy individuality the external impact or entering energy, idea, influence may act as an irritant awakening the inner being to a sense of discord, incompatibility or peril, and then there is a struggle, an impulse and process of rejection; but even in this struggle, in this process of rejection there is some resultant of change and growth, some increment of the power and material of life; the energies of the being are stimulated and helped by the attack. It may act as a stimulus, awakening a new action of the self-consciousness and a sense of fresh possibility,—by comparison, by suggestion, by knocking at locked doors and arousing slumbering energies. It may come in as a possible material which has then to be reshaped to a form of the inner energy, harmonised with the inner being, reinterpreted in the light of its own characteristic self-consciousness. In a great change of environment or a close meeting with a mass of invading influences all these processes work together and there is possibly much temporary perplexity and difficulty, many doubtful and perilous movements, but also the opportunity of a great self-developing transformation or an immense and vigorous renaissance.

The group-soul differs from the individual only in being more self-sufficient by reason of its being an assemblage of many individual selves and capable within of many group variations. There is a constant inner interchange which may for a long time suffice to maintain the vitality, growth, power of developing activity, even when there is a restricted interchange with the rest of humanity. Greek civilisation,—after growing under the influence of Egyptian, Phoenician and other oriental influences,—separated itself sharply from the non-Hellenic “barbarian” cultures and was able for some centuries to live within itself by a rich variation and internal interchange. There was the same phenomenon in ancient India of a culture living intensely from within in a profound differentiation from all surrounding cultures, its vitality rendered possible by an even greater richness of internal interchange and variation. Chinese civilisation offers a third instance. But at no time did Indian culture exclude altogether external influences; on the contrary a very great power of selective assimilation, subordination and transformation of external elements was a characteristic of its processes; it protected itself from any considerable or overwhelming invasion, but laid hands on and included whatever struck or impressed it and in the act of inclusion subjected it to a characteristic change which harmonised the new element with the spirit of its own culture. But nowadays any such strong separative aloofness as distinguished the ancient civilisations, is no longer possible; the races of mankind have come too close to each other, are being thrown together in a certain unavoidable life unity. We are confronted with the more difficult problem of living in the full stress of this greater interaction and imposing on its impacts

the law of our being.

Any attempt to remain exactly what we were before the European invasion or to ignore in future the claims of a modern environment and necessity is foredoomed to an obvious failure. However much we may deplore some of the characteristics of that intervening period in which we were dominated by the Western standpoint or move away from the standpoint back to our own characteristic way of seeing existence, we cannot get rid of a certain element of inevitable change it has produced upon us, any more than a man can go back in life to what he was some years ago and recover entire and unaffected a past mentality. Time and its influences have not only passed over him, but carried him forward in their stream. We cannot go backward to a past form of our being, but we can go forward to a large repossession of ourselves in which we shall make a better, more living, more real, more self-possessed use of the intervening experience. We can still think in the essential sense of the great spirit and ideals of our past, but the form of our thinking, our speaking, our development of them has changed by the very fact of new thought and experience; we see them not only in the old, but in new lights, we support them by the added strength of new view-points, even the old words we use acquire for us a modified, more extended and richer significance. Again, we cannot be "ourselves alone" in any narrow formal sense, because we must necessarily take account of the modern world around us and get full knowledge of it, otherwise we cannot live. But all such taking account of things, all added knowledge modifies our subjective being. My mind, with all that depends on it, is modified by what it observes and works upon, modified when it takes in from it fresh materials of thought, modified when it is wakened by its stimulus to new activities, modified even when it denies and rejects; for even an old thought or truth which I affirm against an opposing idea, becomes a new thought to me in the effort of affirmation and rejection, clothes itself with new aspects and issues. My life is modified in the same way by the life influences it has to encounter and confront. Finally, we cannot avoid dealing with the great governing ideas and problems of the modern world. The modern world is still mainly European, a world dominated by the European mind and Western civilisation. We claim to set right this undue preponderance, to reassert the Asiatic and, for ourselves, the Indian mind and to preserve and develop the great values of Asiatic and of Indian civilisation. But the Asiatic or the Indian mind can only assert itself successfully by meeting these problems and by giving them a solution which will justify its own ideals and spirit.

The principle I have affirmed results both from the necessity of our nature and the necessity of things, of life,—fidelity to our own spirit, nature, ideals, the creation of our own characteristic forms in the new age and the new environment, but also a strong and masterful dealing with external influences which need not be and in the nature of the situation cannot be a total rejection; therefore there must be an element of successful assimilation. There remains the very difficult question of the application of the principle,—the degree, the way, the guiding perceptions. To think that out we must look at each province of culture and, keeping always firm hold on a perception of what the Indian spirit is and the Indian ideal is, see how they can work upon the present situation and

possibilities in each of these provinces and lead to a new victorious creation. In such thinking it will not do to be too dogmatic. Each capable Indian mind must think it out or, better, work it out in its own light and power,—as the Bengal artists are working it out in their own sphere,—and contribute some illumination or effectuation. The spirit of the Indian renaissance will take care of the rest, that power of the universal Time-Spirit which has begun to move in our midst for the creation of a new and greater India.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Renaissance in India, CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 43-52)

Cease inwardly from thought and word, be motionless within you, look upward into the light and outward into the vast cosmic consciousness that is around you. Be more and more one with the brightness and the vastness. Then will Truth dawn on you from above and flow in you from all around you. But only if the mind is no less intense in its purity than its silence.

Sri Aurobindo

(SABCL, Vol. 17, p. 12)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of September 2002)

In semi-dream I saw a bunch of flowers signifying “Deep peace in the physical”.

It is an indication of what is needed at this stage.

In another dream I asked somebody about A; he said something about shooting and when I asked who did it, I heard “D”. But should I write such dreams about others?

Yes, it is better to write. Obviously these are random suggestions flying about which catch the physical mind in dream.

While talking with people or coming in contact with them, I feel as if I am doing so very superficially or in a very detached manner. The main part of the being is quite elsewhere.

The talking or contact should be externally only, with the rest of the being detached and free.

25 February 1933

My thoughts, memories and dreams about my past life show that the subconscious is not yet well turned to the Divine. When will it be interested only in you and your work and the work given to me? I wish it would close to all extraneous influences.

The subconscious can be entirely dealt with only when the other parts are sufficiently opened and change—but meanwhile it can feel the pressure of the change in the mind and vital.

Now that the conquest is proceeding step by step, I do not understand why I do not realise the psychic being. Why can I not plunge inward sufficiently and break the veil between the outer consciousness and the inner psychic being? Is it because the mental is extremely prominent and the psychic not developed?

The psychic is in action, but it still expresses itself mostly through the mental and by an influence on the vital and physical.

25 February 1933

A slight egoism—“I am progressing better”— is appearing and a slight feeling of

disdain for some who appear not to be doing so. Why does this egoism still come up? It seems very petty to be feeling and thinking thus.

It is a habit of the petty physical vital nature.

I find it difficult to get time to read the Tamil I am studying. Would it be proper to read while at work—at least that portion of Tamil useful for work?

It may be better not. The workmen might think you were not supervising.

26 February 1933

Today lethargy came up in the afternoon and almost turned into sleep. The lethargy may be due to my having attempted to sleep after midday dinner. Is it better to avoid this after-dinner sleep?

It depends on the amount of sleep taken in the night.

I have a wish now for a realisation by which I have a knowledge and afterwards the experience of calm, purity, Truth-living, wideness, love and the bliss of your consciousness; also a knowledge and if possible the experience of your divinised or supramentalised physical, vital, mental and higher; also your method of working and your work—in short a complete and integral knowledge about Mother and Sri Aurobindo. That is the realisation I venture to ask for.

The whole of that cannot come at once. It is by a growth of your own consciousness that it will come.

26 February 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

ABOUT RELIGION

The Older Religions' Limiting Relevance

THE older religions erected their rule of the wise, their dicta of Manu or Confucius, a complex Shastra in which they attempted to combine the social rule and moral law with the declaration of certain eternal principles of our highest nature in some kind of uniting amalgam. All three were treated on the same ground as equally the expression of everlasting verities, *sanātana dharma*. But two of these elements are evolutionary and valid for a time, mental constructions, human readings of the will of the Eternal; the third, attached and subdued to certain social and moral formulas, had to share the fortunes of its forms. Either the Shastra grows obsolete and has to be progressively changed or finally cast away or else it stands as a rigid barrier to the self-development of the individual and the race. The Shastra erects a collective and external standard; it ignores the inner nature of the individual, the indeterminable elements of a secret spiritual force within him. But the nature of the individual will not be ignored; its demand is inexorable. The unrestrained indulgence of his outer impulses leads to anarchy and dissolution, but the suppression and coercion of his soul's freedom by a fixed and mechanical rule spells stagnation or an inner death. Not this coercion or determination from outside, but the free discovery of his highest spirit and the truth of an eternal movement is the supreme thing that he has to discover.¹

The Later Religions' Limiting Relevance

The later religions endeavour to fix the type of a supreme truth of conduct, erect a system and declare God's law through the mouth of Avatar or prophet. These systems, more powerful and dynamic than the dry ethical idea, are yet for the most part no more than idealistic glorifications of the moral principle sanctified by religious emotion and the label of a superhuman origin. Some, like the extreme Christian ethic, are rejected by Nature because they insist unworkably on an impracticable absolute rule. Others prove in the end to be evolutionary compromises and become obsolete in the march of Time. The true divine law, unlike these mental counterfeits, cannot be a system of rigid ethical determinations that press into their cast-iron moulds all our life-movements. The Law divine is truth of life and truth of the spirit and must take up with a free living plasticity and inspire with the direct touch of its eternal light each step of our action and all the complexity of our life issues. It must act not as a rule and formula but as an enveloping and penetrating conscious presence that determines all our thoughts, activities, feelings, impulses of will by its infallible power and knowledge.²

Religion: Scope, Practice and Significance

Religion in fact is not knowledge, but a faith and aspiration; it is justified indeed both by

an imprecise intuitive knowledge of large spiritual truths and by the subjective experience of souls that have risen beyond the ordinary life, but in itself it only gives us the hope and faith by which we may be induced to aspire to the intimate possession of the hidden tracts and larger realities of the Spirit. That we turn always the few distinct truths and the symbols or the particular discipline of a religion into hard and fast dogmas, is a sign that as yet we are only infants in the spiritual knowledge and are yet far from the science of the Infinite.

Yet behind every great religion, behind, that is to say, its exoteric side of faith, hope, symbols, scattered truths and limiting dogmas, there is an esoteric side of inner spiritual training and illumination by which the hidden truths may be known, worked out, possessed. Behind every exoteric religion there is an esoteric Yoga, an intuitive knowledge to which its faith is the first step, inexpressible realities of which its symbols are the figured expression, a deeper sense for its scattered truths, mysteries of the higher planes of existence of which even its dogmas and superstitions are crude hints and indications. What Science does for our knowledge of the material world, replacing first appearances and uses by the hidden truths and as yet occult powers of its great natural forces and in our own minds beliefs and opinions by verified experience and a profounder understanding, Yoga does for the higher planes and worlds and possibilities of our being which are aimed at by the religions. Therefore all this mass of graded experience existing behind closed doors to which the consciousness of man may find, if it wills, the key, falls within the province of a comprehensive Yoga of knowledge, which need not be confined to the seeking after the Absolute alone or the knowledge of the Divine in itself or of the Divine only in its isolated relations with the individual human soul. It is true that the consciousness of the Absolute is the highest reach of the Yoga of knowledge and that the possession of the Divine is its first, greatest and most ardent object and that to neglect it for an inferior knowledge is to afflict our Yoga with inferiority or even frivolity and to miss or fall away from its characteristic object; but, the Divine in itself being known, the Yoga of knowledge may well embrace also the knowledge of the Divine in its relations with ourselves and the world on the different planes of our existence. To rise to the pure Self being steadfastly held to as the summit of our subjective self-uplifting, we may from that height possess our lower selves even to the physical and the workings of Nature which belong to them.³

Overcoming the Limitations of Religions—Spiritual Self-Evolution

All religions have saved a number of souls, but none yet has been able to spiritualise mankind. For that there is needed not cult and creed, but a sustained and all-comprehending effort at spiritual self-evolution.

The changes we see in the world today are intellectual, moral, physical in their ideal and intention: the spiritual revolution waits for its hour and throws up meanwhile its waves here and there. Until it comes the sense of the others cannot be understood and till then all interpretation of present happening and forecast of man's future are vain

things. For its nature, power, event are that which will determine the next cycle of our humanity.⁴

The Eternal Religion

The eternal religion is to realise God in our inner life and our outer existence, in society not less than in the individual. *Esha dharmah sanatanah*. God is not antiquity nor novelty: He is not the Manava Dharmashastra, nor Vidyaranya, nor Raghunandan; neither is He an European. God who is essentially Sachchidananda, is in manifestation *Satyam, Prema, Shakti*,—Truth, Strength and Love. Whatever is consistent with the truth and principle of things, whatever increases love among men, whatever makes for the strength of the individual, the nation and the race, is divine, it is the law of Vaivaswata Manu, it is the *sanātana dharma* and the Hindu shastra.⁵

Transcending Religion

Our inner nature is the progressive expression of the eternal Spirit and too complex a power to be tied down by a single dominant mental or moral principle. Only the supra-mental consciousness can reveal to its differing and conflicting forces their spiritual truth and harmonise their divergences.⁶

SRI AUROBINDO

(Compiled by Arun Vaidya)

References

1. CWSA, Vol. 23 (*The Synthesis of Yoga*), pp. 203-204.
2. *Ibid.*, (*The Synthesis of Yoga*), p. 203.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 459-461.
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 13 (*Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*), p. 211.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 12 (*Essays Divine and Human*), pp. 53-54.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 23 (*The Synthesis of Yoga*), pp. 202-203.

SACRIFICE OFFERED BY THE PHYSICAL

SEED-SCATTERING and withered stems precede
The earth-redemption, the return of light:
Orphean fragments,—like offering,—still bleed,
Shed over forest dene or upland height.
Four elements on inmost altar ranged
In equal balance, body of Orpheus slain;
By a fifth, his death to Incorruption changed,—
Soul's quintessential Light within the fane.
One paten with five sides I contemplate,
Foreseeing far-off lives; thereon we heap
Actions and struggles and the thoughts we keep
For future pyres, betokening mastery.
“How should unnumbered acts be rendered great?”—
“Only if offered up to Love's Winged Victory.”

February 21, 1935

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: A fine sonnet—the thought is subtly pregnant, perhaps a little too much so for the ordinary reader to follow with ease.

A DREAM

THERE should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all human beings of good will, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world, obeying one single authority, that of the supreme Truth; a place of peace, concord, harmony, where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his suffering and misery, to surmount his weakness and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the care for progress would get precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the seeking for pleasures and material enjoyments. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their soul. Education would be given, not with a view to passing examinations and getting certificates and posts, but for enriching the existing faculties and bringing forth new ones. In this place titles and positions would be supplanted by opportunities to serve and organise. The needs of the body will be provided for equally in the case of each and everyone. In the general organisation intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority will find expression not in the enhancement of the pleasures and powers of life but in the increase of duties and responsibilities. Artistic beauty in all forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, will be available equally to all, the opportunity to share in the joys they bring being limited solely by each one's capacities and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would be no more the sovereign lord. Individual merit will have a greater importance than the value due to material wealth and social position. Work would not be there as the means of gaining one's livelihood, it would be the means whereby to express oneself, develop one's capacities and possibilities, while doing at the same time service to the whole group, which on its side would provide for each one's subsistence and for the field of his work. In brief, it would be a place where the relations among human beings, usually based almost exclusively upon competition and strife, would be replaced by relations of emulation for doing better, for collaboration, relations of real brotherhood.

The earth is certainly not ready to realise such an ideal, for mankind does not yet possess the necessary knowledge to understand and accept it or the indispensable conscious force to execute it. That is why I call it a dream.

Yet, this dream is on the way to becoming a reality. That is exactly what we are seeking to do at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram on a small scale, in proportion to our modest means. The achievement is indeed far from being perfect but it is progressive: little by little we advance towards our goal which, we hope, one day we shall be able to hold up before the world as a practical and effective means of coming out of the present chaos in order to be born into a more true, more harmonious new life.

August 1954

*

You say that Auroville is a dream. Yes, it is a “dream” of the Lord and generally these “dreams” turn out to be *true*, much more true than the human so-called realities!
20.5.1966

THE MOTHER

... ordinary human life, such as it is in the present world, is ruled by the mind; therefore the most important thing is to control one's mind; so we shall follow a graded or “conjugate” discipline, to use the Dhammapada's expression, in order to develop and control our minds.

There are four movements which are usually consecutive, but which in the end may be simultaneous: to observe one's thoughts is the first, to watch over one's thoughts is the second, to control one's thoughts is the third and to master one's thoughts is the fourth. To observe, to watch over, to control, to master. All that to get rid of an evil mind...

30 August 1957

The first is: to observe one's mind.

Do not believe that it is such an easy thing, for to observe your thoughts, you must first of all separate yourself from them. In the ordinary state, the ordinary man does not distinguish himself from his thoughts. He does not even know that he thinks. He thinks by habit. And if he is asked all of a sudden, “What are you thinking of?”, he knows nothing about it. That is to say, ninety-five times out of a hundred he will answer, “I do not know.” There is a complete identification between the movement of thought and the consciousness of the being.

To observe the thought, the first movement then is to step back and look at it, to separate yourself from your thoughts so that the movement of the consciousness and that of thought may not be confused. Thus when we say that one must observe one's thoughts, do not believe that it is so simple; it is the first step.

6 September 1957

The Mother

A LETTER

THANK you for the beautiful rose and the still more heart-expressive words for my birthday. I have to be grateful to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for giving me such true friends who, however far away, are inwardly as close to me as the Divine Himself within me. Indeed their closeness is part of that spiritual reality because they are all joined together with me in the same sense of that one supreme Source and Guide. Looking at the rose on the birthday card I may say that all of us are like petals held in a unity by the creative Core from which they radiate.

I shall be completing my 86th year on November 25.* A warm welcome awaits the migratory bird! Quite a long life has been mine. For us length of living has value only inasmuch as it measures out a nearer and nearer approach to the Light of our Gurus. We are—in the depths of our beings—always at the Great Goal but our surfaces have to trace in time and space a running golden reflection of that eternal Truth. When I look back I feel ashamed of so many opportunities missed, so many fallings-away. But Sri Aurobindo and the Mother never encouraged the backward gaze and the regrettings and sighings. They wanted us to look ahead and feel that every moment can be a wonderful beginning and is full of infinite potentialities. I can hear them saying, “Turn your ear to the flute of the future. Its melodies are endless. Waste no hours on airs that have faded, wishing them otherwise. There is no real fading if you feel a fullness awaiting you in the days to come. Get caught up in its call and let the years beyond your 86 move like a Beethoven symphony to its *grand finale*.”

23.11.1990

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

* Next month Amal will be completing 98 years.

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of September 2002)

*Savitri and the Record of Yoga**

2

THROUGHOUT the *Record of Yoga*, we see Sri Aurobindo gradually perfecting the faculties of knowledge and power, *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas*, in a progressive movement towards a consummation he envisioned as a state of omniscience and omnipotence, insofar as such a state is at all possible for an embodied being on earth. In *Savitri*, though the Sanskrit terms used constantly in the *Record of Yoga* do not occur, the concepts expressed by the words *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas* were central to the poem from its earliest versions and developed as Sri Aurobindo ascended to higher and higher planes in the scale leading from mind to supermind.

The role of Narad as the personification of *trikāladṛṣṭi*, time-vision, was part of the legend itself, in which Narad's only function is to foretell the death of Satyavan. In Sri Aurobindo's epic, however, Narad is more than a poetic and dramatic recreation of a mythological character. There is a visionary authenticity, evidently drawn from experience, in lines such as these written in 1916:

But Narad now, the seer, lifted his voice...
Turning on her the rapt celestial eyes
Bare to whose gaze Time toils, his unseen works
Detected....¹

Narad represents pure *trikāladṛṣṭi* separated from the power that can sometimes intervene and modify the events predestined by the present balance of the world-forces. The power that so intervenes, for which the most general word is *tapas*, is embodied in Savitri.

The *Record of Yoga* shows Sri Aurobindo's preoccupation with perfecting *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas* in their separate operations and working out their interrelation. These two terms occur in his diary more than a thousand times each. Their combination is usually abbreviated T² (since the words *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas* both begin with the letter *t*). T² is mentioned a few hundred times in addition to the separate occurrences of *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas*. There is also a T³ which includes telepathy along with *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas*. T³ was regarded as inferior to T², since the reliance on telepathy meant that the future was foreseen by extrapolation from a knowledge of the forces at work in the present. A direct perception of what is destined to happen comes when telepathic *trikāladṛṣṭi* is replaced

* The talk given on 18 February 2002 at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry, is continued in this instalment. This part of the talk elaborates upon ideas that were presented briefly in the instalment of January 2002 (p. 26).

by decisive *trikāladṛṣṭi*. The combination of *tapas* with telepathic and non-telepathic *trikāladṛṣṭi* constituted T³ and T², respectively.

In 1927, shortly before Sri Aurobindo stopped keeping a diary of his Yoga, there was a further step. *Trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas*, knowledge and will, were merging together so that they were no longer distinguishable. The will for something to happen contained within it the vision of its own fulfilment, while the vision of what should happen contained the force that would automatically bring it about. The disappearance of the difference between *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas* caused Sri Aurobindo to drop the “2” from T² at a certain stage and call it simply “T” (written once in the manuscript with an unusually large capital *T*) or “gnostic T”. This does not seem to stand for any single word. Sri Aurobindo noted that “when it acts it is of the nature of omniscience and omnipotence”.² This began to emerge in January 1927, though T² and even T³ continued up to the end of the *Record* later that year.

