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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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STORM BIRD OF ANARCH POWER

THE great voice surging cried to Savitri:
“Because thou knowst the wisdom that transcends
Both veil of forms and the contempt of forms,
Arise delivered by the seeing gods.
If free thou hadst kept thy mind from life’s fierce stress,
Thou mightst have been like them omniscient, calm.
But the violent and passionate heart forbids.
It is the storm bird of an anarch Power
That would upheave the world and tear from it
The indecipherable scroll of Fate,
Death’s rule and Law and the unknowable Will....
The wise are tranquil; silent the great hills
Rise ceaselessly towards their unreached sky,
Seated on their unchanging base, their heads
Dreamless in heaven’s immutable domain.
On their aspiring tops, sublime and still,
Lifting half-way to heaven the climbing soul
The mighty mediators stand content
To watch the revolutions of the stars.
Motionlessly moving with the might of earth,
They see the ages pass and are the same....
Be still and tardy in the slow wise world.
Mighty art thou with the dread goddess filled,
To whom thou criedst at dawn in the dim woods.
Use not thy strength like the wild Titan souls!
Touch not the seated lines, the ancient laws,
Respect the calm of great established things.”

But Savitri replied to the huge god:
“What is the calm thou vauntst, O Law, O Death?...
Vain the soul’s hope if changeless Law is all...
Impose not upon sentient minds and hearts
The dull fixity that binds inanimate things...
I trample on thy law with living feet;
For to arise in freedom I was born.
If I am mighty let my force be unveiled
Equal companion of the dateless powers,
Or else let my frustrated soul sink down
Unworthy of Godhead in the original sleep.
I claim from Time my will’s eternity,

God from his moments.” Death replied to her,
 “Why should the noble and immortal will
 Stoop to the petty works of transient earth,
 Freedom forgotten and the Eternal’s path?
 Or is this the high use of strength and thought,
 To struggle with the bonds of death and time
 And spend the labour that might earn the gods
 And battle and bear agony of wounds
 To grasp the trivial joys that earth can guard
 In her small treasure-chest of passing things?
 Child, hast thou trodden the gods beneath thy feet
 Only to win poor shreds of earthly life
 For him thou lov’st cancelling the grand release,
 Keeping from early rapture of the heavens
 His soul the lenient deities have called?
 Are thy arms sweeter than the courts of God?”
 She answered, “Straight I trample on the road
 The strong hand hewed for me which planned our paths.
 I run where his sweet dreadful voice commands
 And I am driven by the reins of God....
 Far Heaven can wait our coming in its calm.
 Easy the heavens were to build for God.
 Earth was his difficult matter, earth the glory
 Gave of the problem and the race and strife....
 What liberty has the soul which feels not free
 Unless stripped bare and cannot kiss the bonds
 The Lover winds around his playmate’s limbs,
 Choosing his tyranny, crushed in his embrace?
 To seize him better with her boundless heart
 She accepts the limiting circle of his arms,
 Bows full of bliss beneath his mastering hands
 And laughs in his rich constraints, most bound, most free.
 This is my answer to thy lures, O Death.”

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 650-53)

TWO OBJECTS OF THE HIGH-REACHING SOUL

THE Vedic gospel of a supreme victory in heaven and on earth for the divine in man, the Christian gospel of a kingdom of God and divine city upon earth, the Puranic idea of progressing Avatars ending in the kingdom of the perfect and the restoration of the Golden Age, not only contain behind their forms a profound truth, but they are necessary to the religious sense in mankind. Without it the teaching of the vanity of human life and of a passionate fleeing and renunciation can only be powerful in passing epochs or else on the few strong souls in each age that are really capable of these things. The rest of humanity will either reject the creed which makes that its foundation or ignore it in practice while professing it in precept or else must sink under the weight of its own impotence and the sense of the illusion of life or of the curse of God upon the world as mediaeval Christendom sank into ignorance and obscurantism or later India into stagnant torpor and the pettiness of a life of aimless egoism. The promise for the individual is well, but the promise for the race is also needed. Our father Heaven must remain bright with the hope of deliverance, but also our mother Earth must not feel herself for ever accursed.

It was necessary at one time to insist even exclusively on the idea of individual salvation so that the sense of a Beyond might be driven into man's mentality, as it was necessary at one time to insist on a heaven of joys for the virtuous and pious so that man might be drawn by that shining bait towards the practice of religion and the suppression of his unbridled animality. But as the lures of earth have to be conquered, so also have the lures of heaven. The lure of a pleasant Paradise of the rewards of virtue has been rejected by man; the Upanishads belittled it ages ago in India and it is now no longer dominant in the mind of the people; the similar lure in popular Christianity and popular Islam has no meaning for the conscience of modern humanity. The lure of a release from birth and death and withdrawal from the cosmic labour must also be rejected, as it was rejected by Mahayanist Buddhism which held compassion and helpfulness to be greater than Nirvana. As the virtues we practise must be done without demand of earthly or heavenly reward, so the salvation we seek must be purely internal and impersonal; it must be the release from egoism, the union with the Divine, the realisation of our universality as well as our transcendence, and no salvation should be valued which takes us away from the love of God in his manifestation and the help we can give to the world. If need be, it must be taught for a time, "Better this hell with our other suffering selves than a solitary salvation."

Fortunately, there is no need to go to such lengths and deny one side of the truth in order to establish another. The Upanishad itself suggests the door of escape from any over-emphasis in its own statement of the truth. For the man who knows and possesses the supreme Brahman as the transcendent Beatitude becomes a centre of that delight to which all his fellows shall come, a well from which they can draw the divine waters. Here is the clue that we need. The connection with the universe is preserved for the one reason which supremely justifies that connection; it must subsist not from the desire of personal earthly joy, as with those who are still bound, but for help to all creatures. Two then are

the objects of the high-reaching soul, to attain the Supreme and to be for ever for the good of all the world,—even as Brahman Himself; whether here or elsewhere, does not essentially matter. Still where the struggle is thickest, there should be the hero of the spirit, that is surely the highest choice of the son of Immortality; the earth calls most, because it has most need of him, to the soul that has become one with the universe.

And the nature of the highest good that can be done is also indicated,—though other lower forms of help are not therefore excluded. To assist in the lesser victories of the gods which must prepare the supreme victory of the Brahman may well be and must be in some way or other a part of our task; but the greatest helpfulness of all is this, to be a human centre of the Light, the Glory, the Bliss, the Strength, the Knowledge of the Divine Existence, one through whom it shall communicate itself lavishly to other men and attract by its magnet of delight their souls to that which is the Highest.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Kena & Other Upanishads, CWSA, Vol. 18, pp. 96-98)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

NIRODBARAN: Anilbaran's letter. This time it is about politics. He writes: "A zamindar of Mymensingh named Umapada came to see me and said that oppression by the Muslim League has terribly increased."

SRI AUROBINDO: Suren Ghose in his interview with the Mother has said all about it and the Mother has said whatever is necessary.

NIRODBARAN: The letter continues: "Brajendra says that communism is spreading among the youths and Congress can't stand against it. The only way, I told him, is to propagate Sri Aurobindo's ideas and, leaving Gandhi's constructive programme, take up the old village communism."

SRI AUROBINDO: Communism? All that is an old formula. It won't do at all. How is he going to link Sri Aurobindo's ideas to communism? And where was village communism in India ever?

NIRODBARAN: Why? What about the Panchayat systems, etc.?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the village commune, not communism. Communism means having common property.

NIRODBARAN: I think he means commune. Then he says: "About politics there is no necessity to fight the British any more, because they can't stand now against India's will. Now by exerting pressure on government, we must get power and accept ministries as a corollary."

SRI AUROBINDO: All that is old; there is nothing new in it. Next?

NIRODBARAN: "To make this effective we must have unity and the pressure of a united will."

SRI AUROBINDO: How is he going to get it?

NIRODBARAN: By following your trends of thought. Unity not only of India but of the whole world: the principle of unity lies there. Now Public Enemy No. 1 is Bolshevism, No. 2 Communalism, No. 3 perhaps Gandhism.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why perhaps? (*Laughter*)

NIRODBARAN: The remedy is to broadcast Sri Aurobindo's ideas and ideals extensively, to try large-scale production.

SRI AUROBINDO: Large-scale production of what?

NIRODBARAN: Don't know.

SATYEN: Industrial production he means.

NIRODBARAN: Or perhaps human production. (*Laughter*)

PURANI: He speaks of Gandhism as Public Enemy No. 3 because he overvalues Gandhi's influence and his philosophy. His programme is accepted because there is no other.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, Gandhi's programme is the only one at present.

PURANI: When some revolutionary approached Tilak, Tilak said: "If you can show

me even 55% chance of success of a revolution I shall be ready to raise the standard of revolt. But is the country ready? Are the people willing to join the army? What will you do when the British army attacks you?" The revolutionary couldn't convince Tilak.

SRI AUROBINDO: Armed revolution is impossible at present. At the time we started work, there was some chance of success because the instruments of war had not developed so much. If irregular and guerilla warfare had been carried out on a country-wide scale, there might have been some chance. But now with aeroplanes and machine-guns, etc., armed revolution would be crushed in no time.

NIRODBARAN: Perhaps the aim of the revolutionaries is not so much to fight the British army as to intimidate the British Government.

Sri Aurobindo: A small number of revolutionaries won't intimidate the Government. Even if they succeed, the Government will give not Independence but Dominion Status, which they are willing even now to give after some time. England will give up India when she finds it impossible to retain her, either because of the threat of defeat or because the whole nation is united behind the demand.

NIRODBARZN: In Ireland they were forced to submit. They could have crushed Ireland if they had wanted to.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is what Lloyd George threatened—that if De Valera didn't accept the treaty, Ireland would be crushed. All Irish people were united in one demand and object. Every woman and child were revolutionaries and carried out what their leaders said. Even then De Valera had to accept the treaty. In India there is no such possibility of country-wide rebellion. Even an unarmed rebellion...

NIRODBARAN: When you started the revolutionary movement, did you think it would succeed?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I had the idea that it would succeed but found that it was not possible.

SATYEN (*after the talk had run on on several topics*): There was a Jain saint, Rajchandra. He seems to have predicted the death of a man, the exact time and date. According to the prophecy he was to die at night. The saint had said, "Unless my consciousness is clouded he will die at night." But the man died during the day on the same date. Sir, is death predestined? Can the exact date be given?

SRI AUROBINDO: The date can vary. There are many factors that may come in and push it off this way or that way.

(To be continued)

(Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. 1, pp. 495-98)

HYMN TO DURGA

MOTHER DURGA! Rider on the lion, giver of all strength, Mother, beloved of Siva! We, born from thy parts of Power, we the youth of India, are seated here in thy temple. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.

Mother Durga! From age to age, in life after life, we come down into the human body, do thy work and return to the Home of Delight. Now too we are born, dedicated to thy work. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, come to our help.

Mother Durga! Rider on the lion, trident in hand, thy body of beauty armour-clad, Mother, giver of victory, India awaits thee, eager to see the gracious form of thine. Listen, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India....

Mother Durga! We are thy children, through thy grace, by thy influence may we become fit for the great work, for the great Ideal. Mother, destroy our smallness, our selfishness, our fear.

Mother Durga! Thou art Kali, naked, garlanded with human heads, sword in hand, thou slayest the Asura. Goddess, do thou slay with thy pitiless cry the enemies who dwell within us, may none remain alive there, not one. May we become pure and spotless, this is our prayer, O Mother, make thyself manifest....

Mother Durga! Enter our bodies in thy Yogic strength. We shall become thy instruments, thy sword slaying all evil, thy lamp dispelling all ignorance. Fulfil this yearning of thy young children, O Mother. Be the master and drive thy instrument, wield thy sword and slay the evil, hold up the lamp and spread the light of knowledge. Make thyself manifest.

Mother Durga! When we possess thee, we shall no longer cast thee away; we shall bind thee to us with the tie of love and devotion. Come, Mother, manifest thyself in our mind and life and body.

Come, Revealer of the hero-path. We shall no longer cast thee away. May our entire life become a ceaseless worship of the Mother, all our acts a continuous service to the Mother, full of love, full of energy. This is our prayer, O Mother, descend upon earth, make thyself manifest in this land of India.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translations, SABCL, Vol. 8, pp. 215-16)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

Yesterday a hostile suggestion came: "Now it is better to take rest for two or three days. Assimilate well, do not go so fast. It is better to mix with people; otherwise you will feel tense."

ONE has to proceed on a basis of firm quietude and equanimity with a steady aspiration. It is only if there is a vital excitement that progress becomes a strain and relaxation is needed; for this demand for relaxation is the vital's counterpart of excitement and its way of relief from it.

13 February 1933

For two or three days I have got a little less sleep. This does not particularly trouble me, but then there is this thought: during inner purification there may be some physical disturbance; the inner purification may precipitate itself on the material in the form of a disease.

It is better not to diminish the sleep. Rest full and undisturbed is most necessary for the body under the pressure of the Yoga.

13 February 1933

After 3.00 today, I began to feel a slight disinclination for work, a little sense of mental fatigue and uneasiness. I was conscious of something dragging me into depression and by 6.00 it was rather acute. I found my memory clouded, my aspiration not rising and my interest in work becoming vague. Still, a part of me quietly watched and understood.

I see the steps as follows: Interest in work diminished leads to moving about, looking at girls and reading the newspaper and novels during work. These lead to politics, excitement, heightened imagination, interchange with outsiders and sex memories, thoughts and imaginations. These lead to prohibited and wrong movements, indifference to yoga, doubts, want of faith, resistances and precipitation into wrong or hostile action. Do the hostile forces plan these things long before and then see each thing through step by step?

It is not exactly that, but they are always on the watch for an opening and they have a number of formations which they throw upon the consciousness combining all the circumstances, weaknesses, habits of the being which can be favourable to their purpose so as to make the attack effective.

Always react. If a part of the being remains free, it should be easy from there to dispel the invasion.

13 February 1933

This morning I got slight diarrhoea and gurgling in the stomach. I knew it was due to the pressure of the Force on the body itself. The suggestion came that if the pressure continues severe illness may come and I may be laid up. This suggestion may have arisen from a sub-desire to be ill and a subliminal fear utilised by a universal hostile force which uses fear as its method. Am I correct in thinking that "fear" is utilised by the universal Hostile?

It is not only utilised but created by the Hostile.

Illness must not be accepted as a means of transformation; it rather indicates certain difficulties encountered by the force of transformation especially in the vital and the body. But it is not necessary that these difficulties should be allowed to take this obscure form of illness. All illness should be rejected and all suggestions of illness; the Force should be called in to cure by the assent to health and the refusal of assent to the suggestions that bring or prolong its opposite.

The first transformation, I think, is a control of the vital, physical and mind by the mental Purusha surrendered to the Divine and united to the Divine in the mental by a union of "Will"; this first transformation may be termed "mental divinising". The second transformation, I expect, is "psychicising"; next comes "intuitivising" and so on. Is the view correct?

It often proceeds in this order.

In the dish for food I found a sweet from outside. I felt an aversion for it, but thinking it had your sanction I took it. What should I do? If I return it, it may appear I am being a little extraordinary; if I do not, I may be "obeying" because I deem my diet as now fixed by you, after you wrote about it.

No. Don't take these sweets, they might upset the health. They are not included in the "diet".

In P's room in the morning before Pranam, I feel some heat as if a hearth were burning there. What is this?

There is always a fire of Agni burning in P, but he has also a strongly rajasic nature. A heat felt in his room might point to either, but the feeling of the hearth burning would seem to point to the Agni fire.

13 February 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

वयमु त्वा पथस्पते रथं न वाजसातये। धिये पूषन्नयुज्महि ॥

(Rigveda, 6.53.1)

O Pushan, Lord of the Path, we yoke thee like a chariot for the winning of the plenitude, for the Thought. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 229)

अदित्सन्तं चिदाघृणे पूषन् दानाय चोदय। पणेशिचद् वि प्रदा मनः ॥

(Rigveda, 6.53.3)

O shining Pushan, impel to giving the Pani, even him who giveth not; soften the mind even of the Pani. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 229)

वि पथो वाजसातये चिनुहि वि मृधो जहि। साधन्तामुग्र नो धियः ॥

(Rigveda, 6.53.4)

Distinguish the paths that lead to the winning of the plenitude, slay the aggressors, let our thoughts be perfected. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 229)

परि तृन्धि पणीनामारया हृदया कवे। अथेमस्मभ्यं रन्धय ॥

(Rigveda, 6.53.5)

Smite the hearts of the Panis with thy goad, O seer; so make them subject to us. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 229)

वि पूषन्नारया तुद पणेरिच्छ हृदि प्रियम्। अथेमस्मभ्यं रन्धय ॥

(Rigveda, 6.53.6)

Smite them, O Pushan, with thy goad and desire in the heart of the Pani our delight; so make him subject to us. (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 229)

यां पूषन् ब्रह्मचोदनीमारां बिभर्ष्याघृणे। तया समस्य हृदयमा रिख किकिरा कृणु ॥

(Rigveda, 6.53.8)

Thy goad thou bearest that impels the word to rise, O shining seer, with that write thy line on the hearts of all and sever them, (so make them subject to us). (SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 229)

या ते अष्ट्रा गोओपशाऽऽघृणे पशुसाधनी। तस्यास्ते सुम्नमीमहे ॥

(Rigveda, 6.53.9)

Thy goad of which thy ray is the point and which perfects the herds (of thought-vision, *pasūsādhanī*, cf. *sādhantām dhiyaḥ* in verse 4), the delight of that we desire. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 229)

उत नो गोषणिं धियमश्वसां वाजसामुत। नृवत् कृणुहि वीतये ॥

(Rig Veda, 6.53.10)

Create for us the thought that wins the cow, that wins the horse, that wins the plentitude of the wealth. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 229-30)

अप त्वं वृजिनं रिपुं स्तेनमग्ने दुराध्यम्। दविष्ठमस्य सत्यते कृधी सुगम् ॥

(Rigveda, 6.51.13)

Cast away utterly far from us the enemy, the thief, the crooked one who places falsely the thought. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 230)

ग्रावाणः सोम नो हि कं सखित्वनाय वावशुः। जही न्यत्रिणं पणिं वृको हि षः ॥

(Rigveda, 6.51.14)

O master of existence, make our path easy to travel. Slay the Pani for he is the wolf, that devours. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 230-31)

अग्नीषोमा चेति तद् वीर्यं वां यदमुष्णीतमवसं पणिं गाः ।

अवातिरतं बृसयस्य शेषोऽविन्दतं ज्योतिरेकं बहुभ्यः ॥

(Rigveda, 1.93.4)

O Agni and Soma, then was your strength awakened when you robbed the Pani of the cows and found the one Light for many. (*SABCL*, Vol. 10, p. 231)

(To be continued)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)

RINGED

WIDE with that last oblivion of self
The vague fantastic cloudscape slowly dies
Melting to grey monotony of dream,
Changing to windless empery of skies
Where nothing is immured or isolate.
 But oneness evens all—
 So mighty or so small
Be they soever, yet must equalize
Ringed by the overshadowing Infinities.

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: Exceedingly fine and powerful.

MYSELF AND MY CREED

I BELONG to no nation, no civilisation, no society, no race, but to the Divine.

I obey no master, no ruler, no law, no social convention, but the Divine.

To Him I have surrendered all, will, life and self; for Him I am ready to give all my blood, drop by drop, if such is His Will, with complete joy; and nothing in His service can be sacrifice, for all is perfect delight.

Japan, February 1920

THE MOTHER

(Words of Long Ago, CWM, Vol. 2, p. 166)

TOWARDS THE SUPREME LIGHT

SOME people—nearly all—live in their sensations, to the extent of being conscious only of the present moment. They must be taught the consciousness of their whole life and shown the extent to which their feelings are transient and will be replaced, in the course of their existence, by innumerable contradictory sensations.

