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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

Sri Aurobindo

A MIGHTY TRANSFORMATION CAME ON HER (Poem)	... 557
THE PAST AND THE FUTURE	... 559
SOME LETTERS	... 563

Arjava

AWARENESS (Poem)	... 566
------------------	---------

Sampadananda Mishra

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS (Compilation)	... 567
--	---------

Mary Helen

O NIGHT (Poem)	... 569
----------------	---------

The Mother

THE SIMPLE LIFE	... 570
-----------------	---------

Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna)

PERSONAL LETTERS	... 574
------------------	---------

Indra Sen

OUR SPIRITUAL RELIGION AS AT PRESENT	... 576
--------------------------------------	---------

S. K. Ramachandra Rao

SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE VEDA: AN INTRODUCTION	... 577
---	---------

Richard Hartz

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI	... 584
----------------------------	---------

Dimitri von Mohrenschildt

A MEMOIR OF THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION	... 590
--------------------------------------	---------

R.Y. Deshpande

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?	... 596
---------------------------------	---------

Manmohan Ghose

THE WIND IN THE TREES (Poem)	... 604
------------------------------	---------

K. N. Viju

SHIVA IN THE CITY (Poem)	... 605
--------------------------	---------

<i>M. Hafiz Syed</i>	SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY	... 606
<i>Gayatri Lobo Gajiwala</i>	WHEN WILL THIS STOP? (Poem)	... 613
<i>Kati Widmer</i>	INTIMATE PORTRAITS	... 614
<i>Roger Calverley</i>	DEDICATION (Poem)	... 621
<i>Goutam Ghosal</i>	TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO	... 622
<i>Auroposée Bardhan</i>	WHY WORRY? (Poem)	... 627
<i>Nilima Das</i>	SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	... 628
<i>Anne Gilbert</i>	THE NEW CONSCIOUSNESS AND AUROVILLE	... 630
<i>Bhushan Dhingra</i>	A FEW DREAMS	... 633
<i>Allan Stocker</i>	TWO POEMS (Poem)	... 634
<i>Arvind Habbu</i>	DINING WITH SRI AUROBINDO	... 635
	SRI AUROBINDO (Poem)	... 636
<i>Krishna Chakravarti</i>	USHA-BEN	... 637
<i>Dhanavanti</i>	USHA CREATES (Poem)	... 639
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>V. Venkatraj Sharma</i>	Review of BHAVA SUMAM by ASHA AGRAWAL	... 640
<i>Dinkar D. Palande</i>	Review of A GREATER PSYCHOLOGY, AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SRI AUROBINDO edited by A. S. DALAL	... 640

A MIGHTY TRANSFORMATION CAME ON HER

THEN Death the last time answered Savitri:
“If Truth supreme transcends her shadow here...
What bridge can cross the gulf that she has left
Between her and the dream-world she has made?
Or who could hope to bring her down to men
And persuade to tread the harsh globe with wounded feet,
Leaving her unapproachable glory and bliss,
Wasting her splendour on pale earthly air?
Is thine that strength, O beauty of mortal limbs,
O soul who flutterest to escape my net?
Who then art thou hiding in human guise?
Thy voice carries the sound of infinity,
Knowledge is with thee, Truth speaks through thy words;
The light of things beyond shines in thy eyes.
But where is thy strength to conquer Time and Death?
Hast thou God’s force to build heaven’s values here?...
O human claimant to immortality,
Reveal thy power, lay bare thy spirit’s force,
Then will I give back to thee Satyavan.
Or if the Mighty Mother is with thee,
Show me her face that I may worship her;
Let deathless eyes look into the eyes of Death,
An imperishable Force touching brute things
Transform earth’s death into immortal life.
Then can thy dead return to thee and live,
The prostrate earth perhaps shall lift her gaze
And feel near her the secret body of God
And love and joy overtake fleeing Time.”

And Savitri looked on Death and answered not....
A mighty transformation came on her.
A halo of the indwelling Deity,
The Immortal’s lustre that had lit her face
And tented its radiance in her body’s house,
Overflowing made the air a luminous sea.
In a flaming moment of apocalypse
The Incarnation thrust aside its veil.
A little figure in infinity
Yet stood and seemed the Eternal’s very house,
As if the world’s centre was her very soul

And all wide space was but its outer robe.
 A curve of the calm hauteur of far heaven
 Descending into earth's humility,
 Her forehead's span vaulted the Omniscient's gaze,
 Her eyes were two stars that watched the universe.
 The Power that from her being's summit reigned,
 The Presence chambered in lotus secrecy,
 Came down and held the centre in her brow
 Where the mind's Lord in his control-room sits;
 There throned on concentration's native seat
 He opens that third mysterious eye in man,
 The Unseen's eye that looks at the unseen,
 When Light with a golden ecstasy fills his brain
 And the Eternal's wisdom drives his choice
 And eternal Will seizes the mortal's will.
 It stirred in the lotus of her throat of song,
 And in her speech throbbed the immortal Word,
 Her life sounded with the steps of the world-soul
 Moving in harmony with the cosmic Thought.
 As glides God's sun into the mystic cave
 Where hides his light from the pursuing gods,
 It glided into the lotus of her heart
 And woke in it the Force that alters Fate.
 It poured into a navel's lotus depth,
 Lodged in the little life-nature's narrow home,
 On the body's longings grew heaven-rapture's flower
 And made desire a pure celestial flame,
 Broke into the cave where coiled World-Energy sleeps
 And smote the thousand-hooded serpent Force
 That blazing towered and clasped the World-Self above,
 Joined Matter's dumbness to the Spirit's hush
 And filled earth's acts with the Spirit's silent power.
 Thus changed she waited for the Word to speak.
 Eternity looked into the eyes of Death,
 And Darkness saw God's living Reality.
 Then a Voice was heard that seemed the stillness' self
 Or the low calm utterance of infinity
 When it speaks to the silence in the heart of sleep.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 663-66)

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

OUR contemporary, the *Statesman*, notices in an unusually self-restrained article the recent brochure republished by Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy from the *Modern Review* under the title, "The Message of the East". We have not the work before us but, from our memory of the articles and our knowledge of our distinguished countryman's views, we do not think the *Statesman* has quite caught the spirit of the writer. Dr. Coomaraswamy is above all a lover of art and beauty and the ancient thought and greatness of India, but he is also, and as a result of this deep love and appreciation, an ardent Nationalist. Writing as an artist, he calls attention to the debased aesthetic ideas and tastes which the ugly and sordid commercialism of the West has introduced into the mind of a nation once distinguished for its superior beauty and grandeur of conception and for the extent to which it suffused the whole of life with the forces of the intellect and the spirit. He laments the persistence of a servile imitation of English ideas, English methods, English machinery and production even in the new Nationalism. And he reminds his readers that nations cannot be made by politics and economics alone, but that art also has a great and still unrecognised claim. The main drift of his writing is to censure the low imitative un-Indian and bourgeois ideals of our national activity in the nineteenth century and to recall our minds to the cardinal fact that, if India is to arise and be great as a nation, it is not by imitating the methods and institutions of English politics and commerce, but by carrying her own civilisation, purified of the weaknesses that have overtaken it, to a much higher and mightier fulfilment than any that it has reached in the past. Our mission is to out-distance, lead and instruct Europe, not merely to imitate and learn from her. Dr. Coomaraswamy speaks of art, but it is certain that a man of his wide culture would not exclude, and we know he does not exclude, thought, literature and religion from the forces that must uplift our nation and are necessary to its future. To recover Indian thought, Indian character, Indian perceptions, Indian energy, Indian greatness, and to solve the problems that perplex the world in an Indian spirit and from the Indian standpoint, this, in our view, is the mission of Nationalism. We agree with Dr. Coomaraswamy that an exclusive preoccupation with politics and economics is likely to dwarf our growth and prevent the flowering of originality and energy. We have to return to the fountainheads of our ancient religion, philosophy, art and literature and pour the revivifying influences of our immemorial Aryan spirit and ideals into our political and economic development. This is the ideal the *Karmayogin* holds before it, and our outlook and Dr. Coomaraswamy's do not substantially differ. But in judging our present activities we cannot look, as he does, from a purely artistic and idealistic standpoint, but must act and write in the spirit of a practical idealism.

The debasement of our mind, character and tastes by a grossly commercial, materialistic and insufficient European education is a fact on which the young Nationalism has always insisted. The practical destruction of our artistic perceptions and the plastic skill and fineness of eye and hand which once gave our productions pre-eminence, distinction and mastery of the European markets, is also a thing accomplished. Most vital of all, the

spiritual and intellectual divorce from the past which the present schools and universities have effected, has beggared the nation of the originality, high aspiration and forceful energy which can alone make a nation free and great. To reverse the process and recover what we have lost, is undoubtedly the first object to which we ought to devote ourselves. And as the loss of originality, aspiration and energy was the most vital of all these losses, so their recovery should be our first and most important objective. The primary aim of the prophets of Nationalism was to rid the nation of the idea that the future was limited by the circumstances of the present, that because temporary causes had brought us low and made us weak, low therefore must be our aims and weak our methods. They pointed the mind of the people to a great and splendid destiny, not in some distant millennium but in the comparatively near future, and fired the hearts of the young men with a burning desire to realise the apocalyptic vision. As a justification of what might otherwise have seemed a dream and as an inexhaustible source of energy and inspiration, they pointed persistently to the great achievements and grandiose civilisation of our forefathers and called on the rising generation to recover their lost spiritual and intellectual heritage. It cannot be denied that this double effort to realise the past and the future has been the distinguishing temperament and the chief uplifting force in the movement, and it cannot be denied that it is bringing back to our young men originality, aspiration and energy. By this force the character, temper and action of the Bengali has been altered beyond recognition in a few years. To raise the mind, character and tastes of the people, to recover the ancient nobility of temper, the strong Aryan character and the high Aryan outlook, the perceptions which made earthly life beautiful and wonderful, and the magnificent spiritual experiences, realisations and aspirations which made us the deepest-hearted, deepest-thoughted and most delicately profound in life of all the peoples of the earth, is the task next in importance and urgency. We had hoped by means of National Education to effect this great object as well as to restore to our youth the intellectual heritage of the nation and build up on that basis a yet greater culture in the future. We must admit that the instrument which we cherished and for which such sacrifices were made, has proved insufficient and threatens, in unfit hands, to lose its promise of fulfilment and be diverted to lower ends. But the movement is greater than its instruments. We must strive to prevent the destruction of that which we have created and, in the meanwhile, build up a centre of culture, freer and more perfect, which will either permeate the other with itself or replace it if destroyed. Finally, the artistic awakening has been commenced by that young, living and energetic school which has gathered round the Master and originator, S. J. Abanindranath Tagore. The impulse which this school is giving, its inspired artistic recovery of the past, its intuitive anticipations of the future, have to be popularised and made a national possession.

Dr. Coomaraswamy complains of the survivals of the past in the preparations for the future. But no movement, however vigorous, can throw off in a few years the effects of a whole century. We must remember also why the degradation and denationalisation, "the mighty evil in our souls" of which the writer complains, came into being. A painful but necessary work had to be done, and because the English nation were the fittest instru-

ment for his purpose, God led them all over those thousands of miles of alien Ocean, gave strength to their hearts and subtlety to their brains, and set them up in India to do His work, which they have been doing faithfully, if blindly, ever since and are doing at the present moment. The spirit and ideals of India had come to be confined in a mould which, however beautiful, was too narrow and slender to bear the mighty burden of our future. When that happens, the mould has to be broken and even the ideal lost for a while, in order to be recovered free of constraint and limitation. We have to recover the Aryan spirit and ideal and keep it intact but enshrined in new forms and more expansive institutions. We have to treasure jealously everything in our social structure, manners, institutions, which is of permanent value, essential to our spirit or helpful to the future; but we must not cabin the expanding and aggressive spirit of India in temporary forms which are the creation of the last few hundred years. That would be a vain and disastrous endeavour. The mould is broken; we must remould in larger outlines and with a richer content. For the work of destruction England was best fitted by her stubborn individuality and by that very commercialism and materialism which made her the anti-type in temper and culture of the race she governed. She was chosen too for the unrivalled efficiency and skill with which she has organised an individualistic and materialistic democracy. We had to come to close quarters with that democratic organisation, draw it into ourselves and absorb the democratic spirit and methods so that we might rise beyond them. Our half-aristocratic, half-theocratic feudalism had to be broken, in order that the democratic spirit of the Vedanta might be released and, by absorbing all that is needed of the aristocratic and theocratic culture, create for the Indian race a new and powerful political and social organisation. We have to learn and use the democratic principle and methods of Europe, in order that hereafter we may build up something more suited to our past and to the future of humanity. We have to throw away the individualism and materialism and keep the democracy. We have to solve for the human race the problem of harmonising and spiritualising its impulses towards liberty, equality and fraternity. In order that we may fulfil our mission we must be masters in our own home. It is out of no hostility to the English people, no race hatred that we seek absolute autonomy, but because it is the first condition of our developing our national self and realising our destiny. It is for this reason that the engrossing political preoccupation came upon us; and we cannot give up or tone down our political movement until the lesson of democratic self-government is learned and the first condition of national self-fulfilment realised. For another reason also England was chosen, because she had organised the competitive system of commerce, with its bitter and murderous struggle for existence, in the most skilful, discrete and successful fashion. We had to feel the full weight of that system and learn the literal meaning of this industrial realisation of Darwinism. It has been written large for us in ghastly letters of famine, chronic starvation and misery and a decreasing population. We have risen at last, entered into the battle and with the boycott for a weapon, are striking at the throat of British commerce, even as it struck at ours, first by protection and then by free trade. Again it is not out of hatred that we strike, but out of self-preservation. We must conquer in that battle if we are to live. We cannot arrest our development of industry and commerce

while waiting for a new commercial system to develop or for beauty and art to reconquer the world. As in politics so in commerce, we must learn and master the European methods in order that we may eventually rise above them. The crude commercial Swadeshi, which Dr. Coomaraswamy finds so distasteful and disappointing, is as integral a part of the national awakening as the movement towards Swaraj or as the new School of Art. If this crude Swadeshi were to collapse and the national movement towards autonomy come to nothing, the artistic renaissance he has praised so highly, would wither and sink with the drying up of the soil in which it was planted. A nation need not be luxuriously wealthy in order to be profoundly artistic, but it must have a certain amount of well-being, a national culture and, above all, hope and ardour, if it is to maintain a national art based on a widespread development of artistic perception and faculty. Moreover, aesthetic arts and crafts cannot live against the onrush of cheap and vulgar manufactures under the conditions of the modern social structure. Industry can only become again beautiful if poverty and the struggle for life are eliminated from society and the co-operative State and commune organised as the fruit of a great moral and spiritual uplifting of humanity. We hold such an uplifting and reorganisation as part of India's mission. But to do her work she must live. Therefore the commercial preoccupation has been added to the political. We perceive the salvation of the country not in parting with either of these, but in adding to them a religious and moral preoccupation. On the basis of that religious and moral awakening the preoccupation of art and fine culture will be added and firmly based. There are many who perceive the necessity of the religious and moral regeneration, who are inclined to turn from the prosaic details of politics and commerce and regret that any guide and teacher of the nation should stoop to mingle in them. That is a grievous error. The men who would lead India must be catholic and many-sided. When the Avatar comes, we like to believe that he will be not only the religious guide, but the political leader, the great educationist, the regenerator of society, the captain of co-operative industry, with the soul of the poet, scholar and artist. He will be in short the summary and grand type of the future Indian nation which is rising to reshape and lead the world.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Karmayogin, SABCL, Vol. 2, pp. 209-14)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of June 2002)

While working in the morning I was rather harsh to a workman who was very lazily working. I felt I must buck him up to activity and spoke in loud tones. But inwardly there was no anger or very little. Is it necessary to do as I felt?

It is not necessary and it is not right. To be quiet and firm with the workmen is the right thing. The other way lowers your dignity and diminishes instead of increasing the true hold on those who work under you.

I had taken very strong tea for four or five years, frequently every day. Is it possible some of its constituents may be in the system even now?

Yes, it takes long time to eliminate.

I have a curious idea nowadays. How can one have faith in the impersonal Divine when one does not know how to recognise either the Divine or what is impersonal? Anything subtler may offer itself as impersonal, anything without form may be impersonal; and any power, even a hostile one, or any small purity or knowledge or bliss, may be mistaken as a presence of the Divine.

Impersonality in itself is not the Divine. All these mistakes can be and are made by many who claim to be in an impersonalised consciousness. A force may be impersonal but may be also a wrong force. Many think they are impersonal and free from ego because they are obeying a force or something bigger than their own personality—but that force or that something may be quite other than the Divine and it may hold them by something in their personality and ego.

16 February 1933

Till yesterday the coloured dresses of women slightly attracted me, but today all that has disappeared. Also I have no desire to know anything from newspapers and no interest in gossip about people. But I am afraid there may be a slight pride in this.

It should be like that but perfectly simple—no pride.

To break any magnified egoism or vital revolts in me, I want the Mother to give me written instructions about my letters, if possible.

The Mother has no time to do it except occasionally—that is why I do it for her as a rule.

The Mother may give me various orders irrespective of my likes and dislikes, so that my vital may become perfectly obedient. Today I was thinking to write about the most external things—the clothes, hair, beard, etc. This means the most external revolts. So I want orders regarding keeping my hair and beard and putting on the types of clothes, etc.

The Mother has answered that on the blank paper.

16 February 1933

The Mother: It is more important to establish an inner peace and to get rid of restlessness and violence than to fix rigid rules about hair and beard and clothes.

17 February 1933

A suggestion comes sometimes: “They are only laughing at you, you are making no progress, and he replies to your letters because he wants to make fun of you.” This is apparently “doubt-throwing”. How to react forcibly to it?

The suggestion is itself so absurd that you ought to have no difficulty in reacting against it.

The food-desire and greed and even taste have so diminished that I wonder how it is possible. Is it suppression? What is the next step in this?

It is not suppression. In that respect, it is sufficient to be free from the food desire and the bondage of the palate.

And sex thoughts, feelings and imaginations have also gone. I think it is not suppression.

Certainly not. It is a first conquest, but as you found, they may recur and the conquest has then to be repeated till all possibility of these things even disappears.

Last night I got very little sleep—one or two hours—but there is no need for more; the body is cool and active and ready for any work.

You must sleep more. Five or 6 hours is the minimum.

17 February 1933

I got a slight resistance while reading Mother's instructions. I know that my excitement, exaltation and restlessness and violence have to be given up. How to replace them by the inner peace which only you can impart? I tried in my own way but it resulted in a lethargic condition.

It is only the beginning or outskirts of peace in which there is this feeling. The true peace is full of force.

17 February 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

AWARENESS

O I WOULD voyage among the nearer stars
With those winged horses and their spirit cars
That leave a luminous dust of glittering thought
Amid the fabulous deserts of the Nought.
Emptily vast is all that starlit room;
But when the winged commotion enters there,
New light's undesolation threads the gloom
Like comet's sunward tread with burnished hair.

May 4, 1935

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: Very fine lines, especially the third and fourth are magnificent.

SRI AUROBINDO'S RENDERINGS OF SOME OF THE VEDIC RIKS

(Continued from the issue of June 2002)

The First Rik of the Rigveda

[The first *Rik* of the *Rig Veda* is a prayer to Agni. It was received by Rishi Maddhucchandas Vishwamitra. The *Rik* is in *Gāyatrī* metre. Sri Aurobindo rendered and commented on this particular *Rik* several times in different contexts. The main aim of his renderings is to 'reconstruct the old Sanskrit or Aryan tongue', and explain 'the Yogic phenomena and philosophy with which it is concerned'. His commentaries on this particular *Rik* are as significant as the *Rik* itself and they provide clues to go deep into the study of Sanskrit purely from a linguistic standpoint. In the following the English renderings of the first *Rik* of the *Rig Veda* done by Sri Aurobindo have been compiled.]

ॐ अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवं ऋत्विजम् ।
होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥

*Agnim īle purohitam yajñasya devam ṛtvijam
Hotāram ratnadhātamaṃ*

(Rigveda, 1.1.1)

Agni the brilliant I adore who standeth before the Lord, the god that hath the rapture of the truth, the fighter that fulfilleth utter bliss. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1977, p. 35)

Agni I desire who standeth before the Lord, the god who knoweth all the law, the Warrior who disposeth utterly delight. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, April 1978, p. 51)

Agni I desire, who stands before the Lord, the god who seeth truth,—the warrior, who disposeth utterly delight. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1978, p. 154)

Agni I adore, the representative priest of the sacrificial act, the god who is the Adept of the sacrifice, the offerer of the action who disposeth utterly delight. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, April 1979, p. 35)

Agni I adore, the priest who stands forward for the sacrifice, the god who acts in the truth of things, the giver of the oblation who disposes utterly delight. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, April 1979, pp. 35-36)

Agni I adore, who stands before Yajna, the god that seeth right, the offerer of the oblation, chief disposer of delight. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, April 1979, p. 37)

Agni I adore, the representative priest of the Sacrifice, the god who sacrifices aright, the priest of the offering who disposes utterly delight. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1979, p. 150)

The God-will I seek with adoration, divine priest of the sacrifice who is set in front and sacrifices in the seasons of the Law, (or divine priest of the sacrifice, the priest set in front, sacrifice in the seasons of the Law) giver of oblation who most ordains the ecstasy. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1979, pp. 150-51)

The Strength I seek which is set in front as one divine representative in the sacrifice and offers in the order of the Truth, the priest of our oblation who disposes utterly delight. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1979, p. 151)

I adore the Flame, divine vicar of sacrifice, Ritwik and offering priest who most founds the Delight. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, April 1980, p. 39)

I adore the Flame, the Vicar, the divine Ritwik of the sacrifice, the summoner who most founds the ecstasy. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, April 1980, p. 40)

Fire I pray, the priest set in front of the sacrifice, the god Ritwik, the flamen of the call, who gives most the ecstasies. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1980, p. 153)

I adore Agni the god, the Purohit of the sacrifice, the Ritwik, the Hota, most delight-placing. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1980, p. 153)

I seek with adoration the God-Will, divine priest of the sacrifice placed in front, sacrificer in the seasons, offerer of the oblation, who most ordains the ecstasy. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1980, p. 154)

The Flame I pray, the divine vicar of the sacrifice, the ordinant of the ritual, the Summoner who founds the ecstasy. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, April 1981, p. 9)

The Fire I pray, the divine vicar of the sacrifice and ordinant of the rite, the Summoner who most founds the ecstasy. (*Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, December 1981, p. 178)

I adore the Flame, the vicar, the divine Ritwik of the Sacrifice, the summoner who most founds the ecstasy. (*SABCL*, Vol. 11, p. 39)

Agni I adore, who stands before the Lord, the god who seeth Truth, the warrior, strong disposer of delight. (*SABCL*, Vol. 11, p. 439)

I praise Agni, the Purohita of the Sacrifice, the god, the Ritwik, the Hota who holds very much wealth. (*SABCL*, Vol.11, p. 460) (*Ritualistic Interpretation*)

I seek the God-Will, the Priest set in front of our sacrifice, the divine offerer who sacrifices in the order of the truth, who disposes utterly the delight. (*SABCL*, Vol. 11, p. 460) (*Psychological Interpretation*)

(*Concluded*)

(Compiled by Sampadananda Mishra)



O NIGHT

O NIGHT, reveal the secret of thyself,
Wherein thy dark, unending, fathomless deeps
Can dwell such light as lent these diamond stars.