The relation of these faculties to the principal events of *Savitri* can be explained in a very simplified way by using the example of Sri Aurobindo’s experiments with ants. Perhaps it is unfair to compare Satyavan to an ant; but the point of this comparison is to illustrate the difference between letting the play of forces take its course, on the one hand, and intervening with a higher force, on the other. When Sri Aurobindo was passively watching the movements of ants and foreseeing where they would go without interfering, he was using pure *trikāladṛṣṭi* and playing the passive part of Narad. But when he intervened by applying his will, he assumed an active role comparable to that of Savitri.

We have seen one example of these experiments with ants in the *Record* entry of 23 January 1913. Several months later, on 7 September 1913, Sri Aurobindo made the following observations, this time with regard to the movements of an individual ant:

An ant was climbing up the wall in an upward stream of ants; there was no sign of its reversing its progress; but the trikaldrishti saw that the ant would turn and go down, not upwards. At first it made a movement of uncertainty, then proceeded upward, then suddenly left the stream and went steadily and swiftly downwards.

A subsequent perception of the reason for this abrupt change of course brought an insight into the mechanism of telepathic *trikāladṛṣṭi*:

Afterwards the source of the trikaldrishti was seen, a coming movement of pranic energy, prepared in the sat-Brahman, latent both to the waking consciousness of the ant and my own, but caught by the vijñanamaya drishti.³

In this case, Sri Aurobindo did not intervene with his will to influence the movement of the ant. He confined himself, Naradlike, to exercising his *trikāladṛṣṭi* and foreseeing what would happen, given the forces at work. But suppose that instead of letting the ant turn and go down, he had intervened actively with his will as he had done in the other

experiment. Then he would have acted like Savitri and the outcome could have been different. After a brief interruption of its ascent and a struggle with the downward push of pranic energy, the ant might have rejoined the “upward stream of ants”, like Satyavan coming back to life.

Elsewhere in the *Record of Yoga*, the interrelation between *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas* is analysed in ways that are of utmost relevance to *Savitri*. On 14 December 1914, for example, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

There is a struggle between static perception of event and dynamic perception of event (passive and 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....⁴

In *Savitri*, Narad gives the static perception of the event of the death of Satyavan as determined by the present forces acting on the material plane. He leaves the dynamic perception of the same event to Savitri, who intervenes with a higher force and so “alters the event predestined by the ensemble of forces”.

The difference between the static and dynamic ways of perceiving an event can be seen alternatively in terms of a struggle of the forces of the past and present with the forces of the future. On 16 April 1914, Sri Aurobindo entered in his diary:

The whole struggle in the siddhi now is between the present & the future, between the telepathic knowledge that sees & admits the present & the vijñanamaya that reaches beyond to the future, between the force that admits & manipulates present forces & the force that aims at annulling & replacing or transforming them rapidly into the image of their vijñanamaya & anandamaya equivalents....⁵

Five years later, the forces of the future seemed to be growing stronger. On 6 July 1919, Sri Aurobindo observed:

Trikaldrishti, tapas, telepathy are now combining definitely into one movement which is beginning to rise above the constant uneven balancings of the two opposite perceptions, that of the powers and tendencies of the present and what they mean and presage, and that of the other powers and forces which attempt to create a future not bound by the probabilities of the present.⁶

The perception of forces at work to create a future not bound by the limited possibilities of the present is articulated clearly and powerfully by Savitri in her dialogue with Death. What is especially noteworthy from the point of view of a comparison with the *Record of Yoga* is that she voices this perception even in the earliest versions of the poem. This suggests that Sri Aurobindo’s choice of the legend of Savitri as the subject of a literary work was, in all likelihood, related to developments in his Yoga connected with *trikāladṛṣṭi*

and *tapas* and the struggle between the forces of the present and the future.

Sri Aurobindo portrays Death as the arch-conservative who, even in one of the first drafts of *Savitri*, warns his antagonist:

Touch not the ancient lines, the seated laws;
Respect the calm of great established things.⁷

In contrast to Death, Savitri is the arch-revolutionary. Here is part of her spirited reply, as it appears in the same manuscript of 1916:

What were earth's ages if the grey restraint
Were never broken and glories sprang not forth
Bursting their obscure seed nor man's slow life
Leaped hurried into sudden splendid paths
By divine words and human gods revealed?
I trample on thy law with living feet
For to arise in freedom I was born.⁸

But what is the source of Savitri's unheard-of power to trample on the law of Death? It is this, that when she says "to arise in freedom I was born", it is not an egoistic freedom that she claims. This leads us to another important relation between the early versions of *Savitri* and the *Record of Yoga*.

Two opposite expressions occur as far back as the 1916 drafts of the poem: "slave of Nature" and "slave of God". Death, in his first words to Savitri, calls her a slave of Nature.⁹ And in fact, this is precisely what the human being normally is. There is one way to stop being a slave of Nature and yet continue to live and act in the world. It is to become a slave of the Divine, to transcend the laws of the finite by surrendering to the Infinite.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. "Sri Aurobindo's First Fair Copy of His Earliest Version of *Savitri*", *Mother India*, September 1981, p. 498. Cf. *Savitri* (1993), p. 442.
2. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1263.
3. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 291.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 738.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 447.
6. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1111.
7. *Mother India*, January 1982, p. 5. Sri Aurobindo later interchanged the words "ancient" and "seated".
8. *Ibid.*, p. 6. The final version differs from the lines written in 1916 only in punctuation, the substitution of "while" for "nor" in the third line and the insertion of five new lines before the last two lines. Cf. *Savitri*, p. 652.
9. *Mother India*, November 1981, p. 622. Cf. *Savitri*, p. 575.

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of September 2002)

In Retrospect

FERDINAND BRUNETIERE, a specialist in the history of French literature, came to the conclusion, in 1895, that science had not lived up to its expectations. There were too many partial failures and these did affect the credibility of science. There were voices that had maintained that the future belongs to science and the quality of a civilisation is inversely proportional to the religious fervour a society shows. But in Brunetiere's reckoning material progress does not confirm the value of techno-science. Industrial growth also entailed misery in a more acute manner than the worth of its gains. The notion that science proclaimed truths on which could be laid the foundations of a healthy society had belied all expectations. "Science which is infallible, neither in the observation of facts, nor in the interpretation it offers, is undoubtedly less so in the affirmation of consequences that it draws upon... The descent of man of Darwin or the natural history of Haeckel, are not, in the true sense, anything other than scientific novels." (*The World Scientist*, November 1992, pp. 48-55) Science had renounced metaphysics but, strangely, took recourse to it in self-justification. When Ernest Renan in 1848 proclaimed that there is a science of the origins of humanity which will be constructed one day, not by abstract speculation, but by scientific research, Brunetiere was impatient to wait that long. "Science had taken up engagements that it could not honour."

Contrast the contemporary academic establishments with Aristotle's. In him philosophy was love of knowledge which also laid out an approach to the investigation of all natural phenomena, to determine form by detailed systematic work and thus arrive at final causes. His logical method of argument gave a framework for putting knowledge together and deducing new results. He created what amounted to a fully fledged professional scientific enterprise on a scale comparable to a modern university science department. "It must be admitted that some of his work—unfortunately some of the physics—was not up to his usual high standards. He evidently found falling stones a lot less interesting than living creatures. Yet the sheer scale of his enterprise, unmatched in antiquity and for centuries to come, gave an authority to all his writings."

It is perhaps worth reiterating the difference between Plato and Aristotle, who agreed with each other that the world is the product of rational design, that the philosopher investigates the form and the universal, and that the only true knowledge is that which is irrefutable. The essential difference between them was that Plato felt mathematical reasoning could arrive at the truth with little outside help, but Aristotle believed detailed empirical investigations of nature were essential if worthwhile progress was to be made in understanding the natural world. If we have to appreciate it in the present-day context, we see that Plato is well epitomized in Einstein with his assertion that if a mathematical theory is convincing it must also be true and it is just the crudeness of our mind that

demands the proofs of experimental verification for its validity. Neils Bohr refused to accept it in its totality and put empirical criteria as the touchstone for an idea to enter into the scientific domain. But for science to remain as true science, observational stipulation must always come first. It may have severe limitations, but certainly it is this which has given to it a sturdiness that cannot be disputed.

There has thus been a long conflict between idea and observation. "A philosopher," says Bertrand Russell, "who uses his professional competence for anything except a disinterested search for truth is guilty of a kind of treachery." So is a pure scientist. But the benchmark of empirical science is taken as observation and application. In today's world the second aspect weighs more preponderantly than the first, even to the extent of justifying the enterprise of observation in terms of spin-offs coming from its pursuit.

In the course of time Plato got pushed aside and Aristotle, considerably modified and corrected, became the guiding spirit of the empiricist formulations. The authority of science has now acquired such power that we tend to forget the possibility of what Plato was really trying to hint at. We do not recognize that our world could be a projection of something which already exists somewhere else in its genuine seed state. That it could be a force of original form that is manifesting in the conditions of matter becomes suspect in our view. This has led to another extremism with its own disastrous consequences. "We live under the reign of Science, a reign which from the mouth of its hierophants claims to be a tyranny or at least an absolute monarchy. It makes this claim by right of the great things it has done, of the immense utilities with which it has served, helped, strengthened, liberated mankind, right knowledge of the world, an increasing and already fabulous mastery of Nature, a clear and free intellectual vision of things and masterful dealing with them, liberation from the fetters of ignorance, from blind subjection to authority, from unquestioning political, social, religious and cultural tradition with all their hindrance and their evil." (Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 413)

Auguste Comte upheld positivism as a virtue flowing from science and, to take care of subjective factors, proposed a new religion conforming to the positivist ideas. But this religion has no sensitivity and the fine things of life and art are unknown to it. If at all, it promotes unbridled greed and cheap vital life which can drown all nobility that is present in us. There could be degradation. On the contrary, through gracious and happy aesthetic associations there is a possibility of our getting sometimes straight to the essence of the matter and of progressing with an almost intuitive comprehension that might otherwise be altogether missed. In fact such an exclusive positivist pursuit will belie Emile Zola's excessive confidence in the benedictions coming from science. "The simple writer that I am, thank science, the good mother, who has given freedom. She is eternal, immortal, and the mystery belongs to her alone, since she continuously marches to conquer."

That technology founded on science has radically transformed our life and thought and action is the cultural gain which has accrued to us from its vigorous pursuit in the material domain. The determined adventurers of yesteryears dared great things and gave certain solidity to the effects of the practical world, the world which was otherwise dis-

dained in the hunt of a vague divinity that always eluded even the best of our attempts. Although based on a mechanical rhythm, it has even given rise to the feasibility of a greater collective organization with the possibility of a natural organic unity of mankind. “Science, commerce and rapid communications have produced a state of things in which the disparate masses of humanity, once living to themselves, have been drawn together by a process of subtle unification into a single mass which has already a common vital and is rapidly forming a common mental existence.” (*Ibid.*, p. 463) Sri Aurobindo wrote this several decades ago and the complex modern technology has only vindicated its success on a much vaster as well as subtler scale. It has also acquired a certain profundity which was never there in earlier times, even during the halcyon days of rank materialism. Perhaps it has become too exclusive but the benefits are universal.

The foundation of rational wisdom on which progressive life unhindered by pale anaemic preferences or retrograde religious prejudices could be established is a landmark event in the progress of humanity itself. It is also a welcome event. In it a free thinker has arrived and with it has opened the possibility of the coming of *manishi* himself. Sri Aurobindo writes: “The triumphant domination, the all-shattering and irresistible victory of Science in nineteenth-century Europe is explained by the absolute perfection with which it at least seemed for a time to satisfy these great psychological wants of the Western mind. Science seemed to it to fulfil impeccably its search for the two supreme desiderata of an individualistic age. Here at last was a truth of things which depended on no doubtful Scripture or fallible human authority but which Mother Nature herself had written in her eternal book for all to read who had patience to observe and intellectual honesty to judge. Here were laws, principles, fundamental facts of the world and of our being which all could verify at once for themselves and which must therefore satisfy and guide the free individual judgment, delivering it equally from alien compulsion and from erratic self-will. Here were laws and truths which justified and yet controlled the claims and desires of the individual human being; here a science which provided a standard, a norm of knowledge, a rational basis for life, a clear outline and sovereign means for the progress and perfection of the individual and the race. The attempt to govern and organise human life by verifiable Science, by a law, a truth of things, an order and principles which all can observe and verify in their ground and fact and to which therefore all may freely and must rationally subscribe, is the culminating movement of European civilisation. It has been the fulfilment and triumph of the individualistic age of human society; it has seemed likely also to be its end, the cause of the death of individualism and its putting away and burial among the monuments of the past.” (*The Human Cycle*, CWSA, Vol. 25, pp. 20-21)

When we have to go beyond the individual age, faculties apart from rational thought have to enter into operation. But science means knowledge of the physical world methodically acquired with the help of intellect—an instrument of mind. It is not aware of any other tool nor does it look for one that can possibly broaden its perspective. Knowledge of the supra-physical reality is Jnanam which is a seeing. There are disciplines which help in getting that knowledge. It is the pursuit of the Unknown which is not really

Unknowable but remains unknown when we choose to remain in ignorance. Can that come in the purview of open-minded science? We have faculties that can be employed to see this Unknowable. If mind is taken as the only instrument of cognizance then there is no hope of our knowing the Unknowable. "There is a consciousness which mind cannot touch." (*Savitri*, p. 705) That consciousness beginning with intuition could throw another flood of light on our problems of Matter. This may even embrace in its successful clasp the Spirit-Matter dichotomy with a happy resolution. This could also well assure the fruit of success to the very soul of Materialism that is looking for the truth of Matter; for it cannot cry a halt in its stride for progress. Upanishadic Bhṛigu's first discovery that Matter is Brahman has thus to be enlarged. The knower of this Brahman alone can reach the Truth.

But Jnanam is too much of a vague entity for the working scientist. Perhaps it need not be even brought into the picture too early also. As the material tools shall become sharper and keener and subtler more and more of it will also flow into them. In the meanwhile it would be meaningful to investigate the possible directions in which developments can take place. There is already a certain awareness in the minds of inquisitive investigators to discard the shackles of our current methodology. "Since the birth of the modern age the inner world has been increasingly banished from our experience, leaving so many individuals thirsting for a deeper sense of meaning and purpose. Physicist Freeman Dyson, one of the participants of the Manhattan Project speaks of the technical arrogance which overcomes men when they see what they can do with their minds. It is perhaps this Faustian lust for control of the outer world that has led to the disjuncture between the everyday world of stones and stock exchanges and the inner world of imagination, intuition and inspiration. The 'masculine' science of Francis Bacon, who called on his compatriots to 'put nature to the rack and torture her', contrasts dramatically with the 'feminine' (i.e. 'primitive, regressive, romantic') science of Goethe, who suggested that we might learn more by surrendering ourselves to her beauty and mystery. One might speculate about the connection between the identification of Indian thought and culture with this seemingly 'regressive' or 'primitive' inner world and the resistance to taking Indian psychology seriously." (I am thankful to Dr. Don Salmon for showing me the manuscript of his book entitled *Tuning the Finite to Infinity* to be published soon.)

It is said that science's purpose is that of "a rich container of goods for mankind's use, to be disposable also as technology. At the same time it reaches much farther: towards a quiet contemplation, the θεωρία [*theoria*—god-show] in the true sense of the word." Science as a container of goods has now become a factory for the production of goods. But the depth that has to come from its quiet contemplation has yet to arrive at its truer meaning and significance. Another world of knowledge has yet to open out. This shall be the world beyond the reach of analytical-inductive-deductive mind of the current day. A much broader and swiftly moving faculty of intuition going beyond rational thought is a sunny possibility for which we must wait. Newer discoveries of the material world must reveal glorious potentialities that are present in it as the secret seeds of nature's will

and not as algorithmic conclusions. A consciousness that goes even beyond the meta-physical-philosophising scholasticism or un-lived adherence to faithfulness in a dogmatic manner has to be replaced in this beautiful pursuit of developed man and the true purpose of nature's creations grasped and promoted. Presently in formulating our thoughts we lean upon the opinion of some celebrated author subscribing to his reasoning and not remain in quiet contemplation. That may make philosophy a book similar to the Iliad and we may not be able to go any farther in the quest. We may recall what Galileo has to convey to his student Sarsi: "Well, Sarsi, that is not how things are. Philosophy is written in this grand book of the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and to read the alphabet in which it is composed." But this cannot be a language of "mathematics and its characters triangles, circles and other geometric figures, as if without it it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it, as if without these one would wander in a dark labyrinth." After all reality is too subtle to be geometrised. There has to be a kind of yogic identification with the object in which the object itself reveals to us its precious secrets rather than our trying to formulate its nature by external means. Man is to rise to higher ranges of consciousness that are beyond his immediate mental perceptions. Beyond mental reason are other luminous planes with their swift-ranging widenesses that hold things in their truer and more harmonious proportions. They are not governed by the principles of division, separation, antithesis, but by the principles of unity, identity, mutuality and totality. There is a strict discipline to be followed and it is that which alone can put us in contact with those worlds which can promote our search with rich fruit-bearing possibilities. But in the unprepared mind all this can be a hazardous proposition and the chances of being misled are enormous. Which however does not mean that such avenues cannot come into our view. But, maybe, in the meanwhile it is safer to walk on the trodden ground keeping yet the keen eye responsive and observant.

We may therefore get back to our earlier discussion and look into several aspects that enter into it. Here is Kuhn's view which emerged from his study of the history of science. It leads us to identify and ascertain the crucial role which the archetypal thought plays in scientific research. In it the person and his upbringing, time and its operative dynamism, culture with the shades of positive and negative temperaments and dispositions, the milieu and the working conditions providing a thousand pushes and pulls, paradigm burdened with prejudices and possibilities thus become the determinative factors. The consequence is that, in a strange way, "objectivity and subjectivity, truth and falsehood, relative and absolute start living together."

Bacon questioned nature itself. The result was the methodology of induction and deduction. In it is the "received view of science." It at once made observation value-free, detached and objective. This is a gain no doubt, but is also perhaps a serious and bigger loss. However, the very claim of objectivity of observation it makes becomes quite suspect in the post-quantum mechanical formulation. The data themselves are theory-laden and objectivity is hardly the thing that the physicists can claim. That the laws of reason can be stultifying is never recognized by the practitioners of science. "The history of

science, after all, does not consist of facts and conclusions drawn from facts. It also contains ideas, interpretations of facts, problems created by conflicting interpretations, mistakes, and so on. On closer analysis, we find that science knows no 'bare facts' at all but the 'facts' that enter our knowledge are already viewed in a certain way and are, therefore, essentially ideational." (*Against Method*, P. Feyerabend; see the author's Introduction) The problem of objectivity is further compounded by the fact that "we speak more about our observation of the world rather than of the world, and we do this through less than fully adequate language system." (*Positivism versus People*, W. J. Baker) But then there is also a power in that language which produces results. Yet possibly the real world is not independent of the observer. "The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational process, and the properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of the object's interaction with the observer." (*The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra)

"Kuhn's work is significant in that he has made it explicitly clear that science," says an analyst, "like any other human activity, is a social activity which affects and is affected by the setting in which it is embedded, and is guided by sociological, economic, historical and political forces. According to him, science is practised by communities of scientists and not by isolated men and women... Kuhn has shown that science is not as rational and objective as it had been supposed. Indeed, scientific rationality is a matter of consensus. Objectivity and rationality arrive at different conclusions." But these are precisely the best tools available in the present context of man's understanding of nature. Mind seems to be a surer instrument to study matter than life. Observation and experience can and must drastically restrict the range of admissible scientific belief; else there would be no science. (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, T. S. Kuhn)

If the view of reality is essentially subjective, are we then to conclude that the rationalist mind has come to a dead end? And if it has come to such an impasse, are there any hopes for it? Do we discard its methodology which has been so successful and go for something else? In that eventuality what is the guarantee that that something else will not lead us to another gridlock, perhaps of a much direr nature? Are there definite criteria to prejudice our approach towards things, be they material or esoteric? Shall we be chasing a black cat, as is generally said, in a dark room where there is no chance of a ray of light stealing in? Will not our first assumption of the presence of a black cat itself in the room be ill founded? Plato spoke of the projection of reality on the wall of a cave, but what shall assure us that there were no distortions in the full sequence or the wall was flat and neutral?

But then the rationalist tries and tries and ultimately doesn't seem to arrive anywhere. His groping for the mystery with the lantern of thought turns out to be only partially availing. He traverses a half-visible ground and moves only yard by yard. It cannot live the truth it yearns to discover. If at all, it imposes a rigid mental scheme on the supple power that shapes and guides us on the unknown and unseen road. Even the inner seeing mind fails to grasp the secret laws and sorceries that rule the deeper worlds within. (*Savitri*, p. 407) In this context we may also read Sri Aurobindo's sonnet on the discov-

eries of science (*Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 168):

Our science is an abstract cold and brief
 That cuts in formulas the living whole.
 It has a brain and head but not a soul:
 It sees all things in outward carved relief.

But how without its depths can the world be known?
 The visible has its roots in the unseen
 And each invisible hides what it can mean
 In a yet deeper invisible, unshown.

The objects that you probe are not their form.
 Each is a mass of forces thrown in shape.
 The forces caught, their inner lines escape
 In a fathomless consciousness beyond mind's norm.

Probe it and you shall meet a Being still
 Infinite, nameless, mute, unknowable.

It is unfortunate that science has no access to get into those worlds. Perhaps it will never have that if mind is the sole instrument of study and research. Our probes are not sharp enough to witness the mass of forces operating behind the forms which we observe. The question then remains as to what exactly is meant by observation in the context of our investigations of the physical objects.