(The candle)

Those who have become conscious of their life in its entirety must be taught to identify their consciousness with that of the earth (to enter into a depth of their being which is one with the terrestrial destinies). What is the duration of one life compared with the duration of the earth?

(The gaslight)

Those who have become conscious of the terrestrial life must be taught to identify their consciousness with that of the universe, to find within themselves that which is one with the universe and will last as long as the universe. (What is the duration of the earth in comparison to that of the universe? One breath!)

(The electric light)

Those who have become conscious of the universal life, in all its forms, must be taught to identify their consciousness with That which is Eternal, with That which has never begun and will never end, with the Permanent, the Immutable, beyond Which there is nothing.

And for them will be kindled the undying Light.

(The Supreme Light)

THE MOTHER

(Words of Long Ago, CWM, Vol. 2, p. 130)

A LETTER

YOUR letter at the same time sprang a surprise on me and rang a familiar bell. There was surprise because I had not expected any communication from you, but as soon as I opened the envelope and saw your name a warm wave swept over me and the old days of correspondence became vivid to me. And when I saw the enclosure within the letter not only your mind came close but also your heart seemed to be beating in echo to my own and through this concord I knew that behind your heart just as behind mine there was the great yearning to pass beyond the bewildering traffic of the world to the Peaceful One, the Beatific One, the One without a second of the Mandukya Upanishad. For, the thousand rupees which you have gifted me were a sort of symbolic help towards the long pilgrimage to Perfection on which my feet were set in my twenty-third year when setting aside a promising career, the comforts of a fairly well-to-do home and cutting short a “happy” marriage three months old I threw myself at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother.

After the fall three years back, resulting in a fracture of my right thigh-bone near the knee joint and enforcing five months’ bed-riddenness in the Ashram’s Nursing Home, I have been leading an immobile life in a wheelchair. But to the surprise of my friends I am feeling perfectly happy and my work goes on quite harmoniously. In fact from my bed in the Nursing Home I was able to bring out *Mother India* as usual—thanks to the creative peace Sri Aurobindo and the Mother continued to put in my heart.

In your letter you have not spoken of your teacher and guide. Where is he now and what is he doing? I vividly remember his one visit to Pondicherry. With all good wishes,
February 1995

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

The Symbolism of Night in “The Symbol Dawn”

7

In “The Book of Everlasting Day”, in lines that Sri Aurobindo dictated in the latest stages of the composition of his epic, Savitri receives the promise:

When all thy work in human time is done
The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
The body of earth a tabernacle of God.¹

But the poem begins with a stark symbolisation of the opposite condition of things. Instead of a mind that is a home of light in a body that is a tabernacle of God, the world is occupied by a “huge foreboding mind of Night” in the “unlit temple” of an apparently eternal negation of all that is divine.

This mind of Night is what Sri Aurobindo singles out for mention in the second sentence of *Savitri* as the thing barring the path of the divine Light that seeks to manifest here. The prominence of this one occurrence of the words “mind of Night” has led us to explore various possible interpretations of this phrase. Night ultimately symbolises the Inconscient, so at the deepest level the mind of Night should be a mind of the Inconscient. In search of a confirmation of this interpretation, we have followed the Mother’s descent on 5 November 1958 to “the very bottom of the inconscience most hard and rigid and narrow and stifling”.² The Mother commented on this experience:

Generally the inconscience gives the impression of something amorphous, inert, formless, neutral and grey—formerly, when I entered into the zones of inconscience, that was the first thing that I met; but in my experience yesterday, it was an inconscience hard, rigid, coagulated, as if coagulated for a resistance. It was a mental inconscience...³

Speaking of “the action of mind in the inconscient” which “has made the inconscient aggressive—it was not like that before—aggressive, resisting, obstinate”, and explaining why the “mentalised inconscient” is worse than the original “material inconscience”, the Mother observed:

All this rigidity, hardness, narrowness, fixity, opposition come from a mental presence in the creation: this is what the mind has brought into the inconscient. When

the mind had not manifested, the inconscient was not like that: it was formless and had the plasticity of formless things. That plasticity has disappeared.⁴

This may be the reason why in the opening of *Savitri* it is the *mind* of Night that lies stretched across the path of the divine Event. According to the Mother,

...this mental inconscience *refuses* to change, while the other did not; the purely material inconscience has no mode of being, it does not exist, it is not organised in any way. While this one is an organised inconscience, organised through the beginning of a mental influence—and it is a hundred times worse! It has now become a much greater obstacle than before. Before, it did not even have the power to resist, it had nothing, it was truly inconscient. Now it is an inconscience organised in its refusal to change!⁵

The mentalised Inconscient is perhaps what Sri Aurobindo meant in Book Two, Canto Eight, by “Unreality made real and conscious Night”.⁶ Its intrusion into the cosmic scheme would seem to have been a disastrous setback for the evolutionary process. And yet it was at the bottom of this Inconscient that the Mother “struck upon an almighty spring”. She explained that

...in the deepest depths of the inconscient, there is a supreme spring that enables us to touch the Supreme. Because at the very bottom of the inconscience there is the Supreme. It is the Supreme who enables us to touch the Supreme. This is the “almighty spring”.⁷

Just as the Mother in her descent into the inconscient came upon an “almighty spring”, so a similar descent by Aswapati leads to his discovery of “the secret key of Nature’s change”.⁸ Although the details differ, the Mother’s experience is similar in its most essential points to the one Sri Aurobindo had recorded in *Savitri*.

Both experiences reflect the fact that “at the very bottom of the inconscience there is the Supreme”. The Mother had spoken of this previously. On 28 May 1958, she referred to a tradition about a Being emanated from the Supreme Origin to save the world after its plunge into the Inconscient. This Being, “stretched out in a deep sleep at the bottom of a very dark cave”, is described as emanating “prismatic rays of light which gradually spread into the Inconscience”. Evidently, the Mother was referring to her own vision when she said:

If one consciously enters into this Inconscient, one can still see there this same marvellous Being, still in deep sleep, continuing his work of emanation, spreading his Light; and he will continue to do it until the Inconscience is no longer inconscient, until Darkness disappears from the world—and the whole creation awakens to the Supramental Consciousness.⁹

An image reminiscent of this sleeping Being was introduced by Sri Aurobindo into “The Symbol Dawn” in the mid-1940s, at the point of the decisive transition from Night to Dawn:

The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god.¹⁰

These lines suggest that what Sri Aurobindo envisaged was not the importation of an alien divinity into an undivine world, but the disclosure of the radiant godhead who is concealed here, of whom the obscurity and apparent undivinity are merely a temporary cloak. We are again reminded of this vision when he speaks, in Book Eleven, of the superman’s work of

Revealing the secret deity in the cave.¹¹

It may take aeons for the entire material world to awaken through the slow process of emanation of the Light described by the Mother. But her “almighty spring” and Sri Aurobindo’s “secret key” both suggest that more rapid movements of transformation can also occur, not only by a descent from above, but by an action from below which is made possible by the involution of a supreme Force and Consciousness in the inert depths of the Inconscient.

A comparison between the dawn at the beginning of *Savitri* and the dawn that breaks on Aswapati at the end of Book Two, Canto Eight, after he finds the “key of Nature’s change”, brings out an element of illusion in what seems to us momentarily to be the all-negating and all-obstructing power of the mind of Night. We see that the effects of this illusion can crumble and vanish almost instantaneously, as if they were dissolved from within:

Then in Illusion’s occult factory
And in the Inconscient’s magic printing-house
Torn were the formats of the primal Night
And shattered the stereotypes of Ignorance.¹²

The passage containing these lines now concludes the canto entitled “The World of Falsehood, the Mother of Evil and the Sons of Darkness”. This passage took shape mostly from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s, in the period when the opening of *Savitri* was also arriving at its present form. Compared to the cosmic symbolism of Book One, Canto One, what is described at the end of Book Two, Canto Eight, is more of the nature of an individual experience. In Aswapati’s universalised individuality, however, this becomes prophetic of what will happen for the whole earth when inconscience is forever “chased from the world’s voiceless breast”.¹³

The Mother likewise said, with regard to the “spring” at the bottom of the Inconscient,

that this “was a perfect image of what happens, is bound to happen and will happen *for everybody*: all at once you shoot up into the vast”. Identifying this “vast” as “the origin of the supramental creation”, she described it in words that call to mind the phrase in the Isha Upanishad, *anejad ekam manaso javāyah*, “One unmoving that is swifter than Mind”:¹⁴

It was movement at its maximum, infinitely more swift than anything that one can imagine, and at the same time it was absolute peace, perfect stillness.¹⁵

The results of Aswapati’s finding of the “secret key” are depicted in terms which, though they do not point directly to the supramental consciousness as does the Mother’s account of her experience in 1958, go beyond what we might have expected in view of the position of this passage in one of the middle cantos of Book Two, leading into “The Paradise of the Life-Gods”. This passage is a rare revelation of the process of physical, cellular transformation which is fundamental to the fulfilment of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga.

“The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds” was written almost entirely in the 1930s and 1940s, but much of it seems to be based on Sri Aurobindo’s experiences at an earlier stage of his sadhana. The development of the faculties of *trailokyadr̥ṣṭi* (vision of the three worlds) and *trailokyagati* (movement through the three worlds) is noted in the early years of the *Record of Yoga*. For instance, Sri Aurobindo wrote on 3 January 1914:

The whole sukshmbodha is now extending its sense-perceptions to the mental & pranic heavens as well as to the mental & pranic koshas of the material world. This movement initiates the completion of the trailokyadr̥ṣṭi first indicated in the Alipur jail.¹⁶

“The Paradise of the Life-Gods” (Book Two, Canto Nine) would refer to these “pranic heavens”, which were introduced into *Savitri* long after Sri Aurobindo noted his experience of them in the *Record of Yoga*. The two preceding cantos, on the other hand, “The Descent into Night” and “The World of Falsehood”, seem related to the plunge into the Abyss of which he wrote in 1936.¹⁷ They may be taken, therefore, to represent the current phase of his sadhana when he was writing them.

In the concluding passage of Book Two, Canto Eight, the lines that indicate most clearly the nature of the underlying experience, such as “He saw the secret key of Nature’s change” and “Night opened and vanished like a gulf of dream”, first appear in some form in or immediately before the version Sri Aurobindo sent to Amal Kiran on 16 January 1937. Attempts to date events in Sri Aurobindo’s inner life from his poetry are hazardous. But this passage in *Savitri* seems to bear witness to something that must have happened in the mid-1930s. This was alluded to a little earlier in the frankly autobiographical poem “A God’s Labour”, written in 1935-36, where after having “walked in the bottomless pit” the poet emerges triumphantly to proclaim, “All veils are breaking now” and “The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged”.¹⁸

The consummation foreseen in Book Eleven of *Savitri*, where it is prophesied that the earth will be “touched by the Supreme”,

Annulling the decree of death and pain,
Erasing the formulas of the Ignorance,¹⁹

is already prefigured in Aswapati’s experience in Canto Eight of Book Two:

Annulled were the tables of the law of Pain,
And in their place grew luminous characters.

An intuitive “reprogramming” of the cells of the body for another functioning than that governed by “the law of Pain” is indicated:

The skilful Penman’s unseen finger wrote
His swift intuitive calligraphy;
Earth’s forms were made his divine documents....
Arousing consciousness in things inert,
He imposed upon dark atom and dumb mass
The diamond script of the Imperishable,...
And traced on the awake exultant cells
In the ideographs of the Ineffable
The lyric of the love that waits through Time
And the mystic volume of the Book of Bliss
And the message of the superconscient Fire.

As a result of this change in even the cellular consciousness, the consequences of ignorance, falsehood and inconscience are nullified:

Then life beat pure in the corporeal frame;
The infernal Gleam died and could slay no more.
Hell split across its huge abrupt façade
As if a magic building were undone,
Night opened and vanished like a gulf of dream.

The next lines help us to understand, incidentally, a profound and difficult phrase near the beginning of *Savitri*,

The abyssm of the unbodied Infinite.

The “abyssm” in the above line is equivalent to the “gap” below, while the “unbodied Infinite” corresponds to “absent God”; “she” in the following sentence is Night:

Into being's gap scooped out as empty Space
 In which she had filled the place of absent God,
 There poured a wide intimate and blissful Dawn;
 Healed were all things that Time's torn heart had made
 And sorrow could live no more in Nature's breast:
 Division ceased to be, for God was there.

This healing transformation leads to an awareness of divided Matter as a form of the indivisible spirit. The canto closes with a couplet that affirms Sri Aurobindo's vision of earth's future as a fact already realised in its essence in the experience of the liberated and perfected individual:

The soul lit the conscious body with its ray,
 Matter and spirit mingled and were one.²⁰

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. *Savitri* (1993), p. 699.
2. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, pp. 186, 381.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 383-84.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 384.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Savitri*, p. 221. This line first appears in the manuscripts around 1944.
7. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, pp. 384-85.
8. *Savitri*, p. 231.
9. *Questions and Answers 1957-58*, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 333.
10. *Savitri*, p. 3.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 705.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 232. This line can be traced to Sri Aurobindo's revision of his 1942 manuscript of what is now Part One (then Book One, "The Book of Beginnings").
14. *The Upanishads* (1981), p. 20.
15. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 385.
16. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 374.
17. *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 153.
18. *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, pp. 101-2.
19. *Savitri*, pp. 705-6. The long paragraph in which these lines occur was part of Sri Aurobindo's dictated revision of Book Eleven in the last stages of his work on the poem.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

SHE

SHE shines in the power of being as mother, queen, womb,
As lilt in the laughter of children, and love that shapes their doom.
As dream finding form, or as light in the mist,
She does and undoes all things that exist.

From the heart to the smile, so swift and unseen,
Her breath is the spirit of all that has been;
From the soul to the tear, so subtle and sure,
Her presence is beauty in all that is pure.

She is queen of the forest, the magic in trees,
The voice of the brook, the caress of the breeze;
Her heart is life's goodness, her wisdom its Way,
Her peace is its twilight, her power its day.

She planted the rose in the heart of the child,
And buried the petals that time had defiled;
She reaps what is sown, and attracts to her heart
The lives and the loves that have broken apart.

She is all that embraces, and all that draws home,
The sleep at the end of the paths that we roam,
In the power of Being, the Mother of all
Is the unfolding soul, and the unending call.

ROGER CALVERLEY

THE ONLY AVAILABLE SIGNATURES OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

IN ME NOW

It's not in some distant place,
Some guru's mountain hideaway,
Or in some sector of outer space,
What I seek is in me now.

There's nothing that I must do or say,
For this inner sun is beyond the worldly way.
To live a life of inner yearning,
Every desire dissolves within this burning.

Without a thing, into this world I enter,
And when I leave, I carry nothing.
But something will change in me forever,
And I will never see the same again.

I climb the mountain in my heart,
To breathe the air so pure and free,
And then these words find their true place
As a sign that points to where the Soul must be.

ALLAN STOCKER

TIME THE REAPER

DAY in and day out
At all hours the bells peal,
The bronze decree of Time
Who can repeal?

Tight golden curls
Massed around a baby's face,
Small teeth like pearls
Him, the Reaper has reaped.
The wailing father,
The fainting mother,
By whose profound woe
Grief itself is grieved.
But who can save him
Whom the Reaper has reaped?

Yet call him not cruel.
Even though celestial beauty
Like a golden morn arise,
Unless eternal youth is
Bestowed as an added prize,
From a wrinkled face
A Cleopatra's smile,
Crowds will rile.
For a Helen old and infirm,
Not a ship will sail
A single nautical mile.

Godhead and immortality
Are our imperative need
But, till they are granted
The compassion of death
At some point of life
Tastes like meed.
And till then O hearts!
Do not cry. Time's decree
To annul do not try.

Besides, men's hearts mostly
By perverse desire abide.

While at home wastes and pines
Suffers silently and declines
A loving and chaste wife,
Her mate flaunts
A hussy by his side.
Blind passions rule the vile.
The sufferers' prison doors
The Reaper opens wide.
Him therefore do not chide.

Nations grieve for heroes gone
For sometime the dear departed
Soul's friends, sigh and moan,
But fickle hearts forget soon,
In their lives rises a new moon,
When beloved faces fail
To brighten the hours
Then with his terrible ruth
Awaiting the inevitable
Loss of joyous youth
The Reaper awaits his hour
And then tears and devours.

Things that last too long
The human psyche abhors,
Friendship too intense
Quite often bores.
Times have changed,
On the side of the Asuras
The humans are ranged.
Fidelity and eternal love
Are, alas, out of fashion,
Men quest pleasure at a run,
Each season they worship
A new moon, a new sun.

Today love lasting too long,
Ridicule and betrayal invites,
Fickle hearts hold
Immortal love's last rites.

Humanity finds itself at odds
 With its saviour godhead,
 Animality it clutches,
 Has chosen hatred
 Words passionate
 Repeated over a long time,
 Are valued at hardly a dime.
 Pledges of heart and hand
 Are deemed stagnant rites,
 And worst of all,
 When youth is lost
 When hope is gone
 Wandering voices moan,
 When bodies have failed,

And eyesights get veiled,
 The voice fails
 And faint are its wails.
 Death is the friend then at last,
 It is the end of life's repast.
 Therefore mute O Friends!
 Your importunate sighs,
 Now gently lower the eyes.
 Beloved Death is leading
 Us to a new altar
 Weave jasmine garlands,
 Sprinkle rose-water.
 For of our honour
 He is the keeper, truly
 Compassionate is the Reaper.

SHYAM KUMARI

LOVE

LOVE sits as a
 Blushful bride,
 In the heart's
 Secret-most side;
 Never shows
 Its face open
 To all who
 Approach its region.

It has its
 Own invitation
 And also its
 Discrimination:
 Whom to show,
 From whom to hide

Its beauty,
 Deep and wide.

Very tender and very coy,
 Having its mysterious joy:
 Away from lust;
 It maintains its glow,
 Divorced from envy;
 It resumes its flow.

A perennial stream
 Of exquisite charms:
 Soothes, cools, heals
 All twists and harms.

ASHALATA DASH

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

Economic Barbarism

HERE is the story of a village friar told by Leonardo da Vinci. He would attend to his duties piously. Every year on the Saturday just before Easter he would visit the houses in the parish and sprinkle water to make them ready for the occasion. Nothing was to be excluded, not even the village painter's studio. After cleaning it he sprinkled water on the wet painting that was still there on the easel. The painter was quietly watching all the while and didn't utter a word. But while the friar was leaving the studio, he inquired why he was doing all that. "If you do something good," explained the friar, "you are rewarded afterwards in heaven a hundred times." The holy man was doing the virtuous thing that brings celestial merit later. But in his ardour and solemnity he had damaged more than half of the painting. Much less did the poor soul recognise the harm he was inflicting on the creative spirit standing helplessly there in front of him.

Big Science is not the innocent but arrogant friar who does not know the injury it is causing to the beautiful artwork of Nature. What she took millennia of years to do has been ravaged in a matter of less than half a century. And the process continues with unabated rapaciousness. This "bleeding piece of earth" tells us how murderous we have become. Not even the "perfumes of Arabia" will remove the malodour of that offensive act. Forces have been released that seem to be demoniac in character. If there is something noble and genuine in science, and in the human effort to see meaningful contents of the physical world, then it is clear that it has been overtaken by the Mephistophelean spirit leading to the path of great perdition. The two World Wars have wrought large changes that have mutated the common life which was simple and warm, intimate with natural environments. The best seems to have departed unceremoniously.

George Orwell's *Shooting an Elephant* is a classic example of our insensitiveness towards nature. "He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed like a long time—it might have been five seconds, I dare say—he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise. For as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upwards like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skywards like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay."

