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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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I SACRIFICE NOT EARTH

HER words failed lost in thought's immensities...
Then with a smile august as noonday heavens
The godhead of the vision wonderful:
"How shall earth-nature and man's nature rise
To the celestial levels, yet earth abide?
Heaven and earth towards each other gaze
Across a gulf that few can cross; none touch...
There is the All-Truth and there the timeless bliss.
But hers are fragments of a star-lost gleam,
Hers are but careless visits of the gods....
Few are the silences in which Truth is heard...
Reaching the bright miraculous fringe of God,
Into the glory of the Oversoul.
My will, my call is there in men and things;
But the Inconscient lies at the world's grey back
And draws to its breast of Night and Death and Sleep....
Leave to the circling aeons' tardy pace
And to the working of the inconscient Will,
Leave to its imperfect light the earthly race:
All shall be done by the long act of Time....
O flame, withdraw into thy luminous self
Or else return to thy original might
On a seer-summit above thought and world;
Partner of my unhoured eternity,
Be one with the infinity of my power:
For thou art the World-Mother and the Bride.
Out of the fruitless yearning of earth's life,...
Recovering wings that cross infinity
Pass back into the Power from which thou cam'st.
To that thou canst uplift thy formless flight,
Thy heart can rise from its unsatisfied beats
And feel the immortal and spiritual joy
Of a soul that never lost felicity....
Break into eternity thy mortal mould;
Melt, Lightning, into thy invisible flame.
Clasp, Ocean, deep into thyself thy wave,
Happy for ever in the embosoming surge.
Grow one with the still passion of the depths.
Then shalt thou know the Lover and the Loved,
Leaving the limits dividing him and thee.

Receive him into boundless Savitri,
 Lose thyself into infinite Satyavan,
 O miracle where thou beganst there cease!"
 But Savitri answered to the radiant God:
 "In vain thou temptst with solitary bliss
 Two spirits saved out of a suffering world;
 My soul and his indissolubly linked
 In the one task for which our lives were born,
 To raise the world to God in deathless Light,
 To bring God down to the world on earth we came,
 To change the earthly life to life divine.
 I keep my will to save the world and man;
 Even the charm of thy alluring voice,
 O blissful godhead, cannot seize and snare.
 I sacrifice not earth to happier worlds....
 Who made the soul of futile life in Time...
 What force condemned to birth and death and tears
 These conscious creatures crawling on the globe?
 If earth can look up to the light of heaven
 And hear an answer to her lonely cry,
 Not vain their meeting, nor heaven's touch a snare.
 If thou and I are true, the world is true;
 Although thou hide thyself behind thy works,
 To be is not a senseless paradox;
 Since God has made earth, earth must make in her God;
 What hides within her breast she must reveal.
 I claim thee for the world that thou hast made....
 Let a greater being then arise from man,
 The superhuman with the Eternal mate
 And the Immortal shine through earthly forms.
 Else were creation vain and this great world
 A nothing that in Time's moments seems to be.
 But I have seen through the insentient mask;
 I have felt a secret spirit stir in things
 Carrying the body of the growing God:
 It looks through veiling forms at veiless truth,
 It pushes back the curtain of the gods;
 It climbs towards its own eternity."

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 687-93)

PURNA YOGA

THE ENTIRE PURPOSE OF YOGA

By Yoga we can rise out of falsehood into truth, out of weakness into force, out of pain and grief into bliss, out of bondage into freedom, out of death into immortality, out of darkness into light, out of confusion into purity, out of imperfection into perfection, out of self-division into unity, out of Maya into God. All other utilisation of Yoga is for special and fragmentary advantages not always worth pursuing. Only that which aims at possessing the fullness of God is Purna Yoga; the Sadhaka of the Divine Perfection is the Purna Yogin.

Our aim must be to be perfect as God in His being and bliss is perfect, pure as He is pure, blissful as He is blissful, and, when we are ourselves *siddhas* in Purna Yoga, to bring all mankind to the same divine perfection. It does not matter if for the present we fall short of our aim, so long as we give ourselves whole-heartedly to the attempt and by living constantly in it and for it move forward even two inches upon the road; even that will help to lead humanity out of struggle and twilight in which it now dwells into the luminous joy which God intends for us. But whatever our immediate success, our unvarying aim must be to perform the whole journey and not lie down content in any wayside stage or imperfect resting place.

All Yoga which takes us entirely away from the world, is a high but narrow specialisation of divine *tapasyā*. God in His perfection embraces everything; we also must become all-embracing.

God in His ultimate existence beyond all manifestation and all knowledge, is the Absolute Parabrahman; in relation to the world He is that which transcends all universal existence while regarding it or in turning away from it; He is that which contains and upholds the universe, He is that which becomes the universe and He is the universe and everything which it contains.

He is also Absolute and Supreme Personality playing in the universe and as the universe; in the universe He appears to be its Soul and Lord, as the universe He appears to be the motion or process of the Will of the Lord and to become all the subjective and objective results of the motion. All the states of the Brahman, the transcendent, the continent, the universal, the individual are informed and sustained by the divine Personality. He is both the Existent and the state of existence. We call the state of existence the Impersonal Brahman, the Existent the Personal Brahman. There is no difference between them except to the play of our consciousness; for every impersonal state depends upon a manifest or secret Personality and can reveal the Personality which it holds and veils, and every Personality attaches to itself and can plunge itself into an impersonal existence. This they can do because Personality and Impersonality are merely different states of self-consciousness in our Absolute Being.

Philosophies and religions dispute about the priority of different aspects of God and different Yogins, Rishis and Saints have preferred this or that philosophy or religion.

Our business is not to dispute about any of them, but to realise and becomes all of them, not to follow after any aspect to the exclusion of the rest, but to embrace God in all His aspects and beyond aspect.

God descending into the world in various forms has consummated on this earth the mental and bodily form which we call humanity.

He has manifested in the world through the play of all-governing Soul with its own formative Will or Shakti, a rhythm of existence of which Matter is the lowest term and pure being the highest. Mind and Life stand upon Matter (*manas* and *prāṇa* on *annam*) and make the lower half of world-existence (*aparārdha*) ; pure Consciousness and pure Bliss proceed out of pure Being (*cit* and *ānanda* out of *sat*) and make the upper half of world-existence (*parārdha*). Pure Idea (*viñāna*) stands as the link between the two. These seven principles or terms of existence are the basis of the sevenfold world of the Puranas (Satyaloka, Tapas, Jana, Mahar, Swar, Bhavar and Bhur).

The lower hemisphere in this arrangement of consciousness consists of the three *vyāhritis* of the Veda, “Bhur, Bhavar, Swar”; they are states of consciousness in which the principles of the upper world are expressed or try to express themselves under different conditions. Pure in their own homes, they are in this foreign country subject to perverse, impure and disturbing combinations and workings. The ultimate object of life is to get rid of the perversity, impurity and disturbance and express them perfectly in these other conditions. Our life on this earth is a divine poem that we are translating into earthly language or a strain of music which we are rendering into words.

Being in Sat is one in multiplicity, one that regards its multiplicity without being lost or confused in it and multiplicity that knows itself as one without losing the power of multiple play in the universe. Under the conditions of mind, life and body, *ahamkāra* is born, the subjective or objective form of consciousness is falsely taken for self-existent being, the body for an independent reality and the ego for an independent personality; the one loses itself in us in its multiplicity and it recovers its unity, finds it difficult, owing to the nature of mind, to preserve its play of multiplicity. Therefore when we are absorbed in the world, we miss God in Himself, when we see God, we miss Him in the world. Our business is to break down and dissolve the mental ego and get back to our divine unity without losing our power of individual and multiple existence in the universe.

Consciousness in Chit is luminous, free, illimitable and effective; that which it is aware of as Chit (*jñāna-śakti*) it fulfils infallibly as Tapas (*kriyā-śakti*) ; for Jnana Shakti is only the stable and comprehensive, Kriya Shakti only the motional and intensive form of one self-luminous Conscious Being. They are one power of conscious force of God (Chit-Shakti of Sat-Purusha). But in the lower hemisphere, under the conditions of mind, life and body, the luminousness becomes divided and broken up into uneven rays, the freedom trammelled by egoism and unequal forms, the effectiveness veiled by the uneven play of forces. We have, therefore, states of consciousness, non-consciousness and false consciousness, knowledge and ignorance and false knowledge, effective force and inertia and ineffective force. Our business is by renouncing our divided and unequal individual force of action and thought into the one, undivided universal Chit-Shakti of Kali to replace

our egoistic activities by the play in our body of the universal Kali and thus exchange blindness and ignorance for knowledge and ineffective human strength for the divine effective Force.

Delight in Ananda is pure, unmixed, one and yet multitudinous. Under the conditions of mind, life and body it becomes divided, limited, confused and misdirected and owing to shocks of unequal forces and uneven distribution of Ananda subject to the duality of positive and negative movements, grief and joy, pain and pleasure. Our business is to dissolve these dualities by breaking down their cause and plunge ourselves into the ocean of divine bliss, one, multitudinous, evenly distributed (*sama*), which takes delight from all things and recoils painfully from none.

In brief, we have to replace dualities by unity, egoism by divine consciousness, ignorance by divine wisdom, thought by divine knowledge, weakness, struggle and effort by self-contented divine force, pain and false pleasure by divine bliss. This is called in the language of Christ bringing down the kingdom of heaven on earth, or in modern language, realising and effectuating God in the world.

Humanity is, upon earth, the form of life chosen for this human aspiration and divine accomplishment; all other forms of life either do not need it or are ordinarily incapable of it unless they change into humanity. The divine fullness is therefore the sole real aim of humanity. It has to be effected in the individual in order that it may be effected in the race.

Humanity is a mental existence in a living body; its basis is matter, its centre and instrument mind and its medium life. This is the condition of average or natural humanity.

In every human being there is concealed (*avyakta*) the four higher principles. Mahas, pure ideality in *vijñāna*, is not a *vyāhṛti* but the source of the *vyāhṛtis*, the bank upon which mental, vital and bodily action draw and turn its large and infinite wealth into small coin of the lower existence. Vijnana being the link between the divine state and the human animal is the door of escape for man into the supernatural or divine humanity.

Inferior mankind gravitates downward from mind towards life and body; average mankind dwells constant in mind limited by and looking towards life and body; superior mankind levitates upward either to idealised mentality or to pure idea, direct truth of knowledge and spontaneous truth of existence; supreme mankind rises to divine beatitude and from that level either goes upward to pure Sat and Parabrahman or remains to beatify its lower members and raise to divinity in itself and others this human existence.

The man who dwells in the higher or divine and now hidden hemisphere of his consciousness, having rent the veil, is the true superman and the last product of that progressive self-manifestation of God in world, Spirit out of matter, which is now called the principle of evolution.

To rise into divine existence, force, light and bliss and recast in that mould all mundane existence is the supreme aspiration of religion and the complete practical aim of Yoga. The aim is to realise God in the universe, but it cannot be done without realising God transcendent of the universe.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol. 17, pp. 61-65)

INTEGRAL YOGA

Integral Yoga — Life is but a Yoga

“It is natural from the point of view of the Yoga to divide into two categories the activities of the human mind in its pursuit of knowledge. There is the supreme supra-intellectual knowledge which concentrates itself on the discovery of the One and Infinite in its transcendence or tries to penetrate by intuition, contemplation, direct inner contact into the ultimate truths behind the appearances of Nature; there is the lower science which diffuses itself in an outward knowledge of phenomena, the disguises of the One and Infinite as it appears to us in or through the more exterior forms of the world-manifestation around us. These two, an upper and a lower hemisphere, in the form of them constructed or conceived by men within the mind’s ignorant limits, have even there separated themselves, as they developed, with some sharpness.... Philosophy, sometimes spiritual or at least intuitive, sometimes abstract and intellectual, sometimes intellectualising spiritual experience or supporting with a logical apparatus the discoveries of the spirit, has claimed always to take the fixation of ultimate Truth as its province. But even when it did not separate itself on rarefied metaphysical heights from the knowledge that belongs to the practical world and the pursuit of ephemeral objects, intellectual Philosophy by its habit of abstraction has seldom been a power for life. It has been sometimes powerful for high speculation, pursuing mental Truth for its own sake without any ulterior utility or object, sometimes for a subtle gymnastic of the mind in a mistily bright cloud-land of words and ideas, but it has walked or acrobatised far from the more tangible realities of existence. Ancient philosophy in Europe was more dynamic, but only for the few; in India in its more spiritualised forms, it strongly influenced but without transforming the life of the race.... Religion did not attempt, like Philosophy, to live alone on the heights; its aim was rather to take hold of man’s parts of life even more than his parts of mind and draw them Godwards; it professed to build a bridge between spiritual Truth and the vital and material human existence; it strove to subordinate and reconcile the lower to the higher, make life serviceable to God, Earth obedient to Heaven. It has to be admitted that too often this necessary effort had the opposite result of making Heaven a sanction for Earth’s desires; for, continually, the religious idea has been turned into an excuse for the worship and service of the human ego. Religion, leaving constantly its little shining core of spiritual experience, has lost itself in the obscure mass of its ever extending ambiguous compromises with life: in attempting to satisfy the thinking mind, it more often succeeded in oppressing or fettering it with a mass of theological dogmas; while seeking to net the human heart, it fell itself into pits of pietistic emotionalism and sensationalism; in the act of annexing the vital nature of man to dominate it, it grew itself vitiated and fell a prey to all the fanaticism, homicidal fury, savage or harsh turn for oppression, pullulating falsehood, obstinate attachment to ignorance to which that vital nature is prone; its desire to draw the physical in man towards God betrayed it into chaining itself to ecclesiastic mechanism, hollow ceremony and lifeless ritual. The corruption of the best produced the

worst by that strange chemistry of the power of life which generates evil out of good even as it can also generate good out of evil. At the same time in a vain effort at self-defence against this downward gravitation, Religion was driven to cut existence into two by a division of knowledge, works, art, life itself into two opposite categories, the spiritual and the worldly, religious and mundane, sacred and profane; but this defensive distinction itself became conventional and artificial and aggravated rather than healed the disease.... On their side Science and Art and the knowledge of Life, although at first they served or lived in the shadow of Religion, ended by emancipating themselves, became estranged or hostile, or have even recoiled with indifference, contempt or skepticism from what seem to them the cold, barren and distant or unsubstantial and illusory heights of unreality to which metaphysical Philosophy and Religion aspire. For a time the divorce has been as complete as the one-sided intolerance of the human mind could make it and threatened even to end in a complete extinction of all attempt at a higher or a more spiritual knowledge. Yet even in the earthward life a higher knowledge is indeed the one thing that is throughout needful, and without it the lower sciences and pursuits, however fruitful, however rich, free, miraculous in the abundance of their results, become easily a sacrifice offered without due order and to false gods; corrupting, hardening in the end the heart of man, limiting his mind's horizons, they confine in a stony material imprisonment or lead to a final baffling incertitude and disillusionment. A sterile agnosticism awaits us above the brilliant phosphorescence of a half-knowledge that is still the Ignorance.

A Yoga turned towards an all-embracing realisation of the Supreme will not despise the works or even the dreams, if dreams they are, of the Cosmic Spirit or shrink from the splendid toil and many-sided victory which he has assigned to himself in the human creature. But its first condition for this liberality is that our works in the world too must be part of the sacrifice offered to the Highest and to none else, to the Divine Shakti and to no other Power, in the right spirit and with the right knowledge, by the free soul and not by the hypnotised bondsman of material Nature. If a division of works has to be made, it is between those that are nearest to the heart of the sacred flame and those that are least touched or illumined by it because they are more at a distance, or between the fuel that burns strongly and brightly and the logs that if too thickly heaped on the altar may impede the ardour of the fire by their rather damp, heavy and diffused abundance. But, otherwise, apart from this division, all activities of knowledge that seek after or express Truth are in themselves rightful materials for a complete offering; none ought necessarily to be excluded from the wide framework of the divine life. The mental and physical sciences which examine into the laws and forms and processes of things, those which concern the life of men and animals, the social, political, linguistic and historical and those which seek to know and control the labours and activities by which man subdues and utilises his world and environment, and the noble and beautiful Arts which are at once work and knowledge,—for every well-made and significant poem, picture, statue or building is an act of creative knowledge, a living discovery of the consciousness, a figure of Truth, a dynamic form of mental and vital self-expression or world-expression,—all that seeks, all that finds, all that voices or figures is a realisation of something of the play of the

Infinite and to that extent can be made a means of God-realisation or of divine formation. But the Yogin has to see that it is no longer done as part of an ignorant mental life; it can be accepted by him only if by the feeling, the remembrance, the dedication within it, it is turned into a movement of the spiritual consciousness and becomes a part of its vast grasp of comprehensive illuminating knowledge.

For all must be done as a sacrifice, all activities must have the One Divine for their object and the heart of their meaning. The Yogin's aim in the sciences that make for knowledge should be to discover and understand the workings of the Divine Consciousness-Puissance in man and creatures and things and forces, her creative significances, her execution of the mysteries, the symbols in which she arranges the manifestation. The Yogin's aim in the practical sciences, whether mental and physical or occult and psychic, should be to enter into the ways of the Divine and his processes, to know the materials and means for the work given to us so that we may use that knowledge for a conscious and faultless expression of the spirit's mastery, joy and self-fulfilment. The Yogin's aim in the Arts should not be a mere aesthetic, mental or vital gratification, but, seeing the Divine everywhere, worshipping it with a revelation of the meaning of its own works, to express that One Divine in ideal forms, the One Divine in principles and forces, the One Divine in gods and men and creatures and objects. The theory that sees an intimate connection between religious aspiration and the truest and greatest Art is in essence right; but we must substitute for the mixed and doubtful religious motive a spiritual aspiration, vision, interpreting experience. For the wider and more comprehensive the seeing, the more it contains in itself the sense of the hidden Divine in humanity and in all things and rises beyond a superficial religiosity into the spiritual life, the more luminous, flexible, deep and powerful will the Art be that springs from that high motive. The Yogin's distinction from other men is this that he lives in a higher and vaster spiritual consciousness; all his work of knowledge or creation must then spring from there: it must not be made in the mind,—for it is a greater truth and vision than mental man's that he has to express or rather that presses to express itself through him and mould his works, not for his personal satisfaction, but for a divine purpose.

At the same time the Yogin who knows the Supreme is not subject to any need or compulsion in these activities; for to him they are neither a duty nor a necessary occupation for the mind nor a high amusement, nor imposed even by the loftiest human purpose. He is not attached, bound and limited by any nor has he any personal motive of fame, greatness or personal satisfaction in these works; he can leave or pursue them as the Divine in him wills, but he need not otherwise abandon them in his pursuit of the higher integral knowledge. He will do these things just as the supreme Power acts and creates, for a certain spiritual joy in creation and expression or to help in the holding together and right ordering or leading of this world of God's workings. The Gita teaches that the man of knowledge shall by his way of life give to those who have not yet the spiritual consciousness, the love and habit of all works and not only of actions recognised as pious, religious or ascetic in their character; he should not draw men away from the world-action by his example. For the world must proceed in its great upward aspiring; men and

nations must not be led to fall away from even an ignorant activity into a worse ignorance of inaction or to sink down into that miserable disintegration and tendency of dissolution which comes upon communities and peoples when there predominates the tamasic principle, the principle whether of obscure confusion and error or of weariness and inertia. "For I too", says the Lord in the Gita," have no need to do works, since there is nothing I have not or must yet gain for myself; yet I do works in the world: for if I did not do works, all laws would fall into confusion, the worlds would sink towards chaos and I would be the destroyer of these peoples. The spiritual life does not need, for its purity, to destroy interest in all things except the Inexpressible or to cut at the roots of the Sciences, the Arts and Life. It may well be one of the effects of an integral spiritual knowledge and activity to lift them out of their limitations, substitute for our mind's ignorant, limited, tepid or trepidant pleasure in them a free, intense and uplifting urge of delight and supply a new source of creative spiritual power and illumination by which they can be carried more swiftly and profoundly towards their absolute light in knowledge and their yet undreamed possibilities and most dynamic energy of content and form and practice. The one thing needful must be pursued first and always; but all things else come with it as its outcome and have not so much to be added to us as recovered and reshaped in its self-light and as portions of its self-expressive force."¹

Ascending Human Consciousness and Descending Divine Consciousness

"The ultimate knowledge is that which perceives and accepts God in the universe as well as beyond the universe; the integral Yoga is that which, having found the Transcendent, can return upon the universe and possess it, retaining the power freely to descend as well as ascend the great stair of existence. For if the eternal Wisdom exists at all, the faculty of Mind also must have some high use and destiny. That use must depend on its place in the ascent and in the return and that destiny must be a fulfilment and transfiguration, not a rooting out or an annulling."²

Aim of Integral Yoga

"The aim of our Yoga is to open the consciousness to the Divine and to live in the inner consciousness more and more while acting from it on the external life, to bring the inmost psychic into the front and by the power of the psychic to purify and change the being so that it may become ready for transformation and in union with the Divine Knowledge, Will and Love. Secondly, to develop the Yogic consciousness, i.e., to universalise the being in all the planes, become aware of the cosmic being and cosmic forces and be in union with the Divine on all the planes up to the Overmind. Thirdly, to come into contact with the transcendent Divine beyond the Overmind through the supramental consciousness, supramentalise the consciousness and the nature and make oneself an instrument for the realisation of the dynamic Divine Truth and its transforming descent into the earth-nature."³

The Object of Integral Yoga – Descent of Supramental Consciousness

“The object of our Yoga is to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth, to fix it there, to create a new race with the principle of the supramental consciousness governing the inner and outer individual and collective life.”⁴

The Object of Integral Yoga –Transformation

“To be a Yogi, a Sannyasi, a Tapaswi is not the object here. The object is transformation, and the transformation can only be done by a force infinitely greater than your own; it can only be done by being truly a child in the hands of the Divine Mother.”⁵

The Object of Integral Yoga –The Divinised Human Nature

“It is God-realisation and God-expression which is the object of our Yoga and more especially of its dynamic side, it is a divine self-expression in us of the Ishwara, but under the conditions of humanity and through the divinised human nature.”⁶

Newness of Integral Yoga and the Omniscient Supramental

“The Supramental Yoga is necessary for the transformation of terrestrial life and being, not for reaching the Self. One must realise the Self first, only afterwards can one realise the Supermind. This Yoga is ‘new’ because it aims at the integrality of the Divine in this world.

