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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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MARVELLOUS SUN

A MARVELLOUS sun looked down from ecstasy's skies
On worlds of deathless bliss, perfection's home,
Magical unfoldings of the Eternal's smile
Capturing his secret heart-beats of delight.
God's everlasting day surrounded her,
Domains appeared of sempiternal light
Invading all Nature with the Absolute's joy.
Her body quivered with eternity's touch,
Her soul stood close to the founts of the infinite.
Infinity's finite fronts she lived in, new
For ever to an everlasting sight....
Twilight and mist were exiles from that air,
Night was impossible to such radiant heavens....
Ecstatic voices smote at hearing's chords,
Each movement found a music all its own;
Songs thrilled of birds upon unfading boughs,
The colours of whose plumage had been caught
From the rainbow of imagination's wings....
In the harmony of an original sight
Delivered from our limiting ray of thought,
And the reluctance of our blinded hearts
To embrace the Godhead in whatever guise,
She saw all Nature marvellous without fault....
Realm upon realm received her soaring view.
Then on what seemed one crown of the ascent
Where finite and the infinite are one,
Immune she beheld the strong immortals' seats
Who live for a celestial joy and rule
The middle regions of the unfading Ray.
Great forms of deities sat in deathless tiers,
Eyes of an unborn gaze towards her leaned
Through a transparency of crystal fire....
There lightning-filled with glory and with flame,
Melting in waves of sympathy and sight,
Smitten like a lyre that throbs to others' bliss,
Drawn by the cords of ecstasies unknown,
Her human nature faint with heaven's delight,
She beheld the clasp to earth denied and bore
The imperishable eyes of veiless love.
More climbed above, level to level reached,

Beyond what tongue can utter or mind dream:
 Worlds of an infinite reach crowned Nature's stir....
 There Time dwelt with Eternity as one;
 Immense felicity joined rapt repose.
 As one drowned in a sea of splendour and bliss
 Mute in the maze of these surprising worlds
 Turning she saw their living knot and source,
 Key to their charm and fount of their delight,
 And knew him for the same who snares our lives
 Captured in his terrifying pitiless net,
 And makes the universe his prison camp
 And makes in his immense and vacant vasts
 The labour of the stars a circuit vain
 And death the end of every human road
 And grief and pain the wages of man's toil.
 One whom her soul had faced as Death and Night
 A sum of all sweetness gathered into his limbs
 And blinded her heart to the beauty of the suns.
 Transfigured was the formidable shape.
 His darkness and his sad destroying might
 Abolishing for ever and disclosing
 The mystery of his high and violent deeds,
 A secret splendour rose revealed to sight
 Where once the vast embodied Void had stood....
 All grace and glory and all divinity
 Were here collected in a single form;
 All worshipped eyes looked through his from one face;
 He bore all godheads in his grandiose limbs.
 An oceanic spirit dwelt within;
 Intolerant and invincible in joy
 A flood of freedom and transcendent bliss
 Into immortal lines of beauty rose.
 In him the fourfold Being bore its crown
 That wears the mystery of a nameless Name,
 The universe writing its tremendous sense
 In the inexhaustible meaning of a word.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 671-80)

THE SECRET OF THE TERRESTRIAL EVOLUTION

BEFORE there could be any evolution, there must needs be an involution of the Divine All that is to emerge. Otherwise there would be not an evolution, but a successive creation of things new, not contained in their antecedents, not their inevitable consequences or followers in a sequence but arbitrarily willed or miraculously conceived by an inexplicable Chance, a stumblingly fortunate Force or an external Creator.

The long process of terrestrial formation and creation, the ambiguous miracle of life, the struggle of mind to appear and grow in an apparent vast Ignorance and to reign there as interpreter and creator and master, the intimations of a greater something that passes beyond the finite marvel of mind to the infinite marvels of the Spirit, are not a meaningless and fortuitous passing result of some cosmic Chance with its huge combination of coincidences; they are not the lucky play of some blind material Force. These things are and can be only because of something eternal and divine that concealed itself in energy and form of Matter.

The secret of the terrestrial evolution is the slow and progressive liberation of this latent indwelling spirit, the difficult appearance, the tardy becoming [of a] divine Something or Someone already involved with all its potential forces in a first formal basis of supporting substance, its greater slowly emerging movements locked up in one initial expressive power of Matter.

Man the thinker and seeker would not be here if he were not an embodied portion of an all-conscious Infinite that is superconscient above him but lies also hidden in the inconscience of the material universe.

The development of forms is not the most important or the most significant part of the evolutionary process; it is one sign of the thing that is being done, but it is not its essence. Material form is only a support and means for the progressive manifestation of the Spirit.

If all were chance or play of inconscient or inconsequent Force, there would be no reason why man with all his imperfections should not be the last word of this feat of unconscious intelligence or this haphazard miracle. It is because the Divine Spirit is there and his manifestation the meaning of the movement that a new power must emerge in the series that started from Matter.

The material universe would be a waste if wonderful desert if Life had not appeared as the first index to some marvellous utility and an ultimate profound and moving significance. But life too by itself would be a movement without sequence to its purposeful initiation or any light to its own mystery if in Life there were not concealed an interpretative or at least a seeking power of consciousness that could turn upon its powers and try to grasp and direct them towards their own realised issue.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 225-27)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of August 2002)

Today in meditation some undesirable words were thrown into the mind while Mother was coming down. They were words against Mother. I began pushing them away and chanting the Devistotra. From where do they arise?

It may be that the rush of people here and the atmosphere of turmoil created along with many thoughts moving about of not at all the right kind may have sent a wave upon you and revived some old movements of the vital.

The state today was almost the reverse of yesterday's. During work anger was once or twice about to enter. There was much lethargy almost the whole day, though I slept much more than usual. During the lethargy, images and thoughts of home came, and thoughts about eating. Was this all the work of a different type of hostiles with whom I have now to fight? Or was it the result of a new type of pressure?

No, it is the same forces—but the pressure is more on the lower vital and less on the mind and higher vital.

To add to these difficulties, some mistake in my work was detected and pointed out by K. It was not exactly anger which I exhibited but something cold and malignant; it was nothing but the lower vital's pride injured, a vital-egoism which has peculiar twists of its own. Of course there was a redeeming feature—a strong part of my being was above and around watching this twist, this malice, this hatred for K (even a slight impulse to hurt him physically). But that strong part pushed off all these reactions and now puts them before you to transform the vital ego or whatever it may be.

It is what I meant when I spoke of something remaining calm even behind the surface disturbances. What happens is that some part of the being becomes quieted, enlightened and strong—say the mind or the mind and the higher vital. But perhaps the lower vital and the physical may be only temporarily influenced and quieted—in time the work begins on them to change permanently, and owing to some outer touch or the pressure of the hostile forces or the lower nature their possibilities of egoism or unrest rise up and have to be dealt with. The advantage is, as you have seen, that a part of the nature is there in which you can stand and deal with the still recalcitrant parts. One has to remain firm and persistently bring what has been gained down into the lower parts, till there is a permanent peace and freedom assured in the whole nature.

23 February 1933

In the morning there was a slight misunderstanding on my part about something which a workman wanted; when my error was pointed out, I did not get angry but I felt something like irritation at the incident. There was a slight anger at myself, and also a slight desire to punish my body — but this I immediately recognised as the hostile's work. Then I understood what you wrote in your letter today about "some outer touch or the pressure of the hostile forces". Is the hostile watching every movement of the higher pressure and keeping its own presence side by side so as not to allow a parallel government to be established and its regime to be overthrown?

This is exactly what it does; at every step towards the siddhi it is waiting to challenge and put a contrary pressure claiming for its own the world and man's nature.

I also felt something like reverse of vital exaltation — a sense of inability, a feeling that others had overcome these difficulties and I was the last to remain. Is this a reaction of the lower vital?

It is rather a part of the physical consciousness, its inertia and plea of incompetence. Of course it has its corresponding reaction in the lower vital.

There is this habit of seeing the errors of others or laughing at their sadhana or their habits or actions, such as G's enthusiasm for cross-word puzzles or R's silence or S's sleep. Is this a lower vital manifestation not fit to indulge in?

This is quite a part of the ordinary physical consciousness. One can observe things, but not indulge in a too critical or censorious spirit.

Have thoughts like "He is progressing now, but suddenly he may fall" or "After a few days of good sadhana, a few days of bad will also come" any effect on the person about whom they are said? When they are uttered, would it be good to contradict them forcefully?

Yes, these are harmful formations or suggestions; they should immediately be contradicted by a counteracting helpful formation.

When thoughts enter such as "X is very unconscious" or "Y is not surrendering" or "Z has no real faith", is it good to react with opposite, helpful thoughts or is it better to avoid these thoughts altogether?

To avoid altogether.

The pressure from above is now borne well and even felt as less than necessary, as

if there were a demand for more. Is this due to full openness?

It should indicate a greater capacity to receive.

Do hilarity and unnecessary talking dissipate the force given? Is it better to avoid them as far as possible?

Yes; excessive hilarity and unnecessary chat do most undoubtedly dissipate the force. A great moderation is necessary in these things.

24 February 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

In the night as in the day be always with me.

In sleep as in waking let me feel in me always the reality of your presence.

Let it sustain and make to grow in me Truth, consciousness and bliss constantly and at all times.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE SEAMLESS ROBE

EARTH is wounded
With deep gash
Filled with the briny flow
Of narrow seas and wide seas
Whose anguished billows dim the ash
That heaven's breezes charged with glow.

Earth is sunken
In the main of air,
Whose storm breakers thunder
Through her soul in frenzied
Moods of anger or despair—
And lightning blades her strength asunder.

But ever guarded
By this living globe
In the unpierced tenuity
Of rapt ionosphere
Is the untroubled Beauty, the seamless robe
Woven on wide-loomed Eternity.

June 10, 1935

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: "Very fine. The movement of the rhythm is original and expressive."

TWELVE SENSES

22 March 1951

You say that “time is relative”. What does that mean?

THE sense of the length of time depends upon your consciousness. If you are in the ordinary human consciousness, time is measured by the number of years you expect to live. So, what requires, let us say, fifty years to be realised, seems terribly long, for you think, “Fifty years... where will I be in fifty years?” Even without your being clearly aware of it, it is there in your consciousness. But if simply you look from the point of view of a mental consciousness, of something which lasts like a written work, for instance—a work of truly fine quality can last for hundreds and even thousands of years; so, if you are told, “For your ideas to spread it will take a hundred years”, this will not seem to you so very long. And if you succeed in uniting your consciousness with the psychic consciousness, a life is only one moment among so many similar moments which have gone before; and so one life more or less is not of much importance. And if, still further, you unite with the consciousness of eternity, time no longer has any reality.

All is relative.

When one is conscious of the different parts of the being, what part is it which is conscious?

It is probably not always the same. Usually the work of becoming aware ought to be done by the psychic, but it is rarely the psychic. More often it is a part of the mind, more or less enlightened, which has acquired the capacity to stand back a little and look at the rest. But you know it well: if you are conscious in your mind, one part of the mind says one thing and the other replies, and there is an endless discussion between the two parts. Many people have these dialogues in their mind.

It is difficult to say generally what is conscious; but naturally, if something observes, it is always the “witness” element in this part—in each part of the being there is something which is a “witness”, which looks on. There is even a physical witness which can get very much in the way; for instance, if it watches you playing, this can paralyse you considerably. There is also a vital witness which looks at you, sees your desires and enjoys highly all that happens; it acts also as a brake. There is the mental witness which judges ideas, which says, “This idea contradicts this other”, and which arranges everything. Then there is the great psychic Witness, who is the inner divinity.

Sometimes there is no relation among these different witnesses—there ought to be, but it is not always there. But if there is in the being a will to become perfect, the relation is established quite quickly; one can refer to another and finally, if there is a sufficient sincerity, sufficient concentration, you come to the supreme inner Witness who can judge all things. But generally it may be said that it is always a part of the mind, more or less

enlightened, in a little closer contact with the inner being, which observes and judges.

What is consciousness?

(*After a silence*) I am trying to choose among several explanations! One, which is a joke, is that consciousness is the opposite of unconsciousness! Another... it is the creative essence of the universe—without consciousness, no universe; for consciousness means objectification. I could also say that consciousness is what “is”, because without consciousness nothing is—this is the best reason. Without consciousness no life, no light, no objectification, no creation, no universe.

Perhaps there is in the unmanifest Supreme a consciousness (but when one speaks of these questions one begins to say impossible things); it is said that, to begin with, the Supreme became aware of himself (which would mean that he was not conscious of himself before! that he was in a state we cannot call “conscious”), that his first movement was to become aware of himself and once having become conscious of himself, he projected this consciousness, which formed the creation. At least, this is what old tradition says. Grant that there never was a beginning, for it is a human way of putting it: the “beginning” is the Supreme—the unmanifest Supreme becoming aware of himself. Perhaps he found that this consciousness was not altogether satisfactory (!) and he projected it, not outside himself for nothing is outside him, but he changed it into an active consciousness so that it would become an objectification of himself. Consequently, it can be said with certitude that Consciousness is the origin of all creation; there you are as exact as you can ever be with words. Consciousness is the origin of all creation—without consciousness, no creation. And what we call “consciousness” is just a far-off contact, without precision and exactness, with the supreme Consciousness. Or if you like, it is the reflection, in a not very exact or pure mirror, of the original Consciousness. What we call our consciousness is this original Consciousness reflected in a somewhat foggy mirror (sometimes very foggy, sometimes very deformed), a reflection in the individual mirror. Then through this reflection, if we go back slowly to the origin of what is reflected, we can enter into contact with the Consciousness—the True Consciousness. And once we come into contact with the True Consciousness, we become aware that it is the same everywhere, that it is only deformation which divides it; without deformation everything is contained in one and the same Consciousness. That is, it is only distortion, the reflection in a distorting mirror, which brings about difference and division in the Consciousness, otherwise it is one single Consciousness. But it is only by experience that one can understand these things.

*What are the twelve senses?*¹

We are granted five, aren't we? In any case, there is one other which, precisely, has a

1. In the preceding talk dated 19 March 1951 Mother spoke of “twelve senses”.

relation with consciousness. I don't know if you have ever been told this, but a person who is blind, for instance, who does not see, can become aware of an object at some distance through a kind of perception which is not touch for he does not feel it, which is not vision for he does not see, but which is a contact—something that enables him to make a contact without hearing, seeing or touching. This is one of the most developed senses apart from those we habitually use. There is another sense, a sort of sense of proximity: when one comes close to a thing, one feels it as if one had contacted it. Another sense, which is also physical, puts you in touch with events at a great distance; it is a physical sense for it belongs to the physical world, it is not purely mental: there is a sensation. Some people have a sort of sensation of contact with what is happening at a very great distance. You must not forget that in the physical consciousness there are several levels: there is a physical vital and a physical mind which are not solely corporeal. Foresight on the material plane is also one of the physical senses.... We have, then, something that sees at a short distance, something that sees at a long distance and something that sees ahead; this already makes three. These are a sort of improvement of the senses we have; as for instance, hearing at a great distance—there are people who can hear noises at a great distance, who can smell at a great distance. It is a kind of perfecting of these senses.

Which sense is used in water-divining?

The perception is different with each individual. For some, it is as though they saw the water; for others, as though they got the smell of water; and for others yet, it is a kind of intuition from the mental field; but then it is not a physical perception, it is a sort of direct knowledge. There was a man here who used to say he smelt water; he had an instrument, but it was only a pretext.... It is like a rod which bends, you know; try as you may to be as passive as possible, you will always make a slight movement when you have the feeling that something is there. I have tried this experiment many times: you give the rod to someone, you ask him to walk; you are silent, the man is silent, quite concentrated; then, suddenly, you think powerfully: "Here there is water" and hop! the rod makes a little movement—it is quite evident that it is your suggestion. I had thought thus without having the least idea that there was water there, simply to make an experiment; and in the hand of the dowser the rod came down; he had received the suggestion in his subconscious.

If one is sufficiently quiet, the nerves can receive the vibrations of the water?

But there was no water! It was I who had *thought* there was water (there may have been water there, I don't know, I did not tell them to dig and see). But the experiment proves that it was simply my thought which had worked on the fingers holding the rod, and the rod had come down.... You could also tell me that I had thought of water because it was there!

There are animals with very developed senses, aren't there?

Ah! yes, there are animals which are much more advanced than we.

I knew an elephant which led us straight to the water when we were tiger-shooting.

Animals have much more perfect senses than those of men. I challenge you to track a man as a dog does, for instance!

This means that in the curve or rather the spiral of evolution, animals (and more so those we call "higher" animals, because they resemble us more closely) are governed by the spirit of the species which is a highly conscious consciousness. Bees, ants, obey this spirit of the species which is of quite a special quality. And what is called "instinct" in animals is simply obedience to the spirit of the species which always knows what ought and ought not to be done. There are so many examples, you know. You put a cow in a meadow; it roams around, sniffs, and suddenly puts out its tongue and snatches a blade of grass. Then it wanders about again, sniffs and gets another tuft of grass, and so it goes on. Has anyone ever known a cow under these conditions eating poisonous grass? But shut this poor animal up in a cow-shed, gather and put some grass before it, and the poor creature which has lost its instinct because it now obeys man (excuse me), eats the poisonous grass along with the rest of it. We have already had three such cases here, three cows which died of having eaten poisonous grass. And these unfortunate animals, like all animals, have a kind of respect (which I could call unjustifiable) for the superiority of man—if he puts poisonous grass before the cow and tells it to eat, it eats it! But left to itself, that is, without anything interfering between it and the spirit of the species, it would never do so. All animals which live close to man lose their instinct because they have a kind of admiration full of devotion for this being who can give them shelter and food without the least difficulty—and a little fear too, for they know that if they don't do what man wants they will be beaten!

It is quite strange, they lose their ability. Dogs, for instance the sheep-dog which lives far away from men with the flocks and has a very independent nature (it comes home from time to time and knows its master well, but often does not see him), if it is bitten by a snake, it will remain in a corner, lick itself and do all that is necessary till it gets cured. The same dog, if it stays with you and is bitten by a snake, dies quietly like man.

I had a very sweet little cat, absolutely civilised, a marvellous cat. It was born in the house and it had the habit all cats have, that is to say, if something moved, it played with that. Just then there was in the house a huge scorpion; as was its habit, the cat started playing with the scorpion. And the scorpion stung it. But it was an exceptional cat; it came to me, it was almost dying, but it showed me its paw where it was bitten—it was already swollen and in a terrible state. I took my little cat—it was really sweet—and put it on a table and called Sri Aurobindo. I told him, "Kiki has been stung by a scorpion, it must be cured." The cat stretched its neck and looked at Sri Aurobindo, its eyes already a

little glassy. Sri Aurobindo sat before it and looked at it also. Then we saw this little cat gradually beginning to recover, to come round, and an hour later it jumped to its feet and went away completely healed.... In those days, I had the habit of holding a meditation in the room where Sri Aurobindo slept (the room A uses now) and it was regularly the same people who came; everything was arranged. But there was an arm-chair in which this very cat always settled beforehand—it did not wait for anyone to get into the chair, it got in first itself! And regularly it went into a trance! It was not sleeping, it was not in the pose cats take when sleeping: it was in a trance, it used to start up, it certainly had visions. And it let out little sounds. It was in a profound trance. It remained thus for hours together. And when it came out from that state, it refused to eat. It was awakened and given food, but it refused: it went back to its chair and fell again into a trance! This was becoming very dangerous for a little cat.... But this was not an ordinary cat.

To finish my story, if you leave an animal in its normal state, far from man, it obeys the spirit of the species, it has a very sure instinct and it will never commit any stupidities. But if you take it and keep it with you, it loses its instinct, and it is then you who must look after it, for it no longer knows what should or should not be done. I was interested in cats to make an experiment, a sort of inverse metempsychosis, if one can call it that, that is, to see if this could be their last incarnation as animals, if they were ready to enter a human body in the next life. The experiment succeeded fully, I had three absolutely flagrant instances; they left with a psychic being sufficiently conscious to enter a human body. But this is not what men ordinarily do; what they usually do is to spoil the consciousness or rather the instinct of animals.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1950-51, CWM, Vol. 4, pp. 232-39)

A LETTER

YOUR account of how your saffron robe and cap carried you triumphantly everywhere was very enjoyable. It shows that the Americans are sensitive to spiritual symbols and are eager to get in touch with the truth behind them. They must also be perceptive of people's beings behind their physiognomies and appearances. For the USA have had quite an abundance of fellows claiming to represent Indian wisdom but whom Soli and I used to dub "Swami Bogusananda". I wish you had held the seminar the fellow in Atlantic City, famed for its casinos, wanted to attend. Perhaps if I had been in that city during your seminar I would have been hard pressed to decide whether to visit the famous casinos or listen to my enlightened friend hold forth on the rapturous risks of the soul in this world which Sri Aurobindo has called

The wager wonderful, the game divine.

I recollect also a sentence in *The Life Divine* or in *The Synthesis of Yoga* about how "the Purusha in a wager with himself" undertook the adventure, the hazardous task, of creating the stark opposite of everything divine and then starting to manifest his true reality from this Inconscience. Vivekananda spoke of his God the poor, the miserable, the persecuted. I am inclined to speak of God the gambler. And I am glad of this aspect of him, for otherwise he would never have taken up a case like me, such a complexity of personalities, each with its own demand to be fulfilled. Before I came to Pondicherry at the end of 1927 I knew a theosophist named Venkatachalam, an art-critic by profession. When he came to know of my spiritual search he told me: "Nobody except Sri Aurobindo will satisfy so complex a person as you." Strange words coming from a theosophist with those "Masters" who control everything in the universe, leaving hardly any room for anyone like Sri Aurobindo to have a significant say anywhere. But this theosophist had been to Pondicherry and met Sri Aurobindo, and he could not help reporting to me: "Sri Aurobindo lives in the cosmic consciousness." I came to Pondicherry swept up on a wave which seemed irresistible. Sober thinking would never have brought me here. Once I asked the Mother: "Will the Supermind be able to transform us in spite of ourselves?" She laughed and said, "I should think so." I exclaimed: "Then there is hope for me." My situation had only one saving grace. Somehow from the very start I told the Mother to open me up in the heart. Even on the last occasion I met her—on my birthday before the time she retired completely—my last words were: "Put your hand here (*indicating the middle of my chest*) and open me up." She put her hand and said: "It is beating very fast." I answered: "Yes, for I am very impatient now." She gave me one of her unforgettable smiles.