And this is what happens in public places. “A few weeks ago, in a movie theatre in Paris, a person sat on something poking that was on one of the seats. When she got up to see what it was, she found a needle sticking out of the seat with a note attached saying: ‘You have just been infected by HIV.’ The Disease Control Centre reported many similar events in many other cities recently. All tested needles are HIV Positive. Recently, one doctor has narrated a somewhat similar instance—it happened at the Priya Cinema in Delhi—to one of his patients. A young girl engaged and about to be married in a couple of months was pricked while the movie was going on. The tag with the needle had the message ‘Welcome to the World of HIV Positive family.’ Though the doctors told her family that it takes months before the virus grows strong enough to start damaging your system and a healthy victim could survive about 5-6 years, the girl died in 4 months, perhaps more because of the ‘shock-thought’. We all have to be careful in public places, the rest is... God’s grace!” We see all around us “crooked fashioners taking up their task” (*Savitri*, p. 153) at a heavy cost of human souls; but then we are also responsible for the “squanderings of Nature’s store” that was gifted to us, perhaps for another purpose. We do not understand that the immortal goddess distributes her favours generously; but she also withdraws them when there is the danger issuing from our ruinous action.

There is no doubt that technology has thoroughly metamorphosed our life in a radical manner. The way we think, work, engage ourselves in commerce, enact brave deeds in life, follow the pursuits of art and craft, invent newer modes of creative expression, the way we love and fight has acquired another cutting edge which is much sharper than ever there was in history. In the process, while we assert our superiority over the living world, we also heap uncivic havoc on nature. Thanks to science we enjoy material prosperity that never existed in earlier times. Health has improved, our life span has improved, our communication has undergone a sea change and we live in a global closeness. Remove the boon of technology and society gets marginalised. But in the hands of those who possess it, it has the power to dominate the entire world. The survival of the fittest has now to be reckoned in terms of the degree of sophistication one has in science-based activities. “Be a lamp unto yourself,” said the Buddha. That lamp is the floodlight of technology.

But the apposite question to be asked is: “Why has our great technological power led us to a predicament and the worthlessness of thinking which undermines our very being?”

Henryk Skolimowski has the following answer to it. “Look at the American civilisation, nay the American empire. Don’t you see how megalomaniac and puffed they have been? At every junction they have been telling everybody, either implicitly or explicitly, how great and superior they are... And what did this superior American civilisation bring to the world, in addition to various gadgets? Violence! Violence on the screen. Violence in the media. Violence in the family. Violence among children—whereby teenagers are killing without reason, as if possessed by a demon of violence. And finally, globalisation as a new world order. Globalism is a new form of violence. It is old-fashioned imperialism carried out through economic and electronic means.” (Dialogue with Nandi, in *World*

Affairs, 1998) Not technology but something else has failed us.

When it is a matter of national prestige and national honour, when one is inspired by the imagination of national ideals and idea-forces, when the cherished values have to be defended and upheld against the hostility of the degenerate regiments, Rudra-like one can be violent in the calm strength of a warrior. But very often it is a vitalistic reaction which breeds its own karma, has its ineluctable payoffs. The present pounding of Afghanistan with hundreds of 7-ton bombs is the kind of arrogant violence we witness to our entire dismay. Injured pride cannot be the mode of bringing the doer of a wrong to justice.

Evil has to be eradicated and there cannot be two opinions about it. But evil has a funny habit of multiplying itself. From its spilled blood arise another hundred evils. In the astral battle every time a head of Ravana was chopped off another arose in its place. To the wickedness of terrorism Gandhian non-violence can never be the answer. We are familiar with the Biblical advice to beat swords into plowshares. But it seems armies and military industries have to remain gargantuan and ever alert. They must be ever so in the defence of values. In the Battle of Kurukshetra Arjuna was asked to engage himself in the gory act, *ghora karma*, of killing his own kith and kin. Not men but matters of truth must be held dear. By vindicating the Spirit of Righteousness he had to fulfil himself in life. In it is the true shining lustre of a hero, *kshātra-teja*. Not as a revenge, not as a retaliation arising out of amour propre, out of hurt sense, not emotional pitch turning into a battle-cry, not with the notion of bringing the evil-doers to justice, but with the conviction of human nobility and greatness becoming soul-charged that the weapon must be wielded. That will be the Herculean manner of killing the hydra-headed monster. The trouble is, in this crude and bizarre technological thinking we lack sensitiveness, that perception which goes beyond the absurdities that surround us. Mark Twain had a point in the American context which is also applicable to us all if seen in the totality of perspective. "It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practise neither of them." Rationality, science, technology, industry, commerce, capital gains and assets are good; but they cannot, they should not, dull our inner and higher faculties. But that is precisely the bane of the modern age and it is that which we have to effectively counter. Otherwise we become, rather grievously, the practitioners of economic barbarism.

We are enacting a "comedy of Ignorance" lending all our talent to the disaster waiting for us at the other end. This is what Sri Aurobindo wrote long ago: "... if Science has thus prepared us for an age of wider and deeper culture and if in spite of and even partly by its materialism it has rendered impossible the return of the true materialism, that of the barbarian mentality, it has encouraged more or less indirectly both by its attitude to life and its discoveries another kind of barbarism,—for it can be called by no other name,—that of the industrial, the commercial, the economic age which is now progressing to its culmination and its close. This economic barbarism is essentially that of the vital man who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim of life.... The opulent plutocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and organiser of

industry are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society...in a commercial age with its ideal, vulgar and barbarous, of success, vitalistic satisfaction, productiveness and possession the soul of man may linger a while for certain gains and experiences, but cannot permanently rest. If it persisted too long, Life would become clogged and perish of its own plethora or burst in its straining to a gross expansion. Like the too massive Titan it will collapse by its own mass, *mole ruet sua*." (*The Human Cycle*, SABCL, Vol. 15, pp. 72-73; see also *Arya*, March 1917, pp. 492-94)

The warning that was given more than eight decades ago has remained unheeded. In the materialistic age rationality is the overseeing seat of power. Not only the physical world but also the many-streaming currents of life come under its governance. In the sequel Mind itself becomes an instrument of Life. The practical sense, of production, possession, enjoyment, of an efficient organisation, commerce, economics is promoted heedless of subverting everything else that does not meet its demands. The talk of ethics and morality is seen as the unbecoming decrepitude of mind. Art and artistic enjoyment are oddities, at the most "a sort of rare orchid in the button-hole of the vital man."

This reminds us of the event that occurred in the mythological age. In the court of Bacchus on one occasion Orchis showed more than a passing interest in one of the young damsels present in the gleeful assembly. For that act of impertinence the imprudent Orchis was punished. But that also marked the birth of orchids and the desirable gleaming and enchanting Aphrodite. However, we are not immortals like the gods and it seems that our impropriety with nature will not be rewarded in any way with things of beauty.

At one time the arrival of physical science in European life was a welcome event. Even now it is taken as a major determinative factor of its civilisation. Its historical necessity to new-shape the way of thinking and living had a certain justification in the over-all socio-religious context of the time. It struck desirable roots with a force of inevitability in the decadent mode of obscure rites and practices and dogmas. Not on the verification of experience based on strict and exact observation, but on the letter of the scriptural word was the unhappy thrust prior to its entrance in human affairs. That the secular can also be justly meaningful in the fulfilment of life was never recognised as an aspect of the manifesting truth. One shudders to imagine the kind of cruel inquisitions and impositions that were imposed on the free soul of the inquirer of the substantialities of the material world. A heavy price was paid for acquiring that right and ushering in the Age of Reason.

While events were thus rapidly taking place in Europe, providing new tools of prosperity to people, in India we were impotently busy with the existential problems. Our solutions were the ecstatic devotional immergence in the beatitude of the elsewhere or interminable discussions of the metaphysical niceties of things spiritual. A kind of grey inertial mass had got accumulated over the tradition-bound society and disdained were the pursuits of science and technology and engineering and industry. In fact these were practically absent during the dark period of our history. The Muslim invasions and their rule had sucked the creative vitality; the imposition of alien religion gave rise to social conflicts. When there was a national rising it proved too short-lived and was ineffective

in the broader context. The establishment of scientific foundations and organisations based on it was therefore out of the question. Nana Phadanavis, the well-known wise man of the Peshawas, had to engage an English engineer to build a raft mid-stream on the Ganges. He wanted to make holy offerings to the gods to propitiate the spirits of the departed. Later the colonial powers made the land of plenty an abject desert full of poverty.

That was the sad state of affairs in mediaeval India when the industrial revolution was introducing phenomenal changes in the Western world. There the transition from the prevailing agricultural to a commercial set-up was an altogether new incident, giving to social history another pace of movement. It meant the appearance of large factories, of busy urban centres of activity, growth of industrial towns, newer modes of transport and communication, technological innovations, entrepreneurship based on the discoveries of science, designing of machines to manufacture not only tools but machinery, building up of infrastructure to cope with the demands of the producers. The steam engine puffed its way into the lives of men and altered them completely. It is another matter that it soon became a devilish master making the driver its slave. Nonetheless society stepped into another domain of activity that never was present in the former millennia.

The triumphant march of science liberated the spirit of humanity from the unholy clutches of doctrinaire religion and the ruthlessness of its monomaniacal terrorism. Scientific discoveries of the universal principles and their modes of operation replaced credal beliefs and apostolic injunctions. This was a gain. It marked a further movement in the evolutionary cycles of humanity. But the gain has also become unavailing and is now fraught with newer dangers. What would be intuitive and mystical, what would be artistic and appealing, beautifully truthful and acceptable to the deeper sense has been dismissed. The possibilities of the leap of thought and the scope for the entry of the revelatory truths in our transactions of the day have receded too far away from us.

The spectacle we witness presently is of Man dwarfed by his creation. Despite the fact that he has shot himself out into the vastness of the sky, he has become peewee and clumsy. The suppleness he had of deeper or loftier philosophical concepts and ideas or of artistic expression or of enjoyment of what is aesthetically felicitous and ennobling has been sacrificed at the altar of the utilitarian mentality.

It is undeniable that the assertive spirit carries in it an aspect of excellent things. To grow, to expand, to possess, to act, fulfil oneself in the intuition that springs from life,—these are always worthy of manhood if directed beyond the impulses of triviality. But if these are driven by the engines of production then all material attainments bring in their trail the negative results of another kind of subjugation, another kind of ruin. It is in that sense that science has made us its sophisticated drudges. We are caught almost helplessly in the digital web-net of electromagnetic processes. In the strictest sense science itself has remained rather Cartesian-Newtonian, analytically rigid and one-dimensional, altogether programmed and machinelike—notwithstanding the assertions of quantum mechanical uncertainty. But in a very strange way the universality of scientific propositions has also brought to us the aspect of non-existence of the individual. A modern brand

of Vedantic illusionism seems to govern our thought. Here we have a powerful cryogenic rocket that propels itself into empty space without any command from its designer. Jet planes have given us swift wings and made us mobile but that very mobility has also made us still. We have become global but that very globalisation has caused narrowness in our entire outlook towards things of life and nature. Art always makes life worth living. The aspiring spirit of godly search always gives nobility which can urge us to better ourselves in psychological spaces. But these are now absent. Would not that loss mean that the 9th Symphony has fallen mute? Gibbon wrote about the decline of Rome and saw its secret reason in "the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness. Prosperity ripened the principle of decay and the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of the conquest." Is the Empire of Science going to suffer a similar fate?

If America is the weighty leader of the present-day world, the question is: Will she allow developments which do not favour her ideology, which are not compatible with her way of life, which may be in marked conflict with her industrial and commercial interests? If we take a realistic view of men and matters it seems that America will, by bullying and intimidation, try to block all such possible openings. Her ideals of freedom and action are for herself and not for the universal spirit. Even the big club of industry and commerce, with America at the center, cannot therefore be the best instrument for creating the cherished new world order. Violence springing from out-and-out monetary considerations is an affront on human values. It is a poor substitute for wisdom. One then begins to wonder if America is really as strong as one thinks her to be, strong to fulfil cheerful hopes and aspirations that can lift humanity to inspiring heights. It is quite acceptable that American democracy is meritorious in its functioning, but then the truth of the matter is that it has worked only for America. Similarly, science and technology, as they are now, may be good for her and not necessarily for others. Presently these are geared up for the production of money, but it is the American money they produce which may not carry much value for others. That could be just one mode, which also means that there can be other modes. It should be possible to discover the characteristic mode for each country by discovering the spirit that gives it its individuality. In the natural scheme of things it is this which must flourish. To express manifoldly is the higher law and its acceptance is to live in greater harmony with forces that mould the destinies of men and nations.

If social evolution has brought us to the technological age there must have been some purpose behind it. It cannot be such a thing that it will just produce more and more efficient gadgets. Its forward-moving magnificent impetus and dynamism are to unfold what is hidden in the evolutionary potential itself. To create new forms, to chisel new sculptures of life, to express new sensitivities and new powers of becoming, to breathe joyous sublimity even in our day-to-day transactions, to awaken luminosities in our darkness, to give beautiful shapes to the subtle and make them a part of our living is an elemental component of our truer growth. But it is unfortunate that the Age of Reason that has given us unparalleled material prosperity has also created trenchant situations that bespeak of disaster. Scientific pursuit aimed solely towards economic gains is a dis-

tortion of values and it cannot satisfy the deeper longings of human nature. Not that better well-being is to be despised, but material thriving and abundance cannot be the culmination of our entire struggle and striving. If reason gives us only this proficiency and nothing else, then it must be regarded as a catastrophe. In it are then the sperms of an “intellectualised titanic barbarism”. (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol. 14, p. 177) This must be avoided. Science has happily displaced our retrograde infra-rationality; but it should not block the subjective supra-rationality that is dawning on us.

Perhaps it is in this context that the roots of a spiritual culture that also embraces life in its fullness may show us the kind of society which must arrive in the future, a society which will bear the fruits of our expectations. In it science will not be disdained, nor industry nor commerce. On the other hand in it all the human activities will throw another light on the spirit that is waiting in the universe for its own growth even in the material world. In fact in the process the dichotomy between the secular and the sacred will disappear. If this is true, then it may be said, even asserted that the ancient Vedic foundations could help us see and attain this vaster aim in our endeavour. In them we have all the basics of life and it is up to us to profit from them. Are we ready? When we are posing the question whether there can be an Indian science, it is actually this question that we are answering. A quest towards our foundational principles should be the first priority in our reckoning.

Here we may reflect profitably on the perceptive comment of Richard Carlson: “India needs to develop its own societal structures and not have them imposed upon her from outside. This point is well taken today, in a day and age when the forces of globalisation aspire to construct a uniform system of economic management. How such an organisation influences the national character of the nations which compose it, is a matter of debate. It is a widespread notion these days that technology will provide solutions to the ills which beset the world. I am not sure how this is currently being played out in India, but I do know that most of the Fortune 500 technology corporations seek to exploit the cost of labour and the natural capacity India appears to have to produce talented engineers. It would appear to me that due to such commercial intercourse, coupled with a universal faith that is placed in technical solutions, there would be a danger of creating a technocracy such as is in place within the Western world. This Corporatist system of rule, coupled with its Virtual class of pedants, seems to be the Jagannath, rolling over many indigenous peoples and their aspiration for indigenous forms of self-determination and authentic forms of self-rule, even though this onward march of global capitalism maybe a necessary vehicle to propel us towards the emergence of higher forms of Human Unity. Hopefully the pitfalls of adopting alien structures of societal organisation can be avoided in the case of India, that she may once again rise to become the spiritual counsel to the world.” (A comment in jyotilist@yahoo.com apropos of the article *India and the New Millennium* by R.Y. Deshpande posted on the web site www.veda.net)

Will India rise to the expectation of becoming the spiritual counsel to the world? In the present milieu the chances seem to be rather dim. We are after the American model of

living which has really no contact with things mystical and esoteric. Even the cultural foundations of this society don't seem to be luminous and deep. Not only that. We do not recognise our own heritage in its genuine sense. We have practically no understanding of it, no appreciation of it. Only when Goethe becomes ecstatic with Kalidas's *Shakuntala* or Schopenhauer finds solace of life and death in the Upanishads do we look into these marvels. The colonial mentality is still present in us. We have no perception that can make us understand our own poetry and drama and art. We need a Western mind to tell us about the aesthetic theory for enjoyment of our own creations. This is what Daiva Tamosaityte from Lithuania tells us about our poetics and theories of criticism: "To experience *rasa* does not necessarily mean to be immersed in the feelings and to remain on the level of the sensual perception. Every *rasa* has its emotional and intellectual side: it is not a simple feeling, but spiritual state (*citta-vritti*). So when we are speaking about the emotional influence of the work of art, the concept of *rasa* touches in fact all the layers of human psyche. Abhinavagupta was the first to reject simplified concept of the *rasa* as hyperbolised feeling. According to him, the poetry is correlate with life, but not the copy, and *rasa* accordingly aesthetic correlate to the spiritual state with its special emotions, but not the sense as such." (*Mother India* March 2002) Our art never was a copy of copy. It was always the joyous expression of one aspect or other of the spirit. It was the revelation of the formless in forms breathing splendours of beautiful truths. In its ordinary feelings undergo transformation that in them may manifest the powers of the Spirit. What is thus desirable for art in life must also be acceptable for science in life. Let us prepare ourselves to express that possibility in all the activities in which we shall engage ourselves. Then all that was desired for us shall be granted to us as happy boons. Then shall we escape the stranglehold of barbarisms of a different kind.

(*To be continued*)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

THE IDEAL HOUSEHOLDER

OF the four traditional stages of life or *asramas*, three, namely, *brahmacharya* (celibacy), *vanaprastha* (forest dwelling) and *sannyasa* (renunciation) are rated higher in the quality of life they represent than *garhastha* (the stage of the householder). This is because, while the married life of the householder is equated with materialism and even a degree of licentiousness, the other three are considered to exemplify spiritual life, with increasing order of purity, selflessness, detachment and spiritual attainment, starting with the brahmachari and ending with the sannyasi, the last being the most exalted of all.

The fact however remains that the householder is the very source and support of all the *asramas* and without him, no *asramas* can exist. As *Manusmṛiti* says:

Even as air sustains all living creatures, all the *asramas* are dependent for their sustenance on the householder.

It is not necessary that just because the householder has to work for and earn a living and has opportunities for indulging his desires, his life should be devoid of any spiritual seeking and attainment. However, it sometimes happens that, even before acquiring the required degree of disillusionment and detachment with secular life, in a fit of sudden dispassion, occasioned by any unhappy event or reason, a person decides to go and dwell in a secluded place with the intention of pursuing a life of the spirit. In such a case, it is unlikely that he will automatically progress on the spiritual path. A shloka in *Cānakyanīti* says:

A person who has not succeeded in controlling his passions and prejudices even if he goes to dwell in a forest, his shortcomings will assert themselves, whereas one residing in a family atmosphere and successfully bringing his sense organs under control should be considered to be engaged in serious penance and austerity. The one who has transcended all likes and dislikes and is engaged in blemishless activities, such a one's home is as good as a sacred forest hermitage.

Thus life in a family need not be a bar to one's spiritual progress. There is the glorious example of a householder attaining the highest spiritual status in King Janaka, acknowledged to be no less enlightened than the greatest sannyasi and sage. However, while the brahmachari, the vanaprasthi or the sannyasi has God-realisation and a life in tune with the Infinite as the prime focus of his life, the householder's attention and efforts have necessarily to deal with more mundane aspects of life like earning a living, maintaining his family and interacting with society, etc. To live a divine life in the midst of a family can therefore be quite difficult. All the same, if the family-man can sustain an undercurrent of abiding faith and reliance on the Divine in all his thoughts, feelings and undertakings, it is not impossible for him to make his life one of purity, detachment, consecration and surrender to God.