The Sadhak of integral Yoga who stops short at the Impersonal is no longer a sadhak of integral Yoga. Without the action of the integral Divine there is no change of the whole nature. If it were not so, the Mother would not be here and I would not be here if a realisation of the Impersonal were sufficient.... It is only the Supramental that is all-knowledge. All below that from Overmind to Matter is Ignorance.”⁷

Challenges of Integral Yoga

“The way of Yoga followed here has a different purpose from others,—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter. This is an exceedingly difficult aim and difficult Yoga; to many or most it will seem impossible. All the established forces of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness are opposed to it and deny it and try to prevent it, and the Sadhak will find his own mind, life and body full of the most obstinate impediments to its realisation. If you can accept the ideal whole-heartedly, face all difficulties, leave the past and its ties behind you and are ready to give up everything and risk everything for this divine

possibility, then only can you hope to discover by experience the Truth behind it.”⁸

SRI AUROBINDO

(Compiled by Arun Vaidya)

References

1. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, pp. 139-144.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
3. *A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga* (Compiled Extracts), Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973, p. 23.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
6. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 24, p. 798.
7. *A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga* (Compiled Extracts), Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973, p. 30.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

LET THAT SLIP NOT OCCUR

There are deeper issues for India herself, since by following certain tempting directions she may conceivably become a nation like many others evolving an opulent industry and commerce, a powerful organization of social and political life, an immense military strength, practising power-politics with a high degree of success, guarding and extending zealously her gains and her interests, dominating even a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its Swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us.

(Sri Aurobindo's Message to Andhra University, 11 December 1948)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of November 2002)

In my morning meditation, since the Mother came late, I was thinking that perhaps Sri Aurobindo was also going to give us a surprise visit. I don't think the idea is bad and it even seems useful to see you more frequently than you allow at present. At least once a month is not too much.

If I went out once a month, the effect of my going out would be diminished by one third.

2 March 1933

When the psychic is in front, does the vital merely obey it or does it absorb the qualities of the psychic? Does it get quietened, feel the delight of nearness to the Divine, become pure, aspire and surrender? Is this the same thing as psychicisation?

In the first stages it may merely obey, but afterwards it begins to change in the direction you describe—it becomes psychicised. This however does not take place all at once. It has to be done often before the transformation can be complete.

And what is the change in the physical when the process of psychicisation goes on?

It is the same in principle. Only in the physical the chief obstacle is tamas, inertia, subjection to habit, an externalised consciousness, ignorance, an obscure unenlightened movement. These have to be penetrated and changed so that the psychic influence may be effective.

Why do I not get dreams of the sea, the sun, the stars or of fire or of flying or of Mother and Sri Aurobindo? Is there so much impurity to get rid of yet?

These come as the inner vision opens—your turn has been very mental, and with an exceedingly active mental vision develops more slowly.

2 March 1933

Is it possible to know whether, like Gauranga and Ramakrishna, you passed through the bhavas of Bhakti yoga? When shall I experience some of them in an intense way?

It is not necessary to repeat past forms — to bring out the bhakti of the psychic being and give it whatever forms come naturally in the development is the proper way for our sadhana.

3 March 1933

I am thinking of writing to my father-in-law to see if he can manage to get the sum of money we need. Of course, as you know, he is not particularly sympathetic but he has a good heart. I can ask if he can at least lend us the sum. Shall I try it?

Lend, no—we have made it a principle for the Ashram not to borrow money. If he can give or procure, that will be all right.

3 March 1933

Yesterday night in dream I saw a dog running about with its tongue protruding—probably a rabid dog. It came near, so I showed it a thin iron bar and it ran away. Is this an attempt at physical attack conceived by the hostiles on the vital plane?

Not physical, necessarily—it might be an attempted attack purely on the vital plane—perhaps sexual.

How is it that after the 21st there is less constant remembrance and less intense aspiration than before? Is it retrogression?

There are periods of quiet which prepare a new advance.

4 March 1933

Does “consciousness” mean consciousness of the Divine’s nearness and presence or consciousness of movements?

It means both. One must be conscious of all one’s states and movements and the causes and influences that bring them about and conscious too of the Divine—the nearness, presence, power, peace, light, knowledge, love, Ananda of the Divine.

K was saying today that I have looked depressed for some time. Is it really so? Or is it because I do not indulge so much in habitual talks and superficial frivolities?

It is because you are more quiet, I suppose. If one is not bubbling and effervescing outside, people think, “Oh, he is becoming depressed, too grave etc.”

When does one feel, while eating, that it is the Divine and not the vital that is enjoying it?

No greed or desire, a sense of offering, a sense of something calm, wide and pure that receives the offering.

5 March 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

FROM GOLD AND RED AND BLUE

CALM sky of liquid gold;
Indigo sea at eventide;
Tawny red on the desert side
Of the red cliff aeons old.

No breathing thing on the land;
No fleck of foam on ocean's breast;
An aureate sky that had gained its quest
One vast silence spanned.

Before the cradle Time
Was framed or Space was fraught
With uttering sublime
From God's creative Thought,
The *mantra* of this colour chime
Was unreckonably wrought
In all its sorcery of hue
From gold and red and blue.

September 20, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: A very fine poem. The lines marked [5-14] have much illumination and power.

SRI AUROBINDO'S SIGNATURE

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Sri Aurobindo' in a cursive, flowing script.

THE SCIENCE OF LIVING

TO KNOW ONESELF AND TO CONTROL ONESELF

AN aimless life is always a miserable life.

Every one of you should have an aim. But do not forget that on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life.

Your aim should be high and wide, generous and disinterested; this will make your life precious to yourself and to others.

But whatever your ideal, it cannot be perfectly realised unless you have realised perfection in yourself.

To work for your perfection, the first step is to become conscious of yourself, of the different parts of your being and their respective activities. You must learn to distinguish these different parts one from another, so that you may become clearly aware of the origin of the movements that occur in you, the many impulses, reactions and conflicting wills that drive you to action. It is an assiduous study which demands much perseverance and sincerity. For man's nature, especially his mental nature, has a spontaneous tendency to give a favourable explanation for everything he thinks, feels, says and does. It is only by observing these movements with great care, by bringing them, as it were, before the tribunal of our highest ideal, with a sincere will to submit to its judgment, that we can hope to form in ourselves a discernment that never errs. For if we truly want to progress and acquire the capacity of knowing the truth of our being, that is to say, what we are truly created for, what we can call our mission upon earth, then we must, in a very regular and constant manner, reject from us or eliminate in us whatever contradicts the truth of our existence, whatever is opposed to it. In this way, little by little, all the parts, all the elements of our being can be organised into a homogeneous whole around our psychic centre. This work of unification requires much time to be brought to some degree of perfection. Therefore, in order to accomplish it, we must arm ourselves with patience and endurance, with a determination to prolong our life as long as necessary for the success of our endeavour.

As you pursue this labour of purification and unification, you must at the same time take great care to perfect the external and instrumental part of your being. When the higher truth manifests, it must find in you a mind that is supple and rich enough to be able to give the idea that seeks to express itself a form of thought which preserves its force and clarity. This thought, again, when it seeks to clothe itself in words, must find in you a sufficient power of expression so that the words reveal the thought and do not deform it. And the formula in which you embody the truth should be manifested in all your feelings, all your acts of will, all your actions, in all the movements of your being. Finally, these movements themselves should, by constant effort, attain their highest perfection.

All this can be realised by means of a fourfold discipline, the general outline of which is given here. The four aspects of the discipline do not exclude each other, and can be followed at the same time; indeed, this is preferable. The starting-point is what can be

called the psychic discipline. We give the name “psychic” to the psychological centre of our being, the seat within us of the highest truth of our existence, that which can know this truth and set it in movement. It is therefore of capital importance to become conscious of its presence in us, to concentrate on this presence until it becomes a living fact for us and we can identify ourselves with it.

In various times and places many methods have been prescribed for attaining this perception and ultimately achieving this identification. Some methods are psychological, some religious, some even mechanical. In reality, everyone has to find the one which suits him best, and if one has an ardent and steadfast aspiration, a persistent and dynamic will, one is sure to meet, in one way or another—outwardly through reading and study, inwardly through concentration, meditation, revelation and experience—the help one needs to reach the goal. Only one thing is absolutely indispensable: the will to discover and to realise. This discovery and realisation should be the primary preoccupation of our being, the pearl of great price which we must acquire at any cost. Whatever you do, whatever your occupations and activities, the will to find the truth of your being and to unite with it must be always living and present behind all that you do, all that you feel, all that you think.

To complement this movement of inner discovery, it would be good not to neglect the development of the mind. For the mental instrument can equally be a great help or a great hindrance. In its natural state the human mind is always limited in its vision, narrow in its understanding, rigid in its conceptions, and a constant effort is therefore needed to widen it, to make it more supple and profound. So it is very necessary to consider everything from as many points of view as possible. Towards this end, there is an exercise which gives great suppleness and elevation to the thought. It is as follows: a clearly formulated thesis is set; against it is opposed its antithesis, formulated with the same precision. Then by careful reflection the problem must be widened or transcended until a synthesis is found which unites the two contraries in a larger, higher and more comprehensive idea.

Many other exercises of the same kind can be undertaken; some have a beneficial effect on the character and so possess a double advantage: that of educating the mind and that of establishing control over the feelings and their consequences. For example, you must never allow your mind to judge things and people, for the mind is not an instrument of knowledge; it is incapable of finding knowledge, but it must be moved by knowledge. Knowledge belongs to a much higher domain than that of the human mind, far above the region of pure ideas. The mind has to be silent and attentive to receive knowledge from above and manifest it. For it is an instrument of formation, of organisation and action, and it is in these functions that it attains its full value and real usefulness.

There is another practice which can be very helpful to the progress of the consciousness. Whenever there is a disagreement on any matter, such as a decision to be taken, or an action to be carried out, one must never remain closed up in one's own conception or point of view. On the contrary, one must make an effort to understand the other's point of view, to put oneself in his place and, instead of quarrelling or even fighting,

find the solution which can reasonably satisfy both parties; there always is one for men of goodwill.

Here we must mention the discipline of the vital. The vital being in us is the seat of impulses and desires, of enthusiasm and violence, of dynamic energy and desperate depressions, of passions and revolts. It can set everything in motion, build and realise; but it can also destroy and mar everything. Thus it may be the most difficult part to discipline in the human being. It is a long and exacting labour requiring great patience and perfect sincerity, for without sincerity you will deceive yourself from the very outset, and all endeavour for progress will be in vain. With the collaboration of the vital no realisation seems impossible, no transformation impracticable. But the difficulty lies in securing this constant collaboration. The vital is a good worker, but most often it seeks its own satisfaction. If that is refused, totally or even partially, the vital gets vexed, sulks and goes on strike. Its energy disappears more or less completely and in its place leaves disgust for people and things, discouragement or revolt, depression and dissatisfaction. At such moments it is good to remain quiet and refuse to act; for these are the times when one does stupid things and in a few moments one can destroy or spoil the progress that has been made during months of regular effort. These crises are shorter and less dangerous for those who have established a contact with their psychic being which is sufficient to keep alive in them the flame of aspiration and the consciousness of the ideal to be realised. They can, with the help of this consciousness, deal with their vital as one deals with a rebellious child, with patience and perseverance, showing it the truth and light, endeavouring to convince it and awaken in it the goodwill which has been veiled for a time. By means of such patient intervention each crisis can be turned into a new progress, into one more step towards the goal. Progress may be slow, relapses may be frequent, but if a courageous will is maintained, one is sure to triumph one day and see all difficulties melt and vanish before the radiance of the truth-consciousness.

Lastly, by means of a rational and discerning physical education, we must make our body strong and supple enough to become a fit instrument in the material world for the truth-force which wants to manifest through us.

In fact, the body must not rule, it must obey. By its very nature it is a docile and faithful servant. Unfortunately, it rarely has the capacity of discernment it ought to have with regard to its masters, the mind and the vital. It obeys them blindly, at the cost of its own well-being. The mind with its dogmas, its rigid and arbitrary principles, the vital with its passions, its excesses and dissipations soon destroy the natural balance of the body and create in it fatigue, exhaustion and disease. It must be freed from this tyranny and this can be done only through a constant union with the psychic centre of the being. The body has a wonderful capacity of adaptation and endurance. It is able to do so many more things than one usually imagines. If, instead of the ignorant and despotic masters that now govern it, it is ruled by the central truth of the being, you will be amazed at what it is capable of doing. Calm and quiet, strong and poised, at every minute it will be able to put forth the effort that is demanded of it, for it will have learnt to find rest in action and to recuperate, through contact with the universal forces, the energies it expends

consciously and usefully. In this sound and balanced life a new harmony will manifest in the body, reflecting the harmony of the higher regions, which will give it perfect proportions and ideal beauty of form. And this harmony will be progressive, for the truth of the being is never static; it is a perpetual unfolding of a growing perfection that is more and more total and comprehensive. As soon as the body has learnt to follow this movement of progressive harmony, it will be possible for it to escape, through a continuous process of transformation, from the necessity of disintegration and destruction. Thus the irrevocable law of death will no longer have any reason to exist.

When we reach this degree of perfection which is our goal, we shall perceive that the truth we seek is made up of four major aspects: Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. These four attributes of the Truth will express themselves spontaneously in our being. The psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind will be the vehicle of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and harmony.

THE MOTHER

(*On Education*, CWM, Vol. 12, pp. 3-8)

A MANTRA

Om
namo
bhagavate
Sri Aravindāya

The Mother

THOUGHT CONTROL

THOUGHT-control! Who can control his thoughts? Only those who have trained themselves to it, who have tried hard since their childhood.

... You hear people saying every day, “Oh! that thought, all the time it comes back to me, again and again, and I can’t get rid of it!” So they are assailed by all kinds of things, from anxiety to ill-will and fear. Thoughts which express dread are extremely troublesome; you try to send them away, they return like a rubber band and fall back on you. Who has control? It requires years of labour and such a long practice. And so, to come to something which is not complete control but anyway already represents a stage: to have the ability to do this in your head (*Mother moves her hand across her brow*), to annul all the movements, to stop the vibrations. And the mental surface becomes smooth. Everything stops, as when you open a book at a blank page—but almost materially, you understand... blank!

Try a little when you are at home, you will see, it is very interesting.

And so, one follows the place in one’s head where the little point is dancing. I have seen—I have seen Sri Aurobindo doing this in somebody’s head, somebody who used to complain of being troubled by thoughts. It was as if his hand reached out and took hold of the little black dancing point and then did this (*gesture with the fingertips*), as when one picks up an insect, and he threw it far away. And that was all. All still, quiet, luminous... It was clearly visible like this, you know, he took it out without saying anything — and it was over.

And things are very closely interdependent: I also saw the case when someone came to him with an acute pain somewhere: “Oh! it hurts here, oh! it hurts, oh!...” He said nothing, he remained calm, he looked at the person, and I saw, I saw something like a subtle physical hand which came and took hold of the little point dancing about in disorder and confusion, and he took it like this (*same gesture*) and there, everything had gone.

“Oh! oh! look, my pain has gone.”

Voilà.

THE MOTHER

8 January 1958

(*Questions and Answers*, CWM Vol. 9, pp. 253-54)

THREE LETTERS

1

YOUR observation that you never know when you are going to bring forth a poem and that it always comes as a surprise is a very good summing up of the poetic phenomenon. I would only add that a poem comes not only *as* a surprise but also *with* a surprise; for, along with the sudden breaking out of it there is a quality of the unexpected in the very words that express the sight and the insight, the light and the delight, the passionate movement of the parts sculpturing a whole of poised perfection. Sometimes the unexpected is intense at every point and then we have the sheer masterpiece; but for a poem to be a success there have at least to be masterpiece-moments scattered in the midst of a more relaxed flow.

What one has to guard against is the facile belief that if something comes as a surprise it is bound to be charged with surprises. People whose work I have dared to correct have often protested: "Oh, it came like that! How can one change it?" They forget that many matters burst on us involuntarily, yet all of them are not genuine inspiration. Further, even inspiration may not arrive in a single piece. It may arrive, as you say, with

Only bits of one line, and of another,
A word here and a phrase there...

The poet, after he has created a poem, has to be self-critical. And if he can't impersonalise himself sufficiently, he must consult somebody who is steeped in poetic literature and is himself a practitioner of it on occasion. But criticism has to be inspired too: otherwise it may merely introduce a clever invention instead of a brilliant discovery. The critic has to enter into the inner motion of the poem and make his correction a new creation. The beginner-poet is inclined to think that a corrective act is bound to be artificial brain-stuff. So, even when he is not just egoistic and won't have anybody meddle with his own product, he still resents somebody else re-doing it and may check himself from altering what he has "spontaneously" written.

Your statement—"still I do not know the process"—leads me not to attempt defining the process (a task for which I am not quite fitted) but to remark that one can train oneself to write poetry. One can sit down and call for the surprise of it. One can also note that certain times of the day or certain periods of the year are more propitious than others. Milton used to find the season after the winter solstice more conducive to inspiration. Night also was more favourable to the visit of his Muse. As he was blind towards the latter part of his life he had to wake up his daughters to take dictation near midnight or in the small hours. Sri Aurobindo has written somewhere about regularising inspiration and accustoming it to cast its spell at convenient times. I am told that Nolini used to invite the Muse of prose to his afternoon tea and start his literary flow as a continuation of the streaming of that beverage into his system. Chesterton went in for a more dynamic drink.

“One glass of beer—another—still another—and then it all comes!” How inspiration came to visit me during the first ten years of my stay in the Ashram I have described at some length in an article I wrote long ago for the Pathmandir—and the way it took me by storm in the period of *The Adventure of the Apocalypse* I have set forth in my “Personal Preface”.

21.6.1982

2

All invitation to complexify one’s culture is likely to be resented. You resent my appeal to you to find pleasure in the problem of the Indus-script. Many a man will scorn the idea of learning any script made by human minds when there is the silver secret of the stars for him to catch with his upward eye and when he can pore on the crystalline cryptography of the many-mooded rain. No, not for him “the bedevilled jugglery” of the alphabet and the infernal intricacy of grammar and syntax. Do you realise what such self-enraptured complacence could make one miss? And do you realise that it would be on a par with your own drawing of a charmed circle of limited interest for yourself? I may add that quite a number of minds shudder at the Aurobindonian “multi-foliateness”, to use a favourite word of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. They are content with Sankhya, Yoga, Jnana, Bhakti, Karma, Adwaita, Dwaita, Vishishtadwaita and what not of India’s philosophic and spiritual past and care a fiddlestick for the “phantasms and phantasies” of Sri Aurobindo’s “own make”. Have they not Nirvana to disappear into or Krishna to dwell in, instead of bothering about Ascent and Descent, Overmind and Supermind, the Triple Transformation (“or what else of the ilk”)? I am afraid I cannot check myself from following Meredith’s Spirit of Colour

whose touch is infinite and lends
A yonder to all ends.

23.8.69

3

You have a very acute thought when you remark: “It seems to me that colours as colours were less important in the ancient world than the qualities associated with them.” Perhaps “purple” had the largest number of qualitative associations—royalty, splendour, majesty, richness, intensity, even felicity. Calling swans purple strikes me as a highly imaginative and insightful act of Virgil the poet. If Philip Howard had given the exact reference in the Aeneid or the Georgics or the Eclogues we could have looked up various translations and

seen what Dryden or Day Lewis or another had made of his epithet. As I wrote to you some time back, “purpureus” in Latin connoted both a distinct colour and extreme brightness in general.

One point in Howard’s article puzzles me. He writes: “Albert described as *flavus* other stones that look blue to us, such as lapis lazuli and Hyacinthus (whether corundum or zircon).” It is true that the flower hyacinth is bluish or rather purple-blue, but the stone is an orange variety of zircon. And orange is a likely colour of what Homer called “hyacinthine locks”, unless by that adjective he meant hair with locks shaped like the hyacinth plant which is bulbous with bell-like flowers.

