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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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INTO THE PERILOUS SILENCE

CALMLY she laid upon the forest soil
The dead who still reposed upon her breast
And bore to turn away from the dead form:
Sole now she rose to meet the dreadful god.
That mightier spirit turned its mastering gaze
On life and things, inheritor of a work
Left to it unfinished from her halting past...
Transcended now was the poor human rule;
A sovereign power was there, a godlike will.
A moment yet she lingered motionless
And looked down on the dead man at her feet;
Then like a tree recovering from a wind
She raised her noble head; fronting her gaze
Something stood there, unearthly, sombre, grand,
A limitless denial of all being
That wore the terror and wonder of a shape.
In its appalling eyes the tenebrous Form
Bore the deep pity of destroying gods...
The two opposed each other with their eyes,
Woman and universal god: around her,
Piling their void unbearable loneliness
Upon her mighty unaccompanied soul,
Many inhuman solitudes came close...
A sad and formidable voice arose
Which seemed the whole adverse world's. "Unclasp," it cried,
"Thy passionate influence and relax, O slave
Of Nature, changing tool of changeless Law,
Who vainly writh'st rebellion to my yoke,
Thy elemental grasp; weep and forget.
Entomb thy passion in its living grave.
Leave now the once-loved spirit's abandoned robe:
Pass lonely back to thy vain life on earth."
It ceased, she moved not and it spoke again...
"Wilt thou for ever keep thy passionate hold,
Thyself a creature doomed like him to pass,
Denying his soul death's calm and silent rest?
Relax thy grasp; this body is earth's and thine,
His spirit now belongs to a greater power.
Woman, thy husband suffers." Savitri
Drew back her heart's force that clasped his body still...

She rose and stood gathered in lonely strength,
 Like one who drops his mantle for a race
 And waits the signal, motionlessly swift.
 She knew not to what course: her spirit above...
 Watched flaming-silent, with her voiceless soul
 Like a still sail upon a windless sea.
 White passionless it rode, an anchored might...
 Then Death, the king, leaned boundless down, as leans
 Night over tired lands, when evening pales
 And fading gleams break down the horizon's walls,
 Nor yet the dusk grows mystic with the moon.
 The dim and awful godhead rose erect
 From his brief stooping to his touch on earth,
 And like a dream that wakes out of a dream,
 Forsaking the poor mould of that dead clay,
 Another luminous Satyavan arose...
 In the earth's day the silent marvel stood
 Between the mortal woman and the god.
 Such seemed he as if one departed came
 Wearing the light of a celestial shape
 Splendidly alien to the mortal air...
 Between two realms he stood, not wavering,
 But fixed in quiet strong expectancy,
 Like one who, sightless, listens for a command.
 So were they immobile on that earthly field,
 Powers not of earth, though one in human clay.
 On either side of one two spirits strove;
 Silence battled with silence, vast with vast.
 But now the impulse of the Path was felt
 Moving from the Silence that supports the stars
 To touch the confines of the visible world.
 Luminous he moved away; behind him Death
 Went slowly with his noiseless tread, as seen
 In dream-built fields a shadowy herdsman glides
 Behind some wanderer from his voiceless herds,
 And Savitri moved behind eternal Death,
 Her mortal pace was equalled with the god's.
 Wordless she travelled in her lover's steps,
 Planting her human feet where his had trod,
 Into the perilous silences beyond.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 573-77)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of February 2002)

ANY intervention, however imperative, cannot be effective without the cooperation and assent of the being. If you continue to entertain and justify with your mind such movements as you described and gave expression to, if you go on doing physical violence to yourself and adopting it as a means of sadhana or admitting as a part of sadhana the method of revolt or other Asuric errors, how do you expect to have the will and needed discrimination? You have first to throw out these things which have been shown to you to be false and from a hostile source. It is because the mind justified or excused them, that the will became [too] weak to dismiss them. You have to dismiss these errors altogether, if you want to do this Yoga in which they have no place at all.

On the other hand, if you are unable to control these movements and dismiss them in spite of your mind refusing them, that means a weak condition of the nerves in which the remedy I proposed is the only one. I meant by change of air not only a change of climate, but of place, surroundings and atmosphere—to remain for a time where there will not be any pressure. You speak of the danger of not being able to come back or of losing the sadhana, but to allow these things to go farther is much more dangerous to the sadhana and, if they increase or continue, you will not be able to remain here.

As for the secretiveness you spoke of, it is one main reason of your going astray—for it has made you shut yourself up in your own wrong movement. If you have got yourself into an imprisoning circle, the first thing you have to do is to get out of it—secretiveness must be renounced altogether.

31 January 1933

Twice or thrice during the last month I ate betel and other outside things. That, along with other wrong movements, took away the delightful state in which I was moving before; it also brought about a little indigestion, recrudescence of morning diarrhoea and, what is more, a reappearance of spermatorrhoea. Yesterday again I was given a betel; though I took it, I felt very uneasy afterwards. To prevent any such distress in future, I want from you the following prohibitions in a categorical way: that I should not eat any outside thing, and that I should not go to the Bazaar without your permission. I want from you this prohibition because otherwise I will not be able to resist a suggestion from anybody; this will be the only effective argument for me.

Yes, you should not eat anything from outside; it is not good for the Yoga. Avoid betel altogether.

It will be better if you refrain from going to the Bazaar. If there is a real legitimate need, then you can take permission.

4 February 1933

THE MOTHER: I would like you to try some supervision work, as there are many works going on at the same time just now and two supervisors are missing.

I suppose you will have no objection.

C will show you the work.

5 February 1933

I am feeling a slight impetus to look at women passing by. To prevent any further depredations and to fortify myself in right movements, I want from you two more pleasant ordinances: (1) to prohibit me from looking at women or physical forms, and (2) not to feel conceit, vanity, pride or egoism whenever some progress is apparent. I want this because now I know that by myself I cannot do anything; I have lost interest in my own methods.

(1) Do not look at the faces or forms of women, so long as there is desire or attraction in the looking.

(2) Consider all that raises conceit, vanity, self-esteem, pride or egoism in you as not your own work or merit but as the work of the universal Force or, if it is right action or progress, the free grace of the Divine and nothing of your own.

7 February 1933

Yesterday in a dream I saw a child two or three years old. I took it and made it sit in my lap, but immediately I felt a sexual sensation and physical effect. Is it some hostile being that took a child's form and cast its influence? Or is it that even children of two or three years carry such an influence around them? How to prevent such an influence and effect in the subconscious?

It is not probable that the child of the dream was a hostile being or that the influence came from it. The wrong reaction came from a habit in the vital nature (subconscious in this case).

This particular reaction can be got out of the sleep only on two conditions—(1) an entire cessation of such impulses, desires, thoughts or imaginations in the waking state—for these leave their imprint on the subconscious and it can always rise from there in the form of dreams; (2) the growth of a certain organised consciousness or else an instinctive vigilance in the sleep itself. This can come by the use of will, aspiration and practice. A will habitually put on the body consciousness by the waking mind before going to sleep often ends (at least in the case of many people) by first discouraging and then finally inhibiting this reaction.

8 February 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of February 2002)

PURANI: Abhay has come; he had to go to Hyderabad and through the intercession of Sir Akbar managed to obtain the release of two local Arya Samaj prisoners. The Nizam by his reserve power refused to release them as he feared that they, being local people, might start trouble again. Sir Akbar told him through his secretary that if he didn't release them the people would again start the agitation and Sir Akbar mustn't be held responsible. The Nizam had to give way.

NIRODBARAN: What about the Nizam's reforms? When do they come into operation?

PURANI: I don't know. He seems to be thinking of an independent kingdom and of being a king like the king of England.

SRI AUROBINDO: He wants to include Berar also—seems very easy!

PURANI: He has plans of conquering India too after the British people have left.

SRI AUROBINDO: But he seems to have said that the native states wouldn't exist for long if India got Dominion Status. In any case their existence is now at an end. He is a man who has moods; so he may say different things in different moods.

PURANI (*showing a book*): Abhay has given this Vedic Concordance to us. A man is bringing out the Vedas at a very cheap rate—Rs. 5 for the three Vedas.

SRI AUROBINDO: We should get one copy then.

*

PURANI: Somebody from Oundh is trying to bring out the Vedas classifying the Suktas according to hymns and also according to the Rishis addressed.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is my idea too. I wanted to translate and arrange Suktas in that way.

*

PURANI: Abhay was telling me that an Arya Samaj leader had a talk with Gandhi in the presence of Abhay about the Hindu-Muslim problem. Gandhi and other Congress leaders seem to have realised that these Muslims are becoming more and more threatening and it would be well for the Hindus also to organise themselves. Gandhi seems to have said to this leader that instead of sitting idle and being beaten by the Muslims they should also organise and fight. "If you can't accept non-violence as your principle I have never asked you to accept defeat. Instead of sitting like cowards, violence is better."

SRI AUROBINDO: The leader should have said, "It will help our cause if you do some violence." (*Laughter*)

PURANI: C. R. also gave him the same advice; only, he asked not to mention his name. (*Laughter*)

*

PURANI: Many people are coming from Bengal this time and many Zamindars too.

NIRODBARAN: Zamindars? Only in name, perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: Kiran S. Roy is coming. Suren Ghose seems to be arranging for seven persons to accompany him. I don't know how many will actually come.

NIRODBARAN: I am glad that Bengal is turning now to Sri Aurobindo.

PURANI: How do you mean? You can say the "non-public" are coming now.

NIRODBARAN: Charupada and Satuda will be very glad.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why?

NIRODBARAN: Because they were worrying about what would happen to Bengal after this Muslim Raj.

SRI AUROBINDO: What will happen to Bengal depends on Charupada and Satuda.

NIRODBARAN: Anyhow, it is the effect of the Muslim Raj.

PURANI: It seems Huq is trying to come to an agreement with Bengal Hindu leaders.

SRI AUROBINDO: He is not out for Muslim Raj?

PURANI: He may have realised that it wouldn't do. It seems among the Muslims there is a Socialist party which says that the problem is not at all religious but economic.

SRI AUROBINDO: One can make out any question as one likes. (*Laughter*)

PURANI: Professor Kabir and others are for an agreement with the Hindus. The Viceroy is seeing Jinnah on the 6th. It is not known whether the Viceroy has called him or Jinnah himself has asked.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Viceroy must have called him.

PURANI: It would be better if Sikandar Hyat Khan were to be with him.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Viceroy has already seen him. The Viceroy has some plan perhaps. He may be coming to a compromise with Gandhi and wanting to warn Jinnah or tell him to square up.

SATYENDRA: It is strange Jinnah has never said what he wants.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps he doesn't know it himself—unless he wants to be a Minister.

NIRODBARAN: And that he can't say publicly.

SRI AUROBINDO: But it is clear what he wants. He wants either a Muslim half of India over which he can rule or some arrangement by which he can rule at Delhi. In that way Sikandar is clever. His scheme looks democratic and at the same time will satisfy what he wants.

PURANI: Sir Raja Ali is angry with Gandhi because Gandhi says most of the Muslims were originally Hindus. Raja Ali says it is insulting.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): But it is true. Most of the Muslims were Hindus.

PURANI: Raja Ali says the Muslims are democratic.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is a different story. It does not exclude the fact that they were Hindus.

PURANI: No. From Shah Jehan downwards a new connection began between Muslims and Hindus.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Dara, Shah Jehan's son, was almost a Hindu.

(*To be continued*)

THE SHADOW OF SILENCE

(Dedication: To Laelia)

THE amber-golden moon at summer's ending
 Guerdoned our pathway by the surging sea;
With lighted sand your wayfaring was blending
 Shade mystery.

Upon a stream rose-red with sundroop's blazing
 Idly we scattered rose-leaves, white with red:
And in white cohorts came, while we were gazing,
 Stars overhead.

So pale a green of Spring on forest towers...
 Dew falling from fluttered wings of songbirds...
Dark hair glistened with the orchard-petal showers...
 How vain these words.

29 November 1936

ARIJVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: Very beautiful—an admirable vividness of colours.

A DREAM

LORD, last night you gave me a dream.

This is what I remember of it:

At the top of a very high tower standing on a high mountain, in a room so vast that it seemed to be low, I was leaning against the far wall, and facing me was a window looking outside. On my left was a raised throne with several steps, and on the throne sat the Lord of Nations.¹ This I knew although I had not looked at him. To my right at the far end of the immense room, in a kind of alcove lit from above, sat a young woman—a nation. She was a small, dumpy child with very dark hair and a pale and mat complexion. She had put on a wedding-dress, with a crown of white flowers on her head (the dress was mostly white with some blue and a few touches of gold). I knew that I had helped this nation to dress in this way, and to climb the mountain and the tower to come up to the room. She had come to offer herself as a bride to the Lord of Nations, and for this purpose she was to undergo a series of ordeals that the Lord wanted to impose upon her in order to know whether she was worthy of him. These ordeals were the ordeals of Terror.

For the first ordeal he had a full glass as well as a decanter brought to her. And she was to drink the contents of both. To her they seemed to be blood—human blood newly shed. And He, from the height of his throne, was saying to her, “Drink this blood to show that you are not afraid.” The poor child was trembling with disgust and did not dare touch the ghastly beverage. But at that hour, Lord, You had given me the full consciousness and power of the Truth. From where I stood I could clearly see the transparent purity of the water which the glass and the decanter really contained. And while the child was still hesitating and the Lord was taunting her in a biting tone, “What! you are trembling already! This is yet only the first ordeal, the easiest of all, what will you do next?”...

Then, heedless of the consequences, I cried to the child *in a language that the Lord did not understand*, “You can drink without fear, it is only water, pure water, I swear it.” And the child, trusting in my word that dispelled the suggestion, began to drink calmly....

But because of the force with which I had spoken, the Lord suspected something and turned towards me in fury, rebuking me for speaking when I should not. To which I replied—still heedless of the consequences which I knew to be inevitable— “What I say is not your concern since You cannot understand the language I have used!”...

Then the memorable thing happened....

The room suddenly grew as dark as night and in this night a still darker form appeared, a form I perceived distinctly although no one else could see it.

This form of darkness was like the shadow of the light of Truth within me. And this shadow was Terror.

1. The Lord of Nations is an asura, that is, a hostile being of the mentalised vital plane. Of him the Mother said in 1953: “Even now, among the beings who are concerned with the earth, the asuric beings, the greatest of the asuras who is still busy with the earth at present, who is the asura of falsehood and calls himself the ‘Lord of Nations’—he has taken a beautiful name, he is Lord of Nations—it is he, wherever there is something going wrong, you may be sure it is he or a representative of his who is there.” (*Questions and Answers 1953* (10 June), p. 98.)

Immediately the fight began. The being, whose hair was like furious serpents, moving with hideous contortions and terrible gnashing of teeth, rushed upon me. If with only one of her fingers she were to touch my breast at the place of the heart *the great calamity for the world* would occur, and this had to be avoided at all costs. It was a fearful battle. All the powers of Truth were concentrated in my consciousness; and nothing less was needed to fight against so formidable a foe as Terror!

Her endurance and strength in combat were remarkable. At last came the supreme moment of the fight. We were so close to each other that it seemed impossible that we should not touch, and her outstretched finger drew nearer, threatening my breast...

At that precise moment the Lord of Nations, who could see nothing of the tragic battle, stretched out his hand to take something from a small table at his side. This hand—unawares—passed between my opponent and myself. I was then able to take support from it and Terror, for this time definitely vanquished, sank to the ground like a dark dust without power or reality....

Then, recognising the one who sat on the throne, and doing homage to his power, I leant my head upon his shoulder and said to him joyfully, "Together, we have conquered Terror!"

Such was my dream—and with it You gave me the full understanding of it.

For all this I give thanks to You, as for a priceless gift.

31 January - 1 February [1915?]

THE MOTHER

(*Words of Long Ago*, CWM, Vol. 2, pp. 134-36)

LOVE THE SAVIOUR

A Letter

IF one has the inner sense that, with some truth, one loves and is loved, one has become the vehicle of a light and a force greater than one's single isolated self. Love compasses two beings and, in exceeding either of them, it may be greater even than both together—a sort of god who brings various pairs of persons into deep contact for a manifold play of transformative self-giving—

A red Immortal riding in the hearts of men,

as the poet Flecker puts it.

Once the inner feel of such a Power is present, something high and sacred is tainted if we become wholly subject at any moment to our personal moods. We may not always be passionate, but a certain expressive sweetness in however subdued a form should never stop flowing. As soon as we deny it we act counter to the wonderful reality which is twofold and is wider than the individual ego. Every occasion that reduces this reality to the dimensions of passing moods, and forgets the super-personal nature of “the red Immortal”—every such occasion is a blow in the face of the supreme Grace that has broken the hard crust of us, the obscure limit of the closed-in consciousness. It is to be oblivious that there is within our beings “an imprisoned Splendour” (in Browning's phrase) whose liberation as ego-transcending love is the most glorious experience open to us.

If we do not give this experience its full value, if we do not keep it alive at each instant, no matter in how small an expressive heart-beat, we take a step backward towards the dust, the division and the darkness out of which the supreme Grace has lifted us. Let us never be ungrateful to Love the Saviour.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

RELIANCE

A Poem by Nirodbaran with Sri Aurobindo's Corrections and Comments

(Original form)

no more candles *a*

Burn (candles no more) in (your) mid-night heart:
Sleep like a child in utter self-lost peace;

ripples *life's* *shall*

All (wrinkles) from (the) surface (-being) depart
(life)

some

Into (the) motionless abode of seas.

Founts wash the shore in a subdued soft voice;
Culled from Spring-garden of fire-coated seeds
Paint nectar-flowers of heaven's single choice
On memory's threshold—petalled with pearl beads.

hue of

Space has lost all its (colours) heavy sighs

a colourless

In (fathomless) still mystery of sound(:)

The artist

(Far-) aureoled (—) Sun-goddess (slowly) dyes, _

A

(The) symphony descending earthward bound.

has

Deep silence (has) now come upon the night, _

-song - *and*

Moon and star(s,) song(s of the) gold-fretted Light.

2.5.37

Sri Aurobindo's Comments:

It is a little too surrealistic this time. I am obliged to tone down by a few moderating modifications in order to tone down the exuberance. The first quatrain can stand provided the wrinkles are wiped out. These wrinkles, one does not know how they came in and, in

any case, when did wrinkles ever go into an abode of seas? “Surface-being” and “surface-life” are too unpoetically philosophic and psychological.

Second quatrain: There there is, taking the poem as a whole, a terribly surrealistic confusion of images. Where are this shore, garden, threshold, in what arrangement of scene or landscape? Founts don’t wash shores and in any case they don’t wash and nobody washes in a soft subdued voice; one can speak in a soft voice, but not wash anything in it. Anyhow what has all this shore-washing and culling and painting to do with the idea of the poem as a whole? The rest has a very well-connected building. By ceasing to burn midnight candles and going to sleep, peace settles in the life, all the heavy coloured sighs of space give way to some colourless still mystery of sound which as it descends is dyed by the Sun-Goddess in the gold of her own aureole. This descent is surrounded by a deep silence of the night. So far so good, but this second stanza must not interrupt the harmony of the building by a discursive fantasy of washing and paint and flowers which has nothing to do with anywhere. I observe that the first line is unduly sibilant with that mixture of *sh* and *s* sounds which is most difficult to harmonise. The next two lines are very fine and could be accepted if they had any relevance. The “petalled with pearl beads” is too pretty and decorative and overdoes the picturesque. The third quatrain will do very well, if the dyeing business is a little more connected and less crudely done; the dyeing must be connected directly with the colourless mystery to show what you mean; otherwise there is a wanton interference of the Sun-Goddess with some symphony of which we don’t know whether it is the mystery of sound or something else. I put in the “artist” to make the metaphor more convincing and less accidental. With the change from “fathomless” to “colourless” the second line of the quatrain becomes a very fine one.

Couplet: The last line as it stands, reads in English too much like an elaborate conceit and has besides no character in the rhythm. I have made it a little more mystically vague but there is no harm in that.

The poetry is very fine, but I think the second quatrain will have to be rewritten if there is to be any coherence.

Q: The second line was:

Let it sleep childlike in a state of peace

If “childlike” or “like a child” is all right, “state of peace” rather lacks force, no?

A: Very prosaic expression.

Q: In place of “seas” (4th line), it was “breeze”. “Abode of breeze” is what?

A: I don’t know, it has nothing to do with the matter in hand.

Q: Which is better:

“To a motionless abode—intense hushed seas”? or “of deep hushed seas”?

A: My God, sir, the line with its tangle of *sh* and *s* sounds would be unpronounceable like Toru Dutt’s “Sea-shells she sells”.

Q: Cull on a threshold—has hardly any meaning.

A: No.

Q: I don’t know if gardens of seeds will do.

A: It can.

Q: Space has... colours of blue eyes, too intellectual?

A: No—sounds like nonsense.

Q: The last line of the 3rd quatrain was: “The symphony in its descent earthbound.”

Amal says: “earth-bound” means bound by earth.

A: Yes.

Q: I don’t quite catch the meaning in detail. What does it say— “Don’t try to illumine your midnight darkness with candle light...”

A: i.e. Small lights of the mind.

Q: Better sleep in peace and all disharmonies of the outer being will also rest there?

A: Yes.

Q: Founts—of seas? have they? shores—of outer being?

A: All that is not coherent.

Q: The next line (8th) is rather sudden. Memory’s threshold? Memory of inner peace or the outer unrest? If nectar-flowers, then perhaps the latter? Heaven’s single choice?

A: It is quite clear in itself, but the quatrain as a whole does not fit.

Q: Why space comes and why has it sighs which drown in sighs etc., etc.? So a little note, please!

A: Find it below the poem.

Q: It appears to have a beautiful body, anyway, no? If the head and tail were there, it would have been a harmonious Greek statue, what?

A: Rewrite the quatrain and everything can be there.

Q: Opinion? Any change necessary anywhere?

A: See remarks below the poem.

3.5.37

Q: Guru, from this quatrain you will see that I have tried a hell of a lot to improve or rewrite it and yet not successful:

“Plunge there like pearls in timeless trance-repose;
Culled from spring-garden of fire-coated seeds,
The nectar-rays of heaven’s golden Rose
Shower on the calm expanse—like pollen beads.”

A: So I see, but your plunging quatrain plunges and splashes a lot without arriving anywhere near coherence. There is still no possible connection between the ideas and images here and there that go before and after.

Q: You will notice that I have tried to preserve the 2nd two lines as you found them very fine. But I don’t know if they are coherent now.

A: Yes, but incompatible with the rest.

Q: I have put “calm expanse” meaning the surface after the ripples have disappeared.

A: Won't do, sir, won't do.

Q: I have rewritten the 2nd stanza altogether.

infinity

Under the veil of (the) blue canopy
deathless *flaming* (diamonds)
 Where (flaming) eyes like jewels (ever) shine
Tread
 (Build) moments crowned with new birth's ecstasy(:)
Over memory's threshold in *spirit's*
 (On past ruins, temple of) the (soul en) shrine.

God knows what it is like; has it any link with the 3rd stanza?

