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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>		
ENSNARING VOICE (Poem)	...	927
SOME LETTERS	...	929
INTEGRAL YOGA	...	931
<i>Arjava</i>		
TWO POEMS (Poem)	...	935
<i>The Mother</i>		
INVOLVED SUPERMIND	...	936
<i>Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)</i>		
A LETTER	...	939
<i>Sudhanshu Mohanty</i>		
A JOYOUS MEETING	...	940
<i>Shakuntala Manay</i>		
DARSHAN (Poem)	...	942
<i>Suresh Chandra Deb</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO AS I KNEW HIM	...	943
<i>K. D. Sethna</i>		
GREEN TIGER (Poem)	...	952
<i>Richard Hartz</i>		
THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI	...	953
<i>Ramanlal Pathak</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO ON THE FIRST HYMN OF THE RIG VEDA—A GLIMPSE	...	956
<i>N. Jayashanmugam</i>		
YAJNAVALKYA AND THE MEANS TO IMMORTALITY	...	959
<i>Nikhil Kumar</i>		
SAVITRI'S YOGA	...	962
<i>Hoffman von Fallersleben</i>		
FORGET ME NOT (Poem)	...	963

<i>R.Y. Deshpande</i>		
	CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?	... 964
<i>Mary Helen</i>		
	TWO POEMS (Poem)	... 973
<i>Alexander Velichenko</i>		
	THE MIND OF CELLS' CENTRE	... 974
<i>Debashish Banerji</i>		
	TAJ MAHAL (Poem)	... 980
<i>Anonymous</i>		
	WHAT ARE BONSAI?	... 981
<i>A.E. (George William Russell)</i>		
	KRISHNA (Poem)	... 983
<i>Prabhakar (Batti)</i>		
	AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT — XV	... 984
<i>Kati Widmer</i>		
	INTIMATE PORTRAITS	... 990
<i>Shyam Kumari</i>		
	LET THEM DREAM (Poem)	... 995
<i>Goutam Ghosal</i>		
	TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO	... 996
<i>Abani Sinha</i>		
	THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN OUR ASHRAM LIFE	... 1001
<i>Nilima Das</i>		
	SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	... 1002
<i>Mangesh Nadkarni</i>		
	ON LIBERATING ENGLISH TO BE A WORLD LANGUAGE	... 1014
<i>M. S. Srinivasan</i>		
	RELEVANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION FOR THE EMERGING TECHNOLOGICAL SCENE	... 1019
<i>Aurpon Bhattacharya</i>		
	AN EXPERIENCE	... 1022
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>Daniel Albuquerque</i>		
	<i>Review of</i> PASSING MOMENTS <i>by</i> R. Y. DESHPANDE	... 1025

ENSNARING VOICE

“O HUMAN image of the deathless word,
How hast thou seen beyond the topaz walls
The gleaming sisters of the divine gate...
Unlocked the avenues of spiritual sight
And taught the entries of a heavenlier state
To thy rapt soul that bore the golden key?
In thee the secret sight man’s blindness missed
Has opened its view past Time, my chariot-course,
And death, my tunnel which I drive through life
To reach my unseen distances of bliss.
I am the hushed search of the jealous gods...
I am the beauty of the unveiled Ray...
Two powers from one original ecstasy born
Pace near, but parted in the life of man;
One leans to earth, the other yearns to the skies:
Heaven in its rapture dreams of perfect earth,
Earth in its sorrow dreams of perfect heaven....
But when the phantom flame-edge fails undone,
Then never more can space or time divide
The lover from the loved; Space shall draw back
Her great translucent curtain, Time shall be
The quivering of the spirit’s endless bliss.
Attend that moment of celestial fate.
Meanwhile you two shall serve the dual law...
Yet if thou wouldst abandon the vexed world,
Careless of the dark moan of things below...
Renounce the tie that joins thee to earth-kind,
Cast off thy sympathy with mortal hearts.
Arise, vindicate thy spirit’s conquered right:
Relinquishing thy charge of transient breath,
Under the cold gaze of the indifferent stars
Leaving thy borrowed body on the sod,
Ascend, O soul, into thy blissful home....
O immortal, to felicity arise.”
On Savitri listening in her tranquil heart
To the harmony of the ensnaring voice
A joy exceeding earth’s and heaven’s poured down...
A smile came rippling out in her wide eyes,
Its confident felicity’s messenger
As if the first beam of the morning sun

Rippled along two wakened lotus-pools:
 "O besetter of man's soul with life and death...
 I climb not to thy everlasting Day,
 Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night.
 To me who turn not from thy terrestrial Way,
 Give back the other self my nature asks,
 Thy spaces need him not to help their joy;
 Earth needs his beautiful spirit made by thee
 To fling delight down like a net of gold.
 Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
 Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
 The forge where the Arch-mason shapes his works.
 Thy servitudes on earth are greater, king,
 Than all the glorious liberties of heaven....
 There where the gods and demons battle in night
 Or wrestle on the borders of the Sun...
 In me the spirit of immortal love
 Stretches its arms out to embrace mankind....
 O life, the life beneath the wheeling stars
 For victory in the tournament with death,
 For bending of the fierce and difficult bow,
 For flashing of the splendid sword of God!
 O thou who soundest the trumpet in the lists,
 Part not the handle from the untried steel,
 Take not the warrior with his blow unstruck....
 O king-smith, clang on still thy toil begun,
 Weld us to one in thy strong smithy of life.
 Thy fine-curved jewelled hilt call Savitri,
 Thy blade's exultant smile name Satyavan.
 Fashion to beauty, point us through the world....
 I know that I can lift man's soul to God,
 I know that he can bring the Immortal down....
 Let not the unconscious gulf swallow man's race
 That through earth's ignorance struggles towards the Light.
 O Thunderer with the lightnings of the soul,
 Give not to darkness and to death thy sun,
 Achieve thy wisdom's hidden firm decree
 And the mandate of thy secret world-wide love."

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 683-87)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

In dream I saw a child whom for fun I scratched at two or three places with a knife and blood came out. I think there is some cruelty in the physical nature.

Evidently there must be. You must get rid of it. Cruelty and falsehood are the two things that separate most from the Divine.

The gentleman staying in Arogya House asked me why Mother had stopped allowing cigars and betel from being taken here. I said that in the first place they are physically unnecessary and harmful, in the second place they easily bring contact with other smokers and an exchange of influences with people who have nothing to do with Yoga, thirdly it does not appear good in an Ashram and fourthly they obstruct Mother's working.

It is fairly well replied. Besides smoking is only a morbid craving of physical desire—there is no other reason for people doing it. Smoking is tamasic and prevents control of mind.

I was dining at 12.50 and A was there. He was saying something not very favourable about M. When he found me silent, he asked me why I was so. I told him that if he only wanted to criticise the bad side of somebody I was not interested in it.

You did well to tell him that.

27 February 1933

Where are the emotions of love for the Divine which I felt before? It appears that they are absent in me now or thrown into the background by the mental. They used to impart a delight and active force in the work and sadhana.

These things go by a rhythm. Besides sometimes the psychic is very prominent, at other times it allows the mental or another part to come forward, so as to be worked upon.

28 February 1933

Some boys who were playing football in the street entered Arogya House to take their ball, which had fallen inside. I asked them to go outside and ask for it from there, which they did; then the ball was delivered to them from the terrace by one of the workmen. I did not get angry but I spoke severely to the boys. How ought I to have spoken?

It was quite right to be severe in speech, so long as you do not get angry. They do it on purpose, so they must not be allowed to come in.

28 February 1933

Was the scorpion bite I received last night due merely to accident or to some planned hostile attack?

There is no such thing as an accident. It was an attack.

Was this bite to teach me the necessity of having foot-protection? Should I put on sandals or shoes? During the day, of course, it is more convenient without any footwear.

For safety it is better to wear at least after night-fall.

M told me yesterday night that by not killing the scorpion, I had done something which Mother dislikes. But I did not know that it was to be killed as per Mother's wish and I had no instrument to kill the scorpion, even if I had known it.

The object of killing the scorpion is to prevent the chance of its stinging others. But if you had no instrument, it was not possible.

But have I done right in getting the bite treated at the dispensary when I could have quietly not told anybody and used the inner method?

It is better to get such things treated.

1 March 1933

Why is there sometimes this rajasic atmosphere at the "Prosperity"?

It is because people come full of desires.

1 March 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

INTEGRAL YOGA

Integrality of Body and Mind in Integral Yoga

“NATURE, then, is an evolution or progressive self-manifestation of an eternal and secret existence, with three successive forms as her three steps of ascent. And we have consequently as the condition of all our activities these three mutually interdependent possibilities, the bodily life, the mental existence and the veiled spiritual being which is in the involution the cause of the others and in the evolution their result. Preserving and perfecting the physical, fulfilling the mental, it is Nature’s aim and it should be ours to unveil in the perfected body and mind the transcendent activities of the Spirit. As the mental life does not abrogate but works for the elevation and better utilisation of the bodily existence, so too the spiritual should not abrogate but transfigure our intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and vital activities.”¹

Roles of Purusha and Prakriti

“The relation between the Purusha and Prakriti which emerges as one advances in the Yoga of self-perfection is the next thing that we have to understand carefully in this part of the Yoga. In the spiritual truth of our being the power which we call Nature is the power of being, consciousness and will and therefore the power of self-expression and self-creation of the self, soul or Purusha. But to our ordinary mind in the ignorance and to its experience of things the force of Prakriti has a different appearance. When we look at it in its universal action outside ourselves, we see it first as a mechanical energy in the cosmos which acts upon matter or in its own created forms of matter. In matter it evolves powers and processes of life and in living matter powers and processes of mind. Throughout its operations it acts by fixed laws and in each kind of created thing displays varying properties of energy and laws of process which give its character to the genus or species and again in the individual develops without infringing the law of the kind minor characteristics and variations of a considerable consequence. It is this mechanical appearance of Prakriti which has preoccupied the modern scientific mind and made for it its whole view of Nature, and so much so that science still hopes and labours with a very small amount of success to explain all phenomena of life by laws of matter and all phenomena of mind by laws of living matter. Here soul or spirit has no place and nature cannot be regarded as power of spirit. Since the whole of our existence is mechanical, physical and bounded by the biological phenomenon of a brief living consciousness and man is a creature and instrument of material energy, the spiritual self-evolution of Yoga can be only a delusion, hallucination, abnormal state of mind or self-hypnosis. In any case it cannot be what it represents itself to be, a discovery of the eternal truth of our being and a passing above the limited truth of the mental, vital and physical to the full truth of our spiritual nature.

But when we look, not at external mechanical Nature to the exclusion of our per-

sonality, but at the inner subjective experience of man the mental being, our nature takes to us a quite different appearance. We may believe intellectually in a purely mechanical view even of our subjective existence, but we cannot act upon it or make it quite real to our self-experience. For we are conscious of an I which does not seem identical with our nature, but capable of a standing back from it, of a detached observation and criticism and creative use of it, and of a will which we naturally think of as a free will; and even if this be a delusion, we are still obliged in practice to act as if we were responsible mental beings capable of a free choice of our actions, able to use or misuse and to turn to higher or lower ends our nature. And even we seem to be struggling both with our environmental and with our own present nature and striving to get mastery over a world which imposes itself on and masters us and at the same time to become something more than we now are. But the difficulty is that we are only in command, if at all, over a small part of ourselves, the rest is subconscious or subliminal and beyond our control, our will acts only in a small selection of our activities; the most is a process of mechanism and habit and we must strive constantly with ourselves and surrounding circumstances to make the least advance or self-amelioration. There seems to be a dual being in us; Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, seem to be half in agreement, half at odds, Nature laying its mechanical control on the soul, the soul attempting to change and master nature. And the question is what is the fundamental character of this duality and what the issue.”²

The Supreme as Purushottama and Mahashakti

“As the mind progresses in purity, capacity of stillness or freedom from absorption in its own limited action, it becomes aware of and is able to reflect, bring into itself or enter into the conscious presence of the Self, the supreme and universal Spirit, and it becomes aware too of grades and powers of the spirit higher than its own highest ranges. It becomes aware of an infinite of the consciousness of being, an infinite ocean of all the power and energy of illimitable consciousness, an infinite ocean of Ananda, of the self-moved delight of existence. It may be aware of one or other only of these things, for the mind can separate and feel exclusively as distinct original principles what in a higher experience are inseparable powers of the One, or it may feel them in a trinity or fusion which reveals or arrives at their oneness. It may become aware of it on the side of Purusha or on the side of Prakriti. On the side of Purusha it reveals itself as Self or Spirit, as Being or as the one sole existent Being, the divine Purushottama, and the individual Jiva soul can enter into entire oneness with it in its timeless self or in its universality, or enjoy nearness, immanence, difference without any gulf of separation and enjoy too inseparably and at one and the same time oneness of being and delight-giving difference of relation in active experiencing nature. On the side of Prakriti the power and Ananda of the Spirit come into the front to manifest this Infinite in the beings and personalities and ideas and forms and forces of the universe and there is then present to us the divine Mahashakti, original Power, supreme Nature, holding in herself infinite existence and creating the wonders of the cosmos.”³

The Condition of the Integral Self-Perfection

“But the perfection sought in the integral Yoga is not only to be one with her in her highest spiritual power and one with her in her universal action, but to realise and possess the fullness of this Shakti in our individual being and nature. For the supreme Spirit is one as Purusha or as Prakriti, conscious being or power of conscious being, and as the Jiva in essence of self and spirit is one with the supreme Purusha, so on the side of Nature, in power of self and spirit it is one with Shakti, *parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā*. To realise this double oneness is the condition of the integral self-perfection. The Jiva is then the meeting-place of the play of oneness of the supreme Soul and Nature.”⁴

Integral Yoga – A New Paradigm

“For the sadhaka of the integral Yoga it is necessary to remember that no written Shastra, however great its authority or however large its spirit, can be more than a partial expression of the eternal Knowledge. He will use, but never bind himself even by the greatest Scripture. Where the Scripture is profound, wide, catholic, it may exercise upon him an influence for the highest good and of incalculable importance. It may be associated in his experience with his awakening to crowning verities and his realisation of the highest experiences. His Yoga may be governed for a long time by one Scripture or by several successively,—if it is in the line of the great Hindu tradition, by the Gita, for example, the Upanishads, the Veda. Or it may be a good part of his development to include in its material a richly varied experience of the truths of many Scriptures and make the future opulent with all that is best in the past. But in the end he must take his station, or better still, if he can, always and from the beginning he must live in his own soul beyond the limitations of the word that he uses. The Gita itself thus declares that the Yogin in his progress must pass beyond the written Truth,—*śabdabrahmātivartate*—beyond all that he has heard and all that he has yet to hear,—*śrotavyasya śrutasya ca*. For he is not the sadhaka of a book or of many books; he is a sadhaka of the Infinite.

Another kind of Shastra is not Scripture, but a statement of the science and methods, the effective principles and way of working of the path of Yoga which the sadhaka elects to follow. Each path has its Shastra, either written or traditional, passing from mouth to mouth through a long line of Teachers. In India a great authority, a high reverence even is ordinarily attached to the written or traditional teaching. All the lines of the Yoga are supposed to be fixed and the Teacher who has received the Shastra by tradition and realised it in practice guides the disciple along the immemorial tracks. One often even hears the objection urged against a new practice, a new Yogic teaching, the adoption of a new formula, “It is not according to the Shastra.” But neither in fact nor in the actual practice of the Yogins is there really any such entire rigidity of an iron door shut against new truth, fresh revelation, widened experience. The written or traditional teaching expresses the knowledge and experiences of many centuries systematised, organised, made attainable to the beginner. Its importance and utility are therefore immense. But a great

freedom of variation and development is always practicable. Even so highly scientific a system as Rajayoga can be practised on other lines than the organised method of Patanjali. Each of the three paths of the *trimārga*⁵ breaks into many bypaths which meet again at the goal. The general knowledge on which the Yoga depends is fixed, but the order, the succession, the devices, the forms must be allowed to vary; for the needs and particular impulses of the individual nature have to be satisfied even while the general truths remain firm and constant.

An integral and synthetic Yoga needs especially not to be bound by any written or traditional Shastra; for while it embraces the knowledge received from the past, it seeks to organise it anew for the present and the future. An absolute liberty of experience and of the restatement of knowledge in new terms and new combinations is the condition of its self-formation. Seeking to embrace all life in itself, it is in the position not of a pilgrim following the highroad to his destination, but, to that extent at least, of a path-finder hewing his way through a virgin forest. For Yoga has long diverged from life and the ancient systems which sought to embrace it, such as those of our Vedic forefathers, are far away from us, expressed in terms which are no longer accessible, thrown into forms which are no longer applicable. Since then mankind has moved forward on the current of eternal Time and the same problem has to be approached from a new starting-point.

By this Yoga we not only seek the Infinite, but we call upon the Infinite to unfold himself in human life. Therefore the Shastra of our Yoga must provide for an infinite liberty in the receptive human soul. A free adaptability in the manner and the type of the individual's acceptance of the Universal and Transcendent into himself is the right condition for the full spiritual life in man."⁶

SRI AUROBINDO

(Compiled by Arun Vaidya)

Notes and References

1. CWSA, Vol. 23, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 20.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, pp. 752-753.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 759-760.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 760.
5. The triple path of Knowledge, Devotion and Works.
6. CWSA, Vol. 23, pp. 55-57.

TWO POEMS

THE FEET OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

O to besom a path for the Mother
To a welcoming-place apart,—
Road running, meant for no other,
Straight to the heart.

Be Her light footfall a token
Of a Stillness fraught with Grace;
Keep the truthward prayer unspoken
Her sandals trace.

Not solely Heaven descended
But earth upflowers to God
Eachwhere Her heaven-attended
Silence trod.

September 20, 1934

WHEN CLOUDS HAVE LEFT THE SKY

Long deathly silent sky
Shrill with star-jets that gleam
For the lifeward yearning eye
Weary of false dream—

A dream that Love the lord
Long long ago was slain,
When Chaos and leasings' horde
Began their reign.

Light's welkin, star-befriended,
Swiftly your banner spread;
Love's banishment is ended,
He was not dead.

September 20, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: These two poems are also very good. The one on the Mother has a remarkable beauty; the other very felicitous in its turn of thought and expression.

INVOLVED SUPERMIND

24 July 1957

“In fact, a supermind is already here but it is involved, concealed behind this manifest mind, life and Matter and not yet acting overtly or in its own power: if it acts, it is through these inferior powers and modified by their characters and so not yet recognisable. It is only by the approach and arrival of the descending Supermind that it can be liberated upon earth and reveal itself in the action of our material, vital and mental parts so that these lower powers can become portions of a total divinised activity of our whole being: it is that that will bring to us a completely realised divinity or the divine life. It is indeed so that life and mind involved in Matter have realised themselves here; for only what is involved can evolve, otherwise there could be no emergence.”

The Supramental Manifestation, p. 43

Sweet Mother, what is the involved supermind?

It is the same as the uninvolved one!

It is the same thing when Sri Aurobindo says that if the Divine were not at the centre of everything, He could never manifest in the world; it is the same thing when he says that essentially, in its origin and deepest structure, the creation is divine, the world is divine; and that is why this divinity will be able to manifest one day, become tangible, express itself fully in place of all that veils and deforms it at present. Up to now, all that has manifested of this divinity is the world as we know it; but the manifestation is boundless, and after this mental world as we know it, of which the apex and prototype is man, another reality will manifest, which Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind, for it is in fact the next step after the mind; so, seen from the world as it is, it will naturally be “supramental”, that is, something above the mind. And he also says that it will truly be the changing of one world into another, for so far the whole creation belonged to what he calls “the lower hemisphere” as we know it, which is governed by Ignorance and based upon the Inconscient, whereas the other one will be a complete reversal, the sudden appearance of something which will belong to quite a different world, and which instead of being based on Ignorance will be based upon Truth. That is why it will truly be a new world. But if the *essence*, the principle of this world were not included in the world as we knew it, there would be no hope of the one being transformed into the other; they would be two worlds so totally different and opposed that there would be no contact between them and that necessarily, as soon as one came out of this world and emerged into the world of Truth, Light and Knowledge, one would become, so to speak, imperceptible, non-existent for a world belonging exclusively to the Ignorance and the Inconscience.

How is it that even when this change has taken place, there will be a connection and this new world will be able to act upon the old one? It is that in its essence and principle

the new is already enclosed, involved in the old world. So, in fact, it is there, inside, in its very depths, hidden, invisible, imperceptible, unexpressed, but it is there, in its essence. Still, unless from the supreme heights the supramental consciousness and force and light manifest directly in the world, as it happened a year and a half ago, this Supermind which in *principle* is at the very bedrock of the material world as it is, would never have any possibility of manifesting itself. Its awakening and appearance below will be the response to a touch from above which will bring out the corresponding element hidden in the depths of matter as it is now.... And this is precisely what is happening at present. But as I told you two weeks ago, this material world as it actually, visibly is, is so powerful, so absolutely real for the ordinary consciousness, that it has engulfed, as it were, this supramental force and consciousness when it manifested, and a long preparation is necessary before its presence can be even glimpsed, felt, perceived in some way or other. And this is the work it is doing now.

How long it will take is difficult to foresee. It will depend a great deal on the goodwill and the receptivity of a certain number of people, for the individual always advances faster than the collectivity, and by its very nature, humanity is destined to manifest the Supermind before the rest of creation.

At the basis of this collaboration there is necessarily the will to change, no longer to be what one is, for things to be no longer what they are. There are several ways of reaching it, and all the methods are good when they succeed! One may be deeply disgusted with what exists and wish ardently to come out of all this and attain something else; one may—and this is a more positive way—one may feel within oneself the touch, the approach of something positively beautiful and true, and willingly drop all the rest so that nothing may burden the journey to this new beauty and truth.

What is indispensable in every case is the *ardent* will for progress, the willing and joyful renunciation of all that hampers the advance: to throw far away from oneself all that prevents one from going forward, and to set out into the unknown with the ardent faith that this is the truth of tomorrow, *inevitable*, which must necessarily come, which nothing, nobody, no bad will, even that of Nature, can prevent from becoming a reality—perhaps of a not too distant future—a reality which is being worked out now and which those who know how to change, how not to be weighed down by old habits, will *surely* have the good fortune not only to see but to realise.

People sleep, they forget, they take life easy—they forget, forget all the time.... But if we could remember... that we are at an exceptional hour, a *unique* time, that we have this immense good fortune, this invaluable privilege of being present at the birth of a new world, we could easily get rid of everything that impedes and hinders our progress.

So, the most important thing, it seems, is to remember this fact; even when one doesn't have the tangible experience, to have the certainty of it and faith in it; to remember always, to recall it constantly, to go to sleep with this idea, to wake up with this perception; to do all that one does with this great truth as the background, as a constant support, this great truth that we are witnessing the birth of a new world.

We can participate in it, we can become this new world. And truly, when one has

such a marvellous opportunity, one should be ready to give up everything for its sake.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1957-58, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 156-59)

WHY DOES ONE FEEL AFRAID?

I suppose it is because one is egoistic.

There are three reasons. First, an excessive concern about one's security. Next, what one does not know always gives an uneasy feeling which is translated in the consciousness by fear. And above all, one doesn't have the habit of a spontaneous trust in the Divine. If you look into things sufficiently deeply, this is the true reason. There are people who do not even know that That exists, but one could tell them in other words, "You have no faith in your destiny" or "You know nothing about Grace"—anything whatever, you may put it as you like, but the root of the matter is a lack of trust. If one always had the feeling that it is the best that happens in all circumstances, one would not be afraid.

The first movement of fear comes automatically. There was a great scientist who was also a great psychologist (I don't remember his name now); he had developed his inner consciousness but wanted to test it. So he undertook an experiment. He wanted to know if, by means of consciousness, one could control the reflex actions of the body (probably he didn't go far enough to be able to do it, for it can be done; but in any case, for him it was still impossible). Well, he went to the zoological garden, to the place where snakes were kept in a glass cage. There was a particularly aggressive cobra there; when it was not asleep, it was almost always in a fury, for through the glass it could see people and that irritated it terribly. Our scientist went and stood in front of the cage. He knew very well that it was made in such a way that the snake could never break the glass and that he ran no risk of being attacked. So from there he began to excite the snake by shouts and gestures. The cobra, furious, hurled itself against the glass, and every time it did so the scientist closed his eyes! Our psychologist told himself, "But look here, I know that this snake cannot pass through, why do I close my eyes?" Well, one must recognise that it is difficult to conquer the reaction. It is a sense of protection, and if one feels that one cannot protect oneself, one is afraid. But the movement of fear which is expressed by the eyes fluttering is not a mental or a vital fear; it is a fear in the cells of the body; for it has not been impressed upon them that there is no danger and they do not know how to resist. It is because one has not done yoga, you see. With yoga one can watch with open eyes, one would not close them; but one would not close them because one calls upon something else, and that 'something else' is the sense of the divine Presence in oneself which is stronger than everything.

This is the only thing that can cure you of your fear.

The Mother

(CWM, Vol. 4, pp. 211-12)

A LETTER

IF one is really under the spell of black magic, I suppose one would feel some kind of indefinite *malaise*. But such *malaise* is not necessarily a sign of being under black-magic influence. I think the best thing is not to have the impression of any influence of this kind. To be obsessed with the idea of it may prove harmful even if there is no black magic done. For, the mentality which lives under that obsession may put itself in touch with the lower-vital plane's forces which may themselves act as black magicians. Keep your mind free of fear. After all, real black magic is rare.

As a support to keeping the mind free from fear, I would advise you to repeat the mantra: *Sri Aurobindo sharanam mama* ("Sri Aurobindo is my refuge"). It is a master mantra of protection. One who is not an Aurobindonian may be advised to take names of his guru or his *ista devata* ("chosen deity").

If you have blessing-packets from the Ashram, keep them on your person.

Finally, if indeed some black magic has been done, it is possible that some peculiar sign has been traced on a part of your house. Look for it and, if there is one, rub it off. Sometimes the work is done through a *young* boy or girl servant. In case you have any such servant, watch out for any peculiar behaviour on his or her part. Of course, all such servants are not mediums, and you need not sack them just because they are young.

At any rate, have faith in the mantra I have mentioned and be fearless. All will be well.

26.3.89

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

IF YOU HAVE FAITH

If you have faith and are consecrated to the Divine, there is a very simple way, it is to say: "Let Your will be done. Nothing can frighten me because it is You who are guiding my life. I belong to You and You are guiding my life." That acts immediately. Of all the means this is the most effective: indeed, it is. That is, one must be truly consecrated to the Divine. If one has that, it acts immediately; all fear vanishes immediately like a dream.

The Mother

(CWM, Vol. 5, p. 119)

A JOYOUS MEETING

An Ex-student Meets Amal Kiran

SOME apparently small incidents like a chance meeting fill one with untold joy. I had such an opportune meeting on 3.1.2002.

It had never occurred to me nor did I ever expect to meet Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna). He is a legend in the Ashram. I had of course seen him and heard many anecdotes about him—how he came to know Sri Aurobindo, how his classes in SAICE were hilariously interesting, and that he is one of the three persons who had an intimation pointing to the Supramental Manifestation on 20.2.1956.

On 3.1.2002, I went to meet him at 4.30 p.m.. I hurriedly took the book *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo* authored by him to get it autographed. Maybe it was a banal thought, as I could not think of anything else to do on meeting such a personality.

He lovingly scribbled:

Affectionately
to Sudhangshu and Indira
From Amal Kiran
3.1.2002

It could have been more legible but for a show of firmness by Amal Kiran—he refused to use a table to support the book and held it with one hand instead. However, it is and will remain a cherished and memorable gesture.

On being requested, he recited from memory one of his own poems with the clarity and vigour that one identifies with a man in his thirties. The poem was so good that I blurted out after he had finished—“If one did not know, one could mistake it as written by Sri Aurobindo!” He laughed.

The poem is:

THIS ERRANT LIFE

This errant life is dear although it dies;
And human lips are sweet though they but sing
Of stars estranged from us; and youth's emprise
Is wondrous yet, although an unsure thing.

Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds decrease.
If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,

Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
 For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate:
 Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
 And all thy formless glory turn to love
 And mould Thy love into a human face.

It is interesting to note Sri Aurobindo's comment about the poem:

“A very beautiful poem, one of the very best you have written. The last six lines, one may say even the last eight, are absolutely perfect. If you could always write like that, you would take your place among English poets and no low place either. I consider they can rank—these eight lines [last eight lines]—with the very best in English poetry.”

The Secret Splendour, p. 70

After a few minutes of wondering silence, I blurted out: “What did Sri Aurobindo tell you the first time you met him?”

“Nothing! He did not tell me anything. I just looked at his face. I was all the time watching his face, his beard, and his moustache and was thinking to myself that I can choose this man as my Guru. Then I came away. Later, I asked the Mother, ‘What did Sri Aurobindo say about me?’ She replied, ‘He said you have a good face.’ ”

I then asked, “What was your experience on 29.2.1956, the day of the Supramental Manifestation?”

“That night I was travelling by train from Pondicherry to Madras. (It was as if I was the only hindrance in the way of the Supramental Descent.) I was asleep. I dreamt that the Mother was sitting in a chair and people were filing past to get *Darshan*. I was desperately trying to get my slippers off my feet—specially the left foot (it is lame). I was struggling in my sleep but in vain. Then suddenly, I woke up and I saw the Mother standing in the railway compartment. I am not somebody given to see visions, so I closed my eyes and opened them again and She was still standing there, smiling. Not a silhouette or something but really in flesh and blood. Then again, I closed my eyes and opened them to make sure but I couldn't see Her any more. Later I recounted to Her the experience. She reminded me of our conversation of some 17-18 years before when I had requested Her to promise to tell me of the Supramental Descent when it took place. I was overwhelmed with gratitude that She remembered a promise of such a long time back and that too made to a person like me.”

Then he talked about how he took up the editorship of *Mother India* as wished by Sri Aurobindo. “I was completely new to the job. I asked the Mother on what topic to write. She said that Sri Aurobindo wanted me to write on politics.—‘But I don't know anything on the subject and much less about Indian politics.’ ‘Well!’ She replied, ‘I also do not know anything about it. But Sri Aurobindo is there. He will do everything.’ ”

He talked and joked with us for some more time then it was time for him to go to the Ashram.

I can never forget such a wonderful person because more than any other aspect, his “joie de vivre”, his inner joy really rubbed off on me. He never let us feel the 98 years old that he is, but a different being, an ‘Amal Kiran’.

SUDHANSHU MOHANTY

(Courtesy: *Golden Chain*, August 2002)

DARSHAN

This time it was a light
 That came neither from the star, the sun nor the moon.
 It leaped from within,
 From the soul's longing at last fulfilled.
 Its absence had bred littleness,
 Built a wall of distance,
 A natural pain in darkness
 Gave suffering of separation.
 But in this strange new light
 All that got blotted out
 And the view reversed, became truer.
 Oh its touch is feather-like
 And needed are not eyes,
 Nor ears, nor tongue to speak of it.
 It called a singing bird,
 In palm of the present the future;
 The quest found its sudden goal
 And I was reborn in its joy.
 It was a light that entered into my light,
 It was glory of the Darshan.

SHAKUNTALA MANAY

SRI AUROBINDO AS I KNEW HIM

Some Reminiscences of His Political Days

Mother India has great pleasure in publishing this specially written article—the interesting result of a request to the author to put together his reminiscences of Sri Aurobindo as he came personally to know him during the years when Bengal was making history in and for India. —K. D. Sethna

Silent Watcher

My eyes first set themselves on Sri Aurobindo—known at that time as Aurobindo Ghose—on a November evening on the eve of the Benares Congress held during the last days of December, 1905. The place of the meeting was a room at the Field and Academy Club in the Sib Narayan Das Lane just north east of the present Vidyasagar College Hostel on Cornwallis Street. The Club had been organised by the young men of the Bengalee higher classes headed by the then Maharaj-Kumar of Cooch-Bihar. Many of them had completed their education in Britain and the time-spirit had caught them and been influencing them to think of things other than personal pleasures and the diversions of intellectualism. Leaders of thought and society had been discussing the *pros* and *cons* of the then methods of political activity that were confined to petition, prayer and protest to the alien Authority which held India under subjection. Bankim Chandra had characterised these as “dog-politics”—waiting for crumbs and bones from the master’s plate; Rabindranath Tagore had directed at them his shafts of ridicule in his essays read before the Calcutta learned societies and in articles in the papers edited by him; Sri Aurobindo had held up the example of Parnellism* with a view to discredit this “mendicant policy” in a series of articles in the *Indu-Prakash*, the *Bombay Weekly*, during the later part of the last decade of the 19th century. Bipin Chandra Pal in his *New India* (Weekly), started in 1901, began challenging the postulates of the Congress politics.

It was in this climate of opinion that we had grown up and naturally were drawn towards principles and policies that suggested activities that were dynamic and “dangerous”, to use a word very popular amongst us in those days. To young Bengalees in those days Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore, Bipin Chandra Pal and Upadhyaya Brahmabandhav and those who came to be associated with them were objects of admiration and no little curiosity. On the November evening referred to above, there were gathered Bipin Chandra Pal, Chittaranjan Das, Surendranath Halder, and Sarat Chandra Sen—all familiar faces; the only exception was a retiring figure sitting quietly in a chair, whose name I later came to know was Aurobindo Ghose. The discussion that

* Editor’s Note: It may be remarked that, though the example of Parnellism might be salutary, Sri Aurobindo’s own policy in India was not based on Parnellism. It had more resemblance in Sinn Fein, but was conceived before the Sinn Fein movement and was therefore not inspired by it.

ensued referred to the resolutions of the forthcoming session of the Congress. The Boycott resolution had been passed at a meeting held at the Calcutta Town Hall on the 7th of August, 1905; it had angered and harmed Anglo-India—the finance-capital interests of British merchants and manufacturers. And the State in India whose only reason for existence was the service of these interests naturally attempted to stamp out the rising temper of the subject population symbolised by the Boycott resolution.

This repression helped to disrupt the front of the politically-minded India; the seeds of two party alignments were sown, the “Moderates” and “Extremists” had their birth, the former desiring to tone down the “Extremist” resolution on the Boycott, the latter desiring to have it and other items of a defiant policy endorsed by the Congress. Though the control of the Congress was in the hands of the “Moderates” they dared not resile from the position taken up at the Calcutta meeting. Advanced opinion in Maharashtra and the Punjab, represented by Balwant [commonly known as Bal] Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, pressed home this advantage, and the Benares Congress endorsed the resolution under pressure of that militant group of Indian politicians. All the possibilities of the situation were discussed at this meeting. Sri Aurobindo remained a silent listener. It appeared that he was a watcher of the sky over Bengal and was satisfied with the signs on the weather-chart; he could wait.

Another topic that had been discussed at this “gathering of the clan”, was the need for a daily English-language paper to propagate the principles and policies of the New Party waiting to be born, as the *New India* weekly was felt to be unequal to the task of interpreting the ever-evolving revolutionary changes in the country and of giving a lead that would bring to fruition the dreams and aspirations of the people. No decision could be arrived at as finance stood as a stumbling block. On this topic also Sri Aurobindo appeared to be watching developments.

The next occasion on which I saw Sri Aurobindo was during the days when the Bengal Provincial Conference was scheduled to meet at Barisal in April, 1906, during the Easter holidays. I accompanied Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya to Barisal as a delegate to this Conference. Chittaranjan Das, Bipin Chandra Pal, Surendra Nath Halder and Sarat Chandra Sen were guests of the Lakutia House, a famous zamindar family of the district. I found Sri Aurobindo there, studying the situation. The Conference was dispersed by the bureaucracy at the point of the bayonet and the “regulation lathi”. This outrage inflamed even the leaders of the “Moderate” party, one of whom, Bhupendranath Basu, declared “This is the end, the beginning of the end of the British Rule in India”. The feeling all over India was electric; the Barisal episode laid the foundation of terrorism in Bengal. I recall that while all the others were excited, Sri Aurobindo was unperturbed; and interpreting the past in the light of later events I can say that he was satisfied with the evolution of thought and activity precipitated at Barisal.

Delegates from East Bengal clustered round the leaders of the New Party for light and lead. And they arranged that some of the latter should tour their areas and help preach the new message. Three of them—Bipin Chandra Pal, Sri Aurobindo and Subodh Chandra Mullick agreed to this proposal. I had the privilege of accompanying them as

one of the “volunteer” workers. Thus was I thrown into intimate relation with these leaders, and during about 45 days had occasion to observe matters and unconsciously imbibe the lessons of a new *Sadhana*, devoted work, in politics. Thousands had their initiation during these days, each receiving the gift of understanding and dedication according to the law of his being. Since then life has been different to them through good report and evil, through success and failure. The sacrifice made, the risks taken with the happiness of dear and near ones involved in this refusal to follow the ordinary path, have been worth-while. For, millions felt that “bliss was it in that age to be alive, to be young was very heaven”. We had glimpses of the future, dreamt dreams, saw visions. Thousands of our fellow-workers left the field of their mundane activities; those of us who have lived to see their dreams realised, their visions taking concrete shape, have reasons to feel themselves blessed. Personally speaking I have remained a worshipper at the gate; so it was decreed.

Writing after 45 years of those days of high exaltations and self-forgetfulness, the impressions of these 45 days of April-May, 1906, as these related to Sri Aurobindo, were those of a silent distant figure lost in his own thoughts, speaking the fewest of words, observing the effect of the language in which Bipin Chandra Pal clothed the present degradation and the future ennobling of his people. For he was the orator of the party; neither Sri Aurobindo nor Subodh Chandra would open their lips at public meetings. They had their closed-door discussions with active politicians, with young men burning to wipe out with their blood the insult implicit in foreign rule.

We, “volunteers”, sensed that something was afoot, some “new departure” from the lines of the then current politics. Hints were thrown at us, suggestions made that told us of days big with brave deeds and sacrifices in the service of the Mother, as Sri Aurobindo used to call the land of his birth. Thousands chose and trod the path indicated by the new prophets of a new life. This tour with its flaming words and silences created the history which reached its end on August 15, 1947.

Master Journalist of Nationalism

On return from this tour, I had few occasions to meet Sri Aurobindo for about two months. He was busy as Principal of the institutions started by the National Council of Education. Then something happened that threw me into his company—a privilege undreamt of. I have spoken before of a project for an English-language daily to propagate the principles and policies of the New Party. Since November, 1905, it had been receiving fitful attention. The visit of Bal Gangadhar Tilak to Calcutta on the occasion of the Sivaji Utsav of 1906 imparted an urgency to it. But in June and July, it appeared to halt. And in desperation Bipin Chandra Pal took the plunge almost unknown to the fellow-members of the Party. His weekly was being published from the Classic Press on Corporation Street, now known as Raneeshmoni Road; its proprietor Biharilal Chakravarty agreed to take the risk of publishing the daily on the assurance that the daily sale proceeds of the paper would be his. Bipin Chandra could procure from Haridas Halder and Kshetra Mohan

Singh Rs. 450 for the initial stock of paper and certain other incidental expenses. The name chosen for the paper was *Bande Mataram*—Salutation to the Mother—the refrain of Bankim Chandra’s famous song; the day fixed for the first issue was the 7th of August, 1906, the anniversary of the “Boycott Day”. It had to be changed to the 6th owing to Bipin Chandra’s absence from Calcutta on that day—a last minute change occasioned by the Political Conference in his own home district of Sylhet.

As editor of the paper Bipin Chandra had to think of a leader-writer who in his absence would play the part. In this extremity he went to Sri Aurobindo on the evening of the 5th; the latter had been residing at the Wellington Square Mansion of Subodh Chandra Mullick. He appeared to be taken by surprise at this novel development but readily agreed to Bipin Chandra’s request. Relieved of anxiety on this point, the editor started for Sylhet on the 6th August morning with the *Bande Mataram* hot and wet from the press in his hand. Sri Aurobindo started his contributions from the 2nd or 3rd issue, his first article was entitled: “John Morley—3 phases”. It fell to me to come to him every evening at about 5 p.m. and receive from him the article promised. I found it ready; I did not have to wait for it on any single day.

The *Bande Mataram* was an instantaneous success, and the soreness felt by certain leaders of the New Party for the way in which Bipin Chandra Pal had sprung a surprise on them soon wore away and was replaced by pride at the adventurousness of it. The Classic Press could not cope with the demand for the paper. And there was again a gathering of the clan. On the guarantee of Rs. 6,000 by certain members of the party, Upadhyaya Brahmabandhav undertook to have the *Bande Mataram* published from Sandhya Press on Cornwallis Street from which his own Bengali language daily, the *Sandhya*, used to be published. Till the end of August, the Classic Press printed the *Bande Mataram* and it was my privilege to put in daily appearance at Sri Aurobindo’s residence. Now and then he used to ask me questions with regard to how the rest of the paper got the materials for publication, with regard to Bipin Chandra’s tour programme and whether articles from him came regularly. These were rare occasions.

Now and then I found him with friends—Subodh Chandra Mullick, Charu Chandra Dutt, Surendranath Halder, Bijoy Chandra Chatterjee, Rajatnath Roy, Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, Jogendra Krishna Basu—when he opened out; and still do I appear to hear the tinkling laughter that expressed the joy of his heart at the temporary release from the burden of thought and responsibility generally felt by him. Now and then politics cropped up in these discussions and their handling in the daily Press, in his own articles. He generally spoke in English, but when he used his mother tongue, Bengali, the foreign accent and a lisping sound made it pleasant to the ear. Even during these pleasantries, a book was always by his side into which he would dip and lose himself. And there were silences eloquent of the prevailing mood of all present. Now and then there was small talk, and Sri Aurobindo extracted the utmost pleasure from it. It is not easy to recall at this distance the nature of the discussions held on these occasions. But one stands out prominently where he and N. N. Ghosh, editor of the weekly *Indian Nation* and Principal of the Metropolitan College, now known as the Vidyasagar College, were engaged in a

controversy over the principles and practices of the New Party. N. N. Ghosh had a reputation for crisp, nervous English and Sri Aurobindo was Sri Aurobindo and the controversy between these two giants attained the character of an epic, neither giving quarter. This controversy and the words and phrases used in it became the talk of the politically-minded people of the day.

But this was later in 1907. In August-September, 1906, Sri Aurobindo's writings showed the quality of a master that was an inspiration to thousands. And almost daily Reuter and correspondents of the foreign Press used to cable the news and views published in the *Bande Mataram* as reflecting the authentic feelings of the Indian people in their struggle for national self-respect, which is *Swaraj*. By the end of September, 1906, Bipin Chandra Pal returned from his East Bengal tour and took editorial control of the paper. Sri Aurobindo fell ill and repaired to Deoghar for recuperation. The problem of *Bande Mataram*'s finances came up again and Subodh Chandra Mullick offered to take up the whole responsibility of this concern, and from Cornwallis Street had it transferred to Creek Row in a building owned by himself. This change was symptomatic of a minor change in the internal affairs of the New Party. Bal Gangadhar Tilak tried to bring about a reconciliation during the Congress Sessions at Calcutta over which Dadabhai Naoroji was to preside. But he failed as the youngest people were for a more outright support to the tactics of Parnellism—a combination of constitutional and unconstitutional activities directed against the alien State in India. Bipin Chandra Pal retired from the editorial charge of the paper and in a letter handed it over to Sri Aurobindo—a letter which I carried to the addressee's Mott's Lane residence.

And since this letter afterwards gained importance as evidence against Sri Aurobindo as Editor of the *Bande Mataram* in a sedition case, the episode should be related. "The charges concern the articles entitled 'Politics for Indians' which appeared in the Town Edition of the 27th June and the Dak edition of the 28th June and the republication on the 26th July of certain seditious articles which had originally appeared in the *Jugantar* newspaper", to quote from the judgment delivered on September 28, 1907, by Mr. Kingsford, first Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta. Sri Aurobindo was acquitted, as the prosecution failed to bring home to him the charge that he was the editor of the *Bande Mataram* on those days in spite of the letter of Bipin Chandra Pal found in course of a police search of his house at Mott's Lane. And as Bipin Chandra refused to swear in the witness box when called upon to do so by the Magistrate, the latter drew up proceedings against him for contempt of Court and sent him to his subordinate Magistrate, Mr. Ram Anugraha Narain Singh, for trial. Mr. Kingsford had not allowed Bipin Chandra to put in his plea for refusal to co-operate in the discharge of justice by the State. But in Mr. Singh's court he fully explained his stand. His was not a case for total non-cooperation with British Administration as was evolved in the "open conspiracy" during the twenties of this century under Gandhiji's inspiration and guidance. But he stood on his right as a citizen to withhold co-operation from the State in a particular case in which the policy followed would be creating greater confusion in the country by suppressing the liberty of the people to express their opinion on particular matters of State or the basic principles of

its being. He was sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment on the 10th September, 1907. The Press of India hailed the action of Bipin Chandra's as confirming the opinion of Srinivas Shastri that Bengal was introducing an element of "grimness" into Indian politics which had become more than ever necessary.

With the transfer of *Bande Mataram* from Cornwallis Street to Creek Row my connection with it ceased. But in March, 1908, I was called in by Sri Aurobindo to serve as a sub-editor. Here I found as my colleague Krishna Chandra Ghosh who has died this year on the 8th of May. We "edited" the telegrams, and Sri Aurobindo passing through our room would ask of us of the day's news on which to comment. He generally finished his articles by 3 p.m., and when handing these over to us would inquire whether they would be sufficient. If we replied in the negative, he would stand by our table, look over the telegram sheets, and write a "para" or two, as the mood was on. Other denizens of the editorial sanctum were Syam Sundar Chakravarty and Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, the latter still happily with us, a witness to the "high audacity" of those days, Sri Aurobindo's favourite words. The "Chief", the title by which he was known in the *Bande Mataram* Office, showed an instinct for journalism that was remarkable for one of his retiring and recluse habits.

During 1907, I had been a fitful visitor to Sri Aurobindo. On the eve of the Surat Congress, December, 1907, the organisation of the New Party delegation to it took me more often to the Wellington Square mansion of Subodh Chandra Mullick where Sri Aurobindo generally resided or passed the evenings when he had his own house at Calcutta. One day I found him absorbed in "automatic writing", and certain of the indications about the Surat developments were fulfilled; the insult to Surendra Nath Banerjee, for instance, which was compared to death. I was one of the Bengal delegates who accompanied Sri Aurobindo and Syam Sundar Chakravarty to Surat. All of us travelled "3rd" Class. On reaching Surat we were housed in a Dharmasala; we spread our beddings over carpets. Sri Aurobindo and Syam Sundar had cots to distinguish their position. We took the same vegetarian food arranged on behalf of the New Party's Conference, and Bengal delegates were recipients of marked public notice as having done something significant in the evolution of Indian Nationalism during the British period.

Guide and Deliverer of the Indian People

Sri Aurobindo presided over this Conference. He was no orator. But the Conference hung on his words limpid and flowing, instinct with a new meaning, though the words had been familiar enough. Even during this Conference Sri Aurobindo appeared as a soul that dwelt apart from the tumult and shouting of politics of all awakened people newly roused to the degradation of its subjection and grown conscious of its high destiny in the world recalling and fulfilling the achievements and promises of our storied past. Sri Aurobindo had been chosen to help in transforming the thoughts and activities of his people, and it was enthralling to watch the evolution of this drama involving individuals who left home and family, and dared and did deeds that awed millions and thrilled them

to a new realisation of their weaknesses and a new determination to rid their social polity of these. As the guiding spirit of the *Bande Mataram* he had been a distant figure; the Surat Congress ended that recluse life and pushed him before hundreds of thousands as the tribune of their rights, as the long looked-for guide and deliverer.