There are a few guidelines on the ideal life of a householder in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, shlokas 51-55, Skanda 11, Ch. 17. The purport is:

Either with wealth that one has unexpectedly come into or what one has earned by honest means, *yajnas* can be performed without causing oppression to one's dependents and servants.

Even though one has a family, one should not get attached to its members. Without any slackness, one should be vigilant about the true nature of life. One must recognise the fact that all the blessedness and good life expected in after-life are as transitory as those of this life.

One's association with one's progeny, spouse, close friends and relatives should be considered to be no better than the chance gathering of travellers in a caravanserai. These various relationships disappear when the body is shed, in the same way as dream characters at the end of the dream.

Reflecting on this truth, one must live in the home like a guest without any egoistic feeling of 'I' or 'mine' with regard to anything or anybody.

One who is devoted to Me can continue to live in the home itself, performing all his duties as offerings to Me. He can also choose to become a *vanaprasthi* or a *sannyasi*.

B. G. PATTEGAR

MAN AND TIME

BIRDS of passage go to a banyan tree
On many an episode of venturesome plea
Flutter in its vastness, hovering but a while
Swear nevertheless friendly shackles of flimsy steel.

The tree stands firm there for ever
The birds may return there for never
The Time stands nowhere for never
But the glow of friends stands there for ever.

The glow that was of the dreams dreamt together
The hope that was forged on grounds whatsoever
The Time that bathed them with a burnished tinge
A beauty has grown on its own everlasting hinge.

A bounty and a bliss, more bewitching than Life
Surer than reality, firmer and vaster than Eternity
Glossing all angles, making all memory sweet
Gushing forth from the Springs of the Past—a fond Retreat.

Oh! What will not Time do—an exquisite creator,
Never a partner direct, but a shaper at will.

K. H. KRISHNAMURTHY

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

The Rock

LATE morning, somewhere outside Sydney:

The sun dallied with the clouds and the waves beat the rocks—a smell of rain hung in the air and it was cold and deserted.

A wind-swept beach, the surroundings as if in a perpetual self-multiplication. The horizons were stretched far and in between them held an all-encompassing clarity of details. Everything was brought up; everything was forced to come out; each peculiarity sprung forth. Bushes few and impoverished brushed out a landscape unique in its boldness—a determined frugality marked and strengthened the harsh wilderness of the scene and its presence provided only for a scant talk. There was mostly Nature ruling and there were three of us, aimless Sunday-walkers. Wendy was our leader and we were her guests.

The sand dunes alternating with boulders made for a composite of materials pure and eternally dynamic, as if intended. Nothing seemed to be fortuitous, yet it all looked as if thrown in a jumble. Loosely described, the scene could be placed somewhere between entreaty and defiance.

As the surroundings, so were we; with mixed feelings and thoughts, silent from within. We had brought a picnic basket along and we were looking for a place to sit and taste its contents. By now the wind had grown stronger and the possibility of rain made the wilderness wilder—finally, our walk had got itself an aim: we were concerned and we were looking for a shelter.

Afar, behind an imposing and higher from the rest dune, we could make out a tuft of trees and bushes. We set out towards them, as the dune towered in between and hid them from view; we had to climb it.

It wasn't a sand dune like the rest. When we stood at its top, we felt the ground under our feet solid, firm, different—rock!

On the surface of that miniature-like plateau, the rock was expanding circularly; it was bleached and ancient, a being almost with roots from the start of time. The wind up there was stronger; pressing in from all sides, it had smoothed the top and whatever weeds survived were tiny, too. For awhile we stood, pondering over the landscape and the view surrounding.

There was a curious sense; an odd sensation in me searched for a point of contact or reference, for some recognition. Something was there; something I seemed to now find—then miss.

The rock, the dune; we climbed down.

The tuft accommodated us well. The wind settled and the storm never came. The spring that gurgled rushing through the rocks, became later the stream we followed on our return to the sea; well-rested and fed!

It was early evening when we went back to Sydney but it was still later, just before going to bed, when I decided to tell Wendy of what had been pestering my mind:

“That Rock,” I asked, “what do you know about it?”

She gave me a strange look, “Why?”

With difficulty I tried describing the indescribable and told her about that sense and the sensation, which had to do with something active, great, unknown and, yet, deeply intimate—something like a being. As if Nature herself were present there, a personification chiselled and officiating amongst the rock’s carved niches and corners.

“The Aborigines regard it as a sacred spot and an energy point...” was Wendy’s trailing off answer.

KATI WIDMER

THE INDIAN DANCER

ABRUPTLY the dancer rises
to her full height and soars
transforming life into dance—
azure flows from her hands
earth is her dancing floor
Shiva her dancing teacher
all creation makes music.

On the wings of her trance
love and sorrow, death and birth
dance with smiles and tears.
The incorporeal dances
with the visible in its arms,
time and eternity swing,
the constellations circle
and the elements whirl.
Men, animals and gods dance
bowing to each other.
Bliss dances with the Lord.

MARTA GUHA

POWER OF LOVE

LIKE any good mother, when Karen found out that another baby was on the way, she did what she could to help her 3-year-old son, Michael, prepare for a new sibling. They found out that the new baby was going to be a girl, and day after day, night after night, Michael sang to his sister in Mommy's tummy. He was building a bond of love with his little sister before he even met her.

The pregnancy progressed normally for Karen. In time, the labor pains came. Soon it was every five minutes, every three, every minute. But serious complications arose during delivery and Karen found herself in hours of labor. Would a C-section be required? Finally, after a long struggle, Michael's little sister was born. But she was in a very serious condition.

With a siren howling in the night, the ambulance rushed the infant to the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Mary's Hospital, Knoxville, Tennessee. The days inched by. The little girl got worse. The pediatrician had to tell the parents there was very little hope. Be prepared for the worst. Karen and her husband contacted a local cemetery about a burial plot. They had fixed up a special room in their house for their new baby but now they found themselves having to plan for a funeral. Michael, however, kept begging his parents to let him see his sister. I want to sing to her, he kept saying. Week two in intensive care looked as if a funeral would come before the week was over. Michael kept nagging about singing to his sister, but kids are never allowed in Intensive Care. Karen decided to take Michael whether they liked it or not. If he didn't see his sister right then, he may never see her alive. She dressed him in an oversized scrub suit and marched him into ICU. He looked like a walking laundry basket. The head nurse recognized him as a child and bellowed, "Get that kid out of here now. No children are allowed." The mother rose up strong in Karen, and the usually mild-mannered lady glared steel-eyed right into the head nurse's face, her lips a firm line. "He is not leaving until he sings to his sister" she stated. Then Karen towed Michael to his sister's bedside. He gazed at the tiny infant losing the battle to live. After a moment, he began to sing. In the pure-hearted voice of a 3-year-old, Michael sang: "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are gray." Instantly the baby girl seemed to respond. The pulse rate began to calm down and become steady. "Keep on singing, Michael," encouraged Karen with tears in her eyes. "You never know, dear, how much I love you, please don't take my sunshine away."

As Michael sang to his sister, the baby's ragged, strained breathing became as smooth as a kitten's purr. "Keep on singing, sweetheart." "The other night, dear, as I lay sleeping, I dreamed I held you in my arms." Michael's little sister began to relax as rest, healing rest, seemed to sweep over her. "Keep on singing, Michael." Tears had now conquered the face of the bossy head nurse. Karen glowed. "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. Please don't take my sunshine away..." The next day...the very next day...the little girl was well enough to go home.

Woman's Day Magazine called it The Miracle of a Brother's Song.

The medical staff just called it a miracle.
 Karen called it a miracle of God's love.

Never give up on the people you love. Love is so incredibly powerful.

(E-mail from an unknown source)

A MIRACLE

A GOLDEN red Hibiscus
 Blooming in a bush
 Openly, fearlessly in a park!
 Its beaming joy stirred me,
 Caught my eye in my walk;
 Courage filled my heart.
 "To be full is Nature's art,"—
 A living voice spoke within.
 In giving oneself to the All
 Is the secret of its blossoming.
 Dispelling the darkness
 A force of love leaped forth.
 What then is left if the Self is all?
 I knew that one is not alone,
 But there's the other Hibiscus
 Golden red awaiting me
 To evoke silent symphony.
 In the air, along the esplanade,
 In the public park where I go
 I met its welcoming smile.
 A dewdrop from orange sky
 Slipped over my slumbering soul.

To wake me up to that sudden union
 A miracle happened at the dawn,
 A miracle on a routine walk!

SHAKUNTALA MANAY

ONE HAS YET TO LEARN IN LIFE

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

2

WHEN one does not want to do a work which requires immediate attention and which humanly and morally one is obliged to do, one finds an excuse and tries to justify to oneself one's inaction. There is no external pressure to demand an explanation; even then we make ourselves convinced of our stand because it is our inner voice or soul that questions our action. We have several occasions in life when we also try to deceive ourselves in this way.

The annual examinations were being held in the University and I was going there for invigilation in a morning session. On the way I saw a speeding car knock down a cyclist, a student cyclist perhaps. The driver raced away. I stopped for a while. A couple of morning trotters had also gathered and tried to help the student but he had become unconscious. I was getting late for the invigilation. It was quarter to seven and there was no time for me to spare to take the student to the nearby hospital. I thought there would be someone to take care of the situation. I thus assured myself and drove towards the University. I reached in time, distributed the answer-books and question-papers, and the examination started on time.

The examinees were busy answering the question paper and only one candidate was absent. I was doing the invigilation all right but was also lost in thought. "What could be the fate of the cyclist-student? Was he hurt seriously? He may have got fractures. People must have taken him to the hospital. How sad it was! Possibly he must have been coming to the University for the examination. Is he the same candidate who is absent today from my room? Musing on these lines, I was moving to and fro in the room. All of a sudden I saw a student standing at the open door of the room. I went up to him to enquire what he wanted. He told me that he was an examination-candidate of that very room and that he had come for the examination. I saw the watch. It was 7.30 and so I told him, "You are half an hour late. I cannot allow you to take the examination."

"Sir, I am late on account of another student. Please permit me for the examination," he pleaded.

"No, as per rules, I cannot do so," I tried to make him understand.

"Sir, please forgive me. One student had met with an accident and I had to take him to the hospital," the candidate said.

I was almost shocked by the statement of the examination-candidate and was wondering whether he was talking of the same accident which had occurred before my eyes and I left the spot on account of my invigilation duty? Was the accident-hurt student the same whom the examination-candidate took to the hospital? It is with such questions and answers that my mind was occupied at that moment.

"Which student? Where was he?" I enquired.

“Sir, I do not know him. He was lying unconscious near the University-gate after the accident,” the candidate said.

“Were not others there at that moment?” the culprit within me spoke.

“Sir, there were five-six persons talking amongst themselves but none thought of taking him to the hospital. I had to take the initiative,” he said.

“But did it not occur to you that you have an examination?” I said.

“Sir, it did not occur to me at that time,” the candidate said.

I saw the watch and it was 7.35. A chain of thoughts came to my mind. Possibly what the candidate said is correct. He did not make the mistake I did. He was really a thoughtful young man. Why should he lose one year of his career for doing something good for the society? Refusing permission to appear at the examination would be a punishment to him. I also wanted to compensate for the wrong I had done. The culprit within me was restless. There was no time to report this matter to the examination-superintendent and take his permission for the student to appear at the examination. I took all responsibility upon myself and permitted the candidate to appear. I gave him the blank answer-book and the paper, but asked him to meet me after the examination. After the examination and collecting the answer-books, I enquired of the student, “Did you really forget about your examination at that time?”

“Sir, when I saw the boy lying unconscious after the accident and people showing only lip sympathy, I certainly forgot about it. I immediately requested a passing car to stop and took the boy in it to the hospital. It is only on the way I became conscious of my examination but then it was too late to retrace the step,” he said.

“You could have asked the car-owner to stop and allow you to get down,” I interrupted.

“Sir, it would have been inhuman. It would have been letting down the car-owner. Nor would he permit me to get down,” he said.

“Were you not mindful of the fact that you might not be allowed to appear at the examination for being late?” I said.

“Sir, I have the firm belief that if you do good, it is only good that will come to you. I was sure of my appearing at the examination,” he said with self-confidence.

“Suppose things had been different. I mean in case you had not been allowed to do so?” I asked.

“I would have lost one year then and I would have been definitely unhappy. However, I would have consoled myself that I could save a life at the cost of my one year. I would not have considered this a waste of the year. I would have accepted the situation, considering it as the will of Divine,” he said.

“Do you believe in God?” I asked.

“Sir, all of us are his children,” he said.

“That’s so good!” I said and continued: “How was the boy when you left the hospital?”

“I do not know. I will go there and then know. Sir, it is after great persuasion that the hospital people let me leave the hospital. I explained to them about my examination-

problem and showed them my identity card and then they let me come for the examination after noting down all details about me.”

“That’s good. You may go now and do meet me afterwards,” I said.

After he left, I submitted the answer-books and then reported the matter to the examination-superintendent. I apologised that I had allowed the candidate to appear at the examination on my own without reporting the matter to him and taking his permission. I also explained that doing all this would have taken another 10-15 minutes and that would have been a loss for the student. I assured him that the explanation given by the examinee was justified and there appeared to be no malpractice of any kind. After taking my leave and returning home, all the time I was thinking only of one fact: “How inhuman it was on my part that I left the accident-hit boy unattended, without taking him to the hospital and went to the University! The examination-candidate did the work which I should have done. He is not only kind and good but also wise. He staked his one year for saving one life. How selfish, thoughtless and compassionless I am that I did not do the humane work which I should have done!” I was undergoing a great soul-suffering. It was a consolation to realise that our country does have such youths who believe in God, understand right and wrong and are always ready to do human service. All said and done, one thought still persists in my mind. “Man probably is not aware of what he considers himself and how right or wrong he is in the assessment about himself. How he is, how good or wanting, is known only when he undergoes a test. Indeed that examination-candidate, the student is definitely a better person than myself and I have yet to learn many things in life.”

(To be concluded)

YUGUL KISHORE GUPTA

GOD

To me, God is a diary
To whom I can “tell all”,
To whom when I’m in trouble
I can very easily call.

From whom I have nothing to hide,
To whom I can easily show
Every single bit of me
For She already knows.

To Her I can tell my story
No matter how short or long,
I can tell her everything
Whether it’s right or wrong.

But unlike the usual diary
What I tell Her no-one knows,
For after I have finished
My book is shut tight—closed.

Then when I want to talk to Her
I have a special key—
This key is really important
And it’s reserved only for me.

And maybe God’s your diary too
And you have your special key.
But even if you don’t, be sure—
God’s still there for you and me.

GAYATRI LOBO GAJWALA
(12 years)

FROM SARAJEVO TO 13 DECEMBER 2001

SARAJEVO. 28 June 1914. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the successor to the Austro-Hungarian imperial throne along with his wife Sophie visits Sarajevo for troop inspection as part of their fourteenth wedding anniversary. 28 June is a day engraved deeply in every Serb heart. For, on that day in 1389 the Turks conquered the Serbs and ruled over them for centuries. Gavarilo Princip, who shot at the archduke and assassinated the couple, was just one of the half a dozen teenagers that were behind the act. The rising Serb nationalism in them just rejected another *28 June*, another tyranny. The note the group left behind passed judgement and condemned Franz Ferdinand with a single four-letter word and two numerals – **June 28**. Death to the tyrant.

We may be taking a ridiculously simplistic view of history. But for Sarajevo there would not have been the First World War, the Russian Revolution, Nazism and the Second World War, MK Gandhi and the colonial emancipation, the Cold War, perhaps even 11 September and 13 December. And had we had the same actors upon the world historical stage in September and December 2001 as there were on 28 June 1914, World War III would have befallen on us extinguishing much of our civilization and humanity itself.

25 days after Sarajevo, on 23 July, Austria-Hungary issues the ultimatum to Serbia to be complied with in just 48 hours. It demands the suppression of all reactionary agitation against Austria-Hungary, purging of those who had taken part in it, the tightening of border controls, the outlawing and dissolving of all Serbian nationalist organizations, the arrest and extradition of a list of the involved extremists (who for Serbia were patriots), and an Austro-Hungarian participation in the inquiry into the assassination.

It was an ultimatum that was intended to be rejected; such was the cry of national honour and war phobia in the Hapsburg Empire. The Russian foreign minister Sazanov exclaimed to the Austrian Ambassador, “You are setting fire to Europe”. The Serbs yielded, accepting all but one condition of the ultimatum; the German Kaiser thought of it as virtual surrender averting war. But the convictions were hardening in Vienna that if war was declared, the Serbs would submit without fighting—a miscalculation and over-confidence that tumbled Europe into the abyss of a world war.

The ocean of blood and the lava of hate left behind by World War I virtually bankrupted humanity’s moral character and ethical stature, to which the nineteenth century had given expression to through epochal acts like Britain’s Reform Bills, abolition of slavery, the US emancipation proclamation, the 1897 Peace Conference in the Hague for outlawing war itself. The world wars of the twentieth century not only erased the dividing line between combatants and civilian population but converted war into the agent of total barbarisation of humanity and total destruction of the planet. The Allies, for example, maintained the naval blockade of the capitulated Germany till the end of the Versailles Conference in 1921 bringing about starvation deaths to large segments of the defeated population especially to children and the weak as has happened to Iraq after the Gulf War. The Reparation conditions imposed on Germany so humiliated and devastated the collective German psyche that the rise of Hitler and the Nazis and World War II were pre-

programmed and inevitable. And the massive carpet bombing of cities in that war claimed all humanity as ransom for the ever barbarising and devastating war machines—and Hiroshima and Nagasaki showed that humanity itself would be erased in a future war.

Both the Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force in World War II were forbidden to bomb civilian targets. On 24 August 1940 German bombs intended for a London oil refinery fell on the City of London and the East End. Churchill, over-ruling the RAF, ordered raids on Berlin the next day. Hitler retaliated by blitzing London—the Battle of Britain. After Pearl Harbour and the US entry into the war, the Allied strength swelled so overwhelmingly that the war aim was hiked towards the irreversible “unconditional and total capitulation”. The military drift eliminated every ethical and humanitarian consideration in an utterly brutal and total war. With Europe thus converted to rubble and ashes, the twentieth century entered its barbaric high noon—fifty billion deaths, and the total devastation of the continent. Add to this another fifty billion killed, gassed, devastated, exterminated in the Stalinist, Maoist, Korean, Vietnam, Pol Pot war machines and the victims of the countless lesser wars, coups, civil strifes and famines in Asia, Africa, Latin America since WW II. No doubt that the twentieth century brought us phenomenal material advancements, but it was also a century of earth-shaking barbarisation of human civilization—Sarajevos, Holocaust, Hiroshimas, Jehadic terrorisation, 11 September, 13 December 2001.

Remember, it is after the eyeball-to-eyeball nuclear confrontation and seeing the abyss of hell at the Cuban Missile Crisis that the superpowers moved over to the age of détente and co-existence. 13 December could tumble us into another Sarajevo or it could take us towards a truer South Asian joint family. This deeply wounded and un-realizing subcontinent of ours must be healed; the planet cries for healing and spiritual rebirth after the carnal sins and collective crimes of the passing century.* Subcontinental reconciliation pointing towards a post-nuclear Global Peace Order, revalidating and upholding the *archetypal* Indian vision, is the political perspective with which we should work.

When we are able to forget the Partition wound, the subcontinent emerges to us as one of the geopolitical corner-stones comparable only to the European Union. Such a South Asian Home *ipso facto* flows into an Asian Peace Order balancing the Sino-Nipponic Houses to the North, and the Arab-Islamic Home of West Asia, ultimately paving the way towards a more confederative United Nations, which thereby becomes a cooperative and concordant post-nuclear Global Peace Order. After the horrors and holocaust of the twentieth century we are at the watershed of humanity’s and the planet’s transformation and spiritual rebirth. It is India’s hour in history, Asia’s hour in history. For, the twenty-first century is the Asian century, as much as the twentieth was the European century.