O sea, thee too must keep the secret hid,
For I have seen upon thy jet blown mane,
Thy laughing, sparkling dances answer the moon.

O forest, fragrant earth-creation's bed,
Thee too, far pregnant luxury of green
And leafy shadows cannot hide thy bloom.

O Nature, surely I too am thy child,
For deepest darkness dwells within this breast,
Here too, I beg, reveal thy mystic Light!

MARY HELEN

THE SIMPLE LIFE

THE Prophet Mohammed, who devoted his life to teaching the Arab people, cared not for ease or riches.

One night he slept on a hard mat, and when he awoke his skin bore the marks of the knots and fibres of his bed.

A friend said to him, "O Messenger of Allah! This bed was too hard for you, and if you had asked me I would joyfully have prepared a softer one, so that your rest might have been better."

The Prophet replied, "A soft bed is not for me. I have a work to do in the world. When my body needs rest, I give it rest, but only as a horseman who ties his horse for a little while under the shade of a tree, to spare him from the heat of the sun, and soon sets off once more."

"I have a work to do in the world," said the Prophet. That is why his noble life was a simple one. Believing in his mission, he wanted to instruct the whole of Arabia. He did not care for luxuries: his heart was set on loftier thoughts.

*

The following story from Arabia shows that to a healthy soul the simple offers more happiness than any other.

Maisun was a daughter of the tribe of Kalb; she had spent her early years in tents in the desert.

One day, she was married to Caliph Muawiyah, but although he was rich and had many slaves, she was not happy with him; and in spite of all the luxury around her, she could find no peace of mind. Often when she was alone, she would sing softly to herself verses she had composed in Arabic:

Brown garments of camel's hair are fairer in my eyes than the robes of a queen.

The desert tent is lovelier to dwell in than the grand chambers of a palace.

The young colts that run about the Arab camp are lovelier than the mules weighed down by their rich trappings.

The voice of the watch-dog who barks at an approaching stranger sounds sweeter than the ivory horn of the palace-guard.

Her song was heard by the Caliph and he banished her from his court. So the poetess returned to her tribe, happy to see no more of the rich dwelling that made her sad.

*

In all countries, many people are beginning to understand that a simple life is more desirable than a life of extravagance, vanity and show.

There are more and more men and women who though they can afford to buy costly things for themselves, feel that their money can be put to a better use. They take a healthy

diet instead of rich foods, and prefer to decorate their homes with furniture that is simple, strong and in good taste, rather than with cumbersome, ornate and useless articles meant only for display.

In every age, the best and most energetic servitors of earth's progress have known how to lead a quiet and frugal life, which keeps the body in good health and enables man to take a more active part in working for the common good. Their example will always put to shame all those who pile up useless treasures and become slaves to their vast quantities of servants, clothes and furniture.

You cannot make a heap without making a hole; and too often the luxury of some represents the poverty of many others. There are too many beautiful, great and useful things to be done in the world for those who are not wholly devoid of intelligence to be allowed to waste their time, money and thought in futile pastimes.

*

Saint Francis was an apostle of the Good Life. He did not teach in order to earn money. His life was simple and his greatest joy was to instruct the people by his example and his preaching. And he was content with whatever food he was given.

One day, as he and his companion, Brother Masseo, were passing through a town, Masseo went down one street while Francis took another. Masseo was tall and handsome, whereas the saint was short and plain-looking. People gave generously to Masseo, but Francis collected only very little.

When they met outside the gates of the town, they sat by a large stone on the bank of a clear stream that ran nearby, and put together the alms they had received.

"O Brother Masseo," cried Saint Francis with a joyful face, "we are not worthy of so great a feast."

"Indeed," replied Masseo, "but what is there to call a feast in these few pieces of bread? We have no knife, no dishes, no cloth, no servant."

"Is it not a feast," replied the saint, "to have good bread on a good table when one is hungry, and fresh water from a limpid spring to drink when one is thirsty?"

This does not mean to say that poor people should always be resigned to their miserable fare. But in any case it shows how the contentment that comes from a noble life and the cheerfulness native to beautiful souls can make up for the absence of material possessions and outer riches.

*

One thing is certain, that a simple life has never harmed anyone, while the same cannot be said for luxury and over-abundance. Most often, the things which are of no use to men are also those which cause them harm.

In the reign of the famous Akbar, there lived at Agra a Jain saint named Banarasi Das. The Emperor summoned the saint to his palace and told him:

"Ask of me what you will, and because of your holy life, your wish shall be satisfied."

“Parabrahman has given me more than I could wish for,” replied the saint.

“But ask all the same,” Akbar insisted.

“Then, Sire, I would ask that you do not call me again to your palace, for I want to devote my time to the divine work.”

“Let it be so,” said Akbar. “But I in my turn have a favour to ask you.”

“Speak, Sire.”

“Give me some good counsel that I may bear in mind and act upon.”

Banarasi Das thought for a moment and said:

“See that your food is pure and clean, and take good care, especially at night, over your meat and drink.”

“I will not forget your advice,” said the Emperor.

In truth the advice was good, for healthy food and drink make a healthy body, fit to be the temple of a pure mind and life.

But it so happened that the very day on which the saint visited the Emperor was a fast-day. And therefore Akbar would only have his meal several hours after midnight. The palace cooks had prepared the dishes in the evening and had placed them in plates of gold and silver, until the time of fasting should be over.

It was still dark when Akbar had them brought before him. Despite his haste to take some nourishment, he suddenly remembered the words of Banarasi Das: “Take care over your meat and drink.” So he examined the plate before him carefully and found that the food was covered with brown ants. In spite of all precautions, these ants had crept in and spoiled the Emperor’s meal.

Akbar had to send away the dishes, and this incident strongly impressed on his mind the useful advice he had received.

For you will understand that Banarasi Das had not intended to warn Akbar merely against brown ants, but against anything in his diet that might not be good for the health of his body or mind.

Many diseases come from an unheathy diet.

One who knowingly sells unwholesome products is in fact making an attack on the lives of his fellow-citizens. And unwholesome products are not only those that are adulterated or spoilt but all those that may be in any way harmful to eat.

*

The story does not tell us that Akbar found brown ants in his cup as well, and yet Banarasi Das advised him to be careful about his drink. For there are indeed cups which look bright to the eye and which seem to contain a pleasant and cheering drink but which are nevertheless full of danger for men. Foremost among them are those which contain alcohol.

The Prophet Mohammed taught that there was sin in wine and gambling; and therefore all who respect the words of the Koran abstain from wine and gambling to their profit.

But on the other hand there are many good people all over the world who find it

right to take spirits. We respect their opinions. But these same people cannot assert that it is wrong not to take alcohol.

If, then, there are people who think that it is wrong to take fermented drinks, and others, on the contrary, who think that it is good, yet there is no one to maintain that it is wrong not to take any. It is also debatable whether or not it is useful to drink, but no one would dream of claiming that it is harmful not to do so. And everyone would agree that in any case it is cheaper.

In every country there are societies for temperance or even total abstinence, whose members undertake not to touch spirits. And in certain towns it is even forbidden to sell them.

But in other places, the use of alcohol, formerly unknown, is spreading. In India, for example, where abstinence had reigned for so many centuries, alcohol has been introduced, more terrible than any demon in the ancient legends. For the terrible Rakshasas of which they speak could be harmful only to the body, whereas alcohol has even the power to kill thought and destroy character. So first of all it hurts the body. It hurts the children of parents who drink to excess. It hurts the intelligence of man and enslaves those who should be the servitors of humanity.

For every one of us should be a servant of humanity; and if by our food or our drink we weaken our minds or bodies, we are then only bad servants unable to perform their task.

What happens to the soldier when his weapon is broken, to the sailor when his ship has lost its masts, to the horseman when his horse is lamed? And what can a man do if he loses possession of his most precious faculties?

He no longer even has the worth of a good animal, for the animal at least avoids eating and drinking things that may harm it.

The Roman poet Virgil liked to live in the countryside. He admired the powerful bullock that draws the plough and cuts the furrow where the next harvest will spring up. Strong is his body, powerful his muscles and hard is his labour year in and year out.

And Virgil adds: "Wine and too much feasting are unknown to him. He feeds on grass, quenches his thirst from running rivers and crystal streams; and no care disturbs his peaceful slumber."

Be temperate to be strong.

You would be offended if someone were to tell you, "Be weak."

Moderation increases the strength of the strong and preserves the strength of the weak.

Remember the advice of Banarasi Das:

Take good care over the dish.

Take good care over the glass.

THE MOTHER

PERSONAL LETTERS

I was very happy to hear from you—and so soon besides. I felt as if I were accompanying you. I could breathe the English air, feel the April rain and travel through the counties. Except for Eliot, April has quickened the hearts of all English poets beginning with Chaucer's "that April with his showers sweet" when all souls are stirred to make pilgrimages and continuing with Browning's cry to be in England with the advent of April and coming up to our own time with William Watson's image of uncertain opposite moods of weather: "April, April, / With thy girlish laughter / And thy girlish tears!" Perhaps for you the last part of Watson's phrase will serve as a reminder of either Tennyson's

Tears from the depth of some divine despair

or else Amal Kiran's

The longing of ecstatic tears
From infinite to infinite.

Eliot's "April is the cruellest month" can have a point for you only in the sense that in that month you made an exit from Auroville and Pondicherry. But "exit" in what direction? The direction of England and this makes all the difference. England is not only wonderful because of "the tongue that Shakespeare spake" but also heavenly because English has been made by Sri Aurobindo

A fire whose tongue has tasted paradise.

With you, a permanent part of me, there, Sri Aurobindo's impression that I may have been a metaphysical poet in the Restoration Age starts beating and burning within me. The curious complex controversial figure of John Wilmot, Earle of Rochester, rises up before me with his erotic poignancy, his passion for paradox and his death-bed fumbling—or should I say stumbling?—towards the Unknown before which all our wit and wisdom fade into insignificance and only a sense of our nothingness is the saving grace. He has a semi-philosophical poem entitled *Upon Nothing* and I am at once thrown back on the classic stanza of my own *Two Ways of Pranam to the Divine Mother*:

Make me your nothing, I would be
Drowned in your vastnesses —
A cry to be ruled by your flawless touch,
Your will alone my peace.

The last line I have used as the master-mantra today—April 24—the day of the Mother's final coming to Pondicherry.

(24.4.1982)

*

I wish you a delightful birthday. I say “delightful” rather than “joyous” or “happy” or even “rapturous”, because this adjective contains the word “light” at the very centre of it, so that what I wish you is not only joy, happiness or rapture but also a radiance, a kindling of the soul with the Great Unknown Presence and, through that kindling, the awareness of a perennial bliss which does not depend on any object or circumstance for its golden smile.

(10.6.1982)

*

I am at my usual activities, typing away, reading, going to the Samadhi, answering questions there by various people. The other day a visitor came towards me, looked into Dyuman's room and asked: “Where is the Samadhi?” Some days earlier another visitor did the same but put me a different question: “Can I buy T-shirts here?” Still earlier, Saralaben Shah looked intently at me and said: “Are you any relative of Amal Kiran?” I answered: “Not at all.” She was surprised—until I told her: “I am myself Amal Kiran.” This appeared to surprise her even more. Two more anecdotes and I am done. A fellow complained: “In this heat how am I to meditate?” I said: “The solution is very simple. Just take your shirt off.” He was quite impressed and came the next day without his shirt. The best questioner put the following problem: “What to do when I feel again and again to go to the Samadhi? So many times I go there—but it is always to look at the pretty girls who come and kneel and go.” I said: “Keep going to the Samadhi, but offer all the kneeling pretty girls to the Samadhi itself instead of pulling them towards your own eyes.” He will be trying this new branch of the Integral Yoga.

(1985)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

OUR SPIRITUAL RELIGION AS AT PRESENT

SRI AUROBINDO has mentioned Spiritual Religion as the Religion of the Future, beyond the present-day different religions. The Religion of the future will represent the essential spiritual elements of all religions and will synthesise them all. The spiritual elements are common to all. That is obvious and yet the animosities and the differences are obvious too. Their union is also obvious. A spiritual religion of the future can be foreseen. Similarly, a synthesis of different philosophies can be imagined. A unity of life is inherently present in our present life. We have to go through differences. That is our fate. Unity is our destiny. That Sri Aurobindo has demonstrated in *The Life Divine*.

The Religion of the Future has to be defined at different times in different ways according to circumstances. What could be its form at the present time?

Sincerity comes first. It should be consciously cultivated and ever increased. It needs to be watched and tested repeatedly. It must not be taken for granted. Then honesty is a thing to be cultivated. It should be observed in all dealings. Then, our dedication in our pursuits should be whole-hearted. Whole-heartedness is a thing to be cultivated carefully. It does not come easily.

Above these particular qualities, we need to have a faith, living and active, in the higher values of life and existence. These higher values are Truth, Goodness and Beauty as absolutes of reality. Truth, Goodness and Beauty are the three highest qualities and recognised as the highest values of life. But they are considered as relative to cultural ends, for example, good for this purpose or that. Absolute good is not considered. Here Absolute Good is intended. This is difficult to contemplate but this is what is intended. Similarly, Absolute Truth is intended and so is Absolute Beauty. Ultimate standards can be only absolute qualities. Relatives are only relative.

Absolute Truth, Goodness and Beauty are embodied in the Divine. Our faith in the Divine should be absolute and our reference to Him for guidance in all our doings should be constant. With the Divine's approval, we should feel sure of our doings. That is the whole secret of spiritual life.

As to the forms of worship, they can be varied to suit different attitudes and temperaments. Different psychological make-ups require different approaches and there should be room for that. Even different beliefs may be possible to suit different psychological conditions. But the essential spiritual truths will stand.

14 August 1993

INDRA SEN

SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE VEDA: AN INTRODUCTION

[DR. R. L. KASHYAP has recently brought out in 3 volumes, in English, the first *aṣṭaka* consisting of 121 hymns of the Rig Veda Samhita. These have been published by the Sri Aurobindo Kapali Sastri Institute of Vedic Studies, Bangalore. In the author's preface we have the following justification for the work: "Admirers of the Rig Veda Samhita have felt a strong need for a translation which reveals the wisdom or knowledge in it. Some others have expressed a need for an edition which has the text in both the Devanagari and Roman scripts so that they can follow the text while hearing a chant of the hymns. Some persons who are familiar with the well-known translations such as those of Griffith or Wilson want more clarifications before accepting a spiritual and psychological meaning for every verse. This book is designed to satisfy the needs and questionings of a variety of readers. The translation is more literal than poetic."

In 1947 T. V. Kapali Sastry wrote his outstanding commentary in Sanskrit on the Rig Veda, entitled *Siddhāñjana*. It was blessed by Sri Aurobindo. Sastry has closely followed the esoteric clues provided by the Master-Yogin in his approach towards the ancient Scripture. The work therefore acquires a greater significance for the spiritual seeker. The introduction to the 3-volume work of Dr. Kashyap is by Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao, wherein he brings out succinctly the deeper mystical aspect which shall be immensely profitable in our studies of the Veda. In the following we present the same. — R. Y. D.]

KAPALI SASTRY himself has succinctly given expression to this framework in the Sanskrit *Bhūmikā* to his *Siddhāñjana* [1947, Dipti-Publications, Pondicherry; Collected works of T. V. Kapali Sastry, Vol. 4, 1983]. This framework acquires significance on the ground that the Veda has a secret meaning, which alone is of ultimate and real value. In contradistinction to this, there is the external meaning, the apparent one, consisting of word-meanings which are conventional and transactional in nature. The latter is meant for the common folk, to help them in their religious aspirations, while the former is deliberately intended to guide the advanced aspirants. The Veda employs this double-language method, because there are two distinct approaches prevalent among human beings: one that relies on the senses, employs reason, and holds the intellect in high regard; and the other that depends on revelation and inspiration, and employs intuition and insight. The two approaches may be designated 'practical' and 'spiritual'.

Sāyaṇa's interpretation of the Rig Veda Samhita illustrates the 'practical' approach, while Sri Aurobindo, and Kapali Sastry after him, represent the 'spiritual' or 'mystical' line of interpretation. It is unfortunate that the decadent culture in the country during the middle ages held on to the 'practical' approach, to the detriment of the other. As a result, the Veda was looked upon as a source-book for ritualism, as a sanction for intellectualism and as a justification for crude materialism. The *Mīmāṃsākās* had already encouraged

this outlook, and their preference for the *Brāhmaṇā* books (ritualistic tracts, appendages to the Samhita by the priests to the Samhita) prevailed in the middle ages, and has continued till our own day. The Samhita, by a curious reversal of values, became secondary to the *Brāhmaṇās*, like the proverbial tail wagging the dog. Sāyaṇa was an uncompromising votary of the *Mīmāṃsaka* ritualism, and his approach to Rig Veda Samhita in his famous *Bhāṣya* is only through the *Brāhmaṇa* ideology. He did not accord an independent status to the Samhita, but viewed it only as an appendage to the *Brāhmaṇa* tracts.

It is remarkable that he (Sāyaṇa) chose at all to write a commentary on Rig Veda Samhita, for no *Mīmāṃsaka* had ever thought of writing a gloss, interpretation or annotation to the Samhita. The *Mīmāṃsakās* paid lip-service to the greatness, glory and antiquity of the Veda, but had completely ignored its import. They were more concerned with 'dharma' (conduct of life based on spiritual principles) than with 'mantrārtha' (meaning of mantras), for they regarded 'dharma' itself as the 'vedārtha' (the meaning of the Veda). The words were all that was important for them in a mantra from the Samhita collection, because the mantras had to be recited as part of the rituals. The meaning of the mantra was of no interest or importance to them. Indeed, the great *Mīmāṃsaka*, Jaimini, argued that the mantras that were not prescribed or employed in the sacrifices were irrelevant and redundant:

आम्नायस्य क्रियार्थत्वात् आनर्थक्यमतदर्शानाम्॥

āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt ānarthakyamatadarthānām.

In the decadent tradition, therefore, there was no need for a *Bhāṣya* commentary on the Samhita. Nevertheless, Sāyaṇa did write one, and unwittingly turned the attention of traditionalists to the meaning of the mantras, although ritualism was for him, as for others around him, the main focus.

It is again unfortunate that the Western indologists took an interest in Vedic studies precisely at a time when the decadent culture held the ground. What they were exposed to was the ritualistic interpretation of Rig Veda Samhita by Sāyaṇa. For them, Sāyaṇa was the traditional authority, although Sāyaṇa lived only in the fourteenth century A.D. and there were other and more trustworthy commentators earlier. Max Muller, who published the Rig Veda Samhita for the first time in human history, published it along with Sāyaṇa's commentary, thus providing it a high academic acceptance value. Modern Vedic students and scholars, Western as well as Indian, have been brought up in the tradition of regarding the Rig Veda Samhita only in the light of Sāyaṇa's *Bhāṣya*.

The first great person who raised his voice against this injustice, impropriety and outrage to the true spirit of the Vedic lore was Sri Aurobindo. He discovered that the Veda had a hidden meaning, not by a scholarly study of Vedic mantras but by an inner vision; it was only later that his studies confirmed his direct perception. He was himself a sage, a *ṛṣi*, and he had therefore the equipment in common with the sages who visualized the mantras. Vedic hymns are not products of superior scholarly exercises, or of clever constructions of thought, diction and speech. They had wondrous powers within, which

freely opened up and blossomed into charming poetic articulations. They were inspired by a profound encounter with reality as such. The hymns therefore are in the nature of mantra-perceptions (*mantra-dr̥ṣṭayaḥ*).

According to this discovery, the central aim of the Vedic hymns is to help the seekers of truth (*satya*), immortality (*amṛta*) and light (*jyoti*). The truth that the Veda reveals is in effective contrast to the truth of this phenomenal world which is a 'mixed one' (truth hidden in a mass of false presentations), and which can be grasped by our senses and mind; it is most profound and transcendental. The immortality of the real revealed by the Veda is distinguished by being beyond space and time and being beyond dualities. And the light that one finds in the Veda is beyond the light that is signified by human intelligence. All the hymns in the Vedic corpus must be interpreted in accordance with this search; the hymns become meaningful only in the context of this search.