The extract from Woodroffe sticks in my gullet. I find it unreadable. I don’t blame you for saying you can’t understand Woodroffe. The Mother’s talk on planes and colours is rather a novelty to me. I always believed that the colour of the mind-plane is yellow which grows brighter as one goes higher till it meets the gold of the Divine Truth. This is what we find in Sri Aurobindo’s scale of colours. But the Mother says: “there is the blue of the Mind, and then comes the Higher Mind which is paler, and then the Illumined Mind which is the colour of the flag, a silver blue...” But perhaps yellowness is characteristic of the thinking mind as exemplified in man. For, writing about the free Mind-plane itself, Sri Aurobindo has the lines:

In gleaming clarities of amethyst air
The chainless and omnipotent Spirit of Mind
Brooded on the blue lotus of the Idea. (*Savitri*, p. 264)

The Mother’s labelling of the Intuitive Mind beyond the Illumined Mind as pale yellow is quite a surprise for me. I thought the Intuitive Mind carried further the silvery blue of the Illumined Mind and led to Sri Krishna’s light of the Overmind, which is also known as Sri Aurobindo’s light, a whitish blue like moonlight, the blue light modified by the white light of the Mother. But the Mother gives the Overmind “all the colours” in their brightness. Perhaps there are different ways of seeing things: the globality of the Overmind can rightly be spoken of as multi- or omni-coloured. The Supermind is gold in all accounts. Beyond it are the kingdoms of whiteness, sheer or touched with pink and gold and silver. I suppose these kingdoms are most typically the Ananda-level.

Hearing colours or seeing colours with the hearing of sounds is an imaginative or intuitive experience not quite uncommon, but what about smelling and tasting sounds as well as colours? In regard to Rimbaud’s famous colour-vision of vowels, I wonder why nobody has written on consonant-colours. There is also the matter of names conjuring up visual images. As a boy I used to have such images whenever I heard the name of a place or a country. Thus the mention of China would always make me see a table-lamp with a white translucent shade of a circular form.

Reverting to the burden of my previous letter’s song, may I quote a few more examples of the verbal turn to which you object? In a recent compilation, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, I found the well-known English philosopher John Hick writing:

“Openness to the wider religious life of humankind with its rich plurality of ways—female as well as male—of symbolizing the divine, can help to free us from the grip of an absolutized Christian Patriarchalism” (pp. 33-34). In the same book there is Wilfred Cantwell Smith mentioning “the error of identifying with the divine, with the truth, with the final, with transcendence, the particular form in or through which we have been introduced to it...” (pp. 58-59). The same author again tells us “of the misapprehension that the divine is to be fully identified with or within one’s own forms” (p. 61).

22.12.88

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

TALKING SUN

I WISH I could talk to you like the sunlight,
In the golden glow of sunset,
Like the stars winking in the night,
Or the light’s opening show at the break of day.

Still I go on writing
With words that hardly express
The way I feel, when You are here, My Friend,
And I am boundless Joy uncontained by this world.

I would speak this feeling like the fragrant flower,
Or as the notes of the warbler from its high branch
That cannot hold back its song of gratitude,
Praising the life that dwells inside.

I wish I could speak like the sunlight,
Then I’d simply fade away,
Content, fulfilled in my deepest passion:
To shine until the night dissolves in the day.

ALLAN STOCKER

A CANTO-WISE RÉSUMÉ OF SAVITRI

I: 1 The Symbol Dawn

SAVITRI begins with the primordial Darkness when the gods are still asleep. Out of it has to come a fuller divine manifestation upon earth. But obstructing its path there is the mind of ominous Night and nothing can happen as long it is present. Many were the attempts made earlier but the success was only partial. At times something had stirred on the borderline of dream and waking, but too feeble was the awareness. Again and again the dawn had come with her gifts and had to go back as there was no sufficient response. It is in this circumstance that Savitri, the Daughter of the Sun-God, takes human birth. She identifies herself with this death-bound earthly creation with all its suffering. Keeping her spirit open to the Spirit in all she takes up the issue. To make the anguished body a receptacle of heavenly joy has been her ancient mission. She recalls it and yogically prepares herself to confront the Adversary. This shall be on the day of Satyavan's death.

I: 2 The Issue

Satyavan awaits in the forest of life the arrival of Savitri. His waiting for her is, in the cosmic working, the waiting of the God of Love for her. For him she is perfection's home and could well live in her as in his own infinity. But behind him also follows covertly the God of Death. Savitri is yet unaware of it. But while she is reviewing the past a supernatural darkness surrounds her. In it her will rises to cancel that past itself. Hers is a struggle in which neither the Gods of the Sky nor the Powers of Nature can lend any help to her. But at the opportune hour the Goddess in her stands out revealed and at once takes charge of things and events. Savitri as a defeatless warrior falls upon Death and the bounds of Consciousness and Time break open. All this has already happened in the transcendental realm, but now it must be worked out on earth.

I: 3 The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Soul's Release

The divine Goddess takes mortal birth. She is in a way compelled to do so. She comes as Savitri in answer to Aswapati's prayer. In the context of the creation's issue he carries with him the world's desire and invokes her to incarnate. For that he engages himself in the triple Yoga, the Individual, the Universal, and the Transcendental Yoga. This Yoga is done in earth-consciousness to prepare the needed base for her birth and action. Aswapati himself as the Supreme incarnate accepts the burden. First he releases himself from Nature's hold. He finds the source from which his spirit came, knows his larger self and becomes one with all. But there is the ingrained reluctance in the earthly stuff. He must discover its cause and remove it. He does it. Now his body's parts also open to higher things, to greater light. With the soul's release Aswapati has achieved everything as an individual. There must now come the spirit's freedom from all contingencies.

I: 4 The Secret Knowledge

But perhaps there is a purpose in the Spirit submitting itself to Nature's law, Being to the

law of Becoming, Purusha obeying Prakriti. It is through her mechanics that this stubborn inconscient stuff can slowly gain awareness. Though not herself divine presently, she is planned divinely. This truth has to be found and the intention yogically worked out. Aswapati is therefore engaged in the Yoga of Knowledge of the Time-Born Man. He now gets a new vision of himself and of the world. He may not be yet aware of the goal fixed for him, not know whether he is going to reach just the featureless unseen or discover a new mind and body in the city of God. But he is tied to the fate of this creation and there cannot be rest for him until the dusk from man's soul is lifted. He must attend to it.

I: 5 The Yoga of the King: The Yoga of the Spirit's Freedom and Greatness

Aswapati first has the knowledge about the possibilities waiting for the time-born man. He has read the secret Vedic text and deciphered the significance of the great world rhythms. He sees a hidden sun even in the depth of darkness. His will now assumes superhuman dimensions and it can bring down a greater world. But he also discerns the gulf between what is and what is to be. He withdraws from everything and in silent mind hears the call. A Descent leaps down and there is a new change. Nothing now remains sealed to his sight. Where could abide only for a while the heavenlier states, there is no more resistance of the lower members. Nature is mastered and the exploration of her vast provinces begins. His present Raj Yoga, the Yoga of the King, has to be raised to the Cosmic Yoga, Vishva Yoga, and finally to the Yoga of Surrender to the Divine Mother.

II: 1 The World-Stair

The Vishva Yoga begins. Here is a Universe well-planned and many-tiered. It has limits neither in Space nor in Time. Experience after experience displays the rainbow moods of the Power that brought it into existence. It is as if from one string issued out numberless harmonies, each with its own frozen perfection. They climb one above the other and disappear in the original Hush. It is up on these ascending slopes of Heaven that the aspiring soul of man moves. So too these worlds influence in several ways the working of this earth, her grief and her joy. Our souls were attracted by its mystery and accepted the travail. In the process slowly the meaning of the cosmic scheme itself becomes evident. The Seer is born within and whatever knowledge is necessary is received. In the exploration of this scheme no term has been fixed for Aswapati and his march is towards the indiscernible end. He sees Nature's climbing hierarchy and sets himself on the way.

II: 2 The Kingdom of Subtle Matter

The first port of entry is the world of Subtle Matter. Here are present the prototypal forms, the shining origins of things on earth. All here is beautiful, faultless, dream-hued, outlasting death and birth. Though so close to earth they suffer no deformation. Even as the soul is radiant, material substance in this region bears the signature of power and authority. From here occurs the fall into darker and denser reality that is ours. This makes us humble, but also can make us noble to be stars. Here is a possibility of our mortal body

becoming glorious if it should hold sufficient truth in it. The divine substance is now present in this proximate world marking a new beginning towards that divinity on earth. But prior to that Aswapati has to discover what lies beyond this material Paradise.

II: 3 The Glory and Fall of Life

Not symmetric charm and carved dreams, but the spirit of adventure is what gives vibrancy to existence. Life bothers the least about the pros and cons and hazards to assert herself in every circumstance. Her high birth disdains not her entering into the squalid earth. Indeed, whatever can serve her questing delight she gambles on, unmindful of the peril. She risks even the extremes. Be they meadows of laughter or fields of toil, for her everything is for creative enjoyment. Because of her alone the dull material substance becomes sensitive to dynamic possibilities of the revealing Spirit. She builds the foundation for greater powers to step into this physical manifestation. However, in the process, Matter's stiffness or *jadatva* overpowers her and she is no more her old self here. Life meets Death and they together now drive the insecure cart of dubious immortality.

II: 4 The Kingdoms of the Little Life

The great power has succumbed and earth failed to keep the joy she had brought with her. Not only that. She herself has become an abject being crawling in the lowly mud. Yet in her arrival glimmers a faint hope urging the mortal's soul on the wakened path. Aswapati sees this pitiful state of fallen Life surviving on Death. Here perpetuity is her immortality. But then there are in this meaningful fall gains also. There is a climbing of life from below. The first creation is followed by the instinct of a thinking sense. An animal experiment then begins. In it all is done to satisfy the body's wants and survival of the fittest becomes the law. But with the physical mind opening to higher Light the possibility of transformation becomes distinct. Presently an instrument personality is born and all is dictated by habits. Everything looks species-based and repetitive; around the little glow of life there is the nescient haze.

II: 5 The Godheads of the Little Life

There is nothing angelic in this empire of little life. Chaos governs the infernal creatures inhabiting it. Life has force and she is driven by idea, but the Idea-Force is absent. Instinct is followed by thought and thought by will. But the miracle is that out of this queer stuff was shaped man and it was proclaimed that he is well made. Still man lives just for a brief while—only to enjoy and suffer and die. He has essentially remained the same, yet greatly prone to error. His mind is but a puppet manipulated by unseen forces and such cannot be the end of Life's adventure. She has to move forward to receive truer gifts from the hands of Fortune. Not Man nor Nature but the Avatar alone can help her receive these rewards. He pays the price for that. If the body's cells have to be filled with divine joy he has to eliminate the wrong afflicting them. Sacrificing his triple glory he accepts the mortal state, bears its anguish. Aswapati moves through it with his spirit's alert flame.

II: 6 The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life

Stepping into the wider Life, Aswapati notices her attempt to seize the boundless in birth. Thus she would claim back her heavenly state she had lost long ago. She made this creation of many hues but missed the True. Yet she moves on towards the far-off Light. Aswapati glimpses a ray of hope in her thousand expressions. He hears the heartbeats of a hidden reality. But he also hears the weeping of her soul within. She has become hostile and has consorted herself with hidden death. She is a riddle unto herself and yet slays the puzzled wayfarer. But Aswapati reads clearly the hieratic script and the Word of Life is not a mystery to him. He discerns the gap between what she came to do and what she now is. Pause she would not in her attempt to bring glory to the material inanity, though her knowledge be incomplete. He must probe in the night itself for the cause of this failure.

II: 7 The Descent into Night

The problem of Life's abysmal condition is a central issue and Aswapati cannot rest content without tackling it. What could have been in the service of good has become an instrument of vice. In this world of fallen Life fair is foul and foul fair. If there is creative Darkness engendering pain, wickedness, suffering, corrupting truth, then it could be here. Now Ignorance, Falsehood, Error, Ego walk in its thick shadow and the Satanic votaries proclaim: "Evil, be thou my God." Life in that gloom with her perilous charm and beauty lies cursed under the Gorgon spell. There Aswapati felt that his body was licked by the hostile Power and he suffered fear. But this had to be borne. He endures and with his bare spirit masters her. The stepping of the Incarnate into the worlds of Night is a wonderful thing that can happen to her and in it is her opportunity to change.

II: 8 The World of Falsehood, the Mother of Evil and the Sons of Darkness

God created Hell in his mood of infinite love and justice, but this love has to first conquer the appalling Inane. The existential problem is the denial to all that is God's. Here are titans and maniac powers and cruel operators; here, allowed by the mighty Spirit, work determinedly terrible agencies. But Aswapati in the strength of his soul takes up the challenge. He probes penetratingly this kingdom of pain, this world of sorrow and hate, of wickedness and malignancy. Not only that. Shiva-like he drinks all the poison, till not a drop is left. The radiant truth in him yet remains intact. In the vastness of Existence he even feels the smallness of this queer material creation. Aswapati observes that the inconscient Being is asleep and knows not what it built. But he puts his finger upon the error and the pain and at once awakens there new knowledge. He has opened the Book of Bliss and Life's truth is revealed. The dichotomy between Matter and Spirit is resolved.

II: 9 The Paradise of the Life-Gods

In the occult abyss was the rendezvous with the Night. Aswapati had gone there to woo her dark and dangerous heart. On the track leading to the meeting place his footprints have become the seals of divinity and thence shall gush radiant fountains. Around him all is felicitous and wonderful and the daylight of conscious suns is within him. After that

wounding experience here is something healing and marvellous. The dread is over and an Elysian fragrance fills the air. He is in the company of Gods and Goddesses and is thrilled with beauty, peace, love, might, desire, pleasure, dream, sweetness. Forms are shaped here by the divine light and mind is made immortal by music. Aswapati's whole being is flooded with bliss and an undying power fills his strength. But he has also the perception that this cannot be the journey's end and that the Highest must be reached.

II: 10 The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Little Mind

Across the land of sensuous beauty are the realms of observation and understanding. Now in the play of Nature has been set into motion another faculty, that of the early mind. First appears the physical mind, marking the beginning of the thinking mind. It is tied to habits and it toils in ignorance. Soon arrives Reason. She has come and made great inventions, built philosophies and rational disciplines, drawn on the map of knowledge a few lines of reality. But there is no goal and the game is inconclusive. In the process she stumbles upon the fissioned atom and in it sees the omnipotent's force. Yet what is witnessed is the tyranny of Matter's logic imposed upon the Spirit's swiftness of thought. There has to be a greater Mind to see a greater truth. Only rarely does intuition bring to us superior knowledge, the higher gnosis. Sometimes Life-Thoughts come like shining Maruts, or else the pure Thought-Mind brings bodiless ideas in our midst.

II: 11 The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Mind

But these wonderful powers of Mind are not of great avail. There is a truth by which things can be seen in an unerring manner and that is altogether beyond their reach. Aswapati now meets in the Ideal's world the Thinker or Manishi. Across the first realms of Mind he is in the company of shining archangels and kings of thought. Theirs is an attempt to grasp Truth's absolute. The creative Word sets into motion these many worlds and the will-to-be is seized in things. The divine power of hearing comes as a natural gift. But Mind is incapable of understanding these works of Truth. Even sages and seers find her to be beyond their grasp. There is no way to know her and it is only by surrendering to the absolute will of hers that a ray of her radiant wonder can enter into our life's many dimnesses. Or else she would remain forever unknown to us.

II: 12 The Heavens of the Ideal

But the Ideal is always a bright spur for the explorer. At each step is seen a luminous world rising in honour of the high Truth. On one side are the kingdoms of love, beauty, joy, sweetness all bringing to earth their gracious marvels. What remained dormant until now opens to spiritual greatnesses. Here is felt the Immortal's touch. On the other side of this climbing pathway burns the deathless flame of will, the force of utter divine consciousness. Even as it climbs the ascending slopes, there is a call to reach the summits of existence. Aswapati moves through these worlds with the household ease. But he finds that here while beauty and greatness, sweetness and might, the Rose and the Flame, come together yet they stand apart. They would not find themselves in the single soul of

the world. The spiritual path and the occult-psychic path run parallel but do not yet become one. Aswapati must therefore advance towards the diviner spheres.

II: 13 In the Self of Mind

On his onward march Aswapati has now entered the passive world of the superior being of Mind who is simultaneously impersonal also. He stands on the summit and is a silent witness, *sākshi*, of things carried out by Nature, Prakriti. He watches indifferently the good and the bad of life; he is unconcerned about victory or defeat. Yet without his consent the movements of Prakriti would not take place. He is *anumantā*, giving approval for her actions. Aswapati lived in this still self, and its quiet vastness was in him. But there was no urge to stay in it. That self seemed but a shadow of a vaster and more forceful a reality. Peace is all right, but there has also to be the Truth's dynamism. It is this dynamic aspect which gives credibility to this world. Aswapati found love and sweetness of the Mother-force absent here. This would not satisfy him and he is prompted to go beyond the realization of this silent self.

II: 14 The World-Soul

In search of the active power who shapes the course of events, Aswapati is led by a mysterious sound and he comes to a wonderful realm. There consciousness, mind, life, body are all made of soul-stuff and spiritual sense is the instrument of knowledge. Those who have by the practices of virtue accumulated great merit in life on earth ascend to this splendid abode. Here wait the liberated souls for a new adventure in the world of opportunities. Beyond it are regions of happiness and peace, of light, hope, love. Aswapati grows aware of them. He sees Shiva and Shakti in a fulfilling union's poise. Behind them stands the omnipotent Goddess, Chidvilasini or Consciousness-Force by whose act this creation has come out from the Unknowable. Aswapati's spirit has now become a vessel to hold her luminous might. In her he finds an answer to his long search and surrenders to her. Indeed, this is the offering of the World-Soul to the Higher Power who alone can assure the success of his work. His quest bears fruit in her.

II: 15 The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge

Aswapati, after such a wonderful experience on the border touching the Transcendent, returns to the things of Time. Now wherever he goes he carries along with him the consciousness of Passive Brahman, the quiescent Sachchidananda as a foundation for all of his activities in the world. He sees the powers that supervise the world and beyond them looks for that which can bring about a cosmic change. He makes a total yogic surrender to the Reality which sustains the Earth, the Mid-region, and Heaven,—Bhur, Bhuvar, Swar. In that sacrifice he is newborn and even his body partakes in its joy. Yet this supernal birth is his alone and cannot be of great avail for the collective on the earth. The individual's supernal birth has to become a larger supernal birth. Its key is with the Divine Mother and therefore Aswapati must approach her. With this Siddhi attained, and with the cosmic forces now under his control, he becomes the Lord of Life Aswapati. Hence onward his march is towards that transcendence where is her home.

III: 1 The Pursuit of the Unknowable

The one whom Aswapati met standing behind the World-Soul is still a mystery to him. So his quest continues and he ascends to the height where stands only the bare Reality. But on that summit of realization he has to make a final choice,—he must either abandon the world and merge into that Reality or else seek that which will transform it. Towards that choice no help was available and the cosmic spirit remained just an aspect of Non-being, the first Asat. But that Asat is ever inaccessible. Perhaps in it if all should vanish then the golden Sphinx might reveal something of her mystery. But it entails a danger, that of going out of the manifestation. That eventuality would mean the failure of the soul's mission itself. Though to free the self from the contingent Nature is a basic condition for any progress, there is also an obligation of fulfilling oneself here. Aswapati is alert to it and hence he must remove the veil of light.

III: 2 The Adoration of the Divine Mother

In that self-discovery Aswapati comes to know about God's desire that works here even in this mortal world. Here he is rewarded. It is in response to the longing of his soul that a being of wisdom, power, delight,—*jñāna*, *shakti*, *ānanda*,—steps out of eternity. He surrenders to her and his heart is glad. Existence no more seems to be without aim. In her is found the hidden Word, the Mantra of Ascent and Transformation. She stands at the head of this creation and she is the one who helps us cross great distances that yawn between us and the marvels that shine over there. From her Sun we can set alight our suns, suns of knowledge, strength, beauty, sweetness, love, joy, harmony, perfection. It is she who can turn our pain of death into ecstasy of life. How wonderful to be caught in her intolerant flame! Her light and her bliss he asked for men on earth. Nothing else he yearned for and gave himself entirely to her alone.

III: 3 The House of the Spirit and the New Creation

Aswapati sits expectantly with a prayer in his silent heart, but nothing happens. He is puzzled and must discover if something in him was still resisting the great advent. He is aware that even the least element could spoil the work. He traces its roots and extracts them out completely. He is free and enters into the superconscient state. There Nature's afflictions disappear and in the deep hush is the anticipation of an answering voice. Aswapati's solitary concern is the good of the grieving creature. His long tapasya was for that purpose. Indeed, it is out of it that sprang up a new creation in the transcendent. But it ought to become a part of the evolutionary reality. For that to happen the Spirit's disdainfulness towards Matter should disappear. Behind the present world Aswapati sees a world to be and the question is to make it actual. He knows that it can be done only by the divine Power. He must call her.

III: 4 The Vision and the Boon

There is a sudden flow of energy and Aswapati feels its rush into all parts of his being down to the very physical. Spirit and body identify with each other, even as the radiant

Goddess stands in front of him. She counsels him not to force mortality's issue; he should instead leave all to the course of the evolving Time. He is told that Man is too weak to bear the burden of the Truth and he must graduate himself to receive her gifts. In the meanwhile, Aswapati should help this struggling creature on his heavenward march. She is ready to grant a boon to Aswapati, with the assurance that all things shall happen in God's transfiguring hour. But the Siddha Yogi makes himself bold and holds out an alternative. He knows that a new creation in the House of the Spirit is waiting to be born and the Goddess should incarnate herself to make it real here. Saying 'Be it so,' the Goddess withdraws and glad Aswapati returns to attend to his worldly duties.

