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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

THE DOWNWARD SLOPE (Poem)	...	273
THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST 1947	...	275
TOTAL AND SINCERE SURRENDER	...	277
SOME LETTERS	...	278
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF INDIA	...	281

Sampadananda Mishra

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS (Compilation)	...	283
--	-----	-----

Arjava

AN ASPIRATION (Poem)	...	285
----------------------	-----	-----

The Mother

TRUE SURRENDER	...	285
THE CONQUEST OF KNOWLEDGE	...	286

Atal Behari Vajpayee

WE SHALL TRIUMPH AGAINST TERRORISM	...	289
------------------------------------	-----	-----

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

THE LAW OF KARMA	...	294
------------------	-----	-----

Maggi

THAT INVIOLEABLE SOUND	...	296
------------------------	-----	-----

Richard Hartz

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI	...	297
----------------------------	-----	-----

R.Y. Deshpande

THIS FIRE (Poem)	...	300
------------------	-----	-----

R.Y. Deshpande

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?	...	302
---------------------------------	-----	-----

Abani Sinha

TWO SANSKRIT HYMNS ON SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER (Poem)	...	311
---	-----	-----

<i>Georges van Vrekhem</i>		
	A COMMENT APROPOS OF <i>NOT MATISSE!</i>	... 312
<i>Arun Vaidya</i>		
	MY ANGELS (Poem)	... 314
<i>Kati Widmer</i>		
	INTIMATE PORTRAITS	... 315
<i>Gayatri Lobo Gajiwala</i>		
	THE QUIZ (Poem)	... 320
<i>Yugul Kishore Gupta</i>		
	ONE HAS YET TO LEARN IN LIFE	... 321
<i>K. H. Krishnamurthy</i>		
	MY COUNTRY (Poem)	... 324
<i>Nilima Das</i>		
	SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	... 325
<i>Sanjyot D. Pai Vernekar</i>		
	PHILOSOPHY'S TRYST WITH MODERN SCIENCES	... 331
<i>Shakuntala Manay</i>		
	THE PERFECTION'S HOME (Poem)	... 335
<i>Daiva Tamosaityte</i>		
	THE UNIVERSAL ASPECT OF THE RASA CONCEPT	... 336
<i>Alexander Velichenko</i>		
	SRI AUROBINDO'S SYSTEM OF UNDERSTANDING	... 341
<i>Ayon Roy</i>		
	THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHORIAL INTENTION IN LITERATURE	... 347
<i>Goutam Ghosal</i>		
	TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO	... 352
<i>S. N. Ganguli</i>		
	THE STORY OF THREE NEUTRINOS	... 356
<i>Aurpon Bhattacharya</i>		
	SUFFERING MEANINGFULLY	... 360
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>Prema Nandakumar</i>		
	<i>Review of</i> SING MY SOUL: SELECTED POEMS AND OTHER WRITINGS <i>by</i> GEORGETTE COTY	... 364
<i>Rita Nath Keshari</i>		
	<i>Review of</i> THE GOLDEN LIGHT, a journal of SRIMA Trust	... 366
<i>Pravir Malik</i>		
	<i>Review of</i> GLOBAL DHARMIC MANAGEMENT <i>by</i> S.A. SHERLEKAR	... 367

HARIKANT C. PATEL

HARIKANT C. PATEL, son of Chhotabhai Patel, was born on 12 September 1917 at Thasara, District Kheda, in Gujarat. He had one elder brother. Harikantbhai studied in Sojitra Matriculation School in Ahmedabad. Under the influence of his cousin Ramabhai Patel he first visited the Ashram in October 1934. On the completion of his school education he joined the Ashram in March 1935. This was at the age of 18.

From the beginning Harikantbhai was assigned the work in the Prosperity, the Ashram's general stores. Prosperity takes care of all the basic requirements of the Ashramites. He continued to carry out this assignment till the end.

On 18 November 1974 Harikantbhai was co-opted as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust. In August 1992 he became the Managing Trustee of the Board.

Harikantbhai passed away in the Ashram's Nursing Home on Thursday, 7 March 2002, at 4.50 pm. He was 84.

THE DOWNWARD SLOPE

THERE came a slope that slowly downward sank;
It slipped towards a stumbling grey descent.
The dim-heart marvel of the ideal was lost...
A straining taut and dire besieged her heart;
Heavy her sense grew with a dangerous load,
And sadder, greater sounds were in her ears,
And through stern breakings of the lambent glare
Her vision caught a hurry of driving plains
And cloudy mountains and wide tawny streams,
And cities climbed in minarets and towers
Towards an unavailing changeless sky...
Drifting she saw like pictured fragments flee
Phantoms of human thought and baffled hopes,
The shapes of Nature and the arts of man,
Philosophies and disciplines and laws,
And the dead spirit of old societies,
Constructions of the Titan and the worm....
Once more arose the great destroying Voice:
...“Behold the figures of this symbol realm,
Its solid outlines of creative dream
Inspiring the great concrete tasks of earth....
Vainly thou seek’st in Matter’s world an aim;
No aim is there, only a will to be....
Look on these forms that stay awhile and pass...
The world is a myth that happened to come true,
A legend told to itself by conscious Mind...
Think not to plant on earth the living Truth
Or make of Matter’s world the home of God;
Truth comes not there but only the thought of Truth,
God is not there but only the name of God....
Dream not to change the world that God has planned,
Strive not to alter his eternal law.
If heavens there are whose gates are shut to grief,
There seek the joy thou couldst not find on earth;
Or in the imperishable hemisphere
Where Light is native and Delight is king
And Spirit is the deathless ground of things,
Choose thy high station, child of Eternity....
O soul, drown in his still beatitude.
For thou must die to thyself to reach God’s height:

I, Death, am the gate of immortality.”

But Savitri answered to the sophist God:
 “Once more wilt thou call Light to blind Truth’s eyes,
 Make Knowledge a catch of the snare of Ignorance
 And the Word a dart to slay my living soul?
 Offer, O King, thy boons to tired spirits
 And hearts that could not bear the wounds of Time,
 Let those who were tied to body and to mind,
 Tear off those bonds and flee into white calm
 Crying for a refuge from the play of God,
 Surely thy boons are great since thou art He!...
 The world is a spiritual paradox
 Invented by a need in the Unseen...
 In vain thou hast dug the dark unbridgeable gulf,
 In vain thou hast built the blind and doorless wall:
 Man’s soul crosses through thee to Paradise...
 Already the torch becomes the undying ray,
 Already the life is the Immortal’s force,
 The house grows of the householder part and one.
 How sayst thou Truth can never light the human mind
 And Bliss can never invade the mortal’s heart
 Or God descend into the world he made?...
 Already God is near, the Truth is close...
 I am not bound by thought or sense or shape;
 I live in the glory of the Infinite,
 I am near to the Nameless and Unknowable,
 The Ineffable is now my household mate.
 But standing on Eternity’s luminous brink
 I have discovered that the world was He;
 I have met Spirit with spirit, Self with self,
 But I have loved too the body of my God.
 I have pursued him in his earthly form.
 A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
 A heart that has grown one with every heart:
 I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
 My spirit’s liberty I ask for all.”

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 641-49)

THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST 1947

AUGUST 15th is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But it has a significance not only for us, but for Asia and the whole world; for it signifies the entry into the comity of nations of a new power with untold potentialities which has a great part to play in determining the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity. To me personally it must naturally be gratifying that this date which was notable only for me because it was my own birthday celebrated annually by those who have accepted my gospel of life, should have acquired this vast significance. As a mystic, I take this identification, not as a coincidence or fortuitous accident, but as a sanction and seal of the Divine Power which guides my steps on the work with which I began life. Indeed almost all the world movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though at that time they looked like impossible dreams, I can observe on this day either approaching fruition or initiated and on the way to their achievement.

I have been asked for a message on this great occasion, but I am perhaps hardly in a position to give one. All I can do is to make a personal declaration of the aims and ideals conceived in my childhood and youth and now watched in their beginning of fulfilment, because they are relevant to the freedom of India, since they are a part of what I believe to be India's future work, something in which she cannot but take a leading position. For I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power and prosperity, — though these too she must not neglect —, and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other peoples, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race. Those aims and ideals were in their natural order these: a revolution which would achieve India's freedom and her unity; the resurgence and liberation of Asia and her return to the great role which she had played in the progress of human civilisation; the rise of a new, a greater, brighter and nobler life for mankind which for its entire realisation would rest outwardly on an international unification of the separate existence of the peoples, preserving and securing their national life but drawing them together into an overriding and consummating oneness; the gift by India of her spiritual knowledge and her means for the spiritualisation of life to the whole race; finally, a new step in the evolution which, by uplifting the consciousness to a higher level, would begin the solution of the many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity, since men began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society.

India is free but she has not achieved unity, only a fissured and broken freedom. At one time it almost seemed as if she might relapse into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. Fortunately there has now developed a strong possibility that this disastrous relapse will be avoided. The wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly makes it possible that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindu and Muslim seems to have hardened into the figure of a permanent political division of the country. It is to be

hoped that the Congress and the nation will not accept the settled fact as for ever settled or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. The partition of the country must go, — it is to be hoped by a slackening of tension, by a progressive understanding of the need of peace and concord, by the constant necessity of common and concerted action, even of an instrument of union for that purpose. In this way unity may come about under whatever form — the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, the division must and will go. For without it the destiny of India might be seriously impaired and even frustrated. But that must not be.

Asia has arisen and large parts of it have been liberated or are at this moment being liberated; its other still subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

The unification of mankind is under way, though only in an imperfect initiative, organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and, if the experience of history can be taken as a guide, it must inevitably increase until it conquers. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For in any case the unification is a necessity in the course of Nature, an inevitable movement and its achievement can be safely foretold. Its necessity for the nations also is clear, for without it the freedom of the small peoples can never be safe hereafter and even large and powerful nations cannot really be secure. India, if she remains divided, will not herself be sure of her safety. It is therefore to the interest of all that union should take place. Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness could prevent it. Against that, it has been said, even the gods strive in vain; but it cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions; even it may be such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship and a voluntary fusion of cultures may appear in the process of the change and the spirit of nationalism losing its militancy may find these things perfectly compatible with the integrity of its own outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

The spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The rest is still a personal hope and an idea and ideal which has begun to take hold

both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must come through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far or how soon this connection will be fulfilled, depends upon this new and free India.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, pp. 400-03)

TOTAL AND SINCERE SURRENDER

THERE must be a total and sincere surrender; there must be an exclusive self-opening to the divine Power...

*

...surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti.

*

In proportion as the surrender and self-consecration progress the Sadhaka becomes conscious of the Divine Shakti doing the Sadhana, pouring into him more and more of herself, founding in him the freedom and perfection of the Divine Nature. The more this conscious process replaces his own effort, the more rapid and true becomes his progress. But it cannot completely replace the necessity of personal effort until the surrender and consecration are pure and complete from top to bottom.

*

The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Mother*, SABCL, Vol. 25, pp. 2,7,8,10)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of March 2002)

A few ambitious imaginations seemed to hover about me the other day: the egoistic feeling that I was doing something more than others; the idea that I will be able to do something very useful for you; that I would become a centre of power in politics and bring swaraj with your name; that I would come very near you and be given a place in the Yogic hierarchy; that I would sit quietly with you and do spiritual work.

ALL these are the usual suggestions of the ego when one does the sadhana—one has to throw them out and rise above their source.

Can a hostile being throw such a cloud that the memory becomes so dulled that we do not remember any yogic experience or our resolutions? How to meet such an emergency?

That would mean a throwing of tamas on the physical mind—it happens but it can always be avoided by quietude joined to a resolute aspiration to the Divine.

Perhaps I am writing too much, but then again, not having communications with you may be the subtle plan of a hostile being, so I am writing as soon as I find it necessary. If it is too much, please let me know.

The Mother when she took your letter and before she opened the envelope, became aware of this suggestion and saw the hostile source. Of course it must be rejected; you need have no hesitation at all in writing and, on the contrary, it is the best thing for you and you must continue.

11 February 1933

N's friend came near me while I was standing to see Mother in the evening. He began to talk to me but I avoided him. Then I felt I should not have treated him so coldly, so after a few minutes I asked him smilingly if he had seen Mother. Is it the right thing or is it better to avoid contact completely?

There was no harm in that—but it is better at present not to mix too freely with people from outside.

Yesterday I worked with awful vigour, yet after I saw Mother in the evening I felt no physical tiredness at all and that I could work for twelve hours more.

It is the Mother's energy that comes down into the vital and physical for those who are open.

12 February 1933

The flower on the envelope I received this morning is called "Vital thoroughness in work". I thought the work I was doing was quite thorough, so this gave me a sense of resistance; but in the afternoon I resolved to enter into details about the work I was supervising. I found the following things. [Ten inadequacies of work-supervision are listed.] All these points opened before me with a richness of detail that was pleasant to enter into; a keenness in work was imparted and a quiet steadiness within.

It is very good. By remaining psychically open to the Mother, all that is necessary for work or sadhana develops progressively,—that is one of the chief secrets, the central secret of the sadhana.

D, R's young son was standing near by while I was working. I told him in Telegu, "There was a king. . ." He replied immediately, "There may be a king in England." I said, "But there is a greater one here." He said, "Yes, yes, there is Sri Aurobindo." What a simple, natural, unsullied faith in a young boy, while we are doubting and resisting! Will the whole new generation have such a fine faith and knowledge!

There are a certain number of the new generation who are like that, souls already developed—even in childhood, the psychic being naturally in front.

12 February 1933

Last night before going to sleep at 9.30, I suddenly got in a semi-dream state the impulse to take a big stick and go to the new Arogya House; I saw that some people were trying to break open a door and destroy something. Awakening immediately, I thought that it might be my own fear about the house, so I did not act. On coming to the house this morning, I found a few lines or streaks made on the west wall; it is possible that at the time mentioned some boys may have tried to spoil the wall.

It might be that; but more probably some part of your being went out and saw the harm done and sent the message to the mind; in your mind it was transcribed in the way you describe as a vital attack on the house which you wanted to repel.

After coming from Pranam I felt that Mother did not smile at me; even after a few hours I could not remember whether Mother did smile or not. And then there was a very slight feeling of resistance somewhere. Is it what you meant when you wrote

about the hostile forces throwing inertia on the physical mind?

At the time it so happened that the Mother gave you a smile of welcome and approval, but she felt someone saying, “He will not notice that you have smiled” — it was the hostile formation. This is how they work — by this kind of obscuration to blind the mind and senses first and on the basis of wrong observation or failure of observation build up suggestions of a depressing or disturbing character. It happens to many sadhaks at pranam time to make this kind of mistake about Mother’s smile or expression and to worry themselves thinking she is displeased with them. This is a kind of deception against which one must be on one’s guard and such suggestions must always be rejected.

12 February 1933

After the Darshans on 15th August and 24th November of last year, I got a peculiar smell, as if something were burning; along with it there was a feeling of heat around the head and shoulders, as if something were present there. For the past three or four days, I get it often. But in the mouth it is as if something cool is being sprayed on the palate.

It may be pressure of the Agni fire that you feel as the heat — especially if there is something that has to be purified or a difficulty burned away. The cool spray on the other hand comes as an accompaniment of the sense of purification.

After reading the chapter in the “Synthesis” on supramental sense, I got the idea that the names of flowers are given by the Mother by appreciating the psyche of the plant — the psyche of a flower is of a particular quality, and that quality in the psychic world is translated into a material word, which is the name given to the flower. Is it so?

Yes.

Yesterday at work a girl brought a betel-leaf and supplied it to a workman; just as he was chewing it, I looked at him and felt that there was sexuality in that. I think betel has that atmosphere around it. Is it so?

Yes.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of March 2002)

NIRODBARAN: The forces have no separate entities?

SRI AUROBINDO: They are a part of the universal, like forces of nature.

NIRODBARAN: Are they self-directed? Have they some idea or consciousness behind?

SRI AUROBINDO: They are directed by the universal or Supreme Being and the consciousness is of the universal which is ultimately directed from the Supreme.

PURANI: Are they individualised?

SRI AUROBINDO: What do you mean by that? They are universal forces. For instance, the universal force of love seizes upon a man and he becomes a lover. When the force leaves him, he ceases to be a lover.

NIRODBARAN: But the force that is manifested through a being is his own force.

SRI AUROBINDO: The force is the universal force that is manifested through the being and the being too is part of the universal being. Both derive their support from the universal or the Supreme.

SATYENDRA: We want to know if the attacks of diseases on people are of forces or of beings.

SRI AUROBINDO: Forces of universal vital nature or beings.

NIRODBARAN: The force of electricity or the force of Nature which causes an earthquake or a cyclone—is it a universal force or the force of a being?

SRI AUROBINDO: What kind of being?

NIRODBARAN: Universal being.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it may be the action of a universal being or force. We see the force as a movement.

NIRODBARAN: Sometimes people on their death-bed shout out at some invisible forces, “Go away! I am not coming with you. Oh, they have come to fetch me away,” etc. Are there some forces they see?

SRI AUROBINDO: Forces or beings of the other world which they may see at such a time. Usually, some parts of their being are already in the other world.

NIRODBARAN (*after a while*): Subhash Bose seems to have hinted at a separate Congress if the Rightists come to a compromise. He says that he hoped to capture the Congress in a year but the Rightists have disregarded the rules of the game and he has no such hope now. The masses are also with them.

SRI AUROBINDO: Masses with them? Is that why he doesn't want an election in Bengal now?

NIRODBARAN: It is a queer argument they have given against the election.

PURANI: And did he always play according to the rules of the game?

SRI AUROBINDO: Doing what he says is the game? He seems to cherish many illusions; one of them being to capture the Congress in a year.

NIRODBARAN: He seems still to have a big following. In Calcutta he addressed a large gathering.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who says “large”?

NIRODBARAN: The *Amrita Bazar* reports.

SRI AUROBINDO: In places like Calcutta and Bombay the Leftists seem to be large in number but around Bombay they were badly defeated in the elections.

If the Congress can get Dominion Status without any fighting or struggle, I don’t see why it shouldn’t accept it. It can build up our defence after that and when that is ready, it can easily cut off the British connection.

NIRODBARAN: Dominion Status Subhash calls a compromise. He wants independence.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a compromise on the surface but it is practically independence. You get all you want without any unnecessary struggle. When you can secede at your will from the British connection, it is practically independence. Independence is all right if you are prepared for a revolution. But is the country ready for it?

NIRODBARAN: According to Subhash it is; he says Gandhi and company are not in touch with progressive elements of the country. So they don’t know the kisans, the socialists, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Can he lead? What will the kisans do? They are strong only in U.P. When repression will start, kisans will at once sink under military pressure.

*

There was very little talk today. I said that Sotuda had brought the news that Nishikanto’s book has been selling now.

PURANI: It is still too soon to expect any sale. No reviews have even come out, though reviews don’t influence the sale.

SRI AUROBINDO: In England they do, it is said. Plenty of people read the reviews. Any book recommended by the Book Club has a good sale.

*

PURANI: Jinnah is getting impossible. He says that India is one country but with two nations in it—Hindus and Muslims.

SRI AUROBINDO: Two heads on one body? Why two only? As the *Hindu* points out, there are other minorities that can also claim to be separate nations—five or six heads!

PURANI: Vallabhbhai Patel says that the British Government is keeping up the division by playing one party against the other.

SRI AUROBINDO: What else does he expect? So long as there are parties, the Government will act like that. If they don’t do so but leave India, the Russians may come in and do the same thing.

(To be continued)

(Nirodbaran: *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, pp. 423-25, 450)

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of February 2002)

वधीर्हि दस्युं धनिनं घनेनैकश्वरन्नुपशाकेभिरिन्द्र।
धनोरधि विषुणक् ते व्यायन्नयज्वानः सनकाः प्रेतिमीयुः॥

(Rigveda, 1.33.4)

Nay, thou slayest with thy weapon the wealthy Dasyu, ranging alone with thy powers that serve thee, O Indra; they on thy bow (the powers as arrows) sped diversely in all directions and they who keep possession and sacrifice not went unto their death. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 227)

परा चिच्छीर्षा ववृजुस्त इन्द्राऽयज्वानो यज्वभिः स्पर्धमानाः।
प्र यद् दिवो हरिवः स्थातरुग्र निरव्रताँ अधमो रोदस्योः॥

(Rigveda, 1.33.5)

Their heads were scattered far from them, they who do not sacrifice yet strove with the sacrificers, when, O lord of the shining steeds, O strong stander in heaven, thou didst cast out from Heaven and Earth those who observe not the law of thy working (*avratān*). (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 227)

अयुयुत्सन्ननवद्यस्य सेनामयातयन्त क्षितयो नवग्वाः।
वृषायुधो न वधयो निरष्टाः प्रवृरिन्द्राच्चितयन्त आयन्॥

(Rigveda, 1.33.6)

They fought against the army of the blameless one; the Navagwas set him on his march; like bullocks who fight against the bull they were cast out, they came to know what was Indra and fled from him down the slopes. (SABCL, Vol. 10, pp. 227-28)

त्वमेतान् रुदतो जक्षतश्चायोधयो रजस इन्द्र पारे।
अवादहो दिव आ दस्युमुच्चा प सुन्वतः स्तुवतः शंसमावः॥

(Rigveda, 1.33.7)

O Indra, thou foughtest them who laughed and wept on the other side of the mid-world (*rajasah pāre*, i.e. on the borders of heaven); thou didst burn down the Dasyu out of heaven from on high, thou didst foster the expression of him who affirms thee and gives the Soma. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 228)

चक्राणासः परीणहं पृथिव्या हिरण्येन मणिना शुम्भमानाः।
न हिन्वानासस्तितरुस्त इन्द्रं परि स्पशो अदधात् सूर्येण॥

(Rigveda, 1.33.8)

Making the circle of the earth, they shone in the light of the golden gem [an image for the Sun]; but for all their rushing they could not pass beyond Indra, for he set spies all around by the Sun. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 228)

परि यदिन्द्र रोदसी उभे अबुभोजीर्महिना विश्वतः सीम्।
अमन्यमानाँ अभि मन्यमानैर्निर्ब्रह्मभिरधमो दस्युमिन्द्र॥

(Rigveda, 1.33.9)

When thou possessedst earth and heaven all around with thy vastness; O Indra, by the speakers of the world (*brahmabhiḥ*) thou didst cast out the Dasyu, attacking those who can think not (the Truth) by those who think, *amanyamānān abhi manyamānaiḥ*. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 228)

न ये दिवः पृथिव्या अन्तमापुर्न मायाभिर्धनदां पर्यभूवन्।
युजं वज्रं वृषभश्चक्र इन्द्रो निज्योतिषा तमसो गा अदुक्षत् ॥

(Rigveda, 1.33.10)

They attained not to the end of heaven and earth; Indra, the bull, made the lightning his helper, by the Light he milked the shining cows out of the darkness. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 228)

असेन्या वः पणयो वचांस्यनिषव्यास्तन्वः सन्तु पापीः
अधृष्टो व एतवा अस्तु पन्था बृहस्पतिर्व उभया न मृळान् ।

(Rigveda, 10.108.6)

May your words be unable to attain, may your embodiments be evil and inauspicious; may you not violate the path to travel upon it; may Brihaspati not give you happiness of the two worlds (divine and human). (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 229)

नाहं वेद भ्रातश्त्वं नो स्वसश्त्वमिन्द्रो विदुरङ्गिरसश्च घोराः।
गोकामा मे अच्छदयन् यदायमपात इत पणयो वरीयः॥

(Rigveda, 10.108.10)

I know not brotherhood and sisterhood, Indra knows and the dread Angirasas; desiring the Cows they protected me so that I came; depart hence, O Panis, to a better place. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 229)

दूरमित पणयो वरीय उद्भावो यन्तु मिनतीर्ऋतेन।
बृहस्पतिर्या अविन्दन्निगूःहाः सोमो ग्रावाण ऋषयश्च विप्राः॥

(Rigveda, 10.108.11)

Depart hence, O Panis, to a better place, let the Cows ye confine go upward by the Truth, the hidden Cows whom Brihaspati finds and Soma and the pressing-stones and the illumined seers. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 229)

(*To be continued*)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

AN ASPIRATION

WHEN Night is rolled away from eastern ocean
And Dawn's translucent sky is very calm,
And waves of trance have nigh forgot their motion
In mirror poise of daydawn colour-psalm.