From Surat he went to Bombay: the conduct of the *Bande Mataram* devolved on Syam Sundar Chakravarty and Hemendra Prasad Ghosh who had deputised for them all during the Congress session; and it was he [Sri Aurobindo] who put in the *Bande Mataram* a banner head-line describing Dr. Rash Behary Ghosh's speech as "The Undelivered Masterpiece". We resumed our normal life at the *Bande Mataram* office. The "Chief" returned after about 30 days. I do not remember anything particularly noticeable to be recalled except that newspaper controversy between the "Moderates" and "Extremists" with regard to the responsibility for the abortive Surat Congress showed no signs of abatement. During those tumultuous days at Surat, he had been his own self, unaffected by them, in-drawn generally to a world of which we know little. And, therefore, we could not imagine that the days were hastening towards a crisis in the affairs of his own life, in the fortunes of the *Bande Mataram*. Financial difficulties had always been dogging this paper. Except in an extremity, the management generally did not pester him with them. And the majority of us were taught to treat them as part of the day's work, the "Chief" preferring to forego any "salary" that he now and then drew; the others followed the example. For, in those days journalists regarded journalism as part of a mission, not a profession to be carried on under Trade-Union rules. Those of us who linger on the scene still follow something of the old-world practice.

Sri Aurobindo during the three months that he remained free was in requisition as a speaker at public meetings, he having got over his resolve not to address his people in English, and the latter refusing to accept any refusal now that reports of meetings addressed by him in Western India had carried eloquent head-lines. His articles in the *Bande Mataram* gained a new reality from this closer touch with the people imparting to his thoughts a this-worldly colour of their daily struggles with wants and other deficiencies in their material existence. The alien bureaucracy having failed to capture him with laws of sedition were ever on the watch, and their "spies" were on the prowl, even planting themselves in the *Bande Mataram* office. We members of its staff were careful of our words and avoided "loose" talk before less known people such as generally crowd into newspaper offices. We felt the tension in the air. But we were not prepared for what happened on April 30, at Muzaffarpore in Bihar then under a common Lieutenant-Governor. A bomb burst at about 9 p.m. shattering the carriage in which Mr. Kingsford was supposed to be returning home. In reality the victims turned out to be Mrs. Kennedy and Miss Kennedy, wife and daughter of one of the leaders of the Bar and a Congressman, Mr. Pringle Kennedy. Rumours floated over Calcutta of this event on the 1st of May, 1908. The next day-break found Sri Aurobindo in police custody. Days of confusion followed. The *Bande Mataram* struggled heroically to ride the storm. It was in vain. The bureaucracy itself inflicted the death-blow by confiscating the press which printed the paper.

Life became a victim to rumours. The "Chief" was withdrawn behind the jail lock-

up; the Manicktala Bomb Conspiracy case was lengthening its weary days; the assassination inside the jail of the approver Narendra Nath Goswami by Kanai Lal Dutta and Satyendra Nath Basu introduced an element of exaltation that upheld public morale. The blackest day, however, has to come to an end. The Conspiracy case before Mr. Beachcroft, a fellow entrant of the year into the Indian Civil Service with Sri Aurobindo, resulted in his acquittal. The judge accepting the verdict of the two assessors on the 13th of April, 1909, Sri Aurobindo was let out of the jail lock-up about 30 days after. He came to a world where a “hush” and a “silence” had set in, the national mind waiting for a new lead. I was then teacher in the National School of Sylhet, the headquarter station of the farthest east Bengalee-speaking district. During the next Puja recess two or three of us hastened to Calcutta to meet the “Chief”; he was putting up at the College Square house of Krishna Kumar Mitra, husband of his maternal aunt. We had our *darshan*, a winsome smile welcoming us. We felt ourselves as on a pilgrimage, believing that he was engaged in a new *Sadhana* that would give him supernatural powers which would make an end of the hated foreign rule. My companions were more receptive of the new psycho-physical discipline that the “Chief” was prepared to impart; the *Karmayogin* (English) and *Dharma* (Bengali), the two weeklies preaching a new Nationalism, were more in my line. We interpreted the truths inculcated through these two papers in the light of our own experience, in consonance with our individual capacities. These brought to our thoughts and activities some sort of a coherence out of the confusion created by the repression by the Government and the safe policy of our elder politicians. He showed us the way out of bewilderment; we learnt to understand what Indian Nationalism stood for and the ideal of the “Karmayogin”:

“It [Indian Nationalism] must be on its guard against any tendency to cling to every detail that has been India. This has not been the spirit of Hinduism in the past.... In all life there are three elements, the fixed and permanent spirit, the developing and constant soul, and the brittle changeable body. The spirit we cannot change, we can obscure or lose; the soul must not be rashly meddled with, must neither be tortured into a shape alien to itself, nor obstructed in its free expression, and the body must be used as a means, not overcherished as a thing valuable for its own sake...”

The return of self-respect to a people is characterized by a sort of revivalism that leads men and women to “cling to every detail” that is in practice in every-day life. Indian nationalism of the times I have been trying to indicate was not free from this defect. And it was in the fitness of things that Sri Aurobindo, the “prophet of Nationalism” as Chittaranjan Das called him, during the peroration of his address to Mr. Beachcroft and the assessors, should take the earliest opportunity to warn his people of this aberration of their life. Many of us who had been carried away by its spirit of revivalism needed this warning so that we could devote ourselves to the service of our people with a becoming spirit of humanity, with a new awareness that the alien values introduced into their life by Britain had made contributions towards its enrichment, winnowing the chaff from the

grain. Thus would we be able to take part in rebuilding the life of humanity on a new basis in the construction of which East and West would co-operate out of mutual knowledge. Sri Aurobindo, a graft of the East put on a Western trunk, was best suited to work out this synthesis. The *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma* were chosen as the instruments fit to be placed in his hands for the evolution of the Master Plan of a saner humanity rooted in honest labour, disdaining to exploit the labour of others, and bearing love for all created things. This was an earnest of the “divine life on earth” of which Sri Aurobindo speaks with certitude in his 76th Birthday Message. The *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma* gave us intimations, faint and obscure, of the “human dream of perfectibility”, of “aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religious and spiritual seers and thinkers.”

The weakening of political fervour turned the minds of many of us inwards. But the presence of External Authority in our country had had such a disturbing effect on our minds that, except the chosen few, none could settle down to this new *sadhana*. The majority of us looked to the *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma* to give us a new lead in our political bewilderment. Sri Aurobindo’s “Open Letter to My Countrymen” that appeared in the *Karmayogin* on July 31, 1909, was regarded by us in this light. And we who lived in the countryside could not know that this letter would prove to be his “Last Political Will and Testament” to his people. So, when in August 1909, rumours reached us that he had vanished from Calcutta, we thought that it was part of political tactics—a refusal to be caught and put behind prison bars; we fondly hoped that he would come back to his accustomed place in the political leadership of his people, referred and renovated by the new *sadhana* he had undertaken. We of the generation that grew up under his specious eyes, caught fire from his flaming words, the few of us who have had no inspiration other than the ending of alien rule, the few of us who still linger on the scene have been awaiting for 40 years for the arrival amidst us of one of the builders of our youth whom the Creator has yet spared to us. We have waited in vain. So it has been decreed. Sri Aurobindo is a distant figure to us beyond our comprehension. The realisation of this disability in us has not been a pleasurable experience. But we have learnt to accept it as a decree from on high.

These reminiscences cover a period of about 45 years. They are coloured by growth and retrogression in thought and life that are part of human evolution. I am conscious that they do not throw much light on the development of the personality from a political thinker and activist into a seer. They are here for what they are worth. I am thankful to *Mother India* for according me an opportunity to recall the age when Sri Aurobindo was the centre of a people’s hope, a path-finder to them over stretches of life littered with lost opportunities, it may be with failures and weaknesses, but now and then shot through and through with exaltations of spirit, acts of high audacity, silent dedication to a far-off divine event that dawned on the 15th of August, 1947, coincident with the anniversary of Sri Aurobindo’s birthday. This attempt to recollect has been a healing experience. It has confirmed my faith in the people. Saint Augustine’s mother had been consoled with the words—“the child of so many tears can never go wrong for long”; the people among

whom Sri Aurobindo was born can never go wrong for long. This thought upholds many of us.

SURESH CHANDRA DEB

(Reproduced from *Mother India*, 15 August 1950)

GREEN TIGER

There is no going to the Gold,
 Save on four feet
 Of the Green Tiger in whose heart's hold
 Is the ineffable heat.

Raw with a burning body
 Ruled by no thought—
 Hero of the huge head roaring
 Ever to be caught!

Backward and forward he struggles,
 Till Sun and Moon tame
 By cutting his neck asunder:
 Then the heart's flame

Is free and the blind gap brings
 A new life's beat—
 Red Dragon with eagle-wings
 Yet tiger-feet!

Time's blood is sap between
 God's flower, God's root—
 Infinity waits but to crown
 This Super-brute.

K. D. SETHNA

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

*Savitri and the Record of Yoga**

3

THE phrase “slave of God” occurs in a speech of the Godhead into whom Death is transformed after Savitri’s victory, a passage that is now part of Book Eleven, “The Book of Everlasting Day”. But this passage in its original form, which already included the line in question, was written as early as 1916. It is found in the notebook used by Sri Aurobindo for his first known draft of the poem, consisting of some eight hundred lines and not yet divided into books or cantos. This nearly complete draft of what would evolve into an epic of thirty times that length is preceded in the small notebook by a three-page draft of the opening—dated, on the second page, “August 8th 9th 1916”—beginning with the lines:

In a huge forest where the listening Night
Heard solitary voices and a tread
That had no sound for the rich heart of day....

After breaking off on the third page, at the point where Savitri arrives at the place where she will meet Satyavan, Sri Aurobindo started again in almost the same way, possibly a couple of months later. This time he continued and, after some time, began dating the draft every few pages. It was perhaps due to the unusual flow of inspiration he was experiencing that he became interested at this stage in recording the progress he was making with the poem from day to day. The dates in the margins of the manuscript—October 17, 18 and 19—show that on three days in 1916 he drafted much of what eventually became Books Eight, Nine and Ten of the epic, “The Book of Death”, “The Book of Eternal Night” and “The Book of the Double Twilight”. However, there was no double twilight as yet, but only something like “The Dream Twilight of the Ideal”, where much of Savitri’s debate with Death took place. The draft stops abruptly at the point where the twilight vanishes:

Even as she spoke, they left the twilit world.
It ended not; it vanished. Savitri

The remainder of the notebook was used mostly for the rewriting of passages that had

* The talk given on 18 February 2002 at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry, is continued in this instalment.

already been drafted. This was the beginning of the long process of revising and expanding *Savitri*, which would continue until 1950. But there are also some passages for the concluding section of the poem, where Death is transfigured into a luminous God. Among these passages is a speech of this God to Savitri, a flight of sustained inspiration which, as we can see from a study of Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga*, has an exact relation to his state of consciousness at the time when it was written. Here is a substantial part of this extraordinary passage:

Mirror of Nature's secret spirit made
 Thou shalt not shrink from any brother soul
 But live attracted helplessly to all,
 Drawn to me on the bosom of thy friend
 And forced to love me in thy enemy's eyes.
 Thou shalt drink down my sweetness unalloyed
 And bear my ruthless beauty unabridged
 Amid the world's intolerable wrongs,
 Mid the long discord and the clash of search,
 Thou shalt discover the one and quivering note
 And be the harp of all its melodies
 And be my splendid wave in seas of love.
 Insistent, careless of thy lonely right,
 My creatures shall demand me from thy heart.
 All that thou hast shall be for others' bliss;
 All that thou art shall to my hands belong.
 I will pour delight from thee as from a jar
 And whirl thee as my chariot through the ways
 And use thee as my sword and as my lyre
 And play on thee my minstrelsies of thought.
 And when thou art vibrant with all ecstasies
 And when thou liv'st one spirit with all things,
 Men seeing thee shall feel my siege of joy,
 And nearer draw to me because thou art.
 Enamoured of thy spirit's loveliness,
 They shall embrace my body in thy soul,
 Hear in thy life the beauty of my laugh,
 Know the thrilled bliss with which I made the world.
 This shalt thou henceforth learn from thy heartbeats
 That conquering me thou art my captive made,
 And who possess me are by me possessed.
 For ever love, O beautiful slave of God.¹

This passage was ultimately expanded by twenty lines or so, with a number of

changes in the order and wording of the lines.² But compared with the drastic mutations undergone by many other passages in *Savitri* in the course of Sri Aurobindo's quest for a spiritually revelatory perfection, it came relatively close to its final form at what seems to have been the first writing.

The reason for this must be that what is expressed here is something Sri Aurobindo realised in its full intensity fairly early in his sadhana and, moreover, something that was essential to his original conception of *Savitri*. The *Record of Yoga* supports the first part of this explanation. Sri Aurobindo began *Savitri* during a long gap in the *Record* extending from March 1916 up to January 1917. (In one sense, this is unfortunate for us, because if the *Record* had continued through that period there might have been some mention of the poem Sri Aurobindo was then beginning to write.)³ When the diary resumes on 9 January 1917, we read in the first entry: "Shakti on the basis of dasya is well founded."⁴

Now, *dāśya* is the term used in the *Record of Yoga* for the state described in *Savitri* as being a "slave of God". *Dāśya* is, literally, the condition of being a slave, a *dāśa* (masculine) or *dāśī* (feminine); the latter word, *dāśī*, is used by Sri Aurobindo when he wishes to make the image of the slave explicit. Submission and surrender are English equivalents of *dāśya*, but they occur only occasionally in the *Record*, while *dāśya* occurs hundreds of times.⁵

The "slave of God" passage in *Savitri* is a vivid description of what is called in the *Record of Yoga* "the dasya of the supreme degree which obeys helplessly the direct impulse of the Master".⁶ Paradoxically, this slavery is the key to liberation in action, this defeat and surrender of the ego are the victory of the spirit and this helplessness is the secret of omnipotence.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. *Mother India*, February 1982, pp. 82-83.

2. See *Savitri* (1993), pp. 700-702.

3. Sri Aurobindo never mentions *Savitri* by name in the *Record of Yoga*, although at an earlier period of the *Record* there are explicit references to *Ilion*, his major poetical work before *Savitri*. But *kāvya* (poetry) probably refers in some places to *Savitri*, as when Sri Aurobindo writes on 20 February 1920: "Increasing ideal-power in kavya." (He used the word "ideal", equivalent to *vijñānamaya*, for what comes from the planes he later called "overhead".)

4. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 919.

5. "Submission" is also used as a translation of *nati*, submission to the divine Will as a form of *samatā* (equality). In 1927, in the last period of the *Record*, "surrender" becomes the normal word for *dāśya*.

6. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 194. This is part of a definition of the degrees of *dāśya* found in the *Record* entry of 13 January 1913, ten days before the experiment with ants for the development of *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas* discussed in an earlier instalment. On 16 January, Sri Aurobindo wrote that he was experiencing this supreme degree of *dāśya* as the dominant state of his being, even in "such involuntary motions as the closing or blinking of the eyelids, *nimishannapi* or the direction of the gaze." (*Ibid.*, p. 207)

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

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

6

In these translations Sri Aurobindo all the time has emphasised the original spiritual meaning of the Rik and not in the least either the ritual, historical, geographical or mythical meanings rendered by Indian as well as Western scholars.

One may ask why Sri Aurobindo is so much attracted towards Madhuchchhandas and consistently returned to his very first Rik of Agni particularly—not on either Indra or Vayu or Varuna or any other God. He has tried to explain the Rik in his own simple Bengali at length even for the common people of Bengal who know their native language only.

In one of his articles in *The Hymns of Madhuchchhandas* published in *Archives and Research*²⁰ Sri Aurobindo has clearly stated why he preferred to write on the Hymns of Madhuchchhandas. He says: “I have selected the Madhuchchhanda group because, in my opinion, he troubles himself less than many other Rishis, less for instance than Medhatithi Kanva who follows him in the received order of the Veda, with the external symbols of sacrifice and ceremony and is more clearly and single-mindedly occupied with moral and spiritual ideas and aspirations. He presents, therefore, a favourable ground for the testing of my theory.”²¹

Except the first Sukta, from the second to the tenth Suktas Madhuchchhandas has prayed to Vayu, Indra-Vayu, Mitra-Varuna, Ashwini Kumaras, Indra, Vishwedeva, Saraswati, Maruta, Indra-Maruta and Indra respectively. Sri Aurobindo has concentrated specially and at length on the Riks of Agni and Saraswati. He has dwelt upon key words अग्नि (1.1.1) विश्वतः परिभूरसि (1.1.4) कविऋतु सत्यः चित्रश्रवसम् (1.1.5) गोपामृतस्य (1.1.8) and adjectives of Saraswati: वाजेभिः वाजिनीवती, पापका, धियावसु (1.3.10) सुपतीनां सुनुताम् (1.3.117).

Sri Aurobindo was deeply impressed by the unique spiritual attributes of Agni and Saraswati experienced by the Rishi and revealed boldly in symbolic language. Boldly because the entire surroundings were full of rituals and Fire and Sacrifice were limited to the concept of the external oblations-offering. Madhuchchhandas has entirely changed the earthly details of rituals into real God-language and Yogi Sri Aurobindo has rightly experienced the true spirit inherent in the Rik. Hence to point out the greatness of Madhuchchhandas it will be befitting to quote some lines from *Savitri*:

A Will, a hope immense now seized his heart,
And to discern the superhuman's form
He raised his eyes to unseen spiritual heights,
Aspiring to bring down a greater world.
The glory he had glimpsed must be his home.²²

7

Sri Aurobindo's findings are:

“Agni is a Devata, one of the most brilliant and powerful of the masters of the intelligent mind.... In man as he is at present developed, the intelligent mind is the most important psychological faculty and it is with a view to the development of the intelligent mind to its highest purity and capacity that the hymns of the Veda are written.”²³

“Agni in the sphere of material energies is the master of *tejas*... fiery light, which is the basis of the *citkoṣa*... Agni.... [is] the agent of the *sahaituka tapas* in the mind. In the language of modern psychology, this *sahaituka tapas* is Will in action,—not desire, but Will embracing desire and exceeding it. It is not even choice, wish or intention. Will, in the Vedic idea, is essentially knowledge taking the form of force. Agni, therefore, is purely mental force, necessary to all concentration. Once we perceive this Vedic conception, we realise the immense importance of Agni and are in a position to understand the hymn we are studying.”²⁴

“The word Agni is formed from the root अग् (ag) with the nominal addition नि (ni). The root अग् (ag) is itself a derivative root from the primitive अ (a), meaning “to be”. The ण् (g) gives an idea of force and अग् (ag), therefore, means to exist in force, pre-eminently—to be splendid, strong, excellent and Agni means mighty, supreme, splendid, forceful, bright”.²⁵

In his aforesaid article *The Hymns of Madhuchchhandas* he says:

“...when I read in the next line Agni described as ‘Kavikratuh Satyashitra-sravastamanh’, the strong in wisdom, the true, the rich in various knowledge, I reached the limit of my powers of complaisance. I shake off the yoke of the materialist. The materialistic interpretation sinks under triple blows of these epithets and from my mind at least passes away never to return. Fire, material fire, has nothing to do with wisdom, truth and various knowledge... Agni of whom wisdom, truth and various knowledge are the attributes, cannot be the personification of fire or the god of the material flame but must be and is something greater. The Rishi of the Veda is raising his hymn to a mighty god, moral and intellectual, a god before whom Sages can bow down, not to a savage and materialistic conception. He is not thinking of the burning fire, he is thinking of the helper of man who fortifies his character and purifies his intellect, Vaisvanara, Pavaka, Jata Vedas.”²⁶

Sri Aurobindo experienced the height of Rishi Madhuchchhandas Vaiswamitra in attributing the meaning of God-Will and Seer-Will to Agni in 1.1.1 and 1.1.5 and was deeply moved by the non-ritualistic and most philosophical rendering of the Rik. If we look at the Rik in this perspective and study it from the height achieved by the Rishi and the light received by the Yogi Sri Aurobindo we shall at once be one in heart with the true significance of the verse.

Irach J. S. Taraporewala has welcomed the esoteric interpretation of the “Agni Suktas” presented by Sri Aurobindo. He observed that “our ancient Aryan scriptures should be re-interpreted in a truly mystic fashion. Then only their true spiritual work will

be appreciated, mere philological and lexical interpretation give the 'body' of these chants; we need to reveal the 'soul' and that can be done only through the 'mystic' interpretation".²⁷

8

Conclusion

We may conclude the discussion in the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"So the Rig-veda begins with an invocation to Agni, with the adoration of the pure, mighty and brilliant God. 'Agni (he who excels and is mighty),' cries the Seer, 'him I adore'. Why Agni before all the other gods? Because it is he that stands before Yajna, the Divine Master or things; because he is the god whose burning eyes can gaze straight at Truth, at the *satyam*, the *vijñānam*, which is the Seer's own aim and desire and on which all Veda is based; because he is the warrior who was down and removes all the crooked attractions of ignorance and limitation अस्मज्जुहुराणम् एनः (*asmajjuhurāṇam enaḥ*) that stand persistently in the way of the Yogin; because as the vehicle of Tapas, the pure divine superconscious energy which flows from the concealed higher hemisphere of existence, (*avyakta parārdha*), he more than any develops and arranges Ananda, the divine delight. This is the signification of the verse."²⁸

(Concluded)

RAMANLAL PATHAK

References

20. *Archives and Reserch*, Vol. 8 No. 1, April 1984, pp. 3-5.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
22. *Savitri*, p. 76.
23. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 443.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 445-47.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 447.
26. *A & R*, Vol. 8 No. 1, April 1984, pp. 8-9.
27. Quoted by Dr. S. G. Kantawala in "Sri Aurobindo's Vedic Interpretation". The journal of the M. S. Pai of BRD Vol. XXII, XXIII 1972-74).
28. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 439.

YAJNAVALKYA AND THE MEANS TO IMMORTALITY

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

5. The Indestructible Law of Atman

YAJNAVALKYA'S formula of knowledge is this: first, to know Atman in its pure essence, *āmā* (2-4-5); second, to know the abode of Atman to be in the world, *āmanaḥ* (*Ibid.*); third, to know all this as the manifestation of the eternal essence of Atman, *idaṁ sarvaṁ yad ayam ātmā* (2-4-6). He who knows Atman according to this formula is an all-knower, *sarvavid* (3-7-1), an upholder of the indestructible law of Atman, *anucchitti-dharmā* (4-5-14).

Now Yajnavalkya tries to amplify his formula of knowledge through two examples, one is an example of a lump of salt dissolved in water, *saindhava-khilya* (2-4-12) and another is an example of a mass of salt that has appeared out of sea water, *saindhavaghanaḥ* (4-5-13).

(i) When a lump of salt is thrown into water, it dissolves. As a result, the water becomes saline in taste. There is no particle of water which does not have this saline taste. There is Being that has become huge, *mahad bhūtam*, by assuming infinite forms, *anantam*, and extending endlessly, *apāram*, in space and time. In other words, the world comes into existence when Being (*bhūtam*) has become this immense universe (*mahad bhūtam*). Being is conscious substance and the world that has come out of the Being is a multiplicity of conscious forms (*prajñānaghana*), a multiplicity where all forms without exception are conscious in nature (*prajñānaghana eva*). This is what we are supposed to understand of Being in the analogy of the lump of salt dissolved in water.

(ii) The word *saindhava* means a product of *sindhu* (sea). The mass *saindhavaghana* is made up of salt particles and all the particles taste saline without exception, *kṛtsanaḥ rasaghanaḥ*, whether they are taken from inside or outside. In the same way the Atman which is a mass of infinite forms (*anantam*) and extended in boundless space and time (*apāram*) has appeared out of the original Atman beyond space and time. The distinctions of inside and outside cannot be found in the mass of forms, because the mass is entirely conscious in nature, *kṛtanaḥ prajñānaghana eva*. In other words, the world which is a manifestation of Atman is composed only of conscious forms.

Thus both 2-4-12 and 4-5-13 speak of the world coming from and abiding in Atman. Though the forms are conscious like Atman, they put on the appearance of inconscience which is an accidental outcome of manifestation, as in the case of a bronze statue which, in the process of creation, comes to have many accidental features, but is free of them at the end of creation. It is referred to as a condition overtaken by death, *mṛtyunābhipannam* (3-1-3). The inconscience is removed in two successive stages, first by awakening the individual soul to Atman abiding in eternal oneness and then to the same Atman extended in the multiplicity of forms. When the soul is released from ego and united with the One, it destroys its ego-connections with form, *tany anuvinaśyati*, and comes forth as an entity

separated from similar connections with all beings that are the becomings of Atman, *etebhye bhūtebhyaḥ samutthāya* (2-4-12 / 4-5-13). As a result, he sees Atman in pure essence but not in cosmic extension. He sees the world elsewhere than in Atman. He cannot extend his love of Atman to all—wife, sons, material possessions and the rest. Therefore Yajnavalkya says that he has arrived at a knowledge of Atman but not a knowledge which is complete, *na pretya samjñāsti*. (*Ibid.*)

Now Maitreyi says that she is confused by the words *na pretya samjñāsti*. Her difficulty arises from her dualism. According to her theory, except Atman all else is Anatman; therefore when Atman is known, the knowledge cannot but be complete, *samjñā*. Hence Yajnavalkya draws her attention pointedly to the indestructible law of Atman, *anucchitti dharmā* (4-5-14), the law by which Atman is not only in eternal essence but also in manifestation of the essence, not only in the timeless One but also in the Many extended in time. He knew already that she might commit mistakes of this type. Hence his instruction was that she should give concentrated attention to his words, *nididhyāsasva* (2-4-4). But, it seems, she disregarded his instruction. For her mind was surely clouded by her dualism.

6. Atmavidya and Madhuvidya

By seeing the world elsewhere than in Atman the knower of Atman finds the world to be Anatman, a world characterised by the sense of otherness, *anyatva*. It is a world where all are others and all dealings are other-to-other dealings: other (*itaraḥ*) sees other (*itaram*); other smells other; other tastes other; other speaks to other; other hears other; other thinks of other; other touches other; other knows other (4-5-15). In other words, it is a world where every one is alienated from Atman. This, according to Yajnavalkya, is illustrative of a duality which is false, *dvaitam iva*. (*Ibid.*)

It is wrong to jump to the conclusion that Yajnavalkya dismisses all duality as false (*mithyā*). Where everyone is other like everyone else the relation is one of false duality. This is because the world is seen elsewhere than in Atman. If, on the contrary, the world is seen as originating from and abiding in Atman, then the world will be characterised by another type of duality in which the sense of otherness is entirely absent. As distinguished from the other type, this will be a duality of the real type. There cannot be a world which does not abide in Atman and which is devoid of all duality. Even as the world must abide in Atman, duality there must be in the world, but a duality of the real type.

Traditionalists speak of three types of dualities—*vijātīya bheda*, *sajātīya bheda* and *svagata bheda*. But we have to note that there is a fourth type too, a type recognised long ago by the great Yajnavalkya. We may ask: how can there be a duality without the sense of otherness? We may even dismiss such a conception as totally impossible. This is because we are bound by the traditional classification of dualities and believe that no other conception is possible.

Take any of the three types mentioned by the traditionalists. First, *vijātīyabheda*. It is a duality between two distinct classes, as between a stone and a man. Second, *sajātīyabheda*. It is a duality between two distinct individuals, as between a man and

another man. Third, *svagatabheda*. It is a duality between two distinct parts in an individual, as between ears and eyes in a man. In all of them the relation is one of otherness. But according to Yajnavalkya, there is another type of duality not conditioned by the relation of otherness. We may ask whether such a duality is ever possible. Yajnavalkya invites our attention to a mass of salt, *saindhava ghana* (4-5-13). It is a mass consisting of salt particles. While the particles differ from one another as particles having their own independent forms, they simultaneously exceed themselves and abide in the essential oneness of saline taste. This illustrates a unique type of duality characterised by oneness. In order to distinguish it from the traditional types it may be called *atigatabheda*. The salt example is intended to tell us that the world abiding in Atman has dualities, but all the dualities are rooted in the oneness of Atman. Yajnavalkya is a non-dualist because his non-dualism excludes the dualities of the false type conditioned by otherness. He recognises the dualities pervaded by the sense of oneness, but this dualism is not final, for it is dependent on the ultimate oneness of Atman. In this sense also he is a non-dualist. He is a non-dualist in yet another but a more fundamental sense, because he believes only in the reality of Atman besides which nothing else exists.

We know that the indestructible law of Atman is binding upon all who seek Atman. Therefore a seeker cannot stop with knowing Atman in its essential oneness. He must also know Atman in manifestation of its essence. Instead of seeing the world elsewhere than in Atman he must practise *śravaṇa* etc. and see the world as originating from and abiding in Atman. When he succeeds in doing so, he realises that all is verily the becoming of Atman, *sarvam ātmaivābhūt* (2-4-14 / 4-5-15). All sense of otherness disappears from the world and oneness alone is seen everywhere. He finds that all dealings of the world are dealings based on the sense of oneness: Atman sees Atman; Atman smells Atman; Atman tastes Atman; Atman speaks to Atman; Atman hears Atman; Atman knows Atman. His love of Atman is extended to all; he loves all for the sake of Atman. One may see or smell, but it is an occasion for Atman to exchange love for love of Atman. If love becomes the law of living in the world, it will be a life of sweetness and delight, *madhu*. Mortal life with its fear, hatred and hostility disappears; it gives place to immortal life, *amṛtatvam*, characterised by fearlessness, sympathy and helpfulness. Now *ātmavidyā* fulfils itself in *madhuvidyā*. This is the theme of the Madhu Brahmana (2-5).

A seeker of Atman must seek Atman completely. He must love Atman and love all too for the sake of Atman. If there is anything to be renounced, it is ego and its delusions and not the world. A knower of Atman is happily related to all—wife, sons, material possessions and what not. This is the teaching of ancient Vedanta, a teaching of which Yajnavalkya is a monumental example. This is the philosophy of Atman he taught to Maitreyi.

(Concluded)

N. JAYASHANMUGAM

SAVITRI'S YOGA

Then Savitri surged out of her body's wall
And stood a little span outside herself
And looked into her subtle being's depths
And in its heart as in a lotus-bud
Divined her secret and mysterious soul.¹

In the background of the inner truth which Sri Aurobindo found on a very high plane of yogic Consciousness, that our being is constituted of body, life, mind, soul at the centre—the former being the instruments of the soul, the eternal portion of the Divine—we are required to have a yogic vision accordingly to view Savitri—Savitri who “surged out of her body's wall”, Savitri who “stood a little span outside herself”, Savitri who “looked into her subtle being's depths”, Savitri who saw “her secret and mysterious soul”. In the yogic perspective it appears that something “transcendent” to her instrumental selves surges out of her body's wall.

As the “transcendent” surges out of “her body's wall” to find out the “secret and mysterious soul”, we are led to view it as a projection of the Soul, a projection which Sri Aurobindo calls ‘Psychic Being’. It is the Psychic Being which is alone capable of finding out the Soul having looked into the subtle being's depths and “in its heart as in a lotus-bud”. It is alone capable of knocking and pressing “against the ebony gate,”² and of making the “opponent Powers”³ withdraw “their dreadful guard”.⁴ Such a being

...entered into the inner worlds.⁵

The “transcendent” comes to be all the more visible as Psychic Being, as Sri Aurobindo shows:

She forced her way through body to the soul.⁶

Since Savitri says that her “strength is taken from her and given to Death”,⁷ her Psychic Being needs to join the Soul, the Jivatman, of which it is a projection, to come out of the finiteness of the spiritual mind consciousness. The consciousness and power of Jivatman, the Soul will enable her to transcend the limit of Time and Death, whom she has to vanquish.

Savitri's Yoga thus comes to be the Yoga of the Psychic Being to be one with the Jivatman, its divine source as a result of which “A camp of God is pitched in human time”.⁸ The Adorer and the Adored comes to be One. Radha and Krishna come to be One Transcendent Being. A new Consciousness, a new order of Existence takes over the reign of the terrestrial existence. Evolution no more proceeds from Ignorance to Knowledge. It proceeds from Knowledge to higher Knowledge. The Psychic Being is no longer under the subjection of Ignorance or the Divisive Principle of Consciousness, the Consciousness

which has hitherto remained the highest order of terrestrial existence.

NIKHIL KUMAR

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1. *Savitri*, pp. 488-89.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 489.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 474.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 531.

FORGET ME NOT

THERE blossoms a beautiful tiny flower
 In our green meadow,
 Its eye is like the sky
 So serene and blue.

It does not know much to say
 And all that it speaks is always
 The same: FORGET ME NOT.

HOFFMAN VON FALLERSELEBEN

(Translated from the German by Subir Kanta Gupta.)

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

Prospects of an Indian Science

“I’m not interested in proofs but only in what nature does!” This is what the famous British mathematical physicist Dirac once told a student of his. It is an insightful acuity and shows that to do good science one needs that rare quality called the “mysterious sixth sense”. Without it no worthwhile contribution can be made to knowledge of the physical world. Perhaps we Indians do possess that in ample measure, but something else is lacking which puts us off. A disciplined and organized life with the firm commitment to pursue things of one’s liking is equally important. Which also assumes that there has to be a sufficient professional basis developed to tackle important problems of research.

What is that sixth sense and what is its joy? An anecdote about Einstein will illustrate well what is really implied in this occupation to which one should commit. “On a visit to Princeton University, a young student came across the familiar figure of none other than Albert Einstein. She was baffled to see the great scientist staring at a fountain and tilting his head this way and that way, striking curious postures, and sometimes moving his hands rapidly up and down. But when Einstein saw her puzzled look, he asked her, ‘Can you do it? Can you stop the stream enough to see individual droplets of water?’ Then he showed her how to move her hands to synchronise them with the flow and create a strobe effect that freezes the droplets. As he left the fountain, he remarked, ‘Never forget that science is just *this* kind of exploring and fun!’ ” We lack that fun.

The qualities which are present in these great people were also richly present not only in the ancient Indian teachers but also among the students. Takshashila was a famous school that existed long before the beginning of the Christian era and practically all the branches of learning were taught there. The famous physician Jivaka belonging to the 5th c B.C. acquired knowledge of medicine from a very experienced teacher. After completing the seven-year tenure Jivaka was competent enough to do medical practice on his own. But the teacher gave him an assignment. He was to find if there were any herbs within the radius of 7 km around the campus which did not have any medical use. Jivaka failed to get even one and the teacher passed him. He had fully qualified to step into life.

Not only in such ancient times but in recent days also we witness that full spirit of adventurous play. It is perhaps that which makes us authentic Indians. A tale about the indomitable character of an ordinary woman is quite illustrative of this splendid sense of life with an openness of society not to be found even in the western countries. “There is folklore about a lady, Peechi, who lived some five generations ago, during the time when women also did honey hunting and climbed down steep cliffs. One such cliff with many colonies was a challenge by the menfolk to Peechi—to climb down a rope and harvest

the colonies. She took up the challenge and successfully harvested the colonies.” (*Honey-hunters and Beekeepers of Tamil Nadu*, Keystone Foundation) A Spaniard would have hailed her in excitement as “Brava!” But something seems to be amiss in us today.

If we want to get a rather disconsolate picture of the present Indian conditions and Indian character, here are a few illustrations. “Today there is a total lack of integrity in public life. Accountability and honesty have been banished. The situation reminds one of the Greek philosopher Diogenes who went about with a lamp in broad daylight looking for an honest man... In the 1950s atomic power was regarded as the ultimate solution to India’s energy problems. This proved hollow. Other organisations have little to show for years of ‘effort’... If atomic energy has performed poorly, then the story is little different in the area of renewable energy... one of our senior officials went and signed an agreement on solar technology with an American company called Hemlock. And for long years, two groups of scientists were fighting over the applications ability or otherwise of indigenous technology... We are given to boasting that our country has one of the largest reservoirs of scientific talent in the world. That is an absurdity: hundreds of thousands of ordinary science graduates do not constitute a gene pool of brilliant scientists. Most of them are anyway unemployed or unemployable and ultimately turn to crime or non-science jobs in sheer desperation... Our centres of higher education have degenerated into the personal fiefdom of incompetent mediocrities who are only interested in protecting their own interests... India’s scientific establishment is still groping in the dark for national goals which remain imprecise... In Bihar universities have become so impossible to run that some were taken away from academics and handed over to IAS officers. The IAS officers failed in their mission and retired officers from police and the military were given the responsibility. They too have failed... Our subsystems are suffering from metal fatigue. If you fix it in one place, you cannot prevent the fissure from spreading to another... We are not merely at the edge of a historical precipice, but are tottering dangerously, with one foot over the brink... The time for action is now. It is this agenda for action, this activist search for possible cures that we need to address. (*The Degeneration of India*, T. N. Seshan with Sanjoy Hazarika, 1995)

Contrast this gloomy picture with what Will Durant has to say about India. “India was the motherland of our race and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages. India was the mother of our philosophy, of much of our mathematics, of the ideals embodied in Christianity... of self-government and democracy. In many ways, Mother India is the mother of us all.” But, then, why is it that we do not recognize the preciousness of India and her vigorous traditions and her rich and fulfilling culture? Why is it that we do not live in the soul of true India? We appreciate great works of art kept in a museum, and is it that India has now become such a piece of admired antique? But when you remove a statue from the cathedral and keep it in a museum it almost seems half dead. Its real beauty and its breathing life are intimately tied up with the setting in which it exists and not among other pieces of art howsoever beautiful they be. Harmony of association and almost spiritual companionship with the surroundings are essential in the warmth of relationship. In such an inviting and associative atmosphere contemplation and aesthetic

enjoyment become inseparable. Elgin Marbles have a different life in Greece than in the British Museum. How do we pull out India from the western art-house and put her on the temple tower reaching the blue of the sky or on the green and luxurious lands of cheerful moods or on calm summits of thought leaping into intuition or make her run on the playfields of happiness? India has to live in the Indian context and not in the minds of her admirers or sly votaries of *swadeshi*. How can India be a living India? This is necessary for the true progress in the values of the spirit and in the expression of the truth of her individuality. There have been external influences throughout the country's history but always these were assimilated and made a part of her own personality, allowing newer idea-forces to enter into a meaningful and sensitive engagement. That has to happen again.

In order to realize this we should get back to the robust sense of our culture on which the entire social structure was founded. It is sad that during the last thousand years or so the soul of India was sunken in the darkness and the creative urges were more or less asleep. This was further accentuated by the world-shunning spirituality which sucked the life-blood of its people. But prior to that was an order full of healthy beans and countless activities flourished the like of which were hardly there on this majestic scale elsewhere in the world. Literature, fine arts, sciences, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, crafts, technologies, agriculture, commerce, business, in fact in every walk of secular life also there was present the creative spirit. We may have a cursory glance at these achievements to just get an idea at the range of activities that existed in ancient India. It will be then our task to recover the principles on which life was established, life which could give rise to such tremendous creativity.

In India mathematics had its roots in the Vedic literature. This should also mean that the methods of investigation were Vedic. Not ratiocinative but esoteric-intuitive association with the truths behind things brought to our world the dimensional riches of the invisible. If behind the language we speak there is the goddess Vak standing to give concreteness to expression, so also is there the goddess of Sankhya who renders definiteness to ideas and forces which are also the manifestations of superior deities. When these divinities enter the secular fields we have their corresponding Shastras or Sciences. The great discovery of numbers or the amazing concept of Zero should not therefore come to us as a surprise. The seers who were not just the thinkers of the past moved at ease in the company of those gods and goddesses and obtained their gifts for us. Those ancients saw, as an exceptional vision, the presence of occult beings behind all that we have here. Even in our own days the carved beings on the Gopurams of the South Indian Temples are not just neutral images but are living figures. Ramanujan, or the man who knew infinity, who lived only yesterday was bestowed with luminous familiarity with numbers by Namagiri the Goddess of Namakkal. The very old discovery of Zero belongs to that magical order.

If we have to seek an ancient Greek parallel perhaps it could well be found in Pythagoras. He had such intimate friendship with the numbers that we might think them visiting him as beings in mystical experiences. No wonder, it would be foul if not

blasphemous on our part to talk to him about irrational numbers. A superior relationship of these numbers was for him the basis of the music of the spheres which he must have heard in the deep hush of his spirit. Possibly in it is the movement of heavenly objects in the rhythms that set things into motion, the metres in which the worlds roll. And yet we have irrational numbers. Could these be a facet of transmission of the whole numbers from their plenary status through intermediate levels of mind down to our physical world? This is an aspect which must be explored before the early ideas are dismissed as incomprehensible scrap.

But coming back to the Indian Zero. Apart from being a numeral it is also a concept and a fundamental one at that. If we have to see it from a rational point of view its connotation of nullity is a remarkable abstraction and we are amazed that it was present with such power of acumen amongst those early thinkers. It is indicated by a dot and is termed *pujyam*. The alternative term for Zero is *shunyam*, meaning a blank which is also loaded with deep metaphysical suggestions. As *pujyam*, conveying the sense of reverence and respect, it is expressed as *shubhra* or white. In the course of long history it travelled from India to the Arab countries and through them to Europe. It is here that *shubhra* became the Arabic *siphra* or *sifr* which further down in time became *cipher* or *cypher*. It also stands for the Greek coin of the lowest denomination, obol, of almost no value. But that was valuable enough for the dead man to pay his fare to Charon the ferryman for crossing the River Styx. He showed great spirit in earning every obol.

If we have to applaud the mathematical achievements of the ancient Indians during the historical period we may remember the fervent words of the Australian Indologist A. L. Basham: "... the world owes most to India in the realm of mathematics, which was developed in the Gupta period to a stage more advanced than that reached by any other nation of antiquity. The success of Indian mathematics was mainly due to the fact that Indians had a clear conception of the abstract number as distinct from the numerical quantity of objects or spatial extension." (*The Wonder that was India*)

Here is one example of their mathematical precision. In a Yuga the number of rotations of the earth are 1582237500; this makes the sidereal period $1577917500/1582237500 = 23\text{h } 56\text{m } 4.1\text{s}$ corresponding to the modern value of 23h 56m 4.091s. A most remarkable accuracy! This is not just a stray calculation but there are any number of such instances.

Let us now have a hurried look at the ancient Indian atomic theories. These were mostly metaphysical in character but had foundation on spiritual experiences belonging to the Sankhya system. We have its descriptions available in the scriptural literature such as the Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita, the Puranas and also the epic Mahabharata. In the Puranas we hear the name of Kapila as the originator of this system of knowledge. But the first to have formulated ideas about the atom was Kanada who lived in the 6th c B.C. The Sankhya postulates as presented by Sri Aurobindo are as follows: "The elementary state of material Force is, in the view of the old Indian physicists, a condition of pure material extension in Space of which the peculiar property is vibration typified to us by the phenomenon of sound. But vibration in this state of ether is not sufficient to create

forms. There must first be some obstruction in the flow of the Force ocean, some contraction and expansion, some interplay of vibrations, some impinging of force upon force so as to create a beginning of fixed relations and mutual effects. Material Force modifying its first ethereal status assumes a second, called in the old language the aerial, of which the special property is contact between force and force, contact that is the basis of all material relations. Still we have not as yet real forms but only varying forces. A sustaining principle is needed. This is provided by a third self-modification of the primitive Force of which the principle of light, electricity, fire and heat is for us the characteristic manifestation. Even then, we can have forms of force preserving their own character and peculiar action, but not stable forms of Matter. A fourth state characterised by diffusion and a first medium of permanent attractions and repulsions, termed picturesquely water or the liquid state, and a fifth of cohesion, termed earth or the solid state, complete the necessary elements.” (*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 18, p. 80) Varying combinations of these five elements give rise to all material things, gross as well as subtle.

Kashyapa later known as Kanada—from *kana*, meaning a tiny grain or particle—was the first to propound the idea of atom, called *paramānu*. It is not only indivisible but also indestructible. The material universe is built on these *kanas*. But there are different types of *paramānus* arising from different minglings of the five elemental states of Matter, viz. ether, air, fire, water and earth as described by the Sankhya system.

If we have to weigh these ideas in terms of the present-day notions of science, we must admit that they belong to the domain of speculative philosophy and not to empirical rationalism. At times in our enthusiasm for establishing the contents of modern science in Indian explorations we perhaps get too far from either. Certainly, there could be an element of truth in both but the hiatus remains unbridged. It is to be understood that we need not ridicule one or the other. Instead, the question one has to pertinently answer is how to combine the intuition behind metaphysical formulations and observational methods and go to the higher synthesizing basis of knowledge. Here is one such zealous analysis: “There is a tendency in Indian logic to give a religious or philosophical base to all statements. But if we give a material rather than philosophical interpretation the ancient writings appear like a book of physics. Take an example, *Tarkasamgraha* of the 17th century treatise of Annambhatta. If we translate the words *dravya*, *guṇa*, *karma* into matter, property and dynamics instead of substance, quality and activity the book sounds like any book of physics. In the same way, *utkshepana* and *avakshepana* can be directed motion, and *gamanāni* a random motion which comes in Kinetic Theory. This is not to say that Annambhatta knew all about Kinetic Theory. He might or might not have known of it, but these are types of motions which are defined and we can get a proper modern version of them.” (*Sanskrit and Science*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1984)

About a thousand years ago Nagarjuna lived near the famous shrine of Somnath. He was a chemist and had acquired such a high reputation that it was believed that he was in communion with supernatural powers. His treatise *Rasaratnākara* dealing with chemical reactions is in the form of a dialogue between him and the gods. “In his attempt to prepare the ‘elixir of life’ from mercury, Nagarjuna made use of animal and vegetable

products, apart from minerals and alkalis. For the dissolution of diamonds, metals and pearls, he suggested the use of vegetable acids like sour gruel and juices of fruits and bark. In his treatise, he has also listed the apparatus that was used by earlier alchemists. The process of distillation, liquefaction, sublimation and roasting were also mentioned.”

Coming to technological aspects we have here a few examples. “The original Damascus steel—the world’s first high-carbon steel—was a product of India known as wootz. Wootz is the English word for *ukku* in Kannada and Telugu, meaning steel. Indian steel was used for making swords and armour in Persia and Arabia in ancient times (5th c B.C.). Wootz was produced by carburising chips of wrought iron in a closed crucible process. Carbon 1.2-1.8%... The rustless wonder called the iron pillar near Qutub Minar is a marvel of technology. High phosphorus, low sulphur, low manganese and high slag contents contribute to the good corrosion resistance of the pillar. The pillar was fabricated by forging and hammer welding lumps, weighing 20-30 kg of hot pasty iron in a step-by-step process. It is assumed that 120 labourers took a fortnight to complete the work... Agnichayana or Atiratra is performed on a bird-shaped altar of 10, 800 bricks. The altar is a geometrician’s delight. Details are given in *Sulbha Sutras* 800-500 B.C. The mathematical knowledge comes from the creation of altars and bricks in various shapes... The Pythagorean theorem (6th c B.C.) was already known to Baudhayana. The tackling of mathematical and geometrical problems with rational numbers and irrational numbers was a unique achievement of the early Indians... 4th c A.D. Bakshali Manuscript deals with fractions, square-roots, progressions, income and expenditure, profit and loss, computation of gold, interest, rule of three and summation of complex series... Astronomical work of Aryabhatta (b. 476 A.D.) is a significant landmark event. The development of Siddhantic astronomy came as a result of interaction with Greece in the post-Alexandran period (3rd c B.C.). *Vedānga Jyotisha* does not mention week days or zodiacal signs but in the Siddhantic texts these are in-built... The main occupation of Indian astronomers for the next thousand years was the calculation of planetary orbits... *Sushruta Samhitā* (350 A.D.) is the oldest known work that describes plastic surgery of the nose, ear and lip. Translated into Arabic by Manka during the reign of Harun-al-Rashid (786-809 A.D.) it mentions 8 branches of medical knowledge as surgery and 121 surgical instruments. There was also the therapeutic school of medicine in India... Chinese sources place Charak at the court of the first Scythian king Kanishka. *Charak Samhitā* contains a vast accumulation of medical knowledge... Kautilya’s *Arthashāstra* refers to Vrikshayurveda or botanical science. Harappan cities (2000-1500 B.C.) were laid out according to well-established precepts of town planning. Instruments for land survey and alignments must have been developed... The principal contribution of the Ashokan School was the stupas. Gravity pillar just standing on the level ground is a wonder of science and technology... The rudiments of construction are available in Puranas, Shastras, Samhitas. *Brihad Samhitā* of Varahmihira is an early text of *Vāstushāstra*... The Southern style of temple architect became quite distinct with the Pallava School (7th c A.D.)” Coinage dating from the 8th c B.C. to the 17th c A.D. provides numismatic evidence of the progress made by smelting technology in ancient India. We thus see that great advances in

production technology, architecture and shipbuilding were made here long before these were available elsewhere in the world. This went along with the development of highly abstract systems of thought.