The supreme reality is described in the Veda as the beyond (*param*), the truth (*satyam*), the right (*ṛtam*) and the vast (*bṛhat*). It is beyond the three realms of phenomenal existence, symbolized by the *vyāhṛtis*: *bhūh* (earth), *bhuvaḥ* (midregion) and *suvaḥ* (sky), and represented by the three luminous deities *Agni*, *Indra* and *Sūrya*. The three realms together constitute the lower half of reality (*aparārdha*). Beyond this is the upper half (*parārdha*), where *Sūrya* (the *Savitṛ*, of whom the *Sūrya* of the three realms is but an image) reigns supreme and shines brilliantly. This is the only reality (*ekam sat*) that the Veda recognizes. All the deities and gods that the hymns refer to as having different names, forms and functions are but so many aspects of this one *Sūrya*, the supreme reality, the vast sky (*bṛhad-dyauḥ*), the great (*mahaḥ*), the beyond (*paraḥ*), the luminous (*svaḥ*). The Veda shows the mystic path to reach this highest state:

अन्वेष्टव्यो बृहद्विवः पन्था॥
anveṣṭavyo bṛhaddivaḥ panthā.

[*Siddhāñjana*]

It is well-known that the Vedic hymns are replete with symbolic language. They are altogether unlike the poetical compositions that we are familiar with; they tend to veil their speech. The seers who were responsible for these hymns were essentially mystics, having had the direct contact with the sole reality of all existence. The Veda is regarded in tradition as the treasury containing the secrets discovered by these knowers of mystic knowledge. Kapali Sastry defines Veda as the deliberately coded communications of profound mystic wisdom:

तेषां (मन्त्रद्रष्टाणां) गहनतत्त्वविदां
गूढभाषया गोपितानां गोप्यानां कोश ऋग्वेदः।
तेषां ऋक्सूक्तानां समुदायमेव ऋक्संहितामाचक्ष्महे॥
teṣām (mantradṛṣṭāṇāṃ) gahanatatvavidāṃ
gūḍhabhāṣyā gopitānām gopayānām koṣha ṛgvedaḥ.
teṣām ṛksūktānām samudāyameva ṛksamhitāmāchakṣmahe.

It is also recognized that the Vedic mantras are especially potent in their verbal forms as well as in their meaning nuances, and effective for securing welfare here as well as hereafter; and this is due to the fact that their origin is ascribed to the direct encounter with the ultimate reality (*prādurbhāva-prabhāvāt mantrānām vīrya-vattvam*). The words came out without effort from the seer, almost spontaneously; and the words concealed as well as revealed. The incorporation of two meanings in each mantra (the exoteric and the esoteric, the external and the internal) was by no means deliberate or calculated, but perfectly natural in the context of spiritual experience and its communication. The external sense is only a sign, a symbol (*sariketa*), and is intended to discern the real but internal import. This holds good also for rituals. The external rituals are only symbolic of the internal transformations that must take place.

In fact the external world is only a symbol of the internal world that is more real. The gods of the three realms (*adhyāṇḍa*) represent only the powers within the individual (*adhi-piṇḍa*). Tradition speaks of the three realms (earth, midregion and sky) as representing the three faculties: *anna* (gross waking state), *prāṇa* (powers, forces, energy) and *manas* (mind, knowledge) respectively. They are presided over by the gods *Agni*, *Vāyu* and *Sūrya*. Beyond the three realms indicated by the three *vyaḥṛtis*: *bhūḥ*, *bhūvaḥ* and *svaḥ* is the great expanse without limits (*mahaḥ*, *bṛhad-dyauḥ*), the domain of *Sūrya* (distinguished from the physical Sun, *laukika-sūrya*).

It may be recalled that there is a long-standing tradition, ignored however by Sāyaṇa, of seeing in the Rig Vedic passage a triad of meanings:

त्रयोऽर्थः सर्ववेदेषु ॥

trayoḥ arthāḥ sarvavedeṣu.

Yāska accepts the ritualistic sense (*adhiyajña*), the meaning relating to the deities (*adhidaiva*) and the esoteric meaning (*ādhyātma*). Later thought spoke of ‘*ādhibhautika*’ (the gross, external meaning, referring to the physical world and common transactions), ‘*ādhidāivika*’ (in which *adhiyajña* is included) and ‘*ādhyātma*’. With reference to the Vedic passages, tradition also distinguishes between the conventional meanings of words used (*rūḍa*), which are superficial but symbolic (relating to *ādhibhautika*, *adhiyajña* and *ādhidāiva* levels) and the meanings which are etymologically valid and significant (*yaugika*), which are the real and intended meanings (relating to the *ādhyātma* level). It was *Ananda-tīrtha* (Madhva Āchārya), who in his Rig Bhāṣya resuscitated this tradition that was being sidelined by the votaries of ritualism, and attempted to explain the Vedic mantras primarily at the *ādhyātma* level. Rāghavendra Tīrtha’s *Mantrārtha mañjari* followed this lead, and provided guidelines for Kapali Sastry’s comprehensive reconstruction of the real import of the Vedic corpus. Kapali Sastry was inspired by the discovery of Sri Aurobindo, and his *Siddhāñjana* is true to the traditional line of interpretation and is a brilliant attempt to focus attention on the hidden meaning of the revelations of the ancient seers. I have gathered together the principal propositions from

his introduction known as *Bhīmīkā* to his commentary on the Rig Veda, and have prepared this garland of aphorisms which help in understanding the hidden import of the Veda. I have called it *Veda-gūḍārtha-bodha-sūtrāṇi*, taking the clue from his own expression. The aphorisms included here are in his own words; only the selection and arrangement is mine. This, I hope, would illustrate the general framework of Vedic interpretation accepted by Yāska, Saunaka, Kātyāyana, Durgāchārya, Ānanda-Tīrtha, Bhāskara, Rāghavendra-Tīrtha and, in recent years, by Sri Aurobindo and after him by Kapali Sastry.

The Summary of the Secret of the Veda in Aphorisms*

1. The Veda is eternal, because it made its appearance from the highest space without limits, known as *parama-vyoma* or *bṛhad-dyauh*, beyond the three realms of existence (*bhūh*, *bhuvah* and *suvaḥ*).

2. The Veda is primarily intended to aid spiritual study, contemplation and spiritual practices.

3. The Veda that is most ancient is but one; it is called Rig Veda, a collection of *riks* (mantras).

4. For the sake of performing rituals, the mantras of Yajur Veda and the *Brāhmaṇa*-texts were prepared at a later period.

5. The mantras of the Rig Veda were direct perceptions of the seers.

6. The seers who perceived the mantras dwell, before their birth and after their passing away, in the highest space (from which the Veda made its appearance).

7. The seers, abiding in a state of high austerity, encountered directly the mantras (known by the name *brahma*), according to Yāska.

8. The Veda is not concerned with *dharma* (rules of good life) and Karma (rituals) only; there is in the Veda a hidden teaching which is spiritual in nature pertaining to the Self.

9. This essential import of the mantras was concealed by a secret (or coded) language; the seers hid the secret within the mantra.

10. It is the inner import that takes the form of symbols and abides in the mantras.

11. The seers employed the symbols for the sake of preserving the real meaning of the Veda.

12. It is proper therefore that one must understand the significance of the symbols in order to determine the true import of the Veda.

13. The secrets indicated by the symbols pertain to the internal or esoteric mysteries.

14. One must attempt to comprehend the purport of the mantras only in accordance with the inner meanings.

15. An understanding of the system of symbolism is the gateway to get at the secret of the Veda.

16. In all Veda there is but one system of symbolism.

* The original Sanskrit text is given as an appendix at the end of the article.

17. For all the seers of the mantras, there is but one goal, one hidden teaching and one tradition of symbolism.

18. The hidden teaching is this: The supreme and solitary divinity is *Sūrya*, the Supreme Person.

19. *Sūrya* abides bearing several names and assuming several deity-forms.

20. The real is but one, but bearing a multiplicity of names and forms.

21. The origin of all deities is but one, the nature of all deities is also one, and the goals of all of them is one also.

22. The differences among the deities are in accordance with their functions and their personalities.

23. The deities can be apprehended by one's inner perception.

24. The nature of the deities, however, are capable of being perceived by the eye that is opened by the divine or inner vision.

25. All the deities begin to function only at the level of the supreme reality (viz., the highest space, *brhad-dyauh*, from which the Veda makes its appearance, and in which the seers dwell); and their actions have a tendency to ascend.

26. The Veda presents the picture of the deities with their own names, qualities and actions, but who are all in reality so many aspects of the one great self, known by the name *Sūrya*.

27. The sacrificial ritual is also symbolic; the supreme purport of the Vedic sacrifice is but inner worship.

28. Whoever is the wise person, equipped with vision and learning, who becomes competent enough to realise the hidden teaching of the mantra, it is for him that the Veda reveals itself.

29. For him, the symbols of their own accord would reveal the secret import.

30. One must therefore make an effort to understand aright the true meaning of the mantras.

S. K. RAMACHANDRA RAO

Appendix

Veda gūḍārtha bodha sūtrāṇi

॥ वेदगूढार्थबोधसूत्राणि ॥

१. परमव्योम्नि समुद्भुतत्वाद्देवो नित्यम् ॥
२. कृत्स्नस्य वेदस्य स्वाध्याये जपे ध्याने एव सामान्य विनियोगे बोध्यः ॥
३. एक एव परो वेदः पुरातनः। स ऋग्वेदः ॥
४. यज्ञकर्मकलापसमृद्धौ यजुषां मन्त्राणानां च कल्पना उत्तरकालीना ॥
५. ऋचः ऋषीणां दृष्टयो भवन्ति ॥
६. मन्त्रदर्शिन ऋषेर्जन्मनः प्राक् मृतेः परं च सिद्धमेव परमं व्योम ॥
७. तपःस्थितानां ऋषीणां ब्रह्मपदवाच्यो मन्त्रः प्रत्यक्षोऽभवदिति यास्कः ॥

८. न केवलं धर्मकर्मपरो वेदः। अध्यात्मविद्यादिरहस्यमस्ति वेदे॥
 ९. रहस्यभाषया मन्त्रार्थो गोपितो भवति। मन्त्रेषु ऋषिभिः रहस्यं निक्षिप्तम्॥
 १०. अन्तरर्थे एव सङ्केतरूपं धृत्वा मन्त्रे स्थितः॥
 ११. ऋषिभिः प्रयुक्ताः सङ्केताः वेदार्थगोपनार्थम्॥
 १२. वेदसूक्तार्थविचारे सङ्केतरूपार्थग्रहणं न्याय्यम्॥
 १३. निणयपदार्थभूतरहस्यानि॥
 १४. मन्त्रतात्पर्यावगाहनं अन्तरार्थानुसारेण कर्तव्यम्॥
 १५. सङ्केतव्यवस्थापरिज्ञानं वेदरहस्यावगाहनस्य द्वारम्॥
 १६. समस्तेऽपि ऋग्वेदे एकरूपा सङ्केतव्यवस्था॥
 १७. सर्वेषां मन्त्रद्रष्टृणां एकमेव परमं लक्ष्यं, एकमेव रहस्यं, एकमेव सङ्केतसम्प्रदायः॥
 १८. रहस्यं त्विदम्। एक एव परो देवः सूर्यात्मा परमः पुमान्॥
 १९. सः बहुदेवतात्मकतया बहूनि नामानि बिभ्रदवतिष्ठते॥
 २०. एकः परो नानामूर्तिनामस्वरूपधृक्॥
 २१. देवानां एकमूलत्वं एकात्मत्वं एकलक्ष्यत्वम्॥
 २२. तेषां पृथक्तवं तु नामतो व्यापारतो व्यक्तितश्च॥
 २३. यच्चेतना एव देवाः अन्तर्दृष्टिगोचराः॥
 २४. देवानां स्वरूपाणि तु दिव्येनाभ्यन्तरेण वा उन्मीलितेन चक्षुषा ग्राह्याणि॥
 २५. सर्वेषां देवानां कर्माणि परमाद्वाङ्मः प्रारम्भन्ते, ऊर्ध्वमूलानि च भवन्ति॥
 २६. एक एव महानात्मा सूर्यपदवाच्यः यस्यैव मूर्तिभेदाः व्यक्तिविशेषाः अङ्गप्रत्यङ्गभूताः
 तत्तद्गुणक्रियोचितानि नामानि बिभ्रते देवाः वेदे प्रतिपादिताः॥
 २७. यज्ञोऽपि सङ्केतरूपः। वैदिकाध्वरस्य परमार्थं अन्तर्यजनमेव व्याचक्षते॥
 २८. यस्तु विज्ञः दृष्टिश्रुतिसम्पन्नः मन्त्ररहस्यं साक्षात्कर्तुमधिकारी भवति तस्मै ऋगात्मिका
 वाक् स्वयं प्रकाशं भवति ॥
 २९. सङ्केताः स्वयमेव विवृतगूढार्थाः स्पष्टं लक्ष्यन्ते॥
 ३०. अतो मन्त्रार्थावगत्यै यत्रः कार्यः॥

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of June 2002)

The Symbolism of Night in “The Symbol Dawn”

9

By the mid-1940s, Sri Aurobindo had written out and revised the opening of *Savitri* more than forty times since the first known draft in August 1916. Yet he continued to alter and expand it each time he began another manuscript of the poem. Evidently, it was not according to a preconceived plan that the passage grew, but by a hidden necessity contained in the seed of the original idea. The scope of the epic demanded that it should begin with a complete presentation of the problem it sets out to solve. Specifically, this meant that the symbolism of Night on the first page had to include, in however brief, indirect or cryptic a form, indications of every aspect of that Inconscience whose hold on the world impedes the divine event announced in the second line—the event symbolised in the introductory canto by the Dawn and in the poem as a whole by Savitri’s victory over Death and all the consequences of that victory.

A study of the manuscripts of 1944, to which we will now turn, reveals that the expansion of the opening passage stopped with the inclusion of the last of the “Four Matter Powers” mentioned in the *Record of Yoga* in 1927.¹ We have seen that these four powers were introduced into *Savitri* in the late 1920s in a sentence that now occurs in Book Three, Canto Four. This sentence has been referred to in several earlier instalments, but it may be useful to quote the final version of it in its entirety, before showing how the functions represented by the Dragon and Sphinx were incorporated in the treatment of Night at the outset of the poem.

The sentence describes man’s predicament in an unconscious, seemingly hostile universe:

An inert Soul and a somnambulist Force
Have made a world estranged from life and thought;
The Dragon of the dark foundations keeps
Unalterable the law of Chance and Death;
On his long way through Time and Circumstance
The grey-hued riddling nether shadow-Sphinx,
Her dreadful paws upon the swallowing sands,
Awaits him armed with the soul-slaying word:
Across his path sits the dim camp of Night.²

The four elements of the human dilemma depicted in these lines appear together in several places in *Savitri*, although nowhere else as explicitly as here. Sometimes only

one of them is referred to by name, but the fourfold presence is felt nonetheless. Near the beginning of “The Descent into Night”, for instance, occur two sentences in which only Night is expressly mentioned, but preceded by three related entities associated with the words “awakened Nescience”, “the living Void” and “the Abyss”:

On a dim bank where dies subjective Space,
From a stark ridge overlooking all that is,
A tenebrous awakened Nescience,
Her wide blank eyes wondering at Time and Form,
Stared at the inventions of the living Void
And the Abyss whence our beginnings rose.
Behind appeared a grey carved mask of Night
Watching the birth of all created things.³

This “tenebrous awakened Nescience”, looking at things from a “stark ridge” with blank wondering eyes, resembles the Greek Sphinx, who asked her fatal question from atop a high rock; the dying of “subjective Space” seems to suggest the fate of the hapless travellers who failed to solve her riddle. The “inventions of the living Void”, at which she stares, are a paradox reminiscent of the works of the “somnambulist Force” in the passage in Book Three, while the “Abyss” of our beginnings brings to mind the “dark foundations” guarded by the Dragon.

Here the Sphinx dominates the other aspects, and Night is in the background. On the first page of the epic, on the other hand, it is Night who is the principal agent of the resistance to the divine Event, and the rest are subordinated to her. It is she who with her mass of darkness and denial directly obstructs the advent of the Light, lying

Across the path of the divine Event

just as she blocks man’s way in “The Vision and the Boon”, where the reference to her begins with almost the same words:

Across his path sits the dim camp of Night.

We have noted likewise the similarity of the “ignorant Force” and its “somnambulist whirl” on the opening page to the “somnambulist Force” in the third book. These parallels were already present in manuscripts of the late 1930s. But it was not until 1944, when Sri Aurobindo was writing out the first three books on large sheets of paper in two columns, that he inserted lines near the beginning of the poem suggesting his other two symbols of aspects of the Inconscient: the Sphinx and the Dragon.

The facsimile in this issue shows the first column of the first page of one of these two-column manuscripts.⁴ This is the penultimate two-column version of the first page. It was written as part of Sri Aurobindo’s last complete manuscript of Book One, dated

“April 24, 1944” at the end. After he revised this page, Sri Aurobindo removed it from the complete manuscript and replaced it by a fair copy which he lightly revised in turn. Somewhat later he used small note-pads for new insertions and rewritten passages, including the last version of the opening lines in his own hand.

The third sentence of the version seen in the facsimile is not found as a sentence prior to this. But some of its lines had been introduced into the second sentence in the two manuscripts immediately before this one. In the first of these, the second sentence is found in the following form:

Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In the unlit temple of eternity,
A power of fallen limitless Self awake
Between the first and the last Nothingness,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge....

It is of interest to observe that the phrase “power of fallen limitless Self” (later changed to “power of fallen boundless self”) occurred originally in apposition to “mind of Night”. In the printed text, the connection is less obvious. But a study of the history of this passage suggests that in the final version also, “power of fallen boundless self” was intended to be a description of the “mind of Night”.

In Book Six, Canto Two, “The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain”, we come across an explanation of how this power of fallen boundless self, this mind of Night, came into being.

Once in the immortal boundlessness of Self,

Narad tells the queen,

The soul looked out from its felicity.

This is boundless Self in its unfallen state, “deathless, timeless, spaceless, one,” and possessed of “the Spirit’s interminable bliss”.

Then, curious of a shadow thrown by Truth,
It strained towards some otherness of self....

It yielded to a call to leave “its too safe eternity”:

As one drawn by the grandeur of the Void
The soul attracted leaned to the Abyss:
It longed for the adventure of Ignorance....

Thus began a movement which was to culminate in a “huge descent”, a “giant fall”:

It sensed a negative infinity,

(in the first lines of the poem, this “negative infinity” is called the “abysm of the unbodied Infinite”)

A void supernal whose immense excess
 Imitating God and everlasting Time
 Offered a ground for Nature’s adverse birth
 And Matter’s rigid hard unconsciousness
 Harbours the brilliance of a transient soul
 That lights up birth and death and ignorant life.
 A Mind arose that stared at Nothingness
 Till figures formed of what could never be;
 It housed the contrary of all that is.⁵

This Mind which after the fall from “the immortal boundlessness of Self” arose and stared at Nothingness is, we may suppose, related to the mind of Night at the beginning of the poem, which is similarly a power of fallen boundless Self aware of itself between “the first and the last Nothingness”.

The facsimile of the penultimate 1944 manuscript of the opening of *Savitri* shows the stage where the lines on the “power of fallen limitless Self” were removed from the second sentence and placed at the beginning of a new sentence (with “boundless” substituted for “limitless”). Initially two more lines which had been drafted in an intermediate manuscript were copied after “Nothingness” to make a four-line sentence. But these two lines were cancelled, and replaced by two lines written in the left margin and two more to the right of the cancelled lines. The sentence so expanded reads as follows:

A power of fallen boundless Self awake
 Between the first and the last Nothingness,
 Recalled the tenebrous womb from which it came,
 Turned from the insoluble mystery of birth,
 And the tardy process of mortality
 And longed to reach an end in vacant Nought.

The final text differs from this (apart from details of punctuation and capitalisation) only in substituting “Recalling” for “Recalled” and “its end” for “an end” in the third and sixth lines.

It is the phrase “insoluble mystery” in the fourth line that, in view of the context, betrays the presence of the Sphinx lurking behind these lines. We see, too, the fatal result of the inability to solve her riddle, to grasp the meaning of this process of birth and

mortality. It is not only a question of finding intellectually an affirmative and all-reconciling solution to the problem of the world. Far more serious than any tendency towards philosophical nihilism, ascetic illusionism or scientific scepticism are the self-doubt, pessimism and defeatism ingrained in the physical consciousness and the subconscious, the mind in Matter.

The Mother once commented on this sentence in *Savitri*: “It is like the origin of Death.”⁶ About the riddle of the Sphinx, which is the riddle of the world, she said: “If you can solve it, you will be immortal, but if you fail you will perish.”⁷

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, pp. 1261-62.
2. *Savitri* (1993), p. 336.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 202. These lines took shape gradually in the late 1930s and early 1940s, beginning with the “grey carved mask of Night”.
4. The second column of the page whose first column is reproduced in the facsimile was lightly revised, with the insertion of only one new line: “Yet all can be done when the god-touch is there.” This line can be seen above the last group of lines to the right of the column shown in the facsimile; part of an arrow indicating its insertion in the second column is visible. The line appears in the next manuscript (the final version of this passage) in the form “All can be done if the god-touch is there.” (In the 1954 and 1970 editions, the “g” of “god-touch” was capitalised.) Numbers (“40”, “50” and “60”) seen along the right edge of the facsimile are Sri Aurobindo’s numbering of the lines in the second column. These line-numbers continue to the end of the second canto. The numbering was done before the manuscript was revised.
5. *Savitri* (1993), pp. 454-56. This passage was drafted around 1946 and first published in *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual* in 1948 in a form differing somewhat from the final, revised text.
6. *About Savitri* (Published by Huta, 1972, text facing Plate III; also reproduced in *Invocation*, February 2000, p. 11).
7. *On Education*, CWM, Vol. 12, p. 291. It is significant that the Mother gave this message (as a caption for the painting “Oedipus and the Sphinx” by Gustave Moreau, reproduced on the Gymnastics Competition Award Card in December 1950) in the context of the physical education activities of the Ashram.