A: That is more manageable except that the last line is useless. Still I have taken from it the temple idea, which agrees with the image of the first line while the realm of sky prepares for the Space and Night of the later part of the poem. I have also resuscitated and dragged in memory's threshold from the original peccant quatrain, but stripped of its too gaudy beads.

4.5.37

Reliance

Burn no more candles in a mid-night heart:
 Sleep like a child in utter self-lost peace;
 All ripples from life's surface shall depart
Into a lulled abode of motionless seas.
 (Into some motionless abode of seas.)

Under the veil of blue infinity
 Where deathless eyes like flaming jewels shine,
 Tread moments crowned with new birth's ecstasy
 Over memory's threshold in the spirit's shrine.

heavy

Space has lost all its hue of (Heavy) sighs
 In a colourless still mystery of sound
 The artist(-)aureoled Sun-goddess dyes,
 A symphony descending earthward bound.

Deep silence now has come upon the night,
 Moon-song and star-song and gold-fretted Light.

Q: I send the poem again. How do you find the total effect?

A: I want to suggest in place of the fourth line to make it more cogent
“Into a lulled abode of motionless seas”.

Q: I have very little credit though, this time.

A: I think between us—putting aside all false modesty—we have made a rather
splendacious surrealist poem out of your surrealist affair.

Q: Still, something, what?

A: Certainly. Mine are only the finishing touches.

THE SILENT REVOLUTION

SRI AUROBINDO and the Mother's Yoga is a silent Revolution—no preaching, no propagation. A sadhak in this yoga ascends in his realisation from peak to peak silently like the rising sun. Perhaps he knows or perhaps he even does not know. Again each realisation has many levels and disparities.

In a deep sleep as the psychic silently awakes, similarly in our deeper consciousness Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Yoga Shakti awakes incessantly and works vigilantly, quietly opening one after another the hidden doors of our consciousness. The sadhak at one time realises that he is not the same man as before. He has become a new man with a new consciousness. In his life, externally there is no noise, no loud calls, but inwardly all his being has been reversed topsyturvy. The Yoga of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo has quietly reconstructed, renovated and recreated his inner self.

Sometimes acceding a little to our desire soul, sometimes denying most or sometimes totally cancelling all that we wanted, it has built up a new man in us. It is therefore called the hidden third method of God, *Murarir Tritiya Pantha*.

It has three stages—Involution, Revolution and Evolution. Firstly, descent of higher consciousness and power in the inner consciousness of man and society. Then there starts an imbroglio, a churning within to create a revolution. After the descent of Supramental Power and Consciousness upon earth we have seen all around us a tremendous turmoil, a wrecking, ruining and devastating condition in man, in society, in states, the like of which we have not seen before. This condition prevailed for a long time. Such involution and revolution continued. Now begins an Evolution—a silent spiritual Evolution. This Revolution and Evolution sometimes go separately sometimes go together, side by side.

Sri Aurobindo has said that mankind in the past has experienced many kinds of revolutions, social revolution, political revolution and religious revolution. There were conflicts, bloodshed, wars and destruction. But the condition of human life remained almost the same.

The human civilisation is waiting for the fourth and final revolution, that is the spiritual revolution. The Divine Consciousness with the spiritual power will continue to work silently and universally. Divine Power, *Divya Shakti*, moves in mankind from mind to mind and creates a revolution *Deva Manmani Sañcaranti*. In everyone's life this silent revolution goes on, so inevitably, infallibly that it is now transpiring internationally, nationally and individually. Now nobody can surely say: What am I now, what shall I be the next moment? What I am today I know not, what shall I be tomorrow? Sri Aurobindo said it already: "It is the Hour of God... it is the hour of the unexpected."

Moreover, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is present now gracefully and conspicuously with the world's highest wisdom, with the greatest tapasya, with the supernal light. People are coming here from different parts of the world, they are seeing and realising the living example of the future spiritual life of mankind. They are going back, imbibing the new life of the future. One day gradually they themselves will change the whole society.

Sri Aurobindo's Relics are now going to different parts of the country and the world.

With the Relics of Sri Aurobindo, there goes with them Sri Aurobindo's Power and Consciousness. As the sacred parts of Mahashakti's body are scattered in 52 places in our country creating the holy places, *Pithasthan*, likewise the places where Sri Aurobindo's Relics are going are also becoming holy places, *The Divine Pithasthan*.

Every one of us is carrying the flag of the silent revolution. I heard it from the Mother. The Mother once said to me, when the soul takes his birth he carries with him a mission, to fulfil a particular work. When the time comes, when the particular work is over the soul returns. Even sometimes leaving the work unfinished he cuts short and returns. Or it may so happen, the Mother said, the soul's mission work is well done but still if he can do more if he has more progress to make, then the soul continues to stay.

The whole human civilisation, as Sri Aurobindo said, is now in this silent Spiritual Revolution.

PRANAB KUMAR BHATTACHARYA

(Noted and transcribed by Amallesh Bhattacharya, 18-10-2001)

ALONG THE WAY

ALONG the way in journey of life
Detours await and challenges abound.

Hope, aspiration, prayers pave the path,
Longings turn into discovery unrealised.

Your Grace illuminates sunlit quest,
Traversing along, seeking Your Truth.

My wobbly steps gather sudden speed
With You, O Angel! along the highway.

ARUN VAIDYA

THE ASCENT OF SIGHT IN SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of February 2002)

Part Three (Contd)

9. Vision of the Supreme Form:

A very difficult question confronts us: Whether the Divine has an original supraphysical Form and power of form from which all other forms proceed, or is eternally formless.

The normal conception of the Infinite Being is formlessness but can he not be at once form and the Formless? For the apparent contradiction does not correspond to a real opposition and incompatibility. For, the Formless is not an utter negation of the power of formation but the condition for the Infinite's free play of formation. The Divine is formless but by that very reason capable of manifesting all possible shapes of being. (Adaptation of page 337 of *The Life Divine*.)

As Sri Aurobindo has so trenchantly put it in his *Essays Divine and Human*: "Nothing can arise from Nothing. Asat, Nothingness, is a creation of our mind; where it cannot see or conceive, where its object is something beyond its grasp, too much beyond to give even the sense of a vague intangible, then it cries out 'Here there is nothing.' Out of its own incapacity it has created the conception of a Zero. But what in truth is this zero? It is an incalculable Infinite." (p. 197)

But the doubting reader may still raise a valid question here: Granted that the Formless has given rise to all these myriad forms but does it follow from that that the Formless itself has a form of its own? In answer to the misgivings on this score expressed by one of his disciples, Sri Aurobindo once remarked that even if the Formless logically precedes Form, yet it is not illogical to assume that in the Formless itself Form is inherent and already existent in a mystic latency; also it would be equally logical to assume that there is an eternal Form of Krishna, a spirit body. Sri Aurobindo further wrote:

"As for the highest Reality it is no doubt Absolute Existence, but is it only that? Absolute Existence as an abstraction may exclude everything else from itself and amount to a sort of very positive zero; but Absolute Existence as a reality who shall define and say what is or is not in its inconceivable depths, its illimitable Mystery?" (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 83) (italics author's)

However, leaving aside all metaphysical debate and any misplaced zeal to score a point, which is not after all the purpose of the present essay, let us proceed to the attentive reading of a very sublime passage of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* which describes the austere and heroic attempt of the Mahayogi Aswapathy to have a vision of the Ultimate Form,

and its spiritual aftermath.

Aswapathy's soul was passing on "towards the end which ever begins again" (295); it was approaching "the source of all things human and divine". Far beyond the zone of "nameless Gods", even beyond the Abode of Iswara-Isvari, "the deathless Two-in-One", "a single being in two bodies clasped", who "seated absorbed in deep creative joy... sustained the mobile world", at the fount of all

"...One stood
 Who brought them forth from the Unknowable.
 Ever disguised she awaits the seeking spirit;
 Watcher on the supreme unreachable peaks,
 Guide of the traveller of the unseen paths,
 She guards the austere approach to the Alone....
 Above them all she stands supporting all,
 The sole omnipotent Goddess ever-veiled
 Of whom the world is the inscrutable mask;
 The ages are the footfalls of her tread,
 Their happenings the figure of her thoughts,
 And all creation is her endless act." (295)

What did Aswapathy do then and what followed? —

"Mute in the fathomless passion of his will
 He outstretched to her his folded hands of prayer.
 Then in a sovereign answer to his heart
 A gesture came as of worlds thrown away,
 And from her raiment's lustrous mystery raised
 One arm half-parted the eternal veil.
 A light appeared still and imperishable.
 Attracted to the large and luminous depths
 Of the ravishing enigma of her eyes,
 He saw the mystic outline of a face." (295-96)

And what was the effect of this vision on Aswapathy? —

Overwhelmed by her implacable light and bliss,
 An atom of her illimitable self
 Mastered by the honey and lightning of her power,
 Tossed towards the shores of ocean ecstasy,
 Drunk with a deep golden spiritual wine,
 He cast from the rent stillness of his soul
 A cry of adoration and desire

And the surrender of his boundless mind
 And the self-giving of his silent heart.
 He fell down at her feet unconscious, prone.” (296)

“He fell down at her feet unconscious, prone.” We may recall in this connection the stern warning uttered by the supreme Lord to Moses so that the latter might not try to go near Him and “see” Him in his original Form. For no consciousness lodged in any material embodiment can ever succeed in doing so. So Moses “heard” the Lord from within the burning bush. (Exodus, 3)

But this disability, although universal now, need not remain a permanent trait of all terrestrial being. For as “all life is fixed in an ascending scale” (342) and as “adamantine is the evolving law” (342), in the march of the progressive evolution of consciousness, the instrumental transformation also is bound to follow ushering in its wake the development of a New Sight, the divine Sight which will be capable of seizing the supreme Form. And this thought and high hope on our part leads us to our next and final section.

10. Sight: Its Future Apotheosis:

We have at last come to the end of our essay. Although the survey has been rather brief given the scope and importance of the subject, we have been, we hope, able to cover the entire ground, albeit in bare outline. But the question is: Does the “sight” too end its itinerary here? Or, who knows, has it any further evolutionary prospect?

As Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga is a Yoga of Integral Transformation, it is understood that it is not merely the inner consciousness which has to undergo divine transformation, even the outer physical system of man, including all its forms and functions, has to submit itself to the unrelenting process of supramental transformation. As Sri Aurobindo has affirmed in one of his last prose writings, “The Divine Body”, published in 1949:

“...other numerous potentialities might appear and the body become an instrument immeasurably superior to what we can now imagine as possible. There could be an evolution from a first apprehending truth-consciousness to the utmost heights of the ascending ranges of supermind and it may pass the borders of the supermind proper itself where it begins to shadow out, develop, delineate expressive forms of life touched by a supreme pure Existence, consciousness and bliss... The transformation of the physical being might follow this incessant line of progression and the divine body reflect or reproduce here in a divine life on the earth something of this higher greatness and glory of the self-manifesting Spirit.” (*The Supramental Manifestation and Other Writings*, 1989, p. 40)

Of course, it is the consciousness within which has first to change; for, our means and ways of knowledge and action must necessarily be according to the nature of our consciousness and “it is the consciousness that must radically change if we are to command and not only be occasionally visited by that higher power of knowledge.” (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 473)

Be that as it may, we can very well visualise that in the overall transformation of the physical system the sense of sight will not be faulted and excepted: this too will have the privilege of undergoing a supremely divine transfiguration.

Now what will be the results of this supramentalisation of sight? Sri Aurobindo has dealt with this question quite in detail in the chapter entitled "The Supramental Sense" in his book *The Synthesis of Yoga*. What follows below is an abridged adaptation of his observations:

"The lifting of the level of consciousness from the mind to the supermind and the consequent transformation of the being from the state of the mental to that of the supramental Purusha must bring with it... a transformation of all the parts of the nature and all its activities." There will be accordingly a profound transformation in the physical senses, "a supramentalising of the physical sight, hearing, touch, etc." that will reveal to us "a quite different view, not merely of life and its meaning, but even of the material world and all its forms and aspects."

The supramental eye will get a new and transfigured vision: its sight will acquire "an extraordinary totality and an immediate and embracing precision in which the whole and every detail [will] stand out at once in the complete harmony and vividness of the significance meant by Nature in the object..."

In the supramental seeing one will feel as if "it were the sight of the supreme divine Poet and Artist in which we were participating and there were given to us the full seeing of his truth and intention in his design of the universe and of each thing in the universe."

There will be an unlimited intensity which will make all that is seen "a revelation of the glory of quality and idea and form and colour." The very physical eye will seem then "to carry in itself a spirit and a consciousness which sees not only the physical aspect of the object but the soul of quality in it, the vibration of energy, the light and force and spiritual substance of which it is made."

In this vision of the supramental eye there will always be the "revelation of the soul of the thing seen and of the universal Spirit that is expressing itself in this objective form of its own conscious being."

There will be at the same time a subtle change which will make the sight see in a sort of fourth dimension. The material object will become "to this sight something different from what we now see, not a separate object on the background or in the environment of the rest of Nature, but an indivisible part ...an expression of the unity of all that we see."

To the supramentalised seeing the material world and material objects will cease to be material; they will be seen as spirit itself in a form of itself and a conscious extension. "The whole is a unity—the oneness unaffected by any multitudinousness of objects and details—held in and by the consciousness in a spiritual space and all substance there is conscious substance."

Such will be the apotheosis of sight when it gets supramentalised in course of its future evolution. Now here are some verses from *Savitri* embodying the vision of the

future glory of our Eye:

- (1) "... the secret sight man's blindness missed
Has opened its view past Time ..." (683)
- (2) "See with the large eye of infinity" (696)
- (3) "A vision which had scanned immortal things" (723)
- (4) "The Supreme's gaze looked out through human eyes" (31)
- (5) "... the eyes of the Timeless... look out from Time" (72)
- (6) "The immense regard of immortality" (320)
- (7) "Earth's seeing [shall] widen into the infinite." (344)
- (8) "And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze" (346)
- (9) "The superconscient's beam shall touch men's eyes" (451)
- (10) "And a soul's thoughts looked out from earth-born eyes" (485)
- (11) "Infinity turned its gaze on finite shapes" (526)
- (12) "Can fill those orbs with an immortal's sight" (370)
- (13) "Infinity's vision through thy gaze shall pierce,
Thou shalt look into the eyes of the Unknown" (537)
- (14) "Yet shall they look up as to peaks of God" (704)
- (15) "His regard crossing infinity's mystic waves" (706)
- (16) "The Spirit's eyes shall look through Nature's eyes" (707)
- (17) "The Spirit shall look out through Matter's gaze" (709)
- (18) "Time's sunflowers gaze at gold Eternity" (279)
- (19) "And all earth look into the eyes of God" (450)

So the journey ends. And we are infinitely grateful to Maha-Rishi Maha-Kavi Sri Aurobindo for affording us the favour of walking in his luminous footsteps and following the long march of the ascent of sight from the "sightless sight" of the Inconscient up to the "closed eyes' sight" of the supreme Superconscient — surely not in living experience as in the case of Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo himself but as a meditative intellectual-cum-imaginative exercise. And that is surely no mean gain for us the ordinary mortals with our "clipped outlook" on things.

"Jayatu Sri Aurobindo"—"Victory to Sri Aurobindo!"

(Concluded)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

ONENESS

Oh! the living Love,
That floods the sea, the sky!
It moves in all my movements,
In breath ever hums *so'ham*,
Descends, creates a Home,
Stirs the sleeping mind
To receive its trickles,
To stay with its moorings,
In air get its freshness;
In sunrays its Hymn,
Its vastness is felt,
Its presence in bees and butterflies.
Who is this that suddenly
I feel within?
Its Becoming my being
Adores to the core,
Its source from above
Sets off a source from below,
Making one the high and the low.

SHAKUNTALA MANAY

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of February 2002)

The Symbolism of Night in “The Symbol Dawn”

5

By the late 1930s, Sri Aurobindo had plunged deeply into the “dark and bottomless reality” of the Inconscient and the Ignorance which he sought to illumine and transform. During this period he began to express in the opening lines of *Savitri*, with a force and concreteness that grew with each successive revision, the resistance he found confronting him “everywhere and at all times in its tremendous and boundless mass.”¹

We have already dwelt at some length on his description of the resisting power as the “huge foreboding mind of Night”. This resonant phrase sums up in a few words the nature of what obstructs the “divine Event”. Coming as it does in the third line, it seems to announce the problem whose solution is the subject of Sri Aurobindo’s epic and the aim of his Yoga. Hence the importance of understanding all that these words mean.

We have explained this Night to be “the Night of the eternal negation”,² a symbol of that substratum of our existence which Sri Aurobindo called the Inconscient, whose hold on Matter seems to present such a powerful obstacle to any divine manifestation on earth. The words “mind of Night” we have taken to allude to Death, Savitri’s adversary later in the epic. We have seen in the foreboding aspect of this mind a reference to Fate, the other power that confronts Savitri. This interpretation of the “mind of Night” was based partly on a study of the phrase “spirit of Night” in an earlier version. But it does not account for all the possible implications of “mind of Night”.

“Spirit” in this phrase pointed clearly to the Purusha side of the duality of Purusha and Prakriti. It indicated a conscious being standing behind the darkness of Inconscience symbolised by Night. “Mind”, on the other hand, can equally refer to Prakriti. It seems to imply a mentality not only behind the Night, but in it. It is perhaps from this point of view that Sri Aurobindo’s choice of “mind” for the final text becomes most significant.

The aptness of “mind of Night” as an allusion to Death has been commented on in a previous instalment.³ Death is presented in *Savitri* as the spirit of the self-negating movement of the Divine that has created an inconscient universe. The mind of Death is the faculty of division needed for this denial, without which it would not have been possible to keep a world of unconscious, insentient Matter separate from its infinitely conscious and blissful source. But the Inconscience which Mind created has engulfed its creator, as it were. This process is described in Book Two, Canto Eight:

Inconscience swallowing up the cosmic Mind
Produced a universe from its lethal sleep;...⁴

The gradual reemergence of the principle of mind, swallowed up at the outset of the creation, has been a central feature of the phenomenon of evolution, whose thrust has been towards a recovery of the consciousness and bliss that were lost in the beginning. But mind, which has been instrumental in a partial recovery, retains the separative tendency that was necessary for its original dividing function. A point is reached where the separated powers must be reunited for the fulfilment of a higher cosmic purpose. Mind, the apparent leader of the march of evolution up to this point, must then abdicate its dominant position. If it refuses to do so, it becomes an instrument of Death who seeks to maintain the established negation against the arriving forces of the great Affirmation that is to be.

Mind in man has thus served as an instrument of Death in many ways and on every plane of his being. All this misuse of the mind, from an evolutionary standpoint, might be included collectively in the “mind of Night”, which blocks the advent of a divine Dawn upon earth. The word “foreboding” which Sri Aurobindo has placed before this phrase suggests that pessimism—as we showed in the preceding instalment—is among the surest signs of the negating force at its work, contradicting at each step the spontaneous faith that all is being guided by a sovereign Power and Wisdom towards a future that will amply justify the trials and tribulations endured on the way.

From its highest intellectual forms in the illusionism of the East and the scientific materialism of the West to its crude vital and obscure physical manifestations, pessimism undermines both our confidence in the value of our existence in the world and our will to pursue its true purpose. That is why Death assails Savitri with arguments representing nearly every important school of thought in his attempt to discourage her conviction that terrestrial life can embody divine perfection. But the decisive battle is not fought on the intellectual plane. For even a radical change of human thought in the direction of the acceptance of an integral spiritual aim in life might leave the root of the problem almost untouched if there is not an effective assault on the “massive forts of gloom”, where the “opponents of the Highest” sit bastioned against “the sword of Flame, the luminous Eye”.⁵ In order to bring the “advent for which all creation waits”⁶ and usher in a divine life in the terrestrial field, a deeper level of the “mind of Night” has to be dealt with.

Sri Aurobindo has spoken of “Matter’s night”⁷ as well as “the Inconscient’s night”.⁸ If Night is a symbol of the unconsciousness of Matter, then the mind in Matter or mind of Matter⁹ mentioned by the Mother could be at least one component of the “mind of Night”, a part of the machinery used by Death to maintain his unquestioned authority over this world. Asked to clarify the exact identity of “this mind which is spontaneously defeatist, having all sorts of fears, apprehensions, always seeing the worst, repeating always the same things”, the Mother replied:

That is the most unconscious part of the physical mind and that is the link joining the physical mind and this material substance.... it is the mind of the cells, it is a cellular mind.¹⁰

This most material mind is evidently closer to “the world’s inconscient unity”¹¹ than are the more conscious parts of our being, and the Mother discovered that even when it responded “marvellously” in herself, it had “not yet the power to assert itself spontaneously against what comes from outside, this perpetual contagion, constant, constant, of every minute.”¹²

She attributed the same defeatism to the subconscious as to the material mind, which seems to suggest that the latter is a subconscious mind¹³ and that the Mother was referring to the same thing when she talked about “the mind in Matter” as when she spoke in similar terms of the subconscious:

Because of physical death, the subconscious is a defeatist. Well, the subconscious has the feeling that whatever be the progress, whatever the effort, it will always end by that, because till today it has always ended that way. So the work that is being done is to try to introduce faith, the certitude of transformation, into the subconscious.¹⁴

A correspondence between this subconscious, material or cellular mind and the “huge foreboding mind of Night” appears possible in view of the Mother’s comment on the hugeness of the subconscious:

It is not merely that of one person, it is the subconscious of the earth. It is interminable.¹⁵

Sri Aurobindo likewise had noted that there was “an obscure mind of the body, of the very cells, molecules, corpuscles”. He wrote of its role in impeding the physical transformation on which the complete fulfilment of his Yoga depends:

This body-mind is a very tangible truth; owing to its obscurity and mechanical clinging to past movements and facile oblivion and rejection of the new, we find in it one of the chief obstacles to permeation by the supermind Force and the transformation of the functioning of the body.¹⁶

In an earlier instalment¹⁷ we explained the symbolism of Night in terms of a phrase in Sri Aurobindo’s *Record of Yoga*, “obstruction and conservatism of the material negation”.¹⁸ Matter, however, is a form of existence (*sat*) and a positive reality in its essence, whatever may be the element of illusion in our perception of it. Negation, the act of saying no, is a phenomenon of consciousness. The expression “material negation”, therefore, would seem to refer to the material mind’s negation and rejection of all that is still unmanifest. The conservatism that follows as a natural consequence from this negation is the same mind’s “clinging to past movements” which makes it so difficult to effectuate a radical change in the functioning of the body and in the habits of Matter usually known as “laws”.