In the background of such diverse activities in so many fields of science and technology one wonders if one can unhesitatingly agree with A. L. Basham's following statement. "Ancient Indian theories lacked an empirical base, but they were brilliant imaginative explanations of the physical structure of the world, and in a large measure, agreed with the discoveries of modern physics." Perhaps the statement has to be read in several contexts. If we are to apply Baconian-Cartesian ideas of science to these researches there is considerable merit in what he says. But we should also appreciate that apart from analytical-inductive-deductive methods there could as well be other approaches.

However, we must sensibly and conscientiously recognize that we have to go beyond all these processes of mentalisation and be in tune with the very methods of Nature herself. Might be she created these marvels with her own distant objectives in view, objectives in relationship with the possibilities that are present in the material cosmos. Here something more than the Grecian Man has to enter in, but not in the sense of uprooting him to bring hasty gods in our midst. The dignity of Man must be maintained, must grow, that he becomes capable of receiving the gifts of God and Nature waiting for him. Narrow theological considerations are therefore immediately out, but not their aspects of human aspiration with their cosmic harmony and perfection which give truer completion to all our attempts at realizations of the noble and the happy. André Malraus speaks of Man devaluated in an attempt to uplift God. "As much genius was needed to obliterate Man at Byzantine as had been needed to discover him on the Acropolis." (*Man and God*) Why should these stand in antagonism against each other? Is it not a sure signal telling us that we are missing something in our day's occupation? Perhaps the creaking sounds that we hear in the machinery of modern life are clear indications urging us to discover greater and truer concord that is the real basis of a worthwhile and progressive existence. We have gone through several human cycles and experienced more than a few conflicts. It seems these were inevitable in the very nature of things. Was there a distinct possibility that Acropolis had come to a stage that it would not go any farther and therefore another order had to appear? Could it be that Byzantine served its purpose in kindling the soul of humanity to the truth of love and gentleness and benevolence and walked away from history? If we read these signs with a certain degree of alertness it would appear that the complex techno-civilisation we have created in these decades of ours is on the verge of playing itself out, making room for something greatly valuable. Perhaps here India with her spiritual sensitivity can do a bit to change the course of events.

But India has to meet the threefold problem of identity. The Vedic cycle of rich life based on surer intuition brought glories in the marvels of the spirit. Then came the long age of metaphysical-dialectical cerebrations though still carrying in them the elements of pretty genuine perceptions. The decline in sovereignty of the inner life in the present time has drawn the lure of blundering materialism with its unhealthy consequences. The good of science and technology is a must for the commerce of the life-forces in relationship

with each other and it should not be shunned; the good of speculative philosophies has a measure of functionality that can make thought keener and swifter; the good of literature and arts ought to be there to tune up our higher sensibilities to the nuances of rainbow-hued emotions; the good of the warrior strength and heroism is there to conquer the dark regions present in the abysses of existence. The good of the expressive spirit has to come forward to mould its instruments for another dimension of working in the brightness of the joys of Nature and Soul and God. All this can happen if India awakes to her destiny.

There have been external influences that also brought newer opportunities. Crediting these as the gain and absolving ourselves of the debt accrued due to degeneracy that through declining ages grew in and around us, the expectation is that we shall first find our own soul and live in it, in the dharma of the nation. In this context let us remember what Sri Aurobindo wrote long ago: “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... in her own way, through solutions arising out of her own being and from her own deepest and largest knowledge.” (*The Renaissance in India*, CWSA, Vol. 20, p. 43)

The first condition for all this to happen is to get rid of the Seshanian cynicism and live in the broad daylight of optimism with faith in the capacity of our traditions, in the strength that comes from nobility of character, in the perseverance of values that uphold even the sun and the stars. We have to look at the prospects of an Indian in this spirit of creativity. We have to ask basic questions, worthwhile questions and not titillating or just utilitarian questions. We have to ask questions that come from deeper perceptions. In the physical sciences, for instance, we ought to discover the causes which compel Life to live in subjugation to Death. If we do that perhaps we might get answers to remove those causes. We do not know why at every stage of aggregation or disaggregation of matter newer properties appear. Presently we have descriptions but not knowledge. Thus water is not the sum of hydrogen and oxygen. It is another substance. How does that happen? The answer to the why of it is not available. Here is a wonderful revelation from the Mother: “...in the mineral kingdom there are phenomena which reveal a hidden consciousness, like certain crystals... If you see with what precision, what exactitude and harmony they are formed, if you are in the least open, you are bound to feel that behind there’s a consciousness at work, that this cannot be the result of unconscious chance.” (*Questions and Answers 1957-58*, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 323) Similarly, if Matter, Life, and Mind are fundamentally independent entities then, plausibly, indisputably, they will constitute irreducible dimensions and one cannot be expressed in terms of the other. In that case how would Life arise out of or enter into Matter? And so on. But if Life is to be viewed as a product of Matter, how does it acquire characteristics which are not there in the material state? In case this is true it may sound rather paradoxical, if not pretty audacious. We do not yet know how the combination of hydrogen and oxygen gives rise to an altogether different substance with altogether different properties. It will be then

strange to think of Matter giving rise to Life by some mysterious process. Matter occasioning Life is one thing and producing it is another. It would be a creation out of vacuum, *ex nihilo*, as if the vacuum were seething with an intense activity. The mystery gets further confounded as we go up on the ladder to higher propositions. But are not Matter and Life and Mind interminable? To the practising researcher such questions may appear to be intractable, they may even be called inanities; but then that cannot be the reason not to take them up before writing a condemnation about their absurdity or irrationality. On the contrary, perhaps such could precisely be the reason to set ourselves in the celebrated neo-Aryan spirit of inquiry to formulate and tackle them satisfactorily. Indeed, if such meaningful researches are to be pursued we may have to invent altogether novel techniques of approach. Not only idea-tools but also much subtler physical apparatuses and probes for investigation. Then we may be able to say that there is Indian science. Until then we are just keeping ourselves busy—one doesn't know with what. If the quality of a culture depends upon the kind of questions it asks, then we should ask questions worthy of that culture. Only when the questions are raised there is a possibility of getting their answers.

Before we scrutinise these issues or aspects of our discipline in further detail, let us first look into the general historical perspectives of science. In the course of its development through long and weary centuries we have now arrived at a stage when the analytical method has to be re-appraised in careful measure and the synthetic approach discovered. The age of supra-rational logic has to set off and in its unfolding bring to our vision brighter and broader prospects of the truth-existent.*

(Concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

* This instalment closes the long series under the caption *Can there be an Indian Science?* forming Part I of our survey of the present-day developments in the field of science and technology with their socio-commercial implications. Part II will deal with *Some Historical Perspectives of Science*. In the concluding Part III we shall take up a detailed study of the subject under the title *Foundations of Indian Science*.

TWO POEMS

(1)

In sunshine bathing green earth smiled
At wind caressing trembling locks
Of leaves and swaying branches blue-
Green brooks cascading drops of honey
Dew on upturned laughing flower
Faces close embrace of form
On form in silent anguish for
The pain of throbbing notes on memories'
Ears but only blue deep silence hears
The song of formless gentle joy
Of love from heart to answering heart
And silent prayer of soul and soul.

(2)

Rain gives of its own
Without hesitation
 expectation
of return.

We own what we give
Hesitating
 expecting
return
And never learn
 to love.

MARY HELEN

THE MIND OF CELLS' CENTRE

THIS paper is a further development of *Sri Aurobindo's system of understanding*, published a few months ago.* In it we traced the binary terms (such as physical mental and mental physical, vital-mental and mental vital, etc.) that appear in Sri Aurobindo's texts. The key idea of the system's reconstruction is that human aura (which Sri Aurobindo calls in terms of 'environmental consciousness') includes only those sheaths, that correspond to the seized stages of evolution. The sheaths are three (gross and subtle physical sheath, vital sheath, and mental sheath). They intersect three planes of universal consciousness, projecting on the physical body (planes of universal physical, vital and mental consciousness).¹ As a result of crossing, the combinations of qualities of consciousness are formed. Sri Aurobindo designates them in the frameworks of the binary terms. These qualities we called 'aspects of consciousness' and presented in the form of a table of aspects. It allowed us to establish synonymy of many terms used by Sri Aurobindo for the description of yogic experiences.

The Table of Aspects of Consciousness

From our point of view, the table of aspects of consciousness makes clear a lot—but not all. For example, proceeding from the table, it is not completely obvious which aspects Sri Aurobindo calls as higher and lower vital. From the arrangement of aspects of consciousness in the table we can assume that lower vital is rather vital aspect of physical consciousness (I.2. vital physical), than physical aspect of vital consciousness (II.1. physical vital). Therefore there should be one more system of understanding, a complementary one, which would clear up this question. And such a system really exists: Sri Aurobindo's aspects of consciousness correlates with chakras and thus he localized them accordingly, having built up a vertical structure. It is this model that would help us to define what aspects of consciousness are called higher and lower, particularly to locate the mind of cells centre.

1. Muladhara

It is the first, lowest chakra. Sri Aurobindo calls it the centre of the physical proper (material) consciousness.² It means that it supports physical consciousness and material

* *Mother India*, April-May 2002.

body.³ But it governs not only physical consciousness, but also subconscious.⁴ While subconscious in itself, as writes Sri Aurobindo, is too vague to have its own centre.⁵

Muladhara is also the sex-centre.⁶ Sri Aurobindo makes its precise localization: the apex of Muladhara is at the end of the spine and projects forward from there, controlling activity of genitals (“the organ”).⁷

2. Svadhithana

Svadhithana is below the navel, it governs the lower vital,⁸ manifesting in small vital desires and lusts—e.g. greeds (food desire), sexual desire, small likings, dislikings, vanity, quarrels, love of praise and anger at blame.⁹ It should be noted that the functional characteristics of Svadhithana practically coincide with the characteristics of physical aspect of the vital consciousness: “The physical-vital is the being of small desires and greeds...”¹⁰

3. Manipura (Nabhipadma)

Manipura is the centre above the navel.¹¹ It governs central vital¹² and more large-scale (“stronger”, “larger”) desires and passions—e.g. ambition, pride, fear, love of fame, attractions and repulsions.¹³

4. Anahata (Hritpadma)

Anahata governs the higher vital¹⁴ (mental-vital¹⁵, vital mind¹⁶, or thinking desire mind,¹⁷ emotional being¹⁸). It carries out two functions: 1) it “gives a mental expression by thought, speech or otherwise to the emotions, desires, passions, sensations and other movements of the vital being”; 2) it is the seat of such feelings as love, joy, sorrow, hatred.¹⁹ The heart centre projects from the subtle body on the middle of the chest.²⁰

Anahata is connected with the psychic centre, or soul-centre²¹. Sri Aurobindo emphasizes that this centre is behind all centres.²² The pressure of the psychic centre is being perceived by a sensation “near the middle of the back”.²³ If we take into account that the centre of psychic being is behind (at a level) the heart centre²⁴, its projection on a physical body appears to be in the area of blade-bones—between (or almost between) them.

5. Visuddha

It is the objectification and adaptation centre of mental impulses to the various conditions of the external physical world.²⁵ It controls activity of the physical²⁶ (or expressive and externalising)²⁷ mind.

The physical mind is co-related with the throat, mouth²⁸ and ears.²⁹ Its centre is in a subtle body at a level of the throat.³⁰

6. Ajna

While the throat and mouth are co-related with the physical mind, the nose and the forehead—with vital (dynamic) part of mental,³¹ or dynamic mind, which is governed

by the forehead centre.³² The concentration on this centre release the inner mind, inner (occult) vision, inner (yogic) consciousness and its powers.³³ By awakening of inner vision ability, it is possible, in particular, to see blue or aquamarine light of the higher planes of mind penetrating all the space.³⁴

7. Sahasradala (Brahmarandhra)

In a certain sense Sahasradala is to be considered as an analogue of Muladhara. Muladhara governs activity of physical consciousness proper, but not only it. The activity of subconsciousness (ergo all is subplanes: subconscious mind, subconscious vital, subconscious physical) is carried out through it. Sahasradala governs activity of the mental proper (thinking mind),³⁵ while the work of superconsciousness and its subplanes (higher thinking mind, illumined mind, plane of intuition and overmind) is carried out through it too.³⁶ Sahasradala itself projects at the top of the head.

Just as we shouldn't mix experience of Anahata and of the psychic centre, so also it is necessary to carry out a distinction between experience of Sahasradala and of the Jivatman (cosmic centre, central being above the head). In contrast to the psychic being, Jivatman is not born (does not descend in the manifested world) nor evolves — it always stands above the evolution, supporting various beings, of which the man consists.³⁷ The Jivatman is on the spiritual plane of superconsciousness (i.e., between mind and supermind), but is not fixed to any of its levels.³⁸

Now we have the following structure (in the brackets there are the synonymous terms that we can meet in works of Sri Aurobindo).

The Table of Chakras I

Thus, the precise correlation between the characteristics of the centres and aspects of consciousness is traced. But chakras are only 7, while aspects are 9.

In *The Table of Chakras I* sectors of aura's mental plane (III.1, III.2, III.3) are positioned along a vertical line in complete conformity with chakras and their characteristics.³⁹ The same situation can be noticed in relation with sectors of the vital plane (II.1, II.2, II.3). Consequently, it is possible to assume that sectors of the physical plane should be positioned according to the same principle.

Then the sector I.2 (vital physical) should be above sector I.1 (physical proper), and sector I.3 (mental physical)—above sector I.2. If there is its own chakra in each sector there, between Swadhisthana and Muladhara should exist two new chakras, two new centres. But while it is our guess only, let us get down to the texts of Sri Aurobindo himself.

In one of his letters Sri Aurobindo specifies, that the centre of the vital aspect of physical consciousness (vital physical) is "between the two lowest centres"⁴⁰ (i. e. between Muladhara and Swadhisthana). At this point we have to note that the centre of the vital aspect of physical consciousness (I.2) appears to be above Muladhara, i. e. above the centre of physical consciousness proper (I.1), as we assumed already.

In another letter Sri Aurobindo makes the following remark: "The nerves are distributed all over the body, but the vital-physical action is concentrated in its origin between the Muladhara and the centre just above it."⁴¹ Probably he means Swadhisthana again, but it is possible as well that he speaks about the centre for which there is no name yet. If it is not Svadhisthana and it is above the centre of the vital aspect of physical consciousness (I.2), then it inevitably should be the centre of the mental aspect of physical consciousness, the centre of cells' mind (I.3). Provisionally we shall name the new centres—Muladhara-2 and Muladhara-3. Muladhara-2 supports the vital sheath, and Muladhara-3 the mental one (see the figure at the end of the paper).

If in his books and letters there is no information about vital and mental centres of physical consciousness, it is possible that he was aware of them but did not disclose them.

Now let us systematize our conclusions through the table.

The Table of Chakras II

In *The Table of Chakras II* the logic is precisely traced, according to certain centres and aspects of consciousness are referred to as higher or lower. Proceeding from the table, it is getting quite clear, why Muladhara (I.1) was called by Sri Aurobindo the lowest centre of physical consciousness: this expression presumes that other centres of physical consciousness exist—for example, higher physical centre (I.3. mind of cells' centre).

Due to this table the contents of Sri Aurobindo's following letter also become clear: "... the vital physical forces (I.2.) can be received from anywhere by the body, from around, below or above. The order of the planes is in reference to each other, not in reference to the body. In reference to each other, the vital physical (I.2.) is below the physical mind [I.3. mental physical], but above the material [I.1. material physical]: but at the same time these powers interpenetrate each other."⁴²

ALEXANDER VELICHENKO

Facsimilli:

Notes and References

1. Just above the human body there is superconsciousness and beneath—subconscious.
2. Sri Aurobindo. *Letters on Yoga* (Pondicherry, 1991), Vol. 1, pp. 357, 376.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 341.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 366.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 377.
6. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 376, 377; Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* (Pondicherry, 1991), Vol. 2, pp. 1536, 1544.
7. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p. 376; Vol. 2, p. 1142.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 365, 839; Vol. 2, pp. 1019, 1142.
9. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 334, 366.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 344.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 334, 365; Vol. 2, p. 1019.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 334, 366.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 365, 373.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 334, 366.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
17. Sri Aurobindo. *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry, 1992), p. 774.
18. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 365, 366.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 375; Vol. 2, p. 1528.
21. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p. 727.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
23. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 1178.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 364, 782; Vol. 2, p. 1142.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
26. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 370, 373, 374, 375, 376; Vol. 2, p. 1600.
27. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 364, 365, 366, 367, 370; Vol. 2, pp. 1142, 1211.
28. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p. 376.
29. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 2, p. 1033.
30. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p. 374.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 365, 372.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 372, 724, 725.
34. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 2, p. 1021.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 1180.
36. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 365, 366, 370; Vol. 2, p. 1019.
37. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 270, 276, 277.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
39. As one can see, Sri Aurobindo denies existence of any centres between Ajna and Sahasradala (*Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 371), but what is said here derives from logic of his system's construction.
40. Nevertheless we have to note that Sri Aurobindo does not speak about the centre of vital aspect of physical consciousness. Such information provides the context of his letter, related to the centres of consciousness. One of the letters reads as follows: "The physical mind centre is in the throat and mouth—the vital physical [centre] is between the two lowest centres—the material consciousness is in the mūlādhāra." (*Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 376).
41. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 376.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 345-46.

TAJ MAHAL

(See first the Taj as Shah Jehan wanted to and ironically was forced to see it in his last imprisoned days—in miniature through the viewing platforms of the Agra Fort. Fashioned like the Taj, jutting in lacy marble from the dark-blooded Mathura sandstone these frame the monument with the paradox of likeness and difference, nearness and distance, reality and illusion. See then the mausoleum of love close up at dawn, in the dream twilight of the evening or under the full moon—never definable, always surreal.)

ONE sees her first afar between dream and waking
Courtyards of white and white arches prepare the gaze
Frames enclosing a Real which teases Illusion.

Dove of Silence, we circle around your stillness
Flinging our seeing's net to capture and ravish
But you gleam like a moonrise laughing undistanced within us.

Whiteness so sheer it stuns and shames and humbles
Shimmer and flicker and blur of fiery wings
Swifter than sight and moveless; here and elsewhere.

Jewelled simplicity, unadorned loveliness
Mother and Sister and Beloved! Father and Presence
Love, Death, Immortality; Matter and Spirit.

DEBASHISH BANERJI

WHAT ARE BONSAI?

The Big Joys of Growing Bonsai

BONSAI are trees and plants grown in containers in such a way that they look their most beautiful—even prettier than those growing in the wild. Cultivating bonsai, therefore, is a very artistic hobby. It's also a good illustration of the gentle respect Japanese have for living things and an expression of their sense of what is beautiful. It's much more involved than growing potted flowers, and requires a much bigger commitment—physically and emotionally.

The oldest mention of the word bonsai comes up in a mid-fourteenth century poem, but it wasn't until around three centuries later that people began using it regularly. Early bonsai can be seen in picture scrolls, though, dating as far back as 1309.

In ancient times bonsai were usually enjoyed by aristocrats, priests, and other high-ranking people, but from around the seventeenth century, commoners began delighting in them, too. After Japan ended three centuries of isolation in 1868 and opened itself up to Western countries, bonsai came to be appreciated as objects of art, and people began growing bonsai not just as a hobby but also as an artistic pursuit. Large-scale bonsai exhibitions were staged, and scholarly books on growing techniques were published.

Today, growing bonsai continues to be a hobby enjoyed by members of the general public. It's also regarded as an important part of Japan's cultural and artistic tradition, nurtured over the years by the nation's climate and people's love of nature.

Caring for bonsai is no longer just a Japanese pastime. More than 1,200 people from 32 countries attended the World Bonsai Convention that was held in the city of Omiya, Saitama Prefecture, in 1989. The convention helped launch the World Bonsai Friendship Federation, which has been a driving force in popularizing bonsai and raising bonsai-growing skills around the world. The association has organized international conventions about once every four years since the Omiya gathering; so far, they've been held in Florida in the United States and Seoul in South Korea. The next convention, set for 2002, will be in Munich in Germany.

Types of Bonsai

All sorts of trees and shrubs are used as bonsai. In essence, any plant that can be grown in a small container can be cultivated as a bonsai. The most popular varieties are pines; maples, whose leaves change their color in autumn; flowering trees, like the cherry and plum; and fruit-bearing trees, like the quince and persimmon. In countries other than Japan, varieties that are best suited to the local climate are used. The trees can grow as tall as a meter (three feet), or be small enough to be fit in one's palm.

Bonsai fall into a number of categories according to shape, but the most important thing to keep in mind is to allow the tree to express its individuality freely, without forcing it to fit any particular category, and to help it achieve its most beautiful, balanced form.

Just as people choose clothes in which they look good, containers should be chosen that best suit the trees in terms of size, shape, and color. This will allow the bonsai to be seen in the loveliest light.

The process of raising bonsai requires controlling the kind of shape the trees take. Sometimes you need to bend branches with wires or to cut them off altogether. You might think that's cruel, but these steps are essential for the tree to remain healthy in a pot.

The trees have a life of their own, of course, and grow in accordance to the laws of nature, so they can never be completely controlled by humans. The key is not to force your will on them but to appreciate the dignity of each living plant and treat them with love and respect.

Bonsai that have been watered and lovingly looked after day by day can make a deep and lasting impression on the viewer—particularly when such trees are centuries old and have been handed down from one generation of bonsai lovers to another.

Unlike other works of art, there are no such thing as “finished” bonsai as long as the trees are still alive and growing; they must continue to be tended to on a daily basis. That's why bonsai growing is sometimes called an art without end. For many enthusiasts, though, it's precisely this timelessness that makes raising bonsai so rewarding and worthwhile.

ANONYMOUS

(From an Internet write-up)

A Note from Aurobharati Trust

We have brought out the errata of *Perspectives of Savitri* published by us. Copies of the same are available with SABDA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605 002. The buyers of the two volumes of the *Perspectives of Savitri* may obtain free of cost their copies of the errata from SABDA.

KRISHNA

I PAUSED beside the cabin door and saw the King of Kings at play,
Tumbled upon the grass I spied the little heavenly runaway.
The mother laughed upon the child made gay by its ecstatic morn,
But yet the sages spake of It as of the Ancient and Unborn.
I heard the passion breathed amid the honeysuckle-scented glade,
And saw the King pass lightly from the beauty that He had betrayed.
I saw him change from love to love. But yet the Prince allowed His claim
To be the purest of the pure, thrice holy, stainless, without blame.
I saw the open tavern-door flash on the dusk a ruddy glare,
And saw the King of Kings outcast reel brawling through the starlit air.
But yet He is the Prince of Peace of whom the ancient wisdom tells,
And by their silence men adore the lovely silence where He dwells.
I saw the King of Kings again, a thing to shudder at and fear,
A form so darkened and so marred that childhood fled if it drew near.
And yet He is the Light of Light whose blossoming is Paradise,
That Beauty of the King which dawns before the seer's enraptured eyes.
I saw the King of Kings again, a miser with a heart grown cold;
And yet He is the Prodigal, the Spendthrift of the Heavenly Gold,
The largesse of whose glory crowns the blazing brows of cherubim,
And sun and moon and starry fires are jewels scattered forth by Him.
I saw the King of Kings descend the narrow doorway to the dust
With all his fires of morning still, the beauty, bravery and lust.
And yet He is the life within the Ever-living Living Ones,
The Ancient with Eternal Youth, the cradle of the infant suns,
The fiery fountain of the stars, and He the golden urn where all
The glittering spray of planets in the myriad beauty fall.

A.E. (GEORGE WILLIAM RUSSELL)

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT — XV

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

Sunilda—The Musician

HE was always a musician, he was born into a family of musicians. Elder brother Anilda played on the sarod. Cousins Ardhenduda & brother played on surbahar and sitar. Sister could sing well.

In the early days, 1945-1953 or 54, he composed music for our Programmes of 1st Dec. He even composed a music for a “Junglee-dance” for the physical demonstration of Dec. 2nd. But this was a one time effort only. The music for the dances and dramas was beautiful, catching, not too classical, in tune with us and the times. It went well with the occasion. It was great fun watching him and his orchestra (elder brother Anil and Harit on sarod. Harit also filled in as tabalchi. Ashok and Runu on clarionette and flute and Debou and Manoj on sitar). Sunilda played on the harmonium or piano, both of which he played with just one finger. We watched with admiration and un-understanding. To me it seemed miraculous how he just watched the dancer and produced the right, suitable music. (Sunilda himself was a maestro on the sitar. But did not play on it. The wrist, ill-set after the football accident, pained and swelled up, if he played for any length of time.)

All these activities were (as I perceive) slowly eased out of his life. I don't recall when exactly he stopped teaching—why did he stop teaching?

All these years of teaching and composing had somewhat frayed Sunilda's nerves. He wrote to the Mother. She told him to relax, go sit under a big tree. She said that a tree emanates a great deal of energy and it will help him recover. He used to, for a short period, go out for long walks to one of the Ashram gardens. Start was after lunch—2 or 2.30 p.m. (Why he chose this unearthly hot time is beyond me). He, along with Gauridi and her sister, carried some tea and some eats, sat in some shady spot, had the tea and returned home with the dusk (*godhuli*)—an enchanting time in any Indian countryside. These short trysts with nature soothed his mind and nerves.

The Mother also gave Sunilda some work in Le Faucheur, the garden by the river Ariankuppam. His botanical genius came in handy. He set to experiment. It seems he worked some wonders—produced seedless lady's fingers, and some wheat, enough to make bread for the Mother. (At present Maheshwari working there has repeated the wheat growing in just a small patch.)

“One man's loss is another man's gain.” We lost a good teacher, but we gained a great musician. As time passed Sunilda seemed to retreat more and more from much of the outer happenings, drawn into some higher regions of music and maybe into other regions. He was all music and barely anything else.

What was his music? How and from where did it come? Who can answer these questions better than he himself. Better still the one who revealed to him the source, nay

was the source, that swept him off in its deluge. Harken to what he says about how his music was revealed to him. (The following is reproduced from *Mother India* June 1998 from Jhumur's article)

Some twenty years ago I heard for the first time the Mother of our Ashram improvising on the organ. In the beginning the music seemed strange to me. It was neither Indian nor Western, or shall I say it sounded like both? The theme She was playing came very close to what we know as bhairon, the whole closely knit musical structure expanding melodiously. Then suddenly, notes came surging up in battalions, piled one on top of another, deep, insistent, coming as if from a long way down and welling up inevitably the magnificent body of sound formed and gathered volume till it burst into an illumination that made the music an experience.

Thus She revealed to me the secret of a magic world of music where harmonies meet and blend to make melodies richer, wider, profounder and infinitely more powerful. I have tried to take my music from Her.

My music is my labour and my aspiration for the Divine and what I try to convey through it are the voices of my inner experience.

My grateful thoughts are with Her who has been my Guide, Guru, Mentor and Mother. One day it was Her Light that sparked my heart, it is Her Light that has sustained its glow, it is Her Light that I seek through my music. If this music brings some comfort, some delight or some message to someone, I have achieved that for which She has placed Her trust in me.

Sunilda was now solely preoccupied with music. He thought and lived music in exclusion of all else—but for his love for the Mother and Her's for him. It was this two-way flow that buoyed and carried him through his life's endeavour—to compose Her music or rather be a channel for Her music. For that he was grateful and full of humility towards the Mother. These feelings are amply reflected and come through to us, when we hear of such touching happenings as the four or five I recount, as I came to know of them.

Sunilda's studio where he recorded his music was just one of the rooms of his house. In the early days they just shut the doors and windows to keep out extra noises, and recorded. As time passed, a little more sophistication was added (equipment, instruments, etc.). But the room remained the room. When an idea to improve the acoustics was mooted, Chamanlalji was consulted. He, with some help and expertise, fitted up some blanketing for the walls and some other gadgetry, to improve the sound of recording. The floor was bare—so a suggestion was made, and his able assistant Victor wrote to the Mother. She was eager to help, and gave one of Her carpets. Now Sunilda was in a quandary! He was reluctant to step on that carpet. He quietly changed the position of his organ so that he could circumvent the carpet and put his stool on a bare part of the floor.

Next came the question of cooling the room, at least to keep the musicians from sweating. Chamanlalji suggested installing an air-conditioner. Then Sunilda said: "Oh!

what is a little sweat? But Mother has to pay for the electricity.” I don’t know if they could get round him.

In 1972, Sunilda had the New Year’s music ready. The Mother was to hear it in Her room. Sunilda was there. Maggi and Nata too were called. After hearing the music the Mother was very happy and was showering Sunilda profusely with praises. He was full of joy, but felt quite embarrassed. He looked this way and that and finally fell at Her feet—it seemed just to stem the flow of Her praises.

A few years ago, a gentleman arrived at the Ashram. He went to the Samadhi. He knelt and bowed, prayed, but got up weeping silently. He looked around and spied Chamanlalji. He was a stranger to Chamanlalji, but somehow felt free enough to approach and introduce himself as a sculptor—by name Parasara (of some repute in the artistic circles). His tears were (it transpired) of a feeling of frustration and depression. He had heard and believed that Sri Aurobindo was an Avatar. Furthermore, he believed that along with the Avatar, there came down artists (painters, sculptors, musicians, etc.) and he had not seen any as yet. The resulting frustration was too deep for him to bear. Could Chamanlalji help? Chamanlalji was on unfamiliar ground, but took him along to one of our artists, who was quite pessimistic and said: “There is not much art here.” Mr. Parasara grew gloomier than ever. Chamanlalji then took Mr. Parasara to Sunilda the composer. Sunilda, typically, said: “I am not a composer—I am just a receiver.” Mr. Parasara got to hear some of Sunil-da’s music. Then the two had a long talk. (musician and sculptor) By the end of their talk, Mr. Parasara was overjoyed. He said: “At last my faith is restored. This (Sunilda) is a great man, he is unique. He has saved my life.” Mr. Parasara was floored by Sunilda’s music and also by his humility.

What did Sunilda most cherish, strive for? A plausible and intelligent guess could be “Music.” A revisal of our thinking may not go amiss after the following. Once, some of his instruments went out of order, reparations were delayed and the date for the completion of the music was fast approaching. He (Sunilda) in a moment of desperation and supplication wrote to the Mother: “Mother what do you want me to do? Things are not as they should be. As for me, I want you. This music and all else is *yours*. I don’t want any of these things. All I want is *You*.” Fortunately, the instruments got repaired soon after and the music got ready. (Sunilda’s prayer given above in quotes is NOT the one he wrote. I have taken the liberty to write it, in my words, after having heard it from an admirer of his.)

J’ai une question à Te poser (I have a question to ask you):

J’ai souvent une sensation ces jours-ci, que c’est Toi qui a fait de moi un musicien—est-ce vrai? (I have often a feeling, these days, that it is You who has made of me a musician—is it true?)

Peut-être... (Could be...)

Si c’est vrai, est-ce que c’était prédestiné? (If it is true, was it predestined?)

Très certainement. (Most certainly.)

The following is the reply to a letter to the Mother Sunilda had written. I could not get to see the letter, but the reply is interesting and meaningful by itself. This is a free rendering into English of the reply written in French. I have tried to keep as close as possible to the meaning.

It is possible, that in a previous birth (life) you were my physical child (son). But, it is not that that has given rise to the deep emotion in you. It is your soul that has inspired your music. It is with your soul that I connect you when I talk of your music and that gets you in touch with your soul and also with me where I am always there at the centre of your being.

It is the intensity of this consciousness that makes you weep with emotion; they are tears of the psychic which dissolve obstacles and difficulties of the being.

The Mother

The Mother used to play on her organ on New Years at 0.00 hours. That was long, long ago. She continued playing until the late '50s, though not at 0.00 hours. In 1959 she asked Sunilda to orchestrate Her New Year Music. Thus I believe She opened a new door, and he stepped into newer, higher regions. Later she gave him the theme and left him to compose the New Year Music around the theme. Then She wanted him to compose music to accompany Her readings of *Savitri*. He was thus gradually drawn deeper and deeper into the realms of Music.

How much the Mother relied on him, and to what extent she could work in him, and his response, i.e. receiving what she gave and his reliance on her, his surrender to let her mould him—are all beyond our normal concepts and values. To know and appreciate Sunilda and his music, one may read some of the letters the Mother wrote to him, ponder over them, let the import of them sink in, and then the understanding of the man that was Sunilda may dawn on the reader. To this purpose I quote (again from the same source as above) the Mother's letters:

Sunil, my dear child,

We need music to accompany and frame my readings of passages from *Savitri* illustrated in *Meditations on Savitri*.

You alone can make this music the way it should be done.

Would you be interested in this work? It would make me very happy.

On another occasion, She wrote to him:

Sunil, this is genius! It is magnificent, with a deep and true emotion. It has made me very happy.

With my blessings.

29.12.64

Sunil, my dear child,

I would be very happy if you composed the music for the 1st of December, Anu's dance-drama. Because you alone can do it the way it should be done. Your music is, according to me, the music of the future and it opens the ways to the new world. Blessings.

13.8.65

My child,

Yesterday, at a quarter past twelve and (again) today, at the same time, I have heard your music with deep emotion and I can tell you that I have never heard anything more beautiful, in music, of aspiration and spiritual invocation.

This letter was written in English:

I heard the music—it is wonderful! Music itself pure and high and strong—It is delightful and leaves you waiting and wanting to hear more....

After listening to another composition, She sent him the following letter:

I heard it with deep emotion as something exceptionally beautiful... I want to repeat again here that this music opens the doors of the future and reproduces admirably the musical vibrations of the higher regions.

8.12.65

Sunil, my dear child,

I have just heard what you have recorded. It is beautiful, very beautiful. It is the first time that I have heard music express true power, the power of Mahakali, the power of the Mahashakti. It is formidable and at the same time, so deeply sweet...

And specially, while listening to it, I had the impression of a door opening on to a still more beautiful future realisation.

Sunil, my dear child,

It was with impatience that I was waiting to listen to your music and I am so happy to have heard it today....

30.12.1965

This is recounted by Sunilda in French—the English rendering is mine:

1967—The music was composed and taped, ready for the Mother's hearing, somehow Sunilda did not like it. He found it to be 'banal'. He said, "I would not listen to it then, but straightaway hear it along with the Mother." So it was taken up to Her room. There, in Her presence, the tape was started. Curiously enough he says, "even

I started to appreciate the music.” The Mother seemed to have gone into trance, eyes closed. Then eyes still closed, her lips trembling, she seemed to want to say something, but could not formulate it into words. Finally she exclaimed: “This is wonderful. It is the first time I have heard music coming down direct from the World of Harmony, without the intervention of the mind and vital.” Sunilda approached the Mother. She asked him how he liked the music. He shook his head. She said, “What! you did not like it? Oh, you want that something new should take birth?”

After this what is there to say of the man. Better watch and wait in silence for the Dawn that touched the hilltops, to descend into our valley—or—climb the hill to meet the Dawn.

(Concluded)

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

The Beautiful and the Useful

“YOU’VE come all this way to see us, my *Kore*¹, and I’ll charge you for it? No, that’s not done. Keep well and go to the Good!”

The old cobbler sat hunched behind his bench. Ancient tools were spread on it, and two white cups of Greek coffee also—one empty and mine, the other his and almost full. In the old tradition of craftsmen, I knew, he’d be sipping out of it slowly throughout the morning. I smiled, thanked him and returned their good wishes. Kyra-Morphula and I hugged each other tightly, then off I was, out into the narrow streets.

It was July. Fresh out of college, I had chosen to spend the summer on the island of Ios, one of the hundreds of isles that spring up from the Aegean Sea. The previous evening the stitching of my sandal had come undone and, by asking around in the morning, I arrived at the old cobbler’s. He had repaired it and now I was about to trace my way back through the town.

I did so leisurely, to let the surroundings work their magic.

Whitewashed walls flanked the donkey-wide streets and pots of basil, geranium, jasmine fitted snugly into niches that seemed made for that purpose only. The day was still fresh and random fragrances mingled with explosions of flower-colours in the sunlight—oh, that sunlight; so clear, so crisp! The sea gleamed and shimmered in deep shades of blue.

Following whiffs of freshly baked bread, I arrived at a little opening in a wall with an arched window by its side, a display to what was waiting within. The bun, crisp and deliciously hot, went perfectly with the cool rice pudding, the house speciality and I, perched up on a parapet, relished them both and not them only. There was the town, the sea and the light and an air so pure it filled me as if with a song, a vibration that rushed out to meet and celebrate all it encountered. It was a scene of astonishing beauty and simplicity.

For a while, I just sat there; I munched and took in the view.

The town is built on a small hill overlooking the natural harbour; walking through its narrow winding streets, one is always aware of the blue expanse stretching far and beyond the horizon. Everything is painted white—that is, everything but the doors and the windows; for them the blue of the sea or the deep green of the pine has been chosen; for the terraces, a light grey. Then, vines, trees and flowers everywhere.

So there I sat, deeply absorbed in the sight then, slowly, I started noticing subtle changes. The day was growing and so did the light. The sea too changed, its colour now transparent; the fragrances lost their intensity and the shadows etched themselves sharply as they fell and shortened in the glare. Noon was coming and the *cicadas*² began

1. *Kore*: Young woman or daughter. An ancient Greek word still in use by parents or strangers when addressing a young female.

2. *Cicadas*: Crickets, of a variety which is active during summertime, particularly during the hot hours of the day. In season, their shrill sound is heard all over the Mediterranean.

to shrill their song.

I found my thoughts wandering to Heraclitus. He must have seen the same light I was basking in and he too must have let his eyes take in the same sea; he probably knew the very smells and the sounds I had come across that morning. He must have seen everything blending in each other and changing. He sought for himself and also for a permanence that never seemed to be there—what did he find? Nature loves to be hidden, he declared; all is in flux. He read the signs Nature gave out and he contemplated her forms. And so was I.

I had plunged myself into the timeless rhythm of Nature that morning, a rhythm natural, primeval, eternal. Everything fell and fitted into it, including the old cobbler and his hearty welcome when I knocked on his door. My thoughts turned to our encounter once more.

I had found him shaving in front of a small mirror propped up against one of his tools and a beautiful toothless smile flooded his lathered face as he waved me in. Foamy brush in hand and caught at the beginning of his day, he was plainly happy to share its start.

“*Kalimera*³!” he greeted me and called out to his wife for another cup of coffee. His was already steaming on the bench and the workspace was basically the anteroom to their home that stretched out towards the back. I could see a courtyard at the end, abloom and inviting.

It was a typical house, one of the many blending seamlessly with the land, the sea and the sky. Eternal and timeless, they defy style definitions—these Aegean Island houses have always done so. If there is a rhythm they obey and belong to it is the rhythm of the sea and the curves of the land, their movements, as they fall and rise.

Resting on sun-drenched hills, built amidst shady trees or arrayed in the narrow streets of little towns, these houses grow naturally out of the ground and into their environment; they are outcrops of the land and its people, they are also the yield of the sea that surrounds them.

The old cobbler’s house was one of the many in Ios Town. His grandfather built it by hand; with much, much love and labour. First he went out to get the rocks; they are found scattered all over the island. Then he carried them on site; he chiselled and hewed them, he used them. He did the same with everything he needed, even the lime for the whitewash at the end. He did most of it alone, occasionally helped by a brother, his wife or a nephew. He had already imagined his home ready and beautiful long before he started building.

What he concerned himself with was that the house should be solid, so he started by placing the stones and the corner pieces and the supports for the doors and the windows first. He made a frame. Things developed as he went on and, consequently, the need for a strong staircase created the little room under it, so that its weight would be supported. The staircase itself is simple; yet, how perfect in its common sense and utility. Simple, yet how our man had struggled to build it.

3. *Kalimera*: Good Day.

The old cobbler took me out and around the house to see it. Because it was not always easy to find the exact stones he needed, grandpa had built the steps with different sized rocks, some smaller, others bigger; for one step he used only one, for another two, or three. One stone was placed vertically, the other horizontally.

We were half way up, when Kyr-Michalis-the-cobbler pointed at a detail I would have otherwise missed—the staircase did not exactly reach the terrace-top! When grandpa ran out of rocks, he cut into the wall for the last two steps: an elegant useful bend, the last of the ascent.

This least expected bend, this natural solution, had brought in two advantages. It not only constrained the bulk of the staircase, it made it at once more solid. From the aesthetic point of view, this now gives a rhythmical movement to the whole house.

“Let me fix this now for you, will you?” the cobbler said as he sat himself behind the bench.

He had been gracious and hospitable in a manner befitting the land of his home, a natural and unpretentious host. He perceived my interest and showed me around his abode and I enjoyed the depth and economy of his conversation. I was charmed by his island-lilt and thought it added a balance to his slow and measured movements. When his wife took over (so that he would work in peace!), she displayed her own charms and a similar degree of hospitality, continuing the Greek tradition—the stranger, the visitor and the traveller have always been welcomed and revered there, sacred. Zeus himself, the father of the gods, was the patron of hospitality.

And, just as *Hera*⁴ looked after the home affairs, so the old lady had done through the long and fruitful years of her marriage with the cobbler. Unlike his, her movements and gait were quick; confident mistress of her domain, Kyra-Morphula possessed a swift efficiency. When she finished sweeping her courtyard, she invited me to help her with watering – I was thrilled letting the pail down the well and laughed bringing it up full and spilling! She was calm and thorough and she spoke to and about each of her plants; she loved them, as if her children.

Her own children she showed me later; they were carefully framed in photos scattered all over the little home. Grown up and gone, they had their own families now, their own children—bless them. She spoke of them with the same affection and calmness she had displayed for her plants.

There was naturalness in her that embraced and took everything in; she gave herself. Her house was spotlessly clean, neat and loved and this I could see and feel. When I admired a fine piece of embroidery by the mantelpiece, she told me about her grandmother. There is an old tradition of embroidery in the islands and the little home exhibited it admirably; many long evenings and gentle afternoons must have been spent over designs passed from mother to daughter, to granddaughter.

Basically, the house had only one room, it was partitioned as in the archaic original and it offered the true charm of the family shelter, which one may in vain look for in

4. *Hera*: Wife of Zeus, queen of heaven, and marriage-goddess.

houses with many rooms. The sense of proportion and the grace of such an interior aren't the result of calculations; practical need has made it—as if this need is the bait Nature uses to push man, so that he may unveil the secret of her rhythm.

Going through the house, I noticed simple little statues placed here and there. One was obviously shaped out of some leftover mortar; another from a rock piece the long-gone mason must have thought contained something of his woman (mother, wife, sister or daughter), when she relaxed after the day's work by the porch in the evening. He had worked on that shape; he chipped it here and curved it there and, eventually, both pieces found their place inside the little home. They still grace it, like the niches he made for the basil pot and the spots he reserved for the bougainvillea to grow and the jasmine—one must have flowers.

These little houses are like organic beings; they grow like corals do or the crystals. Each part forms independently from the other yet, in their totality, what a harmony they present!

In accordance to the usefulness and utility so created, there comes beauty too. The man, who alone did what he had to do to complete his abode, did so because of need and necessity. Necessity collected what was needed and, as if in response, the result carried within itself a spontaneous beauty and the home ended up being the quaint little house it is. Even the ornaments he used—look at those beautiful vine-and-floral motifs drawn around doors and windows—they seem plucked from the real ones growing nearby.

Engrossed in the beauty of the surroundings and my own thoughts, I forgot time. But the growing heat and the glare pulled me out of the reverie; besides, I was thirsty. The plain whitewashed walls sparkled in the sun as I wound my way back through the town and did the usual holiday routine; I changed, went down to the beach, swam, then rested awhile.

When out and about again, the island had changed garb. A different light now, mellower. The white undertones of the morning were now tinged with yellow, with orange later on. A pleasant wind blew as I made for the Rocks, the natural fortress that crowns the town—shelter against the pirate-raids of old, it was presently the sanctuary of a Hard Rock Café that offered classical music during the early evening hours.

Stunningly beautiful, Aegean sunsets are a spectacle eternal and inexhaustible; a recurrent theme of themselves, they never repeat their details. Agreeably, the rock I found to sit on and watch this one was perfect too. Weather-smooth, it cradled me whilst Ravel's Bolero was playing and the colours kept changing in the west. They spread and stretched and they took over more and more of the sky and in that milieu I let myself be. Soon, my thoughts joined in.

All is in flux, Heraclitus had said and today's Greek still takes his statement for granted. It is engraved onto marble tablets that adorn many a village spring (the rushing flow of their waters being a constant and natural reminder). It is also etched into the collective Greek awareness, deeply so.

The Greek knows beauty, usefulness and utility through change and diversity and these he came to understand through the nature of his land. Natural forms and elements,

illuminated by that (so clear, so crisp!) sunlight, unveil most of what he needs, they even prompt in him the sense of tolerance he has and the freedom he bestows to the individual. This light lays bare everything for him; natural forms, elements and his common sense do the rest.

All has its purpose, utility and beauty; one has to only look for and find it, like grandpa did for his stones and the lime-wash, the motifs with which he painted his house. Like his wife did too, when she looked after her children and flowers, the planting and harvesting of the fields and the new designs she contrived for embroidery; even for the recipes she concocted.

For ages, the generations of grandpas and the women who stood by their sides, built lives and homes. They did so by joining the land and by letting Nature guide and provide. They opened and listened to her rhythms with candid abandonment, that same welcoming openness the old cobbler and his wife offered me that morning.

Now, the evening was settling in – pinks and lilacs and streaks of gold on one side, a gorgeous inky blue on the other. Defiantly, the whitewash persisted. How much inspiration these unblemished island houses can give to the educated architect, I thought as I watched them reflecting the last of the light; those sparkling white little homes with their sun-kissed grey terraces. Vine-shaded, how much the elegant simplicity of their staircases and the rising curbs of their wells can reveal to heart and mind!

Inhabited, deserted or solitary, they seem to utter faint whispers – like the cypresses, the olive trees and the mountains do, like the sun and the remnants of their ancient past, the archaeological finds unearthed all over the Aegean.

Kyr-Michalis had mentioned the changing spirit of time, how the island and its life were being altered. He did not lament, he only stated a fact, adding that, beautiful and solid as the products of his surroundings may be, they are also very delicate. Just like the crystals and the corals are.

It is perhaps because of their geographical isolation that the Aegean Islands have been relatively protected from the pollution of educated architecture. Or, maybe, it is that the islanders cling so tenaciously to what has been, because they just feel strongly about it or because they've been exposed for so long and are saturated with that Aegean Light. Whatever the reasons, the flow still persists, the ancient rhythm endures, simplicity and beauty prevail.

And this I could see, looking from above. Night had fallen and new music was punctuating the evening. Below, lights were lit and people strolled the streets; windows were kept open and they framed lives touched by the balmy breeze.

Feeling in harmony with the scene and myself, I thought, "it's going to be a good summer."

KATI WIDMER

LET THEM DREAM

OF fairylands sweet and bright,
Of golden mountains and cascading light —
Let each and every child
Have such wonderful dreams.

Let them dream of oceans of milk,
Of goddesses robed in rustling silk,
Of mermaids dancing in faery isles,
Of unknown flowers on luminous vines,
Of sporting on the farthest stars,
Of assailing the titans to win God's wars,
Of mingling with sunbeams, of heaven's rainbow gleams,
Of having a true and faithful friend,
Of hatred and falsehood's sure end,
Of a child's curls, of poems and pearls,
Of a high fate, of keeping with destiny their date,
Of sunkissed prairies, of angels and fairies,
Let them dream of mangoes with cream,
Sweet and bright, great or light
Let each and every child
Have wonderful dreams.