Caption :

A column of the first page of a 1944 manuscript

A MEMOIR OF THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

My Arrest, Imprisonment and Liberation 1918-1920

IN the early spring of 1918 my family was living in Petrograd where, as I recall it, life was becoming increasingly hard. The food situation was hopeless. I can remember dinners that consisted only of boiled potato peels. A gala feast, unusual at that time, featured carrots: soup, cutlets and dessert all made of carrots.

Soon after the February Revolution my father began working for the Nobel Oil Company which operated in the Caucasus but had an office in Petrograd. When all industries were nationalised by the Bolsheviks my father lost his job. Many of our friends were arrested. One of my cousins, for instance, was denounced by his own secretary and was subsequently shot. As one might expect, many were fleeing the city, going south to the Caucasus, the Crimea, or to other safer parts of the empire. My family decided to go to Minsk, which at that time was still occupied by the Germans. My father managed to get a travel permit—I shall never know how—and the entire family, consisting of my father, mother, my younger brother (then seven years old), and myself started out on this dangerous journey. I remember it as a harrowing experience. We were on the road at least a week before we arrived at our destination, and during all that time we lived in dread of being molested. The train was filled to capacity; the coach compartment and corridors were jammed with passengers, and there were even people clinging to the sides and roofs of cars. There was constant checking of documents and some passengers were taken off the train accused of being counter-revolutionaries or speculators.

It was in April or May of 1918 when we arrived in Minsk.

Before the Revolution we had a small estate there and for years my father had served as district Marshal of the Nobility. Needless to say, we had some friends in the region and I suspect that it was one reason for my father's decision to flee to Minsk. Upon our arrival in the city we found it to be a real paradise compared to Petrograd—the "red paradise". There was order and discipline and food was plentiful. Shortly after our arrival World War I was coming to an end. The German troops soon withdrew and the Bolsheviks moved in. Then the usual difficulties began. My parents were unemployed. The food rations for the bourgeois were inadequate and the problem of sheer survival became all-important. Although I was sixteen years old I managed to secure a very good job at the local railway station as a clerk (*kantorshchik*). The job carried a special food ration, in addition to a salary in rubles (which were worthless). The Bolsheviks must have permitted me to work because there was a great need for educated people. Some educated people were not too anxious to offer their services to them. I soon was performing the job of "Assistant Station Master". At this time the Polish-Soviet War was raging and there were numerous troop-trains going through Minsk to and from the front. When a train arrived in the station I would put on my red arm band, receive the train, give orders as to where it should proceed or wait, and would talk to the military commanders on board.

It was while I performed this role that I saw Leon Trotsky for the first time. He was then Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army, and his train made a brief stop-over in Minsk on its way to the front. Trotsky was travelling with his entourage in the former personal train of the Tsar; there was a car full of beautiful secretaries. When the train pulled into the station, the officials and functionaries present lined up to meet Trotsky; I was one of those in line. When he climbed down from his car he completely ignored all of us and walked to the engine cab to shake the hand of the chief engineer. Only then did he come back to greet us. There was much that was theatrical in Trotsky, but I must say that I was greatly impressed with his general bearing and appearance.

One of my functions as “Assistant Station Master” was to issue identification and travel documents to Russian prisoners of war who were gradually being released from German captivity and were returning to their homeland. They were being released because of the provisions of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and most of these returnees passed through Minsk. In the South of Russia the Civil War was under way and many of the freed officers wanted to go there to join the White movement. It was my job to take their documents and to issue them new Soviet papers indicating the person’s name, nationality, rank and destination. Some of the prisoners were officers who came from prominent families. I realised that if those who came from the North were to proceed there the chances were that they would be arrested by the Bolsheviks and most likely shot.

It was then that my counter-revolutionary activity began. I prepared documents or travel certificates indicating that these officers belonged to various minority groups: Cossacks from the Don, or the Ukraine, or the Caucasus. With these documents it would be relatively safe for them to travel south. I could probably have helped them more than I did but I was too young and inexperienced. Nevertheless, I was able to provide a few of them with documents that made it easier for them to reach the White armies in the South. I did this, not because of any deep political feelings on my part, but rather from simple humane feelings. As I continued to be involved in this situation I prepared in advance a number of papers made out to “Ukrainian citizens” which I kept hidden in my apartment. Provisionally, I prepared travel papers for myself.

I considerably enjoyed the authority entrusted to me because all kinds of people came to me seeking advice and help and making me take important decisions. But I was foolish and careless. I probably spoke of my plans somewhere in a public place and was overheard. One night while I was at home there came the usual knock on the door and a uniformed officer, accompanied by two or three armed soldiers, entered our apartment. The interesting thing about the officer—his name was Pertsov, as I recall—was that he was formerly a Guards Officer in the Tsar’s army and came from an upper class family. Now he was serving the Cheka.* He greeted me in a deceptive manner, seemingly in hope of luring me into providing him with as much information as possible about my activities. He began by saying, “Dimitri Sergeevich, we used to meet, don’t you remember, in St. Petersburg at the home of the... family.” My father, who was standing near me,

* Office of the spy service.

whispered that I should tell Pertsov nothing. But the officer sought to calm us by saying that his visit was no more than a formality, that he was obliged to search the premises, and that we had nothing to worry about. He then proceeded directly to the little room which I occupied and conducted a very thorough search, in the course of which he discovered the collection of travel documents I had been keeping ready.

A number of other compromising things, which I had foolishly kept, were also discovered. Further, I had a notebook containing a personal code I had devised for fun, but the searchers showed great interest in it and it clearly aroused their suspicions. My father was also subjected to a search but nothing incriminatory was found on him, except his Tsar's decorations and papers showing that he was Marshal of Nobility. After about two hours of searching (it was then about 2 a.m.) my father and I were arrested. Pertsov continued to reassure us that it was a mere formality and we would soon be released. It was obvious that he was trying hard to ingratiate himself with us in the hope of getting more information. Later, when I was in Smolensk prison, I found out that he was a dope addict and that he personally executed people in the Cheka courtyard.

We were then conveyed to a place which remains vividly in my memory. It was a large cellar of the parish house of the Orthodox church in Minsk. Apparently it served as a temporary place of detention. Prisoners were packed like sardines—all sorts of people—men, women, children, peasants, landowners, merchants and persons of many nationalities. It was a cross-section of Russia. A group of Mensheviks were openly agitating against the Bolsheviks. Some peasants were praying, others cursing. Women and children were crying. The room was filthy, and the stench from the "parasha"* was stifling.

My father and I remained in the cellar for a couple of days, when suddenly my name was called out.

I was taken for interrogation to the local Cheka which was a short distance from the cellar. I had no idea what would happen, but was trying to prepare myself for the worst. A guard took me to the office where a man sat at a large desk. He was obviously of working-class origin and not well educated. He wore a patch over one eye. I judged him to be a genuine Bolshevik. When I appeared before him he at once drew out a large revolver, placed it on the desk, and immediately began to use third-degree methods in questioning me. He demanded to know about the conspiratorial organization which he accused me of belonging to and insisted I reveal the names of its members. On the desk was a pile of documents. Some of these, I speculated, might have been the false travel certificates confiscated in my room. While he was grilling me, another man entered the room on several occasions and whispered something to him. This individual I liked at once. He seemed intelligent and had a kind face. As we shall see he was of great help to me later on.

Not getting any response, the interrogator began to shout and curse me. He pressed hard for the name of the organization I worked for, suggesting it was the Polish Counter Intelligence or Denikin's group. He took me to the window and pointed out at a wall

* Toilet for the prisoners.

where he said the executions were taking place. He warned that I would be disposed of forthwith. I pleaded that I did not work for any organization but was "a free lance" and therefore could not possibly provide him with any names. The interrogator then called in a guard to escort me into the hallway. He gave me five minutes to think about my recalcitrance. This I thought was the end. The soldier who guarded me was a sympathetic peasant lad. I asked him to pass on a message to my parents in the event I did not return. The soldier consoled me by saying that threats like these were usual and that he did not think I would be shot immediately. In five minutes I was led back to the man with the eye patch. I repeated that I had no names to divulge. The interrogator cursed me and added, "We will dispose of you soon. Now, get out of here!" I was returned to the cellar of the parish house.

A few days after my interrogation, my father was released.*

It was rumored that the Polish Army was advancing on Minsk and that the Bolsheviks were preparing to retreat. The atmosphere was tense and anxious. It was feared that before the Bolsheviks retreated many prisoners would be shot. In a few days my name was called. Together with a number of other prisoners we were told to prepare our meager belongings as we would presently be moved. We were marched on foot to the railway station where some of my old colleagues came to look at me and spat in my face, thus expressing their contempt for "the white guard bandit". I sat forlornly in the station with my bundle of belongings, still wearing my uniform of the Naval Academy, which had been dissolved a year earlier by the order of Trotsky.

The journey from Minsk to Smolensk was harrowing. The man in charge of the train was a Don Cossack named Semenov. At one point some of the prisoners tried to escape. It was announced that if there were any more attempts at escaping all the people in the coach would be shot. When we arrived in Smolensk we were taken to the Hard Labor Prison, which was not far from the site of the Katyn massacres by the Communists of thousands of Polish officers early in the Second World War.

At first I was placed in solitary confinement, but soon was transferred to a large cell with about fifty Polish landowners who, it turned out, were held as hostages. I had no idea of what my fate would be. I was not interrogated again, and seemingly was forgotten.

In the Smolensk prison I spent approximately six months. My cellmates were highly educated and very pleasant people. Many came from prominent families of Lithuania, Poland and Western Ukraine. I spent much time playing chess with them. To do that I had to learn to speak Polish because even though they knew it well, they would not speak Russian with me for nationalistic reasons. Most of my cellmates were elderly, but as the Polish-Soviet war progressed, an increasing number of young Poles were put in with us.

Life in prison was not too unbearable, except for two things: lack of food and uncertainty as to my future. Twice a day we were given small quantities of bread full of

* He was re-arrested after my release from prison and departure for the U.S.A. He was condemned to life- exile to the extreme North, probably the dreaded Solovka concentration camp. He was released from prison for one day to arrange his affairs and decided to flee. For a huge sum of money the family was taken across the border to Poland.

straw and once a day a watery soup with occasional pieces of horsemeat, or *vobla* (dried fish). We were helped, however, by the Polish Red Cross, which supplied us with an extra ration of bread, sugar and, for sick people, milk. However, even with this supplement we were constantly hungry. But the most difficult thing to bear was not the lack of food but the executions which were taking place every night. People were called out from the adjoining cells usually about 11 p.m. They were taken first to the office downstairs. Then, a guard told us, they were loaded on trucks and taken to nearby woods where they were shot. We could actually hear the shots. Before being taken downstairs, some sang the anthem “God Save the Tsar”, others were cursing the Bolsheviks and the revolution. The guards gagged such prisoners with a rubber ball. This procedure would go on day after day. This was in the autumn of 1919—the height of the Civil War and of Red Terror.

My own case was a puzzle. I expected to be shot, but as time went on this became less likely. I had no communication with my parents who remained in Polish-occupied Minsk. As I found out later, they were able to get my name on the list of hostages whom the Polish government wanted to exchange for some Bolsheviks that were in their hands. I was later told that one of the hostages held by the Poles was Karl Radek, whom the Bolsheviks were anxious to have at the time. Thus my status had been changed—from a political prisoner to a hostage—without my knowing it. Had I known it, life in prison would have been easier, free from the anxiety as to what would come next.

It was early in 1920, perhaps in February or March, that my name was called. I was taken to the prison office and was told that I was free to go. My situation was hopeless. I had no money and no warm clothing. I wore a *bushlat* (pea jacket) of the Naval Academy and it was twenty degrees below zero. Where to go? I knew no one in Smolensk. I asked the jailers to let me earn my keep with some kind of employment, but they booted me out. One possibility was to find a representative of the Polish Red Cross, but after thinking for a while I decided against that since they had already helped me so much in prison, and I did not want to further obligate myself to them. The only other organization I was familiar with was the Cheka, so I went there indicating my situation and asking for help to find a job. They would not talk to me and even threatened to re-arrest me.

As I wandered down the main street of Smolensk feeling utterly helpless and dejected, I spotted the man I had seen in the Minsk Cheka, the man whose face I liked. I walked up to him and asked him if he remembered me. He responded at once, “Of course, I remember you very well!” So I explained my situation to him. He took me to his home, fed me, and gave me a warm overcoat. He said that he was a former Tsarist officer and that he was no longer connected with the Cheka. For a time he had been forced to work there, but now was serving in the regular army. He told me that I was extremely lucky to be alive. When Minsk was about to be evacuated by the Red Army, a list of prisoners to be executed was prepared. My name was on it. The day before the executions were to take place, a top Communist official arrived in the city. He looked over the list and struck my name off observing that “the Soviet government does not execute children.” I was then 17 years old.

My officer host did everything for me. Not only did he save me from hunger and cold, but he got me a job. He called the Smolensk railway station and asked if they had a job for a young man with experience in railway work. The response was positive and on the next day I reported to the station and once again was installed as a railway clerk.

I had been working for only a few days when I was called to the office of my superior, who told me that I was on the list of hostages who were to be exchanged with the Polish Government. The exchange was to take place in a few days, and I was told to be ready at a moment's notice. When the exchange day was announced I went to the gathering place where I again saw my former prison friends, the Polish landowners. A special train took us across the Polish border to Minsk where my parents were waiting for me.

Thus ended the episode of my arrest and imprisonment in revolutionary Russia. While the story is not exceptional, it still might provide a footnote in some historical account of Russia's great upheaval.

DIMITRI VON MOHRENSCHILDT

[Dimitri arrived in America from Europe in 1922. There he continued his education at Yale and Columbia Universities. He was founder and editor of *The Russian Review* from 1941 to 1973 and was Professor of Russian History and Literature at Dartmouth College. In 1967 he was appointed Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

In 1958, on a visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Dimitri asked the Mother whether he should move to the Ashram or stay in America. Her reply is reproduced below. Dimitri has lived permanently in the Ashram since 1976. He celebrated his 100th birthday on 11th April, 2002.

We regret to inform the readers that Dimitri von Mohrenschildt, born on 11 April 1902, passed away in the Ashram Nursing Home on Sunday 9th June 2002 at 6.00 p.m.]

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of June 2002)

The Social Context of Science

THE progress of the western society is measured in terms of advancement in science and technology. Be they the problems of work, entertainment, promotion of new ideas, or the problems of business, commerce, or even of the arts, all are viewed in that perspective. From the days of Archimedes to Newton giant leaps were made, but what has been achieved during the last 300 years is something unparalleled in the history of civilization. Rational thought based on observation is the Baconian inheritance that proved most rewarding. But this all-pervasive rationalism also gave another power to the aggressive peoples who built vast empires in self-aggrandizement. Colonies proved to be the unfailing source of cheap raw materials and captive markets to establish and promote large commercial enterprises. What had happened in the strong surge of the Industrial Revolution, and in the conquests of new seas and new lands, was the entirely new turn which history took. The seeds of large-scale demeaning covetousness were sown in the lives of men. Scientific knowledge undoubtedly gave tremendous power to the wielders of science, but it was at the cost of human wisdom and human values. Success has been the watchword of this whole business and everything is measured in terms of material returns.

“Imperialism has devastating effects on indigenous peoples the world over, and science is often used to ‘prove’ Western superiority over ‘primitive’ Aboriginal groups. This justified in the eyes of white invaders the conquering of Aborigines, resulting in the breaking down of traditional social, political and economic structure—cultural and physical genocide.” This is what Steven Ross writes in an Internet essay. (*Western Science and Aboriginal People—A History of Racism*) “This process is relevant to all branches of science, from physics and medicine, to the relatively new sciences of anthropology and archaeology. To cover up the scientists’ involvement in colonial processes, scientists have established themselves in an exclusive and elite realm, outside the influences of Christianity and broader social attitudes—this is the language of rational thought. This language of rationality stems from the Liberal Thought, which also claims objectivity, particularly in its assertion of race free or colour blindness.”

It was a sacred duty of the imperial mission to civilize the local inhabitants over whom the ‘superior race’ ruled. The assumption had always been the so-called backwardness of the natives. They were never equal or fit for anything scientific. Perhaps a bit of this tendency of those times persists even today. “The western scientific thought and social institutions have as a foundation the assumptions of traditional liberalism because they are developed within the context of a liberal democracy. By implication these scientific epistemologies and institutions also inherit a legacy of racism and oppression.” This itself dislodges the very objective and unprejudiced idealism of scientific rationalism.

“Therefore, the notion that science and scientists are objective and free from the constraints and values of broader society is false. Science is a socially constructed discipline and therefore inherently based around the attitudes and desires of the broader community.”

The European spirit of naval adventure is something that we must admire in this context. It led to the establishment of colonies in distant places and on far-off seas of the globe. Captain James Cook, the British navigator and explorer of the eighteenth century, set out on a voyage around the world in the *Endeavour*. On 26 August 1768 the ship sailed off from Plymouth. James Cook writes: “Having received my commission, which was dated the 25th of May, 1768, I went on board on the 27th, hoisted the pennant, and took charge of the ship, which then lay in the basin in Deptford-yard. She was fitted for sea with all expedition; and stores and provisions being taken on board, sailed down the river on the 30th of July, and on the 13th of August anchored in Plymouth Sound. While we lay here waiting for a wind, the articles of war and the act of Parliament were read to the ship’s company, who were paid two months’ wages in advance, and told that they were to expect no additional pay for the performance of the voyage.”

On 3 June 1769 there was going to take place a rare astronomical event of the planet Venus passing across the sun. It was for this purpose that the British Royal Society made a proposal of sending a scientific team to the Tahiti Island far away in the Pacific Ocean. The leader of the scientific expedition to carry out the observation was the 40-year-old captain James Cook. But the captain was also given secret orders to explore the southern Pacific. Observation of the eclipse caused by the passage of Venus no doubt proved a great success; however, other events bearing far-reaching consequences soon followed. In October 1769 James Cook became the first European to set his foot on New Zealand. On 15 November 1769 he took possession of New Zealand in the name of Georges III. His three voyages later led to the establishment of European colonies throughout the Pacific.

The scientific contents of Cook’s voluminous writings and drawings are an invaluable record of the time. He was meticulous in his observations and made detailed entries in the true spirit of a discoverer. They offer “a wealth of observational data for oceanographers, astronomers, geologists, botanists, zoologists, cultural anthropologists, historians and many others. This body of knowledge stimulated additional scientific investigations and provided a foundation for subsequent studies.” His works indeed present the new theme of scientific progress itself. Our understanding of the oceans actually begins with him.

But the life of this great explorer ended in an unfortunate manner,—as if we have in it the Law of Karma acting in an efficacious manner. On 14 February 1779 Cook was stabbed to death by the Hawaiian natives. “Captain Cook was now the only Man on the Rock, he was seen walking down towards the Pinnacle, holding his left hand against the back of his head to guard it from the stones and carrying his musket under the other arm. An Indian came running behind him, stopping once or twice as he advanced, as if he was afraid that he should turn round, then taking him unaware he sprung to him, knocked him on the back of his head with a large club taken out of a fence and instantly fled with the

greatest precipitation; the blow made Captain Cook stagger two or three paces, he then fell on his hand and one knee and dropped his musket, as he was rising another Indian came running to him and before he could recover himself from the fall drew out an iron dagger he concealed under his feathered cloak and stuck it with all his force into the back of his neck, which made Captain Cook tumble into the water in a kind of a bite by the side of the rock where the water is about knee deep; here he was followed by a crowd of people who endeavored to keep him under water, but struggling very strong with them he got his head up and looking towards the Pinnacle [a small cutter] which was not above a boat hook's length from him waved his hands to them for assistance, which it seems it was not in their power to give. The Indians got him under water again but he disengaged himself and got his head up once more and not being able to swim he endeavored to scramble on the Rock, when a fellow gave him a blow on the head with a large club and he was seen alive no more. They now kept him under water, one man sat on his shoulders and beat his head with a stone while others beat him with clubs and stones, they then hauled him up dead on the rocks where they stuck him with their daggers, dashed his head against the rock and beat him with clubs and stones, taking a savage pleasure in using every barbarity to the dead body; as soon as one had stuck him another would take the instrument out of his body and give him another stab."