Yet Sri Aurobindo saw that this troublesome subconscious mind is not a mere ob-

struction. He evidently saw that the “conservatism of the material negation” can by a conversion of this body-mind be transformed into what it obscurely misrepresents, what we may call the stability of the material affirmation of the Divine. Revealing his vision of the future of this mind in the body, he continued in the letter quoted above:

On the other hand, once effectively converted, it will be one of the most precious instruments for the stabilisation of the supramental Light and Force in material Nature.¹⁹

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. *Savitri* (1993), p. 737.
2. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1261.
3. *Mother India*, December 2001, pp. 927-28.
4. *Savitri*, p. 221.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 200.
7. *Savitri*, pp. 17, 262; *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 99.
8. *Savitri*, pp. 370, 704.
9. *Notes on the Way*, CWM, Vol. 11, pp. 2, 18.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
11. *Savitri*, p. 331.
12. *Notes on the Way*, p. 74.
13. Cf. Sri Aurobindo's mention of “the subconscious mind in the body” in *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 24, p. 1565.
14. *Notes on the Way*, p. 285.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
16. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 340.
17. *Mother India*, October 2001, pp. 763-66.
18. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1261.
19. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 340.

TWO SPECIAL DARSHANS OF THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of February 2002)

In the Service Tree

WHEN the Mother gave me the work of caring for the Service Tree immediately after the cyclone broke the massive branch that was directly over the Samadhi, facing South, I began a program of pruning and fertilizing the tree throughout the 1970s to 1981. During the 1980s I lived in the U.S. and in the 1990s once again took up the work, now with many able assistants, among them Montu and Andreas.

This is the story of a day in 1970 (or 1971, I no longer recall exactly) when I was still climbing without a safety harness, often going very high onto the top of the tree to prune branches. This particular day I had much to do as there were numerous dead branches to be pruned, diseased areas to clean out, jagged edges to be smoothed, etc. Climbing throughout the tree, section by section, I came finally to the Eastern side and, turning a bit North, I saw the Mother in Her room! Perhaps I should not have glanced at Her golden form in that vast space where I felt no walls, but can the humble bee not incline towards the honeyed flower? Though I could have fallen from the tree, so powerful was the experience, who kept my feet in place and my balance intact? How could one not have looked at Her, She who is “the magnet of our difficult ascent”?

Today, more than 30 years later, I remember that moment high up in our beloved Service Tree, and the Mother’s darshan. Now, things are different and many of our sages and seers have commented on how long it will take for the supramental race to be established on earth. I know very little, nothing really, but I do know that She resides in us and we in Her, now and for all ages. In one of the last meetings with Nolini-da here is what he said: “Your body (*pointing to Mary Helen*) and your body (*pointing to me*) and my body may all look different but they are not, they are all the same...they are all Her body, really. She has put a part of Herself into each of us.”

(Concluded)

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

REMINISCENCES OF THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of February 2002)

As far as the Physical Education is concerned, I would like to share with you a few memorable moments. When I came in 1946, the Mother did not go out of the Ashram. A little later the Playground was cleaned up by the boys and girls and the strong young men. Stones and glass pieces were removed. And a new surface of clay and sand was rolled on. All helped in this work with great enthusiasm. The Mother had just started visiting some sadhaks' rooms. She announced that She would come to the Playground. It was a very special occasion as was each new venture that the Mother started, giving a special energy and impetus for perfection, cleanliness, beauty and harmony. "...where she presses her feet course miraculous streams of an entrancing Ananda," says Sri Aurobindo in *The Mother*. I believe, the Mother stood near the entrance and announced that henceforth, we would begin to have our Physical Education Programme in a very complete and organised way. I believe She read out the code of sportsmanship which was taken from a book on Physical Education, chosen by Dada. Later, She wrote the Ideal Child in a similar style with Her own ideas. An interesting detail is that when She recorded the Ideal Child in French much later, She spontaneously added at the end "Childhood is the symbol of the Future and the hope of all future realisations."

During a Novelty Race, I remember coming first in a Dressing Race which meant that we ran with our sports uniform from one end of the Playground to the other, put on our everyday shirt and shorts, white socks and shoes, and ran back to the finishing Line. When the Mother inspected us, She gave me second place, because I had tied my shoelace with one loop instead of two. This is to show how particular She was about every detail and would not allow any slipshod way or negligence.

When the Sports Ground started, the Mother Herself came for the competitions, where group members competed together. I remember doing shotput along with Vishwanath-da. The Mother used to hold the tape for track events. And She would sit and watch each of the field items, noting down the results in Her notebook.

Personally, I remember, in a 200-metre race I decided to offer all of myself to the Mother at each moment. I was not good at running, specially short distances; but I found myself running with effortless ease. The next day, when I met the Mother, I was touched when She said: "You did very well." Another year in the long-distance 3000-metre run, I did come first. And the Mother said to me the next day: "You were very steady." This is to show how observant and encouraging the Mother was.

When each group got its new uniform, members stood before the Mother and each group said its prayer. The Mother answered. When the Captains' group was formed on 24 April 1961 and the new uniform was ready, we stood before the Mother and I was privileged to recite the prayer. I would like to read the prayer and the Mother's answer since Her words still ring in my ear.

Sweet Mother,

We all aspire to work together towards the goal that You have prepared for us.

Grant us the rectitude, the courage, the perseverance and the good will necessary to accomplish this sublime task.

Kindle in us the flame which will burn out all resistance and make us fit to be Your faithful servants.

My children,

We are united towards the same goal and for the same accomplishment.—a work unique and new, that the Divine Grace has given us to accomplish.

I hope that more and more of you will understand the exceptional importance of this work and that you will feel in yourselves the sublime joy that the accomplishment will give you.

The Divine force is with you—feel its presence more and more and be very careful never to betray it.

Feel, will, act so that you may be new beings for the realisation of a new world, and for that my blessings will always be with you.

The Mother's messages on work were the governing guidelines for my work. The most prominent one put up in all departments was the following: "Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body's best prayer to the Divine."

There was an interesting message of the Mother in Biren-da's binding department, next to the Dining Room, which I found amusing and instructive. It said: "Work as much as you can. Talk as little as possible."

Personally, when I wrote to the Mother, asking whether I should meditate, She wrote: "If your work can be a constant remembrance of the Divine, meditation is not necessary."

Now, I come to a subject about which you are, I suppose, curious. It is Human Relationship.

Early in 1964 while trying to extract a beehive by cutting open the trunk of a Health tree I got stung many times, but did not pay much attention to it. Several stings turned septic, but one was lodged particularly deep. But I continued with my usual activities like washing clothes, taking classes, going to the laboratory, and so on. Finally, I had to go to Dr. Sanyal's Nursing Home. Dr. Sanyal operated on my little finger before going to America for his own operation. I had overworked myself and was feeling so very weak. My weight was terribly low and I was drained of energy. I had no stamina. In fact I could hardly lift my hand. While I was there in that state The Mother used to send me an egg; She wrote my name, in short, "Rich", to be sure that I would definitely eat it.

It was Janina who nursed me and helped me recover a little. She noticed that I was very indifferent to people who came to see me. I had an air of stiffness. Instead of transforming, I had the habit of suppressing my emotions and desires. Janina told me

that one could put light on the unregenerate nature and offer all, good and bad, to the Mother. I had written to the Mother about all the uprising of the forces of the subconscious.. So, She sent Pavitra to see me. He told me that since I was alone and unoccupied, it was only natural that the subconscious would raise its ugly head. He told me to remember what Sri Krishna said in the *Gita*: “Abandoning all dharmas take refuge in me alone. I will deliver you from all sins. Do not grieve.”

On 17 July 1964 Janina passed away on her birthday. Since there was nobody in the Nursing Home, I continued to stay there alone. A month later, I was told that Kailas was coming from America and would be staying there. The rooms were prepared for her arrival. The Mother had sent a flower of the Divine’s Presence for her. Kailas was not new to the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. She had read *The Life Divine* and was spontaneously drawn to Sri Aurobindo and had contacts with the Mother while she was in America for ten years.

As I waited, I had the feeling that something unexpected and different was about to unfold. So, I wanted to remain as quiet as possible. Kailas arrived vibrant and happy, a dynamo of enthusiasm and energy. Usha and her group had accompanied her. They introduced us to each other. I told her that the Mother had sent the Divine’s Presence for her. And she greeted me warmly.

We were so different in our external personality, she was so free and quick, intellectually and in decision making and very particular in her tastes, whereas I was the simple Ashram boy regulated by the Ashram way of life and not used to this sudden change in my regulated Ashram life. Yet, we had two things in common besides that strong bond which binds us all together in the Mother. She was spiritually intent and had a love of beauty and flowers.

I asked the Mother whether I had a spiritual future with Kailas. She replied: “Everywhere, there is a spiritual future if one can find it. *Le tout est de vouloir et ne vouloir que cela.*” Roughly translated: “The important thing is to want and to want that, nothing but that.”

The Mother elaborated this further:

If it is a material instinct, an instinct of the animal pushing to reproduce and towards material happiness, the best is to leave the Nursing Home and not to see Kailas any more.

If it is a vital attraction, it can be overcome by reducing your relation to what is indispensable in living together.

If it is sentimental and emotional attraction, it is easier to canalise and turn towards the Divine by a common seeking for the spiritual life and for Yoga.

Now, all depends on your mutual goodwill and sincerity.

And She sent me *The Adventure of Consciousness* to study together. Well, Kailas had already read it in America. On her part, she abhorred all physical relationship and had absolutely no interest in sex. She was one-pointed and focused on her spiritual

growth and contact with the Mother, seeking her absolute guidance in everything. When we went to the Mother on Kailas's birthday I was standing on one side while the Mother was handing book after book to Kailas. The Mother looked at me and said: "Aren't you a gentleman!" I quickly stepped forward and took the books out of her hands. After the language riot, when the Ashram Post Office and some houses were attacked, She told me to continue to stay in the Nursing Home so that Kailas was not left alone.

I watched Kailas sending a dishful of flowers every day to the Mother. The dish contained Purity: (jasmine) with Loving Surrender in the centre. The Mother responded by filling the whole dish with flowers of the Divine Grace as long as it was in season. Then the Mother filled her dish with Supramental Psychological Perfection with Supramental Consciousness in the centre, as Her answer, again as long as it was in season. Then, the Mother returned her dish with Perfect Radiating Purity with either the Supramental Sun or Supramental Sacchidananda in the centre as long as it was in season. I too was drawn into her communion with the Mother. The Mother allowed me this privilege too. This went on for four years. I remember distinctly that for the last few times, the Mother sent me a garland of Tulsi leaves signifying devotion.

And so true is the Mother's statement: "When I give flowers, I give you states of consciousness." As Sri Aurobindo says: "There are three ways of blessing of the Mother: by sight, by touch and through flowers. And it is through flowers that Her blessing is most effective." This totally changed the direction of my relationship with Kailas.

This brings me to the subject of flowers, which, besides children touch me deeply. One thing which impressed me, when I saw the Mother, was the intensity of Her look, Her eyes which penetrated deeper and deeper into my being. On other occasions, I felt I was being drawn deeper and deeper into Her. I felt a sort of similarity in my approach to flowers, since I was drawn to them from the time I learnt that the Mother gave spiritual significance to the flower. And, of course, with flowers it is not only the beauty of form but the colour and fragrance too.

This is a subject very dear to my heart and I am grateful to the Mother for sending me the significance of flowers through Pavitra, through Tara and sometimes directly. I had seen the first book that came out, *Le Role des Fleurs* in 1957 and was very much touched by its introduction. I asked the Mother if I could work on a larger edition of all the flowers to which the Mother gave significance. The Mother graciously consented. Thus began my work with flowers, with gardeners, collection of photographs and their paintings.

I also worked with the Mother on the gardens of the Matrimandir. Well, I think, this is a subject by itself in which the Mother guided me and would take me beyond the time limit of this talk.

I would like to end this with my last physical contact with the Mother. As many of us have experienced, the Mother works very effectively in our sleep or our dreams. Although my mind could never accept the Mother leaving Her body, I had seen in my dream (in November 1973) a long box being carried towards the Samadhi. This was a sort of intuition, preparing me for Her departure. Way back in 1950 the Mother gave the

permission to my father and me to go to Annamalai University to meet Professor Singh who made experiments on the effect of music on plants, when we were to leave on the 5th December.

We returned in the evening. Usually, when I entered the Ashram, I felt a sense of solid peace. But when I went to the Ashram that evening, I saw a disturbed atmosphere inside and outside: crushed plants and shrubs which were trampled over. And friends told me about the crowds rushing in. Inwardly, I knew that I could not have borne the shock and was saved by the Mother from this uncontrolled commotion.

When the Mother passed away, I was awakened very early in the morning and asked to come to the Ashram for duty. As soon as I heard the news, the first thing that crossed my mind was how considerate the Mother was this time to “inform me”. Of course, I told Kailas and took her to the Ashram.

Each time, I passed before Her, as Her body lay in state, I saw a warrior, continuing Her grim battle. It was impossible to believe that the Mother had left. On the 20th morning, when I read the list of those chosen to carry the casket of the Mother’s body to the Samadhi, I did not see my name.

When I was on duty in the Ashram, someone came to ask me to check at Harpagon whether the casket was ready. On my way back someone else came hurriedly to inform me that I should change quickly and be ready to carry the Mother’s casket. For me, it was the Mother’s way of confirming that I was Her son, and She gave me that honour.

And to this day, I feel Her living Presence which answers to our thoughts and feelings and prayers. Over the years, as I have become aware of Her Presence within me, I equally see Her Presence in all, not only here, but wherever I go.

(Concluded)

RICHARD PEARSON

HOW TO LIVE 24 HOURS A DAY

“THE culture of a man depends on how he spends his leisure hours,” said Dr. Radhakrishnan. Well, then what about all the 24 hours? Animals, men, women, children, old people, whether rich or poor all live somehow. But the degree of good or ordinary living varies from person to person. Is it the external life only which is important or are there some other aspects of life also? Let us discuss in detail how best life can be lived and all our days become fruitful and enjoyable.

Whatever work comes to our lot, let us try to make it a play. Just as a game is interesting and full of fun, why should our work also not become like that? After a long time we may feel bored by the same routine. But if we take it as lovable duty, service to mankind and ourselves and try to see God’s hand guiding us in this work, we may see a new element entering into our routine work. Work while you work, play while you play; that is the way to be happy and gay. “The great essentials of happiness are something to do, something to love and something to hope for,” said Chalmers.

“Unselfishness is more paying, only people do not have the patience to practise it,” said Swami Vivekananda. If our behaviour towards others becomes less selfish, then the pattern of day-to-day life will also change. If you have something extra, there is a joy in giving a part of it to the needy or offering it to God in some way.

Count your life by smiles not years
Count your age by friends not years.

This was written on a wall-plate presented to me by a friend on my birthday. I have jotted it down in my diary and refer to it at least once a year and contemplate on it. This helps in developing more smiles in a day and good friendship.

According to a psychologist there are five stages of progress:

Panic, Inertia, Coping, Struggle, Mastery.

The first two are concerned with Tamasic nature, the 3rd and 4th with Rajasic nature, and the 5th with Sattwic nature. A Sattwic man is very likely to live the whole day with balance, calm and cheerfulness, instead of restlessness or laziness.

A quote from the Upanishads reads: Let good and noble thoughts come to us from all sides. If this is put into practice, day-to-day life will be full of goodness and nobility. Let all become happy and healthy, let us all see good things in life, nobody should get any grief.

To spend some time with children and family members is very enjoyable, beneficial too. Exchange of views, their likes and dislikes, necessary mutual adjustments, all these can be had at this time.

It is difficult to keep silent the whole day, but then it is more difficult to observe continuance of speech. To speak truth with soft and sweet words is very essential. A harsh word can kindle a fire between two persons. A word of appreciation or gratitude can make the listeners your friends. A timely word can improve an unnerving situation.

A sort of double life has been cultivated by most of us while living the daily life. It is useful to say something which avoids a tussle or creates a problem. An old sanskrit dictum is *yuktiyuktam vadet vakyam*—speak a sentence that is full of intelligence and tact also. To be practical is no doubt useful but to reduce the double life of saying something and doing quite the opposite is to be reduced or avoided.

Laughter is the salt of existence. If we cultivate a sense of humour in our daily life it is very useful. Laugh and people will laugh with you. But if you cry rarely will anybody cry with you. It is essential that we should not injure anybody's feelings by laughing.

Before concluding, let me give some suggestions as regards daily activities. "Early to bed and early to rise, that is the way to be healthy, wealthy and wise." This proverb has a substantial truth and if it is followed well the good result is inevitable. Meditation, yogic postures or light exercises and a brisk walk in open air early in the morning are advisable. A heavy breakfast, lunch of medium quantity of food and a light dinner are good for health. Whatever we eat it is to be masticated well. Minimum talking while eating is recommended. Before retiring to bed a survey of the activities of the whole day would be beneficial. "Did I live well during the whole day? What improvement can I make tomorrow?" These are the questions worth answering for oneself. Light reading, a prayer and a cup of warm milk lightly sugared before going to bed would induce sound sleep. Thus we can live 24 hours in the best possible way.

HARSHAD H. MEHTA

NOT MATISSE!

ON April 9th 1951, in the course of a talk in the Ashram Playground about modern art, the Mother told this story about a painter she had known:

I have known artists who were great artists, who had worked hard and produced remarkable things, classical, that is, not ultra-modern. But they were not in fashion because, precisely, one had not to be classical. When a brush was put in the hands of an individual who had never touched a brush, and when a brush was put on a palette of colours and the man had never touched a palette before, then if this individual had in front of him a bit of canvas on an easel and he had never done a picture before, naturally he daubed anything at all; he took the colours and threw them in a haphazard way; then everybody cried out “admirable”, “marvellous”, “it is the expression of your soul”, “how well this reveals the truth of things”, etc! This was the fashion and people who knew nothing were very successful. The poor men who had worked, who knew their art well, were not asked for their pictures any longer; people said, “Oh! this is old-fashioned, you will never find customers for such things.” But, after all, they were hungry, you see, they had to pay their rent and buy their colours and all the rest, and that is costly. Then what could they do? When they had received rebuffs from the picture-dealers who all told them the same thing, “But try to be modern, my friend; look here, you are behind the times”, as they were very hungry, what could they do?... I knew a painter, a disciple of Gustav Moreau; he was truly a very fine artist, he knew his work quite well, and then... he was starving, he did not know how to make both ends meet and he used to lament. One day, a friend, intending to help him, sent a picture-dealer to see him. When the merchant entered his studio, this poor man told himself, “At last! here’s my chance”, and he showed him all the best work he had done. The art-dealer made a face, looked around, turned over things and began rummaging in all the corners; and suddenly he found... Ah! I must explain this to you, you are not familiar with these things: a painter, after his day’s work, has at times some mixed colours left on his palette; he cannot keep them, they dry up in a day; so he always has with him some pieces of canvas which are not well prepared and which he daubs with what are called “the scrapings of palettes” (with supple knives he scrapes all the colours from the palette and applies them on the canvases) and as there are many mixed colours, this makes unexpected designs. There was in a corner a canvas like that on which he used to put his palette-scrapings. The merchant suddenly falls upon that and exclaims, “Here you are! my friend, you are a genius, this is a miracle, it is this you should show! Look at this richness of tones, this variety of forms, and what an imagination!” And this poor man who was starving said shyly, “But, sir, these are my palette-scrapings!” And the art-dealer caught hold of him: “Silly fool, this is not to be told!” Then he said, “Give me this, I undertake to sell it. Give me as many of these as you like; ten, twenty, thirty a month, I shall sell them all for you and I shall

make you famous.” Then, as I told you, his stomach was protesting; he was not happy, but he said, “All right, take it, I shall see.” Then the landlord comes to demand his rent; the colour-man comes demanding payment of the old bill; the purse is quite empty, and what is to be done? So though he did not make pictures with palette-scrapings, he did something which gave the imagination free play, where the forms were not too precise, the colours were all mixed and brilliant, and one could not know overmuch what one was seeing; and as people did not know very much what they saw, those who understood nothing about it exclaimed, “How beautiful it is!” And he supplied this to his art-dealer. He never made a name for himself with his real painting, which was truly very fine (it was really very fine, he was a very good painter), but he won a world reputation with these horrors! And this was just at the beginning of modern painting, this goes back to the Universal Exhibition of 1900; if I were to tell you his name, you would all recognise it.... (MCW 4:297-99)

The Mother did not mention the name of this painter. But in the beautiful volume *The Mother—Paintings and Drawings* published by the Ashram in 1992 the editors suggest that she may have been referring to Matisse, on the basis that “The only student of Moreau who attained this kind of eminence was Henri Matisse.” They also point out that “The Mother liked his work better than most modern art for ‘he had a sense of harmony and beauty and his colours were beautiful.’” (p.165) I am convinced that this is a mistaken identification, and was surprised to find it repeated in Georges van Vrekhem’s recent biography of the Mother (p. 23-24), presented this time as a matter of fact.

The reason why Matisse’s name was suggested as the artist in the Mother’s anecdote is mentioned in the article in *The Mother—Paintings and Drawings*: at the time it was written in the 1980s he was the most famous of Gustave Moreau’s students.

Moreau, who was Professor of Painting at the main art school in Paris, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, from 1892 up to his death in April 1898, had occasion to teach many of those who became known as painters during the period up to the first World War, as well as many whose names have never become very well known, amongst them Henri Morisset, the Mother’s first husband. This anecdote is very obviously a bit of inside information from the circle of the Master’s ex-students and their friends. Gustave Moreau was already considered quite “behind the times” as an artist at the time of his appointment. His technically perfect canvases of mythological and biblical subjects resemble those of the Pre-Raphaelite artists of Britain, and were a far cry from the new Impressionist work that represented the artistic avant-garde of the times. But many of his students paid tribute to his encouraging, inspiring and eclectic approach as a teacher: he seems to have been both appreciated and admired by them. One student became much closer to him than all the others and was recognised as his real disciple and successor. All the details of the Mother’s anecdote point much more to this artist than to Matisse, whom so far as we can tell from all published material about him was never quite in the dire straits she describes in her story, even at the beginning of his career. Matisse came from quite a well-off back-

ground, married a lady with means of her own, and was very soon noticed by the Russian patrons who bought and commissioned so many of his paintings up to the time of the Revolution. Moreover, perhaps because of this early patronage, Matisse exhibited little in his lifetime, and therefore remained relatively unknown to the general public, although of course informed people in the art world were aware of his great gifts. It was only after the immensely important retrospective exhibition of Matisse's life work organised after his death by his son, that the wider public became aware that alongside Picasso, Matisse was the major artist of the first half of the 20th century. This exhibition took place I believe in autumn 1956. In 1951, when the Mother told her story, the name of Matisse was definitely not one that would have sprung to everyone's mind as one of the best known French artists.