Here we may also refer to A. V. Hill's pertinent comment, though somewhat unkind: "The views of Bernard Shaw the Jester are quoted on politics and science: Soddy, the Chemist, writes fantastically about economics: famous astronomers get entangled with divinity of metaphysics... My contention is that their views need not be taken more seriously than those of more ordinary people. The most distinguished of mathematical physicists of today, Einstein, recently proposed at the Albert Hall that a place where young mathematicians could work undisturbed might be found in light-houses: one pities the poor sailors who would depend upon their lights!" (*The Ethical Dilemma of Science*, p. 209) Quite sarcastic, but true! Milton in his *Paradise Lost* spoke of "some new race called man", but has man fulfilled himself? If man is the measure of things, then that measure has failed to live up to its expectations. There is no earthly paradise in view. Religions have not offered much to us nor to gods, arts have not seized the beauty of the invisible, philosophies have floundered on the rock of the abstract. If science is to be taken as the measuring device to evaluate the merits, then it has failed in a great way.

Add to all this the new high-flying dimension that has entered in the entire reckoning. The nature of science is governed by the societal thinking coupled with the political and economical decisions in the sponsorship of research. Technical progress and the

concerns ensuing from it have become palpable; yet interests of a number of powerful pressure groups influence the debates. But the achievements of the relativity theory in the understanding of the universe and of quantum physics leading to the discoveries of the microscopic world of matter are indeed revolutionary.

Why does then empirical rationalism go on the blink? What are its limitations? Apart from the dilemma it faces in today's science in defining an object or an observation, its tools are too rigid to see the subtlety of even the physical world. On a psychological level of operation too many limitations start entering into the picture and the whole enterprise turns out to be frustrating. Its mathematical language puts a severe limitation on it.

Mimicking the physical reality or the moods of nature through computer artwork can be a good hobby, a pleasant pastime, and we are engaged in it. However it can never take us an inch closer to the vaster truths that are present around. One may create images or bring vividness to ideas by visual presentations but they cannot enact life, as wouldn't the cartoon characters the people in flesh and blood. Through such an art one can sometimes get straight to the essence of the matter and almost get an intuitive comprehension that might otherwise take years of study. But there ends its contribution because, always, in such an art there can be many representations. Each viewer has his view which then ceases to be science. There is in it an element of emotional response which is unpalatable to the Platonic notion of a thinker. In that sense Newton was more serious when he compared his achievements to boyish successes in life. "I know not what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me." We lack that humility.

If we look at the science-based western society it is noticed that it is mostly driven by the physical and vital wants, Artha and Kama, Interest and Desire. But the urge of man is his becoming a true mental being. That is his foremost dharma. Not cravings and impulses arising from the unregenerate life-force, not crude bodily comforts and corporeal needs of the dull gross physical consciousness, but a distinguished and elevating sense of values that marks him different from all other creations of nature. In a cultured society the faculty of mind comes into play in the realization of higher and nobler ideals. Fine values and powers of mind shape his life in the expression of fully developed and organized possibilities of the spirit. But there are ranges and ranges of the mental consciousness. It is well understood in psychology that mind does not possess sufficient light and that it is only an instrument of division and analysis, is reductionist. Its knowledge is conceptual, abstract, metaphysical. Power of synthesis, globality, harmonization is absent in it. In fact beyond the physical and vital mind, beyond the faculty of reason and rational thinking, beyond the aesthetic and ethical perception is the intuitive faculty which makes at once available to us bright and broad continents of surer awareness. To live in that daylight accepting its gifts of knowledge by some direct intimate contact with objects and things and men is to rise to the multifold truths of the greater Truth that holds everything in its manifesting harmony. This power is beyond the reach of our ordinary mental faculties

including the purest Reason, Reason even in its friendly or spiritual sense. Empirical rationalism of which science boasts as the most desirable and effective mode of approach in our understanding of the physical nature becomes just a remote ashen shadow of the Idea founded on Truth, the Real-Idea. It may be an enormous advance over the infra-rationality of an animal mind that is present in our constitution, and may even bring gains of matter and life in a newer multiplicity of expression and happiness; but eventually it becomes unavailing and fails to satisfy our genuine and deeper urges and expectations. It seems to create more problems than the ones it came to solve. The Indian approach is expected to recognize these deeper levels of human psychology and put them into operation in every walk of life. Then only there can be an Indian life. Then only there can be an authentic Indian science. Will that happen?

(To be concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

LINES

AH, why so solemn, Memory?
 Her sacred ashes take,
 And of adoring sighs and tears
 A holy ikon make:

My dead love, as she living were;
 Her breath, her bloom give back,
 And with her laughter lily-clear
 Appease the lorn world's lack.

Not as through tears I see it shine,
 Her beauty back to me
 Transfigured, distant, half divine,
 Give, weeping Memory,

No, but her old self, laughter-rife,
 Arch, mocking, bring me clear!
 Stab, sting me with her earthly life,
 The wayward sweet of her!

MANMOHAN GHOSE

(Songs of Love and Death, 1926)

JUBILATION OF THE BALD PARROT

A SHOPKEEPER had a lovely parrot. It could speak fluently, sing when in mood and was the greatest attraction of the shop. But one day it did something that was none of its business. It sat on the shoulder of a customer, a lady, and pecked at the gold on her nose. As the lady shrieked, the shopkeeper hit the parrot hard on the head with a rod that had been heated for some purpose. It fell silent and stopped talking. It grew extremely remorseful. By and by all the feathers on its head fell off and it became totally bald.

A year passed. One day a venerable member of the nobility, who happened to be bald, entered the shop. The parrot suddenly began flapping its wings and shrieking and, hopping onto the customer's shoulder, exclaimed, 'So, you too pecked at the lady's nose and were hit by a hot rod, eh?'

It began to talk and sing as of old.

The folktale educates us on two points of some psychological import. First, the parrot was cured of its melancholy and dumbness the moment it found someone who seemed to share its own humiliation—with whom it could fraternally sympathize. It is a consolation that one is not alone in one's sorrow. Second, one judges a phenomenon in the light of one's own experience. The nobleman must have grown bald for the very reason for which the parrot had become bald.

This second truth the story tells returned to my mind with a vengeance when I happened to read *Vishnu on Freud's Desk: A Reader in Psychoanalysis and Hinduism*, edited by T.G. Vaidyanathan & Jeffrey J. Kripal.

When Girindrasekhar Bose, the doyen of psychoanalysis in India, sent an ivory carving of Vishnu as a gift to Freud on the latter's seventy-fifth birthday, little did he know that he was also making a gift of a valuable title to the aforesaid compilation. The ivory Vishnu, we are told, still adorns Freud's desk. *Vishnu on Freud's Desk*, therefore, looks like a reference to a bare fact. But it becomes more or less an allegory as one proceeds reading it.

For sometime past this author suspected that since there had been a population explosion of psychoanalysts and psychiatrists, sooner or later they would face scarcity of food and would greedily view the realm of Indian myths and traditions as a fresh and fertile pasture. This anthology reinforces the suspicion. And my fear that they will try, nay, strive to fit the meaning of symbols and institutions to the Procrustean bed of their theories and ideas has come true.

The contributors to this anthology attempt at applying psychoanalysis to the Hindu myths, some of the traditions and rituals, through essays bearing quite inviting titles, such as 'Sex and Yoga', 'When a Lingam is just a good cigar' and 'The Bloodthirsty Tongue and the Self-feeding Breast'—even tantalizing—thanks to the influence of journalism. (By the way, I am not out of that influence while choosing a title for this piece.)

Alas, if A.K. Ramanujam states that 'Searching for the stories of the Oedipus type some years ago in the myths and folklore of the Indic area I found very little that looked

like the Sophocles play where a young man kills his father and marries his mother,' the author of the very next essay, Paul B. Courtright, proceeds with an amazing confidence to interpret a certain conflict between Shiva and Ganesha 'and the latter's subsequent submission and restoration as a proof of the father/son aggression' which 'invites comparison with the myth of Oedipus and the meaning Freud and his followers have derived from it for understanding human psychological dynamics.'

In his *Afterword* Jeffrey Kripal says that many of the authors in this volume are either themselves South Asians or are trained in intellectual disciplines that make South Asia a specific object of study and he informs us of the presence of a desire in them 'to refashion psychoanalysis itself in the light of Indian culture'.

How much I wish that such a desire had been evident in a credible way—if not its fruition. But a reader with some basic knowledge of Indian myths seeking to profit from these scholars would close the book with a sigh of disappointment. Not that pretensions to such a desire cannot be seen in flashes, but none of these experts seem to care for the unavoidable truth (they could not be stark ignorant of it) that myths could be the crystallized essence of experiences and realizations that are far beyond the scope of psychoanalysis, that elements in folklore could be distortions or exaggerations of ideas that were sublime at their source, that the 'Mother' for the Indian psyche could be qualitatively different from the wisdom of psychoanalysis would allow them to perceive and that man can be potentially greater than man. No one, however intelligent a scholar in his discipline, can 'refashion psychoanalysis itself' without such faith and an attitude of humility.

Ironically, far from showing any sign of that indispensable humility, some of these scholars startle us with their dogmatism and poverty of comprehension. For example, T.G. Vaidyanathan refers to a passage from one of Sri Aurobindo's letters to a seeker where the Master said:

"I find it difficult to take these psychoanalysts at all seriously when they try to scrutinize spiritual experience by the flicker of their torch lights, yet perhaps one ought to, for half-knowledge is a powerful thing and can be a great obstacle to the coming in front of the true Truth. This new psychology looks to me very much like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet. They look from down up and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities. The superconscient, not the subconscious is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analyzing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms forever in the Light above. The self-chosen field of these psychologists is besides poor, dark and limited; you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest." (*Letters on Yoga*)

While Vaidyanathan cites the passage only to show how 'seemingly irreconcilable' are the positions taken by the mystic and the analyst, his collaborator, Kripal, in one breath detects in the statement a colonial context and refers to the lotus symbolizing reproductive organ—a knowledge which he is mercifully in favour of putting aside for the time being, and proceeds to ask 'how any one could hope to understand something as

biological as a lotus without first beginning with the larger ecosystem, that is with the secrets of the mud in which it grows'!

What prudence, what a profound outlook for a metaphor!

One of the valued authors of this anthology, Sudhir Kakar, had referred to the same passage of Sri Aurobindo in his work, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors* (1982) and had advised Sri Aurobindo that he being a Yogi should not display anger and a 'certain peevishness' towards psychoanalysis. Kakar must have taken recourse to some mysterious wavelength of ether to feel 'anger' in Sri Aurobindo's words, but do the likes of Kakar and Kripal believe that they alone had the right to explain away man and a mystic must forfeit it to them? Do they believe that their discipline alone can measure human life and destiny? God save the discipline if its champions must demonstrate their wisdom through an examination of Sri Aurobindo's lotus imagery in such crude terms without the least regard for its spirit implying that man is not merely a creature of darkness.

Noted thinkers in the West have been merciless towards the claims of the devotees of this discipline. To wit, 'Psychiatry's chief contribution to philosophy is the discovery that the toilet is the seat of the soul.' (Alexander Chase, *Perspectives*, 1966) In comparison, Sri Aurobindo's is a mere pointer towards its limitations. That three exponents of psychoanalysis should pounce on it – which was originally a personal letter to a seeker—speaks of an ominous complex of which they would do well to heal themselves before pouncing on the world of Indian myths which can only deceptively lend itself to them through its superficial versions, but which in its original theme is far beyond them.

That I am not exaggerating their incapacity, should be quite clear from what one of the contributors, Wendy Doniger, has to say: 'Stories from ancient India present a great boon to psychoanalysts trained in the Freudian, Western tradition... The blatant sexuality of the Hindu myths had often been noted... The Hindu stories seem to corroborate Freudian hypotheses about infant sexuality.'

The over-enthusiastic, simplistic attraction for a great lore, verging on glee and avarice, is alarming. We can very well expect some more scholarship of the type of our good old bald parrot's.

The principle of psychoanalysis may be effective within a certain range of the working of human consciousness—and at a certain plane. The danger lies in its ignoring the truth that consciousness is too vast for Freud and his disciples to survey in full. There are spheres of occult reality and planes of consciousness that can be known only through deep concentration, meditation and other methods of Yoga, not through a course in psychoanalysis. Centuries have gone into paving the different paths of Yoga. Great geniuses have perfected them. Psychoanalysis, formalized the other day, would do well to be humble, not to try to explain away the experiences of, say, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, with their formula.

Alas, it has begun gatecrashing into spheres angels fear to tread.

NO PLACE

IF there is within, then there is without.
But I do not find you in the worlds of duality.
I find you where there is no-place.

If there is this, then there is that.
If there is some thing, then there must be some one,
And they must be somewhere.
But I do not feel your heart in the world of multiplicity.
I feel you where there is no-place.

If there is self, then there is also non-self.
But I do not love you and I cannot love you fully enough
In that somewhere of two.
In no-place, we are one, and love is complete.

In no-place, I am not
Nor are You,
Nor is there otherness nor sameness.
For there cannot be two where there is no place.
Therefore, I contemplate that existence where there is no such reality as place,
In order that the You and the I of my notions
May become one.

ROGER CALVERLEY

YAJNAVALKYA AND THE MEANS TO IMMORTALITY

(Continued from the issue of September 2002)

3. Love of Atman and Love of All for the Sake of Atman

If all is to be loved for the sake of Atman, it is possible only when there is love of Atman. But then how to develop the love? The first condition is to eliminate the love of ego. It is eliminated when all is considered to be not the possessions of ego and not the objects to be loved for the sake of ego. This is implied in the declaration that all is to be loved not for its own sake. The next is a positive condition: Atman is to be realised, *ātmanā draṣṭavyaḥ* (2-4-5). Through what is Atman to be realised? *śravaṇa* (hearing), *manana* (reflection) and *nididhyāsana* (meditation). To learn of Atman from authentic sources such as the Upanisads is *śravaṇa*; to get rid of all errors of understanding and arrive at the true import of words is *manana*; to pass from the words to the reality of Atman behind them is *nididhyāsana*. Atman, thus discovered through both negative and positive means, is found in its eternal essence beyond space and time, names and forms. Now there is love of Atman, but there is no means of extending the love to all we find here, for all exist in space and time, possess names and forms. Therefore Yajnavalkya suggests a third means—through seeing all (*darśanena*) as having come from and staying as the possessions of Atman (*ātmanaḥ*). Through what is all this to be realised thus? It is again through hearing (*śravaṇena*), reflection (*matyā*) and understanding (*vijñānena*). If the pure Atman is known from scriptures, the Atman as the source and support of the world is known from the same scriptures. It is for this reason that *śravaṇa* and the rest are mentioned twice. If all is thus realised, then all this is known, *idaṃ sarvaṃ viditam* (2-4-5) i.e., all are truly known as objects to be loved for the sake of Atman. Not only has Yajnavalkya taught that all be loved for the sake of Atman but he has given the needed means to put the teaching into practice.

Yajnavalkya's words in 2-4-5 have been mutilated beyond recognition by traditionalists. Shankara says that the purpose of 2-4-5 is threefold: (i) to create a distaste for all in Maitreyi's mind, *virāga* (SB., 2-4-5); (ii) to teach that Atman alone is to be loved and nothing else, *etadātmaiva priyo nānyat* (*Ibid.*); (iii) to show that *śravaṇa* and the rest are used for two things, one for realising Atman (*samyagdarśanam*) and another for destroying all things superimposed on Atman by Avidya, *upamardanārtham* (*Ibid.*). If we strictly go by the wording of the text (2-4-5), there is hardly any evidence for Shankara's interpretation. First, if the purpose of the text were to create distaste for the world, it would not repeatedly insist on loving all for the sake of Atman, for distaste and love are opposites. Moreover, when Maitreyi herself has disclosed her distaste for material possessions (2-4-5), there is no point in saying that Yajnavalkya tries to create distaste in her mind. But the fact is that he tries to remove distaste from her mind through love. Second, when the text says that all are to be loved for the sake of Atman, it clearly means that there are two things to be loved, Atman and the world. It is impossible to deduce

from the text that Atman alone is to be loved and nothing else. Third, *śravaṇa* and the rest are mentioned twice for two different purposes. In the first instance the purpose is realisation of Atman. In the second instance the purpose is some other thing realised through Atman. The words *idaṁ sarvaṁ viditam* do not speak of knowing them simply through Atman. Even if we grant that the above words suggest knowledge arising out of destruction of all, it is admittedly against the sense and spirit of the previous statement that all is to be loved for the sake of Atman. *śravaṇa* and the rest are mentioned twice in the text (2-4-5) and in both cases the results are positive and mutually distinct—*ātmā draṣṭavyaḥ* and *idaṁ sarvaṁ viditam*.

4. The Consequence of World-Negation

With her mind well set on the view that wealth is to be dispossessed by a seeker of immortality, Maitreyi is just one step behind the eventual outcome: like wealth, everything else is to be dispossessed, because the world is not Brahman, *abrahma-rupa*; the distaste for wealth will naturally end as the distaste for the world and finally as the negation of the world. In order to prevent her from heading towards this extreme exclusiveness Yajnavalkya is concerned to show Maitreyi an inevitable result that arises from world-negation.

Yajnavalkya points out to Maitreyi the fate of one who knows all—*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* and the rest—as *anyatrātmanaḥ* (2-4-6), the fate of being given away by the world, *parādād*. The expression *anyatrātmanaḥ* admits of two interpretations: (i) Shankara takes it to mean “otherwise than as of the essential nature of Atman” (*ātmāsvarūpa vyatirekeṇa*); (ii) it may also be taken to mean “elsewhere than in Atman”. Strictly speaking, the second is more faithful to the text than the first, for it agrees with the literal sense of the original expression. The words *yaḥ veda* (he who knows all in this manner) are also capable of giving two meanings. What is the condition of the person who thus knows the world elsewhere than in Atman? Is he a knower or a non-knower of Atman? It is possible for him to be either a non-knower or a knower. He sees the world elsewhere because he has not known Atman. As he has not known Atman, he is unable to relate the world to Atman. We may also say that he sees the world elsewhere because he has known Atman. He has known Atman in pure essence alone and not in cosmic extension. In pure essence Atman is beyond space and time, name and form; therefore he is unable to see in Atman a world existing in space and time and possessing name and form. Now we have to find out whom Yajnavalkya has in mind when he speaks of *yaḥ veda*.

One of the methods that help us in choosing the right interpretation of a phrase such as this is the consequence to which a provisional interpretation of the phrase leads. If it results in promoting consistency in the text, it is accepted as the right one, otherwise it is given up. Therefore we shall provisionally accept Shankara’s interpretation and see the consequence. He takes *yaḥ veda* to mean a person who has not known Atman and, therefore, sees the world as *anyatrātmanaḥ*. But with this view he is unable to consistently explain the word *parādād* which says something very important about the wrong knower

of the world. To speak the truth, he explains the word *parādād* by saying that the world turns the wrong knower backwards, *parākuryāt*. It is a gloss on the word but not an explanation. Therefore his followers have tried to develop *parākuryāt* into an explanation.

Vidyaranya, the author of the *Anubhutiprakasha*, says that *parākuryāt* means “turning the wrong knower away from liberation, *kaivalyāt* (2.15-31).” Even this explanation does not help much. The wrong knower is already ignorant and has not attained liberation. This is the reason why he sees the world as *anyatrātmanaḥ*. Therefore there is no point in saying that the world excludes him from *kaivalya*. If we take it that the world excludes him from an opportunity to become free on some future occasion, we do not understand how this opportunity depends on the world. Even if we ignore this point, we are confronted with another difficulty, perhaps a more serious difficulty. It is the nature of all ignorant men to see all as *anyatrātmanaḥ* and there is no exception to the rule. If, on account of this, they are refused the possibility of freedom, then no one will be able to become free of ignorance. The meaning of *parādād* is clear, but the word does not go with the meaning given to *yaḥ veda*. As a result, the provisional interpretation put on the phrase must be given up as unsuitable.

Now there is only one alternative—to take *yaḥ veda* in the sense of a knower of Atman. We shall now see whether it promotes consistency in the text by putting a suitable interpretation on *parādād*. The knower has known Atman in pure essence which is devoid of space and time, name and form. When he sees all—*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, the worlds, the gods the Vedas and what not (4-5-7), he notices the discrepancy between Atman on the one hand and the things of the world on the other. For all are qualified by names and forms and conditioned by space and time. In other words, they are Anatman. Therefore he sees the world elsewhere than in Atman, *anyatrātmanaḥ*. Yet he lives in the world as a creature among creatures. As he is to the world, so is the world to him. This is the law of the world which none in the world, even if he is a knower of Atman, can violate without paying for the violation. Therefore Yajnavalkya discloses the consequence that awaits the knower of Atman, viz., all here give him away, *parāduḥ* (2-4-6). We can understand the full significance of *parādād* only when we know how and to whom he is given away by the world.

Before we proceed further we shall refer to a wellknown form of meditation called *nirvikalpa samādhi* which in later times is recognised as an important means to the knowledge of Atman. There are two stages in *samādhi*, *savikalpa* (with option) and *nirvikalpa* (without option). Through *savikalpa* one attains knowledge of Atman, but here union with Atman is subject to option. The option consists in completely excluding the world and becoming identified with Atman or in alternating between Atman and the world. But *samādhi* becomes *nirvikalpa* (without option) when the knower of Atman concentrates exclusively on Atman through a total elimination of the world. He now sees everything elsewhere than in Atman. By doing so he withdraws himself from the world, from his body and mind to the point of their absolute petrification and enters Atman. The literature on this form of *samādhi* records that he who has reached Atman in this way cannot return to his physical life or to the world of active existence. For him return to

outer life is not optional. After a short duration of three weeks following his entry into Atman, his body falls dead. From this we gather the following relevant points: (i) the foundation of *nirvikalpa samādhi* is that one must see Atman alone and all elsewhere; (ii) when he excludes all, he is excluded from the world, from his mind and senses and even from living in his body; (iii) his exclusive method forces him to eventually leave the body itself and plunge into the depth of Atman. In Yajnavalkya's language this is giving away of the knower of Atman by the world, *parādād*.