In captain James Cook's *Endeavour* there were a number of scientists, including botanists and doctors,—and including missionaries. When he arrived at Australia the aborigines of Sydney were the first to become objects of scrutiny and scientific analysis. Descriptions of these people were often derogatory, coloured by the complex of superiority of the white race. The entire reasoning that was present in these studies was the assumption of backwardness of the natives; add to that one single concern, the missionary concern, to civilize them. "The dominant scientific discourse which informed these descriptions of Aborigines was The Great Chain of Being which arranged all living things in a hierarchy, beginning with the simplest creatures, ascending through the primates to man. From the 17th century it became the practice to distinguish between different types of man, with European men at the top of the chain." Coupled with this attitude was the Darwinian Survival of the Fittest, which led to the Aborigines Evidence Bill in 1844. The argument went to the extent that, in a Court of Justice, the chattering of the Ourang-Outang could well be taken as evidence in the defence of this 'savage race'. Any number of draconian policies were introduced. The children of the aborigines were forcefully taken and their language and traditional practices banned; christianizing them was one undertaking to save the oafish tribes. The fact that the Sydney aborigines farmed the waters around Sydney Harbour and surrounding rivers, and maintained kangaroo feeding grounds was pushed aside from the objective datum of the western scientific methodology. "The Eora and Cadigal people traded with other Aboriginal groups, maintained ancient religious, social and political systems, which included complex cosmological and botanical information. And Sydney Aborigines did not die out as foretold by Darwinists, evidenced through the strong and proud Eora and Cadigal descendants still living and working in the Sydney area." (An Internet write-up)

The story of Spanish colonization is as much a story of fearless adventure as of gruesome exploitation. Driven further by the missionary spirit, we see the supplantation of native cultures where it occurred. The friars of the Society of Jesus were extremely effective and stamped the European mark wherever they went. It was also another mode of promoting the interests of an expanding empire. In this pursuit even martyrdom was joyously accepted. Spanish conquistadors displayed arrogance and cruelty which were no worse than the Muslim spirit of invasion and plundering that went through the dark stridency of the mediaeval centuries. Colonization affected profoundly the behaviour of the natives. New economic classes came into existence. But unfortunately the knowledge of nature that had come to them through direct contact with the world of men and beast and birds and leaves was getting lost. "Disease, warfare, enslavement, evangelization, and cultural domination" meant the demise of indigenous society. Exploiting the native labour and extracting surplus production was the sordid depressing order of the day. "Villages were occupied during the cultivation season. These villages were usually circular, possibly palisaded, with a wattle and daub thatched hut for each nuclear family. In the fall and winter the villagers dispersed into smaller groups for specialized hunting and gathering, moving about to take advantage of localized resources... Archaeological evidence indicates that these small groups shared foodstuffs, especially deer, in a reciprocal manner. The matrilineal social organization and method of reckoning chiefly succession formed a stabilizing force in the community. Clan knowledge was transmitted through the generations; some of the transmission would have been from mother, or mother's sister to child, along a matrilineage. Households were the primary unit of production, and women made important contributions to the economic subsistence base, complementing men's subsistence contributions. Most likely, women gained personal, publicly recognized status, through their productive activities, just as the men gained (some) status through warfare or hunting. Considerable amounts of materials were probably produced by women." (Ruth Troccoli in an Internet write-up) But the colonial policies of avarice destroyed the old order completely.

In this crudity of colonization coming in a more aggressive manner with the advancement of science and industry is the unfortunate loss of knowledge of things that is brought to us by the intimate association with life and nature. Take the case of Mesoamerica's great cities. Stout Cortez with eagle eyes staring at the Pacific, immortalized by Keats in his sonnet on Chapman's Homer, subjected the Aztec Empire of Mexico to his sway. With that dark invading flood also got dissolved its ceremonial centers. Even as the Spaniards scoured the land for gold, life in Mesoamerica changed forever. What was left behind was a christianized world suffering with "European diseases such as smallpox, measles, and typhus." Hernando Cortez won the esteemed Spanish *Encomienda*. No wonder, for having performed a notable service to the King of Spain, the *encomendero* had the right to exact tribute from the Native Indians of America.

In a perceptive portrayal of Orlando belonging to the American Southwest, Kati Widmer writes in her intimate travelogue as follows: "Tribal myths that survived the past in the background of rocks, plants, buildings and sites cropping up under that burning

sun—it all came alive because of Orlando. In his own particular manner, through the words he spoke and the way he moved in and out of his narration, he expanded our horizons and lifted us into a happy communion with him and the environment he knew and explained. Because of him, his people and their circumstances became a little more real for us, our perception of them grew clearer.” (*Mother India*, February 2002) This is the place where people feel nature as their Mother and they as her children. The waterfalls are full of life and the expanses of sage ravish the senses. There is contentment, there is peace, and there is the happy company of friends and trees and wild animals.

“In our travels,” continues Kati Widmer, “we visited some of the settlements of the Native American people and glimpsed through the apparent into the spirit of their lives. They manage casinos and continue the tradition of their exquisite pottery, jewellery and leatherwork. The buffaloes are gone and so are the vast expanses where their ancestors revered and heeded Nature. Yet, the land still breathes sanctity felt even when seen through our foreign and unaccustomed eyes.” The Natives make use of sage in many ways and burn the dried branches in rituals of prayer and worship. The pueblos of these people are full of life and are a perfect expression of some deep underlying harmony behind existence. But alas! Our modernity has lost something simple and precious.

That the tribal knowledge of things was born from the robust instinct of life should come as a strong pointer to the modern mind, that there could also be other methods of learning about men and matter apart from the approach of rational science. This should come like a waft of fresh breeze particularly when we see the disasters we have created ourselves. Let us take a couple of examples before we explore such a possibility.

In their book *Asking the Earth* Winin Pereira and Jeremy Seabrook bring a remarkable insight into the world that is fast disappearing. The invasion of civilization has brought to us a tragic gain of values making now our lives abstract and cyber-packed. The intimacy, even an identity that gives knowledge of the country-field is fast disappearing. Those who worship Hirva, the Green, are dismissed as uneducated, superstitious, gullible, naive, even barbaric at times. To highlight our flaunting urbanity we call Adi (Original) Vasis (Inhabitants) Natives of the Land who know not the comforts and fruits of education-science-technology-commerce. Here is one intimate portrayal of one such tribe. “Adivasis are considered the original inhabitants of India. They were—and often still are—believed to be ‘primitive tribals’ by the ‘civilized mainstream’, a classification that has rationalized the oppression of the Adivasis. However, in spite of the invading ‘civilization’, they still live in a manner that has sustained them for millennia. Nature in the form of tropical forests is [bountiful and] beautiful, but Adivasis use its products sparingly.” The Warlis north of Mumbai call themselves the Kings of the Jungles. They have survived long epochs of time in harmony with their surroundings and without oppressing others. But we have killed the Albatross and do not know how to redeem our sin. (Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner*)

Many Warlis, report our authors, do not know how to read or write but they have a vast store of consistent knowledge, orally handed down from parents to children for countless generations. Raji, a twelve-year-old girl, knows the names of over a hundred

herbs, shrubs and trees and their varied uses. Many of these supplement her basic diet of cereals and pulses with essential proteins, vitamins and minerals. She knows which plants are a source of fibre, which are good for fuel and lighting, which have medicinal uses. She knows how to get crabs out of their holes and how to trap fish. She can catch wild hare, quail and partridges and locate birds' nests. Watching Krishna tend his herd is instructive. As he drives them to the *nalla* for a drink, he darts to look at a flower, observes a bird building its nest, tries to catch a dragonfly, picks ripe *karandi* berries, exchanges information with his friends similarly occupied, bursts into a song of his own composition and interrupts it to shout at a straying cow in a language that it seems to understand. When paddy was attacked Lahanu suggested putting the leaves of a wild tree, *khair*, in the channel through which the water flowed into the field. He didn't have to use chemical pesticides. The Warlis locate water by observing land crabs. The mounds of wet mud that crabs excavate and leave around their holes indicate the presence of water below. Ladku the wise elderly man of the tribe says that animals which have worked hard for years should not be sold for slaughter since they are entitled to a leisured old age. They are therefore freed to move about as they please. The Warlis are able to diagnose several diseases and have herbal medicines for them. Sores on cattle are treated with the leaves of *sitaphal* or *karela*, the seeds of *palas*, or the tubers of *kovli bhaji*. Raghu was walking along a road through a jungle when a *ghorpad* (monitor lizard), more than a metre long, ran across it. The flesh of these reptiles is a favourite food but catching one by chasing it is next to impossible. Raghu simply gave a peculiar low whistle and the *ghorpad* stopped moving and waited to be caught. Ramji catches freshwater prawns up to 20 cm long with a remarkable efficiency of labour. He puts a mixture of bark and leaves of three plants in the holes and the stupefied prawns come out to the entrance. Savitri spends up to half a day collecting fuel for her daily needs. She knows which kind of fuel to collect without causing harm to the forest. Chintu impales a number of kernels of *chandrajyoti* seeds on a thin twig and has an instant torch. But now it is more economical to sell the seeds and buy kerosene, a non-renewable resource! Vasanti has knowledge about herbal medicines because her father was a *bhagat*, who is more than a doctor; in addition to medical practice he transmits myths and legends of people. The way of preserving wisdom of the Warlis is to learn from them and return to them what has been learned.

What we see in the north of Mumbai also happens in other parts of India, indeed, in all the parts of the ancient world. Take the example of herbal medicines. Traditional Indian medicine uses 7000 plants. *Sushruta Samhita* describes seven ways of purifying water. In those days the author Sushruta was not aware of microbiology. The *Samhita* also discusses about 72 diseases of the eye. It stipulates drug therapy for various types of conjunctivitis and glaucoma along with surgical procedures of the removal of cataract, pterygium, diseases of ear, nose and throat. In our humility we have to simply ask the question as to how this fund of knowledge was obtained by the ancients. Perhaps that may shed true light on our pursuit of knowledge of the physical as well as the natural world. Let us appreciate such a possibility by going through the vast compendium of understanding that has come through tradition.

“Indian medicine is traditionally plant based. The most ancient of Indian religious writings contain prescriptions and formulae, as well as invocations and prayers that address the healing plants themselves. The medicinal plants of India became famous throughout Asia. The great classic of Chinese herbal medicine lists over 8,000 formulae, most of them plant based, a greater range of plants than has ever been used in any other system of medicine. Essential oils have been used in Egypt since the time of the pharaohs. There are records on clay tablets of cedar wood and cypress being imported into Egypt. Cedar wood and myrrh were both used very effectively in the embalming process, biochemical research has now shown that cedar wood oil contains a strong fixative, and that myrrh is an excellent antiseptic and antibacterial oil. The oils were also used in other spheres of life. Cleopatra is said to have harnessed the power of rose oil in order to blind Mark Antony with her charms. Egyptian high priests recorded what they knew about the oils on papyrus and their knowledge forms part of the basis of modern aromatherapy. Babylonian doctors recorded their prescriptions on clay tablets but, unlike the Egyptians, they did not record what quantities to use. What they did record was what time of day the preparations should be prepared and used, usually at sunrise. The ancient Greeks gained much of their knowledge of essential oils from the Egyptians, but they also acknowledged that the aroma of certain flowers could be either uplifting or relaxing. They used olive oil in their effleurage processes. The Greek physician Hippocrates, who was revered as the father of medicine, refers to a vast number of medicinal plants in his writings. Many Greek physicians were employed by the Romans, and through them the use of medicinal plants gradually spread around the ancient world. The Romans used essential oils for pleasure, to perfume their hair, bodies, and clothes, as well as for pain relief. After the fall of Rome many physicians fled to Constantinople, taking their knowledge with them. Here the works of the great Graeco-Roman physicians, such as Galen and Hippocrates, were painstakingly translated into Arabic and their knowledge spread throughout the Arab world.”

But what we learn from the tribal people inhabiting the north of Mumbai is the close and dependable knowledge they get straight from nature. Can we have access to it? If it is worthwhile and is something in the character of the wholesomeness and harmony of life, should we not try to look into its methodology? The gain will be entirely ours,—even to the extent that we may remove its shortcomings. The witchcraft and the quackery and the black magic and the worship of dubious gods of the vital world that can go at times with it could be removed. While the green raw instincts of life can be quite misleading, the danger ensuing from them can possibly be avoided by summoning to our aid higher intuitive faculties. In this connection it is interesting as well as educative to be aware of what S. Radhakrishnan brings to our attention about Saint Bernard’s method of acquiring knowledge: “What I know of the divine sciences and Holy Scripture, I learnt in woods and fields. I have had no other masters than the beeches and the oaks.” (*The Principal Upanishads*, fn., p. 411) Adivasis have that in their own way.

Which means that there is good hope of our seeing the real meaning and significance of some of the utterances of the Upanishads. Let us take the very second verse of the

Chhandogya Upanishad. Sri Aurobindo renders it as follows: "...herbs of the fields are the essence of the waters; man is the essence of the herbs." (*The Upanishads*, SABCL, Vol. 12, p. 385) The herbs have come from the spirit and in their coming is the prospect of man's arrival. Not therefore just the ecological relationship between man and nature, the symbiotic give and take, but a deeper harmony and progressive mutuality is the essence of truer growth. "Repair to the forest," *vanam vrajet*, was the injunction of the ancient days. The advocacy of the third stage of life, Vanaprastha, of retiring to the woods after fulfilling the worldly obligations, thus comes to us with another profundity.

In this context we may well remember what Satyakama gained from the earnestness of his quest in the Chhandogya Upanishad. It provides us a possible method of approach also. We may briefly narrate it following Nolini Kanta Gupta. (*Collected Works, Vedic Hymns*, Vol. 8) Satyakama was the son born of an illicit relationship, but was an ardent seeker of spiritual knowledge. That took him to Rishi Gautama. After the ceremony of initiation was duly performed, the Rishi picked up four hundred lean and worn-out cows and handed them over to Satyakama. The student was asked to take them away and return only when they became one thousand in number. He looked after them well and in this way several years passed. When the prescribed number was reached, all on a sudden a Bull appeared out of the herd. He told Satyakama that the time to return to the Rishi's hermitage had come. But, in the meanwhile, he told him something about the knowledge of the Eternal. He said that the four directions are the first aspect of the Eternal. Then appeared Agni. He told Satyakama that earth, mid-air, heaven, and ocean are the second aspect of the Eternal. As homeward Satyakama drove the kine, at the eventide appeared the Swan who spoke to him about the third aspect of the Eternal, consisting of the fire, the sun, the moon, and the lightning. Then on the last occasion appeared the Flamingo*. He gave him the knowledge of the fourth aspect of the Eternal, of the Life-force, the Eyes, the Ears, and the Mind. The Rishi received Satyakama and was happy to see his face shining with the knowledge of the Eternal.

Such is the efficacy, the power of communion with Nature. We must throw away our colonialised mentality and seek even the secular knowledge in the true spirit of a seeker.

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

* The Cormorant is the symbol of the Divine as it moves in the triple universe of air, land and water.

THE WIND IN THE TREES

At the window I lean,
And my heart is a mist.
'Tis a whispering scene,
Where all was whist!

Whist and still was the garden; but now a breeze
Takes the tree-tops all, the whispering trees;
Makes of verdure music and shakes dead silence to life,—
O silence that tombs at my heart, without hope, without strife!

Sighing, the stair
I slowly descend.
Strayed pilgrims so fare
Who roam without end.

Down the ghostly staircase, where her lost tread
Haunts my heart with the music of days that are dead,
My own step daunts me with echoes down through the gloom,—
O echoing dusk at my heart that aches with her empty room!

Out in the garden,
Where flowers seem amiss,
I hear it sigh "pardon"
To be what it is.

Swaying, the branches above me seem one long sigh.
O tremendous wash of sound that pauses to die,
They have eased their sad hearts out on the swell of the breeze,—
O tremblings of deep-drawn sighs that hurt and never give ease.

Sighing, I wonder
Up at green leaves,
To see them grow fonder
With the gust that bereaves.

On the very breeze that shakes them, which ere it is done
Robs their lovely thousands, and one by one
Makes them whirl to the ground in yellowing sheaves,—
O gust at whose dance my heart in a passion of mystery grieves.

Whence has it blown,
Invisible death,
From the blue unknown?
It is life, it is breath

Unto them; for the whole bough quivering blows one way,
 Rippling ecstasy takes to dance with the gay,
 Unseen freshness, that whirls the drooping foliage, awake,—
 O whirl at my own sad heart that asks to be still and break!

MANMOHAN GHOSE

(Songs of Love and Death, 1926)

SHIVA IN THE CITY

THE blue of the sky and the blue of the snow
 Merges in the blue of his immobile form.
 Amidst the crowded peaks seeking refuge among clouds
 His lone faithful friend is a pale crescent moon.

Over the smoke-filled sleepless roads
 The city buses move as in a depressing nightmare.
 But mind filled with him knows no other thoughts
 Save the placid features of his calm brooding face.

I wished to tell those hurrying feet and panting breaths,
 That somewhere, sits someone—matted locks
 And ash besmeared; whose nude form the snow
 Cannot benumb; whose ageless meditation
 The gusty winds cannot disturb; if thoughts of him
 Sieve through our mind, enter each cell; make us aware of
 The grandeur of his meditation's ageless rest

Alone, he calls the world to nestle in him.
 Take his name, softly; for he disdains the crowd's roar
 Watch the miracle happen, mutely; for no one else shall know.

K. N. VIJU

SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY

Biographical

SRI AUROBINDO was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. In 1879, at the age of 7 he was taken with his two elder brothers to England for education and lived there for 14 years. Brought up at first in an English family at Manchester, he joined St. Paul's School in London in 1885, and in 1890 went from it with a senior classical scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he studied for two years and took a first class in classical tripos. In 1890 he passed the open competition for the Indian Civil Service but at the end of two years probation failed to present himself at the riding examination and was disqualified for the service. At this time the Gaekwar of Baroda was in London. Aurobindo saw him and obtained an appointment in the Baroda Service and left England in February 1893.

Sri Aurobindo passed 13 years from 1893 to 1906 in the Baroda State Service first in the Revenue Department and in secretariat work for the Maharaja, afterwards as Professor of English and finally Vice-Principal in the Baroda College. These were years of self-culture, of literary activity,—for much of his poetry afterwards published from Pondicherry was written at this time—and of preparation for his future work.

In England he had received, according to his father's express instructions, an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East.

At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages, assimilated the spirit of Indian civilization and its forms, past and present. A great part of the last years of this period was spent on leave in silent political activity; for he was debarred from public action by his position at Baroda. The outbreak of the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave him the opportunity to give up the Baroda service and join openly in the political movement. He left Baroda in 1906 and went to Calcutta as Principal of the newly-founded Bengal National College.

“Bandemataram”

Sri Aurobindo hoped to capture the Congress and make it the directing centre of an organized national action, an informal state within the state which would carry on the struggle for freedom till it was won. He persuaded the party to take up and finance as its recognized organ the newly-founded daily paper “Bandemataram.” During its brief but momentous existence it changed the political thought of India, which has ever since preserved fundamentally, even amidst its later developments, the stamp then imparted to it. But the struggle initiated on these lines, though vehement and eventful and full of importance for the future, did not last long at the time; for the country was still unripe for so bold a programme.

Sri Aurobindo was prosecuted for sedition in 1907 and acquitted. Till now an organizer and a writer, he was obliged by this bent and by the imprisonment or

disappearance of other leaders to come forward as the acknowledged head of the party in Bengal, to appear on the platform for the first time as a speaker. He presided over the nationalist conference at Surat in 1907, where the Congress was broken to pieces.

In May 1908 he was arrested in the Alipore Conspiracy case as implicated in the doings of the revolutionary group led by his brother Barindra; but no evidence of any value could be established against him and in this case too he was acquitted. After a detention of one year as under-trial prisoner in the Alipore Jail, he came out in May, 1909 to find the party organization broken, its leaders scattered by imprisonment, deportation or self-imposed exile and the party itself still in existence but dumb and dispirited and incapable of any strenuous action.

Almost a year he strove single-handed as the sole remaining leader of the nationalists in India to lead the movement. He published at this time a weekly English paper, the *Karmayogin*, and a Bengali weekly, the *Dharma*. At last he was compelled to recognise that the nation was not yet sufficiently trained to carry out his policy and programme. For a time he thought that the necessary training must first be given through a less advanced Home Rule movement or an agitation of passive resistance of the kind created by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. But he saw that the hour of these movements had not come and that he himself was not their destined leader. He resolved therefore to withdraw from the political field at least for a time.

Retirement from Politics

In February, 1910 he withdrew to a secret retirement at Chandernagore and in the beginning of April sailed for Pondicherry in French India.

A third prosecution was launched against him at this moment for a signed article in the *Karmayogin*; but, for the third time, a prosecution against him failed.

Sri Aurobindo left Bengal with some intention of returning to the political field under more favourable circumstances; but very soon it appeared to him that the magnitude of the spiritual work he had taken up would need the exclusive concentration of all his energies. Eventually he cut off connection with politics, refused repeatedly to accept the presidentship of the National Congress and went into a complete retirement. During all his stay at Pondicherry from 1910 to his death he remained exclusively devoted to his spiritual work and his Sadhana.

In 1914, after four years of silent Yoga, he began the publication of a philosophical monthly, *The Arya*. Most of his more important works, those published since in book form, *The Upanishads*, *Essays on the Gita*, and others not yet published, *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*, appeared serially in *The Arya*. At this time also he began to publish his poems, both those written in England and those at Baroda. *The Arya* ceased publication in 1921 after six years and a half of uninterrupted appearance.

Sri Aurobindo lived at first in retirement at Pondicherry with four or five disciples. Afterwards more and more people began to come to him to follow his spiritual path and the number became so large that a community of 'Sadhaks' had to be formed for the

maintenance and collective guidance of those who had left everything behind for the sake of a higher life. This was the foundation of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, which had less been created than grown around him as its centre.

Sri Aurobindo began his practice of Yoga in 1905. He pressed on in search of a completer experience, uniting and harmonizing the two ends of existence—spirit and matter.