From the first time I came across the Mother's anecdote I have felt sure that it referred to another painter of the same generation, one who is almost forgotten nowadays, but whose name would have been much more familiar to the general public in 1951 than that of his contemporary Matisse. This was Georges Rouault, the specially close disciple of Gustave Moreau, who once told him "I consider you as the representative of my pictorial doctrine—and that is just the reason for your lack of success."¹ This lack of success did not last however. For the first sixty years of the twentieth century Rouault had a tremendous reputation as a painter of religious and mythological subjects, which may have been bolstered by the patronage and approval of the Catholic Church, for he was a demonstratively devout Catholic all his life. Visiting Paris in the summer of 1961, I remember seeing a huge exhibition at the Petit Palais Museum in the Champs Elysées, entitled "Gustave Moreau—the Teacher of Rouault". The paintings of a forgotten and unfashionable master were being advertised by their connection with his—at that time—most famous student, the one who had been closest to him in his lifetime and who remained closest to him in subject matter and the use of colour throughout his career. The affinities between the works of teacher and disciple were obvious: monumental iconic figures, dark backgrounds offsetting brilliant patches of intense colour. But whereas Moreau maintained the fine finishing and detailed drawing he had learned, mastered and taught up to the last years of the 19th century, his student Rouault became known for a distinctive technique of thick impasto, using a similar range of colours but just as if laid on with a palette-knife—a detail which gives all the piquancy to the Mother's anecdote. As early as 1910, a contemporary observer referred to these as "appalling caricatures of the works of Gustave Moreau".² So far as we know, Matisse never did anything like that in his life. He does seem to have learned much from Moreau about the use of colour, but carried whatever he gained from him much further, in a completely original way, experimenting and apparently caring nothing for the opinion of either dealers or the public, simply exploring with fascinated delight the world of colour and form, right up to the end of his long life. Today it seems as if appreciation for Matisse's art may continue to grow

1. Georges Rouault, *Souvenirs Intimes*, quoted in Jean Paladilhe et José Pierre, *Gustave Moreau ...*, Paris, Hazan, (1971), p. 143 [my translation].

2. Guillaume Appollinaire; *ibid.* [my translation].

so that his reputation one day eclipses that of Picasso. Whereas Georges Rouault, the Catholic painter who may have had to compromise what he learned from his master simply in order to survive, gained recognition and prosperity in his lifetime, but is practically disregarded today.

Those of us who love and admire Matisse for his selfless lifelong dedication to the quest for subtle new expressions of beauty, harmony and truth would not like to think that he first made a name for himself in the way mentioned by the Mother. And there is really no evidence that he did so. On the other hand a comparison between the early, unappreciated works of Georges Rouault, and the later ones with which he gained fame really does reveal an abrupt change of style around the turn of the century from a 'classical' style to one that corresponds closely to the Mother's characterisation.

When Gustave Moreau died, still a bachelor, in 1898, it was found that he had bequeathed his family home and a huge collection of his own works to the French State to be maintained as a museum. His disciple Rouault was made curator of this collection – a recognition of the special relationship between them. But there was almost no money to go with the job; and with the changing fashions in art which the Mother mentions, the work of Moreau, who for many years had been valued more as a teacher than as a painter, was totally out of tune with the new trends. The poor young disciple had to make his own way. A little research would probably soon unearth the name of the perceptive dealer who launched his successful career by advising him to concentrate on pictures resembling palette-scrappings!

SHRADDHAVAN

Notes:

(a) Matisse, she says (without naming him), was doing his very best as a painter, but he had to struggle with the fate of so many Parisian artists at the beginning of their career: he could not sell his work, which means that he went hungry. One day, somebody who wanted to help him brought an art dealer to his studio. The art dealer was not impressed by what he saw, till he found a canvas on which Matisse, after each painting session, had smeared the remainder of the colours from his palette, giving free rein to his fantasy. The art dealer, in search of new sensations, grew ecstatic. 'Give me as many paintings as you can in this genre, twenty, thirty a month, I will sell them all and make you famous!' and famous Henri Matisse became the first and perhaps most refined painter of a new school called Fauvism. (From Georges Van Vrekhem, *The Mother: A Biography*, pp. 23-24.)

(b) Another artist with whom the Mother seems to have been well acquainted is Matisse who, like her husband, was a student of Gustave Moreau. She did not mention Matisse by name, but in a talk on 9 April 1951 she told a story about a painter she knew who was a student of Moreau. This painter was "truly a very fine artist" and he "was starving, he did not know how to make both ends meet". The painter later "won a world reputation" and

the Mother said to the Ashram children to whom she was speaking : “If I were to tell you his name, you would all recognise it.” The only student of Moreau who attained this kind of eminence was Henri Matisse. The financial straits of the painter spoken of by the Mother also tally with Matisse’s situation in early life.

Matisse was a few months older than Morisset and they were both studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in the early 1890s. After 1900, their careers went in quite different directions. Morisset pursued a successful career within the French art establishment which led to his being honoured in 1912 with membership in the Legion of Honour. Matisse, after an initial hesitation, threw in his lot with the avant-garde. But he had an advantage over many other modernists in that he had thoroughly mastered all that a traditional training could offer. The Mother liked his work better than most modern art, for “he had a sense of harmony and beauty and his colours were beautiful.” She had little positive appreciation of modern art in general. At best, the Cubists and others “created from their head. But in art it is not the head that dominates, it is the feeling for beauty.” Yet for all the apparent incoherence and ugliness of many of its manifestations, the Mother could detect in the modern art movement “the embryo of a new art.”

(From *The Mother—Paintings and Drawings*, p. 165.)

THE UNIVERSAL ASPECT OF THE RASA CONCEPT

RASA is a well known category of Indian aesthetics, which by now has become the main category applicable to all the spheres of Indian art. Once formulated by Bharata in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (IV-VI c.) the *rasa* concept reached its golden age at the end of the tenth century. At that time Abhinavagupta, the greatest representative of Kasmir's Vedanta school, originally elaborated it and fixed epistemological and synthetic terms of the doctrine in his treatise *Abhinava-bhāratī* (X c.). As the main aim for all arts the *rasa* concept was stated by one of the most famous scholars in poetry and philosophy, Anandavardhana (IX c.); as a separate theory in music it was developed by Sarangadeva in *Sangāta-ratnākara* (XIII c.). With the global process of cultural integration many scholars began to discuss the question of the *rasa* concept: whether it is culturally determined (Eliot Deutch, James R. Brandon, Farley Richmond), or has universal features as well (Edwin Gerow, M. Christopher Byrski, V. Raghavan, Shanta Gandhi and others). Some Indologists put into question the very possibility for westerners to conceive Indian drama or music properly. They ask why it lacks the element of entertainment, intellectual argumentation, incitement in social action, didactic instruction which it has in the West, especially in a field of modern art and theatre (Harold S. Powers). Or, maybe, *rasa* is an alternative to Western aesthetic feeling? The question, which shows a benevolent attitude regarding integration of civilisations, I would set this way: "Is there any equivalent in the West?" My answer would be as follows: "Yes, there is such an equivalent from the times of Plato and Aristotle." However, in the West we never had an aesthetic theory developed so fully, consistently and integrally as the *rasa* theory. We can find some similarities between *rasa* and *ethos* doctrines, to point out the mythological period, but there are many differences as well. The Ancient Greeks were laying the greatest emphasis on the ethical aspect of music (drama). The best aesthetic treatises were written during the classical period down to fourth century B. C. Afterwards the teaching gradually lost its importance, though it gave birth to the new emotional theories like *Affektenlehre* in West Europe (eighteenth century). *Mimesis* of Aristotle reminds us of the doctrine of Śrīsañkuka, who said that *rasa* is "a state of knowing" based on imitation, an effect of fiction produced on the scene. That point of view was opposed by Indian scholiasts Tauta, Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta in particular as well as by the founder of "psychological distance" in aesthetics and arts E. Ballough, J. P. Richter and others in the West almost ten centuries later. Many analogies to Sanskrit poetics we can find in the works of Wordsworth, Novalis and other romantics.¹ In the twentieth century the *rasa* theory, still enjoying its traditional continuity, is akin to the emotive theory of poetic language put forward by I. A. Richards and his followers in the Anglo-American "New Criticism". Also, it can be compared with the other emotive theories developed by S. Langer, M. Dufrenn, J. Kohen, T. C. Pollok, C. L. Stevenson, W. K. Brown, E. M. Tillyard, etc.

1. According to scholiast P. A. Grincer; v. his monograph *The Main Categories of Classical Indian Poetics*. Moscow, 1987, p. 189-190. (Original in Russian)

The purpose of this article is to indicate some universal aspects of the *rasa* theory using references to the art of music. Indian aesthetic musical thought is a very important level in evolution of cultural thinking of humanity, and this fact for the westerners becomes more and more evident. Born from the Vedic rituals, drama, later becoming a part of the Indian classical music, the *rasa* concept through Byzantine, Persian and Greek cultures had reached the Middle West and made a great impact on the arts of Renaissance ages. The fact reminds us once more that Eastern culture indirectly acts on the culture of the Occident. The latter does not hang in a vacuum. Even more, by their most noble and beautiful manifestations those cultures are inseparable. It is easy to conceive why the *rasa* theory is too hard to be understood in the Western art world today, why it is considered strange, dry and even impossible aesthetic formulae. The tip of Western criticism is spearheaded at the search of something “original”, “new” or “individual”. Perhaps this is the only criterion today. The most important thing for an art connoisseur is to point out if a piece of art is unique. It holds for the musical criticism as well. On the contrary, the *rasa* conception gives to any “incomparable uniqueness”, a softly speaking, secondary role.

Alexander G. Baumgarten ascribed sensual knowledge to the lower level of gnosiology, and the theory of fine arts, which are subordinated to this sphere, are considered to be only a preparing stage on the way to the higher level of knowledge—the perfect clearness of pure thinking. Since then there prevails the attitude, that intellectual and emotional perception are opposites and their unity is impossible, because the higher knowledge, i. e. the preterensual one, acts with the help of an abstract notion and is the subject of logic. The *rasa* concept, however, is based on the unity of these opposites. It belongs to aesthetics, but also to philosophy and religion, actually joining symbolical, conceptual and intuitive thinking. First of all, this is a category assigned to describe *the state of consciousness*: in this case it describes it as *a quintessence of aesthetic experience*. That is why to experience *rasa* does not necessarily mean to be immersed in the feelings and to remain on the level of the sensual perception. Every *rasa* has its emotional and intellectual side: it is not a simple feeling, but a spiritual state (*citta-vṛtti*). So, when we are speaking about emotional influence of the work of art, the concept of *rasa* touches in fact all the layers of the human psyche. Abhinavagupta was the first to reject the simplified concept of the *rasa* as hyperbolised feeling. According to him, the poetry is correlate with life, but not the copy, and *rasa* accordingly—aesthetic correlate to the spiritual state with its special emotions, but not the sense as such. Langer thinks similarly and bases her opinion on musical examples. According to her, perception of music is a spiritual process, a process of knowledge, since it reveals not the symptoms of feelings, but their universal structure. The aesthetic thinking is straight and intuitive (against the opinion of Bergson and Croce, who isolated them from the intellectual perception). The concept of Langer is akin to that of Sanskrit theorists from the point of view that it studies not the feeling as such, but the structure of it, its universal model. “What the art expresses is not the real feeling, but its idea...”² This idea with respect to *rasa* is nothing but experience,

2. Langer, S. *Feeling and form. A theory of art developed from philosophy in a new key*. London, 1953.

abstracted from the defined content, which could be described as a pure experience of beauty on a transcendental level. (In that sense *rasa* itself is pure, bright coloured sensual consciousness.) For Richards and Ogden experience of art is the harmonised whole complex of differently directed emotions. For them the beautiful is an object, which simply raises emotional gratification. But the theory of *rasa* does not speak about disinterested harmony of different trends of emotion. It speaks rather of their purification and universalization of the one main emotion. Here lies the essential difference of both musical languages. The harmony, basic structural principle of European musical aesthetic experience, has reached its apogee in instrumental music (primarily in chamber music). Indians, on the contrary, didn't develop plenty of new genres, but tried to perfect existing ones and to convey the main musical idea as good, exact and universal as possible—an idea, the basis of which is melody. For example, the axis of *rāga* is *śaḍaja* (an approximate equivalent of tonic), and all the other tones through structural means (at a first place *alamkāra*, embellishments) makes variable relations (transitional states) for the only purpose—to blend with it (to reach the basic state). Richards, Ogden and their followers believed that to be the result of emotional influence, but the Indian theorists thought of it as only a mechanism. In order to conceive the essence of *rasa* better, we need that mechanism to analyse in detail.

Rasa literally means “sap”, “juice”, “essence”, also “taste” and “aroma”. The aesthetic experience is described as an experience of taste (*rasāsvādāna*), or simply tasting (*svāda*, *āsvāda*); the one who tastes is called *rasika*, and the work of art *rasavat*. In *Rasasūtra* Bharata formulated the basic statement of how *bhāva* becomes *rasa*, or an ordinary, common emotion transforms itself into purely aesthetic feeling: *vibhāva-anubhāva-vyabhicārī-samyogād-rasa-nispattiḥ*. In other words, the elements or dimensions of everyday experience (*samskara* or *vasana*), during aesthetic experience constructing elements of emotional content of the work of art (*vibhāva*), causes corresponding consequences (*anubhāva*), i. e., by sight, sound or motion expressed alterations of feeling, which reflects an emotional state. Emotional states are basic, or constant (*sthāyibhāvas*) and transitional (*vyabhicāribhāvas*). Thus *bhāvas* are conscious emotional states and through them the recipient, or *rasika*, experiences *rasa*. In the *Nāṭyaśāstra* Bharata mentions 8 basic *bhāvas* and 49 transitional ones. Each of these must be subordinate to one of the main *bhāvas*, their combination must be in line with it and not break the canon of proportions; otherwise “transitional state suppresses *rasa*”, and the work of art, instead of being exciting, becomes sentimental and tedious.³ The same principle suits the music as well: in order to bring delight, to open the heart of a listener and to rouse sublimated emotions, experienced as *rasa*, the piece of music must conform to all the canons of composing and interpretation of classical music. In that respect the conception

3. Thus *sthāyibhāvas* become *rasas*: *rati* (love), *śṛṅgāra* (erotic), *hāsa* (laughter, cheerfulness), *hāsyā* (comic, humorous), *śoka* (grief), *karuṇa* (compassion), *krodha* (anger), *raudra* (terror), *utsāha* (vigour, zeal), *vīra* (heroic), *bhaya* (fear), *bhayānaka* (dread), *jugupsā* (shrinking), *bībhatsa* (disgust), *vismaya* (bewilderment), *adbhuta* (wonder). For more about *rasa* and *bhāvas* by Bharata v. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, English Translation with Critical Notes by Rangacharya. New Delhi, 1996, chapters VI-VII (pp. 53-77).

of *raga* as the main form of classical Indian music is reminiscent of the Western classical musical principle of “Golden Section” and learning about proportions. (Even in the twentieth century Bartok and Debussy made conscious use of it. The “Golden Section” or “Divine Proportion” is expressed in mathematical ratio ϕ (phi) or 1:1. 618+.)

(To be concluded)

DAIVA TAMOSAITYTE

BEYOND CULTURE

ONE of the interesting developments in modern thought is the increasing attention to “Culture” and “Values”. There are many definitions and view-points on what constitutes Culture. But in our Indian perspective Culture means the government of the physical and vital life of man by the ideals and values of the higher mind, which means, the rational, ethical and aesthetic mind. But is this the highest ideal of human development? If this is the highest ideal, can this ideal be realised entirely in life by the powers of the human mind? Or is there something beyond Culture? These are the questions which the present article tries to explore in the light of Indian thought.

The Meaning of Culture

The physical and vital motives of Artha and Kama (Interest and Desire) are not the true Dharma of human nature. Man is primarily a mental being and his Dharma is not to be a permanent slave of his physical and vital impulses. Man’s higher Dharma is to develop fully all the powers of his Mind and to impose a refining and uplifting control and mastery over the physical and vital impulse under the government of the highest powers and values of his Mind. This is the meaning of true Culture. In our present civilisation, mind and its powers serve as brilliant slaves of their passionate and impulsive vital masters. But in a truly cultured civilisation this position will be reversed; Mind and the mental nature and its energies will dominate the physical and vital nature and energies of man—control the vital energies as a rider controls his horse and use them for an increasing satisfaction, realisation and self-expression of the higher values and powers of the Mind in Life.

What are these higher powers and values of Mind? Mind in the Indian view is not only the thinking and rational mind. There is an emotional mind, a self-ruling Will, an aesthetic and ethical being which are also parts of the formed mental consciousness of Man. Each of these powers of the human Mind seeks for its own absolute values. Reason seeks for knowledge, meaning, order and law; will for power, strength, control and mastery; aesthetics and emotions for beauty, love and joy; the ethical for right, goodness and justice. The mission of Culture is to achieve the highest possible harmony between these values not only conceptually in thought, but also as a realised fact in Life. This is in general the Indian theory and vision of Culture. Now we have to examine the practical feasibility of this vision in relation to the facts of life.

How to achieve this higher aim of Culture? What is the power within Man which can take the lead and guide him to his higher harmony? The western culture and the modern mind in general rely on the power of Reason which is the highest evolved power of human consciousness. But the Indian approach agrees only partially with this view. To govern the body and life by Mind and its higher powers and values is the true Dharma of Man. To refine, uplift, elevate and humanise the infrarational Animal in Man by the Mind and its powers, create a workable order and harmony between the various powers and values of the Mind, and with that of the body and life, with Reason, the god-given super-

instinct of the species as the Pilot is the great work of human Culture. Up to this point there is not much disagreement between the Indian and the Western cultures. But when the question comes to what extent this government of Reason can be made effective in culturing human consciousness and how long it can be sustained, there is a radical divergence of view between Indian culture and the conventional ideas of Western culture.

Limitations of Mental Culture

Western culture believes that by a progressive expansion of the powers of the Mind with scientific Reason as the guiding Angel of the way, human civilisation can be gradually elevated to the status of cultural perfection. The ancient Graeco-Roman culture relied on philosophic and aesthetic Reason while its modern descendant contemporary Western culture relies on the scientific and pragmatic Reason. But the Indian ethos believes that the consciousness of Mind and Reason has some inherent and irreducible limitations which make it incapable of bringing complete harmony over human nature and therefore of perfection of human culture. Even to realise the higher aims and values of the mental culture, the Reason has to call in the aid of powers greater than itself.

What are the inherent limitations of Mind and Reason? The first limitation is that the rational intelligence and will, in their very nature, do not possess sufficient light and power for the complete harmonisation of mastery of our being. All those who have lived the inner life and made a sincere attempt to control and master their inner being would have realised how helpless most of the time Reason is against the infrarational and subconscious instincts and impulses of Nature. All those who have studied the progress of human civilisation with a discerning eye would have realised by now how ineffective the attempt of Mind and Reason is in bringing the light of higher culture to humanity. The non-rational elements in human nature and life have always baffled all the well-intentioned philosophies, plans, systems, religions and morals of the human Mind. Even the most accomplished Mind with an enlightened Reason, developed aesthetic and ethical sense and the strongest mental will cannot create a settled and total harmony in human nature. At its best, Mind can, to a certain extent, purify, intellectualise, refine and humanise the infrarational animal in man; it can create a precarious and temporary harmony, which has to be constantly sustained, guarded and protected by the ever-vigilant will from the sudden and violent upsurges of the subconscious regions from below which often invade and shatter the painfully constructed empire of Reason.

The second limitation of the rational Mind is that it is in its very nature a consciousness of division and power of analysis and not a consciousness of the whole or a power of synthesis. The rational Mind and its government and organisation can never bring any lasting harmony, unity or synthesis to the individual or collectivity because it doesn't possess these qualities and powers as an inherent and integral part of its consciousness.

The rational Mind cannot perceive the organic whole of Nature or Life but tries to understand their laws and processes by an analysis of parts as if each part were the whole. Though this method can be very effective and successful in the material and economic

dimensions of life—and to a much lesser extent in the social dimension—in the psychological and cultural development of humanity this analytical and divisive method of reason will yield very little result. For, man's psychology is too complex to understand by the purely rational and analytical process of the Mind. And human development in the cultural dimension is primarily a process of education, motivation and communication leading to a change of consciousness and motives of people. This requires a deeper "holistic" insight into the individual and collective psychology of human development.

The third limitation of the rational mind is that the knowledge of reason is of the nature of conceptual abstractions and not a realised experience of truth and values shared by the whole being. The normal tendency of the rational mind is either towards a disinterested pursuit of truth and knowledge for its own sake, playing with pure ideas without any relation to life, or towards scientific pragmatism, positivism, utility and efficiency. In both these trends Reason ignores the aspirations and values of the other parts and powers—emotional, aesthetic and ethical faculties—of the mental consciousness.

Even when the rational mind tries to arrive at an insight into the whole or tries to convert itself into a power of synthesis, it arrives only at a cold, abstract and conceptual insight which has very little effect on the other parts of the human consciousness or in the practical dealing with life. One classic example is the philosophy of the modern systems theory. In this new philosophy with its stress on holism, integration, and on "relations" rather than on "things", the scientific thought of the West is for the first time becoming aware of its own limitations and moving closer to the spiritual thought of the East. Here we find the scientific and rational mind renouncing its natural tendency for a separative and analytical dealing with parts and making an attempt, through an integrative and synthesising approach, to arrive at an insight into the whole. But still the insight at which it arrives is conceptual and abstract, which remains only at the philosophical level with very little effect on the practical dealing or organisation of life. A holistic insight in thought, though very helpful and desirable, nevertheless is not entirely effective if it is not shared by the other faculties of consciousness like feeling and will. We do appreciate the positive contribution made by the systems philosophy to modern culture in turning its thought in every field of life towards a "holistic" view of life. But to be integrally effective, the modern systems philosophy, following the lines of the Indian spiritual tradition, must evolve a system of Yoga to "realise" these values in the consciousness and life of the individual and collective existence.

Towards a Spiritualised Culture

If the human Mind has some intrinsic limitations, what is the alternative to mental culture? The answer given by Indian culture is to discover a higher consciousness beyond mind, which is free from the limitations of mind, and make it the governing principle of human life. Intuitions and experiences of great mystics all over the world bear witness to the fact that such a higher consciousness which is free from the limitations of mind and which has the light and power to bring the highest perfection and fulfilment to human life

exists within man.

But until now this higher consciousness has been realised only by a few exceptional individuals. Indian culture made the attempt to create a social order centered around this spiritual realisation as the highest aim of life. The attempt achieved great success in giving a strong spiritual orientation to the cultural life of the Nation, that is, in religion, philosophy, art, literature. But still the attempt ended in creating only a great religio-philosophic culture with a burning spiritual aspiration at its core but failed to create a spiritualised culture and society.

To create such a spiritualised society and culture the present government of human life by mental consciousness has to be replaced entirely and wholly by the spiritual consciousness. Spiritual consciousness has to directly govern the whole of the individual and collective life and every activity of the life of man—his physical, vital and mental life and his cultural, economic, social and political life. For this to happen, leadership of the society has to pass from Reason to spiritual intuition; leaders with spiritual consciousness and intuition have to appear not only in religion and culture but also in every other activity of the society, in industry, commerce, science, technology, politics, administration, on the shop-floor and in marketplaces and give a spiritual turn to these activities.