Luckily a radical beginning was made in the first few months of my stay in the Ashram—some time in 1928. I used to feel a pain in my chest every time I sat to meditate. I complained about it to the Mother. She remarked: "Don't worry. I know what it is. It will go." And go it did one day when I felt as if a wall had suddenly crumbled down in my chest and a marvellous depth disclosed the fire and fragrance of an ineffable felicity

whose very stuff was an incessant spontaneous sense of the eternal Beloved. The depth has not remained open in that fashion always. But some feeling of it has persisted through the years and now and again there has been its outburst. All complexities, all conflicts of the various selves in one find their point of resolution, their world-forgetting rest in that Immortal in the mortal (to use the Vedic phrase about Agni).

Excuse me for digressing from the subject of saffron-robed Yogi Yogendra. I am convinced that it is not just your garment that rendered people so reverential. Surely my friend bears in his face the seal of Sri Aurobindo and his eyes carry a reminiscence of the light that fell into them when he first looked at the Master and the Mother. What the Americans saw is well expressed by what the Bengali chief accountant in your New York office told his sisters about you when he was on a visit to Bombay. The words you have quoted from him as if in surprise hit the target: "He is no ordinary boss of mine. He is a direct disciple of Sri Aurobindo." The epithet "direct" is of the essence. Those who have been fortunate enough to have stood in the physical presence of our Guru and received on their heads the profound Grace-touch of his hand and borne in their hearts the glowing memory of the *darshan*-days are bound to be subtly haloed to all sensitive souls who come into contact with them. Both you and I know how, in spite of those days, we fall far below the expectations of our Guru, but the sheer sense of his transcendent greatness is the shining seed from which all futurity for us is bound to be a Godward growing—a secure destiny even if slow and gradual in fulfilment.

I like the fervour with which you speak of your varied meetings with so-called great men and emphasise that none of these celebrities come anywhere near Sri Aurobindo. I haven't met any of the seven famous names you list and, after being blessed by Sri Aurobindo, I never had the slightest urge to seek out anyone looming large in the public sphere. Even Raman Maharshi whose pictures revealed to me a face whose radiance could draw one deep inward did not draw me outward enough to go and meet him. Sri Aurobindo compassed everything and he was to me

All heaven's secrecy lit to one face.

I shall close with best wishes for a very successful cataract-operation on the 15th as planned. Without fail, every afternoon at the Samadhi I appeal to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to protect and help you.

7.11.1990

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

THE SACRED BELL

LET us go beneath the snow
Beyond the streams of mortal dreams
Behind the lights of crystal nights

And in the myriad chambers dwell
Listening for the sacred bell.

Let us not part from the voice of the heart
Nor ever stray from beauty's way
Nor find too steep the path we seek

And in those austere chambers dwell
Listening for the sacred bell.

MARY HELEN

SLEEP IS THE SCHOOL ONE HAS TO GO THROUGH

Sleep can be a very active means of concentration and inner knowledge. Sleep is the school one has to go through, if one knows how to learn his lesson there, so that the inner being may be independent of the physical form, conscious in itself and master of its own life. There are entire parts of the being which need this immobility and semi-consciousness of the outer being, of the body, in order to be able to live their own life, independently....

It is another school for another purpose, but it is a school. If one wants to make the maximum progress possible, one must know how to use one's nights as one uses one's days; only, usually, people don't at all know what to do, and they try to remain awake and all that they create is a physical and vital imbalance—and sometimes a mental one also—as a result.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers, 2 March 1955, CWM, Vol. 7, pp. 70-71)

A FEW REMINISCENCES

It was either 1925 or 1926.

From 1924 I had started coming to Pondicherry for the Master's Darshan every year as soon as I could collect some money for my long journey and stay for two to three months. This continued till I became permanent after November 1926.

Those days I was looking upon Sri Aurobindo as the greatest son of Mother India and the greatest Master of Yoga, although I had learnt through the late Sri Puraniji that he was not only a Master Yogi but also a living embodiment of Sri Krishna. But as I myself had no such experience at that time, I continued to look upon him as my Master who had graciously initiated me into his Yoga of Integral self-perfection.

Now, it so happened that Mrs. Purani, our Lilavatiben, with whom I had started visiting Sri Aurobindo, felt like preparing some dishes for the Master's midday meal. Both she and Puraniji jointly got them ready and delivered them to one of the inmates of the Library House a little before Sri Aurobindo's mealtime.

But fortunately for me, one day it came to my lot to carry the dish. I came with it to the Library House and after duly handing it over to Amrita or Bijoy Nag (I don't quite remember to whom) who was standing in front of the Reception Room of today, but then of Nolinida's room, in the company of the other inmates. Unexpectedly I saw that Sri Aurobindo was coming down the stairs for his dinner. I stood wonder-struck, for it was not the great Yogi whom I saw before my eyes, but the Lord of Yogis in his eternal glory. His sun-bright eyes cast a luminous glance of grace on me utterly overpowering my being. My heart and soul felt blessed by this mighty vision of the living Ishwara, the Lord of Yoga and of Yogis.

As I stood almost stunned, he passed on his way, but I got my God, my Ishwara, my fulfilment, living in the divine person of Sri Aurobindo.

*

Soon after 1921, Sri Aurobindo changed his residence from the Guest House (at present annexe to the Dortoir) to the Library House, 9, Rue de la Marine, the house the entrance to which is now the Main Gate of the Ashram. Here, as we approach the present Reception Room, we find a staircase by which Sri Aurobindo used to come down for his meals, and crossing the Reception Room and Prithvisingh's office go to his dining room (our present Fruit Room). The upstairs verandah is hallowed by the Master, for he sat there daily for 2 to 3 hours in the forenoon and about an hour in the afternoon when talks* took place sometimes with the Master and sometimes among the sadhaks, the Master participating in them when he thought fit or called for.

There was arranged a simple table and an equally simple chair a little to the east of the middle door and there the Master sat, going through the newspapers or seeing some sadhaks or an occasional visitor.

1. These have been recorded by A. B. Purani in his *Evening Talks*.

But sometimes before he came, one of the house cats found it comfortable to occupy his chair—perhaps as a matter of right—and would not leave the chair for the Master. It probably wanted to enjoy the celestial warmth emanating from the yogic body of Sri Aurobindo, as the light from the sun. And the ever-considerate Master never disturbed the confident cat in any way whatsoever, but simply, nay, precariously sat on the little border-space all the time he remained there. He was by nature a democrat—more than any democrat. His democratic susceptibility extended not only towards human beings but towards animal life also.

*

Sri Aurobindo's Compassion

It was about 5 in the morning. As usual, I had gone to the holy house in which the Master and the Mother lived. I had been graciously granted the work of cleaning part of the house and the Mother herself used to open her door for me to enter and start my delightful work.

But one day, after opening the door, the Mother stood there and in Sri Aurobindo's name asked me to be more careful and quiet that day so as not to disturb a sparrow that was resting on the top of the big middle door.

I took it as a divine command and promised to be cautious. Then I stepped in and the Mother retired. Without making a stir or a sound, I passed by the aforesaid door and to my wonder and delight saw the sparrow sitting motionless on its topmost part.

I was moved. How compassionate was our divine Master! He used to be walking at night in the hall there and had observed this tiny creature taking its night-rest in the peaceful atmosphere always prevailing there. We human beings were not the only creatures for His compassion to look after, but all beings, big and small had a place of love in His more than universal heart.

Blessed, indeed, are we all and blessed the earth for having Him, the divine Master, the living embodiment of the Lord of the universe, for ever leaning over us from His heights and housing us in the depths of His heart of love.

*

Bushy—The Cat

Cats, too, were along with us, bright recipients of the bountiful grace of Sri Aurobindo. For long years, right from His early stay at Pondicherry, i.e. soon after 1910, some lucky cats enjoyed His divine hospitality and made His house their own.

It started like this. A cat persisted in her desire to adopt His house, and although other house-members were at pains not to allow her there, she remained resolute in her will and won.

Sri Aurobindo thought of working upon cat-consciousness also, and this cat-sadhika found a home for herself and her progeny.

It may need a long chapter for dealing with this cat-colony, which we cannot afford. I will, therefore, limit myself to one, Bushy by name, one who is immortalised by Sri Aurobindo, the Master-Poet in His poem "Despair on the Staircase".

Bushy was a great devotee of the Mother and the Master. She had made it a rule of her life to follow the Mother like a faithful dog, whenever She came down either for the giving of Her soup-prasad or for general meditation. Bushy's greatest ambition or rather aspiration was to carry her kittens to the Mother and if possible to the Master to be laid at Their feet as her offering.

It was for this reason that she kept her young ones under the corner-cupboard, half way up the stairs. From here as soon as the door opened and the Mother came out, she would carry them and lay them at Her feet. It was, indeed, a touching sight. How even a cat aspired to make her offering of her dear ones to the divine Mother!

And this was not all. She yearned to lay her offering at the Master's feet also. But before one could reach Sri Aurobindo's room there was first the main entrance door to be negotiated and then there was a wooden partition over 7 feet high. So at night when the Master was alone and the Mother in the meditation hall, Bushy would wait at the stairs to take her chance and at the first opportunity jump in with her kitten in her mouth and again jump over the wooden partition, and perhaps have the Master's darshan, but I don't know whether she laid her baby at His feet or not.

Sri Aurobindo in His pacing at night must have seen her waiting on the topmost stair at the entrance door, ardently desiring to enter, but being refused the opportunity, showing her pose of self-respect worthy of a cat belonging to the Divine.

There she was in despair, magnificently upholding her dignity. This is the subject of the poem "Despair on the Staircase", wherein is revealed the way our Lord looked at all creatures. He writes, "Whether she is spirit, woman or a cat" and "A charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman". He naturally looked upon all beings as forms of the One Brahman, and in this particular case clearly indicated that there was in her cat-body a future woman too.

PUJALAL

(*Breath of Grace*, edited by M. P. Pandit)

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN THE EARLY POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO

ALTHOUGH he regarded himself first and foremost as a poet, Sri Aurobindo's considerable achievements as a poet of eminence have unfortunately been eclipsed by his more widespread reputation as a mystic, philosopher and nationalist. True, his reputation has survived the sixties' hostility of P. Lal and Raghavendra Rao, as indeed the prejudice of modernists like Nissim Ezekiel and Arvind Kishen Mehrotra. A great deal of credit goes to the steadfast defence by early critics like K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar and V.K. Gokak. However, his early poetry dealing with the theme of religious nationalism remains sadly neglected.

Aside from a general lack of interest in Sri Aurobindo's poetry, there are a number of extra literary cultural and political factors that have impeded a better appreciation of his poetry of religious nationalism. Many of his devotees/disciples/admirers make a distinction between his early and later poetry, preferring the second that deals with the more mystical/spiritual experience. These include his sonnets and *Savitri*. Secondly, thanks to the onslaught of the secularists and secular historians, this poetry has not received due attention. Sri Aurobindo's own attitude towards his early essays and poetry on Hindu nationalism remains uncertain. For instance, speaking of the *Karmayogin* articles published in 1937, he cautioned against treating these as representative of his views. To do so, he said, would be to suggest that there had been "no change in my views in twenty-seven years (which would surely be proof of a rather unprogressive mind). My spiritual consciousness and knowledge at that time was nothing to what it is now."

However, despite this caveat, it is important to note that Sri Aurobindo has not disowned his early essays and poetry. Nor has he entirely discarded religious nationalism that was a cornerstone of his political philosophy and action during his Baroda and Bengal days. It is important to know nevertheless that he was never an advocate of Hinduism in the sense of an organized creed or religion, preferring to base his political gospel on the essential teachings of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Epics and the Gita. He spoke often of what he called the Sanatan Dharma or eternal religion and contrasted that with organized religiosity, with evils such as caste stratification and blind superstitions.

The early poetry of Sri Aurobindo dealing with religious nationalism coincides with the essays he wrote during this period. Sometimes the two seem to run concurrently. The volume *Sri Aurobindo on Nationalism* (1965; reprinted in 1996) lists most of these essays. Part I (1893-1894) deals with "India and the British Parliament" and "New Lamps for the Old", Part II (1905-1906) with "Bhavani Mandir" and "Our Political Ideal" (Translation), Part III with (Bandemataram 1906-1908). Part IV contains essays from 1906-1908, Part V brings selections from 1909-1910. And finally, Part VI covers those written after 1910.

There are a number of poems that Sri Aurobindo wrote during this period that suggest a propensity for religious and nationalistic themes. These include *Bankim Chandra Chatterjee*, *Madhusudan Dutt*, *Invitation* (1908-1909 in Alipore Jail), *Who* (1908-09), *A*

God's Labour (31.7.1935-1.1.1936) and longer poems like *Baji Prabhou*.

Before we proceed further, it may be useful at this stage to briefly review the historical circumstances that gave rise to the movement for national liberation. Organized nationalism and religious revivalism both arose in Bengal in the 1870-80s (Heehs, 1997, p. 117). Keshab Chandra Sen's Bramho Dharma and Raj Narain Bose's advocacy of a form of cultural nationalism resulted in Jatiya Mela, renamed as Hindu Mela in 1872. Other figures contributed significantly to the coming together of these streams: Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's (1838-94) historical romance *Anandamath* (1882) narrates the story of a band of Sannyasi revolutionaries who strive for the liberation of the motherland. Similarly, in his *Dharmatattva* (published serially 1884-1885) patriotism or Deshbhakti is held out as superior to bhakti to God. Bankim Chandra's approach was consolidated by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) who in his speeches and writings propounded a vigorous Hinduism as a fitting instrument for the freedom of India.

There were others who propounded political nationalism. They included Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) who challenged the moderate Congressmen and Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) later known as Sri Aurobindo who advocated the right to self-rule. Both Pal and Sri Aurobindo reveal a pronounced use of religious vocabulary, idiom and symbols in some of their writings and speeches. However, as Heehs rightly maintains, both of them were also "practical politicians". "Their program was political, economic and educational: swaraj or self-rule, swadeshi or promotion of indigenous products, boycott of British products, and the creation of parallel educational and other institutions. Their methods were derived largely from European political sources. Religion, however, was the inspiring and guiding force of their lives and they believed, it should inspire and guide the movement as well." (Heehs, 1997, p. 119)

There are certain features that characterize the religious nationalism of Pal and Sri Aurobindo. They include (1) the religious basis of Indian life and the spiritual nature of the people, (2) the superiority and universality of Indian religion, and (3) India's mission in the world. What is noteworthy is that Sri Aurobindo's essays assume all the three principles mentioned although in a non-hegemonic sense. A general spiritual temper and attitude to life seems to permeate his essays even while they deal with the most mundane or the most contentious political or programmatic issues. For instance, in the essay *The Unhindu Spirit of Caste Rigidity* he advocates the transformation of "the fixed, hereditary, anti-democratic caste-organisation into the pliable self-adapting, democratic distribution of function at which socialism aims." (*On Nationalism*: 229. Sept. 20, 1907) Significantly, he invokes the "perfect spirit of the Vedantic gospel of equality." (*Ibid.*, p. 30) Similarly, in the essay *The New Ideal*, he refers favourably to a speech of Bipin Chandra Pal at Uttarpara Library and said: "The ideal is that of humanity in God, of God in humanity, the ancient ideal of the *sanātana dharma* but applied, as it has never been applied before, to the problem of politics and the work of national revival. To realise that ideal, to impart it to the world is the mission of India." (*Ibid.*, p. 294)

The same vision that combines spirituality with politics is also seen in the essay *The Wheat and the Chaff* which, among other things, talks about the Moderate Party,

Phirozshah Mehta and Morley-Minto Reforms. Speaking of the abiding strength of Nationalism, Sri Aurobindo observes: "Only that cause is God-created, entrusted with a mission, sure of victory which can stand by itself in a solitude, absolute and supreme, without visible shield or sword, exposed to all that the powers of the world can do to slay it, and yet survive." (*Ibid.*, 309)

Again: "God is a hard master and will not be served by halves. All evasions, all subterfuges He cuts away and puts the question plain and loud; and before all mankind..." (*Ibid.*, 310)

The arguments build up progressively and a contrast is made between cowardly self service and "profitable swadeshi investments" as well as genuine service for the nation. As Sri Aurobindo declares: "The work now before us is of the strongest kind. Power of a greater burning." (*Ibid.*, 312) In *The Ideal of the Karmayogin* he says: "We say to the nation: 'It is God's will that we should be ourselves and not Europe.' " (*Ibid.*, p. 386)

Undoubtedly, one of the longest expositions of this kind is found in Uttarpara Speech where Sri Aurobindo speaks of his realization of Krishna in the Alipore Jail and reveals how the new experience of identification with Him has made possible a greater service to the nation. As he concludes most memorably: "...nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the Sanatan Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatan Dharma, with it it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatan Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatana Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatana Dharma it would perish. The Sanatan Dharma, that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you." (*Ibid.*, p. 376)

The use of religious/spiritual themes for the national freedom struggle is also extensively found among many painters of the Bengal School. Two of the poems Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1908-09 remain his best in this category. Outwardly, neither of the two, namely *Invitation* and *Who*, deals with the nationalistic theme. But seen in the larger context in which these poems were composed, there is little doubt about their symbolic value with regard to nationalism.

The publisher's note indicates that *Invitation* was composed in Alipore Jail. As the opening lines clearly indicate, the poem extends an invitation to fellow seekers. The speaker is the iconic leader, fearless and intrepid. He is the avatar, the Christ, the Krishna and the Buddha who throws a challenge to the devout to follow his footsteps:

With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow? ...

I am the Lord of tempest and mountain,
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride.

Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
 Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

(*Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 39)

Similarly, the poem entitled *Who* is a beautiful rendering of our experience of God, His mystery and miracles. The opening stanza contains evocative lines of great beauty and depth:

In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest,
 Whose is the hand that has painted the glow?
 When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether,
 Who was it roused them and bade them to blow?

(*Ibid.*, p. 40)

God the Almighty Being forever remains benign and enigmatic. The poem brings in many allusions to spiritual traditions, East and West:

We have love for a boy who is dark and resplendent,
 A woman is lord of us, naked and fierce.
 We have seen Him a-muse on the snow of the mountains,
 We have watched Him at work in the heart of the spheres.

(*Ibid.*)

There are equally powerful echoes of the Western cosmography as depicted in the last two lines of the following stanza:

In the strength of a man, in the beauty of woman,
 In the laugh of a boy, in the blush of a girl;
 The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven,
 Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl.

(*Ibid.*)

Love for God is not enough. We must acquire Godlike qualities such as courage, fearlessness, nobility and the spirit of sacrifice which in the context of liberation from foreign yoke becomes a matter of pivotal importance. As the lines capture a mood of profound regret:

The Master of man and His infinite Lover,
 He is close to our hearts, had we vision to see;
 We are blind with our pride and the pomp of our passions,
 We are bound in our thoughts where we hold ourselves free.

(*Ibid.*, p. 41)

A longer poem of equal charm and strength is Sri Aurobindo's patriotic poem "Baji Prabhou". It embodies most of the elements of religious nationalism found in his essays. Shivaji's fight against the tyranny of the Moguls and the heroic self sacrifice of his General Baji Prabhou Deshpande in defence of the motherland have unmistakable lessons for the ongoing fight against the British rule. The author's note in the beginning of the poem provides a crucial background:

This poem is founded on the historical incident of the heroic self-sacrifice of Baji Prabhou Deshpande, who to cover Shivaji's retreat held the pass of Rangana for two hours with a small company of men against twelve thousand Moguls. Beyond the single fact of this great exploit there has been no attempt to preserve historical accuracy. (*Ibid.*, p. 279)

The opening lines of the poem capture an ambience of aridity and spectral stillness. Man and Nature are pitted against each other, wrestling against a cruel and inexorable fate. The lines are graphic and depict the topography in stark and austere terms:

A noon of Deccan with its tyrant glare
Oppressed the earth; the hills stood deep in haze,
And sweltering athirst the fields glared up
Longing for water in the courses parched
Of streams long dead. Nature and man alike,
Imprisoned by a bronze and brilliant sky,
Sought an escape from that wide trance of heat.

(*Ibid.*, p. 281)

There is the description of the Mogul horsemen with their "surf of steel" pitted against "the panther of the hills" with the foes in hot pursuit, there is a need to save the leader. The choice falls inevitably upon Baji. He spoke no word

...but stormed with loose and streaming rein
To the high frowning gorge and silent paused
Before the leader.

(*Ibid.*, p. 282)

The words he hears beckon him to a task more mighty than the one of saving his leader:

Baji, more than once
In battle thou hast stood, a living shield,
Between me and the foe. But more today,
O Baji, save than any single life,—
Thy nation's destiny.

(*Ibid.*)

Baji's brief is to delay the host with the help of five hundred men until the leader sped to

Raigurh and returned in “two brief hours”. His answer elevates the discourse from the plane of military prowess to one of spiritual strength:

Tanaji Malsure, not in this living net
Of flesh and nerve, nor in the flickering mind
Is a man’s manhood seated. God within
Rules us, who in the Brahmin and the dog
Can, if He will, show equal godhead. Not
By men is mightiness achieved; Baji
Or Malsure is but a name, a robe,
And covers One alone. We but employ
Bhavani’s strength, who in an arm of flesh
Is mighty as in the thunder and the storm.
I ask for fifty swords.

(Ibid., p. 283)

The farewell is equally poignant. Baji’s words, ringing with passionate ardour are matched by the depth of his chief’s utterance:

“We part, O friend, but meet again we must,
When from our tasks released we both shall run
Like children to our Mother’s clasp.”...

(Ibid., p. 284)

The slender band of warriors met the foes headlong, “Tall and large-limbed, a formidable array,/ The Pathan infantry; a chosen force,/ Lower in crest, strong-framed, the Rajputs marched...”

Baji’s clarion call to battle is always accompanied by Bhavani’s swords for the sake of the freedom of the country. In the final hours, even as the end seems inevitable, he remains defiant and declares:

Make iron of your souls.
Yet if Bhavani wills, strength and the sword
Can stay our nation’s future from o’erthrow
Till victory with Shivaji return.

(Ibid., p. 289)

The poet shows the transformation that comes upon Baji when he becomes an instrument for a higher divine force:

...then suddenly
Upon the Prabhou all the Goddess came.

Loud like a lion hungry on the hills
 He shouted, and his stature seemed to increase
 Striding upon the foe.

(*Ibid.*, p. 290)

Finally, only fifteen men are left out of the original fifty and at the very end only three survive. In his sacrificial death, Baji Prabhou attains martyrdom and gives up his life for the greater glory of his nation. Here, as in the other poems discussed, Sri Aurobindo's poetry shows an admirable working of religious nationalism.

In the final analysis, religious nationalism in Sri Aurobindo's poetry cannot be equated with communalism, sectarianism or right-wing Hindu revivalism. When Sri Aurobindo speaks of Hinduism, he basically has Sanatan Dharma in mind. For him, it is universal religion "whose external scriptures were as much the Bible and the Koran as the Hindu Shastra and whose internal scripture was the voice of the eternal within the heart of all."