O then to be the bird so whitely gleaming
Out out into the orient of rose,
When through dissolving wisps of shadow-seeming
To merge within Light's vestibule he goes.

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: Very beautiful and felicitous in suggestive phrase and image.

TRUE SURRENDER

TRUE surrender enlarges you; it increases your capacity; it gives you a greater measure in quality and in quantity which you could not have had by yourself. This new greater measure of quality and quantity is different from anything you could attain before: you enter into another world, into a wideness which you could not have entered if you did not surrender. It is as when a drop of water falls into the sea; if it still kept there its separate identity, it would remain a little drop of water and nothing more, a little drop crushed by all the immensity around, because it has not surrendered. But, surrendering, it unites with the sea and participates in the nature and power and vastness of the whole sea.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers, CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 114-115)

THE CONQUEST OF KNOWLEDGE

THE great Rishi, Bhrigu, shining in splendour, sat on the summit of Mount Kailas, and Bharadwaja questioned him:

“Who made the world?

How wide is the sky?

Who gave birth to water? To fire? To the wind? To the earth?

What is life?

What is good?

What is there beyond the world?”

And so on. Great were the questions and great must be the Rishi who could answer them all!

But Bharadwaja’s mind was the mind of a man who asks and asks ever and again, and never knows enough.

The child is the supreme questioner, he is always asking, “What is this? What is that? How is it made? What makes this thing move? What makes the lightning flash? Why are there tides? Where does gold come from? And coal? And iron? How is a book printed?...” And many more questions besides.

Both children and men ask questions. They also reply. When we know something, we can answer questions. We can teach, we can spread knowledge.

What shall we learn? What shall we teach? Shall we try to learn everything that has happened throughout the ages? Shall we attempt to learn every word that man can pronounce?

In the poem of Mahabharata, the following words are used to describe the various kinds of arrows shot by the Pandava brothers and other warriors: sara, ishu, sayaka, patri, kanda, vishikha, naracha, vishatha, prushatka, bhalla, tomara, ishika, silimukha, anjalika. We certainly do not need to learn all these names for arrows. And there are many other names of things that we do not need to learn.

We speak of the news: we think of shipwrecks, murders, robberies, quarrels, law-suits, wars, fires, concerts, weddings, funerals and thousands of other things that we read of in a few minutes and forget about immediately afterwards.

We open the Koran and at the head of the chapters of this sacred book we read the word “News” and immediately we think of shipwrecks, murders... but wait!

The Prophet Mohammed was neither a frivolous person who took pleasure in news of evil deeds nor a gossip who taught nothing noble. Let us read the beginning of the chapter on “News”:

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Of what are they speaking together?

Of the great news.

Are they disputing about it?

No, but they wish to know.

Surely, they will know.

“Have we not made the earth as a bed?
 And the mountains as tent-pegs?
 Were you not created in pairs?
 And have we not made you sleep for your rest?
 And made the night for a mantle?
 And the day to earn your bread?
 And built above you the seven firmaments?
 And set there a burning light?
 And made showers of water fall from the brimming clouds
 To bring forth grain and herb everywhere
 And gardens thick with trees?”

Thus the Prophet kindled hope in the hearts and minds of men and made them think of greater things, things that have a lasting beauty, things that teach man how noble is the world of life.

So we agree that there are words and things and certain kinds of news that are not worth hearing and repeating. But other things, on the contrary, are worth hearing and repeating, even though it may cost us much time, trouble and effort to find them out.

Man’s power lies within his thought. The limbs, the hands that are so skilful, are the slaves of his thought which decides and directs.

And since the human race first dwelt on earth, how great have been man’s conquests over Nature!

We can see this power pictured in the tale of Rama’s crossing over the sea.

When he reached the shores of India, and learned that his dear wife Sita was a captive in the island of Ceylon, he prepared to cross the waters. Vast was his army, but it was made up of monkeys and bears. How could they cross the turbulent waters?

Rama’s intelligence was profound, his sagacity keen and his heart full of courage. First he spoke gently to the old Ocean and said:

“Great Sea, I beseech you, let my army pass.” But after he had waited three days, there was still no reply from the waves.

Then Rama called his brother:

“Lakshman, bring me my bow and arrows. I have wasted my words on the sea, just as a man wastes good seeds by sowing them in sand.”

Rama, the divine hero, shot an arrow into the deep waters and the shaft gave a fiery pain to the ocean, and all the fish were full of fear. Then the spirit of the ocean took the form of a Brahmin who knelt before the Lord with a golden dish full of jewels as an offering.

The Ocean clasped the lotus-feet of Rama and said:

“Great Lord, forgive my sin, I am like my kin of the air, the earth and the fire. They are heavy and slow and so accustomed to power that they do not answer the call of a Lord like you. No hero before you has ever made me obey his will. In you I see my master. Do what seems good to you.”

Lord Rama smiled:

“Tell me,” he said, “how my army may cross over your realms of waves and storms.”

“My waters,” said the sea, “will bear on their breast the rocks which your soldiers will throw on them and in that way a bridge will be built between India and Lanka.”

Rama turned to his army:

“Let the bridge be built,” he said.

“Glory to Rama,” shouted all the warriors.

They uprooted trees and rocks and even great cliffs, and brought them to the two master-builders, Nala and Nila. And Nala and Nila fastened the wood and stone together so that everything floated firmly on the surface of the sea. Then the army marched across it.

Rama sat on a mountain of India and watched the countless troops moving across the bridge.

Just as Rama forced the spirit of the ocean to obey him, so does man’s thought, the glory of humanity, conquer the sea, and many other things besides. Man masters the wind, since he makes it blow his sailing ships and turn his windmills. He conquers the ice and the snow, for explorers have travelled to the frozen lands of the North Pole and the South Pole and have climbed the highest mountains. He conquers the beasts, for all over the world he slays the animals that are a danger to him and his family: lions, tigers, wolves, snakes and even sharks. Although he has less power over the great ocean, he has made his strength felt on land. And while he has rid himself of the animals that are harmful to him, he has kept and bred the animals that are useful to him: the ox, the horse, the sheep, the elephant, etc.

But all this is the conquest of things by his hands and by his tools and weapons. And hands and tools and weapons are the servants of his thought.

Man conquers by knowledge. And he conquers knowledge; he asks and asks again and again, and perseveres until he really knows.

Some men of whom history tells are known as conquerors: Alexander the Great who conquered Western Asia and Egypt, Julius Caesar who conquered France and England, the emperor Babar who conquered the North of India, Napoleon who became for a time the master of Europe.

But there are other ways of being a conqueror.

You also can be a conqueror. There are things in the world which need to be known and learnt. Ask, seek, learn and conquer. Then you can call yourself a conqueror.

THE MOTHER

(*Words of Long Ago*, CWM, Vol. 2, pp. 243-247)

WE SHALL TRIUMPH AGAINST TERRORISM

My dear fellow countrymen, joyous new year greetings to all of you.

To our brave *jawans*, security forces, and policemen guarding our borders and vital installations; to our hard-working *kisans* (farmers) who have ensured our food security; to our workers and managers who, with their sweat and toil, are making India an economic power; to our talented software professionals who have burnished India's image abroad; to our children and youth, who are the future of our nation; indeed, to every Indian who in his or her own way is contributing to nation-building, I wish happiness and prosperity in the New Year.

I also send my felicitations to all Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), who, despite the distance in space and time that separates them from us, have maintained unbreakable social, cultural, spiritual, and emotional ties with India.

We leave an eventful year behind us, a year of many trials and tribulations—amongst them the earthquake in Gujarat at the beginning of the year and the terrorist attack on our Parliament at the end of the year.

We faced all of them with courage and self-confidence. As we begin our journey in 2002, it is time for all of us together to resolve that we shall grow further in fortitude; that our belief in ourselves shall be further steeled to take on even stiffer challenges that may confront us in the new year.

Today, let us pledge that our motherland shall emerge stronger—in national security, which is of supreme importance, and in development that betters the life of those of our brethren who continue to be victims of poverty and neglect.

It is said that time's ways are inscrutable. This may be true in the life of individuals, not in a nation's life. True, we cannot predict what may happen to our individual destinies. But, in my mind, there is no uncertainty whatsoever about India's destiny.

India is marching towards a bright future. We have our share of problems. But these cannot hide the brightness on the horizon. It will be a future free of poverty and all other vestiges of underdevelopment.

Indeed, the level of poverty is coming down; and the day is not far when every region, every community, and every citizen in our country shall enjoy the fruits of India's prosperity and progress.

If we want, and if we act unitedly to get what we want, then this energizing goal can be achieved within the span of a generation.

But the future I see is not only one of a prosperous India, free of fear and free of want. In recent years, the world has come to look at India with renewed respect, recognizing a strong and prosperous global power in the making.

I have no doubt that India in the foreseeable future will begin to play a decisive role in global affairs, not to advance any partisan agenda at the expense of others but to protect and promote mankind's most cherished universal ideals.

It is also a future when the fabled richness of India's culture, arts, intellectual explo-

ration, and spiritual pursuit will begin to show its full radiance, bringing much succour to the troubled spirit of the modern man.

Is this a dream? Yes. Is it an impossible dream? No, it is not.

Nations achieve greatness when their people learn to dream lofty dreams and to strive hard—and make sacrifices, when necessary—to realize those dreams, without getting disheartened by the difficulties along the way and without ever letting their faith in their nation's destiny falter.

I am reminded here of the inspiring vision of Maharshi Aurobindo, which he set out in his historic radio broadcast for August 15, 1947:

“I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power, and prosperity,—though these too she must not neglect,—and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other peoples, but to live also for god and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race.”

This, I believe, is the quintessence of India's work, now and in the future. Different leaders of modern India have presented the same vision in different words.

In the five and a half decades since independence, we have made definite progress in realizing a part of this vision, although there is a need to introspect on why our achievement has not been greater, faster, and more egalitarian.

But let us not get bogged down in the issues and debates of yesterday. Now we must hasten our march forward, correcting the mistakes of the past but always keeping our eyes fixed firmly on where we want India to be in the future.

It often happens that the road to the future is rendered difficult by roadblocks placed by the past. One such roadblock for us, indeed the biggest, is Pakistan's consistent and continuing anti-India policy, beginning with its refusal to accept the constitutionally validated and democratically endorsed accession of Jammu & Kashmir to India.

For a long time, the rulers in Islamabad relied on military confrontation, as exemplified by the wars they waged in 1948, 1965, and 1971, to settle this issue in their favour. After failing abjectly in their endeavour, the anti-India forces in Pakistan decided to foment terrorism and religious extremism as the principal means to instigate separatism in our country.

I must say that they are nursing a dangerous delusion. What they could not achieve through open military aggression, they never will achieve through cross-border terrorism.

They failed miserably in their evil designs in Punjab. Terrorism bled Punjab; but, in the end, it fled Punjab. It could not dent Hindu-Sikh unity. Similarly, the terrorists and their mentors are doomed to fail in Jammu & Kashmir, too.

However, the very certainty of failure is driving them, in desperation, to embrace a more dangerous agenda. The terrorist attack on our Parliament on December 13 has shown beyond a shadow of doubt that the anti-India forces in Pakistan are prepared to wreak any havoc on our soil.

It was an attack on our sovereignty, on our national self-respect, and it was a chal-

lenge to our democratic system.

Although India has been a victim of cross-border terrorism for nearly the past two decades and has lost tens of thousands of innocent men and women and security forces, the outrage of December 13 has breached the limit of the nation's endurance.

That the terrorists who stormed the precincts of Parliament failed in their core objective, thanks to the exemplary alertness and bravery of our security forces, some of whom laid down their lives in the call of their duty, cannot diminish the diabolical nature of the conspiracy hatched by their mentors across the border.

It is useful to presume that more such terrorist strikes can take place. The only way to defend ourselves against such attacks is by forcing Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism. And this precisely is the objective we have set ourselves in our current multi-pronged strategy.

The many political and diplomatic steps we have taken after December 13 are a part of this strategy. As I have said earlier, India does not want war. India has never been an aggressor in her long history.

But we have a sovereign right to defend ourselves against cross-border terrorism, which is a proxy war that is already thrust on us. Pakistan will be solely responsible for the consequences of encouraging terrorism against India and, when expedient, turning a blind eye to terrorist groups with trans-national linkages operating from its soil.

Today, I also wish to share a thought with the people of Pakistan and, indeed, with all the right-thinking persons in its ruling establishment.

It is unfortunate that anti-India forces in Pakistan have been allowed to play with fire, apparently with no thought given to what this fire can do to Pakistan itself.

I have heard and read many perceptive Pakistanis express serious concern over their government's appeasement of terrorism fuelled by religious extremism.

They have voiced alarm over how Pakistan's social fabric and its institutions have been grievously affected by its government's policy of creating and systematically promoting the Taliban, ostensibly to gain 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan and a 'force multiplier' for its anti-India campaign in Jammu & Kashmir.

The fate of the first game plan has already been sealed. The fate of the second will be no different.

Taliban and Al Qaeda are not merely the names of organizations. They stand for an aberrant mental outlook and a highly regressive socio-political agenda, which rejects the ideals of pluralism, secularism, freedom, and democracy and has no respect even for national boundaries.

For the pursuit of its goal to establish global hegemony, it considers the use of terrorism domestically as well as its aggressive export to countries near and far entirely legitimate.

Like you, I too often wonder: Why do some people choose the path of terrorism? Why do they kill, and are ready to be killed? How are they able to create a religious frenzy in support of terrorism, when no religion sanctions terrorism?

One can understand if some persons, dissatisfied with the prevailing state of affairs

or angered by a sense of injustice or deprivation, want to establish a different social order that they consider is more just and would benefit more people.

There is nothing wrong with such striving. Indeed, humanity has progressed through the struggles of such idealists.

But where the path of the terrorist diverges sharply from that of the idealist and the revolutionary is in the choice of the means he employs. Because of his murderous ways, his intolerance, and his extremism, he expels himself from the pale of humanity and descends to barbarism. To allow such barbarians to succeed even partially, even in a single corner of the world, is to invite danger for the whole civilized humanity.

Which is why India stood firmly behind the international coalition's support to the United States' war on terror in Afghanistan following the horrendous terrorist attacks of September 11 in New York and Washington.

The leadership of Pakistan took a commendable decision to join the international coalition against terrorism in Afghanistan, although it meant a drastic U-turn in their policy of support to the Taliban regime.

But what was their real intention? If it was the same as that of the international community—namely, to root out terrorism and extremism—then I extend my hand of alliance to them.

I wish to tell them: "Shed your anti-India mentality and take effective steps to stop cross-border terrorism, and you will find India willing to walk more than half the distance to work closely with Pakistan to resolve, through dialogue, any issue, including the contentious issue of Jammu & Kashmir."

In my musings from Kumarakom last year, I had affirmed:

"In our search for a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem, both in its external and internal dimensions, we shall not traverse solely on the beaten track of the past. Rather, we shall be bold and innovative designers of a future architecture of peace and prosperity for the entire South Asian region."

I continue to remain wedded to this commitment. My bus journey to Lahore earlier in February 1999, my invitation to President Pervez Musharraf to come to Agra in July for summit talks, and our oft-extended 'ceasefire' in Jammu & Kashmir are a testimony to India's sincere, bold, and innovative search for peace.

This search continued even after the betrayal in Kargil. Our efforts will be further intensified, if Pakistan demonstrates its matching sincerity to have peace with India.

Together, let us leave the past of futile hostilities behind us and embrace a future free of tension and full of mutually beneficial possibilities. The common enemy that both our countries face is poverty, illiteracy, disease, and unemployment. Terrorism and extremism cannot solve any of these problems. They can only further delay their solution.

Therefore, let us join hands to fight this enemy and, along with other countries in South Asia, make our region a land of peace, plenty, and all-round progress. This is the challenge of the new year and of the new century. Let us accept it in a spirit of cooperation.

However, if the intention of Pakistan's leadership is to continue to promote, or con-

done, cross-border terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir as a matter of state policy, while maintaining that they are one with the world in rooting out terrorism in Afghanistan, then the international community will judge this position to be opportunistic. It will conclude that Pakistan, far from being a part of the solution, will remain a part of the problem itself.

It is for Pakistan to make the right choice. After what happened on December 13, we have made certain legitimate demands of the government of Pakistan. Its sincerity to fight terrorism will be determined by its positive response to these demands.

We also hope that our friends in the international community will bring requisite pressure on Pakistan to give up its double standards on terrorism.

Dear fellow countrymen, the situation we are facing is unprecedented. I would like you to be prepared for any eventuality. I would also like you to realize that the battle against terrorism will necessarily be a long one. One should neither expect a quick and painless victory nor despair if more terrorist strikes take place.

Today, my heart goes out to our jawans, security forces and police personnel who are doing their duty in difficult conditions, so that all of us can sleep soundly and go about our normal lives.

But let us also recognize that, in some ways, every citizen is a soldier in this war against terrorism. Like them, let us be disciplined and ever vigilant.

Like them, let us also be prepared to make sacrifices—sacrifice of our leisure, sacrifice of our comforts, sacrifice of our riches, and, if necessary, sacrifice of our lives.

I am sure that all of us will work harder than before to keep our economy and our civic services fighting-fit. I know that, as during the previous wars, our citizens will gladly bear hardships if the government has to take certain temporary measures to support our effort.

Our people have shown the fist of unity at the time of every crisis in the past. I am confident that you will do it again, and not allow any other issue to come between us and our goal.

And that goal is India's victory—a decisive victory—in our supremely just struggle. We shall triumph against terrorism—to defend India, to defend humanity. Let this be every Indian's New Year resolve. May the Almighty give us strength to redeem this resolve.

ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE

THE LAW OF KARMA

A LETTER

If I haven't replied to you promptly it has mostly been because I was myself seeking enlightenment on the problem you have stated.

Your problem logically divides into four interrelated parts:

(1) If the vital and mental beings, before getting dissolved, exhaust, on the other planes after death, the effects of their actions on earth, what becomes of the Law of Karma which says that the rewards and punishments come in the next incarnation on earth?

(2) If the psychic being takes on a new vital and mental being when it takes birth again, what happens to the Karma incurred by the old vital and mental beings?

(3) If there are new vital and mental beings at each birth and if the psychic which persists from birth to birth is untouched by any vital-mental action, how can those new beings be held responsible for what the old ones have done?

(4) If the Law of Karma is valid as the best explanation of the inequalities that are in the world, through what medium does it operate under the conditions listed in questions 2 & 3?

The first question is not difficult to answer. After death, the vital and mental beings of ordinary people find themselves among presences with which they have been in contact in the course of life by means of the desires and passions and thoughts they have indulged in. Conditions which were not fully found on earth exist there and the discarnate vital and mental take advantage of them or suffer by them. This is the analogue of what is really called heaven and purgatory and hell. It has nothing to do with the Karmic Law which operates on earth for actions done on earth. Of course, what happens on the other planes can be also subsumed under a Karmic Law but this Law is not a substitute for the other terrestrial one. The supra-terrestrial Karmic Law is all in all for the religions which do not accept rebirth, but even so the idea of rewards and punishments in the ordinary sense is declared by Sri Aurobindo to be a crude, popular fiction. Suffering and happiness will be there but not meted out according to a narrow moral system of canings and lollipops.

As regards the remaining questions, I have dug up a number of letters or talks from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and I have sent them to the press for the August issue of *Mother India*. They don't go into details but provide some sort of general answer. What I can say here in addition to them is simply this: The aim of evolution on the human level is a wide variety of experiences for the soul, each time a new side of consciousness to be developed. For that reason a new vital and mental being no less than a new physical one is required. The old notion of a relentless series of punishments and rewards holds here as little as it holds on the supra-terrestrial planes. Everything done by the vital and mental

personalities in a life does not have a value for the next incarnation. So a mechanical comprehensive Law of Karma in every detail cannot be thought of as acting. The Karmic Law must act in consonance with the Law of Evolutionary Progress and Enrichment. In addition, there is the action of the Divine Grace which can annul a lot of Karma in response to the soul's aspiration. Certain things from the past do continue and have force—but how exactly is beyond me to describe. The letters I'll be publishing give some idea but the particulars of the *modus operandi* is not entirely clear to me. In general the best light on rebirth and its implications is thrown by the chapters on the subject in *The Life Divine* of Sri Aurobindo.

6 June 1982

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

P.S. In order not to keep you lingering till August I am giving here the relevant sentences from the matter which will be published:

Q. ...What becomes of the Karma and of the impressions—samskaras—on the old sheaths? Do they also dissolve without producing any result, good or bad, which they should according to the theory of Karma? Also what becomes of the vital and mental beings after the dissolution of the vital and mental sheaths?

A. ...the true vital, the true mental and even the true subtle physical persist; it is that which keeps all the impressions received in earthly life and builds the chain of Karma. (The Mother)

The soul gathers the essential elements of its experience in life and makes that its basis of growth in the evolution; when it returns to birth it takes up with its mental, vital, physical sheaths so much of its past Karma as is useful to it in the new life for further experience. (Sri Aurobindo)

My comment: A distinction is made between the true and the outer being on each plane. The outer in every case dissolves sooner or later. The true remains (God knows where) and comes back with whatever Karma the soul chooses.

THAT INVIOABLE SOUND

SLEEPING in the rock
It lay unfurled, still bound,
Unheard within the shadows of its crypt,
Waiting to be kindled by the struggling tongue
This ancient sound.
The heart behind the hushed heart
Held its secret
On still-defended ground.
And when, at last, it was set ranging free for god
A new Prometheus leapt forth unsound
To teach us love
Then did it flare
Brighter than fire
Brighter than fire
This time round
This time round
And forever closed the wound
Of humankind

The music that draws near unveiled
Is love's sound, love's inviolable sound.

MAGGI

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of March 2002)

The Symbolism of Night in “The Symbol Dawn”

6

As we attempt to pierce the “triple-plated gloom”¹ of the darkness that seems to intensify as the dawn of a divine consciousness on earth draws nearer, we glimpse the obscure workings of the mind hidden behind the dim physiognomy of Night as portrayed in the opening passage of *Savitri*. This mind with its negativity, its conservatism and its refusal to admit the light is presented as the primary obstacle in the way of the luminous event symbolised by the dawn. “Huge” though it is, we have found that an important aspect of the action of the “mind of Night” can be traced to the level of the cells. At this level, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother encountered a formidable resistance to the higher forces. Their observations about the nature of this resistance point, however, to the possibility of a radical conquest. The Mother, for example, noted:

There is a consciousness in the cells: it is what we call the “body consciousness” and it is wholly bound up with the body. This consciousness has much difficulty in changing, because it is under the influence of the collective suggestion which is absolutely opposed to the transformation.

Evidently, the problem has two distinct elements. There is the nature of the body consciousness itself and there is the influence of the collective suggestion. The crux of the difficulty seems to lie in the latter. But in that case, the cellular consciousness would only have to be freed from the tyranny of an alien influence that has been imposed on it. This may be difficult but should not be impossible. Eventual success can even be predicted as the inevitable outcome of the struggle if it is viewed in an evolutionary perspective. The Mother went on to say:

So one has to struggle with this collective suggestion, not only with the collective suggestion of the present, but with the collective suggestion which belongs to the earth-consciousness as a whole, the terrestrial human consciousness which goes back to the earliest formation of man. That has to be overcome before the cells can be spontaneously aware of the Truth, of the Eternity of matter.²

Essentially, it is an immemorial habit that has to be changed:

Inflicting still its habit on the cells
The phantom of a dark and evil start

Ghostlike pursues all that we dream and do.³

In Sri Aurobindo's epic, the being who confronts Savitri as Death is represented as the source and exponent of the defeatist suggestions that keep us in bondage. We have been hypnotised, as it were, by Death into believing our mortality cannot be transformed. And yet there is nothing in the actual nature of things to prevent the transformation. The spell of the hypnotic suggestion has only to be broken. The breaking of this spell is, in effect, what Savitri accomplishes as a representative of humanity in her debate with Death.

The last support of the refusal or inability to change may lie at a yet deeper level than the subconscious mind of the body. It is perhaps in the Inconscient itself that the most forbidding aspect of the mind of Night is to be found. Night, as we have seen, was for Sri Aurobindo the principal symbol of the Inconscient. If so, the phrase "mind of Night" should refer to a mind of the Inconscient. But does such an entity exist?