V.T. PATIL AND SRI ASIANANDA

* For a detailed presentation, see the authors’ *Healing the Subcontinent* published by Minerva Press, London-New Delhi.

TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO: AN INTEGRAL APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

Formative Influences

RELIGION meant very little to Sri Aurobindo in his teens. It meant a lot to Tagore, he was steeped in Brahma culture since his childhood. However, religion and spirituality were not the only tunes that rang in the Tagore house of Jorasanko. The Tagores were fond of poetry, painting, theatre, music and almost all the arts under the sun. Young Rabindranath hated confinement. His mind pined for far-away things. Sri Aurobindo would have called him a typical 'mystic' child fond of exploring twilight lanes, wishing for the paths, not for the goal in a one-pointed labour. Of course, he talked of the goal and the pain of eternal separation, but the variety of the One distracted his attention at times.

The sweet rhythm of *Vaishnav padavali* reached him early in his life. The aesthete was not able to define why he was drawn to those mysterious verses. He was a Nature-mystic by birth. He was curious about the hidden Supremo who reflected Himself in all His creations. He wished to imagine Him in many ways. He imagined Him in terms of aesthetics, the aesthetics reaching him through the English Romantics like Shelley and Keats, sometimes directly, and often through a poet named Biharilal Chakroborty who was extremely popular during Tagore's boyhood and early youth. The close association with Devendranath, his father, helped him reach the Upanishads and other scriptures of the world. Besides, there were the great musicians around him, the great singers from different fields of music, and they took away his heart.

Outside the great house of Jorasanko, the streets were filled with the cry for freedom. Inside, the great Tagores were stirred by that cry. The thinking mind was also developing because of the great intellectuals who thronged the corridors of *Thakurbari*. Then there was that proverbial reading. Niharranjan Ray draws our attention to "his unceasing and life-long attempt to weave into the pattern of his being whatever was creative in thought, imagination and vision of India's past, from the days of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* right up to his own. Formally and spiritually, he aimed at an interpenetration and complete identification of his individual personality with the personality of India as he saw and understood it."¹

Sri Aurobindo was divorced from his native soil at the age of seven, when he was sent to England with a view to building him up as an anglicized intellectual. From his seventh to twenty-first year, he was in England mastering all the finer elements of European culture and acquiring glamorous degrees. It was only towards the close of his stay in England that he began to feel strongly for his motherland and the feeling deepened the moment he returned to his native soil. He learnt Sanskrit quickly, took a close look at the contemporary situation, and swiftly transformed himself into an Indian, who could see the past and the present of the country with a swift synthetic glance and who could not

afford to ignore anybody attacking India. Here was a man of extreme temperament, sometimes angry and often dispassionate. When the heat of New Nationalism mellowed and he was released from jail in 1909, his voice softened. From 1914 onwards, the author could synthesize the best of Europe and Asia. The global tradition behind Sri Aurobindo becomes quite prominent in the *Arya* period. With the new power of expression, there appears a cool prose indicating the previous readings of Sri Aurobindo. It is a memory of his past acquaintance with Greco-Roman literature. For, Sri Aurobindo virtually ceased to read in the Pondicherry period (1910-1950). Reading became very casual for the poet of yoga. The memory of past readings is clear in the comparative modes:

Therefore we see that the reason in its growth either does away with the distinct spiritual tendency for a time, as in ancient Greece, or accepts it but spins out around its first data and activities a vast web of the workings of the intelligence, so that, as in India, the early mystic seer is replaced by the philosopher-mystic, the religious thinker and even the philosopher pure and simple.²

It is curious that such a wonderful synthetic mind was only partly known in Calcutta and Baroda. For Tagore, the assimilation of thoughts was immediately known, just after the work of assimilation. Whereas, we have to wait long to see the proper western 'historical sense' of Sri Aurobindo. Of course, he had written fine comparative criticism in Baroda, in pieces like *Hindu Drama* and in the notes on the great Indian epics. But then, Sri Aurobindo's acquaintance with the West is to be seen clearly only in the Pondicherry period. Was it a case of improvement in Sri Aurobindo's expression? Or was it just because he did not have his subject proper in Baroda and Calcutta? Unlike Tagore, Sri Aurobindo does not give us any specific indication about the influences on him.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

Notes and References

1. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1961): *A Centenary Volume*. Sahitya Akademi. New Delhi 1961, p. 224.
2. *Social and Political Thought*, SABCL, Vol. 15, p. 177.

PHILOSOPHY'S TRYST WITH MODERN SCIENCES

SRI AUROBINDO'S ONTOLOGY AS A VIABLE PARADIGM

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

ALMOST the same conclusions, though in a slightly different idiom, are arrived at by Sri Aurobindo in his ontological argument. They are crystal clear particularly in his Involution–Evolution postulate.⁶ Like the modern scientists cited above, he also believes that consciousness is inherent as much in seemingly inert matter as in plant, animal, human and superhuman life. It participates in the various levels of being in various ways. Because of its predominant property of this kind Sri Aurobindo interprets the Spirit or *Sachchidananda* as the highest level of Being-Consciousness-Bliss, all holistically one. Being and Bliss, as much as Consciousness, stand both independently and holistically, for the whole of *Sachchidananda* which is nothing but the Absolute or the Spirit. This factor in Sri Aurobindo's ontological argument needs to be carefully noted because of the almost exclusive importance he attaches to Consciousness in his argument: *Sachchidananda* (or the Divine or the Spirit) is at the transcendent summit. The Supermind mediates *Sachchidananda* to the multiplicity of the world. The Overmind serves as delegate of Supermind. Intuitive Mind, the next lower level of the descent of *Sachchidananda*, is a kind of consciousness of the heart. It discerns the truth in momentary flashes rather than in a comprehensive grasp. Illumined Mind communicates consciousness by vision, and Higher Mind through conceptual thought. Then enters Mind with its propensity to integrate reality through cognitive, intellectual and mental perceptions rather than through direct vision. Yet mind is open to the higher levels of consciousness, for it is basically oriented to Supermind in which it participates in a derivative way. According to Sri Aurobindo, further, life which is the next form of consciousness in the descending order is cosmic energy through which the Divine is received and made manifest. Matter from which life has evolved is the lowest level in Sri Aurobindo's hierarchy of consciousness manifestation. Therefore, matter is an expression of *Sachchidananda* in a diminished form.⁷ It is not reducible to mere material substance.

Such similarity (rather identity) of Sri Aurobindo's pronouncements on the physical, supraphysical, rational and supernatural elements of consciousness to what the modern scientists choose to call 'emergent properties' should be quite obvious. The similarities are further strengthened by his interpretation of Existence (universe) as the Divine "Involution–Evolution". 'Evolution seeks the Divine through nature' because its ultimate purpose is to achieve the inevitable divinization (and therefore "emancipation" or "Mukti") for the universe at large. For 'behind the appearance of the universe (matter) there is... in the mind, life and body... this One Being and Consciousness is involved here in Matter. Evolution is the method by which it liberates itself; Consciousness appears in what seems to be inconscient and, once having appeared, is self-impelled to grow higher and higher and at the same time to enlarge and develop towards a greater and greater perfection. Life

is the first step of this release of Consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind; it awaits a release into something greater, viz., a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit.⁸ ‘...only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it become possible for life to manifest perfection.’ ‘The former steps in evolution were taken by Nature without a conscious will’. But ‘in man nature becomes able to evolve by a conscious will’. ‘It is not, however, by mental will in man that this can be wholly done’. ‘A conversion has to be made, a turning of the consciousness by which mind has to change into the higher principle.’⁹ Needless to say, the modern scientific views regarding the origin and development of the universe and everything it contains have once again to be juxtaposed with these views of Sri Aurobindo to be convinced about philosophy’s tryst with modern sciences in his ontological paradigm. It would be desirable for this purpose to choose, as relevant illustrations of modern science, modern cosmology and modern psychology.

Cosmology is rightly described as ‘one of the oldest and one of the youngest of the sciences’.¹⁰ Also, it is very much dominant in the domain of contemporary scientific thinking. Holistically, cosmology covers such sciences as astrophysics, astronomy and the latest theories of evolution thrown up and supported by various kinds of “life sciences” providing minute details of the emergence of geological, biological and psychological aspects of the latest generic species of evolving consciousness (whether due to one or the other theories of the universe), the *homo sapiens*. Cosmology is an ‘attempt to understand the universe in scientific terms’, particularly in terms ‘of mathematical-physical sciences’. ‘The domain of cosmology is the universe as a whole’. ‘This domain... makes cosmology’ the ‘most peculiar science since ...the universe is the most peculiar entity’, on account of its being ‘unique and all-encompassing’. These ‘features of cosmological science are not shared by any other domain of science’. ‘The universe’ is ‘everything in space and time’, including space-time itself. But as scientist, the cosmologist is concerned only ‘with the structure and composition of the physical universe...’ Other things such as ‘atoms, butterflies and mountains’, ‘all parts of the universe’, are, however, of no interest to the cosmologist.

Roughly speaking, two kinds of cosmology have attracted attention so far: 1) that which attempts to make sense of the world on the largest possible scale, and 2) the more limited study of the astronomical environment of the earth covering ‘anything from planets to quasars’. The ‘first kind of cosmology ...relies on philosophical reasoning and invites speculation’. In contrast, ‘the other relies on observation and invites mathematical model-making’. On the one hand, thus, ‘cosmology got incorporated into astronomy and ...dealt with the visible part of the universe, the solar system in particular’ and, on the other, retained its identity as a discipline associated with philosophy and religion.

That part of cosmological science which is astrophysics ‘gives us various theories’¹¹ about the origin or beginning of the universe. They include 1) the Big Bang Theory which ‘states that the universe is expanding’, 2) ‘The Steady State Theory’ which, in conciliation with the expanding universe, admits ‘that new material is continuously ap-

pearing in the universe' and 3) the 'Oscillating Universe Theory'. (However, there are, besides, 'many other intermediate theories'.)

'The Big Bang Theory and the Steady State Theory are scientific concepts quite acceptable' but 'rather phenomenological'. 'The Big Bang Theory does not delve into the origin of the matter that exploded'. Similarly, 'the Steady State Theory formulates constant appearance or creation of matter'. Recently, "the Cosmic Background Explorer" [COBE] has strongly supported the theory that the universe began expanding in a great explosion...the big bang.'¹² Cosmologists of today 'believe all that is our universe was incredibly small and dense. Neither space nor time, as we know them existed. Nothing is known of this earliest instant'.¹³ At that stage, cosmologists calculate, 'ordinary matter did not exist'. As that speck expanded, it cooled and the components of the universe began to emerge. 'By the time the universe was one second old, the building blocks of atoms—had come into being'. Here it is relevant to note that 'Scientists have agreed to start the universal clock, at ...a moment defined as 10^{-43} second'. It 'is a point at which the universe begins to differentiate. Gravity becomes a separate force, tearing away from the other still unified basic forces of nature.' Within barely seven seconds thereafter, the separate force of gravity becomes an individual entity as a strong force 'that will hold' the 'nuclei of atoms together' 'although atoms do not yet exist'. The next four seconds pass, and the universe expands more than it has expanded 'in the roughly 15 billion years since', triggered by the separation of the strong force. The next twenty-seven seconds or so bring into existence 'quarks and anti-quarks'. 'The smallest known constituents of matter, along with electrons and exotic particles', emerge such that the universe now teems with them. Quarks and antiquarks annihilate each other upon contact. But a surplus of quarks—one per billion pairs—survives. This surplus of quarks will ultimately combine to form matter. At the end of these twenty-seven seconds, 'Quark confinement' takes place. As the universe cools to one trillion K, trios of quarks form photons and neutrons. Within less than one second to three minutes thereafter nucleosynthesis comes into existence. Cooling continues. Protons and neutrons bind to form the nuclei of soon-to-be formed atoms. The next stage is Energy domination which takes from a few seconds thereafter to 3,000 years. Because of high temperatures radiant energy generates most of the gravity in the universe during this period. Matter domination starts after these 3000 years and onward. With cooling, matter becomes the primary source of gravity. Matter begins to clump and form structures. In theory, particles of so-called dark matter would have come into existence by this time. They may account for as much as 99 percent of all matter. At 300,000 years after Big Bang "Decoupling" begins. Matter and energy took the form of a 'stew' extremely 'concentrated'. 'Not until the universe was 300,000 years old did light break away from matter and begin to travel freely through our expanded speck of space'. COBE scientists maintain that 'matter isn't distributed evenly in the universe today'. 'It's clumped into stars and galaxies and planets, like earth.' 'The universe today is continuing the expansion that began with the big bang'. Continued expansion and cooling allow matter and electromagnetic energy to go their separate ways. Nuclei capture electrons to form complete atoms of hydrogen, helium and lithium. The

universe becomes transparent. Radiant energy, or photons, travels freely. These photons now exist throughout the universe as microwave radiation. They reveal ripple-like concentrations of primordial matter—seeds for the structure of the universe that arose during the era of inflation. Galaxy formation starts 200 million years onward after the Big Bang. Matter continues to clump in the areas of concentration and over eons is condensed by gravity. This gives rise to quasars and galaxies. Expansion of the universe continues. Galaxies cluster in an overall structure of sheets separated by huge voids containing relatively few galaxies.

All such accounts given by the latest astrophysicists confirm the statement that ‘the universe is the totality of things and therefore also unique’.¹⁴ True, ‘scientists speak of “universes”’. But what ‘they... really mean’ is “models of the universe” ‘seeking to describe the one and only universe’. Interestingly, ‘physicists also refer to the idea of multiple universes...involving causally isolated regions of spacetime.’ But ultimately, one has to admit that ‘there is only one universe’ even according to cosmology.

All such views, whether modern astrophysicists’ or modern cosmologists’, bring Sri Aurobindo’s ontological argument extremely close to them. As already noted, the Absolute Spirit (*Sachchidananda*) postulated by Sri Aurobindo can be seen by science as the Thing that might have existed before the Big Bang. All the modern scientific theories of the origin of the universe are modern sciences’ version of Sri Aurobindo’s Involution–Evolution postulate. What he calls Nescient/Inconscient is the very first stage of the expanding universe immediately after the Big Bang. Everything that has taken place in the universe for the past 15 billion years is nothing but the evolution of *Sachchidananda* from the Nescient / Inconscient to the Mind through the Subconscious, the Material, the Vital and the Mental. Note that modern science admits that the expanding universe shall continue to expand indefinitely. This is the scientific equivalent of Sri Aurobindo’s ontological postulate that Evolution is going to continue (probably as indefinitely as the scientist’s Expanding Universe) until the whole cosmos is emancipated by means of Cosmic Divinization through the future stages of evolutionary ascent of the Absolute Spirit into the Supramental stage and beyond.¹⁵

As already stated, Aurobindonian ontology posits five successive higher stages of evolution of Consciousness from the present mental to the final supramental: Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind and Supermind. The pivotal role Sri Aurobindo assigns to Consciousness in his argument, thus, necessarily makes room for psychology (chosen as one of the two illustrations of “modern sciences”) to participate in our endeavour to prove that philosophy’s tryst with modern sciences has been achieved by the Aurobindonian paradigm. Pronouncements made by various experts in the area of psychology tend to highlight two distinct categories: psychology and psychotherapy.¹⁶ To these two can be added Sri Aurobindo’s ‘Integral psychology’ as the third category since it is ‘the study of the mind and the soul and includes the goal of developing both an integral practice of psychotherapy and an integral method of education’. Sri Aurobindo’s concept of psychology appropriates most elements of prominent Western theories of the science but transforms it into yogic psychology by means of his original holistic ap-

proach. Particularly, his concept is close to, among other things, the contribution made by Western psychologists to the recognition of introspective methods to be employed in widening the sphere of psychology. On the basis of such a contribution, the psychologists of today rightly predict 'that the day is near when we will realise that we cannot even understand a stone without taking into account many other realms of consciousness: the pranic or "vital" which organises the electrons, atoms, etc. of the stone; the mental, through which the energy of the pranic is organised, the ideational, gnostic or causal realm, which provides the archetypal idea through which the mental and pranic hold the material together; and further realms upto the Absolute which is present in every stone, brook and tree. If true for the stone, more so for thinking and feeling at every stage of development'. More interestingly, some psychologists of today (such as Frances Vaughan) describe higher states of consciousness as 'those in which lower states are subsumed so that any higher state is an expanded state; ... it includes everything in the lower state so that the higher state means more presence. It doesn't mean moving from here to there, it just means being here with expanded awareness'. 'Higher modes of functioning in terms of "more unitive or integrated modes of awareness...[consist of] more inclusiveness, more presence to immediate experience"'. Hence the conclusion: 'A good starting point for the future development of a science of introspection, would be a thorough experiential investigation of the great spiritual traditions of humanity'.

One cannot help noticing the incredibly close similarity of these utterances and their language to those of Sri Aurobindo. Development of this kind of approach to psychology in the twentieth century becomes the fit backdrop for Aurobindonian ontology's tryst with modern psychology as much as with modern cosmology. As noted above, Sri Aurobindo is the protagonist of Consciousness as the fountainhead of Involution-Evolution paradigm regarding the origin of the Universe. That is why, those states of Consciousness which he postulates as the next planes of Consciousness are simultaneously part of his yogic psychology and ontology. They are part of his yogic cosmology as well, which he reveals in his mega epic poem, *Savitri*.¹⁷ Even as modern cosmology states that there are numerous structures of, or in, the universe, Sri Aurobindo postulates that, as *Sachchidananda* descended from Its transcendental poise, It created several supraphysical (since consciousness-born) "worlds" or "Kingdoms" in the universe. Because of constraints of space no description of them is possible here. However, the titles Sri Aurobindo gives to them can be accommodated here. They are exceedingly suggestive, even self-explanatory:

"The World-Stair"

"The Kingdom of Subtle Matter"

"The Glory and Fall of Life"

"The Kingdoms of the Little Life"

"The Godheads of The Little Life"

"The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Life"

"The Paradise of the Life-Gods"

"The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Little Mind"

“The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Mind”

“The Heavens of the Ideal”

“The Kingdoms of the Greater Knowledge”

Whether ontological, cosmological or psychological, the inclusion of such significant classification, interpretation and integration of the five trans-mental planes of Consciousness into his Involution-Evolution oriented ontological argument, impels Sri Aurobindo to declare that evolution of Consciousness initiated after Involution (the Big Bang of astrophysics of today) is predestined to make possible the divinisation of the whole cosmos,—the “Cosmic Emancipation”. This visionary and futuristic avowal, together with the convincing argument he adduces, vindicates the fact that his ontology is a viable paradigm of Philosophy’s tryst with Modern Sciences (to be more comprehensively understood and accepted, perhaps, in the first century of the third millennium onwards).

(Concluded)

SANJYOT D. PAI VERNEKAR

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8. Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself*, p. 95.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Helge Kragh, “On the History and Philosophy of Twentieth-Century Cosmology” [Article from the Web]. This article is the main source consulted here in regard to cosmology.
11. Nicolau Pereira, “Creation and Annihilation in Science”, *Separata do Boletim do Instituto Menezes Braganca* No. 129 (1981), pp. 7-16.
12. Bradford A. Smith, “The Universe”, *National Geographic* Vol. 185, No. 1 (January 1994), pp. 33-34, 38.
13. Bradford A. Smith, “A Short History of The Universe”, *National Geographic* Vol. 185, No.1 (January 1994), p. 12.
14. Helge Kragh, “On the History and Philosophy of Twentieth-Century Cosmology” [Article from the Web].
15. Cf. Sri Aurobindo’s dialectics: ‘Energy or *Sachchidananda* (“existence, thought, joy”) comes down from Brahman (thesis) to meet energy from the supermind of man striving upwards towards spirituality (antithesis) and melts in man to create a new spiritual superman (synthesis)’, mentioned in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Micropaedia, Vol. I, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1984), p. 656.
16. Don Salmon, “A History of Psychology” [Article from the Web].
17. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*, 1st ed.(1950-51), 4th rev. ed.(1993), 5th impression (1996), pp. 95-201, 233-82, 297-302.