SHYAM KUMARI

(Written for children)

TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

Tagore's Paintings: A Consciousness Approach

WHILE Sri Aurobindo was fascinated by the art and architecture of ancient and medieval India, Tagore turned to the modern West as a painter and wished his friends and relations to go to Japan and to the Western countries to elevate the status of their paints. Sri Aurobindo searched for the spiritual touch in Indian paints. Tagore, the painter, indulged in the vital in his weird paintings and drawings. He is, arguably, the first modern painter of India. Tagore, the painter, is a pilgrim of night without the vision of Paradiso. He never encouraged national boasting in the field of art, although he did not resist this revivalistic trend in the wake of the renaissance. Not that he relied much on colonial art. But, he was not in favour of all Indianness in art:

When we speak of Indian art it indicates some truth based upon the Indian tradition and temperament. At the same time we must know that there is no such thing as absolute caste restriction in human cultures; they have the power to combine and produce new variations, and such combinations have been going on for ages, proving the truth of the deep unity of human psychology.¹

A preference for a purely nationalistic painting was there in the early part of his career. He loved Ravi Varma's paints because of their Indianness. In the 1890s Indian subjects and sculptures with Indian mood and flavour meant much to him. Later, after the partition of Bengal, the nationalistic stress passed away giving way to modernism, which came to him first naturally and then from Japan and the Western countries. In a letter to Gaganendranath Tagore, dated 8 August 1916, Tagore is indirectly critical about the limitations of Indian art. "When are you going to come out of home to embrace the greater world?"² In the same letter, and also in a letter to Rathindranath Tagore written on 22 August of the same year, there is a reference to a Japanese artiste named *Araai* whom Tagore was planning to send to Calcutta as a trainer. Tagore thought Gaganendranath and others needed to learn the finer points of Japanese art very urgently. He was fascinated by the blend of art and utilitarian value in Japanese art. Every small thing was beautiful. The Indians could not do that. The Japanese people made life beautiful in its totality. Where did the Japanese hide their rubbish? he wondered. It was sheer joy for him to see how the Japanese women did everything neatly and with an authentic touch of Beauty.⁴ In the letter to Rathindranath Tagore, the criticism was direct and constructive:

In the art of modern Bengal, I persistently feel the need of a little more of force, courage and wideness. We have given stress on minor things—very insignificant things ... Gagan and Aban are reluctant to come here. Is there no possibility of

Nandalal's visit here? Coming here I have felt that the Japanese have no parallel in the field of painting.⁵

Tagore was all praise for Japanese painting on large canvas and wished Nandalal Bose and others to learn that art from Japanese painters. While Sri Aurobindo was seeking to encourage the nation to revive the ancient and medieval art tradition of India, Tagore was distinctly seeking to initiate the Indian painters to the principles of modernism. As a practicing painter and art-critic Tagore was not interested in spirituality; he was interested in the trendy modernism, which was strongly vitalistic in nature. In poetry and other arts, Sri Aurobindo's aim was one-pointed: the Spirit must be expressed through all kinds of art.

He too appreciated the Japanese, but because he found in Japanese art the inner principles, the noiseless art consecrated to the Divine.

A great oriental work of art does not easily reveal its secret to one who comes to it solely in a mood of aesthetic curiosity or with a considering critical objective mind, still less as the cultivated and interested tourist passing among strange and foreign things; but it has to be seen in loneliness, in the solitude of one's self, in moments when one is capable of long and deep meditation and as little weighted as possible with the conventions of material life. That is why the Japanese with their fine sense in these things,—a sense which modern Europe with her assault of crowded art galleries and over-pictured walls seems to have quite lost, though perhaps I am wrong, and those are the right conditions for display of European art,—have put their temples and their Buddhas as often as possible away on mountains and in distant or secluded scenes of Nature and avoid living with great paintings in the crude hours of daily life ...⁶

This and many other passages from *The Foundations of Indian Culture* speak of a new aesthetic principle born of the old credo of the ancient Indians: Art must express the Divine. "Its highest business is to disclose something of the Self, the Infinite, the Divine to the regard of the soul, the Self through its expressions, the Infinite through its living finite symbols, the Divine through his powers."⁷

Tagore, certainly not a spiritualist in the field of painting, believed that the contemporary Indian paintings had nothing to do with society. In 1928, at age 67, Tagore began to draw and paint with a queer enthusiasm. He had done some occasional doodles and sketches in the past, but now it was a serious affair and he was athirst for fame as a painter. The craving for fame was as vital as his weird paintings. The late partiality for an unknown art forced poetry out of his life. Tagore explained to Nirmal Kumari that the main reason of its attraction lay in a kind of mysterious unexpectedness. In poetry, he believed, rhythm came beforehand, at least faintly, and after that rhythm flew out smoothly "as the Ganga had flown out from the locks of Shiva." In painting it is just the opposite—the line appeared as he kept the pen on the paper and then the more a shape appeared the

more it moved towards the head. His mind wondered at this strange creation:

... If I were a competent artist, I would have preconceived my paints. In that case, the interior scheme would have taken an external shape. There is a joy in that too. But then it is more intoxicating when the mind is absorbed in external creation. The result is a total withdrawal from all external activities. If like those days spent by the Padma I were totally free from duty so as to produce only paintings for the Golden Boat of Time ! Now I can give little time to that because of the pressure of various duties. That little is not enough to satisfy my mind. It wishes to occupy the whole of my leisure. I am also keen on giving my consent. The stars obstruct. One of them is the welfare of mankind.⁸

This is obviously a problem of integrating aesthetics with life, which is not at all a problem with Sri Aurobindo at any stage of his life. He worked coolly and did not care for appraisals or publicity. He just enjoyed the joy of creation. Tagore was fond of indicating at times that painting linked him up with God and that it was God who was creating his new boundaries in limitless mysterious lines. The joy of paint is the joy of the finite, he wrote to Nirmal Kumari. In the discipline of his paint, he saw the Presence clearly.⁹ How true was Tagore in this claim for vital inspiration? In any case, he wished to equate his joy of painting with divine inspiration. In the letter written to Sudhindranath Dutta on 1 April 1930 there is a very distinct desire for fame. This is very vital and does not go with the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's ideal of an artist.

I cannot stand the remarks of the underqualified. Hope your letter to Rothenstein won't be futile. I too will talk to him on that when I meet him. I am not sure whether he can do it or not. When I go to Oxford I will renew my contacts. I'll also try my luck in the Continent. Today I'll raise the issue before my German friend.¹⁰

This is not the only example. In letter after letter, he expressed his restlessness and passion for fame in that new field. On 17 May, 1930, he wrote to Sudhindranath Dutta :

My fame as a painter in Paris might have reached the ears of my countrymen. I wish you were here. My paints are going to be exhibited in London and Birmingham. The connoisseurs who have seen them, have been appreciative. This time I hope to be greeted with either a garland or a certificate when I return home.¹¹

He wanted more time for his paints and lamented that it was not there because of his public engagements. In the 30s, he virtually became child-like in his interest in the new game. And sometimes, there came out the typical efflux of a dissatisfied romantic.

... My eyes have strained enough and now they must last for my paints. I found my paints at the twilight of my life. In the approaching night of my life, I thought of a

honeymoon with painting. I wished to sport with her in absolute quiet. My paints are being affected by my workload and people around me. Meanwhile, my eyesight is failing.¹²

There are about two thousand and five hundred available paintings by Tagore, mostly done between 1928 and 1940. There are also quite a few self-portraits; there are faces, landscapes and nudes and other varieties, most of which are the products of the creative vital. Prithwish Neogy beautifully sums up the topics, which point to what Sri Aurobindo calls the “subliminal”:¹³

Unfurling, animated ribbons, composite flower-birds, nameless archaistic beastliness, ambiguous sardonic imps, contorting primitive reptiles, proliferating monster-vessels, oddly sensuous nudes on extravagant furniture, improbable protagonists in a mysterious melodrama, distraught angular pilgrims on an unknown quest eternal, romantic dream houses, illustrations to lost stories, lovers, silhouettes, incandescent evening landscapes, murderous enactments, peaceful promenades, familiar types, characters and portraits, masks of sarcasm, masks of terror, heads of power and glory, delicate, oval moon-faces of silent lips and with eyes to transfix. All freshly, formed, rampant, iridescent.¹⁴

Unlike the recurring theme of mystical quest in his poetry, songs and in some plays like *The Post Office* and *Malini*, the paintings usually come from the zone located between the heart and the sex-centre, the most dangerous zone in the human consciousness. The paintings are as secular as his later poems. Buddhadev Bose observes : “The usual order is reversed in him : the older he grew, the more secular he becomes.”¹⁵ Sisirkumar Ghose thinks in another way as he talks of Tagore’s later poetry, which is quite often seen together with the weird paints. Let us see how Ghose sums up the essence of the later poetry :

Here is a grappling with the powers of Darkness not merely in the manner of a metaphor but in dead earnest, something especially and excruciatingly real, something that endows them with the majesty of archetypal poetry, ample recompense for the lesser things in the midst of which they shine in such sombre splendour. In them “a terrible beauty is born”. These are, as Whitman might say, poems retrieved from the night.¹⁶

The words may be applied to Tagore’s paints quite relevantly. It is natural to remember the poetry of Baudelaire as we look at the gloomy paints of Tagore. Both the artists know how to extract beauty from filth and mire.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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6. *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol. 14, pp. 212-13.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
8. Letter to Nirmal Kumari Mohalanabish, Number 8, 1928.
9. Letter to Nirmal Kumari, November 30, 1928.
10. Letter to Sudhindranath Dutta, April 1, 1930.
11. Letter to Sudhindranath Dutta, May 17, 1930.
12. Letter to Amiya Chakroborty, 1938 (date and month unknown).
13. 'Subliminal' is a general term used by Sri Aurobindo for all parts of the being which are not on the waking surface. See SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 354 for Sri Aurobindo's explanation.
14. Prithwish Neogi, Drawings and paintings of Rabindranath Tagore in *Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary Volume 1861-1961*. Sahitya Akademi, p. 201.
15. Buddhadev Bose, *An Acre of Green Grass*, p. 12
16. Sisirkumar Ghosh, *The Later Poems of Tagore*. Sterling, New Delhi, 1989, p. 193.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN OUR ASHRAM LIFE

THE devotees and followers of Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother must remember that Sri Aurobindo Ashram has nothing to do with religion as such. True spirituality is the foundation. Sri Aurobindo's letter to Nirodbaran (14 January, 1932) published in the *Bulletin* (November 1999) bears ample testimony to this fact. Here it is:

As to what you say Islamic ideals, you should remember that whatever is necessary to keep from the past as materials for the future, will *of itself* and *automatically* be taken into the new creation when things are ready and the full Light and Power at work. It is not necessary for anybody to represent and stand for Islamic ideals or Hindu or Christian ideals; if anybody here thinks he must stand for one or other of these things, he is making a mistake and is likely to create unnecessary narrowness, clash and opposition. There is no opposition or clash between them in the spiritual experience; it is only the external human mind that mistakenly puts them against each other. What we are here to make is a new creation in which there is a larger reconciling Truth than anything that went before in the past; but what will reconcile and create anew is the Power, the Light, the Knowledge that comes from above.

The same holds good about other religions too.

The Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* (20 December 1916) gives us the story of how the Buddha came to her and exerted her to "obey the injunction from the depths." But he introduced himself to her not as the Buddha, but as Sakyamuni—the hermit of Sakya dynasty. The name Buddha was given by his followers who created a new religion after his demise. The same thing can be said of all other religions.

The Mother also warned us not to create a new religion in the name of Sri Aurobindo who embodied in himself the Supreme Truth far above all religions. The followers of Sri Aurobindo should also follow the example of their Divine Guru and strive for a total transformation of their beings down to the physical.

This is only for the sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The rigour of his Yoga is not expected from the devotees in general. A faithful devotion and collaboration for the Divine work by each one according to his or her capacity will be enough to receive the blessings of the Supreme Lord and the Divine Mother.

But if we follow the path of a particular religion we will never reach the Supreme Truth. We will move eternally through the labyrinth of partial truths. In that case we will miss the opportunity that Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother presented to us. Whatever is our outward pursuit we must hold on to their lotus-feet for final fulfilment.

ABANI SINHA

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

SRI AUROBINDO always gave to the disciples the help and encouragement whenever they erred or slipped; a security of protection was extended to them whenever they felt depressed; also he gave invaluable guidance to them by acting as an eye-opener to them, showing the cause of the minutest of disciples' backslidings. None who has not been through such ordeals can ever fully appraise the concrete help that comes along with the guiding voice of the pilot.

Sri Aurobindo's character will stay for ever unknown, to wit, the pains he took, with almost incredible patience, not only to help those who wanted to give a poetical expression to spiritual truth and experience, but also to knock the bottom out of a prevalent false notion that yoga belongs to the province of silence to the exclusion of expression. Also it was because he was a great poet that it was given to him to assay such truths about spiritual poetry which had been his *grande passion* before he started yoga. He himself once said (as one of his earliest disciples, Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta, testifies in the preface to Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems*) that he had been first and last a poet: it was only later that he became a Yogi. Poets can be made through yogic powers and that he achieved it consciously in quite a few of disciples. One can understand it from the self-explanatory statement of Nirodbaran: "I was myself one of those who came under the spell of the Muse, although I had never before written a line of poetry. J. A. Chadwick (Arjava) was another and I can give many more instances.... Sri Aurobindo never 'wrote down' to the disciples nor did he deliver sermons from a lofty height. The tone is invariably courteous and compassionate with hardly ever a harsh word even where the disciple is gravely at fault." Sri Aurobindo writes:

... I put forward four reasons why the experiment [by us of writing poetry in the English language] could be made: (1) The expression of spirituality in the English tongue is needed and no one can give the real stuff like Easterners and especially Indians. (2) We are entering an age when the stiff barriers of insular and national mentality are breaking down (Hitler notwithstanding), the nations are being drawn into a common universality with whatever differences, and in the new age there is no reason why the English should not admit the expression of other minds than the English in their tongue. (3) For ordinary minds it may be difficult to get over the barrier of a foreign tongue but extraordinary minds (Conrad etc.) can do it. (4) In this case the experiment is to see whether what extraordinary minds can do cannot be done by Yoga. (28.2.1936)

*

My aim is not personal glory, but to arrive at the expression of spiritual truth and

experience of all kinds in poetry. The English tongue is the most widespread—if it can be used for the highest spiritual expression, that is worth trying. (10.12.1935)²

In the Foreword to *Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran* Amal Kiran writes as follows:

“Nirodbaran and I grew up together as poets under the creative eye of Sri Aurobindo. Both of us owe to him whatever beauty and truth—or rather beauty of truth—flowered in our work. But, while the merits of our productions may be the same, Nirodbaran has a more remarkable ‘case-history’—if I may borrow a term from his past career as a medico. And one of the reasons for it is precisely that he was a medico pure and simple before coming to Sri Aurobindo whereas I had previously some poetic initiative.

How a doctor started to pen extraordinary verses instead of commonplace prescriptions is a typical Aurobindonian phenomenon, for which there is to my knowledge no parallel except that other metamorphosis—the turning of the mathematical logician John Chadwick into ‘Arjavananda’, the bard of dynamic occult vision soon after he had joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and got the new name.

There is still one difference between the two examples of Sri Aurobindo’s transformative power. Nirodbaran became quite often a sheer medium through whom a strange species of poetry poured without his being able to make head or tail of it. Of course, what he served as a channel for proved to have a comet’s tail, a brilliance from beyond the earth, and a veritable godhead seemed to glow from behind or above the mere mind. But the recognition of the glory came mostly after the Master had broken to the somewhat dazed disciple the good news that he had written splendid poetry without being aware of it.

Most poets feel elated by their own work soon after bringing it to birth and not infrequently realise as a later stage that what they had taken as marvellous was just so-so. Nirodbaran, time and again, thought he had produced nothing more than a mouse after a mountain of labour—until Sri Aurobindo disclosed to him how a full-bodied worship-worthy Ganesh had for his *vahana* (vehicle) what Nirodbaran had felt to be a poor rat.

The poet’s unawareness of the wonder he was transmitting was, however, only one facet of the strange development he was going through. Another was that often the poem was not simply far better than he had thought but also of a new kind, an unusual version of what contemporary Europe at that period was coming to dub Surrealism. Sri Aurobindo understood European Surrealism in general to be a certain outburst from the dream-plane where logical links are rarely to be found in a composition of suggestive yet confusing images. Nirodbaran’s variety of Surrealism was no confusion at all: it did not hail from the common dream-plane but rather through it and its origin was a subtle shimmering mystery that was part of the inner Yogic consciousness.

So much for the baffling side of his work. There was also the side which Sri Aurobindo cryptically termed ‘O. P.’ for short, meaning ‘Overhead Poetry’. The poetry thus characterised dropped in front levels of consciousness that are never abundantly tapped in the world’s great poetry. Here is a greatness other than the mind’s lucid or

intricate imagining, the life-force's happy or intense seeing, the subtle physical's undulant or straightforward observing. Here is a new power which can exhibit a largeness, a depth, a delicacy which we can describe only as directly spiritual instead of translating spirituality into a vivid language other than its own. Nirodbaran is not very prolific in this rare utterance but he catches its authentic note with enough frequency to make it an appreciable element.

None of us without Sri Aurobindo's co-operation would have come into our own. But Nirodbaran's 'case-history' is rather exceptional in that in many of his poems Sri Aurobindo as co-operator is more than the inspirer: he is actually the fellow-writer. To deliver the poet in Nirodbaran Sri Aurobindo, especially at the start, had to rewrite several of the doctor's lines. He had to doctor the doctor and with his master touch bring out in full what the tyro could seize only in part. Occasionally the tyro got hold of the perfect expression:

And time-greyled towers against the evening sky

or

Only by faith the Knowledge is enshrined
In the ancient temple of the twilight mind.

But there we are still within the domain of the creative intelligence in a semi-romantic semi-religious mood. At rare times Nirodbaran pulls into the open a wonderful secret with his own sensitised fingers: a simple yet magical conjuration like

Under the white felicitous eye of the moon

or a profound intuition of the poetic activity itself at its finest:

A rhythmic fire that opens a secret door

or else a rapt intensity timeless in its insight:

Life that is deep and wonder-vast...

Such masterpieces increase in frequency as the years pass and we have a few whole poems—grave or airy—which needed very little transmutation. For a long while, nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo had to intervene. Now and then no more than a small tightening was required, as with the line which originally read:

A giant eagle poised in realms of delight.

Sri Aurobindo commented: 'Good Lord, sir, this anapaest in the last part jerks and is

quite inappropriate to the poise of the eagle'. The slightly redone line brought out the truth-beauty intended by the inspiration:

A giant eagle poised in realms of light.

An even more revealing tact in letting the deep intent of the mystic Muse find its way into a faultless compactness of style and an inevitable metrical rhythm is shown in the corrected form as compared with the original:

Your
 (While your) body's faint murmur falls slowly heard,
A *last*
 (Like a) dying warrior's half-spoken word.

The work of patient empathic correction carried on by Sri Aurobindo is a lesson to all aspirants towards what he has called 'the Future poetry'—and it is a lesson taught repeatedly with a lavish yet most apposite humour. This humour is one of the outstanding merits of Nirodbaran's book and its effect on the receptive reader may well be hit off by that charming line of his:

Figures of infinite beauty laugh like Dawn..."³

Here are some of Nirodbaran's poems with Sri Aurobindo's comments and corrections.

1

(Original form)

My thoughts are fruited on Thy magic tree
hung
 Among gold leaves, (hanging) on a silver bough
Fruits lustrous
 (Lustrous fruits), delicate-hued like ivory
Or
 (And) diamond stars shining on the sky-brow!
 Can't have at the
 beginning a cretic
 like that followed

*by a dactyl
for heart's*
I pluck them one by one (and in) my (heart) store
shalt
Where like a rapturous vision they glow;
The transcendent crystal walls and marble floor
Mirror their flames like glassy mounds of snow.
Metre?

Each thought is burdened with Thy mood divine
And wrapt with beauty unimaginable
Brimming with splendours of a sun-red wine
And songs of a gold-throated nightingale.
rhyme between
2nd and 4th?
Doubtful, but
let it be.

6.3.38

Sri Aurobindo's comments:

Q: Can words be woven with incense in the last line?

A: They may be but can't be woven by incense, but what the deuce is the construction of this line? and the meaning?

Q: You will be staggered by the Harinian⁴ imagery here, but has it Harinian cohesion and illogical logic?

A: An exceedingly fine poem. This time the inspiration has got through with a vengeance. Except for two lines the rhythm is also admirable.⁴

Here are 2 facsimiles of the original compositions with Sri Aurobindo's comments and corrections.

2

(*Original form*)

in

I have grown to a milk-white fire of the moon

In the sky-shadow of the vast;
4 feet?

Clouds of pale figures fall into a swoon

From my soul's radiance cast.

Candle-vision from haunts of starry caves

Flickers on my path of dreams

Like sinuous smiles of pearl-glistening waves

On the heart of rock-strewn streams.

Poised in an eagle-calm my thoughts (doth) flow

Over dark ranges of night

Burdened with the hues of some invisible glow

Of a sun-dripping light.

Around a haloed Face they hover and rest

And on its beauty brood

And drink now the gold-brimming nectar, pressed

From its infinitude.

Sri Aurobindo's Comments:

A: Exceedingly fine.

Q: I am sorry I have no time to comment to-night.

A: Well, that's *some* inspiration! (American sense of some!) O.K. to the nth degree. Only you do not seem to have realised that it is predominantly a stress rhythm with feet as the subordinate and workable element—otherwise you wouldn't say that line [2] is 4 feet—that would be only if it were an ordinary iambic metre. But as regular feet metre the poem would be impossible. As stress rhythm it is perfect.

(Revised form)

I have grown into a milk-white fire of the moon
 In the sky-shadow of the vast;
 Clouds of pale figures fall into a swoon
 From my soul's radiance cast.

Candle-vision from haunts of starry caves
 Flickers on my path of dreams
 Like sinuous smiles of pearl-glistening waves
 On the heart of rock-strewn streams.

Poised in an eagle-calm my thoughts flow
 Over dark ranges of night
 Burdened with hues of some invisible glow
 Of a sun-dripping light.

Around a haloed Face they hover and rest
 And on its beauty brood
 And drink now the gold-brimming nectar, pressed
 From its infinitude.⁵

28.3.38

3

(Original form)

My life is veiled in a sleep of light,
 A hush that nothing breaks,
 The world before my inward sight
pure
 Into (a) beauty wakes.

“a” is rather vague,
an epithet is needed.

Life that is deep and wonder-vast,
 Lost in a breath of sound;
 The bubbling shadows have been cast
 From its heart’s timeless round.
 Any meaning?
lots of meaning

In its lulled silver stream now shines
 A lustrous smile of God
 Whose brilliantly curved outlines,
ing
 Flash on the memory-trod
 Outlines of God or
 his smile?
Smile

there
 Caverns of slumbering earth, (and) bring

 A glow of the Infinite;

30.3.38

Sri Aurobindo’s comments:

Q: Guru, I fear this is only a sprat!

A: It is not a sprat, sir; it is a goldfish. You seem to be weak in poetical zoology. It is perfect, except for the one fault you have detected. The only alterations (except the “pure”) I find needful are meant to obviate that defect, by going back to “my”, so connecting the first and the last lines (also aided by the repetition of Light) and making the rest appear as closely connected with it. Like that it makes a very well-built and finely inspired poem. If you can produce more sprats like that, there will be much wealth in your fisheries. It is much better than the other recent ones, except the stress poem—nothing decorative,—all there!

31.3.38

Q: About yesterday's poem, I am still "weak" in finding the "gold" you found in my fish. I don't see what beauty is there to make you mark certain lines thrice—e.g. "Into a heaven of light" which is very simple, ordinary sort of line, I should say. I admit it is well-built and devoid of decoration, but to see it as you see it—well, could you explain a bit? But I can increase this sort of "wealth" if you are at my back!

A: There is probably a defect in your solar plexus which makes it refuse to thrill unless it receives a strong punch from poetry—an ornamental, romantic or pathetic punch. But there is also a poetry which expresses things with all absolute truth but without effort, simply and easily, without a word in excess or any laying on of colour, only just the necessary. That kind of achievement is considered as among the greatest things poetry can do. The three lines are put in yesterday's poem wherever that happened.

A phrase, word or line may be quite simple and ordinary and yet taken with another phrase, line or word become the perfect thing. If you look you will see that my 3 lines are put against the *two* last lines taken together and not this one only by itself. So taken they express with perfect felicity something that can be seen or felt in spiritual experience. The same reason for the other three line encomiums. E.g. A line like "Life that is deep and wonder-vast" has what I have called the inevitable quality, with a perfect simplicity and straightforwardness it expresses something in a definitive and perfect way that cannot be bettered; so does "Lost in a breath of sound", with less simplicity but with the same inevitability. The two lines that follow are very fine but they have to labour more to express what they want and express it less absolutely—still it does so much that it gets 2 lines, but not three. The same distinction applies to the next two lines "In the lulled silver stream" etc. and the four that follow. I don't mean that highly coloured poetry cannot be absolutely inevitable, it can, e.g. Shakespeare's "In cradle of the rude imperious surge" and many others. But most of the highly coloured poetry attracts too much attention to the colour and its brilliances so that the thing in itself is less felt than the magnificence of its dress. All kinds are legitimate in poetry. I only wanted to point out that poetry can be great or perfect even if it uses simple or ordinary expressions—e.g. Dante simply says "In His will is our peace" and in writing that in Italian produces one of the greatest lines in all poetic literature.

(Revised form)

My life is veiled in a sleep of light,
A hush that nothing breaks;
The world before my inward sight
Into pure beauty wakes.

Life that is deep and wonder-vast,
Lost in a breath of sound;

The bubbling shadows have been cast
From its heart's timeless round.

In its lulled silver streams now shines
A lustrous smile of God
Whose brilliantly curved outlines,
Flashing on the memory-trod

Caverns of slumbering earth, there bring
A glow of the Infinite;
While my soul's diamond voices wing
Into a heaven of light.⁶

30.3.38

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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2. *Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran with Sri Aurobindo's Comments and Corrections*; letters dated 28.2.36, 10.12.1935.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. iii-iv.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-50.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

ON LIBERATING ENGLISH TO BE A WORLD LANGUAGE

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

2

I SHALL NOW move on to a more familiar field where the failure to appreciate the special nature of English as a World Language has confused issues. I shall look briefly at the problem of deciding what should be an educational model for spoken English in India. This discussion is intended to bring out another feature of World English and also suggest a condition which is needed for its natural evolution.

Prator's (1968) main objection to accepting an Indian variety of spoken English as an educational model for Indians was the following:

...in a nutshell, the heretical tenet I feel I must take exception to is the idea that it is best, *in a country where English is not spoken natively* but is widely used as the medium of instruction, to set up the local variety of English as the ultimate model to be imitated by those learning the language. (Prator, 1968: p. 459; emphasis added)

Prator's point simply is that since varieties of Indian English are not native varieties, no variety of Indian English can be suitable to be adopted as an educational model. I do not wish to raise here the issue whether the dichotomies such as native and non-native are legitimate distinctions. But whatever its value in other contexts, it is my contention that such a dichotomy and the value judgments based on it cannot be used in the case of World English.

Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1964) are more sympathetic to the use of non-native varieties as educational models. However, they suggest two criteria to determine whether a variety of English is acceptable for use as an educational model.

First, it must be a variety actually used by a reasonably large body of the population, in particular by a proportion of those whose level of education makes them in other respects desirable models.... Second, it must be mutually intelligible with other varieties of English used by similar professional and educational groups in other countries.... It follows from this that the extent of deviation from Standard English grammar and lexis must be small. It also follows, as far as phonology is concerned, that while the actual quality of vowels and consonants may vary a great deal between one accent and another, the number of contrasts, the number of phonological units, and the number of systems being operated must also remain fairly close to those of other 'educated accents', since otherwise speakers of one would have greater difficulty in understanding speakers of others.

I doubt whether in a country like India where English is learnt mostly through formal schooling and study we can ever find a variety of English which satisfies the two criteria mentioned by Halliday et al and which would therefore be acceptable as an educational model. Take, for instance, the kind of English that is called General Indian English that is recommended as an educational model for India (CIE Monograph 7). According to even the writers of this monograph it is a 'reformed' version of the educated variety of Indian English actually used. In other words, it is an artificial model in the sense that it is arrived at by bringing about selective reform in a certain variety of Educated Indian English by adding to it features such as stress and certain consonant distinctions. This strategy of proposing as an educational model a variety of English not actually used by a sizeable group of speakers in the country has been criticised for that reason; it does not satisfy the first criterion mentioned by Halliday et al in the quotation above.

But in my view this strategy is the only sensible means of finding a compromise between the educational arguments for a model of spoken English that would be intelligible outside one's own state and country, and the socio-linguistic arguments which allow each community to evolve its own models. Once again the first criterion suggested above by Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens is a criterion for a natural language but for World English this criterion is not applicable.

I also feel that fresh thinking is called for on this bogey of intelligibility across countries that is often raised. Otherwise we are likely to thwart the natural evolution of World English by straightjacketing it to fit our expectations about other languages. In recent years Quirk (1985) has strongly advocated the desirability of a global standard for English to ensure that the acceptance and encouragement of local varieties, particularly in countries like India where English is a second language does not become detrimental to global communication. Referring to English Second Language (ESL) and English First Language (EFL) countries Quirk has said: "The relatively narrow range of purposes for which the non-native needs to use English (even in ESL countries) is arguably well catered for by a single monochrome standard form that looks as good on paper as it sounds in speech."

I am inclined to agree more with Graeme Kennedy (1986) who points out in his comments on Quirk's remarks:

Since English is so much the world's language, international popular culture may be a more powerful determinant on norms than so-called standards, whether or not they have official or educational sanctions. I suspect that in the final analysis, the vast majority of users of English tend to adopt local varieties, regardless of the admonitions of teachers.

I question the assumption that because English is a World Language which is being increasingly used for international communication, every learner, let us say in a country like India, where English is taught at the level of primary schools most often by teachers totally ill-equipped for the task, should be required to acquire an internationally intelligible

model of English. (Nadkarni 1983)

It may sound like a paradox but I feel that a World Language will establish itself more firmly in the minds and hearts of people belonging to different language groups in the world to the extent it allows them latitude to realise and express their individuality in it and through it. And the way one pronounces a language is one of the things one is most sensitive about. Generally, an Indian takes greater offence when you correct his pronunciation than when you correct his grammar.

Until the middle of the 19th century, French was a greater international language than English. Today the influence of French has diminished outside the francophone countries while English is gaining everywhere. There certainly are a host of reasons to which English owes its ascendancy today. But one of these reasons is probably that the teaching of impeccable, native, French was an explicit policy of French governments while the British have been more tolerant in this respect and have taken a more or less neutral attitude towards the emergence of different national English accents. World English will no doubt continue this tradition. This latitude that English has so far enjoyed in developing according to the individualities of the different communities which use it is one of the necessary conditions for the growth of a World Language. It is because of such a freedom which English has enjoyed that Sethna and others like him can make the kinds of claims they have made about English.

In my view, with regard to intelligibility, Chinese is probably the right model for World English. Chinese dialects are intelligible across dialects only in the written form but are not always intelligible across this divide in the spoken form. I am not suggesting that English should adopt an ideographic writing system. What is an attractive feature of Chinese is that it is intelligible across dialect boundaries at least in the written medium if not in the spoken medium. Similarly World English does not have to aim at every speaker of its innumerable varieties being intelligible to all other speakers of the language in the spoken as well as the written medium. If you consider the global scope of English, this would seem to be totally impracticable. As it is, many of the varieties of Indian English are not intelligible to speakers of many varieties of British or American English or even to speakers of ESL varieties such as Nigerian English. But global communication through English does not mean that each individual who learns English has to have this competence. When English is taught more or less as a compulsory subject at school to literally scores of millions of students, the aim of this teaching cannot be attaining international intelligibility in the spoken form. English will have to be content to aim at such international intelligibility primarily at the receptive level and that too in the written variety. What about intelligibility at the spoken level? This requirement will be effectively met by some 'brokers', who have either the special gift or have had the opportunity of picking up a variety of internationally intelligible spoken English.

To conclude, I have discussed in this paper two characteristics of English as a World Language and also one condition which is crucial to its natural evolution. This may be seen as a small attempt at characterising World Language English as a distinct linguistic phenomenon. The two properties are:

1. A World Language is a language which evokes mother-tongue-like sentiments among people of diverse linguistic backgrounds for whom it is not their natural mother tongue. In other words, a World Language is potentially an auxiliary mother tongue of all those who wish to use it as a mother tongue.

2. In the case of a World Language an educational model, particularly for spoken English can be a synthetic model, a model which is not used by any sizeable speech community within that country.

The condition for the natural evolution of a World Language is that it gives to those who use it enough latitude to make it their own; this is needed to make them feel for it the kind of closeness and loyalty which one feels for one's mother tongue. A World Language unites people because it enables each linguistic community which uses it to feel at home within its fold. The function of a World Language is to foster an international or global consciousness without suppressing diversity in its manifestation. English needs to be liberated from the restrictions we still impose on it because we do not always seem to be able to remember that it is a new linguistic phenomenon. We should not shackle the new by seeking to impose on it the restrictions of the old.

(Concluded)

MANGESH NADKARNI

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RELEVANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION FOR THE EMERGING TECHNOLOGICAL SCENE

In our modern age Technology has come to stay as a powerful force for shaping the outer life of man. No amount of moral or spiritual platitudes or frowning of the orthodox religionist over the “Evils of Technology” can alter this fact. But technology is only a tool, the right use of which depends on the vision and values of the consciousness which uses it. So what modern science and technology need at present is an illuminating spiritual vision which can ensure its right use, guide its deployment towards the fulfilment of the evolutionary destiny of humanity, and give it a certain clarity in understanding its role and significance in the future evolution of humanity, Here comes the utility and importance of Sri Aurobindo's thought which can provide such a guiding vision.

The emerging and future technological scene will be shaped by three frontier technologies or shall we say technology-clusters? They are *Information Technology*, *Bio-technology* and the *Energy and Environment Technologies*. Here we make an attempt to view these frontier technologies in the light of Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary vision.

Information Technology

So much is being said and written about “Information Revolution” which is going to change the world. Some of the oft-repeated cliches about Information Technology (IT) are: It is the second industrial revolution; it will change “everything” from economy and commerce, to society and culture; it will radically change the way we think, work and live, etc. We will not join with this ever-swelling bandwagon of IT enthusiasts. We will make an attempt to look at IT and its impact on the society objectively, critically and holistically in the light of integral spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo.

The IT wave which is sweeping the world raises many crucial questions regarding the role of technology in general and IT in particular in the future evolution of humanity. The first question is whether IT can bring any radical or fundamental changes in human conditions? The answer to this question depends on our standards of judgement. There are five standards or shall we say using the modern terminology, paradigms of judgement: pragmatic, humanistic, ecological, traditional-spiritual and, finally, integral or holistic which is that of Sri Aurobindo. But to understand Sri Aurobindo's paradigm of judgement we must have some clear view of the other four paradigms.

First is the paradigm of the technocrat, managerial and pragmatic mind which is dominating the world today. This type of mind judges everything by its pragmatic impact on the external world in economy, society, politics, measured in terms of productivity, efficiency, profit and prosperity. When we look at it from this angle, it may be true that IT will bring a great change in the lifestyle of people in their outer life.

The second is the humanistic paradigm which judges everything from its positive impact on the human being measured in terms of some fundamental human values like

liberty, equality, fraternity, well-being, quality of life and the social, mental, moral, aesthetic and cultural progress of humanity. When we look at IT from this humanistic point of view, the picture we get may not be as rosy as it was painted by the IT technocrat. For example, many modern thinkers all over the world have expressed deep concern that IT may widen the gap between the rich and the poor. But, since in the future it is not material resources, but "Information" or "Knowledge" will be the main source of wealth, IT may lead to a widening gap between Info-rich and Info-poor.

The third is the ecological paradigm which measures every phenomenon in terms of its impact on physical Nature or Environment and how much it helps in harmonising human life with the ecology of physical Nature. From this ecological standard IT scores rather well. For IT is non-polluting; it consumes minimum amount of non-renewable energies of Nature; it doesn't disturb the bio-diversity of Nature.

The fourth standard of judgement is that of traditional spirituality which judges everything by its impact on the spiritual progress of the individual and the fulfilment of his ultimate spiritual destiny. Most of the recent Indian traditional spirituality considers the world more or less as an illusion with its only significance as a framework of experience for the moral and spiritual development of the individual. In this spiritual perspective the worth or significance of a technological or social phenomenon depends on the help it renders to the moral and spiritual development of the human being; if it doesn't help in this spiritual growth, it is just a toy with which the ignorant and infantile humanity is amusing itself!

But none of these paradigms gives us a truly holistic perspective or standard for understanding the significance of IT. Here comes the importance of Sri Aurobindo's integral vision.

Sri Aurobindo accepts some of the fundamental propositions of the humanistic and spiritual paradigm. He accepts the humanistic view that the only true revolutions are those which elevate the motives and values of people and create a better human being; better not merely in terms of knowledge and skill and productivity and efficiency, but a wiser, balanced, more loving, compassionate, refined and cultured human being and a freer, more equitable, harmonious and unified humanity. Any technological system has to be judged by its potentiality to help or contribute to this task of creating a better human being. And all technology has to be used with this end in view.

Sri Aurobindo agrees that the humanistic paradigm is a better and a broader standard of judgement than the purely techno-economic standard which judges everything in terms of economy, productivity and efficiency. And, finally, Sri Aurobindo agrees with the traditional spiritual paradigm that the highest and lasting fulfilment of the human being lies in his spiritual transformation and in the fulfilment of his spiritual destiny. Neither technology nor ecology nor humanism nor the mental and moral and aesthetic culture of the human mind by itself can bring about this transformation. This transformation can be realised only by the inner spiritual discipline of Yoga.

But Sri Aurobindo's integral vision reconciles all these four paradigms in an overarching synthesis and gives a holistic standard of vision for judging any social or

technological phenomenon. In this holistic vision IT has a significant role to play in the future evolution of humanity. In this integral vision the role of IT may not be as exalted as the IT enthusiasts make it to be but it will not be insignificant as some of the spiritual fanatics look at it.

(To be continued)

M. S. SRINIVASAN

AN EXPERIENCE

My parents never tired of suggesting I read Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's works during times of depression. I rarely did. Little did I know that I would turn to the Mother during the time of my greatest need.

I was a student at Wabash College, USA. I had just returned to Wabash for my third and penultimate year. I had a terribly hectic semester ahead of me. Six courses and a laboratory class required a lot of determination and I had to petition the college administration to allow me to take such a heavy course load. I had also decided to shift to off campus housing for that academic year (2001-2002). For the past two years I was living in the college dormitory and, consequently, lived in the college campus with the various academic departments and the college health centre in very close proximity, ate at the college mess—all the advantages of on campus housing. By moving off campus, not only would I have to cook for myself but also walk half a mile to the college for classes (which doesn't sound much but in winter, with a couple of feet of snow and temperatures 18 degrees Celsius below zero, it does become quite a struggle). I would also have to take care of all the bills that I didn't have to these couple of years since I lived in college accommodation. I had no idea that all these factors, added to my six courses and a laboratory class, would make life unexpectedly tough.

Within a couple of weeks of arriving at Wabash I received the first troublesome signs. I used to leave my apartment at 9 in the morning after having a glass of milk and a banana, go through all my classes, work after college, study in the library, return at 10 or 11 at night, cook dinner, eat and finally go to bed at 2 or 3 in the morning. I was eating one meal a day and pushing my body to the limit. Two weeks into my third year, I started passing extremely painful stool. Not heeding the warning, I continued on my regular schedule and received a shock when I realized I had one of the worst cases of haemorrhoids. My parents had suggested I should meditate after reading a little bit of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother before going to bed when I had told them of my discomfort and tough schedule earlier. I hadn't.

The very next day I hobbled to the doctor who immediately advised a minor surgery and gleefully proceeded, much to my horror. Subsequently he assured me that I could get back to my normal routine. I felt no pain at this time as I had been administered a local anaesthetic. I returned to the library where I worked and found that I just couldn't get up after sitting down. My boss, Mr. Frye, drove me back to my apartment at once. The pain was excruciating and my jeans was stained completely with blood. Following the doctor's instructions, I prepared to take a Sietz Bath in the bathtub. I sat down and was horrified to find that the water in the tub turned crimson. I decided to lie down immediately. For the next four hours I bled non-stop. In blind pain, I rang up the doctor who said the campus health centre had closed and I should come to their nursing home—which was a mile and half away—at once. When I said I didn't have a car nor were any of my friends available at that time, he suggested I walk. Shocked, I rang up my local guardian in New York, Dr. Manjula Bansal, who promised to ring up my doctor and speak to him. A couple of

minutes later, the doctor rang up, all sweet and sugary, apologized for their bad work over my haemorrhoids and invited me very politely to their clinic.

All this time I had been asking the Mother for strength to go through the ordeal. At that very moment, my roommate returned home, much to my delight, as he wasn't supposed to be back till late at night. He drove me to the nursing home. The doctor said the operation hadn't been successful and he would need to cauterise me this time. Once again I was injected a local aesthetic rectally (something that had been done just four hours ago) and operated. Despite the aesthetic and the painkiller I had just taken, I was in agonizing pain by the time I returned home. I took another pain killer and was knocked out cold. I woke up six hours later.

It was clear that college for the next week or so was out of the question. I had taken six courses—four advanced—that required regular rigorous study and were vital for completing my Major. I lost all heart. There was no way I could go through the semester. It was the most depressing period of my life.

My parents had packed a book, *Growing up with the Mother* with my luggage as their birthday gift to me. I had taken it out and placed it on my desk as soon as I had returned but had never opened it. As it was the book nearest my reach, I turned to it and started reading. The more I read, the more relaxed and confident I felt. After an hour, something spurred me towards studying for all my courses in advance. I read the assigned readings of the next two days, completed the following two days' homework as well and went to sleep feeling happy and confident.

It was morning when I awoke, feeling sick and nauseated. The pain had returned. I ate a fruit or two, drank a bit of milk, swallowed a painkiller and started contemplating dropping the semester and going home. Depression had hit me so hard that I thought myself worthless, life not worth living and dreamt of ingenious ways to commit suicide as I drifted into sleep. I woke up some hours later in the same state of mind. With nothing to do, I turned once again to *Growing up with the Mother*. Once again, I felt at peace and happy, turned to my books and studied hard for the next four hours or so. This cycle continued for the next week. I read and re-read *Growing up*... I had also fallen into the practice of meditating after reading the book and then going to sleep and found my strength returning with a spirit of optimism I had never known. Every day and every night, whenever I would be haunted by the most depressing of thoughts, loneliness and pain, something deep within me told me that everything would fall into place—a faith that spurred me on.

A week had passed but I no longer felt that I wasn't up to it. I had missed a week of class, the pain had eased, though it was quite severe even then, but I felt I could return to my normal routine. So it started. I started going to my classes a bit tentatively at first but then grew in confidence as I realized I hadn't missed much but kept abreast of my classes and even advanced further because of my regular reading.

It took me a month to be completely cured but I hadn't stopped the habit of reading from the Mother's works (like *Living Within*), meditating and then going to bed. It had raised me from a deadly, depressing stupor to a cheerful workaholic stage. Imagine my

shock when, at the end of the semester, I received my grades and discovered I had done exceptionally well, much better than I had thought I ever could. It was a lesson hard learnt, but worth it. The divine guidance and support I received that semester continued for the next and yielded unimaginably wonderful results. At the annual awards ceremony I was astonished to receive the Cassel Award for the most promising student in the Political Science department. For that one academic year I regularly studied the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's works. It helped bring calm to an extremely hectic and lonely period and the divine guidance I received in the words I read helped preserve my sanity whenever I was on the verge of the most disastrous nervous, emotional breakdowns. Now I know it would have been easier to tackle my illness had I started earlier; perhaps the operation would not have been averted but I am sure the depression that hit me afterwards would have been easier to tackle. I feel grateful to the Divine for giving me the strength and guidance to go through the ordeal.

AURPON BHATTACHARYA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Passing Moments by R. Y. Deshpande. Ultra Publications, Bangalore. Pages: 59. Price: Rs. 60.

The Poet in Time and Space

It all began on 19/06/98 at 2:21 p.m. and ended on 18/08/98 at 2:58 p.m.! All of the 50 poems bound in 59 pages have a footer date and time. I wonder how Sri Aurobindo, or the Mother, would have reacted to this. I am sure quite favourably. As for me the *Passing Moments* keep lingering and I go back to them again and again and ask myself, why the poet is tormented as he lives in this world of space and time. Does he want to extricate himself from time's cares and worldly space? Where is he heading? The final poem in his work states the following:

Exists no more the hours
That once held my pain and grief;
And I have left shadows behind,
Worldly joys that are brief.
Time's Opuscle, p. 54

Then I leaf backwards and come back to the first poem again where I discover:

With a master-key in hand,
Oh to be active eternity!
I walk from peak to unseen peak
And claim that many-hued fire for me.
Passing Moments, p.1

Once you are through this little booklet, you would have to come back to it to read it at random and yet the feeling is that you are reading it continuously; you leaf it backwards and forwards and you will see there is unity about the work.

Mystical Man

There is tremendous mystic restlessness in the poet's soul and his determined and indefatigable journey takes him beyond time. By mysticism I mean that raised consciousness which directly receives the Divine light; it is that ideal life that is described in the Master's *The Life Divine*. The mystic restlessness, in the same manner, is the utter intensity of the soul to be one with the Divine. It has been expressed surprisingly in easy terms and even with humour:

I went to the edge of timelessness
 To meet the God of Time;
 But he was busy making the rounds
 In scattered seasons of the far-off clime.

God of Time, p. 5

Mysticism can do wonderful things to man. One can have an amazingly clear vision of the divine life. In other words, what is God doing! Indeed just as the children are curious to know what is going on around them, a mystic probes and prods God himself:

As usual the village potter
 Was at work shaping his pots;
 In the school when God saw
 Children he had afterthoughts.
When the Gods Laughed, p. 45

Space and Time

For a poet space and time are not mere physical dimensions; they are metaphysical entities to understand what lies beyond these realities. Nature evolves rather violently and space and time have their role to play. Not just this planet Earth is governed by the laws of matter but the entire universe comes under its ambit. The entire universe is a metaphor of the transient world; what really matters is that the eternal is from eternity:

Suddenly a star explodes at the edge
 And rises uncurling smoke;
 Yes, there was a fire burning long ago
 Before time from space broke.
What's Happening?, p. 19

“Time is that in which all things pass away,” said the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer and spent the rest of his life meditating as to how the will is represented in the world. Whatever happens, it happens in time; and more often than not, the things go the wrong way. Since we are humans, we err by nature; we may seek perfection, but we fall more often than we make efforts to rise. We fall, that is a fact:

A scarlet shadow floated
 On a scarlet stream of time,
 One of the horrid past
 Had committed the crime.
Tragedy at the Moon-Gate, p. 22

We must reflect upon our nature and discover what laws govern our lives. Why do we have to suffer affliction, disease, old age, and death; why is there such suffering in the world? Everything in creation is bound to destruction and death. Death is the law of life.

Life full of anguish and pain,
 Life held by death,—but why?
 And night after night the stars
 Suffer darkly their fate in the sky?
Law of Life, p. 30

Grace as the New Law of Life

Are we then governed by fate? Certainly not. We must take a new birth where the laws of matter are subsumed by the laws of the spirit. It is when grace conquers the flesh. We become incarnate with the spirit. The matter is not derided or discarded, the body is not judged profane and disposable. The spirit transforms the body and transcends it.

Spirit found a house to dwell in birth,
 Not a gloomy rented place, lifeless room,
 But a bright house for the stars to stay:
 A flame was seeded in Matter's womb.
New Birth, p. 40

The poet is mindful of the so-called 'practical questions'. It is easy, charge the detractors, to preach perfection. They even think that spiritual quest is a waste of time, a time which could have been well invested in alleviating poverty, promoting education, generating employment, serving the society and the country. However, if you do not know who you are and what you want to do, none of the practical minds in the world can help.