But what will be the main difference between a mental culture and a spiritualised culture? In a mental culture the physical and vital life of man is governed by a mental or moral idea imposed on it externally by a collective authority or self-imposed internally by the will of the individual. But in a spiritual culture there will be no such imposition, neither internal nor external. There will be a rich, harmonious and diverse flowering of human life governed, not by a mental idea, but by a spiritual realisation of the unity of all existence, felt and experienced concretely in the consciousness of the individual and the collectivity. Each individual and the collectivity will grow spontaneously according to the truth and law of their deepest spiritual self, in unison and harmony with the truth and law of others and the whole, which means a state of consciousness beyond culture. For culture involves rigorous cultivation of a mental or moral idea by a constant, vigilant and regulated discipline of the Will, conduct, behaviour and action. But in a spiritualised culture there will be no such cultivated discipline or regulated conduct. Life has risen beyond the undisciplined and passionate activity of the vital desire and also beyond the regulated discipline of mental culture to the free, spontaneous, effortless harmonious and flowering movement of the Spirit.

This is the spiritual ideal which is far away from the present condition of our mental civilisation and culture. There have to be many intermediary stages in our evolution from the present condition to the spiritual ideal. In these transitional stages, Mind or Reason has to play an important but subordinate role as a mediator between Spirit and Life, serving as an instrument for the practical organisation of the spiritual intuition in human society. But even to do this subordinate role perfectly and effectively, Reason has to open itself to the light of spiritual intuition and get transformed into intuitive Reason.

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of February 2002)

The Second Defeat

If we have seen the possibilities and pitfalls in Big Science given to us by the American model, we also notice its results in other places,—for example in Japan. Japan's first experience with high-level business and industrial development forms a good illustration to see how one can get trapped on the economic path when something alien enters into the system. Yoshiro Hoshino writes: "There is nothing worse than war for bringing about the destruction of nature, human beings, factories, housing, and transportation systems, and for causing starvation and sickness, the discharge of untreated factory wastes, and the destruction of farm lands. When environmental destruction is understood in its broadest and most fundamental sense, the original culprit is war." America, after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, invaded Japan in another way. It looks as though the evil found another soil to grow and flourish in a vigorous manner.

In the wake of the devastation due to War Japan changed into another country. Yoshiro Hoshino continues: "Okinawa became a battleground and the area was laid waste. Because of the lack of food, most urban dwellers were undernourished, there was a great rise in the incidence of tuberculosis, and many others suffered from a wide spectrum of diseases... By the late 1960s, labour shortage had become one of the major problems. Automation was extensively introduced in both production and administrative branches. By then, motorization of Japan had also substantially progressed. Thus, in a relatively short period of ten years, Japan's industrial modalities, as well as consumer lifestyles, underwent major changes... Japan's GNP was over 10 per cent, while the growth-rate for European countries was 5 per cent. It is obvious that with this high economic growth rate within such a short period, some very difficult social problems were bound to result... In the 1970s the production of iron and steel along the shores of the Inland Sea reached 70 million tons, an amount equal to that produced by France and the United Kingdom combined. Daily processing of petroleum reached over 1,600,000 barrels, equal to the production levels of the United Kingdom. Petroleum chemistry brought the production of 1,800,000 tons of ethylene annually, equalling the British output." (An Internet write-up)

While such rapid growth was taking place, scant attention was paid to the problems of air and water pollution. This soon became a matter of great concern. In the case of Tokyo Bay the production of ethylene from the concentrated petrochemical industries was 1.5 megatons annually and the results which were until now invisible became visible.

"By 1961 a major iron and steel complex in Yahata, northern Kyushu, was pouring 27 tons of particulate matter per day into the city's air, and in Kawasaki City, situated in the Tokyo Bay industrial area, the amount was 23 tons. Along with the black smoke there

was also a great amount of red smoke that spread over the sky... Many industrial workers were exposed to the industrial dusts in the atmosphere, and as a result developed various lung disorders." In the 1960s coal was replaced by heavy oil as the main source of energy, but in an expanding industrial economy the problem of sulphurous acid gases became very serious. "A one-million-kilowatt, oil-fired, electric-power generation plant uses 1.3 megatons of heavy oil per year. Since this fuel contains on average 2 per cent natural sulphur, 52 kilotons of sulphurous acid gases are released into the air annually from the power plant. Oil refineries and petrochemical complexes also release great amounts of such gases." The result was the appearance of respiratory diseases. Also, the human environmental support system started becoming weak.

"Japan's environmental destruction during the post-war period gave rise to concentration in limited land areas of manufacturing plants much larger in scale than similar factories found in Western countries. With this came a very rapid increase in the pressures for urbanisation, which resulted both in conglomerate urban concentrations and massive amounts of both industrial and life-sustenance-derived wastes. This brought about further destruction of the natural environment."

In the process, ecological balance was compromised and life got affected everywhere and in every way. "In 1960 the daily per capita garbage amounted to 400 gm. By 1970 this had risen to 1 kg, and by 1977 it stood at 1.7 kg. Most of this discarded waste is made up of supermarket-derived food-packaging materials, cans, and bottles. The great increase in the number of automatic vending machines has also added to the severity of the problem. During the 1970s Tokyo had to dispose of 16 kilotons of garbage each day. In order that these materials can be disposed of properly, plans are being made to use them for the creation of more reclaimed land." We have here a thoroughly Americanised Japan.

There are twelve atomic-power plants in operation in Japan producing 1,550 megawatts of electricity. Radiation-related diseases are another byproduct of this industrial growth.

Corporate entities and administrative bodies together keep on seeking greatly increased profits. The unhappy consequence is the overexpansion of production. In its trail then arrive all the environmental pollution problems. To this act of irresponsibility must also be added an almost total lack of concern for human rights of the citizenry as a whole. Its obsession with modern lifestyle means the death of a refined civilisation. If people have lost sensibility and adopted something that is apparently successful but detrimental in a deeper manner, then different kinds of calamities befall them.

"When the fact of extreme environmental degradation could no longer be ignored, all levels of government were more interested in saving the corporations than in saving the people. As a result, compromises were worked out on the basis of economic and political security, rather than on the basis of human rights."

In 1945, at the end of the War, the occupation forces imposed on Japan a democratic set-up under the pressure of world opinion. Slowly with that dubious social awareness and human rights movements also got imported. While in the industrial context it was

good to introduce these measures, it also marked the supplanting of indigenous institutions. Another set of values found their subtle way into the national attitude. “Strengthened by the support of the citizens’ movement, the victims of the four major pollution episodes,—the Kumamoto Minamata disease, the Niigata Minamata disease, Itai-itai disease, and Yokkaichi asthma,—took their cases to court and through concerted legal action were able to receive compensation for the damage that had been done to them.” But the pain suffered by the victims did not go away in the assertion of constitutional or statutory rights. Great harm was already inflicted and now it seems almost impossible to change the course of economic and political currents. Instead of seeking judicial remedies the question that must be asked is: Who needs high-speed bullet trains that produce horrifying noise and excessive vibration? Who really considers faster trains to be better than slower trains? The relevant issue rather is a reappraisal of the curious industrial and consumer lifestyle in the context of human values. Economic criterion is not all the time sufficient and the wholesomeness of social personality must always be the deciding rule.

After the Second World War there was a sudden spate in the requirement of electrical and electronic consumer goods. Production machinery got geared up to this booming market. The demand included items such as washing machines, refrigerators, transistor radios, television sets, tape-recorders, motor bicycles, cars, and the like. Because of the intense competition between companies, there was a great deal of investment in installation to increase the efficiency of mass production systems. “Through the application of mass production methods, the costs of individual consumer products declined, the market expanded with increased demand, and mass production became the norm. The mutual interaction of supply and demand expanded the scale of Japan’s economy. This growth in industry brought many young people from the rural areas into the industrial cities of Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya. Urbanisation continued rapidly in a random manner and by 1970 a large population of Japan, as much as 44 per cent, was concentrated in these urban centres. By way of contrast, the farming areas, which had experienced an oversupply of labour for a very long time, now faced labour shortages, and this resulted in the rapid mechanisation of agriculture.”

Seen in a historical perspective, there is certainly the necessity towards modernising a jaded social framework. This is true everywhere, particularly so in places where one sees decadent regimes not addressing themselves to the problems of the masses. Fascist militarism is always a curse and to get out of it a heavy price has to be paid. Take the example of the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The pressures exerted by farmers on their lower-class feudal lords introduced political changes to some extent. But the real political changes were imposed “from the top down as a result of pressure from these same lower-class *bushi* samurai warriors.” In that sense democratic institutions opened a new way of life for the people of Japan. However, this way of life has also brought with it bizarre cataclysmic effects in many cheap and undesirable respects. It is unfortunate that today the great tradition of Zen Buddhism, Tea Ceremony and Flower Arranging is getting clumsily commercialised. Quick bonsai are available in supermarkets to match with the pace of supersonic gains. The fine sense of art that was a mode of courtly and elegant

living has become a topic of discussion in westernised lounges and clubs.

Almost a hundred years ago Sri Aurobindo wrote about Japan as follows: “There is no instance in history of a more marvellous and sudden up-surfing of strength in a nation than modern Japan.... They [the fountains of that sudden up-surfing] were drawn from religion. It was the Vedantic teachings of Oyomei and the recovery of Shintoism with its worship of the national Shakti of Japan in the image and person of the Mikado that enabled the little island empire to wield the stupendous weapons of Western knowledge and science as lightly and invincibly as Arjun wielded the Gandiv.” (*Bande Mataram*, SABCL, Vol. 1, p. 67) Today no doubt Japan operates in a masterly way the American gears of financial prosperity; but her national Shakti has suffered a setback. She is inflicted with the culture of information technology supported by the mighty steelwork of industry and driven by the power of petrochemical machinery. She knows not for what purpose.

If the Japanese “believe intensely in their religion of patriotic duty and put all their might into its observance,” (*Karmayogin*, SABCL, Vol. 2, p. 257) then today regretfully they have failed in that observance and in that duty. The national trait of assimilating through the periods of energising beautiful calm is not to be found in the country since the double devastation it suffered after the War. Even in the new gains that have been recently acquired, there is a problem of industrial competition from the neighbouring countries. The assured markets Japan had in America are now getting challenged as cameras and television sets and the like get produced at a much lesser cost by others. The yen has become so weighty that counterweights are bound to appear sooner than later. The exotic path of the so-called progress has to lead to another search. The ancient sight must be recovered.

“Japan is essentially the country of sensations; she lives through her eyes. Beauty rules over her as an uncontested master; and all her atmosphere incites to mental and vital activity, study, observation, progress, effort, not to silent and blissful contemplation. But behind this activity stands a high aspiration which the future of her people will reveal.” (*Words of Long Ago*, CWM, Vol. 2, p. 150) This is what the Mother wrote long ago, on 9 July 1917. It is that national genius which must be the guiding spirit in all her transactions. If that fine sensibility, that “high aspiration”, is lost, Japan’s soul will fail in her mission. Similar is the warning to others also. Such is the lesson we too should see in the economic power that Japan has become at the cost of her *swabhava*, her fine innate qualities shaping life. Greater virtues have to be always acquired and assimilated but never in the manner of imitation. In following what is not germane to one there is always perdition; in *paradharma* is the all-devouring fear, declares the Sanskrit saying. There never was much science in Japan and her genius basically has been in innovation and improvement. “...Japan lives centrally in her temperament and in her aesthetic sense, and therefore she has always been rapidly assimilative; her strong temperamental persistence has been enough to preserve her national stamp and her artistic vision a sufficient power to keep her soul alive.” (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol. 14, p. 412) The loss of this temperament and aesthetic sense in the wake of Americanism that has invaded

Japan is a loss not only to her but is a bigger loss to the world as a whole. We notice its dire consequences in the pollution-afflicted land that it has become. The fairies of the garden have taken wings and departed to far lonely places unencumbered with ungainful trivia of modernity.

“In Japan, the beauty of leaves in autumn is revered with almost religious fervour,” writes Rowan Hooper in *Japan Times*. But this autumn must be lived as an aesthetic experience. If we should bring instruments of dissection to gauge its splendour, we would have sadly alienated ourselves from something that is joyous for its own sake, in fact joyous in the adoration of the Goddess of Beauty. Unfortunately the so-called modern scientific mind seems to be altogether incapable of appreciating that spirit of beauty. See what Rowan Hooper reports: “Part of the autumn weather forecast is devoted to showing the ‘leaf front’ as the color change in trees moves across the country. Millions of tourists travel to marvel at the display. But how many people ask themselves why trees put on such a spectacular display? Probably not many. It took a man of uncommon intellect to ask the question no one else had thought of—William Hamilton, the Oxford evolutionary biologist... He asked himself, what is all that autumn colour for? It’s certainly not just for us to marvel at—it must have some function... Peacocks, for example, grow large, elaborate tails that are energetically expensive, both to develop and to carry around. Why? Because peahens can look at the tail and use the information to help them choose which male to mate with. Only healthy males are able to ‘afford’ to grow expensive tails. The theory that explains the evolution of such costly signals in these terms is known as the handicap theory. Handicap, because the animal apparently burdens itself with a heavy cost. If a signal is cheap to make, any crummy male could make it. Only expensive traits are reliable indicators of quality, because only ‘well-off’ animals can make them. The theory, however, had not been applied to plants until Hamilton started thinking about autumn colours. As the days shorten, trees start recycling the green chlorophyll in their leaves, slowing down growth systems in preparation for winter. But at the same time, the leaves actively synthesise new pigments. The red-purple anthocyanin pigments, for example, are made in huge amounts, even though they are not involved in photosynthesis. And there are some fluorescent compounds that are only found in autumn leaves. Trees don’t choose mates like peacocks, so why do they ‘invest’ so much on signals? Who are they signaling to? Trees have predators, too, and they signal in a similar way.” The bright autumn colours are the trees’ way of saying to its insect pests: “I’m strong enough to resist you. You might as well go feed on another tree.” This is the Hamiltonian legacy with which “changed our understanding of the world at a deep level, from social insects to selfish genes, and now autumn leaves.” That the ruse-mechanism for repulsion has another attractive sense at a different level needs also to be well understood. Western biology has no access to it. If Art is Beauty and Science is Truth, then there appears to be a basic conflict and the Keatsian equation that Truth is Beauty and Beauty Truth is not possible. The Japanese poet Shiko (1664-1731, see *An Introduction to Haiku*, Harold G. Henderson) wrote a haiku about the charm and appeal of maple leaves in autumn, as if from its eminence began a flight to Nirvana:

Enviéd by us all,
 Burning to such loveliness,—
 O red leaves that fall.

The weather, the foliage, the bird and insect-life, and the emotions traditional to the season, rapturous awareness in mystical experience and identity of life in all forms get quintessenced in just a seventeen-syllable composition. The beauty is, much remains unsaid in this “telegraphic notation” and the creative association and imagination of the responsive participant becomes necessary for its completion as much as enjoyment. But the Hamiltonian legacy has no touch that can lift us up. That is the tragedy of modern Japan. Contrast this with what the Mother had experienced eight decades ago during her four-year fruitful stay in that country:

“The art of Japan is a kind of directly mental expression in physical life.... Only, in the physical, they have spontaneously the sense of beauty... very simple people... go for rest or enjoyment to a place where they can see a beautiful landscape.... They are seen... walking to a place from where one gets a beautiful view. Then at this place there is a small house which fits very well into the landscape, there is a kind of small platform on which one can sit: one takes a cup of tea and at the same time sees the landscape. For them, this is the supreme enjoyment; they know nothing more pleasant. One can understand this among artists, educated people, quite learned people, but I am speaking of people of the most ordinary class, poor people who like this better than resting or relaxing at home. This is for them the greatest joy.

“And in that country, for each season there are known sites. For instance, in autumn leaves become red; they have large numbers of maple-trees (the leaves of the maple turn into all the shades of the most vivid red in autumn, it is absolutely marvellous), so they arrange a place near a temple, for instance, on the top of a hill, and the entire hill is covered with maples. There is a stairway which climbs straight up, almost like a ladder, from the base to the top, and it is so steep that one cannot see what is at the top, one gets a feeling of a ladder rising to the skies—a stone stairway, very well made, rising steeply and seeming to lose itself in the sky—clouds pass, and both the sides of the hill are covered with maples, and these maples have the most magnificent colours you could ever imagine. Well, an artist who goes there will experience an emotion of absolutely exceptional, marvellous beauty. But one sees very small children, families even, with a baby on the shoulder, going there in groups. In autumn they will go there. In springtime they will go elsewhere.” (*Questions and Answers*, CWM, Vol. 4, pp. 306-07)

Science in its industrialised crudity has caused havoc not only to nature but also to the sense of inner living. There are neither landscapes nor inscapes and no autumn leaves or spring flowers gladden the spirit. The beauty of the past seems to have withered. What Sri Aurobindo wrote about the oriental culture is absent now. It is getting coarse and odious. “A great oriental work of art does not easily reveal its secret to one who comes to it solely in a mood of aesthetic curiosity or with a considering critical objective mind, still less as the cultivated and interested tourist passing among strange and foreign things; but

it has to be seen in loneliness, in the solitude of one's self, in moments when one is capable of long and deep meditation and as little weighted as possible with the conventions of material life. That is why the Japanese with their fine sense in these things...have put their temples and their Buddhas as often as possible away on mountains and in distant or secluded scenes of Nature and avoid living with great paintings in the crude hours of daily life, but keep them by preference in such a way that their undisputed suggestions can sink into the mind in its finer moments or apart where they can go and look at them in a treasured secrecy when the soul is at leisure from life." (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol. 14, pp. 212-13) But today the bullet trains speed cravingly for nothing and the soul of Japan has no leisure. Japan has lost the protection that comes as a gift of nature to her from her Sakura, the cherry blossoms. If Issa's life (1762-1826) was one full of sadness even on a sunny day, so is that of this adorer of beauty. Presently there is hardly anyone to live in it.

Thanks to cherry bloom
 In its shadow utter strangers—
 There are none!

Cherry trees all over Japan burst into profusion of pink blossoms in early April. The coronation of the spring draws flower-viewing parties, *ohanamis*, but the identification with Sakura is a thing of the past. Gay parties of carefree holiday makers, "many wearing ridiculous masks and fantastic costumes aimed at provoking laughter and good fellowship" invade the cherry resorts.

Sakura has been loved for more than 10 centuries. The beauty of falling snowy petals in the spring breeze is a delight to watch. "Of all flowers, the cherry blossoms appeal most to the aesthetic taste of the Japanese people. The Japanese people would never have been essentially so jubilant, cheerful, optimistic and youthful were it not for the beauty of the cherry blossoms. Cherry blossoms have been the theme of songs and poems since time immemorial, and have played an important role in moulding the Japanese character. So universal is their appeal to the moral and aesthetic taste of the race that they are constantly used as motifs on kimonos, lacquerware, pottery and other decorative items."

What we now see in the cities are cherry blossoms smeared with a thick coat of soot. Vanished have "the trees at festival and the lonely paths that seem to scale the sky." The magical power of the landscape has dimmed and no one brings little pink roses that are "a promise of the near future." The soul of Japan suffers in a twofold defeat: World War II brought to it civic-political disaster; Yen-rich economy following the American industrial design cultural debasement. Kai fish is the traditional fish of happiness in Japan served at marriage parties. But the hungry industry has made it poisonous. What was refined and aesthetic has now become uncouth, if not unwholesome. The Mother had heard the cherry-tree whisper in her ear: "It is in the cherry-blossom that lies the remedy for the disorders of the spring." (*Prayers and Meditations*, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 359) But now

everything has changed. The Sakura seasons come and there are no perceptive *ohanamis*.

(*To be continued*)

R.Y. DESHPANDE

APROPOS OF WORLD WAR II

THE ATOM BOMB

A bomb more powerful than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. was dropped on the Japanese army base on Hiroshima, a great part 190 miles west of Kobe.

August 6, 1945

One more atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki.

The effect was that all living things were seared to death.

Note:—Colonel Paul Tibot, pilot.

Capt. Robert A. Lewis, co-pilot.

Major Thomas W. Terebec—bombarded.

Were the Crew of the super-fortress “Enola Gay” which dropped the first atom bomb.

August 9, 1945

A PROPHECY

The Japanese Emperor will not be dethroned.

This prediction is made by Mr. B. V. Raman, the Editor of well-known astrological magazine published here:

Mr. Raman has correctly predicted the end of the European war in May and Russia’s entry into the war against Japan.

According to Mr. Raman, from now until Saturn enters Cancer after its retrogression, that is till March 1946, it will be an extremely bad time for the Japanese Emperor.

Mr. Raman foresees another world conflagration when Saturn again enters Aries in 1967.

Bangalore, Aug. 14, ’45

MOTI RAM DHINGRA

(Extracts from the diary of Capt. Moti Ram Dhingra maintained during the 2nd World War)

INTO LANGUAGE: AN INTROSPECTION

We have seen that an analysis of the grammatical structures of language requires a subtle mixture of algebra, dynamics and biology. Without pretending to have a definitive answer to a problem whose difficulty can scarcely be measured, I venture to suggest that these ideas may contain something of interest for many specialists.¹

René Thom

THE human mind viewed as a dynamic entity has at least three kinds of activities—cognitive, affective and conative. These however are never found in isolation. Moreover, each activity can move from a stage to a subtler stage, perhaps infinitely subtler, and can move from a plane to a higher plane, perhaps infinitely higher, with the progress of the mind. Now, language is the expression of thought, and naturally therefore, analysis of language is intimately connected with analysis of thought. But the two are not surely the same. This is because though language expresses thought and therefore purports to be ‘isomorphic’ to thought, the goal is ever unrealised. Language has its own peculiarities, distinct from the peculiarities of thought, just as photography can have its own peculiarities apart from the peculiarities of the objects of photography.

It is suggestive to think about the thought-total as a topological space with a rudimentary metric (distance function) in it. Language is then like an epsilon-net over it, of course, dynamically growing finer and finer. There is nothing strange about it, since a word is a structurally stable form and is a singularity in its neighbourhood in the thought-space (*cf.* Theories of Pudgala and Viśeṣa of Ancient Indian Philosophy).

A word once created behaves very much like a living organ, trying to perpetuate its own life and adapting for that purpose to changing circumstances and suffering at times from split-personalities and contradictions—a bifurcation of the ego in the language of René Thom’s Catastrophe Theory.

It would be interesting, in this connection, to consider one or two examples. Consider the word ‘umbrella’ in the English language. The word for it in french is ‘parapluie’. Etymologically, ‘umbrella’ means that which gives shade (and saves one from the sun), and ‘parapluie’ means that which saves one from the rain.* But the two words have braved through, in their respective habitats, the constant ‘opposite’ treatment! But the sail is generally not so easy for words of logically higher types (à la positivists). Consider for this, the word ‘logic’ itself. The dictionary gives its meanings as ‘the science and art of reasoning correctly’ or, ‘the science of the necessary laws of thought’, etc. How can we then countenance the uninterpreted many-valued logics? (Even for an interpreted system to deserve the appellation ‘logic’, the ‘arguments’ should still be propositions.) Logic, which in modern times dealt with and emphasised the formal aspects of thought, was devoured by its own formalism. Here formalism predates over thought—a perfect piece

* French has two words for umbrella—parapluie and parasol—one against rain and one against the sun—Ed.

of confusion of the prey-predator relation in a capture morphology.