(To be concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

STRINGS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

DWARFED thumb that I am:
Torn in all directions,
Pulled by every passing thought
A wild horse running haywire
Multi-fragmented and scattered.

Only Thy grace can save me
To collect the diverse strings
To unite the fragmented selves,
To utilise this lifetime.

Help me, dear sweet Mother,
To unite and form a will
Which I can surrender at Thy feet.

YASMIN BHAGAT

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of November 2002)

*Savitri and the Record of Yoga**

4

Dāśya or surrender, literally “servitude” to the Divine, has several degrees, defined by Sri Aurobindo in more detail in the *Record of Yoga* than in any other writing of his. The phrase “slave of God” in *Savitri*—which, as we have seen, was introduced into the poem very early in its composition, midway through the main period of the *Record*—acquires a richer, more precise meaning when it is understood to indicate the highest of these stages.

As early as 26 November 1912, in the second sentence of the new phase of his diary which he had identified as the beginning of the “regular record of the sadhana”, Sri Aurobindo assessed his progress in the Yoga of self-perfection with these words:

What has been effected with some finality & thoroughness, is the submission or dasyam.¹

Evidently, this was the indispensable basis for all that would come afterwards. A few months prior to this, on 1 July 1912, he had recorded the beginning of “a new life, that is to say, a new type of action, starting with... the final inevitable seal on the dasyabhava.”² In this long entry at the beginning of the “Journal of Yoga” which he kept during that month, Sri Aurobindo wrote an extensive account of three forms of *dāśya*.

The first is simple *dāśya*, later called primary *dāśya*. It is defined as free obedience, the attitude of the servant who retains a certain independence:

The simple dasyam is that obedience to the divine impulsion which is self-chosen and depends on the individual’s intelligence of God’s will and his consent, his readiness to obey. The Purusha is still karta [doer] and anumanta [giver of the sanction], a servant of God, not His slave.³

This definition of simple or primary *dāśya* as the state of being a “servant of God” implies already that to become “His slave” is a higher stage. But the essential principle—that one is increased, not diminished, by self-subordination to something greater than oneself—is the same for every degree of *dāśya*. This is the kind of service that is characterised in a line in *Savitri* as “a spiritual sovereignty”.⁴

* The talk given on 18 February 2002 at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry, is concluded in this instalment. The discussion of *Savitri* and the *Record of Yoga* will be continued.

Then there is the transition to the double or secondary *dāśya*, about which Sri Aurobindo writes:

The great step bridging the transition from the simple to the double dasyam is the renouncement of the kartritwa abhimana [the sense of being the doer], by which we perceive that Prakriti is the only doer of all our actions voluntary or involuntary from the most deliberately concerted endeavour even to the simplest trifle....

In this transition, the sense of independent action that distinguishes “servanthood” from unconditional “servitude”, or *dāśya* in the full sense of the word, begins to be lost:

At first the consciousness tends to make a false division claiming the movement itself to be our own although the determining impulse is felt as a driving or a pressure proceeding from infinite Nature above or around us. The wearing away of this division marks a farther attenuation of servanthood and deepening towards the divine servitude.⁵

The second degree of *dāśya* is related to what in the *Record of Yoga* is termed *Kālībhāva* or becoming one in our nature with Kali, the universal Prakriti or Shakti. Here, Kali is not the goddess of popular Hinduism. The use of the names Krishna and Kali for the Divine and his Shakti is a feature of the *Record of Yoga* up to 1920 which can be found also in Sri Aurobindo’s *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, written around 1913.

In the *Record* entry of 12 November 1913, under the heading “Ahankara-Mukti-Siddhi” (perfection of the release from the ego), Sri Aurobindo described the state of *Kālībhāva*. After observing that the sense of “aham karta” (“I am the doer”) had now been replaced by “kartri brahma” (Brahman as the doer), and that likewise the sense that “I am the knower”, “I am the enjoyer”, “I am the upholder” and “I am the witness” had been replaced by Brahman as each of these things, he continued:

What is left of the aham [“I”] is a kendra [centre] of action, a kendra of knowledge, a kendra of vision, a kendra of enjoyment. In this kendra Kali receives the will of God, thinks it out in the idea, fulfils it in action, watches its fulfilment and sends up the bhoga [enjoyment] to God, becoming herself the will, the action, the vision, the bhoga, the knowledge.⁶

On 16 August 1914, Sri Aurobindo wrote of a condition of “complete Kalibhava”, in which

the form of the egoistic consciousness with a name attached to it is repelled whenever it throws its shadow on the central consciousness, & there is instead the conception of the ego as an ansha [portion] of Prakriti or a vibhuti [manifestation of divine power] serving as an instrument and slave of the Ishwara or Para Purusha [Lord or Supreme Being].⁷

The last words point beyond the impersonal secondary *dāśya*, in which the personality of the Ishwara is only indirectly perceived behind the workings of Prakriti, and suggest a third form of *dāśya* to which the words “instrument and slave” are applicable. The realisation of this tertiary or triple *dāśya* is sometimes associated in the *Record of Yoga* with the emergence of the *Kṛṣṇakālī bhāva*, where the presence of the Ishwara as Krishna is directly felt dominating the surrendered Kali-consciousness of the Prakriti.

Sri Aurobindo’s definition of the third degree of *dāśya* changed from 1912 to 1914. At first, triple *dāśya* was regarded as the last stage; then it became the penultimate degree, with a fourth and supreme degree beyond it; finally, tertiary *dāśya* became again the highest form, but was divided into three stages, the last of which corresponded to the supreme degree in the previous system. Its essential characteristic, however, was always *yantrabhāva*, the state of being an instrument of the Lord.

All the stages of tertiary *dāśya* need not be explained here, for it is mainly the third and highest stage that concerns us. This differs from the lower stages in that Prakriti is purely a “channel & not an agent” and the compulsion from the Ishwara is “direct, omnipresent and immanent”. Sri Aurobindo wrote on 7 July 1919 that he was aware of the Ishwara

driving the instrument with an absolute and immediately and intensely felt decisiveness of control as if it were being pushed by him with his hand upon it and it vibrated with the ananda of the touch and the driving.⁸

In *Savitri*, this state is very poetically evoked in a few lines of the passage I have quoted from the 1916 version:

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.

The next line,

And when thou art vibrant with all ecstasies⁹

describes the effect of this condition of *yantrabhāva* on the conscious instrument when, as Sri Aurobindo says in the *Record*, it begins to vibrate “with the ananda of the touch and the driving”.

But the image of the instrument must have seemed at times to be too mechanical to represent the living experience it was intended to convey. In “The Mystery of Love”, a chapter of Part Three of *The Synthesis of Yoga* published in the *Arya* in November 1918 (and not revised thereafter), Sri Aurobindo summarised some of the stages of *dāśya*, simplifying the elaborate scheme found in the *Record of Yoga* during the same period. He

used the images of the servant, the instrument and the slave:

Obedience is the sign of the servant, but that is the lowest stage of this relation, *dāśya*. Afterwards we do not obey, but move to his will as the string replies to the finger of the musician. To be the instrument is this higher stage of self-surrender and submission. But this is the living and loving instrument and it ends in the whole nature of our being becoming the slave of God, rejoicing in his possession and its own blissful subjection to the divine grasp and mastery. With a passionate delight it does all he wills it to do without questioning and bears all he would have it bear, because what it bears is the burden of the beloved being.¹⁰

Here Sri Aurobindo uses the same phrase as in *Savitri*, “slave of God”, and connects its meaning with one further aspect of *dāśya*, the “passionate delight” that accompanies the total surrender. In the *Record* this is called *madhura bhāva*. On 27 March 1914 Sri Aurobindo wrote, after explaining the three stages of tertiary *dāśya*:

The bhava of the dasya tends to its right relation of the bandini dasi with the characteristic madhurabhava of that relation....¹¹

The word *bhāva* means a state of being or especially feeling, and is also used for particular relations between the soul and the Divine analogous to human relations. *Madhura* means sweet, but the notion of sweetness is inadequate to render the ineffable bliss of the relation with the divine Lover which is called *madhura bhāva*. *Dāśya* with *madhura bhāva* takes a form audaciously compared by Sri Aurobindo to the relation of the *bandinī dāsī*, the “captive slave-girl”, to her Master. There seems to be an allusion to this in the 1916 version of *Savitri*:

This shalt thou henceforth learn from thy heartbeats
That conquering me thou art my captive made,
And who possess me are by me possessed.¹²

The last line—which corresponds to the phrase “rejoicing in his possession and its own blissful subjection” in *The Synthesis of Yoga*—later disappeared. The second line was interchanged with the first and became:

Who hunts and seizes me, my captive grows....¹³

The *bandinī dāsī* or “captive slave-girl” is clearly related to the *madhura dāsī* or “sweet slave-girl” who is mentioned in the *Record* on 1 January 1915:

Kali [i.e. Prakriti or Shakti] is now everywhere revealed in the bhava of the madhura dasi dominated by Krishna and ministering to his bhoga.¹⁴

But there is no weakness in this submission of Kali to Krishna. Her surrender is sometimes referred to as “dasya of the power” and she is also called the *dāsī īśvarī*.¹⁵ If in relation to Krishna, her Lord, she is an enamoured slave, in relation to the world she is the Ishwari, the all-ruling Goddess. For hers is

the aishwarya [sovereignty] of the *Dasi* empowered by the Lover and Master, the real aishwarya being his, the executive aishwarya hers.¹⁶

The “Krishna Kali relation founded on madhura dasya”¹⁷ is thus the foundation of *tapas-siddhi*, the power to change the world. This is the power that manifests through Savitri, the power that is one with knowledge and with the love of which Sri Aurobindo wrote in his epic in that tremendous *mantra*:

For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 117.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
4. *Savitri* (1993), p. 125.
5. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 75.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 307-8.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 600-601. The loss of the sense of one’s separate individuality, which becomes only a portion of universal Nature, seems to be what is expressed by the phrase “Mirror of Nature’s secret spirit” at the beginning of the passage in *Savitri* quoted from the 1916 version in the last instalment.
8. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, pp. 1112-13.
9. *Mother India*, February 1982, p. 82.
10. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 24, p. 603.
11. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 412.
12. *Mother India*, February 1982, p. 83.
13. *Savitri*, p. 702.
14. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 783.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 927, 1100.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 1038-39.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 1189.

AN ELEGY

NOR spring, nor bloom, nor freshness!—O come thou!
Bloom, verdure, springtime, all things, call thee now.
Not of the moon so wistful is the sea
As sea and moon and earth and air of thee!

The hollow, silent world, now thou art gone,
Like music of thy laughter vibrates on,
As silence after music; oh, so sweet
Thy name is now for absence to repeat.

Ah! dearer than the dart of all delight,
Ah! swifter than fresh beauty to the sight,
Comes thy lost cheek to kiss of summer days,
And to the gazing stars thy starry gaze.

Come thou! The very air, that aches to be
Void of thy bloom, is bending over thee.
It is of thee the violet breathes replete;
Remembering thee, the rose is straightway sweet.

And my dream-burdened spirit, full to death,—
Ah! just behind the rose I feel thy breath!
Thou seemest through the sweet saps just to start;
Through the green leaves thou comest in my heart.

Oh, she is gone? she never may return,—
Past greenest leaves in summer's heart to burn,
Past dew or flower, or dreams, or surges' lull,
To lie in deepest nature beautiful.

MANMOHAN GHOSE

(Songs of Love and Death, 1926)

PRESIDENTIAL COINCIDENCE ?

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was elected to Congress in 1846.
John F. Kennedy was elected to Congress in 1946.

Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860.
John F. Kennedy was elected President in 1960.

The names Lincoln and Kennedy each contain seven letters.
Both were particularly concerned with civil rights.

Both Presidents were shot on a Friday.
Both Presidents were shot in the head.

Lincoln's secretary was named Kennedy.
Kennedy's secretary was named Lincoln.

Both were assassinated by Southerners.
Both were succeeded by Southerners.

Both successors were named Johnson.
Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln, was born in 1808.
Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy, was born in 1908.

John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Lincoln, was born in 1839.
Lee Harvey Oswald, who assassinated Kennedy, was born in 1939.

Both assassins were known by their three names.

Both names comprise of fifteen letters.

ANONYMOUS

CHRIST AND CHRISTMAS

JESUS CHRIST is considered to be one of those Avatars who come in certain crises of evolution or when special work is to be done.

According to Sri Aurobindo: "Jesus [Christ] was the child of the Divine Mother." "Christ came into the world to purify, not to fulfil. He himself foreknew the failure of his mission and the necessity of his return with the sword of God into a world that had rejected him." "When all is said, Love and Force together can save the world eventually, but not Love only or Force only." (*SABCL*, Vol. 25, p. 90; Vol. 17, pp. 99, 100)

"The Messenger suffered on the cross, and what happened to the truth that was his message?" The message he brought has never been understood by those who profess the Christian faith. "For a hundred years it was a glorious mirage for which thousands of men and women willingly underwent imprisonment, torture and death in order that Christ's kingdom might come on earth and felicity possess the nations. But the kingdom that came was not Christ's; it was Constantine's... For another thirteen centuries... Has it not been the chief support of fanaticism, falsehood, cruelty and hypocrisy, the purveyor of selfish power, the key-stone of a society that was everything Christ had denounced?" (*SABCL*, Vol. 17, p. 163)

What is the truth for which a young man, beautiful, gifted, eloquent and admired should consent to be crucified for its sake? The cross is, in Yoga, the symbol of the soul and nature in their strong and perfect union, but because of our fall into the impurities of ignorance, it has become the symbol of suffering and purification.

In Nature, pain is a possibility which has to be exhausted and man has been selected as the instrument to work it out of the cosmos. In the light of this idea the Christian doctrine of the Son of Man on the Cross acquires a new significance and Man himself becomes the Christ of the universe.

Jesus was a great thinker, a man who had caught something of the divine knowledge, but the writers who recorded his sayings were for the most part, ordinary men of a very narrow culture and scope of thought. They seem to have grossly misunderstood his deepest sayings. For instance, when he said, "I and my Father are one," expressing the deep truth that the human self and the divine self are identical, they imagined that he was setting up an individual claim to be God.

The inner Divinity is the eternal Avatar in man; the human manifestation is its sign and development in the external world.

Whether a Jesus, son of the carpenter Joseph was actually born in Nazareth or Bethlehem, lived and taught and was done to death on a real or trumped up charge of sedition is the least important. If the Christ, God-made-man, lives within our spiritual being, it would seem to matter little whether or not a son of Mary physically lived and suffered and died in Judea.

This history is written in too pronounced characters to be the exact type of all messages that the world has received. But is it not in some sort the fate of all truth?

Nevertheless, mankind has for thousands of years been attempting, obstinately and

with passion, to discover that truth.

It was the knowledge of good and evil that brought grief and sin into the world; when that knowledge is surmounted, man will rise above grief and sin. Before he ate the forbidden fruit, he had the innocence of the animal; when he shall cease to eat it, he will have the innocence of God.

“There is no connection between the Christian conception (of the Kingdom of Heaven) and the idea of the supramental descent. The Christian conception supposes a state of things brought about by religious emotion and moral purification; but these things are no more capable of changing the world, whatever value they may have for the individual, than mental idealism or any other power yet called upon for the purpose. The Christian proposes to substitute the sattwic religious ego for the rajasic and tamasic ego, but although this can be done as an individual achievement, it has never succeeded and will never succeed in accomplishing itself in the mass. It has no higher spiritual or psychological knowledge behind it and ignores the foundation of human character and the source of the difficulty—the duality of mind, life and body. Unless there is a descent of a new Power of Consciousness, not subject to the dualities but still dynamic which will provide a new foundation and a lifting of the centre of consciousness above the mind, the Kingdom of God on earth can only be an ideal, not a fact realised in the general earth-consciousness and earth-life.” (*SABCL*, Vol. 22, p. 133)

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We know that the shortest day of the year corresponds to the greatest declination of the sun to the south, about the 21st December; then the sun again mounts to the north. The Mother’s comment on this is:

“That is why the 25th December was a festival of Light long before Jesus Christ. This festival was in vogue long before Christianity; it originated in Egypt and very probably the birthday of Christ was fixed on the same day as that of the return of the Light.” (*CWM*, Vol. 4, p. 6)

Also, about the significances of the gifts offered by the three Magi to Jesus at the time of his birth, She said:

Gold: wealth of the world and supramental knowledge.

Frankincense: purification of the vital.

Myrrh: immortalisation of the body.

Father Christmas—Santa Claus: One of the most popular saints was Nicholas or Myra, known for his miracles. The transformation of St. Nicholas into Father Christmas occurred first in Germany, then in countries of reformed churches and finally in France. The Dutch Protestants replaced St. Nicholas with the benevolent magician who came to

be known as Santa Claus. In the United States and England, St. Nicholas is the patron of Christmas, traditionally a festival of the family when presents are exchanged.

The Christmas Tree: It is an evergreen, usually a Balsam or Douglas Fir, and on Christmas Day it is decorated with lights, objects and other ornaments connected with the birth of Jesus. The use of evergreen trees as a symbol of eternal life was an ancient custom of Egyptians, Chinese and Hebrews. The Scandinavians use it at the New Year to scare away the devil. In fact the Mother calls the evergreens like pines and firs “Perpetual Vitality”. The modern Christmas tree originated in West Germany where it was used for a popular mediaeval play about Adam and Eve and apples were hung on it.

The Doctrine of Transubstantiation: At the last supper as Jesus broke the bread and gave of the wine, he said to his disciples: “This is my body and this is my blood.” The Roman Catholic Church was founded upon this doctrine and the remarkable rise of the Eucharist came into existence. “Blasphemous nonsense!” cried the Protestant.

But according to Sri Aurobindo Jesus’ words always have a meaning, generally a true and a beautiful one. On the other hand, the Transubstantiation Doctrine is one which the Catholics themselves do not understand. It is to them a mystery. And yet, how plain is the meaning to the Oriental intelligence! The plasm of matter—the food sheath of the universe—to which bread and wine belong, is rendered as the blood and body of God and typifies the great primal sacrifice by which God crucified himself so that the world might exist. The infinite had to become finite, the unconditioned to condition himself, Spirit to evolve Matter. In the bread and the wine which the communicant eats, God actually is; but he is not present to our consciousness and he only becomes so present by an act of faith. This is the whole doctrine of Transubstantiation.

Let the Christ, God-made-man, live within our spiritual being so that we can know by spiritual experience the inner Christ, live uplifted in the light of his teaching and escape from the yoke of the natural law by that atonement (at-one-ment) with God of which the crucifixion is the symbol.

It is in this spirit that we must celebrate Christmas.

KAILAS JHAVERI

(The text is based on the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)

References taken from Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library Edition:

Christianity and Yoga: 22: 128-133.
The Trinity: 23: 556
Indian Spirituality: 23: 556
Esoteric tradition: 13: 154
Purgatory: 14: 162
Christian Idea of God: 22: 56
Son of Man: 3: 385.

Eucharist: 12: 55-56; 16: 364.
Virgin Mary: 12: 55
Failing of Christianity: 22: 430
Christianity: 16: 310, 365, 394
Christ and Man: 26: 447-448
Christmas: 20: 314.

A HUMAN HAND

A-TREMBLE with the eagerness to play
And rapture of surrender
There, very near, yet many worlds away
Unconscious of its splendour:

A human hand
Forceful subdued display
And image of its owner.

The mirror of a many-splendoured soul
Reflecting earthly summits
The foothills of a superhuman goal
Beyond the reach of planets:

A human hand
Charming, expressive whole
And image of its owner.

A tempting hand to hold and leave no more
But it defeats desire
Its noble chastity inspires awe
And makes the heart reach higher

A human hand
Certainly it is more
Than image of its owner.

*

I showed this poem to a friend of mine
Whose judgement I desired
“It’s very fine” he said and smiled benign
His own hand then admired:

My perfect hand—
Its masterly design—
True image of its owner!

The poem then was read at tea for two
 To our pretty lady
 Her lovely cheeks all turned a pinkish hue,
 The answer she had ready:

My shapely hand
 Well rounded, it is true,
 The image of its owner.

At last I gave the poem then to see
 To someone so much dearer
 And was surprised to see his eyes on me
 As he drew somewhat nearer:

Your lovely hand
 Always enraptured me;
 The owner of its owner!

CARMEN

Hail to Thee, O Lord, Master of the world. Give us the power to do the work without being attached to it and to develop the capacities of individual manifestation without living in the illusion of personality. Strengthen our vision of reality; make firm our perception of unity; deliver us from all ignorance, all darkness....

O Lord, grant that we may rise above the ordinary forms of manifestation so that Thou mayst find the tools necessary for Thy new manifestation.

Do not let us lose sight of the goal; grant that we may always be united with Thy force, the force which the earth does not yet know and which Thou hast given us the mission to reveal to it.

In a deep meditation, all the states of manifestation consecrate themselves to Thy manifestation.

The Mother

(Prayers and Meditations, June 26, 1914)

A LETTER

Maggi dearest

When I read your letter it seemed to me I was hearing Nata's voice as well, and now it is as though I speak to him too, in whom I confided everything, as I will do now.

There are moments of the soul which are very special, and this is one of them.