Similarly, sociologists and social psychologists like T. N. Madan (1987), Ashis Nandy (1988) and Richard Falk (1988) "have demonstrated the historical contingency of European secularism and suggested a new role for religion in Indian political and social discourse." (Heehs, p. 125) In the same manner, Partha Chatterjee points out the inadequacy of histories that equate nationalism with the struggle for political power. He asserts that nationalists in India and other Asian and African countries were remarkable for remembering the need to preserve 'the distinctiveness of one's spiritual culture' while engaged in political struggle (Chatterjee, 1993; rpt 1994: 6). This gave them the chance 'to think of new forms of the modern community' (Chatterjee, 1994: 13) (Heehs, p. 132)

In sum, the interface of nationalism and religion in Sri Aurobindo's poetry constitutes a significant phase in his writing career. It also marks a valuable stage in the making of the Indian Nation.

SACHIDANANDA MOHANTY

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THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of August 2002)

*Savitri and the Record of Yoga**

1

In a letter written in 1932, Sri Aurobindo explained how he had arrived at the knowledge on which he and the Mother based their work:

We know well what is the difference between a subjective experience and a dynamic outward-going and realising Force. So although we have faith, (and who ever did anything great in the world without having faith in his mission or the Truth at work behind him?) we do not found ourselves on faith alone, but on a great ground of knowledge which we have been developing and testing all our lives. I think I can say that I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane. That is why I am not alarmed by the aspect of the world around me or disconcerted by the often successful fury of the adverse Forces who increase in their rage as the Light comes nearer and nearer to the field of earth and Matter.¹

In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo created a symbol of the victory of this dynamic realising Force over the forces opposing it in the field of Matter and human life. The uniqueness of *Savitri* among works of literature lies in the fact that it is not merely a product of the imagination, however beautiful, or even the expression of a purely subjective mystical experience. It announces the action of a Force that could change the world.

It is now possible to get a fairly precise and detailed picture of some of the “testing” that had given Sri Aurobindo confidence in the effectivity of such a Force. His Yogic diary, the *Record of Yoga*, which he kept with some regularity from 1912 to 1920 and resumed briefly in 1927, has recently been published in book-form for the first time. The text runs to about 1,500 pages in two volumes. Its publication could profoundly affect future research in several areas of Sri Aurobindo’s thought and work, including *Savitri*.

Sri Aurobindo’s often-quoted statement that *Savitri* is “the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind”² suggests that it may have something in

* In this instalment is published the beginning of a talk given on 18 February 2002 at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Pondicherry. In the instalment of May 2001, where the relation between *Savitri* and the *Record of Yoga* was first discussed, it was promised that further examples of correspondences between Sri Aurobindo’s epic and his diary would be presented after studying the four aspects of the world-problem symbolised by the Dragon, the Sphinx, Night and the somnambulist Force. That study has been concluded, and the connection between *Savitri* and the *Record of Yoga* will now be taken up in a more general way, beginning with the present talk. The transcript of the talk has been revised for publication as part of this series.

common with the *Record of Yoga*. The Mother, likewise, described *Savitri* as a “daily record” of Sri Aurobindo’s experiences.³ But if we want to have a clear idea of how Sri Aurobindo recorded his inner life in *Savitri*, we encounter the difficulty that his epic is a legend as well as a symbol, besides being a poem and not a diary. Its structure is not chronological, but literary. Though it has been called a spiritual autobiography, reading it in that way is beset with pitfalls.

It might help, therefore, to look into the other record of Sri Aurobindo’s sadhana, the diary he kept for many years. His *Record of Yoga* could be expected to provide clues to exactly how *Savitri* reflects his Yogic development. For a number of reasons, a comparison between *Savitri* and the *Record* is not at all easy to make. But that should not deter us from an approach that is sure to yield valuable insights.

The first problem we meet in trying to compare *Savitri* with the *Record of Yoga* is due to the fact that Sri Aurobindo wrote most of *Savitri*, at least 80% of it, after the period of the *Record*. The explicitly Yogic books and cantos—especially “The Yoga of the King”, “The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds” and “The Book of Yoga”—were written almost entirely after the discontinuation of the *Record*, whose last dated entry was made on 31 October 1927. It must have been around this time that Sri Aurobindo’s conception of *Savitri* began to undergo the change implied by his first published letter on the poem, dated 1931, in which he said of the earlier version that “in that form it would not have been a ‘*magnum opus*’ at all” and, besides, that “it would have been a legend and not a symbol.”⁴ In spite of the overlap between the *Record* and the writing of *Savitri* from 1916 to 1920 and again in 1927, the narrative poem Sri Aurobindo was working on at that time offered limited scope for including the kind of experiences recorded in the diary of his Yoga.

As a result, parallels between *Savitri* and the *Record* are mostly to be found in passages in the epic that were written from the late 1920s onwards. Sri Aurobindo often restated in a poetic form experiences he had noted years earlier in the matter-of-fact style of his diary. I will give some examples of this later on. But first I will show that from the beginning of the composition of the poem, even before Sri Aurobindo had begun to describe his Yogic experiences in it on a large scale, his treatment of the theme of *Savitri* reflected in significant ways the sadhana described in the *Record of Yoga*. This connection, which goes back to the first known drafts of *Savitri* in 1916, becomes evident not so much when we look at separate lines and passages as when we examine the central ideas of the early poem in relation to the experiments and experiences documented in the *Record* during the same period.

The diary entry of 23 January 1913 may be taken, more or less at random, as a typical example of these experiments and experiences. About two months earlier, on 26 November 1912, Sri Aurobindo had written: “The regular record of the sadhana begins today”. Although a few diary entries go back as far as 1909 and 1911, and during two or three of the earlier months of 1912 we find almost daily entries under the headings “Record of the Yoga” and “Journal of Yoga”, a new phase seems to have commenced on 26 November 1912.

Some of the first observations noted in this “regular record of the sadhana” concern attempts to predict and influence events in the Balkans, where war was then raging. In the midst of entries recording (among other things) his successes and failures in these attempts, Sri Aurobindo wrote under the date “Jan 23d”:

Today the aishwarya and trikaldrishti suddenly developed an unprecedented force;...⁵

The Sanskrit words used here, which are typical of the terminology of the *Record*, have to be explained before proceeding further. Sri Aurobindo used hundreds of Sanskrit terms in the *Record*, evidently because he found he could describe his experiences most accurately in that way. He defined “aishwarya” as “effectiveness of the Will acting on object or event without the aid of physical means”.⁶ This is one of the three “siddhis of power” which are among the eight siddhis (*aṣṭasiddhi*) forming the third part of the *viññāna catuṣṭaya*. The *viññāna catuṣṭaya* is the third of the seven divisions of the *sapta catuṣṭaya*.

The *sapta catuṣṭaya* is the system consisting of seven (*sapta*) sections with four elements (*catuṣṭaya*) in each, revealed to Sri Aurobindo as a “programme” for his Yoga, apparently soon after he came to Pondicherry.⁷ He explained this system in “The Yoga of Self-Perfection”, Part Four of *The Synthesis of Yoga*. There the last and most general *catuṣṭaya*—the *siddhi catuṣṭaya*—is treated first, in order to make clear the meaning of “self-perfection”. The other six divisions are summarised in the tenth chapter, “The Elements of Perfection”. These are taken up one by one in the remainder of the incomplete Part Four, reaching as far as *trikāladṛṣṭi* or threefold time-vision, the second member of the third *catuṣṭaya*.

The *sapta catuṣṭaya* is the key to understanding the *Record of Yoga*. Explanations of this system have, therefore, been published in the Introduction and Appendixes to the book. In one of these explanations, Sri Aurobindo is reported to have said about the powers included in the *aṣṭasiddhi*, such as *aiśvarya*:

All siddhis exist already in Nature. They exist in you. Only owing to habitual limitations you make a use of them which is mechanical and limited. By breaking these limitations, one is able to get the conscious and voluntary use of them.⁸

It is these siddhis that are described in *Savitri* as

The powers that sleep unused in man within.⁹

In the *Record*, the “siddhis of power”—*aiśvarya*, *īśitā* and *vaśitā*—are often referred to collectively as *tapas* or *tapas-siddhi*.

“Trikaldrishti”, the other Sanskrit term that occurs in the first sentence of the entry of 23 January 1913, is the vision of the three times—the past, present and future. *Tri* means “three”, *kāla* means “time”, and *dṛṣṭi* means “vision”. Sri Aurobindo was interested primarily in being able to see the future, because his aim was to manifest something on

earth that does not yet exist here in a visible form. He referred to *trikāladṛṣṭi* in the literal sense in a line in *Savitri*:

Time's triple dividing step baffled no more....¹⁰

In the *Record*, he distinguished telepathic and decisive *trikāladṛṣṭi*. Telepathic *trikāladṛṣṭi* relies on the use of telepathy, which consists of two faculties: *prākāmya* and *vyāpti*. These “siddhis of knowledge” are two more of the eight siddhis of the *aṣṭasiddhi*. (The remaining three are “siddhis of the body”.) *Prākāmya* means extending the power of the mind to know things beyond its normal range: thoughts of others, events at a distance and so on. It involves a sort of projection of the consciousness. *Vyāpti*, on the other hand, means receiving thoughts, feelings and other movements as they come to our minds from outside ourselves. This is receptive *vyāpti*; there is also a communicative *vyāpti* by which we can send our own thoughts, etc., out into the world and to other minds.

So telepathic *trikāladṛṣṭi* employs *prākāmya* and *vyāpti*, constituting telepathy, to know the forces determining events. One who sees all the forces at work may be able to predict what will happen; knowing the invisible forces which are not normally known, he is in a position to foresee otherwise unexpected events which these forces are preparing to bring about. However, the play of forces is exceedingly complex and this way of knowing the future is always uncertain.

Decisive *trikāladṛṣṭi*, on the other hand, foresees the future directly, without relying on a telepathic vision of the forces at work. It simply sees in advance what is destined to happen. But this can occur on different planes. An event foreseen by such *trikāladṛṣṭi* may be predetermined to happen according to one plane of determinism, yet this might not take into account the possibility of a totally new force intervening from a higher plane and altering the course of events. This is the situation represented in *Savitri*.

But what happened on 23 January 1913, when Sri Aurobindo experienced an unprecedented development of the faculties of *aiśvarya* and *trikāladṛṣṭi*? This is how the entry continues:

... while watching the movement of ants on the wall opposite, it was suddenly perceived that every slightest movement of the particular ant observed in each case followed the anticipatory observation; wherever my idea turned, there the ant, with but slight variations, immediately corrected, turned to follow it; when the forceful will was applied, there was sometimes a slight, but unavailing struggle. This observation covered some half hundred successive movements of various ants and was marred by only one actual and final failure.¹¹

The mention of one failure—an ant that simply refused to obey the will applied to it—is an instance of the scientific objectivity of Sri Aurobindo's recording of his experiments. The failures were as important to him as the successes, because they indicated the limi-

tations of his progress and how much was still to be achieved.

But what do ants have to do with *Savitri*? First of all, in passing, we may perhaps detect a distant reminiscence of Sri Aurobindo's observation of ants in Book Seven, Canto Four, where the "sense-shackled human mind" says:

I have studied the methods of the ant....¹²

The apparent insignificance of these creatures should not lead us to regard Sri Aurobindo's references to them in the *Record of Yoga* as trivial and unworthy of comparison with his sublime preoccupations in *Savitri*. In a chapter of *The Life Divine* entitled "The Pure Existent", published in the *Arya* in April 1915 not long after his experimentation with ants, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

If we look... not at mass of quantity but force of quality, we shall say that the ant is greater than the solar system it inhabits....¹³

But the relevance and importance of this experiment with ants—and similar experiments, in which Sri Aurobindo observed the flights of birds and the behaviour of cats, dogs, squirrels and other animals as well as humans in the immediate environment which was his *sādhana-kṣetra* or field of exercise—becomes more evident as the entry of 23 January 1913 continues. Influencing events in the Balkans, which Sri Aurobindo resumed recording the next day—

The day's news about the Turkish acceptance of the Powers' Note is a success for the trikaldrishti (vyaptiprakamya) & for the Aishwarya for the conclusion of peace, but a violent defeat for the Aishwarya about the terms of peace...¹⁴

—involved the exercise of the same faculty of will-power as influencing the movements of ants on the wall. Sri Aurobindo goes on in the entry of 23 January, after the description of his experiment with ants:

If this force can be rendered permanent and generalised so as to apply to all objects and subjects, then human omniscience and omnipotence in the field permitted by the Infinite are attained. It is a matter of time only; the perfectibility of knowledge and power have today been finally and irrevocably proved.¹⁵

This extraordinary conclusion, relating the movements of ants to the attainment of omniscience and omnipotence, brings us back to *Savitri*. While ants receive a passing mention in Sri Aurobindo's epic, the words "omniscience" and "omnipotence" express the very nature of the Knowledge-Force whose manifestation, transforming the human mind and will, is the heart of the meaning of *Savitri*:

If human will could be made one with God's,
 If human thought could echo the thoughts of God,
 Man might be all-knowing and omnipotent....¹⁶

(To be continued)

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Notes and References

1. *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, pp. 468-69.
2. *Savitri* (1993), p. 800.
3. *Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 13, p. 24.
4. *Savitri*, p. 727.
5. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 214.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
7. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1485.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 1473.
9. *Savitri*, p. 26.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 299.
11. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 214.
12. *Savitri*, p. 519.
13. *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 18, p. 72.
14. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 215.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
16. *Savitri*, p. 457. These and the other lines from *Savitri* quoted in this instalment were written in the 1940s. Comparison of the early versions of *Savitri* with the *Record of Yoga* will begin in the next instalment.

SRI AUROBINDO ON THE FIRST HYMN OF THE RIG VEDA—A GLIMPSE

1

HERE is the opening hymn of the Rig Veda:

अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम्। होतारं रत्नधातमम्॥ १.१.१

“Sri Aurobindo returned again and again to this hymn during forty years of his Vedic studies. The development of his psychological interpretation and linguistic treatment of the ancient hymns is illustrated by his handling at different times of the first one, a hymn of Rishi Madhuchchandas to Agni the Mystic Fire.”¹

No renowned Vedic scholar right from Yaska onward to the present date, either from India or abroad, has dwelt upon the Rigveda 1.1.1 so seriously and consistently as Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo had studied deeply all the hymns of Madhuchchandas and has propounded a sound and new theory of psychological interpretation of the Veda.

Before starting the series *The Secret of the Veda* in the *Arya*, Sri Aurobindo had studied closely almost all the various theories regarding the interpretation of the Veda put forward by Indian as well as Western scholars. He found that they all failed to reveal the hidden and true meaning of the Veda. Thus he commented on the Indian tradition: “The Veda became to the later scholastic and ritualistic idea of Indian priests and Pundits nothing better than a book of mythology and sacrificial ceremonies.”²

Regarding the study and various findings of the European scholars Sri Aurobindo had to say: “European scholars seeking in it the history, myths and popular religious notions of a primitive people, have done yet worse wrong to the Veda and by insisting on a wholly external rendering still further stripped it of its spiritual interest and its poetical greatness and beauty.” “Western Philosophy is admittedly imperfect and as applied to the Veda boldly conjectural and in the absence of a more perfect science of language we are not bound by its conclusions.”³

He repeatedly emphasised: “We can no longer enshrine the Veda wrapped in the folds of an ignorant reverence or guarded by a pious self-deceit; either the Veda is what Sayana says it is, then we have to leave it behind for ever as the document of a mythology and ritual which have no longer any living truth or force for thinking minds, or it is what European Scholars say it is, and then we have to put it away among the relics of the past as an antique record of semibarbarous worship or else it is indeed Yoga, a book of divine knowledge and it becomes of a supreme importance to know and to hear its message.”⁴

2

The European scholars were not conversant with the real Vedic meaning and did not possess a sufficient background of deep Yogic Sadhana. Consequently many difficulties

were experienced by them at every step in a correct understanding of the mantras. Due to their lack of intuitiveness and insight into Vedic studies they sometimes misrepresented the hymns. It so happened because of (i) “Seer wisdoms that utter their inner meaning to the Seer only,” *kāvyaṇi kavaye nīvacanā*; (ii) they selected the simple way of making Sayana the basis of their labour and applying to their studies their knowledge of the new sciences, comparative mythology, comparative Religion and Philology, but all their tools of Vedic study were largely conjectural; (iii) almost all Western professors accepted the myth of an “Aryan invasion” of India in the second millennium B.C. and therefore started with the wrong notion of supposed differences between Aryan and Dravidian culture; (iv) all these scholars neglected the theory of Adhyatmika interpretation of the Veda and largely concentrated on Adhibhautika findings and partly on Adhidaivika meanings. No doubt, indeed, some scholars were studious, possessed of scientific aptitude, eager to find out new things, lovers and appreciators of Indian knowledge and culture, sincere in their work; but as they were not Yogis and Seers in the real sense it was impossible for them to fathom the symbolic, spiritual and mystic significance of the golden treasures of Vedic antiquity.

Indeed, to understand a scripture, it is not enough to be a scholar; one must be a soul. To know what the *drashta* saw one must oneself have *drishti*, sight, and be a student if not a master of the knowledge. Grammar, etymology, prosody, astronomy, metaphysics, logic, all that is good, but afterwards there is still needed the higher knowledge by which the Immutable is known.⁵

3

Sri Aurobindo started in 1910 at Pondicherry a deep study of the Vedas in the original and found in them “a constant vein of the richest gold of thought and spiritual experience”.⁶ We have to keep in mind the fact that he has not gone from the Vedas towards Yoga. His real “first contact with Vedic thought came indirectly while pursuing certain lines of self-development in the way of Indian Yoga.”⁷ Through regular and intense Yogic sadhana he turned to the Veda, as the Veda simply brought him a confirmation of what he had received directly. Thus Sri Aurobindo is first a Yogi and then a great Vedic scholar. On the sound footing of his Rishihood and severe austerity he had ‘Vani’ and ‘Lipi’ (Viz. *Record of Yoga*)⁸ and thereby became a perfect illustration of and worthy answer to

अतप्ततनुर्नतदामो अश्नुते श्रुतास इद्वहन्तस्ततसमाशत॥

(Rig Veda: IX: 83:1)

“He tastes not that delight who is unripe and whose body has not suffered in the heat of the fire, they alone are able to bear that and enjoy it who have been prepared by the flame.”⁹

Salient Features of Sri Aurobindo's Vedic Study

Unlike other Vedic scholars, Sri Aurobindo (i) possessed no family background for the Rigveda and Vedantic study; (ii) he learned the Veda without help of any oral tradition or Vedic teacher, *shrutiparamparā*; (iii) he had not seen even Sayana before he attained considerable depth and height of his own in the Vedic study; (iv) he had not followed any established branch of the study or theory propounded by any Indian or Western scholar; (v) in the light of his own deep Yogic experiences, intense abstraction, severe meditation, *tapas*, and intuition, *ritambharā prajñā*, he went towards the study of the Veda; (vi) he studied the Veda with the direct and original text of the Veda itself; (vii) philologically he delved into the old Vedic language in the light of a deep study of the Tamil, Greek and Latin root-system and learned the grammar of the old Sanskrit language from the original root-clans of the words. Thereby he concluded: "The Rigveda is one in all its parts. Veda cannot be interpreted by separate passages or hymns. If it is to have any coherent and consistent meaning, we must interpret it as a whole."¹⁰ And that is why he tried to establish a common, steady and divine meaning, i.e., spiritual as well as occult of the root with the help of which he found the mystery of the Vedic Yajna.

Moreover, his whole manner and occasion of entry into the Vedas was unpremeditated and accidental. As he himself explains, he looked into the Vedas to see if there was any evidence therein to justify the popular theories of racial animosity and conflict between the Aryans and Dravidians of that early age and of the utter incompatibility due to difference of origin between the northern Sanskritic and the southern Dravidian group of languages. And he was struck to find in the hymns much that threw light on and in some ways anticipated the ways of spiritual realisation he had been charting out independently of his own accord.¹¹

Sri Aurobindo was in any case among those with an uncommon solidity of learning and capacity for industry. He addressed himself to a task which none had successfully attempted so far. He set out on his own basis of intuitive insight to comment upon, explain and fix psychological meanings of all the Agni Suktas of the Rigveda and introduced them as "Hymns to the Mystic Fire" to the world of scholars. In the words of M. P. Pandit, "Sri Aurobindo says the Vedas are truly epitomes of knowledge gained and bequeathed by the Rishis of old who were not bards or poets of common clay but inspired singers who poured out in living vocables the highest experiences and realisations of the soul. They were Seers—leaders of men who had attained a high water-mark of a particular culture and civilisation and these hymnal records are just the finger-prints and sign-posts of their spiritual and religious endeavour. The mantras of the Veda are not of the usual human origin, their contents bespeak the presence of the World beyond words. The language is antique but behind that antiquity lies the story of human language."¹²

It will be astonishing for all to know that "Sri Aurobindo's reading of the Veda was extensive. It is apparent from certain indications left in his notebooks that he considered this *Pravacana* to be part of his sadhana. At times he kept a careful record of his progress, the entire Ninth Mandal was read in four days of May 1914. The extent and range of his

notes and of his references in works such as *The Secret of the Veda* make it clear that he read the entire Rigveda several times over. Parts or all of some Mandals were copied, annotated, translated or explained, sometimes one or more of these operations were repeated half a dozen or more times for a given group of hymns.”¹³

“Sri Aurobindo’s Vedic and linguistic research was pursued steadily between 1912 and 1914. The beginnings of the Vedic work seem, in retrospect, to be rather experimental, but a firm basis was soon found and by March 1914 Sri Aurobindo could write: ‘Veda is now taking a clear form, the definite interpretation has begun.’ After August 1914 much of his Vedic research was channelled into the pages of the *Arya* in such series as ‘The Secret of the Veda’ and ‘Hymns of the Atris’.”¹⁴

(To be continued)

RAMANLAL PATHAK

Notes and References

1. *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Vol. I, No. 2, December 1977, p. 93.

2. Quoted in *Sri Aurobindo’s Vedic Glossary*, A. B. Purani, 1962, p. 4.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

4. *Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishads* (1974), M. P. Pandit, p. 19. Also compare:

“There is nothing like finality in views that are mainly based on mere intelligent guesses, surmises and probabilities rather than on positive and incontestable historical proofs and there should be room enough for a fresh view, based on fresh materials.” *Rig Vedic Culture* (1923), A. C. Das, p. 8.

5. *Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 37.

6. *The Secret of the Veda* (1997), p. 40.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

8. *Archives and Research*, April 1986 to April 1994:

(A) Vani—the hearing of a voice, (B) Lipi—writing seen in subtle vision.