SRI AUROBINDO'S SYSTEM OF UNDERSTANDING

A HERMENEUTIC ANALYSIS

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

Now we have only to fill the cells with descriptions or corresponding quotations of relevant aspects of consciousness and to systematise the synonymous terms.

Let us get started from the first sheath—the sheath of physical consciousness. When it is crossed with planes of universal consciousness the following aspects are formed: physical consciousness proper (I.1), physical aspect of vital consciousness (II.1) and physical aspect of mental consciousness (III.1).

I.1. Material consciousness, from the point of view of Sri Aurobindo, is the most physical grade of the physical [1, p. 351]. This is the body-consciousness—obscure consciousness of limbs, cells, tissues, glands, organs [1, p. 348]. It is characterized by tamas, inertia, ignorance, stupidity, littleness, obstruction [2, p. 1430]. The centre of the physical proper is Muladhara [1, p. 376].

II.1. The physical vital is “turned entirely upon physical things, full of desires and greeds and seekings for pleasure on the physical plane”. In its activities it is closely related to the vital-physical (I.2), nervous system, which Sri Aurobindo called the nervous being, i. e. the being made of nerves [1, p. 344].

While examining resemblances or differences of the following quotations one can conclude that synonymous to “the physical vital” is the term “the lower vital”.

1) “The lower vital as distinguished from the higher is concerned only with the small greeds, small desires, small passions (*underlined by the author of this paper*), etc. which make up the daily stuff of life for the ordinary sensational man—while the vital-physical proper is the nervous being giving vital reflexes to contacts of things with the physical consciousness” [1, p. 327].

2) “The physical-vital is the being of small desires and greeds (*underlined by the author of this paper*), etc.—the vital-physical is the nervous being; they are closely connected together” [1, p. 344].

In the works by Sri Aurobindo there are only two cases of contrast of the vital-physical to other parts of a human nature. In one case it is the physical-vital, and in the other the lower vital, while the characteristics of the latter practically coincide.¹

The lowest degree of physical vital is material vital. This aspect of the vital consciousness is engaged entirely in the activities of the gross physical. Its function is “to support and energise the body and keep in it the capacity of life, growth, movement, etc., also of sensitiveness to outside impacts” [1, p. 345].

The center of the lower vital, and thus of the physical-vital, is Svadhithana. It is

1. Sometimes the term “lower vital” is used in meaning “vital-physical”. If so, the lower vital and the physical-vital are considered different.

“commanding the small vital movements, the little greeds, lusts, desires, the small sense-movements” [1, p. 366].

III.1. The physical mental Sri Aurobindo calls externalising mind, and that in turn the physical mind [1, pp. 373, 374]. “The word ‘physical mind’”,—comments Sri Aurobindo,—“is rather ambiguous, because it can mean this externalising Mind and the mental in the physical taken together” [1, p. 326].²

The physical mind is the very part of the mind especially dealing with physical phenomena; it observes nothing but the objects and events of the external world and its conclusions are based on the sensual facts [1, p. 327]. This mind is not inert at all [1, p. 351]. It “is in the habit of observing things with or without use” and “would like everything made easy” [1, p. 328].

It serves bifunctionally: “first, to work upon external things and give them a mental order with a way of practically dealing with them and, secondly, to be the channel of materialising and putting into effect whatever the thinking and dynamic mind³ sends down to it for this purpose” [1, p. 328].

As this aspect of mental consciousness is entirely oriented towards the perception of the external world, “it is sceptical of the existence of supraphysical things, of which it has no direct experience and to which it can find no clue; even when it has spiritual experiences, it forgets them easily, loses the impression and result and finds it difficult to believe” [1, pp. 347-48].

The center of physical mind is in the subtle body at the level of the throat and connected strongly with the speech [1, p. 374], this is Vishuddha Chakra.

Let's get down to the description of the second sheath—the vital. When it intersects with planes of universal consciousness the following sectors are formed: vital aspect of physical consciousness (I.2), vital proper (II.2) and vital aspect of mental consciousness (III.2).

I.2. “The vital-physical governs all the small daily reactions to outward things—reactions of the nerves and the body consciousness and the reflex emotions and sensations; it motives much of the ordinary actions of man and joins with the lower parts⁴ of the vital proper⁵ in producing lust, jealousy, anger, violence etc. In its lowest parts (vital-material) it is the agent of pain, physical illness etc.” [1, p. 344].

“The nervous part of the being is a portion of the vital—it is the vital-physical, the life-force closely enmeshed in the reactions, desires, needs, sensations of the body” [1, p. 345].

“The nerves are distributed all over the body, but the vital-physical action is concentrated in its origin between the Muladhara and the centre just above it” [1, p. 376]. The reference is to the center that exists between Muladhara and Svadhithana.

2. Actually, in the texts the term is frequently used in the second meaning.

3. That is the mental proper (III.3) and the vital-mental (III.2).

4. II.1.

5. II.2.

II.2. The proper vital is a life-force, that is in charge of such motions as desires, impulses and needs that are determined by physical consciousness to a much lesser extent⁶ [1, p. 345].

The center is Manipura Chakra at the level of the navel [1, p. 365].

III.2. The vital aspect of the mental consciousness is corresponding to the dynamic mind. It is a mind of will, a mind of solutions. It pursues the goal to put into life-practice such ideas as are offered by the thinking mind [1, p. 326].

If the throat and the mouth are related to the physical mind, then the nose⁷ and forehead are related to the vital (dynamic) part of the mental [1, p. 373]. The dynamic mind is directed by the Ajna Chakra, the forehead center between the eyebrows.

The third sheath is the mental one. When it is intersected with planes of universal consciousness, the mental aspect of the physical consciousness (I.3), the mental aspect of the vital consciousness (II.3) and the mental proper (III.3) are formed.

I.3. "That is the nature of the mental physical, to go on repeating without use the movement that has happened. It is what we call the mechanical mind—it is strong in childhood because the thinking mind is not developed and has besides a narrow range of interests. Afterwards it becomes an undercurrent in the mental activities" [1, p. 329].

This mind "is limited by the physical view and experience of things, it mentalises the experiences brought by the contacts of outward life and things, and does not go beyond that (though it can do that much very cleverly), unlike the externalising mind which deals with them more from the reason and its higher intelligence.⁸ But in practice these two usually get mixed together. The mechanical mind is a much lower action of the mental physical which, left to itself, would only repeat customary ideas and record the natural reflexes of the physical consciousness to the contacts of outward life and things" [1, p. 326].

Sri Aurobindo refers to the mechanical mind not only as a much lower action of the mental aspect of the physical consciousness, but also as a mind of body [1, p. 328]—of the very cells, molecules, corpuscles. "This body-mind is a very tangible truth; owing to its obscurity and mechanical clinging to past movements and facile oblivion and rejection of the new, we find in it one of the chief obstacles to permeation by the supermind Force and the transformation of the functioning of the body. On the other hand, once effectively converted, it will be one of the most precious instruments for the stabilisation of the supramental Light and Force in material Nature" [1, p. 340].

II.3. Unlike the dynamic Mind or dynamic Intelligence (III.2), operating ideas and judgements (reasons), the vital mind is limited only to the vital worldview and vital experience. This is a mind remaining at the level of a vital consciousness, or mental

6. Ambitions, for example.

7. "The nose is connected with the vital dynamic part of the mental (*underlined by the author of this paper*),—a man with a strong nose is supposed to have a strong will or a strong mental personality,—though I don't know whether it is invariably true. But the vital physical? Of course the nose is the passage of the Prana and the Prana is the support of the vital physical" [1, p. 373].

8. That is from the vital-mental (III.2) and the mental proper (III.3).

aspect of vital consciousness [1, p. 326].

Its function originates from being like an intermediary between vital emotions, desires, impulses and the mental itself. The vital mind puts these ones into mental forms, striving to show them to be reasonable and then to impose them on the mind [1, pp. 326, 341]. It is also to “plan or dream or imagine what can be done” [1, p. 334]. Inner dialogue with other people is characteristic for the vital mind too. “It is a way it has of acting on the subtle plane on things in which it is interested, especially if the physical action is stopped or restricted” [1, p. 338].

The mental aspect of vital consciousness is under the direction of the Anahata, the cardiac center [1, pp. 334, 341, 366].

III. 3. The thinking mind operates the ideas itself (it is interested in pure knowledge only) and it does not depend on the physical consciousness [1, pp. 326, 327]. It serves to think, to reason, to comprehend, to understand, to explore, to clarify or judge [1, p. 334].

The thinking mind is under the control of Sahasradala Chakra, the thousand-petalled lotus [1, p. 365].

Now we can fill the cells of the table with synonymous terms and thus it acquires a system.

The proposed reconstruction of psychological life by Sri Aurobindo (look at the table) makes it possible not only to put in order the variety of terms, but also to explicate why subconscious mind, subconscient vital, subconscient physical exist: they appear at the intersection of the border of subconsciousness with corresponding sheaths.

The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo reveals the essence of the yoga in relation to evolution. Every plane of consciousness is a stage of evolution that is conquered or yet to be conquered, and at every plane the consciousness is en clothed with a corresponding sheath. In man, there are three planes—matter (I), life (II) and mind (III), consequently he is surrounded by physical sheath gross and subtle (1), vital (2) and mental (3). The consciousness of a yogin from the top of the head penetrates the fourth plane—the sphere of superconsciousness—and at a certain moment acquires a new, fourth sheath.

The fourth plane is a Spiritual mind, but we may consider it to be the plane of Overmind also. No less than the physical, vital and mental planes, it is intersected by the sheaths of the aura, resulting in the forming of new aspects of the consciousness. There are four of them—just as Sri Aurobindo had written—Higher Mind (IV.1), Illumined Mind (IV.2), plane of Intuition (IV.3) and Overmind⁹ (IV. 4).

The comparison of Spiritual Mind consisting of Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition and Overmind as is quite logical, for it derives from the train of thought of Sri Aurobindo himself.

In *The Life Divine* [4, p. 957] he notes that the Overmind's light and power (IV.4) descend downward into the man and open up in him one after another greater or overmind Intuition (IV.3), greater or overmind Illumination (IV.2), greater or overmind spiritual Thinking (IV.1).

If we proceed thus we see that yoga in fact is a conscious evolution. We may propose that the new sheath is formed due to the energy of planes of superconsciousness or by supramental power—at this point we realise that in the yoga of Sri Aurobindo the descending flow of Supramental Shakti is the most important thing. This sheath is formed from the top downwards, consequently it should be closed in subconsciousness. Before this it will intersect different planes and add to human nature new aspects of consciousness. However, we can give a description of their peculiarities, having got knowledge about the basic essential and distinguishing attributes of the planes and sheaths of consciousness.

The closing of the sheath well explains the concept of Sri Aurobindo, according to which the consciousness of the yogin, after it has risen up from the body, descends into subconsciousness. Such a descending is considered to be quite inevitable if the yogin is not going to move out of his body or to be immersed into trance. The higher his consciousness goes the deeper he must descend: "...on each height we conquer we have to turn to bring down its power and its illumination" [5, p. 123].

Just the same way we perceive the activity of dynamic mind (through solving of some life-problem) or mechanical mind (reiterating the same thought or tune), though

9. Overmind proper.

our consciousness is not moving up or down, the consciousness of a yogin dives into the deeps of the subconsciousness, without leaving his position above the head and the realization. The yogin dives into the experience of them due to the descending of the power of the new plane, that makes an effort to create a new correspondent sheath for him.

In this context I can give a new interpretation of some facts of the inner, "sacral" biography of Sri Aurobindo. On August 15th, 1923 he told his disciples that he made an attempt to bring down the imperative Supermind into the human body [6, p. 131]. On November 24th, 1926 the consciousness of Krishna, at that time who was a personification of the Supermind, descended into him. Purani, who was one of his disciples, made a mention of the fact that the rather dark face of Sri Aurobindo had become light-pink and a flesh-coloured light emanated out of his body [7, p. 297]. Much later, in 1935, Sri Aurobindo evaluated what had happened that day as the descent of the godhead of the Overmind, that prepared the descent of the Supermind itself [3, p. 136].

Evidently, it is a matter of the descending of the energy of superconsciousness via the merged fourth sheath on the level of physical consciousness (I.4). It is significant that this level is connected directly to the body-consciousness (I.1), the nervous system (I.2) and the mind of the cells (I.3).

The same year of 1935, Sri Aurobindo stated: "The detail or method of the later stages of the yoga which go into little known or untrodden regions, I have not made public and I do not at present intend to do so" [1, p. 99; 7, p. 307]. We can assume that "little known or untrodden regions", not counting the field of subconsciousness, are the sectors from V.5. (supramental proper) to I.5. (supramental aspect of physical consciousness, supramental physical). Again, it is essential that it was at this phase that Sri Aurobindo turns to the yoga of the cells. The yoga of the cells is to transform the programs, produced and maintained by the mechanical mind, that don't allow the cells to get into the divine energy and thus gain immortality. In other words, the yoga of the cells is conducted at the level of I.5.

(Concluded)

ALEXANDER VELICHENKO

Summary

Introduction

This paper attempts to reconstruct the system of understanding that underlies the texts of Sri Aurobindo (an outstanding Indian philosopher of the first half of XX century and the architect of the Integral Yoga) and his replies to his numerous disciples.

Proposals

To arrive at a more full reconstruction of this system, we need to apply the hermeneutic approach, the table, and the graphical methods of representing the subject matter. Thus far we would be able to follow his logic relating the description of his spiritual experience and to classify the terms that seem to be synonymous.

Well, we get a reasonable question then: Is it possible in fact? Indeed, the spiritual

experience is quite transcendent to the mind and therefore it can hardly be said that even a person who is engaged in studies of religion could do it. But anyway, what is the sense that we imply for the word ‘experience’ itself? Is this a mystic experience or an experience of comprehension and description? The latter lies within the reach of academic exploration.

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

Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo used a large variety of terms of his own, that after a close investigation, turn out to be the structural elements of his system.

His system of understanding and description of spiritual experience is quite similar to the periodic table related to the aspects of the consciousness. If we can specify the *planes* and the *sheaths*, it is possible for us to make specified descriptions of their intersections—existing and yet possible to be created in the course of the evolution.

The reconstruction is proved to be relevant by not only the texts of Sri Aurobindo, but also with his *inner, sacral* biography.

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4. Sri Aurobindo. *The Life Divine*. Pondicherry, 1988.
5. Sri Aurobindo. *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Pondicherry, 1992.

Notes on the scheme

There are no such terms as “overmental sheath” or “supramental sheath” in the texts of Sri Aurobindo. Therefore I placed them within square brackets. Instead, Krishna was referred to be the Overmind Godhead that is “anandamaya” (*On Himself*, p. 136). The variant of this term is “anandamayakosa”, i.e. “sheath, formed of Ananda”. Please be reminded that in Isha Upanishad Sri Aurobindo has found a description of Overmind as “golden lid which hides the face of the [supramental] Truth” and this point also can be related to the idea of the sheath.

Intersection of overmental sheath (4) with universal planes of consciousness forms the following aspects: overmental physical (I.4), overmental vital (II.4), overmental mental (III.4); overmental proper, “true overmind”¹⁰ (IV.4).

Intersection of the sheaths of the aura with universal overmental consciousness (IV) forms the following aspects: physical overmental, “overmind spiritual Thinking”, “Higher

10. The terms in quotes can be found in the texts of Sri Aurobindo.

Mind" (IV.1); vital overmental, "overmind Illumination", "Illumined Mind" (IV.2); mental overmental, "overmind Intuition", "intuitive overmind" (IV.3).

Intersection of the supramental sheath (5) with universal planes of consciousness forms the following aspects: "supramental physical" (I.5), supramental vital (II.5), supramental mental (III.5); supramental overmental, "supramental overmind or overmind gnosis" (IV.5); supramental proper, "true supermind or Divine Gnosis" (V.5).

Such aspects as overmental supramental, mental supramental, vital supramental and a physical supramental are not existent at all, for the aura's sheaths (except the supramental sheath) do not intersect with the supramental plane.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

SRI AUROBINDO knew the importance of his letters to his disciples more than they knew it themselves. They wrote to him in every mood possible. The volume of correspondence greatly increased and so was the pressure on Sri Aurobindo's time as will be seen from his reply to the disciples: "You do not realise that I have to spend 12 hours over the ordinary correspondence, numerous reports, etc. I work 3 hours in the afternoon and the whole night up to 6 in the morning over this. So if I get a long letter with many questions I may not be able to answer it all at once. To get into such a disturbance over it and want to throw off the Yoga is quite unreasonable."¹ (17.6.1933)

A question from the disciple:

What has happened to my typescript? Hibernating?

Sri Aurobindo says:

"My dear sir, if you saw me nowadays with my nose to paper from afternoon to morning, deciphering, deciphering, writing, writing, writing, even the rocky heart of a disciple would be touched and you would not talk about typescripts and hibernation. I have given up (for the present at least) the attempt to minimise the cataract of correspondence; I accept my fate like X with the plague of Prasads and admirers, but at least don't add anguish to annihilation by talking about typescripts."² (9-3-1936)

What a great loss it would have been to the literary world in general and spiritual seekers in particular if Sri Aurobindo had not concerned himself with the writings of these letters!

"It was customary for the disciples to leave their queries and recordations of personal experience in a tray before 11 p.m. everyday—the letters may pile up to a hundred or more—and Sri Aurobindo would sit up half the night answering them, and these replies would be distributed to the respective Sadhaks by Nolini the next morning. The Sadhaks could write about anything—almost anything—and some wrote twice a day; and they wrote about their trials, their hopes, their dark nights, their dreary days, their sudden exultations and exhilarations, their strange fears and their leaden-eyed despairs—or they wrote about the problems of philosophy or Yoga theory and practice, or poetic inspiration and technique or even on contemporary Indian and world politics. And the reply came giving the true balm of spiritual succour in the shape of a kindly-worded, conversationally, spoken message—an epistle long or short, gay or serious but always springing from the heart and from the home of Truth, and appropriate in every way to the nature of the query and the character and mood of the correspondent.... There must now be in existence several thousands of these letters, and from time to time selections from (or collections of) these letters have been published to reach an audience wider than the

Ashram, and as wide as the world. The *Riddle of this World* appeared in 1933, *Lights on Yoga* in 1935, *Bases of Yoga* in 1936. *The Mother* (1928) too had in the main a similar origin. Introducing the first series of *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (1947) Kishore Gandhi wrote: ‘The letters of Sri Aurobindo are a vast literature of very great value...intended for direct and intimate help to disciples, they are written in a somewhat less lofty and difficult style than his other more metaphysical works and yet they bear that stamp of luminous authenticity and are charged with that High Wisdom that comes from the constant living in the Spirit’s complete Truth.’”³

“More collections appeared, and then most of the letters pertaining to Yoga were brought out in two omnibus volumes. Tomes One and Two of *On Yoga—Book Two* (1958). Tome One comprises letters on the The Supramental Evolution, Integral Yoga and the Other Paths, The Purpose of Avatarhood, The Foundations of the Sadhana, Sadhana through Work, Meditation, Love and Devotion and similar topics; and Tome Two comprises letters on the Transformation of the Mind, the Vital, the Physical, the Subconscient and the Inconscient, and on the Triple Transformation, Psychic, Spiritual and Supramental. The letters have been graded and arranged with infinite care, and in their totality the two Tomes constitute a many-limbed but unforbidding treatise complementary to the *The Synthesis of Yoga*.”⁴

In the following passages, Sri Aurobindo gave answers asked by his disciples.