The illness came as the greatest Grace.

It has brought me closer than ever to the Divine, and union with the Mother has become intense and constant.

In a brief arc of time Mère has granted me experiences 'of a wide radius': on the physical plane, at the medical level, and above all on the inner plane. Through something apparently 'bad' She has made me a participant in one of Her 'planes of work', making of me a docile instrument explaining to me that what was happening was not a personal event but concerned Her work and therefore everyone.

All began a year ago with a strange pain in the right leg. But for months and months several physicians could not tell what was the cause (even though quite obvious from the X-rays). So the pain increased until it paralysed me, and even this was Grace. Only then, in February, the right diagnosis was made: a prostatic tumour, in metastasis in the pelvic bones, so extensive and aggressive, according to the tumour specialist, as to be probably incurable.

Then a great peace came over me, Maggi, which was not mine. And in that peace came one day, unexpectedly, the experience of the Divine in the physical body. I seemed to touch the Divine physically and it seemed that the Divine had entered physically into me.

The pain was transformed into Ananda; the legs themselves—both the healthy one and the sick one—vibrated in unison with the presence of the Divine, an energy, unknown to me till that moment, ran through them like a subtle electric current, every trace of suffering had disappeared, the legs themselves brimmed with happiness.

An experience that has probably changed the geography of life and shifted the central barometer of existence, such that I would not know how to describe it.

The Mother has been the Divine Nurse. How many conversations I have had with Her, giving Her all the pain that I had in me, and for everything I had Her reply, as tangible for the common man as matter is. At the moment the tumour was diagnosed and the doctors decided to try radiotherapy, Mère suggested to me: "It will be Divine-therapy." Suspended by the thread of human ignorance, I thus felt not that I 'would be' but that I 'was' cured, that even a malignant tumour is Yoga, since behind it were concealed unfathomable positivities.

In Her work Mère used even Ginevra, who has been marvellous and very, very brave and very strong. We have lived everything, absolutely everything together, like one single person in Mother's arms. That which has so changed has not gone away.

Parallel with the medical experience based on radio- and chemotherapy—destructive and one-directional, one comes out of it with the body deeply disturbed—I also received

the Grace to know homoeopathy at a level that I didn't know existed.

You know homoeopathy much better than we do, so you will forgive me if I tell you things you already know. And forgive me also if my language is... medically incompetent.

For years Ginevra and I have taken homoeopathy with a lady doctor who uses as a diagnostic instrument the Vega Test machine, as yet not calibrated, so to speak, for cases such as cancer. So she sent me to a colleague specialising in the cure of tumours.

I went to Dr. Dobrea at the end of April, a month after the radiotherapy. He uses diagnostic instruments developed in research laboratories in Germany, the USA and Japan. They are based on the 'magnetic bioresonance', like the Vega Test, and his are calibrated precisely for tumour illnesses.

Dobrea explained everything, step by step, while he was making the diagnosis: it seemed to me like listening to an ancient Yogi in a modern science, a synthesis of East and West, of the past and the present. It was a meeting of exceptional interest, as though perhaps the Mother would have wanted to see and hear about the cure for cancer.

Dobrea is one of a group of researchers who rely, among others, on the laboratory in Germany where the Vega Test and other instruments were created. You probably already know what I am about to tell you.

In that laboratory they have developed a very advanced Kirlian camera that allows one to see the human aura (and naturally of other living creatures) even 'in its complexity and with colours' of which the ancient knowledge of India has spoken.

I have seen that machine with my own eyes as someone managed to present and demonstrate it on a special television show.

Using the Kirlian camera, they have deepened their studies of cancer, developing an instrument in the USA that I saw for the first time in Dobrea's hands and which is difficult to describe: it's a sort of "biological diapason" which, oscillated by the physician in front of the patient, enables him to test physically and visibly the state of his aura, of the subtle body.

Examining a patient with the Vega Test, the "biological diapason" indicates if the subtle body is closed and in equilibrium, or turbulent and open, causing leaks, imbalances, etc. In this case, the Vega Test enables the doctor to determine the medication that restores the subtle body to equilibrium and seals the leaks.

If I'd been told about it, perhaps I wouldn't have believed it, but I was seated on a chair, the object of diagnosis, and Dobrea explained all the phenomena that were occurring. I saw the biological diapason oscillating regularly if the Vega Test indicated equilibrium in the organ being tested; 'swerve' from its normal oscillation if the organ was diseased and unbalanced; and become regular again when the Vega Test identified the right medication.

The medicines are almost all produced in Germany, the USA, Japan etc.... (One of them, Germanium, comes from China, and on the label is written: "A Gift of the Divine for the Human Kind of the XXI Century.") The majority of them complement those which specifically 'act on the DNA of the tumour cells until they restore the DNA itself to conditions of normality and health'.

Dobrea also has other instruments, not only for diagnosis, but also for specific therapies.

When I went to him for the first time, I saw immediately that the immune system was damaged and the metabolism in crisis. Before he was able to make a diagnosis, he made me undergo two therapies with the Vega Select instrument: the first for the immune system, the second for the metabolism.

Vega Select, while it cures, memorises personal data on magnetically therapeutic cards (like credit cards) which I then wore for a month around the neck in such a way that one rested on the solar plexus (for the metabolism) and the other on the thymus (for the immune system).

The results of Dobrea's homoeopathic cure are significant. I relate them to you, not knowing whether or not they will interest you.

In mid-February, at the first correct diagnosis, some of the pelvic bones (dx?) had disappeared in the X-rays, there were many signs of abnormality in the blood, and the 'psa' (more or less the principal indicator of the malignancy and extent of tumours of my type) was 720 (normal-max. 4).

At the end of March, at termination of the radiotherapy accompanied by hormone treatment, the 'psa' was down to only 50 (a most significant and unforeseen result for the tumour specialist), though the bones indicated increased osteoporosis as a result of the radiation.

At the end of April, at the first visit, Dobrea ascertained that the DNA of the cells affected by the tumour were still on the 'sick branch', but after only one month of treatment it was already on the way to being cured, on the 'healthy branch', as he puts it. Physically, moreover, I felt reborn.

In July the CAT and X-ray of the pelvis showed that the bones, even those assumed to be permanently 'defunct', were reforming and recalcifying very well. But above all, the 'psa' was down to 1.9—less than half the maximum! There seemed to be no trace of the tumour.

I am convinced that homoeopathy is the medicine of the future. I now call it the medicine of the Divine.

The non-homoeopathic doctors who treated me are amazed at my progress. I am not: I was cured by the Mother with Her instruments, and even the radiotherapy had been stopped after the first cycle of sittings (22) on account of the exceptional results obtained.

Today I seem to have become a child again with all of life still to live. A little child of the Mother. (...)

On the day of Sri Aurobindo's great Darshan we also thought much about you and our friends in Auroville and Pondy.

My heart overflows with gratitude and love for the Divine who has granted so much Grace to this his minute creature.

With love and friendship

Your ARKA

N.B. This is one of the last letters Arka wrote to Maggi before his passing away in 2000. See also, *Mother India*, June 2002, pp. 513-14. — R.Y.D.

RAM JHAROKA, RAMESHWARAM

(This promontory on ancient Tamil soil, believed by local legend to be the remnant of the magic mountain of Himalayan herbs carried to Lanka by Hanuman, overlooks a serene transparent inlet of the Indian Ocean, closest in India to Sri Lanka. A temple to Rama tops the hill, enshrining on a rock the impress of a small pair of feet, believed to be the avatar's.)

HERE earth's infancy still lingers. A youthful god
Gazed over these red and green swards. His unaffected
Native dominion's sway in plant and stone
And sapphire stretches full of a listening silence
Lives on: His cool breath mingled in the breeze
Motives a murmurous foam-embroidery
Around islets in a lagoon's crystal water.
All things remind of Ram. Graceful feet
Pressed the yielding earth and left their imprint
Now enshrined on the hilltop. Ever fresh
And tender as the coconut water offered
By a Tamil girl-child under the tamarind tree,
Earth preserves with care this memory from Time's trident.

DEBASHISH BANERJI

O Lord, O eternal Master, my thought lies mute and powerless before Thee but my heart calls to Thee; awaken all my being that it may be for Thee, entirely, the needed instrument, the perfect servitor.

The Mother

(Prayers and Meditations, August 28, 1914)

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE POETIC ACT AND THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

In order to study this relation we shall consider the four steps of poetic experience as envisaged by Sanskrit poetics:

- a. the world of poetry, *kāvya-saṁsāra*,
- b. the psychology of poetic creation, *pratibhā*,
- c. the poetic work, *kavi-karman*,
- d. the aesthetic experience, *rasāśvādāna*.

a. The world of poetry

This consists of a permanent (poetical) state, *sthāyibhāva*, inherent in every person; and the outside world.

The permanent state is the Absolute-of-poetry. It contains all feelings and poetic knowledge in a state of latency. Here, for example, are dormant the universal feelings of love, heroism, compassion, horror etc. common to all humanity. But though they are latent they acquire, in most men, a certain capacity of being activated, given an adequate stimulus. The degree of this capacity depends on *saṁskāra* 'impressions (which remain subconsciously in the mind,) of objects experienced' and on *vāsanā*, inborn propensities which, according to Indian thought, are impressions left by experiences of past lives.¹

Kalidasa refers, on several occasions, to these ideas and their relation to the aesthetic experience; as for instance in the very well-known lines:

*ramyāṇi vīkṣya madhurāṁśca nīśamya śabdān
paryutsuko bhavati yatsukhito 'pi jantuḥ |
taccetasā smarati nūnamabodhapūrvam
bhāvasthirāṇi jananāntarasauhrdāni ||*

(*Abhijñāna-śakuntalam*, V, 2)

Sometimes a man, even in his happy moments, becomes sad when he sees things of beauty and hears sweetest songs: this surely shows that he recollects in his heart, in a manner unfelt before, affections of former lives which have left unalterable impressions.

Here, the word *bhāva* has the connotation of *vāsanā*. Because of the latent impressions 'a thing of beauty' becomes 'a joy for ever'; this 'joy' is what the Indian aestheticians name *rasa*.²

Here is also the outer world, mythical and historical. The objects of this world, in the context of poetry, act as stimuli, which activate the permanent (poetical) state. The dormant sentiments of love etc. are roused and transmuted into a dynamic state which can be felt and 'enjoyed'. This dynamic state is the state of *rasa* 'sap or essence of a thing'.

This dynamization, or outflowing of *rasa*, has been defined by Bharata in these oft-quoted much-discussed words:

vibhāvānubhāva-vyabhicāri-samyogād rasa-niṣpatiḥ ॥

i.e. the outflowing of *rasa* takes place when *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyabhicāri-bhāva* unite together.

In order to grasp the significance of the various technical terms in this definition I would like to compare it with a few lines from W. Kandinsky. He writes:

Nature, that is to say the everchanging surroundings of men, sets in vibration the strings of the piano (the soul) by manipulation of the keys (various objects with their specific potentialities).³

Vibhāva, roughly speaking, are these everchanging surroundings of men, *anubhāva* are the keys, various objects with their specific potentialities, and the *vyabhicāri-bhāva* are the transitory vibrations produced in the soul. What Kandinsky does not mention explicitly, and Bharata does, is the concept of *rasa*. However, if we stretch logically Kandinsky's metaphor, we arrive at the *rasa*-concept, i.e. the melody underlying the passing vibrations. *Rasa* is the melody of the soul. And *sthāyin* or *sthāyi-bhāva* is the potentiality of the melody lying dormant as the strings of the piano before they are set into vibration.

Sthāyin is the objective, ever-existent sentiment which is the support of all our passing emotions which are transitory. In the experience of the poet, it is this that takes the form of *rasa*. Thus *rati* (eroticism) which is a *sthāyin* becomes *śṛṅgāra* (feeling of love) which is the *rasa*-form of *rati*; *śoka* (sorrow) becomes *karuṇa* (feeling of pathos): *śoko hi karuṇa-sthāyi-bhāva*.⁴ And the experiencer is immersed in that outflowing of *rasa*: this state is known as *rasāveśa*, absorption in the emotional experience.

The idea of the transmutation of *sthāyin* into *rasa* is very graphically expressed by Bhavabhūti. Rama is suffering the intense pang of separation after he has exiled his wife. Describing Rama's suffering Bhavabhūti writes,

anirbhinno gabhīratvād antar-gūḍha-ghana-vyathāḥ ।
putapāka-pratikāśo rāmasya karuṇo rasaḥ ॥

(*Uttararāmacarita*, III, 1)

Because it is profound it does not burst out. This pathos of Rama, full of dense pain hidden in the depth of his heart, as if it were a potion boiling inside a retort.

The dense, deep-lying pain, *antar-gūḍha-ghana-vyathā*, dormant, is the *sthāyin* which lies hidden in every human being. The latent state is, however, dynamised in this case, by the fact of the exile of his wife; this separation produces the sentiment of pathos.

It is this *rasa* which is the real object of poetry and aesthetics, when through the contact with the objects of the outer world the permanent (poetical) state is energised the real sentiment is revealed. This revelation is the poetic vision, *darśana*, of the seer, the poet. The first contact with the objects of the outer world is not the end of poetic seeing because these objects have a reality limited in time and space, and therefore the emotions they arouse are transitory and not the true *rasa*.

Let us consider the famous story of Valmiki, the first poet. He saw a pair of birds of which one was killed by a hunter. The other flew around its dead mate weeping. This scene moved him so profoundly that he burst out into rhythmic utterances.

Here the scene, object of the outer world, stimulated the latent compassion, *śoka*, (sorrow) in Valmiki's mind and roused it into a dynamic state which he could experience as pathos, *karuṇa-rasa*. This revelation of the universal pathos is a vision, *darśana*, made possible by the latent impressions (*saṁskāra*, *vāsanā*).

By this revelation one becomes a 'seer'. But a seer is not a poet. For this vision to be poetry there must follow expression, *varṇana*. The seer and the mystic can remain content with vision only, but there is no poetry without expression.

tathā hi darśana-svacche nitye'pyādi-kaver muneḥ |
noditā kavitaḥ loke yāvaj jātā na varṇanā ||

for this, it has been said, that even though the vision of the sage (Valmiki), the first poet, was pure and eternal, yet poetry did not take form until expression was born.

(To be continued)

RANAJIT SARKAR

Notes and References

1. For a discussion of the meaning of *saṁskāra* and *vāsanā*, see Surendranath Dasgupta, *The History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, London, 1922, p. 263.
2. Cf. *Raghuvamśa* I. 20; VII. 15; XI. 22.
3. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, London, 1947, p. 50. English translation of *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, 1912.
4. *Dhvanyāloka*: K. Krishnamoorthy (ed.), Dharwar, 1974, p. 12.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

MY DADDY

(Be ready to shed tears, this is a beautiful affirmation for life and more.)

HER hair was up in a ponytail
Her favorite dress tied with a bow.
Today was Daddy's Day at school,
And she couldn't wait to go.

But her mummy tried to tell her,
That she probably should stay home.
Why the kids might not understand,
If she went to school alone.

But she was not afraid;
She knew just what to say.
What to tell her classmates
Of why he wasn't there today.

But still her mother worried,
For her to face this day alone.
And that was why once again,
She tried to keep her daughter home.

But the little girl went to school,
Eager to tell them all.
About a dad she never sees
A dad who never calls.

There were daddies along the wall in back,
For everyone to meet.
Children squirming impatiently,
Anxious in their seats.

One by one the teacher called,
A student from the class.
To introduce their daddy,
As seconds slowly passed.

At last the teacher called her name,
Every child turned to stare.
Each of them was searching,
For a man who wasn't there.

"Where's her daddy at?"
She heard a boy call out.
"She probably doesn't have one,"
Another student dared to shout.

And from somewhere near the back,
She heard a daddy say,
"Looks like another deadbeat dad,
Too busy to waste his day."
The words did not offend her,
As she smiled up at her Mom.
And looked back at her teacher,
Who told her to go on.

And with hands behind her back,
Slowly she began to speak.
And out from the mouth of a child,
Came words incredibly unique.

"My Daddy couldn't be here,
Because he lives so far away.
But I know he wishes he could be,
Since this is such a special day.

And though you cannot meet him,
I wanted you to know
All about my daddy,
And how much he loves me so.

He loved to tell me stories
He taught me to ride my bike.
He surprised me with pink roses,
And taught me to fly a kite.

We used to share fudge sundaes,
And ice cream in a cone.
And though you cannot see him,
I'm not standing here alone.

Cause my daddy's always with me,
Even though we are apart
I know because he told me,
He'll forever be in my heart."

With that, her little hand reached up,
And lay across her chest.
Feeling her own heartbeat,
Beneath her favourite dress.

And from somewhere in the crowd of dads,
Her mother stood in tears.
Proudly watching her daughter,
Who was wise beyond her years.

For she stood up for the love
Of her life.
Doing what was best for her,
Doing what was right.

And when she dropped her hand back down,
Staring straight into the crowd.
She finished with a voice so soft,
But its message clear and loud.

"I love my daddy very much,
He's my shining star.
And if he could, he'd be here,
But heaven's just too far.

You see he was a fireman
And died just this past year
When airplanes hit the towers
And taught Americans to fear.

But sometimes when I close my eyes,
It's like he never went away."
And then she closed her eyes,
And saw him there that day.

And to her mother's amazement,
She witnessed with surprise.
A room full of daddies and children,
All starting to close their eyes.

Who knows what they saw before them,
Who knows what they felt inside.
Perhaps for merely a second,
They saw him at her side.

"I know you're with me Daddy,"
To the silence she called out.
And what happened next made believers,
Of those once filled with doubt.

Not one in that room could explain it,
For each of their eyes had been closed.
But there on the desk beside her,
Was a fragrant long-stemmed pink rose.

And a child was blessed, if only for a moment,
By the love of her shining bright star.
And given the gift of believing,
That heaven is never too far.

They say it takes a minute to find a special
person, an hour to appreciate them, a day to
love them, but then an entire life to for-
get them.

ANONYMOUS

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

(Continued from the issue of November 2002)

BEFORE coming to the holistic perspective of Sri Aurobindo, let us have a look at the way IT is used by humanity at present. For any technology is only a tool; how much it benefits humanity depends to a large extent on the quality, motives and values of the consciousness which uses it. So a quick glance at the present patterns of IT usage may indicate the present condition of humanity and what IT *cannot* change.

According to the Guinness Book of Records, Millennium Edition, the most frequently used search-word on the Internet is “sex” with an average of 1.55 million searches a month; in the second place comes “chat”, which means some form of gossip, with around four lakhs searches per month. We need not reel out statistics to show that the most extensive use of IT is in Business or E-commerce; it is obvious to everyone who is watching the rapid spread of IT in Business. Next to Business, the other large-scale use of IT is in the defence establishment and for spying, which means for Power. According to the well-known futurist thinkers like Alvin Toffler, the future wars will be fought more in cyberspace than in geographical space. In India recently a top commander of the Armed Forces exhorted the officers of the army to prepare for the “info-war” of the future. The other area in which use of IT is spreading rapidly is Entertainment. So, what are the predominant motives for using IT? It is the motive for power, wealth, sex, gossip and entertainment. Surely, IT is also used for education, research and medicare. But the use of IT for these higher motives is relatively much less in comparison to its use for the lower motives. This is because the dominant interests of humanity are not those of knowledge but of wealth, power and enjoyment.

This brings us to the hype that is going around everywhere, that IT will herald the “knowledge-society” or “knowledge-economy”. But we have to be clear about the type of “knowledge” that these IT enthusiasts are talking about. The “knowledge” that is talked about here is the pragmatic and utilitarian knowledge which will enhance the efficiency and productivity of the instruments of wealth, power and enjoyment. Here “knowledge” is used for a better and more efficient realisation of these motives. For example, “knowledge-management” (KM) is one of the new facts in Management. But what is the aim of KM? It is, according to the KM experts, to “leverage” knowledge for “Competitive Advantage”. But competitive advantage is a power-motive; the aim here is to use knowledge to gain a competitive edge over rival companies or, in other words, market-dominance. So the “knowledge-society” of the future of the IT prophet will be driven by the same essential motives of humanity. All this shows that the hype heaped on IT, that it will “change everything”, is from a higher point of view rather an exaggerated claim. This also brings out the importance of the constant emphasis of the humanistic and spiritual philosophies that there cannot be any radical change in human society without a radical change in the human being and his motives and values.

In our perspective, based on Sri Aurobindo's vision, a true knowledge-society is the one in which knowledge and learning is the dominant motive of humanity; it will be a society in which knowledge is sought not for the practical benefits it brings, but for the joy of knowledge, and for the illumination it brings for a better understanding of Truth and the higher values and aims of life. In such a society, the motives of power, wealth and vital enjoyment are subordinated to the higher motives of knowledge and truth and not the other way round as it is happening now. In other words, in a true knowledge-society, education, research, and culture, and not economics, business and politics, will be the dominant social organ. IT in such a society will be an instrument mainly of culture and not controlled by commerce as it is now.