9. *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 339.

10. *Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishads*, M. P. Pandit, p. 20.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Archives and Research*, Vol. 2, No. 2, December 1978, p. 212.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

YAJNAVALKYA AND THE MEANS TO IMMORTALITY

1. The Two Versions

If there is any thinker who frequently appears in the chapters of the Brihadaranyaka, it is doubtless the majestic figure of Yajnavalkya. If from the Upanishad we know him to be an earliest exponent of the Vedanta, from his words of profound wisdom we know the Brihadaranyaka to be the most prominent text of the Upanishads. He is a rishi who lives with his two wives Maitreyi and Katyayani. Of the two ladies, the first is distinguished by the title Brahnavadini (expounder of a doctrine of Brahman). She is of the view that a seeker of immortality has no use for wealth and actually uses no wealth. This is the reason why, when Yajnavalkya informs her of his proposal to divide his property between her and Katyayani, she says that she does not know what to do with that by which she cannot become immortal, *yenāham nāmṛtā syām kimaham tena kuryām* (2-4-3). Having thus expressed her utter distaste for wealth, she asks him to teach her the way to immortality, the way he has known through his personal experience, *yad eva bhagavān veda tadeva me brūhi* (*Ibid.*). This provides an occasion for Yajnavalkya to expound the doctrine of immortality, a doctrine as old and profound as the Vedas.

As we all know, Yajnavalkya's exposition is found in two versions, one in chapter 2-4 and another in chapter 4-5. Though the versions generally agree with each other, they do differ with regard to certain important points. This however does not mean that there is a conflict between the two in spite of their general agreement. Wherever the two versions differ, the difference is due to the fact that one says something which the other has left out. Thus the two versions are identical as well as complementary.

If we try to assess the contribution of chapters 2-4 and 4-5 to the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, we discover that they draw the boundary lines within which all other discourses in the text are to be placed and interpreted. Professor Raghavachar, in his study of the Upanishad, has come to the same conclusion. He observes as follows: "The entire dialogue containing Yajnavalkya's teaching to Maitreyi occurs twice in the Upanishad (2-4 and 4-5) with only slight variations. Yajnavalkya seems to open his philosophy with it and conclude with it. It is the *upakrama* and the *upasamhāra*. All the intervening discourses are to be interpreted, it seems, in the light of this introduction and climax."¹ Therefore the key to a right understanding of the entire text of the Brihadaranyaka is to be found in Yajnavalkya's discourses to Maitreyi.

2. Renunciation: Physical and Psychological

The relation between immortality and wealth can be understood in two ways: (i) while immortality concerns Atman, wealth concerns Anatman; (ii) while immortality is inward and psychological, wealth is outward and physical. According to the first, they are opposites

1. S. S. Raghavachar, *Sri Ramanuja on the Upanishads*, 1972, p. 67.

and exclude each other; according to the second, they are distinct but not divorced from each other. For the purpose of explanation of the latter, immortality may be taken in the sense of something having an eternal essence, and wealth in the sense of something possessing a tangible form. We know that essence and form are but two aspects of the same thing. We also know that while its essence is inward, its form is outward. If immortality and wealth are viewed thus, they go together and are related to each other as the inward essence and the outward form.

We may speak of two types of wealthy persons, one seeking immortality with the necessary qualification and another seeking the same without the qualification. The qualification consists in having a real desire for immortality. When Maitreyi asks whether she can become immortal through wealth, *katham tenāmṛtā syām* (2-4-2), she puts herself in the first category and wants to know whether she can realise the goal through using her wealth as a means therefor. By asking the question she intends to announce that she cannot reach immortality through wealth. Though her intention is clear, it is not clear why she thinks that immortality cannot be reached through wealth. There is only one clue that can help us here—her title Brahnavadini. We may suppose that she has two conceptions, one metaphysical and another practical. Metaphysically, she is called Brahnavadini because she is known to favour a doctrine according to which Brahman alone is worthy of attainment and all else being Abrahman is unworthy of it and therefore to be renounced. Practically, if wealth is Anatman, then it cannot be a means to immortality which is Atman. Possession of wealth will force the possessor to seek only things of its type i.e. *anāṣṭma-vastus* (material things) and not immortality. And she can escape its influence only through dispossession. If we accept these as her two possible conceptions, then they explain why Maitreyi thinks that she cannot reach immortality through wealth and also why wealth is distasteful to her, *kim aham tena kuryām* (2-4-3). Her dualistic position of Atman and Anatman is taken for granted not only here but in other parts of the dialogue too.

In answer to Maitreyi's question whether she can become immortal through wealth (2-4-2) Yajnavalkya says two things: (1) the life of a person who possesses wealth will be like that of wealthy people; (ii) immortality is not possible through wealth, *amṛtatvasya tu nāśāsti vittena* (*Ibid.*). On the face of these two, Yajnavalkya agrees fully with Maitreyi's view of wealth and immortality. If this is true, how can he say that not only wealth but all other things are to be loved for the sake of Atman: *ātmanastu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati* (2-4-5)? Evidently, he does not see any opposition between wealth and immortality; on the contrary, he sees that the two can go together, even as the form and essence of an object. In other words, he does not subscribe to the dualism of Atman and Anatman. How is it then that he agrees with Maitreyi and yet has a completely opposite view of wealth and immortality?

Though Yajnavalkya speaks words that seem to support Maitreyi's view, he really speaks something else. For he answers her question not from her point of view but from the point of view of a wealthy person who seeks immortality without the necessary qualification (2-4-2). Now we shall go back to his answers. (i) He says that the life of a

wealthy person will be like that of wealthy people. What do they do in their life? They generally seek only material things. And when they happen to seek immortality, they are under the delusion that they can become immortal without having the necessary qualification. Therefore, like them, the wealthy person will be doing these two things in his life. (ii) The genuine desire (*āśā*) for immortality arises by itself and not through anything else, much less wealth. Therefore wealth cannot create the desire in the mind of the wealthy person. It is in this sense that the desire for immortality is declared to be not possible through wealth, *amṛtatvasya na āśā asti vittena*. Note the difference between the words used by Maitreyi and Yajñavalkya—*amṛtāsyām*—by her and *amṛtatvasya āśā* by him.

Immortality consists in knowing Atman, for Atman is immortality. Conversely, mortality consists in being bound by ego, for ego is mortality. Ego uses not only wealth but everything else in the world for its satisfaction and aggrandisement. Immortality is won by the desire for the immortal Atman. But the desire arises spontaneously and never depends on any external circumstance. However, material possessions can play a vital role in the case of a person who has the desire for immortality. For they are not opposed to immortality which is Atman. They arise from and abide in Atman. If, out of the desire for immortality, ego is surrendered by surrendering all to Atman, then all possessions help the renouncer a great deal in moving away from his ego and fixing his attention more and more on Atman. They help in destroying the delusions of ego and crippling the ego itself by making it less and less effective. Thus they help in strengthening the seeker's original desire and fitness for immortality. However, they cannot get rid of the ego, even as they cannot create the desire for immortality. Dissolution of ego takes place only when the vision of Atman arises, *param dṛṣtvā nivartate* (*Gṛā*, 2-59).

Now we shall have a close look at Yajñavalkya's words (2-4-5). They emphasise four important things: (i) the things on which our life depends—husband, wife, sons and others including wealth; (ii) our attitude towards them—they are regarded as objects to be loved for their own sake, *sarvasya kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati* (*Ibid.*); (iii) prohibition of love of things for their own sake, *na vā are sarvasya kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati* (*Ibid.*); (iv) prescription of love of things for the sake of Atman, *ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati* (*Ibid.*). First, Yajñavalkya draws our attention to the fact that wealth is not the only thing on which we depend, but there are so many other things also like husband, wife, sons, etc. They too are necessary for our life. Second, we love them for their own sake i.e. we love them for the sake of the benefits which our ego derives from them and by which it fulfils its desires and increases its worth. Third, when it is prohibited from loving them for their own sake, the ego loses its force and effectiveness. Fourth, the prohibition results in the rejection not of the objects of love but of the ego behind them. When the ego alone is prohibited and not the objects of love, for whose sake are they to be loved? For the sake of Atman. This is Yajñavalkya's instruction.

Here Yajñavalkya makes a momentous distinction between two ways of renunciation, physical and psychological. The first consists in physically renouncing all objects of love, while the second in renouncing them mentally and not physically. His

recommendation to Maitreyi is that she practise psychological instead of physical renunciation. Love is good and objects of love are also good. But what is not good is ego and love of objects for the sake of ego. For what makes one mortal is ego and love of ego and not wife, sons, wealth, etc. or love of these objects. Therefore when ego is renounced, both love and objects of love are preserved and transferred from ego to Atman. As a result, all are loved for the sake of Atman. Yajnavalkya does not favour physical renunciation which rejects the world and love for the world for the sake of getting immortality.

The Isha Upanishad speaks of the world renounced through a wrong view thereof, *tena tyaktena*. But it does not approve of this physical renunciation. Therefore it calls upon the seeker of the Lord, *upāsaka*, to accept and enjoy the world, *bhuñjīthā*. However, it takes care to insist that the enjoyment must be free from the desires of ego, *mā gṛdhaḥ* (verse 1). It is clear from this Upanishad that it favours psychological and not physical renunciation. It is in pursuance of this ancient tradition that Yajnavalkya advises Maitreyi to seek immortality through inner and not outer renunciation.

In Yajnavalkya's view one can have wife, sons, and all other things and love them too, but yet one can be immortal. For immortality consists in having no ego and looking upon all as Atman's possessions and loving them for Atman's sake.

(To be continued)

N. JAYASHANMUGAM

CAN THERE BE AN INDIAN SCIENCE?

(Continued from the issue of August 2002)

Fortune Technology Corporations

THE practical aspect of science has, in the present-day pursuit, overshadowed the aspect of authentic knowledge, knowledge for the sake of knowledge alone. Mental pleasure in comprehending the laws of nature has been pushed aside and innovative technology towards the good turn of commerce has taken its place. Not that there is no honest and legitimate science but what is mostly present is the strain of competent professionalism in the service of society. Extravaganza and a contemptible vitalistic lifestyle of the masses have even moulded the curricula of prestigious universities and academic institutions. One all-important goal of this establishment is to cater and gratify the disquieting consumerist expectations. Globalisation in the sense of world markets is the unpleasant product of this age. Its trademark is crass and unbridled exploitation of the credulous or else the under-privileged and its promoters are the venture capitalists and unscrupulous multinational companies ruthlessly engaged in mega-financial assets and objectives, their acquisitions. Almost everything else is irrelevant to them and all is geared up towards this single business of rich dollars to be counted in billions. It looks as though science under the specious argument of utilitarianism has fallen willy-nilly in the hands of great big moneymakers. Fortune technology corporations are a visible sign of these vastly changed circumstances. Not that there were no big houses in the past, but the considerable spaces these occupy in our daily life now is an altogether different kind of social phenomenon with its alarming implications. The imbalances that have set in demand newer solutions more radical in their nature than ever we had. Historically speaking, we may trace the origin of such a predicament of ours perhaps to the seventeenth century foundational principles of the Royal Society itself. These prospects were quite unequivocally mandated in the very charter that defined the tone of scientific researches. In its approach the pragmatics of life always had the foremost priority and other considerations received only supportive or secondary favours. Francis Bacon and the notably influential schools of positivist philosophy lifted high these matter-of-fact if not nifty enterprises and put them on an exalted pedestal of acceptability. The trend seems to have got set irreversibly.

Any number of analyses have arrived at this conclusion but they appear to be infructuous. Perhaps the force of life is more assertive than the abstract notions of existence. We may just note here what Ludwig Feuerbach has to say: "The true and rational purpose of science [learning—knowledge] is to be useful for the human life, to enrich it with new inventions and treasures. Its purpose, therefore, is not the satisfaction of curiosity or amusement or glory and fame... Science shall not be a resting couch for the mind vexed by curiosity or a pleasure walk or a high tower from whose height one looks down with contempt... but a rich container of goods, a treasure chamber in honour of the

supreme master of works of all things and for the use of mankind. Science's purpose is therefore a combination of quiet observation along with the practical activity, a combination resembling the conjunction of the highest planets, of Saturn, the preceptor of the principle of quiet contemplation, and of Jupiter, the preceptor of an active life." (*History of Recent Philosophy from Bacon to Spinoza*) Such is the legacy bequeathed to the European nations by Bacon's *Novum Organum* (The New Instrument of Knowledge) and *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum* (About Dignity and Perfection of the Sciences). It is through these gates of entrance we are now taken into the world of practical utility founded on experiment. Should we enter into this world with our eyes shut?

In the happy days of ancient human glory there was the thirst to learn and know more about the universe and the notion of practical benefits often came later. But in the arrival of the innovative science we witness another situation. The industrial revolution changed the landscape around academia beyond recognition. The interdependence between politics and commerce acquired sharper cutting edges. Everything was weighed in terms of gain, financial gains. The government was interested in collecting more and more taxes and the business houses brawny capitals. Other members of society had to be on the payrolls of these powerful masters. To illustrate the point we may take the example of Michael Faraday, famous for his outstanding discoveries in electromagnetic induction that have completely altered the picture of western countries since the nineteenth century. Once a sceptical government officer asked him if his work on electricity would bring any benefit to the treasury. Faraday's reply showed great foresight: "One day, Sir," he said, "you may tax it." In our own days this was repeated in the case of Rutherford, rightly recognized as the Father of Nuclear Physics. Atomic energy has become a source of electricity.

But scientists were also not wanting in justification of their vocations in terms of practical claims. Marcelin Berthelot the chemist: "We see each day how the applications of scientific doctrines to industry continuously increase the prosperity of nations... The history of the present century equally proves the point that everything was improved by new ideas. Such are the consequences of the scientific method. It is in this manner that the universal triumphs of science will ensure the maximum happiness and morality for men." (*Revue de Paris*, 1 February 1895)

We do not know how the universal triumph of science is going to improve the morality of people; rather it seems to be the other way round. The havoc wrought by technology has proved more disastrous in killing the spirit of man than the benefits it has brought to him. There is perhaps considerable merit of exaggeration in taking Bacon as the creator of the experimental method and of recent science. But he himself was a product of the scientific revival of the sixteenth century. What he propounded was the conclusion drawn by the English common sense reflecting the practical rather than the theoretic. The three virtues of the possessors of this common sense are, according to André Maurois, the Bible—Free Trade—Democracy. The linkage of science with the commercial aspect is to be traced in this national character with its emphasis on free trade. Its success makes science stand for "Reason, Progress, Power, Yield, Profit, Prosperity, Modernity, Secu-

larism, Freedom of Thought, Enlightenment.” Obviously enlightenment here is to be contrasted against religious obscurantism and dogmatic impositions and does not mean mystical or deeper revelatory knowledge that comes in absorbed communion with the reality.

The scientific movement that had already set in even before the arrival of Bacon led him to formulate his methodology of science. Galileo had broken from the Aristotelian tradition and initiated the experimental method. But we must concede to Bacon the honour of raising it from the low condition to which scholastic prejudice had consigned it and of insuring to it a legal existence by the most persuasive plea ever made in its favour. It is no small matter to speak out what many think and Bacon did it against the strong tide of religious-metaphysical dogmatism that was prevalent then.

Bacon’s philosophy of science has been echoed and re-echoed by eminent minds down the centuries. For instance: “It is the interaction between science and society which finds expression in the political and economical decisions—from the sponsorship of research via the restructuring and enlargement of the universities to the curricula of the schools. Science is perceived by society not only as a source of technical progress. Instead, in recent decades more and more concerns and fears of the consequences of this progress have become palpable as they threaten to strike back onto the bases of the life of mankind. Again and again suspicions are voiced, that individual contributions to the debate are influenced by interests, yea, even the discussion as such manipulated. Since long and necessarily, the public discussion about technology’s effects is not limited anymore to individual countries, as the threats also are transgressing borders. Let us begin with a look at physics. From the viewpoint of methodological progress in science, the 20th century was doubtlessly a century of physics: the relativity theory including the theories regarding the origin of the cosmos and the discovery of the atomic structure, especially of the atomic nucleus and the elementary particles are certainly such a progress in knowledge, for which even the expression ‘revolutionary’ appears too weak. Therefore it is all the more astonishing how little attention these pillars of present physics find nowadays in the public awareness in Germany.” (Albrecht Biedl’s talk on *Natural Sciences and their Influence on the Society in Germany*, 1999)

A reflection on science and technology falling in the crude hands of the devil’s agents makes us shudder to speak about their glories. Wendell Berry’s impassionate thoughts could be taken as a point of illustration. When the World Trade Center was attacked in the early morning of 11 September 2001 the conscience of perceptive humanity at once received a hurtful shock as to the new danger to the progressive civilization that has been posed by the unholy and the irrational. If science and technology are facts and if we cannot attach subjective values to facts, that they are amoral, then they seem to become amoral in the manner of an artist painting a goddess as a nude on the thick canvas. But deeper social considerations have to weigh in our responsive minds. “The pre-September 11 American thinking was based on the unquestioning technological and economic optimism which rested on the proposition that we were living in a ‘new world order’ and a ‘new economy’ that would ‘grow’ on and on, bringing a prosperity of

which every new increment would be 'unprecedented'. The dominant politicians, corporate officers, and investors who believed this proposition did not acknowledge that the prosperity was limited to a tiny percent of the world's people, and to an ever smaller number of people even in the United States; that it was founded upon the oppressive labour of poor people all over the world; and that its ecological costs increasingly threatened all life, including the lives of the supposedly prosperous. The 'developed' nations had given to the 'free market' the status of a god, and were sacrificing to it their farmers, farmlands, and communities, their forests, wetlands, and prairies, their ecosystems and watersheds. They had accepted universal pollution and global warming as normal costs of doing business. There was, as a consequence, a growing worldwide effort on behalf of economic decentralization, economic justice, and ecological responsibility... The paramount doctrine of the economic and technological euphoria of recent decades has been that everything depends on innovation. It was understood as desirable, and even necessary, that we should go on and on from one technological innovation to the next, which would cause the economy to 'grow' and make everything better and better... We did not foresee that all our sequence of innovations might be at once overridden by a greater one: the invention of a new kind of war that would turn our previous innovations against us... Nor did we foresee that the weaponry and the war science that we marketed and taught to the world would become available, not just to recognized national governments, which possess so uncannily the power to legitimate large-scale violence, but also to 'rogue nations', dissident or fanatical groups and individuals whose violence, though never worse than that of nations, is judged by the nations to be illegitimate. We had accepted uncritically the belief that technology is only good; that it cannot serve evil as well as good; that it cannot serve our enemies as well as ourselves; that it cannot be used to destroy what is good, including our homelands and our lives. We had accepted too the corollary belief that an economy (either as a money economy or as a life-support system) that is global in extent, technologically complex, and centralized is invulnerable to terrorism, sabotage, or war, and that it is protectable... We can continue to promote a global economic system of unlimited 'free trade' among corporations, held together by long and highly vulnerable lines of communication and supply, but now recognizing that such a system will have to be protected by a hugely expensive police force that will be worldwide, whether maintained by one nation or several or all, and that such a police force will be effective precisely to the extent that it overweighs the freedom and privacy of the citizens of every nation. Or we can promote a decentralized world economy which would have the aim of assuring to every nation and region a local self-sufficiency in life-supporting goods. This would not eliminate international trade, but it would tend toward a trade in surpluses after local needs had been met. One of the gravest dangers to us now, second only to further terrorist attacks against our people, is that we will attempt to go on as before with the corporate program of global 'free trade', whatever the cost in freedom and civil rights, without self-questioning or self-criticism or public debate... But the talk that we are hearing from politicians, bureaucrats, and commentators has so far tended to reduce the complex problems now facing us to issues of unity, security, normality, and retaliation.

National self-righteousness, like personal self-righteousness, is a mistake.” (*Thoughts in the Presence of Fear*)

11th September must have been in the year 1201. Arab invasions of India via the Khyber Pass are not unknown to us, new to us. They changed the course of history. The speed of horses and the rattling of swords still din into our ears. We had to pay the price for sleeping the blissful sleep of the mediaeval ages. The spirit was buried too much in the dull sloth of ignorance and inertia, too much lost in the dryness of abstract thought. The vitality had been fully sucked out by the thirsty mouths of time. But now there is another lesson to be learnt by the progressive spirit of mankind. The crude vital forces that descended have shattered the too confident postures of sophistication and technology, of affluence. Nothing avails when somehow and somewhere we make room for their assault. The Asura knows too well when and how, and of course where, to strike. He can also quote scriptures and, regardless of any consequences, achieve his own purpose.

But could it be a part of man’s struggle? Does it not show how imperfect man is and what a long way he has yet to go till he reaches perfection? There is a metaphor: “After Moses freed his people from Egypt, Israel had to wander full 40 years in the desert wilderness, until everyone who came out of Egypt died, and it is the new generation purified in the desert that finally makes it to the Holy Land. So also it has been opined that there is intelligent life somewhere in the universe, much more intelligent and advanced than man. But they do not like to visit us because of our violent nature,—just as many Europeans dread visiting third world countries.” (E-mail from a friend)

America unquestionably is a particularly receptive country in many ways. There are even more prosperous countries, for example, Australia, but it is the USA alone standing so vehemently for human values. There is the high Spirit behind it, very special. The nation has a living and powerful soul and there is no doubt about it. It looks into the future. New York City follows its special dharma. It generates the diversity of many human efforts, provides a large space for the creative energy in several walks of life. Here ideas with their practical sense foster to come into surer existence. This city could easily be the symbol of the best modern achievements of humanity. That is why it was hit so viciously.

But can New York City be called Babylon or Rome or Alexandria or Paris? Perhaps not. Certainly not Athens. It depends upon what kind of wholesome contributions to mankind it will make and what kind of forces will win in the end. Freedom, Human Rights, Democracy, Disciplined Collective Systems, the Romanesque Will to do Things and achieve Things, Organised Material Life, Efficiency,—well, we have here something which can make the Americans receptive to higher forces. “Think Big and Do Big,”—that is the kind of American image. This has brought a new dimension in the collective life. This is undoubtedly very worthwhile. But, then, America looks to be a “Shining City Atop A Hill.” The arrogance that has come to it because of its science-technology-commerce-wealth also contributes greatly to human disaster. America, for example, is the biggest polluter of the environment in the world. Yet it “shines”. But there are also deeper psychological factors which a technological-commercial society can hardly

appreciate. Terrorism, for instance, comes from man's instinct and impulse to kill, *thanatos*, the death instinct. It finds its way into existence. That feature, the phenomenon of terrorism, makes it very dangerous and unpredictable. Our styles of life can in a positive or negative sense contribute greatly towards its very appearance. Dag Hammarskjöld has a point: "You cannot play with the animal in you without becoming wholly animal, play with falsehood without forfeiting your right to truth, play with cruelty without losing your sensitivity of mind. He who wants to keep his garden tidy doesn't reserve a plot for weeds." Undoubtedly in the present circumstances the most respectful and nobly secular thing one can do is fight terrorism until justice is done. America has awoken to the reality of this new danger. But it looks at everything from the point of view of its own national interests and not with genuine human considerations. The super-technology fireworks are directed against enemies who despise its scientific-commercial power, power also trying to bring under its control the resources of the entire world. The fight against terrorism thus ceases to be the fight for values. The criteria that are applied in formulating policies and actions are money-motivated and towards that the entire achievement of technology is pressed into service. The spirit of fortune technology corporations comes into full play.