Ways of Yoga

Most ways of Yoga are paths to the beyond leading to the spirit and in the end away from life. The world is in this view or vision of things a life in ignorance with the inconscient as its base; but even in its darkness there are involved presence and possibilities of the divine. The created world is not a mistake or a vanity and illusion to be cast aside by the soul returning to heaven or *nirvana*, but the sense of spiritual evolution by which out of this material inconscience is to be manifested progressively the divine consciousness in things. Mind is the highest term yet reached in the evolution, but it is not the highest of which it is capable. There is above it a super-mind or eternal truth-consciousness, which is in its nature the self-aware and self-determining light of a divine knowledge. Mind is an ignorance seeking after truth, but this is a self-existent knowledge harmoniously manifesting the play of its forms and forces. It is only by the descent of this supermind that the perfection dreamed of by all that is highest in humanity can come. It is possible by opening to a greater divine consciousness to rise to this power of light and bliss, discover one's true self, remain in constant union with the divine and bring down the supermental force for the transformation of mind and life and body. To realize this possibility has been the dynamic aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

His Spiritual Philosophy

As most of the English educated Indians have lost close touch with their ancient tradition and its soul-inspiring wisdom, they more often than not are inclined to misunderstand a saint and a sage, who in keeping with the eternal ideal of soul-purification and spiritual evolution, has to follow a fixed and unalterable law of spiritual development. Every teacher has his own system of moral and spiritual discipline, though essentially all spiritual guides have a common goal and a well-planned system of self-control, self-analysis, self-abnegation and self-purification. There are certain points on which they are one, one of which is complete self-surrender to the Divine Will and His true representative in the outer world, the Guru to whom and through whom he looks up to and receives his instructions to tread the path safely and securely. Sri Aurobindo was one of those few teachers who had attained the spiritual height through their own self-effort and direct Divine grace. In his famous precious little book, *The Mother*, his exact words regarding the question of self-surrender are these:

“There must be a total and sincere surrender; there must be an exclusive self-opening

to the divine power.” Further he says, “The surrender must be total and seize all the parts of the being.” “You must keep the temple clean if you wish to install there the living presence.” On page 16 of the same book he says, “Let your sincerity and surrender be genuine and entire. When you give yourself, give completely, without demand, without condition, without reservation so that all in you shall belong to the Divine Mother, and nothing be left to the ego or given to any other power. The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will Grace and protection be with you.”

“No Mass Hypnotism”

Sri Raman Maharshi in his famous booklet *Who am I?* has on page 11 expressed the same fundamental principles in his own words, “God and Guru are in truth one and the same. If one resigns oneself up to the Guru, sure as anything one shall be saved: there will be no betrayal. But one should unquestioningly follow the path unto the Guru. Self-surrender unto God is the same as concentration on the Atma.”

Now, in the light of these basic principles of spiritual realization, if we carefully examine the lives of the *Sadhakas* living in the Pondicherry Ashram, we find that they are not living under a “mass hypnotism” as one Mr. Sumitra is pleased to call it, but under one common abiding inspiration of self-surrender and resignation to the one divine will, which is manifested through the Guru, to which services they have dedicated their lives, unconditionally and whole-heartedly. In Islamic phraseology this great event of initiation is called “Bayat”, which means selling oneself away to the spiritual guide unreservedly, keeping nothing of his own. Every act of unselfish service to the Guru or in other words God is an act of worship, prayerfulness. He works with his body, senses and mind without any regard for the fruit of his action.

His Rational Approach

This ancient method of God-realisation as practised in the Pondicherry Ashram is not novel and unique. Every school of mysticism, ancient or modern, has endorsed it. In fact, this is the price one has to pay for attaining one’s freedom from the galling limitations of physical life to the attainment of spiritual height. What we attain is priceless, immense and immeasurable. What we give in return for it is trifling, unreal.

Some unkind critics have doubted whether Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is entitled to be called philosophy at all and whether it is Indian in its conception or not. In reply to such critics all that we have to say is this: Do whatever you like, but do not look at Indian thought through Western eyes and spectacles. The object of philosophy in the East has always been not only the attainment and realization of Truth but to put an end to pain also. In the sphere of pure speculation Indian thinkers have not lagged behind any other thinkers. Sri Aurobindo in all his books and pamphlets has dealt with the problem of divine life in a sensible, rational and acceptable manner, being an adept both in the Eastern and in the Western Cultures and not being unaware that the Western ideals have dominated

the Indian mind to a great extent. He had tried his best in many of his writings to interpret ancient wisdom in terms of modern thought. His system of philosophy and method of self-realization are essentially Indian in technique and spirit. Nothing would be farther from the Truth than to say that his scheme of life divine was anything but Indian.

What he did for India

During his stay in Baroda his interest in India and her spiritual outlook had been awakened, which spurred him to migrate to his own native province and take part in the struggle for the freedom of his people and country. He started his political career from the time he took charge of the principalship of the National Council of Education. He launched *Bandemataram* on the turbulent sea of Indian politics and made it a powerful organ of his cherished goal of independence and freedom of India. Some of his writings were so misunderstood and misinterpreted by the bureaucratic Government that under one pretext or another he was imprisoned in the Alipore Jail for about a year, where he had complete leisure to meditate deeply and come to a wise and the most far-reaching decision of his life. While still in the Alipore Jail he had composed a few poems revealing the strength of his new-found faith. "He had become there the sort of man who could peep into Infinity."

Sri Aurobindo had spent fourteen years in a foreign land and he had been both amused and edified by the civilization of the West; but in the end he had found it uninspiring and insufficient. In the central core of the Western civilization he found darkness rather than light. "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?"

On his return to the country of his birth he ever kept alive in his mind the ideal of service to the Motherland.

In one of his speeches he declared: "When I approached God at that time I had hardly had a living faith in Him. I did not feel His presence. Yet something drew me to the truth of the Vedas. I felt there must be a mighty truth somewhere in this Yoga, a mighty truth in this religion based on the Vedanta."

Not Personal Salvation

He did not ask for "Mukti", personal salvation. He fervently prayed to God in these touching words:

"If Thou art, then Thou knowest my heart. I do not ask for anything that others ask for. I ask only for strength to uplift this nation, I ask only to be allowed to live and work for this people whom I love and to whom I pray that I may devote my life."

It may be added that in the light of this deep-seated conviction of his in regard to the service of his people and his country there was no conflict or wavering in him between Yoga and politics; when he started Yoga, he carried on both without any idea of opposition between them. If by politics he meant the struggle for the freedom of a country, its economic, moral and spiritual betterment, then it must be acknowledged without the

least doubt in our minds that Sri Aurobindo, unlike other Yogis of India, had always striven in his own silent but powerful way to work for the salvation of his Motherland. He had always had a deep and abiding faith in the future destiny of India which was pre-ordained to play a great part in moulding the spiritual tone of the world-civilization and making it more human, refined and edifying than it had been heretofore.

India's Freedom

India's freedom was pre-ordained. Those who worked and still continue working in conscious co-operation with the Divine Will were fully convinced of her final victory, because without her freedom India could not possibly play her mighty role as the spiritual guide and teacher of the world.

Exalted Height

Speaking about the Exalted Height to which we have to ascend to meet the Supreme Grace, Sri Aurobindo says:

“The call upon us is to grow into the image of God, to dwell in him and with him and be a channel of his joy and might and an instrument of his works. Purified from all that is Asubha (evil), we have to act in the world as dynamos of that Divine Electricity and send it thrilling and radiating through mankind, so that wherever one of us stands, hundreds around may become full of his light and force, full of God and full of Ananda. Churches, theologies, philosophies have failed to save mankind because they have buried themselves with intellectual creeds, dogmas, and institutions...as if these could save mankind, and have neglected the one thing needful, the power and purification of the soul.”

Sri Aurobindo emphasized the necessity of “a resurrection of the soul” as the panacea for the malady to which humanity is subjected at the present time.

He had the credit of the triple distinction of poet, politician and philosopher. His writings—philosophical and poetic—are Indian in spirit, but Western in rhythm and colour. There is the freshness of originality tempered with personal experience and not the “vapourings” of a man cut off from reality.

Sri Aurobindo typifies the Indian tradition in his final renunciation of the world (but being in it), first a politician then a poet-cum-philosopher and ultimately a Messenger of God.

Highlights of His Philosophy

The highlights of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy are (1) its high conception of the destiny of man and of the universe, (2) its incorrigible optimism, (3) its cosmic view of salvation, (4) its integral view of Yoga, and (5) its conception of the Superman. On each of these points it is possible to write volumes and yet have the feeling that one has only touched

the fringe of the subject.

His Conception of Man

To my mind the most refreshing feature of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is the high status he has given to the world and the grand conception which he has presented of the future of man. It is this feature of his philosophy which is best calculated to inspire men's minds with hope, and that is why it is necessary today, when human civilization is passing through a crisis, the like of which it has never experienced before, to study it a little carefully.

Man is destined to rise to the status of the Superman. The Superman is an evolutionary necessity. But what is the Superman? As we all know, the honour of being the first to use the word "Superman", though not of being the first to introduce the idea connected with the term—for the idea of a race of higher beings is present in the literature of all countries and all ages, and is perhaps as old as mankind itself—belongs to the German philosopher Nietzsche.

But if Nietzsche is to be given credit for being the first to use the word "Superman", he must also be held responsible for lowering the idea of Superman and reducing it to that of an Asuric or Titanic man. The new race pictured by him may be stronger and more powerful, but it is certainly not "better" than the existing race of men. In fact, if anything, it is more ruthless and cruel.

It is, however, quite otherwise with Sri Aurobindo's conception of the Superman; for his Superman is the God-Man, the Gnostic Being, who excels man not in physical strength or in the power to rule and conquer, but in things of the spirit.

There is, however, this in common between Sri Aurobindo and Nietzsche, that they both emphasize the fact that if the world is really to be raised to a higher level, it can only be done by a new and higher race of men and through individual salvation of individual men.

The path of individual salvation was favoured by our ancient sages. Sri Aurobindo believes that individual salvation is not enough, as it cannot lead to a radical change in the universe, which is the goal of evolution. There is the need of the supermental descent into the earth-consciousness for the divinization of mankind. That, Sri Aurobindo says, is decreed, and that is the aim of his lifelong Sadhana.

M. HAFIZ SYED

(Courtesy: *Kalyana-Kalpataru*, March 1951, Vol. 16, pp. 517-23)

WHEN WILL THIS STOP?

IN school at recess
When I jump over the wall
I hear a shrill scream
That almost makes me fall.

“What have you done,
you naughty Child?
Why can't you be like a girl?
Sweet and quiet and mild.
I ask you now,
Please tell me why
You, instead of a girl,
Act like a boy?”

I stare at the teacher,
I'm feeling awful.
(I'm sure shouting like this
Isn't lawfull!)

GAYATRI LOBO GAJIWALA
(Age 12 years)

(Inspired by Ms. Pam teaching her to be a lady)

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

Encounters on the Sacred Greek Island of Patmos

From Gary's journal:

On a clear and fresh Aegean morning we began our trek to the Orthodox Christian nunnery near the south-western tip of this holy island of Patmos. The shadows were still quite dark in the donkey-wide lanes of the old hilltop village when we started threading our way along ancient walkways that lead downward and towards the open spaces beyond the village perimeter. Sometimes, as we rounded a steeply descending corner, we could see over a wall and catch a glimpse of the deep blue horizon-sea.

Greece is the most wonderful place to visit because of the light. Greek mornings in spring provide brilliant skies with dark blue seas and deep shadows on the snow-white dwellings that rival the day-brightness in tropical countries. We were feeling at home, for there is something very intimate that both Greece and India share: an obvious setting for the worship of Light.

The light from the sun, reflecting off the gently flickering sea, conveys a sense of things in the Greek sky that is beyond clarity; it is Divine. As we walked, there was an abrupt change from shady lane to bright sun. A parallel Pondicherry experience in early February makes one feel at home and refreshed; there is much similar in the Nature experience of Greece and southern India, even though their latitudes are quite apart.

Hora, the main town of the island of Patmos is built up on a hill and it is criss-crossed with throughways that are but short tunnels weaving through it. With ceilings still made out of wood and mud, they allow us to pass through what were once parts of the fortress's walls. In medieval times, the Venetians and Franks and other European powers occupied the mainland and Greek islands; a walk through the town is a walk through a centuries-old fortress establishment. Even the way up from the small port was the road that John the Apostle had used. He lived in a cave, halfway up the cobblestone bridle path to the present Christian Monastery of Patmos, and there he wrote his *Apocalypse*, the Revelation tale of the Bible. One wonders where he had lived psychologically to write such a dreadful Christian prophecy while in the midst of this heaven-on-earth Nature setting.

The air remained cool on the island until the sun rose to about sixty degrees in the sky, at around ten in the morning this time of the year. It was not yet seven o'clock as the small golden valley beneath the town came into view. We arrived at a small church and sat in the courtyard to rest and enjoy the view of the island peninsula in the distance.

Golden tinted in early sun, the steep and high island tip gave Mother Nature a soft graciousness; visible from where we sat, it supported a tiny chapel atop it. The Greeks, like the Indians, place temples in the godliest physical surroundings. Even the small church in whose courtyard we were now sitting was wonderfully placed for the view. So marvellous was the sight that one could not help but feel the beauty of this moment bring to life the Vedic symbolism of Nature as divine.

We left the small flat flagstone viewpoint to follow a path towards the road at the base of the valley. A mosaic of centuries old stonewalls framed each field with a distinctive picture look, and the pathway wove in between them; wild flowers sprouted out of them. At shoulder level the walls allowed a perspective that reminded us of the vastness-horizon, ...*the eye of the Vast Truth*... in Vedic symbolism, and a view of Nature as the Mother.

As the descent took us closer and closer to the valley bottom, the two hills on either side looked ever more awesome in the streaking sunlight. They were like the sentinels through whom we would have to pass to journey to the monastery for ladies, above island cliffs not yet visible.

The whitewashed buildings of a small farmhouse nearby were stark against fields of green and the blue of the sky. Then, around a curve, a shepherd with a small herd of sheep came into view. The animals were nibbling the fresh spring grass along the roadside as their elderly owner leaned against a high wall. His staff stood straight and long beside him as he rested with crossed arms.

‘Kalimera,’¹ he called out to us, in the culturally Greek singsong manner of contentment. His large eyes were sparkling in the spring sunlight and, along with his long moustache, expressed his traditional culture. His life as a Greek farmer was good enough to give him the leisure of spending a day with his sheep.

A young dog started yapping as we drew near, and jumped up and down on the other side of the rockwalled drain, beside his owner and the grazing sheep. A short Greek conversation with Ekaterini² occurred, and I stopped to await its completion, to share in their feelings. Their melodious language sang in conversation as they happily returned to the days of Socrates and Plato, using the same words and idioms upon which Western civilisation is based. The puppy did not stop for a moment; it kept on jumping and yapping in our direction as if trying to tell us something.

The shepherd gave Kati directions as to where to turn off the road for the Nunnery and how to follow a path down to the rocky beach below. Kati and I started off again with the determined puppy echoing each step. She could tell when I looked over my shoulder at the short, yet somewhat longhaired dog, that I was curious as to its determination.

Reading my mind she stated, ‘The herdsman said, “The dog is expressing joy.” He said other things as well, but in terms of his yet-to-be-trained sheep-dog, it is expressing joy at seeing us.’

Immediately, my North American education broke into the mind and repeated, ‘Expressing its joy? The dog is expressing joy at seeing us?’ What a distinctly Eastern framework I thought. The expression of joy is so much a part of his life, that he sees the dog living it as well. Prehistoric Greece remains alive in the language and symbols of Her modern society, marking a parallel to those same spiritual nuances of ancient Vedic India.

However, my surprise at the idea of a dog expressing joy reflected the content of modern and scientific North American education. My schoolteachers would never have

1. Greek for ‘Good morning’.

2. The full Greek name of Kati.

accepted such a suggestion that animals could be conscious in their own way of universal things that we (as the human species) experience. I rather liked this new perspective that Greek culture was providing.

...So Gary felt and wrote and I very well remember my amusement then, also his question marks and exclamations, as we resumed our walk: '*Really!* The dog is expressing joy in seeing *us*? Really? The *dog*?'

It was his second visit to Greece and by now I had become accustomed to find that everything sent him into a mode of surprise and wonderment—the people and their attitudes towards life, their demeanour and mind-set in approaching it. I was amused but I was also given the opportunity to view my own approach, as it did not differ much from that of my country-folk.

Yes, the puppy *was* happy, yes, the puppy *was* joyful and, yes again, the puppy *was* expressing it in the best way it could, uncontrollable tail wagging included! What's so strange about *that*?

I was as surprised and bemused as Gary was, although for a different reason.

We walked on. The day was glorious and the puppy happy. The island unfolded itself softly under our feet. Bouncing almost, I could hardly wait to reach the nunnery that had so impressed me the previous year, when I had visited the island alone. Finally, as we turned around a curve, there it was, bathed in the fresh light, with the sea as backdrop. Through the cast iron gate we could see an abundance of flowers blooming in the courtyard.

It was as beautiful, welcoming and peaceful as I had remembered it.

Gary and I went into the compound and enquired about Sister Anthousa, the nun I had met the year before and with whom I had been corresponding since. She and I had felt an instant bond and a mutual liking and, with the spontaneity of recognition, we had sat on the hewn rock that served as a bench at the entrance. We had introduced ourselves and had put aside social and polite complications; we had acted as we felt: soul sisters meeting on the Path. Somewhere deep inside we had known each other and, as we had sat on the bench, that day our friendship felt continuing rather than starting. Sister Anthousa had been on gate-duty that afternoon and the chanting would still take a little while to start.

It had been Easter Tuesday and I had been told not to miss vespers at the ladies' Monastery, for it was famous for its choir. As people had streamed by and into the chapel, Anthousa and I had set out exploring each other's inner geography and findings.

Then in her sixties, she had once been a high school teacher before she had opted for an early retirement and 'a new start in life' in the monastery, as she put it. She had been there for several years already. Her natural devotion blended perfectly with the good education she had had and the two made a very fine combination. Her thoughts were structured, yet her understanding did not derive from the mind's grey cells only. Deep and genuine feelings had surfaced regularly during that first meeting and her observations had been acute; she had the certainty of direct perception.

Our outward differences in pursuing inner needs had not bothered her nor had she given them much value. Mental debates and speculations were clearly unworthy to her; she would rather trust her heart. Feeling the same way, I had moved along with her and our exchange had been so refreshing that I had found myself opening up to her like the buds nearby in the sun.

Our conversation had been easy and effortless. Her surprise at my living in India (in an Ashram!) had given way to her natural curiosity and interest. She had wanted to know why I had gone so far, what was it that I had discovered there. What was it that my soul had found helpful to guide it and quench its thirst? I had told her and she had listened with an almost scientific attentiveness. She had understood it all and had even contributed with personal examples of similarities she had perceived and experienced in her own seekings. She had had a little difficulty with the concept of man as a transitional being, but with the Fire in the heart she had none.

It was almost with reluctance when we had broken up to attend vespers.

The choir could not be seen; the sisters had been at a higher level, above and behind the congregation and their chanting had descended from above. Down it poured, in choral streams of soprano and contralto voices tied into perfection and unison. Hymns I remembered from childhood reached my ears and touched me deeply. Unlike other churches, the Greek Orthodox Church does not encourage the use of musical instruments; it is the human voice alone that reaches for divinity.

It was late afternoon and the sun was low; angled golden shafts had entered through the western windows and brought the icons and the frescoes on the walls to life. The chapel was unlike any other I had been in. In it the sisters had achieved a harmony similar to the musical notes that were then filling it up. Fine embroidery dressed the altar and the icons and the wall-frescoes vibrated with fresh and vibrant colours—so unusual in an Orthodox church.

For the past twenty years or so, as Sister Anthousa had pointed out earlier, the nunnery had been undergoing a kind of a Renaissance; there had been an increase in the spiritual needs and people in Greece were seeking means that would, somehow, fulfil them. Monasteries that had seen the sum total of their inmates dwindling for decades were being filled up again. The interesting part was that the newcomers were mainly well-educated professionals who, like her, had opted for and sought a deeper mode of expression; a large number of intellectual as well as artistically-inclined women had flocked into this nunnery at Patmos. Perhaps it was because of its natural setting, of the strongly felt 'presence' of the Goddess, of the feeling that the Mother was 'holding' the island—a fact I had well sensed myself. The nunnery itself was devoted to Panagia, the All-Sacred Mary, mother of the Son of Man.

For thousands of years Patmos has been an important centre of worship; a temple to the Greek Goddess Artemis had stood where the Monastery of St. John's Apocalypse stands for the last thousand years. Columns and stones from that ancient temple were used to build the monastery and the odd inscriptions of the Old Faith are still seen carved on them—their messages refreshingly timeless in their tolerance and acceptance of a

Divine, a tolerance and acceptance unknown to today's dividing creeds.

The beauty of the chapel was a result of the labour of its artist inmates.

Sister Parthena was a well-known and promising artist before she gave herself to the All-Sacred-One. She had studied with some great artists and her paintings had been admitted to the National Gallery in Athens. She was at the zenith of her creativity and success when she decided to 'start her life anew' at the nunnery and, after the required apprenticeship, she had donned the nun's habit. Her aspirations were depicted in the frescoes and icons that had enchanted me.

The Orthodox iconography traditionally presents its saints with austere, dry and grave faces; it equates the expression of pain and suffering with devotion and inner sacrifice. Although she did not deviate from this age-long heritage of her trade, Sister Parthena imbued her icons with a closer and more intimate freshness; there was joy of life in the colours she used and the faces she painted. A celebration of Life came forth, not the traditional denial of it. Sin, punishment of the flesh and that pronounced distance between the petty unworthy human and a-removed-from-this-world-God were dismissed—almost defiantly.

During the rest of my stay on the island, I had visited the nunnery regularly. It had become part of my life there, and an important one at that. Conversation with Sister Anthousa had been its highlights and it was only natural that our friendship's exchange continued through letters, when I returned home to Pondicherry and India. It was even more natural that I would visit again next time I was in Greece and that was why Gary and I were here now.

Sister Anthousa came towards us with open arms and heart. Her welcome was deep and its ease contagious. For Gary's benefit, she very kindly showed us the grounds. After a while, we left him to his own and his camera's resources. The Abbess, 'the Elder-One,' as Sister Anthousa called her, wished to meet me—for Sister Anthousa had told her we would be coming. I followed her, with a sense of apprehension: Why would the Abbess...

The word itself carried connotations of authority for me, a stiffness associated with the enclosure of religion. A keeper of doctrines I imagined, serious and restrained, with the aloofness of the righteous. I felt concerned and unwilling, unprepared—so unprepared that I was slow to relate to the introductions Sister Anthousa was making. Ignorant of the dress-hierarchy, I was only seeing yet another sister in the person we met on our way to meet the Elder-One. Finally, I was pulled into the reality of the moment: it was she herself, doe-eyed and round faced, smiling and welcoming, the Abbess I had dreaded!