“Where to burn? How to burn?”
 Asked the tender flame.
 “Like a lamp? Like a forest fire
 Fiery rapture to claim?”
Where to Burn?, p. 47

Indeed, the essence of life consists of not in the achievements achieved, but how these have been achieved. God sees the heart, the love with which a deed is done. A child needs to barely smile and all the torments of the mother vanish. Such is the reflected and conscious life. Great words and empty action result in nothing:

Word and Sense went to market
 To buy a kilo of sweet potatoes;

But finding prices a bit too high
 Just bargained for their shadows.
To Buy Shadows, p. 43

Birth and death are the *termini* of the span of life. Creation and destruction, motion and change are the characteristics of the temporal things. However, for those who live by the grace of the Divine, life is changed and not ended with death:

But death can cross the ninth gate only if
 A sacrificial fire is kindled in the heart;
 Then will the being be carried in a surge,
 A great surge new divinity to body impart.
How Many Lives?, p. 46

Conclusion

Robert Frost, the famous American poet wrote: "I have never started a poem yet whose end I knew. Writing a poem is discovering." (*New York Times*, November 7, 1955) This observation aptly fits our own poet. He has given a wonderful bouquet of poetry collection: *The Rhododendron Valley*, *All is Dream Blaze*, *Under the Raintree*, *Paging the Unknown* and now *Passing Moments*. A familiar reader of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* feels that these are meditations on the Master's great epic:

In my lifeful trance
 I saw a radiant woman long ago named Savitri;
 The sky became a sun,
 The sun set afire by love who indeed is but she.
My Search, p. 15

He pays homage to the Master:

A godhead came upon earth
 Keeping aside the glory of his past;
 Left deathless life behind
 His crimson seeds in death to cast.
Time's Opusculc, p. 58

It binds well the philosophy of *The Life Divine*:

Peace became dense and serene
 And the night-watchers one by one went away

To a world of calm,—which would mean
Call of tranquil air would soon herald the day.
I Was Asleep, p. 3

A reader should keep this book of poems close at hand, so that he can find inspiration just as close as that.

DANIEL ALBUQUERQUE

ENSNARING VOICE

“O HUMAN image of the deathless word,
How hast thou seen beyond the topaz walls
The gleaming sisters of the divine gate...
Unlocked the avenues of spiritual sight
And taught the entries of a heavenlier state
To thy rapt soul that bore the golden key?
In thee the secret sight man’s blindness missed
Has opened its view past Time, my chariot-course,
And death, my tunnel which I drive through life
To reach my unseen distances of bliss.
I am the hushed search of the jealous gods...
I am the beauty of the unveiled Ray...
Two powers from one original ecstasy born
Pace near, but parted in the life of man;
One leans to earth, the other yearns to the skies:
Heaven in its rapture dreams of perfect earth,
Earth in its sorrow dreams of perfect heaven....
But when the phantom flame-edge fails undone,
Then never more can space or time divide
The lover from the loved; Space shall draw back
Her great translucent curtain, Time shall be
The quivering of the spirit’s endless bliss.
Attend that moment of celestial fate.
Meanwhile you two shall serve the dual law...
Yet if thou wouldst abandon the vexed world,
Careless of the dark moan of things below...
Renounce the tie that joins thee to earth-kind,
Cast off thy sympathy with mortal hearts.
Arise, vindicate thy spirit’s conquered right:
Relinquishing thy charge of transient breath,
Under the cold gaze of the indifferent stars
Leaving thy borrowed body on the sod,
Ascend, O soul, into thy blissful home....
O immortal, to felicity arise.”
On Savitri listening in her tranquil heart
To the harmony of the ensnaring voice
A joy exceeding earth’s and heaven’s poured down...
A smile came rippling out in her wide eyes,
Its confident felicity’s messenger
As if the first beam of the morning sun

Rippled along two wakened lotus-pools:
 "O besetter of man's soul with life and death...
 I climb not to thy everlasting Day,
 Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night.
 To me who turn not from thy terrestrial Way,
 Give back the other self my nature asks,
 Thy spaces need him not to help their joy;
 Earth needs his beautiful spirit made by thee
 To fling delight down like a net of gold.
 Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;
 Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
 The forge where the Arch-mason shapes his works.
 Thy servitudes on earth are greater, king,
 Than all the glorious liberties of heaven....
 There where the gods and demons battle in night
 Or wrestle on the borders of the Sun...
 In me the spirit of immortal love
 Stretches its arms out to embrace mankind....
 O life, the life beneath the wheeling stars
 For victory in the tournament with death,
 For bending of the fierce and difficult bow,
 For flashing of the splendid sword of God!
 O thou who soundest the trumpet in the lists,
 Part not the handle from the untried steel,
 Take not the warrior with his blow unstruck....
 O king-smith, clang on still thy toil begun,
 Weld us to one in thy strong smithy of life.
 Thy fine-curved jewelled hilt call Savitri,
 Thy blade's exultant smile name Satyavan.
 Fashion to beauty, point us through the world....
 I know that I can lift man's soul to God,
 I know that he can bring the Immortal down....
 Let not the unconscious gulf swallow man's race
 That through earth's ignorance struggles towards the Light.
 O Thunderer with the lightnings of the soul,
 Give not to darkness and to death thy sun,
 Achieve thy wisdom's hidden firm decree
 And the mandate of thy secret world-wide love."

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 683-87)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

In dream I saw a child whom for fun I scratched at two or three places with a knife and blood came out. I think there is some cruelty in the physical nature.

Evidently there must be. You must get rid of it. Cruelty and falsehood are the two things that separate most from the Divine.

The gentleman staying in Arogya House asked me why Mother had stopped allowing cigars and betel from being taken here. I said that in the first place they are physically unnecessary and harmful, in the second place they easily bring contact with other smokers and an exchange of influences with people who have nothing to do with Yoga, thirdly it does not appear good in an Ashram and fourthly they obstruct Mother's working.

It is fairly well replied. Besides smoking is only a morbid craving of physical desire—there is no other reason for people doing it. Smoking is tamasic and prevents control of mind.

I was dining at 12.50 and A was there. He was saying something not very favourable about M. When he found me silent, he asked me why I was so. I told him that if he only wanted to criticise the bad side of somebody I was not interested in it.

You did well to tell him that.

27 February 1933

Where are the emotions of love for the Divine which I felt before? It appears that they are absent in me now or thrown into the background by the mental. They used to impart a delight and active force in the work and sadhana.

These things go by a rhythm. Besides sometimes the psychic is very prominent, at other times it allows the mental or another part to come forward, so as to be worked upon.

28 February 1933

Some boys who were playing football in the street entered Arogya House to take their ball, which had fallen inside. I asked them to go outside and ask for it from there, which they did; then the ball was delivered to them from the terrace by one of the workmen. I did not get angry but I spoke severely to the boys. How ought I to have spoken?

It was quite right to be severe in speech, so long as you do not get angry. They do it on purpose, so they must not be allowed to come in.

28 February 1933

Was the scorpion bite I received last night due merely to accident or to some planned hostile attack?

There is no such thing as an accident. It was an attack.

Was this bite to teach me the necessity of having foot-protection? Should I put on sandals or shoes? During the day, of course, it is more convenient without any footwear.

For safety it is better to wear at least after night-fall.

M told me yesterday night that by not killing the scorpion, I had done something which Mother dislikes. But I did not know that it was to be killed as per Mother's wish and I had no instrument to kill the scorpion, even if I had known it.

The object of killing the scorpion is to prevent the chance of its stinging others. But if you had no instrument, it was not possible.

But have I done right in getting the bite treated at the dispensary when I could have quietly not told anybody and used the inner method?

It is better to get such things treated.

1 March 1933

Why is there sometimes this rajasic atmosphere at the "Prosperity"?

It is because people come full of desires.

1 March 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

INTEGRAL YOGA

Integrality of Body and Mind in Integral Yoga

“NATURE, then, is an evolution or progressive self-manifestation of an eternal and secret existence, with three successive forms as her three steps of ascent. And we have consequently as the condition of all our activities these three mutually interdependent possibilities, the bodily life, the mental existence and the veiled spiritual being which is in the involution the cause of the others and in the evolution their result. Preserving and perfecting the physical, fulfilling the mental, it is Nature’s aim and it should be ours to unveil in the perfected body and mind the transcendent activities of the Spirit. As the mental life does not abrogate but works for the elevation and better utilisation of the bodily existence, so too the spiritual should not abrogate but transfigure our intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and vital activities.”¹

Roles of Purusha and Prakriti

“The relation between the Purusha and Prakriti which emerges as one advances in the Yoga of self-perfection is the next thing that we have to understand carefully in this part of the Yoga. In the spiritual truth of our being the power which we call Nature is the power of being, consciousness and will and therefore the power of self-expression and self-creation of the self, soul or Purusha. But to our ordinary mind in the ignorance and to its experience of things the force of Prakriti has a different appearance. When we look at it in its universal action outside ourselves, we see it first as a mechanical energy in the cosmos which acts upon matter or in its own created forms of matter. In matter it evolves powers and processes of life and in living matter powers and processes of mind. Throughout its operations it acts by fixed laws and in each kind of created thing displays varying properties of energy and laws of process which give its character to the genus or species and again in the individual develops without infringing the law of the kind minor characteristics and variations of a considerable consequence. It is this mechanical appearance of Prakriti which has preoccupied the modern scientific mind and made for it its whole view of Nature, and so much so that science still hopes and labours with a very small amount of success to explain all phenomena of life by laws of matter and all phenomena of mind by laws of living matter. Here soul or spirit has no place and nature cannot be regarded as power of spirit. Since the whole of our existence is mechanical, physical and bounded by the biological phenomenon of a brief living consciousness and man is a creature and instrument of material energy, the spiritual self-evolution of Yoga can be only a delusion, hallucination, abnormal state of mind or self-hypnosis. In any case it cannot be what it represents itself to be, a discovery of the eternal truth of our being and a passing above the limited truth of the mental, vital and physical to the full truth of our spiritual nature.

But when we look, not at external mechanical Nature to the exclusion of our per-

sonality, but at the inner subjective experience of man the mental being, our nature takes to us a quite different appearance. We may believe intellectually in a purely mechanical view even of our subjective existence, but we cannot act upon it or make it quite real to our self-experience. For we are conscious of an I which does not seem identical with our nature, but capable of a standing back from it, of a detached observation and criticism and creative use of it, and of a will which we naturally think of as a free will; and even if this be a delusion, we are still obliged in practice to act as if we were responsible mental beings capable of a free choice of our actions, able to use or misuse and to turn to higher or lower ends our nature. And even we seem to be struggling both with our environmental and with our own present nature and striving to get mastery over a world which imposes itself on and masters us and at the same time to become something more than we now are. But the difficulty is that we are only in command, if at all, over a small part of ourselves, the rest is subconscious or subliminal and beyond our control, our will acts only in a small selection of our activities; the most is a process of mechanism and habit and we must strive constantly with ourselves and surrounding circumstances to make the least advance or self-amelioration. There seems to be a dual being in us; Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, seem to be half in agreement, half at odds, Nature laying its mechanical control on the soul, the soul attempting to change and master nature. And the question is what is the fundamental character of this duality and what the issue.”²

The Supreme as Purushottama and Mahashakti

“As the mind progresses in purity, capacity of stillness or freedom from absorption in its own limited action, it becomes aware of and is able to reflect, bring into itself or enter into the conscious presence of the Self, the supreme and universal Spirit, and it becomes aware too of grades and powers of the spirit higher than its own highest ranges. It becomes aware of an infinite of the consciousness of being, an infinite ocean of all the power and energy of illimitable consciousness, an infinite ocean of Ananda, of the self-moved delight of existence. It may be aware of one or other only of these things, for the mind can separate and feel exclusively as distinct original principles what in a higher experience are inseparable powers of the One, or it may feel them in a trinity or fusion which reveals or arrives at their oneness. It may become aware of it on the side of Purusha or on the side of Prakriti. On the side of Purusha it reveals itself as Self or Spirit, as Being or as the one sole existent Being, the divine Purushottama, and the individual Jiva soul can enter into entire oneness with it in its timeless self or in its universality, or enjoy nearness, immanence, difference without any gulf of separation and enjoy too inseparably and at one and the same time oneness of being and delight-giving difference of relation in active experiencing nature. On the side of Prakriti the power and Ananda of the Spirit come into the front to manifest this Infinite in the beings and personalities and ideas and forms and forces of the universe and there is then present to us the divine Mahashakti, original Power, supreme Nature, holding in herself infinite existence and creating the wonders of the cosmos.”³

The Condition of the Integral Self-Perfection

“But the perfection sought in the integral Yoga is not only to be one with her in her highest spiritual power and one with her in her universal action, but to realise and possess the fullness of this Shakti in our individual being and nature. For the supreme Spirit is one as Purusha or as Prakriti, conscious being or power of conscious being, and as the Jiva in essence of self and spirit is one with the supreme Purusha, so on the side of Nature, in power of self and spirit it is one with Shakti, *parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā*. To realise this double oneness is the condition of the integral self-perfection. The Jiva is then the meeting-place of the play of oneness of the supreme Soul and Nature.”⁴

Integral Yoga – A New Paradigm

“For the sadhaka of the integral Yoga it is necessary to remember that no written Shastra, however great its authority or however large its spirit, can be more than a partial expression of the eternal Knowledge. He will use, but never bind himself even by the greatest Scripture. Where the Scripture is profound, wide, catholic, it may exercise upon him an influence for the highest good and of incalculable importance. It may be associated in his experience with his awakening to crowning verities and his realisation of the highest experiences. His Yoga may be governed for a long time by one Scripture or by several successively,—if it is in the line of the great Hindu tradition, by the Gita, for example, the Upanishads, the Veda. Or it may be a good part of his development to include in its material a richly varied experience of the truths of many Scriptures and make the future opulent with all that is best in the past. But in the end he must take his station, or better still, if he can, always and from the beginning he must live in his own soul beyond the limitations of the word that he uses. The Gita itself thus declares that the Yogin in his progress must pass beyond the written Truth,—*śabdabrahmātivartate*—beyond all that he has heard and all that he has yet to hear,—*śrotavyasya śrutasya ca*. For he is not the sadhaka of a book or of many books; he is a sadhaka of the Infinite.

Another kind of Shastra is not Scripture, but a statement of the science and methods, the effective principles and way of working of the path of Yoga which the sadhaka elects to follow. Each path has its Shastra, either written or traditional, passing from mouth to mouth through a long line of Teachers. In India a great authority, a high reverence even is ordinarily attached to the written or traditional teaching. All the lines of the Yoga are supposed to be fixed and the Teacher who has received the Shastra by tradition and realised it in practice guides the disciple along the immemorial tracks. One often even hears the objection urged against a new practice, a new Yogic teaching, the adoption of a new formula, “It is not according to the Shastra.” But neither in fact nor in the actual practice of the Yogins is there really any such entire rigidity of an iron door shut against new truth, fresh revelation, widened experience. The written or traditional teaching expresses the knowledge and experiences of many centuries systematised, organised, made attainable to the beginner. Its importance and utility are therefore immense. But a great

freedom of variation and development is always practicable. Even so highly scientific a system as Rajayoga can be practised on other lines than the organised method of Patanjali. Each of the three paths of the *trimārga*⁵ breaks into many bypaths which meet again at the goal. The general knowledge on which the Yoga depends is fixed, but the order, the succession, the devices, the forms must be allowed to vary; for the needs and particular impulses of the individual nature have to be satisfied even while the general truths remain firm and constant.

An integral and synthetic Yoga needs especially not to be bound by any written or traditional Shastra; for while it embraces the knowledge received from the past, it seeks to organise it anew for the present and the future. An absolute liberty of experience and of the restatement of knowledge in new terms and new combinations is the condition of its self-formation. Seeking to embrace all life in itself, it is in the position not of a pilgrim following the highroad to his destination, but, to that extent at least, of a path-finder hewing his way through a virgin forest. For Yoga has long diverged from life and the ancient systems which sought to embrace it, such as those of our Vedic forefathers, are far away from us, expressed in terms which are no longer accessible, thrown into forms which are no longer applicable. Since then mankind has moved forward on the current of eternal Time and the same problem has to be approached from a new starting-point.

By this Yoga we not only seek the Infinite, but we call upon the Infinite to unfold himself in human life. Therefore the Shastra of our Yoga must provide for an infinite liberty in the receptive human soul. A free adaptability in the manner and the type of the individual's acceptance of the Universal and Transcendent into himself is the right condition for the full spiritual life in man."⁶

SRI AUROBINDO

(Compiled by Arun Vaidya)

Notes and References

1. CWSA, Vol. 23, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 20.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, pp. 752-753.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 759-760.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 760.
5. The triple path of Knowledge, Devotion and Works.
6. CWSA, Vol. 23, pp. 55-57.

TWO POEMS

THE FEET OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

O to besom a path for the Mother
To a welcoming-place apart,—
Road running, meant for no other,
Straight to the heart.

Be Her light footfall a token
Of a Stillness fraught with Grace;
Keep the truthward prayer unspoken
Her sandals trace.

Not solely Heaven descended
But earth upflowers to God
Eachwhere Her heaven-attended
Silence trod.

September 20, 1934

WHEN CLOUDS HAVE LEFT THE SKY

Long deathly silent sky
Shrill with star-jets that gleam
For the lifeward yearning eye
Weary of false dream—

A dream that Love the lord
Long long ago was slain,
When Chaos and leasings' horde
Began their reign.

Light's welkin, star-befriended,
Swiftly your banner spread;
Love's banishment is ended,
He was not dead.

September 20, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: These two poems are also very good. The one on the Mother has a remarkable beauty; the other very felicitous in its turn of thought and expression.

INVOLVED SUPERMIND

24 July 1957

“In fact, a supermind is already here but it is involved, concealed behind this manifest mind, life and Matter and not yet acting overtly or in its own power: if it acts, it is through these inferior powers and modified by their characters and so not yet recognisable. It is only by the approach and arrival of the descending Supermind that it can be liberated upon earth and reveal itself in the action of our material, vital and mental parts so that these lower powers can become portions of a total divinised activity of our whole being: it is that that will bring to us a completely realised divinity or the divine life. It is indeed so that life and mind involved in Matter have realised themselves here; for only what is involved can evolve, otherwise there could be no emergence.”

The Supramental Manifestation, p. 43

Sweet Mother, what is the involved supermind?

It is the same as the uninvolved one!

It is the same thing when Sri Aurobindo says that if the Divine were not at the centre of everything, He could never manifest in the world; it is the same thing when he says that essentially, in its origin and deepest structure, the creation is divine, the world is divine; and that is why this divinity will be able to manifest one day, become tangible, express itself fully in place of all that veils and deforms it at present. Up to now, all that has manifested of this divinity is the world as we know it; but the manifestation is boundless, and after this mental world as we know it, of which the apex and prototype is man, another reality will manifest, which Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind, for it is in fact the next step after the mind; so, seen from the world as it is, it will naturally be “supramental”, that is, something above the mind. And he also says that it will truly be the changing of one world into another, for so far the whole creation belonged to what he calls “the lower hemisphere” as we know it, which is governed by Ignorance and based upon the Inconscient, whereas the other one will be a complete reversal, the sudden appearance of something which will belong to quite a different world, and which instead of being based on Ignorance will be based upon Truth. That is why it will truly be a new world. But if the *essence*, the principle of this world were not included in the world as we knew it, there would be no hope of the one being transformed into the other; they would be two worlds so totally different and opposed that there would be no contact between them and that necessarily, as soon as one came out of this world and emerged into the world of Truth, Light and Knowledge, one would become, so to speak, imperceptible, non-existent for a world belonging exclusively to the Ignorance and the Inconscience.

How is it that even when this change has taken place, there will be a connection and this new world will be able to act upon the old one? It is that in its essence and principle

the new is already enclosed, involved in the old world. So, in fact, it is there, inside, in its very depths, hidden, invisible, imperceptible, unexpressed, but it is there, in its essence. Still, unless from the supreme heights the supramental consciousness and force and light manifest directly in the world, as it happened a year and a half ago, this Supermind which in *principle* is at the very bedrock of the material world as it is, would never have any possibility of manifesting itself. Its awakening and appearance below will be the response to a touch from above which will bring out the corresponding element hidden in the depths of matter as it is now.... And this is precisely what is happening at present. But as I told you two weeks ago, this material world as it actually, visibly is, is so powerful, so absolutely real for the ordinary consciousness, that it has engulfed, as it were, this supramental force and consciousness when it manifested, and a long preparation is necessary before its presence can be even glimpsed, felt, perceived in some way or other. And this is the work it is doing now.

How long it will take is difficult to foresee. It will depend a great deal on the goodwill and the receptivity of a certain number of people, for the individual always advances faster than the collectivity, and by its very nature, humanity is destined to manifest the Supermind before the rest of creation.

At the basis of this collaboration there is necessarily the will to change, no longer to be what one is, for things to be no longer what they are. There are several ways of reaching it, and all the methods are good when they succeed! One may be deeply disgusted with what exists and wish ardently to come out of all this and attain something else; one may—and this is a more positive way—one may feel within oneself the touch, the approach of something positively beautiful and true, and willingly drop all the rest so that nothing may burden the journey to this new beauty and truth.

What is indispensable in every case is the *ardent* will for progress, the willing and joyful renunciation of all that hampers the advance: to throw far away from oneself all that prevents one from going forward, and to set out into the unknown with the ardent faith that this is the truth of tomorrow, *inevitable*, which must necessarily come, which nothing, nobody, no bad will, even that of Nature, can prevent from becoming a reality—perhaps of a not too distant future—a reality which is being worked out now and which those who know how to change, how not to be weighed down by old habits, will *surely* have the good fortune not only to see but to realise.

People sleep, they forget, they take life easy—they forget, forget all the time.... But if we could remember... that we are at an exceptional hour, a *unique* time, that we have this immense good fortune, this invaluable privilege of being present at the birth of a new world, we could easily get rid of everything that impedes and hinders our progress.

So, the most important thing, it seems, is to remember this fact; even when one doesn't have the tangible experience, to have the certainty of it and faith in it; to remember always, to recall it constantly, to go to sleep with this idea, to wake up with this perception; to do all that one does with this great truth as the background, as a constant support, this great truth that we are witnessing the birth of a new world.

We can participate in it, we can become this new world. And truly, when one has

such a marvellous opportunity, one should be ready to give up everything for its sake.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1957-58, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 156-59)

WHY DOES ONE FEEL AFRAID?

I suppose it is because one is egoistic.

There are three reasons. First, an excessive concern about one's security. Next, what one does not know always gives an uneasy feeling which is translated in the consciousness by fear. And above all, one doesn't have the habit of a spontaneous trust in the Divine. If you look into things sufficiently deeply, this is the true reason. There are people who do not even know that That exists, but one could tell them in other words, "You have no faith in your destiny" or "You know nothing about Grace"—anything whatever, you may put it as you like, but the root of the matter is a lack of trust. If one always had the feeling that it is the best that happens in all circumstances, one would not be afraid.

The first movement of fear comes automatically. There was a great scientist who was also a great psychologist (I don't remember his name now); he had developed his inner consciousness but wanted to test it. So he undertook an experiment. He wanted to know if, by means of consciousness, one could control the reflex actions of the body (probably he didn't go far enough to be able to do it, for it can be done; but in any case, for him it was still impossible). Well, he went to the zoological garden, to the place where snakes were kept in a glass cage. There was a particularly aggressive cobra there; when it was not asleep, it was almost always in a fury, for through the glass it could see people and that irritated it terribly. Our scientist went and stood in front of the cage. He knew very well that it was made in such a way that the snake could never break the glass and that he ran no risk of being attacked. So from there he began to excite the snake by shouts and gestures. The cobra, furious, hurled itself against the glass, and every time it did so the scientist closed his eyes! Our psychologist told himself, "But look here, I know that this snake cannot pass through, why do I close my eyes?" Well, one must recognise that it is difficult to conquer the reaction. It is a sense of protection, and if one feels that one cannot protect oneself, one is afraid. But the movement of fear which is expressed by the eyes fluttering is not a mental or a vital fear; it is a fear in the cells of the body; for it has not been impressed upon them that there is no danger and they do not know how to resist. It is because one has not done yoga, you see. With yoga one can watch with open eyes, one would not close them; but one would not close them because one calls upon something else, and that 'something else' is the sense of the divine Presence in oneself which is stronger than everything.

This is the only thing that can cure you of your fear.

The Mother

(CWM, Vol. 4, pp. 211-12)

A LETTER

IF one is really under the spell of black magic, I suppose one would feel some kind of indefinite *malaise*. But such *malaise* is not necessarily a sign of being under black-magic influence. I think the best thing is not to have the impression of any influence of this kind. To be obsessed with the idea of it may prove harmful even if there is no black magic done. For, the mentality which lives under that obsession may put itself in touch with the lower-vital plane's forces which may themselves act as black magicians. Keep your mind free of fear. After all, real black magic is rare.

As a support to keeping the mind free from fear, I would advise you to repeat the mantra: *Sri Aurobindo sharanam mama* ("Sri Aurobindo is my refuge"). It is a master mantra of protection. One who is not an Aurobindonian may be advised to take names of his guru or his *ista devata* ("chosen deity").

If you have blessing-packets from the Ashram, keep them on your person.

Finally, if indeed some black magic has been done, it is possible that some peculiar sign has been traced on a part of your house. Look for it and, if there is one, rub it off. Sometimes the work is done through a *young* boy or girl servant. In case you have any such servant, watch out for any peculiar behaviour on his or her part. Of course, all such servants are not mediums, and you need not sack them just because they are young.

At any rate, have faith in the mantra I have mentioned and be fearless. All will be well.

26.3.89

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

IF YOU HAVE FAITH

If you have faith and are consecrated to the Divine, there is a very simple way, it is to say: "Let Your will be done. Nothing can frighten me because it is You who are guiding my life. I belong to You and You are guiding my life." That acts immediately. Of all the means this is the most effective: indeed, it is. That is, one must be truly consecrated to the Divine. If one has that, it acts immediately; all fear vanishes immediately like a dream.

The Mother

(CWM, Vol. 5, p. 119)

A JOYOUS MEETING

An Ex-student Meets Amal Kiran

SOME apparently small incidents like a chance meeting fill one with untold joy. I had such an opportune meeting on 3.1.2002.

It had never occurred to me nor did I ever expect to meet Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna). He is a legend in the Ashram. I had of course seen him and heard many anecdotes about him—how he came to know Sri Aurobindo, how his classes in SAICE were hilariously interesting, and that he is one of the three persons who had an intimation pointing to the Supramental Manifestation on 20.2.1956.

On 3.1.2002, I went to meet him at 4.30 p.m.. I hurriedly took the book *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo* authored by him to get it autographed. Maybe it was a banal thought, as I could not think of anything else to do on meeting such a personality.

He lovingly scribbled:

Affectionately
to Sudhangshu and Indira
From Amal Kiran
3.1.2002

It could have been more legible but for a show of firmness by Amal Kiran—he refused to use a table to support the book and held it with one hand instead. However, it is and will remain a cherished and memorable gesture.

On being requested, he recited from memory one of his own poems with the clarity and vigour that one identifies with a man in his thirties. The poem was so good that I blurted out after he had finished—“If one did not know, one could mistake it as written by Sri Aurobindo!” He laughed.

The poem is:

THIS ERRANT LIFE

This errant life is dear although it dies;
And human lips are sweet though they but sing
Of stars estranged from us; and youth's emprise
Is wondrous yet, although an unsure thing.

Sky-lucent Bliss untouched by earthiness!
I fear to soar lest tender bonds decrease.
If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,

Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow.
 For 'tis with mouth of clay I supplicate:
 Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
 And all thy formless glory turn to love
 And mould Thy love into a human face.

It is interesting to note Sri Aurobindo's comment about the poem:

“A very beautiful poem, one of the very best you have written. The last six lines, one may say even the last eight, are absolutely perfect. If you could always write like that, you would take your place among English poets and no low place either. I consider they can rank—these eight lines [last eight lines]—with the very best in English poetry.”

The Secret Splendour, p. 70

After a few minutes of wondering silence, I blurted out: “What did Sri Aurobindo tell you the first time you met him?”

“Nothing! He did not tell me anything. I just looked at his face. I was all the time watching his face, his beard, and his moustache and was thinking to myself that I can choose this man as my Guru. Then I came away. Later, I asked the Mother, ‘What did Sri Aurobindo say about me?’ She replied, ‘He said you have a good face.’ ”

I then asked, “What was your experience on 29.2.1956, the day of the Supramental Manifestation?”

“That night I was travelling by train from Pondicherry to Madras. (It was as if I was the only hindrance in the way of the Supramental Descent.) I was asleep. I dreamt that the Mother was sitting in a chair and people were filing past to get *Darshan*. I was desperately trying to get my slippers off my feet—specially the left foot (it is lame). I was struggling in my sleep but in vain. Then suddenly, I woke up and I saw the Mother standing in the railway compartment. I am not somebody given to see visions, so I closed my eyes and opened them again and She was still standing there, smiling. Not a silhouette or something but really in flesh and blood. Then again, I closed my eyes and opened them to make sure but I couldn't see Her any more. Later I recounted to Her the experience. She reminded me of our conversation of some 17-18 years before when I had requested Her to promise to tell me of the Supramental Descent when it took place. I was overwhelmed with gratitude that She remembered a promise of such a long time back and that too made to a person like me.”

Then he talked about how he took up the editorship of *Mother India* as wished by Sri Aurobindo. “I was completely new to the job. I asked the Mother on what topic to write. She said that Sri Aurobindo wanted me to write on politics.—‘But I don't know anything on the subject and much less about Indian politics.’ ‘Well!’ She replied, ‘I also do not know anything about it. But Sri Aurobindo is there. He will do everything.’ ”

He talked and joked with us for some more time then it was time for him to go to the Ashram.

I can never forget such a wonderful person because more than any other aspect, his “joie de vivre”, his inner joy really rubbed off on me. He never let us feel the 98 years old that he is, but a different being, an ‘Amal Kiran’.

SUDHANSHU MOHANTY

(Courtesy: *Golden Chain*, August 2002)

DARSHAN

This time it was a light
 That came neither from the star, the sun nor the moon.
 It leaped from within,
 From the soul's longing at last fulfilled.
 Its absence had bred littleness,
 Built a wall of distance,
 A natural pain in darkness
 Gave suffering of separation.
 But in this strange new light
 All that got blotted out
 And the view reversed, became truer.
 Oh its touch is feather-like
 And needed are not eyes,
 Nor ears, nor tongue to speak of it.
 It called a singing bird,
 In palm of the present the future;
 The quest found its sudden goal
 And I was reborn in its joy.
 It was a light that entered into my light,
 It was glory of the Darshan.

SHAKUNTALA MANAY

SRI AUROBINDO AS I KNEW HIM

Some Reminiscences of His Political Days

Mother India has great pleasure in publishing this specially written article—the interesting result of a request to the author to put together his reminiscences of Sri Aurobindo as he came personally to know him during the years when Bengal was making history in and for India. —K. D. Sethna

Silent Watcher

My eyes first set themselves on Sri Aurobindo—known at that time as Aurobindo Ghose—on a November evening on the eve of the Benares Congress held during the last days of December, 1905. The place of the meeting was a room at the Field and Academy Club in the Sib Narayan Das Lane just north east of the present Vidyasagar College Hostel on Cornwallis Street. The Club had been organised by the young men of the Bengalee higher classes headed by the then Maharaj-Kumar of Cooch-Bihar. Many of them had completed their education in Britain and the time-spirit had caught them and been influencing them to think of things other than personal pleasures and the diversions of intellectualism. Leaders of thought and society had been discussing the *pros* and *cons* of the then methods of political activity that were confined to petition, prayer and protest to the alien Authority which held India under subjection. Bankim Chandra had characterised these as “dog-politics”—waiting for crumbs and bones from the master’s plate; Rabindranath Tagore had directed at them his shafts of ridicule in his essays read before the Calcutta learned societies and in articles in the papers edited by him; Sri Aurobindo had held up the example of Parnellism* with a view to discredit this “mendicant policy” in a series of articles in the *Indu-Prakash*, the *Bombay Weekly*, during the later part of the last decade of the 19th century. Bipin Chandra Pal in his *New India* (Weekly), started in 1901, began challenging the postulates of the Congress politics.

It was in this climate of opinion that we had grown up and naturally were drawn towards principles and policies that suggested activities that were dynamic and “dangerous”, to use a word very popular amongst us in those days. To young Bengalees in those days Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore, Bipin Chandra Pal and Upadhyaya Brahmabandhav and those who came to be associated with them were objects of admiration and no little curiosity. On the November evening referred to above, there were gathered Bipin Chandra Pal, Chittaranjan Das, Surendranath Halder, and Sarat Chandra Sen—all familiar faces; the only exception was a retiring figure sitting quietly in a chair, whose name I later came to know was Aurobindo Ghose. The discussion that

* Editor’s Note: It may be remarked that, though the example of Parnellism might be salutary, Sri Aurobindo’s own policy in India was not based on Parnellism. It had more resemblance in Sinn Fein, but was conceived before the Sinn Fein movement and was therefore not inspired by it.

ensued referred to the resolutions of the forthcoming session of the Congress. The Boycott resolution had been passed at a meeting held at the Calcutta Town Hall on the 7th of August, 1905; it had angered and harmed Anglo-India—the finance-capital interests of British merchants and manufacturers. And the State in India whose only reason for existence was the service of these interests naturally attempted to stamp out the rising temper of the subject population symbolised by the Boycott resolution.

This repression helped to disrupt the front of the politically-minded India; the seeds of two party alignments were sown, the “Moderates” and “Extremists” had their birth, the former desiring to tone down the “Extremist” resolution on the Boycott, the latter desiring to have it and other items of a defiant policy endorsed by the Congress. Though the control of the Congress was in the hands of the “Moderates” they dared not resile from the position taken up at the Calcutta meeting. Advanced opinion in Maharashtra and the Punjab, represented by Balwant [commonly known as Bal] Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai, pressed home this advantage, and the Benares Congress endorsed the resolution under pressure of that militant group of Indian politicians. All the possibilities of the situation were discussed at this meeting. Sri Aurobindo remained a silent listener. It appeared that he was a watcher of the sky over Bengal and was satisfied with the signs on the weather-chart; he could wait.

Another topic that had been discussed at this “gathering of the clan”, was the need for a daily English-language paper to propagate the principles and policies of the New Party waiting to be born, as the *New India* weekly was felt to be unequal to the task of interpreting the ever-evolving revolutionary changes in the country and of giving a lead that would bring to fruition the dreams and aspirations of the people. No decision could be arrived at as finance stood as a stumbling block. On this topic also Sri Aurobindo appeared to be watching developments.

The next occasion on which I saw Sri Aurobindo was during the days when the Bengal Provincial Conference was scheduled to meet at Barisal in April, 1906, during the Easter holidays. I accompanied Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya to Barisal as a delegate to this Conference. Chittaranjan Das, Bipin Chandra Pal, Surendra Nath Halder and Sarat Chandra Sen were guests of the Lakutia House, a famous zamindar family of the district. I found Sri Aurobindo there, studying the situation. The Conference was dispersed by the bureaucracy at the point of the bayonet and the “regulation lathi”. This outrage inflamed even the leaders of the “Moderate” party, one of whom, Bhupendranath Basu, declared “This is the end, the beginning of the end of the British Rule in India”. The feeling all over India was electric; the Barisal episode laid the foundation of terrorism in Bengal. I recall that while all the others were excited, Sri Aurobindo was unperturbed; and interpreting the past in the light of later events I can say that he was satisfied with the evolution of thought and activity precipitated at Barisal.

Delegates from East Bengal clustered round the leaders of the New Party for light and lead. And they arranged that some of the latter should tour their areas and help preach the new message. Three of them—Bipin Chandra Pal, Sri Aurobindo and Subodh Chandra Mullick agreed to this proposal. I had the privilege of accompanying them as

one of the “volunteer” workers. Thus was I thrown into intimate relation with these leaders, and during about 45 days had occasion to observe matters and unconsciously imbibe the lessons of a new *Sadhana*, devoted work, in politics. Thousands had their initiation during these days, each receiving the gift of understanding and dedication according to the law of his being. Since then life has been different to them through good report and evil, through success and failure. The sacrifice made, the risks taken with the happiness of dear and near ones involved in this refusal to follow the ordinary path, have been worth-while. For, millions felt that “bliss was it in that age to be alive, to be young was very heaven”. We had glimpses of the future, dreamt dreams, saw visions. Thousands of our fellow-workers left the field of their mundane activities; those of us who have lived to see their dreams realised, their visions taking concrete shape, have reasons to feel themselves blessed. Personally speaking I have remained a worshipper at the gate; so it was decreed.

Writing after 45 years of those days of high exaltations and self-forgetfulness, the impressions of these 45 days of April-May, 1906, as these related to Sri Aurobindo, were those of a silent distant figure lost in his own thoughts, speaking the fewest of words, observing the effect of the language in which Bipin Chandra Pal clothed the present degradation and the future ennobling of his people. For he was the orator of the party; neither Sri Aurobindo nor Subodh Chandra would open their lips at public meetings. They had their closed-door discussions with active politicians, with young men burning to wipe out with their blood the insult implicit in foreign rule.

We, “volunteers”, sensed that something was afoot, some “new departure” from the lines of the then current politics. Hints were thrown at us, suggestions made that told us of days big with brave deeds and sacrifices in the service of the Mother, as Sri Aurobindo used to call the land of his birth. Thousands chose and trod the path indicated by the new prophets of a new life. This tour with its flaming words and silences created the history which reached its end on August 15, 1947.

Master Journalist of Nationalism

On return from this tour, I had few occasions to meet Sri Aurobindo for about two months. He was busy as Principal of the institutions started by the National Council of Education. Then something happened that threw me into his company—a privilege undreamt of. I have spoken before of a project for an English-language daily to propagate the principles and policies of the New Party. Since November, 1905, it had been receiving fitful attention. The visit of Bal Gangadhar Tilak to Calcutta on the occasion of the Sivaji Utsav of 1906 imparted an urgency to it. But in June and July, it appeared to halt. And in desperation Bipin Chandra Pal took the plunge almost unknown to the fellow-members of the Party. His weekly was being published from the Classic Press on Corporation Street, now known as Raneeshmoni Road; its proprietor Biharilal Chakravarty agreed to take the risk of publishing the daily on the assurance that the daily sale proceeds of the paper would be his. Bipin Chandra could procure from Haridas Halder and Kshetra Mohan

Singh Rs. 450 for the initial stock of paper and certain other incidental expenses. The name chosen for the paper was *Bande Mataram*—Salutation to the Mother—the refrain of Bankim Chandra's famous song; the day fixed for the first issue was the 7th of August, 1906, the anniversary of the "Boycott Day". It had to be changed to the 6th owing to Bipin Chandra's absence from Calcutta on that day—a last minute change occasioned by the Political Conference in his own home district of Sylhet.

As editor of the paper Bipin Chandra had to think of a leader-writer who in his absence would play the part. In this extremity he went to Sri Aurobindo on the evening of the 5th; the latter had been residing at the Wellington Square Mansion of Subodh Chandra Mullick. He appeared to be taken by surprise at this novel development but readily agreed to Bipin Chandra's request. Relieved of anxiety on this point, the editor started for Sylhet on the 6th August morning with the *Bande Mataram* hot and wet from the press in his hand. Sri Aurobindo started his contributions from the 2nd or 3rd issue, his first article was entitled: "John Morley—3 phases". It fell to me to come to him every evening at about 5 p.m. and receive from him the article promised. I found it ready; I did not have to wait for it on any single day.

The *Bande Mataram* was an instantaneous success, and the soreness felt by certain leaders of the New Party for the way in which Bipin Chandra Pal had sprung a surprise on them soon wore away and was replaced by pride at the adventurousness of it. The Classic Press could not cope with the demand for the paper. And there was again a gathering of the clan. On the guarantee of Rs. 6,000 by certain members of the party, Upadhyaya Brahmabandhav undertook to have the *Bande Mataram* published from Sandhya Press on Cornwallis Street from which his own Bengali language daily, the *Sandhya*, used to be published. Till the end of August, the Classic Press printed the *Bande Mataram* and it was my privilege to put in daily appearance at Sri Aurobindo's residence. Now and then he used to ask me questions with regard to how the rest of the paper got the materials for publication, with regard to Bipin Chandra's tour programme and whether articles from him came regularly. These were rare occasions.

Now and then I found him with friends—Subodh Chandra Mullick, Charu Chandra Dutt, Surendranath Halder, Bijoy Chandra Chatterjee, Rajatnath Roy, Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, Jogendra Krishna Basu—when he opened out; and still do I appear to hear the tinkling laughter that expressed the joy of his heart at the temporary release from the burden of thought and responsibility generally felt by him. Now and then politics cropped up in these discussions and their handling in the daily Press, in his own articles. He generally spoke in English, but when he used his mother tongue, Bengali, the foreign accent and a lisping sound made it pleasant to the ear. Even during these pleasantries, a book was always by his side into which he would dip and lose himself. And there were silences eloquent of the prevailing mood of all present. Now and then there was small talk, and Sri Aurobindo extracted the utmost pleasure from it. It is not easy to recall at this distance the nature of the discussions held on these occasions. But one stands out prominently where he and N. N. Ghosh, editor of the weekly *Indian Nation* and Principal of the Metropolitan College, now known as the Vidyasagar College, were engaged in a

controversy over the principles and practices of the New Party. N. N. Ghosh had a reputation for crisp, nervous English and Sri Aurobindo was Sri Aurobindo and the controversy between these two giants attained the character of an epic, neither giving quarter. This controversy and the words and phrases used in it became the talk of the politically-minded people of the day.

But this was later in 1907. In August-September, 1906, Sri Aurobindo's writings showed the quality of a master that was an inspiration to thousands. And almost daily Reuter and correspondents of the foreign Press used to cable the news and views published in the *Bande Mataram* as reflecting the authentic feelings of the Indian people in their struggle for national self-respect, which is *Swaraj*. By the end of September, 1906, Bipin Chandra Pal returned from his East Bengal tour and took editorial control of the paper. Sri Aurobindo fell ill and repaired to Deoghar for recuperation. The problem of *Bande Mataram*'s finances came up again and Subodh Chandra Mullick offered to take up the whole responsibility of this concern, and from Cornwallis Street had it transferred to Creek Row in a building owned by himself. This change was symptomatic of a minor change in the internal affairs of the New Party. Bal Gangadhar Tilak tried to bring about a reconciliation during the Congress Sessions at Calcutta over which Dadabhai Naoroji was to preside. But he failed as the youngest people were for a more outright support to the tactics of Parnellism—a combination of constitutional and unconstitutional activities directed against the alien State in India. Bipin Chandra Pal retired from the editorial charge of the paper and in a letter handed it over to Sri Aurobindo—a letter which I carried to the addressee's Mott's Lane residence.

And since this letter afterwards gained importance as evidence against Sri Aurobindo as Editor of the *Bande Mataram* in a sedition case, the episode should be related. "The charges concern the articles entitled 'Politics for Indians' which appeared in the Town Edition of the 27th June and the Dak edition of the 28th June and the republication on the 26th July of certain seditious articles which had originally appeared in the *Jugantar* newspaper", to quote from the judgment delivered on September 28, 1907, by Mr. Kingsford, first Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta. Sri Aurobindo was acquitted, as the prosecution failed to bring home to him the charge that he was the editor of the *Bande Mataram* on those days in spite of the letter of Bipin Chandra Pal found in course of a police search of his house at Mott's Lane. And as Bipin Chandra refused to swear in the witness box when called upon to do so by the Magistrate, the latter drew up proceedings against him for contempt of Court and sent him to his subordinate Magistrate, Mr. Ram Anugraha Narain Singh, for trial. Mr. Kingsford had not allowed Bipin Chandra to put in his plea for refusal to co-operate in the discharge of justice by the State. But in Mr. Singh's court he fully explained his stand. His was not a case for total non-cooperation with British Administration as was evolved in the "open conspiracy" during the twenties of this century under Gandhiji's inspiration and guidance. But he stood on his right as a citizen to withhold co-operation from the State in a particular case in which the policy followed would be creating greater confusion in the country by suppressing the liberty of the people to express their opinion on particular matters of State or the basic principles of

its being. He was sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment on the 10th September, 1907. The Press of India hailed the action of Bipin Chandra's as confirming the opinion of Srinivas Shastri that Bengal was introducing an element of "grimness" into Indian politics which had become more than ever necessary.

With the transfer of *Bande Mataram* from Cornwallis Street to Creek Row my connection with it ceased. But in March, 1908, I was called in by Sri Aurobindo to serve as a sub-editor. Here I found as my colleague Krishna Chandra Ghosh who has died this year on the 8th of May. We "edited" the telegrams, and Sri Aurobindo passing through our room would ask of us of the day's news on which to comment. He generally finished his articles by 3 p.m., and when handing these over to us would inquire whether they would be sufficient. If we replied in the negative, he would stand by our table, look over the telegram sheets, and write a "para" or two, as the mood was on. Other denizens of the editorial sanctum were Syam Sundar Chakravarty and Hemendra Prasad Ghosh, the latter still happily with us, a witness to the "high audacity" of those days, Sri Aurobindo's favourite words. The "Chief", the title by which he was known in the *Bande Mataram* Office, showed an instinct for journalism that was remarkable for one of his retiring and recluse habits.

During 1907, I had been a fitful visitor to Sri Aurobindo. On the eve of the Surat Congress, December, 1907, the organisation of the New Party delegation to it took me more often to the Wellington Square mansion of Subodh Chandra Mullick where Sri Aurobindo generally resided or passed the evenings when he had his own house at Calcutta. One day I found him absorbed in "automatic writing", and certain of the indications about the Surat developments were fulfilled; the insult to Surendra Nath Banerjee, for instance, which was compared to death. I was one of the Bengal delegates who accompanied Sri Aurobindo and Syam Sundar Chakravarty to Surat. All of us travelled "3rd" Class. On reaching Surat we were housed in a Dharmasala; we spread our beddings over carpets. Sri Aurobindo and Syam Sundar had cots to distinguish their position. We took the same vegetarian food arranged on behalf of the New Party's Conference, and Bengal delegates were recipients of marked public notice as having done something significant in the evolution of Indian Nationalism during the British period.

Guide and Deliverer of the Indian People

Sri Aurobindo presided over this Conference. He was no orator. But the Conference hung on his words limpid and flowing, instinct with a new meaning, though the words had been familiar enough. Even during this Conference Sri Aurobindo appeared as a soul that dwelt apart from the tumult and shouting of politics of all awakened people newly roused to the degradation of its subjection and grown conscious of its high destiny in the world recalling and fulfilling the achievements and promises of our storied past. Sri Aurobindo had been chosen to help in transforming the thoughts and activities of his people, and it was enthralling to watch the evolution of this drama involving individuals who left home and family, and dared and did deeds that awed millions and thrilled them

to a new realisation of their weaknesses and a new determination to rid their social polity of these. As the guiding spirit of the *Bande Mataram* he had been a distant figure; the Surat Congress ended that recluse life and pushed him before hundreds of thousands as the tribune of their rights, as the long looked-for guide and deliverer.

From Surat he went to Bombay: the conduct of the *Bande Mataram* devolved on Syam Sundar Chakravarty and Hemendra Prasad Ghosh who had deputised for them all during the Congress session; and it was he [Sri Aurobindo] who put in the *Bande Mataram* a banner head-line describing Dr. Rash Behary Ghosh's speech as "The Undelivered Masterpiece". We resumed our normal life at the *Bande Mataram* office. The "Chief" returned after about 30 days. I do not remember anything particularly noticeable to be recalled except that newspaper controversy between the "Moderates" and "Extremists" with regard to the responsibility for the abortive Surat Congress showed no signs of abatement. During those tumultuous days at Surat, he had been his own self, unaffected by them, in-drawn generally to a world of which we know little. And, therefore, we could not imagine that the days were hastening towards a crisis in the affairs of his own life, in the fortunes of the *Bande Mataram*. Financial difficulties had always been dogging this paper. Except in an extremity, the management generally did not pester him with them. And the majority of us were taught to treat them as part of the day's work, the "Chief" preferring to forego any "salary" that he now and then drew; the others followed the example. For, in those days journalists regarded journalism as part of a mission, not a profession to be carried on under Trade-Union rules. Those of us who linger on the scene still follow something of the old-world practice.