At first sight, a mind of the Inconscient might look like a contradiction in terms. In the sheer Inconscient, there would seem to be no room for mind. Yet the Mother spoke of her experience of a "mentalised inconscient". Her account of this experience may provide a clue to the ultimate nature of the mind of Night and not only explain the secret of its obstructive power, but reveal the key to its transformation.

The Mother described at some length her experience of 5 November 1958, the basis of her new year message for 1959. During the meditation after the evening class, in which she had noticed in the children a "total lack of interest" whose cause she wished to discover, she "began going down into the mental atmosphere" of those around her:

And I was literally dragged down to the bottom, as if into a hole.... I went down into a fissure, as it were, between two steep rocks, rocks made of something harder than basalt.... And I was dragged, dragged, dragged down,—I went down, down, down and there was no end to it, it became more and more oppressive, stifling, suffocating.⁴

It is not the details of this experience, but its general significance and outcome that have a direct bearing on *Savitri*. But it may be relevant to note in passing that Aswapati too, in "The Descent into Night", is

Driven by a strange will down ever down....⁵

He, too, in the next canto, is "stifled in the Inconscient's hollow dusk". There, in "the abysmal secrecy", he finds "the secret key of Nature's change".⁶ We will return to this point after we have seen how the Mother's experience ended, and what she had to say about it. She continued:

I asked myself, "But what is there at the bottom of this hole?"

Hardly had I formulated the question when it was as if I had touched a spring

that was there at the very bottom of the hole, a spring I had not noticed yet, which acted at once with a tremendous force and at one bound shot me up straight into the air...⁷

The Mother formulated this extraordinary experience succinctly and powerfully in her message for the new year:

At the very bottom of the inconscience most hard and rigid and narrow and stifling I struck upon an almighty spring that cast me up forthwith into a formless limitless Vast vibrating with the seeds of a new world.⁸

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

References

1. *Savitri* (1993), p. 220.
2. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 315.
3. *Savitri*, p. 140.
4. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, pp. 381-82.
5. *Savitri*, p. 217.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
7. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 382.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 381.

THIS FIRE

THIS puissant fire was kindled long ago
 even before the birth of rushing Time,
And long before the seer-monarch wielded his sword
 of triumph across unknown lands,
And the defeatless champion speeded in his chariot
 on the ascending slopes of Heaven,
And a fruitful strangeness was sowed in immobility
 of the Void's occult furrows,
Long before the dreams of the ageless Dreamer woke up
 in the mystery of the sleep.
This fire was kindled on summits of the mountain
 that up-bears the great imperturbable calm,
And in the swaying green that providently hastens
 even unto the abyss of death,
And yet reaches the viewless expanse of the sky
 beyond the grasp of mortal sight.
This fire was kindled in the cave of the darkness
 and on the rock of the spiritless gloom,
And in the swift-rippling stream, and in the veins of life,
 and in the intuition's blaze,
In the hollow, and in the shanty, in pupil of the hesitant eye
 yearning for a blinkless light.
This fire was struck not with the sharp edge of the flint
 gifted by the works of Time,
Nor by a sudden lightning in the dark and ancient woods
 when moved angelic agents through storms,
Nor by fine grains of the fast-burning propellant-fuel
 rocketing the spaceships of adventure.
But this fire was pressed under the hooves of horses
 who bring riches to the sacrificer,
And this fire jumped like a thunder from cloud
 to auspicious cloud of plenty,
And sprang up from the temple-bells like a hymn
 of loud affirmation in the song of its march,
And climbed up from the valley like a voice of immortality
 defying embodied death.
O worship this fire and offer to it flowers and food
 cooked with rich milk and honey,
Offer ornaments of the night and happy moods of the dawn
 and gains of the youthful day:

This fire established long ago in the lotus-heart of a multi-
delighting creation,
In million figs of this Tree of the World sprawling
in excellence of the Truth.
Now a quenchless will has been kindled again
in the hour of God taking birth in the golden womb,—
As though a far-visioning poet conquered for joy
the whole earth in the laud of the Immortal.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of March 2002)

Woodsman Spare the Tree

In the mid-nineteenth century Walt Whitman wrote *Woodsman Spare the Tree*, but then at that time he was making a simple appeal to the conscience of man who could perhaps yet hear the poetic voice. Today neither do we have poets of the kind who can write “of life broadened, raised and illumined by a strong intellectual intuition of the self of man and the large soul of humanity” (*The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol. 9, p. 284), nor simple people who can respond with the alertness of noble instincts that can shape it. The woods are disappearing and concrete jungles are taking their place. The industrial effluents are flooding the streams. The air is filled with the chimney smoke that can cause a disastrous change in the sensitive biosphere. Cows have become machines to produce in megacanisters the white liquid and the farms are infected with the inorganic poison. The barns are rich but the grains are dry and lifeless. We have produced the synthetic world for which the woods have to be cut thoughtlessly, mercilessly. The Hollow Man has arrived on the scene. The happy feeling the bard had about humanity now seems altogether wanting.

I see the serene brotherhood of philosophers,
I see the constructiveness of my race—

thus he sang, but it can no more be heard in the din of the petro-civilisation in which we live. What is the great loss we bemoan? It is the loss of the precious Whitman-spirit which causes us the considerable anguish that is of our own making.

Sri Aurobindo saw in Whitman a giant of poetic thought with his energy of diction, a prophet who put his gifts to the service of democracy, liberty and the soul of man and Nature and all humanity. “He is a great poet, one of the greatest in the power of his substance, the energy of his vision, the force of his style, the largeness at once of his personality and his universality. His is the most Homeric voice since Homer.” In his speech is the rush of oceanic sound, “the surging of the Atlantic between continents, not the magic roll and wash of the Aegean around the isles of Greece.” (*Ibid.*, p. 149)

Again: “He belongs to the largest mind of the nineteenth century by the stress and energy of his intellectual seeking, by his emphasis on man and life and Nature, by his idea of the cosmic and universal,... by his eye fixed on the future, by his intellectual reconciling vision at once of the greatness of the individual and the community of mankind, by his nationalism and internationalism, by his gospel of comradeship and fraternity in our common average manhood, by almost all in fact of the immense mass of ideas which form the connecting tissue of his work.” (*Ibid.*, p. 179) He gave to them all another potency and meaning without becoming excessively intellectual. But the “puissant voice” has fallen silent. Presently we live in the digital severity that is altogether insensitive to

the invigorating soul of Nature. The tendency is more to observe life than live it in the subtle yet strong and swift character sustained by its shaping powers.

However, it is gainful to hold dear,—and if possible repossess,—the Whitman heritage that we may enrich our synthetic world in the authenticity of its spirit. Science and technology and commerce cannot be all and the creation of warm cultural space is essential to the wholesomeness of a nation's longings and aspirations. When Whitman published his *Leaves of Grass* around the fourth of July in 1855, "he believed he was embarking on a personal literary journey of national significance." Defining the American experience, he vocalised in a new voice the greatness of a new country.

"At the time of Whitman's birth in 1819, the Constitution and the democratic ideas upon which this country was founded," writes a commentator, "were only a generation old; America was a land of seemingly unlimited space, resources, and possibilities, yet a land with no cultural roots to call its own." But today the Whitman phenomenon only goes to show the extremely dynamic period of American cultural history which is eminent in several respects. He sang not of the Hollow Man but of the Modern Man; he sang of

... the freest action form'd under the laws divine.

Indeed, the poetry of Whitman shows what large and new elements can bring to the increase of the spiritual potentialities even in the harshness of this material existence. Such were the foundational concepts which cherished and promoted higher goals in every walk of life giving nobility to action even in things material.

If we have to see in this cultural backdrop the American science we might as well take a couple of examples. This is perhaps necessary to appreciate and recognise the fact that science itself is a product of a certain social environment and it is in that totality that it can be availing or hurtful.

"Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and Nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? ... There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship." Not too long before Whitman this is what Emerson said while speaking about Nature. The roots of study were deeper than what are found in the rational soil of today. These seem to be totally absent in the commerce-based occupation of man in the present age. A certain intuitive touch with the entire world around gave a sense of another awareness.

Emerson bewailed that "science has one aim, namely, to find a theory of nature. We have theories of races and of functions, but scarcely yet a remote approach to an idea of creation." If Dante experienced love moving the sun and the other stars, here was one who saw every night "the envoys of beauty coming out and lighting the universe with their admonishing smile." What we miss in the gross commercial century of ours is the feeling of intimacy that comes from another kind of association. Emerson felt something

different. "In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows... currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God." That makes Emerson's rapturous utterance genuinely Vedantic. At a profounder philosophical level for him visible nature has a spiritual and moral side which we see not in our study. If the world is a divine dream there also seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms. This in the context of Idealism leads to the question of the evidence of our own being and the evidence of the world's being. "Idealism is a hypothesis to account for nature by other principles than those of carpentry and chemistry. Yet, if it only deny the existence of matter, it does not satisfy the demands of the spirit. It leaves God out of me. It leaves me in the splendid labyrinth of my perceptions, to wander without end." The insight of the reality of the physical world in the dream of God is something marvellous indeed. For Emerson

The golden key
Which opes the palace of eternity

carries upon its face the highest certificate of truth because, he says, "it animates me to create my own world through the purification of my soul."

Complaining against empirical science Emerson states that the very knowledge of functions and processes bereaves the student of the manly contemplation of the whole. "The savant becomes unpoetic. But the best read naturalist who lends an entire and devout attention to truth, will see that there remains much to learn of his relation to the world, and that it is not to be learned by any addition or subtraction or other comparison of known quantities, but is arrived at by untaught sallies of the spirit, by a continual self-recovery, and by entire humility. He will perceive that there are far more excellent qualities in the student than preciseness and infallibility; that a guess is often more fruitful than an indisputable affirmation, and that a dream may let us deeper into the secret of nature than a hundred concerted experiments."

He continues: "The problems to be solved are precisely those which the physiologist and the naturalist omit to state. When I behold a rich landscape, it is less to my purpose to recite correctly the order and superposition of the strata, than to know why all thought of multitude is lost in a tranquil sense of unity. I cannot greatly honour minuteness in details, so long as there is no hint to explain the relation between things and thoughts; no ray upon the metaphysics, of conchology, of botany, of the arts, to show the relation of the forms of flowers, shells, animals, architecture, to the mind, and build science upon ideas. In a cabinet of natural history, we become sensible of a certain occult recognition and sympathy in regard to the most unwieldy and eccentric forms of beast, fish, and insect. The American who has been confined, in his own country, to the sight of buildings designed after foreign models, is surprised on entering York Minster or St. Peter's at Rome, by the feeling that these structures are imitations also,—faint copies of an invisible archetype. Nor has science sufficient humanity, so long as the naturalist overlooks that wonderful congruity which subsists between man and the world."

This is undoubtedly a very powerful argument against the methodology of science. The question of natural selection versus creative design in the evolution of species, for instance, looks to be unresolvable if we are to accept the involved antagonism between the two. Theories can be marshalled to support one or the other approach. When seen from a humanistic point of view, it is indisputable that science cannot provide answers to several aspects we associate with life and thought. Idealism has a certain role to play in urging human endeavour towards things that are noble and satisfying to our deeper sense. On the other hand the solidity of empirical rationalism is a gain that we should not forgo for something that may appear airy or mystifying. We shall take up the issue later.

Let us presently remain with Emerson. Beyond the half-sight of science there are worlds of wonder waiting to offer their gifts to us if only we can approach them with another sense of cognition. "The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common. What is a day? What is a year? What is summer? What is woman? What is a child? What is sleep? To our blindness, these things seem unaffecting. We make fables to hide the baldness of the fact and conform it, as we say, to the higher law of the mind. But when the fact is seen under the light of an idea, the gaudy fable fades and shrivels. We behold the real higher law. To the wise, therefore, a fact is true poetry, and the most beautiful of fables. So shall we come to look at the world with new eyes. It shall answer the endless inquiry of the intellect,—What is truth? and of the affections,—What is good? by yielding itself passive to the educated Will. Then shall come to pass what my poet said; Nature is not fixed but fluid. Spirit alters, moulds, makes it. The immobility or bruteness of nature, is the absence of spirit; to pure spirit, it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient. Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house a world; and beyond its world, a heaven. Know then that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect. What we are, that only can we see. All that Adam had, all that Caesar could, you have and can do. Adam called his house, heaven and earth; Caesar called his house, Rome; you perhaps call yours, a cobbler's trade; a hundred acres of ploughed land; or a scholar's garret. Yet line for line and point for point, your dominion is as great as theirs, though without fine names. Build, therefore, your own world." The question is if a heavily industrialised society can imagine such a possibility.

But even the most urban citizen of our age had an uneasy feeling about the disappearance of a world that was simple and beautiful. Not too long ago T. S. Eliot became nostalgic about the pre-industrial America and the family and the farmhouse. But what pained him most in 1933 was the sight of a country laid waste by the factory machines: "My local feelings were stirred very sadly by the first view of New England... Those hills had once, I suppose, been covered by primaevial forest; the forest was razed to make sheep pastures for the English settlers; now the sheep are gone, and most of the descendants of the settlers... You descend to the sordor of the half dead mill town of Southern New Hampshire and Massachusetts. It is not necessarily those lands which are the most fertile or most favoured in climate that seem to me the happiest, but those in which a long struggle of adaptation between man and his environment has brought out the most qualities of both; in which the landscape has been moulded by numerous generations of one

race, and in which the landscape in turn has modified the race to its own character. And those New England mountains seemed to me to give evidence of a human success so meagre and transitory as to be more desperate than the desert.” (*After Strange Gods*)

The Unreal City made Eliot an Unreal Citizen, a resident alien, a *métoikos*. In his poetry we see a waste land; what we have now in our crowded houses are decayed gerontions; London the symbol of a successful empire is drifting farther away from grace; we see everywhere hollow or straw men, we hear dried voices, we greet paralysed creatures. “In our rhythm of earthly life we tire of light.” The quest for knowledge and experience becomes illusory. The foundations of existence become shaky and cities become unreal. The possible hope is if this can lead to in-folding. “This in-folding is to be identified as the true Christian’s re-enactment of Christ’s Passion. It is in such moments that the mystery of earthly suffering and the beauty of divine communion are reconciled, the fire and the rose become one.” In it

All shall be well and
All manners of things shall be well...

But then the dichotomy remains yet unresolved. Our religious fervour and material longings both remain unanswered and we cannot rest content with one or the other. The boons of information technology, for instance, are wonderful and most acceptable, to the extent that we take even the hacking of our systems in our stride. But there is another joy also—of exceeding ourselves in every direction. There seem to be innumerable horizons within us, below, around, above us, and our greatness ever urges us to reach them.

This precious sense of exceeding ourselves gets epitomised in Richard Bach’s *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. It is the story of a young defiant seagull who not only broke records of flight but also strove to create a race that aimed at perfection.

“Most gulls don’t bother to learn more than the simplest facts of flight—how to get from shore to food and back again. For most gulls, it is not flying that matters, but eating. For this gull, though, it was not eating that mattered, but flight. More than anything else, Jonathan Livingston Seagull loved to fly.” (p. 14) But one fine morning something else happened, just after sunrise. “Jonathan Livingston Seagull fired directly through the center of Breakfast Flock, ticking off two hundred twelve miles per hour, eyes closed, in a great roaring shriek of wind and feathers. The Gull of Fortune smiled upon him this once.” (p. 26) For a seagull, however, this was atrocious, imprudent, and the Council was in session to chastise the norm-breaker.

“A seagull never speaks back to the Council Flock, but it was Jonathan’s voice raised. ‘Irresponsibility? My brother!’ he cried. ‘Who is more responsible than a gull who finds and follows a meaning, a higher purpose for life? For a thousand years we have scabbled after fish heads, but now we have a reason to live—to learn, to discover, to be free! Give me one chance, let me show you what I’ve found...’ ” (p. 35) But the chance was not given and the adventurer became an outcast. But for the spirit of flying there is no limit in the sky. What has been achieved has to be excelled. Jonathan set himself to do it.

“At two hundred fifty miles per hour Jonathan felt that he was nearing his level-flight maximum speed. At two hundred-seventy-three he thought that he was flying as fast as he could fly, and he was ever so faintly disappointed. There was a limit to how much the new body could do, and though it was much faster than his old level-flight record, it was still a limit that would take great effort to crack. In heaven, he thought, there should be no limits.” (p. 51) But progress measured in terms of higher and higher digital figures can hardly be called progress. Improved records do not necessarily mean real advancement. The basic quality might get heightened without undergoing any radical change.

The Elder Gull Chiang had another wisdom which sees things differently. “You may go beyond the idea of flying for food, you may improve continuously your flight record, but finally there is always a limit even if you go with the speed of light. Heaven is not a place, and it is not a time. Heaven is being perfect. You will begin to touch heaven, Jonathan, in the moment that you touch perfect speed. And that isn’t flying a thousand miles an hour, or a million, or flying at the speed of light. Because any number is a limit, and perfection doesn’t have limits. Perfect speed, my son, is being there.” (p. 55)

A billion-dollar industry may look very successful but it is always the striving towards perfection that must be considered as its determinative quality. The American mind itself is perceptive towards it but the general collective life with its affluence has other pulls and pushes. India has absolutely no sensitivity, no working awareness to hold commercial pragmatism and loftiness of philosophical idealism together. This psychological frailty manifests itself not only in our pursuit of science but in every sphere of activity. Take the example of the recreation industry and we see another dimension of the American soul.

When on 15 December 1966 Walt Disney died in Los Angeles he left behind much more than a million dollar a year captivating commonwealth of happiness and wonderment. His first animated feature *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937 already signalled the possibility of *Final Fantasy* with \$137 million expenditure making it a marvellous visual enchantment. The American spirit of large-scale massiveness is evident here again.

The characters of Walt Disney have arrived in our midst to give us another sight, and also insight into ourselves. They have come from the dream-soft and delicate fairyland of happy imagination which has also the robustness of thought. Its simplicity has urbanity. Not as an art, the creator maintains, but as an aspect of entertainment enterprise our life is filled with them. To us has come alive a new world of aesthetic experience with the sensitivity which is almost psychic-lyrical. An obituary note speaks of its author as a Weaver of Fantasies. “From his fertile imagination and industrious factory of drawing boards, Walt Elias Disney fashioned the most popular movie stars ever to come from Hollywood and created one of the most fantastic entertainment empires in history. In return for the happiness he supplied, the world lavished wealth and tributes upon him. He was probably the only man in Hollywood to have been praised by both the American Legion and the Soviet Union. Where any other Hollywood producer would have been happy to get one Academy Award—the highest honour in American movies—Mr. Disney

smashed all records by accumulating 29 Oscars.” It is even said, though perhaps with considerable exaggeration, that Walt Disney was “the most significant figure in graphic arts since Leonardo.” *Mary Poppins*, released in 1964, proved to be the most successful of his non-animated productions.

From a small garage-studio the Disney enterprise on a 420-acre ranch grew into one of the most modern movie studios in the world. Yet Disney didn't stop there. His restless mind created a unique wonder in Disneyland, a 300-acre tract of amusement rides and fantasy spectacles at a cost of \$1 million. Nikita Khrushchev wanted to visit it in 1959 but was unable to see it. Security arrangements could not be made in time. Even after Disneyland had proven itself, Disney declined to consider suggestions that he had better leave well enough alone: “Disneyland will never be completed as long as there is imagination left in the world.” Very true! The feeling that the world is wider than what money can make or give is strengthened in this spirit of artistic creation.

Disney himself considered his Mickey Mouse to be a pretty nice fellow who never does anybody any harm, who gets into scrapes through no fault of his own, but always manages to come out grinning. Eisenhower called him “a genius as a creator of folklore” and said his “sympathetic attitude toward life has helped our children develop a clean and cheerful view of humanity, with all its frailties and possibilities for good.” It was Mrs. Disney who had named the famous cartoon character as Mickey.

Final Fantasy directed by Hironobu Sakaguchi and Motonori Sakakibara, now running in Tokyo, is an astounding enterprise. The American bigness is again witnessed in it when we reckon the fact that millions of dollars were spent in this production. Technologically it sounds a great success. However, the Nipponese conception regretfully lacks, avers a critic, the warmth of Disney with real men and women moving amongst us. We would have expected something different from the land of cherry blossoms awake to the elegance and artistry bringing with them the ray of early sun. But it has fallen into the hi-fi electronic mode and the videos trace another vocation not native to it.

The popularity of the Disney idols and pictures is universal. On the screens of mobile telephone instruments, inside train coaches, on pavements and in public places in Japan appear Disney icons, marking the ingress of imported modernity. This can least be the fault of the Yankee and one wonders if the creator of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck would have felt happy with this preference for his creations. Certainly he would have objected to the whole business on the basis of his indisputable copyright. What is creation in one place becomes production if not imitation elsewhere. What Japan should have picked up is the authentic spirit that had inspired Walt Disney and not his featured world of cartoons, not consumer industry but material creations in the expression of national sense of beauty. Obviously it is a genuine lesson for us also if we wish to learn it.

The kind of immortality that Mickey Mouse has acquired has on it the undeniable stamp of the American genius and possibly it is that which can safeguard America from the evil of excessive technology. But Walt Disney's Wonderland gives one the impression that highly evolved art needs the heavy ballast of dollars and it is futile to think of aesthetic pursuit without large-scale financial support. But this is the natural outcome of

the American sense of doing big things, be they in art or literature or commerce or industry or science. The culture it nourishes is the big sense of life nourished by big money. If the rest of the world believes in that success then it is the rest of the world who should be faulted for that foolhardiness. Means are of course important, but they cannot be factors to curb the creative-expressive spirit of man. America has found one mode, others have to find their corresponding modes. Each one has to live with his natural *swadharma* and *swabhāva*. If we are to do our own science, for instance, we must do it in a manner that is characteristic to us. That this is not happening is witnessed not only in our science but also in all the activities in which we are engaged presently, activities that are mostly duplication of what is being done elsewhere. Vivekananda's call "Arise, awake!" has another sense and we have to understand that and fulfill ourselves in it.

In this context we may also see the impact of science fiction on society revealing their interdependence. The case in point is Michael Crichton's best-selling novel *Jurassic Park* which recently prompted Steven Spielberg to set an enterprise costing \$60 million.

"The basic plot of *Jurassic Park* is fairly simple. A Palo Alto corporation called International Genetics Technologies, Inc. has become able—through an entrepreneurial combination of audacity, technology, human ingenuity, and fantastic outlays of capital (mostly funded by Japanese investors, who are the only ones willing to wait years for uncertain results)—to clone dinosaurs from the bits of their DNA recovered from dinosaur blood inside the bodies of insects that once bit the now-extinct animals and were then trapped and preserved in amber for millions of years. The project is the dream of John Hammond, a billionaire capitalist with a passionate interest in dinosaurs. With the resources of his wealth and power, Hammond buys a rugged island a hundred or so miles off the coast of Costa Rica and turns it into Jurassic Park, 'the most advanced amusement park in the world,' with attractions 'so astonishing they would capture the imagination of the entire world': a population of living, breathing actual dinosaurs." (Joe Sartelle in *Bad Subjects*, 1993)

What dinosaurs stand for may be called a transferred epithet to represent certain problems of human society. They are "a class of beings created by capital in order to serve capital." It is the Third World in which people are captives of a system; they serve other masters.

"The novel opens with a half-fiction, half-fact introduction about the corruption of pure science by business interests; the field of biotechnology, in particular, has been driven from the beginning by the capitalist interest in profit. This distinction between science and capitalism—science is the resource, capitalism the corrupting agency—is occluded over the course of the novel, so that science finally takes the blame." In that process Chaos Theory enters into discussion as a mediating term between capitalism and nature: it reinterprets social forces as natural forces. If nature can bring about changes by violent actions, so can the social forces. Marxism is one example of it. However, what is needed is a theory of the totality of the world. Thus alone perhaps we can understand the world of dinosaurs as much as our own world. Presently we do not have that understanding.

The American experience of science and society is a vigorous experience and a welcome experience; but it is the product of only a certain attitude towards life. It cannot become universal and attempts to duplicate it will always prove to be disastrous. Which means that we can have our own science only if we live in our own socio-cultural context. If the society has its own individual character, its own *dharma*, then it is bound to express itself in every creative activity, including science.