“Well, what I am considering is this, whether it would not be wiser, as far as concerns England or America, to start impersonally with the philosophical side and the side of the Yoga, and leave the person a little behind the scene, for the present, until people there are ready as individuals for the personal touch; that is the course we have been following up to now. In India it is different, for here there is another kind of general mentality and there is the tradition of the Guru and the Shishya.

Q: What disciples we are of what a Master! I wish you had chosen or called some better stuff—perhaps somebody like X.

A: As to the disciples, I agree!—Yes, but would the better stuff, supposing it to exist, be typical of humanity? To deal with a few exceptional types would hardly solve the problem. And would they consent to follow my path—that is another question? And if they were put to the test, would not the common humanity suddenly reveal itself—that is still another question.

3-8-1935

Q: Does your allowing people to go out from here mean that now there is no harm in their doing so?

A: No, it does not; it simply means that we can’t always be holding back people whose vital says “I want to go, I want to go” and they side with the vital. They are allowed to go and take their risk.

18-3-1937

About the correspondence, I would be indeed a brainless fool if I made it the central aim of my life to con an absurd mountain of letters and leave all higher aims aside! If I have given importance to the correspondence, it is because it was an effective instrument towards my central purpose—there are a large number of Sadhaks whom it has helped to awaken from lethargy and begin to tread the way of spiritual experience, others whom it has carried from a small round of experience to a flood of realisations, some who have been absolutely hopeless for years who have undergone a conversion and entered from darkness into an opening of light. Others no doubt have not profited or profited only a little. Also there were some who wrote at random and wasted our time. But I think we can say that for the majority of those who wrote there has been a real progress. No doubt also it was not the correspondence in itself but the Force that was increasing in its pressure on the physical nature which was able to do all this, but a canalisation was needed, and this served the purpose. There were many for whom it was not necessary, others for whom it was not suitable. If it had been a mere intellectual asking of questions it would have been useless, but the substantial part was about Sadhana and experience and it is that that proved to be of great use.

But as time went on the correspondence began to grow too much and reached impossible proportions, yet it was difficult to stop the flood or to make distinctions which would not have been understood; so we have to seek a way out and as yet have only found palliatives. The easy way would be if those who have opened would now rely on the inner communication with only a necessary word now and then—some have begun to do so. I suppose in the end we shall be able to reduce the thing to manageable proportions.”⁵

12-1-1934

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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1. *SABCL*, Vol. 26, p. 186.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
3. *Sri Aurobindo* by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, pp. 578, 579.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 579.
5. *SABCL*, Vol. 26, pp. 178, 179, 180.

THE STORY OF THREE NEUTRINOS

(Continued from the issue of April 2002)

Fundamental Constituents of Matter

By the early 1960s there were so many strongly interacting particles—like protons, neutrons, pions,—and weakly interacting particles—like electrons, muons,—that it became necessary to take a closer look and update the classification of particles in terms of the smaller number of building blocks. Fortunately, evidence was accumulating which indicated that particles like protons and neutrons have structure. Putting all these ideas together, particles were classified into two groups: matter particles and force particles. Matter particles as we understand today are of two types: quarks and leptons; these are the fundamental constituents of matter. Out of quarks are formed protons, neutrons, pions, kaons etc.; the forces acting on quarks are such that they do not exist as free particles like protons and neutrons. The leptons are electrons, muons, electron-neutrinos, muon-neutrinos, etc. The visible matter that we see around us is formed out of two kinds of quarks (up and down) and two leptons (electron and its neutrino). Matter in high-energy cosmic rays and in high-energy laboratory experiments contain additional quarks and leptons.

Matter particles are subjected to four basic forces, gravitational, electromagnetic, weak and strong. One does not know why these forces are there. The gravitational force is universal, that is, every object experiences the force of gravity; it is the weakest of the four forces and the force carrier is called graviton. It plays a vital role in the formation and sustenance of stars, galaxies and other objects. The electromagnetic force is experienced by all electrically charged particles (quarks and charged leptons), and the force is due to the exchange of a massless particle, the familiar photons of light. It is responsible for the stability of atoms and molecules. The electromagnetic force between two electrons is about 10^{42} times stronger than the gravitational force. The strong force, mediated by a particle called gluon, is responsible for the compactness of atomic nuclei and for holding the quarks together in protons and neutrons; leptons are not sensitive to the strong force. The weak force is responsible for the radioactivity and for the decays of unstable particles like muons; quarks and leptons both experience the weak force. It may be noted that neutrinos are involved in only weak interactions. The energy production in the sun is dominated by this force, via the proton-proton fusion reaction.

In the late 1960s Steven Weinberg and Abdus Salam gave a unified description of electromagnetism and weak interaction and, together with the work of Sheldon Glashow, this came to be known as the electroweak theory. The electroweak theory predicted the existence of three heavy bosons, about ninety times heavier than our familiar proton; these were named as W^+ , W^- and Z^0 , that is two of them charged and one neutral. A specially designed antiproton-proton collider was constructed at CERN to look for W and Z bosons. Two independent international collaborations, called UA1 and UA2, carried out these searches and they discovered the W^+ , W^- and Z bosons in 1983; these

bosons are found to be very massive, about ninety times heavier than a hydrogen atom. Carlo Rubbia and Simon Van der Meer shared the Nobel prize in 1984 for this discovery.

Another startling step forward was taken in 1973 when Kobayashi and Maskawa proposed six quarks and six leptons to understand all the known facts about matter particles. Quarks are called (up, down), (charm, strange) and (top, bottom). Leptons are called (electron, electron-neutrino), (muon, muon-neutrino) and (tau, tau-neutrino); all neutrinos are assumed to be massless and neutral. It is interesting to note that in 1973 one knew experimentally only three quarks (up, down and strange) and four leptons (electron, electron-neutrino, muon and muon-neutrino).

The next question that arises in our mind is: Do we know how many leptons or how many neutrinos exist in nature? For this let us now go through the LEP story.

The LEP Story and the Third Neutrino

The LEP story started in the late 1970s; the machine was formally approved by CERN in 1981. Let us say a few words about CERN. CERN is an European organisation for Nuclear Research, founded in 1954 with its headquarters in Geneva. It has become a worldwide laboratory. It is a unique centre of excellence in particle physics and a successful model for international collaborations in science and technology. CERN is funded by 20 European countries called CERN's Member States. Now back to the LEP. The LEP is a Large Electron Positron collider at CERN, Geneva, which was commissioned on 14 July, 1989. The LEP circular tunnel, which is about 50 to 100 metres below the surface of earth, is of 27 kilometre circumference in which high-energy beams of electrons and positrons were rotating in opposite directions; a positron is an antiparticle of an electron with the same mass but opposite charge. The beams were made to collide at four intersection regions which were surrounded by four giant detectors to detect all the particles emerging from collisions of electrons and positrons. The four experiments are named as: ALEPH, DELPHI, L3* and OPAL. After six years of hard work these four experiments collected nearly twenty million examples of decays of the Z particle and concluded that there are only three different types of neutrinos. This means that there are only six quarks and six leptons. Why nature chose this sacred number is a mystery. The third tau-neutrino has now been detected at Fermilab in the USA.

Before the data taking at LEP started in 1989, five out of the six quarks predicted were already detected. The first three quarks are of light masses. The fourth, called charm, was detected in 1974 independently at the two laboratories in USA (BNL and SLAC) and of mass nearly one and half times that of a hydrogen atom. The fifth quark, called bottom, was detected in 1977 at Fermilab and is of mass nearly five times that of a hydrogen atom. Search for the sixth quark was on. Measurements at LEP predicted that the sixth top quark should be nearly two hundred times heavier than the hydrogen atom; this was found at Fermilab in 1995. Among the charged leptons, tau lepton (seen in 1975 at SLAC)

* Physicists of Experimental High Energy Physics group of Tata Institute are members of this collaboration.

is nearly 3500 times heavier than the electron (or two times heavier than the proton), and the muon is nearly two hundred times heavier than the electron.

How do these particles and the force carriers W and Z acquire their masses? Newton gave us the relation between mass and weight, and Einstein taught us the equivalence between energy and mass; but nobody explained to us how anything acquires mass in this mysterious universe. The present thinking is that particle masses were generated by an unseen field permeating the universe. This field is named after one of its proponents Peter Higgs and the particle corresponding to the field is a neutral particle, named Higgs. The hunt is on for the Higgs particle and what one knows presently from LEP experiments is that, if such a particle exists, it must be more than one hundred and twenty times heavier than the hydrogen atom. From two ongoing experiments at Tevatron, Fermilab, one may expect some results on Higgs by 2005; otherwise one will have to wait for the commissioning of Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN in 2006.

Neutrino and our Sun

Let us now try to understand the role played by the neutrino in understanding how the sun, or for that matter any star in the sky, shines and finally what is the fate of a star? The sun shines by burning hydrogen via the nuclear fusion in its core; the hot core can be considered as an immense furnace producing not only heat and light, but also a vast number of neutrinos. The overall reaction is referred to as the proton-proton chain leading to energy generation. In the first step a fusion of two protons produces a deuteron (a nucleus of deuterium, called deuteron, contains one proton and one neutron as compared to only one proton in a hydrogen nucleus), a positron and a neutrino. The deuteron thus produced burns quickly to produce He^3 . Then two nuclei of He^3 fuse to form an alpha particle (He^3 contains two protons and one neutron, while an alpha particle, denoted by α or He^4 , contains two protons and two neutrons). Each of these reactions leads to a release of energy. The net effect of the above described reactions is the fusion of four protons into an α particle, two positrons and two electron-neutrinos; nearly 600 million tons of hydrogen are burned every second in the core. The mass of the helium atom is slightly less than the masses of the four hydrogen atoms and, as a result, the energy equivalent to the excess mass is released. Positrons being antimatter get quickly annihilated with matter and release further energy. Neutrinos, being weakly interacting particles with no mass, escape with the speed of light. Thus heat, light and neutrinos are produced in the interior of the sun. It is estimated that during 5 billion years of its existence our sun has used up about half of its original hydrogen fuel, so that it has still enough nuclear fuel to last for another five billion years and there is no reason to panic just now.

When the fusion reaction ends in a small star, the star starts shrinking. This burned-out star is called a white dwarf because it emits a faint glow of radiation. A white dwarf in isolation can remain in this state indefinitely. S. Chandrasekhar,—he was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1983—asked about seventy years ago (1931) the question: what should be the maximum size of a star so that it can support itself against its own

gravity after it had consumed its nuclear fuel? As the star contracts, the atomic electrons are pressed tightly together to generate a pressure (the density of matter at this stage is in the range of $10^4 - 10^8 \text{ gm/cm}^3$). Chandrasekhar showed that the electron pressure can sustain the collapse tendency due to gravitational pressure if the core mass is less than a critical value, now called Chandrasekhar mass, and if it is 1.4 times the solar mass. This is the maximum stable mass of a white dwarf.

When fusion ends in a large star, the electron pressure can no longer stop the gravitational collapse. There is, however, a possibility to halt the collapse for stellar masses between 10 to 15 solar masses through a build up of pressure due to neutrons. This happens when the central part of the core reaches the nuclear density, which is the density of matter inside a large nucleus, and it is about $5 \times 10^{14} \text{ gm/cm}^3$. The sudden halt of the collapse generates an outward moving shock travelling with supersonic speed but at a much lower velocity than the speed of light. It reaches the surface a few hours later and ultimately leads to an explosion of the outer layers of the star, causing the sudden brightening of the star that we call a supernova. In 1987 a supernova explosion took place in the Large Magellanic Cloud, our neighbouring galaxy. High-energy neutrinos were detected at several neutrino observing stations. After about few hours of neutrino burst the optical brightening of the supernova was seen. In the year 1054 a supernova was detected by the Chinese astronomers. For stars more massive than about 20 solar masses, it seems difficult to halt the collapse and this may lead to the formation of what are called Black Holes.

The supernova remnant, as a result of the stellar collapse, consists mostly of neutrons at nuclear density and is called a neutron star with a mass less than about 5 solar masses. A neutron star of one solar mass has a radius of about 10 to 15 km with a density of about $5 \times 10^{14} \text{ gm/cm}^3$. This is an unbelievably large density where a pinch of salt of this material has a mass of about 500 million tons. Neutron stars called pulsars were first seen in 1968.

Neutrinos, as we note from the above description, are emitted in plenty by the sun and other stars continuously; this happens in the form of a burst (i.e. within a short interval of time of about 10 seconds) from a stellar collapse. Note that these are electron-neutrinos. The sun is a dominant source with the flux of neutrinos incident on earth of about $10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ sec}^{-1}$. As against this the number of neutrinos that we receive from stars in our galaxy, other than the sun, is about $10^2 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ sec}^{-1}$ which is several orders of magnitude smaller than the value from the sun; it is because the stars are much further away than the sun from the earth and the flux decreases as the square of the distance of the star from the earth. There are two more natural sources of neutrinos for our earth, and these are: (i) radioactive decays in the interior of the earth which give out neutrinos at the rate of about $10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ sec}^{-1}$, and (ii) atmospheric neutrinos which arise due to collisions of cosmic ray particles with air-nuclei of our earth; these collisions produce charged mesons and their decay products yield about $10^1 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ sec}^{-1}$ neutrinos. Although the flux of atmospheric neutrinos is the lowest among the natural sources they are comparatively easy to detect, because these are about a thousand times more energetic than the other neutrinos. We will now give some experimental results based on the detection of solar neutrinos.

Detection of Solar Neutrinos: Since the neutrino has very poor or weak interaction with matter, it is one of the most difficult particles to detect. This property of the neutrino is actually a boon to us from Mother Nature. Because of this property neutrinos can reach us practically from any region, howsoever far it be. They carry the original information about direction and energy. Solar neutrinos can thus be used to understand the nuclear energy generation in the interior of the sun; similarly the neutrinos from a supernova burst will help us to understand the core of a collapsing star. However, to detect these neutrinos the experiments must run for years to collect a reasonable sample of events and make use of detectors that contain a huge number of target atoms.

The first detector that had been set up to detect solar neutrinos was in 1968 by R. Davis and his collaborators at the Homestake mine, South Dakota, U.S.A., at a depth of 4850 feet. They used chlorine-37 in the form of C_2Cl_4 liquid. A neutrino on interaction with chlorine yields argon-37 with the emission of an electron. By detecting argon atoms one measures the neutrino flux from the sun. After 30 years of hard work this experiment has measured an average the neutrino flux which is a factor of three below the theoretical prediction. This discrepancy is referred to as the solar neutrino problem.

The discrepancy between the measured and predicted solar neutrino flux generated a lot of excitement. It also motivated the development of other new experiments. Three other experiments which are taking data are: (i) Kamiokande (now Super-Kamiokande), situated one kilometre underground in the Kamioka mine in Japan, uses 50,000 tons of water as a target for neutrinos; (ii) GALLAX detector with 30 tons of Gallium is located in the Gran Sasso underground laboratory in Italy; and (iii) SAGE detector with 60 tons of Gallium is situated underneath a high mountain in the Baskan Valley of the Soviet Union. Observations from these experiments confirm that neutrinos detected are significantly lower by a factor of two to three compared to the theoretical predictions of the solar model.

This can mean two things: either we do not understand the nuclear energy generation in the interior of the sun, or something else is happening to our neutrinos on their way to the earth. Over the years theoretical calculations have been vastly improved and refined, and one cannot accommodate the big deficit seen by all the experiments. All efforts are therefore being made to explore the second possibility. To be specific, there is a possibility from the theoretical point of view: if the neutrinos have masses then one type of neutrino, such as electron-neutrino, can get converted into another type of neutrino, such as muon-neutrino, while moving through space. Such a process is called neutrino oscillation. So if there is neutrino oscillation, the flux of electron-neutrinos from the sun will get reduced on arrival at earth, as some of it would get converted into muon-neutrinos or tau-neutrinos. This may very well be the explanation for the solar neutrino problem.

How do we make sure of the neutrino oscillation? For this, our detector should be able to detect all the three different types of neutrinos. If there is neutrino oscillation, then the sum of fluxes of the three types of neutrinos should be equal to the theoretical calculation of electron-neutrino flux from the sun. Several new experiments are planned on

this line. We will mention one of them which has just started taking data; it is the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory (SNO), in the Creighton mine about two kilometres below the surface in Sudbury, Canada. The first result from this experiment, reported in June 2001, provides evidence for neutrino oscillation and the total neutrino flux is in close agreement with theoretical predictions of solar models. Indications for neutrino oscillations have also come from atmospheric neutrinos which arise due to collisions of cosmic ray particles with air-nuclei of earth. In the coming 5-6 years there will be several accelerator-based experiments, called long baseline experiments, in which neutrinos of known types will be produced in high-energy accelerators (at CERN, Fermilab and KEK) and they will be focused to a distant detector where the flux and type of neutrinos will be measured. There will be at least three such experiments: the first one is called K2K (already taking data) where neutrinos from KEK in Japan are focused to the Kamioka detector situated 250 km away; the second one is NGS where neutrinos from CERN will be sent to the Gran Sasso laboratory situated about 750 km away, and the third is MINOS where neutrinos from Fermilab will be transported to Minnesota about 750 km away. Besides these long baseline experiments there are going to be several short baseline experiments. So exciting results are expected in years to come.

We have now come to the end of our story. Through this story we have attempted to give some flavour of particle physics that has emerged so far. We see that matter particles, quarks and leptons, come in three generations. These generations come in doublets, and they are: electron, muon, tau and their neutrinos in the lepton sector. Except for the different masses of e , μ and τ , they are identical in all other respects. Similarly in the quark sector the generations are: (up, down), (charm, strange) and (top, bottom), and the message appears to be that they are identical in all respects except for their masses. Why nature chose three sets is a mystery. It is likely that the answers may emerge with the forthcoming experiments being planned with neutrinos as well as with the Large Hadron Collider at CERN.

(Concluded)

S.N. GANGULI

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MARY HELEN EGGENBERGER

A Tribute

MARY HELEN, beloved friend and companion on the Way, disciple of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, left this beautiful and hallowed earth she so cherished at 7:30 a.m. on February 7, 2002, a day before her 58th birthday.

Mary Helen read about Mother and Sri Aurobindo when she was just out of her teens and, as a young woman at the age of 22, she sent her photo to Mother and received Her blessings to come and live in the ashram. She travelled on her own to India, taking with her a few belongings and leaving everything else to meet Mother in August of 1966. She returned to the Ashram in 1968 for the inauguration of Auroville and worked for some months in the Auroville Information and Design office opposite the Ashram main complex. After returning to the U.S. for a few years she once again came to the Ashram in 1971, later moving to Auroville with Mother's blessings where she worked in the Matrimandir Gardens for 10 years, collecting and studying numerous plant species that she helped collect and propagate. She participated in every plant collecting expedition to find new plants for the Matrimandir Gardens, more than 85 of which Mother gave spiritual significances. She also began one of Auroville's first journals, *Progress*, chronicling the development of the pioneer communities in those early years.

She was diagnosed with late-stage ovarian cancer in 1998 and underwent extensive exploratory surgery. The cancer was so widespread, however, that no removal was possible surgically. She was given three weeks to live. Determined, as the Mother's child, to conquer this disease on the life plane or proceed as far as possible towards its elimination with her guru's ever-present help, she concentrated her work on the body's cells, calling in the Light while exploring both traditional therapies and a host of alternative protocols.