Calm and beautiful, she put me at ease; her gaze was direct, clear and penetrating. She touched a chord deep within me and this she did with intimacy and goodness. To my astonishment, she was much younger than Sister Anthousa – mid-fifties, no more.

We let our eyes talk first. Recalling now our meeting, there are no details of it kept by the memory. If there were subjects broached, I must have found their importance minor—our meeting happened apart from verbal exchanges. As if by a pool of still deep waters, we let our beings commune as they would. When time came for me to take my

leave, the Abbess included a statement along with the usual farewell: ‘You are one of us; we are all one. Go to the Good.’

We went.

Again I followed Sister Anthousa and we did not talk till we reached the library. Apparently, the Abbess had given me permission to browse in it as I pleased and had previously requested. It was then that life at its most ordinary took over again—as if to re-establish itself, it became a challenge: we met the local priest on his way out.

A little caricature of a man, with a goatee beard that made him look like a goat—even his step, as he exited the library building, seemed to be taken on hooves. Unkempt and with an unjustified self-importance, he nodded at us indifferently, at once shattering all silence and oneness with a faint garlic-and-wine odour that reached my nostrils. I met his eyes and saw them darting, noisy. Instinctively, I sought cover behind Sister Anthousa; he wasn’t one I cared to meet. But she was used to him; after all, he was regularly there. He was the one who celebrated mass for them, as there are no women priests in the Greek Orthodox Church.

The sister casually explained my presence there, how far I had come from. He sneered, and his goatee became an even more pronounced part of his personality. To my embarrassment, I was almost in giggles—a goat of a man, no less!

He shrieked, although I had half-expected him to bleat: ‘Humph! India? All heathen there, lost sheep! I know, I know. She too. Bah!’

And he stomped off.

In an attempt to restore normalcy, Sister Anthousa walked over to her desk; the library was her actual place of work. From below the glass-top, she pulled out a large card. She had brought it from St. Ekaterini’s Monastery in Jerusalem, she explained, when she had been there a year earlier.

‘Come, take it,’ she said as she handed it to me.

St. Ekaterini, whose name I bear, looked calm and majestic in a rich red gown and crown. I looked at the card and thanked my friend, just as I took a deep-deep breath and tried to handle the provocation and disturbance I felt.

All that I had met in that single morning demanded attention. The absurdity of Greek reality (or was it universal *reality*?) had surfaced and I had to make an effort to meet it dispassionately. All of them, people and events, crowded my mind and I felt uneasy, thoughtful, perplexed; the religious rigidity I had run away from many years ago had caught up with me. The priest and his raging ignorant intolerance had caught me off-guard and shaken foundations in me that I thought I had built sound and sturdy.

I was no longer seeing the funny and the ridiculous; his base reaction had found and triggered corresponding base feelings—sure, I had buried them deep, yet now I could see their ugly heads rising. Leering, these feelings were gaining shape. They called in reason for assistance. Not only reason, history too. Even the saint on the postcard, my namesake, became a live and active part in their plots.

Wasn’t she part of the Church? She had been canonised by it, like so many other saints, and she was revered. She had died on the pyre as a martyr. Yet the ancestors of the

very people who revere her today had been hated and murdered by the faith she died for.

What right had the priest (any priest, any person, of any creed) to judge, manipulate, impose, monopolise? Why the hate, the murder, the drive for elimination? Why the separation, mistrust, thirsts for power and domination? Why always this sad unconscious dividing?

And there I paused: Unconscious. Dividing. Always.

I let the words grow. I watched them as they stirred slowly in me. Their meanings sought further planes in the being and they asked to be considered.

I took a long breath, slowly disentangling myself from what was clutching at me. I looked at the words: unconscious, dividing, always—and I sought their opposites.

There they were: Consciousness. Union.

Again, that morning's events and people flashed through the mind.

There had been the simple directness of the herdsman and his happy puppy, their self-contentment that needs only the most natural and elemental to exist. There had been Gary and his amusing puzzlement. There was the Abbess, filled with love and silence. And there, behind the desk, stood my sweet friend, soul sister on the Path—outwardly extending the love she felt and nourished in her heart.

Another breath—less deep, calmer. As if I had climbed onto higher grounds, there came a slow shift in my perception, a larger and more encompassing view. There *was* another perspective. Although people and events remained fundamentally the same, the ones that had bothered me no longer did so. Simple multiplicity was there, self-existent and separate from my own thoughts, reactions and preferences; looking closer, I saw particles—some of them prettier and more benevolent than others—all contributing to a reality of choices and of potentials.

Fastening them tight together there was love and hope too.

All the complications the critical mind had groped with and held against the heart melted away: so what if some want to hold onto creeds and faiths and separation? There are many others who do not. I came out of the cloud that had enveloped and disturbed my feelings by focussing on my friend; she had been talking and now she turned to the shelves in the library.

Breathing normally, I followed her once again, this time to find out about her own work and research, also of the library's system. For the next hour, she showed me and I looked and I learnt.

'Refreshments now,' beamed sweet Anthousa as we found Gary staring out through an arched window—the same window in the compound's wall I had often sat at to gaze out and meditate over the sea-expanse it framed.

A little later, we started our walk back. It was almost noon.

DEDICATION

I WILL weave a carpet of woodland fern,
In gold and silver lace,
And lay it low on the portal-stone
At the door of your dwelling-place.

When the mist has moved in lustral clouds
In the aisles of the cedar-glade,
I will offer you this woven skein
Of the gift your beauty made.

And in this gift, beneath your feet,
Will rest a part of me;
I am woven into the beauteous gleams
That awake in all I see.

Low will I rest below your door,
Where your feet would touch the earth,
To bear the weight of your glory down
To the dust where you take birth.

ROGER CALVERLEY

TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of June 2002)

Influences and Originality in their Early Prose and Poetry

BOTH the poets were born romantics and naturally they were drawn to poets like Keats, Shelley and Tennyson. For Sri Aurobindo, the schoolboy, it was just the European 'historical sense'. For Tagore, it was 'global' romanticism, a queer blend of Shelley, Vaishnav Padabali and Biharilal Chakraborty. Even in his teens, Tagore felt a cry within himself to grab something higher than himself, to get out of the bondage of the desires pulling him downwards. Nature was the key tune. He felt a keen intimacy with Nature, in fact keener than Wordsworth. He felt he was part of the plants and shrubs, the streams, the come-and-go of winds, the constellations, the numerous animals and birds. The outer made a stir inside. It was a cosmic consciousness, more Aurobindonian than Wordsworthian. Young Aurobindo could feel in another language the same vibrations in Nature. There were just memories of Keats and Tennyson and Wordsworth, but a new voice was clear from the very beginning. He claimed his originality very early in his life:

Mine is not Byron's lightning spear,
Nor Wordsworth's lucid strain
Nor Shelley's lyric pain,
Nor Keats', the poet without peer.
I by the Indian waters vast
Did glimpse the magic of the past...¹

But Sri Aurobindo was a vague Indian at school, although, I suspect, a strong sense of separation was there throughout his stay in England. *Love in Sorrow* confirms that he was homesick to a degree. The subjectivism of the following lines authenticate his early effort at writing original lyrics:

For there was none who loved me, no, not one.
Alas, what was there that a man should love?
For I was misery's last and frailest son
And even my mother bade me homeless rove.²

Bad poetry or good poetry—that is not our point here. It confirms that Sri Aurobindo was not imitating Keats or Tennyson. He was searching for his own idiom in his teens, thinking aloud his own problems, just as Tagore did as a boy-poet. In his twenties, Sri Aurobindo could re-create Wordsworth in a new poetic idiom:

A golden evening, when the thoughtful sun
 Rejects its usual pomp in going, trees
 That bend down to their green companion
 And fruitful mother, vaguely whispering,—these
 And a wide silent sea. Such hour is nearest God,—
 Like rich old age when the long ways have all been trod.³

Both Tagore and Sri Aurobindo were Nature-mystics in their days of apprenticeship, when they were perfecting their art. Unlike Tagore, Sri Aurobindo was obsessed by the 'rose', an image which would grow into a large metaphor in his later poetry, in *Savitri* in particular. The 'sea' is another image which grows and deepens in his later poetry.

Tagore was passionately attached to Nature. The attachment lasted throughout. He wished to see everything, every aspect of it, eagerly, as if he would not get another chance to observe its queer mysteries, as if this life was given to him to discover all the forms of Nature. He remembered the misty days of his childhood with great fondness, when he could just see a pond and a mysterious banyan tree by it with its long dense branches. It was all real, and the early prose and poetry reflected his own passion for discovering the words. "It wasn't enriched, but it was mine,"⁴ Tagore said about his *Sandhya Sangeet (Evening Songs)* indicating his claim for originality. The next year, in 1883, *Prabhat Sangeet (Morning Songs)* came out showing the prescience of the mature life-sense of Tagore, the life-sense which speaks of the presence of the Infinite in the finite, the presence of the whole in the part. It is that cosmic awareness, which we also see in Sri Aurobindo's poetry written during his twenties. Let us see how Tagore became aware of this mystery behind every object of Nature:

In every nook and corner,
 in the scattered bushes and plants
 What wonder was lurking! and what awe!
 The birds sat on the branches
 and sang the same tune
 throughout the day—
 the hush around
 made my heart throb,
 a warm wind kissed my body
 bringing in strange things.⁵

It was also a kind of invitation of the More in the true spiritual sense. Tagore was unwilling to risk a one-pointed adventure. Instead, he began seeing and feeling this call of the More from the viewpoint of aesthetics. He chose to move on the shadowy borderline of aesthetics and spirituality:

My heart wishes

to go up into the sky
 and live like the stars,
 wishes to bloom
 in its own joy
 like flowers gazing at the sky,
 wishes to go up in the sky
 at dead of night
 to look around,
 wishes to lose its way
 among the stars
 and sing unmindfully.⁶

This queer blend of aesthetics and spirituality is more prominent in *The Flute (Kori O Komal)*, which is another sign of the young Tagore's success in re-creating the mood of *Vaishnav Padabali* for the modern age. The note of yearning for the Lord is too serious here; it comes out authentically through the aesthetic medium:

O, listen to the flute,
 who plays it?
 the fragrance of the garland
 merges into the tune of the flute...
 I hear the musical sounds of Yamuna,
 My soul sobs....⁷

Sri Aurobindo's poetry, with its quest for originality all the time, matured exceptionally after 1895. As Tagore was preparing for *Sonar Tori (The Golden Boat, 1894)* and *Naivedya (Sacred Offerings, 1901)* on the verge of his fortieth year, Sri Aurobindo was preparing to greet his thirties with his mature poetry of cosmic awareness. For Sri Aurobindo, there was not much of tradition behind this poetry. It was neither Whitmanesque nor Upanishadic. Sri Aurobindo was possibly attempting to see how romanticism could be channelised in a one-pointed direction. He was spontaneously seeking a new form to record his spiritual experiences. By then, the Divine became an obsessive quest for him. The fiery prose and satirical editorials written in the early *Bandemataram (1906-7)* period have obscured this obsessive quest. The quest had begun in Baroda in the late 1890s and it deepened in a subterranean manner and came to the surface in the post-jail prose and poetry (1909 onwards). The multi-dimensional poetry of Tagore was close to the human consciousness and the frequent "God-touch" on that poetry made Tagore very popular. Sri Aurobindo was less attractive even in the pre-Pondicherry days, simply because he chose God whole-heartedly as the only subject of his poetry. Except for some love poems written very early in his career, some mythical and philosophical poems and a few tributary lyrics, Sri Aurobindo could do nothing without the Divine. He was technically sound in those formative years—in Baroda and

Calcutta—and he was soon able to master a very economical style without the sign of any influence on him:

My soul arose at dawn and, listening, heard
 One voice abroad, a solitary bird,
 A song not master of its note, a cry
 That persevered into eternity.⁸

Such were the two poets in their formative years. Both of them mastered prose even earlier, as if they were two born Lords of Language. One wrote in Bengali; the other in English. Tagore's *Torn Letters* or *Chhinna Patra* bear testimony to his early mastery of Bengali prose. Most of these letters were written to Indira Devi, from 1887 to 1895. This prose is simpler than Bankim Chandra's descriptive prose, but more attractive because its rhythm is close to the usual speech rhythm of the Bengali language.

By this time the sun sets; the gold tint in the sky vanishes. In the dark, everything around becomes clear. Later, on seeing the faint shadow by me I come to know that the thin moon is up with its meagre light. You can't trust your eyes when you see the pale light over the pale sand. It is not just a matter of guess where the sand and the water and the sky and the earth lie.⁹

I refer to a letter just to show how casually Tagore could write masterfully in his twenties. He created this language for the modern Bengali writers. It had not existed before him. The usual letter in Bengali in the pre-Tagore era had read like the language of metaphysics! *Europe Prabasis Patra* (*Letters of a Sojourner in Europe*, 1881) had been less interesting but as mature as the *Chhinna Patra*. Sri Aurobindo mastered the English language at age eighteen. The document is a Dialogue entitled *The Harmony of Virtue*. He could not round off his arguments perhaps because he lost interest in the middle of the piece. The language and the pressure of thought behind it are just incredible as it came from the hands of a teenager:

Look at the stars, the brain of heaven as Meredith calls them. How they march tossing on high their golden censers to perfume night with the frankincense of beauty! They are a host of winged insects crawling on the blue papyrus of heaven, a swarm of golden gnats, a cloud of burning dust, a wonderful effect of sparkling atoms caught and perpetuated by the instantaneous pencil of Nature. And yet they are none of all these, but a vast and interdependent economy of worlds. Those burning globes as they roll in silent orbits through the infinite inane, are separated by an eternity of space. They are individual and alone but from each to each thrill influences unfathomed and unconscious, marvellous magnetisms, curious repulsions that check like adverse gales or propel like wind in bellying canvas, and bind these solitary splendours into one supernal harmony of worlds.¹⁰

This prose could be a dream piece for any mature author. Sri Aurobindo wrote it at the age of eighteen.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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WHY WORRY?

If you are honest and sincere,
You have nothing to fear.

If you have nothing to fear,
You are brave and strong.

If you are brave and strong,
No sorrow or evil can touch you.

If no sorrow or evil can touch you,
You can be happy and free.

If you can be happy and free,
You ought to have self- confidence.

If you have self -confidence,
You will overcome all obstacles.

If you overcome all obstacles,
You will believe that God exists.

If you believe that God exists,
You know he will take care of you.

And if He always takes care of you,
...what are you worried about?

AUROPOSÉE BARDHAN

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of June 2002)

SRI AUROBINDO'S Yoga is based on the triple principles of aspiration, rejection and surrender. The first two lead to the third and the third reinforces the other two. All the three work successively as well as together. The surrender without which Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is impossible, is often mistakenly construed to be either a will to surrender or a surrender only in essence. Surrender must be total, integral, and must arise from the various parts of the being. Surrender is an active process; it is not a passive surrender that leads to success in Yoga. In fact tamasic surrender is no surrender at all. Further, real surrender takes a long time, for a will to surrender is only the first step. The mind, the heart, the physical—all must surrender, constantly, of their own volition, without pressure or coercion from the parts surrendered. For this to become possible much effort is required on the part of the disciple in the beginning and a long time after. Effort and surrender are thus dependent upon each other. Surrender appears to be the most simple act but it is in fact the most difficult. Sri Aurobindo writes about the inner surrender in these words:

“The core of the inner surrender is trust and confidence in the Divine. One takes the attitude: ‘I want the Divine and nothing else. I want to give myself entirely to him and since my soul wants that, it cannot be but that I shall meet and realise him. I ask nothing but that and his action in me to bring me to him, his action secret or open, veiled or manifest. I do not insist on my own time and way; let him do all in his own time and way; I shall believe in him, accept his will, aspire steadily for his light and presence and joy, go through all difficulties and delays, relying on him and never giving up.... Whatever happens, I will keep to this aspiration and self-giving and go on in perfect reliance that it will be done.’”¹ Referring to the difficulties he himself had to pass through in the path of Sadhana, Sri Aurobindo wrote: “As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways, follow all methods, to surmount mountains of difficulties, a far heavier burden to bear than you or anybody else in the Ashram or outside, far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure, ways to cleave through impenetrable morass and desert and forest, hostile masses to conquer, a work such as I am certain none else had to do before us. For the Leader of the way in a work like ours has not only to bring down or represent and embody the Divine,...bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience, not in a mere play or *līlā* but in grim earnest, all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled, hampered and only slowly victorious labour which are possible on the Path.”² The unreasonable and inconsistent human nature is unwilling to fulfil the conditions of progress but would demand divine action to work miracles. The difficulties of the one embodying the Divine are more, not less, real but this fact goes unrecognised. Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple touching on this point in the following words:

“There is the rule that you seem all to ignore entirely—the difficulties of the physical embodiment and the divine realisation on the physical plane. For most it seems to be a simple alternative, either the Divine comes down in full power and the thing is done, no

difficulty, no necessary conditions, no law or process, only miracle and magic, or else, well, this cannot be the Divine. Again you all (or almost all) insist on the Divine becoming human, remaining in the human consciousness and you protest against any attempt to make the human Divine. On the other hand, there is an outcry of disappointment, bewilderment, distrust, perhaps indignation if there are human difficulties, if there is strain in the body, a swaying struggle with adverse forces, obstacles, checks, illness and some begin to say, 'Oh, there is nothing divine here!'—as if one could remain vitally and physically in the untransformed individual human consciousness, in unchanged contact with it, satisfy its demands, and yet be immune under all circumstances and in all conditions against strain and struggle and illness. If I want to divinise the human consciousness, to bring down the Supramental, the Truth-Consciousness, the Light, the Force into the physical to transform it, to create there a great fullness of Truth and Light and Power and Bliss and Love, the response is repulsion or fear or unwillingness—or a doubt whether it is possible. On one side there is the claim that illness and the rest should be impossible, on the other a violent rejection of the only condition under which these things can become impossible. I know that this is the natural inconsistency of the human vital mind wanting two inconsistent and incompatible things together; but that is one reason why it is necessary to transform the human and put something a little more luminous in its place."³

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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THE NEW CONSCIOUSNESS AND AUROVILLE

DURING January last year a small team of Aurovilians put up an exhibition at the India Habitat Centre New Delhi. The title they gave the exhibition was: 'Auroville - The City the Earth needs.' I was a member of the team.

One might well comment on the title of the exhibition and ask how we came to make so bold a statement about Auroville. Is Auroville the city the earth needs? We believe this statement made by the Mother (founder of Auroville) to be a truth and I would like to explain why.

Tremendous suffering and upheaval mark humanity's short history on planet Earth. One would have expected the increased light of scientific knowledge and discovery to have raised the quality of human life. However, this has not been the case; there is still fear, suffering and violence everywhere. What is more, a greater fear is now looming on the not too distant horizon, and this fear is life threatening. It comes with the growing global awareness that our human activities are not only threatening us (the human species) but also the entire web of life on planet Earth.

But if this is the history of humanity's shadows, there is also the history of the luminosity of the human spirit, the human quest throughout the ages for beauty, truth and excellence and man's enduring aspiration for the Divine. It would seem that man is ever trapped between these two polarities, the forces of light and the forces of darkness, dharma and adharma, freedom of the spirit and the prison of the mind. This is the ageless battle of Kurukshetra.

Sri Aurobindo, in his *Thoughts and Aphorisms* states:

There are four very great events in history, the siege of Troy, the life and crucifixion of Christ, the exile of Krishna in Brindavan and the colloquy with Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra. The siege of Troy created Hellas, the exile in Brindavan created devotional religion (for before there was only meditation and worship). Christ from his cross humanised Europe, the colloquy at Kurukshetra will yet liberate humanity.

Kurukshetra is not just the ancient battle of the Mahabharata, Kurukshetra is timeless and continues throughout history. The two armies that confront each other on the battlefield at Kurukshetra, the Pandavas and Kauravas are archetypal symbols. They represent the opposing forces of life: the forces of light, the Pandavas, and their antithesis the forces of darkness, the Kauravas. The Divine charioteer, Krishna speaks to man in every age, it is the eternal colloquy between man and his soul.

In the countdown to the year 2000 there was a tremendous worldwide projection of hope on the new century that it would herald the dawn of a new era of global prosperity. However, two years further on this hope is changing to cynicism about the possibility of

our present human nature ever achieving universal peace and fraternity.

But this is to judge causes and events only by their outward surface appearances. There are many more levels to life than sense perceptions. What is not taken into account are the tremendous invisible forces that precipitate causes and events. "All life", says Sri Aurobindo, "is the play of universal forces." Last year's turbulence could also be seen as the rudric forces of the cosmic dance of Kali, Kali crushing beneath her feet all that had to go – all the old baggage of the past, the worn-out belief systems and prejudices. Kali is preparing the ground for the New Consciousness.

There are very evident signs now of the emerging of the New Consciousness in many areas of the world. It can be felt in the growing global need for more spirituality and finds expression in literature and art. The New Consciousness is the Truth Consciousness and is unity. The forming of global coalitions for finding permanent solutions for our global problems is a sign of the coming of the New Consciousness. So too is the global demand not to repeat past patterns to resolve these problems but to address instead the deeper psychological roots of conflict. It is the prayerful longing of people everywhere for universal peace and fraternity.

Dr. Mary King, Professor of Political Science at the University of Washington DC, human rights campaigner and writer, is at present a member of the Auroville International Advisory Council. At the end of a talk she recently gave in Auroville titled 'Post September 11th' a member of the audience asked for her feelings on the future. Her reply was that many areas of world affairs gave cause for grave concern, but nevertheless, there were two signs of hope. These two signs were firstly the new dialogue between the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan and secondly Auroville. About Auroville, Mary King said that as a result of September 11th more people would want a change of world order and that many would look to see if the Auroville experiment offered a new future direction.