(To be continued)

R.Y. Deshpande

TWO SANSKRIT HYMNS ON SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

(With the English Translation)

ॐ अचिन्त्यमव्यक्तमरूपम्
अखिलचराचरभूपम् ।
अवतारमतुलनीयमितिहासविधातारम्
अरविन्द आश्चर्यनाम
नमस्तुभ्यं नमस्तुभ्यम् ॥१॥

ॐ अरविन्दाभिन्नात्मन् पराशक्ति-मिराम्बिके
अरविन्दसाहाय्यार्थम् अवतीर्णा युगे युगे ।
तमसानिमज्जते विश्वे ऋतज्योतिप्रदायिके
प्रेमस्वरूपिणि मातः
नमस्तुभ्यं नमोऽस्तु ते ॥२॥

(1)

OM! O Thou, who art beyond Thought
Beyond Manifestation, beyond Form;
O Thou, who rulest over all that moves and moves not,
O Thou, the incomparable Avatara
Who lordest over History and man's Destiny;
O the Wonder-Name Sri Aurobindo!
I bow to Thee, I bow to Thee.

(2)

OM! O the soul inseparable from that of Sri Aurobindo,
The Power supreme, Mother Mira,
O Thou who descendest from age to age
To help Sri Aurobindo's divine Mission;
O Thou who bestowest the supramental Light
To the poor earth engulfed in darkness;
O Mother Divine, who art the very soul of Love,
I bow to Thee, I bow to Thee.

ABANI SINHA

A COMMENT APROPOS OF *NOT MATISSE!*

SHRADDHAVAN has been so kind to send me her reflexions on Henri Matisse and Georges Rouault before their publication. I appreciate this gesture.

Shraddhavan writes¹ that she “is convinced” that the painter the Mother talks about in her Playground *Entretiens* of 1951 is not Henri Matisse but Georges Rouault. I must say that I am far from convinced by her conviction. Consider the following points:

1. According to Shraddhavan, “so far as we can tell from all the published material about him, [Matisse] was never quite in the dire straits [the Mother] describes in her story.” Looking up the lemma “Matisse, Henri” in the Micropaedia of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, I find in volume 7, page 937: “In 1902 he was in a group show at the small gallery of Berthe Weill, and the next year he and a number of his old classmates from Moreau’s atelier and the Académie Carrière were the progressive contingent in the liberal, newly created Salon d’Automne. But in spite of such recognition, he was often on the brink of financial disaster ... His wife opened a dress shop in the hope of helping to make ends meet.”

2. Shraddhavan maintains that “there is no evidence” of an “abrupt change of style” in the work of Matisse. Yet, on the same page of the Encyclopaedia Britannica is written: “[Matisse] spent the summer of 1905 with André Derain [another member of the ‘Fauves’] at Collioure, a small French fishing port on the Mediterranean, near the Spanish Border. In the dazzling sunshine he rapidly freed himself from what he called ‘the tyranny’ of Pointillism. The carefully placed little dabs required by the additive-mixture approach turned into swirls and slabs of spontaneous brushwork, and the theoretically realistic colours exploded into an emotional display of complementaries: red against green, orange against blue, and yellow against violet.” Of the painter she had in mind, the Mother said: “His colours were all mixed and brilliant,” something that is hardly applicable to the style of Rouault, whose tone-scales tend to be much darker than Matisse’s.

3. Shraddhavan states: “In 1951 [the year of the Mother’s *entretien* in question] ... the name of Matisse was definitely not one that would have sprung to everyone’s mind as one of the best known French artists.” Is that so? The MacMillan Encyclopaedia 2002 says about Henri Matisse the following on p. 803: “By 1909 he had achieved world-wide recognition.” Matisse had exhibitions of his work in New York City, Moscow and Berlin as early as in 1908. In 1912 his paintings were on view in Cologne and London, in 1913 in the New York Armory Show and in Chicago. He did the sets and costumes for Sergey Diaghilev’s production of the ballet *Le Chant du Rossignol*. He became famous as a graphic artist and illustrator of Mallarmé, de Montherlant, Reverdy, Baudelaire, de Ronsard, and others.

In a book I happen to be reading at the moment, *De la Belle Époque à la Grande*

1. See *Mother India* March 2002.

Guerre, Michel Leymarie says that the poet Guillaume Apollinaire called Matisse “*le fauve des fauves*”, which means the “fauve par excellence”—and Apollinaire died just after the First World War in the pandemic of Spanish flu. There is no doubt that Matisse has always been recognised as the founder and principal member of the group of the Fauves. (*Fauve* means wild beast. This name of a modernist group of painters was given by an early critic who judged their style and colours to be savage.)

Moreover, one may bear in mind that Matisse visited the *Académie Julian* in 1891-92, the same atelier where Mirra Alfassa learned painting three or four years later. This is no proof that they met and became acquainted there, but it is a plausible indication that this may have happened, as painters and aspiring painters frequented certain circles and cafés where they met like-minded souls. Mirra Alfassa probably became acquainted with Matisse through her future husband, Henri Morisset, as both men were disciples of Gustave Moreau.

“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 ... This was Georges Rouault ...” writes Shraddhavan. First opinions, like first love, can leave a very deep impression without therefore being the lasting or true thing. Having presented the aforementioned, to my mind convincing arguments, I leave the question open for all interested to study. Historical facts are always important, but there is, I think, a gradation in their importance.

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM

MY ANGELS

YOUR Angels steer my steps and uplift my spirit
Unseen and unknown as they are.

I pray for Your grace and guidance
Luminous and splendid as You are.

Along the way in journey of life
You send Kutsa and Vishwamitra.

Helping in seeking seer-knowledge,
Pursuing self-transformation overcoming self.

Along the way while adrift and perplexed
You send Sunashepa and Aiklavya.

Facilitate on pyre of offering to be selfless,
Learning from within to offer fruit of toil without reserve.

Along the way while wishing to be Yours, in turmoil,
You send Prahlad and Vashistha.

Practising to pray with mind and heart and soul
I stay steadfast in conduct and in my goal.

Your Angels of Heaven are blessedly
My angels ever more to be truly Yours.

ARUN VAIDYA

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

NIKOS

FIRST he gave us the welcome of old friends and then he opened a room for us to sit in. A plain room with just the basics: there were a bed, a chair, a table and a window framing the essence of the island. Nikos took the chair, Gary and I sat on the bed and a moment later all three of us took in the view. Slopes drenched in the afternoon sun, shrubs made thick with shades of green, a backdrop of clear cerulean blue. There was a vision pulsating, spreading high and drawing the viewer deep into itself. Homer sang of it in the Iliad and also of the gods who watched over the battlefield of Troy from its peak.

In a hazed halo, gold particles of light moved over the green and defined the material form of the majestic silent being that rose high in front of us, Mount Fengari.

Nikos knew the mountain well, we had been told; he knew its paths and its ways, he felt for its moods. He and his wife ran one of the hamlet's taverns and let out some rooms. It should be easy to find him, they had said and it was. He was busy cleaning some tables when we walked into the little natural balcony over the stream that served as the garden setting for his establishment and he smiled at us. We asked for Nikos and he grinned, "That's me!"

The rest of the family was there too, Maria, his wife, in the kitchen, their two children arranging empty bottles into cases and his mother, weatherworn and restful, sitting under the sycamore. A handsome lot, yet Nikos stood out with his tall athletic body and wide shoulders, the ease and certainty he moved with. There was refinement and openness about him, a graceful and inviting simplicity.

We stepped into his world and he naturally slipped into the role of the host. We told him the reason for our visit, our wish to climb the mountain. To speak of the Mountain was his privilege and right; he was born on the island and it was the mountain that had brought him up, he said.

"Come, let's get somewhere comfortable," he marched us up into the room and from there he started us on our Samothrace island journey.

He used words and music to guide us through. While he spoke and played his bouzouki, we followed his eyes, his face, his fingers and body—all in accord. He presented a symphony of feelings, experience and information; an acutely personal narrative, enwrapped and punctuated by the music he played.

This is enthusiasm, I thought. This is what the Greeks felt when they created the word for this state of being: "in God." In complete abandonment, we joined in as he soared up and higher, straight to the limits of a communion common to him, and natural.

His profile reminded us of those painted on ancient pottery, his athletic build and clear thinking portrayed the old dictum: a healthy mind in a healthy body. In the stark

environment of the room, he grew into an archetype of what a man in full must be.

“I meet with God when I am there,” he confessed and through the window he let his eyes wander up the slopes to take in the rising mountain. “There is something there with which I meet, my soul does; it makes its call easier. Perhaps it is the heights, perhaps it is the solitude—whatever, high up there I connect, a link occurs and through it I feel and understand. Source-like, it guides and provides; it colours life and directs its movements, it is the foundation upon which I build all I do. It makes me and because of it I am. It is not education that made this person; I’ve hardly had any schooling. Even the music, it was with fingers and soul alone that I sought and grasped it.”

We listened, wondered and gazed at the musician, the athlete, and the man. We saw in his fingers the passionate extensions of the music his soul played. We relished the echo of ancient sounds and nuances contained in his speech. Behind the words, there was the strength and poetry of moving Time, continuing and taking hold of a man who has surrendered himself to the embrace of his destiny.

He told us of his life, how in the early years of his youth his eyes gazed at the mountain that his feet took him a little higher each time and how it slowly became his. Seasons were movements and variations on the same theme; herbs and flowers were friends with individual characteristics and uses, each with its own scent, shape and beauty. He looked at them, touched and smelt them; he picked some and brought them home. He took over the little patch of earth by the side of the family house and made it his laboratory. There he planted his findings, observed and later used them. He met with the old shepherds who taught him what they knew and to their findings he added his own.

Absorbed in the ever new and wide, he roamed the wilderness and forgot about the classroom in the village. Eventually, he dropped out; he had joined a larger school.

“Teachers... There is hardly anyone among them who is willing to know, they don’t know how to learn, and perhaps they don’t want to. How can they then disclose and pass on knowledge to others? They chew up some books, talk of them like parrots. Yes, that’s what teachers do. There was one though, who was different. He taught me the love for history, how to dig in it, find, learn and apply it.”

By now, the sun had moved lower and the light outside was receding; the mountain looked golden and thickened with shadows. The room felt cosy and charged as Nikos talked and expounded his ideas.

He believed in the continuity of things. For him there are relations and interactions. Existence displays itself in many varied levels; past, present and future do not line up for him. There are causes and effects, movements of results of actions in the universe and all is interrelated. The island has been inhabited for millennia. Host to major cults, it has been a place of worship and initiation for aeons and these aeons have stamped and permeated their essence deep into it. Part of the island’s evolution must be attributed to the spiritual practices performed here in past times—about this Nikos felt strongly and was convinced.

It is true, the island breathes defiance, as if there is a substance that reveals and

prompts one to see, perceive, and be beyond the appearances. However, this does not exclude one from the material physical experience.

We first sensed this when we approached Samothrace by boat and saw it bathed in the midday sun. We had arrived and this arrival involved and meant more than our entry to its harbour. Early the next morning, the sunrise found us silently skirting the ancient site of the Great Mother's temple by the sea, at the feet of Mount Fengari. There and then we could almost touch that something other—a presence in the stillness of our minds, a warmth in our hearts. Even the light seemed different, crisper than the crisp Aegean. It illuminated and made transparent details otherwise opaque and unseen.

In his youth, Nikos became aware of this and much more. There was a reality he perceived and into it he moved, there to live and grow. Now, Nature and the Mountain are entities to him, beings, life itself manifesting. This he wanted us to know and understand and he spilled out his soul, explaining it with tales and deeds.

His very self gushed out and its impetus and breadth revealed the ancient Mother Goddess of old, whom the island revered and he made the Great Gods by Her side come alive. In a performance that kept him poised and personally involved at the same time, he exposed the Mysteries and what we saw was not forgetful of life; indeed, the mysteries Nikos gave out have not broken away from it.

After the years of youth, there came those of duty and adulthood. Like every young man in Greece, Nikos was called to serve in the military. He went and took his bouzouki along. By then the instrument had become a natural extension of him. The chords played were his speech and expressed what he felt; the melodies it uttered recounted what he sensed; he glimpsed things others never saw and those he shared in an abundance of notes. Music was a world he was invited to inhabit and he simply responded to its call.

His mates thought him good entertainment and he actually was. They convinced him there was a future for him as a musician and he should seek it in the nearest big city. He did. Military service over, off he went to Salonica and there he lived for a few years. His colleagues were right; fortune awaited him there.

“It was good. I got to be kind of famous. Sent money home. I played professionally and learned from those I played with. It was good. But then, it wasn't *very* good. I felt a gap, a void, something terribly unfulfilled. True, there was enough: success, good pay, and fame. But none of it made much sense, true sense, that is. No, none of it was good enough. A huge chunk of me was left on the island and without it I was an incomplete half-man...”

It was his soul that was left behind, up in the mountain, amidst the thick shrubbery and beyond it. As he reminisced, we traced movements of memory and determination in his eyes.

“So I came back.”

We listened and kept gazing at him. Listening to his narrative, we grew appreciative of the time. The hour had come when Nature stands poised—just a step before dark, the

day almost gone. Sweet, tranquil hour, the light stretched itself softly and spread long shadows.

Then the bouzouki picked up the mood and welcomed us to the night.

During the three weeks we stayed on the island we visited him often. We got to know him more and shared parts of his days, we entered his home and he showed us his books, we walked through his garden and we saw the gym he had built adjacent to it, aptly completing his private universe. We shared meals at his tavern, eating Maria's food; their kids played, studied or helped nearby. The tourist season had not yet begun and we were all at leisure.

As we regularly wandered in and out of it, his life got to be more real and made more sense. That first afternoon's introduction helped and steadied our journey, it made us travel the island further. He had plunged us into Samothrace then, and we had to just follow the cues and signs he had given. We climbed the mountain till there were no more trails to be seen—only those thick, sturdy shrubs we had first seen from afar. We went about in circles and found no way around them. When asked, Nikos laughed, "I walk on them!"

We stayed in a room amidst the blooming chestnut trees. Clear sunlit mornings started with bread and honey on the veranda and they were followed by daylong expeditions up the slopes, down to the shore and into the villages through plains heavy with wheat. We were delighted with the poppies and quenched our thirst kneeling down by gurgling streams. The wild goats watched our advent and fled scabbling up the scarp when we came too near.

There were waterfalls everywhere with boulders framing them. We climbed those megaliths gingerly and reached high where the flow started. We measured the island and made it our own through light, wind, smells, colours, and distances covered—each day a song and our hearts kept the rhythm. At night we slept lulled by the sound of water crashing nearby and the nightingale.

We discovered silent pools, their waters were deep and heavy with life, their surface stormed by multitudes of gossamer wings. Sunbeams stole through the foliage and got caught by the vibrant darting and buzzing blues—we were in the home of the dragonflies. We sketched, photographed, or let ourselves simply be. Once, a yellow budgerigar came and kept us company; it tweeted and flew from branch to branch, it followed us closely and trusted us enough to peck breadcrumbs out of our hands—was it tamed and lost? Or had we stepped into a world still innocent of fear and danger?

The island was sacred to the ancient world and people came here to be initiated into old rites that still haunt the land; Cybele presided and the ancient twins, Cabeiroi, stood guards and helpers to Her secrets. In Nikos we had met a manifestation of what might perhaps be a mystic reborn, and in our own encounters and wanderings we experienced a union that did not ask us to leave the world for it to happen.

The day before our departure, the three of us met for lunch. Enjoying the intimacy

of each other's company, the pleasure of our friendship was prolonged and enhanced by comfortable silences. The wind rustled the leaves overhead, the stream joined it with its rushing below. Gary lifted his camera and aimed it at the illumined foliage above. He focused, clicked and put the camera aside. Nikos looked at the contraption attached to its lens, asked what that was for, and the talk turned to photography and the practical necessity of polarisers and filters.

"I have been filming the island, you know," he said and trotted off. He brought back a videotape and announced, "It's on sale, as of this season!"

We were the first to buy it but watched it much later, when back home.

Nikos had mentioned he was a novice to the medium and that he still had a long way to go. It was true; there was much to improve. However, he had caught the essence: the looming mountain, the island-coves laced by waters sparkling in the light, the formidable landscape unfolding in details and intricacies that kept pace with season, sun and cloud. He zoomed in waterfalls that crashed to meet and kiss the pools below and expanded on long shots of views he and the eagles only had. Frame after frame, he presented the panorama of the grounds he trod and knew so well; in sequential images he displayed travels and vistas he and his soul had had. Among them we saw what we had missed seeing, the view down from the peak: for we never mastered the skill of walking on the thick and sturdy shrubs.

Nikos was a man at ease with himself and the world. He was settled and certain and there was strength and calm about him. Only forty years old when we met him, his years seemed to exceed him, as if multiplied through many other lives.

KATI WIDMER

THE QUIZ

(A true experience!!)

Before:

THERE'S a feeling in my stomach
And this feeling grows and grows
Till the feeling wraps around me
From my head down to my toes.

I'm feeling very nervous;
My heart is beating fast;
She's asking every one of us;
I hope to God I'm last.

She's asking us by roll number,
Now I won't stand a chance.
My heart is beating faster.
I feel I'm in a trance.

Words are swimming in my mind;
They pass by in a whizz,
The reason this is happening is
I'm going through a quiz!

After:

She called on me and asked me
And boy, was it tough!
The question seemed so easy
But...I couldn't answer enough.

I'm feeling quite relieved now,
But I'm also feeling numb;
My brain seems to have gone to sleep,
Thank God, the bell's just rung.

Thank God? Oh no, the feeling's coming back,
To me and all the rest.
There's murmur going around
There's gonna be *another* test!

GAYATRI LOBO GAJIWALA
(Age: 15 yrs.)

(Before: Science Test After: Hindi Test)

ONE HAS YET TO LEARN IN LIFE

1

I WAS in class IX in 1940-41. In the Hindi-prose book there was a lesson, "All Are Better Than Myself" authored by Jugal Kishore Birla. Yes, he is from the same well-known Birla family and elder brother of Ghanshyamdas Birla. This lesson is a memoir of his then-usual morning-walks. I do not remember now its contents, but one thing resulting out of that lesson persisted in my memory and that is this: "How humble, kind and open-hearted a man from the well known and rich family of the country is Jugal Kishore who regards an insignificant man like the gardener (a character of that memoir) to be better than himself," better of course as a person and in character and not in position and in riches. At that time in the adolescent age this left a lasting impression on my mind, without in the least bothering whether the memoir was true or just a story. Sixty years have passed since then, but I still have faint memories of that article written by Jugal Kishore Birla and the moral resulting out of it: "This life is a big experimental laboratory where one has to have an open mind and work with eyes and ears wide open so that each experiment is an improvement over the previous one." Today when I have mind and time to look back, I feel how truly the article reflected the various situations happening in my life and offering me opportunities to take a lesson; but my ego made me blind and suppressed any such tendency to improve upon myself in elevating the consciousness. I always considered myself at the top of the world but today, crestfallen on the earth, I realise that "I am nothing" and that "I have yet to learn much from others in this life." I have the consolation that I am alive to the truth that one is never too old to learn a lesson.

One's education and training, family traditions and conscientious company may motivate or inspire one to do charity or make donations to be of help to society. Those who can afford it, to a small extent because they do not have enough, have a surreptitious desire in a corner of their heart that what they do for society may be known and appreciated. This tendency in itself cannot be justified, but the fact of its helping society has to be recognised and they are definitely good people. Another category of donors are those who have plenty and donate large sums of money. Such persons in general have no desire to be known because they automatically become known by their large sums donated. They too are good people. There is yet another category of donors who can little afford but they do so with pleasure and donate whatever they can, and consequently suffer. Such examples are many in mythological stories, but there are a few even today. The question of their desiring to be known does not arise.

There is an institution near my house for the rehabilitation, education and training of male-children born of poor parents, one or both of whom suffer from leprosy, and it is being run efficiently and smoothly. On seeing the neatly dressed and disciplined children and knowing the satisfactory arrangements and the administration, anybody may be tempted to extend help to the institution in cash or kind. Last time when I went to the institution to have a fresh look and also to give my contribution, I saw there in the room

of the Head Master one known person who used to sit in a corner of the shopping centre near my house doing the job of a cobbler. It would be more appropriate to know him as a 'bhagat' (devotee) rather than a cobbler since he always muttered devotional songs while working. More than a thousand people live there. He knew all of them and wished them well by saying "Ram, Ram" whenever he met them. All of us used to feel happy whenever we saw him.

"Oh, Shyamu! What brings you here?" I asked.

"Nothing, Sir, just to do my job here," he replied.

"Shyamu repairs the shoes of the children," the Head Master interrupted.

"Oh, that's good! That way you could find some additional work for yourself," I said to Shyamu.

"Gupta Saheb, Shyamu takes no money for repairs," the Head Master interrupted.

"Oh! I see. Shyamu, that's a good thing that you do," I said.

"Nothing, Sir! It is the kindness of Master Saheb that I get an opportunity to serve these children," Shyamu said.

"Gupta Saheb, do you know, Shyamu loves the children," the Head Master said.

"Master Saheb, I am a petty poor man. I feel nervous at your good words... Let me go now... Can I leave with your permission?" Shyamu folded his hands, touched the Mother Earth and left the place.

"What Shyamu does is a big thing! He is sure to have a family. How does he pull on?" I inquired.

"That we do not know, but it appears he lives from hand to mouth, I guess," the Head Master said.

"Head Master Saheb! Don't you think you must pay him something for the work he does?" I said.

"Oh, Sir! Don't tell me that. You will be surprised if I were to tell you something more about him," the Head Master said.

"What is that?" I asked.

"Gupta Saheb! He has just handed over these fifty rupees to me before you came here. He saved them from his daily earnings. He had told me not to disclose this to anyone, but I could not resist doing so. He was inspired to make this contribution the very first day he saw the children. It was then and then only he had made up his mind to save from his daily earnings to contribute to the institution, which he has done today."

"Oh! that's wonderful! It is a big sacrifice!" I exclaimed.

"Gupta Saheb, not only that. It is unusual and unmatched," the Head Master said.

Though initially I was happy to know all this about Shyamu and made the exclamatory remark in appreciation, but I suddenly dropped low in spirits. I was feeling myself so small that I had no more words to speak. My speech lost power for a while. Somewhere in the inner corner of my heart I had a surreptitious feeling, "I am something," but here a cobbler living in poverty has done something which he can little afford and therefore is greater than what I did. His help to the institution is exemplary. It is a real sacrifice. Shyamu is far better than myself. When I could get over my ego and recovered from the

low spirits, Shyamu appeared to be an angel to me and I was full of admiration for him. It appeared to me that there was no want of good people in this world. Next day when I happened to go to the shopping centre, I spoke to Shyamu, “Shyamu, you are great and you have a big heart. You are helping others’ children. One has to take a lesson from your example.”

“No, Babuji, I am a small and poor man. Please do not praise me like this,” Shyamu replied.

“No, Shyamu, you have a heart and spirit to do sacrifice which even rich people do not have,” I said.

“Babuji, I again say I have done nothing. All the children in the school are children of God. I am serving God only, to my capacity, and that’s all.”

As soon as Shyamu said this, I again felt ashamed of my smallness. I felt guilty of underestimating Shyamu’s benevolence and goodness. It appeared to me that Shyamu was not only kind-hearted but enlightened. I felt, having been so highly educated, I did not know even the first principles of spiritual living and this fellow, who never had an opportunity for being educated, was practising it in his life. For the first time I realised that education has nothing to do with the higher life and my feeling was strengthened that, howsoever one may be educated or experienced, one has yet to learn in life. Indeed Shyamu is far better than myself—nay, if I look around, I may find that perhaps all are better than myself.

(To be continued)

YUGUL KISHORE GUPTA

MY COUNTRY

A TINY little house in a small little hamlet
A handful of friends sharing but poverty in comfort
A mundane rigmarole with but scant specks of delight—
How golden these grow as Time passes on
Down the lane of memory as Life speeds on
To become a very haven, with crevices smoothed out
And bestow an enthralling aroma and a beacon-light!
Just but a spot of earth where I happen to strut about,
Its debacles, flourishes, pageantry, trappings, music and art
Aspirations, broodings, failures, risks, gains and what not—
This becomes my country, sweet, enchanting and infallible
A habitation of my progenitors, its very mud, hence, irresistible
Mine and my own, pure, precious, cherished, fought for and defended
Where I am ever buried and ever born—all are gold, divine and what not!
Empires and hegemonies, civilizations and their unending machinations
Tremors and upheavals, histories, and their limitless convolutions
Rare reigns of dharma as poets have dreamt and sages seen—
All are but ripples in the ever flowing river of Man
And when Science has heralded that we sink or swim as one,
And we seem not even to be just a speck in the expanding Universe,
That cares for none
And Vedanta has mused long on our oneness with Brahma
That cares for all,
Why grudge our growing from a zygote to cosmos?