We shall take up the grammatical categories and pay attention only to a few particular ones. We shall consider the question of negation separately, at the end.

When we take up grammar here we shall be in essence doing universal Grammar. That we consider 'English language' for our study is only incidental. The findings herein are sure to have similar significance in any other language. Thus the grammatical categories of the sentence 'The snow is white' in English and its French 'La neige est blanche' will be the same and the question of the gender will be of no relevance.

We shall not take up any language of Indian origin, but would like to say a few words, by way of a digression. Sanskrit grammar is a wonderful product of intellect and perseverance. The lead here may be said to have been given by Panini and his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, probably of the fifth century B.C., and this was followed, in two centuries, by Patanjali of the fame of *Mahābhāṣya* and Bhartrihari with his commentary on the *Mahābhāṣya* and further development of Patanjali's Sphoṭavāda. We desist from giving more names of the following centuries which will form a galaxy. The Indian grammarians succeeded in discovering a path of spiritual discipline even through the labyrinthine mess of grammatical speculations. It deserves special mention that the Sanskrit name for a letter of the alphabet is *akṣara*, the same as that used as an epithet of the Supreme (Brahman). We must make mention of the development of the Vedangas—a class of literature auxiliary to the proper understanding of the Vedas, and note that this literature consists of six features that includes phonetics (*śikṣā*), etymology (*nirukta*), metrical (*chanda*) and grammar (*vyākaraṇa*). We may also take note of Sri Aurobindo's profound, and painstaking work on the Vedas and the Upanishads and his masterly handling of the comparative philological questions for this purpose.

Let us now take up some of the grammatical categories. It was Joseph Priestley who introduced the famous eight grammatical categories, also called the parts of speech. Rene Thom has wondered that the whole of human thought could be fitted into just eight grammatical categories. We would like to add that this could be done only through sacrifice of details. In fact, the structure can be retained only if we agree to many modifications and further ramifications to be made on the basis of semantical analysis. We now come to specific categories that we want to discuss.

Adjectives

Nesfield has defined 'Adjective' as a word used to qualify a noun or a pronoun. We fail to accept this definition. We propose to define 'Adjective' as a word syntactically adjoined to a noun, acting on it semantically in various capacities. The different capacities in which an adjective can act on a noun are:

(i) Qualifier: Examples—efficient headmaster, dutiful registrar, Murshidabad silk, red ant, spherical neighbourhood, commutative ring, rectangular hyperbola.

(An efficient headmaster is a headmaster, and thus the set of all efficient headmasters is a subset of the set of all headmasters; similarly for all the other cases.)

(ii) Simulator or Modifier: Examples—assistant headmaster, deputy registrar, synthetic silk, white ant, punctured neighbourhood, ternary ring, semi-cubical parabola.

(An assistant headmaster is not a headmaster and thus the set of all assistant headmasters is not a subset of the set of all headmasters; in fact, the two sets are disjoint.)

(iii) Probability Indicator: Examples—suspected terrorist, alleged murderer, conjectured hypothesis.

(A suspected terrorist may or may not be a terrorist; in fact, the matter may remain undecided for ever.)

(iv) Numeration Operator: Examples—three men, four sides, seven years.

(In ‘intelligent men’ each man is intelligent. But in ‘three men’ each man is not three; in fact no man is three.)²

Pronouns

A word used instead of a noun is called a ‘Pronoun’. The definition is from Nesfield.³ After the definition Nesfield gives an example and then adds: “Hence a pronoun is a substitute word; and its chief use is to save the repetition of the noun.” It is clear that the explanation is given keeping in mind only the third person pronouns. But what is worthy of notice is that while ‘he’ (‘she’, ‘it’) is used after at least one occurrence of the noun it replaces, the case is not so with ‘I’ or ‘You’. The fact to be understood is that egocentric sentences have a speciality of their own.

(Egocentric sentences are those that involve the words ‘I’ or ‘You’ and the meaning of any such sentence depends on who is the speaker or who is the person spoken to. Thus consider the sentence:

I am the State.

The meaning of the sentence will change if instead of Louis XIV, the speaker is the author or a reader of this paper. Such is surely not the case with sentences like “The earth revolves round the sun.”)

The fact is that ‘I’ or ‘You’ is never used to save repetitions of any noun. ‘I’ or ‘You’, we may say, dominate over the names of characters they stand for, while a third person pronoun like ‘he’, is dominated by the name for which it is a substitute.

There is no harm in calling them all ‘pronouns’, since they all do the job of a noun. But it will be appropriate to divide them further into two kinds:

(i) ultra-pronouns: the first person and the second person pronouns, and

(ii) infra-pronouns: the third person pronouns.

We shall not enter into the question of the singular and the plural, nevertheless shall mention that plurals of ‘I’ and ‘You’ have a speciality of their own: In ‘horses’ each member is an instance of a horse. Similar is the case with pronouns of the third person, but not for pronouns of the first or the second person. Thus in ‘they’, as a plural of (he or she), each member is an instance of (he or she). But in ‘you’ (plural) no member except the person spoken to is an instance of ‘you’ (singular), and in ‘we’ no member except the speaker is an instance of ‘I’.

Connectives

A word that is grammatically called a connective is syntactically always so since it connects two sentences. Semantically, it is a logical conjunction, logical disjunction or an implication (carried out by 'If' or 'If... then').

We like to state that a connective in either of the first two senses may act also on two substantives. This gives rise to compound substantives like 'Ram and Shyam' and 'Ram or Shyam'. Their use in a sentence will have the meanings:

$p(\text{Ram and Shyam}) = p(\text{Ram}) \text{ and } p(\text{Shyam})$

$p(\text{Ram or Shyam}) = p(\text{Ram}) \text{ or } p(\text{Shyam})$

where p is a proposition involving a substantive, simple or compound, given in parenthesis adjoint to p from the right.

We intend to call a connective between substantives a substantival connective.

If substantival connectives are accepted, then there shall be quite a new type of substantival connective carried out by 'and... together' (similar to the sentential connective 'If... then') as

Ram and Shyam together

This can be of two different types in meaning:

(i) Weaker type: When p (Ram and Shyam together), no doubt, implies p (Ram) and p (Shyam), but also implies something more.

Example: Ram and Shyam together went to Mumbai.

(ii) Stronger type: When p (Ram and Shyam together) is such that neither p (Ram) nor p (Shyam) is true, but the proposition holds when Ram and Shyam are taken together or are acting together as partners.

Example: Ram and Shyam together wrote the book.

We now introduce another type of connectives, to be called extra-sentential connectives:

A sequence of sentences in a connected discussion is called a string of sentences or a sentence-string. In a sentence-string involving assertive sentences a stop-mark at the end of a sentence, excepting the last one, acts as a conjunction between the sentence in question and the next one. Such a conjunction may be called a 'Mute Conjunction'. It is obviously an extra-sentential connective, and thus an extra-sentential grammatical category. There cannot be any mute disjunction, as a moment's reflection will show.

The fact that there can be a mute conjunction, but no mute disjunction brings out clearly the deep psychological distinction between conjunction and disjunction which otherwise enjoy such an equal role in sentential calculus.

Before concluding, we take up the question of Negation. It is not a separate grammatical category, being just an adverb. But we have to talk of many things, like or unlike the Walrus, about it.⁴

Negation

In Logic, negation of a sentence is defined for assertive sentences only. But in actual

language, grammatical negation may take place in a sentence of any mode. The major grammatical modes, other than the assertive, are the interrogative, the imperative, the optative and the deontic. The deontic mode again may be of two kinds—the permissible and the obligatory. By a modal sentence we generally mean a sentence of any non-assertive mode.

Consider the following group of sentences exemplifying the above (non-assertive) modes in order:

Group A

- (a) Is he in Delhi?
- (b) Turn left.
- (c) May it rain.
- (d1) You may come. (permissible)
- (d2) You must come. (obligatory)

The grammatical negations of the above sentences give the following group:

Group (NA)

- (Na) Is he not in Delhi?
- (Nb) Do not turn left.
- (Nc) May it not rain.
- (Nd1) You may not come. (perm.)
- (Nd2) You must not come (obl.)

It may be noted that one who asks the question (a) may, equally well, ask the question (Na), for the two questions serve the same purpose. Such is not the case with any other sentences. This prompts us to introduce the notion of what we shall call the assertivity-content of any mode:

If a mode be such that any sentence under that mode is equivalent to its negative, in the sense of serving the same purpose, then the mode will be said to be of assertivity-content equal to 0. If a mode be non-assertive, but be such that a sentence under that mode is not equivalent to its negative then that mode will be said to be of assertivity-content equal to 1/2. Lastly, the assertivity-content of the assertive mode will be taken to be equal to 1.

The sentences may accordingly be said to be completely non-assertive, semi-assertive and completely assertive.

Notes and References

1. *Structural Stability and Morphogenesis*, p. 329.

2. Whenever we propound, we propound something about something. The something about which we propound is called a substantive. Thom observes that in a field of rapid change our language is ill-suited for describing the situation; this is because, he says, we fail to grasp at the true 'substantives'. In our opinion, however, the failure, when any, is that of thought itself, and therefore, not of language whose sole purpose is to express the thought. In the realm of thought the matter was not unknown in India. The Buddhist schools went to the length of rejecting the reality of any substance (Pudgala Nairātmyavāda) and maintained that everything is evanescent. We need not, of course, agree with the doctrine. It may be mentioned that the etymological meaning of the word 'substance' (of which 'substantive' is a cognate word;) is 'that which stands under' i.e., that which stands invariant under a process of change. The goal of science and philosophy is to arrive at the true substantives or the true substantive. But here we are concerned only with the linguistic aspect of the matter. A substantive in a sentence must refer to something that remains 'that thing' within, at least, the scope of the sentence. When we say, 'The boy goes to school' it is to be hoped that the boy remains a boy, at least, during the act described. Difficulty may arise in any predication that connotes a change in the substantive itself. Thus when the porch is painted, from where philosopher Zeno will deliver his lectures, we get a painted porch. Since a painted porch is a porch, the adjective 'painted' is a qualifier adjective. But when coal is burnt to cook meat, we get cooked meat and burnt coal. While cooked meat will be readily accepted as meat, the burnt coal is unlikely to be accepted as coal. 'Burnt' in 'burnt coal' is to be treated as a simulator or modifier adjective. The examples of the adjectives above may be described, in common, as transformer adjectives, and then we may say that transformer adjectives are of two types—the agreeable type or the non-agreeable type according as the antecedent property is preserved or not under the transformation. In the case of a transformation of the agreeable type, the transformer adjective will be a qualifier adjective; in the other case it will be a modifier or a simulator adjective.*

(* "Investigation into Nature of Language—A Logico-Mathematical study", 'Catastrophe Theory and Applications', p. 87-96. Wiley, New York, 1981. (Abstract included in *Zentralblatt Fur Math*, Berlin, (1-1045-87-85.)

3. *English Grammar Series*, Book IV (New Ed), by J C. Nesfield.

4. "Study in Nature of Language (with use of transformational techniques)", *Some Aspects of Studies in Philosophy and Language of Mathematical Modelling*: A Jadavpur University Publication, India (1981), pp. 47-54.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of February 2002)

THE retirement of Sri Aurobindo, dictated by an inner necessity and particular circumstances of his arduous Sadhana, marks, however, the beginning of a new phase of his activity in the external field. We have read how he assured his disciples that he had not totally or finally retired into his spiritual shell. Within a relatively short time, he convinced them of his intentions in this respect by entering into a new type of contact with them, contact by letters. Till then his correspondence was mostly with the people who lived outside and was in the nature of private or public statements issued under pressing requests from his friends or former political collaborators on matters of national importance, or letters of reply to calls for spiritual help and guidance. But from 1930 onwards he had started writing to the disciples who lived in the Ashram itself. The disciples saw to their great relief and joy that, though the door of direct personal contact was barred to them, the window of correspondence was opened through which beamed outwards the effulgent rays of his spiritual light. They seized the opportunity with alacrity and thus a long period of correspondence was ushered in. And it lasted for about eight years, without a break, and grew so much in volume that a time was soon reached when Sri Aurobindo had to keep himself fully engaged in nothing else than answering letters all through the night, every night! The disciples of that period recalled how piles and piles of notebooks and letters used to be written and both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother pored over them each night, month after month, year after year. The mornings saw the disciples eagerly waiting for their “Divine post” and when it arrived from upstairs and distributed each received his “post” with a thrill of joy that knew no bounds. And what letters! In sheer quantity they run into three massive volumes. Every worthwhile subject under the sun finds place in them. Religion, Science, Politics, Sociology, Arts, Psychology, Poetry, Mysticism, Metaphysics, Philosophy, and the practical aspect of his Yoga were revealed in the letters.

Sri Aurobindo himself wrote to Dilip Kumar Roy that he was engaged in “dredging, dredging, dredging the mire of the Subconscious.”¹ And there are some more excerpts from Sri Aurobindo’s letters belonging to the period 1934-36.

Sri Aurobindo wrote: “We had tried to do it [Sadhana] from above through the mind and higher vital, but it could not be because the Sadhaks were not ready to follow—their lower vital and physical refused to share in what was coming down or else misused it and became full of exaggerated and violent reactions. Since then the Sadhana as a whole has come down along with us into the physical consciousness.... The total descent into the physical is a very troublesome affair—it means a long and trying pressure of difficulties, for the physical is normally obscure, inert, impervious to Light. It is a thing of habits, very largely a slave of the subconscious and its mechanical reactions.... We would have preferred to do all the hard work ourselves there and called others down when an easier movement was established, but it did not prove possible.”² Again Sri Aurobindo men-

tioned: "I am myself living in the physical consciousness and have been for several years. At first it was a plunge into the physical—into all its obscurity and inertia, afterwards it was a station in the physical open to the higher and higher consciousness and slowly having fought out in it the struggle of transformation of the physical consciousness with a view to prepare it for the supramental change."³

His letters also form a massive work like *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, etc. He had confessed that he wrote these more for his own sake than for the sake of others. They therefore demand an intellectual equipment on the part of an earnest reader. But in writing these letters Sri Aurobindo fully kept in view the disciples to whom they were addressed and almost retold his profound works in a style that is a model for simplicity, lucidity and directness. It is as if the Master came down from his empyrean heights to the planes of the work-a-day world and walked with his disciples hand in hand as man to man, as friend to friend and as father to son, and guiding them over through surfaces of the Yogic path clearing the debris of the mind at one place, the dross of the heart at another, and lifting them heavenwards. We see the integral Yoga delineated in its many-faceted splendours, its rich possibilities, its uniqueness over other Yogas. They reveal the methods, the processes, the rationale of his teachings. These letters overflow with kindness and compassion towards the struggling soul in its flight upwards.

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

1. *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, p. 51.
2. *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, pp. 474-750.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

DAD'S DEPARTURE

[My father Dr. Sunil Kanti Ghosh passed away on 24 June 2001 in the Ashram Nursing Home after a brief spell of illness and was 87 when he died. He, along with my mother, Prof. Gouri Rani Ghosh came to settle in Pondicherry at the feet of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo after retirement from their distinguished academic careers. During my father's illness I was overwhelmed by the loving care that he received at the Ashram Nursing Home and subsequently, when he passed away I could also experience first hand how the funeral ceremony is arranged in the Ashram. Both experiences bore the unmistakable stamp, the 'Sri Aurobindo Ashram' touch. I was particularly struck by the beauty, simplicity and yet the profound solemnity of the funeral arrangements which were so pregnant with meaning and significance and so harmonious that I felt again and again, that in the Mother's scheme of things even death seemed to lose much of its sting. I have written this account not only to re-live those precious last days, but also to mark my gratitude to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram for providing emotional and spiritual sustenance during that time. Although initially this was written for my immediate family and friends, I have now presented an edited version for the general readers of *Mother India*.]

AMONG my father's outstanding personality traits that outshine all others are his extraordinarily positive attitude towards everything in life and his trust and surrender to the Mother. My father also had a very kindly disposition towards everyone. He had a passionate love for flowers and would spend hours doing floral arrangements for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. This he did meticulously even with his poor and failing eyesight. The members of the Ashram knew this 'weakness'—his love of flowers—and often gave him fresh cut flowers to take home. This gave him immeasurable joy. He would be seen with a little cloth bag in the Ashram premises where he would put his treasures—Ashram flowers and floral gifts from friends and well wishers. He did this chore almost regularly before settling down for the evening meditation at his chosen place on the verandah just outside Dyuman Bhai's room near the Samadhi. A few weeks before his last spell of illness he was invited to the Pondicherry Law College (my dad was a professor of Law and Jurisprudence was his area of specialisation). Even at 87 he had spoken extempore for well over an hour. Possibly, that had tired him excessively and subsequently this might have triggered his heart condition which was already getting rather weak. But, because of his uncanny trust in the Mother's protection, he never worried about it, nor did he ever curtail any of his movements. Such was his spirit—forever positive, cheerful and surrendered.

I had come to visit Pondicherry on the 19th of June. This visit was totally unplanned since I had just started on a new job at Leeds University in England and dad had expressly forbidden me to visit him then as he was getting much better already. But I was guided by the Mother's Grace and I had a 'luminous awareness' that I should come then and not at

any other time; I quickly made up my mind without letting “worldly prudence whisper too closely in my ears”! Subsequently I realised that it was indeed the ‘hour of the unexpected’ and I would have regretted much if I hadn’t come then. When I arrived, I learnt that dad was still in the Nursing Home but would be discharged that very morning. I went out and bought fresh cut flowers and arranged them nicely in the puja room. Soon afterwards, he arrived—upright, bright and even with a spright in his walk and when he saw me and the flowers he was overjoyed and straightaway led me to the Mother’s photo in the puja room and told me “Look, how the Mother listens to all I ask Her!” He then showed me the letter that he had written only two days ago and which he had stuck behind the Mother’s picture—he had written “Mother, I really want to get better so that I can perform my puja and decorate you with flowers!” I then bathed and came into the puja room—as always before, this time too, my asana was laid, and agarbatti and match box neatly arranged, and my *Savitri* placed on the table. Dad loved doing all this and this time too he made no exception. He was very happy about the new and exciting possibilities that were coming my way at Leeds University. I tried my best to give him as much comfort as I could without tiring him and made sure that he did not feel like an invalid. That night he felt so refreshed that he talked to Devika-di in Calcutta over the phone. However, he was a bit restless on one account—he wanted to visit the Ashram as soon as possible and I reassured him that he would do so during my stay in Pondicherry. I had cooked dad a western meal—chicken with pasta shells and green peppers served with tomato relish and he savoured every morsel of that meal and over the meal he told me about my mother’s constant care and also about how much my sister looked after him when she was visiting him from America a month earlier. He recollected that while she was with him they celebrated ‘Mother’s Day’ as they do in America and was overjoyed when she bought fresh jasmine garlands for the Mother. Later that evening Sarat Patnaik came to visit us and had his camera with him. He took informal pictures of mum, dad and me in our bedroom—this was to be our last photograph together. Then before going to bed dad wanted me to read to him from *Savitri* and in particular lines from “Adoration of the Divine Mother”. On the following day during tea time I played him some music—first on my harmonium and then on a tape recorder and life seemed to return to an even keel. Dad presented me with his signed copy of *Aspects of Sri Aurobindo* by Amal Kiran and I asked him to write something on it. He wrote “to our loving Babu, for his meaningful and thoughtful reading on the day of his arrival—affectionately Baba”. After dinner, the three of us continued our reading session. After a moment’s concentration I opened a page from *Savitri* at random and I had a page from the “Book of Fate”. I read for quite some time and he said “Look how beautifully Sri Aurobindo has expressed his thoughts” and saying so he immediately collapsed on the floor. I lifted him up back to the bed and ma’s face looked petrified. He was fast losing control of himself. I immediately gave him some water from Manasarovar (I had always nursed this wish that I should be able to give some of this holy water during my dad’s last moments). He had still not quite lost consciousness. I asked him, “Baba, have you got any regrets in life?” He almost smiled and said, “No, none at all and especially because now you are at my side.” Then I asked him,

“Baba, can you see the Mother?” He slowly raised his right arm (only later we learnt that he had suffered a stroke and had his left side completely paralysed) and said, “Here She is, right in front of me—I can see her very clearly”. Then he slipped off into a semi-conscious state. Soon afterwards Dr. Salila came with Bishwabandhu-da and we took him to the Nursing Home. Then on the next day we had a brain scan done and his condition still continued to be critical. On the following day, quite early in the morning I went to see him. Minu had also come and very surprisingly, I found dad fully conscious and very fresh. He was sitting on his bed with the oxygen and the drip tubes removed and I rang ma and told her that dad was much better. After sometime Savardekar came and announced Nirod-da’s arrival and said that he would soon come up to see dad. When Nirod-da appeared all other fellow patients greeted him with folded hands and when he came up to dad’s bed and asked, “How are you, dada?” Dad nodded his head and said clearly *bhalo achhi* (meaning “I am well” in Bangla). Then Nirod-da blessed him with his touch and felt his pulse and patted me on my back as I massaged dad’s legs and told me, “Your dad is not in pain—he will not suffer” and left. It was around 12 noon and the day was clear and bright. My dad’s bed faced the Bay of Bengal and over his bed there was a framed photo of the Mother with Sri Aurobindo. Dad faced the blue of the sky and the sea and again wanted me to read him *Savitri*. It was a blessed moment and the setting was calm and soothing, breathing an aura of ‘immensitude’ and vastness. Then he asked me to bring my head forward and when I brought it close to him he gave me his *ashirwad* (blessings)—consciously and very lovingly on my bowed head just below the picture. Then I left him to rest and told him that I would bring ma and come at 4 pm. Immediately after I arrived home, the Nursing Home rang us and told us to come over. Upon our arrival we were told that dad had passed away peacefully around 12.50 pm (24 June 2001). I feel that it was arranged by the Mother, that during his last moments there was nobody to distract him from his one pointed concentration on Her. Even the presence of my mother and myself would have been a diversion.