Now we shall go back to the question how and to whom the knower of Atman is given away by the world. The process of giving away consists in being excluded little by little by the world; the knower is given away to Atman by being forced to eventually depart from the world and plunge into the object of exclusive knowledge. According to Yajnavalkya, knowledge of Atman is sought not for the sake of withdrawing from the world and losing oneself in the nameless and formless condition of Atman but for something positive and constructive—for extending the love of Atman to all things and loving them for the sake of Atman. Therefore he wants Maitreyi to avoid the fate of being given away by the world and take care not to reject the world under the notion that it is Anatman.

When Yajnavalkya speaks about the fate of the exclusive knower of Atman, his is certainly not a solitary voice. The expression *nirvikalpa samādhi* is not found in any of the authoritative Upanishads which include the Brihadaranyaka. However, there are evidences to show that this spiritual condition is known to the Upanishads and also prohibited by them through condemnatory remarks. There are two passages, one from the Isha and another from the Taittiriya, which provide the evidences. The Isha says that he who delights in the knowledge of Atman to the exclusion of the world faces dissolution in the darkness of exclusiveness, *bhūya iva te tamaḥ ya u vidyayām ratāḥ* (verse 9). The relevance of this teaching to Yajnavalkya's word *parādād* is considerably increased by the fact that this verse (verse 9) appears in the Brihadaranyaka also (4-4-10). The Taittiriya says that if one knows Brahman (Atman) to be non-existent in the world, i.e., to be not extended in names and forms, one becomes non-existent, i.e., one dissolves himself in the Brahman (Atman) by losing his name and form, *asanneva sa bhavati* (2-6-1). In order to emphasise that the knowledge of Atman should not be allowed to bring about a premature departure from the world, the Isha declares in a categorical voice that one should desire to live a hundred years, *jijīveṣet śatam samāḥ* (verse 2). Yajnavalkya's warning that the exclusive knower of Atman will be renounced by the world seems to issue out of an ancient tradition upheld by the teachers of Vedānta.

Yajnavalkya seems to be plainly saying that the knower of Atman who utterly excludes the world is prohibited by the Vedas themselves when he declares that they give him away, *vedastam parādūḥ* (4-5-7). This raises a very important question: the knower of Atman has known Atman only through the help of the Vedas, i.e., through hearing their words, *śravaṇa* (2-4-5); if so, why do they disown him? They do so for two reasons: (i) He has indeed benefited by the Vedas, but he regards them as one of the objects found in the world and so sees them elsewhere than in Atman. In accordance with the law of the

world (the renouncer being renounced by the world), the Vedas disown him; (ii) There are passages in the Vedas, as we saw above, which prohibit a knower of Atman from utterly excluding the world. Hence they upheld their teaching by rejecting him in an exemplary manner. From this we understand how Yajnavalkya follows the tradition very closely and meticulously.

From the above discussions we may see that the phrase *yaḥ veda* (4-5-7), as understood by us, has contributed in no small measure to a proper interpretation of *parādā* and, through this, to a deeper understanding of the relation of 2-4-6/4-5-7 to all that have gone before. We understand that the two instructions given by Yajnavalkya (2-4-5) are equally important and when the second one is disregarded, the fate of being rejected by all becomes inevitable. Therefore we must retain the interpretation put on *yaḥ veda* and treat it as valid.

Scholars accustomed to the way of the traditionalists may find it difficult to accept the view that Yajnavalkya is not in favour of seeking knowledge of Atman to the exclusion of the world. The traditionalists say that Yajnavalkya is a great renouncer and an advocate of world-renunciation. The scholars must understand that it is a myth invented by the traditionalists and maintained by them. The scholars may argue that the traditionalists are right, for they are guided by Yajnavalkya's formula *neti netyātmā* (not this, not this Atman) (4-5-15). The formula of Atman does not deny the world as is imagined by the traditionalists, but denies limitation of Atman by the world. Positively, it affirms Atman's superiority to the world, *satyasya satyam* (2-3-6). By any stretch of the imagination Yajnavalkya cannot be taken as a supporter of the view of world-negation.

(To be concluded)

N. JAYASHANMUGAM

IF I WERE

If I were the raindrops
The dusk sky pours,
I would fall and merge with the earth.

If I were the sand grains
Fearing a fall from the heights
I would never feel the skies.

If I were the bird song on the lark's throat,
I wouldn't know the cat's mewling;
If I were the cat's whisker, I would miss the lark song.

If I were the poet, impersonating
All names and forms,
I would still miss the formless.

If I were the sage's meditation,
I would be thirsting for words;
If I were the poet's word
I would search for a sage's silence.

To gain is to lose, to lose is to gain
This game still suits me the best.

K. N. VIJU

Today we have to learn how to watch over these thoughts. First you look at them and then you watch over them. Learn to look at them as an enlightened judge so that you may distinguish between the good and the bad, between thoughts that are useful and those that are harmful, between constructive thoughts that lead to victory and defeatist thoughts which turn us away from it. It is this power of discernment that we must acquire now....

13 September 1957

The Mother

SRI AUROBINDO ON THE FIRST HYMN OF THE RIG VEDA—A GLIMPSE

(Continued from the issue of September 2002)

4

In the light of a brief background of Vedic Study in India and the Western world presented in (1) and facts based on the newly found record of Sri Aurobindo's Yogic Sadhana in (2) we can state in emphatic words that Sri Aurobindo is such an Abhinava Vedic Rishi of this age who for occult reasons has deliberately chosen the very first Rik of the Rigveda—the oldest written literary document of the world—for translation and commentary again and again. If unpublished old notes used by Sri Aurobindo had not seen the light of day the world would not have known till now how Sri Aurobindo in his small room consistently speculated with great perseverance for almost forty years of his precious life to find out the unique Secret of the Vedas. Thereby he has built a Golden Bridge between the remote past and the most recent present and opened wide frontiers of Time and Space in the ages to come.

The text of the small, symbolic and beautiful First Rik of the Rig Veda is:

अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम्। होतारं रत्नधातमम्॥ १.१.१

Rishi: Madhuchchhandas Vaishwamitra; Deity: Agni; Metre: Gayatri.

According to Madhuchchhandas Agni is God. He is all and the whole of the sacrifice: Purohit, God of Sacrifice, Ritwik, Hota and giver of wealth. Thus when the Rishi says that Fire is everything it means there must be something new and other or more than ritualistic performances of the sacrifice. Sri Aurobindo in all his translations, notes and studies right from 1910 to 1950 has tried consistently to read the mind of Rishi Madhuchchhandas and find the secret revealed by him.

5

Sri Aurobindo's first two translations of the Rik appeared in the *Dharma*, a weekly in the Bengali language. It was edited by Sri Aurobindo himself. On 23rd August 1909 its first issue appeared and in all only 28 issues were published. Out of various articles presented in the Weekly, two viz.: (1) *Tapodeva Agni* and (2) *Rigveda* (Introductory) are the most important so far as our discussion is concerned. In *Tapodeva Agni* he has drawn our attention to the Tapas aspect of Agni and emphasised the spiritual meaning of the Vedic Agni. In the second article on the Rigveda he has translated and explained with notes all the nine Riks of the First Hymn of Madhuchchhandas along with some other selected Riks of 1.17, 1.75, 3.46 and 9.1. Herein are two translations of the First Hymn. In one he

has given meanings of ईडे, पुरोहितं, ऋत्विजम्, होतारं, रत्नधा and धा in brief. These meanings are non-ritual. In another one a direct translation of the Rik is presented without giving meanings of each word separately. Here Agni is addressed as 'Tapodeva Agni'; not only that, from 1.1 to 1.6 Riks he has used this very phrase repeatedly and categorically. Thereby in the second article by using 'Tapodeva Agni' he tries to emphasise with explicitness what he had written in the first one.¹⁵

After presenting Bengali renderings, Sri Aurobindo published an English translation in *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* (1952). It is as follows:

"I adore the Flame, the vicar, the divine Ritwik of the Sacrifice, the summoner who most finds ecstasy."¹⁶ In the revised edition of the same in 1991, the following three translations are given on page 439 and 460 respectively.

Page 439:

"Agni I adore, who stands before the Lord, the god who seeth Truth, the warrior, strong disposer of delight."

Page 460:

(i) Translation: Ritualistic

"I praise Agni, the Purohit of the sacrifice, the God, the Ritwik, the Hota who holds very much wealth."

(ii) Translation: Psychological

"I seek the God-Will, the Priest set in front of our sacrifice, who sacrifices in the order of the truth, the divine offerer who disposes utterly the delight."

These English translations along with notes and studies found among Sri Aurobindo's early manuscripts, evidently unrevised, are other than the previous and published in the 1952 edition. Thus four English translations published in various editions of *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* during 1952-1991 are distinct from the two Bengali translations. Sixteen more translations were found from the old notebooks by the team of scholars: Archives and Research, Pondicherry. These sixteen translations are altogether new and different from the ones published in the books. They fill up the gap between the first Bengali translation in *Dharma* and the last English translation published in *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, 1991. "Their various readings and variations are the best illustrations of the enhancement of Sri Aurobindo's thinking research, growing along with his Yogic Sadhana."¹⁷

In all we get twenty-two translations during 1910 to 1950.¹⁸ This suggests the richness and depth of Sri Aurobindo's Vedic studies as well as the prolonged and constantly perfected effort he put into them.¹⁹

References (see table 1) of sixteen translations (see table 2) which appeared in *Archives and Research* from December 1977 to December 1981 are shown in the Appendix.

(To be concluded)

APPENDIX

Table 1 — References
Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research, Pondicherry
 (April 1977 to December 1994)

The First Hymn of the Rigveda 1.1.1

Sr. No.	Volume	Month-Year	No.	Page	Content	Translation	Year
1	1	December 1977	2	35-38	Translation and notes (incomplete)	1	around 1912
2	2	April 1978	1	51-57	Translation and notes	1	-
3	2	December 1978	2	148-54	Translation and notes	1	-
4	3	April 1979	1	35-37	Translation	1	done in 1912 or there about
5	3	December 1979	2	150-52	Translation (i) done around 1912 (ii) 1914 (iii) after September 1913	3	1912-1914
6	4	April 1980	1	39-40	Translation and short notes	2	done in 1914 (about)
7	4	December 1980	2	153-55	Translation	3	1912-1914
8	5	April 1981	1	9	Translation note on रत्नवर्णम्	1	done 1939
9	5	December 1981	2	178	Translation	1	dating from early 1940s

Analysis

- (i) Done during 1912 to 1917 = 14
 (ii) After a long gap about twenty-two years later in 1939 = 1
 (iii) After one year in 1940 = 1

 16

Table 2 — Translation
The First Hymn of the R̥gveda
Mandala 1, Sukta 1

Sr. No.	अग्निमीळे Agnimile	पुरोहितं Purohitam	यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् Yajnasya devam Ritvijam	हेतारं Hotaram	रत्नाधत्तम् Ramadhattamam
1	Agni the brilliant I adore	who standeth before the Lord	the god that hath the rapture of the truth	the fighter	that fulfilleth utter bliss
*A	See introduction 1				
2	Agni I desire	who standeth before the Lord	the god who knoweth all the law	the Warrior	who disposeth utterly delight
3	Agni I desire	who stands before the Lord	the god who seeth truth	the Warrior	who disposeth utterly delight
4 (i)	Agni I adore	the representative priest of the sacrificial act	the god who is the Adept of the sacrifice	the offerer of the action	who disposeth utterly delight
4 (ii)	Agni I adore	the priest who stands forward for the sacrifice	the god who acts in the truth things	the giver of the oblation	who disposes utterly delight
4 (iii)	Agni I adore	who stands before Yajna	the god that seeth right	the offerer of the oblation	chief disposer of delight
5 (i)	Agni I adore	the representative priest of the Sacrifice	the god who sacrifices aright	the priest of the offering	who disposes utterly delight
5 (ii)	The God-will I seek with adoration	divine priest of the sacrifice who is set in front	and sacrifices in the seasons of the law	giver of oblation	who most ordains the ecstasy

Sr. No.	अग्निमिले Agnimile	पुरोहितं Purohitam	यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् Yajnasadevam Ritvijam	होतारं Hotaram	रत्नधातमम् Ratnadhataamam
5 (iii)	The strength I seek	which is set in front as one representative in the sacrifice	and offers in the order of the truth	the priest of our oblation	who disposes utterly delight
6 (i)	I adore the Flame	divine vicar of sacrifice	Ritwik	and offering priest	who most founds the Delight
6 (ii)	I adore the Flame	the Vicar	the divine Ritwik of the sacrifice	the summoner	who most founds the ecstasy
* B See introduction 2					
7 (i)	Fire, I pray	the priest set in front of the sacrifice	the god Ritwik	the flamen of the call	who gives the most ecstasy
7 (ii)	I adore Agni the god	the Purohit of the sacrifice	the Ritwik	the Hota	most delight placing
7 (iii)	I seek with adoration the God-will	divine priest of the sacrifice placed in front	sacrificer in the seasons	offerer of the oblation	who most ordains the ecstasy
8	The Flame I pray	the divine vicar of the sacrifice	the ordinant of the ritual	the Summoner	who founds the ecstasy
9	The Fire I pray	the divine vicar of the sacrifice	and ordinant of the rite	the Summoner	who most founds the ecstasy

* A Introduction 1: A & R, Vol. I, No. 2, Dec. 1977, 35: The First Hymn of the Rigveda. Translated into English with an etymological reconstruction of the old Sanskrit or Aryan tongue in which it was rendered in the Dwapar Yuga and an explanation of the Yogic phenomena and philosophy with which it is mainly concerned.

A hymn of praise, welcome and prayer to Agni, Lord of Tejas, composed when the mind of the Yogin Madhuchhanda was full of satwic energy and illumination, page 35 viz. 1.

* B Introduction 2: A & R, Vol. 4, No. 1, April 1980: The First Hymn of the Rigveda.

A hymn to Agni the divine Flame, priest of the sacrifice, bringer of the gods to man, giver of the treasures, protector and leader and king of the sacrifice of the path, inspired seer-will in works, giver of the supreme good and truth and its shining guardian, page 37.

Under this one introduction two translations are done which are found in A & R, Vol. 4, No. 1, April 1980, pp. 39-40, viz.: 6 (i) (ii).

Notes and References

15. *Sri Arvindni Bangali Rachana*, Sundaram, 1970, pp. 28-30.
16. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* (1952), pp. 2-3.
17. *Archives and Research*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 93-94.
18. "These translations however are not intended to be a scholastic work. This is a literary and not a strictly literal translation." Sri Aurobindo, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 29.
19. *Archives and Research*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 94.

INTIMATIONS

FROM the deepest niche
 In the temple's emptiness,
 From the last blackness
 Hiding in that vast
 Arise laughing waves
 Of Light
 In all shades of white.

Bells peal from some shrine lost
 In those shimmering foam hills,
 Lions roar where the horizon joins
 The inner sea's border,
 Their sound nearly mute
 As it wets the shore.

I sense a knock
 On the farthest inner door.

DINKAR D. PALANDE

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT — XV

SUNILDA

(A snowy high Kanchenjunga)

*“Saints and poets are hills touched with the dawn
whilst the valley is in darkness.”*

AUSTIN O’MALLEY

I MAY add to the above saints and poets, a third category—that of musicians—composers—for Sunilda was both, with a good bit of “saint” thrown in.

Here is a great man, in the true sense of the word, whom I reluctantly bring under the heading of “Not so great”. He for one, I am sure, would just have smiled and not let it ruffle the quiet deep waters of his greatness. He was one of the most self-effacing men one comes across.

With that assurance backing me, I would start this, an eulogy of the great man who wouldn’t be “so great”.

Jhumur has already written about him in *Mother India* (June 1998). She being his niece had a close view of him, yet I will pen my views, also close, with often a clash (physical—in football). In my opinion he was a genius and what is my opinion worth—for the Mother Herself said of Sunilda: “He is a genius.”

Sunilda was born in Krishnanagar—Bengal, on the 3rd of November, 1920. His father a doctor (Homoeopath), mother, Anil the elder brother, Minnie the elder sister and Sunil formed a close and well-knit family. His father loved young Sunil and Sunil was very attached to him. As a boy, he did what boys did—played, studied, fought with his sister (only 15 months older, so she did not deserve his respect). He was a bit short-tempered—would shy at anything handy if roused. He must have tamed this temper in later years, for I never heard him raise his voice in anger—except once—in all the 50 years I had known him. I can’t even recollect his showing any signs of impatience. What made him stand out from the other boys was that he showed glimpses of his future brilliance even in those early years. Whatever he took up, he did better than most. Maths was already his forte. He even picked up a knowledge of horoscope reading (don’t know from where or from whom). Chess came naturally to him (he excelled in it). He acquired a working knowledge of Homeopathy (like Ekalavya—guru being his father). He would go to the slum area behind the house, diagnose, prescribe and administer—all free. He earned the honorary title of “chhoto Dactar”. His father did keep a close watch, and checked on him (called him ‘master’).

The family later shifted to Calcutta and Sunilda got admission into the prestigious St. Xavier’s College. He shone out there too, took honours in Chemistry, played some football and learned to play the Sitar from Ardhenduda’s brother who himself was a student of one of the Ustads (may be Mustaq Ali Khan).

Ardhenduda was Sunilda’s cousin, much older than he. He too was quite a genius—a good musician and also a good chemist. He came to the Ashram in the early 40s,

lived on the 1st floor of our Dental Clinic. He led a very retired or secluded sort of life. Rarely did he participate or attend any function. Only once did I hear him play on the Surbahar. He did consent to teach one or two students for a short period. He had great wit and humour—that is when and if he talked. All his genius and talents were well corked and hidden. The last few years of his life he was overwhelmed by a horde of cats.

Cats remind me of Sunilda's cats. He was not overwhelmed, but did, I suspect, reserve a soft corner in his heart for at least two of them—Tutu and her son Bañtul. I recount all this and digress, for Tutu was no ordinary cat, and she and Ardhenduda were close enough to Sunilda, to make our acquaintances with them quite worthwhile.

Tutu was picked up as a tiny kitten near the Samadhi. She was brought to Sunilda's house. She grew up to be "the lady" of not only their house but the whole block—Play-ground and the Mother's Room included. She came and went as and when and where it pleased her. She would come walking regally and lie in the middle of the Play Ground just as the daily March Past was about to start. In those days all the groups (A to H) took part everyday, as the Mother stood in front of the map of India. Tutu stretched her legs and lay relaxed. The files of hundreds of us had to make a detour around her. She was unperturbed, not an inch did she give. Sometimes she would take her cat-nap on the Mother's sofa (in the Room). The Mother would not have anyone disturb Tutu. If there is a "Feline-Divine-world" Tutu must have come down from there—what for, is hard to guess! Bañtul took no such liberties—he was more like an ordinary cat. Now back to Sunilda.

Sunilda took honours in Chemistry. This information is quite irrelevant, for he could have shone in any subject he chose to and also in the sports he took up, and of course in the music he composed (that poured out through him).

Sunilda was of a solid and proportionate build, with enough weight and strength to make his presence felt—especially in the play field. He could build up enough speed for added effect. He was of good height, and a neat figure, but for a slight hunching of the shoulders. A well shaped head sat atop the shoulders, fronted by a handsome face with healthy cheeks, cheerful large eyes that shone and smiled along with the generous mouth. The faint trace of a smile never left the eyes and lips. On the whole he impressed us as a man in a state of solid calm of body and mind and deeper within.

Sunilda came to the Ashram for a short visit and went back. That was in 1940 or 41. He had no plans to settle down here. He was still studying. He came back with the family (elder brother Anilda and family, elder sister and her daughter and mother) in 1942. He would probably have gone back to continue his scholastic life. An idea that he could go in for the I.C.S. was also mooted. Applications were made which reached 3 days too late. He could have tried for the next year. It was discovered, he would be over age. He was pushed into a corner—so—no I.C.S. Some subtle forces seemed to scuttle his plans (they, the forces, may not have been much evident then, but now, seen from a greater distance in time and the perspective of later events, they seem almost obvious). Then events got so arranged that Sunilda and Gauridi got married. The Mother said that they both could stay in the Ashram. I suspect what the Mother wanted although was that both

should be able to stay here. Thus was the drama made to happen. The gods moved the human pawns.

Came Dec. 1943 and our School was opened. Sunilda was one of the first teachers. Through the years that he taught, we never felt that he was teaching. He soaked us, we either imbibed or we didn't. Sunilda had an unique system of keeping a tag on us. (This was in the lower classes only.) It helped us to mark ourselves and it had an element of competitive fun and game. The system was much like "Snakes and Ladders", with the healthy difference that the ladders were dominant and could be long or short, whereas the snakes were of just one square or one step downward. The system worked thus: the students sat in an order 1,2,3.... No. 2 may be asked a question. He answers correctly—all is status quo. If he fails, the next i.e. No. 3 has to try. If he succeeds he goes up to No. 2 and No. 2 steps down to No. 3. Supposing now 3,4,5 fail and No. 6 succeeds. Then No. 6 climbs up to No. 2 and all the others i.e. 2, 3, 4 & 5 slide down one step each (only the last No. could afford to be complacent—if he chose to be) I don't know if any other teacher imitated this system.