Take the example of terrorism being inflicted on India. The American media have a fairly balanced view of the situation relating to Kashmir. Their suggestion to make the Line of Control an international boundary has a certain merit also in it. It does offer an immediate practical solution. India may be willing to consider it favourably, but Pakistan won't as the political bosses there maintain that Kashmir flows in their blood. The truer and deeper psychological factor is that Kashmir is just a pretext for Pakistan. The long agenda is to get Kashmir first and then move next towards Delhi. This is a transparent design known to every Pakistani as well as to every Indian. The roots are much firmly set in the past, going back to the Muslim glory that was there before the British came and snatched the kingdom from them. They want to get it back and rule over the entire country. It is that which makes the present division as a division worked out and nourished by falsehood. That falsehood has to be eradicated and this is what Sri Aurobindo said as early as 1947 at the time of India's independence. The Mother also clearly saw the difficulty but she maintained that the spiritual India as we have on the Playground wall must emerge for the benefit of the country as well as of the world. She even said that this is very essential for the divine work itself upon the earth. How is this going to be achieved? Those in India and the world who are awake to the values of life should work for it. In it is also the test of the American resolve to eradicate terrorism wherever it is nurtured. But the paradox is, for its own geopolitical gains it is fighting against terrorism by befriending those who promote terrorism and make terrorism an instrument for territorial conquest in the stiff name of religion. Oil-hungry America, America that is governed by the bosses of the petrochemical industries, America that will put into effect all its scientific-technological gains in that service has developed another kind of arrogance which will have its own karmic consequences. It is this shortsightedness which could be calamitous in the long run, as it happened earlier in the Afghan context during the days of the cold

war. Perhaps these are too subtle aspects to be seen through the techno-commercial glasses which the modern nations wear. Will the enlightened will prevail in the world? Let us pray for that.

Angst [Dread] of the sudden atomic strike, against which there is hardly any protection, seems to be less appalling compared with the doings of terrorism. The discussion in Dennis Meadows's *The Limits of Growth* or the 1972 reports of the *Club of Rome* fade into insignificance when the fine-tuned acts of terrifiers of society have to be met as a new challenge that never was there earlier in history. If there is no safety for the common civilian population under the very wings of professional governmental management, then the entire system becomes suspect and other solutions have to be discovered. All talk about global warming, greenhouse effect and carbon dioxide reduction, or the delayed transformation into legal rules, assumes much less importance in the face of attacks on urban and gracious life, on the pillars of human dignity, or the idealism of free speech, individual rights and prospects of progress. That also makes the very amorality of science untrustworthy and questionable and one begins to wonder whether it should not acquire the subjective quality that can energize and promote the nobility of human feelings and human aspirations. We are quite far away from such a possibility. Has commerce spoilt science? Has man's unregulated greed for excessive possessions and authoritative control made knowledge subservient to it? The instrument that is designed to obtain power seems to have become meek in its hand. Whatever be the findings of science, they get grossly misused, coarsely exploited. If not for the purposes of war, they are for the gratification of the consumers. And people hail the achievements as progress and advancement!

Fortune technology corporations form a big link in the entire chain of operations. Here is a story of a funny chicken which is a product of genetically modified food promoted by such venturists. It may look to be more apocryphal but has in it the necessary elements of plausibility, convincingly displaying the mode of modern engagements. If we have to take the Indian version of it, it runs as follows. "A man was driving along a rural road one day when he saw a three-legged chicken. He was amused enough to drive alongside it for a while. As he was driving he noticed that the chicken was running 30 kmph. Pretty fast chicken, he thought, and wondered just how fast it can run. So he sped up and the chicken did too! They were now moving along the road at 45 kmph! The man in the car sped up again; to his surprise the chicken was still running ahead of him at 60 kmph. Suddenly the chicken turned off the road and ran down a long driveway leading to a farmhouse. He followed the chicken to the house and saw a man in the yard and dozens of three-legged chickens. He called out the farmer and expressed his curiosity. 'How do you get all these three-legged chickens?' the farmer replied, 'I breed 'em. You see, it's me, my wife and my son living here and we all like to eat the chicken leg. Since a chicken has only two legs, I started breeding this three-legged variety so we could all eat our favourite piece.' 'That's amazing!' said the visitor. 'How do they taste?' 'Don't really know, can't catch 'em.' " (*Technostar* Issue 3.8)

But being typically an Indian version, the episode has neither a precise beginning

nor a conclusive end. The middle is, as usual, clumsy and grotesque. Genetic engineering is a grafted art in India and the story is hanging without an end, simply—or is it inevitably so?—because the entire attempt results in futility. In the American version the three-legged chicken was first running with a speed of 80 mph. The chase went on up to 130 mph. When the visitor saw hundreds of thousands of three-legged chickens in the huge farm, fully mechanized with the state-of-the-art machinery and with a large team of immigrant Indian scientists, he began to inquire whether the giant American Funny Chicken Corporation had commissioned the project. The farmer replied that he himself was the owner of the company. The first leg of the run was already accomplished by the AFC and money was being poured to investigate high-speed systems which would enable the farmer to catch these swift and strange birds. In the meanwhile, the spin-offs had already started paying rich dividends in terms of the affluent dollar. The AFC's share prices shot up to incredible heights. Not only the domestic but also the international market was waiting for the exotic trademark product. After solving the problem of catching the three-legged chicken there could be other unforeseen problems also. There could be a problem of cooking such a queer bird, or the problem of taste, of digestion, of possible after-effects, of specialized skills of management of such farms, of marketing, and so on. There could also be the veterinary aspects to take care of the creatures, their food and their diseases, development and production of medicines for them. A similar set of problems would be waiting to take care of the consumers of the three-legged chickens. A brand-new industry would soon be coming into existence. Not only that. A whole new world of investigative research and in its wake of prototype development and manufacturing and of commerce will have thus opened out. New patents and new awards would follow in the course of such an eventful scenario. In that escalation of activity shall be the veritable scientific and technological growth. The glorious name for such an enterprise is progress.

Fortune technology corporations have thus won the day. The world has come a long way from the aristocratic Athens thriving on slavery to the body of cyber professionals slaving for the betterment of life of man. But what about science? and what of knowledge for the sake of knowledge? What about the aspiring soul of humanity for a life that is wholesome and truthful, harmonious and beautiful? Does it not sound like an inane question?

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

THE OLD SWEET QUIET

WHERE art thou, my old sweet Quiet,
Where, O where?
By the billows canst thou be?
Is it there?
There, where hushed from wild waves' riot
Breaks the smoothed blue sea?
No, not there! The peaceful moon
By those falling waves would stir
With the far, far distance soon
Longings infinite for her;
Her, that from my heart can purge
Not a billow, not a surge.
No, not there!

Art thou in the cornfields lonely?
Oh, to be
Where the wide earth ripples green
Like a sea!
There, possessed of verdure only,
Watching dost thou lean?
No! not there; for thou wouldst meet
By some stile, some hedgerow fair,
Sweet objects, ah! too keenly sweet
With the memory of her;
Her, that from their perfume knows
Not a woodbine, not a rose!
No, not there!

MANMOHAN GHOSE

(Songs of Love and Death, 1926)

SANSKRIT TONGUE

भारत्यम्बा वीणानिक्वणलब्धोदया सुपुण्यकरी।
कविजनरसना सिंहाकारमाहास्थानसाम्राजी॥

O, Sanskrit! Your blessed self was born from the sound raised by Mother Bharati on the Veena. You are the delight of the poets and their Queen, seated on the lion-shaped throne.

कामदुधा भक्तिमतां लोकद्वयसाधनी प्रबुद्धानाम्।
प्रतिभा महाकवीनां ध्वन्यध्वन्यध्वनीनानाम्॥

You are the wish-yielding (cow) for the devoted, you are the best giver of both the worlds to the wise. You are the inspiration for the great poets, who are travellers in the path of suggestive poetry.

पणिन्यादिमहर्षिभिः अस्यां संस्कारः एष आरचितः।
यदसौ कालत्रितये विकृतिं नोपैति काञ्चिदपि॥

Your form has been perfected by Rishis like Panini in such a way that in all the three times (past, present and future) it cannot undergo the least change.

व्याससुतः शुकनामा योगिवरोऽप्याश्रयन्निमामेव।
पक्वसरालोन्मधुरं निर्मितवान् विष्णुभागवतम्॥

The best of sages Shuka, son of Vyasa, even as the parrot does, sucked your sweetness and wrote the *Vishnu Bhagavat*.

T. S. KRISHNAMURTHI

I AM THAT PRIMAL FORCE

I AM that Primal Force
Moving in wind and water
I am the Lord of the Mystic Deep,
The Sovereign Eye that visions forth
Creation and dissolution.
I Am That I Am.

I am the script and the reader,
The subtle movement of mind;
I am the tracery of fate in the ether,
The ascent and the fall;
I am that, and more.
I Am That I Am.

I am the eternal life,
And I am the change called death.
What moves and moves not
Inheres in me,
And touches me not.
I Am That I Am.

I am war and harmony,
I am music and destruction;
Light and dark abide in me
The high, the low, and the wide sweep,
The mortal and the immortal.
I Am That I Am.

ROGER CALVERLY

SAMARPANA*

(Lines written in Dhvanyaloka)

I

ACCOMPANIED by the talking cool wind and smoke
I walk to the sun-baked lake for a dialogue on life.
But on the way the summer flames on the roadsides
burn my passion for living
to reveal the true nature in the flowing turbid water in the crevice.

People motoring the serpentine road
hunting for the fleeting phantoms of their life
redesign their life in curious patterns.

The waves in the lake slice me into three parts
the body in the east
the mind in the west
the soul in the centre
each vying with the other to get an upper hand
upon the windy water.

In the opaque water
I am unable to distinguish
whether the ramifications
are my dreams
or like the misty clouds
hanging on the green Tirumala Hills in wintry December.

Far from the Chamundi Hill
above the glimmering water
like the fringe of a yellow silk saree waving in the breeze
an eagle like a streak of visible light in the dark
fathoming the depths of its own consciousness
in the reflections of uncupped water!

* Self-offering.

II

In the lake on the raised mound
my roots are like upward pointing cornfields
fluttering and dancing
like the wild grass around the cliff.

I may have come from my mother's womb
 but my thinking from an indefinite empirical world.
I may have been nourished by mother's milk
 but my crude logic from the buried experiences in books.
I may have been tutored by my father's stern words
 but my philosophy from the ruins of ancient civilizations.
I may have been structured by my teachers
 but my love and sympathy from the ashes of theories
 and doctrines.

Sitting on the edge mottled by grass
I look at my visible symbols
retracing their origin in the vicinity of sunlight.
I listen to the voiceless music from the depths of water
unaccompanied by the percussion
that ravages through the pores of my skin
and scintillates the entwined gossamer like veins
in the leaf-like heart.

K. V. RAGHUPATHI

HARI-KI-PAIRI

FOR the Hindus this is a very sacred place, almost where the Ganges steps into the plains. There is a small but impressive temple at the head of the stairs. It is considered to be the most auspicious spot for bathing, when the holy tirtha-kshetra (a place of pilgrimage) plays host to the world's largest religious fair, Kumbha Mela, which is held once in every twelve years. There is also the Ardha Kumbha Mela conducted once in six years. This temple enshrines the same sacred slab which was consecrated by the imprints of Lord Maha Vishnu. Legend says—according to *sthalagna*, the local guide—that Lord Vishnu visited this place to advise Daksha Prajapati, the son of Brahma, for ruling the country from here and also carrying on uninterruptedly the activities of creation. After Vishnu's departure the spot where he had set his feet bore the imprints. Since then they have been worshipped with utmost devotion. Mother Ganga adores his feet day and night by touching the walls of the shrine; for, it was from Lord Maha Vishnu's feet she was born. The grateful theists and temple authorities have been offering elaborate regular prayers to this Ganga Mai every evening with ardour that has neither parallels nor similarities elsewhere. This is a regular ritual witnessed every day by hundreds of thousands of devotees and admirers. It is a sight in the evening to enjoy little lamps and flowers floating on the fast-moving crystal waters of the River. No wonder this place is fittingly called Hari-ki-Pairi and the town where it happens Haridwar.

K. K. MOORTHY

(Courtesy: *The Temples of North-East India*, by K. K. Moorthy, pp. 52-3,
Message Publications, Tirupathi)

UDAR

ON 7th December 2001, in the early morning a rare jewel from the treasure of the Mother left us for the higher journey in the subtle world. Now his physical form is no longer visible amongst us.

A young aeronautical engineer, Lawrence M. Pinto, who joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram in the thirties, had since then given his unparalleled contribution in the growth of the Ashram, till his last breath.

On his 31st birthday, on 26th April 1938, Sri Aurobindo gave him the name “Udar” and wrote its significance—“Noble, generous, upright and sincere”. Udar upheld all the four virtues in himself and proved himself true to his name.

The Mother had given him the work of sounding the gong, three and four times, respectively, at the time of the commencement and the completion of the morning meditation around the Samadhi, on every Darshan Day. He did this work most punctually and unfailingly almost till the end of his life. To sound the gong for the Mother is not a small or an easy task. It is only to someone who is the most fortunate and rare that the Mother herself would entrust this work.

There is hardly a single department in the Ashram which began without Udar contributing a lion’s share in it. Whether it was to make new furniture for Sri Aurobindo’s rooms or else to construct a new apartment for the Mother—that work would be entrusted only to Udar. He had the rare privilege of going to Cuddalore with the Mother for purchasing the logs of teak wood to be used for furniture in Sri Aurobindo’s rooms. Whether it was to materialise the Mother’s dream of Golconde or start the Harpagon Workshop or the precast Concrete Factory or the Perfumery or the Handmade Paper Unit or the Stainless Steel Factory or even the business firm of Honesty Engineers & Contractors, in starting, giving shape and stabilising all these departments—we find everywhere the invaluable contribution of Udar.

When the Mother began to give much attention to physical education in the Ashram, it was Udar who manufactured the table tennis tables; the dumb-bells, barbells and other apparatus for body-building, weight lifting and gymnastics; the discus, javelin, shots, hammer and even the spiked running shoes required for athletics—all in the all-purpose Harpagon Workshop! Even the running tracks and the Swimming Pool in the Sportsground were constructed under his direct supervision. During the athletics season in the early fifties, the entire organisational work was carried out in his office in Harpagon. It was a most familiar sight in the athletics season to see Udar in the Sportsground, always hovering near the Mother, maintaining a meticulous record of the performance of each participant (and there used to be some six hundred of them!)—and this after his eight-hour stint of supervising the work in each and every department under his care.

At the time of the grand function for the laying of the foundation stone of Auroville, the Mother herself made Udar the main announcer. Also, the Mother had selected Udar as her representative for going to Delhi to do the work of hand-delivering her special blessings, in response to the request from the would-be President of India.

One of the most luminous sides of Udar's personality was his love for *Savitri*. Udar used to go to Sri Aurobindo's Room to do the work entrusted to him, namely to clean the furniture, at the time when Sri Aurobindo would be dictating *Savitri* to Nirodbaran. He had heard portions of *Savitri* spoken in Sri Aurobindo's voice. It was a divine experience, as he often told us, and it was at this time that the seed was sown which in later years burgeoned as his passion for *Savitri*. One astonishingly brilliant achievement of Udar was that he had memorised long passages from the epic poem *Savitri*. To see him and to listen to him recite *Savitri* was a spiritual feast.

Udar was one of those very few persons, who can be counted on the fingertips, who were present at the time of the last breath of Sri Aurobindo. The responsibility of the momentous task of laying in the Samadhi the material body of Sri Aurobindo was also entrusted to Udar under the direct and detailed instructions of the Mother. Again, after the Mahanirvan of the Mother, following her specific instructions, Udar accomplished the work of laying her physical frame in the Samadhi.

In 1970 Udar founded *Sri Aurobindo's Action* under the permanent presidentship of the Mother and assumed the work responsibility as its secretary. From that very same year a monthly named *Sri Aurobindo's Action* was launched. Under the auspices of this institution he organised All India Youth Camps at Pondicherry in Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary Year.

Once the Mother casually remarked that in her childhood in France, she had heard that India was the land of storytellers. Then she told Udar, with a twinkle in her eye: "It is only when you began to tell me your stories that I knew how Indians got that reputation."

Every afternoon, at tea-time, those who stayed at Golconde would sit by Udar's side and listen to his stories on various topics. To listen to his *Savitri* recitation, initially at his office and afterward at his home, and thereafter to sit by his side and listen to his reminiscences of the olden days was also an uncommon privilege.

On the occasion of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary, as part of the programme of the Government of India, Udar was selected along with one other person for the work of going to the West and giving talks on Sri Aurobindo and his Yoga. During that trip Udar used to wear a silk dhoti, kurta and silk scarf. That looked very elegant and impressive and had a special impact on the audience. As a result, some people started calling him "Swamiji". Udar immediately and firmly put a stop to this mode of addressing him. After his return to the Ashram, the conversation he had with the Mother in this regard was as follows:

The Mother: They called you Swamiji?

Udar: Yes, Mother, but I soon stopped it.

The Mother: I am glad you stopped it; because if ever you fall into that trap, wherever you are, I shall come and break your head.

Udar: Mother, please, dear Mother, I don't want to fall into any trap. I have no intention of being any "Swamiji". For me you are the only one.

The Mother: Yes, I know, and that is why I am telling you all this. Udar, those who

take our Force, Sri Aurobindo's and mine, and try to build up their own image with it, they are traitors to our work.

He had, according to the highest tradition of those sadhaks of the Ashram who were very close to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, completely effaced his individual ambition and, having remained far away from publicity in this world, had fully illumined his life in the light of Purna Yoga. Udar is not now amongst us in his physical body. But his life will inspire us always.

KAIVALYA SMART

(Courtesy: *Auroma*, Surat)

DROWNING

PULL the stopper, quick! My rubber ducky's drowning!
It must be suffering my fate also.
I can't take too much of this world
Before I start to sink.

Pouring! Pouring! While the world is snoring.
How come I'm waking up
To find that I've been chasing dream schemes,
Drowning in a desert, as dry as a bone?

The world is drowning in its own reflection,
Elusive and deceptive, like the dream from which it suffers.
In my heart, the sun always shines;
The silent spring overflows, to soak the earth in majesty.

ALLAN STOCKER

PUJALAL — CENTENARY CELEBRATION

17TH JUNE 1901. In Godhra, Gujarat, parents Ranchchoddas and Dhuliben announce the birth of their son Punjalal. They called him Punjalal. But later on he came to be known as Pujalal. Pooja, the root word in his new name, means worship. And truly Pujalal's entire life was an unceasing adoration of the Divine—the Divine he discovered incarnated in the person of Sri Aurobindo. He recounts:

“It was either 1925 or 1926.

... fortunately for me, one day... I came to the Library House.... Unexpectedly I saw that Sri Aurobindo was coming down the stairs for his dinner. I stood wonderstruck, for it was not the great yogi whom I saw before my eyes, but the Lord of Yogis in his eternal glory. His sun-bright eyes cast a luminous glance of grace on me, utterly overpowering my being. My heart and soul felt blessed by this mighty vision of the living Ishwara, the Lord of Yoga and Yogis.... I got my God, my Ishwara, my fulfilment, living in the divine person of Sri Aurobindo.”

Let us now look at the outlines of his life, which was a constant offering at the altar of Purna Yoga and became a holy confluence of knowledge, devotion and works.

The early part of Pujalal's childhood was spent in Godhra where he had his primary education living in stringent pecuniary conditions. But he soon moved to Nadiad for his secondary education. Here his intellectual thirst intensified and his interest in learning increased considerably. He passed his matriculation exams in 1917.

It was also here in Nadiad that he came into contact with Puraniji. This was the beginning of a decisive turn in his life. Puraniji was then immersed in the work of founding the *Akhadas* (gymnasiums) popularising athletic activities in Gujarat. Attracted by the magnetic personality of Puraniji and the dynamism of his works, Pujalal joined him with zeal and enthusiasm. He hardly had the monetary means to maintain himself adequately. He often went with just one meal a day, which naturally affected his health. But he refused to be daunted and continued to perform with meticulous care the duties entrusted to him by Puraniji. He had the strength and stamina of a soldier. The daredevil quality of his nature is wonderfully illustrated by an incident worth mentioning.

It happened like this. The river Narmada is in spate. Both Puraniji and Pujalal are on the bank looking on. Suddenly Puraniji throws a challenge: “Pujalal, you swim the Narmada when the waters are quiet. But I would call you a real swimmer if you can cross the river today!” Pujalal jumps into the water. So does Puraniji. Both of them manage to reach the other bank fairly easily. But on the way back, Pujalal gets caught in an eddy. Puraniji swims back, does not find Pujalal, looks on helplessly, praying for an unseen hand to deliver his friend safe to the shore. And that is exactly what happens. Pujalal frees himself from the gyrating water and reaches the bank. Some Grace saw to it that he met the accepted challenge with success.

It was also from Puraniji that Pujalal came to know about Sri Aurobindo and Pondicherry. Puraniji joined the Ashram for good in 1923. Pujalal visited here in 1924. He stayed for three months and was lucky to have an interview with Sri Aurobindo.

When Pujalal expressed his desire to do the yoga, Sri Aurobindo asked: "Why do you want to do the yoga?" And he replied: "To realise God." Sri Aurobindo observed him for a long moment, then placed his hand on his chest and said: "The Divine Power is above. Aspire and reach." Pujalal took this incident as a formal initiation, *diksha*, into spiritual life. He had to go back to Gujarat for financial reasons. But he returned to settle permanently in the Ashram in November 1926, just in time to be here on the Siddhi Day. He was one of the twenty-four persons present here on 24th November 1926.

Now starts Pujalal's yoga of works in full earnest. When he joined the Ashram, servants were employed to clean the vessels. This he did not like and volunteered to do the job. Very soon he also took up the work of cooking. A little later on, the Mother entrusted him to look after the cleanliness of the upper floor of the Ashram where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo resided. This service he continued to perform till 1968 when for reasons of health he had to give it up.