K. H. KRISHNAMURTHY

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of March 2002)

SRI AUROBINDO knew the importance of his letters to his disciples more than they knew it themselves. For his letters were not just replies on the mental plane to remove intellectual doubts. They were charged with spiritual Force and Light and were received as such by the disciples, some of whom had unexpected opening in their mental and emotional being. Instances were plenty showing the working of the spiritual force on the receptive disciples; men and women of poor understanding found themselves assimilating difficult portions of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and metaphysics, disciples who composed poetry poorly bloomed into poets of promise and even on the physical plane many felt the force working on their long-standing physical ailments either removing them altogether or lessening them. His letters do not sermonise nor is there any attempt in them to point out a sadhak's mistake in the manner of "I told you so." There is, as one disciple put it, a smiling reasonableness, an almost matter of clarity and a natural awareness of twentieth century hopes and fears. Sri Aurobindo takes the disciple into his compassionate arms as it were, and makes the human heart feel the warmth and love of the divine solicitude. His letters not only breathe and communicate a spiritual atmosphere but they are also uniformly courteous, kind, compassionate and are often interspersed with rich humour, sallies, anecdotes. They are aimed to alleviate and also elevate.

Dilip Kumar Roy writes: "I asked Gurudev, since He at least had known all along how unfit I was though I myself did not—naturally, being ignorant of the very stuff and basis of my nature! I bitterly complained at such moments and the more restive I grew, the more convinced I became that I was unfit for Yoga and therefore should leave instantly. But there they were, Mother and Gurudev with the balm of their forgiveness.

" 'You need not think that anything can alter our attitude towards you'. Gurudev wrote on one such occasion. 'That which is extended to you is not a vital human love which can be altered by external things. It remains and persistently we shall try to help you up and lead you towards the Light where in the union of the soul and the heart you will recognise the Friend and the Mother.' "

Again Dilip wrote that "...during those early years of our *sadhana* we often expressed our misgivings about his 'thesis of the Supramental', as we called it. I often wrote to him (half in jest, no doubt, but the other half clung impenitently to its scepticism) that the Supramental seemed too good to be true. Once I wrote to him what Chadwick remarked casually about the Supramental: 'Sri Aurobindo takes one's breath away, Dilip! Will it, can it, really happen?' I often conveyed to Gurudev such titbits to draw him out if I could and, as I generally succeeded, I grew bolder and went the length of equating the Supramental with something grim and withering like a ruthless Dictator out to do good but with a devastating velocity, riding roughshod over all our cherished ideals of a sweet and liberal living and perhaps making us despise this beautiful earth as an utterly unsuitable place for its Kingdom of thunder and lightning.

“He must have smiled indulgently when he commented on my flings and, coming down to my level once again, ran full tilt into me:

“It is curious that you admit your ignorance of what the Supramental can be, and yet in these moods you not only pronounce categorically what it is like, but reject emphatically my experience about it as of no practical validity or not valid for anybody but myself! I have not insisted, I have answered only casually because I am not asking you now to be non-human and divine much less to be supramental; but as you are always returning to this point when you have these attacks and making it the pivot—or at least a main support—of your depression, I am obliged to answer. The Supramental is not grand, aloof, cold and austere; it is not something opposed to or inconsistent with a full vital and physical manifestation; on the contrary, it carries in it the only possibility of the full fullness of the vital force and the physical life on earth. It is because it is so, *because it was so revealed to me and for no other reason that I have followed after it and persevered till I came into contact with it and was able to draw down some power of it and its influence*. I am concerned with the earth and not with worlds beyond for their own sake; it is a terrestrial realisation that I seek and not a flight to distant summits. All other Yogas regard this life as an illusion or a passing phase; the supramental Yoga alone regards it as a thing created by the Divine for a progressive manifestation and takes the fulfilment of the life and the body for its object. The Supramental is simply the Truth-Consciousness and what it brings in its descent is the full truth of life, the full truth of consciousness in Matter. One has indeed to rise to high summits to reach it, but the more one rises, the more can one bring down below. No doubt, life and body have not to remain the ignorant, imperfect, impotent things they are now; but why should a change to a fuller life-power, a fuller body-power be considered something aloof, cold and undesirable? The utmost *ananda* the body and life are now capable of is a brief excitement of the vital mind or the nerves or the cells which is limited, imperfect and soon passes; with the supramental change all the cells, nerves, vital forces, embodied mental forces can become filled with a thousand-fold *ananda*, capable of an intensity of bliss which passes description and which need not fade away. How aloof, repellent and undesirable! The Supramental love means an intense unity of soul with soul, mind with mind, life with life, and an entire flooding of the body-consciousness with the physical experience of oneness, the presence of the Beloved in every part, in every cell of the body. Is that too something aloof and grand and undesirable? With the supramental change, the very thing on which you insist, the possibility of the free physical meeting of the embodied Divine with the *sadhaka* without conflict of forces and without undesirable reactions becomes possible, assured and free. That too is, I suppose, something aloof and undesirable? I could go on—for pages, but this is enough for the moment.’

“Which brings me right into the heart of the problem of transformation of our nature into what it aspires to be and yet refuses to accept when it has, perforce, to put its shoulder to the wheel! It acts in this anomalous way because it is driven by diverse forces warring in its own territory for mastery, because it has, in a word, wheels within wheels. But here I will have to revert to my past to be intelligible—the more as I myself found it

not a little difficult to understand what was expected of us as well as what they, our guides, were up against in their *sadhana*.

“When one puts it in words simply, as an abstract thesis, it sounds indeed feasible and laudable enough to be attempted. Has it not been claimed by all the great seers, mystics and prophets down the ages that our intellect can be a help only if it agrees to serve the spirit—that it is a good orderly but a bad commandant? Or to put it in the deeper accent of the great Seer:

The intellect is not all; a guide within
Awaits our question; He it was informed
The reason He surpasses; and unformed
Presages of His mightiness begin.*

“True Yogis have unanimously claimed, however, that these “presages” cannot become clear messages—far less helping torches which slay the darkness that makes us grope so pitifully on our way—unless and until either the mind is stilled or reason taught its place in the scheme of things. I had once an interesting talk with the saint, Sri Ramdas, in his Ashram. He related to me the following incident:

“He was then living on the top of a hill, in a small hut when, one evening, an intellectual friend sought him out. He had a great many questions seething in his mind, he said, to which he could find no satisfactory answers. Ramdas was scared stiff since he had never been overfond of the mentality which loves to cross-examine from the dais witnesses who stand in the dock deposing for the Divine. So he put off the discussion somehow and retired for the night. But as the ghost had only been warded off for the nonce, not laid, he had to appeal to his one Extricator, Ram. To his amazement, in the dead of night Ram Himself formulated questions and answered them back, point by point, of which he kept a record. Next morning he showed these to his intellectual friend who found it all but incredible: the very questions he wanted to ask had been answered by Ram, the questions which he had not even hinted at to Ramdas.

“These questions, with the answers, are given by Ramdas in his book, *At the Feet of God*. I will only select a few from the sheaf:

Question: What is the result of self-surrender?

Answer: Everlasting bliss.

Question: How?

Answer: When the human will is given up for the Divine Will, all the responsibility of the instrument, the devotee, ceases and the consciousness of the individual ego is merged in the Divine consciousness. Then all his actions, thoughts and words emanate from the Divine source, leaving him entirely free from all doubts, desires and bonds....

Question: How is it you allow your child’s mind to wander?

Answer: All, all is myself, O child! Wherever your mind wanders, it wanders in me

* Quoted from Sri Aurobindo’s poem ‘In the Moonlight’, *SABCL*, Vol. 5, p. 59.

and rests in me.... You cannot reason why it is so; but it is the one great Truth. You cannot comprehend it, but you can realise it.

Question: Why should Ramdas not comprehend it?

Answer: Because it is a thing beyond the range of the intellect.”²

In *Nirodbaran's Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* Nirodbaran writes:

“The modern age has produced a modern Guru who could deal with each sadhak according to his nature. When I asked from what perennial fount flowed so much laughter, his cryptic answer was the Upanishadic “রসো বৈ সঃ”*. In the whole of spiritual history I know of no Guru-Shishya relationship in which the Guru of venerable age and vast learning has given such unlimited liberty to the disciple, so that I could challenge his Karmayoga doctrine, refuse to accept his own example as having any validity for common people like us, carry on a long-drawn out argument on Homeopathy vs Allopathy, etc. In all the exchanges what was remarkable was his calm and cool temper, yogic *samatā*, inexhaustible patience and above all his sunny humour pervading the entire correspondence. At times, he asked to be excused for the bantering tone he could not resist when his own Karmayoga based on experience was tilted at. Very freely he used swear-words for the sake of fun or perhaps to shock the puritan temper. I was occasionally on the perilous brink of irreverence. When people complained of it, he replied, ‘I return the compliment—I mean, reply without restraint, decorum or the right grave rhythm. That is why I indulge so freely in brackets.’

“As regards subject matter he gave me a wide field to range over. Supermind, literature, art, religion, spirituality, Avatarhood, love, women, marriage, medical matters, sex-gland, any topical question, such as goat-sacrifice at Kalighat, Bengal political atrocities, sectarian fanaticism, hunger-strike, India's freedom, etc., etc. were my rich pabulum. I need not labour the point that in the process emeralds and lapis-lazulis of rare value were the reward extracted from his supramental quarry, though at the cost of being dubbed a “wooden-head” and many other complimentary epithets. Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Napoleon, Virgil, Shaw, Joyce, Hitler, Mussolini, Negus, Spanish Civil War, General Miaja, romping in, oh, the world-theatre seen at a glance exhibiting many-coloured movements for the eye's, the ear's and the soul's rejoicing.

“Now, the question arises: what was the purpose of it all? At one stage, Sri Aurobindo declared that he wanted to intellectualise and logicise my “wooden head”. But that would be a very short-sighted human view of the Divine's multi-dimensional work. I am reminded, however, of a narrative poem by Tagore about Guru Govind Singh. The Sikh Guru adopted a Pathan boy whose father he had killed in a flare of temper. He brought him up well-versed in all Shastras and proficient in the art of warfare. Every morning and evening the old valorous Guru used to play with the boy as with his own son. His disciples, much alarmed, warned him not to indulge in this dangerous game, since he was a tiger-cub. However kindly and diligently trained, he would not change his nature. ‘When he grows up, do remember that his paws will be piercingly sharp,’ they added. The Guru

* *raso vai sah*: Verily He is Delight.

replied, ‘If I fail to make the cub grow into a tiger then what have I taught him?’

“I was anything but a tiger-cub. Was it the Guru’s purpose to experiment with common clay and see how far it could be transformed by his Supramental Power? He has said that he turned many cowards into heroes during the Swadeshi days. Or could it be that—to adapt his own words—he tried to enlighten my understanding, raise me to his level and inspire willing obedience, by convincing me with his incontrovertible logic, as, according to him, Sri Krishna seems to have done in the case of Arjuna, so that my mind purged of all wrong ideas might thereby be prepared to plunge into the sadhana?

“Another story comes apropos. When we were attending on Sri Aurobindo after the accident to his right leg, the Mother entered his room one day and saw a vision that Sri Aurobindo and I were playing with each other like two babies on a bed. I shall not try to analyse it for he himself replied, when asked about the reason of our exceptional relationship, “Cast your plummet into the deep and perhaps you shall find it—or perhaps you will hit something that has nothing at all to do with it.” I said, ‘But the “deep” is too deep for my plummet.’ His answer was, ‘For any mental plummet. It is not the mind that can discover these things.’

“We must also remember that Sri Aurobindo’s yoga accepts life and must attend to all matters big or small as parts of it with a view to transform it. He remarked to me that life was in full swing in the Ashram. We know also that the Ashram has been considered as a small “Supramental laboratory” or an epitome of the world where all human problems are concentrated: if and when their solutions would be found, the world problems too would get solved. Each one of us represents a type. On the one hand, our inner and outer difficulties, struggles, resistances in the peripeties of sadhana, the ups and downs, successes and failures, complexities of nature (each one an impossibility, according to the Mother), all these coming to the surface as a result of the pressure of yoga. On the other hand the Mother and Sri Aurobindo treating each case with amazing love and patience in order to give each one the full chance of finding his soul. Such is the spiritual saga I have tried to unfold with innumerable illustrations. I myself was a certain type so that my conversion would facilitate the conversion of many others like me. I believe that is what Sri Aurobindo meant when he said, ‘You see, your difficulties are not yours alone. When they are conquered, others also will benefit by it. That is the meaning of one man doing yoga for all.’

“I shall point the reader’s attention to a few medical cases to illustrate what the acceptance of life meant in yoga. Let us take the case of S. He suffered from a protracted illness due to his own indiscretion and was on the brink of death. My long correspondence with Sri Aurobindo on the case is an eye-opener, revealing how Sri Aurobindo kept vigil as it were night and day and went on applying his force till S was pronounced out of danger. Another case was of M. The patient, my assistant, had an accident and was hospitalised. Since it became a Police case, Sri Aurobindo ascertained from me and other sadhaks all the facts and gave me minute instructions regarding the conduct of the case with the Police. Then came the vaccination comedy *à la* Moliere. For the first time the French Government sent an injunction that all Ashram members must be vaccinated.

That created a mild commotion in the Ashram. To the Mother and Sri Aurobindo vaccination was a nasty business. Sri Aurobindo wrote to me, ‘The whole Pasteurian affair is to me antipathetic—it is a dark and dangerous principle, however effective.’ That is all very well, but how to avoid it? Sri Aurobindo had to use all his divine diplomacy and initiated me in the art of dodging the Government, ending eventually with a small number of sadhaks being ‘induced to make themselves victims on the sacred altar of Science.’ I could not resist my hilarity, poring over Sri Aurobindo’s reasons why such and such persons should not be touched.”³

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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1. *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, by Dilip Kumar Roy, p. 159.
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3. *Nirodbaran’s Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, Introduction, pp. x-xii, xiii.

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PHILOSOPHY'S TRYST WITH MODERN SCIENCES

SRI AUROBINDO'S ONTOLOGY AS A VIABLE PARADIGM

As its terms of reference, this paper has metaphysics and ontology from the primary branches of the areas of philosophy and philosophy of science from the secondary branches. In addition, rational psychology ('study of the soul'), rational cosmology ('study of the cosmos or world') and rational theology ('study of God') from special metaphysics will also have to figure. After all, Sri Aurobindo's ontological paradigm as philosophy's tryst with modern sciences is deeply rooted as much in metaphysics as in "rational psychology" and "rational cosmology" purported here to be considered as illustrations of modern sciences.

Most pronouncements made on "modern science" by contemporary scholars tend to obliterate the distinction between "science" and "modern science". With reference to "the dominant method of knowing today in the West," Jerry Bergman, for example, seems to equate "science in the past" with "science today". As he adds, the term "science" refers to both a body of "true knowledge" and to "a method of obtaining and using that knowledge."¹ According to him, science is also "a collection of objective empirical data ... obtained by measurement via senses and summarized by statistical methods." Bergman is in agreement, too, with the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition of science as "a branch of study... concerned either with a connected body of demonstrated truths or with observed facts systematically classified and more or less collimated by being brought under general laws and which include trustworthy methods for the discovery of new truths within its own domain."

As regards "paradigm", Kuhn's concept of the term cited by Jerry Bergman is accepted: "a shared, integrated and unified set of concepts, assumptions and methods."² It is also borne in mind that every now and then a new paradigm emerges and replaces the old. "The new paradigm triumphs although this may take many decades, even centuries." Training in science results in the socialization into a paradigm when the person concerned is "conditioned to accept certain 'colored glasses' to look at the universe through." Moreover, "paradigms are necessary" and must be used though they "get in the way in learning about the universe."

"Modern science endeavors to understand and explain how the natural world works and how it got to be the way it is."³ Its function is not restricted "merely to collect 'facts' about or simply describe different parts of the natural world [read as empirical or 'sensible' world]... about which there is a method of objective investigation." "Feelings of the presence of God, for example, do not count as empirical in this sense." Thus, "science is limited to the study of the natural world and cannot deal with supernatural entities or beings." This sufficiently distinguishes it from philosophy.

Another point to be noted is that "...scientific knowledge... is not absolutely, eternally and infallibly true." Even so, "scientific knowledge is often the most reliable knowledge humans can have" in spite of its "limitations and uncertainties." After all, science is

not “nothing more than guesswork.”

Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo’s views on science and scientists are similar to these observations. About scientists and their investigations he says, for instance, that they are “too much accustomed to deal with physical things and things measurable by instruments and figures...”⁴ “Science...cannot...determine what is the truth of the things or their real nature, or what is behind physical phenomena; it can only deal with the process of physical things and how they come about or on what lines men can deal with and make use of them.” He is aware that “Most continental scientists ...declare that it is not the business of Science nor is it within its means to decide anything about the great questions which concern philosophy and religion.” Regarding twentieth century scientific developments, Sri Aurobindo says that science has now “lost its old materialistic dogmatism” and is almost ready to see that “the material universe is only the façade of an immense building which has other structures behind it, and it is only if one knows the whole that one can have some knowledge of the truth of the material universe. There are vital, mental and spiritual ranges behind, which give the material its significance. If the earth is the only field of spiritual evolution in Matter—(assuming that)—then it must be as part of the total design.” Consciousness and life of the vast cosmic spirit “are everywhere, in the stone and dust as much as in the human intelligence.” As he adds further, “All the world according to Science is nothing but a play of Energy—a material Energy it used to be called, but it is now doubted whether Matter, scientifically speaking, exists except as a phenomenon of Energy. All the world, according to Vedanta, is a play of a power of a spiritual entity, the power of an original consciousness...” “In the world so far as man is concerned we are aware only of mind-energy, life-energy, energy in Matter; but it is supposed that there is a spiritual energy or force also behind them from which they originate.” “...modern Science admits [that] matter is only energy in action, and as we know in India, energy is force of consciousness in action.... The Spirit is there already in Matter as everywhere else; it is only a surface apparent unconsciousness or involved consciousness which veils its presence.” “If there were no creative power in the material energy, there would be no material universe. Matter is not unconscious or without dynamism—only it is an involved force and consciousness that work in it. It is what the psychologists call the inconscient from which all comes—but it is not really inconscient.”

The meeting place for modern science and philosophy, which this paper seeks to demarcate, begins to be discernible when we place these ideas of Sri Aurobindo alongside some of the critical remarks made on the book, *New Metaphysical Foundations on Modern Science*.⁵ The articles included in the book are essays by “scientists and philosophers” alike. But they share “the belief that science urgently needs to examine its implicit assumptions about the nature of reality since these have led to important areas of human experience—especially consciousness-related phenomena—being neglected or denied.” In his article Willis Harman, President, the Institute of Noetic Sciences, for example, “calls for an extended science or ‘wholeness science’ based on two opposing assumptions: a) that ... the physical universe and consciousness, mind and matter form a fundamental oneness or wholeness; and b) that there are two windows for acquiring knowledge

of reality: the objective through the physical senses and the subjective through the intuitive and aesthetic faculties.” “Separateness science,” he adds, no longer has the authority “to insist that we are here solely through random causes, in a meaningless universe; nor that our consciousness is ‘merely’ the chemical and physical processes of the brain.” The book reviewer admits that “all our observations depend on our conscious self” but the “science constructed from these observations seems to contain no place for a self. Scientific materialism has traditionally reduced the mind to a byproduct of the brain and denied it any causal role.” But “the neuroscientist and Nobel laureate, Roger Sperry, believes that science has already largely corrected this error. As a result of the “consciousness revolution” of 1970s “the prevailing view today is that conscious mental states are ‘emergent properties’ of brain processes and are able to have causal effects ...associated with higher domains of brain processing.” Sperry admits that science has as yet no understanding of how these higher-level processes might work. He calls this approach the “new mentalism”. He states that for a mentalist, phenomena such as telepathy, clairvoyance, channeling, reincarnation and psychokinesis are “logical impossibilities” and warns against the support of science to “the supernatural, mystical, the paranormal, the occult, the otherworldly.” Harman, on the other hand, says “that most people who have taken the trouble to examine the subject have been impressed by the evidence in favor of psychic phenomena, survival after death and reincarnation.” “Sperry maintains that consciousness can be understood without bringing in quantum physics.” But Mae-Wan Ho, Robert Jahn and Brenda Dunne “argue that quantum mechanical concepts provide ‘useful analogies’ for understanding consciousness-related phenomena both normal and paranormal... However, quantum physics... still leaves us with a picture of the mind as inextricably bound up with the brain.” Whereas, belief in “survival after death and reincarnation ...are possible only if our conscious self is able to exist independently of the brain.” In Rudolf Steiner’s view, such a thing seems to be possible. Significantly, he says that humans have three other bodies, besides “a physical body”: (1) “an etheric body, responsible for form and life”; (2) “an astral body which gives rise to sentient consciousness”; and (3) “a self-conscious ego”. Biologists like Nobel Laureate, George Wald, maintain “that mind... has always existed and that the universe is life-breeding because the pervasive presence of mind has guided it to be so.” Another biologist, Brian Goodwin, opposes the idea that vital or spiritual forces play any role in evolution, in the same way as he rejects the idea of explaining organisms “solely in terms of their genetic program.” “The new biology”, Goodwin says significantly, “needs to recognize that organisms [are] self-organizing wholes [generated by] dynamic principles” which he understands in standard physical and chemical terms. This idea of holistic science of qualities is viewed by some scientists as still essentially materialistic like Sperry’s mentalism. David Bohm and his associates believe that human consciousness does not bring quantum systems into existence and does not significantly affect the outcome of a measurement “except in case of genuine psychokinesis”. Nevertheless they (especially Bohm) “argue that consciousness is not simply a byproduct of matter but is rooted deep in the implicate order, and is therefore present... in all material forms.” In Bohm’s words, “everything material is also mental

and everything mental is also material, but there are many more infinitely subtle levels of matter than we are aware of.” An alternative view maintained by quantum physicists like Bohm is that, while all things are one in essence, they nevertheless interact through an interplay of forces of many different kinds, nonphysical as well as physical. Hence Harman’s conclusion that “in the broadest sense, there is no cause and effect; only a whole system evolving.” But unless we suppose the parts of this whole system to be separated by gaps of absolute nothingness it must really be “a seamless plenitude, in which everything is interlinked by a continuum of energy-substance of endlessly varied grades.” “Causation is therefore ultimately unfathomable, but this is no reason to jump to the conclusion that, beyond the physical structures...there are no further levels of structure and causal agents, but only absolute oneness and instantaneous connectedness. A more concrete framework for understanding mind-matter interaction, reincarnation, paranormal phenomena and the purposeful nature of evolution is provided by the ancient wisdom which teaches that the physical world is only one octave of an infinite spectrum of consciousness-substance, and is interpenetrated by innumerable other worlds... which are imperceptible to our physical senses. And just as the physical world is organized and coordinated by inner worlds—astral, mental, and spiritual—so the physical body is animated and organized by inner energy-fields or souls.” In this view, “self organization” mainly operates “from *within outwards* and ‘holistic’ or ‘emergent’ properties arise from the fact that the more complex an organism’s outer structure the greater its ability to receive and express influences (information) from the inner level of its constitution.”

(To be concluded)

SANJYOT D. PAI VERNEKAR

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2. *Ibid.*
3. Martin Nickels, “The Nature of Modern Science & Scientific Knowledge”, *Anthropology* [Article from the Web].
4. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga* (Pondicherry : Sri Aurobindo Ashram , 1971), pp. 202-223.
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THE PERFECTION'S HOME

IT WAS only a thought
Calling down the Omnipresent
Whose presence I missed
In darkness that was darker than death.
The loved ones part, the dearest depart,
The gulf between life and light
Yawns with its ugly face;
Courage comes from nowhere,
No invisible hand guards the flickering flame,
No hidden voice puts an end to shriller noise.
Yet a gentleness stirs in silence,
To an awareness,
Its care is all around;
Something leans down
Lifting me with something,
Thus I know I am not alone,
This now lives in my home.
The Hidden, the Omnipresent
Is there, just above, very close.
Now as a symbol on the house-roof
Casting charm, radiance, glow,
Catching the sun's rays in all its hues,
Penetrating nook and corner,
Cooling, calming the perturbed heart,
Reversing the ugly face
It is now there on the roof-top.
In its true Grace
I feel the formless present.
I have found my home,
A place of beauty housing Spirit's bounty,
A perfection's home,
Of living Divinity!