When we arrived all the nurses were by his bed. They had taken such exemplary care of him throughout. Now I recollect how much they shone in the Mother’s light and love and how dignified they looked in their white saris with the symbol in pale blue on their apron fronts. How much kindness they also showered on me and my mother—constantly offering us food and drinks—and how much I also owe to Dilip-da, Gayatri-di and Salila-di—the doctors who treated him. Being Sri Aurobindo Ashram—everything had a touch of class—the nurses had sponged him and placed a red rose on his breast pocket already. His face had a serenity like never before. I clothed him in a spotless dhoti, panjabi and chaddar and sprayed perfume on him. By then Suresh-da, Julie-di, and their son Lotus had also come over and Lata-di took over all the subsequent arrangements. (My father had categorically told me that in the event of his death, we should only strictly follow all the guidelines practised by the Ashramites and should completely do away with all traditional Hindu rituals.) Four or five young men from the Ashram arrived in a van and they carried him to his room. Basu and Shanti broke down—they were like members of our own family and loved their ‘aiyya’ very much. We laid him on a white

sheet and placed two blessing packets on his chest. We placed a photo of the Mother's Feet near his head and I placed his *Savitri* by his side. We were given agarbatties to light and were asked to softly play some of the Ashram's meditation music. We were told also to maintain silence in that room. I found some time and went to inform Nirod-da—he said, *khobor peyechhi aar shokalei ami jantam* (meaning “I have been informed and I had known since this morning”) and also told me *tomar baba to ek jon sadhak chhilen* (meaning “your dad was a sadhaka”). Then as evening set in one by one friends and ashramites started coming in to pay their last respects. They came in silently and reverentially, with flowers and agarbatties, meditated for some time and left. The local Tamils also came—they came with fragrant garlands of *mogra* and jasmine—all knew that their ‘aiyya’ loved flowers. Balam our old rickshawalla came with a bunch of red hibiscus and silently wept and placed it on dad's body. Ma spent some time in that room and then went over to the adjacent room. I was asked to sit by dad's body and to keep me company Shikhadi's young son Mukut came along and sat with me all night. Sudhir-da was silently supporting me all along and over the past few months he had been coming every Wednesday to read to dad. Then, on the following morning, Rama-di came to pay her last respects and afterwards Bharati-di from the Ashram's atelier services came exactly at 10.30 am in order to proceed with dad's funeral. I was asked to change in white before we carried dad over for the cremation. Sudhir-da, Ashish-da, Uddipta-da, Suresh-da and Minu were with me along with many others. We drove out and as we approached the Ashram we did a *parikramā* around the Ashram—this was in a way fulfilling my dad's last wish to be taken to the Ashram. I am sure his subtle physical body was by the Samadhi. (Later a lady Ashramite told me that dad was seen by her at the Samadhi on some occasions.) After a short drive we came to a shady garden that has an area exclusively reserved for Ashram cremations. Dad's body was laid on successive layers of bricks, sand, cow-dung cakes and straw. The cremation platform was covered with simple thatch and surrounded by shady trees and was open on all the four sides. A gentle breeze fanned the agarbatties that we held as we stood silently by the funeral pyre. I was asked to pour warm ghee over dad after which he was anointed all over with sandalwood, herbs and spices and was decorated with flowers. Camphor and flowers (with special significances) from the Mother's Room were placed on his heart. And then when I ignited the camphor the body was consigned to the flames. We departed in silence. At the crack of dawn the next day Behrambhai then came to take me and Sudhir-da to collect *asthi*. We arrived at the pyre where the embers were still glowing. I then poured water and milk on the pyre while chanting “Om Anandamayee Chaitanyamayee Satyamayee Parame”. The bones were hand picked and wrapped in a new towel. Then we drove over to an Ashram enclosure by the sea and an ashramite swam quite far out and gently immersed dad's mortal remains into the morning sea. The sun then broke out and shone over the splashing waves foaming over the black boulders and gleaming yellow wet sand. My mind went blank and waves of peace started to descend upon me like never before. Grieving was impossible—because as I looked over the sea I knew dad's forehead was already etched with Sri Aurobindo's symbol and he was with the Mother. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram made death look so beautiful and

serene. I instinctively thought “What a beautiful ceremony—I must go home and describe it to dad!” This was only natural—any little incident, anything to do with the ashram always interested him and he was radiantly happy when I told him these details!

On Wednesday 27 June the Mahasamadhi was decorated in white to commemorate dad's departure. All this was especially arranged by Nirod-da and Jayshree-di. Ma and I were given a tray of special flowers and a beautiful ‘New-Creation’ (*rajanigandha*) garland to take up to Sri Aurobindo's room. Bani-di led us to the Lord's room where we also saw Nirod-da.

Then on the 28th afternoon as I was quietly sitting by the Samadhi, thinking about dad a twig suddenly fell from the Service Tree by my side. Many in the Ashram believe that all Mother's children when they shed their mortal frame come to the Samadhi and rise up from the Service Tree. So when the twig dropped by my side, I knew this was dad's and the Mother's way of reassuring me that indeed he was with the Mother. Then a thought struck me and I told myself: “How I wish I could at least once help in the decoration of the Mahasamadhi. I have never been given this chance.” Then suddenly, almost immediately after this thought, Jayshree-di came by me with a basket of white jasmines and slowly said: “Do you want to decorate the Samadhi with these flowers?” Strange are the ways of the Mother's working. All these experiences bring me ever so close to Her and the Lord.

On 29 June we had a meditation with members of the Ashram. Brinda-di, Bina-di, Julie-di and Mr. Savardekar helped me with the decorations. Nirod-da, Dolly-di, Bani-di, Anju-di, Ashish-da, Manoj-da, Mona-da, Arindam-da, Shraddhavan, Dilip-da were among the 80 odd people who had come for the meditation. We meditated with the 1972 New Year Music and the room, fragrant with scent of the flowers and agrabatties, was already charged. The whole room was beautifully decorated and in one corner we had a small altar with photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and immediately below, a fairly recent photo of dad. Nirod-da had brought a huge garland and flowers from the Mother's Room. Arup Tagore and Kalyani-di sang Brahma Sangeet befitting the solemnity of the occasion. Interestingly, Arindam-da told ma *amra khobor peyechi uni khub bhalo achchen* (meaning “we have been informed that he is very well”). Sarat Patnaik made a video recording of the whole meditation ceremony and we had arranged with the cottage restaurant of the Ashram for the catering. We were deeply touched that Mithu's and Brahma's father could also come. Ma told me that evening that, after the meditation was over, she was free from *shoka*, grief. On the following evening after meditation by the Samadhi dear Shipra-di smilingly told me “Satyajit, now all you have to do is to pray to the Mother to take your dad swiftly over to Her abode of Peace.”

Now, I have more time to think of dad and his life. I ask myself what is the greatest gift that he has given me? The answer is clear. He has shown me through his life the extraordinary power of positive thinking and to always turn to the Mother wholeheartedly for everything in life, to love Her and be ever grateful to Her, to trust Her unreservedly, and to have that quiet child-like confidence that all will be well. I know that with dad's departure, I have been able to move forward in my sadhana. He has shown me an

easy way to progress—to turn to the Mother with certitude and to rest assured that indeed She is our “sole abiding refuge”.

I wanted to end this tribute with appropriate lines from *Savitri* since this epic was my dad’s favourite aid in his sadhana. I prayed and resolved that I would quote from whatever lines I get as I opened *Savitri*. As a fitting testimony, to show me his way of a loving trust in the Mother, I was led to very significant and appropriate lines. I shall offer these lines to dad and end this recounting.

But none in the other would his body lose
 To find his soul in the world’s single Soul,
 A multiplied rapture of infinity.
 Onward he passed to a diviner sphere:
 There, joined in a common greatness, light and bliss,
 All high and beautiful and desirable powers
 Forgetting their difference and their separate reign
 Become a single multitudinous whole.
 Above the parting of the roads of Time,
 Above the Silence and its thousandfold Word,
 In the immutable and inviolate Truth
 For ever united and inseparable,
 The radiant children of Eternity dwell
 On the wide spirit height where all are one.

(*Savitri*, Book II, Canto XII, p. 282)

SATYAJIT GHOSH

P.S. I have had to mention names in this essay in order to give a graphic account of the last days of my dad. I apologise for any inadvertent omissions. It is needless to mention that Sri Aurobindo Ashram with all its Departments and Services as well as all its members are very close to my heart.

THE POLITICAL ABUSE OF HISTORY

An Interview with Dr. Romila Thapar

[The tendency of political parties to appropriate the discipline of history with scant regard for its factual and scientific basis is a disturbing trend. Describing this as a “political abuse of history,” eminent historian, Dr. Romila Thapar discusses this and other issues in a conversation with V. Krishna Ananth. A crucial point she makes is that in such political abuse of history, “the past is invented on the pretence of depicting it.”]

What is history, especially in the context of the increasing use of myth in history?

I THINK most historians would agree that the purpose of history is to try and explain and comprehend the past. In this context, unlike 50 years ago, the sources that could be used for the reconstruction of history have become much wider in range and the methodology involved in the writing of history has moved away from the ideas that dominated in the late 19th century where historians were said to be concerned with something called “the truth”. We now realise that however good our sources may be and however brilliant our analysis may be, we can never really arrive at “the truth”. Therefore historians tend to take a much more humble position and what they are concerned with is explaining the past and understanding the past. By way of using new categories of sources such as archaeological data, oral traditions and such other tools, there is a totality of the past which the historian is trying to understand. Therefore history has now become a sophisticated discipline demanding expertise. It is now beginning to tell us much more about our past than we ever knew before. But at another level, strangely enough, there is, at the same time, the curious phenomenon of probably the maximum political abuse of history that Indian society has ever known. In this political abuse of history, there is a discarding of these methodologies, techniques, source materials and analyses of sources required of good historical writing. Instead the past is invented on the pretence of depicting it. The tragedy is that the serious historian today cannot therefore have any discourse with a person who is inventing history. Yet in the popular view it is all “history” because most people are unaware of the difference.

When you say political abuse of history, does it imply that there is a political use of history, or that the discipline has a political purpose and what do you think is the purpose then?

Well, I think that all studies in a way have political connotations and in the case of history, this is perhaps more so than in other social science disciplines. This is because, history is closely tied into the question of identity and this in turn is the basic issue in nationalism. So there is a link. We have experienced nationalism in the 19th and the 20th

centuries, when we had a spectacular national movement. In addition to what has been termed by many historians as Indian nationalism, which is (now being defined as) secular nationalism, there were also trends of communal movements, or what might be called segmentary nationalism. These related to identities based on how history was perceived. Secular nationalism was inclusive of and attempted to include all categories of people, even if the dominant voice was that of the middle class. Communal, segmentary nationalisms drew on an identity which focussed on one group, identified by religion and excluded the others. Where communal nationalism becomes militant and acquires power it carries the genesis of fascism. There was a demand for a separate Muslim State, which grew out of a Muslim communal segmentary nationalism and now there is the demand for Hindutva, which has grown out of a communal segmentary Hindu nationalism. The demand for Khalistan has its roots in a communal segmentary Sikh nationalism. In each of these cases, what is interesting is that the demand is based on an assertion of a particular identity. The argument is that we have a right to be a nation-State or to dominate the nation-State, because of our distinct identity. Whether it is the Muslim component of the sub-continent as it was in pre-partition days, whether it is the Hindu majority or the Sikhs in Punjab, this right or this perception of identity is based on how history is perceived. History therefore is modulated in order to conform to projecting an identity.

Does Indian nationalism, which you feel is an outcome of the national movement, provide the impetus to the growth of this segmentary nationalism?

Well. It did up to a point, in that these ideas operated side by side. But there is an essential difference. Indian nationalism had as its primary function the termination of colonial rule. This has not been the aim of segmentary nationalisms. They were concerned with other types of interests. I am not going into the merits of the nation-State as such. What I am saying is that in the change that is taking place, as we have historically moved towards a nation-State, these segmentary nationalist interests are based on an identity which does not conform to secular Indian nationalism.

Could you be more specific... which are these identities and how is it that they do not conform to Indian nationalism?

It is demonstrated in the concept of identity based on religious communities, leading to Muslim nationalism, Sikh nationalism and Hindu nationalism.

So would you say that Indian nationalism was bereft of religious identity?

No. I would not say that Indian nationalism was bereft of religious identity. The point is that its emphasis was not on religious identity. It did from time to time use religious symbols. But I would argue that its purpose and function in the way it developed as a national movement was concerned with things other than religious identities.

Was it a purely political concept then?

Indian nationalism was not concerned only with the transfer of power. It also visualised fundamental changes in Indian society, in the concept of how India was envisaged even a century ago as a society and an economy. It was dominated by middle-class thinking, middle-class values and aspirations. This was something new in Indian history. The middle class emerged in the 19th century and because it emerged in the anti-colonial context it came to be dominant in Indian nationalism. But let us not forget that even as early as in the 19th century there was a worked out economic programme and Indian nationalists were supporters of their economic programme. So nationalism was not merely a political obsession with changing Governments.

By this, do you rule out the impact of tradition in the emergence of Indian nationalism? What is it that one finds as the traditional roots of Indian nationalism?

Nationalism is a new phenomenon and what it is picking from tradition is what it imagines to be tradition. For example, a very controversial point: Indian nationalism assumed that the Indian sub-continent has always been a nation. Now this is something which has forcefully come up again recently. Can one historically justify the Indian sub-continent as having been a single nation in the past? Some historians wrote about golden ages and dark ages. In defence of imperialism, historians like Vincent Smith described the golden age as the age of large States that virtually covered the major part of the sub-continent. So the Mauryan period is depicted as a golden age and the dark age is when these States break up. It is interesting that when Hindu nationalism, for example, seeks to take the nation back in history the Mauryan State is chosen and there is an emphasis on Chanakya as being the creator of the original nation. The evidence for nationalism in this scheme is seen as hostility between two powers, the Indians against the Greeks and the Persians. But this is more in the nature of political confrontation between dynasties than the expression of nationalism.

Do you agree with this effort to root Indian nationalism...

Nationalism emerges in a historically specific situation. It cannot claim to have existed in an earlier period, but nationalism can use earlier tradition and this creates the problem for communalism. Because, for segmentary nationalisms only one tradition—Hindu, Muslim or Sikh—has pre-eminence. This is where the question of identity, social and religious values and traditions comes to the foreground.

No, in specific terms, let us take the case of the theory of Aryans...

Actually the use of the theory of an Aryan race has been very interesting purely as a historical exercise, but its political implications are quite frightening. As a historical ex-

ercise the theory of an Aryan race is an invention of Europe. It is a 19th century European invention and was used by people like Max Mueller who read in the Vedic texts the reference to the Aryas and the Dasas and argued that this was a reference to the Aryan race and to the non-Aryans. It continued to be used by imperialist historians who supported the theory because it argued that a body of superior Aryans invaded India and were the founders of Indian civilisation. The British saw this as a parallel to their own activities. What is interesting is that Indian nationalist historians also did not question it. This was partly because the evidence to question it was not so apparent until the 1920s and 30s and partly because it also suited their interest. One reason could perhaps be that they belonged to the middle class and they were also involved in the middle class finding its identity—an upper caste identity. So the theory of an Aryan race fitted in very neatly for it argued that the upper castes, in particular the Brahmins were the lineal descendants of the Aryans. But then, there were two variations from this position. One was the Hindu nationalist position where the argument was that the Aryans were indigenous. Hindu nationalism was seeking the roots of a particular group. That the group had to be indigenous, was part of the Hindu nationalist rhetoric. It does not suit them to admit that they descended from a group which came as aliens, for they were arguing that the foreigner has an inferior status in the Indian nation-State. As opposed to this was the position of Jyotibha Phule and the ideologues of the anti-Brahmin movements, a position which is also taken by some of the Dalit thinkers these days—that the Aryans were alien and that they ousted the indigenous inhabitants, i.e., what today are the lower castes, the untouchables and the Scheduled Tribes. So everybody in a sense was using the theory for their own purposes to try to fit their 20th century ideological positions into something they were interpreting from the past. Now the position is rather complicated. If one goes back to what I was saying in the beginning, there is on the one hand a very sensitive, sophisticated, meticulous historical writing and on the other hand there is a popular version which is very different from the first and is a kind of political abuse of history. This is demonstrated in the Aryan problem. There is a consensus emerging among archaeologists, linguists and historians that there was no large-scale invasion or massive migration which brought the language Indo-Aryan. But there is no denying the fact that there was a language Indo-Aryan which came in from the direction of West Asia. Even the evidence of the Vedic texts itself indicates that this language spread from the North-West, into the Punjab and from there to the Ganges Valley and Eastern India. The question therefore that the historian is faced with is, how did that language spread and what changes occurred in the language? So, the issue is rather different now. The crux of the problem relates to a society and language change and the nature of the changes that are incorporated in Vedic Sanskrit. There is an incorporation of words and forms from non-Aryan languages. How does this happen? Was there a period of bilingualism? In other words, the earlier picture of 'the Aryans' coming and filling up a virtual blank in Northern India has changed completely. If there was a series of migrations or long-term contacts, were the migrants traders or pastoralists? Were religious rituals instrumental in the change? Was there continuity from the earlier cultures and change at the same time?

The reason why one reacts against the BJP suddenly introducing in its textbook the statement that the Aryans were indigenous to India is not only because this is historically untenable, but because it reduces the study of history to statements which are an invention or at least cannot be regarded as standard, accepted opinion.

Now can you say that the Aryans migrated into India?

Language and race are two different categories and cannot be treated as identical. In fact when we use the term 'Aryans', it denotes the Aryan-speaking people. When a language arrives, obviously a modicum of speakers come too and what happens after that in terms of how they amalgamate with the existing cultures is a historical process. One cannot therefore make sudden judgments and dismiss evidence simply because it pleases one politically to link our identity with what we believe were a particular group of people.

How do you perceive the role of myth in history?

Myth was something that used to be dismissed by historians in the past. It was held that there is a sharp difference between myth and history, that history is factual, it is 'the truth' whereas myth is entirely imagined. The focus on myth has changed now because it is argued that even if a myth is entirely invented, it is invented on the basis of certain assumptions of a society. These assumptions are important to that society, and the historian should analyse the myths not as descriptions of events having occurred in the past but for understanding why a society creates a particular myth. In the case of the Aryan myth, the question is not what the 'Aryans' were or were not, but rather, why in the 19th and 20th centuries does this become so important to the India's perception of itself. That is how the myth can be examined. The point is that myths are constantly being made. Right through time, myths are invented and undergo change. We have frequently in the Indian tradition one of the most fascinating aspects of the study of myths which is the way in which the same story is taken, time after time, in region after region, and either slightly changed or substantially changed. Why then do these changes occur? The story of Rama is a superb example in the context. It is reproduced in different forms, and only the bare bones of the story are generally recognisable. Otherwise there are fundamental changes and one has to analyse and explain these changes in a historical context.

Do you mean to say that the entire postulation that the Aryans were an indigenous people, even when it was made in the 19th and 20th centuries, was a political project?

It was in the sense that it played a very important role in a political project, even though it was not entirely so.

So will you have the same levels of objection to the postulation say in the 19th century context, as you object to the postulation being made by the BJP now?

One can understand the reason why in the 19th century there was an excitement about these ideas, why they were incorporated into the reconstruction of history. There was a reason why particularly Indian middle class society adopted this theory. In this sense, the level of objection to the earlier exercise is different from what I object to in the current exercise. Further, in the former case, the interpretation was made on the basis of sources then available and it was generally accepted that the interpretation was correct. It was not a deliberate reversal of what a number of historians were saying. Today, hardly any secular scholar would say that the Aryans were a people indigenous to India. It is because of this that to introduce such a statement in school textbooks is seen in the profession of historians as an act of politics and not of history. Let me add that school textbooks are meant to carry statements of standard views. They cannot carry speculations in lieu of this as statements of fact. New ideas are first tested at the level of research and if they are generally accepted among the specialists, then they may be introduced in school textbooks. The objection is not to the new idea but to the fact that it is not generally acceptable to specialists. Therefore the motivation becomes questionable.

Is myth a valid tool in historical analysis?

The creation of myths will go on whether the historian wishes it or not. The historian has to be aware that a myth is being created and point to this. Beyond that the historian has no control, because a myth is created by non-historians. It is being created by sections in society, who have an interest in creating the myth. While generally it is a political interest, it could also stem from other concerns. But the historian must certainly observe this process, comment on it and emphasise that it is not history.

Why do you think that the BJP is attempting to recreate this and other myths?

There are two apparent reasons. One is that it does find itself uncomfortable with the Indian nationalist tradition, which certainly does not endorse the BJP position on history. The Indian nationalist tradition of the pre-1947 period, by and large, was a secular tradition, even though we may not always agree with the content and definition of secularism. Its natural impulse was to support a secular society and a secular history. But equally important is the fact that those supporting communal interpretations of Indian history have realised that history has become a serious independent discipline and people in politics cannot control it. For a movement that is claiming that its major aim is the creation of Hindu nationalism and the establishment of Hindutva it is very important that it controls history as a justification for a Hindu identity for India.

V. KRISHNA ANANTH

(Courtesy: *The Hindu*, 3 May 1993)

ALL FOR THE GOOD

A Tamil Folktale

CHOZHA kingdom was once ruled by King Dhuvaramon. He had an able and efficient minister. The king was so proud of him that he bestowed upon him the authority to settle matters pertaining to the kingdom and also to pass judgement on all the cases brought to the court.

The minister believed that we are mere puppets in the hands of God and that whatever happens is all for our good. Some called him optimist and some called him fatalist. But the minister never changed his views on God and life.

Once a poor farmer went to court and complained that his hut was gutted by fire.

“All for the good,” said the minister and continued: “All the unwanted things that got accumulated all these years would have gone in flames. Fire is a good purifier, you know. Something better is on the way for you. Go home in peace.” That was how he consoled the farmer who went away weeping over his fate.

A couple of days later a landlord came to the court with a complaint. “Last night there was a burglary in my house. My men are still on the hunt for the burglars. I don’t know if they will succeed!” said he.

“All for the good,” said the minister and continued: “Gold is the root of all evil. The richer you grow, the more evil you become. Your mind becomes the devil’s workshop. Perhaps God wants you to be satisfied with what he has saved for you from the burglars. Be content with what you have.”

The landlord went home all the time cursing the irresponsible minister. He began telling others that the minister was power drunk and that he lent deaf ears to others’ problems.

Yet the minister had an unshakeable faith in God’s plans. He believed that God is a master planner and when he sends us joy or pain, it is all for our own good. He was of the opinion that the ordinary people would never be able to understand the truth of the matter unless they experienced it.

One day it so happened that the king while slicing a ripe mango with a kitchen knife, gashed his left forefinger. The finger began to bleed profusely and the royal physician applied a herbal paste on the wound and bandaged it.

The minister entered the king’s chamber on an urgent errand and was taken aback to see his majesty holding his blood stained bandaged finger up above his head and bearing the throbbing pain with a grin.

“What happened, your majesty?” he asked with all seriousness.

The king explained to him, now and then gritting his teeth in pain.

“All for the good, your majesty!” said the minister with a smile.

The minister’s words and his smile only aggravated the king’s irritation and he barked: “What...did...you...say?”

“Your majesty! I meant that God has given you this suffering, not without a purpose.”

“You imbecile! For such unwarranted words of yours, I throw you into prison for a month,” said the king in a stentorian voice.

“All for the good,” said the minister. “If it is destined so, I’ll gladly spend a month inside the prison. God only knows for certain for what purpose he is incarcerating me. But I know it is only for my good.”

It was customary of the king to go on a hunting expedition every month. The minister usually accompanied the king but now that he was in prison his majesty had to go alone with his crew minus the minister.

King Dhuvaramon was a good shot. After an hour of this bloody sport, he took rest under a neem tree, when suddenly there appeared a spotted deer. The king jumped up with his sturdy bow and quiver of arrows, and darted towards the racing deer. His crew lost track of the king. They went in several directions in search of him.

The king too lost track of the deer. But to his great shock, there sprang from the bushes a ferocious lion at an unexpected moment. The king fell down unconscious.