Let us now move to another aspect of Pujalal's personality and sadhana. When he joined the Ashram, the dormant poet in him woke up. The devotion that surged in his heart outpoured in poems charged with emotion. Two of his works in English were corrected by Sri Aurobindo himself and even the titles *Rosary* and *Lotus Petals* were chosen by him. It is for the poems collected under these titles that the Mother called him "My Poet", an honour that many a person would have loved to have.

He had also been writing poems in Gujarati. His first publication *Parijat* came out in 1938. He continued to write poems in Gujarati and by 1981 he had some 29 titles to his credit.

One day, sometime after 1968, he was at the Samadhi when he heard a voice: "Translate *Savitri*." He wrote about it to the Mother and she gave him her consent and blessings for the work. Thus in February 1973, he started translating *Savitri* into Gujarati and in two and a half years he completed the Herculean task, while at the same time battling against quite severe health problems. Thus, this translation is not merely the crowning glory of his poetic powers, but a triumph of spirit over matter and irrefutable evidence of his yogic heights.

His health problems were increasing. So too his creativity. Between 1973 and 1985 he published about 25 books, among which were more translations of Sri Aurobindo's poems and dramas, a translation of *Meghdoot*, a biography of bhaktas, and a masterpiece of a gift to lovers of Gujarati poetics, a book entitled *Chhandpravesh*.

He was also a great lover and master of Sanskrit. Mother once said that Sanskrit should be made a living, spoken language. Pujalal took the hint and set himself to the task. To make teaching and learning Sanskrit easier, he wrote lessons, dialogues, dramas, poems. He made a selection of slokas from various sources, translated them into English and got them published along with the originals. He also composed wonderful stotras. With all these contributions to make learning Sanskrit easier, he would figure first among the pioneers who popularised Sanskrit in the Ashram school.

For years together, every morning at 6 o'clock, children would throng to his room. He made them chant slokas and the Ashram atmosphere became a delightful hum.

The magazine *Lokasanskritam* also started because of the combined urge and effort of the late Sri Jagannath and Pujalal.

All this literary activity was an outpouring of his *bhakta hridaya*—the devotee’s heart—only a facet of his sadhana. For Pujalal, the server, Pujalal, the poet, Pujalal, the enlightened erudite, were, like colours in a rainbow, different aspects of Pujalal, the sadhak.

So years passed by of a life full of activity, creativity, till on 27th December 1985 Pujalal shed his earthly sheath. Just an hour earlier he had been telling someone: “I have done all I had to do and am prepared to go.” Thus, feeling totally fulfilled, he took leave. A bright star of the firmament of the Ashram disappeared. And yet, even today, when we enter his room, his gentle, loving eyes look into ours, from the photo on his chair, and his smile speaks: “*sudinam, swāgatam*.” Everyone who ever visited him felt at ease. All through his life he had been a picture of loving humility. He was like the river Ganga, born on Himalayan heights, consenting to come down to the plains, always cordial, ever accessible, almost inviting and of course like the waters of the Ganga, sanctifying. From wherever he is today, may he keep on showering blessings on us, as before.

DHANAVANTI AND USHA DESAI

A SPIRIT INDOMITABLE

WHAT a wonderful opportunity to be present at the right time and at the appointed place when the Mother needs one! Is it mere coincidence or the preparation of several lives that leads one at the appointed hour and venue ready for the Mother's work. And that has so often happened in Millie-di's life.

Born in a respectable family in Bengal on 1 June 1917, Millie-di got married into a family in Calcutta dedicated to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The family had strong and long connection with the Ashram. That was the first appointed meeting with her destiny which would lead her step by step towards a most coveted goal: to serve the Mother.

Her life took a sharp turn when the Japanese started bombing Calcutta in World War II. Many devotees fled and took refuge in the safest place on earth—at the feet of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. The Ashram, hitherto inhabited by mostly elderly Sadhaks and Sadhikas, was full of boisterous and playful children. In February 1942 Millie-di too came away to Pondicherry with her three-year-old daughter and some relatives. The Divine Mother full of compassion and love accepted these families with children. She started a school for them. Not like any of the conventional schools of the time but a school where the children would learn to grow in their inner being and face the challenges of the new world to be born, like hero warriors. They did not come to the Ashram to do Yoga. Their consciousness was still dormant. The Ashram school started on 2nd December 1943. Millie-di was appointed as a drawing teacher. A born artist, she never had any proper education in painting. Through this work came the opportunity to express her latent talent.

The Mother appointed her as Her own attendant too. With the increasing number of inmates and devotees, Her own household needed to be cared for. With a few other inmates Millie-di looked after the Mother's personal needs, sometimes she cooked for Her and also served meals to the inmates who used to take food with the Mother.

Soon after the Press started, she was given work in the Book Binding section too. Some of the books used to be leatherbound. Millie-di prepared page markers with the cut pieces of leather and painted on them. Here too she revealed her artistic qualities.

1944 was an important watershed in the history of the Ashram when the Mother agreed to give special Darshan on the Puja days at the request of the inmates. It was for the first time that She revealed Her Four Powers to the world. Millie-di too got her opportunity to be present at the right time and appointed place to serve the Mother. She was one among a few others who decorated the Meditation Hall on those days and continued that work till the end.

The upkeep of the body, the importance given by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to the physical, found its root when the Mother started the Department of Physical Education in 1945. Not only the children but the elders too participated. The grown-up girls used to play or exercise wearing salwar-kamiz. The Mother found the dress unsuitable for physical culture. Whom did She choose to break the tradition and come to the Playground wearing shorts-shirt-kitty cap? Millie-di, wife in a conventional family, undaunted by centuries

of tradition, was chosen to brave the world—a dress unthinkable in those early forties. The Mother explained to others the advantages of such a dress for physical culture and since then the group-dress of girls continues to be shorts, shirt and kitty cap. That was Millie-di, bold, undaunted. Her only aim was to obey the Mother.

The cultural programme of 1st and 2nd December started soon after. There too she served as incharge of the Theatre programme, helping in all types of work. Soon she started the Art Department, engaged in handiwork of painting, batik and embroidery. Here came the opportunity to express fully the hidden artistic faculties so long dormant.

Till the end she performed her duties with dedication and love, groomed the next generation so well that the work continues without interruption or break. She instilled in them the motto of dedication and perfection in work.

She heard the call of the other world and left her body at the age of eighty-three to be present at the appointed venue and time with an undaunted spirit ready for the Mother's work.

KRISHNA CHAKRABARTY

LEARN HOW TO SLEEP WELL

I always tell those who complain of not being able to sleep, "Meditate then and you will end up by sleeping." It is better to fall asleep while concentrating than "like that", scattered and strewn without knowing even where one is.

To sleep well one must learn how to sleep.

If one is physically very tired, it is better not to go to sleep immediately, otherwise one falls into the unconscious. If one is very tired, one must stretch out on the bed, relax, loosen all the nerves one after another until one becomes like a rumpled cloth in one's bed, as though one had neither bones nor muscles. When one has done that, the same thing must be done in the mind. Relax, do not concentrate on any idea or try to solve a problem or ruminate on impressions, sensations or emotions you had during the day. All that must be allowed to drop off quietly: one gives oneself up, one is indeed like a rag. When you have succeeded in doing this, there is always a little flame, there—that flame never goes out and you become conscious of it when you have managed this relaxation. And all of a sudden this little flame rises slowly into an aspiration for the divine life, the truth, the consciousness of the Divine, the union with the inner being, it goes higher and higher, it rises, rises, like that, very gently. Then everything gathers there, and if at that moment you fall asleep, you have the best sleep you could possibly have. I guarantee that if you do this carefully, you are sure to sleep, and also sure that instead of falling into a dark hole you will sleep in light, and when you get up in the morning you will be fresh, fit, content, happy and full of energy for the day.

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers*, 23 April 1951, CWM, Vol. 4, pp. 352-53)

YOU

You were the movement of the wind
But how could my web capture you?
You were the benediction of the trees,
And through thousand leaves and shoots
You prayed to the barren skies
Till blessings showered drop by drop.
But who could even hear you pray?

In the smile of the child I glimpsed you
But infancy to adulthood turned,
And who could restore childhood's lost smile?

For a moment you played on a stirless flame
On the lamp I lit in my lonely room.
But before I cupped my hands, you died
When the wind blew in from crowded streets.

It's you, formless, I have sensed in forms
But what form contains you whole?
It's you, wordless, I capture in words,
But were the words to capture you?

K. N. VIJU

A FEW DREAMS

(Continued from the issue of August 2002)

14.09.1981

TONIGHT I got afraid as it often happens. There appeared two thieves somewhere and I shouted “Ma”. Immediately I awoke while shouting. I was expecting that Sudha would wake up, but it did not happen. Then I addressed the Mother and said to Her: “Will such a time come when in all circumstances, in sleep or in waking, at every moment, I will call Thee and Thee alone?” Saying so and calming down my mind I again fell asleep. After some time I find myself in the upper storey of a house. I come down from there and find myself in a room at a distance. In the room Sita aunty and Kunti aunty are lying on a bed. Kunti aunty is somewhat unwell. Both the aunties issue a cheque of Rs. 144. This was a donation to Manavstali School. I wonder why they do not give something to the Ashram. I take the cheque and come back. I come on the path towards my house. In front I see Anil, brother of Anita, who says that there some child is dead, in Dhingra Sahib’s house. I immediately go to that place after visiting my house first. I reach the 1st storey and see that a very beautiful small baby is lying in my arms. I do not know who this child is. Some persons are sitting in a room and it appears that the dead body of a child is lying there. I come to another room. I feel that this is the same child in my arms who has expired and whose dead body is lying there under the cloth. Then I take the beautiful child with me to another room and lay him down there. I think that the child is alive because I am holding him in my arms. As soon as I laid the child down, he began to move his hands and feet naturally. The child continues to enjoy his playful movement. However, he suddenly begins to become motionless. I go on looking at him. First his legs get motionless. Then the upper part of his body and hands get motionless. Gradually, while I watch, this inertness increases on his head and then on all sense organs. Then suddenly I see that there are no legs, nor stomach nor hands. Gradually I see that there is only the face, the area from neck to head. All the rest has vanished. Now I see only the head, eyes, nose, mouth, ears of the child. I feel that after some moments these remaining organs will also vanish. I am awe-struck to see how all this has happened. On looking at the remaining part of the child at that moment I feel inspired with some idea and I put my hand on the forehead of the child and I utter “Ma”. While doing so and uttering the Mother’s name I have a feeling that the condition of this child’s life and soul will now be illumined and elevated in this world and in the worlds beyond.

With the utterance of “Ma” I awoke. I looked at my watch. It was 4.30 a.m., time to get up.

I invoked the Mother and told Her: “Mother, I had told you some time before that I had not called you at the time when I was afraid and that I prayed to you to enable me to call you in every condition. You have accepted my prayer.” With this thought I got filled with gratitude. A wave of this gratitude ran throughout.

(To be concluded)

BHUSHAN DHINGRA

A WORLD IN TURMOIL—‘ETERNAL INDIA’ POINTS AN ARROW INTO THE FUTURE

(Continued from the issue of August 2002)

It is interesting to note that at the time when these discoveries reversing all previous positions of science are being made, new movements are emerging in our lives, new kinds of disciplines of knowledge are coming into being. The science of ecology, in the West, is one such attempt trying to link again what has been cut asunder—man with environment and nature. Whether in the fields of medicine or psychology, of education and culture, of architecture and ways of living—the list is long and covers most areas of life—the attempt is to move towards wholistic possibilities. The need to bring together what has been taken apart and to see all existence as one is strong, over-powering and clearly visible. The fact of ‘globalisation’, which marks our times, is an external manifestation of this essentially inner urge.

At the same time, let us hasten to add, the cracks and fissures on the outer crust of the civilisation of modern man, and in the many distinctive cultures that are part of it, are only too apparent and are becoming more and more pronounced. Perhaps they are in direct and exact proportion to the imbalances that are present in our own existential status. For, we are still beings with an active mind, bound to circle in its innate round of piecemeal perception and action. Yet the mind is receptive, on the other hand, to higher ranges of its own functioning—it sees other possibilities, can receive intimations from them but cannot reach out to them fully. And, hidden deep in the recesses of our inner consciousness, are the spiritual parts of our being that are of the nature of self-existence—‘wholes’. For them, the ‘wholes’ are a fact of experience. When we are in contact with these domains our perception of man and the world undergoes a change and action takes on another hue and dimension.

We also observe that there is a growing number of people around the world, young and also not so young, who give clear evidence—through their perceptions, though not yet through their actions—of being in contact with such deeper or higher levels of being. The mind, in them, does not seem to function solely in an analytic and linear manner. It has a rare ‘inwardness’ in its character, which is open to the ‘intuitive perception’ of things and feels at ease in the presence of ‘totalities’ of structure and relation.

Is ‘mind’ itself changing? Under the influence of other levels of conscious being? Does this indicate the next curve of our growth in our long spiral movement of evolution?

A statement of Sri Aurobindo stands as a sign-post on the way: “Man is a transitional being; he is not final. For in man and high beyond him ascend the radiant degrees that climb to a divine supermanhood. There lies our destiny and the liberating key to our aspiring but troubled and limited mundane existence.... The step from man to superman is the next approaching achievement in the earth’s evolution. It is inevitable because it is at once the intention of the inner Spirit and the logic of Nature’s process.... Supermanhood is not man climbed to his own natural zenith... Supermind is something beyond mental

man and his limits; it is a greater consciousness than the highest consciousness proper to human nature.”¹

As we observe these indications of a change taking place in the world, we are inclined to see them as part of Nature’s own evolutionary process.

Sri Aurobindo sees this movement of change as “a vast Yoga of Nature attempting to realise her perfection in an ever increasing expression of her potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality.” He further affirms: “In man, her thinker, she for the first time upon this Earth devises self-conscious means and willed arrangements of activity by which this great purpose may be more swiftly and puissantly attained.” So that “the subconscious Yoga in Nature” can become “the conscious Yoga in man”.²

By Yoga is meant “a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being”. Thus enabling man to compress his own evolution within a span of time other than Nature’s. But it follows the same methods and processes of growth that Nature does. While her movement is leisurely and allows for large spirals of an upward labour, Yoga represents a concentrated and directed effort: “... what Nature aims at for the mass in a slow evolution, Yoga effects for the individual by a rapid revolution.”³

All life is essentially a process of Yoga. Through the workings of Nature, life seeks this fulfilment by the perfection of the instruments already at her disposal or the emergence of those which are latent in her. Whereas Nature’s processes are partly submerged and have a measured tread, Yoga can be made a self-conscious process, pursued by man in full knowledge of the elements and forces that make up the process, so as to arrive at swift and more puissant results.

It is a self-conscious process that leads man to the discovery of his spiritual foundation of being and a growing perfection of his instrumentation of mind, life and body. This true and total selfhood once discovered and integrated into a harmonious whole of being can lead the way for a union with the greater Reality, both universal and transcendent, that pervades all existence and creates eternally new forms and figures of itself. Man can thus work on his own evolution, so as to arrive at qualitatively greater powers of consciousness through the total range of his being.

Yoga has been practised since time immemorial in India. Its many disciplines, each a specialised form of endeavour like the entire system of natural sciences, has delved with precision, with intrepidity and rigour of close introspection, flinching before no discovery whether palatable or otherwise, into the inner reaches of human consciousness. It has traversed the hierarchy of levels of consciousness, beginning with the individual’s own to the vastnesses that uphold the universe and rise beyond. It has further attempted to experiment with and to see how the various groupings of psychological elements of each such level and the interactions between the levels thus forming a structural whole can be combined and recombined and mutually harmonised. The science of Yoga perceived that such a handling of the psychological elements and their harmonisation at various levels of consciousness could not be successfully achieved and consolidated until an ‘upward’ movement,—to open up the being to the higher ranges of consciousness,—had

taken place. It was found that only the power of the higher levels could effectively integrate the lesser levels.

In our own times, the pursuit of Yoga—as a conscious handling of man's being based on a knowledge of the psychological elements that constitute it—is becoming progressively part of the great modern endeavours. Sri Aurobindo, in the early years of the twentieth century, with the collaboration of the Mother, set out to discover and to put into practice such a process, which he later called the 'Integral Yoga'. This process rests on the total sum of experience made in the past but, in a uniquely and powerfully creative spirit, disengages from the specificity of the ancient disciplines the secret lever of change which operates in their processes. With the dynamic elements at the centre a new synthesis both in process and goal is arrived at. At the same time the relationships that exist between these ancient disciplines and the workings of universal nature in its great evolutionary movement are clearly seen and made explicit. Thus the modern thrust for knowledge is able to find itself in a valid kinship with the experience of the past.

Integral Yoga seeks to offer not only a process of qualitative change of consciousness for man in his evolution forward, but takes into its scope of possible action the changes that societies and entire civilisations can consciously pursue and put forth as their focused goals. Man can only move thus far if he moves alone. At some point of his own growth, the human collectivity, of which he is an inseparable part but for which he is also the path-finder and leader, must follow a similar course. Yoga for the individual and for the collectivity, for the human race as a whole—this is the reach of Integral Yoga.

From Mind to the Spirit is the transition we are in the midst of as we set foot into the new millennium. The shift from one level of conscious being to another, the next higher one, is of the nature of a major 'upheaval' in the existing order of the world such as we witness today. But there is really no cause for alarm! Only the need for a deep and clear-sighted perception that sees the direction in which the changes are taking place and to attempt a conscious collaboration with that movement of change. Man can operate his own evolution by conscious means! He has successfully created a world of technology and the surface of the world is no longer recognisable. Can he not also work out a wondrous change in the very stuff of his being? All the possibilities he sees in himself, all he has dreamt of as his great ideals, his lofty aspirations to the Highest—can he not *realise* them in life and action?

Here is the challenge of the new millennium that has just begun. This is not a time for despondency and helplessness but a time to harness our will to move ahead propelled by the evolutionary spirit of the times. This step taken consciously by means of the process of Yoga, pursued in full awareness of the goal, is the gift of Eternal India to the future of mankind. Eternity harbours all time in her bosom and releases the moments in their necessary succession.

"If mankind only caught a glimpse of what infinite enjoyments, what perfect forces, what luminous reaches of spontaneous knowledge, what wide calms of our being lie waiting for us in the tracts which our animal evolution has not yet conquered, they would leave all and never rest till they had gained these treasures."⁴

Each step taken is so much gained even though the distance seems long to cover. And time itself seems to be on our side! The very notion of ‘acceleration’ has undergone a change. There is a ‘simultaneity of speeds or movements’ in a multi-dimensional ‘space-time’ continuum—which cannot be compared to anything we have known before.

Truly, a time of the ‘unexpected’ when everything has taken on a new and richer dimension of complexity and of totalities of experience. The future is with us, shaping our present moments.

(Concluded)

ASTER PATEL

(Courtesy: *World Affairs*, January-March 2002)

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GRACE OF LIGHT

THORN-SHARP has become my heart,
 Relentless fogs creep on my mind,
 Wounded, courage has bled,
 Belied, hopes have fled,
 Each step on the cheerless way
 Seems an endless Everest climb.
 Frayed are the life-lines’ ropes,
 Moan around our sinking hopes;
 Alone I stand on an ice-ledge.
 Life’s door can be forced only
 By betrayal’s wedge.
 Shut or open it does not entice,
 In shame to live is too great a price.
 All is lost, darkness is massed around.
 I cannot unwind and ever hold myself tight,
 Will you not, O incarnate Love! shatter my night
 And grant me the infinite Grace of Thy light?

29-3-99

SHYAM KUMARI

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

Kyra-Zoe and I

THINGS with Kyra-Zoe* were straightforward right from the beginning. They had to be. I met her early enough and even then it was obvious I'd better go along with her. Or maybe it was my mother, who added and aided with her "Little girls this... and little girls that..." On and on she went and, later, little girls started becoming women. Meanwhile, my brother ("Little boys this... and little boys that...") was also growing up. Although his was another universe, for a while he and I built bridges.

"Come, tell me what I think!" I used to challenge him and he would close his eyes to concentrate hard and I could feel him searching through my brain-cells—oh, how we rejoiced each time he came up with the right answer or image!

He was younger, three immense years my junior, a toy alive and mouldable. He adored me and I loved him. Our play during those early years consisted in the instinctive exploration of surroundings. We found and learned what was. I showed him things he had missed and he observed them with fascination. Our differences weren't as yet crystallised and separate perceptions hadn't been formed.

Kyra-Zoe was there too. Always with us, she was real in her subtleties and truthful in her demeanour. She helped us see. The trees in the garden were beings, not just names. The shade of the fig tree had 'heaviness' and the lemon-tree was 'light'. The first made us drowsy; the other welcomed and refreshed us. Little boy-brother was told of this and more, little girl-me steered him through the world of our garden and her arm around his shoulders was firm and tender. Ah, there was such newness, such wonders galore!

Sprawled by the reeds growing down by the far end of the fence, we waited for things to happen. They came and they went and they caught us and we caught them. The dusk in late spring brought fireflies, summers buzzed with cicadas. We baked mud-curved shapes in the sun and for hours we watched little creatures going about their business—on our bellies, at ground level.

A simple fluidity marked it all and we drifted in it with comfort. Then, one evening, we found out we could not outrun the moon, even if we ran as fast as we could. I had promised little brother that we would and this defeat marked the end of childhood. For me, at least; it was a disappointment through which Kyra-Zoe made a somewhat firmer introduction of herself. Soon after, I started school.

And she kept on doing that, Kyra-Zoe did; ever introducing, always firm.

Sometimes I manage to contain my disappointment but I always let her look after my defeats. I try to go along and make a point to leave introductions to her. She brings things in and I process them, assess them for what they are; I have to use tools or invent ways; women are good at that. We've been doing it for a long long time. We have known Lady-Life intimately.

* To be pronounced as Keer.ah-Zoh.ee.

Lady-Life is my Kyra-Zoe.

I don't remember when or how exactly I gave her the title; it was a long way back, in Greece, probably (Kyra means lady or Mrs. in Greek and Zoe means life). I might have been exasperated with her or it was simply this habit of mine that likes addressing things by name. Things become a little more real and substantial when personified.

So, Lady-Life got herself a title. She is certainly a female and in charge no doubt. She is moody and unpredictable and she has the upper hand. A woman myself, I am convinced I have a more intimate view of her and her workings. Not that I understand her, mind you, far from it. She is too inventive and unpredictable, too wilful and head-strong. She is vast and impossible. Yet, there is suchness in her that is also mine and, like most women (knowingly or unknowingly), I share in it.

One thing I like about Kyra-Zoe is her way. Lady-Life does not bother with sentiments, not the way women do. Purposeful, she goes about what she has to do and she does so with indifference.