Mary Helen's life was one of beauty, harmony, refinement and order. It was a joy and a constant lesson to see how beautifully she arranged physical things, such as clothes, furniture, art work, etc. Her flower arrangements were sensitive and soaring examples of the expression of beauty. Music and ballet were also great loves and she was among the original members of the first Auroville choir. She was a living example of Mother's dictum: "Not to take care of material things which one uses is a sign of inconscience and ignorance. You have no right to use any material object whatsoever if you do not take care of it. You must take care of it not because you are attached to it, but because it manifests something of the Divine Consciousness."

She slept each night with the blessings packets Mother had given her and a packet of sand from the inner chamber of the Samadhi. In the midst of excruciating pain she would ask me: "Where are my Blessing Packets?" I would reply that I had put them in her shirt pocket over her heart and she would smile. In her final day on earth I placed them in her hospital gown, again over her heart and she said, [about knowing where the packets were]: "You will have to remember."

She knew the Ashram to be her spiritual home and considered the Patels, Lilou,

Maniben, Pushpa and Jayantibhai her closest family but cherished her friendships with many Ashramites and Aurovilians. Among her most treasured memories were the times when Udar took her to Mother's room and especially the many times when he took Chali as a baby (a year old or so) and sat her on Mother's lap. Her calm and gentle demeanour, her sweet and warm disposition, her generosity and good will towards all masked a warrior soul on the path of the integral Yoga.

Photographer, writer, horticulturist and artist, she did many of the line drawings and together with Mary Aldridge and Narad proof-read the entire text for the first major revision of *Flowers and Their Messages*, the compilation of the spiritual significance of flowers given by The Mother. To this day she is fondly remembered for her artistic taste in designing the showroom for the Marbling Group. She is lovingly remembered by plantsmen for her research on tropical plants, gained primarily from her years of work in the first stages of the Matrimandir Gardens. Together with her husband she authored *The Handbook on Plumeria Culture* and *The Handbook on Oleanders*. In tribute she has been honored by having two flowers named for her, Bougainvillea 'Mary Helen' by John Lucas, President of the Bougainvillea Society of America and Phlox 'Mary Helen' by Richard Saul of Saul Nurseries, Atlanta, Georgia. In 2001 she was also extended the honor of being made a lifetime member of the Southern California Plumeria Society.

She devoted her last few years to an immersion in Sri Aurobindo's epic poem, *Savitri*, working with Narad intensively on a dictionary of words and terms in *Savitri*, entitled *Lexicon of an Infinite Mind*, and reading the poem aloud each night before sleep.

She is survived by her husband, Narad, her sister, Sue Bailey, and her daughter, Chali, an Aurovilian who helped found and now directs the *Center for Further Learning*, preparing teenage students for entry level accreditation into colleges and universities in Europe and the U.S., and two grandchildren, Aaron and Dylan.

In 1972 Mother wrote to her: "I am with you, fear not."

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

A LITTLE STORY

DEAR ALL,

This is a little story I would like to share with you all.

“Udaar”—the Sanskrit name for a divine quality—Generosity, [Giving and Self-Giving without bargain]. The Mother gave this name to the flowers of the *Impatiens balsamina*. Sri Aurobindo had given this name to one of his early disciples, Mr. Pinto who recently passed away.

For a few years we have been sending flowers from Promesse for the Ashram Samadhi and the Master’s room, by the power of Her Grace.

From 5th December till the 9th of December 2001, we programmed a regular flower offering for all the days except the 7th. But, on the 7th of December, my *amma* brought me a lot of the Generosity flowers. I was a bit upset, as I had not thought of bringing flowers to Her that day. But then, Varadharajan volunteered to take me to the Samadhi and offer the flowers himself. Hence, collecting a little more Generosity from the garden of Promesse we started for Pondy by 3:00 p.m. Varadharajan went and offered these with a prayer “Lord give Udaar to all.”

As he came out, a well-wisher met us and conveyed to us the news of Udar’s passing away.

We humbly remembered Sri Aurobindo giving him the name and his consecration to the Lord and the Mother’s work; his relation to the Samadhi and his early morning readings of *Savitri* which many Aurovilians would remember; and how in a simple way we were able to offer at the Samadhi some flowers from Auroville, on that day, though we had not planned it—thanks to the Mother’s Force at work in my *amma*.

(Submitted by Syamala and Varadharajan from Promesse, Auroville.)

PHANKI

The Deception

RABINDRANATH is Rabindranath. He needs no introduction, not even to the small school-children who know him not only as a world-famous poet but also as a great man in many respects. But all are not equally conversant with his vast and varied writings. So, in some cases introduction to his works is necessary. For instance, I have liked his suggestive and significant poem *Phanki* for many years. But there may be some who have not heard of it at all, not to speak of the subject-matter of the poem.

However, Rabindranath is generally remembered devotionally on two occasions in a year, on the first of Baishakh, the Bengali New Year Day, and on the twenty-fifth of Baishakh, his birthday (*Janma Jayanti Divas*). The students and teachers of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education usually celebrated the days with recitation, songs, dance, drama, etc., based on Tagore's works. I also am in the habit of observing these two days privately with a few of my friends.

But this year, I mean on the first of Baishakh, 1408 (2001 AD), I was out of Pondicherry, went to my younger brother's place at Bilaspur, M.P. So the problem cropped up as to how to observe the day as I have been doing all these years. But, after a little deliberation, I found the solution. I thought that I should celebrate the occasion alone by going through a few selected pieces from Rabindranath meditatively, sitting in a solitary place.

But, ultimately, the solution proved abortive. Because I had forgotten to carry the book *Sanchayita* with me. I grew sad and gloomy losing the chance to observe the auspicious day. My sister-in-law noticed my plight and, knowing the reason, she consoled me smilingly. "Please don't worry. I have a copy of *Sanchayita*, my marriage-gift received about 45 years ago. But we have to fish it out from the old books." Then she added with joy, "If we can recover the book I shall invite the Rabindra-lovers from amongst the neighbourhood to come to our place by six this evening."

She could find *Sanchayita* without much difficulty. But its condition was deplorable, very old and torn at places. In the evening I sat with the book, ready to receive the invitees. While looking for the page number of the poem *Barshashesh* (the end of the year) from the index, I failed to find it as the pages were torn at places. Still I went on turning the pages at random with the hope of finding it by chance. Meanwhile the guests started arriving and I received them cordially, without giving up my search for the poem. It would have been the most suitable one for the occasion. But instead suddenly I came across the poem *Phanki*, my favourite poem. I thought of beginning the function with the recitation of this one.

I sought the opinion of the invitees: "Gentlemen, may I open the function with the reading of the poem, *Phanki*? Hope you know about it." "Yes, of course," they opined in unison. "We have heard the name of the poem, but have completely forgotten its subject-matter. Please commence, Sir." I was set on reciting the poem. But just as I read the

following lines:

বিলাসপুরের স্পঞ্জিশিনো বদল হবে গাড়ী;
তড়াতাড়ি নামতে হল।
ঘণ্টাকাল থামতে হবে যাত্রীশালায়।

The train has to be changed at Bilaspur Station. So we got down quickly. We will have to wait there in the waiting room for some time.

The listeners became a little inattentive and started to whisper among themselves. “Do you want to tell me anything?” I asked. One of them replied, “Now we remember everything about the poem, Sir. Actually Rabindranath himself had come to Bilaspur station.” The news was startling and it made me mute for a while. “Is it so, how do you know that?” I wanted to know. “Not only I, many of us know about it. To commemorate his coming here to Bilaspur, a symbolic installation exists on Platform No. 1. It is open to all. One can go and see it any time.” “How is the installation?” “A fine photograph of Rabindranath under a magnificent shed. The above words from *Phanki* are inscribed both in Bengali and Hindi under the photo.”

This was a revelation to me and I was all praise and thankful to those who stood behind such an admirable work in honour of Rabindranath. I forthwith decided to go and see the place as soon as possible.

Now after the introduction, to complete the episode I should briefly narrate in prose the subject-matter of the poem.

Vinu was hardly twenty-three when she fell ill. Various kinds of treatments were tried. Still the disease lingered on for a year and a half, without showing any sign of improvement or cure. Then the doctors suggested for her a change of climate. What happened next we shall know from the words of her husband.

The decision of the doctors came as a boon to both of us, particularly to Vinu who had never enjoyed a train-journey before. Moreover, we got a chance to be free from the fetters of rigid customs of the then conservative joint family system. It was impolite for a young couple to mix and converse freely, without the interference of the elders.

The vast blue sky above and the boundless beauty of rural Bengal, its fields, meadows and green vegetation around welcomed us into their exquisite fold. Vinu became overjoyed and, to share her joy with others, she made paper-packets of coins of different denominations. In our travel she threw these packets to the waiting beggars at each station. Thus when the train reached Bilaspur junction I said, “Vinu, this is Bilaspur station. Let us be ready to get down quickly. We have to wait here for about six hours in the waiting room to catch the next connecting train. Oh, what a boredom is it, and waste of time!” She remarked, “Why, this is the best. We shall be able to observe the surrounding scenes of a junction station from close quarters.”

Through the windows of the waiting room Vinu went on observing with keen interest and joy, running horse-carts, huts and houses of the railway employees, with beautiful small gardens in front, goats, grazing cows and calves, playful naked and half-naked

children, quarreling cats and dogs, etc. She was spellbound to see them, as it were.

After a long while I approached Vinu, stretched the bedding on the floor in front of her and requested, "Vinu, enough of sight-seeing. Now take rest and sleep comfortably for some time." I myself dragged a chair onto the platform, purchased an English novel and went through it with deep concentration. Thus about three hours passed without my knowing it.

I grew aware of the surroundings as I found Vinu signalling me from the door of the waiting room. I went and she introduced to me Rukmini, the wife of Jhamru coolie and started telling their life-story,—how the tyranny of the local landlord compelled them to leave their hearth and home and come over here to take up work. "Their story later," I said to Vinu, "first tell me why you wanted me." She hesitated for a while and then divulged the secret. "The marriage of Rukmini's daughter has been settled but cannot take place due to lack of sufficient money to arrange for dowry. You have to give them some money for the purpose." "How much?" "Rupees twenty-five will do, I think." "My god! But the problem is, I have only a hundred-rupee note with me, no change." "What of that? You can get the change from the station." "Probably I can, I shall give them."

I called Rukmini aside to a corner of the platform and rebuked her a lot. "Now I know how you people cheat the simple and kind-hearted passengers. I shall also take steps and see how you can continue in your service." Instantly she fell at my feet and started weeping. In order to get rid of her and the awkward scene, I handed over to her Rupees two only and bade her to leave the place at once.

After two months the light of my life suddenly got extinguished. I came back to Bilaspur station alone. Vinu was not with me. While leaving the land of the living for good, Vinu took dust from my feet and whispered into my ear, "You have filled the last two months of my life with *sudha* (nectar). The memory will ever linger with me like the mark of vermilion on the forehead of Narayani (Laxmi) of Baikuntha—the abode of Vishnu."

O, the all-knowing Lord of my being, tell me how I can communicate to Vinu today that in the history of the last two months of her life there was a big gap, the gap of deception of Rupees twenty-five. If I give even a lac of Rupees to Rukmini now, that gap will not be made good in any way.

At Bilaspur station I asked each and everyone about Rukmini and her husband but none cared to give any definite answer. Then I approached the Station Master and wanted to know about them. He replied, "Well, gentleman, I knew their names but as far as I remember they have left the place about a month before." "Can you please tell me where they have gone?", I asked. He got annoyed. "Who cares to know the particulars, Sir, eh?"

Oh, how can I make others understand today that I am in search of one who is treated as most negligible in the world? Because the same one is the only person who can unburden my heart from the heavy load of deception, the deception of Rupees twenty-five. Otherwise falsehood will be the everlasting companion of my life...

THE STORYTELLER'S IS A POWERFUL VOICE

“WHAT next?” Bhagavan Vyasa asked himself after successfully completing the marathon job of compiling the *Vedas*. He was not a sleepyhead and he knew for certain that he was born to achieve. A plethora of thoughts rushed to him and vied with one another to plead with the blessed sage to give them shape. He was in a quandary about what to choose, for great minds can only think lofty thoughts. Finally the best in the whole lot elbowed its way into his thought process.

Sage Vyasa conceived the *Mahabharata*. Having devised the scheme of an excellent work, he was in search of an able amanuensis who could record on dried palm leaves every syllable that fell from his mouth.

Brahma, the creator, came to the sage's rescue. He recommended Pillaiyar (Lord Ganesha), as nobody else, in his opinion, could be treated on a par with the pot-bellied, elephant headed God of knowledge and success.

On invocation, Ganapathi (another name for Pillaiyar) appeared before the sage who told him his wish.

“Agreed,” said Pillaiyar and raised a warning finger. “I shall do as you wish,” He continued, “on condition that you dictate without a break and do not allow my stylus to pause even for a second.”

The sage nodded his head. The Lord smiled at his nervousness.

Vyasa, to be on the safe side, told the Lord, “But first grasp the meaning of what I dictate before you move your stylus on the leaf.”

Pillaiyar grinned as he nodded. Now it was the sage's turn to smile.

Thus began the composition of the noble poem, the *Mahabharata*, possessing in a supreme degree the qualities of a true epic, heroic characters and stately diction. Words like a torrential downpour rushed from the sage and the Lord's stylus was moving at breakneck speed. But the moment of acute embarrassment came when the fast moving stylus broke into two.

The sage in his meditative ecstasy continued to dictate. And the elephant headed Lord too without a moment's hesitation broke one of his tusks and helped the writer to complete the work.

Thus goes the legend behind the broken tusk of Pillaiyar. But do not stop with the story. Read between the lines.

To an elephant the tusk is a matter of pride. Yet the Lord sacrificed it for a noble cause. Hence this action of Pillaiyar can't but be a symbolic demonstration that no personal sacrifice is too great for the cause of spreading Jnana and Dharma.

Storytelling, which is as old as man himself, apart from the purpose of entertaining children of all ages, played the major role of educating them. In India (the original home of fiction) storytelling is serious business. Storytellers of yore strongly believed that great truths are easily understood when expressed through a simple tale or legend. In short, stories are sugar-coated pills for swallowing without much fuss. And the result is an easy cure.

The frame tale of *Panchatantra* further substantiates this view.

King Amara-Sakti of Mahilaropya in the Deccan had three sons who were equally dull. A dullard prince could never be crowned king thereby making the country an easy prey to an ever-anxious and eager enemy. Very much worried about his sons, he assigned several scholars from various parts of his kingdom to infuse them with knowledge so that they could be shaped into efficient administrators and thereby his able successors.

The teachers tried their best. But how could one ever thread an eyeless needle? So they knelt before his Majesty and invariably accepted their inefficiency to teach the dullard princes.

The king coaxed the teachers to repeat their attempts. But the poor fellows, who had little knowledge about the psychology of teaching, took to their heels for fear of losing their heads.

When all the efforts of the king proved futile, he lost hope. At that hour a pundit named Vishnu Sharma came to his rescue. "Give me a chance. Let me try my luck," he told the king. The latter readily agreed.

The princes who were really fed up with the monotonous theories and principles that refused to enter their heads, soon found to their joy that their new teacher was quite different from the rest. He went on telling them stories about various human problems and their solutions. Through the characters of birds and animals, Vishnu Sharma taught them, rather they learned from him, wisdom and good sense. Thus the great teacher through his sheer tapas was able to perform a miracle—the miracle of transforming the once dullard princes into "incomparable masters of the art of practical life".

Every child brought up in the Indian tradition of value oriented education is quite familiar with the 'Crow stories'. One story that falls under this classification tells of an intelligent crow that quenched its thirst by making a little effort.

On a blistering day of midsummer, a poor crow with a parched tongue was in search of water. To its great surprise it could find not a single drop of water anywhere.

Tired and exhausted it flew to a garden and perched on a bough of a bushy tree. It was lucky enough to find a pot near a well.

Elated it flew down and sat on the edge of the pot. Its heart jumped for joy for there was water in it. But to its great disappointment, it couldn't reach the water with its beak, for the pot was only half full.

The bird didn't lose hope. Pebbles heaped up in one corner of the garden came in handy. It picked up a pebble and threw it into the pot. It repeated the process several times. Slowly the water level came up. And it stopped the process when its beak reached the water.

The crow drank and merrily took wing.

Had it been a foolish crow, it would have gone away like the wolf in the 'Sour Grapes' story! How tantalizing it would have been! The story simply tells us to leave no stone unturned, if a goal has to be achieved. Further the story teaches us: "Skill is knowing how to do something; wisdom is knowing when and why to do it, or refrain from doing it". And this is one aspect of Dharma.

Our traditional stories are often cautionary tales and guides to behaviour. Not a single story was told without a purpose.

Long ago, an egocentric and authoritarian king ruled a certain country. He had a powerful army, a mammoth granary that was always full and a harem of wives. He cared little for his subjects and respected none. Since there was no one to question his might, he was stubborn and headstrong.

A sage, who had heard of the king, wanted to visit him. One day he happened to pass through that country. Halting in a temple, he sent word to the king about his arrival in his land.

The king took no note of the messenger's words. The sage who expected the king to come in person and take him in his chariot with fun and fanfare to the palace was disappointed. There was absolutely no response from the king.

The sage sent another messenger. He was instructed to introduce the sage to the king and speak in fitting terms about the glories of the holy man. Thereby the sage expected the king to send him the royal palanquin to carry him to the palace. Only disappointment awaited him this time too.

Having studied the mind of the king, the sage barged into the palace where the king was holding court. At the sight of the sage, the courtiers stood up and respectfully bowed before him. But the king was indifferent.

He sat with his legs crossed and didn't even nod his head, as courtesy demanded. Above all, he heckled at the appearance of the sage.

The sage stood staring at the king. With wrath filled eyes, he cursed him thus: "You will die within twelve months." Without even looking at the reaction of the king, the sage rushed out of the palace.

Flabbergasted stood the courtiers. The words of the sage reverberated throughout the palace. The king was shaken and panic-stricken.

Many aged and wise courtiers pitied the king. The fate of his Majesty became the talk of the country. It was brought to his notice that his subjects delighted on hearing the curse.

The king began to spend sleepless nights. Dreams of death haunted him. Something in him said: "When a king dies, his subjects should mourn his death and never rejoice in it. The only way to find a place in everyone's heart is to help them in all possible ways."

Months passed. The subjects couldn't believe their eyes and ears. The king became polite and kind and humble. Every one began to take a liking for the king and they all invariably prayed to God to bless him with a long life.

Twelve months were over. The king thought that the curse didn't work, all because of the prayers sent heavenward by his subjects. He continued to be a friendly king.

A month or so later, the sage while returning from his pilgrimage walked into the palace and surprised everyone.

Startled the king stood up and saluted the sage in all humility. He said: "O Sage! Had you sent me a word, I would have driven my chariot to your place of rest and brought you to my palace with beat of drums."

The sage who had already heard about the king's metamorphosis smiled. His smile spoke volumes to the king.

The king treated the sage as a royal guest and wanted him to be in his palace forever. The sage smiled again. When he wanted to take leave of the king, the king asked, "How is it that I am not yet dead even after twelve months of your curse?"

The sage smiled again and before he left the palace said, "Who said you are not dead?"

Of course, the sage was right. The egocentric and authoritarian king he had seen during his last visit to that country was no more. It may not be a physical death. But where is the headstrong king? The sage's curse had worked and the king was dead. In his place, a new one, loved and respected by his subjects. Hats off to the sage for making such an effort. It was by his sheer tapas that he had transformed the king much to the joy of his subjects.

Man's Dharma is what holds up a man, prevents him from falling down to the level of a beast. The sage in the above story dispelled the king's ignorance and his animal desires and successfully liberated him from all bonds. He has done his 'dharma' for the sake of humanity.

Had Pillaiyar not sacrificed one of his tusks, the world would have lost a major portion of the *Mahabharata*, which was told with the noble motive of telling the world how man should or should not live.

P. RAJA