Sri Aurobindo during the three months that he remained free was in requisition as a speaker at public meetings, he having got over his resolve not to address his people in English, and the latter refusing to accept any refusal now that reports of meetings addressed by him in Western India had carried eloquent head-lines. His articles in the *Bande Mataram* gained a new reality from this closer touch with the people imparting to his thoughts a this-worldly colour of their daily struggles with wants and other deficiencies in their material existence. The alien bureaucracy having failed to capture him with laws of sedition were ever on the watch, and their "spies" were on the prowl, even planting themselves in the *Bande Mataram* office. We members of its staff were careful of our words and avoided "loose" talk before less known people such as generally crowd into newspaper offices. We felt the tension in the air. But we were not prepared for what happened on April 30, at Muzaffarpore in Bihar then under a common Lieutenant-Governor. A bomb burst at about 9 p.m. shattering the carriage in which Mr. Kingsford was supposed to be returning home. In reality the victims turned out to be Mrs. Kennedy and Miss Kennedy, wife and daughter of one of the leaders of the Bar and a Congressman, Mr. Pringle Kennedy. Rumours floated over Calcutta of this event on the 1st of May, 1908. The next day-break found Sri Aurobindo in police custody. Days of confusion followed. The *Bande Mataram* struggled heroically to ride the storm. It was in vain. The bureaucracy itself inflicted the death-blow by confiscating the press which printed the paper.

Life became a victim to rumours. The "Chief" was withdrawn behind the jail lock-

up; the Manicktala Bomb Conspiracy case was lengthening its weary days; the assassination inside the jail of the approver Narendra Nath Goswami by Kanai Lal Dutta and Satyendra Nath Basu introduced an element of exaltation that upheld public morale. The blackest day, however, has to come to an end. The Conspiracy case before Mr. Beachcroft, a fellow entrant of the year into the Indian Civil Service with Sri Aurobindo, resulted in his acquittal. The judge accepting the verdict of the two assessors on the 13th of April, 1909, Sri Aurobindo was let out of the jail lock-up about 30 days after. He came to a world where a “hush” and a “silence” had set in, the national mind waiting for a new lead. I was then teacher in the National School of Sylhet, the headquarter station of the farthest east Bengalee-speaking district. During the next Puja recess two or three of us hastened to Calcutta to meet the “Chief”; he was putting up at the College Square house of Krishna Kumar Mitra, husband of his maternal aunt. We had our *darshan*, a winsome smile welcoming us. We felt ourselves as on a pilgrimage, believing that he was engaged in a new *Sadhana* that would give him supernatural powers which would make an end of the hated foreign rule. My companions were more receptive of the new psycho-physical discipline that the “Chief” was prepared to impart; the *Karmayogin* (English) and *Dharma* (Bengali), the two weeklies preaching a new Nationalism, were more in my line. We interpreted the truths inculcated through these two papers in the light of our own experience, in consonance with our individual capacities. These brought to our thoughts and activities some sort of a coherence out of the confusion created by the repression by the Government and the safe policy of our elder politicians. He showed us the way out of bewilderment; we learnt to understand what Indian Nationalism stood for and the ideal of the “Karmayogin”:

“It [Indian Nationalism] must be on its guard against any tendency to cling to every detail that has been India. This has not been the spirit of Hinduism in the past.... In all life there are three elements, the fixed and permanent spirit, the developing and constant soul, and the brittle changeable body. The spirit we cannot change, we can obscure or lose; the soul must not be rashly meddled with, must neither be tortured into a shape alien to itself, nor obstructed in its free expression, and the body must be used as a means, not overcherished as a thing valuable for its own sake...”

The return of self-respect to a people is characterized by a sort of revivalism that leads men and women to “cling to every detail” that is in practice in every-day life. Indian nationalism of the times I have been trying to indicate was not free from this defect. And it was in the fitness of things that Sri Aurobindo, the “prophet of Nationalism” as Chittaranjan Das called him, during the peroration of his address to Mr. Beachcroft and the assessors, should take the earliest opportunity to warn his people of this aberration of their life. Many of us who had been carried away by its spirit of revivalism needed this warning so that we could devote ourselves to the service of our people with a becoming spirit of humanity, with a new awareness that the alien values introduced into their life by Britain had made contributions towards its enrichment, winnowing the chaff from the

grain. Thus would we be able to take part in rebuilding the life of humanity on a new basis in the construction of which East and West would co-operate out of mutual knowledge. Sri Aurobindo, a graft of the East put on a Western trunk, was best suited to work out this synthesis. The *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma* were chosen as the instruments fit to be placed in his hands for the evolution of the Master Plan of a saner humanity rooted in honest labour, disdaining to exploit the labour of others, and bearing love for all created things. This was an earnest of the “divine life on earth” of which Sri Aurobindo speaks with certitude in his 76th Birthday Message. The *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma* gave us intimations, faint and obscure, of the “human dream of perfectibility”, of “aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religious and spiritual seers and thinkers.”

The weakening of political fervour turned the minds of many of us inwards. But the presence of External Authority in our country had had such a disturbing effect on our minds that, except the chosen few, none could settle down to this new *sadhana*. The majority of us looked to the *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma* to give us a new lead in our political bewilderment. Sri Aurobindo’s “Open Letter to My Countrymen” that appeared in the *Karmayogin* on July 31, 1909, was regarded by us in this light. And we who lived in the countryside could not know that this letter would prove to be his “Last Political Will and Testament” to his people. So, when in August 1909, rumours reached us that he had vanished from Calcutta, we thought that it was part of political tactics—a refusal to be caught and put behind prison bars; we fondly hoped that he would come back to his accustomed place in the political leadership of his people, referred and renovated by the new *sadhana* he had undertaken. We of the generation that grew up under his specious eyes, caught fire from his flaming words, the few of us who have had no inspiration other than the ending of alien rule, the few of us who still linger on the scene have been awaiting for 40 years for the arrival amidst us of one of the builders of our youth whom the Creator has yet spared to us. We have waited in vain. So it has been decreed. Sri Aurobindo is a distant figure to us beyond our comprehension. The realisation of this disability in us has not been a pleasurable experience. But we have learnt to accept it as a decree from on high.

These reminiscences cover a period of about 45 years. They are coloured by growth and retrogression in thought and life that are part of human evolution. I am conscious that they do not throw much light on the development of the personality from a political thinker and activist into a seer. They are here for what they are worth. I am thankful to *Mother India* for according me an opportunity to recall the age when Sri Aurobindo was the centre of a people’s hope, a path-finder to them over stretches of life littered with lost opportunities, it may be with failures and weaknesses, but now and then shot through and through with exaltations of spirit, acts of high audacity, silent dedication to a far-off divine event that dawned on the 15th of August, 1947, coincident with the anniversary of Sri Aurobindo’s birthday. This attempt to recollect has been a healing experience. It has confirmed my faith in the people. Saint Augustine’s mother had been consoled with the words—“the child of so many tears can never go wrong for long”; the people among

whom Sri Aurobindo was born can never go wrong for long. This thought upholds many of us.

SURESH CHANDRA DEB

(Reproduced from *Mother India*, 15 August 1950)

GREEN TIGER

There is no going to the Gold,
 Save on four feet
 Of the Green Tiger in whose heart's hold
 Is the ineffable heat.

Raw with a burning body
 Ruled by no thought—
 Hero of the huge head roaring
 Ever to be caught!

Backward and forward he struggles,
 Till Sun and Moon tame
 By cutting his neck asunder:
 Then the heart's flame

Is free and the blind gap brings
 A new life's beat—
 Red Dragon with eagle-wings
 Yet tiger-feet!

Time's blood is sap between
 God's flower, God's root—
 Infinity waits but to crown
 This Super-brute.

K. D. SETHNA

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

*Savitri and the Record of Yoga**

3

THE phrase “slave of God” occurs in a speech of the Godhead into whom Death is transformed after Savitri’s victory, a passage that is now part of Book Eleven, “The Book of Everlasting Day”. But this passage in its original form, which already included the line in question, was written as early as 1916. It is found in the notebook used by Sri Aurobindo for his first known draft of the poem, consisting of some eight hundred lines and not yet divided into books or cantos. This nearly complete draft of what would evolve into an epic of thirty times that length is preceded in the small notebook by a three-page draft of the opening—dated, on the second page, “August 8th 9th 1916”—beginning with the lines:

In a huge forest where the listening Night
Heard solitary voices and a tread
That had no sound for the rich heart of day....

After breaking off on the third page, at the point where Savitri arrives at the place where she will meet Satyavan, Sri Aurobindo started again in almost the same way, possibly a couple of months later. This time he continued and, after some time, began dating the draft every few pages. It was perhaps due to the unusual flow of inspiration he was experiencing that he became interested at this stage in recording the progress he was making with the poem from day to day. The dates in the margins of the manuscript—October 17, 18 and 19—show that on three days in 1916 he drafted much of what eventually became Books Eight, Nine and Ten of the epic, “The Book of Death”, “The Book of Eternal Night” and “The Book of the Double Twilight”. However, there was no double twilight as yet, but only something like “The Dream Twilight of the Ideal”, where much of Savitri’s debate with Death took place. The draft stops abruptly at the point where the twilight vanishes:

Even as she spoke, they left the twilit world.
It ended not; it vanished. Savitri

The remainder of the notebook was used mostly for the rewriting of passages that had

* The talk given on 18 February 2002 at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry, is continued in this instalment.

already been drafted. This was the beginning of the long process of revising and expanding *Savitri*, which would continue until 1950. But there are also some passages for the concluding section of the poem, where Death is transfigured into a luminous God. Among these passages is a speech of this God to Savitri, a flight of sustained inspiration which, as we can see from a study of Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga*, has an exact relation to his state of consciousness at the time when it was written. Here is a substantial part of this extraordinary passage:

Mirror of Nature's secret spirit made
 Thou shalt not shrink from any brother soul
 But live attracted helplessly to all,
 Drawn to me on the bosom of thy friend
 And forced to love me in thy enemy's eyes.
 Thou shalt drink down my sweetness unalloyed
 And bear my ruthless beauty unabridged
 Amid the world's intolerable wrongs,
 Mid the long discord and the clash of search,
 Thou shalt discover the one and quivering note
 And be the harp of all its melodies
 And be my splendid wave in seas of love.
 Insistent, careless of thy lonely right,
 My creatures shall demand me from thy heart.
 All that thou hast shall be for others' bliss;
 All that thou art shall to my hands belong.
 I will pour delight from thee as from a jar
 And whirl thee as my chariot through the ways
 And use thee as my sword and as my lyre
 And play on thee my minstrelsies of thought.
 And when thou art vibrant with all ecstasies
 And when thou liv'st one spirit with all things,
 Men seeing thee shall feel my siege of joy,
 And nearer draw to me because thou art.
 Enamoured of thy spirit's loveliness,
 They shall embrace my body in thy soul,
 Hear in thy life the beauty of my laugh,
 Know the thrilled bliss with which I made the world.
 This shalt thou henceforth learn from thy heartbeats
 That conquering me thou art my captive made,
 And who possess me are by me possessed.
 For ever love, O beautiful slave of God.¹

This passage was ultimately expanded by twenty lines or so, with a number of

changes in the order and wording of the lines.² But compared with the drastic mutations undergone by many other passages in *Savitri* in the course of Sri Aurobindo's quest for a spiritually revelatory perfection, it came relatively close to its final form at what seems to have been the first writing.

The reason for this must be that what is expressed here is something Sri Aurobindo realised in its full intensity fairly early in his sadhana and, moreover, something that was essential to his original conception of *Savitri*. The *Record of Yoga* supports the first part of this explanation. Sri Aurobindo began *Savitri* during a long gap in the *Record* extending from March 1916 up to January 1917. (In one sense, this is unfortunate for us, because if the *Record* had continued through that period there might have been some mention of the poem Sri Aurobindo was then beginning to write.)³ When the diary resumes on 9 January 1917, we read in the first entry: "Shakti on the basis of dasya is well founded."⁴

Now, *dāśya* is the term used in the *Record of Yoga* for the state described in *Savitri* as being a "slave of God". *Dāśya* is, literally, the condition of being a slave, a *dāśa* (masculine) or *dāśī* (feminine); the latter word, *dāśī*, is used by Sri Aurobindo when he wishes to make the image of the slave explicit. Submission and surrender are English equivalents of *dāśya*, but they occur only occasionally in the *Record*, while *dāśya* occurs hundreds of times.⁵

The "slave of God" passage in *Savitri* is a vivid description of what is called in the *Record of Yoga* "the dasya of the supreme degree which obeys helplessly the direct impulse of the Master".⁶ Paradoxically, this slavery is the key to liberation in action, this defeat and surrender of the ego are the victory of the spirit and this helplessness is the secret of omnipotence.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. *Mother India*, February 1982, pp. 82-83.

2. See *Savitri* (1993), pp. 700-702.

3. Sri Aurobindo never mentions *Savitri* by name in the *Record of Yoga*, although at an earlier period of the *Record* there are explicit references to *Ilion*, his major poetical work before *Savitri*. But *kāvya* (poetry) probably refers in some places to *Savitri*, as when Sri Aurobindo writes on 20 February 1920: "Increasing ideal-power in kavya." (He used the word "ideal", equivalent to *vijñānamaya*, for what comes from the planes he later called "overhead".)

4. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 919.

5. "Submission" is also used as a translation of *nati*, submission to the divine Will as a form of *samatā* (equality). In 1927, in the last period of the *Record*, "surrender" becomes the normal word for *dāśya*.

6. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 194. This is part of a definition of the degrees of *dāśya* found in the *Record* entry of 13 January 1913, ten days before the experiment with ants for the development of *trikāladṛṣṭi* and *tapas* discussed in an earlier instalment. On 16 January, Sri Aurobindo wrote that he was experiencing this supreme degree of *dāśya* as the dominant state of his being, even in "such involuntary motions as the closing or blinking of the eyelids, *nimishannapi* or the direction of the gaze." (*Ibid.*, p. 207)

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

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

6

In these translations Sri Aurobindo all the time has emphasised the original spiritual meaning of the Rik and not in the least either the ritual, historical, geographical or mythical meanings rendered by Indian as well as Western scholars.

One may ask why Sri Aurobindo is so much attracted towards Madhuchchhandas and consistently returned to his very first Rik of Agni particularly—not on either Indra or Vayu or Varuna or any other God. He has tried to explain the Rik in his own simple Bengali at length even for the common people of Bengal who know their native language only.

In one of his articles in *The Hymns of Madhuchchhandas* published in *Archives and Research*²⁰ Sri Aurobindo has clearly stated why he preferred to write on the Hymns of Madhuchchhandas. He says: “I have selected the Madhuchchhanda group because, in my opinion, he troubles himself less than many other Rishis, less for instance than Medhatithi Kanwa who follows him in the received order of the Veda, with the external symbols of sacrifice and ceremony and is more clearly and single-mindedly occupied with moral and spiritual ideas and aspirations. He presents, therefore, a favourable ground for the testing of my theory.”²¹

Except the first Sukta, from the second to the tenth Suktas Madhuchchhandas has prayed to Vayu, Indra-Vayu, Mitra-Varuna, Ashwini Kumaras, Indra, Vishwedeva, Saraswati, Maruta, Indra-Maruta and Indra respectively. Sri Aurobindo has concentrated specially and at length on the Riks of Agni and Saraswati. He has dwelt upon key words अग्नि (1.1.1) विश्वतः परिभूरसि (1.1.4) कविऋतु सत्यः चित्रश्रवसम् (1.1.5) गोपामृतस्य (1.1.8) and adjectives of Saraswati: वाजेभिः वाजिनीवती, पापका, धियावसु (1.3.10) सुपतीनां सुनुताम् (1.3.117).

Sri Aurobindo was deeply impressed by the unique spiritual attributes of Agni and Saraswati experienced by the Rishi and revealed boldly in symbolic language. Boldly because the entire surroundings were full of rituals and Fire and Sacrifice were limited to the concept of the external oblations-offering. Madhuchchhandas has entirely changed the earthly details of rituals into real God-language and Yogi Sri Aurobindo has rightly experienced the true spirit inherent in the Rik. Hence to point out the greatness of Madhuchchhandas it will be befitting to quote some lines from *Savitri*:

A Will, a hope immense now seized his heart,
And to discern the superhuman's form
He raised his eyes to unseen spiritual heights,
Aspiring to bring down a greater world.
The glory he had glimpsed must be his home.²²

7

Sri Aurobindo's findings are:

“Agni is a Devata, one of the most brilliant and powerful of the masters of the intelligent mind.... In man as he is at present developed, the intelligent mind is the most important psychological faculty and it is with a view to the development of the intelligent mind to its highest purity and capacity that the hymns of the Veda are written.”²³

“Agni in the sphere of material energies is the master of *tejas*... fiery light, which is the basis of the *citkoṣa*... Agni.... [is] the agent of the *sahaituka tapas* in the mind. In the language of modern psychology, this *sahaituka tapas* is Will in action,—not desire, but Will embracing desire and exceeding it. It is not even choice, wish or intention. Will, in the Vedic idea, is essentially knowledge taking the form of force. Agni, therefore, is purely mental force, necessary to all concentration. Once we perceive this Vedic conception, we realise the immense importance of Agni and are in a position to understand the hymn we are studying.”²⁴

“The word Agni is formed from the root अग् (ag) with the nominal addition नि (ni). The root अग् (ag) is itself a derivative root from the primitive अ (a), meaning “to be”. The ण् (g) gives an idea of force and अग् (ag), therefore, means to exist in force, pre-eminently—to be splendid, strong, excellent and Agni means mighty, supreme, splendid, forceful, bright”.²⁵

In his aforesaid article *The Hymns of Madhuchchandas* he says:

“...when I read in the next line Agni described as ‘Kavikratuh Satyashitra-sravastamanh’, the strong in wisdom, the true, the rich in various knowledge, I reached the limit of my powers of complaisance. I shake off the yoke of the materialist. The materialistic interpretation sinks under triple blows of these epithets and from my mind at least passes away never to return. Fire, material fire, has nothing to do with wisdom, truth and various knowledge... Agni of whom wisdom, truth and various knowledge are the attributes, cannot be the personification of fire or the god of the material flame but must be and is something greater. The Rishi of the Veda is raising his hymn to a mighty god, moral and intellectual, a god before whom Sages can bow down, not to a savage and materialistic conception. He is not thinking of the burning fire, he is thinking of the helper of man who fortifies his character and purifies his intellect, Vaisvanara, Pavaka, Jata Vedas.”²⁶

Sri Aurobindo experienced the height of Rishi Madhuchchandas Vaiswamitra in attributing the meaning of God-Will and Seer-Will to Agni in 1.1.1 and 1.1.5 and was deeply moved by the non-ritualistic and most philosophical rendering of the Rik. If we look at the Rik in this perspective and study it from the height achieved by the Rishi and the light received by the Yogi Sri Aurobindo we shall at once be one in heart with the true significance of the verse.

Irach J. S. Taraporewala has welcomed the esoteric interpretation of the “Agni Suktas” presented by Sri Aurobindo. He observed that “our ancient Aryan scriptures should be re-interpreted in a truly mystic fashion. Then only their true spiritual work will

be appreciated, mere philological and lexical interpretation give the 'body' of these chants; we need to reveal the 'soul' and that can be done only through the 'mystic' interpretation".²⁷

8

Conclusion

We may conclude the discussion in the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"So the Rig-veda begins with an invocation to Agni, with the adoration of the pure, mighty and brilliant God. 'Agni (he who excels and is mighty),' cries the Seer, 'him I adore'. Why Agni before all the other gods? Because it is he that stands before Yajna, the Divine Master or things; because he is the god whose burning eyes can gaze straight at Truth, at the *satyam*, the *vijñānam*, which is the Seer's own aim and desire and on which all Veda is based; because he is the warrior who was down and removes all the crooked attractions of ignorance and limitation अस्मज्जुहुराणम् एनः (*asmajjuhurāṇam enaḥ*) that stand persistently in the way of the Yogin; because as the vehicle of Tapas, the pure divine superconscious energy which flows from the concealed higher hemisphere of existence, (*avyakta parārdha*), he more than any develops and arranges Ananda, the divine delight. This is the signification of the verse."²⁸

(Concluded)

RAMANLAL PATHAK

References

20. *Archives and Reserch*, Vol. 8 No. 1, April 1984, pp. 3-5.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
22. *Savitri*, p. 76.
23. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 443.
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25. *Ibid.*, p. 447.
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YAJNAVALKYA AND THE MEANS TO IMMORTALITY

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

5. The Indestructible Law of Atman

YAJNAVALKYA'S formula of knowledge is this: first, to know Atman in its pure essence, *āmā* (2-4-5); second, to know the abode of Atman to be in the world, *āmanaḥ* (*Ibid.*); third, to know all this as the manifestation of the eternal essence of Atman, *idaṁ sarvaṁ yad ayam ātmā* (2-4-6). He who knows Atman according to this formula is an all-knower, *sarvavid* (3-7-1), an upholder of the indestructible law of Atman, *anucchitti-dharmā* (4-5-14).

Now Yajnavalkya tries to amplify his formula of knowledge through two examples, one is an example of a lump of salt dissolved in water, *saindhava-khilya* (2-4-12) and another is an example of a mass of salt that has appeared out of sea water, *saindhavaghanaḥ* (4-5-13).

(i) When a lump of salt is thrown into water, it dissolves. As a result, the water becomes saline in taste. There is no particle of water which does not have this saline taste. There is Being that has become huge, *mahad bhūtam*, by assuming infinite forms, *anantam*, and extending endlessly, *apāram*, in space and time. In other words, the world comes into existence when Being (*bhūtam*) has become this immense universe (*mahad bhūtam*). Being is conscious substance and the world that has come out of the Being is a multiplicity of conscious forms (*prajñānaghana*), a multiplicity where all forms without exception are conscious in nature (*prajñānaghana eva*). This is what we are supposed to understand of Being in the analogy of the lump of salt dissolved in water.

(ii) The word *saindhava* means a product of *sindhu* (sea). The mass *saindhavaghana* is made up of salt particles and all the particles taste saline without exception, *kṛtsanaḥ rasaghanaḥ*, whether they are taken from inside or outside. In the same way the Atman which is a mass of infinite forms (*anantam*) and extended in boundless space and time (*apāram*) has appeared out of the original Atman beyond space and time. The distinctions of inside and outside cannot be found in the mass of forms, because the mass is entirely conscious in nature, *kṛtanaḥ prajñānaghana eva*. In other words, the world which is a manifestation of Atman is composed only of conscious forms.

Thus both 2-4-12 and 4-5-13 speak of the world coming from and abiding in Atman. Though the forms are conscious like Atman, they put on the appearance of inconscience which is an accidental outcome of manifestation, as in the case of a bronze statue which, in the process of creation, comes to have many accidental features, but is free of them at the end of creation. It is referred to as a condition overtaken by death, *mṛtyunābhipannam* (3-1-3). The inconscience is removed in two successive stages, first by awakening the individual soul to Atman abiding in eternal oneness and then to the same Atman extended in the multiplicity of forms. When the soul is released from ego and united with the One, it destroys its ego-connections with form, *tany anuvinaśyati*, and comes forth as an entity

separated from similar connections with all beings that are the becomings of Atman, *etebhye bhūtebhyaḥ samutthāya* (2-4-12 / 4-5-13). As a result, he sees Atman in pure essence but not in cosmic extension. He sees the world elsewhere than in Atman. He cannot extend his love of Atman to all—wife, sons, material possessions and the rest. Therefore Yajnavalkya says that he has arrived at a knowledge of Atman but not a knowledge which is complete, *na pretya samjñāsti*. (*Ibid.*)

Now Maitreyi says that she is confused by the words *na pretya samjñāsti*. Her difficulty arises from her dualism. According to her theory, except Atman all else is Anatman; therefore when Atman is known, the knowledge cannot but be complete, *samjñā*. Hence Yajnavalkya draws her attention pointedly to the indestructible law of Atman, *anucchitti dharmā* (4-5-14), the law by which Atman is not only in eternal essence but also in manifestation of the essence, not only in the timeless One but also in the Many extended in time. He knew already that she might commit mistakes of this type. Hence his instruction was that she should give concentrated attention to his words, *nididhyāsva* (2-4-4). But, it seems, she disregarded his instruction. For her mind was surely clouded by her dualism.

6. Atmavidya and Madhuvidya

By seeing the world elsewhere than in Atman the knower of Atman finds the world to be Anatman, a world characterised by the sense of otherness, *anyatva*. It is a world where all are others and all dealings are other-to-other dealings: other (*itaraḥ*) sees other (*itaram*); other smells other; other tastes other; other speaks to other; other hears other; other thinks of other; other touches other; other knows other (4-5-15). In other words, it is a world where every one is alienated from Atman. This, according to Yajnavalkya, is illustrative of a duality which is false, *dvaitam iva*. (*Ibid.*)

It is wrong to jump to the conclusion that Yajnavalkya dismisses all duality as false (*mithyā*). Where everyone is other like everyone else the relation is one of false duality. This is because the world is seen elsewhere than in Atman. If, on the contrary, the world is seen as originating from and abiding in Atman, then the world will be characterised by another type of duality in which the sense of otherness is entirely absent. As distinguished from the other type, this will be a duality of the real type. There cannot be a world which does not abide in Atman and which is devoid of all duality. Even as the world must abide in Atman, duality there must be in the world, but a duality of the real type.

Traditionalists speak of three types of dualities—*vijātīya bheda*, *sajātīya bheda* and *svagata bheda*. But we have to note that there is a fourth type too, a type recognised long ago by the great Yajnavalkya. We may ask: how can there be a duality without the sense of otherness? We may even dismiss such a conception as totally impossible. This is because we are bound by the traditional classification of dualities and believe that no other conception is possible.

Take any of the three types mentioned by the traditionalists. First, *vijātīyabheda*. It is a duality between two distinct classes, as between a stone and a man. Second, *sajātīyabheda*. It is a duality between two distinct individuals, as between a man and

another man. Third, *svagatabheda*. It is a duality between two distinct parts in an individual, as between ears and eyes in a man. In all of them the relation is one of otherness. But according to Yajnavalkya, there is another type of duality not conditioned by the relation of otherness. We may ask whether such a duality is ever possible. Yajnavalkya invites our attention to a mass of salt, *saindhava ghana* (4-5-13). It is a mass consisting of salt particles. While the particles differ from one another as particles having their own independent forms, they simultaneously exceed themselves and abide in the essential oneness of saline taste. This illustrates a unique type of duality characterised by oneness. In order to distinguish it from the traditional types it may be called *atigatabheda*. The salt example is intended to tell us that the world abiding in Atman has dualities, but all the dualities are rooted in the oneness of Atman. Yajnavalkya is a non-dualist because his non-dualism excludes the dualities of the false type conditioned by otherness. He recognises the dualities pervaded by the sense of oneness, but this dualism is not final, for it is dependent on the ultimate oneness of Atman. In this sense also he is a non-dualist. He is a non-dualist in yet another but a more fundamental sense, because he believes only in the reality of Atman besides which nothing else exists.

We know that the indestructible law of Atman is binding upon all who seek Atman. Therefore a seeker cannot stop with knowing Atman in its essential oneness. He must also know Atman in manifestation of its essence. Instead of seeing the world elsewhere than in Atman he must practise *śravaṇa* etc. and see the world as originating from and abiding in Atman. When he succeeds in doing so, he realises that all is verily the becoming of Atman, *sarvam ātmaivābhūt* (2-4-14 / 4-5-15). All sense of otherness disappears from the world and oneness alone is seen everywhere. He finds that all dealings of the world are dealings based on the sense of oneness: Atman sees Atman; Atman smells Atman; Atman tastes Atman; Atman speaks to Atman; Atman hears Atman; Atman knows Atman. His love of Atman is extended to all; he loves all for the sake of Atman. One may see or smell, but it is an occasion for Atman to exchange love for love of Atman. If love becomes the law of living in the world, it will be a life of sweetness and delight, *madhu*. Mortal life with its fear, hatred and hostility disappears; it gives place to immortal life, *amṛtatvam*, characterised by fearlessness, sympathy and helpfulness. Now *ātmavidyā* fulfils itself in *madhuvidyā*. This is the theme of the Madhu Brahmana (2-5).

A seeker of Atman must seek Atman completely. He must love Atman and love all too for the sake of Atman. If there is anything to be renounced, it is ego and its delusions and not the world. A knower of Atman is happily related to all—wife, sons, material possessions and what not. This is the teaching of ancient Vedanta, a teaching of which Yajnavalkya is a monumental example. This is the philosophy of Atman he taught to Maitreyi.

(Concluded)

N. JAYASHANMUGAM

SAVITRI'S YOGA

Then Savitri surged out of her body's wall
And stood a little span outside herself
And looked into her subtle being's depths
And in its heart as in a lotus-bud
Divined her secret and mysterious soul.¹

In the background of the inner truth which Sri Aurobindo found on a very high plane of yogic Consciousness, that our being is constituted of body, life, mind, soul at the centre—the former being the instruments of the soul, the eternal portion of the Divine—we are required to have a yogic vision accordingly to view Savitri—Savitri who “surged out of her body's wall”, Savitri who “stood a little span outside herself”, Savitri who “looked into her subtle being's depths”, Savitri who saw “her secret and mysterious soul”. In the yogic perspective it appears that something “transcendent” to her instrumental selves surges out of her body's wall.

As the “transcendent” surges out of “her body's wall” to find out the “secret and mysterious soul”, we are led to view it as a projection of the Soul, a projection which Sri Aurobindo calls ‘Psychic Being’. It is the Psychic Being which is alone capable of finding out the Soul having looked into the subtle being's depths and “in its heart as in a lotus-bud”. It is alone capable of knocking and pressing “against the ebony gate,”² and of making the “opponent Powers”³ withdraw “their dreadful guard”.⁴ Such a being

...entered into the inner worlds.⁵

The “transcendent” comes to be all the more visible as Psychic Being, as Sri Aurobindo shows:

She forced her way through body to the soul.⁶

Since Savitri says that her “strength is taken from her and given to Death”,⁷ her Psychic Being needs to join the Soul, the Jivatman, of which it is a projection, to come out of the finiteness of the spiritual mind consciousness. The consciousness and power of Jivatman, the Soul will enable her to transcend the limit of Time and Death, whom she has to vanquish.

Savitri's Yoga thus comes to be the Yoga of the Psychic Being to be one with the Jivatman, its divine source as a result of which “A camp of God is pitched in human time”.⁸ The Adorer and the Adored comes to be One. Radha and Krishna come to be One Transcendent Being. A new Consciousness, a new order of Existence takes over the reign of the terrestrial existence. Evolution no more proceeds from Ignorance to Knowledge. It proceeds from Knowledge to higher Knowledge. The Psychic Being is no longer under the subjection of Ignorance or the Divisive Principle of Consciousness, the Consciousness

which has hitherto remained the highest order of terrestrial existence.

NIKHIL KUMAR

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1. *Savitri*, pp. 488-89.
 2. *Ibid.*, p. 489.
 3. *Ibid.*
 4. *Ibid.*
 5. *Ibid.*
 6. *Ibid.*
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 474.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 531.
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FORGET ME NOT

THERE blossoms a beautiful tiny flower
In our green meadow,
Its eye is like the sky
So serene and blue.

It does not know much to say
And all that it speaks is always
The same: FORGET ME NOT.

HOFFMAN VON FALLERSELEBEN

(Translated from the German by Subir Kanta Gupta.)

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

Prospects of an Indian Science

“I’m not interested in proofs but only in what nature does!” This is what the famous British mathematical physicist Dirac once told a student of his. It is an insightful acuity and shows that to do good science one needs that rare quality called the “mysterious sixth sense”. Without it no worthwhile contribution can be made to knowledge of the physical world. Perhaps we Indians do possess that in ample measure, but something else is lacking which puts us off. A disciplined and organized life with the firm commitment to pursue things of one’s liking is equally important. Which also assumes that there has to be a sufficient professional basis developed to tackle important problems of research.

What is that sixth sense and what is its joy? An anecdote about Einstein will illustrate well what is really implied in this occupation to which one should commit. “On a visit to Princeton University, a young student came across the familiar figure of none other than Albert Einstein. She was baffled to see the great scientist staring at a fountain and tilting his head this way and that way, striking curious postures, and sometimes moving his hands rapidly up and down. But when Einstein saw her puzzled look, he asked her, ‘Can you do it? Can you stop the stream enough to see individual droplets of water?’ Then he showed her how to move her hands to synchronise them with the flow and create a strobe effect that freezes the droplets. As he left the fountain, he remarked, ‘Never forget that science is just *this* kind of exploring and fun!’ ” We lack that fun.

The qualities which are present in these great people were also richly present not only in the ancient Indian teachers but also among the students. Takshashila was a famous school that existed long before the beginning of the Christian era and practically all the branches of learning were taught there. The famous physician Jivaka belonging to the 5th c B.C. acquired knowledge of medicine from a very experienced teacher. After completing the seven-year tenure Jivaka was competent enough to do medical practice on his own. But the teacher gave him an assignment. He was to find if there were any herbs within the radius of 7 km around the campus which did not have any medical use. Jivaka failed to get even one and the teacher passed him. He had fully qualified to step into life.

Not only in such ancient times but in recent days also we witness that full spirit of adventurous play. It is perhaps that which makes us authentic Indians. A tale about the indomitable character of an ordinary woman is quite illustrative of this splendid sense of life with an openness of society not to be found even in the western countries. “There is folklore about a lady, Peechi, who lived some five generations ago, during the time when women also did honey hunting and climbed down steep cliffs. One such cliff with many colonies was a challenge by the menfolk to Peechi—to climb down a rope and harvest

the colonies. She took up the challenge and successfully harvested the colonies.” (*Honey-hunters and Beekeepers of Tamil Nadu*, Keystone Foundation) A Spaniard would have hailed her in excitement as “Brava!” But something seems to be amiss in us today.

If we want to get a rather disconsolate picture of the present Indian conditions and Indian character, here are a few illustrations. “Today there is a total lack of integrity in public life. Accountability and honesty have been banished. The situation reminds one of the Greek philosopher Diogenes who went about with a lamp in broad daylight looking for an honest man... In the 1950s atomic power was regarded as the ultimate solution to India’s energy problems. This proved hollow. Other organisations have little to show for years of ‘effort’... If atomic energy has performed poorly, then the story is little different in the area of renewable energy... one of our senior officials went and signed an agreement on solar technology with an American company called Hemlock. And for long years, two groups of scientists were fighting over the applications ability or otherwise of indigenous technology... We are given to boasting that our country has one of the largest reservoirs of scientific talent in the world. That is an absurdity: hundreds of thousands of ordinary science graduates do not constitute a gene pool of brilliant scientists. Most of them are anyway unemployed or unemployable and ultimately turn to crime or non-science jobs in sheer desperation... Our centres of higher education have degenerated into the personal fiefdom of incompetent mediocrities who are only interested in protecting their own interests... India’s scientific establishment is still groping in the dark for national goals which remain imprecise... In Bihar universities have become so impossible to run that some were taken away from academics and handed over to IAS officers. The IAS officers failed in their mission and retired officers from police and the military were given the responsibility. They too have failed... Our subsystems are suffering from metal fatigue. If you fix it in one place, you cannot prevent the fissure from spreading to another... We are not merely at the edge of a historical precipice, but are tottering dangerously, with one foot over the brink... The time for action is now. It is this agenda for action, this activist search for possible cures that we need to address. (*The Degeneration of India*, T. N. Seshan with Sanjoy Hazarika, 1995)

Contrast this gloomy picture with what Will Durant has to say about India. “India was the motherland of our race and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages. India was the mother of our philosophy, of much of our mathematics, of the ideals embodied in Christianity... of self-government and democracy. In many ways, Mother India is the mother of us all.” But, then, why is it that we do not recognize the preciousness of India and her vigorous traditions and her rich and fulfilling culture? Why is it that we do not live in the soul of true India? We appreciate great works of art kept in a museum, and is it that India has now become such a piece of admired antique? But when you remove a statue from the cathedral and keep it in a museum it almost seems half dead. Its real beauty and its breathing life are intimately tied up with the setting in which it exists and not among other pieces of art howsoever beautiful they be. Harmony of association and almost spiritual companionship with the surroundings are essential in the warmth of relationship. In such an inviting and associative atmosphere contemplation and aesthetic

enjoyment become inseparable. Elgin Marbles have a different life in Greece than in the British Museum. How do we pull out India from the western art-house and put her on the temple tower reaching the blue of the sky or on the green and luxurious lands of cheerful moods or on calm summits of thought leaping into intuition or make her run on the playfields of happiness? India has to live in the Indian context and not in the minds of her admirers or sly votaries of *swadeshi*. How can India be a living India? This is necessary for the true progress in the values of the spirit and in the expression of the truth of her individuality. There have been external influences throughout the country's history but always these were assimilated and made a part of her own personality, allowing newer idea-forces to enter into a meaningful and sensitive engagement. That has to happen again.

In order to realize this we should get back to the robust sense of our culture on which the entire social structure was founded. It is sad that during the last thousand years or so the soul of India was sunken in the darkness and the creative urges were more or less asleep. This was further accentuated by the world-shunning spirituality which sucked the life-blood of its people. But prior to that was an order full of healthy beans and countless activities flourished the like of which were hardly there on this majestic scale elsewhere in the world. Literature, fine arts, sciences, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, crafts, technologies, agriculture, commerce, business, in fact in every walk of secular life also there was present the creative spirit. We may have a cursory glance at these achievements to just get an idea at the range of activities that existed in ancient India. It will be then our task to recover the principles on which life was established, life which could give rise to such tremendous creativity.

In India mathematics had its roots in the Vedic literature. This should also mean that the methods of investigation were Vedic. Not ratiocinative but esoteric-intuitive association with the truths behind things brought to our world the dimensional riches of the invisible. If behind the language we speak there is the goddess Vak standing to give concreteness to expression, so also is there the goddess of Sankhya who renders definiteness to ideas and forces which are also the manifestations of superior deities. When these divinities enter the secular fields we have their corresponding Shastras or Sciences. The great discovery of numbers or the amazing concept of Zero should not therefore come to us as a surprise. The seers who were not just the thinkers of the past moved at ease in the company of those gods and goddesses and obtained their gifts for us. Those ancients saw, as an exceptional vision, the presence of occult beings behind all that we have here. Even in our own days the carved beings on the Gopurams of the South Indian Temples are not just neutral images but are living figures. Ramanujan, or the man who knew infinity, who lived only yesterday was bestowed with luminous familiarity with numbers by Namagiri the Goddess of Namakkal. The very old discovery of Zero belongs to that magical order.

If we have to seek an ancient Greek parallel perhaps it could well be found in Pythagoras. He had such intimate friendship with the numbers that we might think them visiting him as beings in mystical experiences. No wonder, it would be foul if not

blasphemous on our part to talk to him about irrational numbers. A superior relationship of these numbers was for him the basis of the music of the spheres which he must have heard in the deep hush of his spirit. Possibly in it is the movement of heavenly objects in the rhythms that set things into motion, the metres in which the worlds roll. And yet we have irrational numbers. Could these be a facet of transmission of the whole numbers from their plenary status through intermediate levels of mind down to our physical world? This is an aspect which must be explored before the early ideas are dismissed as incomprehensible scrap.

But coming back to the Indian Zero. Apart from being a numeral it is also a concept and a fundamental one at that. If we have to see it from a rational point of view its connotation of nullity is a remarkable abstraction and we are amazed that it was present with such power of acumen amongst those early thinkers. It is indicated by a dot and is termed *pujyam*. The alternative term for Zero is *shunyam*, meaning a blank which is also loaded with deep metaphysical suggestions. As *pujyam*, conveying the sense of reverence and respect, it is expressed as *shubhra* or white. In the course of long history it travelled from India to the Arab countries and through them to Europe. It is here that *shubhra* became the Arabic *siphra* or *sifr* which further down in time became *cipher* or *cypher*. It also stands for the Greek coin of the lowest denomination, obol, of almost no value. But that was valuable enough for the dead man to pay his fare to Charon the ferryman for crossing the River Styx. He showed great spirit in earning every obol.

If we have to applaud the mathematical achievements of the ancient Indians during the historical period we may remember the fervent words of the Australian Indologist A. L. Basham: "... the world owes most to India in the realm of mathematics, which was developed in the Gupta period to a stage more advanced than that reached by any other nation of antiquity. The success of Indian mathematics was mainly due to the fact that Indians had a clear conception of the abstract number as distinct from the numerical quantity of objects or spatial extension." (*The Wonder that was India*)

Here is one example of their mathematical precision. In a Yuga the number of rotations of the earth are 1582237500; this makes the sidereal period $1577917500/1582237500 = 23\text{h } 56\text{m } 4.1\text{s}$ corresponding to the modern value of 23h 56m 4.091s. A most remarkable accuracy! This is not just a stray calculation but there are any number of such instances.

Let us now have a hurried look at the ancient Indian atomic theories. These were mostly metaphysical in character but had foundation on spiritual experiences belonging to the Sankhya system. We have its descriptions available in the scriptural literature such as the Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita, the Puranas and also the epic Mahabharata. In the Puranas we hear the name of Kapila as the originator of this system of knowledge. But the first to have formulated ideas about the atom was Kanada who lived in the 6th c B.C. The Sankhya postulates as presented by Sri Aurobindo are as follows: "The elementary state of material Force is, in the view of the old Indian physicists, a condition of pure material extension in Space of which the peculiar property is vibration typified to us by the phenomenon of sound. But vibration in this state of ether is not sufficient to create

forms. There must first be some obstruction in the flow of the Force ocean, some contraction and expansion, some interplay of vibrations, some impinging of force upon force so as to create a beginning of fixed relations and mutual effects. Material Force modifying its first ethereal status assumes a second, called in the old language the aerial, of which the special property is contact between force and force, contact that is the basis of all material relations. Still we have not as yet real forms but only varying forces. A sustaining principle is needed. This is provided by a third self-modification of the primitive Force of which the principle of light, electricity, fire and heat is for us the characteristic manifestation. Even then, we can have forms of force preserving their own character and peculiar action, but not stable forms of Matter. A fourth state characterised by diffusion and a first medium of permanent attractions and repulsions, termed picturesquely water or the liquid state, and a fifth of cohesion, termed earth or the solid state, complete the necessary elements.” (*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 18, p. 80) Varying combinations of these five elements give rise to all material things, gross as well as subtle.

Kashyapa later known as Kanada—from *kana*, meaning a tiny grain or particle—was the first to propound the idea of atom, called *paramānu*. It is not only indivisible but also indestructible. The material universe is built on these *kanas*. But there are different types of *paramānus* arising from different minglings of the five elemental states of Matter, viz. ether, air, fire, water and earth as described by the Sankhya system.

If we have to weigh these ideas in terms of the present-day notions of science, we must admit that they belong to the domain of speculative philosophy and not to empirical rationalism. At times in our enthusiasm for establishing the contents of modern science in Indian explorations we perhaps get too far from either. Certainly, there could be an element of truth in both but the hiatus remains unbridged. It is to be understood that we need not ridicule one or the other. Instead, the question one has to pertinently answer is how to combine the intuition behind metaphysical formulations and observational methods and go to the higher synthesizing basis of knowledge. Here is one such zealous analysis: “There is a tendency in Indian logic to give a religious or philosophical base to all statements. But if we give a material rather than philosophical interpretation the ancient writings appear like a book of physics. Take an example, *Tarkasamgraha* of the 17th century treatise of Annambhatta. If we translate the words *dravya*, *guṇa*, *karma* into matter, property and dynamics instead of substance, quality and activity the book sounds like any book of physics. In the same way, *utkshepana* and *avakshepana* can be directed motion, and *gamanāni* a random motion which comes in Kinetic Theory. This is not to say that Annambhatta knew all about Kinetic Theory. He might or might not have known of it, but these are types of motions which are defined and we can get a proper modern version of them.” (*Sanskrit and Science*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1984)

About a thousand years ago Nagarjuna lived near the famous shrine of Somnath. He was a chemist and had acquired such a high reputation that it was believed that he was in communion with supernatural powers. His treatise *Rasaratnākara* dealing with chemical reactions is in the form of a dialogue between him and the gods. “In his attempt to prepare the ‘elixir of life’ from mercury, Nagarjuna made use of animal and vegetable

products, apart from minerals and alkalis. For the dissolution of diamonds, metals and pearls, he suggested the use of vegetable acids like sour gruel and juices of fruits and bark. In his treatise, he has also listed the apparatus that was used by earlier alchemists. The process of distillation, liquefaction, sublimation and roasting were also mentioned.”

Coming to technological aspects we have here a few examples. “The original Damascus steel—the world’s first high-carbon steel—was a product of India known as wootz. Wootz is the English word for *ukku* in Kannada and Telugu, meaning steel. Indian steel was used for making swords and armour in Persia and Arabia in ancient times (5th c B.C.). Wootz was produced by carburising chips of wrought iron in a closed crucible process. Carbon 1.2-1.8%... The rustless wonder called the iron pillar near Qutub Minar is a marvel of technology. High phosphorus, low sulphur, low manganese and high slag contents contribute to the good corrosion resistance of the pillar. The pillar was fabricated by forging and hammer welding lumps, weighing 20-30 kg of hot pasty iron in a step-by-step process. It is assumed that 120 labourers took a fortnight to complete the work... Agnichayana or Atiratra is performed on a bird-shaped altar of 10, 800 bricks. The altar is a geometrician’s delight. Details are given in *Sulbha Sutras* 800-500 B.C. The mathematical knowledge comes from the creation of altars and bricks in various shapes... The Pythagorean theorem (6th c B.C.) was already known to Baudhayana. The tackling of mathematical and geometrical problems with rational numbers and irrational numbers was a unique achievement of the early Indians... 4th c A.D. Bakshali Manuscript deals with fractions, square-roots, progressions, income and expenditure, profit and loss, computation of gold, interest, rule of three and summation of complex series... Astronomical work of Aryabhatta (b. 476 A.D.) is a significant landmark event. The development of Siddhantic astronomy came as a result of interaction with Greece in the post-Alexandran period (3rd c B.C.). *Vedānga Jyotisha* does not mention week days or zodiacal signs but in the Siddhantic texts these are in-built... The main occupation of Indian astronomers for the next thousand years was the calculation of planetary orbits... *Sushruta Samhitā* (350 A.D.) is the oldest known work that describes plastic surgery of the nose, ear and lip. Translated into Arabic by Manka during the reign of Harun-al-Rashid (786-809 A.D.) it mentions 8 branches of medical knowledge as surgery and 121 surgical instruments. There was also the therapeutic school of medicine in India... Chinese sources place Charak at the court of the first Scythian king Kanishka. *Charak Samhitā* contains a vast accumulation of medical knowledge... Kautilya’s *Arthashāstra* refers to Vrikshayurveda or botanical science. Harappan cities (2000-1500 B.C.) were laid out according to well-established precepts of town planning. Instruments for land survey and alignments must have been developed... The principal contribution of the Ashokan School was the stupas. Gravity pillar just standing on the level ground is a wonder of science and technology... The rudiments of construction are available in Puranas, Shastras, Samhitas. *Brihad Samhitā* of Varahmihira is an early text of *Vāstushāstra*... The Southern style of temple architect became quite distinct with the Pallava School (7th c A.D.)” Coinage dating from the 8th c B.C. to the 17th c A.D. provides numismatic evidence of the progress made by smelting technology in ancient India. We thus see that great advances in

production technology, architecture and shipbuilding were made here long before these were available elsewhere in the world. This went along with the development of highly abstract systems of thought.

In the background of such diverse activities in so many fields of science and technology one wonders if one can unhesitatingly agree with A. L. Basham's following statement. "Ancient Indian theories lacked an empirical base, but they were brilliant imaginative explanations of the physical structure of the world, and in a large measure, agreed with the discoveries of modern physics." Perhaps the statement has to be read in several contexts. If we are to apply Baconian-Cartesian ideas of science to these researches there is considerable merit in what he says. But we should also appreciate that apart from analytical-inductive-deductive methods there could as well be other approaches.