Women can be like that. Actual feelings and every day practicalities are what they usually talk about and that's what they are comfortable and concerned with. Abstractions are not attractive to them, for they are not theorists. Women would rather execute. Men, on the other hand, prefer to ruminate: what and how and when and because. ...

Women respond; spurs of the moment and the moment's demands are their familiar grounds. Like life, real womanhood is about activity, not about biological factors. The seers of old knew this; the Forefathers had women by their side. The ancient Mothers brought forth the intuition of their feelings, they were willing to have them guided—concepts were worked out in life then.

Why did we lose this? When? How did it happen?

My friend was in a reflective mood.

"I feel so *old*," she said, "Old in what I know, old in what I see, old in how I feel. I mean, I feel old *in experience*. Men don't have that. Most of everything is new to them, one more thing to try and do. They miss the obvious and predictable—how do they really see? Maybe they need experience, whereas I don't always. Often, I just *feel* I know." She was talking about her husband and herself, their different ways, and she was puzzled.

There is much that men bypass as unimportant and on which women love to comment. My friend and I had one of those women-only moments and I could tell Kyra-Zoe was listening—all smiles, close by.

My friend went on with her thoughts. There is an inherent direct simplicity in a woman's perception. Intuition is at the upper end, overreacting sentiments and emotions haunt its bottom. This spectrum men fail to perceive and, often, misunderstand it. The most they see is weakness, meekness, deception or incoherence. They miss subtlety and misunderstand lack of rational expression.

They don't know there is a veil to lift.

The veil is hardly ever lifted anyhow. And there are many veils, not just one. Actually, all that matters is still *behind* the veil. On appearance things are flat, at best three-dimensional. Yet, there is more; Kyra-Zoe and Dame-Nature are inseparable. They swap

places regularly; support and interactions are common trade to them and they play and barter freely.

My friend has two daughters—the younger is quick and headstrong, the older careful, serene and considerate. They are smart and beautiful and I enjoy their company. One day, my friend was on her way to my place. “Wait, we are coming too” they squealed. “Come then,” and she opened the door. “Wait!” and they ran into their room. Moments later they reappeared well groomed and in fresh, pretty clothes.

“Kati-auntie likes it so,” they gravely answered their mother’s astonished look, and they were right. I had always appreciated not only their manner and character but also their creativity and sense for beauty. It is natural to them, visible in the little touches they would add onto themselves and surroundings; small details, really: hints of colour, shape and application.

I do the same. They had sensed this particular need of expression I have (one would call it aestheticism, but they don’t bother with definitions as yet) and it was feelings they delivered as they marched in—with smiles, clad in detailed and deliberate beauty!

And, so it goes. We relate and respond to what we know and we are suspicious and closed when we don’t find the familiar. That’s all. We do not see because of the veil, because of our limited perception and consciousness, our narrow understandings. This isn’t just about what happens between women and men (what an old unfinished story that is!), it is with everything—Science, Art, Mechanics or Philosophy. Everything. All shrouded.

One of the problems with Lady-Life is that she has too much time on her hands, she never hurries. What isn’t done now can be done later. She doesn’t get frustrated the way I do, the way we all do. And, she keeps her intentions to herself—part of her play.

But I do get along with her. I like her and I accept her, even when she seems to be most unfair or obnoxious. You may call this necessity, I say it is hindsight. I like working things out. They don’t always succeed but, eventually, there is always something good somewhere, even if it isn’t where or what I had planned!

Lady-Life is also working things out.

As little girl-me grew up and moved into womanhood, Kyra-Zoe kept on playing her part. She introduced death, she played with emotions and she tried idealism, political action and education. The never-ending parade was hers and I marched along. I still do. (I make them sound simple and easy these dealings with Kyra-Zoe, don’t I? God knows this isn’t always so!)

But I have grown immensely interested in Kyra-Zoe and perhaps this is her intention. She took me places. I saw and sought and she’s been very generous. (Never quite figured out how it works. Does she keep me interested because I respond or do I respond because she keeps my interest? Honestly, I’d like this question answered—I’d like many questions answered but she’ll take her time with disclosures!)

I must confess that womanhood preoccupies me; I tend to take our lot seriously. I consider its circumstance and question its ways. A rather forlorn, misdirected and oppressed lot, women are also capable, enduring, inventive and practical.

One thing about them is that they stay put in life, they look after her. They bear—children, problems, family. They bear the fact that they are not used according to what they are, what they can do and add. For they can add. Plenty. Not in the way it has recently come about through career and profession. Although a step, this is like acting roles in a parody, not being in the real thing.

Ours is a partly lived world. Nature, Life, Self are ignored in their substance; half-known, they are partly lived. A woman's attentiveness and self-giving are misplaced and a man's will and direction lack the deeper concern. The two remain apart and different and their diversity does not culminate in union. It has been so. One uses the other for little ends. Fragmented aims guide them; domination, protection, homes.

Isn't it about time to change this? (Kyra-Zoe puts on a condescending smile when she hears me saying such things, but I ignore her!)

Recently I spent an evening with a friend, a lady-friend. We did exercises, then we had dinner and talked. Easy talk, intimate; it invariably happens with women.

First come the practicalities, we like to exchange ways and methods of doing. Then, tentatively, we drop at each other hints of more personal concerns. It is almost a pattern. If the hints find a common ground, then we blossom! We tell and tell and we open our hearts and bask in the comfort of feelings. Depending on the persons, this can lead to a rather lofty sort of exchange, a state where something like a current goes back and forth—uplifting and strengthening. And this happened with us that night.

We had eaten well and gone through the ritual of recipes and other such matters of importance. Eventually, it was time to move into the intimacy of the further and deeper and, having known each other long, we skipped the hints.

The topic developed to that of love.

I told her about Lady-Life and me, and she giggled. I liked the dimples on her cheeks and thought I should tell her how pretty she is when she laughs. Then we got serious. The purpose of physical exercise, caring for the body and the necessity of looking after its health entered our scope—why do all this? We were deeply concerned. Why should we? For whom? Is it necessary?

Culturally, I had some of the answers ready. True daughter of Greece, I was initiated early into her ancient dictum of “a healthy mind in a healthy body” (so simple and straightforward and in such a perfect accordance to the antique Greek preoccupation with Nature-Energy). But we dug deeper than that.

We do it for our selves, we decided—neither for the mind alone nor for the admiration or appreciation we might get, not for any of it. We are in Lady-Life's premises and there is plenty to do. That's all. The body is a part and we take it along; it should help and be helped in the doing. This doing ought to be wholesome.

Greed, laziness, negligence—they all store their ugliness on the body and distort it. They weaken it and not the body only, the damage seeps deeper. It is an attitude that builds up.

It's not that one can be strong and conscious all the time; we are not heavenly spirits. If it is not Kyra-Zoe herself, it is our own troubles that weigh on us. We neglect,

we become despondent and we lose hope and joy. And, when joy is gone, we find ourselves out of love—the true Love, which moves and nourishes.

We were getting somewhere; exercise was taking us a long way, indeed. We continued. To do something for someone or with a short-term purpose is good; it gives satisfaction. But, what if the attempt grew larger, embraced more and more? What if it expanded? What if it became life itself?

“There you are, made you laugh again, didn’t I?”

The talk had evolved to the elevated subjects of parothas, extra fat, skipping of exercise and taking liberties with feeling “oh, so *low* today” (here I made a face to match the words!).

We were honest. We called indulgence by its name and then came back to love—love for life, love for one’s self; love as an active component in everything one does and how that shows and comes forth.

It was growing late, words faltered. We went as far as we could and had arrived at a good place. We felt close to each other. Warm smiles on our faces, we savoured what we were: two women, in life, at the end of a good day and ready for a good sleep. We wished each other good night.

Nearby, Kyra-Zoe was pleased.

KATI WIDMER

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of August 2002)

ILLUMINATING is the distinction Sri Aurobindo draws, in the course of a letter, between Vyasa and Valmiki on the one hand and Homer and Shakespeare on the other. In another letter, Sri Aurobindo elaborates the point that, although in the yogin's vision of universal beauty, all is indeed beautiful, yet all cannot be reduced to a uniform level. Sri Aurobindo writes: "There are gradations, there is a hierarchy in this All-Beauty... In the artist's vision too there are or can be gradations, a hierarchy of values. Shakespeare can get dramatic and therefore aesthetic values out of Dogberry and Malvolio and he is as thorough a creative artist in his treatment of them as in his handling of Macbeth or Lear. But if we had only Dogberry or Malvolio to testify to Shakespeare's genius, no Macbeth, no Lear would he be so great a dramatic artist and creator as he now is? It is in the varying possibilities of one subject or another that there lies an immense difference. Apelles' grapes deceived the birds that came to peck at them, but there was more aesthetic content in the Zeus of Pheidias..."¹

K. D. Sethna writes: "I am sending you two poems—one is Albert Samain's famous poem *Pannyre aux talons d'or* and the other is Flecker's much-praised translation of it. I shall be very much interested in your comparison of the two. Here is Samain:

*Dans la salle en rumeur un silence a passé...
Pannyre aux talons d'or s'avance pour danser.
Un voile aux mille plis la cache tout entière.
D'un long trille d'argent la flûte, la première,
L'invite; elle s'élance, entre-croise ses pas,
Et, du lent mouvement imprimé par ses bras,
Donne un rythme bizarre à l'étoffe nombreuse,
Qui s'élargit, ondule, et se gonfle et se creuse,
Et se déploie enfin en large tourbillon...
Et Pannyre devient fleur, flamme, papillon!
Tous se taisent; les yeux la suivent en extase.
Peu à peu la fureur de la danse l'embrase.
Elle tourne toujours; vite! plus vite encore!
La flamme éperdument vacille aux flambeaux d'or!...
Puis, brusque, elle s'arrête au milieu de la salle;
Et le voile qui tourne autour d'elle en spirale,
Suspendu dans sa course, apaise ses longs plis,
Et se collant aux seins aigus, aux flancs polis,
Comme au travers d'une eau soyeuse et continue,
Dans un divin éclair, montre Pannyre nue.*

Here is Flecker:

The revel pauses, and the room is still,
 The silver flute invites her with a trill,
 And buried in her great veils, fold on fold,
 Rises to dance Pannyra, Heel of Gold.
 Her light steps cross, her subtle arm impels
 The clinging drapery, it shrinks and swells,
 Hollows and floats, and bursts into a whirl;
 She is a flower, a moth, a flaming girl.
 All lips are silent; eyes are all in trance,
 She slowly wakes the madness of the dance;
 Windy and wild the golden torches burn;
 She turns, and swifter yet she tries to turn,
 Then stops; a sudden marble stiff she stands,
 The veil that round her coiled its spiral bands,
 Checked in its course brings all its folds to rest,
 And clinging to bright limb and pointed breast
 Shows, as beneath silk waters woven fine,
 Pannyra naked in a flash divine!

‘All here?’, says a critic, ‘is bright and sparkling as the jewels on the dancer’s breast, but there is one ill-adjusted word—pointed breast—which is perhaps more physiological than poetic.’ Personally I don’t somehow react very happily to the ‘girl’ in line 8.”

Sri Aurobindo writes: “Samain’s poem is a fine piece of work, inspired and perfect: Flecker’s is good only in substance, an adequate picture, one may say, but the expression and verse are admirable within their limits. The difference is that the French has vision and the inspired movement that comes with vision—all on the vital plane, of course,—but the English version has only physical sight, sometimes with a little glow in it, and the precision that comes with that sight. I don’t know why your critical sense objects to ‘girl’. This line

She is a flower, a moth, a flaming girl,

and one other,

Windy and wild the golden torches burn,

are the only two that rise above the plane of the physical sight. But both these poems have the distinction of being perfectly satisfying in their own hand.

P.S. ‘Flaming girl’ and ‘pointed breast’ might be wrong in spirit as a translation of the French—but that is just what Flecker’s poem is not, in spite of its apparent or outward fidelity, it is in spirit quite a different poem. (23-6-1932)”²

A number of critical and technical questions were asked to Sri Aurobindo by the

Ashram poets K. D. Sethna, Arjava, Nirodbaran and Dilip to get their inspiration, full possession of the language and opening of the artistic eye. Sri Aurobindo guided them to develop their creative formation of poems and technique of poetic intelligence. He had been helping when somebody wanted really to develop the literary power. Dilip Kumar wrote: "...the help and encouragement Gurudev always gave us whenever we erred or slipped; secondly, the security of protection he extended to us whenever we felt depressed or diffident, and lastly, the invaluable guidance he gave us by acting as an eye opener to us all, showing laboriously the cause of the minutest of our backslidings. Now who has not been through such ordeals can ever fully appraise the concrete help that comes along the guiding voice of the Pilot."³

Here is K. D. Sethna's poem *Agni*:

Not from the day but from the night he's born,
 Night with her pang of dream—star on pale star
 Winging strange rumour through a secret dawn.
 For all the black uncanopied spaces mirror
 The brooding distance of our plumbless mind.
 O depth of gloom, reveal thy unknown light—
 Awake our body to the alchemic touch
 Of the great God who comes with minstrel hands!...

Lo, now my heart has grown his glimmering East:
 Blown by his breath a cloud of colour runs:
 The yearning curves of life are lit to a smile.
 O mystic sun, arise upon our thought
 And with thy gold omnipotence make each face
 The centre of some blue infinitude!

Sri Aurobindo comments: "The modifications now made are quite satisfactory and render the poem perfect. The last six lines still remain the finest part of the poem, they have a breath of revelation in them; especially the image 'my heart has grown his glimmering East' and the extreme felicity of 'the yearning curves of life are lit to a smile' have a very intense force of revealing intuitivity—and on a less minute, larger scale there is an equal revealing power and felicity in the boldness and strength of the image in the last three lines. These six lines may be classed as 'inevitable', not only separately but as a whole. The earlier part of the poem is also fine, though not in the same superlative degree—the last two lines have something of the same intuitive felicity, though with slighter less intense touches, as the first two of the (rhymeless) sestet—especially in the 'alchemic touch' of the 'minstrel hands'. Lines 2 to 5 have also some power of large illumination."⁴

On another occasion Sethna asks: "How is it that people find my poetry difficult? I almost suspect that only Nolini and Arjava get the whole hang of it properly. Of course many appreciate when I have explained it to them—but otherwise they admire the beauty

of individual phrases without grasping the many-sided whole the phrases form. This morning Premanand, Vijayarai and Nirod read my *Agni*. None of them caught the precise relevances, the significant connections of the words and phrases of the opening lines....

"In the rest of the poem too they failed to get, now and again, the true point of felicity which constitutes poetic expression. My work is not surrealist: I put meaning into everything, not intellectualism but a coherent vision worked out suggestively in various detail. Why then the difficulty? Everybody feels at home in Harin's poetry, though I dare say that if I catechised them I might find the deepest felicities missed. All the same, there was something in his work which made his sense more accessible. Even Dilip says that my work passes a little over his head—Arjava's, of course, he finds still more difficult. Perhaps I tend to pack too much stuff into my words and to render my links a little less explicit than Harin did—or Dilip himself does in Bengali. But would people have the same trouble with vernacular poetry, however like my own it might be?"

Sri Aurobindo explains: "It is precisely because what you put in is not intellectualism or a product of mental imagination that your poetry is difficult to those who are accustomed to a predominantly mental strain in poetry. One can grasp fully if one has some clue to what you put in, either the clue of personal experience or the clue of a sympathetic insight. One who has had the concrete experience of the consciousness as a night with the stars coming out and the sense of the secret dawn can at once feel the force of those two lines, as one who has had experience of the mind as a wide space or infinity or a thing of distances and expanses can fathom those that follow. Or even if he has had not these experiences but others of the same order, he can feel what you mean and enter into it by a kind of identification. Failing this experience, a sympathetic insight can bring the significance home; certainly, Nolini and Arjava who write poems of the inner vision and feeling must have that, moreover their minds are sufficiently subtle and plastic to enter into all kinds of poetic vision and expression. Premanand and Vijayrai have no such training; it is natural that they should find it difficult. Nirod ought to understand, but he would have to ponder and take some trouble before he got it; night with her labour of dream, the stars, the bird-winging, the bird-voices, the secret dawn are indeed familiar symbols in the poetry he is himself writing or with which he is familiar; but his mind seeks usually at first for precise allegories to fit the symbols and is less quick to see and feel by identification what is behind them—it is still intellectual and not concrete in its approach to these things, although his imagination has learned to make itself their transcribing medium. That is the difficulty, the crux of imaged spiritual poetry; it needs not only the fit writer but the fit audience—and that has yet to be made.

"Dilip wrote to me in recent times expressing great admiration for Arjava's poems and wanting to get something of the same quality into his own poetic style. But in any case Dilip has not the mystic mind and vision—Harin also. In quite different ways they receive and express their vision or experience through the poetic mind and imagination—even so, because it expressed something unusual, Dilip's poetry has had a difficulty in getting recognised except by people who were able to give the right response. Harin's poetry deals very skilfully with spiritual ideas or feelings through the language of the

emotion and the poetic imagination and intelligence—no difficulty there. As regards your poetry, it is indeed more compressed and carefully packed with substance and that creates a difficulty except for those who are alive to the language or have become alive to subtle shades, implications, depths in the words. Even those who understand a foreign language well in the ordinary way find it sometimes difficult to catch these in its poetry. Indications and suggestions easy to catch in one's own tongue are often missed there. So probably your last remark is founded. (14-5-1937)"⁵

Here is a letter from Dilip Kumar to Sri Aurobindo with his reply to him:⁶

Facsimile to come here:

To Sri Aurobindo: Today I wrote a poem in the same छन्द (*chhanda*): its developments and ramifications.

And what do you think of my handwriting—Bengali? Everyone is aghast at its supramentalisation! I mean in the direction of high-born legibility?

Sri Aurobindo: Marvellous and miraculous! How did you manage it. I read now with a sort of gasping ease—I mean an ease which gasps with astonishment at its own existence. I used formerly to stop at every second line and wonder what the double deuce this or that word might be—but that is all over. Perhaps if you could communicate the secret of it by influence or otherwise I might manage to make one tenth of my own writing just barely legible—which would be at least a decimal relief to everybody. The metre is very pretty and the poem too. (2-12-34)

“Very successful,” comments Sri Aurobindo on the poem *Unanimous Tradition* by Arjava.⁷

Some pointilliste had left this canvas called “The Stars”
Half-finished, in his dilettante way,—
“And why this planet skit
Devolving-ape-infest?”—
Their pointillitic mind-stuff lit,
Sage minds co-deem “Pure jest.”

(*To be continued*)

NILIMA DAS

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2. *Ibid.*, K. D. Sethna, pp. 341-42.
3. *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me* by Dilip Kumar Roy, p. 151.
4. *Overhead Poetry* edited by K. D. Sethna, pp. 25-26.
5. *Life-Literature-Yoga* by K. D. Sethna, pp. 70-73.
6. *Mother India*, April 2000, pp. 256-57.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

ON LIBERATING ENGLISH TO BE A WORLD LANGUAGE

THERE are enough indications that English as a World Language is gaining recognition as a special phenomenon. Thus, for example, we have journals like *World Englishes* and *English World-Wide*, and books such as *English as a World Language*, *English Around the World*, and *English in the World*, devoted entirely to the study of World English; all this is indicative of the fact that World English is being recognised as a field of study in its own right. And yet it seems to me that we have been tardy in taking the next step, which is that of recognising that this new phenomenon requires theoretical perspectives of its own.

As can be seen in the writings of Braj Kachru and others, we seem to have made considerable progress in this direction during the last few years. Thus more and more people are giving up the assumption that English is primarily an Anglo-American, Judeo-Christian phenomenon. A related assumption that is also being given up today is the tenet that Anglo-American norms should be the final arbiters in all matters pertaining to the use of English, such as pronunciation, stylistic preferences, etc.

What has not been sufficiently recognised, in my opinion, is that English as a World Language is not merely an international language, that World English even as an international Language represents a totally new phenomenon in human history. It is not sufficient to realise that the domain of World English now includes 'such typically distinct varieties as pidgins and creoles, 'new' Englishes, and a range of differing standard and non-standard varieties that are spoken on a regular basis in more than 60 countries around the world'.¹ The world has seen quite a few international languages in the past, but not anything like English. The uniqueness of English as an international language is not merely a matter of scale. World English is not just an instance of a natural human language used much more extensively than any other language in history, but it is a distinct and new phenomenon with a dynamism and a logic of its own. What we need today is an adequate theory of World English.

Kachru comes nearest to recognising this in a more recent paper of his in which he declares:²

My position is that the diffusion of English, its acculturation, its international functional range, and the diverse forms of literary activity it is accommodating are historically unprecedented. I do not think that linguists, pedagogues, language planners—and, if I might include the purists here—have ever faced this type of linguistic challenge before. I do not believe that the traditional notions of codification, standardization, models, and methods apply to English any more. The dichotomy of its native and non-native users seems to have become irrelevant.

I wish to argue that to understand World English adequately we need a somewhat different conceptual framework from the one we use to explain and understand other

natural languages. In other words World English is not merely a descriptive term, it is a theoretical construct as well. A failure to recognise this has in fact resulted in distortions in our perceptions of its manifestations. Recent history of language studies shows that we made an analogous mistake in being tardy in recognising that a second language variety is not a deviant form of a first language variety but in certain important ways a manifestation of a distinct theoretical construct. There are indications that a similar mistake is being made in the case of World English.

I shall try in this paper to delineate some of the contours which make World English a distinctive theoretical notion. I shall use for this purpose some data from one of the varieties of World English that I am somewhat familiar with, namely, Indian English. In Section 1 of this paper I shall look at certain kinds of misperceptions of Indian Writing in English and show how they arise by our failure to recognise the unique nature of World English. In section 2, I shall show how this failure has also confused issues relevant to the choice of an educational model of spoken English for India.