We would like to clarify here some of the possible doubts and misconceptions or misunderstandings which may arise regarding our conception of the knowledge-society. We are not making any condemnatory moral judgement on the motives of wealth, power, pragmatic knowledge and enjoyment, or on the organs of wealth and power, that is Business and Politics. The motives of power, wealth and enjoyment are some of the psychological needs of the human being and have a significant role to play in human evolution. These are the motives which awaken the individual and the community from the inertia, indolence and mechanical routine of physical nature to the dynamism of the vital nature or the life force; these are the motives which bring vitality, vigour and prosperity to the individual and the community. In the present condition of human evolution, these motives are the psychological source of its economic, social and political life. Similarly, Business and Politics are indispensable organs of the human society because they are a collective expression of some of the fundamental psychological needs of Man. In any society of the past, present or future there will be business, politics and the social organism; there will also be luxury industries which cater to the vital enjoyment of people.

For we cannot eat knowledge or wear knowledge. We need commerce and industries to produce the utilities and luxuries for people. We need government to co-ordinate, regulate and direct the various organs of society. We need pragmatic knowledge and the people with the appropriate temperament, inclination, motives and the capacity for the efficient organisation of the material, economic, social and political life of the community.

But in the spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo, the motives of wealth, power and enjoyment are not the highest motives and aims of life. These are the motives of the physical and vital nature in man. But man is not merely a body, or emotions, senses and their desires which together constitute what is called the vital being in Sri Aurobindo's integral psychology. There is a higher nature in man beyond his physical and vital nature which is made of his mental, moral, aesthetic and spiritual being. To rise into this higher mental and spiritual nature is the next step in human evolution. The central aim of this next, future step in human evolution will not be mere socio-economic development of the outer life of man; it will be the inner evolution of the individual and the collectivity or, in other words, the mental, moral, aesthetic, psychological and spiritual development of the human being. The main motives of this higher stage in evolution will not be power and wealth; it will be the higher values and aims of life like truth, beauty, goodness,

harmony, unity, freedom, perfection and ultimately the Divine which is the source of all values, ideals and perfections. The enjoyment that is pursued in this higher stage of evolution will not be the sensuous or vital enjoyment but the aesthetic and spiritual enjoyment of the beauty and joy of life. The knowledge that is sought after will not be merely the materially pragmatic knowledge but the philosophical, aesthetic, psychological and spiritual knowledge which will lead to the concrete realisation of these higher motives, values and aims in the inner and outer life. For “knowledge” means, in the Indian spiritual conception, not mere information; nor is it practically useful knowledge which can be “leveraged” for “competitive advantage”; knowledge means inner illumination which brings more consciousness or awareness, greater self-knowledge; uplifts us to a higher level of consciousness; liberates us from ego, desire, bondage and suffering and transforms us into a new Man. The knowledge-society of the future will seek liberating higher knowledge.

(To be continued)

M. S. SRINIVASAN

NOTICE

A humble request to the readers of my books which are published through the HAVYAVAHANA TRUST for which I am responsible.

Nothing should be taken from my books without my written permission. After getting the written permission from me no changes should be made in the Mother's letters, passages, messages and words. Also, the proper source must be acknowledged.

Huta

RABINDRA SANGEET: THE SONGS OF TAGORE

TAGORE began writing songs at age 13 or 14. When he wrote the song *Jwal Jwal Chita* for Jyotirindranath's play *Sarojini*, he was 14.¹ It went on ceaselessly as a life-long search for ecstasy in various things, mundane and spiritual. He wrote about 2,500 songs. He began developing his theory of music quite early in his life. His essay on "Music and Poetry" (*Sangeet o Kabita*) came out in 1882, when he was barely 21. Only a year before, his two musical plays *Balmiki Protibha* and *Kalmrigaya* had been published. His essays on music are rarer as compared to his articles on poetry and other arts. But then he took up the issue quite frequently in his letters and discussions, diaries and memoirs and in fact anywhere in passing, because he lived continuously in music.

Time may fade the image of the poet, but it will be hard for it to stifle the voice of Tagore, the musician and the creator of *Rabindra Sangeet*, which is an unforgettable achievement of the romantic spirit in man. Tagore was not a champion of Indian classical music, although he had an intimate knowledge of its grammar. He revived the spirit of Indian classical music in his own queer ways, the ways of a romantic and a creative composer. He drew inspiration from the other sources of Indian music, like the folk songs, the *Kirtans* and other religious songs, *Kabigan*, *Brohmo Sangeet* (initiated by Rammohan Roy), patriotic songs, songs of stage plays and *Jatra* (melodramatic theatre), *Panchali*, *Tarja*, *Akhrai*, *Toppa* and the like. He was also inspired by some western tunes. As a revolutionary composer, he broke away from the expressive modes of Indian classical music in his search for a new form of expression based on the marriage between words and tunes. This fusion creates a new art. The musical value of the composers of Bollywood in the fifties and sixties cannot be estimated properly without an understanding of Tagore's achievement as a musician. If Tagore is the first modern composer in the field of Indian music, the post-moderns are men like Naushad and Roshan and Madan Mohan who created the classics for a new age with the help of poets like Shakeel Badayuni, Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi and others.

The purists were not quite kind to Tagore's music. They hit back. It pricked the sensitive skin of a poet. He defended boldly, often ironically. In the May-June issue of *Bharati* in 1881, he wrote:

Am I bribed by *Jay Jawanti*, that I'll have to sacrifice my life for it ? It is distressing for any sensitive listener, when he sees the *ustads* of today sweating heavily and making terrible faces while singing and thereby stifling the sense behind the song ... The different *surs* needed for different *ragas* had been fixed up long before. I don't feel any need to labour for them. Now, music will really be benefited if the purists concentrate on trying to discover the different ideas behind those *ragas*.²

The sense behind an Indian *raga* or *ragini* is the thing which matters most for Tagore. Why does *Purbi* remind us of the evening? And why does *Bhairon* bring in the memory of dawn. Both abound in the soft *surs*. Then why do they produce different moods? In

Bhairon, the *sur* must expand and rise slowly; in *Purbi*, the *sur* passes away slowly like the fading away of a sweet soft murmur. The dawn opens the eyes slowly; the night closes the eyes gently. There lies the similarity. Tagore wished to discover the words through the *surs*. But he did not always stick to that principle. He could not. For situations needed other methods of composition. In 1921, in an interview with Marguerite Wilkinson, he said:

Sometimes I make the words first and then put music with them later. Sometimes I make a melody first and then put words with it. Sometimes the music is subordinated to the words. Sometimes, the words are subordinated to the music.³

The best is a total harmony between the words and tunes. One cannot separate them. The purpose is to create a *third art*, which is neither poetry nor *sur*. Poetry and *sur* consent to give birth to a third existence that is true *Rabindra Sangeet*. A very ordinary poem may be transformed into a bright creation with the addition of a *sur* or *surs*. In an interview with Edward Thompson in 1926, Tagore draws our notice to his sense of tradition and creativity:

In my hymns, my *Brohmosangit*, I have adapted and taken wholesale older tunes from Tansen, the best of our composers; in these, I have used orthodox forms. But for my own songs I have invented freely.⁴

Like the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, Tagore insisted on the soul value of music. The psychic touch is more important than a demonstration of grammar, which is quite often mere pedanticism. He preferred *Kirtan* over the dry exhibitionism of the grammarian. He did not use the word psychic; he struggled to mean it in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy written on 29 July, 1937.⁵ In that letter we find him insisting on a Bengali voice for *Kirtan*, because according to him that form demanded a special mellow sensitivity, a depth of sense, which could not be a mere external gesture or the harsh presentation of a classical vocalist. On 29 October 1937, he claimed, in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy, that nobody could resist the union of words and *sur*. "They want each other."⁶ In his letter to Dilip Kumar Roy written on 6 February 1938, Tagore claimed originality in a humorous address to Tansen. "Ustadji, my path is also your path." It is the path of new creation.⁷ He missed Sahana Devi, who had sacrificed her musical ambition in favour of her love for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Tagore missed her because she could open the inmost being while singing and there was no stylization in her presentation. On 4 April 1938, he wrote to Sahana Devi clarifying his interest in her renderings:

When you sing my songs, I feel my compositions have become meaningful. In that rendering I'm there as much as you are there ...⁸

Tagore possibly meant Sahana's capacity to realise the soul-value of his words. The

proper rendering of the inspiration must be there. The Mother observes:

But what I mean is that there is an inner condition in which the external form is not the most important thing; it is the origin of the music, the inspiration from beyond, which is important; it is not purely the sounds, it is what the sounds express.⁹

Although it is not possible to translate the spiritual or the mystic atmosphere of the Bengali songs, a few samples may be cited to introduce the themes of some lyrics to the non-Bengali readers. These samples will indicate why Tagore is a gateway to the worlds of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and why Sri Aurobindo has seen a great possibility in music:

Art, poetry, music, as they are in their ordinary functioning, create mental and vital, not spiritual values; but they can be turned to a higher end, and then, like all things that are capable of linking our consciousness to the Divine, they are transmuted and become spiritual and can be admitted as part of a life of yoga. All takes new values not from itself, but from the consciousness that uses it; for there is only one thing essential, needful, indispensable, to grow conscious of the Divine Reality and live in it and live it always.¹⁰

One must say that the effort was always there in Tagore. His aspiration takes beautiful shapes: beautiful flowers, fragrance in the air, prayer for purity and grace, the sound of the Divine's flute and so many things revealing the soul's ultimate choice:

With the light of mine eyes
I saw the outside:
Now when the light is gone, I see the self within.
In the playhouse of the world I had played with thee –
Let that play be over and the meeting of hearts begin,
The string of the *vina* has snapped,
The *vina* of the heart now sings.¹¹

Touch me with thy fire,
Burn and purify my life,
Lift my body
And make it thy temple lamp.
Let my songs be the oil
That feeds the flame.
In the core of Darkness
Stars blossom forth at thy touch,
And my agony aflame
Rises to heaven.¹²

The translator, a Bengali, has drifted away a bit from the original. And yet one can easily

feel Tagore's effort at self-purification through music. Sudhir Chakroborty, in his article entitled *Nirjan Ekoker Gaan*¹³ (*The Song of a Loner Sung to Himself*) has indicated the spiritual aspiration of Tagore, which is very prominent due to his choice of the *Raga Bhairabi* between the years 1892 and 1939. Chakraborty draws our attention to the psychic sadness of *Bhairabi* expressed through the songs "The Flute knows my true word" (1915), "The song that plays in my being" (1921), "I don't know to whom I sing my songs" (1939), "Days pass by" (1926), "Why are my eyes flooding with tears (1892), and many others which speak of a loner's painful quest. Unlike European music, which is mostly addressed to humanity, Tagore's music is singularly individual. Shankho Ghosh has seen the same aspiration in Tagore's songs:

Tagore's songs are there to build him up from inside. It is a ceaseless music of self-awareness and self-teaching. In this pedestal of self-teaching, I examine my daily life. I see that no lotus has bloomed in my heart centre. Alas ! Beauty won't choose to implant Her feet there. This sense of waste, incapacity and incompleteness makes him weep.¹⁴

While this quest for self-knowledge is obsessive in the songs of the *Puja* phase in *Gitobitan*, Tagore goes out to the world of Nature too. He feels the Divine in trees and flowers, in streams and seas, in the green and the bareness, and in the nights too, when he looks up to discover bright flames burning in the stars.

He composed songs for every season in Bengal. When rains set in, he was specially thrilled. Then it was not just aesthetics. The rains brought in old memories in a new world; the jingling sound took his heart away. He struggled to remember who had come in the nights to call him. He saw a shadow in his dream and wondered: who had come?

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT—XVI

RAJANGAM

*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.
A time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that
which is planted....*

Old Testament

RAJANGAM was already an ancient when I first saw him. We could hardly visualise him otherwise—but whenever it was that he attained it, he didn't change much after that. Nature had no room to work on him—I would so suspect.

Rajangam was a man of the 19th century—born in a village (Agaramangudi) of Tanjore Dt. on 30th of April 1898. (His centenary came and went unnoticed.) Not much is known about him till he joined the Medical College at Madras in the early part of the 20th century. He was of a small stature—anyway you looked at him. He stood at 5'—give or take an inch or two. A slight stoop only emphasized the lack of height. He was thin as can be—only backbone and ribs wrapped up in a parchment-like wrinkled skin. The limbs matched the rest of him. The head was a bit more reassuring. A good amount of hair collected into a bun in true South Indian Brahmin fashion. The eyes were quite bright but small, carried some fight in them. Cheeks were no cheeks. A Ho-Chi-Minh beard completed his “ascetic-after-austerities” appearance. He was usually clad in a short dhoti and chuddar carelessly thrown over the shoulders. Wooden sandals lent an inch or so to the height. We hardly saw him socialise or talk, except with 2-3 chosen friends. He was one of the “Olds”—many of them were a silent lot, or at least sparing in speech. He lived a long time in the room at the head of the “Prosperity” stairs, at the left (the stairs near our “Reception Room”). Subhash of Electric Dept. is the present occupant.

Rajangam was a medical student in Madras back in the twenties of the old century. He came across some copies of the *Arya* and a booklet or two of Sri Aurobindo's speeches, etc. and was at once captivated. He wanted to meet Sri Aurobindo and so made it to Pondicherry in April of 1921. He had the darshan of Sri Aurobindo in the Guest House. A short conversation followed during which Sri Aurobindo asked him what he had been doing. Rajangam replied that he was reading the *Ideal of Karmayogin* and practising it, taking his body as the chariot and Sri Krishna as the charioteer. Sri Aurobindo replied “Alright, continue.” Rajangam went home in an elated mood, and he had an experience. He felt himself a bird flying to distant places. It was all light and delight. He had lost all body consciousness. He recounted this to Sri Aurobindo, who said “Good, it is symbolic. The bird represents the soul, and promise of light to come.” Rajangam was over-elated—just then Sri Aurobindo quietly remarked “Oh, it is quite a common experience!”

Rajangam went back to Madras, finished his medical studies, and returned in 1923. Sri Aurobindo had told Puraniji, who was then acting as manager of the Ashram: “Yoke him when he comes.” And so he was yoked in that year. When later he told Sri Aurobindo

about some light descending (an experience he had), Sri Aurobindo remarked that the mind intervenes and there is a mixture. But Rajangam assured Sri Aurobindo that in his case there was no mixture. The Guru smiled and said: “After 30 years, I find there is a mixture—and you....” He (Rajangam) must have shrunk a few inches then and there!

Rajangam had often the chance to meditate, along with some others, with Sri Aurobindo. One of them complained of noise (carpenters were working) downstairs during the meditation. Sri Aurobindo told them that one should be able to meditate on a battlefield.

Rajangam came decided to live in the Ashram. He claimed and brought away all that was due to him from the family,—his share of the money, his personal belongings (including brooms), all in bundles, and placed them at his guru’s feet. I heard it said that it was with that money that the part of the Ashram now called Library House (present Reception and Reading Room) was bought. The Ashram Main building is a combination of 4 houses, plus renovations and additions; these houses were bought one by one through the years.

Rajangam was yoked to his work which was to make purchases, and running to the French Post Office, the Treasury, etc. He was given this work to bring him under the Mother’s influence.

Once when he needed some extra supplies, he had trouble getting them. Sri Aurobindo wrote to him: “I am taking whatever the Mother gives, so you also take whatever Mother gives.”

How long he did this work I cannot say, but in the 40s he already led a semi-retired life. What we saw then was that he boiled and delivered to the Mother some water She needed. He had for this purpose a huge enamelled kettle. That his frail frame had the strength to carry it up was surprising. (The kettle should have been a museum piece even then. It must be lost now—junked off)

Rajangam, though a medical man (we would expect a smartly dressed, scientific minded man) was simple—to the point of being naïve, and innocent. Going by present standards of thought, living and dressing, there would be no gauging him. Consider first his dress. There was no change from that short dhoti and chuddar (towel actually). He hung on to his Ho-Chi-Minh beard and long hair gathered into a knot (called a *kummudi* in Tamil and it was ever decreasing). I mention the beard for he was its faithful host as opposed to many old-timers who shed beards and long hair as encumbrances when they joined the newly started Physical Education sometime after 1949 when the Mother put much of Her energies and creative powers into its burgeoning and growing. Then Rajangam had to discard his dhoti (at least for the time of the activities) put on knee-length shorts and white shirt. There was no waist line, the shorts had to be hitched on by a belt. (It was on our grapevine that Rajangam had no intestines. We were simple enough to take the fact in with some belief without a pinch of salt.)

If one does not plant in season, or does not pluck in time—the chances are one gets stalled, and has to retrace one’s footsteps on the path, to plant and pluck.... So it was, I think, with Rajangam (and maybe with others). So he returned, armed with a

tennis racket to redeem a part of himself.

Rajangam and some others like Anilbaran, Bansidhar, Madanlal of D.R., etc. took to some physical activities with unexpected zeal. Rajangam specialised in two items—Mass Exercises and Tennis. The Mass Exercises for the 2nd December Demonstration. The Mass Exercises was, and hopefully will remain, an item that all who wanted could join in. Rajangam could never learn even one figure correctly. He was willing but his mind was incapable of memorising, and the body given a chance, would have preferred to rest—but it was driven to participate. The result was a treat to watch, all knobby limbs jerking around, each of its own volition. He turned around, stretched, folded up, took a few steps whenever he saw the others do something similar—but all too late. It was even difficult for him to find his allotted place. Some good neighbour had to actually lead him to his “spot”.

Tennis was a different story. It was with some amusement and a little puzzlement that we saw Rajangam and his peers rouse themselves from a semi-reclusive way of life, and launch themselves into this activity in all earnestness and seriousness (too much in fact) that would put to shame a teenager (the late Anilbaran Roy and Bansidharji, etc. were of the same ilk). Rajangam, this wisp of a man would don his long shorts, tennis shoes with calf-length socks, tie back his little bun of hair—of course the Ho-Chi-Minh beard tagged along—shoulder his racket and jump on to his well-polished bicycle, pedal off fast (to reach the courts before others). Once there they (R & AB Roy, etc.) got down to the real business. Every point had to be fought for, both in the real sense and vocally—the last recourse was usually necessary—an “out” ball could be shouted back “in”! Rajangam was at a disadvantage because of his size and age. (Not that the others were not old.) Come tournament, he was pitted against younger and fitter members. He got round his weak points as best he could. He first reduced the size of his racquet (the normal leverages were too much for him), by holding it somewhere in the middle of the handle! He could not run much so he made the opponent run—not with forehand and backhand drives—he had not the strength for that. He did instead an amazing chop, nearly sliced the ball in half! This he did with a queer “left-right”—one skip forward and one skip back. He met the impact of the ball with the forward skip and recoiled with the backward skip. The ball dropped into a corner or near the net and just bounced back, away from the opponent. It was very difficult to deal with it. Parul fell victim to him on many an occasion. I think—so does she—that Chandubhai the organiser took some pleasure in setting him against her, and he (Chandubhai) didn’t miss watching the match.

Rajangam did get too old for Tennis and Mass Exercises. He had to give them up. His work too was reduced. He was now left with one duty, that of opening of the Ashram Main Gate at 4.30 am and closing it at 11.00 pm. This he did nearly until his last days. (The regularity, punctuality and an undiminished devotion persisting over decades of some of these old timers would seem unattainable nowadays. Another observable phenomenon is that when one of them passes away or has to retire (old age), two or three are needed to replace him—Rajangam, Bula-da, Khirod-da, etc.) A few minutes before 11 pm or 4.30 am one could hear him coming down the stairs, his wooden sandals beating

a “khat-khat” on the wooden stairs. One night he missed a step and came tumbling down the last few steps. A minor miracle, no bone broke. Actually he was the least excited. He just picked himself up and moved on. It so happened one night that he did not come down. Someone went up and came down a bit alarmed! He called me and said “Battida, come quick, something wrong with Rajangam.” I went up to investigate. There was Rajangam in his night dress—a “Kaupin” (G-string) gloriously snoring away—flat on the floor. There were books and papers strewn all around him and on the cot. Near his ear, a transistor radio was lulling him with some Carnatic classical music. (I think he had learned some Carnatic music in his younger days. He could be heard humming to himself when moving around.) Rajangam acquired this radio but never got to know how to handle it. The radio was tuned to Chennai and he switched it on when there was a classical music programme. When and if, by any chance touch, the tuning knob was shifted off Chennai, and music did not emanate from the gadget, he thought it needed repair. He would send it to our Radio Repairing Section. Mahi or Arun & Co. knew Rajangam well. They put the needle back to Chennai and returned the radio. It was probably easier this way than to teach him the intricacies of Radio Tuning. I shook him gently. He woke up with a start. I assured him everything was OK, and that he could go back to sleep, we would lock the gate. I forget what he did then. But those were the days of “beginning of the end”—which eventually came on the 5th of May 1984. He was 86—quite a long rally.

The yoke, put on Rajangam way back in 1923, on Sri Aurobindo’s orders, by Puraniji, changed from time to time, but was never taken off, nor shrugged off. He breathed his last yoked. The Mother had once told him that he was, in a previous life, the French Revolution leader Barat who later opposed Robespierre. I wonder what and how many “inner voyages” brought him from that violent way to this peaceful Haven. He did retain vestiges of that “Barat” fire till his last days.

Epilogue

Maybe we all, each one of us, are made up of many different streams flowing parallelly to merge into One Ocean. But each stream reaches individually, in its own time according to its flow—some stagnate, are muddy or clear, some flow fast within the banks, yet some flood their banks and lose their way to return later. Each Odyssey is over only when *all* the streams reach *The Ocean*.