However, we must sensibly and conscientiously recognize that we have to go beyond all these processes of mentalisation and be in tune with the very methods of Nature herself. Might be she created these marvels with her own distant objectives in view, objectives in relationship with the possibilities that are present in the material cosmos. Here something more than the Grecian Man has to enter in, but not in the sense of uprooting him to bring hasty gods in our midst. The dignity of Man must be maintained, must grow, that he becomes capable of receiving the gifts of God and Nature waiting for him. Narrow theological considerations are therefore immediately out, but not their aspects of human aspiration with their cosmic harmony and perfection which give truer completion to all our attempts at realizations of the noble and the happy. André Malraus speaks of Man devaluated in an attempt to uplift God. "As much genius was needed to obliterate Man at Byzantine as had been needed to discover him on the Acropolis." (*Man and God*) Why should these stand in antagonism against each other? Is it not a sure signal telling us that we are missing something in our day's occupation? Perhaps the creaking sounds that we hear in the machinery of modern life are clear indications urging us to discover greater and truer concord that is the real basis of a worthwhile and progressive existence. We have gone through several human cycles and experienced more than a few conflicts. It seems these were inevitable in the very nature of things. Was there a distinct possibility that Acropolis had come to a stage that it would not go any farther and therefore another order had to appear? Could it be that Byzantine served its purpose in kindling the soul of humanity to the truth of love and gentleness and benevolence and walked away from history? If we read these signs with a certain degree of alertness it would appear that the complex techno-civilisation we have created in these decades of ours is on the verge of playing itself out, making room for something greatly valuable. Perhaps here India with her spiritual sensitivity can do a bit to change the course of events.

But India has to meet the threefold problem of identity. The Vedic cycle of rich life based on surer intuition brought glories in the marvels of the spirit. Then came the long age of metaphysical-dialectical cerebrations though still carrying in them the elements of pretty genuine perceptions. The decline in sovereignty of the inner life in the present time has drawn the lure of blundering materialism with its unhealthy consequences. The good of science and technology is a must for the commerce of the life-forces in relationship

with each other and it should not be shunned; the good of speculative philosophies has a measure of functionality that can make thought keener and swifter; the good of literature and arts ought to be there to tune up our higher sensibilities to the nuances of rainbow-hued emotions; the good of the warrior strength and heroism is there to conquer the dark regions present in the abysses of existence. The good of the expressive spirit has to come forward to mould its instruments for another dimension of working in the brightness of the joys of Nature and Soul and God. All this can happen if India awakes to her destiny.

There have been external influences that also brought newer opportunities. Crediting these as the gain and absolving ourselves of the debt accrued due to degeneracy that through declining ages grew in and around us, the expectation is that we shall first find our own soul and live in it, in the dharma of the nation. In this context let us remember what Sri Aurobindo wrote long ago: “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... in her own way, through solutions arising out of her own being and from her own deepest and largest knowledge.” (*The Renaissance in India*, CWSA, Vol. 20, p. 43)

The first condition for all this to happen is to get rid of the Seshanian cynicism and live in the broad daylight of optimism with faith in the capacity of our traditions, in the strength that comes from nobility of character, in the perseverance of values that uphold even the sun and the stars. We have to look at the prospects of an Indian in this spirit of creativity. We have to ask basic questions, worthwhile questions and not titillating or just utilitarian questions. We have to ask questions that come from deeper perceptions. In the physical sciences, for instance, we ought to discover the causes which compel Life to live in subjugation to Death. If we do that perhaps we might get answers to remove those causes. We do not know why at every stage of aggregation or disaggregation of matter newer properties appear. Presently we have descriptions but not knowledge. Thus water is not the sum of hydrogen and oxygen. It is another substance. How does that happen? The answer to the why of it is not available. Here is a wonderful revelation from the Mother: “...in the mineral kingdom there are phenomena which reveal a hidden consciousness, like certain crystals... If you see with what precision, what exactitude and harmony they are formed, if you are in the least open, you are bound to feel that behind there’s a consciousness at work, that this cannot be the result of unconscious chance.” (*Questions and Answers 1957-58*, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 323) Similarly, if Matter, Life, and Mind are fundamentally independent entities then, plausibly, indisputably, they will constitute irreducible dimensions and one cannot be expressed in terms of the other. In that case how would Life arise out of or enter into Matter? And so on. But if Life is to be viewed as a product of Matter, how does it acquire characteristics which are not there in the material state? In case this is true it may sound rather paradoxical, if not pretty audacious. We do not yet know how the combination of hydrogen and oxygen gives rise to an altogether different substance with altogether different properties. It will be then

strange to think of Matter giving rise to Life by some mysterious process. Matter occasioning Life is one thing and producing it is another. It would be a creation out of vacuum, *ex nihilo*, as if the vacuum were seething with an intense activity. The mystery gets further confounded as we go up on the ladder to higher propositions. But are not Matter and Life and Mind interminable? To the practising researcher such questions may appear to be intractable, they may even be called inanities; but then that cannot be the reason not to take them up before writing a condemnation about their absurdity or irrationality. On the contrary, perhaps such could precisely be the reason to set ourselves in the celebrated neo-Aryan spirit of inquiry to formulate and tackle them satisfactorily. Indeed, if such meaningful researches are to be pursued we may have to invent altogether novel techniques of approach. Not only idea-tools but also much subtler physical apparatuses and probes for investigation. Then we may be able to say that there is Indian science. Until then we are just keeping ourselves busy—one doesn't know with what. If the quality of a culture depends upon the kind of questions it asks, then we should ask questions worthy of that culture. Only when the questions are raised there is a possibility of getting their answers.

Before we scrutinise these issues or aspects of our discipline in further detail, let us first look into the general historical perspectives of science. In the course of its development through long and weary centuries we have now arrived at a stage when the analytical method has to be re-appraised in careful measure and the synthetic approach discovered. The age of supra-rational logic has to set off and in its unfolding bring to our vision brighter and broader prospects of the truth-existent.*

(Concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

* This instalment closes the long series under the caption *Can there be an Indian Science?* forming Part I of our survey of the present-day developments in the field of science and technology with their socio-commercial implications. Part II will deal with *Some Historical Perspectives of Science*. In the concluding Part III we shall take up a detailed study of the subject under the title *Foundations of Indian Science*.

TWO POEMS

(1)

In sunshine bathing green earth smiled
At wind caressing trembling locks
Of leaves and swaying branches blue-
Green brooks cascading drops of honey
Dew on upturned laughing flower
Faces close embrace of form
On form in silent anguish for
The pain of throbbing notes on memories'
Ears but only blue deep silence hears
The song of formless gentle joy
Of love from heart to answering heart
And silent prayer of soul and soul.

(2)

Rain gives of its own
Without hesitation
 expectation
of return.

We own what we give
Hesitating
 expecting
return
And never learn
 to love.

MARY HELEN

THE MIND OF CELLS' CENTRE

THIS paper is a further development of *Sri Aurobindo's system of understanding*, published a few months ago.* In it we traced the binary terms (such as physical mental and mental physical, vital-mental and mental vital, etc.) that appear in Sri Aurobindo's texts. The key idea of the system's reconstruction is that human aura (which Sri Aurobindo calls in terms of 'environmental consciousness') includes only those sheaths, that correspond to the seized stages of evolution. The sheaths are three (gross and subtle physical sheath, vital sheath, and mental sheath). They intersect three planes of universal consciousness, projecting on the physical body (planes of universal physical, vital and mental consciousness).¹ As a result of crossing, the combinations of qualities of consciousness are formed. Sri Aurobindo designates them in the frameworks of the binary terms. These qualities we called 'aspects of consciousness' and presented in the form of a table of aspects. It allowed us to establish synonymy of many terms used by Sri Aurobindo for the description of yogic experiences.

The Table of Aspects of Consciousness

From our point of view, the table of aspects of consciousness makes clear a lot—but not all. For example, proceeding from the table, it is not completely obvious which aspects Sri Aurobindo calls as higher and lower vital. From the arrangement of aspects of consciousness in the table we can assume that lower vital is rather vital aspect of physical consciousness (I.2. vital physical), than physical aspect of vital consciousness (II.1. physical vital). Therefore there should be one more system of understanding, a complementary one, which would clear up this question. And such a system really exists: Sri Aurobindo's aspects of consciousness correlates with chakras and thus he localized them accordingly, having built up a vertical structure. It is this model that would help us to define what aspects of consciousness are called higher and lower, particularly to locate the mind of cells centre.

1. Muladhara

It is the first, lowest chakra. Sri Aurobindo calls it the centre of the physical proper (material) consciousness.² It means that it supports physical consciousness and material

* *Mother India*, April-May 2002.

body.³ But it governs not only physical consciousness, but also subconscious.⁴ While subconscious in itself, as writes Sri Aurobindo, is too vague to have its own centre.⁵

Muladhara is also the sex-centre.⁶ Sri Aurobindo makes its precise localization: the apex of Muladhara is at the end of the spine and projects forward from there, controlling activity of genitals (“the organ”).⁷

2. Svadhithana

Svadhithana is below the navel, it governs the lower vital,⁸ manifesting in small vital desires and lusts—e.g. greeds (food desire), sexual desire, small likings, dislikings, vanity, quarrels, love of praise and anger at blame.⁹ It should be noted that the functional characteristics of Svadhithana practically coincide with the characteristics of physical aspect of the vital consciousness: “The physical-vital is the being of small desires and greeds...”¹⁰

3. Manipura (Nabhipadma)

Manipura is the centre above the navel.¹¹ It governs central vital¹² and more large-scale (“stronger”, “larger”) desires and passions—e.g. ambition, pride, fear, love of fame, attractions and repulsions.¹³

4. Anahata (Hritpadma)

Anahata governs the higher vital¹⁴ (mental-vital¹⁵, vital mind¹⁶, or thinking desire mind,¹⁷ emotional being¹⁸). It carries out two functions: 1) it “gives a mental expression by thought, speech or otherwise to the emotions, desires, passions, sensations and other movements of the vital being”; 2) it is the seat of such feelings as love, joy, sorrow, hatred.¹⁹ The heart centre projects from the subtle body on the middle of the chest.²⁰

Anahata is connected with the psychic centre, or soul-centre²¹. Sri Aurobindo emphasizes that this centre is behind all centres.²² The pressure of the psychic centre is being perceived by a sensation “near the middle of the back”.²³ If we take into account that the centre of psychic being is behind (at a level) the heart centre²⁴, its projection on a physical body appears to be in the area of blade-bones—between (or almost between) them.

5. Visuddha

It is the objectification and adaptation centre of mental impulses to the various conditions of the external physical world.²⁵ It controls activity of the physical²⁶ (or expressive and externalising)²⁷ mind.

The physical mind is co-related with the throat, mouth²⁸ and ears.²⁹ Its centre is in a subtle body at a level of the throat.³⁰

6. Ajna

While the throat and mouth are co-related with the physical mind, the nose and the forehead—with vital (dynamic) part of mental,³¹ or dynamic mind, which is governed

by the forehead centre.³² The concentration on this centre release the inner mind, inner (occult) vision, inner (yogic) consciousness and its powers.³³ By awakening of inner vision ability, it is possible, in particular, to see blue or aquamarine light of the higher planes of mind penetrating all the space.³⁴

7. Sahasradala (Brahmarandhra)

In a certain sense Sahasradala is to be considered as an analogue of Muladhara. Muladhara governs activity of physical consciousness proper, but not only it. The activity of subconsciousness (ergo all is subplanes: subconscious mind, subconscient vital, subconscient physical) is carried out through it. Sahasradala governs activity of the mental proper (thinking mind),³⁵ while the work of superconsciousness and its subplanes (higher thinking mind, illumined mind, plane of intuition and overmind) is carried out through it too.³⁶ Sahasradala itself projects at the top of the head.

Just as we shouldn't mix experience of Anahata and of the psychic centre, so also it is necessary to carry out a distinction between experience of Sahasradala and of the Jivatman (cosmic centre, central being above the head). In contrast to the psychic being, Jivatman is not born (does not descend in the manifested world) nor evolves — it always stands above the evolution, supporting various beings, of which the man consists.³⁷ The Jivatman is on the spiritual plane of superconsciousness (i.e., between mind and supermind), but is not fixed to any of its levels.³⁸

Now we have the following structure (in the brackets there are the synonymous terms that we can meet in works of Sri Aurobindo).

The Table of Chakras I

Thus, the precise correlation between the characteristics of the centres and aspects of consciousness is traced. But chakras are only 7, while aspects are 9.

In *The Table of Chakras I* sectors of aura's mental plane (III.1, III.2, III.3) are positioned along a vertical line in complete conformity with chakras and their characteristics.³⁹ The same situation can be noticed in relation with sectors of the vital plane (II.1, II.2, II.3). Consequently, it is possible to assume that sectors of the physical plane should be positioned according to the same principle.

Then the sector I.2 (vital physical) should be above sector I.1 (physical proper), and sector I.3 (mental physical)—above sector I.2. If there is its own chakra in each sector there, between Swadhisthana and Muladhara should exist two new chakras, two new centres. But while it is our guess only, let us get down to the texts of Sri Aurobindo himself.

In one of his letters Sri Aurobindo specifies, that the centre of the vital aspect of physical consciousness (vital physical) is "between the two lowest centres"⁴⁰ (i. e. between Muladhara and Swadhisthana). At this point we have to note that the centre of the vital aspect of physical consciousness (I.2) appears to be above Muladhara, i. e. above the centre of physical consciousness proper (I.1), as we assumed already.

In another letter Sri Aurobindo makes the following remark: "The nerves are distributed all over the body, but the vital-physical action is concentrated in its origin between the Muladhara and the centre just above it."⁴¹ Probably he means Swadhisthana again, but it is possible as well that he speaks about the centre for which there is no name yet. If it is not Svadhisthana and it is above the centre of the vital aspect of physical consciousness (I.2), then it inevitably should be the centre of the mental aspect of physical consciousness, the centre of cells' mind (I.3). Provisionally we shall name the new centres—Muladhara-2 and Muladhara-3. Muladhara-2 supports the vital sheath, and Muladhara-3 the mental one (see the figure at the end of the paper).

If in his books and letters there is no information about vital and mental centres of physical consciousness, it is possible that he was aware of them but did not disclose them.

Now let us systematize our conclusions through the table.

The Table of Chakras II

In *The Table of Chakras II* the logic is precisely traced, according to certain centres and aspects of consciousness are referred to as higher or lower. Proceeding from the table, it is getting quite clear, why Muladhara (I.1) was called by Sri Aurobindo the lowest centre of physical consciousness: this expression presumes that other centres of physical consciousness exist—for example, higher physical centre (I.3. mind of cells' centre).

Due to this table the contents of Sri Aurobindo's following letter also become clear: "... the vital physical forces (I.2.) can be received from anywhere by the body, from around, below or above. The order of the planes is in reference to each other, not in reference to the body. In reference to each other, the vital physical (I.2.) is below the physical mind [I.3. mental physical], but above the material [I.1. material physical]: but at the same time these powers interpenetrate each other."⁴²

ALEXANDER VELICHENKO

Facsimilli:

Notes and References

1. Just above the human body there is superconsciousness and beneath—subconscious.
2. Sri Aurobindo. *Letters on Yoga* (Pondicherry, 1991), Vol. 1, pp. 357, 376.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 341.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 366.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 377.
6. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 376, 377; Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* (Pondicherry, 1991), Vol. 2, pp. 1536, 1544.
7. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p. 376; Vol. 2, p. 1142.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 365, 839; Vol. 2, pp. 1019, 1142.
9. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 334, 366.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 344.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 334, 365; Vol. 2, p. 1019.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 334, 366.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 365, 373.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 334, 366.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
17. Sri Aurobindo. *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Pondicherry, 1992), p. 774.
18. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 365, 366.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 334.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 375; Vol. 2, p. 1528.
21. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p. 727.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
23. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 1178.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 364, 782; Vol. 2, p. 1142.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
26. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 370, 373, 374, 375, 376; Vol. 2, p. 1600.
27. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 364, 365, 366, 367, 370; Vol. 2, pp. 1142, 1211.
28. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p. 376.
29. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 2, p. 1033.
30. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p. 374.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 365, 372.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 372, 724, 725.
34. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 2, p. 1021.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 1180.
36. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 365, 366, 370; Vol. 2, p. 1019.
37. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, pp. 270, 276, 277.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
39. As one can see, Sri Aurobindo denies existence of any centres between Ajna and Sahasradala (*Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 371), but what is said here derives from logic of his system's construction.
40. Nevertheless we have to note that Sri Aurobindo does not speak about the centre of vital aspect of physical consciousness. Such information provides the context of his letter, related to the centres of consciousness. One of the letters reads as follows: "The physical mind centre is in the throat and mouth—the vital physical [centre] is between the two lowest centres—the material consciousness is in the mūlādhāra." (*Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 376).
41. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 376.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 345-46.

TAJ MAHAL

(See first the Taj as Shah Jehan wanted to and ironically was forced to see it in his last imprisoned days—in miniature through the viewing platforms of the Agra Fort. Fashioned like the Taj, jutting in lacy marble from the dark-blooded Mathura sandstone these frame the monument with the paradox of likeness and difference, nearness and distance, reality and illusion. See then the mausoleum of love close up at dawn, in the dream twilight of the evening or under the full moon—never definable, always surreal.)

ONE sees her first afar between dream and waking
Courtyards of white and white arches prepare the gaze
Frames enclosing a Real which teases Illusion.

Dove of Silence, we circle around your stillness
Flinging our seeing's net to capture and ravish
But you gleam like a moonrise laughing undistanced within us.

Whiteness so sheer it stuns and shames and humbles
Shimmer and flicker and blur of fiery wings
Swifter than sight and moveless; here and elsewhere.

Jewelled simplicity, unadorned loveliness
Mother and Sister and Beloved! Father and Presence
Love, Death, Immortality; Matter and Spirit.

DEBASHISH BANERJI

WHAT ARE BONSAI?

The Big Joys of Growing Bonsai

BONSAI are trees and plants grown in containers in such a way that they look their most beautiful—even prettier than those growing in the wild. Cultivating bonsai, therefore, is a very artistic hobby. It's also a good illustration of the gentle respect Japanese have for living things and an expression of their sense of what is beautiful. It's much more involved than growing potted flowers, and requires a much bigger commitment—physically and emotionally.

The oldest mention of the word bonsai comes up in a mid-fourteenth century poem, but it wasn't until around three centuries later that people began using it regularly. Early bonsai can be seen in picture scrolls, though, dating as far back as 1309.

In ancient times bonsai were usually enjoyed by aristocrats, priests, and other high-ranking people, but from around the seventeenth century, commoners began delighting in them, too. After Japan ended three centuries of isolation in 1868 and opened itself up to Western countries, bonsai came to be appreciated as objects of art, and people began growing bonsai not just as a hobby but also as an artistic pursuit. Large-scale bonsai exhibitions were staged, and scholarly books on growing techniques were published.

Today, growing bonsai continues to be a hobby enjoyed by members of the general public. It's also regarded as an important part of Japan's cultural and artistic tradition, nurtured over the years by the nation's climate and people's love of nature.

Caring for bonsai is no longer just a Japanese pastime. More than 1,200 people from 32 countries attended the World Bonsai Convention that was held in the city of Omiya, Saitama Prefecture, in 1989. The convention helped launch the World Bonsai Friendship Federation, which has been a driving force in popularizing bonsai and raising bonsai-growing skills around the world. The association has organized international conventions about once every four years since the Omiya gathering; so far, they've been held in Florida in the United States and Seoul in South Korea. The next convention, set for 2002, will be in Munich in Germany.

Types of Bonsai

All sorts of trees and shrubs are used as bonsai. In essence, any plant that can be grown in a small container can be cultivated as a bonsai. The most popular varieties are pines; maples, whose leaves change their color in autumn; flowering trees, like the cherry and plum; and fruit-bearing trees, like the quince and persimmon. In countries other than Japan, varieties that are best suited to the local climate are used. The trees can grow as tall as a meter (three feet), or be small enough to be fit in one's palm.

Bonsai fall into a number of categories according to shape, but the most important thing to keep in mind is to allow the tree to express its individuality freely, without forcing it to fit any particular category, and to help it achieve its most beautiful, balanced form.

Just as people choose clothes in which they look good, containers should be chosen that best suit the trees in terms of size, shape, and color. This will allow the bonsai to be seen in the loveliest light.

The process of raising bonsai requires controlling the kind of shape the trees take. Sometimes you need to bend branches with wires or to cut them off altogether. You might think that's cruel, but these steps are essential for the tree to remain healthy in a pot.

The trees have a life of their own, of course, and grow in accordance to the laws of nature, so they can never be completely controlled by humans. The key is not to force your will on them but to appreciate the dignity of each living plant and treat them with love and respect.

Bonsai that have been watered and lovingly looked after day by day can make a deep and lasting impression on the viewer—particularly when such trees are centuries old and have been handed down from one generation of bonsai lovers to another.

Unlike other works of art, there are no such thing as “finished” bonsai as long as the trees are still alive and growing; they must continue to be tended to on a daily basis. That's why bonsai growing is sometimes called an art without end. For many enthusiasts, though, it's precisely this timelessness that makes raising bonsai so rewarding and worthwhile.

ANONYMOUS

(From an Internet write-up)

A Note from Aurobharati Trust

We have brought out the errata of *Perspectives of Savitri* published by us. Copies of the same are available with SABDA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605 002. The buyers of the two volumes of the *Perspectives of Savitri* may obtain free of cost their copies of the errata from SABDA.

KRISHNA

I PAUSED beside the cabin door and saw the King of Kings at play,
Tumbled upon the grass I spied the little heavenly runaway.
The mother laughed upon the child made gay by its ecstatic morn,
But yet the sages spake of It as of the Ancient and Unborn.
I heard the passion breathed amid the honeysuckle-scented glade,
And saw the King pass lightly from the beauty that He had betrayed.
I saw him change from love to love. But yet the Prince allowed His claim
To be the purest of the pure, thrice holy, stainless, without blame.
I saw the open tavern-door flash on the dusk a ruddy glare,
And saw the King of Kings outcast reel brawling through the starlit air.
But yet He is the Prince of Peace of whom the ancient wisdom tells,
And by their silence men adore the lovely silence where He dwells.
I saw the King of Kings again, a thing to shudder at and fear,
A form so darkened and so marred that childhood fled if it drew near.
And yet He is the Light of Light whose blossoming is Paradise,
That Beauty of the King which dawns before the seer's enraptured eyes.
I saw the King of Kings again, a miser with a heart grown cold;
And yet He is the Prodigal, the Spendthrift of the Heavenly Gold,
The largesse of whose glory crowns the blazing brows of cherubim,
And sun and moon and starry fires are jewels scattered forth by Him.
I saw the King of Kings descend the narrow doorway to the dust
With all his fires of morning still, the beauty, bravery and lust.
And yet He is the life within the Ever-living Living Ones,
The Ancient with Eternal Youth, the cradle of the infant suns,
The fiery fountain of the stars, and He the golden urn where all
The glittering spray of planets in the myriad beauty fall.

A.E. (GEORGE WILLIAM RUSSELL)

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT — XV

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

Sunilda—The Musician

HE was always a musician, he was born into a family of musicians. Elder brother Anilda played on the sarod. Cousins Ardhenduda & brother played on surbahar and sitar. Sister could sing well.

In the early days, 1945-1953 or 54, he composed music for our Programmes of 1st Dec. He even composed a music for a “Junglee-dance” for the physical demonstration of Dec. 2nd. But this was a one time effort only. The music for the dances and dramas was beautiful, catching, not too classical, in tune with us and the times. It went well with the occasion. It was great fun watching him and his orchestra (elder brother Anil and Harit on sarod. Harit also filled in as tabalchi. Ashok and Runu on clarionette and flute and Debou and Manoj on sitar). Sunilda played on the harmonium or piano, both of which he played with just one finger. We watched with admiration and un-understanding. To me it seemed miraculous how he just watched the dancer and produced the right, suitable music. (Sunilda himself was a maestro on the sitar. But did not play on it. The wrist, ill-set after the football accident, pained and swelled up, if he played for any length of time.)

All these activities were (as I perceive) slowly eased out of his life. I don't recall when exactly he stopped teaching—why did he stop teaching?

All these years of teaching and composing had somewhat frayed Sunilda's nerves. He wrote to the Mother. She told him to relax, go sit under a big tree. She said that a tree emanates a great deal of energy and it will help him recover. He used to, for a short period, go out for long walks to one of the Ashram gardens. Start was after lunch—2 or 2.30 p.m. (Why he chose this unearthly hot time is beyond me). He, along with Gauridi and her sister, carried some tea and some eats, sat in some shady spot, had the tea and returned home with the dusk (*godhuli*)—an enchanting time in any Indian countryside. These short trysts with nature soothed his mind and nerves.

The Mother also gave Sunilda some work in Le Faucheur, the garden by the river Ariankuppam. His botanical genius came in handy. He set to experiment. It seems he worked some wonders—produced seedless lady's fingers, and some wheat, enough to make bread for the Mother. (At present Maheshwari working there has repeated the wheat growing in just a small patch.)

“One man's loss is another man's gain.” We lost a good teacher, but we gained a great musician. As time passed Sunilda seemed to retreat more and more from much of the outer happenings, drawn into some higher regions of music and maybe into other regions. He was all music and barely anything else.

What was his music? How and from where did it come? Who can answer these questions better than he himself. Better still the one who revealed to him the source, nay

was the source, that swept him off in its deluge. Harken to what he says about how his music was revealed to him. (The following is reproduced from *Mother India* June 1998 from Jhumur's article)

Some twenty years ago I heard for the first time the Mother of our Ashram improvising on the organ. In the beginning the music seemed strange to me. It was neither Indian nor Western, or shall I say it sounded like both? The theme She was playing came very close to what we know as bhairon, the whole closely knit musical structure expanding melodiously. Then suddenly, notes came surging up in battalions, piled one on top of another, deep, insistent, coming as if from a long way down and welling up inevitably the magnificent body of sound formed and gathered volume till it burst into an illumination that made the music an experience.

Thus She revealed to me the secret of a magic world of music where harmonies meet and blend to make melodies richer, wider, profounder and infinitely more powerful. I have tried to take my music from Her.

My music is my labour and my aspiration for the Divine and what I try to convey through it are the voices of my inner experience.

My grateful thoughts are with Her who has been my Guide, Guru, Mentor and Mother. One day it was Her Light that sparked my heart, it is Her Light that has sustained its glow, it is Her Light that I seek through my music. If this music brings some comfort, some delight or some message to someone, I have achieved that for which She has placed Her trust in me.

Sunilda was now solely preoccupied with music. He thought and lived music in exclusion of all else—but for his love for the Mother and Her's for him. It was this two-way flow that buoyed and carried him through his life's endeavour—to compose Her music or rather be a channel for Her music. For that he was grateful and full of humility towards the Mother. These feelings are amply reflected and come through to us, when we hear of such touching happenings as the four or five I recount, as I came to know of them.

Sunilda's studio where he recorded his music was just one of the rooms of his house. In the early days they just shut the doors and windows to keep out extra noises, and recorded. As time passed, a little more sophistication was added (equipment, instruments, etc.). But the room remained the room. When an idea to improve the acoustics was mooted, Chamanlalji was consulted. He, with some help and expertise, fitted up some blanketing for the walls and some other gadgetry, to improve the sound of recording. The floor was bare—so a suggestion was made, and his able assistant Victor wrote to the Mother. She was eager to help, and gave one of Her carpets. Now Sunilda was in a quandary! He was reluctant to step on that carpet. He quietly changed the position of his organ so that he could circumvent the carpet and put his stool on a bare part of the floor.

Next came the question of cooling the room, at least to keep the musicians from sweating. Chamanlalji suggested installing an air-conditioner. Then Sunilda said: "Oh!

what is a little sweat? But Mother has to pay for the electricity.” I don’t know if they could get round him.

In 1972, Sunilda had the New Year’s music ready. The Mother was to hear it in Her room. Sunilda was there. Maggi and Nata too were called. After hearing the music the Mother was very happy and was showering Sunilda profusely with praises. He was full of joy, but felt quite embarrassed. He looked this way and that and finally fell at Her feet—it seemed just to stem the flow of Her praises.

A few years ago, a gentleman arrived at the Ashram. He went to the Samadhi. He knelt and bowed, prayed, but got up weeping silently. He looked around and spied Chamanlalji. He was a stranger to Chamanlalji, but somehow felt free enough to approach and introduce himself as a sculptor—by name Parasara (of some repute in the artistic circles). His tears were (it transpired) of a feeling of frustration and depression. He had heard and believed that Sri Aurobindo was an Avatar. Furthermore, he believed that along with the Avatar, there came down artists (painters, sculptors, musicians, etc.) and he had not seen any as yet. The resulting frustration was too deep for him to bear. Could Chamanlalji help? Chamanlalji was on unfamiliar ground, but took him along to one of our artists, who was quite pessimistic and said: “There is not much art here.” Mr. Parasara grew gloomier than ever. Chamanlalji then took Mr. Parasara to Sunilda the composer. Sunilda, typically, said: “I am not a composer—I am just a receiver.” Mr. Parasara got to hear some of Sunil-da’s music. Then the two had a long talk. (musician and sculptor) By the end of their talk, Mr. Parasara was overjoyed. He said: “At last my faith is restored. This (Sunilda) is a great man, he is unique. He has saved my life.” Mr. Parasara was floored by Sunilda’s music and also by his humility.

What did Sunilda most cherish, strive for? A plausible and intelligent guess could be “Music.” A revisal of our thinking may not go amiss after the following. Once, some of his instruments went out of order, reparations were delayed and the date for the completion of the music was fast approaching. He (Sunilda) in a moment of desperation and supplication wrote to the Mother: “Mother what do you want me to do? Things are not as they should be. As for me, I want you. This music and all else is *yours*. I don’t want any of these things. All I want is *You*.” Fortunately, the instruments got repaired soon after and the music got ready. (Sunilda’s prayer given above in quotes is NOT the one he wrote. I have taken the liberty to write it, in my words, after having heard it from an admirer of his.)

J’ai une question à Te poser (I have a question to ask you):

J’ai souvent une sensation ces jours-ci, que c’est Toi qui a fait de moi un musicien—est-ce vrai? (I have often a feeling, these days, that it is You who has made of me a musician—is it true?)

Peut-être... (Could be...)

Si c’est vrai, est-ce que c’était prédestiné? (If it is true, was it predestined?)

Très certainement. (Most certainly.)

The following is the reply to a letter to the Mother Sunilda had written. I could not get to see the letter, but the reply is interesting and meaningful by itself. This is a free rendering into English of the reply written in French. I have tried to keep as close as possible to the meaning.

It is possible, that in a previous birth (life) you were my physical child (son). But, it is not that that has given rise to the deep emotion in you. It is your soul that has inspired your music. It is with your soul that I connect you when I talk of your music and that gets you in touch with your soul and also with me where I am always there at the centre of your being.

It is the intensity of this consciousness that makes you weep with emotion; they are tears of the psychic which dissolve obstacles and difficulties of the being.

The Mother

The Mother used to play on her organ on New Years at 0.00 hours. That was long, long ago. She continued playing until the late '50s, though not at 0.00 hours. In 1959 she asked Sunilda to orchestrate Her New Year Music. Thus I believe She opened a new door, and he stepped into newer, higher regions. Later she gave him the theme and left him to compose the New Year Music around the theme. Then She wanted him to compose music to accompany Her readings of *Savitri*. He was thus gradually drawn deeper and deeper into the realms of Music.

How much the Mother relied on him, and to what extent she could work in him, and his response, i.e. receiving what she gave and his reliance on her, his surrender to let her mould him—are all beyond our normal concepts and values. To know and appreciate Sunilda and his music, one may read some of the letters the Mother wrote to him, ponder over them, let the import of them sink in, and then the understanding of the man that was Sunilda may dawn on the reader. To this purpose I quote (again from the same source as above) the Mother's letters:

Sunil, my dear child,

We need music to accompany and frame my readings of passages from *Savitri* illustrated in *Meditations on Savitri*.

You alone can make this music the way it should be done.

Would you be interested in this work? It would make me very happy.

On another occasion, She wrote to him:

Sunil, this is genius! It is magnificent, with a deep and true emotion. It has made me very happy.

With my blessings.

29.12.64

Sunil, my dear child,

I would be very happy if you composed the music for the 1st of December, Anu's dance-drama. Because you alone can do it the way it should be done. Your music is, according to me, the music of the future and it opens the ways to the new world. Blessings.

13.8.65

My child,

Yesterday, at a quarter past twelve and (again) today, at the same time, I have heard your music with deep emotion and I can tell you that I have never heard anything more beautiful, in music, of aspiration and spiritual invocation.

This letter was written in English:

I heard the music—it is wonderful! Music itself pure and high and strong—It is delightful and leaves you waiting and wanting to hear more....

After listening to another composition, She sent him the following letter:

I heard it with deep emotion as something exceptionally beautiful... I want to repeat again here that this music opens the doors of the future and reproduces admirably the musical vibrations of the higher regions.

8.12.65

Sunil, my dear child,

I have just heard what you have recorded. It is beautiful, very beautiful. It is the first time that I have heard music express true power, the power of Mahakali, the power of the Mahashakti. It is formidable and at the same time, so deeply sweet...

And specially, while listening to it, I had the impression of a door opening on to a still more beautiful future realisation.

Sunil, my dear child,

It was with impatience that I was waiting to listen to your music and I am so happy to have heard it today....

30.12.1965

This is recounted by Sunilda in French—the English rendering is mine:

1967—The music was composed and taped, ready for the Mother's hearing, somehow Sunilda did not like it. He found it to be 'banal'. He said, "I would not listen to it then, but straightaway hear it along with the Mother." So it was taken up to Her room. There, in Her presence, the tape was started. Curiously enough he says, "even

I started to appreciate the music.” The Mother seemed to have gone into trance, eyes closed. Then eyes still closed, her lips trembling, she seemed to want to say something, but could not formulate it into words. Finally she exclaimed: “This is wonderful. It is the first time I have heard music coming down direct from the World of Harmony, without the intervention of the mind and vital.” Sunilda approached the Mother. She asked him how he liked the music. He shook his head. She said, “What! you did not like it? Oh, you want that something new should take birth?”

After this what is there to say of the man. Better watch and wait in silence for the Dawn that touched the hilltops, to descend into our valley—or—climb the hill to meet the Dawn.

(Concluded)

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

The Beautiful and the Useful

“YOU’VE come all this way to see us, my *Kore*¹, and I’ll charge you for it? No, that’s not done. Keep well and go to the Good!”

The old cobbler sat hunched behind his bench. Ancient tools were spread on it, and two white cups of Greek coffee also—one empty and mine, the other his and almost full. In the old tradition of craftsmen, I knew, he’d be sipping out of it slowly throughout the morning. I smiled, thanked him and returned their good wishes. Kyra-Morphula and I hugged each other tightly, then off I was, out into the narrow streets.

It was July. Fresh out of college, I had chosen to spend the summer on the island of Ios, one of the hundreds of isles that spring up from the Aegean Sea. The previous evening the stitching of my sandal had come undone and, by asking around in the morning, I arrived at the old cobbler’s. He had repaired it and now I was about to trace my way back through the town.

I did so leisurely, to let the surroundings work their magic.

Whitewashed walls flanked the donkey-wide streets and pots of basil, geranium, jasmine fitted snugly into niches that seemed made for that purpose only. The day was still fresh and random fragrances mingled with explosions of flower-colours in the sunlight—oh, that sunlight; so clear, so crisp! The sea gleamed and shimmered in deep shades of blue.

Following whiffs of freshly baked bread, I arrived at a little opening in a wall with an arched window by its side, a display to what was waiting within. The bun, crisp and deliciously hot, went perfectly with the cool rice pudding, the house speciality and I, perched up on a parapet, relished them both and not them only. There was the town, the sea and the light and an air so pure it filled me as if with a song, a vibration that rushed out to meet and celebrate all it encountered. It was a scene of astonishing beauty and simplicity.

For a while, I just sat there; I munched and took in the view.

The town is built on a small hill overlooking the natural harbour; walking through its narrow winding streets, one is always aware of the blue expanse stretching far and beyond the horizon. Everything is painted white—that is, everything but the doors and the windows; for them the blue of the sea or the deep green of the pine has been chosen; for the terraces, a light grey. Then, vines, trees and flowers everywhere.

So there I sat, deeply absorbed in the sight then, slowly, I started noticing subtle changes. The day was growing and so did the light. The sea too changed, its colour now transparent; the fragrances lost their intensity and the shadows etched themselves sharply as they fell and shortened in the glare. Noon was coming and the *cicadas*² began

1. *Kore*: Young woman or daughter. An ancient Greek word still in use by parents or strangers when addressing a young female.

2. *Cicadas*: Crickets, of a variety which is active during summertime, particularly during the hot hours of the day. In season, their shrill sound is heard all over the Mediterranean.

to shrill their song.

I found my thoughts wandering to Heraclitus. He must have seen the same light I was basking in and he too must have let his eyes take in the same sea; he probably knew the very smells and the sounds I had come across that morning. He must have seen everything blending in each other and changing. He sought for himself and also for a permanence that never seemed to be there—what did he find? Nature loves to be hidden, he declared; all is in flux. He read the signs Nature gave out and he contemplated her forms. And so was I.

I had plunged myself into the timeless rhythm of Nature that morning, a rhythm natural, primeval, eternal. Everything fell and fitted into it, including the old cobbler and his hearty welcome when I knocked on his door. My thoughts turned to our encounter once more.

I had found him shaving in front of a small mirror propped up against one of his tools and a beautiful toothless smile flooded his lathered face as he waved me in. Foamy brush in hand and caught at the beginning of his day, he was plainly happy to share its start.

“*Kalimera*³!” he greeted me and called out to his wife for another cup of coffee. His was already steaming on the bench and the workspace was basically the anteroom to their home that stretched out towards the back. I could see a courtyard at the end, abloom and inviting.

It was a typical house, one of the many blending seamlessly with the land, the sea and the sky. Eternal and timeless, they defy style definitions—these Aegean Island houses have always done so. If there is a rhythm they obey and belong to it is the rhythm of the sea and the curves of the land, their movements, as they fall and rise.

Resting on sun-drenched hills, built amidst shady trees or arrayed in the narrow streets of little towns, these houses grow naturally out of the ground and into their environment; they are outcrops of the land and its people, they are also the yield of the sea that surrounds them.

The old cobbler’s house was one of the many in Ios Town. His grandfather built it by hand; with much, much love and labour. First he went out to get the rocks; they are found scattered all over the island. Then he carried them on site; he chiselled and hewed them, he used them. He did the same with everything he needed, even the lime for the whitewash at the end. He did most of it alone, occasionally helped by a brother, his wife or a nephew. He had already imagined his home ready and beautiful long before he started building.

What he concerned himself with was that the house should be solid, so he started by placing the stones and the corner pieces and the supports for the doors and the windows first. He made a frame. Things developed as he went on and, consequently, the need for a strong staircase created the little room under it, so that its weight would be supported. The staircase itself is simple; yet, how perfect in its common sense and utility. Simple, yet how our man had struggled to build it.

3. *Kalimera*: Good Day.

The old cobbler took me out and around the house to see it. Because it was not always easy to find the exact stones he needed, grandpa had built the steps with different sized rocks, some smaller, others bigger; for one step he used only one, for another two, or three. One stone was placed vertically, the other horizontally.

We were half way up, when Kyr-Michalis-the-cobbler pointed at a detail I would have otherwise missed—the staircase did not exactly reach the terrace-top! When grandpa ran out of rocks, he cut into the wall for the last two steps: an elegant useful bend, the last of the ascent.

This least expected bend, this natural solution, had brought in two advantages. It not only constrained the bulk of the staircase, it made it at once more solid. From the aesthetic point of view, this now gives a rhythmical movement to the whole house.

“Let me fix this now for you, will you?” the cobbler said as he sat himself behind the bench.

He had been gracious and hospitable in a manner befitting the land of his home, a natural and unpretentious host. He perceived my interest and showed me around his abode and I enjoyed the depth and economy of his conversation. I was charmed by his island-lilt and thought it added a balance to his slow and measured movements. When his wife took over (so that he would work in peace!), she displayed her own charms and a similar degree of hospitality, continuing the Greek tradition—the stranger, the visitor and the traveller have always been welcomed and revered there, sacred. Zeus himself, the father of the gods, was the patron of hospitality.

And, just as *Hera*⁴ looked after the home affairs, so the old lady had done through the long and fruitful years of her marriage with the cobbler. Unlike his, her movements and gait were quick; confident mistress of her domain, Kyra-Morphula possessed a swift efficiency. When she finished sweeping her courtyard, she invited me to help her with watering – I was thrilled letting the pail down the well and laughed bringing it up full and spilling! She was calm and thorough and she spoke to and about each of her plants; she loved them, as if her children.

Her own children she showed me later; they were carefully framed in photos scattered all over the little home. Grown up and gone, they had their own families now, their own children—bless them. She spoke of them with the same affection and calmness she had displayed for her plants.

There was naturalness in her that embraced and took everything in; she gave herself. Her house was spotlessly clean, neat and loved and this I could see and feel. When I admired a fine piece of embroidery by the mantelpiece, she told me about her grandmother. There is an old tradition of embroidery in the islands and the little home exhibited it admirably; many long evenings and gentle afternoons must have been spent over designs passed from mother to daughter, to granddaughter.

Basically, the house had only one room, it was partitioned as in the archaic original and it offered the true charm of the family shelter, which one may in vain look for in

4. *Hera*: Wife of Zeus, queen of heaven, and marriage-goddess.

houses with many rooms. The sense of proportion and the grace of such an interior aren't the result of calculations; practical need has made it—as if this need is the bait Nature uses to push man, so that he may unveil the secret of her rhythm.

Going through the house, I noticed simple little statues placed here and there. One was obviously shaped out of some leftover mortar; another from a rock piece the long-gone mason must have thought contained something of his woman (mother, wife, sister or daughter), when she relaxed after the day's work by the porch in the evening. He had worked on that shape; he chipped it here and curved it there and, eventually, both pieces found their place inside the little home. They still grace it, like the niches he made for the basil pot and the spots he reserved for the bougainvillea to grow and the jasmine—one must have flowers.

These little houses are like organic beings; they grow like corals do or the crystals. Each part forms independently from the other yet, in their totality, what a harmony they present!

In accordance to the usefulness and utility so created, there comes beauty too. The man, who alone did what he had to do to complete his abode, did so because of need and necessity. Necessity collected what was needed and, as if in response, the result carried within itself a spontaneous beauty and the home ended up being the quaint little house it is. Even the ornaments he used—look at those beautiful vine-and-floral motifs drawn around doors and windows—they seem plucked from the real ones growing nearby.

Engrossed in the beauty of the surroundings and my own thoughts, I forgot time. But the growing heat and the glare pulled me out of the reverie; besides, I was thirsty. The plain whitewashed walls sparkled in the sun as I wound my way back through the town and did the usual holiday routine; I changed, went down to the beach, swam, then rested awhile.

When out and about again, the island had changed garb. A different light now, mellower. The white undertones of the morning were now tinged with yellow, with orange later on. A pleasant wind blew as I made for the Rocks, the natural fortress that crowns the town—shelter against the pirate-raids of old, it was presently the sanctuary of a Hard Rock Café that offered classical music during the early evening hours.

Stunningly beautiful, Aegean sunsets are a spectacle eternal and inexhaustible; a recurrent theme of themselves, they never repeat their details. Agreeably, the rock I found to sit on and watch this one was perfect too. Weather-smooth, it cradled me whilst Ravel's Bolero was playing and the colours kept changing in the west. They spread and stretched and they took over more and more of the sky and in that milieu I let myself be. Soon, my thoughts joined in.

All is in flux, Heraclitus had said and today's Greek still takes his statement for granted. It is engraved onto marble tablets that adorn many a village spring (the rushing flow of their waters being a constant and natural reminder). It is also etched into the collective Greek awareness, deeply so.

The Greek knows beauty, usefulness and utility through change and diversity and these he came to understand through the nature of his land. Natural forms and elements,

illuminated by that (so clear, so crisp!) sunlight, unveil most of what he needs, they even prompt in him the sense of tolerance he has and the freedom he bestows to the individual. This light lays bare everything for him; natural forms, elements and his common sense do the rest.

All has its purpose, utility and beauty; one has to only look for and find it, like grandpa did for his stones and the lime-wash, the motifs with which he painted his house. Like his wife did too, when she looked after her children and flowers, the planting and harvesting of the fields and the new designs she contrived for embroidery; even for the recipes she concocted.

For ages, the generations of grandpas and the women who stood by their sides, built lives and homes. They did so by joining the land and by letting Nature guide and provide. They opened and listened to her rhythms with candid abandonment, that same welcoming openness the old cobbler and his wife offered me that morning.

Now, the evening was settling in – pinks and lilacs and streaks of gold on one side, a gorgeous inky blue on the other. Defiantly, the whitewash persisted. How much inspiration these unblemished island houses can give to the educated architect, I thought as I watched them reflecting the last of the light; those sparkling white little homes with their sun-kissed grey terraces. Vine-shaded, how much the elegant simplicity of their staircases and the rising curbs of their wells can reveal to heart and mind!

Inhabited, deserted or solitary, they seem to utter faint whispers – like the cypresses, the olive trees and the mountains do, like the sun and the remnants of their ancient past, the archaeological finds unearthed all over the Aegean.

Kyr-Michalis had mentioned the changing spirit of time, how the island and its life were being altered. He did not lament, he only stated a fact, adding that, beautiful and solid as the products of his surroundings may be, they are also very delicate. Just like the crystals and the corals are.

It is perhaps because of their geographical isolation that the Aegean Islands have been relatively protected from the pollution of educated architecture. Or, maybe, it is that the islanders cling so tenaciously to what has been, because they just feel strongly about it or because they've been exposed for so long and are saturated with that Aegean Light. Whatever the reasons, the flow still persists, the ancient rhythm endures, simplicity and beauty prevail.

And this I could see, looking from above. Night had fallen and new music was punctuating the evening. Below, lights were lit and people strolled the streets; windows were kept open and they framed lives touched by the balmy breeze.

Feeling in harmony with the scene and myself, I thought, "it's going to be a good summer."

LET THEM DREAM

OF fairylands sweet and bright,
Of golden mountains and cascading light —
Let each and every child
Have such wonderful dreams.

Let them dream of oceans of milk,
Of goddesses robed in rustling silk,
Of mermaids dancing in faery isles,
Of unknown flowers on luminous vines,
Of sporting on the farthest stars,
Of assailing the titans to win God's wars,
Of mingling with sunbeams, of heaven's rainbow gleams,
Of having a true and faithful friend,
Of hatred and falsehood's sure end,
Of a child's curls, of poems and pearls,
Of a high fate, of keeping with destiny their date,
Of sunkissed prairies, of angels and fairies,
Let them dream of mangoes with cream,
Sweet and bright, great or light
Let each and every child
Have wonderful dreams.

SHYAM KUMARI

(Written for children)

TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

Tagore's Paintings: A Consciousness Approach

WHILE Sri Aurobindo was fascinated by the art and architecture of ancient and medieval India, Tagore turned to the modern West as a painter and wished his friends and relations to go to Japan and to the Western countries to elevate the status of their paints. Sri Aurobindo searched for the spiritual touch in Indian paints. Tagore, the painter, indulged in the vital in his weird paintings and drawings. He is, arguably, the first modern painter of India. Tagore, the painter, is a pilgrim of night without the vision of Paradiso. He never encouraged national boasting in the field of art, although he did not resist this revivalistic trend in the wake of the renaissance. Not that he relied much on colonial art. But, he was not in favour of all Indianness in art:

When we speak of Indian art it indicates some truth based upon the Indian tradition and temperament. At the same time we must know that there is no such thing as absolute caste restriction in human cultures; they have the power to combine and produce new variations, and such combinations have been going on for ages, proving the truth of the deep unity of human psychology.¹

A preference for a purely nationalistic painting was there in the early part of his career. He loved Ravi Varma's paints because of their Indianness. In the 1890s Indian subjects and sculptures with Indian mood and flavour meant much to him. Later, after the partition of Bengal, the nationalistic stress passed away giving way to modernism, which came to him first naturally and then from Japan and the Western countries. In a letter to Gaganendranath Tagore, dated 8 August 1916, Tagore is indirectly critical about the limitations of Indian art. "When are you going to come out of home to embrace the greater world?"² In the same letter, and also in a letter to Rathindranath Tagore written on 22 August of the same year, there is a reference to a Japanese artiste named *Araai* whom Tagore was planning to send to Calcutta as a trainer. Tagore thought Gaganendranath and others needed to learn the finer points of Japanese art very urgently. He was fascinated by the blend of art and utilitarian value in Japanese art. Every small thing was beautiful. The Indians could not do that. The Japanese people made life beautiful in its totality. Where did the Japanese hide their rubbish? he wondered. It was sheer joy for him to see how the Japanese women did everything neatly and with an authentic touch of Beauty.⁴ In the letter to Rathindranath Tagore, the criticism was direct and constructive:

In the art of modern Bengal, I persistently feel the need of a little more of force, courage and wideness. We have given stress on minor things—very insignificant things ... Gagan and Aban are reluctant to come here. Is there no possibility of

Nandalal's visit here? Coming here I have felt that the Japanese have no parallel in the field of painting.⁵

Tagore was all praise for Japanese painting on large canvas and wished Nandalal Bose and others to learn that art from Japanese painters. While Sri Aurobindo was seeking to encourage the nation to revive the ancient and medieval art tradition of India, Tagore was distinctly seeking to initiate the Indian painters to the principles of modernism. As a practicing painter and art-critic Tagore was not interested in spirituality; he was interested in the trendy modernism, which was strongly vitalistic in nature. In poetry and other arts, Sri Aurobindo's aim was one-pointed: the Spirit must be expressed through all kinds of art.