Sunilda taught many subjects. He taught Maths, Botany, Zoology, Geology, Geography, Astronomy and last, for some of us—Football. I dare say, he could have taken some music classes—if one had the ear and inclination and if he himself was willing. He did teach 3-4 youngsters, but no classes as far as I know (quite intriguing, considering the fact he was a great musician and a great teacher). It seemed he had all the subjects at his fingertips. He hardly needed a textbook, and that made his classes all the more interesting. Keeping the textbook in the background we could meander away, in and out of the subject. Long before the School's lab, we had botany practicals at his residence, where we sliced the cross-sections and peered at the inner workings of flowers through a microscope (incidentally that was the first microscope we had ever seen). Under his guidance we even charted the heavens. To do so, we devised an apparatus:

A large piece of glass was held on two heavy stands by adjustable clamps. The glass was held parallel to the constellation to be mapped. Lying behind or below the glass, we put an ink spot on it, in line with the eye and the wanted star. We got fairly good results! It was also Sunilda's idea and backing that got us to build a big sundial in the school. It stood on the (present) lawn, a few metres to the south-east of the stage. Come to think of it, it was a nice monument (in more than one meaning of the word) and also could have been educative. It had a beauty and an imposing presence of its own. Without shedding too many tears over "spilt milk", I wish it were still there today (some blame me for not opposing its demolition when renovations were in the offing).

(This is again an aside-story.) Before constructing the sundial, there was the question of design. It was not meant to be a "carry-around" clock. It stood about 2.50m or more high. A cube of 1m (of concrete slabs) set on a square pillar of about 0.60m/side (of brickwork) with a pair of circular steps for base. On the top was the gnomon as also on all the four vertical sides (a gnomon is the pointer on a sundial, of which the length and position of its shadow indicates the time of the day). I made a simple drawing of it, while one of us approached Sanjibanda for a design. He made a drawing of an elaborate,

intricately designed one. Both were shown to the Mother. She chose mine—the simpler one. I, for one, was naturally glad.

Sunilda took our higher Maths class and may be the higher next to ours. These were some of the last classes he took. It was about the time the great mathematician, Dr. Venkataraman, delivered a few lectures on higher or pure Mathematics (higher than what we were grappling with). (Dr. Venkataraman was a very fine human-being, he later settled in the Ashram. He dressed, looked and *was* a simple south Indian Brahmin, complete with a small knotted tuft of hair hanging on to a shaven head. Ever smiling and absent minded, well-versed in Sanskrit and Tamil he lived his last days here in the Mother's service. His wife continues to live here as simple and inconspicuous as he. Dr. Venkataraman and Sunilda were great friends, of a kind, they developed a great kinship.) Now Sunilda wanted us (the class) to attend these lectures. He said it would do our brains some good. He sent me to seek Pavitrada's permission for our class to attend. Pavitrada said "No, no, it will be too difficult for you." But Sunilda was insistent, he said, "No, no, go ask him again, insist." So back I went, and badgered Pavitrada who finally gave in. We attended. I hope it did some good to some. To me it was soporific.

Sunilda stopped teaching some time in the late 60s. Perhaps by now, music in a torrent was pouring down from above or gushing up from within, deafening or swamping his old ardour for teaching Maths, Zoology etc. When he came to the class he hardly sat on his chair. He paced about with his hands held behind, palm in palm. Then we saw his thumb incessantly moving from one fingertip to the next as if counting or giving rhythm in accompaniment to some music, unheard by us, but churning his mind and heart. I will come back to his music—now back to school.

Once long back, there was a teacher's meeting, held on the landing of the East block of our School. Not that such meetings were not held at other times than this once. But it was one that he happened to attend and I too was there. Many aired many ideas and opinions, some longish rallies of points and counterpoints enlivened the proceedings. Suddenly after some discussions, Pavitrada looked at Sunilda and asked, "Et, Sunil, que dites-vous?" (And Sunil, what have you to say?) Sunilda smiled and: "Oh! moi?...moi?" (Oh! me? ...me?) smiled some more, got up and just walked down the stairs and away! I was quite amused—of the others' reactions, your guess is as good as mine.

This was the 'mental' Sunilda. There was a metal one, i.e. hard and strong—the football player. (He also played some volley-ball) He captained the Ashram Football team for a few years. His speed and solid build were both used with telling effect, earning him the nickname of "Le Tigre". His play was more of the dashing, direct kind. No fancy footwork, but good positioning, a break-through run with the ball and a powerful shot made up his game. He broke his wrist in one of the games towards the end of his playing days. He stopped playing but coached and managed the team for some more time. It was the hey-day of Ashram Football. Then there was no "Ashram Team" to be managed, as all matches with other teams was stopped. Sunilda moved on to other fields.

(To be concluded)

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

A FEW DREAMS

(Continued from the issue of September 2002)

13.04.1981

FOR the last 4-5 days some depression has possessed me. The business has come down very much this year. Sales have reduced and profits have become much less. Presently we are consuming the capital for our maintenance. The mind is therefore a little heavy.

One day I opened the shop in this state of mind and addressed the Mother stating, "Ma, whatever has happened, I accept with happiness." And saying so the tears of joy started flowing. I remembered some portion of *Radha's Prayer*. I felt that happiness and grief, illness and health, life and death have to be chosen by the will of Sri Aurobindo and have to be accepted with joy. Gradually depression was overcome. My tuition work was also coming to an end. One tuition work was expected to continue but that was also going to stop now in three days. In this mental state I opened *Savitri* and read out two or three pages. I came across these words: "I am stronger than death and greater than my fate." (p. 432) These are the utterances of Savitri emphasising that she is more powerful than Yamaraj and higher than destiny. As these words entered deep into my mind, they became a Mantra for me. The Mother's photo was in front of me and I started uttering this Mantra: "I am stronger than death and greater than my fate." On that day, at any opportunity of introspection, I uttered this Mantra. At night also I went to sleep meditating on this, but at midnight I got afraid and shouted as per the old habit.

Then I got up and for a long time continued to repeat the Mantra. Next day was Sunday and during most of the time this repeating of the Mantra continued. Night came and I slept saying it. At midnight I awoke. I concentrated at the psychic centre and for some time at the forehead. Then I concentrated on nasal and respiration systems joining them with the psychic centre. Gradually this Mantra entered into the physical system through the nasal channel and started moving there. It was now there in my head, in my legs, in my hands, in my stomach, throughout the nerve system. Then I was asleep and had a dream: I am going on a road. I am alone. At one place there are many youths gathered. Just nearby I find a small path which I felt to be the way I should take. As soon as I got ready to do so, I felt that those youths are going to assault me. I hurriedly caught one of them and held him below my arm. His ear was near my mouth. So I caught it with my mouth and started biting it deeply. The remaining fellows stayed away, as they would not dare come near to me. Then I was thinking to release him and to proceed on my way. In the meantime, I turned to my side and was awake. The way all those fellows vanished was surprising to me. I pondered how till yesterday I was shouting with fear and today...

An Experience

Last Sunday there was a movie named 'Meera' on TV. Subhalakshmi was singing as

Meera. My eyes were full of tears—tears of joy. Children mocked at me. I tried my best to control myself yet, at one point of time, I burst into a loud cry. This was the moment when at Dwarika Meera in devotion and dedication had exhausted herself in front of Giridhar Gopal. The doors of the temple were closed. Meera's call was constant, her deep and earnest call. Suddenly the doors opened. Meera got the Darshan and her soul merged in Giridhar Gopal. I had once visited this temple along with Sudha. Since then I always felt how deep and strong our call for the Lord should be.

(Concluded)

BHUSHAN DHINGRA

YOU COULD BE...

A conversation between the Soul and the man

You could be an eagle soaring in the sky.

“Nah, I'd rather be a chicken waitin' to die.”

You could be an ocean that never ends.

“Naw, I'd rather be a puddle in the rut around the bend.”

You could be the sun that illumines everyone.

“I'll settle for a candle, that in one hour is all done.”

You could roam the mountains like a frisky ram.

“I'll just be a mole, buried in these shifting sands.”

You could be a garden filled with beauty and delight.

“But it's easier to be a desert burning in the night.”

You could be a singer of a song that never ends.

“Oh all right, I give up, it's Your life, my inner Friend.”

ALLAN STOCKER

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

A Very Tidy Beautiful Place

THE music was lively and pleasing and we hummed along as it approached. Closer and closer it came, till it was only a few meters behind us. Curious, we turned and there was the most extravagant garbage truck! Up the street it drove, light classical tunes broadcasting from its loudspeakers—presumably to cover the hydraulic sounds of its function or, perhaps, to add a certain refinement to the beginning of the day. We burst out laughing; truly Japan lives out its need for beauty on multiple levels!

Obsessed with cleanliness, the Japanese are the very expression of polite civility—isn't the musical truck, we considered, yet another aspect of cleanliness? Even their strong devotion to beauty—what else is it but a compulsion to arrange clean and unalloyed lines or forms at appropriate places?

It was still early morning and the little town was nestled somewhere in the mountains of Hokkaido. I have forgotten its name by now, but the freshness of its air still lingers in my memory and so do the shopkeepers, busy sweeping the pavements in front of their shops and getting them ready for customers. Gary and I were walking down the main street and there the garbage truck had taken us by surprise.

We marvelled and thought of home and India. We remembered those two-foot-high municipal concrete-rings, randomly placed by the roadsides of Pondy—forever teeming with raw filth and garbage—a common sight swarmed by flies, frequented by a variety of animals, always piling high, perpetually spilling over.

We did not settle for criticism or easy comparisons. Instead, we started reflecting deeper into the two cultures; the appearance of the musical garbage truck had highlighted the differences between them so strikingly as to make them rich material for our minds to ponder on. But it was the fundamentals we focused upon, not the apparent.

True, India could do with some thorough clean-up. Yet, is this really important in what she *really* has to do? Should this be a priority in fulfilling her destiny? We weren't sure about the answers.

We remembered Sri Aurobindo urging his younger brother in a letter: "...look at India. Except for some solitary giants, everywhere there is your 'simple man', that is, the average man who does not want to think and cannot think, who has not the least Shakti but only a temporary excitement." And further on, "...his stock is the excitement of the emotional mind."¹

Sri Aurobindo was speaking specifically of the Bengali then, yet we took the liberty to generalise and apply his remarks to the average contemporary Indian person of today.

Besides, since I could vividly remember how indifferent and oblivious to all filth and rubbish I myself had been during my first years in India, I tended to see this fact as a larger cultural infliction one easily adapts to simply by living out India's subtle influences.

1. Translated from the original Bengali, SABCL, Vol. 4, p. 327. Sri Aurobindo had written this letter to his brother Barin on 7 April, 1920.

India's tolerance (or should one call it *tamas*?), along with her other attributes, can easily get under one's skin. Amazingly, I saw none of the filth on the streets then; it simply did not exist, as my soul roamed about places where dirt and cleanliness had other definitions. There was an air pregnant with fragrances other than those my nose refused to register. Seeking had brought me home and homecoming was sweet. But clean it was certainly not and, eventually, even I had to admit it!

The echo of Sri Aurobindo's urging letter continued; "...we have abandoned the sadhana of Shakti and Shakti has abandoned us. We do the sadhana of Love, but where Knowledge and Shakti are not, there Love does not remain, there narrowness and littleness come, and in a little and narrow mind there is no place for Love."

Even the Mother was impressed with that letter and had remarked: "Read this; it shows a slightly new side of Sri Aurobindo's thought. I mean, he took a sterner tone when addressing Indians, and he gave a fuller account of his experience of the West."²

Sri Aurobindo was clear "...to get that Shakti one must be a worshipper of Shakti. We are not worshippers of Shakti. We are worshippers of the easy way. But Shakti is not to be had by the easy way. Our forefathers dived into a sea of vast thought and gained a vast Knowledge and established a mighty civilisation."

During the long centuries of its existence, Japan too, has established much and contributed abundantly to the world. Its very tradition is beauty; its very existence is turned towards beauty. Beauty and cleanliness meet with life there and, together, they celebrate.

Where else would the mechanic at the petrol pump wear sparkling white gloves? Where else would take-away food look so perfect when packed? Where else would the adoration of the fairy cherry-blossoms find its perfect home? Where else would the garbage truck play music?

It was all there and we relished it. We rejoiced in its refreshing sincerity and we abandoned ourselves in it. It was all so new and Japanese, so exquisitely different.

In Japan, *presentos*³ are exchanged at every possible and impossible situation. They are the most common expression of hospitality and they seal feelings of friendship among strangers—a most endearing exchange that never failed to surprise us. We still keep most of what we received: a pair of miniature traditional slippers made of straw, a little hand-carved mirror and a tiny comb; also, the recollection of precious delicious oranges—each of them given with the smiles and bowing appropriate for the occasion!

Most extraordinary were the circumstances of the slippers and the oranges; the first offered when high up a mountain. It was a volcano, actually, and from where we stood (a narrow ridge that served also as a path) we could look down on either side.

Awesome and magnificently enhanced by a cobalt blue sky, the view was spectacular. On our right, more than a hundred feet down, stretched the perfect circle of a lake in a shade of blue only high sulphur content can create. The sprawling moonscape on our

2. *Mother's Agenda*, 1962, Volume 3, p. 268 (translated from the French).

3. Probably deriving from the English word *present* that must have entered the Japanese language after the Second World War, when America sent its soldiers to occupy the country.

left, the crater, looked grey, harsh and lonesome and, beyond it, there were higher peaks piercing the sky.

These were expansive strange elements, difficult to frame. With our cameras pointing here and there and looking for the perfect shot, we suddenly caught sight of some mountaineers approaching from the other end of the path. As soon as we were done with the smiles and the bowing, we switched over to hand gestures. None spoke the other's language, yet we all had the need to express what we felt; the mere meeting with fellow human beings in such a terrain called for exchange and celebration—out came the tiny straw slippers!

The oranges were another touching story, *presento* of a rainy day.

We had been confined in our tent for too long; torrents of water were coming down ceaselessly and we were desperate for something to lift us up. We thought of the Japanese fruit-wine and the log cabin further up the path looked promising—perhaps there was some to buy?

It was the warden's home and I found his wife cooking. Crestfallen for not having what I wanted, she seemed so upset I had to reach out and hold her hands as I smiled and bowed my way out; her own response a thoughtful look.

Hurriedly skirting the back of the cabin, I saw her leaning out from the kitchen window—an unforgettable sight. In the pouring rain, cradled in the palms of her hands, three golden oranges! It was all she had, her offering, and she would accept no money for it.

“Japan is in the heart,” a young biker told us one evening as we crouched around a fire. What he meant was that the Japanese seek the expression of feelings and thoughts through appropriate gestures and responses in life. There is always a code and any variations can only be applied through it. Variations do not exceed the code and the code itself never transcends the life apparent.

According to the Mother Japan is a mental society. There is no deeper spiritual element, it is clear-cut propriety that does the trick—and this is the difference between India and Japan, the underlying evidence of their different objectives.

True, there is no harm in India learning how to clean her streets; indeed, this would be nice and good, but it isn't what her destiny is all about. There is more and other she has and must do, there is plenty she has already been doing.

Whereas Japan deals with Beauty, India has Spirituality to look after.

As the garbage truck drove off and the sound of music receded, we felt somewhat alien in the broad spotless street. We were suddenly and acutely aware of the reasons that had prompted us both to make India our home. We had defined in our minds why India is the home Japan would never be and had come to the conclusion that India supports and guides in ways deeper than the physical garbage, seen or not. Her very air helps in throwing light onto some other kind of piles, far more important albeit less physical; through the millennia of her spiritual evolution India has worked out elaborate ways for that.

We felt light and homesick—travellers with a home to return to, travellers from a world larger than any world of amenities. India, the world of our home, was established

in its right perspective and through it we could see her for what she actually is: deep and wide, a being reaching high.

That same letter from Sri Aurobindo provided us with the final conclusion "...our business is not with the formless Spirit alone; we have also to direct the movement of life. And there can be no effective movement of life without form. It is the Formless that has taken form and that assumption of name and form is not a caprice of Maya. Form is there because it is indispensable. We do not want to rule out any activity of the world as beyond our province. Politics, industry, society, poetry, literature, art will all remain, but we must give them a new soul and a new form."

It was this understanding that added a certain quality to the rest of our stay in the Land of the Rising Sun; it helped and guided us through, so to speak. It clarified our priorities without taking away any of the beauty and novelty abundant in Japan. If anything, it enhanced and broadened their particular and, sometimes, peculiar aspects.

Yes, Japan is beautiful and we absorbed this beauty in each and every manner we could, during the several weeks of our sojourn there; even in a suicide witnessed on a cloudless spring day. A splendid day it was, the day before our departure, and we were strolling down a magnolia-lined avenue in Sapporo.⁴ Everything looked bright, clean, immaculate—a perfectly beautiful setting in a perfectly beautiful street. No wonder, the sudden sound heard was perfectly loud too!

Glass shattered and glittered in the light when a large object flew through a window hitting, with a thud, the rock garden below. It all took place in front of a multi-storey building ahead of us. It was elegant and imposing, a hospital, judging from its Red Cross sign. People in white overalls rushed out, quick to get busy and very efficient. Some of them carried off a woman's body; others brought a hose to clean up.

Within minutes, nothing was left of the mess.

We stood by and watched, while Gary kept on muttering words that soon took shape—in a Haiku,⁵ one more *presento* from Japan:

Sapporo afternoon / Tinkle glass / She jumped in Spring.

KATI WIDMER

4. Hokkaido's capital city.

5. A Japanese three-part poem of usually 17 syllables in lines of 5, 7, 5, syllables. The form emerged in the 16th century and flourished from the 17th century to 19th century, and traditionally dealt with images of the natural world. In the early 20th century it was admired and imitated by modernist, particularly imagist, poets as a model of clarity and precision of expression. [*Oxford English Reference Dictionary*]

EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Introduction

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA was born on 12 January 1863. His name as given by his parents was Narendranath. He took the name Vivekananda just before leaving for USA to participate in the Parliament of Religions. His parents were Viswanath Dutta and Bhuvaneshwari Devi. In 1883 he passed BA from Calcutta University. He had completed law studies but did not appear at the examination. On 11 September 1893 he addressed the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago. In 1897 he returned to India. On 7 May 1897 he founded the Ramakrishna Mission. In 1899 he went abroad again and returned in December 1900. He passed away on 4 July 1902. Swamiji was not only a religious leader, but was also a social reformer. He did not consider the necessity of continuance of casteism. He said: "The caste system is opposed to the religion of the Vedanta. The caste is a social custom and all our great preachers have tried to break it down."¹ It is unfortunate that casteism still persists. His religion was very broad. He paid respect to every religion. He worked for bringing out reform in Hindu religion. Various aspects of the educational thoughts of Swamiji are as follows:

Meaning of Education

According to Swamiji, all knowledge is inside the human mind. Education discovers it. It is the manifestation of perfection already in man. Learning is discovering what is already in mind. He said: "Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs."² He also said: "... by education I do not mean the present system but something in the line of positive teaching. Mere book learning won't do. We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's feet."³ He said: "Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas."⁴ According to him, learning is in fact discovering.

Criticisms of Ongoing Education System

Swami Vivekananda criticised the education system of his time accusing it of its failure to become a man-making education. He said:

The education that you are getting now has some good points, but it has a tremendous disadvantage which is so great that the good things are all weighed down. In the first place, it is not a man-making education, it is merely and entirely a negative education. A negative education or any training that is based on negation is worse than death.

The child is taken to school, and the first thing he learns is that his father is a fool, the second thing that his grandfather is a lunatic, the third thing that all his teachers are hypocrites, the fourth that all the sacred books are lies! By the time he is sixteen, he is a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless.⁵

His views on education are still valid. As the techniques of delivering education advance at a great speed, a developing country like ours will always lag behind.

Modernization of Ancient Education System

Swami Vivekananda was not totally against western education. He found some aspects of this system that could be useful. He suggested that western scientific knowledge coupled with knowledge of Vedanta and Brahmacharya could provide an effective education system.⁶

Stress on Brahmacharya

Swamiji was himself a Brahmachari. He knew the powers of Brahmacharya. According to him, a person practising Brahmacharya for at least 12 years gets power—intellectual and spiritual. Brahmacharya is not only control of physical sex desire but also chastity in thought, word and deed.

Education from Nature

Swamiji gave stress on education from nature. He said: "... true education is gained by constant living in communion with nature."⁷ Similar was also the viewpoint of Tagore. Swamiji's viewpoint was not similar to that of Rousseau who despised society.

Varieties of Teachers

According to Swamiji, the guru may be even an animal, a tree or a non-living object. Swamiji did not restrict education to formal institutions. He described the story of Satyakama who got lessons from a big bull, fire, a swan and a bird called Madgu, *in addition to his human teacher*. Swamiji said: "The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow."⁸ Life can become a perpetual field of learning.

National Education

During Swamiji's days, the nation was under foreign rule. So he gave stress on national education. The Indian political leaders accepted Swamiji's ideas on national education and the movement for national education took a start. He argued for having the whole educational system of the country, spiritual or secular, in the hands of the Indians. Such

an education had to be on national lines, through national methods as far as possible.

Mass Education

Swamiji argued for mass education. According to him, the then pitiable condition of the country was due to the uneducated masses. Development of a nation is dependent on the level of education of its masses. The present-day educated persons have been neglecting their role for the poor and uneducated. The educated have to realise the fact that the contribution of these uneducated and poor have given rise to temples, schools and colleges. Hence, it is the moral responsibility of the society and the government to provide education to everybody. If the poor cannot come to school, the schools must go to the doors of the poor. He said if the mountain does not go to Mohammed, then Mohammed must go to the mountain.⁹ He also said, “The education must be provided to the poor wherever it suits them—workplace or home. If the poor cannot come to education, education must reach them at the plough, in the factory, everywhere.”¹⁰

Education for Service to Mankind

Swamiji laid stress on the role of education for service to mankind. He said that a person who feels for the poor is a *mahātmā*. If the said person really feels for the poor and prays God for their upliftment, God will indicate the path. He urged educated persons to go to the underprivileged and help them develop. That every Indian irrespective of caste, creed, occupation is his/her own brother or sister must be realised in every individual. He must help them to develop and prosper. “So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.”¹¹ Thus, according to him, every educated person is morally bound to do social work.