SHAKUNTALA MANAY

THE UNIVERSAL ASPECT OF THE RASA CONCEPT

(Continued from the issue of March 2002)

ABHINAVAGUPTA investigated the relation between concrete structure (form) and *rasa* awareness and came to the quite radical conclusion that no determinate relation is possible; for the *rasa* is more real and more persistent than any of its so-called causes.⁴ It does not depend on these conditions, because it can't be found in an actor, poet or spectator. *Rasa* exists in a transcendental (*alaukika*) dimension and is not determined by time or space, or the subject who experiences it. These *laukika* and *alaukika* categories, describing what belongs to "secular" and "sacral" dimensions respectively (*loka*, or "the world", is etymological equivalent of Latin *locus*) are being used in the context of music; so also are terms *svargya*, *asvargya* and *mārga*, *deśī*. These terms were perfectly explained by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in his treatise *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*: "The ensemble of music (*saṃgītam*) is of two kinds, highway (*mārga*) and local (*deśī*): that which was followed after by Shiva (*druhinena*) and practised (*prayuktam*) by Bharata is called highway and bestows liberation (*vimukti-dam*); but that which serves for worldly entertainment (*lokānurañjakam*) in accordance with custom (*deśasthayāṛityā*) is called 'local' ..."⁵ Further, referring to *Śukranāisāra* (IV. 4. 73-76) he says: "We find that whereas the making of images of deities in 'conducive to the world of heavenly light', or 'heavenward leading' (*svargya*), the making of likenesses of men, with however much skill, is 'non-conducive to the world of heavenly light' (*asvargya*)."⁶ (One of the most important components of the *rāga* concept is its deity (*devatā*), an expression of *rasa* embodied in a form of sound (*nāda-maya-rūpa*). Thus *mārga* and *deśī* are sacral and secular spheres of music, similar to the Medieval European *musica humana* and *musica profana*. Siegmund Levarie and Ernst Levy, in their work *Musical Morphology: a Discourse and a Dictionary*⁷ call such pure instrumental music *musica musicans*. They define it as "music determined by immanent laws of musical structure and by the grammar of musical language", as opposed to *musica musicata*, which serves "the unfolding of the passions".⁸ However, the laws discussed here are natural laws of harmony in a wide sense, and the grammar is euphony of elements of musical language (melody, rhythm and harmony) which fill up the tonal and compositional framework. Let us come back to the statement of Abhinavagupta. It says that an aesthetic experience (*rasa*) doesn't directly depend upon structural elements of the work of art. It "must depend" on something else, then. Research of Western musical history shows that there have always been scholars who shared

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7. Levarie S., Levy E. *Musical Morphology: a Discourse and a Dictionary*. Kent State University Press, 1983.

8. The example is taken from Godwin, Joscelyn. *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth*. Rochester, Vermont, 1995, p. 97.

the same view. Could it be related to the inspiration? Can we say that the level of inspiration is possibly of the greatest importance? For example, Canadian professor of musicology Joscelyn Godwin points out, that there are 3 levels of musical inspiration. The highest is the “avatatic” level that has a historical function in addition to, or even surpassing, its intrinsic value. The works of such composers serve, in their own domain, like the visions of meditating saints, which become the icons of religion. They become objects of contemplation for every subsequent composer, Godwin says. He mentions some of them: the Greek innovator Timotheus, contemporary of Plato; St. Gregory the Great, to whom all of Gregorian chant was at one time attributed; Ziryab (eighth-ninth century), court lute-nist in Baghdad and Cordoba; magister Perotinus of Notre-Dame (c. 1200), creator of the first polyphony in four parts. To the second level belong composers who can be called re-creators after a revealed pattern, Masters of their art. The inspiration to them comes from the memory: here the reconstruction of musical archetypes (*citta-vṛtti*) plays the most important role. To the second level could be ascribed all the greatest composers, who write sacral, *alaukika* music, or *musica humana*. In their utterances we can find many references to preternatural reality, which surpasses time, space and themselves as subjects: “This knowledge will be a perpetual *éblouissement*, an eternal music of colours, an eternal colour of musics. In Thy Music, we will SEE Music. In Thy Light, we will HEAR Light” (Olivier Messiaen, 1908-1993). There can be quoted a series of confessions of such composers like Johan Sebastian Bach, Johannes Brahms, Richard Wagner, Alexander Skryabin, Claude Debussy or John Cage (no matter of which century), confirming the transcendental level of aesthetic consciousness, which manifests itself through intuition and inspiration. According to Godwin the third degree of inspiration is not strictly speaking inspiration at all, because the creativity proceeds only from the creator’s own *ego*, from the models he sees around him in the world, and from his subconscious mind.⁹ This is a sphere of profane music.

Talking about the structure of musical language, it is absolutely evident that we cannot compare straightforwardly harmonic (tonal or atonal) thinking, characteristic of Western musical tradition, with domination of melodic origin in classical musical traditions of the East, in this case Indian. But here we can find some interesting parallels, too. The analytical system of Heinrich Shenker (1868-1935) obeys a correct intuition in looking for quasi-melodic outlines behind classical pieces, although it can never explain why a certain second subject of Mozart is such a perfect companion to its first subject; neither can any intellectual analysis, for the relationship is not an intellectual one. Maybe this method is precise so much as helps to reveal relativity of melodic and harmonic music as in a field of aesthetic experience. According to Godwin, anyone can construct harmonic progressions or tonal schemes in classical style, but without the gift of melody they will be lifeless images. What attracts us in Schubert or Beethoven is not the harmonic or tonal system. It is rather the “endless melody”, because in fact the whole sequence of phrases and themes is successful as much as it makes the sequence of harmonised melodies.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 676-78.

Everybody knows that it is possible to teach students many secrets of harmony and counterpoint, but to teach how to write melody none can; that is why it is said that it is a gift from God. The purpose of *rāga*, the main form of Indian classical music composition, is treated from a similar point of view. “That which charms is *rāga*”. The word “*rāga*” is obtained by adding the suffix “*ghan*” (which indicates “doing”) to the root “*rāñj*”, “to please”. “A *rāga*,” the sages say, “is a particular arrangement of sounds in which notes and melodic movements appear like ornaments to enchant the mind.” (*Sangīta Darpana*, 2-1)¹⁰ It is not a simple rendition of the scale of several chosen tones from the 22 *śrūtis*: its main purpose is to stir the emotions. The famous “endless melody” of Wagner was influenced by the philosophy of the East, and the composer tried to embody that philosophical insight in his impressive operas. There are many composers who derived, directly or indirectly, their inspiration from the Indian classical music, and especially composers of the twentieth century (Pierre Boulez, George Enescu, John Cage, Phillip Glass and others).¹¹ But perhaps it is correct to assert that what they “derive” is not the transference of foreign musical grammar. Bringing in some elements of musical language or use of the timbre of an instrument gives mostly exotic colouring and remains on the experimental level. Even more, there hardly was the effort “to think the Oriental way”. Hardly was there “the meeting of minds on the universal aesthetic level”, which enables one to catch and conceive the very core of the music, i. e. its essence—*rasa*.¹²

Of course, in order to be able to conceive *rasa* both intelligence and proper mood

10. The examples are taken from Daniélou, A. *The Rāgas of Northern Indian Music*. London, 1968, p. 91.

11. Today many American composers think that in order to become a composer, one must necessarily learn about Indian classical music. They are of the opinion that it is not worth beginning the studies of composition unless the student goes to India to know the main principles of Indian music, take lessons of singing or learn to play some classical instruments.

12. Generally speaking, until XVII c. the West had the same oral tradition and monody. The criteria of aesthetics didn't much differ from the so called Eastern countries (the relativity of allocation into “East” and “West” by contemporary scholars of comparative studies is more and more recognised). I would assert that specific difference of mentality lies in the shifting of criteria of values. Indians always cared about the result of music, its effect (*rasa*). Meanwhile for Europeans, who have become too pragmatic during the last few centuries, the most interesting thing seems to be the very process of “making music”, and structural elements have risen in importance, though they must play only a subsidiary role. Indian philosophical and aesthetic thought for centuries tried to keep the common basis. It does not change fundamental principles, does not lose contact with essential origins from which it rises, and does not turn into peripheral matters. The Indians' was always a search for uniting criteria (e.g., Advaita Vedanta, Integral Vedanta, the *rasa* concept, etc.). The identical relation between art and philosophy exists in the Western culture as well. But Western philosophers began to dismantle the Being into separate parts and the whole of it to base on one or another part. Such “rolling” of the Existence as if it would be a toy in the hands of the child could be called a children's game; only it had very serious consequences. It led to the present chaos and crisis in reality. The conflict of opposite rudiments, stress, eternal revolutionism, indulging in suffering and destruction, the negation of the truths just found a while ago and permanent innovation became the main stimuli for creativity. In the field of music composers experimented in the same way with the separate elements of musical language, sometimes hyperbolising them for fun. In a sense (from the point of view of *gnosis*) Indian classical music was developing vertically, European horizontally. Lord Yehudi Menuhin has said in his book *Unfinished Journey* that Indians have kept all the possible modes, rhythmic formulae and permutations of the sound. “Melodically and rhythmically Indian music long ago achieved a complex sophistication which only in the twentieth century, with the work of Bartok and Stravinsky, has Western music adumbrated,” he said and added that “even arcane rules of dodecaphonic composition had been anticipated and surpassed.” The sonoristic technique reminds us of the *svara* concept. The same could be said, without “taking a donkey's hind leg off”, about the enormous orchestras and choruses that gave birth to the minimalism, which reached its peak in John Cage's creative thought and finally led to the silence.

are necessary. Ānandavardhana and other theoreticians used the term *sahṛdaya*, or “one of similar heart”. According to Abhinavagupta, *sahṛdayas* are “those people who are capable of identifying with the subject matter, as the mirror of their hearts has been polished through constant repetition and study of poetry, and who sympathetically respond in their own hearts.”¹³ (At this point Richards and Ogden emphasise uniting emotional experience and use such concepts as “empathy” and “balance”.) Abhinavagupta studied the factors which help or prevent the process of perception. In this respect the universal aspect is of crucial importance. The first condition for conceiving the *rasa* is universalisation of an aesthetic object (the impersonal nature of *rasa* having no ethical ground). The second one is the universalisation of an aesthetic subject (of the spectator, listener or reader) (the “psychical distance” of E. Ballough). What happens then is that “one’s heart becomes a spotless mirror, for all of one’s normal preoccupations (*samīkārikabhāva*) have been completely forgotten, and [one] is lost in aesthetic rapture, listening to the fine singing and music.”¹⁴ As soon as the deimpersonalised consciousness of the spectator meets an universalised emotional content of the artwork, identification of the subject and object takes place (*tanmayībhāva*). Abhinavagupta considers it as the third necessary condition of *rasa* experience. Such an identification is possible because in the consciousness of the recipient as well as of the creator lies latent the same spiritual archetypes, which, according to the doctrine of reincarnation, do not disappear, but become universal models, or subconscious complexes, or impressions (*vāsanā*). Thus *rasa* first reaches the poet (composer) and his creation, then becomes an intermediary, conveying the *rasa* to the reader (listener), *rasika*. From this point of view, even a Westerner can experience *rasa* listening to the music of Bach or any other classical music, Gerow says. In my opinion to the list we can add classical music of any other culture, because the highest aesthetic experience does not have in itself any specific subjective features.

In the deepest sense of the word, *rasa* is “the bliss of one’s own consciousness” (Abhinava), it is the fullness and bliss of it (*svasamīvid-ānanda*). The highest purpose of *rasa* is the reintegration and transformation of consciousness. The experience in itself becomes the knowledge of the self, which gives the delight. The latter is expressed by various *rasas* and manifests as opening (*vikāsa*), widening (*vistāra*) or ceasing (*druti*) of consciousness (Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka). However, consciousness, as every other form of the matter, consisting of three *gunas* (*tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*) takes a *sattvic* quality. Thus the ninth *sthāyībhāva*, *tattvajñāna* (knowledge of the truth) turns into *śāntajñāna* (knowledge of silence). The *śānta* or silence was added by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka and later Abhinavagupta argued for it, not only as the ninth *rasa*, but also as the main one, because it integrates the aesthetic experience of the other eight *rasas*. Indeed, “*śānta rasa* is to be known as that which arises from a desire to secure the liberation of the Self, which leads to a knowledge of the Truth, and is connected with the property of highest happiness.”¹⁵ So the artwork

13. *The Dhvanyālokalocana of Abhinavagupta—The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana with Locana of Abhinavagupta*. Ed. by J. Pāthak. Varanasi, 1965, pp. 39-40.

14. Masson, J. L. & Patwardhan, M. V. *Śāntarasa and Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Aesthetics*. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969, p. 33.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

in the fullness of its experience as *śānta rasa* leads to the liberation of the self (*mokṣa*), the most important among the four (the other three are *kāma*, *artha* and *dharma*) aims of life. The ideal of *mokṣa* suggests an attitude, that any work of art which does not serve this aim is not worthy of listening to or seeing. In our age of postmodernism, especially in the West, such an attitude seems to be paradoxical and even uncomfortable. But we can't take that as a similar ideal, the goal of the high art is a thing of the past: it is a frequent quest of a composer or an artist even today. Even more, *rasa* in the widest sense can't be considered to be exceptionally an "Indian" phenomenon. Hardly the emotional nature of an Indian differs from that of an Englishman or a Lithuanian; otherwise we would have the curious "racial aesthetic theory".

Summarising what has been said we can draw the conclusion that *rasa*, as an experience of plenitude, with a sense of unity, and immediate awareness, by its very nature is a universal aesthetic concept. The theory of *rasa* is one of the most powerful and integral modern living aesthetic theories, and it can be very helpful reintegrating and expanding the dimensions of Western aesthetics of the twenty-first century.

(Concluded)

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SRI AUROBINDO'S SYSTEM OF UNDERSTANDING

A HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS

EXPLORATION of the texts of Sri Aurobindo are quite impossible without a reference to hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a secular analogue of exegetics. Its methods are called upon to represent the most complete comprehension of the text being investigated. These methods themselves can be divided into external and internal ones. External methods are related to the study of the biography of an author and the time during which he lived. Internal methods call for a deep penetration of the researcher's consciousness into the experience of the author and, in a most close approach, penetration into his consciousness standing behind the text.

The importance of external methods is indisputable, as also is the opportunity for their application. As for the internal methods some questions arise in our minds. How shall we proceed if there is a text of the mystical contents before us in which is an experience not of the ordinary life but of the transcendent? And if there are texts belonging to various traditions how will the consciousness of the scientist tune with them, switch from the night of the soul to warm tears of identification? How will he know and express samadhi?

I have a strong impression that the way to understand such texts is inaccessible to us; for, the experience which they narrate is unique or is not available to the consciousness of the researcher. Besides, it is impossible to master all mystical experiences given in the texts. Yet it seems to me we still retain some means to resolve the difficulty.

But what do we imply by the word 'experience'? Could it be mystic experience or experience of comprehension and description? The latter lies within the reach of academic exploration.

If a person tries to tell about his transcendental experience he has to inevitably get into the *linguistic worldview* that is conventional for all, including the person himself. The need to answer various questions then makes a mystic design his own system of understanding the experience. It is formulated through the language of its description that consists of special terms, serving as elements of the system itself.

All that I have told above is completely relevant to Sri Aurobindo's philosophical heritage. He used a lot of his own terms. The difficulty of working with them consists not only in their great quantity but also, due to it, it becomes sometimes hazardous while deriving their meaning directly from a context. Therefore we have got a paradoxical situation: hundreds of pages are related to the detailed description of the various aspects of Sri Aurobindo's yoga and philosophy, but their contents still remain esoteric,—primarily at the level of language rather than at the level of experience. If we envisage understanding the texts of Sri Aurobindo, it is necessary for us to learn to think by his rules and to speak in his language.

Sri Aurobindo's system of understanding and description of experience implicitly exists in all his texts but nowhere is it represented briefly, or as one may say, in a "dog-

matic” way. In order that we understand the contents of the texts from within, derived from this point, we should prior to that reconstruct the system itself. At this juncture we inevitably fall into a vicious circle, the so-called hermeneutic circle: the understanding of the particular is a prerequisite for the understanding of the general and not the other way around. The attempt to break through it does not make sense, for we cannot go beyond the cognitive field at all. To avoid it we have to concentrate, by turns, on both general and particular aspects. Consequently, the circle would get transformed into a spiral and through it understanding would attain a quite new level.

Thus I will first make a brief outline of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in general and then get down to the analysis of his terminology; finally, I will return to the general points.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Absolute is the *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). It is transcendent and supracosmic and is not manifested here.¹ *Nirguna* and *Saguna Brahman* (Absolute as the pure Existence and Absolute as Energy) are its aspects, divided in the Universe, but unified in *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

The transphysical universe is manifested, but is atemporal.² It consists of the so-called typical planes of consciousness, inhabited by creatures who are not able or are not willing to get into evolution. The sequence of the universal planes is as follows: sub-consciousness, its ultimate degree is the inconscient; physical consciousness, its ultimate degree is matter; vital consciousness;³ mental consciousness and spiritual mind (including sub-planes of higher mind, illumined mind, planes of intuition and overmind). Supermind (the supramental) is the connection between the manifested universe and the unmanifested *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. In fact, it is *Sat-Chit-Ananda* in the aspects of energy and will. It is transcendent by the origin and universal by the field of its operation.

Through the existing structure of planes is seen the involution of supramental consciousness, which finally imprisons itself in the inconscient. The involution is altered by the evolution to reveal the fullness of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* at every plane of its spectrum. In such a way evolution is not a return to the origin, an escape from the absurd created world, but is an uncovering of the fullness of the Divine consciousness in the conditions of the manifested universe.

Unlike the inhabitants of the typical planes, the human being contains in himself all the previous steps of the evolution. He is just the same integral one as *Brahman* is. It is a fact that creatures of typical planes should be born on Earth (i. e. incarnate in human form) if they want to become free in *Brahman*.

1. Such a definition of Absolute in Indian tradition can be considered as both katafatic and apophatic one, for on the one hand, it is characterized through essential aspects, from the other, the human mind, according to Sri Aurobindo, is quite unable to say something more definite about it.

2. In such a way, Sri Aurobindo was avoiding speculations on “What was earlier to the creation or manifestation”, for the thought about the beginning in relation to the activities of the eternal Absolute has got inner contradiction. Creation comes from the conditions of Eternity (eternal present) into the conditions of Time. But our language is developed in the course of the time, therefore its chronological sequence prevents the description of the other process.

3. Other name – “life”, the plane of emotions and desires.

The nature of the human reproduces in itself the nature of the world. In the depths of the subconscious resides the supramental. In Indian tradition it is known as Kundalini (eternal Force, divine Power). It rises along the backbone. In superconsciousness this kind of power is awakened from the beginning and, unlike Kundalini, descends via the top of the head. In principle, both the currents should interact so that mortal nature of the human being transforms into the immortal one. Therefore the supramental is Alfa and Omega of the nature, of both the world and the human.

Evolution does not come to an end with the appearance of the human being; it still goes on. Man, *manu*, is Mind, *manas*; ergo Superman is supermind. But in order to gain fullness of the life divine he should possess not only the supramental consciousness, but also the supramental body that will be the instrument, the vessel, the shrine of the Spirit.

In relation to the doctrine of evolution of man and the world, Sri Aurobindo paid great attention to the anthropology of his yoga.

One can think that while classifying the nature of the human the set of planes such as the planes of matter, life, and mind are sufficient. But in the texts of Sri Aurobindo we have a more elaborate terminology: body-consciousness, body-mind, dynamic Intelligence, dynamic Mind, externalising Mind, externalising intelligence, gross physical, higher intelligence, higher thinking mind, material consciousness, material physical, mechanical mind, mechanical mental physical, mental physical, mental proper, mental vital, mental-vital, physical mental, physical mind, physical proper, physical vital, physical-vital, reason, thinking Mind, thinking mind proper, true thinking mind, vital-mental, vital Mind, vital physical, vital proper, vital-physical and so on. Yet related to the field of the consciousness this is far from being a complete list of terms. It resides between the fields of superconsciousness and subconsciousness. Superconsciousness embraces the area from the very top of the head up to infinity while the subconsciousness extends below starting from the feet.

In this list one can select terms that at first seem to be merely a play on words: mental physical, physical mental, physical vital (physical-vital), vital physical (vital-physical). If we proceed from the point that it is something more than that, we can put together the following pairs of terms: physical mental and mental physical, physical vital (physical-vital) and vital physical (vital-physical), vital-mental and mental vital (mental-vital). Here they are a combination of the various qualities of consciousness of the human nature. If it is so, then there should exist "pure" qualities themselves. Indeed, we can find the corresponding terminology in his works: mental proper, vital proper, physical proper.

We have now nine terms to operate with. But it is not clear as to what defines the sequence of words in each term and, finally, if there are criteria for any particular sequence.

In a text of Sri Aurobindo there is a sentence that would be of great help in the course of reconstructing his system of understanding and description of spiritual experience: "There are in fact two systems simultaneously active in the organisation of the being and its parts: one is concentric, a series of rings or sheaths with the psychic at the

centre; another is vertical, an ascension and descent, like a flight of steps, a series of superimposed planes...”⁴

I just mentioned the hierarchy of planes. But what is the concentric system of sheaths? It is my strong impression that here it refers to the subtle body, i. e., aura.

But it is very difficult to find the word “aura” in the texts of Sri Aurobindo. How can it be explained? I suppose Sri Aurobindo was willing to discard this term because of theosophists who used it widely. The reasons for that we can find in the life story of the founder of Integral Yoga. The temporary teacher of Sri Aurobindo was Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, a member of the Theosophical Society. Under his directions on the third day (out of the seven) of their highly concentrated meditation Sri Aurobindo obtained an experience of Nirvana. Certainly, Lele taught him not only the silent state of the mind but also, I am sure, he told him all concerning the subtle structure of the human being. Some time after that they went their own way. Nevertheless, in spite of his critical attitude toward the theosophical doctrines on the whole Sri Aurobindo never argued against them.

But let us return to the system of sheaths. In one of his letters, Sri Aurobindo points out that the environmental consciousness is called by the theosophists the aura.⁵

This example of “translation”, or of language transformation of some theosophical terms from their lingo into his own, is not solitary. Thus while the ethereal plane was referred to as a plane of physical consciousness, the astral plane is taken as a plane of vital consciousness.

The names of sheaths (or bodies of the human being) in the works of theosophists have a correlation with the names of planes such as gross material sheath, ethereal, astral and mental. We can assume that Sri Aurobindo proceeded with the same ‘logic’. In fact, he used such related terms: corporeal sheath, body-sheath; subtle environmental physical atmosphere, subtle physical sheath, physical sheath; life-sheath, vital sheath; environmental mind, surrounding intelligence, mind-sheath, mental sheath. Thus the human being contains three principles of consciousness, represented by planes and related sheaths. Planes and sheaths intersect each other. In this way various combinations of qualities of consciousness are formed. (Look at the table opposite.) The resulting combination of qualities of consciousness, which we can trace from the works of Sri Aurobindo, can be called as aspects.⁶

In this relation two versions of interpretation are possible. In the first the main criterion is plane and in the other sheath. Only those aspects are not shifted which are “pure” and derived from intersections of homogeneous plane and sheath. For example, mental proper (III.3) is a consequence of intersection of universal mental consciousness (III) and mental sheath (3).

4. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 251.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

6. The Arabic numerals indicate sheaths, while the Roman universal planes of consciousness.

Now that we have identified the location of planes of universal consciousness and aspects of individual consciousness (aura), we are able to trace the version Sri Aurobindo stands for.

Mental consciousness as a projection on the physical body is from top of the head till the shoulders. The sector from shoulders down to the navel is covered with the higher vital consciousness. At a lower place together with the very coccyx the vital consciousness makes a transition into the physical (lower vital). Physical consciousness proper (including material) occupies the field from the coccyx to the feet.