The aim of Auroville is human unity. Auroville is a unique experiment; it is a collective endeavour by people of many different nationalities, cultural backgrounds, age and levels of consciousness to build a new city. It is a new city because unlike any other city it does not have as its prime focus any political, economic or social agenda. The guiding principle of Auroville is spiritual. It is the people who live here that are building the city, and it is evolving naturally through their living spiritual experience and their efforts to find unity. In Sri Aurobindo's words: "In [the] harmony between our unity and our diversity there lies the secret of life." Another unique feature is that the development of Auroville has not been at the expense of the bioregion. The villagers of the surrounding area have also grown and prospered as Auroville grew.

Auroville came of age when in 1998 the European Commission recognised Auroville as an urban centre. With this status accorded to it, Auroville became eligible to apply to the commission for grants. A project proposal from Auroville was recently endorsed in Brussels for a two-year partnership of the European Commission with Auroville in an Asia Urbs programme. The cities of Venice and Cologne will also be partners in this project. As a part of this programme Auroville will host an International conference

(25-28th February). This conference will bring together in Auroville representatives from 28 cities of the European Union and 30 from India. The title of this conference is 'City Networking for a Sustainable Future and Human Unity'.

Auroville as a city in the making is entering a new phase of development. For the first three decades of Auroville's existence the focus had to be on fundamentals, the land, housing, education and industry, now the attention turns towards the city and the future. For more than thirty years Aurovilians have lived close to the land. They transformed a stretch of barren denuded earth into a fertile landscape and then enjoyed living in their earthly paradise. But the Garden of Eden is the past—the city is the future. There are few empty spaces left now, the human species has overpopulated planet Earth, and science, technology and our numbers have reduced the world to a global village. It is essential for our future that we find harmony with one another and with the environment. But first we have to find that harmony within ourselves.

The principle of unity in diversity forms the basis of the collective life of Auroville. It is because this is an essential principle of human unity that Auroville is necessary for the Earth. To further understand and develop the principle of unity in diversity, work has begun on two exciting research projects in Auroville. One is the International Zone where the research is focussed on the discovery of the genius or soul of the nations that have a well-defined culture and the other is the CIRHU project (Centre for International Research in Human Unity).

Human Unity and the New Consciousness are great spiritual ideals and are the future. Ideals are necessary to life in order to set our goals and direction. A form of economic unity is now emerging and will become more of a reality in the fast growing global market place. But this is an artificial and fragile unity, it is only a unity founded on an inner spiritual and psychological basis that will be real and lasting, and this unity belongs to the New Consciousness. Auroville is the body formed on earth to realise a true Human Unity and be a centre for the New Consciousness. The pale light that glimmers now on the edge of the night sky at dawn heralds the coming of the New Consciousness. Another name that has been given to Auroville is the 'City of Dawn'.

ANNE GILBERT

A FEW DREAMS

(Continued from the issue of June 2002)

24.04.1981 (Early Night)

A Dream Consecrated at the Lotus Feet of the Mother

A VAST ground ahead. The atmosphere is charged with deep enthusiasm. People are engaged with some big arrangements. There is a big board on which is fixed the Mother's Photo. Perhaps a drama is going to be played. Can't say exactly what is going to happen. I am standing at a place. Nearby I see one couple and two children. I enquire of them who they are. The gentleman says that he is Dr. (so & so). I asked them (they appeared to be on some pilgrimage) where were they going. They replied "Mukteswar". I was astonished and asked him if he belonged to I.V.R.I. This time he was astonished and asked me how I knew this. I introduced myself as B. K. Dhingra and that I belong to B.I.C. He knew B.I.C. and felt happy. Then he expressed inquisitiveness regarding the happy and interesting atmosphere prevailing there and asked me if there is any special occasion today. I said, "You don't know, today is Darshan Day 24th April. Did you not see the Mother passing by your side just a little while ago?" After saying so I went ahead for Darshan. There is a lot of tarpaulines spread on the ground which appear to be rising high and high one after the other. I reached the highest and there I see at the top the Mother herself sitting on the chair looking down below. I recollected the moments when in 1971 I had put my head in the Mother's lap. Her hands were moving. I was anxious if she would look at me. Then a question struck me if Her look was limited only to Her physical eyes. Actually, Her look is always fixed on each of us at every moment. However she graced the occasion and she raised her eyes and looked at me. I was extremely overjoyed and awoke. The dream ended but I remained for about one and a half hours in that strange mood and kept lying with closed eyes. I said "Mother, Thou never forgettest us, it is we who forget. Thou comest to us regularly, sometimes in Thy own form, sometimes in different forms of Thy Powers such as Mahakali, Maheshwari, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati. Thou comest to us even in the adverse form of illness to make us strong and rise above the illness." Now I remembered that my biological Mother had suffered a heart-attack once and after having recovered she was experiencing the presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in everything. I continued thinking that it is the Mother who assumes the opposite forms of scarcity and abundance, sadness and happiness and pain and pleasure, etc. The more I thought, the more I felt happy. All these ups and downs are her play in order to make us rise high above.

*

A Dream

There is a small baby. She appears to be Shveta. She is hardly one year old. Suddenly she

starts chanting the full Gayatri Mantra. Thereafter she utters some sermons. All of us are amazed to see such a small child uttering all this.

(To be continued)

BHUSHAN DHINGRA

TWO POEMS

MY SILENT REVERIE

FREE, as the breeze that's blowing homeward;
 Natural, as the torrent running downhill;
 Common, like the sunshine on a glorious day.
 Why am I so overwhelmed by this silent visit?

Resting, though filled with elation;
 Quiet, yet bubbly with silent songs;
 Content, yet yearning for completeness;
 Is this what I was sent here for?

Patient, though my heart is soaring,
 Alert, yet my mind is subdued;
 Awakened, but my earth companion is sleeping.
 Why is simplicity so complicated?

MOON WHISPERS

The moon is shining in my window tonight,
 Quietly whispering in my ear
 Secrets, I can never tell
 In words...or songs...or deeds.

ALLAN STOCKER

DINING WITH SRI AUROBINDO

A Dream Experience

I AWOKE this morning from a deep slumber, bringing back into the sunny world a freshness almost forgotten.... But I hadn't dined with Sri Aurobindo before either. The last time that I had concretely interacted with Auro-da was ages ago, though we have met in between. I was a teenager at the Ashram then, and had found myself one night outside the body in his chambers upstairs sitting at his feet, as he read *Savitri* to me as a sort of instruction in poetry and yoga. I sat still, hardly listening, mesmerized by the greatness and presence of the Rishi. But it had been different this time. We were a small if diverse family, with the Mother attending to us all in the just sufficiently roomy home. It was a very quiet life, for Sri Aurobindo hardly ever spoke, and upheld everything with loving benignity. He would most often be found sitting still, thinking perhaps, radiating a peace and a tranquillity that set him in vast isolation amidst our liveliness. I would sit around too, watching him, obliquely at first, then more openly with reverence, not yet free of the impulses of egoism and stupidity that characterize such a large portion of ourselves.

One such day, he had stood up from his chair, turned his bright ageless face to glance at me and cut a joke about me, so insightfully humorous and penetratingly intelligent that I couldn't but help appreciate that superb irony of his, and join him and the others in celestial laughter. I had been piqued for a moment, but how could I grudge him the scintillation of it all, and the moment I chimed in with a guffaw, I felt that carapace of ignorance and self-indulgent egoism loosen and slough away from my innerness. And much more than with laughter, my heart surged with gratitude at the painlessness of this deft surgery, and felt the impact of a compassion and patience that had awaited the right instant and made it so mercilessly quick. I was left with a deeper sweetness and knew a more plastic receptivity to the grandeur and depth of him. As if I had not known it before, there arose a love and a fealty that bound my soul closer to him who freed me. In all the variety of everyday living and chores, the Mother's presence was not lost on us, for indeed we were well cared for and that same unshakeable compassion that in Sri Aurobindo was motionless radiance, poured into us with every touch of her hands and lilt of her voice, for young as we were, she drew us to herself and held us within the infinite confines of her eternal motherhood.

It so happened one evening that when it was time for me to eat, the Mother had set Auro-da's plate at the head of the wooden table. We ate together, he more slowly than I, and far more beautifully, savouring every morsel in divine equanimity. He spoke not a word, yet to be near him was bliss, was plenitude and unutterable grace. It was after dinner when he had finally risen that I stepped out of the door to return to a body asleep on earth, but participating in the events of living with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in complete meditative stillness. When I awoke into this world, a breeze made my eyes feel fresh, and peace broke through the screen of difficult everyday circumstances. The financial quandaries facing me now seem remote and insignificant before the infinite presence and

calm of Sri Aurobindo; and the profound freshness of his self-evidence are all that I need to carry me through and eventually transcend mortality.

15 October 1990

ARVIND HABBU

Maggi's comment: The atmosphere is so much like what the Mother described to me of Sri Aurobindo's habitat.

SRI AUROBINDO

A VAST glimmering breeze he came,
 Almost a tornado frozen in Peace.
 A strange slow dawn upon the edge of being
 Reminiscent of inwardnesses, the flower-touch of the Lord.
 The voice nectarean, the Himalayan presence,
 The Mountain of Light, brooded, enveloping all self,
 A deep freshet of invigorating calm,
 A silence as when the Sun rises from sleep
 And all the air is tremulous to his ray,
 So too the Lord; all being upturned, offered unutterably.
 A possession profound, a mass of Peace,
 A sweetness heaven-sent of the ecstasy, the sight
 That wells before the inner eye, the footfall
 Approaching. A towering figure of Compassion infinite.
 Shiva, mute, transcendent, Krishna's enchantment, ineffably sweet,
 And all the gods surpassed, the very Supreme
 Stood before me, and ere I bent to those
 Golden luminous feet, my whole being to lay prostrate
 Forever there, a hand stayed upon the head,
 And the heart knew, the source of all this Universe.

ARVIND HABBU

USHA-BEN

A Tribute

USHA, the dawn, as her name signifies never allowed herself to become the dazzling sun of noon. Throughout her short life she always remained on the horizon aloof, shy, indrawn—an introvert. How talented she was! And an allrounder too but never revealed or regaled to others about her qualities. She kept herself so much in the background that when her painting exhibition was put up in the Exhibition Hall many exclaimed, “Oh! She was a painter and that too such an extraordinary one, we never knew.” That was her greatest quality—not to reveal her talents externally but to let them grow in her silently and gracefully as the Grace flower she had painted.

At the age of nine she joined the Ashram along with her sister and brother. A student of our Ashram school, she later became a teacher and a group captain—participated in the 1st December cultural programmes and the 2nd December physical education demonstrations and also worked in the Prosperity Department. The harmonious blending of all these activities showed in her swift and graceful gait. That harmony too was quite evident in her loving relationship with her elder sister Urmila-ben. Always together, and day after day and year after year wearing similar dresses, these two sisters blended their lives in the service of the Mother. How often I wondered in my younger days—who chose the dress and who agreed. Did they never have different choices or disagreement?

But for some reason she withdrew from some of the activities. A dutiful daughter, she gave herself totally and completely with the help of Urmila-ben to looking after their aged parents—the all caring, all affectionate but strict daughter.

As the dawn announces the day, the exhibition of Usha-ben’s paintings announced her progress, her inner development, her inner vision—the unfolding of a soul through creativity. Her paintings too were as herself, not showy or loud in colours. They were of delicate, soft hues just like the dawn, blending harmoniously and also suggestive—never bright and loud in colours dazzling like the noonday sun. Looking at her painting of the Samadhi, so vivid and living, one could feel the peace and serenity, breathe the fragrance of flowers and incense sticks and see the service flowers rain like golden rain drops in the southern breeze.

Her inwardness, her aloofness in the outer life, her curt and to the point replies to questions, were may be due to her being always so immersed in her creativity that she could not allow herself to be extravagant with words or gossipy to satisfy other people’s wants.

A small anecdote to exemplify Usha-ben the artist:

Once a picnic was arranged for our office. All came except Harikant-bhai, to the Fossil Land. As Mohammed would not come to the mountain, I brought a small piece of fossil (wood fossilized and turned to rock) for him. He had kept it in Prosperity. A few days later, Usha-ben met me and said, “I was looking for you, what made you choose that fossil for Kaka.” I simply said, “I found its shape like the peaks of two mountains

standing side by side. One higher and the other a little lower—reminder of Kedarnath and Badrinath.” She just said, “Oh, come and see it again, you may find something else.” I went and saw it the next day. To my eyes the fossil conveyed the same image. Usha-ben then said with a smile, “Don’t you see the Virgin Mary holding the new born Jesus?” Amazing—the artist’s eyes found love and compassion in the fossilized tree of a million years.

That was our Usha-ben, curt and to the point externally but wide and vast inwardly, where there were hidden treasures which she revealed to none and none ever will know about them.

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTI

USHA CREATES

USHA creates
—with line, with paints
—in oil, pastel or watercolours
on fabric, canvas or paper.

Still forms, figures and flowers,
Landscapes or just abstracts.

Sometimes she chooses
to build with dots,—
Tiny specks generating
Great effects.

Gods from Indian legends
And temple sculpture
inspire her, and
Meera, Radha too.

She fashions dolls
From any material;
She decks and dresses,
Gives them life.

She frames her own paintings,
—simple, almost austere—
pretty and perfect is the craft.

She creates in movement,
in graceful dance—
Sleeping beauty, Cinderella, she is
always the princess of a fairy tale.

Each moment, every act,
For the creative urge,
It is Usha, it is new dawn.

DHANAVANTI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Bhava Sumam, poems in Sanskrit, *by Asha Agrawal*. Published by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, 2002. ISBN 81-7058-672-0. Pages: 130. Price: Rs. 70.00.

Smt. Asha Agrawal is a well-known Sanskrit teacher in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry. She has written many small poems in simple Sanskrit. Her style is lucid and pleasant. Her devotion and faith towards the Sage Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram are very deep. Her devotion pervades every line of her poems. She uses several kinds of figures of speech without effort and there is no difficulty in grasping the purport of the poems. There is rhythm in these poems, so that they can be sung even in primary schools. There are more than one hundred poems in this anthology. I hope that Smt. Asha Agrawal will give us many such sweet poems in the future also. I wish her all success and request the Sanskrit-loving people to encourage her in her service to the great and ancient language of India.

V. VENKATRAJ SHARMA

A Greater Psychology, An Introduction to the Psychology of Sri Aurobindo. *Edited by A. S. Dalal*. Foreword by Ken Wilber, and Introduction by Arabinda Basu. First Indian Edition 2001. Published by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry. Pages: 426. Price not mentioned.

I have always been interested in psychology from my medical college days. To understand the system of the Aurobindonian psychology has been a difficult but essential part of our Sadhana here in Pondicherry. A fellow aspirant had once told me that it was the study of a manuscript on *The Psychology of Sri Aurobindo* by a German author that had influenced her, a well-educated European, an anarchist till then, to seek the source,—the Mother in Pondicherry. But that book was never published.

I have known many intellectuals, including psychologists, dissatisfied with the level of information available in their libraries on this subject: what constitutes the human being. When asked, I could not give any proper reference. Over more than a score of years I had always felt inadequate when asked where to find a concise introduction, an opening to the Aurobindonian psychology. No more. Now I can point to this wonderful book. As Ken Wilber says in his foreword, “this book is surely the finest overview of Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought now available and it will likely remain a classic reference for the foreseeable future.”

Greater psychology perhaps could be defined not only as a science of the mind but also as a scientific study of what constitutes a human being in all his parts, material and non-material. Only a psychologist could do full justice to a compilation of Sri Aurobindo’s

thoughts on this subject. About three years ago I heard that Dr. Dalal was compiling and bringing out such a book. I have been waiting for this Indian edition to be in my hands, eager to browse through it before making it my constant companion and recommending it to my friends and acquaintances.

The book has a foreword by Ken Wilber, an introduction by Arabinda Basu, and a preface by the Editor. Ken Wilber is probably the most well known of modern thinkers who have written about one or other aspect of Sri Aurobindo's immense contribution to the understanding of ourselves. Wilber's support and encouragement is well acknowledged by the Editor in his preface. His foreword would encourage interested modern psychologists and others to turn to this book for learning about the Aurobindonian psychology.

Ken Wilber's foreword is of great help to those who are interested in psychology but have not heard much about Sri Aurobindo. Arabinda Basu's introduction is on the other hand of benefit to those intellectuals who have heard of Sri Aurobindo, but find him difficult to read and grasp.

The Editor, A. S. Dalal, in his preface describes well the main objective of this book by saying, "the aim is to present Sri Aurobindo as a Seer whose delineation of the future of human being and of human society is not an ideative dream of what ought to be, but a spiritual pre-vision of what is already in the process of becoming." Two features of Sri Aurobindo's thoughts he has tried to highlight are, in his own words, "its experiential and integral nature," something that is probably unique to Sri Aurobindo.

The Editor in his preface as well as A. Basu in his introduction have stressed the fact of how to avoid the most common difficulty in grasping Sri Aurobindo's thoughts and writings. We are made aware that Sri Aurobindo uses a novel nomenclature to explain the different levels of consciousness (e.g. overmind) and gives different significances to many well-known terms like vital, spirit, psychic, and soul in his writings. Sri Aurobindo had to use words to express what till then was never described with precision. Words with the required meaning did not exist then. Hence he had to coin new words as well as use old words with new significances, which he defined in very clear terms. A. S. Dalal has helped the reader immensely in this task by giving a glossary of such words and terms before the index at the end of the book.

The book proper is divided in two parts. Part One is an anthology of Sri Aurobindo's writings on man, what constitutes a human being, what is the purpose of this evolution of consciousness and the meaning of our existence. This part could be divided in three sections: first twelve chapters, next three and then the last five.

The first twelve chapters describe the various parts and potentialities of a human being, starting with Consciousness—the (true) reality, followed by "the manifold being", the surface and the inner being, the psychic being and so on till our highest part and possibility—the Supermind and Sat-Chit-Ananda are presented. Woven within is the problem of our nature and its solution.

The next three chapters make a very good attempt to explain topics that are rather difficult to comprehend, namely, liberation, transformation, spiritual experiences, and

faith. First we have a chapter titled "Liberation and Transformation." (Can one confine liberation and transformation to a chapter?) Sri Aurobindo describes liberation as "the mind's overwhelming experience of what is beyond itself and all it can conceive. It is a supreme negative experience, but beyond it is all the tremendous light of an infinite Consciousness, an illimitable knowledge, an affirmative absolute Presence." (page 167) The word transformation is used in a special sense, meaning "a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution." (page 168)

The subsequent two chapters deal with the "Validity of Supraphysical and Spiritual Experience" and "Faith". We discover that faith, faith in spiritual things that is asked of the spiritual aspirant, is a luminous faith, "a dynamic intuitive conviction in the inner being of the truth of supersensible things which cannot be proved by any physical evidence but which are a subject of experience." (page 204) That faith "is in reality an influence from the supreme Spirit and its light a message from our supramental being which is calling the lower nature to rise out of its petty present to a greater self-becoming and self-exceeding." Faith is fortunately in-built in the human being since it is a part of our innermost true self. We only have to find it.

With this foundation, if the reader would now go back and re-read from the beginning the first 12 chapters he could come to an enhanced comprehension and grasp. He could then turn to the final 5 chapters of Part One. These deal with "States of consciousness" (chapters 16 and 17), "Psychical phenomena" and the psychological and spiritual evolution of mankind leading "Towards a Greater Psychology".

The second part of the book complements the first part by further exposition of some important aspects of Sri Aurobindo's writings. There are seven essays by Dr. Dalal on "Sri Aurobindo's Psychological Thought." The first essay "The Nature and Methodology of Yoga" sets the ball rolling, so to say, towards an understanding of Greater Psychology.

Yoga is in the words of Sri Aurobindo "a convenient name including all processes or results of processes that lead to the unveiling of a greater knowledge, consciousness, experience." (page 309) And psychology "deals with the mind and consciousness and tries to find out not so much their ultimate nature and relations as their actual workings and the rule and law of these workings." (page 308)

In the next essay Dalal gives us three prerequisites for research on consciousness in the light of Sri Aurobindo's writings. These are: 1) To regard consciousness as a reality in its own right, 2) Use appropriate methodology, and 3) Establish a schema of consciousness derived from knowledge already available. The methodology is the same as that of any science, namely, exact observation and scrupulous experiment. This study of consciousness, as stressed by Sri Aurobindo, calls for "intuitive and experimental knowledge" and "a direct observation of mental operations." (page 320) Such a method requires an inner development including that of the subtler senses.

In the third essay Dalal gives us a good resume of the materialistic and mystic views of consciousness. The fourth essay's contents are well described in its title, "Sri

Aurobindo on the Structure and Organization of the Being—*An Integral Map for Self-Discovery*.” The fifth and sixth essays deal with Sri Aurobindo’s description of the “self as experienced in Yoga” and an exposition of his “integral view”. In the last essay, “Sri Aurobindo on Human Development: a Transpersonal Perspective” Dalal first gives us the five themes that constitute Transpersonal Psychology. Then he presents very well how “Sri Aurobindo’s integral view of human growth incorporates all the five themes just mentioned, and weaves them around a central concept—the evolution of consciousness—which is found in two of the definitions quoted above.” (page 391)

This book is indeed a remarkable achievement and, at the same time, is very much needed today. As A. Basu points out in his introduction (page xi) “there has been an explosion of interest in the study of consciousness” as evinced by the number of related books and publications. Sri Aurobindo’s emphasis that “Consciousness is not only an entity but *the* entity” is very timely. Sri Aurobindo’s views, concepts and findings are very much needed today to swerve the Science of Psychology in a new direction, giving an orientation towards Greater Psychology. This book, I am sure, is a milestone in that endeavour.

DINKAR D. PALANDE