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

THE STRANGE WAYS OF LIFE

SOMETIMES we plan but we do not succeed to the extent and the way we desire because the Divine has something else in store for us in the cosmic scheme, but it is always for our good. It seems life always works for our progress. We may not know this at that time but realize it later. Also sometimes it becomes obvious, at other times the good happens in such a subtle way that we are not able to recognize it. The following event with fictitious names of persons and places amply shows how casual, mysterious, and yet calculated life's way is to help a person.

My friend Sadhu who was a lecturer in a college at Nainital in the fifties had applied for a Reader's post in the Engineering College of a town in the plains near his native place. Sometime after the interview Sadhu came to know that his name was second in the panel of selected candidates and the person at no. 1 was not joining. Since Sadhu was tired of hill-living and wanted to leave that place as soon as possible, he was anxious to know the fate of his likely appointment at the Engineering College and he left for the college town. He straightway went to the Principal's residence to inquire about his appointment. The Principal asked Sadhu to accompany him to the college. On reaching the college and his room, the Principal seated himself on his chair, looked for a while at the papers on his table, closed his eyes for a minute and then turned to Sadhu.

"Dr. Sadhu, I am sorry, no one has been selected for the Reader's position. But if you wish we may consider your name for the Lecturer's post on a higher starting salary in the Selection Committee going to be held tomorrow."

At first Sadhu was taken aback by this proposal contrary to what he had learned earlier from a reliable source, but he could not do anything at that moment. He could not even say what he knew. He kept silent for a while and thought over the situation and his problems at Nainital, and then gave his consent.

"Ok, what salary do you expect?" the Principal asked. Sadhu said what he expected and left for Nainital. In a month or so he received the appointment letter and joined the Engineering College. Some two/three months after this, the Registrar of the College happened to meet Sadhu in the town where he confronted Sadhu with the question: "Dr. Sadhu, why did you come to the College that hot June morning?"

"What hot June morning!" Sadhu exclaimed.

"When you came with the Principal?"

"Obviously I wanted to know about my fate for the Reader's post," Sadhu replied.

"Yes, exactly that's what I say. Why did you come at all? Do you know your appointment letter as Reader was on the table of the Principal for his signature? Had you not come that day, the letter would have been signed and dispatched to you at Nainital," the Registrar said.

Sadhu was shocked to know this and was at a loss to understand the situation.

"Why was I then asked to consider the post of a Lecturer?" Sadhu inquired.

The Registrar paused for a while and then said, "Yes, I put the same question to the

Principal. Do you know what reply he gave?"

"No, no, what was it?" Sadhu inquired.

"Please do not misunderstand me if I tell you the truth."

"Oh! please, go on. Don't keep me in suspense," Sadhu said.

"I quote and unquote what the Principal said. 'Dr. Sadhu does not know manners. He does not deserve the Reader's position. When I asked him to accompany me in my car, he took the back seat while I was driving.' Dr. Sadhu, I feel bad to say all that."

So saying the Registrar looked at Sadhu for his reaction. Sadhu was shocked and bewildered and looked at the Registrar almost blankly. He then softly said, "All this sounds unbelievable. Is it really true?"

"Yes, that's what the Principal told me," the Registrar replied.

"Even if it is a fact, how am I supposed to know the manners? That was my first ride in a car. Is the Principal so fussy about etiquette?" Sadhu inquired.

"Do you know that he is the retired Chief Engineer of the State—the first Indian to be appointed on the post after Independence?" the Registrar queried.

"Ok! but what mannerism has to do with the merit of the appointment?" asked Sadhu.

"I appreciate your surprise at the strange decision of the Principal in the case, but it has happened like that," the Registrar replied.

Sadhu had a weary smile that he was unaware of the manners and was sad too about the expectations of the Principal. He reconciled with his fate. He could see that the time for his promotion had not yet come. Yet the flimsy ground of the mannerism for which he missed the appointment left him dejected and disappointed. Almost a year passed and Sadhu had another opportunity for the Reader's post in a well known and reputed University. He applied, was interviewed, and selected. He was greatly relieved and satisfied. Sadhu was now in an open wide world of academic activity. The inspiration that he received in acquiring knowledge, the exposure that he had in interacting in its communication, and the challenges that he faced in the academic competition, provided him a solid foundation to enable him to make contributions in his field. Sadhu now realizes, after forty years, the good hidden in his not being appointed as Reader in the Engineering College. Had he been appointed as Reader then, he would not have applied for the Reader's post in the University. He knew that even if he had applied for the post, his application would not have been forwarded by the College for an equivalent position. Above all, there were other personal and circumstantial considerations holding him back to the place where the Engineering College was located. As a result of the appointment in the college, he would have missed all those academic opportunities which took him far in the University life. At that time Sadhu had not even an inkling of the academic heights he would attain in the University life, though he was aware of the opportunities. Sadhu had a different and bigger role to play at a different place amongst different people, which was possible only when his appointment as Reader in the Engineering College was not made for a reason and situation created by Sadhu's visit to

the Principal's residence. That is how life plans and destiny works. When Sadhu looks back in retrospect, he realizes how positive and decisive destiny is. Sadhu thinks over all this and feels highly contented in life.

YUGUL KISHORE GUPTA

DAWN LEANED OUT ...

DAWN leaned out from heavy slumbering depths,
 Surveyed again the inert silent Om,—
 But finding only long impervious night
 She turned away toward aeons deep with sleep,
 Then paused,—as if some giant unseen hand
 Was laid upon her shoulder to detain.
 Again her vastness turned, the question loomed,
 And slowly uncoiled the spirit of her strength;
 A thunderous might rose up and suddenly
 A single ray pierced down, set fire the sky
 And shattered the upturned sleeping soul of man.
 And rivers of shimmering molten gold
 Run streaming through yesterday's night.
 Unuttered thoughts wheel softly around my head
 And distant notes pluck heart strings mute, unsung
 Which inner ears must know can never come
 To sing these songs, nor meager words describe
 All that's bursting breathless from my heart.

MARY HELEN

RENDEZ-VOUS

It is always a special day, the 2nd of December. Each and every year it brings a new opening, new expectation, prayers answered, aspiration and resolution for progress renewed. That is the day, young and old, child and father, even participants of grandfather's age take part together in offering the body's prayer to the Mother—the annual physical education demonstration in the Sportsground. On 2nd of December 1943 the Mother opened up the Ashram to the children by taking charge of their education—the preparation of the new race for the future. The event has a great significance and hence one feels a charged atmosphere on that day. And to mark that special occasion, a physical education demonstration takes place every year in the Sportsground. The aspiration and expectation of the participants, the preparation inward and outward for that occasion, and a sense of happiness of some goal reached. The aspiration from below and the Grace from above mingle and create in this earthly atmosphere a heaven on earth, of another world descending.

It was a special day, that 2nd December 2000. The cyclonic storm of 29th November blew away, washed and cleaned the atmosphere of its impurities. The weather was cool, the morning sun bright and its rays reflected in ethereal glow. Since the morning one felt the peace descending in the heart.

Was the shooting star awaiting this day? The Hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven also sent the shooting star hurling down. From where? No one knows. Alone it journeyed through heavens unnumbered—not dependent on anyone—a master of its own self, a nameless, relationless detached entity “travelling infinity with its own light.” Is it with a single aim? To be on earth to hear the prayer and to be a part and portion of the aspiring congregation at the Sportsground.

And her soul, gathering all the experiences of past lives, traversed the life cycles and travelled through infinity keeping one aim, one trajectory through the numerous births. Leading a life surrounded by family and friends, caught in the net of worldly life, dependent and in turn depended on, she kept her stature. Loving, caring, dutiful and in return loved and respected. Throughout ups and downs in life, struggle and beatitudes, she never neglected her Puja or the reading of Bhagavadgita and her Japa. Taking suffering with a smiling face, never complaining, passing through many critical conditions in her life but each time her spirit indomitable pulled her out. Was it attachment? Or more preparations? Who knows how her soul progressed in this mundane day to day life, towards what goal? Is it to merge with the shooting star?

On 2nd December 2000, the evening atmosphere in the Nursing Home was quiet, very quiet as many had gone away to the Sportsground, only a handful of assistants remained. A peace as vast and calm as the sea in front reigned. One could feel a descent even in the Nursing Home as the programme in the Sportsground progressed. The soul immersed in Sadhana awaited the moment—the descent of Grace and left the earthly abode—not alone. The shooting star too reached the Sportsground and burst a bright ball of fire. Her soul merged with it in the new world of light and bliss.

When did they fix the rendez-vous!
Does any one know!

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTI

My Aspiration to Thee, O Lord, has taken the form of a beautiful rose, harmonious, full in bloom, rich in fragrance. I stretch it out to Thee with both arms in a gesture of offering and I ask of Thee: If my understanding is limited, widen it; if my knowledge is obscure, enlighten it; if my heart is empty of ardour, set it aflame; if my love is insignificant, make it intense; if my feelings are ignorant and egoistic, give them the full consciousness in the Truth. And the "I" which demands this of Thee, O Lord, is not a little personality lost amidst thousands of others. It is the whole earth that aspires to Thee in a movement full of fervour.

In the perfect silence of my contemplation all widens to infinity, and in the perfect peace of that silence Thou appearest in the resplendent glory of Thy Light.

The Mother

(Prayers and Meditations, October 25, 1914)

H. MAHESHWARI

A TRIBUTE TO A HEROIC SOUL

MAHESHWARI-BHAI, whom many of us affectionately called papa, left this earthly existence on 19 May 2002. His life served as an inspiration to many who came in touch, through him, with the Mother. Deceptively simple in its outward appearance, his inner life was nevertheless a rich and complex synthesis of the heart, the intellect and the dynamic will. The dhoti which adorned his beautiful figure was perhaps symbolic of his many-sidedness which flowed from some secret sense of oneness that he always carried along with him. It is little wonder that he had found his home everywhere and was loved and admired by many of her children in India and abroad. Yet, his global comprehension did not diminish his innate love for India and Indianness. He truly represented the genius of India in both his body and soul. His simplicity of living concealed behind itself a keen and sharp intellect, a childlike heart full of wonder, a youthful dynamism that wanted to serve the Divine till the very last days of his life. Behind all this was a noble soul that would not compromise with falsehood and strived to act always from the summits of consciousness. A tapaswi by temperament and a karmayogin by choice he remained in his heart a child of the Divine Mother loving her with full trust even in the face of the most difficult circumstances. He was a hero who never let himself succumb to difficulties nor waver in his faith in the face of contrary appearances. No doubt he had his own cross to bear, as all of us must, but he bore it well, never letting its shadow fall upon even his closest ones. An exceptional exponent of the Gita he truly lived its message:

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मुक्तः स मे प्रियः॥

The yogin who is ever contented, self-controlled and steadfast in will and resolution, whose mind and reason are dedicated to Me, he, my loving devotee, is dear to Me.

Dear he must have been to the Divine so as to have been made his instrument to distribute her Light as Prasada among all, uncaring for his own personal inconveniences. Such ones never die. They continue to live forever, shedding their fragrance upon earth and lightening the burden of the way. They live in their deeds too and therefore return not out of compulsion and bondage but out of a heroic aspiration to battle upon earth as a force of Light for the Divine consummation in humanity. Such a one was papa, our loved and dear Maheswari-ji. The last words I exchanged with him a few hours before he chose to leave were beautifully significant. On asking him if he needed anything, he replied with a faint smile, “Grace.” That was it and I am certain he is indeed in the bosom of Grace preparing to return for Her Work here upon earth. For indeed,—

After we have served this great divided world

God's bliss and oneness are our inborn right
and,—

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

To such a child of the Divine Mother our love and salutations.

ALOK PANDEY

SOME GLIMPSES OF THE HINDU-BRAHMO INTERCHANGE DURING RAJNARAIN BOSE'S TIME

Rajnarain Bose was the maternal grandfather of Sri Aurobindo. Up until the age of five when Sri Aurobindo was with his parents at Rangpur, the family occasionally visited Deoghar and stayed with Rajnarain Bose—a great patriot, nationalist and exponent of Indian culture. In addition, Rajnarain was an eminent leader and thinker of the Brahmo Samaj. The influence of the Brahmo Samaj upon the contemporary Bengali society during Rajnarain's time was considerable, particularly the way in which the established Hindus intermingled and occasionally clashed with the Brahmos, who were often characterised by the zeal and ardour of most neo-converts, often led to rather interesting and hilarious exchanges. This essay seeks to elucidate some of these interchanges during a time that witnessed much socio-political, intellectual and cultural fervour in the prevailing culture of nineteenth century Bengal, and Calcutta in particular. But first, it would be in order to say a few words about the Brahmo Samaj itself.*

As British rule consolidated in India during the 18th century, two factors contributed to the formation of the Brahmo Samaj in the following century. First, many felt that the Hindu social system which placed too much of an emphasis on traditional rituals, had been reduced to a stagnant religious society which called for immediate reforms. Secondly, an English educated class of Indians began to emerge to fulfill the administrative and economic needs of British rule. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who belonged to the latter class, founded the Brahma Samaj at Calcutta in 1828, which was initially known as the "Brahmo Sabha". Later in 1868 it was changed to the "Adi" (Original) Brahmo Samaj. It rejected idol worship and the worship of multiple gods and goddesses of the traditional Hindu beliefs. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was much influenced by western thought, especially Christianity, and was one of the first Hindus to visit Europe, and eventually died in Bristol. Among his most interesting associates were Dwarakanath Tagore and his son Debendranath Tagore. Prior to his departure to Europe, Raja Ram Mohan Roy had requested Debendranath to take over his work while he was away in Europe. Debendranath Tagore took an active interest in the Brahmo Samaj, and began to transform it into a spiritual fraternity. Subsequently, Debendranath Tagore was succeeded by Keshab Chandra Sen who sought to incorporate Christian ideals into the Samaj. Eventually, mainly due to differences in certain areas of religious beliefs, three institutions arose:

*The Adi (Original) Brahmo Samaj—founded by Debendranath Tagore,
The Naba-Bidhan (New Dispensation) Samaj—founded by Keshab Chandra Sen,
and
The Sadharan (Common) Brahmo Samaj—founded by Pandit Shivanath Shastri.*

* Supriya Chandra's article on the History of Brahmo Samaj published on the World Wide Web, 2002.

The above brief introduction of the Brahmo Samaj is sufficient for our purposes and adequately sets out the context for the following anecdotal accounts that have been extracted and translated from the original Bengali autobiography of Rajnarain Bose published from Calcutta (Sakabda 1315). As the reader will discover, the narrative, often written in a chatty style, easily evokes the prevailing texture and feel of the society to which Rajnarain belonged. I have tried to preserve the original 'Bengali' flavour of the author's text which often reads like a personal diary, and at other times like a piece of narrative travel writing. In any case, I have tried my best to be accurate and faithful to the original text. The paragraphing, the sectioning, the section headings, and the bracketed texts are all mine.

1. Some Interesting Aspects of Rajnarain Bose's Eldest Daughter's Wedding

(Rajnarain Bose's eldest daughter Swarnalata Devi was the mother of Sri Aurobindo. She was so beautiful that often she was referred to as the 'Rose of Bengal'.)

This wedding was a great and grand affair. During those times the Brahmo Samaj was relatively free from divisive factions. Both Debendra Babu and Keshab Babu had gone over to Medinipur for this wedding. Many Brahmos from Calcutta were also in Medinipur for the occasion. The wedding party included the Brahmo circles of Calcutta and Medinipur in addition to the practising Hindus of Medinipur. It was a great gathering. The use of the harmonium had begun in the Brahmo gatherings by then and the instrument was brought over to Calcutta to be played during the wedding. Keshab Babu was the 'Prodhan Acharya'—the chief preceptor. In addition, Bijoy Krishna Goswami and Pt. Bholanath Chakrabarty—a leading and enthusiastic Brahmo of Medinipur, was another acharya. Ayodhyanath Pakrashi performed the rites that behoved a 'purohit' or, a priest. The wedding was such a grand spectacle that Debendra Babu later on had remarked that the pomp and ceremony even surpassed a Royal Wedding. The oratorical abilities of Ayodhyanath Pakrashi and some others were truly extraordinary. It was indeed this extraordinary skill that led me to call him the 'Massillon of Bengal'. If he were still alive, the Brahmo Samaj would have greatly benefited from him. I gave a gift of my *Dharmatattwadipika* to my eldest daughter's husband Sriman Krishnadhan Ghosh (Sri Aurobindo's father). While still in Medinipur, I infused new practices among the Brahmos which included meditation sessions in beautiful and natural settings. During the spring we celebrated Basantotsav or the Spring Festival at Go Giri in Medinipur. My yearly discourses on these occasions have since appeared in my book *Basanta-kujan-shire*. The festival is celebrated even today (1890) at Go Giri. When I was a resident of Medinipur town I would often preach elsewhere within the district of Medinipur.

2. Some Reminiscences: Medinipur Days

In the year 1864 during the month of Ashwin we experienced a cyclone. The gale force winds were so strong that boats on the Ganga near Calcutta were simply tossed over to

the adjoining fields by the riverbank. Although not as severe as in Calcutta, the city of Medinipur also experienced the wrath of the cyclone. When the cyclone subsided, I went on a preaching tour in the village of Jaleswar within the Medinipur district. Jaleswar is located on the banks of Subarnarekha. The memories of the stately rows of Deodar along the banks of Subarnarekha are still etched in my mind. While at Jaleswar I was a guest of my former student Srijukta Prasanna Chandra Chattopadhyay who was then the post-man there. When I was there, the salt factory had long ceased to exist. The salt superintendent sahib's superb quarters were unoccupied. I came and occupied them and from there I started preaching at the famous Lakshmannath village and at nearby Jaleswar. Two famous Brahmos resided at Lakshmannath and at Jaleswar within the Medinipur district. They were called Kumarnarain Mitra and Kartikchandra Ray. Kartikchandra Ray was a resident of Jaleswar and he had mentioned to me that he was from the same lineage as the famous poet Bharatchandra Ray. Immediately upon my arrival at Jaleswar I learnt that Kumarnarain Mitra of Lakshmannath had just passed away. I was extremely sad upon learning this. Kartikchandra Ray told me that during the last moments of his father's life as he lay dying he had requested him (Kartikchandra) to read him my speech.

3. Widow Re-Marriage Ceremonies and their Aftermath

Madhusudan Ghosh of Panihati embraced widow re-marriage, soon followed by my first cousin Durganarain Basu, and my own brother, Madan Mohan Basu. Soon after this, my uncle (*khura mahashay*) wrote to me from Boral that "because of you, we have been socially ostracized by the contemporary Kayasthas." When Durganarain Basu was about to get married, Ishwar Chandra Mukherjee from the village stuck his face into the palanquin and said, "Durga, did you have this in your mind, you are really impossible!". The mass movements in support of this practice were also not few in Medinipur. The then Government lawyer of Medinipur, Haranarain Datta had said, "Rajnarain Bose does not know that he lives in a Bengali household."

The second Master Babu Jadu Nath Mukhopadhyay of Uttarpara, who later on became the head master of the Sanskrit College, and myself, once went to a nearby jungle and cut out two sturdy *lathis*; if ever there was a riot then these would be of use. The residents of Boral had said, "If Rajnarain Bose visits this village, then we shall stone him". As a rebuttal I had declared "that will please me. I had always thought that the Bengalis were an indifferent lot. If such incidents occur, I can start to believe that the current strong and negative reactions towards the practice can one day be replaced by an equal measure of approval when these people will eventually start to believe that this is indeed a good practice".

When I travelled from Medinipur to Calcutta I would spend the night at Boral and would return to Calcutta again at the crack of dawn. On one such occasion at Boral, I found someone coming out of the house very early in the morning when it was not even close to daybreak and this person held an oil-lamp. When this person came and sat close to my mosquito curtain I recognised her as my mother. She said: "Rajnarain, you had this

in your mind?” Saying this she started making a lot of complains. The readers can well imagine the state of my mind at that time. Because of this issue of widow-remarriage mother was quite enraged. She was then at Mathura—had she been here we would never have been able to get our brothers married to widows. Maharshi Debendranath Thakur was also in the West during that time. When I had written to him about it he had replied saying, “the venom that will come out of the whole issue of widow remarriage will greatly perturb your tender mind; nonetheless the Divine’s help will always be with anyone with pure and noble intentions.” “The Divine’s help will always be with anyone with pure and noble intentions”—this statement has now become a catch-phrase for the Brahmos. However in the present context this was first used by Srimat Pradhan Acharya.

4. Some Health Concerns and the Marriage of Rajnarain’s Second Daughter

My eldest daughter got married in the year 1864 the details of which have already been presented.