Women’s Education

Swamiji gave importance to the education of women. He quoted Manu’s statement that daughters should be supported and educated with as much care and attention as sons. According to him, women’s education will lead to a prosperous nation. But he was not in favour of modernisation of women that can take them away from the ideal of Sita. He suggested that women’s education should include religious training consisting of japa, worship, meditation, character formation and celibacy, study of history and *purānas*, house keeping, education of children, stitching, etc. He also pointed out the necessity of training women to acquire the spirit of valour and heroism. Chastity is to be taught to them as an ideal. They should be taught the ideal of renunciation, lifelong virginity, sciences etc.¹² Laying emphasis on education of women, he stated: “It is only in the homes of educated and pious mothers that great men are born.”¹³

Character Building Education

According to Swamiji, morality and spirituality build the character of a person. “Civilisation, true civilisation should mean the power of taking the animal-man out of his sense-life by giving him visions and tastes of planes much higher and not external comforts.”¹⁴ Sister Nivedita said: “All education worth having must first devote itself to the developing and consolidating of character, and only secondarily concern itself with intellectual accomplishment.”¹⁵ She also said, “To feel nobly and to choose loftily and honestly, is a thousandfold more important to the development of faculty than any other single aspect of the educational process.”¹⁶ Swami Sivananda stated that Pranayama can control the vital force of the body.

Manual Work and Education

Swami Vivekananda’s worthy disciple Sister Nivedita advocated manual training in education. She said: “At any rate, the recognition of manual training as a part of general education leads to no cheapening or curtailing of the scheme as a whole.”¹⁷ She referred to the manual training high schools in the USA.

Education for Physical Development

Swamiji stressed education for physical development. He said that the young people can be nearer to heaven through football than through the Gita. This does not mean that he ruled out the role of the Gita. Rather it means that he found the role important. Unless the physical body is in proper condition, one cannot understand the Gita. He said that strength is goodness and weakness is sin. According to him, Brahmacharya is a useful tool for physical development. He said that body and mind must run together: “Walk in the mornings and evenings and do physical labour.”¹⁸ Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have laid stress on physical education, but more to awaken the body consciousness.

Yoga as Education

Swamiji emphasised the role of concentration, meditation and yoga in education. He said: “Science of yoga can develop a sound personality, which is the secret of all education.”¹⁹ The Mother said that the Government should recognise yoga as education.

Education for Religious and Moral Development

Swamiji laid emphasis on moral and spiritual development. It is more important than intellectual development. According to him, religion is realisation. Religious ideas have to be put into practice. He saw the same God in every religion. According to him, the essence of all religion is the same. Hence, one should have religious tolerance. There

should not be any religious hatred. A student needs to study religious scriptures so as to develop the knowledge-base of one's own religion. He viewed religion as the inner core of education.²⁰ He put weight on religious education. But his concept of religion was spiritual in nature. According to him, religion should not bother about erecting temples or arranging lectures or organisations. It should stress realisation. A true religion tolerates and embraces all persons, irrespective of their religion.

Education for Development of Mind

Swamiji was against rote learning. He said that if education is restricted to information gathering, the libraries could be the greatest sages. He criticised the on-going system of education. He said:

The mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Control of the mind should be taught first. If I had my education to get over again and had any voice in the matter, I would learn to master my mind first, and then gather facts if I wanted them. It takes people a long time to learn things because they can't concentrate their minds at will.²¹

According to him the ideal education is not concerned with the filling of mind with a lot of facts. It is involved with the process of perfection of instruments and getting complete mastery over one's mind. He suggested exercises for developing power of concentration and meditation for perfecting the mind. He gave importance to meditation. "There is no knowledge without the power of meditation."²² According to Swami Sivananda, focusing one's mind on a point for 12 seconds is concentration and 12 such periods of uninterrupted concentration are a meditation. A serene and cheerful mind is very helpful for practising concentration and meditation. Swami Vivekananda stated that the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collection of facts. Sister Nivedita stated: "The training of attentions rather than the learning of any special subject, or the development of any particular faculty has always been, as Swami Vivekananda claimed for it, the chosen goal of Hindu education."²³ Thus, educational thoughts of Swami Vivekananda are based on Vedic psychology and not on Western psychology. This is also the case with the principle of Integral Education of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Emphasis on the Learning of Sanskrit

Swamiji emphasised the learning of Sanskrit. He said: "Sanskrit and prestige go together in India. As soon as you have that, none dare say anything against you."²⁴ The Mother suggested that Sanskrit should be the national language of India. Sanskrit is taught as a subject in the Ashram school, starting from Kindergarten.

Freedom in Education

Swami Vivekananda laid stress on the role of freedom in education. Generally, the parents decide the career of their children. Swamiji was of the opinion that the students are to be helped to learn. According to him, liberty is the first condition of growth.

Methods of Teaching

Swamiji stressed *Guru Griha Vasa*, staying in the Teacher's house. The student could learn a great deal by having close contact with the teacher. This was also the system in ancient India. The character and personality of the teacher influence the student a lot. A teacher being aware of the fact that there is the Divine in every student has to help the student to discover this truth and find the inner teacher. Swamiji says that a teacher cannot teach a child to grow but can help him grow. The teacher must respect actions of the children to allow them to grow. Help can be in the form of suggestions. Like a number of Western educationists, he also suggests that the method should first make the child concentrate on learning from concrete situations and objects and gradually proceed to abstract situations and objects. According to him, the teacher should give more weight to sharpening of the human mind than on acquisition of information. In order to develop powers of the mind, the learner must develop the power of concentration. The learner has to be initiated in the learning process through discussion. The teacher should not impose his ideas, but should try to offer them. The teacher must stress positive suggestions. Swamiji underlined self-education. He said:

A child teaches itself. But you can help it to go forward in its own way. What you can do is not of the positive nature, but of the negative. You can take away the obstacles, but knowledge comes out of its own nature. Loosen the soil a little, so that it may come out easily. Put a hedge around it, see that it is not killed by anything, and there your work stops. You cannot do anything else. The rest is a manifestation from within its own nature. So with the education of a child; a child educates itself.²⁵

He also said: "No one can teach anybody. The teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching. Thus Vedanta says that within man is all knowledge—even in a boy, it is so—and it requires only an awakening, and that much is the work of a teacher."²⁶ Sister Nivedita said that the teacher should never assume that he is teaching. In case of such assumptions, everything is spoilt. She also gave weight to self-education. She stated that "behind knowledge gained, there stands a man; there stands a mind, the task of the instruction can be changed into one of self-education."²⁷ She emphasised self-education of the child in the following words.

At every step in the ascent of knowledge, the child's own will must act. We must never carry the little one upwards and onwards; he must himself struggle to climb.

Our care must be to put just so much difficulty in his way as would stimulate his will, just so little as to avoid discouragement.²⁸

Teacher

The teacher, according to Swamiji, must be of sound character and personality. There must be purity of heart. The teacher has to be pure to make his/her words valuable. The teacher must be well versed in the scriptures. Love must be the medium through which the teacher can transmit knowledge. The teacher must be aware of the divine presence in a student. Swamiji was of the opinion that the external, human teacher offers only the suggestions which raise the internal teacher inside the learner to take up its activities.

Sri Aurobindo on Swami Vivekananda

Sri Aurobindo had much respect for Swami Vivekananda. He said: "Vivekananda was a soul of puissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men."²⁹

SUNIL BEHARI MOHANTY

References

1. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Pithoragarh), Vol. 5, p. 311.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 342.
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 302.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, pp. 301-302.
6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 5.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 369.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 15.
9. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 88.
10. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 308.
11. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 58.
12. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 342.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 489.
14. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 284.
15. Sister Nivedita: *Hints on National Education*, 1923, Udbodhan Office, Calcutta, p. 55.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
18. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 7, pp. 171-172.
19. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 16.
20. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 231.
21. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 280.
22. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 230.
23. Sister Nivedita: *Hints on National Education*, p. 9.
24. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 3, p. 299.
25. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 55.
26. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 366.
27. Sister Nivedita: *Hints on National Education*, pp. 24-25.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
29. *SABCL*, Vol. 17, p. 332.

DAKSHA AND KALI

MORE than thirty years ago, intrigued by some peculiar myths recounted in the Adi Parva of the *Mahabharata*, I had turned to my father who referred me to Sri Aurobindo's *The Secret of the Veda*. This inspired me to explore the meanings hidden in the stories of Uttanka, Aruni, Upamanyu, the churning of the ocean, Garuda and Kacha.¹ Manoj Das's recent talk published in *Invocation* swept me back into that engrossing *weltanschauung*.² While talking about the mythic background of *Savitri*, he provides a brilliant insight towards the end regarding the inscrutable enigma of the Sphinx that has fascinated and intrigued mankind over the millennia. But that is not what set off my train of thought.

Re-reading the text, I was riveted by the explanation he provides of the much-debated, puzzling image of Kali stepping on Shiva³ as a dyadic symbol representing the dialectical relationship between Time and Eternity:

Kali is the *prakriti* bound to time, with one leg raised, in eternal movement, wearing human heads as a garland representing all the destruction and creation that goes on. And she is dark because...bound to this space and time, we do not know where we are going to place the next step, we do not know whether we will stand or if we are going to fall down; so her whole movement, which is a precise rendition of what is to come, remains veiled from our knowledge. Hence the image of dark time as a dynamic posture of Kali, marching forward, firmly founded on eternity.

Where does Kali first appear? She is one of the ten terrifying emanations, *mahāvīdyōs*, Sati figures forth when Shiva refuses to let her attend her father Daksha's *yajna*. That is when he reluctantly agrees. We know what happens thereafter: unable to countenance her father's gross insult, Sati consumes herself in a supreme holocaust whereupon Shiva's hordes rout the gods and rishis attending the ritual and decapitate Daksha. Does this hold any meaning for us, or is it just another of those "time-pass" myths for the illiterate masses?

What does *daksha* mean? Let us go to the root, as Sri Aurobindo has shown us in his Vedic researches. It shares the same root as "dexterity," the Latin *dexter*, "on the right" (significantly, Daksha is born of Brahma's right thumb) and has the same meaning, "skilful." As usual, however, the Sanskrit has a subtler sense: "clever, intelligent, mental power, strength of will, energy" (Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*). It is not merely manual skill but the mind's powers that are signified.

Daksha was declared as "Prajapati", lord of creatures, by Brahma the creator, as Adam was by Jehovah. His overlordship sprouted a swiftly waxing arrogance that denied any superior. The Mother says about the first emanation of the Supreme Mother: "In the sense and the feeling of (his) supreme power, (he) cut connection with (his) Origin and...being separated from (his) Origin, entered into darkness. The first one was Consciousness, Consciousness in Light, and by cutting Himself from His Origin, He went down and down towards Unconsciousness...This happened after (he) came down into

the vital level.”⁴ The mythology of Daksha, “A power of fallen boundless self”⁵ records this descent into the vital too. Rishi Durvasa visited Daksha wearing goddess Jagadambika’s *amrita*-oozing garland that she had gifted him. Noticing Daksha’s eagerness to possess it, the sage gave it to him. Placing the garland in his bedroom, excited by its wondrous fragrance, Daksha made love to his wife, polluting its purity. Upbraided for this by Sati and Shiva, he nursed a grudge against them. For the pauper and skull-carrying Shiva, Daksha had nothing but disgust and never forgave his daughter Sati for wedding him. Once, when Daksha reached a sacrificial ceremony, he noticed that his son-in-law Shiva remained seated instead of rising to honour him. Considering himself grossly insulted, Daksha organised the *Brihaspatisavana*, a sacrificial ritual of heroic proportions to celebrate his glory, to which he invited all notables except Sati and Shiva.

Man, set above all creatures by the mind, gets so enamoured of his intellect’s powers that he brushes aside as inconsequential Prakriti and Purusha, regarding them as mental creations of the feeble-minded, made in his own image. He believes that there is nothing beyond material existence and achieving the acme of material excellence, acquiring wealth and power and becoming the master of the world as he sees it. Myth knows of him by many names: the Alouads, Nimrod, Kamalaksha-Tarakaksha-Vidyunmali, Lucifer. Striving to storm heaven, piling Ossa on Pelion, they build towering structures, magnificent edifices, great cities mocking the heavens: the Tower of Babel, Tripura—the triple cities of gold, silver and iron—Pandemonium, Leningrad/Stalingrad, the World Trade Centre. Divinity is denied, spiritual life scoffed at and sought to be ground under heel by state power. The Senecan tragic hero’s ominous mark of Cain is stamped upon man: “I am myself, alone.”

I climb, a claimant to the throne of heaven...
 I am God still unevolved in human form;
 I have seized the cosmic energies for my use.
 I have pored on her infinitesimal elements
 And her invisible atoms have unmasked...
 If God is at work his secrets I have found.⁶

Indra, the purified discrimination, comprehended Prajapati’s cryptic statement that the Atman, the psychic being, is Brahman. The Asura Virocana took it to mean his outer self. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, he ‘had mistaken her vital ego for [him]self; [he] had sought for [his] soul and found only [his] force. For [he] had said, like the Asura, “I am my body, my life, my mind, my temperament,” and become attached with a Titanic force to these; especially [he] had said, “I am my life and my body,” and than that there can be no greater mistake for man or nation. The soul of man...cannot be shut up in a physical, a vital, a mental or a temperamental formula. So to confine it...can only stifle the growth of the inner Reality and end in decay or the extinction that overtakes all that is unplastic and unadaptable.’⁷ That is the fate that overtakes Daksha, who misinterpreted—like many do today—*yogah karmasu kaushalam* to mean, “Yoga is skill in action” instead of real-

ising that “to be in yoga is the secret of karma.” Individualism is his chosen creed, the self the deity he celebrates, flying in the face of inexorable Kala:

In Egypt’s sandy silence, all alone,
 Stands a gigantic Leg, which far off throws
 The only shadow that the Desert knows.
 “I am great Ozymandias,” saith the stone,
 “The King of kings: this mighty city shows
 The wonders of my hand.” The city’s gone!
 Naught but the leg remaining to disclose
 The sight of that forgotten Babylon.

We wonder, and some hunter may express
 Wonder like ours, when through the wilderness
 Where London stood, holding the wolf in chase,
 He meets some fragment huge, and stops to guess
 What wonderful, but unrecorded, race
 Once dwelt in that annihilated place.⁸

As Nolini Kanta Gupta writes, “This imperiousness in man seems however to be a sheer imperviousness: it is a mask, a hollow appearance; for with all his knowledge, at the end he has attained no certainty, no absoluteness...his survey of the universe, his knowledge of boundless Nature and the inexhaustible multiplicities of creation have given him a sense of the endless and the infinite, but he has not the necessary light or capacity to follow those lines of infinity.”⁹ Titanic¹⁰ arrogance overreaches itself and falls on the other side, for ultimately man finds,

All is a speculation or a dream:
 In the end the world itself becomes a doubt.¹¹

Literally, Daksha loses his head. That is the fate Yajnavalkya warns Gargi of when she persists in questioning him about the nature of the ultimate. That intellect of which man is so inordinately proud incites him into the depths of disaster—nuclear or otherwise. The massive enterprise he has embarked upon lies in ruins; the sky-topping egotism is ground to dust:

The cry of the ego shall be hushed within,
 Its lion-roar that claims the world as food.¹²

One of the most puzzling emanations of Sati appears to symbolize this: Chinnamasta, holding her severed head in her hand, drinking the blood spurting from her neck. The head stands for the ego, for it is the mind that expresses individuality. This has been

brought to life memorably in Edgar Rice Burroughs' novel, *The Chessmen of Mars*, where numerous bodies lie about, rising to act the bidding of the heads that take possession of them. Chinnamasta severs the ego and consumes the vital being to liberate the soul.

The myth of Daksha does not end with his losing his head—that is precisely its beauty. It looks forward to a renewed existence. What if “the oblivion that succeeds the fall/Had blotted the crowded tablets of the past”? For, “all that was destroyed must be rebuilt.” And so, the decapitated Daksha is given a goat's head to become *Ajamukha*—“All can be done if the god-touch is there.”¹³

What does this peculiar hybrid form symbolise? In the *Rig Veda* (1.1.51) we find that Indra took birth as Savya, son of Rishi Angiras. He ate up the soma plant of sage Medhatithi who called him *Mesha* (goat) thereafter. Indra, the purified discrimination, consumes the *soma-rasa* of supernal bliss, *ananda*. Sri Aurobindo tells us that Angiras is the seer who kindles and tends the flame of aspiration (Agni) for the Divine. Agni's vehicle is the goat, *meshalaja*. *A-ja* is the unborn, the eternal. Daksha's *rajaso-tamasic* ego is shattered and replaced by Shiva's grace with the flaming aspiration of the immortal psychic being. Significantly, it all happens in the course of a *yajna*, the offering up of the lower self to the Supreme Self and the immediate cause is the perverse rejection of the Mother of Light by the human intellect.

After this we do not hear any more of the life of Daksha in the *Devi Bhagvata Purana*. Instead, we find him re-appearing in the *Vishnu Purana* as the child of the ten Pracetas rishis and their common wife Marisha, foster-daughter of Soma-Chandra, to father numerous daughters whose offspring populate the world.

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

Notes and references

1. *Secret of the Mahabharata*, serialised in *Mother India*; later published by Parimal Prakashan, Aurangabad, 1984.
2. No. 8, August 2000.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 19: “The Legend of Savitri: a mythic background,” talk at Savitri Bhavan on March 12, 2000, reprinted in *Mother India*.
4. “About Savitri—Part One”, *Invocation*, No. 6, February 2000, p. 10.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
6. Nolini Kanta Gupta: “Savitri: an Essay”, *Invocation* No. 7, April 2000, p. 31, 32.
7. Sri Aurobindo: *The Human Cycle*, 1962, pp. 52-53.
8. Horace Smith composed this sonnet “On a Stupendous Leg of Granite, Discovered Standing by Itself in the Deserts of Egypt, with the Inscription Inserted Below” on 27 December 1817, during an evening of sonnet-writing session with P. B. Shelley.
9. *Op. cit.*, p. 32.
10. “Titan” means “overreacher” in Greek.
11. Nolini Kanta Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
12. *Op. cit.*, p. 31.
13. This and the preceding quotations are from “About Savitri”, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of September 2002)

SRI AUROBINDO is the poet of yoga and he encouraged his disciples also to write poetry. The inspiration and help to write poetry, and the atmosphere prevailing in those days in the Ashram, brought out the latent poet in many disciples, who had earlier neither the capacity for writing poems nor even an inclination towards it. It would thus appear that collective aspiration of a flowing stream of poet-sadhaks could itself create a spiritual atmosphere conducive to a collective advance.

Nirodbaran and J. A. Chadwick came under the spell of the Muse, although they both had never before written a line of poetry. The name Arjava was given to Chadwick by Sri Aurobindo. It is a Sanskrit word which means simplicity and straightforwardness. At Cambridge Chadwick had been a brilliant scholar of Mathematical Philosophy and had little interest in poetry. At the Ashram he blossomed into a fine poet and wrote some exquisite poetry which was published in 1942 after his untimely death.

Both Arjava and Nirodbaran made attempts under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo. Thus Nirodbaran:

A moment's touch—what founts of joy arise
Running through dull grains of my life's dead sands
Like a cool stream...
The finite for this one moment brief drinks
The Infinite
One moment only, alas!
Time seizes and Space dungeons and the dream,
The deep spell breaks.¹

This is Arjava (*Invocation to Supermind*):

Shining lance, far above rifted woe,
Reveal to earth the ending of thy quest:
When thou to the Holy Logos shall be pressed,
The Hidden Love behind all universe
Sends ruby fire and ever-living flow,—
And night is fading, dreams of self disperse.²

Dilip Kumar Roy reminisces: “One morning he called on me and showed me a letter he had just received from Gurudev. And he read it out to me in great delight: ‘As for acquiring the sense and the power of rhythm, reading the poets may do something, but not all. There are two factors in poetic rhythms,—the technique (the variation of movement without spoiling the fundamental structure, right management of vowel and consonantal

assonances and dissonances, the masterful combination of the musical element of stress with the less obvious element of Quantity) and the secret soul of rhythm which uses but exceeds these things. The first you can learn, if you read with your ear always in a tapasya of vigilant attention to these constituents, but without the second what you achieve may be technically faultless and even skilful but poetically a dead letter. The soul of rhythm can only be found by listening in to what is behind the music of words and sound of things. You can get something of it by listening for that subtler element in great poetry, but mostly it must either grow or suddenly open in yourself. This sudden opening is what can come in Yoga if the power wishes to express itself in that way. I have seen both in myself and others a sudden flowering of capacities in every kind of activity come by the opening of consciousness,—so that one who laboured long without the least success to express himself in rhythm becomes a master of poetic language and cadences in a day. It is a question of right silence in the mind and the right openness to the Word that is trying to express itself—for the Word is there ready formed in those inner lanes where all artistic forms take birth, but it is the transmitting mind that must change and become a perfect channel and not an obstacle.’ I congratulated him.

“So that is how you have so suddenly blossomed into a poet, have you? because something suddenly opened in yourself?”