He too appreciated the Japanese, but because he found in Japanese art the inner principles, the noiseless art consecrated to the Divine.

A great oriental work of art does not easily reveal its secret to one who comes to it solely in a mood of aesthetic curiosity or with a considering critical objective mind, still less as the cultivated and interested tourist passing among strange and foreign things; but it has to be seen in loneliness, in the solitude of one's self, in moments when one is capable of long and deep meditation and as little weighted as possible with the conventions of material life. That is why the Japanese with their fine sense in these things,—a sense which modern Europe with her assault of crowded art galleries and over-pictured walls seems to have quite lost, though perhaps I am wrong, and those are the right conditions for display of European art,—have put their temples and their Buddhas as often as possible away on mountains and in distant or secluded scenes of Nature and avoid living with great paintings in the crude hours of daily life ...⁶

This and many other passages from *The Foundations of Indian Culture* speak of a new aesthetic principle born of the old credo of the ancient Indians: Art must express the Divine. "Its highest business is to disclose something of the Self, the Infinite, the Divine to the regard of the soul, the Self through its expressions, the Infinite through its living finite symbols, the Divine through his powers."⁷

Tagore, certainly not a spiritualist in the field of painting, believed that the contemporary Indian paintings had nothing to do with society. In 1928, at age 67, Tagore began to draw and paint with a queer enthusiasm. He had done some occasional doodles and sketches in the past, but now it was a serious affair and he was athirst for fame as a painter. The craving for fame was as vital as his weird paintings. The late partiality for an unknown art forced poetry out of his life. Tagore explained to Nirmal Kumari that the main reason of its attraction lay in a kind of mysterious unexpectedness. In poetry, he believed, rhythm came beforehand, at least faintly, and after that rhythm flew out smoothly "as the Ganga had flown out from the locks of Shiva." In painting it is just the opposite—the line appeared as he kept the pen on the paper and then the more a shape appeared the

more it moved towards the head. His mind wondered at this strange creation:

... If I were a competent artist, I would have preconceived my paints. In that case, the interior scheme would have taken an external shape. There is a joy in that too. But then it is more intoxicating when the mind is absorbed in external creation. The result is a total withdrawal from all external activities. If like those days spent by the Padma I were totally free from duty so as to produce only paintings for the Golden Boat of Time ! Now I can give little time to that because of the pressure of various duties. That little is not enough to satisfy my mind. It wishes to occupy the whole of my leisure. I am also keen on giving my consent. The stars obstruct. One of them is the welfare of mankind.⁸

This is obviously a problem of integrating aesthetics with life, which is not at all a problem with Sri Aurobindo at any stage of his life. He worked coolly and did not care for appraisals or publicity. He just enjoyed the joy of creation. Tagore was fond of indicating at times that painting linked him up with God and that it was God who was creating his new boundaries in limitless mysterious lines. The joy of paint is the joy of the finite, he wrote to Nirmal Kumari. In the discipline of his paint, he saw the Presence clearly.⁹ How true was Tagore in this claim for vital inspiration? In any case, he wished to equate his joy of painting with divine inspiration. In the letter written to Sudhindranath Dutta on 1 April 1930 there is a very distinct desire for fame. This is very vital and does not go with the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's ideal of an artist.

I cannot stand the remarks of the underqualified. Hope your letter to Rothenstein won't be futile. I too will talk to him on that when I meet him. I am not sure whether he can do it or not. When I go to Oxford I will renew my contacts. I'll also try my luck in the Continent. Today I'll raise the issue before my German friend.¹⁰

This is not the only example. In letter after letter, he expressed his restlessness and passion for fame in that new field. On 17 May, 1930, he wrote to Sudhindranath Dutta :

My fame as a painter in Paris might have reached the ears of my countrymen. I wish you were here. My paints are going to be exhibited in London and Birmingham. The connoisseurs who have seen them, have been appreciative. This time I hope to be greeted with either a garland or a certificate when I return home.¹¹

He wanted more time for his paints and lamented that it was not there because of his public engagements. In the 30s, he virtually became child-like in his interest in the new game. And sometimes, there came out the typical efflux of a dissatisfied romantic.

... My eyes have strained enough and now they must last for my paints. I found my paints at the twilight of my life. In the approaching night of my life, I thought of a

honeymoon with painting. I wished to sport with her in absolute quiet. My paints are being affected by my workload and people around me. Meanwhile, my eyesight is failing.¹²

There are about two thousand and five hundred available paintings by Tagore, mostly done between 1928 and 1940. There are also quite a few self-portraits; there are faces, landscapes and nudes and other varieties, most of which are the products of the creative vital. Prithwish Neogy beautifully sums up the topics, which point to what Sri Aurobindo calls the “subliminal”:¹³

Unfurling, animated ribbons, composite flower-birds, nameless archaistic beastliness, ambiguous sardonic imps, contorting primitive reptiles, proliferating monster-vessels, oddly sensuous nudes on extravagant furniture, improbable protagonists in a mysterious melodrama, distraught angular pilgrims on an unknown quest eternal, romantic dream houses, illustrations to lost stories, lovers, silhouettes, incandescent evening landscapes, murderous enactments, peaceful promenades, familiar types, characters and portraits, masks of sarcasm, masks of terror, heads of power and glory, delicate, oval moon-faces of silent lips and with eyes to transfix. All freshly, formed, rampant, iridescent.¹⁴

Unlike the recurring theme of mystical quest in his poetry, songs and in some plays like *The Post Office* and *Malini*, the paintings usually come from the zone located between the heart and the sex-centre, the most dangerous zone in the human consciousness. The paintings are as secular as his later poems. Buddhadev Bose observes : “The usual order is reversed in him : the older he grew, the more secular he becomes.”¹⁵ Sisirkumar Ghose thinks in another way as he talks of Tagore’s later poetry, which is quite often seen together with the weird paints. Let us see how Ghose sums up the essence of the later poetry :

Here is a grappling with the powers of Darkness not merely in the manner of a metaphor but in dead earnest, something especially and excruciatingly real, something that endows them with the majesty of archetypal poetry, ample recompense for the lesser things in the midst of which they shine in such sombre splendour. In them “a terrible beauty is born”. These are, as Whitman might say, poems retrieved from the night.¹⁶

The words may be applied to Tagore’s paints quite relevantly. It is natural to remember the poetry of Baudelaire as we look at the gloomy paints of Tagore. Both the artists know how to extract beauty from filth and mire.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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6. *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol. 14, pp. 212-13.
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8. Letter to Nirmal Kumari Mohalanabish, Number 8, 1928.
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10. Letter to Sudhindranath Dutta, April 1, 1930.
11. Letter to Sudhindranath Dutta, May 17, 1930.
12. Letter to Amiya Chakroborty, 1938 (date and month unknown).
13. 'Subliminal' is a general term used by Sri Aurobindo for all parts of the being which are not on the waking surface. See SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 354 for Sri Aurobindo's explanation.
14. Prithwish Neogi, Drawings and paintings of Rabindranath Tagore in *Rabindranath Tagore: A Centenary Volume 1861-1961*. Sahitya Akademi, p. 201.
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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN OUR ASHRAM LIFE

THE devotees and followers of Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother must remember that Sri Aurobindo Ashram has nothing to do with religion as such. True spirituality is the foundation. Sri Aurobindo's letter to Nirodbaran (14 January, 1932) published in the *Bulletin* (November 1999) bears ample testimony to this fact. Here it is:

As to what you say Islamic ideals, you should remember that whatever is necessary to keep from the past as materials for the future, will *of itself* and *automatically* be taken into the new creation when things are ready and the full Light and Power at work. It is not necessary for anybody to represent and stand for Islamic ideals or Hindu or Christian ideals; if anybody here thinks he must stand for one or other of these things, he is making a mistake and is likely to create unnecessary narrowness, clash and opposition. There is no opposition or clash between them in the spiritual experience; it is only the external human mind that mistakenly puts them against each other. What we are here to make is a new creation in which there is a larger reconciling Truth than anything that went before in the past; but what will reconcile and create anew is the Power, the Light, the Knowledge that comes from above.

The same holds good about other religions too.

The Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* (20 December 1916) gives us the story of how the Buddha came to her and exerted her to "obey the injunction from the depths." But he introduced himself to her not as the Buddha, but as Sakyamuni—the hermit of Sakya dynasty. The name Buddha was given by his followers who created a new religion after his demise. The same thing can be said of all other religions.

The Mother also warned us not to create a new religion in the name of Sri Aurobindo who embodied in himself the Supreme Truth far above all religions. The followers of Sri Aurobindo should also follow the example of their Divine Guru and strive for a total transformation of their beings down to the physical.

This is only for the sadhaks of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The rigour of his Yoga is not expected from the devotees in general. A faithful devotion and collaboration for the Divine work by each one according to his or her capacity will be enough to receive the blessings of the Supreme Lord and the Divine Mother.

But if we follow the path of a particular religion we will never reach the Supreme Truth. We will move eternally through the labyrinth of partial truths. In that case we will miss the opportunity that Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother presented to us. Whatever is our outward pursuit we must hold on to their lotus-feet for final fulfilment.

ABANI SINHA

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

SRI AUROBINDO always gave to the disciples the help and encouragement whenever they erred or slipped; a security of protection was extended to them whenever they felt depressed; also he gave invaluable guidance to them by acting as an eye-opener to them, showing the cause of the minutest of disciples' backslidings. None who has not been through such ordeals can ever fully appraise the concrete help that comes along with the guiding voice of the pilot.

Sri Aurobindo's character will stay for ever unknown, to wit, the pains he took, with almost incredible patience, not only to help those who wanted to give a poetical expression to spiritual truth and experience, but also to knock the bottom out of a prevalent false notion that yoga belongs to the province of silence to the exclusion of expression. Also it was because he was a great poet that it was given to him to assay such truths about spiritual poetry which had been his *grande passion* before he started yoga. He himself once said (as one of his earliest disciples, Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta, testifies in the preface to Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems*) that he had been first and last a poet: it was only later that he became a Yogi. Poets can be made through yogic powers and that he achieved it consciously in quite a few of disciples. One can understand it from the self-explanatory statement of Nirodbaran: "I was myself one of those who came under the spell of the Muse, although I had never before written a line of poetry. J. A. Chadwick (Arjava) was another and I can give many more instances.... Sri Aurobindo never 'wrote down' to the disciples nor did he deliver sermons from a lofty height. The tone is invariably courteous and compassionate with hardly ever a harsh word even where the disciple is gravely at fault." Sri Aurobindo writes:

... I put forward four reasons why the experiment [by us of writing poetry in the English language] could be made: (1) The expression of spirituality in the English tongue is needed and no one can give the real stuff like Easterners and especially Indians. (2) We are entering an age when the stiff barriers of insular and national mentality are breaking down (Hitler notwithstanding), the nations are being drawn into a common universality with whatever differences, and in the new age there is no reason why the English should not admit the expression of other minds than the English in their tongue. (3) For ordinary minds it may be difficult to get over the barrier of a foreign tongue but extraordinary minds (Conrad etc.) can do it. (4) In this case the experiment is to see whether what extraordinary minds can do cannot be done by Yoga. (28.2.1936)

*

My aim is not personal glory, but to arrive at the expression of spiritual truth and

experience of all kinds in poetry. The English tongue is the most widespread—if it can be used for the highest spiritual expression, that is worth trying. (10.12.1935)²

In the Foreword to *Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran* Amal Kiran writes as follows:

“Nirodbaran and I grew up together as poets under the creative eye of Sri Aurobindo. Both of us owe to him whatever beauty and truth—or rather beauty of truth—flowered in our work. But, while the merits of our productions may be the same, Nirodbaran has a more remarkable ‘case-history’—if I may borrow a term from his past career as a medico. And one of the reasons for it is precisely that he was a medico pure and simple before coming to Sri Aurobindo whereas I had previously some poetic initiative.

How a doctor started to pen extraordinary verses instead of commonplace prescriptions is a typical Aurobindonian phenomenon, for which there is to my knowledge no parallel except that other metamorphosis—the turning of the mathematical logician John Chadwick into ‘Arjavananda’, the bard of dynamic occult vision soon after he had joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and got the new name.

There is still one difference between the two examples of Sri Aurobindo’s transformative power. Nirodbaran became quite often a sheer medium through whom a strange species of poetry poured without his being able to make head or tail of it. Of course, what he served as a channel for proved to have a comet’s tail, a brilliance from beyond the earth, and a veritable godhead seemed to glow from behind or above the mere mind. But the recognition of the glory came mostly after the Master had broken to the somewhat dazed disciple the good news that he had written splendid poetry without being aware of it.

Most poets feel elated by their own work soon after bringing it to birth and not infrequently realise as a later stage that what they had taken as marvellous was just so-so. Nirodbaran, time and again, thought he had produced nothing more than a mouse after a mountain of labour—until Sri Aurobindo disclosed to him how a full-bodied worship-worthy Ganesh had for his *vahana* (vehicle) what Nirodbaran had felt to be a poor rat.

The poet’s unawareness of the wonder he was transmitting was, however, only one facet of the strange development he was going through. Another was that often the poem was not simply far better than he had thought but also of a new kind, an unusual version of what contemporary Europe at that period was coming to dub Surrealism. Sri Aurobindo understood European Surrealism in general to be a certain outburst from the dream-plane where logical links are rarely to be found in a composition of suggestive yet confusing images. Nirodbaran’s variety of Surrealism was no confusion at all: it did not hail from the common dream-plane but rather through it and its origin was a subtle shimmering mystery that was part of the inner Yogic consciousness.

So much for the baffling side of his work. There was also the side which Sri Aurobindo cryptically termed ‘O. P.’ for short, meaning ‘Overhead Poetry’. The poetry thus characterised dropped in front levels of consciousness that are never abundantly tapped in the world’s great poetry. Here is a greatness other than the mind’s lucid or

intricate imagining, the life-force's happy or intense seeing, the subtle physical's undulant or straightforward observing. Here is a new power which can exhibit a largeness, a depth, a delicacy which we can describe only as directly spiritual instead of translating spirituality into a vivid language other than its own. Nirodbaran is not very prolific in this rare utterance but he catches its authentic note with enough frequency to make it an appreciable element.

None of us without Sri Aurobindo's co-operation would have come into our own. But Nirodbaran's 'case-history' is rather exceptional in that in many of his poems Sri Aurobindo as co-operator is more than the inspirer: he is actually the fellow-writer. To deliver the poet in Nirodbaran Sri Aurobindo, especially at the start, had to rewrite several of the doctor's lines. He had to doctor the doctor and with his master touch bring out in full what the tyro could seize only in part. Occasionally the tyro got hold of the perfect expression:

And time-greied towers against the evening sky

or

Only by faith the Knowledge is enshrined
In the ancient temple of the twilight mind.

But there we are still within the domain of the creative intelligence in a semi-romantic semi-religious mood. At rare times Nirodbaran pulls into the open a wonderful secret with his own sensitised fingers: a simple yet magical conjuration like

Under the white felicitous eye of the moon

or a profound intuition of the poetic activity itself at its finest:

A rhythmic fire that opens a secret door

or else a rapt intensity timeless in its insight:

Life that is deep and wonder-vast...

Such masterpieces increase in frequency as the years pass and we have a few whole poems—grave or airy—which needed very little transmutation. For a long while, nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo had to intervene. Now and then no more than a small tightening was required, as with the line which originally read:

A giant eagle poised in realms of delight.

Sri Aurobindo commented: 'Good Lord, sir, this anapaest in the last part jerks and is

quite inappropriate to the poise of the eagle'. The slightly redone line brought out the truth-beauty intended by the inspiration:

A giant eagle poised in realms of light.

An even more revealing tact in letting the deep intent of the mystic Muse find its way into a faultless compactness of style and an inevitable metrical rhythm is shown in the corrected form as compared with the original:

Your
 (While your) body's faint murmur falls slowly heard,
A *last*
 (Like a) dying warrior's half-spoken word.

The work of patient empathic correction carried on by Sri Aurobindo is a lesson to all aspirants towards what he has called 'the Future poetry'—and it is a lesson taught repeatedly with a lavish yet most apposite humour. This humour is one of the outstanding merits of Nirodbaran's book and its effect on the receptive reader may well be hit off by that charming line of his:

Figures of infinite beauty laugh like Dawn..."³

Here are some of Nirodbaran's poems with Sri Aurobindo's comments and corrections.

1

(Original form)

My thoughts are fruited on Thy magic tree
hung
 Among gold leaves, (hanging) on a silver bough
Fruits lustrous
 (Lustrous fruits), delicate-hued like ivory
Or
 (And) diamond stars shining on the sky-brow!
 Can't have at the
 beginning a cretic
 like that followed

*by a dactyl
for heart's*
I pluck them one by one (and in) my (heart) store
shalt
Where like a rapturous vision they glow;
The transcendent crystal walls and marble floor
Mirror their flames like glassy mounds of snow.
Metre?

Each thought is burdened with Thy mood divine
And wrapt with beauty unimaginable
Brimming with splendours of a sun-red wine
And songs of a gold-throated nightingale.
rhyme between
2nd and 4th?
Doubtful, but
let it be.

6.3.38

Sri Aurobindo's comments:

Q: Can words be woven with incense in the last line?

A: They may be but can't be woven by incense, but what the deuce is the construction of this line? and the meaning?

Q: You will be staggered by the Harinian⁴ imagery here, but has it Harinian cohesion and illogical logic?

A: An exceedingly fine poem. This time the inspiration has got through with a vengeance. Except for two lines the rhythm is also admirable.⁴

Here are 2 facsimiles of the original compositions with Sri Aurobindo's comments and corrections.

2

(Original form)

in

I have grown to a milk-white fire of the moon

In the sky-shadow of the vast;
4 feet?

Clouds of pale figures fall into a swoon

From my soul's radiance cast.

Candle-vision from haunts of starry caves

Flickers on my path of dreams

Like sinuous smiles of pearl-glistening waves

On the heart of rock-strewn streams.

Poised in an eagle-calm my thoughts (doth) flow

Over dark ranges of night

Burdened with the hues of some invisible glow

Of a sun-dripping light.

Around a haloed Face they hover and rest

And on its beauty brood

And drink now the gold-brimming nectar, pressed

From its infinitude.

Sri Aurobindo's Comments:

A: Exceedingly fine.

Q: I am sorry I have no time to comment to-night.

A: Well, that's *some* inspiration! (American sense of some!) O.K. to the nth degree. Only you do not seem to have realised that it is predominantly a stress rhythm with feet as the subordinate and workable element—otherwise you wouldn't say that line [2] is 4 feet—that would be only if it were an ordinary iambic metre. But as regular feet metre the poem would be impossible. As stress rhythm it is perfect.

(Revised form)

I have grown into a milk-white fire of the moon
 In the sky-shadow of the vast;
 Clouds of pale figures fall into a swoon
 From my soul's radiance cast.

Candle-vision from haunts of starry caves
 Flickers on my path of dreams
 Like sinuous smiles of pearl-glistening waves
 On the heart of rock-strewn streams.

Poised in an eagle-calm my thoughts flow
 Over dark ranges of night
 Burdened with hues of some invisible glow
 Of a sun-dripping light.

Around a haloed Face they hover and rest
 And on its beauty brood
 And drink now the gold-brimming nectar, pressed
 From its infinitude.⁵

28.3.38

3

(Original form)

My life is veiled in a sleep of light,
 A hush that nothing breaks,
 The world before my inward sight
pure
 Into (a) beauty wakes.

“a” is rather vague,
an epithet is needed.

Life that is deep and wonder-vast,
 Lost in a breath of sound;
 The bubbling shadows have been cast
 From its heart’s timeless round.
 Any meaning?
lots of meaning

In its lulled silver stream now shines
 A lustrous smile of God
 Whose brilliantly curved outlines,
ing
 Flash on the memory-trod
 Outlines of God or
 his smile?
Smile

there
 Caverns of slumbering earth, (and) bring

 A glow of the Infinite;

30.3.38

Sri Aurobindo’s comments:

Q: Guru, I fear this is only a sprat!

A: It is not a sprat, sir; it is a goldfish. You seem to be weak in poetical zoology. It is perfect, except for the one fault you have detected. The only alterations (except the “pure”) I find needful are meant to obviate that defect, by going back to “my”, so connecting the first and the last lines (also aided by the repetition of Light) and making the rest appear as closely connected with it. Like that it makes a very well-built and finely inspired poem. If you can produce more sprats like that, there will be much wealth in your fisheries. It is much better than the other recent ones, except the stress poem—nothing decorative,—all there!

31.3.38

Q: About yesterday's poem, I am still "weak" in finding the "gold" you found in my fish. I don't see what beauty is there to make you mark certain lines thrice—e.g. "Into a heaven of light" which is very simple, ordinary sort of line, I should say. I admit it is well-built and devoid of decoration, but to see it as you see it—well, could you explain a bit? But I can increase this sort of "wealth" if you are at my back!

A: There is probably a defect in your solar plexus which makes it refuse to thrill unless it receives a strong punch from poetry—an ornamental, romantic or pathetic punch. But there is also a poetry which expresses things with all absolute truth but without effort, simply and easily, without a word in excess or any laying on of colour, only just the necessary. That kind of achievement is considered as among the greatest things poetry can do. The three lines are put in yesterday's poem wherever that happened.

A phrase, word or line may be quite simple and ordinary and yet taken with another phrase, line or word become the perfect thing. If you look you will see that my 3 lines are put against the *two* last lines taken together and not this one only by itself. So taken they express with perfect felicity something that can be seen or felt in spiritual experience. The same reason for the other three line encomiums. E.g. A line like "Life that is deep and wonder-vast" has what I have called the inevitable quality, with a perfect simplicity and straightforwardness it expresses something in a definitive and perfect way that cannot be bettered; so does "Lost in a breath of sound", with less simplicity but with the same inevitability. The two lines that follow are very fine but they have to labour more to express what they want and express it less absolutely—still it does so much that it gets 2 lines, but not three. The same distinction applies to the next two lines "In the lulled silver stream" etc. and the four that follow. I don't mean that highly coloured poetry cannot be absolutely inevitable, it can, e.g. Shakespeare's "In cradle of the rude imperious surge" and many others. But most of the highly coloured poetry attracts too much attention to the colour and its brilliances so that the thing in itself is less felt than the magnificence of its dress. All kinds are legitimate in poetry. I only wanted to point out that poetry can be great or perfect even if it uses simple or ordinary expressions—e.g. Dante simply says "In His will is our peace" and in writing that in Italian produces one of the greatest lines in all poetic literature.

(Revised form)

My life is veiled in a sleep of light,
A hush that nothing breaks;
The world before my inward sight
Into pure beauty wakes.

Life that is deep and wonder-vast,
Lost in a breath of sound;

The bubbling shadows have been cast
From its heart's timeless round.

In its lulled silver streams now shines
A lustrous smile of God
Whose brilliantly curved outlines,
Flashing on the memory-trod

Caverns of slumbering earth, there bring
A glow of the Infinite;
While my soul's diamond voices wing
Into a heaven of light.⁶

30.3.38

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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3. *Ibid.*, pp. iii-iv.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
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ON LIBERATING ENGLISH TO BE A WORLD LANGUAGE

(Continued from the issue of October 2002)

2

I SHALL NOW move on to a more familiar field where the failure to appreciate the special nature of English as a World Language has confused issues. I shall look briefly at the problem of deciding what should be an educational model for spoken English in India. This discussion is intended to bring out another feature of World English and also suggest a condition which is needed for its natural evolution.

Prator's (1968) main objection to accepting an Indian variety of spoken English as an educational model for Indians was the following:

...in a nutshell, the heretical tenet I feel I must take exception to is the idea that it is best, *in a country where English is not spoken natively* but is widely used as the medium of instruction, to set up the local variety of English as the ultimate model to be imitated by those learning the language. (Prator, 1968: p. 459; emphasis added)

Prator's point simply is that since varieties of Indian English are not native varieties, no variety of Indian English can be suitable to be adopted as an educational model. I do not wish to raise here the issue whether the dichotomies such as native and non-native are legitimate distinctions. But whatever its value in other contexts, it is my contention that such a dichotomy and the value judgments based on it cannot be used in the case of World English.

Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1964) are more sympathetic to the use of non-native varieties as educational models. However, they suggest two criteria to determine whether a variety of English is acceptable for use as an educational model.

First, it must be a variety actually used by a reasonably large body of the population, in particular by a proportion of those whose level of education makes them in other respects desirable models.... Second, it must be mutually intelligible with other varieties of English used by similar professional and educational groups in other countries.... It follows from this that the extent of deviation from Standard English grammar and lexis must be small. It also follows, as far as phonology is concerned, that while the actual quality of vowels and consonants may vary a great deal between one accent and another, the number of contrasts, the number of phonological units, and the number of systems being operated must also remain fairly close to those of other 'educated accents', since otherwise speakers of one would have greater difficulty in understanding speakers of others.

I doubt whether in a country like India where English is learnt mostly through formal schooling and study we can ever find a variety of English which satisfies the two criteria mentioned by Halliday et al and which would therefore be acceptable as an educational model. Take, for instance, the kind of English that is called General Indian English that is recommended as an educational model for India (CIE Monograph 7). According to even the writers of this monograph it is a 'reformed' version of the educated variety of Indian English actually used. In other words, it is an artificial model in the sense that it is arrived at by bringing about selective reform in a certain variety of Educated Indian English by adding to it features such as stress and certain consonant distinctions. This strategy of proposing as an educational model a variety of English not actually used by a sizeable group of speakers in the country has been criticised for that reason; it does not satisfy the first criterion mentioned by Halliday et al in the quotation above.

But in my view this strategy is the only sensible means of finding a compromise between the educational arguments for a model of spoken English that would be intelligible outside one's own state and country, and the socio-linguistic arguments which allow each community to evolve its own models. Once again the first criterion suggested above by Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens is a criterion for a natural language but for World English this criterion is not applicable.

I also feel that fresh thinking is called for on this bogey of intelligibility across countries that is often raised. Otherwise we are likely to thwart the natural evolution of World English by straightjacketing it to fit our expectations about other languages. In recent years Quirk (1985) has strongly advocated the desirability of a global standard for English to ensure that the acceptance and encouragement of local varieties, particularly in countries like India where English is a second language does not become detrimental to global communication. Referring to English Second Language (ESL) and English First Language (EFL) countries Quirk has said: "The relatively narrow range of purposes for which the non-native needs to use English (even in ESL countries) is arguably well catered for by a single monochrome standard form that looks as good on paper as it sounds in speech."

I am inclined to agree more with Graeme Kennedy (1986) who points out in his comments on Quirk's remarks:

Since English is so much the world's language, international popular culture may be a more powerful determinant on norms than so-called standards, whether or not they have official or educational sanctions. I suspect that in the final analysis, the vast majority of users of English tend to adopt local varieties, regardless of the admonitions of teachers.

I question the assumption that because English is a World Language which is being increasingly used for international communication, every learner, let us say in a country like India, where English is taught at the level of primary schools most often by teachers totally ill-equipped for the task, should be required to acquire an internationally intelligible

model of English. (Nadkarni 1983)

It may sound like a paradox but I feel that a World Language will establish itself more firmly in the minds and hearts of people belonging to different language groups in the world to the extent it allows them latitude to realise and express their individuality in it and through it. And the way one pronounces a language is one of the things one is most sensitive about. Generally, an Indian takes greater offence when you correct his pronunciation than when you correct his grammar.

Until the middle of the 19th century, French was a greater international language than English. Today the influence of French has diminished outside the francophone countries while English is gaining everywhere. There certainly are a host of reasons to which English owes its ascendancy today. But one of these reasons is probably that the teaching of impeccable, native, French was an explicit policy of French governments while the British have been more tolerant in this respect and have taken a more or less neutral attitude towards the emergence of different national English accents. World English will no doubt continue this tradition. This latitude that English has so far enjoyed in developing according to the individualities of the different communities which use it is one of the necessary conditions for the growth of a World Language. It is because of such a freedom which English has enjoyed that Sethna and others like him can make the kinds of claims they have made about English.

In my view, with regard to intelligibility, Chinese is probably the right model for World English. Chinese dialects are intelligible across dialects only in the written form but are not always intelligible across this divide in the spoken form. I am not suggesting that English should adopt an ideographic writing system. What is an attractive feature of Chinese is that it is intelligible across dialect boundaries at least in the written medium if not in the spoken medium. Similarly World English does not have to aim at every speaker of its innumerable varieties being intelligible to all other speakers of the language in the spoken as well as the written medium. If you consider the global scope of English, this would seem to be totally impracticable. As it is, many of the varieties of Indian English are not intelligible to speakers of many varieties of British or American English or even to speakers of ESL varieties such as Nigerian English. But global communication through English does not mean that each individual who learns English has to have this competence. When English is taught more or less as a compulsory subject at school to literally scores of millions of students, the aim of this teaching cannot be attaining international intelligibility in the spoken form. English will have to be content to aim at such international intelligibility primarily at the receptive level and that too in the written variety. What about intelligibility at the spoken level? This requirement will be effectively met by some 'brokers', who have either the special gift or have had the opportunity of picking up a variety of internationally intelligible spoken English.

To conclude, I have discussed in this paper two characteristics of English as a World Language and also one condition which is crucial to its natural evolution. This may be seen as a small attempt at characterising World Language English as a distinct linguistic phenomenon. The two properties are:

1. A World Language is a language which evokes mother-tongue-like sentiments among people of diverse linguistic backgrounds for whom it is not their natural mother tongue. In other words, a World Language is potentially an auxiliary mother tongue of all those who wish to use it as a mother tongue.

2. In the case of a World Language an educational model, particularly for spoken English can be a synthetic model, a model which is not used by any sizeable speech community within that country.

The condition for the natural evolution of a World Language is that it gives to those who use it enough latitude to make it their own; this is needed to make them feel for it the kind of closeness and loyalty which one feels for one's mother tongue. A World Language unites people because it enables each linguistic community which uses it to feel at home within its fold. The function of a World Language is to foster an international or global consciousness without suppressing diversity in its manifestation. English needs to be liberated from the restrictions we still impose on it because we do not always seem to be able to remember that it is a new linguistic phenomenon. We should not shackle the new by seeking to impose on it the restrictions of the old.

(Concluded)

MANGESH NADKARNI

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RELEVANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION FOR THE EMERGING TECHNOLOGICAL SCENE

In our modern age Technology has come to stay as a powerful force for shaping the outer life of man. No amount of moral or spiritual platitudes or frowning of the orthodox religionist over the “Evils of Technology” can alter this fact. But technology is only a tool, the right use of which depends on the vision and values of the consciousness which uses it. So what modern science and technology need at present is an illuminating spiritual vision which can ensure its right use, guide its deployment towards the fulfilment of the evolutionary destiny of humanity, and give it a certain clarity in understanding its role and significance in the future evolution of humanity, Here comes the utility and importance of Sri Aurobindo’s thought which can provide such a guiding vision.

The emerging and future technological scene will be shaped by three frontier technologies or shall we say technology-clusters? They are *Information Technology*, *Bio-technology* and the *Energy and Environment Technologies*. Here we make an attempt to view these frontier technologies in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s evolutionary vision.

Information Technology

So much is being said and written about “Information Revolution” which is going to change the world. Some of the oft-repeated cliches about Information Technology (IT) are: It is the second industrial revolution; it will change “everything” from economy and commerce, to society and culture; it will radically change the way we think, work and live, etc. We will not join with this ever-swelling bandwagon of IT enthusiasts. We will make an attempt to look at IT and its impact on the society objectively, critically and holistically in the light of integral spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo.

The IT wave which is sweeping the world raises many crucial questions regarding the role of technology in general and IT in particular in the future evolution of humanity. The first question is whether IT can bring any radical or fundamental changes in human conditions? The answer to this question depends on our standards of judgement. There are five standards or shall we say using the modern terminology, paradigms of judgement: pragmatic, humanistic, ecological, traditional-spiritual and, finally, integral or holistic which is that of Sri Aurobindo. But to understand Sri Aurobindo’s paradigm of judgement we must have some clear view of the other four paradigms.

First is the paradigm of the technocrat, managerial and pragmatic mind which is dominating the world today. This type of mind judges everything by its pragmatic impact on the external world in economy, society, politics, measured in terms of productivity, efficiency, profit and prosperity. When we look at it from this angle, it may be true that IT will bring a great change in the lifestyle of people in their outer life.

The second is the humanistic paradigm which judges everything from its positive impact on the human being measured in terms of some fundamental human values like

liberty, equality, fraternity, well-being, quality of life and the social, mental, moral, aesthetic and cultural progress of humanity. When we look at IT from this humanistic point of view, the picture we get may not be as rosy as it was painted by the IT technocrat. For example, many modern thinkers all over the world have expressed deep concern that IT may widen the gap between the rich and the poor. But, since in the future it is not material resources, but "Information" or "Knowledge" will be the main source of wealth, IT may lead to a widening gap between Info-rich and Info-poor.

The third is the ecological paradigm which measures every phenomenon in terms of its impact on physical Nature or Environment and how much it helps in harmonising human life with the ecology of physical Nature. From this ecological standard IT scores rather well. For IT is non-polluting; it consumes minimum amount of non-renewable energies of Nature; it doesn't disturb the bio-diversity of Nature.

The fourth standard of judgement is that of traditional spirituality which judges everything by its impact on the spiritual progress of the individual and the fulfilment of his ultimate spiritual destiny. Most of the recent Indian traditional spirituality considers the world more or less as an illusion with its only significance as a framework of experience for the moral and spiritual development of the individual. In this spiritual perspective the worth or significance of a technological or social phenomenon depends on the help it renders to the moral and spiritual development of the human being; if it doesn't help in this spiritual growth, it is just a toy with which the ignorant and infantile humanity is amusing itself!

But none of these paradigms gives us a truly holistic perspective or standard for understanding the significance of IT. Here comes the importance of Sri Aurobindo's integral vision.

Sri Aurobindo accepts some of the fundamental propositions of the humanistic and spiritual paradigm. He accepts the humanistic view that the only true revolutions are those which elevate the motives and values of people and create a better human being; better not merely in terms of knowledge and skill and productivity and efficiency, but a wiser, balanced, more loving, compassionate, refined and cultured human being and a freer, more equitable, harmonious and unified humanity. Any technological system has to be judged by its potentiality to help or contribute to this task of creating a better human being. And all technology has to be used with this end in view.

Sri Aurobindo agrees that the humanistic paradigm is a better and a broader standard of judgement than the purely techno-economic standard which judges everything in terms of economy, productivity and efficiency. And, finally, Sri Aurobindo agrees with the traditional spiritual paradigm that the highest and lasting fulfilment of the human being lies in his spiritual transformation and in the fulfilment of his spiritual destiny. Neither technology nor ecology nor humanism nor the mental and moral and aesthetic culture of the human mind by itself can bring about this transformation. This transformation can be realised only by the inner spiritual discipline of Yoga.

But Sri Aurobindo's integral vision reconciles all these four paradigms in an overarching synthesis and gives a holistic standard of vision for judging any social or

technological phenomenon. In this holistic vision IT has a significant role to play in the future evolution of humanity. In this integral vision the role of IT may not be as exalted as the IT enthusiasts make it to be but it will not be insignificant as some of the spiritual fanatics look at it.

(To be continued)

M. S. SRINIVASAN

AN EXPERIENCE

My parents never tired of suggesting I read Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's works during times of depression. I rarely did. Little did I know that I would turn to the Mother during the time of my greatest need.

I was a student at Wabash College, USA. I had just returned to Wabash for my third and penultimate year. I had a terribly hectic semester ahead of me. Six courses and a laboratory class required a lot of determination and I had to petition the college administration to allow me to take such a heavy course load. I had also decided to shift to off campus housing for that academic year (2001-2002). For the past two years I was living in the college dormitory and, consequently, lived in the college campus with the various academic departments and the college health centre in very close proximity, ate at the college mess—all the advantages of on campus housing. By moving off campus, not only would I have to cook for myself but also walk half a mile to the college for classes (which doesn't sound much but in winter, with a couple of feet of snow and temperatures 18 degrees Celsius below zero, it does become quite a struggle). I would also have to take care of all the bills that I didn't have to these couple of years since I lived in college accommodation. I had no idea that all these factors, added to my six courses and a laboratory class, would make life unexpectedly tough.

Within a couple of weeks of arriving at Wabash I received the first troublesome signs. I used to leave my apartment at 9 in the morning after having a glass of milk and a banana, go through all my classes, work after college, study in the library, return at 10 or 11 at night, cook dinner, eat and finally go to bed at 2 or 3 in the morning. I was eating one meal a day and pushing my body to the limit. Two weeks into my third year, I started passing extremely painful stool. Not heeding the warning, I continued on my regular schedule and received a shock when I realized I had one of the worst cases of haemorrhoids. My parents had suggested I should meditate after reading a little bit of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother before going to bed when I had told them of my discomfort and tough schedule earlier. I hadn't.

The very next day I hobbled to the doctor who immediately advised a minor surgery and gleefully proceeded, much to my horror. Subsequently he assured me that I could get back to my normal routine. I felt no pain at this time as I had been administered a local anaesthetic. I returned to the library where I worked and found that I just couldn't get up after sitting down. My boss, Mr. Frye, drove me back to my apartment at once. The pain was excruciating and my jeans was stained completely with blood. Following the doctor's instructions, I prepared to take a Sietz Bath in the bathtub. I sat down and was horrified to find that the water in the tub turned crimson. I decided to lie down immediately. For the next four hours I bled non-stop. In blind pain, I rang up the doctor who said the campus health centre had closed and I should come to their nursing home—which was a mile and half away—at once. When I said I didn't have a car nor were any of my friends available at that time, he suggested I walk. Shocked, I rang up my local guardian in New York, Dr. Manjula Bansal, who promised to ring up my doctor and speak to him. A couple of

minutes later, the doctor rang up, all sweet and sugary, apologized for their bad work over my haemorrhoids and invited me very politely to their clinic.

All this time I had been asking the Mother for strength to go through the ordeal. At that very moment, my roommate returned home, much to my delight, as he wasn't supposed to be back till late at night. He drove me to the nursing home. The doctor said the operation hadn't been successful and he would need to cauterise me this time. Once again I was injected a local aesthetic rectally (something that had been done just four hours ago) and operated. Despite the aesthetic and the painkiller I had just taken, I was in agonizing pain by the time I returned home. I took another pain killer and was knocked out cold. I woke up six hours later.

It was clear that college for the next week or so was out of the question. I had taken six courses—four advanced—that required regular rigorous study and were vital for completing my Major. I lost all heart. There was no way I could go through the semester. It was the most depressing period of my life.

My parents had packed a book, *Growing up with the Mother* with my luggage as their birthday gift to me. I had taken it out and placed it on my desk as soon as I had returned but had never opened it. As it was the book nearest my reach, I turned to it and started reading. The more I read, the more relaxed and confident I felt. After an hour, something spurred me towards studying for all my courses in advance. I read the assigned readings of the next two days, completed the following two days' homework as well and went to sleep feeling happy and confident.

It was morning when I awoke, feeling sick and nauseated. The pain had returned. I ate a fruit or two, drank a bit of milk, swallowed a painkiller and started contemplating dropping the semester and going home. Depression had hit me so hard that I thought myself worthless, life not worth living and dreamt of ingenious ways to commit suicide as I drifted into sleep. I woke up some hours later in the same state of mind. With nothing to do, I turned once again to *Growing up with the Mother*. Once again, I felt at peace and happy, turned to my books and studied hard for the next four hours or so. This cycle continued for the next week. I read and re-read *Growing up*... I had also fallen into the practice of meditating after reading the book and then going to sleep and found my strength returning with a spirit of optimism I had never known. Every day and every night, whenever I would be haunted by the most depressing of thoughts, loneliness and pain, something deep within me told me that everything would fall into place—a faith that spurred me on.

A week had passed but I no longer felt that I wasn't up to it. I had missed a week of class, the pain had eased, though it was quite severe even then, but I felt I could return to my normal routine. So it started. I started going to my classes a bit tentatively at first but then grew in confidence as I realized I hadn't missed much but kept abreast of my classes and even advanced further because of my regular reading.

It took me a month to be completely cured but I hadn't stopped the habit of reading from the Mother's works (like *Living Within*), meditating and then going to bed. It had raised me from a deadly, depressing stupor to a cheerful workaholic stage. Imagine my

shock when, at the end of the semester, I received my grades and discovered I had done exceptionally well, much better than I had thought I ever could. It was a lesson hard learnt, but worth it. The divine guidance and support I received that semester continued for the next and yielded unimaginably wonderful results. At the annual awards ceremony I was astonished to receive the Cassel Award for the most promising student in the Political Science department. For that one academic year I regularly studied the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's works. It helped bring calm to an extremely hectic and lonely period and the divine guidance I received in the words I read helped preserve my sanity whenever I was on the verge of the most disastrous nervous, emotional breakdowns. Now I know it would have been easier to tackle my illness had I started earlier; perhaps the operation would not have been averted but I am sure the depression that hit me afterwards would have been easier to tackle. I feel grateful to the Divine for giving me the strength and guidance to go through the ordeal.

AURPON BHATTACHARYA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Passing Moments by R. Y. Deshpande. Ultra Publications, Bangalore. Pages: 59. Price: Rs. 60.

The Poet in Time and Space

It all began on 19/06/98 at 2:21 p.m. and ended on 18/08/98 at 2:58 p.m.! All of the 50 poems bound in 59 pages have a footer date and time. I wonder how Sri Aurobindo, or the Mother, would have reacted to this. I am sure quite favourably. As for me the *Passing Moments* keep lingering and I go back to them again and again and ask myself, why the poet is tormented as he lives in this world of space and time. Does he want to extricate himself from time's cares and worldly space? Where is he heading? The final poem in his work states the following:

Exists no more the hours
That once held my pain and grief;
And I have left shadows behind,
Worldly joys that are brief.
Time's Opuscle, p. 54

Then I leaf backwards and come back to the first poem again where I discover:

With a master-key in hand,
Oh to be active eternity!
I walk from peak to unseen peak
And claim that many-hued fire for me.
Passing Moments, p.1

Once you are through this little booklet, you would have to come back to it to read it at random and yet the feeling is that you are reading it continuously; you leaf it backwards and forwards and you will see there is unity about the work.

Mystical Man

There is tremendous mystic restlessness in the poet's soul and his determined and indefatigable journey takes him beyond time. By mysticism I mean that raised consciousness which directly receives the Divine light; it is that ideal life that is described in the Master's *The Life Divine*. The mystic restlessness, in the same manner, is the utter intensity of the soul to be one with the Divine. It has been expressed surprisingly in easy terms and even with humour:

I went to the edge of timelessness
 To meet the God of Time;
 But he was busy making the rounds
 In scattered seasons of the far-off clime.

God of Time, p. 5

Mysticism can do wonderful things to man. One can have an amazingly clear vision of the divine life. In other words, what is God doing! Indeed just as the children are curious to know what is going on around them, a mystic probes and prods God himself:

As usual the village potter
 Was at work shaping his pots;
 In the school when God saw
 Children he had afterthoughts.
When the Gods Laughed, p. 45

Space and Time

For a poet space and time are not mere physical dimensions; they are metaphysical entities to understand what lies beyond these realities. Nature evolves rather violently and space and time have their role to play. Not just this planet Earth is governed by the laws of matter but the entire universe comes under its ambit. The entire universe is a metaphor of the transient world; what really matters is that the eternal is from eternity:

Suddenly a star explodes at the edge
 And rises uncurling smoke;
 Yes, there was a fire burning long ago
 Before time from space broke.
What's Happening?, p. 19

“Time is that in which all things pass away,” said the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer and spent the rest of his life meditating as to how the will is represented in the world. Whatever happens, it happens in time; and more often than not, the things go the wrong way. Since we are humans, we err by nature; we may seek perfection, but we fall more often than we make efforts to rise. We fall, that is a fact:

A scarlet shadow floated
 On a scarlet stream of time,
 One of the horrid past
 Had committed the crime.
Tragedy at the Moon-Gate, p. 22

We must reflect upon our nature and discover what laws govern our lives. Why do we have to suffer affliction, disease, old age, and death; why is there such suffering in the world? Everything in creation is bound to destruction and death. Death is the law of life.

Life full of anguish and pain,
 Life held by death,—but why?
 And night after night the stars
 Suffer darkly their fate in the sky?
Law of Life, p. 30

Grace as the New Law of Life

Are we then governed by fate? Certainly not. We must take a new birth where the laws of matter are subsumed by the laws of the spirit. It is when grace conquers the flesh. We become incarnate with the spirit. The matter is not derided or discarded, the body is not judged profane and disposable. The spirit transforms the body and transcends it.

Spirit found a house to dwell in birth,
 Not a gloomy rented place, lifeless room,
 But a bright house for the stars to stay:
 A flame was seeded in Matter's womb.
New Birth, p. 40

The poet is mindful of the so-called 'practical questions'. It is easy, charge the detractors, to preach perfection. They even think that spiritual quest is a waste of time, a time which could have been well invested in alleviating poverty, promoting education, generating employment, serving the society and the country. However, if you do not know who you are and what you want to do, none of the practical minds in the world can help.

“Where to burn? How to burn?”
 Asked the tender flame.
 “Like a lamp? Like a forest fire
 Fiery rapture to claim?”
Where to Burn?, p. 47

Indeed, the essence of life consists of not in the achievements achieved, but how these have been achieved. God sees the heart, the love with which a deed is done. A child needs to barely smile and all the torments of the mother vanish. Such is the reflected and conscious life. Great words and empty action result in nothing:

Word and Sense went to market
 To buy a kilo of sweet potatoes;

But finding prices a bit too high
 Just bargained for their shadows.
To Buy Shadows, p. 43

Birth and death are the *termini* of the span of life. Creation and destruction, motion and change are the characteristics of the temporal things. However, for those who live by the grace of the Divine, life is changed and not ended with death:

But death can cross the ninth gate only if
 A sacrificial fire is kindled in the heart;
 Then will the being be carried in a surge,
 A great surge new divinity to body impart.
How Many Lives?, p. 46

Conclusion

Robert Frost, the famous American poet wrote: "I have never started a poem yet whose end I knew. Writing a poem is discovering." (*New York Times*, November 7, 1955) This observation aptly fits our own poet. He has given a wonderful bouquet of poetry collection: *The Rhododendron Valley*, *All is Dream Blaze*, *Under the Raintree*, *Paging the Unknown* and now *Passing Moments*. A familiar reader of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* feels that these are meditations on the Master's great epic:

In my lifeful trance
 I saw a radiant woman long ago named Savitri;
 The sky became a sun,
 The sun set afire by love who indeed is but she.
My Search, p. 15

He pays homage to the Master:

A godhead came upon earth
 Keeping aside the glory of his past;
 Left deathless life behind
 His crimson seeds in death to cast.
Time's Opusculc, p. 58

It binds well the philosophy of *The Life Divine*:

Peace became dense and serene
 And the night-watchers one by one went away

To a world of calm,—which would mean
Call of tranquil air would soon herald the day.
I Was Asleep, p. 3

A reader should keep this book of poems close at hand, so that he can find inspiration just as close as that.

DANIEL ALBUQUERQUE