In 1861 *Dharmatattwadipika* as well as *Prospectus of a Society for the Promotion of National Feeling among the Educated Natives of Bengal* got published. On 5 March 1866 my head started to reel, although I was only just lying down. This caused me much concern. Upon reflection I surmised that the symptoms were such that they did not warrant any unnecessary fear. As my head reeled I felt chest palpitations and had visions of fire sparks and flies. Since then (Jyestha 1296) I was on a course of medication which I have continued all along and only stopped it for the last 6-7 years. Excessive medication caused a deterioration in my health for which I now have much regret. There are no medications for weak nerves other than will force. Now I feel that I hadn’t done the right thing to take medicines indiscriminately. Just before the rainy season I was on two months vacation and came to Calcutta. I stayed with my revered friend Debendranath Thakur. While there, I was under the care of the famous Kaviraj Haradhan. I felt as comfortable in Debendranath’s house as in my own home. The nursing and care that I was used to at my own home was also available here in Debendranath’s house. During that year, just before the pujas, I was only once in Medinipur, and since then I was continuously on leave until the December of 1868. I started receiving a pension from 1 January 1869. During April 1867 my second daughter was married. We rented the house of Raja Rammohun Roy’s grandson Lalitmohan Chattopadhyay for the wedding. All the Brahmos were exultant and said, “This is all very well, Rajnarain Babu’s daughter got married in Rammohan Roy’s house!” The wedding rituals were performed in accordance with the Arya Samaj rules. Many contemporary Hindus were also present and Mahatma Ramgopal Ghosh was one among them. After the death of his first wife he married the daughter of my brother-in-law. Based on this relationship I became his ‘pish-shwashur’ (a sort of a father-in-law). When the star of the English elite Babu Ramgopal Ghosh laid prostrate on the ground and offered his pranam to me, his father-in-law, I was deeply embarrassed. My second daughter, whose wedding is being discussed, became his sister-in-law in accordance with this new-found family relationship. When the groom’s arrival was getting inordinately

delayed Ramgopal Babu said, "The groom will be late to arrive, so let me instead sit down to get married!" The Bengalis of those times indulged in this sort of humour which is in short supply within the present society. After the wedding of my second daughter we lived in Boral for six months. Khura-mahashaya (uncle) said, "you have to build an annexe to the existing house and live there, otherwise caste-related troubles may arise." I acted accordingly. Within those six months Khura-mahashaya died, and my mother fell ill with malarial fever. Excluding my wife, all other members of my family were also afflicted with malaria. During that year malaria spread rampantly in all villages. Since almost all the members of the family were virtually on the verge of death, we arranged that my youngest brother Srijukta Abhaycharan Bose would take care of my mother, and after that we left for Calcutta. Ideally we would have loved having mother with us, but she resolutely disapproved of her leaving the ancestral home. This was the reason for handing over mother's responsibility to Abhay. Abhay was not attacked by the scourge of malaria. We arrived Calcutta just a few days before the Puja. Shortly after our arrival in Calcutta mother died. We had not anticipated that she would die so soon. We had hoped that she would at least survive the winter. I still wonder whether it was proper for me to come away to Calcutta under those circumstances. I have since undergone a severe mental tussle—on one side the greatness of being able to serve my mother and, on the other, the near-fatal condition of all my other family members. I left for the West after spending a couple of months in Calcutta.

5. Brahmo Samaj and Mary Carpenter's Visit

During my two months in Calcutta Mary Carpenter visited India for the first time. In order to welcome her, the Brahmos had organised a special gathering at the old premises of the Brahmo Samaj where she had given a speech. My classmate during my college years—Gyanendranath Thakur who was a practising Christian—was also present in that meeting. I have already had some verbal altercations with him earlier. But can a previous affectionate and loving relationship ever wither? As soon as he saw me in the gathering he exclaimed, "I did not expect that I would see my beloved Rajnarain here!" Around this time I was acutely suffering from gastric troubles. Technically in English the disease is often referred to as dyspepsia and even nervous debility. Gyanendramohan Thakur had once made an observation about me to one of his friends saying, "Rajnarain is dying of religious dyspepsia!" Gyanendramohan, although a Christian, could not rise above his caste-related superiority. At a particular gathering while delivering a speech he had said, "I am a Brahmin Christian!" During my conversations with Mary Carpenter I happened to refer to Gyanendramohan. When Miss Mary Carpenter came to Calcutta, she expressed her desire to meet Debendra Babu; when he heard about this he immediately fled to Kushthia which was very close to his Zamindari premises. Debendra Babu was by nature quite reticent to make conversations with the English. This was because his ideas on India-related matters invariably differed from those of the English. By blindly supporting the ideas of the English it is fairly straightforward to get an established social status in

India as well as in England; but Debendra Babu was not in the least interested in gaining such status from the English. In this regard he was completely the opposite of Keshab Babu. The famous Principal Lobb of Krishnanagar college had once written in a newspaper that “the proud old man does not condescend to accept the praise of Europeans.” Had Debendra Babu consented to flatter the English, he would have by now become Maharaja K.C.S.I. Although he never craved for a title, God made sure he had one. He forcibly bestowed one on his shoulders. That title is the ‘Maharshi’. That title transcended all religious divisions. Brahmos and Hindus alike called him Maharshi.

(To be concluded)

SATYAJIT GHOSH

O Lord, Thy Presence is settled within me like an unshakable rock; and the whole being exults in belonging to Thee without the least reserve, with a wide and complete surrender.

O Consciousness, immobile and serene. Thou watchest at the confines of the world like the sphinx of eternity. And yet to some Thou yieldest Thy secret.

They can become Thy sovereign Will which chooses without preference, executes without desire.

The Mother

(Prayers and Meditations, November 10, 1914)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Questioning Ramayanas, edited by Paula Richman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 0-520-22074-9 (pbk); xx+432 pages.

People make love over and over, but only you
Know how it feels. I write about the same Rama
Everyone else has known, but my feelings of love
Are mine.

—Viswanatha Satyanarayana's *Ramayana Kalpavrikshamu* (1934 ff)

THIS was the theme of Paula Richman's first anthology *Many Ramayanas* that illustrated how re-mapping the location of *kathas* is a constant feature of Indian Civilization. However, Richman discovered that each variant is better understood in its own specific context, not vis-à-vis Valmiki's text. This includes hitherto ignored regional languages, dialects, tribal and lower caste versions and re-making by Indian diaspora to reveal the richness of a narrative appropriated by different peoples in diverse ways. For instance, there is G.V. Chalam's remarkable tour de force:

You, Rama, rejected me because you fear that my body was defiled by his touch,
though you know my heart was pure. This anti-god wanted my heart, even though
he knew my body was taken by you. Some day, intelligent people will know who
was a nobler lover.

With this, Sita jumps into Ravana's funeral pyre!

National culture is nourished on variants that contextualize different world-views of particular segments of society. Therefore, this anthology studies authorship, audience, location, purpose and highlights the fact that in these retellings the assumptions and values projected in the original Sanskrit text are questioned in many different ways. The composition of variants was triggered by rulership norms, social relations and obligations, gender, ethics of conduct, demons and deities—every aspect of human activity. This very multiplicity denies the validity of a single authentic version. We find this reflected in the very different, “empowered” Sita projected in B.R. Chopra's TV serial, distinct from the faithful copy of Tulsidas's heroine in the earlier Ramanand Sagar version and in Sanjay Khan's “Jai Hanuman”. Richman argues that Valmiki and Tulsidas's versions were not divorced from the historical context. The Jaina *Paumacariyam* stresses it is not a Brahmin version but the true one recited to Bimbisara. We are invited to compare with this the Viswa Hindu Parishad's insistence that the location of Rama's birthplace is a historical verity. What is sought to be mobilised here? How has Ramayana been used to claim access to knowledge and to negotiate power and status? Is Ravana seen as the threatening “other”? Besides cultural clash, points out Romila Thapar in her Foreword, there is the clash between Ayodhya's monarchy and chiefdoms (the Rakshasa and Vanara

gana sanghas), between settlement and forest comparable to that in *Mahabharata* between the forest dwelling tribes and the Pandavas. Paula Richman provides a superb introduction that summarises most of these issues. Provocatively, she asks: Is *Ramayana* in itself a source of intolerance? On 15 August 1993 the VHP destroyed an exhibition on Ayodhya because it contained the Jain *Dasharatha Jataka* version depicting Rama and Sita as siblings. The multitude of differing versions shows centuries of questioning within the tradition that has two keynotes: multiplicity and accommodating questioning. This is what sustains the tradition over time and space.

The book is in four parts containing fourteen papers: four each on forms of questioning and assertions about social rank, three each on modalities of speaking and applied Ramayanas. Such openness is rare in religious traditions. Even in the Sanskrit text later additions are themselves questions. The book stresses the centrality of questioning within a single narrative tradition by focusing on a tradition of authoritative narratives that are open-ended in order to contain multiple tellings and questions why Valmiki's should be *the* authentic one. Most people being ignorant of Sanskrit, how is it that the epic is so popular? Obviously, through local retellings. Each author dips into the depths of the epic to bring forth a unique texture, a fresh context that is not a variant but a different telling relevant to its social background. That is why the impact is so varied, even where the Sanskrit text was never heard. Deviations from dharma noticed in Valmiki's text are tackled in retellings shaped by factors of gender, social location and regional identity. Oppositional tellings present alternative perspectives—the upper caste women's version is different from that of the lower. Retelling always carries political messages, Richman points out, e.g. Ram-raj and leadership standards; the concept of *maryada purushottama* ushering in a utopian society; Baba Ramchandra's use of Tulsidas to inspire a peasant movement against absentee landlords collaborating with the British; E.V. Ramasami critiquing Valmiki and Kamban for anti-Aryan polemic, glorifying Ravana in a powerful anti-Brahmin movement in South India; the VHP glorifying Rama vs. Muslims. All the more is it dangerous to insist on one version as authentic and blind ourselves to the explosive potential of the epic today.

In the context of the current inflammable climate in India, the most important revelations in this book are Vasudha Narayanan's paper on the existence of Muslim exegetes on the *Kamban Ramayana* and Usha Nilsson's presentation of the voice of Sita in low-caste women's songs. As a contrast, Bina Agarwal's two poems present the sophisticated woman's anguish, not very memorably though:

Sita speak!...
 How did they silence you?...
 Sita, Shree, stree.
 Captive of a name? A religion? Love?...
 Love perished with your test.

One wonders why the editor chose this author when far more significant work is available

like Amreeta Syam's long poem "Kaikeyi" (Writers Workshop, Calcutta) and Dr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar's epic *Sitayana*.

Linda Hess studies the "Shankavali" dialogue with readers of the *Ramcharitmanas* for removing doubts regarding the acts of Rama (700 questions and answers covering proper conduct, devotion, inconsistency, scholarly and literal details) on the lines of the Shiva-Parvati conversations in Tulsidas. Sectarian differences are sought to be resolved in the Tantric Agama tradition linking Shiva with Vishnu worship. Shulman shows how Bhavabhuti sees Rama as tragic hero torn between love and a totalitarian notion of raja-dharma. Aklujkar discusses how *Ananda Ramayana* grapples with contemporary social problems of caste and gender, using the text to avoid blame and gain currency. Here Valmiki composes a billion verses of which the war portion is the *Mahabharata*, the sorrow of life portion the *Ramayana*, and the love-centred part the *Bhagavata*. It grafts *Ramayana* characters on to the Krishna story, reworks the tale of the Shudra Shambuka to show Rama punishing Yati, to be just to a dog, keeping to the spirit and not the letter of law. In "Ravana's Kitchen" Goldman explores the theme of self-restraint vs. license in terms of sexuality and diet, body and spirit as critical cultural markers of status and identity. Lutgendorf's study of the Shabari episode notes how Sagar's TV representation has a cloying sweetness, omitting the incident of the arrogant male rishis excluding the low-born as polluting, as this might be unacceptable to the viewing public even today. Lutgendorf does not realise that Sagar's productions on Rama and Krishna follow not the questioning but the bhakti tradition.*

Usha Nilsson's contribution is possibly the most startling discovery in the book. She shows how women's songs resist Tulsidas' dominant male discourse and indicate a hidden hostility between women of different castes and status. High caste women support their own system of domination. It is the Kayastha women's privilege to sing Ramayana songs, not of lower castes. But songs framed by barber women, sung when men are at work and kids at school to an audience of servant maids, speak of Lakshman's desire for Sita, calling her to make his bed and serve him. When different classes sing, they follow the traditional story line, but in their own group new forms emerge concentrating on human frailties such as Rama's insensitivity to Sita's needs, her pique, Kaushalya's cruelty to servant maids and her lament on barrenness. The innovation depicts self-empowering by Kaushalya and Sita to reach their goals through women's rituals and not being beholden to the male, giving Kaushalya credit for Rama's birth and not the yajna. Sita's penance wins her Rama, not his lifting the bow. Rama leaves Sita behind due to inadequate dowry and is pulled up by his mother. A song tells how Rama goes alone to forest with a hunchback maid. In another, Rama's sister complains to him that Sita draws Ravana's picture. Sita refuses to return to Rama. Women sing of Sita's betrayal by her husband's sister, her husband and his brother, the support given to her by ascetic women, the barber woman who excludes Rama from the celebrations of sons'

* On the other hand, in the B.R. Chopra version this episode specifically shows Rama berating the prejudiced sages and enlightening them as to what makes for true spirituality.

birth and the sweeper woman who is superior to the barren king. Thus the lower caste women appropriate Sita.

V.N. Rao examines how each Ramayana constructed a suitable Valmiki or left him out of the retelling altogether. The story is a text-field of which poets make a Ramayana suitable to the community, time and place. While the integral problem of the epic is kingship and succession, the Telugu bhakti (devotional) Ramayanas move “from communication to communion”, concentrating on building a personal relationship between the listener and the deity. An enormous number of Telugu Ramayanas were composed in the pre-modern times to elevate patrons to Kshatriya status, non-Brahmin kings composing it to win respect. A major change, says Rao, came with the British who took over the Kshatriya position of rulers and the Brahmins lost their role as advisers. The upwardly mobile western educated castes saw Brahmins as enemies and showed them as failing to convert Dravidians by getting them to eat beef and drink liquor. Ramaswami Chaudari’s *Suta Puranamu* is the most important of these variants frontally attacking Brahmin texts. However, Rao overlooks the equally sudden rupture, which lasted much longer, caused by the Muslim invasions and what changes that brought about in this respect. In the 1960s V. Satyanarayana’s *Ramayana Kalpavrikshamu* used the sheer brilliance of poetry to attack English education as destroying Indian culture and enslaving minds, and defended the traditional Brahmin ideas of caste, child marriage. This fuelled anti-Ramayana discourse afresh, climaxing in Muppala Ranganayakamma’s fiercely polemical *Ramayana, The Poison Tree* [1960s] showing the epic as pro-male, pro-rich, pro-upper caste, pro-ruling class and exploitative.

Rich Freeman’s lengthy study of the deification of Vali in the Teyyam cult of Kerala shows how Vali/Bali reflects Keralite social tensions of the soldiering low caste, supposed to be having bestial traits. The sibling fight is traced to having different fathers, which reflects the routine local situation. The tail is a symbol of his identity, tapping into a semiotic of social conflicts that remain unresolved and therefore are productive sources of narrative and actual tension. Bestiality signifies social lowness, but the strength of the tail signals the ambivalent recognition of power of this stratum. The dominated stratum seized upon the might of Bali to re-signify its status as truly noble despite the rigged defeat, making a symbol of victimization into a god. He is reborn as deity of the artisan caste. Originally South Indian, the story of Bali’s origins is found interpolated in north Indian manuscripts belonging to the southern recension and in the 14th century *Adhyatma Ramayana*. Sanskrit “vaala” has the uncertain meaning of “hair”, while in South Indian languages “vaal” means “tail”. The north Indian linguistic environment lacked the word associations of the original southern story and so underwent secondary elaboration to resurface in *Adhyatma Ramayana* where Indra spills semen on the ape’s hair and Surya on the neck. Freeman shows that where the Bali of Kathakali reached down into society, the Bali of Teyyattam reached up—hence the hybrid and polyvalent meanings of his character.

S.J. Sutherland Goldman’s study of the Sundarakanda brings out how Sita confronts her irremediable dependence on her husband: she cannot even commit suicide

being other-dependent and even gives up power of *pativratya*, chastity, and fruitlessly contemplates suicide. T.K. Stewart and E.C. Dimcock deal with Krittibas' ambiguous view of kingship in the Bengali telling. Luv and Kush kill Rama and his brothers because of their perverse injustice, thus eradicating adharmic rule. Here is an excellent example of a subversive theme. The strategy followed is one of criticizing and then deflecting the attack. The Uttarakanda of the Bengali telling survives because it incorporates two attitudes of a non-conformist people who side with noble losers and Sita. It replays the entire *Ramayana*, correcting social injustice by voicing the inexpressible through indirect criticisms (a general malaise prevails in Rama's rule, subjects were happier under his father and are cynical about Ramarajya being truly beneficent). There are two major howlers in this paper: on page 260 the quote "What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow" has been attributed wrongly to Netaji instead of Gokhale and on page 264 B.C. Roy has been transmogrified from chief minister of West Bengal to governor of Bengal.

Vasudha Narayanan's paper analyses how Tamil Muslims—the greatest scholars on Kamban—used his *Iramavataram* as a model for the Prophet's biography. The epic was not significant before 5th century CE in the south but is mentioned by the Alvars (7-9th century CE). Umaru Pulavar, Omar the poet, in 1665-1773 wrote *Cira* (Arabic *sirah*, hagiography) *Puranam*, copying the conventions of Kamban, transposing Tamil landscape on Arabia (e.g. torrential rain, rice, sugarcane fields), as Kamban had done for Ayodhya. Medina women are dressed like Tamilians and erotically described. In the latter part of the 20th century, Chief Justice M.M. Ismail wrote and lectured on *Ramayana*, was celebrated as "Rama Ratnam" and honoured by the Sankaracharya of Kanchi for justifying the slaying of Vali. Narayanan points out that the Tamil *Ramayana* is never for devotional use or domestic piety unlike Tulsidas in the North, being considered a literary masterpiece not a devotional work.

Madhu Kishwar interviews women from different cultural and economic strata and finds a consensus that while Sita is the symbol of ideal commitment to marriage, she ought to have refused the fire ordeal. Shiva is considered the ideal husband, not Rama who tries to be great in society by maltreating his wife. Muslim women also find Sita a perfect wife, but regard Mohammad, not Rama, as the ideal husband because he kept all his wives happy. Even to the men Rama was not a good husband being suspicious, rumour-led and insecure, over-eager to please and earn praise. In his film, through Luv and Kush's song before the people of Ayodhya, Homi Wadia condemns Ramarajya as flawed and the state as evil till women get justice. The strongest indictment comes from Mithila (Sita's homeland) whose people still avoid marrying daughters to men of Avadh, omit Rama's name in songs, name all temples Janaki, not Rama, with Sita legends attached to even trees and ponds. Mahatma Gandhi celebrated Sita's purity and fearlessness encouraging women to follow her as an active pacifist, forcing husbands to abjure communal squabbles by refusing to cook for them, starving themselves, refusing carnal approach. Kishwar records how the Shetkari Sangathan led by Sharad Joshi turns Sita into a powerful symbol for social reform, persuading villages to transfer land to the wife's name in

recognition of Sita's sacrifices and Rama's cruelty. The NGO used the tale of Sita's curse on villagers who refused her food when abandoned as a source of power to redress wrongs to women and launched the Lakshmi Mukti programme to atone for the original misdeed by transferring land to wives. Kishwar mentions a poll among women aged between 9 and 22 years in Uttar Pradesh to show that Sita is not a removed ideal but a role model whose sense of dharma is superior to Rama and who is seen as emotionally stronger. They gloss over her treatment of Lakshmana and see her as flawless. Rama is emotionally unreliable and her refusal to return to him is a symbol of a culture's rejection of Rama as a model husband. Hindu tradition valorises not tyrannical husbands, but wives who put up with them and it expects a high level of loyalty from a good husband, as Shiva always respects Parvati's whims. Sita-like conduct enlists kinship support and domesticates the husband, restraining his straying, as society disapproves of such a man.

Paula Richman's study of Southall Ramlila brings out how it linked an ancient story with the current predicament of coloureds in the UK besides the racism and sexism of its own community, reversing gender roles. Its topicality is the most precious feature. John Kelly studies Fiji where the exile and struggle tropes of the epic help us to understand the politics of Hindutva. Here the epic is a fifth Veda, celebrating the consolidation of virtue in permanent exile to solve Fiji's social problems. The Indian diaspora had to grapple with a life of indenture because of their race long before oppression of Mother India led to mass public action in India. They used cultural materials to constitute a counter-colonial symbol pool, giving the *Ramayana* political imagery to become not just *girmityas*, coolies by nature, but Indians who were Hindus in exile. The demonization enabled by *Ramayana* tropes consolidated racial identities and differences establishing self-righteous and frankly racist ranking of them, producing a counter-racism. As victims of Ravana calling to Rama for aid, looking to India for deliverance, Fijians celebrate more the return from exile than the immolation of Ravana. Now no Ramlila includes burning of Ravana, but Rama's return to Ayodhya on Diwali night is vigorously celebrated as an end to exile. After 1987, says Kelly, the coup undercut Ramlila and in 1991 fire bombing of 4 major worshipping centres, cancelled Diwali celebrations.

This excellent anthology needed a study of how elite audiences are being exposed to radical questionings through powerful dramatic creations like Mallika Sarabhai's "Sita's daughters", bringing home through dance-drama the oppression practised by Indian patriarchal society today on its women, behind pretensions of worshipping her as goddess. This reaches out to far more people and has a much deeper and wider impact than Bina Agarwal's little known poems. One also misses coverage of the questions raised and answered in Bengali and Hindi re-tellings such as D.L. Roy's play "Sita", Narendra Kohli's epic novel *Abhyudaya*, to mention only two, and the rethinking on the Rama story set off by N.R. Navlekar's *A New Approach to Ramayana* and Amit Chaudhuri's startling "telling" *Surpanakha* that totally reverses the traditional account.