In one of his letters Sri Aurobindo made a statement as follows: "The neck and throat and the lower part of the face belong to the externalising mind, the physical mental."⁷ Therefore the physical mental belongs to the level of universal mental, but not universal physical consciousness, and so the second version should be regarded as the right one. Information concerning other aspects of consciousness that I shall mention below also speaks in favour of the second version.

Now it is the time to clarify the translation from the lingo of Sri Aurobindo into the

7. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 373.

common language of terms, represented in the table. While “physical mental” may be translated as “physical mind”, what can we do about “mental physical”? In the texts by Sri Aurobindo we can meet such an expression as “mental in the physical”.⁸ We can well assume that “mental physical” = “mental in the physical”. If we proceed from the proposed interpretation of yogical anthropology of Sri Aurobindo, then “mental in the physical” may be identified as a mind in the physical consciousness, i. e. the intersection of mental sheath and universal physical consciousness. Then we can translate the term “mental physical” into common language as “mental aspect of physical consciousness”, and “physical mental” as “physical aspect of mental consciousness”. Such a kind of translation is based on the first word and it is the same as the arrangement of terms in Version 2 of the table where the criterion of the systematisation is in terms of sheath.

(To be concluded)

ALEXANDER VELICHENKO

8. *Ibid.*, p. 326. The similar construction: “supramental in the physical” [2, p. 963]; “vital in the physical” [2, p. 1408].

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHORIAL INTENTION IN LITERATURE

T. S. ELIOT's enigmatic poem *Ash-Wednesday* begins as follows:

Because I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
I no longer strive to strive towards such things
(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)
Why should I mourn
The vanished power of the usual reign?

A virgin reader of this stanza would be rightly confused. What is meant by “turn”? What are the “things” the poet no longer strives to strive toward? What in the world is “the usual reign”? Is it the reign of a particular *person* or an *idea*? Try as he might, the reader will simply *not* be able to discover the answers to these questions by scrutinising the text of the poem alone. However, once the reader learns that *Ash-Wednesday* was published in 1930, immediately following Eliot's unexpected conversion to Christianity, the poem's meanings begin to unfold. In this context, the reader determines that the narrator of *Ash-Wednesday* does not wish to “turn” away from his Christian faith and the narrator's values radically alter as his own selfish longings and desires become instantly subordinated to his faith in God.

Wimsatt and Beardsley, co-authors of the notorious essay entitled *The Intentional Fallacy*, would argue that such biographical information as Eliot's religious conversion would fall into the category of “external evidence” for the poem's meaning. What is “external”, they argue, “is private or idiosyncratic; not a part of the work as a linguistic fact: it consists of revelations...about how or why the poet wrote the poem.”¹ In this essay, they further argue that authorial intention plays no role in the poem's meaning unless the intention can be determined in the text of the poem itself. However, I don't think it can be denied that, with an understanding that Eliot's *intention* in writing *Ash Wednesday* was at least partly to capture his ambivalence toward and anxiety for his newly adopted faith, the meaning of the poem is importantly elucidated. I will argue, in fact, that authorial intention, widely construed, *always* constitutes the entire meaning of the work and that the aim of interpretation is to unearth and decipher, bit by bit, the author's intention.

Wimsatt and Beardsley take a poem to be a “verbal icon”, a public artifact. Thus, according to them, the “internal” evidence for a poem's meaning is “public” in that “it is discovered through the semantics and syntax of a poem, through our habitual knowledge of the language, through grammars, dictionaries, and all the literature which is the source of dictionaries, in general through all that makes a language and culture.”² They further argue that the “meaning of words is the history of words, and the biography of an author,

his use of a word, and the associations which the word had for *him*, are part of the word's history and meaning."³ Essentially, what they seem to be arguing is that the meaning of a poem can always be determined *within* the text of the poem itself, with the important elaboration, however, that the "meaning of words" includes such things as the author's biography and the "associations" which the word has for the author. The author's intention, they argue, is only relevant to the poem's meaning insofar as this intention manifests itself in the text of the poem. However, it seems to me that, in trying to determine the "associations" which a particular word has for the author, the reader must often turn to the author's intention. In the notes to Eliot's *Waste Land* we learn that Eliot *intended* that the poem should be seen through the eyes of Tiresias and that all the characters in the poem "meet in Tiresias". Eliot, thus, *associates* Tiresias with the other personages of the poem, and this association is undoubtedly useful in deciphering the poem's meaning, even though it can only be gleaned from *outside* the text of the poem itself.

The great flaw in Wimsatt and Beardsley's argument for semantic autonomy is that it renders interpretation totally relativistic. If we cannot look at the author's intention, we are left with determining a poem's meaning according to the ever-changing public norms of language and individual readers' idiosyncrasies. Thus, E. D. Hirsch writes that "any 'piece of language' must have a changing meaning when the changing public norms of language are viewed as the only ones which determine the sense of the text"⁴ and, in a different essay, he argues that interpretative disagreements can never be resolved under the theory of semantic autonomy "since the meaning is not what the author meant, but 'what the poem means to different sensitive readers.' One interpretation is as valid as another, so long as it is 'sensitive' or 'plausible'."⁵ Stein Haugom Olsen is one such semantic autonomist who offers what he considers to be objective criteria with which to compare interpretations. Since none of Olsen's criteria—completeness, correctness, comprehensiveness, consistency and discrimination—involves the author's intention, he dooms interpretation to relativism. There can be an interpretation that fully meets *all* of Olsen's criteria yet it can quite simply be wrong. Hirsch, for example, points out that some first-year undergraduate student essays offer literary interpretations that cannot be refuted solely on *internal* criteria but that are manifestly implausible because they fail to pay heed to the author's intention. In a footnote to their essay, Wimsatt and Beardsley seem to concede that their theory leads to some form of relativism as they argue, "the history of words *after* a poem is written may contribute meanings which if relevant to the original pattern should not be ruled out by a scruple about intention."⁶ This, to me, is an outrageous statement, paving the way for wholesale relativism. In essence, the critic of a particular work *becomes its author*, and this seems absolutely ludicrous. If we accept this, what becomes of objective interpretation? The standard by which interpretations are to be judged instantly dissolves, and we are left with nothing. As Alastair Fowler explains, "the reason for insisting on intention is that without it the work disappears altogether. Abandon the search for authorial meaning, and there remains no common basis for criticism worth respecting."⁷

It seems obvious to me that authorial intention *must* play a crucial role in interpre-

tation. I would agree with Fowler when he writes that “serious critical enquiries are likely to be farthered by habitually orientating thought towards the *locus* of authorial intentions.”⁸ Wimsatt and Beardsley are, of course, largely correct when they say that we can never really know the author’s intention. Although this is true, we can still get a good *idea* of the author’s intention by means of the text itself and external information such as authorial statements of intention. It seems strange when Olsen argues that “statements from the author about the ‘meaning’ of a work have the same status as a reader’s statements about the work.”⁹ More likely, an authorial statement of meaning would provide the guardrails within which successful interpretation can take place. To introduce yet another helpful metaphor, Hirsch invokes Husserl’s terminology. The author’s “horizon” is “an inexplicit sense of the whole, derived from the explicit meanings present to consciousness.” And, Hirsch continues, “of the manifold typical continuations within this horizon the author is not and cannot be explicitly conscious... But it is of the utmost importance to determine the horizon which defines the author’s intention as a whole, for it is only with reference to this horizon, or sense of the whole, that the interpreter may distinguish those implications which are typical and proper components of the meaning from those which are not.”¹⁰ The aim of interpretation, then, is to discern and explicate *parts* of this horizon and gradually “fill out” more and more of this horizon. Thus, one can judge and compare interpretations based on a variety of criteria. Some of the criteria might have to do *only* with the internal features of the work. These criteria might include many of Olsen’s criteria including completeness, comprehensiveness, correctness, consistency and discrimination. However, there might very well be two competing interpretations that successfully meet all of these internal criteria and so there must also be a criterion that is based upon the author’s intention, in order to “break the tie”, as it were. Thus, Hirsch writes with a paradoxical flair, “objectivity in textual interpretation requires explicit reference to the speaker’s subjectivity.”¹¹ Hirsch argues that this criterion based on intention is coherence, and the most coherent interpretation is the one that invokes the “most probable context.” And, according to Hirsch, in order to determine the most probable context, “we have to posit the most probable horizon for the text, and it is possible to do this only if we posit the author’s typical outlook, the typical associations and expectations which form in part the context of his utterance.”¹² It seems to me that the only way to avoid a vicious circularity in comparing the validity of competing interpretations is to turn to authorial intention.

On the theory I endorse, then, there can only be *one* correct interpretation. If one interpreter of Eliot’s *Waste Land* discerns various allusions to World War I and another interpreter argues that the poem illustrates “the disillusionment of a generation” while yet another interpreter sees the *Waste Land* as representing the failure of love, these interpretations all fall within Eliot’s horizon of meaning, but they all fall short of capturing the *full* horizon, so they are all strictly incorrect interpretations. The correct interpretation of a poem like the *Waste Land* must *integrate* all the disparate interpretations that fall under the author’s horizon. Of course, this means that, in all probability, no one will ever arrive at the single correct interpretation of the poem, but this doesn’t strike me as problematic.

The one correct interpretation stands as an ideal which all interpreters strive toward—it is, using Fowler's word—the "locus" around which interpreters do their work.

T. S. Eliot seems to have understood the problems of interpretation all too well. In *Burnt Norton*, he writes:

Words move, music moves
 Only in time; but that which is only living
 Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
 Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
 Can words or music reach
 The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
 Moves perpetually in its stillness.
 Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
 Not that only, but the co-existence,
 Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
 And the end and the beginning were always there
 Before the beginning and after the end.
 And all is always now. Words strain,
 Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
 Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
 Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
 Will not stay still.

The meanings of words, as Eliot realised, are constantly evolving, but something remains static in the midst of the flux, which is why he argues that "only by the form, the pattern...can words or music reach...the stillness." In a critical essay, he wrote, "to understand a poem it is...necessary...that we should endeavour to grasp what the poetry is aiming to be, one might say...endeavouring to grasp its entelechy." This "entelechy", I would argue, is precisely the author's horizon of meaning.

Of course, Eliot also made the notorious remark that "meaning" is like a bit of meat for the guard dog while the burglar can go about his stealthy business. This tasty bit of polemic highlights something very important: that grasping the meaning is an important *means* to enhancing the aesthetic experience, but it is no substitute for it. Ultimately, I would agree with his remark that all great poetry "can communicate *before* it is understood."

AYON ROY

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TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

Introduction

THE link between Tagore and Sri Aurobindo is too certain. Some have touched on the issue in passing, but nobody has attempted a ‘critical’ study comparing the two giants of Indian literature, the awesome two who form the modern Indian tradition. Criticism is suspect. Even Goethe’s suggestion—“Criticism we must, but on bended knees”—remains unacceptable to the devotees of Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. This was surely not wished by the two writers, because they wished to live permanently through debates and discussions. Mere worship and critical neglect send a writer to the dusty shelves of a library. Few have noticed that *The Life Divine* itself is a very critical text leaving the past scriptures behind by the pressure of progressive enlightenment. Such are also the leading texts of Tagore.

Rabindranath Tagore suffered long in the hands of devotees, till Buddhadev Bose and Sisirkumar Ghose¹ rescued him and gave a new life to his works. Sri Aurobindo was fortunate, because his detractors kept shouting against him for the last five decades and a man called K. D. Sethna kept answering, backed up by Iyengar, Gokak, Sisirkumar Ghose, Madhusudan Reddy, M. P. Pandit and a few others. Thanks to the debates and attacks on Sri Aurobindo! The Researcher of the Supramental has now crept into the university canteens and tea-stalls. Similarly, Tagore continues to live his glorious life despite the revelations made by Ketaki Kusari Dyson.² Hasn’t Sri Aurobindo told us that man is a multiple being and that a great spiritual guru may descend to the gross unless he has gone above the mind? Those revelations do not degrade the finer qualities of Tagore or his very fine mystic poetry verging quite often on the spiritual plane.

Tagore would have laughed at being spiritually equated with the trekker of the Supermind and Sri Aurobindo would have mocked at the idea that there was just one great writer in the world called Sri Aurobindo. The point is: both are writers of superior status; both believe in inner victories; both are Indian and global at the same time; both are important for the future of India and humanity; the works of both are complementary for the most part. One lights up the status of the other. Realisation colours their works. The degree and intensity of realisation may not be the same. Unfortunately, Tagore wrote in Bengali, which helps only a particular race to feel the spiritual touch behind his aesthetics. In translation, the authentic experiential flavour is gone. Tagore has prepared a language for spiritual use. A mellow Bengali sensitivity, the grandeur of Sanskrit words and the aspiration of *Vaishnava Padavali*—all these three have contributed to the making of a language, which is now fit for the use of the Aurobindonians writing in Bengali. The success of *Jyotirmala** is just a pointer to the fact.

Tagore was born in Calcutta, eleven years before Sri Aurobindo’s birth, in 1861, when the nation was waking up in the heat of New Thinking. His family was well off and

* Nirodbaran’s niece who wrote poetry in Bengali under the inspiration and guidance of Sri Aurobindo. —R.Y. D.

cultured, but luxury was not allowed to spoil him and the other children growing up with him under the supervision of servants. The school was a terror for the imaginative child and formal education was soon discontinued. The cultured environment helped and there was that special company of Devendranath Tagore, his father, who took him to England in 1878 and kept the young poet with him for two years. Just a year later, Sri Aurobindo reached England and joined school to begin a fantastic academic career. The two heroes of the modern scene stayed close without knowing each other. Both were writing poetry from their childhood; both were bent on creating language; both were under the spell of the romantic poets who had just preceded them.

The heat of nationalism touched Sri Aurobindo towards the close of his stay in England, possibly in 1890, when news from India began flowing in the corridors of Cambridge, in its luscious lawns, which might have been temptation enough for a brilliant student just completing his educational career. To the older poet, the heat had reached earlier and today we know how the poet of *Gitanjali* was feared by the British and the Americans. Unlike Sri Aurobindo, Tagore was not an activist but he was not at all innocuous in the eyes of the rulers. They detected quite early the camouflaged rebel trying to spread national education, through an alternative school and through positive ventures at village reconstruction.

In 1906, Tagore was known more as a poet than as a nationalist, although he was by then directly involved in *Swadeshi*. Sri Aurobindo was simply known then as an 'extremist' with an outstanding command over the English language. The editor of *Bande Mataram* was biting aggressive, but he was always constructive with his views on the doctrine of boycott and passive resistance. Sri Aurobindo became quiet when he came out of jail in 1909. Talking then of the national awakening in Bengal he spoke of the lyrical spirit in Bengal very significantly and after that singled out Abanindranath Tagore as a great force in favour of nationalism.

The lyric and the lyrical spirit, the spirit of simple, direct and poignant expression, of deep, passionate, straightforward emotion, of a frank and exalted enthusiasm, the dominant note of love and *bhakti*, of a mingled sweetness and strength, the potent intellect dominated by the self-illuminated heart, a mystical exaltation of feeling and spiritual insight expressing itself with a plain concreteness and practicality—this is the soul of Bengal.... In Bengal, again, the national spirit is seeking to satisfy itself in art and, for the first time since the decline of the Moguls, a new school of national art is developing itself, the school of which Abanindranath Tagore is the founder and master.³

The passage indicates Sri Aurobindo's approval of Tagore as a nationalist force working in collaboration with the activist. About a decade later, Tagore appears in *The Future Poetry* on sixteen different occasions. Here is a significant observation:

Today much of the poetry of Tagore is the sign of such a Sadhana, a long inherit-

ance of assured spiritual discovery and experience.⁴

Talking of the future of poetry, he remembers the lyricist repeatedly, finding in him signs of incantation and the promise of evolution in the lines drawn up by him. In the 30s, Tagore appears in his letters on poetry reflecting the controversies going on in Bengal then regarding Tagore's experiments.

Tagore met Sri Aurobindo twice, very humbly, recognising the light unerringly. Sri Aurobindo's famous tribute needs to be interpreted properly. I have never seen an interpretation added to that oft-quoted statement. Let us examine that remark again.

Tagore has been a wayfarer towards the same goal as ours in his own way—that is the main thing, the exact stage of advance and putting of the steps are minor matters. His exact position as a poet or a prophet or anything else will be assigned by posterity and we need not be in haste to anticipate the final verdict.⁵

The statement contains quite a few subtle hints within a balanced structure. The beginning is a striking recognition and a caution to those who still believe Tagore should not be called a spiritual seeker or a Sadhak. One easily feels the stress on the expression “that is the main thing”. By the phrase “in his own way” Sri Aurobindo possibly meant his musical way, a powerful means of opening the psychic and inviting the higher sources to change the consciousness. The inward turn is enough achievement in a man's life; the rest is a matter of time and Grace of the Divine. Hence, he says, “putting of the steps are minor matters.” The last sentence is expressive of Sri Aurobindo's critical stance, which relies a lot on the future, on the judgement of posterity. He seems to have been unwilling to give his own verdict on the poet and the prophet.

For practical reasons, one suspects, Sri Aurobindo wished to leave the “final verdict” in the hands of the future. Tagore was his contemporary, a Bengali poet, immensely popular, and his school was also popular. Here, Sri Aurobindo was bound to curb his usual straightforwardness. And yet on another day, at another time, he spoke boldly in defence of Tagore's English *Gitanjali*:

Tagore's *Gitanjali* is not in verse, but the place it has taken has some significance. For the obstacles from the other side are that the English mind is apt to look on poetry by an Indian as a curiosity, something exotic (whether it really is or not, the suggestion will be there), and to stress the distance at which the English temperament stands from the Indian temperament. But Tagore's *Gitanjali* is most un-English, yet it overcame this obstacle. For the poetry of spiritual experience, even if it has true poetic value, the difficulty might lie in the remoteness of the subject.⁶

Time and again, Sri Aurobindo remembers the Bengali poet to indicate the change that will take place in the poetry of the future. Tagore, equally conscious, recognises the

achievement of the poet of yoga: "I thought he would light up the outside with his inner light." Together, they began a new age of Indian poetry, Indian aesthetics and a new age of Indian spirituality, which refuses to ignore the material life.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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THE STORY OF THREE NEUTRINOS

Introduction

THE neutrino is one of the most elusive tiny particles created by nature. The hint for its existence came from the beta decay of nuclei or radioactivity. Although the beta decay was discovered right at the end of the nineteenth century (1896), it was only in 1931 that the neutrino was postulated by Pauli to save the energy conservation in beta decay. It took another twenty-five years to really see neutrino interactions in the laboratory (1956).

Our sun, a dominant source of neutrinos, is powered by proton-proton fusion reactions in which 600 million tons of hydrogen are burned every second in its core. This nuclear fusion reaction, the process in which two light atomic nuclei merge to form a single heavier nucleus, produces not only heat and light but also vast number of neutrinos. Nearly one thousand billion neutrinos from the sun pass through our bodies every second without any interaction. Photons, or electromagnetic radiation, produced in the deep interior of the sun undergo multiple interactions and take several years to reach the surface of the sun and in this process all the information of the stellar core is lost. On the other hand, the neutrinos, because of their extremely weak interactions with matter and practically zero mass like photons, escape straightaway from the core without interacting and thus can be used to study the inner core of the sun. Neutrinos take only a few seconds to escape the sun and another eight minutes to arrive at the earth.

A new role of neutrinos was realised on 24 February 1987 when astronomers observed a dazzling supernova in the Large Magellanic Cloud, a nearby galaxy to our own Milky Way, which is visible from the southern hemisphere. This was named Supernova 1987A (SN1987A). It was so bright that it could be easily seen by the naked eye. The parent star was about twenty times the mass of the sun, which is 2×10^{30} kg. The most interesting part of this SN1987A supernova is that two underground neutrino detectors, Kamiokande in Japan and IMB in USA, detected bursts of eight to twelve neutrinos from the supernova over a ten second interval. The detected signal strongly brought out the important role of neutrinos in the explosion of massive stars and their transformation into a tiny and incredibly dense object called a neutron star. Neutron stars are about twenty kilometres in diameter and extremely dense and more massive than the sun.

There is no direct evidence to date for neutrinos having some mass. Only recently there is growing evidence that the neutrinos after all may possess some mass (about one billionth times lighter than the electron?). What if neutrinos do possess some mass? As far as our day-to-day life is concerned there would be no difference. We will continue to get our light and heat from the sun, which are absolutely necessary for sustenance of life on earth. On the other hand the neutrinos are the second most abundant species next to the photons that permeate the universe. Neutrinos with mass may have some impact in cosmology which deals with the evolution and structure of the universe. Astronomers and cosmologists after several decades of observation are now coming to the conclusion that the luminous matter in the universe (like stars, galaxies, etc.) is not enough to explain

the total mass of the universe. They find that the bulk of the mass remains unseen in the universe, and this has been given the name of Dark Matter. Neutrinos with mass may be one of the candidates for the dark matter.

Beta Decay and the Neutrino Hypothesis

Radioactive decays, as mentioned in the beginning, occur spontaneously and it is a consequence of the breakdown of one type of atomic nucleus into another. Natural radioactivity arises in very heavy nuclei such as uranium and radium containing large number of protons and neutrons, and the tendency is to disintegrate into more stable structures. Each radioactive product has a characteristic half-life which is defined as the amount of time in which half of the atoms will disintegrate into atoms of a new element. The nature of this disintegration law indicates that we are dealing with a statistical law for the first time.

With detailed measurements of the radioactive decay products, it was realised in 1914 that there is a serious problem in understanding the beta decay. The first measurements by Lise Meitner and Otto Hahn suggested that the beta particles (another name for the electrons) are emitted with discrete energies. However the measurements of Chadwick revealed that the energy spectrum of beta particles is continuous, that is the beta particles are emitted with a wide spread in kinetic energy ranging from zero up to maximum possible value in beta decays. It was generally believed that in beta decay the final products are the electron and the daughter nucleus. In such reactions, where only two objects are involved in the final state, one expects, from very general considerations of energy and momentum conservation, the beta particle to emerge with a fixed value of energy. On the other hand, the measurements of Chadwick showed a continuous energy spectrum of beta particle, that is, the energy is varying from decay to decay, which was a great surprise and a puzzle.

Niels Bohr, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1922 for his theory of the hydrogen atom, attempted to understand the continuous energy spectrum of the nuclear beta decay with the hypothesis of the restricted validity of the principle of energy conservation. This was not accepted because the principle of the energy conservation had been proved beyond doubt in all fields of physics.

The debates surrounding the nuclear beta decay were interrupted by the first world war. But afterwards arguments between continuous energy spectrum and discrete lines continued up to 1927, when C.D. Ellis and W. Wooster published new measurements which confirmed beyond doubt the continuous energy spectrum of electrons from beta decay.

On 4th December 1930 Wolfgang Pauli, famous for his Exclusion Principle in 1925 and awarded Nobel Prize for the same in 1945, suggested a desperate solution to the beta decay puzzle through his now famous letter addressed to the 'Dear Radioactive Ladies and Gentlemen' who had gathered in Tübingen for a conference which Pauli could not attend. In this letter Pauli outlined his idea of a neutral third particle participating in the decay which was responsible for the continuous energy spectrum of electron in beta

decay. He also said 'For the time being I dare not publish anything ...' In October 1931 Pauli met Enrico Fermi (who got the Nobel Prize in 1938 for his studies of nuclear reactions using neutrons) at Rome and discussed his idea with him. Finally at the Solvay Conference, Brussels, in October 1933, Pauli presented his hypothesis of the neutral zeroish mass particle with hardly any interaction as the third candidate in the beta decay.

In 1934 Fermi developed his theory of beta decay using the idea of Pauli and named this new particle 'neutrino' (or the 'little neutral one' in Italian). The beta decay is classified as due to a neutron breaking up into a proton, an electron and a neutrino (?). Pauli realised that it would be difficult to detect neutrinos. A detailed calculation was made by Hans Bethe and Rudolf Peierls in 1934 regarding the interaction of neutrinos with matter. It is now known that beta radioactivity is an essential part for the energy production in the sun and the neutrinos from the sun are emitted at the rate of around 10^{11} per second and per cm^2 . On an average only one neutrino will interact during its passage through the earth and the rest will pass through as in empty space. So it was thought that there is practically no possible way of detecting neutrinos.