“Well, I have been turning out verse,” I laughed, flushing. “But to be a poet—it’s not nearly so easy, you know, I have to concentrate hard to produce a single poem.”³

We are giving below some poems of Arjava along with luminous comments of Sri Aurobindo:

FIRST GLIMPSE

Splendour in the penury of night;
 All this everlastingness of light;
 A dole of leaven hid within the meal;
 The vivid disarray that woodlands feel
 As trim dead Winter steals away
 On the first warm springful day.
 All outward heaviness of Death
 Made nought by one sweet cowslip’s breath,—
 Though love be the glint of a cowslip-flame
 That on the heels of winter came,
 No time can from these ears drive out
 Its golden-clamoured fairy shout,
 No swathing custom reave these eyes
 Of that sun-miracled surprise
 When on an elfin ridge of earth
 They saw Love’s fire-bloom spring to birth.

May 24, 1935

Questions by Arjava and Sri Aurobindo's Answers:

Arjava: I am afraid this is lacking in unity—not only in the non-uniformity of metre. And the rhythm does not seem to be handled very well,—e.g. “Made nought by one sweet cowslip’s breath”. I feel as if the theme had been imperfectly mastered and there is some uncertainty in the handling.

Sri Aurobindo: I don’t find any lack of unity or uncertainty in handling. Perhaps what you mean is that there is not the clear building or structure of thought which there had been latterly in your poems; but there is another kind of development more subtle if less explicit and in its kind, which is a very beautiful one—a series of suggestive images culminating in one which is chosen to develop the theme—it seems to me a great success. There is a great beauty in the poem throughout.

Arjava: In the last line but one is it not a mistake to have “sun-lit” after “sun-miracled” of the line before?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, that I think might be altered. It is a little difficult, for one cannot touch the “sun-miracled surprise”, while “sunlit” is obviously the right epithet for the “ridge”; but perhaps something as good can be found for the “sun-lit ridge”.

The rhythm does not seem to me to be at fault—the line you speak of is a little slow and perhaps at one place difficult in its stepping; but it is too good in its language and feeling to change.⁴

NEARING DUSK

Have you seen the Evening Primrose open
 In the Dusk,
 When the surface din of day is newly broken
 And its husk
 Is trolled across the sky by homing rook?

And silence-fall is mingled with the dewfall
 And many bats
 Are summoning the shadows with their cue-call
 From the vats
 Where the dawnghosts hang for hours on moon’s-ort hook.

A hedgepig threads the path along the streamway
 At gambol-gait;
 Gnats that hover in the aftersunset gleam-play
 Mate, remate
 Where water-buttercups make white the brook.

One, launched ungainly on dorbeetlefare,
 Heavily flies;
 And one, with pinions furred, tweet-tweets an air
 In dream-replies—
 A bird wingweary, from her dozy nook.

Around the Evening Primrose by the wonstead
 The moths now flit;
 For it summons with pale fragrance from its gloamstead:
 Dusk's candle lit
 Spires silenceward... "The Primrose, look."

November 6, 1935

Sri Aurobindo's Comment: "The technique is admirable—and the substance, choice of details and description admirable. One gets the atmosphere as well as the picture of the thing described—the hour of nearing dusk."⁵

SANCTUARY

Green gathering of summer-mantled trees
 Against a hush of turquoise-torpid sky,
 And underfoot pale cow-wheat,—yellow rattle,—
 A tall-stemmed toadflax, more yellow than the twain,
 Trim whorled with leaves of smoothly glaucous hue.
 A footway skirts the flanges of each bole
 And roughens with the jut and twist of root
 And darkly wanders through embodied shade
 As it might lead to unimagined core,
 Stripped self, essential Form of woodlandness.

October 27, 1935

Sri Aurobindo's Comment: "These lines are very fine—the poetic force and vividness of the description, at once precise and suggestive, are very remarkable—there is throughout the choice of the exact word needed. The last three lines are admirable in their depth and power."⁶

SUN THE PERSON

(One of the poems written when the poet lay dying of incurable disease)

Sun the Person is leaning down;
 His rustle of Godhead's on my skin;

It takes my pain
 To use, I suppose,
 To colour a Rose,
 To kill a man.
 Within, within
 The hands are working; the lips whistle
 Into my mouth the pomp of his purple
 Golden magnificent Breath...
 As He does, I look down at my death.

A Comment by Amal Kiran: “In this moving snatch of a poem which submits the ailing body to the Supreme Spirit’s will as if to a master surgeon, every line speaks sensitive inner perception. The poet-soul feels, intimately and concretely, the golden Presence that is at work from above, holding the processes of the evolving world together, turning each individual travail to significant purpose in the whole, making and breaking forms with a single movement that carries earthly life towards some life divine. The last line is splendid in gesture. There are three acts of awareness in it, culminating from the import of the four preceding verses. First, a simple yet sublime sense of the body being sacrificed, as it were, in the service of a luminous inner remoulding. Then, a heroic spiritual contempt of the common destiny of frail flesh—somewhat as in the terrible words which a disciple of Vivekananda heard from the latter’s lips in a dream after his passing: ‘I have spat out my body.’ Finally, a rising up of the human self towards Sun the Person, a radiant superiority achieved in a communion with the golden Presence overhead by the poet-soul’s getting rapt into His sovereign and ever-creative afflatus which is the conquest of all mortality.”⁷

Dilip Kumar recollects: “Of his life and *sadhana* there under the name of Arjava it is not for me to speak. That it brought about a profound psychic transformation in his nature is clear from the fact that he, whose language had hitherto been limited to the arid propositions of intellectual philosophy, became a poet and, with the aid of poetry, entered the inner worlds of which, till then, he had but dreamed.”⁸

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

1. *SABCL*, Vol. 9, p. 22.
2. *Life-Literature-Yoga*, pp. 187-188.
3. *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* by Dilip Kumar Roy, p. 151.
4. *Overhead poetry* by K. D. Sethna, pp. 25-26.
5. *Life-Literature-Yoga*, pp. 70-73.
6. *Mother India*, April 2000, pp. 256-257.
7. *Ibid.*, 21 February 1951.
8. *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of September 2002)

Aesthetics

TAGORE'S immediate fame was not due to his 'global' awareness. It was the 'native' stuff that made him popular all over the world. He was seeking to discover ancient India for a new audience. His language was new and he knew how to think it out again for the future and how many things of the old world had no relevance to the present and the future. It is this awareness of the ever progressive new that relates him to Sri Aurobindo. Unlike Sri Aurobindo, he recreates the basics of Indian spirituality and mysticism. His poetry was often simple and sweet and people were athirst for the stuff, the inward look in poetry and in the daily life. The Renascent India took him fondly in her arms as a sweet reminder. His earth-oriented theory of art and aesthetics was a sensation in those moments of re-awakening. While Tagore and Sri Aurobindo were recording their views on art and poetry and writing their best poetry almost simultaneously (barring Savitri, which Sri Aurobindo began writing anew after Tagore's death), Sri Aurobindo's words were known only to a small group of readers. It was good for the readers that they had the foretaste of the mighty works of Sri Aurobindo in the popular Bengali writer.

One was a public writer; the other lived in isolation and above the artistic ego. Sri Aurobindo was conscious about his achievement, in fact very conscious but he could ignore easily the call for publicity and awards. His life and the Mother's life falsified the popular belief that the artist could never surrender. Both were supreme artists and both kept the Divine above everything else. Their lives were two wonderful pieces of art. Tagore could only aspire for that status. He did. That is why Sri Aurobindo chose him in *The Future Poetry* to verify the inward turn in modern poetry.

His [Tagore's] work is a constant music of the overpassing of the borders, a chant-filled realm in which the subtle sounds and lights of the truth of the spirit give new meanings to the finer subtleties of life.¹

Tagore learnt to write the poetry of incantation easily, because he was steeped in the Upanishads. The individual talent boldly went forward with his historical sense to see life in a new way, "to build bridges of visioned light and rhythm between the infinite and eternal and the mind and soul and life of man."² Sri Aurobindo attached great value to this fusion of Spirit and Life in the poetry of Tagore, Whitman, A.E., Meredith and Yeats. Tagore's poetry indicates a turning point in the history of poetry, a moving away from the crude exterior to the finer subtleties of inner life.

How conscious was Tagore himself as a writer of incantatory verse or as a revealer of the secret self in man? In *What is Art?* we get a clear view of his concept of art and the theory of the surplus. He distinguishes between the physical man and the personal man

before introducing his theory of the surplus. The personal man wishes to find something to fulfil his need of love. This world lies beyond the necessities of man. The personal man is the highest in man. "And it has personal relations of its own with the great world, and comes to it for something to satisfy personality."³ Science has no access to this mysterious world, where utility is missing. This world cannot be analysed and can only be felt. This is the world of Art, where the immaterial has a king-size status:

The most important distinction between the animal and man is this, that the animal is very nearly bound within the limits of its necessities, the greater part of its activities being necessary for its self-preservation and the preservation of race. Like a retail shopkeeper, it has no large profit from its trade of life; the bulk of its earnings must be spent in paying back the interest to its bank. Most of its resources are employed in the mere endeavour to live. But man, in life's commerce, is a big merchant. He earns a great deal more than he is absolutely compelled to spend. Therefore there is a vast excess of wealth in man's life, which gives him the freedom to be useless and irresponsible to a great measure. There are large outlying tracts, surrounding his necessities, where he has objects that are ends in themselves.⁴

This 'surplus' is the source of Art, because the emotional efflux must find an outlet of expression. This 'surplus' is Greek to the world of science, which is just material, from which the personal man has been expelled:

Our emotions are the gastric juices which transform this world of appearance into the more intimate world of sentiments. On the other hand, the outer world has its own juices, having their various qualities which excite our emotional activities. This is called in our Sanskrit rhetoric *rasa*, which signifies outer juices having their response in the inner juices of our emotions. And a poem, according to it, is a sentence or sentences containing juices, which stimulate the juices of emotion. It brings to us ideas, vitalized by feelings, ready to be made into the life-stuff of our nature.⁵

Science can easily explain things by analysis and experiment. But, how can we express the personal man in us? Facts are useless, impotent, often lies in the world of love. The laws of science and the laws of emotion are two different things. The personal man deals with taste. Only tasting can help us realize the taste:

Therefore the Sanskrit rhetoricians say, in poetry we have to use words which have got the proper taste,—which do not merely talk, but conjure up pictures and sing. For pictures and songs are not merely facts,—they are personal facts. They are not only themselves, but ourselves also. They defy analysis and they have immediate access to our hearts.⁶

But man also expresses his personality in the material world, where self-expression is not his primary aim. Our consciousness then remains on a low plane. As love or other emotions creep in, our consciousness expands and seeks the medium of Art. For Tagore, our true life is reflected in Art. He unites his voice with Sri Aurobindo when he says:

Man is true, where he feels his infinity, where he is divine, and the divine is the creator in him. Therefore with the attainment of his truth he creates. For he can truly live in his own creation and make out of God's world his own world... If man could only listen to the voice that rises from the heart of his own creation, he would hear the same message that came from the Indian sage of the ancient time: "Hearken to me, ye children of the Immortal, dwellers of the heavenly worlds, I have known the Supreme Person who comes as light from the dark beyond."⁷

Sri Aurobindo's theory of mantric poetry speaks of this voice of God as a reality in the creation of a poet-seer. He too gets the idea from the poetry of ancient India.

Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, the two practising poets, have all the time been aware of the native tradition, which had seen 'enjoyment' as the soul of literature. Of course, it is a disinterested enjoyment. The Sanskrit word *nishkāma* means an absolute disinterestedness. How can 'enjoyment' be a pure activity? Let us listen to Sri Aurobindo:

The world is a movement of God in His own being; we are the centres and knots of divine consciousness which sum up and support the processes of His movement. The world is His play with His own self-conscious delight, He who alone exists, infinite, free and perfect; we are the self-multiplications of that conscious delight, thrown out into being to be His playmates. The world is a formula, a rhythm, a symbol-system expressing God to Himself in His own consciousness,— it has no material existence but exists only in his consciousness and self-expression; we, like God, are in our inward being That which is expressed, but in our outward being terms of that formula, notes of that rhythm, symbols of that system. Let us lead forward God's movement, play out His play, work out His formula, execute His harmony, express Him through our selves in His system. This is our joy and our self-fulfilment; to this end we who transcend and exceed the universe, have entered into universe- existence.⁸

This is a subtler observation than Tagore's, but the basic similarity is clear. *Ananda* is the key word in Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics. This is directly linked up with the theory of ancient Indian *rasa*, which stands for an integral aesthetic experience. But Sri Aurobindo does not stick to the ancient rhetoricians; he sees an evolving aesthetics with the evolution of man's consciousness. What was there in the past is certainly very interesting; what is coming in the future is more strange. This prophetic note in Sri Aurobindo's theory of poetry gives a new dimension to his aesthetics and makes him a theoretician of tomorrow:

This poetry will speak of new things and of old things in a new way and with a new voice, not by any exclusion or diminution of its province, but by a great heightening above, a great intimacy within, a great enlargement and wideness around, a vision of inmost things and therefore a changed vision of the world and life and the untold potentialities of the soul's experience.⁹

Sri Aurobindo is thinking of art and poetry which will be in harmony with a new world, a new creation. He is not thinking of a limited spirituality, a half-hearted flirtation with the Spirit, but of the highest consciousness, which will give birth to the greatest art and poetry:

In the greatest art and poetry there should be something of the calm of the impersonal basing and elevating the effort and struggle of the personality, something of the largeness of the universal releasing and harmonising the troubled concentrations of the individual existence, something of the sense of the transcendent raising the inferior, ignorant and uncertain powers of life towards a greater strength and light and Ananda.¹⁰

The change of consciousness initiates a change in poetry. The form of the new poetry will not be pre-conceived. The Spirit will create the form, only if the overactive intellect does not interfere in its natural work:

Nature creates perfectly because she creates directly out of life and is not intellectually self-conscious, the spirit will create perfectly because it creates directly out of self and is spontaneously supra-intellectually all-conscious.¹¹

Sri Aurobindo, the spiritual existentialist, knows well the value of the individual personality. His yoga does not seek to abolish what Tagore calls the personal man. Every person has his own personal way of enjoying either the Divine or His scattered rays. Tagore's personal man will remain relevant to the poetry of the future. His explanation is remarkable:

And this consciousness of the infinite, in the personal man, ever strives to make its expressions immortal and to make the whole world its own. In Art, the person in us is sending its answers to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the world of facts.¹²

The presence of the personal man in every poet will lead to varieties of experience in the poetry of the future. For Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, life is perpetual creation. The Eternal is being manifested progressively. And this life is extremely important, a chance for new discoveries, a manifold opportunity to discover the mighty rhythms in our upward and inward march. The aspiration in Tagore is quite Aurobindonian, as we can see in the following passage:

Let us express our infinite in everything found in us, in works we do, in things we use, in men with whom we deal, in the enjoyment of the world with which we are surrounded. Let our soul permeate our surroundings and create itself in all things, and show its fullness by fulfilling needs of all times. This life of ours has been filled with the gifts of the divine giver.¹³

Like Sri Aurobindo, Tagore knows that joy and love are the two ways and that the intellect is partial knowledge. The poets and artists of the future will depend more on joy and love and less on the intellect. The hidden vast is beyond the range of the intellect. The poets of tomorrow will turn their eyes from outside to the self of man. They will not be satisfied by a merely cultured poetry dealing with finer things of the surface. The spirit will turn to its own intuitive will and vision. Sri Aurobindo sees a great possibility in the lyric form, which is a moment of heightened soul experience. He draws our notice to its very wide range and flexibility. He was surely thinking of the possibilities opened up by Tagore and Whitman in the lyrical mould. Let us listen to Sri Aurobindo's prophecy, keeping the memory of Tagore alive:

It is therefore in the lyric nearest to the freshness of an original impulse that a new spirit in poetry is likely to become aware of itself and feel out for its right ways of expression and to discover with the most adaptable freedom and variety its own essential motives and cadences, first forms and simpler structures before it works out victoriously its greater motions or ampler figures in narrative and drama.¹⁴

Sri Aurobindo's aesthetic vision considers the future drama with reference to the inwardization of literature in future. He is surely thinking of the dramatic trends in Tagore and Maeterlinck. The success of Tagore's lyrical plays puts a significant question before us: Will the drama remain an objective art in the future? Many of the speeches from Tagore's characters are records of rhythmic voyages of self-discovery.

Nandini (the heroine of *Red Oleanders*)

... he holds an oar in each hand and ferries me across the stormy waters; he catches wild horses by the mane and rides with me through the woods; he shoots an arrow between the eyebrows of the tiger on the spring, and scatters my fear with loud laughter.¹⁵

The change of consciousness will create new forms of drama and fiction. Speech will reflect the consciousness and literature of the surface will lose its value in a spiritual society. Tagore's greatest contribution to the Bengali language and literature is this. He is a pioneer of a new poetry, a new aesthetics and a new language. He is also the most authentic forerunner of Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics and lyric poetry. Unlike Tagore, Sri Aurobindo does not speak in general about the poetry of higher consciousness. He maps the consciousness tiers, gives name to the ascending planes of consciousness, character-

ises them, and initiates a group of poets to write poetry as mantra of the Real. We shall discuss his theory of poetry in a separate chapter.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

References

1. *SABCL* Vol. 9, p. 229.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
3. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. Two, Sahitya Akademi, p. 349.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 353.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 356.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 359-60.
8. *SABCL* Vol. 17, p. 50.
9. *SABCL* Vol. 9, p. 251.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
12. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. Two, p. 362.
13. *Ibid.*, 372.
14. *SABCL* Vol. 9, pp. 258-259.
15. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. Two, p. 227.

Thought-control is the third state of our mental discipline. Once the enlightened judge of our consciousness has distinguished between useful and harmful thoughts, the inner guard will come and allow to pass only approved thoughts, strictly refusing admission to all undesirable elements.

With a commanding gesture the guard will refuse entry to every bad thought and push it back as far as possible.

It is this movement of admission and refusal that we call thought-control.

20 September 1957

The Mother

ON LIBERATING ENGLISH TO BE A WORLD LANGUAGE

(Continued from the issue of September 2002)

THERE are different perceptions about English in India. Some have been hostile to it because they tend to regard it primarily as a remnant of a foreign imposition, a vestige of our colonial past, and as a language which has usurped the rightful place of indigenous languages and their literatures. It has been looked upon with favour by those who regard it primarily as valuable means of promoting the commercial, economic, technological and industrial interests of the country in the modern world. A few have seen it as an immense cultural asset, as our window not only on world science but also on world culture. There is, however, another equally important dimension of English: English is a valuable resource for India not only because it opens to us the magnificent countries of the mind but also because it renders possible to us the most magnificent expression of our own soul. Some Indians have felt that India needs English to express her inmost individuality which, they feel, cannot be expressed through any other language.

There has been a growing perception that the English language, particularly in many of the Third World Countries, “will continue to grow, in the breadth of its uses and the number of its users, for just so long as those who use it feel it as their own possession, with its own range of uses, its own body of users, its own set of linguistic features” (Pride, 1982).* Pride rightly stresses the point that “The English language of the future must be accepted from within, rather than be felt as something imposed from outside.” English is probably the first language to have ever been accepted ‘from within’, so widely. This acceptance from within by people of diverse linguistic backgrounds and from different parts of the world is an important feature of a World language.

Nothing illustrates this inward acceptance of English better than the case for Indian writing in English made nearly 40 years ago by K. D. Sethna (1953, 1968). Sethna pointed out how English because of the extraordinary crop of poets in English history is not only unquestionably the most highly developed of modern languages but also how English has come to surpass all modern languages, including those of India herself, in acquiring the immediacies and intimacies of intuitive speech and thus become a language best suited to express the ‘true soul’ of India:

... English is bound to be most valuable to the genius of a country which is not only synthetical and assimilative in the extreme but also spiritual in the nth degree; for, a speech with extraordinary potentialities of strangely suggestive effects suits most the magic, the mystery, the depth, the sudden revelatory reach of the spiritual consciousness. English promises, therefore, to be the expressive body par excellence of our true soul.

* N.B. References will appear at the end of the series.

Sethna was careful to recognise that not every Indian would have either the gift or the urge for using the English language for creative self-expression. But he declared that to maintain that Indian writing in English can only be an exotic curiosity and never an organic unfolding of genuine Indianness is to indulge in a sweeping superficiality.

During the last four decades Indo-Anglian literature has established itself firmly through a whole host of writers. Iyengar (1985, 4th edition) is a recent history of this literature that runs into 848 pages. And yet doubts of various kinds have been expressed either about the authenticity of this literature and its value or both. An evaluation of Indo-Anglian literature is not relevant to my purposes here. I am interested here only in the nature of the reasons advanced for doubting the adequacy of English to be a literary medium of genuinely Indian sensibility and in the nature of the response this scepticism evokes.

The English Language and the Indian Spirit: Correspondence between Kathleen Raine and K. D. Sethna (1986) is a valuable document devoted to this issue. Kathleen Raine is an eminent English poet and critic and Sethna is one of the finest critics and poets of our time writing in English in India. This correspondence spans the period 1961 to 1964 and it has an unpublished sequel to it. Kathleen Raine in her letters takes the position that an alien tongue such as English cannot be an authentic voice of India, and Sethna tries to show why Raine's position is untenable.

Raine raises this problem in one of her early letters (dated 5.8.61) thus:

Only one thing troubles me: why do you write in English? You write of the land of India, subtilised in an almost physical sense, by the quality of life that has been lived there: is not the same thing true of language? Have you not in using English, exiled your poetic genius from India, to which it must belong, without making it a native of England, for English learned as a foreign language can never nourish the invisible roots of poetry.... *I do not believe that we can—or if we could, that we have the right to—write poetry in a language other than our own.* (emphasis added)

Raine is asking here whether English which is learned as a foreign/second language in India can ever nourish the roots of poetry for Indians. She is not questioning whether Indian English is a legitimate variety of English and she therefore cannot be held guilty of the attitudinal sins which, according to Kachru (1976), Prator commits in his 1968 paper entitled "The British Heresy in TESL".