The lion moved closer to the king and gave him a good sniff. It saw his bandaged finger still stained with blood and moved away without hurting him.

Expert hunters know that the king of the forest shows no interest in cold blood and it moves away at the slightest smell of such blood.

Meanwhile a couple of hunters belonging to the royal crew managed to find the king and they stood behind huge tree trunks witnessing the action of the beast.

When the king regained his consciousness they narrated what they had witnessed. The words of his minister flashed across his mind.

“My God!” he cried, “I failed to understand my minister’s words. In a fit of fury I had him thrown into prison. Had I not gashed my finger, the lion would have eaten me to the bones.”

No sooner did he reach his capital than he had his minister released. Feeling sorry for his action, he said, “It was the lion that taught me the meaning of your words of wisdom, my dear minister. I agree with your view that whatever happens to us is always for our own good. God is great.” He then tilted his head up and raised his palms heavenward as a mark of gratitude. “Now to my doubt, my dear minister!” said the king. “When I threw you into prison, you said: ‘All for the good!’ Now tell me what good did you find when you were behind bars?”

“Quite simple, your Highness! Had you not thrown me behind bars, I would have definitely accompanied you to the forest. Had I accompanied you, the ferocious beast that left you free, would have definitely made a sumptuous meal of me. God wanted to save me from the impending disaster. And that’s why he made you put me in the safest place. God is really great.”

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Ascent of Sight in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* by Jugal Kishore Mukherjee; Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 2001. Price: Rs. 70.

THIS monograph by Jugal Kishore Mukherjee is a most welcome addition to the growing literature on *Savitri*. We had a preview of some of the material covered in this monograph in a couple of chapters in Mukherjee's *From Man Human to Man Divine*. Those of us who are acquainted with the book just mentioned and with his *Destiny of the Body* know him as a scholar who is always thorough, painstaking and candid. His scholarship has a single purpose—that of fortifying his reader's faith in Sri Aurobindo's *Darshan* with understanding. Mukherjee tends to eschew ornamentation and display in his writings and therefore his works hardly ever draw attention to the writer. This may be the reason why he is not as well-known as he deserves to be. A scientific disposition is natural to him but a fearless will for knowledge enables him to transcend the narrow limits normal to contemporary science that bar the mind's soar and the soul's dive into the infinite. We always feel safe under his roof even when the terrain around us is very unfamiliar. This characterisation of the writings of Mukherjee applies with equal aptness to this monograph as well.

Savitri is a work by itself unlike all the others, as its author once averred. In Sethna's words: "No doubt, *Savitri* is not always easy to appreciate, it is mostly a new kind of poetry with a vision and language caught as if directly from hidden heights and depths and breadths of a more than human consciousness." And this can create for certain readers insuperable difficulties in responding to it. If the reader does not have a quick and penetrating imagination, a supple intuitive perception and a certain wideness of consciousness, he will not be able to thrill to the sacred delight in the poem. There is no guarantee that persons with a conventional expertise in English literature will necessarily be able to respond to it. This is borne out by the fact that some of the university Eng. Lit. academics in some Indian universities decided a few years ago that this magnificent epic poem was no poetry at all. What is most significant is that while most unsympathetic readers complain about the mistiness and vagueness of what is described in *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo himself claimed that there is everywhere in the poem "a spiritual objectivity, an intense psycho-physical concreteness". Why then can these readers not see this? The answer is simple: they haven't developed the sight needed to see what the poet wants them to see. And this brings us to the central theme of this monograph—the kinds of sights needed to respond to *Savitri*. We should be grateful to Mukherjee for attempting to provide us with a sketch of the luminous pathway which Sri Aurobindo followed in his "long march of the ascent of sight from the 'sightless sight' of the Inconscient up to the 'closed eyes' sight' of the supreme Superconscient." Mukherjee is careful to admit that while in Sri Aurobindo's case this progression always yielded the living experience associated with each mode of sight, for us following this progression in this monograph

is going to be no more than a meditative intellectual-cum-imaginative exercise. But this exercise itself if taken up in earnest can make the reading of *Savitri* a most potent mode of sadhana. Sri Aurobindo has told us in his *Future Poetry* that the essential power of the poetic word is to make us see, not to make us think or feel. This is particularly true of the kind of spiritual poetry which *Savitri* exemplifies. Since sight is the essential poetic gift, our study of *Savitri* should enable us to rise from thought to sight. That is why the Mother once said, “To read *Savitri* is indeed to practise Yoga...”.

“Sight” thus is a concept very crucial for the understanding of *Savitri*. As Mukherjee points out, “*Savitri* is replete with references to sights and visions and gazes and eyes pertinent to different planes of consciousness of man and functioning in various fields of supra-physical manifestation.” A reference to *Savitri Concordance* will show you that sight is one of the semiotic items which has a very high incidence in the poem. I have shown in parentheses the number of occurrences of some of the important words in that semiotic field: sight/s (163), vision/s (105), gaze/d (125) and eye/s (248). While describing a particular experience Sri Aurobindo often leaves for us useful hints as to the kind of sight to which that experience belongs.

The monograph is in three parts. Since *Savitri* embodies the visional experiences of Sri Aurobindo (and of the Mother too), Mukherjee presents a very clear notion of what vision or “sight” signifies and what its multiform levels of operation are. This is done very lucidly in Part I: Prologomena, which in my view is the heart of the monograph. He points out that there are eight essential elements involved in any complete act of “seeing”, and then he goes on to discuss the variables that operate in each one of these eight elements. And here the reader must prepare himself for several surprises. Thus, for example, with regard to the first of these elements, the “Object Viewed”, the author points out that apart from the well-known physical world, there are in fact many other supra-physical worlds of reality, and each of them contains its corresponding beings, objects and functioning forces. “If one has faculties of vision suited to their reception, one can see all these beings, objects and forces.” Furthermore, there is also the occult fact that not merely sensible physical objects but everything else also in the complex cosmos of manifestation—thoughts, feelings, desires, hopes, fears, ideas, forces, etc., etc.—has a substance of its own and therefore a corresponding form, and hence can be viewed as an object. So if you have the appropriate consciousness, you will be able to see anger or hatred rising from someone and entering the being of someone else as tangibly as you can now see a tree or a table. With respect to the second of these eight elements, namely, the space in which the Object is placed, he points out that according to the well attested discoveries of occult science, there are many more spaces other than this gross physical space. He refers in this context to the Indian mystical tradition which has talked about different kinds of spaces such as *cittakasa*, *chidakasa*, *vyoma*, etc. Similarly, the physical eye is not the only organ of vision; we have, besides the physical sheath, other subtler sheaths such as the vital sheath, the mental sheath, the knowledge sheath, and the bliss sheath, and each of these subtler sheaths possesses its own faculty of vision. Furthermore, what we see depends also on the quality and grade of the consciousness from which we see it. Besides, there

are certain kinds of seeing which belong to our normal waking individual consciousness. Our waking consciousness itself is a very small part of what we are. We have reaches of being “which descend into the profoundest depths of the subconscious and rise to heights of super-conscience, or which surround the little field of our waking self with a wide circumconscient of which our mind and sense catch only a few indications.” Through the process of the widening of our consciousness by yogic sadhana, it is possible for us to extend our vision into all these different parts of our being. The upshot of all this discussion is that we can understand the bases of the many kinds of seeing that are talked about in *Savitri*. And when we pass on to the Higher hemisphere of the Supermind and of the Sat-Chit-Ananda, we develop the supramental sight, and also the sight of the dynamically Cosmic Divine.

Part Two of this monograph explains how ordinary human sight and thought based on the data gathered by this sight are totally inadequate in coping with the kind of reality that *Savitri* reveals to us. The author then discusses the necessity and value of the Inner Sight. He enumerates sights of various kinds—from Sight in the Inconscient, in the Subconscious, in the Intraconscient Subliminal, in the Circumconscient, and sights in the Waking Consciousness to sights in the Superconscient. In presenting a morphology of sights, Mukherjee tries to be as precise as he can be. Categorisation and classification are skills which he handles with a sure mastery. The author identifies lines and passages in *Savitri* which refer to the type of sight under discussion. The reader at this point begins to feel like a customer at a confectioner’s shop who is given a careful categorisation of the various kinds of cakes and pastries laid out behind glass doors without ever having been given a chance to savour any samples of them at all. It is true that most of us cannot yet begin to savour any of these delights for want of *adhiphikara*, but surely we could have vicariously partaken some of the delight or could have arrived at some notion of it in our imagination at least if we could see the author in the act of enjoying a bite or two. The author comes almost close to obliging us by doing this in a few places but then he shies away from the task.

Part Three of the monograph deals with vision in the Higher Hemisphere. And here Mukherjee is excited by what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have to offer to us. The four supernal principles which constitute this hemisphere are Sat, Chit, Ananda and the Supermind. The question Mukherjee raises here is whether our mortal sight which functions in different ways on all levels up to the Overmind will be able to follow the ascent of our consciousness into this zone of the higher hemisphere. He comes to the conclusion that this higher hemisphere may be an object of knowledge but surely not of vision as the term is understood with reference to the lower hemisphere. The supermind is the power of self-awareness and world-awareness of Sachidananda and by it the Divine knows not only his own essence but also his being in manifestation. Its fundamental character is knowledge by identity. Mukherjee doesn’t stop with the Supermind; he pursues the ascent of sight even beyond the supramental gnosis to a point which is prior to the moment when the Sacchidananda decides to initiate manifestation. His excitement does not let him stop even at this point; he is willing to walk in Sri Aurobindo’s light as far as he can

no matter how unfamiliar the terrain. He then goes on to discuss the question whether the Divine has an original supra-physical Form and power of form from which all other forms proceed or whether it is eternally formless. The final section of this monograph deals with what sight will be when it undergoes supramentalisation.

The monograph suffers from one handicap, and the author is aware of it—that of having to present too many useful insights within the cramped limits of a brief monograph which was originally intended to be no more than an article. The mode of exposition he has chosen suits Part One of the monograph much better than it does Part Two. Part Two has enough in it to be developed into a book-length exposition. The author is undoubtedly very adept in the art of classification and categorisation. In this monograph he is dealing with realms of human consciousness and experience in which the differences between the different modes of sight may not be as clear-cut as his verbal characterisations make them seem to be.

One of the most impressive features of this monograph is the author's intimate acquaintance with the entire corpus of the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In the monograph he lets Sri Aurobindo explain the crucial concepts used here in his own words. This is indeed inspired scholarship. Particularly with respect to *Savitri* the monograph shows how closely acquainted Mukherjee has become with the poem which he has been studying "regularly and assiduously for the last five decades". The ease with which he can find the appropriate lines from the poem to illustrate and exemplify almost any point he is making is enviable. For such a commitment and devotion to *Savitri* I offer my most sincere salutations to Mukherjee.

MANGESH NADKARNI

Agni Sūktangal by T. V. Kapali Sastry. (Tamil translation of *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* by Sri Aurobindo, with text of the Rig Vedic verses in both Devanagari and Tamil.) Publisher: Sri Aurobindo Kapali Sastry Institute of Vedic Culture. Pages xviii + 127. Price: Rs. 40.

Sri T. V. Kapali Sastry had the unique privilege of having been the student *shishya* under three spiritual luminaries of modern India namely Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni. As his student and disciple Sri Madhav Pandit observes, "Sastriar was a multiple personality. He excelled in whatever field he worked: languages, literature, yoga, astrology, astronomy, ayurveda and siddha medicine. Among his services to the national heritage, the one which comes most prominently to mind is his solid contribution in building a strong bridge between the ancient past and the evolutionary thought of the present."

His *magnum opus* is *Siddhāñjana*, his Sanskrit commentary on the first Ashtaka on the Rig Veda Samhita along with an extensive introduction dealing with the importance of the spiritual/psychological/symbolic interpretation of the Veda and the prior work in

India in this direction. He started this work when he was nearing sixty. At Sri Aurobindo's direction, his work uses the clues provided by Sri Aurobindo in understanding the secret of the Veda. Sri Aurobindo read the entire work and approved it.¹

In 1946, the first edition of *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* by Sri Aurobindo was published. It had a lengthy foreword of 20 pages by Sri Aurobindo detailing the spiritual interpretation of the Veda followed by English renderings of the *sūktas* or hymns to the deity Agni or the Mystic Fire contained in the Mandalas one, two and six. The present book is a translation into Tamil of this edition of the book along with the foreword. For each verse or mantra, the text is given in both Tamil and Devanagari, and a detailed explanation in Tamil of Sri Aurobindo's English translation.

A careful reading of the foreword by Sri Aurobindo translated here is important for several reasons. First of all, Sri Aurobindo shows with extensive quotations that the text of the Veda itself declares that there is a secret in the Veda. Secondly, he shows that Veda makes no sense partly because common nouns like *go*, *aśva*, *ghṛta*, etc., are given their common meanings. These words are symbols standing for a Ray of Light or Knowledge, Life-energy and clarity, etc. When these symbolic meanings are used, the entire text becomes luminous. Thirdly, he gives a brief summary of the four key steps or ideas in the practice of Vedic Yoga. Remembering these key ideas makes our study of the Veda a lot easier.

The present book begins with the ten hymns to Agni from Mandala 2, the revelations to the seer Gritsamada Bhargava and his school. These hymns are characterised by clarity and equality as the name *Gritsamada* suggests. There is a happy blend of the ideas of *bhakti*, *jñāna* and *karma* in them. The first *sūkta* identifies Agni with the other great Vedic Gods like Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Aditi, the indivisible Mother, and others. Verse 9 declares, "men worship thee as a father so that you may be their brother...; you became a son to the man who worships thee."

The third *sūkta* specifically states that the fire is set or hidden inward, *nihitah* (first verse). In the fifth verse of the same *sūkta*, there is call for the Divine Doors, *devi dvārah*, to open, reminiscent of the opening of *chakras* in the later *tantras*. In the third verse of the fifth *sūkta*, there is a clear mention of THAT, *tat*, the goal of all Upanishads: "When a man has established this fire, he echoes the words of knowledge and comes to THAT." Finally, the tenth *sūkta* declares that "Agni brings to us the touch of sweetness, *madhu-prcham*".

In the next set are the sixteen hymns to Agni from Mandala 6, revealed to the seer Bharadwaja, one who bears all the opulences. It begins with the key idea, "Agni, you were the first thinker, *manota*". In the verse 4 of this first *sūkta*, the seekers are termed as, "travellers with surrender to the plane of Godhead," showing clearly that the idea of complete surrender is very old. Again the verse 13 has the phrase, "let me be enjoyed by thee". This idea is often traced to the much later book, *Srimad Bhagavata*. All of us want

1. We are not sure if Sri Aurobindo read the work himself, in view of his failing eyesight. Most probably some parts of it were read out to him by A.B. Purani. —R.Y. D.

enjoyment. But the call “to be enjoyed by the Divine” is clearly the highest *bhakti*.

In the second hymn, second verse, is the phrase, “the all-seeing horse *vāji*, the horse that no wolf tears.” Clearly the horse here cannot be the four-footed animal. Again hymn 7, to Vaishvanara, the universal Godhead, mentions in verse 5 “the heights of heaven measured into form by the eye of this universal force.” There are several enigmatic verses which can be understood by grasping their symbolism. “Let him become the father of the Father in the womb of the Mother.” (*sūkta* 16, verse 35)

In the third set are the nine hymns from the first Mandala, by the great poet and seer Parashara. These verses are the most lyrical and poetic in the entire Rig Veda. I will give here only 2 verses from the *sūktas* 65 and 69:

He breathes in the waters like a seated swan;
He is like the God of wine, born of truth and a creator;
He is like a cow with her new-born;
He is wide-spreading with his Light seen afar. (1.65.5)

Blazing out brilliant like a lover of dawn. (1.69.1)

All in all, it is a splendid book with a low price which should be on the desks of all Veda lovers.

N. K. KRISHNAMURTHY

Why Read Rig Veda by R. L. Kashyap. Pub: Sri Aurobindo Kapali Sastry Institute of Vedic Culture, 2001. Pages 86 + x. Price: Rs. 40.

Rig Veda Samhita is a vast book of more than ten thousand verses in Vedic Sanskrit. The verses are revelations to a thousand seers some of whom were women also. An idea of its size may be obtained by noting that the popular Bhagavad Gita has only seven hundred verses. The popularly available English translations of this book done in the nineteenth century view it as an anthropological and ritualistic curiosity devoid of any wisdom. It is rarely known that Yaska, the earlier commentator on the Veda *circa* second century BCE, extols the spiritual interpretation of the Veda. Somehow the ritualistic commentary of the great scholar Sayanacharya, a contemporary of the Vijayanagar Empire, has become very popular.

As the author states in his preface, the aim of the twenty-five essays in the book under review is to give a broad overview of the spiritual and psychological wisdom in the Rig Veda Samhita, answer the questions raised by its critics and point out the relevance and necessity for the modern reader who may not even be interested in Sanskrit. The author gives about one hundred and fifty quotations from the Rig Veda to support his view. He has succeeded admirably in his task.

As an instance, consider the concept of Soma. The popular translations regard Soma as a herb yielding an intoxicating drink. The God Indra becomes intoxicated with this drink and gives cows freely to the devotees who pray to him. The book under review gives a quote from the Rig Veda stating that “only the ignorant regard Soma as a herb; none ever drank the Soma known to the men of wisdom.” The “reverential ignorance”, to use the delightful phrase of Sri Aurobindo, of the Rig Veda by the Hindus who call themselves religious has been devastating.

The society pictured in Rig Veda had high regard for women including their right for choosing their mates, high regard for the concepts of freedom and equality, respect for sceptics and unbelievers, respect for knowledge coming from all quarters, etc. All these ideals are very much relevant and necessary today. In no other religious text do we find mention of such high ideals.

A minor drawback of the book is that it does not mention the famous mantras, like the Gayatri Mantra.

This book should be read by all persons interested in our ancient culture and its relevance for modern times.

MOUDGALYA

Sri Aurobindo: Thinker and Yogi of the Future by *M.G. Umar*. Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry 2001. Pp. 284. Price: Rs.100.

Unlike other prophets, Sri Aurobindo tells us that man’s spiritual evolution is inevitable. Devastation and destruction are Nature’s method of shaking man out of his complacency. His philosophy reveals a vision of the Almighty as a benign creator of the universe. This vision may seem a little out of place in today’s world which groans under threats of doom and destruction. Yet those who prefer to think of life positively would look for alternate cultures promoting hope and faith for future development. For such people Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy has its unique relevance. The book under review focuses on the most important aspects of the Master’s philosophy. This kind of book would appeal to those who are looking for an answer to their deeper problems. This work consists of a collection of articles on Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga as exemplified in his major works. The writer includes brief life-sketches of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to reveal the inner link between their lives and their philosophy.

The first chapter traces the biographical outline of the Master covering all the major aspects of his life. Umar begins with Sri Aurobindo’s birth and early education, life in England and Baroda, continues with his political career, his self-imposed exile in Pondicherry and finally his withdrawal from the physical scene on 5 December 1950. At the end of Chapter One the author thoughtfully includes in an Epilogue the opinions of major scholars and thinkers about the Master. This would be helpful for those who need to see Sri Aurobindo in the context of major ideas and thoughts of the past century.

The second chapter deals with the core ideas of *The Life Divine*. Umar highlights Sri Aurobindo's promise of the supramental being who will be to man what man is to the animal (as the Mother once said). In other words, man is an evolutionary being who is not at the apex of Nature. He has to further evolve into a divine being embodying the Divine Gnosis. The evolution of the new race will usher in simultaneously its complete biological transformation—since the very cells of the body will be illumined. And yet this does not sound like a fantasy when we follow Sri Aurobindo's arguments and assertion. The philosopher systematically constructs the pathway of practical discipline of yoga. This charted route over unfamiliar terrain will lead to the transformation of man into a spiritual being. The concept of Reality, the highest Truth pervading all existence, can be further grasped if one turns to *Savitri*, the magnum opus of Sri Aurobindo. What is distant in philosophy becomes illuminated in the lines of poetry. Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution and involution as a parallel movement guiding the destiny of the earth since the beginning of creation has been illustrated with fine examples.

Chapter Three, devoted to the Mother, begins with a long quotation from *Savitri* which describes the Mother. No account of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy or of the Ashram is complete without elaborating the role played by the Mother. The writer correctly points out that the Mother organised and developed the Ashram to give a concrete shape to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. She was the nucleus of the Ashram and everything radiated from her. The Mother interpreted Sri Aurobindo's philosophy tirelessly so that the sadhak would have the right guidance. This chapter closes very aptly with a quotation from *Savitri* depicting her as the golden bridge between the Supreme and mankind.

"All Life Is Yoga", the fourth chapter, clarifies the main tenets of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga—aspiration, rejection, surrender and definitely patience. First, there must be a strong and overwhelming aspiration for the Divine. One must eliminate the hurdles preventing one from advancing on the path. Since it is nearly impossible to do yoga all alone it is necessary for the individual to surrender himself to Divine Grace and Force. There are many methods for realizing one's goal and many broad steps are defined by Sri Aurobindo. In the beginning one starts treading the path of yoga with one's limitations. As one proceeds the conventions and dogmas get eliminated by the power of one's aspiration. The four broad paths of Yoga according to Sri Aurobindo are the Yoga of Works, the Yoga of Integral Knowledge, the Yoga of Divine Love and the Yoga of Self-Perfection. One can choose the path according to one's temperament. As the individual progresses on the path of integral Yoga nations also need to create an atmosphere of peace and co-operation. Sri Aurobindo expounded this idea of world unity in one of his major works, *The Ideal of Human Unity*.

In the fifth chapter Umar explores this concept that a spiritualised religion of humanity alone can bring together man and man, nation and nation. This unifying religion is not a mental idea but one infused with true knowledge. The spiritual basis of society will usher in an era of peace, harmony and unity.

Some practical hints on the practice of Yoga are included in another chapter. Normal activities like sex, food, love, sleep, work have to undergo a substantial change. The

seeker is advised not to sever his emotional ties but to make his love selfless and pure. Abstinence from sex is necessary because the libido has to be converted into pure energy that can strengthen the mental, vital and physical systems of the sadhak. If the food we eat is pure and sattwic then the physical impulses also get restrained automatically. A proper balanced diet is necessary for health but at the same time there should be no preoccupation with food. Likewise sleep at regular hours is necessary for good health. It is also important to recollect the dream sequences during sleep since this will help us to become more conscious of our nature.

Work done in the spirit of consecration to the Divine brings true salvation. Work done with egoistic motives turns into a burden and stifles one's aspiration. Money, either earned or inherited, must be used with an enlightened vision for the benefit of all.

By modifying our attitudes, by improving our daily activities we create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. When we consistently look for the Divine our whole being is moulded into a divine pattern.

This book provides encouragement to one seeking guidance on the spiritual path. It may not always be possible for the seeker to read the complete works of Sri Aurobindo. This book elucidates the major concepts both for the seeker and the intellectual. This book is also recommended for those who need quick reference.

RITA NATH KESHARI