But anything that is created should in principle be detected; otherwise its creation is a colossal waste on the part of nature. To be sure of detecting neutrinos one needs intense beams of neutrinos (that is a large flux of neutrinos) and very large amount of target material. Besides detecting neutrinos, one also needs to understand the background events which mimic the signal one expects for the neutrino. It is a well known fact in experimental science that when two or more experiments do not agree with each other, it is generally the background which has not been properly understood.

A light was seen in the early 1950s in the form of a nuclear reactor. The uranium fission fragments from a nuclear reactor are neutron-rich and they undergo beta decay; as a result the reactor acts as a copious source of neutrinos of about 10^{12} to 10^{13} per second per cm^2 . This motivated Clyde Cowan and Fred Reines to propose a reactor experiment to detect neutrinos in 1953. It took them three years to detect neutrinos convincingly in the laboratory and they shot out a telegram in 1956 to Pauli, the original proposer. Pauli made the following announcement in 1956 to the scientific community: I received on June 15 the following telegram from F. Reines and C. Cowan (Los Alamos): We are happy to inform you that we have definitely detected neutrinos from fission fragments by observing inverse beta decay of protons. Observed cross section agrees well with expected six times ten to the power minus forty four square centimeter." Thus the neutrino was discovered. Fred Reines was awarded Nobel Prize for this discovery in 1995.

Second Neutrino

In 1937 a heavy charged particle called muon (μ), about 200 times heavier than the electron, was discovered in cosmic rays. Cosmic rays are particles dominated by protons and other nuclei entering earth's atmosphere from outside the solar system. The strange thing about a muon is that it behaves exactly like an electron and this led I. Rabi, a well known physicist of that period, to exclaim, "Who ordered muon?" The muon is known to decay

into three particles: an electron, a neutrino and an antineutrino. Particles which are detected in this reaction are only muons and electrons, since neutrinos are neutral and escape detection. During the early 1950s high energy particle accelerators came into operation which made possible studies of particle production in collisions of high energy beams of charged particles with various targets like hydrogen, helium, copper etc. Muons are not directly produced in high energy collisions of protons with target nuclei, rather they are decay products of other particles like pions and kaons. Muons thus produced in laboratories were studied and the energy spectrum of electrons from these decays were found to be well understood in the Fermi theory of weak decays mentioned earlier.

An interesting suggestion was made at the end of the 1950s regarding the neutrino and antineutrino in the muon decay. Since it was assumed in the decay of the muon that the antineutrino was an antiparticle of the neutrino, it was therefore argued that the muon could also decay by the emission of a gamma ray due to virtual annihilation of the neutrino and antineutrino and the theoretical calculation predicted that one muon out of 10,000 should decay by this gamma mode. All experimental searches failed to see this decay mode, and one could not detect even a single muon decaying via the gamma mode out of a total of ten billion muons.

The only way to reconcile ourselves to the above negative result was to conclude that the antineutrino emitted in the decay is not an antiparticle of the neutrino. So it was suggested that there are two types of neutrinos: one associated with the electron, let us call it electron-neutrino, like in the beta decay of the neutron and the second one associated with the muon, let us call it muon-neutrino, like in the decay of a charged pion. It means that the neutrino detected by Reines and Cowan in the reactor referred to the first neutrino associated with the electron. The next obvious question is how does one distinguish between electron and muon neutrinos? The answer is that an electron-neutrino on interaction with matter will produce an electron and no muon, while a muon-neutrino will produce a muon and no electron.

In 1960 Lederman, Schwartz, Steinberger and collaborators carried out an experiment to detect the second type of neutrino associated with the muon. They used the high intensity pion beam from the accelerator of the Brookhaven National Laboratory. They extracted the neutrinos associated with the muons from charged pion decay. The neutrinos were allowed to interact in a 13.5 metres thick steel wall which was followed by a special detector called Spark Chamber to detect electrons and muons. These neutrinos were found to produce only muons and no electrons, and thus a second neutrino, the muon-neutrino, was discovered. For this discovery Lederman, Schwartz and Steinberger shared the Nobel prize in 1988. Since the Nobel prize was given nearly thirty years after the work, Steinberger, while giving a seminar at CERN after receiving his Nobel prize, made a remark that one must have a long life to be able to receive the Nobel prize!

(To be concluded)

S.N. GANGULI

SUFFERING MEANINGFULLY

DOES human suffering have meaning? What metaphysical meaning can there be behind burning people alive? What consolation can one give a mother who has just lost her one and only young son? Of what purpose is life if the end, death, is inconsequential? These are some of the questions that I have attempted to answer in this article.

Is something neither right nor wrong unless and until God has pronounced it one or the other?

If we take the case to be that whatever God commands is right then we run into a number of problems. Jerry Falwell preached that it was a Christian's moral duty to support the Vietnam War and he preached, "Kill a Commi for Christ!" Was he right? Is what God commands right because He commands it, or is it right for some other reason than that he commands it? This seems to be the fundamental question behind the *Book of Job* and sums up Job's condition. Job's argument with God is that he does not, and did not, deserve to be treated the way God has treated him, and God's argument that Job does not have sufficient knowledge to know what is right or wrong from God's point of view is not satisfying for us the readers, because we know God's reasons for bringing ruin to Job—it is a test; it is a test to win a bet with the devil; and it is not about creating some greater good that this requires. It has no more merit than there would be in someone's doing everything s/he could to make sure his/her spouse was loyal by treating him or her terribly and making sure temptation fell right into his or her lap. Even if the spouse proves loyal, the test itself was reprehensible. Job was prosperous, materialistically successful. God tests his faith and when he finds Job holds true, despite being afflicted with "loath some sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head," and receiving severe chastisement at the hands of his wife, He rewards him with double the material wealth.

This raises another interesting question. Should one be faithful to God as God rewards his faithful followers materialistically? "Why," Socrates had questioned Euthyphro in Plato's *Euthyphro*, "be ethical, especially if and when it goes against your self-interest?"

The problem we run into, if we look at these ancient tales as they are, without delving into the philosophy underneath, is that these holy texts do not seem so holistic after all. Would we like to be faithful to a god who rewards us financially? In short, does it pay to be faithful? Most of us would, I am sure. But then how does that fit in with the idea of an afterlife. What is hell and what heaven then if we are rewarded with prosperity in this life itself?

What the *Book of Job* does, I feel, is instruct people to be virtuous. How do we keep faith in God? Is it by being honest, truthful to our fellow men, by following the Ten Commandments for the Christians, the Koran for the Muslims and the Gita for the Hindus. What this does, in effect, is to keep society in place. If men are honest, truthful, caring and virtuous, the element of misery largely disappears from society. What these sacred texts do, I believe, is show us ways through which we can lead a safe and happy

life in a safe society. What better way is there to create a safe society than say, “God did this to Job to test him though he was virtuous. What would He do to the one who is not virtuous?”

This is a great way to play on man’s psychology and keep him in place. This is precisely the technique that monarchs all over the world adopted. They called themselves the king and supreme monarch of their respective monarchies by the mandate of heaven. God or the gods had decreed, according to the mandate of heaven, that the king was his or their very own representative. Hobbes in his *Leviathan*—composed in the late seventeenth century during the times of the English Civil War that centered about Charles I, Cromwell and finally ended with the accession of Charles II to the throne of England—emphasised that we should relinquish all our rights to the monarch. The monarch is the ultimate law. The king’s word is the ultimate word since he is God’s representative in the temporal world. This was a great way to hold common people in awe and make them obey and respect the king. Thus, through the sacred texts of major religions, we see how religion is primarily a tool to hold society in place and uphold social order.

Religion is an answer to suffering.

Obviously we, as humans, are attracted to a solution for human suffering. We suffer throughout our life. Why is that so and what can we do to relieve ourselves of suffering? The answer to this fundamental question, as I have said earlier, has been provided by the ancient religions of the world. What happened over time was that the people who had undertaken to spread these beliefs became corrupt through the power this responsibility brought them. Thus the Roman Catholic Church had become an extremely hypocritical and corrupt institution by the 1500s. The solution to this came in the form of Martin Luther. He emphasized the basic beliefs of Christianity and gave the religion a breath of fresh air. Thus the Protestant reformation period began.

Precisely the same thing happened with Hinduism in India when the priestly class, who had the responsibility to educate the people, spread awareness about Hinduism and conducted religious festivals became corrupt and hedonistic. They suppressed the lower classes and soon complex Hinduism, which over the ages had been explained lucidly to the public, became impossible to comprehend and the public looked for a way out into a pragmatic approach to life. Hinduism, per se, was no longer answering why people had to suffer and how they could escape the daily cycle of suffering. The Buddha arrived with a pragmatic solution that was eagerly lapped up by the people. The Buddha, as the heir to Shuddhodhana’s kingdom based in Kapilavastu, saw how pointless this existence is. He led a completely happy life. He had a beautiful wife, a lovely son; he was the heir to the throne. He was in the perfect Lockean world. What else could a man ask for?

Yet the Four Signs revealed to him the temporal world and a way out of it and he realised that material wealth was not what he wanted. He left his family, his kingdom and sought enlightenment which he eventually received. And his philosophy came as a response to stagnating Hinduism. He did away with rituals, made monotonous by the Brahmins who recited the Holy Scriptures in Sanskrit, a language the common people did not understand, and didn’t even explain it to them. He preached in Pali, the language

of the common people. His pragmatic approach was easy to follow by all and sundry. He said,

“Life is suffering; suffering is caused by desire; suffering can be vanquished; the eightfold path is the way to vanquish suffering.”

This is the simplest philosophical approach towards suffering. The Eightfold Path is as simple as it gets. And who would disagree that true happiness does not come out of following it? The Buddha’s solution was drastically different and had a different purpose as it broke down the religious hierarchy prevalent in India, gave the common people a sense of direction and relief since their own philosophical leaders were not helping them in any way to find the solution that they were looking for. What both Christianity and Buddhism did was provide a sense of direction to one’s life.

Doesn’t life seem pointless when one loses a loved one? Is it not better to know that detachment is the best solution to misery, as Sri Krishna says in the Gita? Don’t we feel a sense of satisfaction when we are honest and truthful? Dire consequences might follow at certain times out of speaking the truth but that is exactly why good knowledge of different philosophies of the world helps so much.

I, for one, from reading the *Book of Job* and having knowledge about the Eightfold Path would know that I have done the right thing by being virtuous since it would aid me in achieving Nirvana. If I faced persecution after that, I would know that being detached from exterior circumstances is the best way not to break down.

But it becomes increasingly tough to act in this fashion and undertake such a stance when one is in a miserable situation such as the one Elie Wiesel faced at Auschwitz during the Second World War. His family was taken from him and he never saw his mother again; his father died in front of him after struggling to live for the many months they were together at the concentration camps; he saw children and weak men being burnt to death to save food and space in the camps.

When one says that the best way to come out of such a terrifying ordeal with a sane mind is to remain unaffected and do one’s duty to the best of one’s capacity—help one’s fellowmen and not turn into a cruel demon like the others around her or him—it seems impossible. But that is why, as Nietzsche was to say in 1938, “Christianity is a misconception. There has only been one true Christian and he died on the cross.” If everybody could go through what Christ went through, and then forgive his enemies, everyone would be an idol, a leader, and a prophet. Everyone would be a Krishna, a Rama, a Mohammed, a Moses, a Job, a Christ, a Martin Luther, a Confucius or a Lao Tzu. That is why we worship people like them and follow their words. They suffered immensely yet forgave their enemies, overcame their miserable situation through their philosophy which they then spread to humanity. They encountered tremendous odds and overcame them. That is why we try to follow their words, since they succeeded in overcoming misery.

Yes, human suffering has meaning. It reinforces our belief in God, for in our happiness we tend to forget him. Atheists are busy, like existentialists, in finding a solution to

misery. Yet they only have to look around to see that human suffering is a challenge that can be overcome. The great sages of the world have already found the solution to it. Their philosophy comforts and guides us along life's harsh ways. Human suffering exists to give us that condition through which we can aspire towards spiritual perfection. If there were no suffering, life would be perfect. But then, that is what we are aspiring towards: spiritual perfection.

AURPON BHATTACHARYA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sing My Soul: Selected Poems and Other Writings by *Georgette Coty*. Pondicherry, 2001. 175 pages. Rs. 150.

NEARLY fifty years ago Purushottama Lal criticised Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* as a poem that left him cold with its talk of the 'soul': he felt there was "nothing to hang on to" and yet sprinkled his own poems with a soul here and a soul there and sometimes it was soul everywhere. What Prof. Lal did not realise was that the "soul" is the only thing left that one can hang on to when pushed off the edge of the precipice.

Which is what happened to Georgette Coty during the Second World War. A young girl in hunger, soldiers hungry for the female flesh. *Sing My Soul* has been worth publishing if only for these three pages of "What Price Victory", an autobiographical fragment. "I was among those, who were thrown into prison to be dealt with as they wished." Well, for millions, they had only their unseen, unfelt soul to hang on to during such imprisonment in Night; they did not let go and either survived or met their end with a rare equanimity. Georgette survived to tell the tale, but she is the Mother's Child and hence will not give the evil forces the satisfaction of having maimed a sensitive soul. So her soul sings and a most welcome music it is to defy the forces of darkness.

Singing in so many tunes of agony and ecstasy, of longing and fulfilment, of strength and weakness, of transience and permanence. And love. Georgette has chanced upon the perfect image to symbolise all that the best and most unselfish love full of noble longings can offer: an Indian mother! Yama exults that his world has received another such image and his exultation is backed by "a choir of voices [that] like music rose to chant":

O, a soul, a soul came home today
To us today ... Wife and Mother
Mother and wife from India
From India today.

This is poetic magic achieved with what may be considered "just ordinary" words trying to limn "just an ordinary" woman. But the force released is extraordinary. Georgette is able to perform the feat again in a twentieth century Bhu-Sukta. The Vedic Hymn to the Earth Goddess glorifies her as Bhuma and Vasundhara, all-beautiful, full of riches, patient, compassionate. Georgette's *Earth Hymn* is a sublime lament:

Who made enemies of brothers and kin,
Who shattered their lands and lives?
Where did all the laughters go
and their happy dance?
The devil took their joys away,

their cries trouble my nights,
The people weep in my heavy eyes.

But Mother Earth continues to be kind, full of charity. The prayer of the poetess merges with the unstruck melody of Bhu Devi turning to the Supreme for help on behalf of humanity.

There is a marked defiance in the manner in which Georgette invokes Ananda, the chosen diction of music giving the free verse a fine lilt:

What magnificently concerted
Orchestration resounds
Throughout the universe!

Ancient Sanskrit thoughts get a refreshing English residence as when the *tamasor mām jyotirgamaya* concept concludes *Shiva the Lord*. Concepts of the western culture (burnt offering, the passion play) also get subsumed in the poems. But the *ādhāra śruti* is the Aurobindonian vision of the Delight of Existence that can chase away all that seeks to cloud the horizon. The Master and the Mother are undeniable presences in this volume where there are several face-to-face invocations. There are some jottings that take us close to parapsychic phenomena too. The mystery of existence cannot be comprehended in its entirety and all one can say is that there are neither partings nor meetings. It is all one tremendous divine Poornam (Full, Complete):

A fragrant flower became our union, secret and alone sits the jewel in the rose.
Warm ruby, diamond radiant, occult amethyst, oh triple jewel, gift Divine.

A parting took place amidst petals of textured delight. Our parting was a beginning, an embrace grown into union and a becoming.

As in *Christalis*, the faery-tripping style hides a keen watcher of humanity. Georgette's "Outpatients at Jipmer" speaks of an experience while she waited in the hospital along with others who had come for relief from pain. Not here the "Christian-yoked Europe's sterile silence". True, these Indians are poverty-stricken and in the grip of pain. But there is something in the Indian clime that always defies darkness by the delight of existence that wells from somewhere within!

....nothing could mar
Or blot out the light which God has placed
into Indian eyes.

Reading Georgette Coty's *Sing My Soul* makes one an immigrant to the Mind of Light. No visas, passports needed to do so, except take up the book, wonder at the presence of the Anandamay Purusha and withdraw into meditation:

Sri Aurobindo, bringer of the Supramental Light, and the diamond-white Divine Mother dispensing it to the worlds. As the glowing disc of the Sun at dawn emerging from the sea, this emergence will not go down at dusk as of old but bathe the worlds with radiance.

And we pray from the lotus of our hearts: let the old glory and purity of the Vedic times return to this sacred land of India to greet the Coming Dawn ... May its renewed spiritual splendour be a shining beacon to all the worlds ever calling for it, awaiting the Hour which is to come!

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

The Golden Light—a journal of Sri Aurobindo Research Institute and Meditation Academy Trust, Jalada, Orissa. Price not mentioned.

Generally the first two issues of a journal are not reviewed exclusively but *The Golden Light* published by SRIMA Trust, Jalada is an exception. Since Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry named this journal as *The Golden Light* he must have foreseen an effulgence spreading from it. First of all, the size, weight and appearance of the two issues of *The Golden Light* under review lead one to treat them as books. Secondly the contents are of such importance that one could preserve them for quick reference as well as serious study. The editors have succeeded in culling together many illuminating and relevant excerpts from the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Interspersed with their writings are the tributes paid by sadhaks and scholars. Let us consider the Special Issue on the Supramental Manifestation, dated 29 February, 2000. The fact that this journal enjoys the blessings and patronage of eminent sadhaks and scholars is evident from their letters published in its opening pages. We have a liberal sprinkling of poems by established poets like Nirodbaran, V. Madhusudan Reddy, Pujalal, Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya. These poems are offered in adoration to the Mother in the context of the descent of the Supramental Light. These poems are eloquent about the new step that humanity has to take to struggle out of its routine predicament.

Three poems of Sri Aurobindo, *Invitation*, *Light*, *The Golden Light* are aptly chosen, illustrating his experience of the Supramental Manifestation. Instead of turning Sri Aurobindo's philosophy into a forbiddingly cold metaphysical treatise this journal tries to highlight the Supramental Descent from different angles. The journal tries to provide an insight into the mystery of 29 February 1956, particularly for those who are still uninitiated. For example, K. D. Sethna's article on pp. 37-40 *Why and How is the 29th February the Supramental Day?* elicits from his own self a wonderful answer. A free translation of Bendre's experience on p. 41 also enhances the reader's grasp of the matter.

In other words, the editorial board has taken special care to see that the readers'

interest does not wane as the narrative progresses. If the selection and arrangement of material are partly responsible for this then the presentation and its ensuing visual impact also deserve credit. Every page has been livened up with a drawing of either a photo, or an anecdote or a beautiful quotation.

These qualities are present in the other issue also which commemorates Sri Aurobindo's 129th birth anniversary and the 50th anniversary of his Mahasamadhi. The tone of the editorial is humble and unassuming, but one can see the great endeavour behind this journal. Regrettably, the editorial winds up only in one sentence the various activities and achievements of Sri Aurobindo Research Institute and Meditation Academy at Jalada. The forthcoming issues will hopefully carry more information about this Academy.

Milestones in the Life of Sri Aurobindo by Manoj Das is a very useful chart which helps us to find any particular event in the Master's life just in one glimpse. The childhood photographs of Sri Aurobindo are matched with pertinent quotations from *Savitri*. The later stages of Sri Aurobindo's life are presented in an equally imaginative manner. We have a wonderful pictorial biography of Sri Aurobindo and the major turning-points are highlighted by headlines and captions. In this way the reader can classify the vast pool of information about Sri Aurobindo more easily. This biography attempts to draw us close to the Yoga of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo by focusing on little-known facts. What did Sri Aurobindo feel when he saw the Mother for the first time? Barin Ghosh, his youngest brother, had asked him precisely this question. The answer to this question makes us marvel at both him and the Mother. This information is from Nirodbaran's book *Sri Aurobindo For All Ages* (1990 edition).

This issue of *The Golden Light*, an album cum monograph, can be reprinted in the form of a proper book. This is a serious suggestion because as periodicals these two issues will be gradually forgotten. If the editors oblige their readers by giving a more durable shape to the existing *Golden Light*, then many people will stand to gain.

RITA NATH KESHARI

Global Dharmic Management by S.A. Sherlekar. Publisher: Himalaya Publishing House. First Edition: 2001. Pages: 219. Price: Rs. 125.

Sherlekar's *Global Dharmic Management* aims to emphasize the need and way of organizational wisdom, as opposed to knowledge where "the wisdom leader needs a firm base in the awareness of cosmic law and order as the starting point." Sherlekar is no doubt attempting to embody an aspiration to create a better world through wise organizations. It is unclear, though, as to how the contents and approach embodied in the book might achieve this.

Sherlekar has, for example, referred to a number of frameworks extracted from the scriptures and gurus. One such framework he refers to is the OSHA model, created by the

Director of IIPM at Bangalore. “The ‘O’ stands for ‘Om’, and is the signature of God indicating oneness with nature, the ‘S’ stands for sattva guna, the ‘H’ stands for the average human, and the ‘A’ stands for Asura.” Further, “the root of the OSHA model is in Om Shanti. ‘O’ refers to Om, and ‘SHA’ to Shanti.” How exactly this connection is made, is left to the imagination of the reader. The possible merit of the model has thus been compromised. This model is used for self-analysis and explains theories of leadership, so Sherlekar says, but, again, does not indicate how, and in what manner. This general approach unfortunately runs through much of the book, and to a large extent Sherlekar has left a lot to the imagination of the reader, both in terms of the content within chapters, and in terms of the connection between chapters. If his aim is to provide the reader with a jigsaw puzzle, so that through imagination, intuition, and effort they can construct a cohesive picture of the vision he has possibly had in mind, then *Global Dharmic Management* must be adjudged a success.

Structure aside, Sherlekar has attempted to create an “ethico-moral” filter or lens to whose scrutiny all organizational decisions should be subjected. Under this lens, any kind of harm, for example, is inappropriate, and should be rejected. Thus, Bush’s pressure on Afghanistan, because of the killing of incidental civilians, in the pursuit of terrorists, would perhaps be construed as an evil action, and thus be better avoided. There is no scope for the loving blows of Mahakali and the many-sided wisdom of the Mother. If *Global Dharmic Management* were the engine of the universe, Osama would not be allowed to blow up the World Trade Center and the Divine would perhaps need to resort to a slow serpentine path across the aeons to fulfill His earthly goals. Perhaps *Global Dharmic Management* would be better applied to a typical world, already fulfilled in its aims. Perhaps it would be better suited to a world which is ‘a perfect picture in a perfect frame’ (*Savitri*, p. 115), where ‘perfected’ beings and ‘perfected’ truth are already the order of the day.

Sherlekar has without doubt spent substantial time researching the Indian scriptures with regard to areas related to work, such as karma, dharma, ethics, and morality, and at several instances in the book his words come across as a voice for a way of being in which many of the tenets described should be applied to modern organizational management. The wisdom of this voice, though, is questionable because there is no scope for Truth to exercise itself. Truth has already been equated to quotations, frameworks, and ways to act, rather than the spontaneity and creativity that comprise its living and varied quality. *Global Dharmic Management* has marginalized spirituality. Spirituality cannot just be applied to organizations like a lotion or tonic. This trivializes it. Each one’s truth of being has to be lived. It has to become the center around which all actions unfold. Application of frameworks and ways to act in given circumstances cannot replace the living will and response of the soul.

Sherlekar believes in the completeness and appropriateness of his work. He has quoted a powerful line from the Mother—“The World is preparing for a big change. Will you help?” He has also presented the way to help, mainly through application of *Global Dharmic Management*: “Arise O India. The Hour of God has come. Lead the Universe

and let us establish global, value-based holistic management. The Divine Grace will help you to change your destiny.” The message contained in *Global Dharmic Management* comes across as being sure of itself. This hints that it is perhaps a stream, amongst many, being put forward because that which is putting it forward seeks to have it heard, perhaps because the essence behind it does need to be integrated into any future manifestation. As such, if it is to maintain its ‘Global Dharmic Management’ title, and the high aspiration of its aim, it should be integrated with other streams of thought. One such stream, for example, could be the utility of pain and suffering in moulding an unfinished world. Another stream, for example, could be the reality of different national spirits, which would require a different expression of their respective Dharmas. Such an integrated message would come across more realistically, and could perhaps apply here. As it stands now, the message of *Global Dharmic Management* belongs to another time and space.

PRAVIR MALIK