Although Kachru's reply was adequate to Prator's kind of "ethnocentrism", it does not directly address Raine's question, which is why does an Indian writer like, say, Sethna or Tagore use English for writing poetry, because according to her a foreign language cannot nourish the roots of poetry. The assumption here is that one cannot express himself creatively except in one's own native language.

In a subsequent letter (dated 1.11.61) Raine puts her objection to writing poetry in a foreign language more precisely:

You write about the superb correspondence of Sanskrit words to meanings that are not so much defined by them as made resonant in them. In the case of Sanskrit their precision is perhaps (I speak in ignorance) greatest in the metaphysical level, least in the natural. *Now the English language is just the opposite; its beauty lies in its ability to convey the very nature of England, its woods and flowers and weather and animals and people with their peculiarly English attitudes....* You may use English abstract terms, or such international and empty words for uses they were never born for, since words cannot be separated from the particular group-soul, grown on a certain kind of earth, under certain skies, and conversing for centuries upon certain themes (Catholic Christendom up to the Renaissance, and other mentalities since then) with people of a certain shared kind and quality, class or caste. *A world-language would be no language at all—at least to poets it would be no language at all.* (emphasis added)

In reply, Sethna points out:

The fact is that the words of a language are never born once for all with an aptness to just one type of outlook and attitude, character and temperament. The mentality of a group is itself an evolving phenomenon and words are constantly getting reborn. Their rebirth is not confined to the group's development, either; they take on new uses in the midst of novel patterns of experience under the "plastic press" of an original individuality. Particularly is this true of English words, for the English group-soul itself is of a most diversified oneness. Thus there is such a heterogeneity in it that there is no persistent tradition of literary expression, of style. Style in English is a thousand different things; the personal element is rampant. English literature is not so much a nation speaking in a single recognisable voice as a crowd of men commingling their idiosyncratic accents. And some of these individuals are so uncommon that at first sight they hardly seem English in their expression, and yet they stand as genuine creators of English literature. (emphasis added)

Before we come to the heart of Sethna's case for Indian writing in English, it might be useful to note that there are two interesting points that Raine has markedly raised here: one is that only in one's mother tongue can one really write poetry, and two, that a world language is no language at all for poetry, however useful it may be globally for the more mundane purposes of trade and commerce. The second point is not crucial to my argument in this paper. I shall therefore consider in brief only her contention that the heart of India cannot express itself in a foreign tongue, in this case, English.

The notion of a mother tongue or even of a native speaker is an elusive one (Paikeday, 1987). The general assumption, however, is that one's mother tongue is the most natural medium for creative self-expression. Nolini Kanta Gupta (1970) opens up for us a new

way of looking at this question of what can be a natural medium for creative self-expression. Referring to the view held by many that a language which is not native to one cannot be used creatively for literary expression, he points out:

But this is judging the present or the future by the past. Mankind is no longer exclusively or even mainly national in its outlook; it cannot remain so if it is to progress, to take the next step in evolution. We say if mankind overpasses the nationalistic stage and attains something of the international consciousness and disposition, it would be possible and even natural for a few at least among the educated to express themselves in and through the wider world language, not merely as an instrument of business deal, but as a vehicle of literary and aesthetic creation.... A language learnt for commercial and diplomatic transaction cannot remain limited to that function. Those who intend merely to learn may end very probably by cultivating it. (pp. 289-90)

Gupta makes a case here for English as the natural medium for the emerging international consciousness, and suggests that whoever possesses this consciousness, no matter whether English is native to him or not, may find it natural for him to use English as the medium of his creative self-expression.

There is another variant of the mother tongue argument which runs somewhat like this: if a foreign language is to be the medium of literary expression even for the few, then they must have a living contact with the people who breathe the atmosphere of the language and live it. Gupta (1970) admits that in India English never was a flowering from the mother soil; it was something imposed from above, at best grafted from outside. But then he points out that "... a national language flowers in one way, an international language flowers in another way. The atmosphere if not the soil, will be, in the new international consciousness, the inner life of mankind.... And minds open to it, soaked in it will find it quite natural to express themselves in a language that embodies that spirit." (p. 291) Thus Gupta is suggesting that English is the linguistic counterpart of the new international consciousness and it can therefore be the natural choice of those who have attained this consciousness. In other words, the older notion of a mother tongue is not relevant to World English.

Gupta here is trying to come to terms with World English as a new phenomenon and contends that the use of English by a small group of Indians cannot be regarded as strange or unnatural just because English is not their mother tongue in the older sense. Now to return to Sethna who offers yet one more perspective on World English and makes an even more persuasive case for Indian writing in English:

... English is a language I find more suited to the deepest movements of the Indian soul than are any of the modern Indian languages. The only rival to it with regard to these movements of the Indian soul is ancient Sanskrit which cannot in its full historical form be revived for common use today. I am not

flashing out a paradox when I write that, together with the Sanskrit of the Rigveda, the Upanishads and the Gita, the English of Shakespeare, Milton, Vaughan, Donne, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Francis Thompson, Patmore (of *The Unknown Eros*), Whitman, Hopkins, AE and Yeats, is the most subtly, intensely, profoundly developed language in the world, and *if a new and modern Rigveda or Upanishad or Gita will be written it will first be in English!* A further truth with the appearance of a paradox is that, since English is the language most subtly, intensely, profoundly developed and since India is still the country with the greatest spiritual experience, *the spiritual fulfilment of English speech along the lines indicated or initiated by many English poets themselves will first come—if it already hasn't—through Indians and not Englishmen*, Indians who have steeped themselves not only in the deepest culture of their own land by Yogic discipline but also in the finest essence of English culture that has been diffused here for some centuries. The coming together, rather the love-affair, of India and the English language has on it the stamp of divine destiny. (pp. 10-11) (emphasis added)

My aim here in highlighting this segment of the correspondence between Raine and Sethna is to show how certain kinds of problems which are legitimate in the context of a natural human language lose their point when used in the context of World English. Consider, for example, Sethna's contention that "if a new and modern Rigveda or Upanishad or Gita will be written it will first be in English". The Rigveda, the Upanishads and the Gita are the expressions of the profoundest soul-stirring articulated by the Indian consciousness. If such soul-stirrings were once again to move an Indian, he would seek to express them first in English. This claim by Sethna shows how intimate the inner bond can be which many people feel with the English language. A somewhat analogous sentiment has been expressed by P. Lal (Iyengar 1985) another eminent Indo-Anglian poet, in the following words:

Without trying to be facetious, I should like to suggest that only in English can real Indian poetry be written; any other poetry is likely to be Bengali-slanted or Gujerati-biased, and so on. Only Indian writing in English can hope to attain the 'Indian' flavour.

It should be possible to find statements expressing similar sentiments about English made by non-native speakers of English from other parts of the world. Thus, for example, Leopold S. Senghor, a leading poet of Senegal, regards English as "an instrument which, with its plasticity, its rhythm and its melody, corresponds to the profound, volcanic affectivity of the Black Peoples".

Consider also the ring of self-confidence in Sethna's words when he says: "... the spiritual fulfilment of English speech along the lines indicated or initiated by many English poets themselves will first come—if it already hasn't—through Indians and not

Englishmen...” Sethna is saying that the first fully developed spiritual voice in English will be that of an Indian. He even implies that such a voice has already appeared, namely Sri Aurobindo whose epic poem *Savitri* has been hailed by some western critics as ‘probably the greatest epic in the English language’ although Indian academia is still baffled by it.

It is not crucial to my argument here that you accept the claims made for Indian writing in English either by Sethna, Gupta or by Lal. What is important is the very presence of this sentiment which English invokes in people like Sethna, Lal and Senghor. They feel that English is the natural voice of their inmost being, as if it is almost their mother tongue. This is a characteristic feature of World English; it evokes mother-tongue-like sentiments even from people for whom it is not the mother tongue. A World Language seems to have the potential of being an auxiliary mother tongue of all citizens of the world no matter what their primary mother tongue is. This seems to be one of the properties of a World Language.

It is important to realise that there is no implication here that English is the only or even the primary language of creative expression for Indians. That undoubtedly is the prerogative of indigenous Indian languages for a vast majority of Indians. What is claimed here is that English can be for some Indians the authentic voice of their creative self as Indian languages are for many others.

(To be concluded)

MANGESH NADKARNI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Renaissance: Notes and Papers with Commentaries on Sri Aurobindo's Criticism by Goutam Ghosal, Subarnarekha 2001, pp. 72.

MUCH to the surprise of the academicians, Sri Aurobindo is becoming more and more relevant to the syllabi of both the arts and science faculties. Of late, he has generated a tremendous appeal among the elite of English, Bengali and Sanskrit literatures.

Goutam Ghosal has spent a considerable number of years trying to explore the art of Sri Aurobindo. He basically concentrates on the literary merits of Sri Aurobindo's prose, poetry and criticism. Each time he surprises us, as Dr. P. Raja has rightly pointed out, with an 'unexamined aspect' of the Master's genius. In Santiniketan who would have thought of Sri Aurobindo's masterful commentaries on the Renaissance art, literature and culture? Ghosal picks out a significant passage from *The Future Poetry* and presents it just before the prefatorial notes along with another masterful passage from Walter Pater. Together, these two passages sum up the nature of the New Thinking in 15th century Italy and in 16th century England. While Pater speaks of the Italian Renaissance, Sri Aurobindo summarises its nature in England. The brief Preface is a bold and justified claim for Sri Aurobindo. Never was such a great writer so undervalued in the history of mankind. That too in his own country! Ghosal refers to those who had detected quite early the subtleties, and the greatness of the Master's art. They had said much before: 1) Sri Aurobindo writes English like Sanskrit; 2) He is a great economiser; 3) He writes with the constellations for his companions. Those early interpreters of Sri Aurobindo's true genius were Raymond Frank Piper, Nolini Kanta Gupta and the critic who reviewed *The Life Divine* for *The Times Literary Supplement*.

Then we have three introductory notes by three expert hands from Santiniketan, Kalyan K. Chatterjee, Sukla Basu Sen and Debarati Bandyopadhyaya. The rest of the book shows us how to apply Sri Aurobindo's literary principles and clues to the great texts of the Renaissance. The book virtually starts with Ghosal's commentaries on two passages from Sri Aurobindo, one from *The Future Poetry* and the other from *Hindu Drama*. It would be very useful for post-graduate and doctoral students if the Sri Aurobindo Ashram reprints these two passages with Ghosal's introduction to them.

Chapter 3 is entitled *Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare, the Poet and the Creator*. Ghosal does not just repeat the arguments of K. D. Sethna, but clarifies the clues by his own examples from *King Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. *Timon of Athens: A Consciousness Approach* is a completely original piece, as Sri Aurobindo has not spoken of the play. Ghosal interprets the play from the Aurobindonian standpoint.

Chapter 5—Dr. Faustus: Marlowe's Dateless Diary—is another illustration of Sri Aurobindo's brief commentary on the powerful Elizabethan playwright. Ghosal draws our notice to the author-centred criticism of Marlowe, where Sri Aurobindo has companions like Una Ellis Fermor, Roma Gill and William Urry. All of them have kept the author alive in Marlowe's text. Ghosal rightly observes:

The pain of the lost face seems to have been Marlowe's own pain. The author is very much alive and the crucial question is related to the crisis of the unconquered vital. Repentance is a psychic quality. It is veiled by the misguided vital. Faustus or his sensa-tional creator is aware of his wrong choice, but he does not know how to tame the vital.

In *Chapter 6*, Ghosal further illustrates the author-centered line of criticism showing us Marlowe projecting out himself in his three principal figures: Queen Isabella, Younger Mortimer and Edward II. In all these observations Ghosal is guided by the brief clues relating to the doctrine of Karma, as referred to by Sri Aurobindo in *The Future Poetry*.

Chapter 7 contains a very fine commentary on the sonnets of Petrarch and Shakespeare. In the last chapter, the writer shows the influence of Plotinus on Castiglione. Here too he sees, in the light of Sri Aurobindo, how Castiglione wrongly interprets Plotinus by equating intellect with the highest culture. Ghosal detects this limitation in Castiglione, because as an Aurobindonian he knows that the intellect is not all and that Plotinus was not an "intellectual" but a "mystic".

Such a book running to only 72 pages is a pointer to the potential of a writer, whom Dr. P. Raja has recently called 'a titanic force in the history of Aurobindoniana' (SABDA Newsletter).

SARANI MONDAL

Bhagavad Gita and Modern Problems (compilation of Papers Presented at the International Seminar on Gita in December 2000). Gita Swadhyaya Samithi and Bharatheeya Vichara Kendram, Thiruvananthapuram, September 2001. Price Rs. 250.

In 1998, the Gita Swadhyaya Samithi initiated the 'Gita Movement' in Kerala and received an overwhelming response especially from the youth. The organizers felt that they had identified the aspiration of the youth for meaningful spirituality. In order to spread the message of the Gita even wider the Gita Swadhyaya Samithi organized the "International Gita Seminar" in collaboration with Bharatheeya Vichara Kendram and was co-sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India in December 2000. The book under review is a compilation of the papers presented at this seminar in Thiruvananthapuram.

The title of the volume *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Problems* at once evokes a host of suggestions before us. The Gita with its universal message of love and inner progress is secular in nature. The participants have addressed several crucial problems plaguing modern existence. In their articles they have sought guidance from this text. Can the Gita, formulated some five thousand years ago, provide solutions or can it at least elucidate the various dimensions of modern-day existence? Since these problems did not exist at the time of its composition, how can the Gita provide answers to them? According to most of the scholars at the seminar, the Gita is the vehicle of Sanatana Dharma or the Eternal Principles. The fundamental truths highlighted in the Gita are applicable

everywhere down the ages. This is possible because the Gita probes deep into human nature and its vagaries. It is the task of the individual to apply the universal truth of the Gita to his particular problem. Spiritual leaders have worked out this challenge of application by developing the theory of Yugadharma. The outer forms and application may change from time to time but the core message of the Gita remains intact. From this perspective, the precepts of the Gita are relevant for any situation including the contemporary situation.

The authors included in this volume convey the essential message of the Gita through refreshingly different interpretations. Some of the papers deal with the theme of the Gita in the context of the problems faced by Kerala. Instead of exploring the abstract philosophy of the Gita the papers try to infuse new awareness of spirituality, especially among the youth. His Holiness the Dalai Lama points out that the small group of religious leaders are getting alienated from the masses and their problems of existence. By turning reclusive the former's link with the latter may get severed. The common people, confused and disoriented, will begin to treat the rich spiritual heritage of India as mere rituals and ceremonies. He appreciates the efforts of the organizers for adopting a pragmatic approach to the regeneration of ethical and traditional values in Indian society.

This book will be helpful for those who need day to day guidance. One may argue that there are already many interpretations of the Gita available in the market. We cannot possibly establish the superiority of this book over the others in the same category. I wish to suggest that this book can be considered for its own merits.

PRADEEP KUMAR KESHARI

Great Sir and the Heaven Lady by Maggi Lidchi Grassi. With an Introduction by Robert A. Johnson. Pub: Writers Workshop, Calcutta. Pp: 241. Price: Rs. 350 (HB) & Rs. 300 (PB). Also available from SABDA & Vak, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605 002.

All of us who have read the *Mahabharata* remember the day of the Great Battle of Kurukshetra when Krishna drove Arjuna out to do battle with the Trigartas. They had sworn to kill Arjuna and kill themselves. What could Arjuna do alone against these thousands and thousands who had, on the very eve of this day, taken the solemn oath? Nothing. Arjuna could do nothing. Not even the bravest warrior and the world's best archer had a chance. But Krishna was there. And suddenly the Trigartas fell to killing each other. Each saw in his comrades Arjuna or Krishna himself. By some divine multiplication or cloning Krishna had caused the enemy soldiers to fall upon and destroy each other.

We know of Dunkirk, that most critical moment in World War II when the defeat of the Allied forces seemed imminent. The British troops were trapped on a stretch of beach entirely without cover. But suddenly and somehow the weather changed in an unheard of manner for that time of the year and the Allied troops were evacuated under a thick

screen of clouds and mist. The enemy aircraft that would have strafed them to ribbons had to return home. Sri Aurobindo speaks of divine intervention here.

Mother says of the Chinese who, in 1962, unexpectedly withdrew when they could so easily have proceeded over the border and invaded India that they were receptive to her force. There are many incidents of their occult working in times of war both on a general level and at an individual level. Mother Would at any time in World War II be “called” and her Being would go out and do what had to be done. Nirodbaran recounts how she came out of her trance one day to tell of two small children who had come home to find their house bombed and their parents dead. Mother had heard their call (was she not the Mother of all?) and had gone out in her subtle body to comfort them and do the necessary.

We cannot know what it was to be the Mother nor Sri Aurobindo in these instances nor how they worked revealing themselves to thousands at the same time in different ways. Sri Aurobindo specially was the soul of reticence. But one does wonder sometimes how it was for those who were rescued and comforted, who were given courage to fight on when all seemed lost, or courage to face death. Did these soldiers (or commanders who were inspired to make brilliant decisions) actually see Sri Aurobindo and Mother or hear them? These people who were open to the force – how did this force come to them, in what guise? For most of them, nearly all of them no doubt, there were only moments of heightened awareness, as we all feel at times when we are open to the force without having visions or hearing voices.

But there are those in war and peace who have the gift of perception of the source of their inspiration through one sense or another. Some are clairvoyant; some are clairaudient.

One such in World War II was John Kelly who was both, an eighteen year old Irish American infantry man, a simple Brooklyn-born boy who knew nothing of India and who had certainly never heard of Sri Aurobindo. It was 1944. Television was in its infancy and nobody knew anything about India except that there was a funny little man in a loincloth and round glasses making trouble for the British.

And yet one night on the battlefield with his mind defeated by the constant deafening shelling, his nerves shattered, John saw Sri Aurobindo, yes, as we see him in the photo by Cartier Bresson, one shoulder bare, blazing majesty and light. Mother too appears to him on the same night as we see her in the photo taken in Japan in a dark long sleeved dress with a little collar and a shawl; a beautiful Goddess.

These heavenly parents led John through his terrible trench war.

There is adoration but also confusion and rebellion in John when he sees Bill Brown, the innocent new recruit, lying dead in the mud with his leg blown off next to him. In desperation and rebellion he weeps.

“Courage,” comes Sri Aurobindo’s voice. Yes. It’s all very well for you, says John. You are up there, with the Lady. But we have got bodies down here. That’s what we have to use down here.

It is the “Lady” who comforts. He will go on fighting because he knows this is what She would want him to do. This is only one of the many, many touching scenes.

Time and again Sri Aurobindo shows him, warning him of a building that is about to collapse, of a stretch of turf that is about to be shelled. And time and again, he leads him into danger so as to help him save not only his squad but his whole unit from death. John's faith is tested to the breaking point. To be Their instrument is not always easy. At times it seems to John that he has a General sitting on his shoulder permanently. There is no letting up, not even when he incurs a minor wound which might earn him a respite in a rest camp.

"No," says Sri Aurobindo.

"Look at all the others who goof off," protests John.

"That's why the war is taking so long," replies Sri Aurobindo.

Yes, they really have these conversations. Finally the war ends and John's unit comes upon a Nazi concentration camp. He understands now why his "Great Sir" (he still does not know who Sri Aurobindo is) is on their side and wishes he had been a better soldier.

After the War John falls into a deep depression. One night he prepares for death and in the darkness he sees a diamond blue light spinning. Sri Aurobindo comes to take him in his subtle body to the Ashram. But this part you must read for yourself. It is a healing dream.

Finally the next morning Sri Aurobindo tries to tell John his name. "Oro-bend."

John returns to America with only one aim: to understand what has happened to him and to serve his Heavenly Parents. Of course, he doesn't fit in. All the other men returning know that they will go back to school, or into their fathers' businesses, to set up a hot-dog-stand, to work in a bank. But when you have received the touch of the Divine you do not know how to formulate your project. Somewhere you know you can only be led. There are no grooves into which to fit.

This is a true story and a wonderful story.

It starts out like any war story; battles, war-torn cities, your best friend dying on the first day. Then slowly the underlying Divine plan is revealed, the greater picture, the war between the forces of Light and the forces of Darkness which World War II was about which Maggi writes in *The Light That Shone Into the Dark Abyss*.

It is brilliantly written and carries you compellingly like a novel, and within all the horror and tragedy, there is humour and irony, Sri Aurobindo's humour as well as soldier humour and an unforgettable chapter in which John goes to Ireland on leave and meets his pipe-smoking visionary grandmother from whom he has inherited "the sight" and who shows him the fairies, "the little people" flying up into the sunset.

War is a terrible tragedy but it hammered on the anvil that was John Kelly and brought forth his soul.

The story of how Maggi came to write this book is told in a postscript chapter and is in itself an astonishing narrative. It reveals how John learnt who Sri Aurobindo and Mother were and other mysteries.

Suffice it to say that the culmination of writing these two books was the appearance of Sri Aurobindo's image on her photo of the Mother when *The Light That Shone Into the*

Dark Abyss was published. She took it as an endorsement. Better than a Nobel Prize, I would say, wouldn't you?

P. RAJA

NOTHING IS LOST

THE smiling sky stooped
To the crooning soil
And confided to her
With fond caress:
“Nothing is lost, dear,
No time wasted
Nor diminished
Our primal vigour.
We are safe on the way
All night and day.”

We come back
To each other
With a trust sincere
And live, Love,
With a natural joy;
Also cherish Life
With a confident smile.

Nothing really is lost;
Love pays its cost
In a simple way
Dispelling all doubt
And dumb dismay.

ASHALATA DASH