(To be continued)

MANGESH NADKARNI

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TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of August 2002)

Nationalism: Two Points of View

TAGORE'S book *Nationalism* was published by Macmillan, New York, in 1917. It attacked the western idea of nationalism directly and created a lot of controversy. In the *Notes to the English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, we find the following observation:

Tagore's forthright denunciation of nationalism provoked violent attacks in the American press and severe criticism by the Japanese intellectuals. This work made him unpopular not only in America and Japan, but also in India where nationalism had already entered a new phase of growth. Tagore wrote his first political novel *Ghare Baire* (1916)—its English translation by Surendranath Tagore was published three years later—in which he criticized the Swadeshi movement very strongly. "His lectures on Nationalism", writes Kripalini, "were 'ill-timed'."¹

It was ill-timed, because India then badly needed to establish her own identity. Only a decade before, Sri Aurobindo, Bipin Pal and Tilak had preached and practised their gospel of New Nationalism. The time was not ripe in 1917 to preach the value of one world. The poet and the humanist blinded the politician. Yet here and there, in these essays, there are moments when Tagore, with his awareness of India's glorious past, comes close to Sri Aurobindo the defender of Indian culture:

Her mission has been that of a hostess who has to provide proper accommodation for numerous guests, whose habits and requirements are different from one another. This gives rise to infinite complexities whose solution depends not merely upon tactfulness but upon sympathy and true realisation of the unity of man. Towards this realisation have worked, from the early time of the Upanishads up to the present moment, a series of great spiritual leaders, whose one object has been to set at naught all differences of man by the overflow of our consciousness of God. In fact, our history has not been of the rise and fall of kingdoms, of fights for political supremacy. In our country records of these days have been despised and forgotten, for they in no way represent the true history of our people. Our history is that of our social life and attainment of spiritual ideals.²

The structure and the tone of the passage are in line with Sri Aurobindo's refutation and defence in *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (1918-21).

The spirit and ideals of our civilisation need no defence for in their best parts and in their essence they were of eternal value. India's internal and individual seeking of

them was earnest, powerful, effective. But the application in the collective life of society was subjected to serious reserves. Never sufficiently bold and thoroughgoing it became more and more limited and halting when the life-force declined in her peoples. This defect, this gulf between ideal and collective practice, has pursued all human living and was not peculiar to India; but the dissonance became especially marked with the lapse of time and it put at last on our society a growing stamp of weakness and failure. There was a large effort in the beginning at some kind of synthesis between the inner ideal and the outer life, but a static regulation of society was its latter end. An underlying principle of spiritual idealism, an elusive unity and fixed helpful forms of mutuality remained always there, but also an increasing element of strict bondage and minute division and fissiparous complexity in the social mass.³

The two passages speak of the unbiased attitude of the interpreters, who are virtually exhibiting their sense of the native tradition. About a decade earlier, when Sri Aurobindo was proclaiming an aggressive nationalism, he was quite logical and constructive. Sri Aurobindo's nationalism was never extremism; it was a wrong label given to a very logical movement. From 1906 to 1909, in the journals entitled *Bandemataram* and *Karmayogin*, Sri Aurobindo was carrying on an intellectual battle to codify the principles of New Nationalism. For him, as also for Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal, the country was primary, the freedom of India was primary. The idiom of the activists was bold, but logic was never missing in that rhetoric. For everything there is a season. The hour demanded assertive gestures. Those leaders were not interested in preaching sophisticated humanism. They had a vision before them; India is not just a piece of land, but a living image of the Mother or Mahashakti. Sandip in Tagore's *Ghare Baire* (1916) might have misused the ideal. But it was true for many Indians. What was the gospel of New Nationalism? How was Sri Aurobindo trying to visualize the ideal?

So with India rests the future of the world. Whenever she is aroused from her sleep, she gives forth some wonderful shining ray of light to the world which is enough to illuminate the nations. Others live for centuries on what is to her the thought of a moment. God gave to her the book of Ancient Wisdom and bade her keep it seated in her heart, until the time should come for it to be opened. Sometimes a page or a chapter is revealed, sometimes only a single sentence. Such sentences have been the inspiration of ages and fed humanity for many hundreds of years. So too when India sleeps, materialism grows apace and the light is covered up in darkness. But when materialism thinks herself about to triumph, lo and behold! a light rushes out from the East and where is Materialism? Returned to her native night.⁴

Sri Aurobindo had a firm conviction that a nation was developing swiftly in the early years of the twentieth century. Like Tagore, he was aware of the Indian heritage, the special features of the Indian heritage, the special features of a great country. By then, he

was also certain of the evolutionary principle of life, which India had known well since the dawn of civilisation. Later in 1917, Tagore remembers this India of the old days: "...the India devoid of all politics, the India of no nations, whose one ambition has been to know this world as of a soul, to live here every moment of her life in the meek spirit of adoration, in the glad consciousness of an eternal and personal relationship with it."⁵

Sri Aurobindo had known this quite well in 1909 and had attempted boldly to remind the people of India of this great heritage. But, certainly he seems more specific than Tagore, more specific in the details relating to India's glorious past:

One of the oldest races and greatest civilisations on this earth, the most indomitable in vitality, the most fecund in greatness, the deepest in life, the most wonderful in potentiality, after taking into itself numerous sources of strength from foreign strains of blood and other types of human civilisation, is now seeking to lift itself for good into an organised national unity.⁶

While Tagore evades the question of eternal religion, in favour of what he calls "the truth of the human soul" (see essay on *Nationalism*), Sri Aurobindo comes out with a bolder voice in favour of a universal spirituality, which alone can change the consciousness of man. This call for a universal religion was part and parcel of New Nationalism, a thing synonymous with the voice of God. It was not the voice of a fanatic:

We do not believe that by multiplying new sects limited within the narrower and inferior ideas of religion imported from the West or by creating organisations for the perpetuation of the mere dress and body of Hinduism we can recover our spiritual health, energy and greatness. The world moves through an indispensable interregnum of free thought and materialism to a new synthesis of religious thought and experience, a new religious world-life free from intolerance, yet full of faith and fervour, accepting all forms of religion because it has an unshakable faith in the one. The religion which embraces Science and faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these, is that to which the World-Spirit moves.⁷

This evolving spirit of universal spirituality, which is the basis of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, is also the basis of Tagore's gospel of New Nationalism. Unfortunately, Tagore did not take into consideration this essence of New Nationalism, when he attacked Nationalism at a wrong time, thinking wrongly that the nationalist movement in the then India was against the cause of humanity.⁸

Again, Tagore seems to have come closer to Sri Aurobindo in *Creative Unity*, where he realised the value of both the Eastern spirituality and the Western materialism in his search for a new ideal of living, which would be more complete and definitive, more synthetic and integral. Sri Aurobindo, the nationalist, speaks precisely about that in Calcutta. Let us listen to Tagore:

The man from the East, with his faith in the eternal, who in his soul had met the touch of the Supreme Person—did he never come to you in the West and speak to you of the Kingdom of Heaven? Did he not unite the East and the West in truth, in the unity of one spiritual bond between all children of the immortal, in the realisation of one great personality in all human persons? Yes, the East did once meet the West profoundly in the growth of her life. Such union became possible, because the East came to the West with the ideal that is creative, and not with the passion that destroys moral bonds. The mystic consciousness of the Infinite, which she brought with her, was greatly needed by the man of the West to give him his balance.⁹

The passage confirms the unity of thought. Spirit has to be fused with Matter. Both Tagore and Sri Aurobindo are in love with this world and somehow they are both thinking of a better future, where Spirit and Matter will live like a harmonious husband and wife. And yet, when we come to the point of nationalism in the first two decades of the twentieth century, Tagore's fear of it seems a bit awkward. Not that he could not see the country as Mother at any stage, but around 1917 he lost the vision of the country as *Mahashakti*. Sri Aurobindo, least affected by garlands and abuses, was never hesitant about an aggressive nationalism even as a Lover of Humanity. His love of India was perfectly harmonised with his love for man. Contradiction is no sin, especially in a genius like Tagore. Tagore who wrote the book *Nationalism* in 1917 seems to have been disgusted with the word. The same person had inspired the nationalists in the later half of the nineteenth century, and more powerfully round 1905, when Sri Aurobindo was preparing to give a new impetus to the nationalist movement, planning to shift from Baroda to Calcutta. Poems like *Prachin Bharati* (*Ancient India*, 1897), *Bharat Lakshmi* (1898), *Bharat Tirtha* (*Indian Pilgrimage*, 1910) shows Tagore's cultural link with the mainstream nationalists. Like Sri Aurobindo, Tagore was keenly aware of the sacredness of his motherland:

Awake, my mind,
in this holy place of pilgrimage
on the shore of vast humanity
that is India.¹⁰

(*Indian Pilgrimage*, 1910)

There was more direct inspiration for the nationalists:

We, thousands, have strung together,
we, thousands, have submitted ourselves
to one single cause
Hail to Thee, O Mother! (1879)¹¹

Oh, don't ask me to sing...
who will rise today, who will work?

who is going to save
the face of the Mother? (1887)¹²

Walk alone, if nobody shows up
to respond to your call... (1905)¹³

Tagore lost his emotional self in 1917 in a confused gesture of humanism. One suspects that was a temporary contradiction and not an evolved stage of consciousness. For, sixteen years later, he recovered the simple patriotic emotion while dedicating the opening song of his *Tasher Desh* (1933) to Subhas Chandra Bose. Sri Aurobindo had been a hardcore nationalist since 1894. His nationalism never contradicted his love for humanity. The fate of humanity depended on India's freedom. Sri Aurobindo's critics took him for a fanatic.

They were blind to the visional stuff which lay hidden within his aggressive editorials of the *Bandemataram* period. On 18 March, 1908, he wrote:

What is needed now is a band of spiritual workers whose *tapasyā* will be devoted to the liberation of India for the service of humanity. The few associations already started have taken another turn and devoted themselves to special and fragmentary work. We need an institution in which under the guidance of highly spiritual men workers will be trained for every field, workers for self-defence, workers for arbitration, for sanitation, for famine relief, for every species of work which is needed to bring about the necessary conditions for the organisation of Swaraj.¹⁴

But humanity was inseparably associated with his spiritual nationalism. In the editorial of 20 September 1907, he tells us that in true Nationalism which is an Indian contribution to the world, "there will be an essential equality between man and man, between caste and caste, between class and class, all being as Mr. Tilak has pointed out different but equal and united parts of the Virat Purusha as realised in the nation."¹⁵ For Sri Aurobindo, it was not just rhetoric, an emotional appeal to initiate a revolutionary action. It was a living reality, a very special Indian nationalism, which was just a fleeting vision in Tagore. Sri Aurobindo saw the soul of Nationalism; it was not a thought, but a sight recorded in the editorial of 16 November 1907:

Nationalism is an *avatāra* and cannot be slain. Nationalism is a divinely appointed *śakti* of the Eternal and must do its God-given work before it returns to the bosom of the Universal Energy from which it came.¹⁶

He saw in Nationalism a spiritual movement for prophets, martyrs and heroes who stood in contradiction with the diplomats and "pinchbeck Machiavels". In Sri Aurobindo's nationalism, there is no scope for selfishness, greed and expansion of empire, which Tagore feared in 1917. His nationalism opens our eyes to Sri Ramakrishna's contribution

to the New Nationalism, which is going to help the whole of humanity:

A new era dates from his birth, an era in which the peoples of the earth will be lifted for a while into communion with God and spirituality become the dominant note of human life.¹⁷

This nationalism was a vision mistakenly seen as fanaticism by the intellectuals. For vision is not intellectualism. The intellect cannot see the whole truth, the inner truth, the living reality hidden behind the surface self. One suspects it was a new interpretation of the Indian renaissance. Sri Aurobindo saw God in the movement and the intellectuals refused it and searched for the European symptoms of the renaissance. God woke up when wise men were speaking of an Indian renaissance. Tagore belonged to the intellectual tradition, although he was not unaware of the Hindu view of life. Sri Aurobindo was thoroughly an anti-intellectual of the Western variety in his choice of a vision of nationalism for the benefit of mankind. The preference for Sri Ramakrishna is a preference for intuition over intellect. He saw the rise of God in the movement and felt that Nationalism was God.

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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17. *Ibid.*, p. 801.

THE BOOK OF JOB: THE MARVEL AND THE MYSTERY OF PAIN

(Continued from the issue of August 2002)

PROF. SITARAMAYYA possesses good credentials for attempting this new interpretation to the problem posed by the Book of Job. He taught the biblical texts as classics of seventeenth century English Prose as a teacher of English literature in the postgraduate classes. In particular, he taught the Book of Job in the last five years of his academic service. The author has always been keenly interested in Religion and Philosophy as well as in Linguistics and Literature. Since his retirement from service in 1984 he has devoted himself to a close study of the Book of Job.

At the end of a prolonged examination and profound cogitation Prof. Sitaramayya decided to write a fresh commentary on the Book of Job, looking at it from a Hindu point of view and making apt comparisons with Indian sacred literature. His interpretation has brought a new insight to this strange and powerful book which deals sharply with such universal questions as the meaning of human suffering and the justice of God. In the presentation of his original point of view, the learned author of *The Marvel and the Mystery of Pain* has drawn upon parallels and Yogic terms as found in the famous Bhagavad-Gita. In particular, in spite of some obvious situational dissimilarities, Prof. Sitaramayya has discovered a few striking resemblances, actions and achievements of the two protagonists, Job of the biblical text and Arjuna of the Bhagavad-Gita. The initial depression and despondency of the two personages (*viṣāda*), their intense seeking to “see” God, their subsequent Vision of the Cosmic Being (*viśvarūpa-darśana*) and their final state of *nistraiguṇya* (‘transcending the three modes of Nature’) have offered Prof. Sitaramayya the necessary clues to unravel the mystery of the drama of Job’s sufferings. His interpretation has revolved around the key concepts of Tamas, Rajas and Sattwa, the three modes or Gunas of Nature-Force. Let us recall that according to the Sankhya Yoga-Philosophy, Tamas represents the principle of inertia and darkness, Rajas that of dynamic energy and vehemence, while the highest mode, Sattwa, is the Guna of light and harmony. Every individual’s nature becomes active at any moment only because of the mutual play of these three modes or Gunas: the inevitable consequence is that wherever and whenever there is no Guna-play, there cannot be any active motion. It is thus ordinarily interpreted that a *nistraiguṇya* or *triguṇātīta* state leads to *naiṣkarmya-siddhi*, an attainment in which all personal actions cease. Thus it is traditionally averred that real perfection comes only when a sadhaka can go above and beyond the operations of these Gunas and that psychological state goes by the name of *guṇātīta-avasthā*.

According to Prof. Sitaramayya’s reading of the situation, Job had attained the perfection of Sattwa before affliction struck him down. But he could not maintain it on an even keel. During his long debate with his three friends, Job’s mood changed in quick succession and he came under the sway of the three modes, Tamas, Rajas and Sattwa, in

rapid alternation. These swift and sudden shifts of modes churned Job's consciousness intensely and helped him unconsciously go deeper and deeper and move progressively towards the Gunatita state of higher perfection. Also the Rajasic desire on his part to see God face to face in order to vindicate his own innocence before Him intensified and changed into an aspiration for the Darshan of the Lord. And he fell silent. Here are the words of Job:

“Who can get me a hearing from God?

I have had my say, from A to Z; now let Shaddai answer me.

I shall wear it on my shoulder,

and bind it round my head like a royal turban.

I will give him [God] an account of every step of my life,

and go as boldly as a prince to meet him.”

(Job 31: 35-37) (Jerusalem Bible)

The focus in the commentary of Prof. Sitaramayya is always on these shifting changes in Job's consciousness from one Guna to another, back and forth, again and again, till he reaches the Gunatita state. Job's suffering is thus seen by the author as purposeful and highly creative, deliberately engineered by the Lord himself, with the specific object of evolving Job from the state of a simple Sattwic perfection to a far higher level of Gunatita perfection, also from a mental knowledge of God to a direct experience and vision of the Divine.

In order to exemplify the difference between the traditional way of looking at things and our professor's novel way of interpreting the same things, let us take chapter 23 of the Book of Job. This chapter represents one of Job's speeches and N. C. Habel, in his commentary, has termed this speech as 'Job's Quest to Face God'. Here are some representative verses from this speech:

My lament is still rebellious,

that heavy hand of his [Shaddai's] drags groans from me....

I should set out my case to him,

my mouth would not want for arguments....

No, he would have to give me a hearing.

He would see he was contending with an honest man,

and I should surely win my case....

If I go eastward, he is not there;

or westward—still I cannot see him.

If I seek him in the north, he is not to be found,

invisible still when I turn to the south....

And yet he knows of every step I take!

Let him test me in the crucible: I shall come out pure gold....

But once he has decided, who can change his mind?
 No doubt, then, but he will carry out my sentence...
 That is why I am full of fear before him,
 and the more I think, the greater grows my dread of him.
 God has made my heart sink,
 Shaddai has filled me with fear.

(Job 23) (Jerusalem Bible)

We can observe in the verses quoted above the kaleidoscopic procession of various moods and emotions passing through the psychological terrain of Job's consciousness: hope and fear, confidence and distrust, buoyancy and depression in quick succession are there. The traditionalist would explain this phenomenon in the way Mathew Henry, for example, has done. He writes on p. 129 of Vol. III of his Commentary: "Here seems to be a struggle between flesh and spirit, fear and faith, throughout this chapter." Now see how our author, Prof. Sitaramayya, envisages the situation:

"Starting with a *Tamasic* note of bitterness... he returned to his wish that he knew where to find God and come even to his seat. He had said with an inner certitude he knew his Redeemer lived. Now he sought to see him face to face.... He would be delivered from his judge. He sank again from his sense of confidence.... God always hid himself. But Job asserted God knew the way he took... Once again sinking into *Tamas* he said God was of one mind and he would do what he decided, perform what he had appointed for him. That made him feel troubled, he was afraid of his presence. Such sudden shifts of moods were there till the last moment." (*The Marvel and the Mystery...*, p. 97)

But what was the final outcome of these rapid oscillations in the three Gunas or modes of Nature in the case of the honest man, Job? The author answers:

"The Book of Job shows the Lord with a great *etza* (a plan of action) which is nothing less than evolving one who is [Sattwically] perfect to a far higher state of perfection [*gunātā-avasthā*]. To work it out, he enacts a drama using Satan as his instrument. He afflicts Job with intense suffering, both physical and psychological.... But the suffering and the torture churn his consciousness and make him ready to see the Lord face-to-face. It is only at the end that Job has a true *binah* (understanding) of the Lord's *etza*."

The text of the Book of Job, as Mathew Henry has pointed out, is very difficult indeed. There are many passages in it greatly obscure and hard to understand. We cannot perhaps be confident of the true meaning of every Hebrew/Aramaic word and phrase we meet in the original text. It is a book that entails a great deal of work for the critics.

Readers will be grateful to Prof. Sitaramayya for having offered them a very competent guidebook for the proper comprehension of this ancient literary masterpiece. His exhaustive analysis of the text, elucidation of difficult verses, citing the alternative views of other exegetes, and almost a running commentary of the ups and downs of the levels of consciousness of different characters of the book make *The Marvel and the Mystery of Pain* a significant literary production which cannot but grip the interest of the readers from the beginning to the end. We salute Prof. Sitaramayya for making available

to the reading public such a competently annotated edition of the Book of Job.

By the way, the author has found a few of the verses of the Book of Job in their Authorized Version (AV) garb particularly obscure to properly interpret. Here are five illustrative examples with Prof. Sitaramayya's introductory remarks:

(1) The verse 8 of chapter 3 "poses a problem". The AV reads, "Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their morning."

(2) The verse 14 of chapter 6 "has been considered as a *crux interpretum*." In the AV it reads, "To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty."

(3) The verse 12 of chapter 11 "poses a problem". The AV reads, "For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt."

(4) The verse 24 of chapter 30 "seems to be a real problem". The AV reads, "How be it he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction."

(5) The verse 33 of chapter 34 "has been a problem to all exegetes." The AV reads, "Should it be according to the mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse or thou choose; and not I therefore thou speak what thou knowest."

The author has not tried to skirt such difficult passages. Instead, he has taken great pains to elucidate the real meaning by quoting and creatively comparing the views of other distinguished exegetes. It has been a pleasure to go through Prof. Sitaramayya's detailed and lucid analysis of these obscure texts. That is one of the attractions of the book under review.

All in all Prof. Sitaramayya's *The Marvel and the Mystery of Pain* is a very good book which we have no hesitation in recommending to the attention of philosophers, theologians and that broad spectrum of general readers who are interested in the deeper issues of human life and destiny.

This laudable, well-produced book suffers, however, from a glaring imperfection: there are too many printing mistakes, here, there, everywhere. This could have been easily avoided with a little more care on the part of the proof-readers. Satan tried to play havoc with Job's destiny but that was only for a short period of time; but the printer's Devil has succeeded in leaving many ugly scars on the beauteous face of Prof. Sitaramayya's book.

It is time to take leave of the patient readers of this extra-long review-article. This length was, however, called for because of possible unfamiliarity of the generality of Indian readers with the Book of Job for which Prof. Sitaramayya has offered us a new interpretation from the Hindu point of view.

Whatever the reservations of the present reviewer about some particular points of the book, he has no hesitation in affirming that the book under review, *The Marvel*

and the Mystery of Pain, will prove to be a source of intellectual delight to all serious-minded readers interested in the deeper problems of life.*

(*Concluded*)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

[N.B. We regret to announce that Prof. K. B. Sitaramayya passed away on 11 May 2002 in Bangalore. He was 76. — RYD]

* For writing this review-article the author has extensively consulted with profit the following books:

1. *The Holy Bible*: New Catholic Edition.
2. Mathew Henry's six-volume *Commentary on the Holy Bible*.
3. *The Jerusalem Bible*.
4. *La Sainte Bible* (traduite en français sous la direction de L'Ecole Biblique de Jerusalem).

The verses from the Book of Job quoted in this article are mostly taken from *The Jerusalem Bible* (Doubleday & Company, Inc.).

The writer of this review-article gratefully acknowledges his debt to all concerned.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

In Search of the Cradle of Civilization by Georg Feuerstein, Subhash Kak, David Frawley. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1999. Pages: xxi+341; index & bibliography. Price: Rs. 395.

The Cinderella of the Ancient World

History Begins at Sumer was the title of S.N.Kramer's major work (1965), which reflects the prevalent view fostered by the West, that civilization—life in cities—first began in Mesopotamia. Over three decades later in BBC's superb TV series *Legacy* [1997] Michael Wood put forward the same idea: the first city in the world was Eridu in Sumer. As though the Harappa Culture had not happened! No wonder Geoffrey Bibby in his *Looking for Dilmun* described the Indus Valley civilization as "the Cinderella of the ancient world." At long last a historian of religion, a professor of computer engineering and a Vedic scholar have joined together to present a contrary thesis at significant length, showing that civilization began in the Indian subcontinent with what is popularly known as the Indus Valley Civilization, which they correctly rephrase as the Indus-Sarasvati Civilization. This Harappan world covered around three hundred thousand square miles with over 2,500 settlements found so far. Stretching from Afghanistan in the north to the Godavari river in the south and from the Indus in the west to the Gangetic plains in the east, its size exceeds the combined area occupied by the Sumerian and Egyptian civilizations and is much older, going back to the town of Mehrgarh in Baluchistan [c. 6500 BC]. Mehrgarh disproves Gordon Childe's concept of a Neolithic revolution followed by an urban revolution, because here already in the beginning of the Neolithic age we have a large town, the largest in the ancient world, covering over 168 acres, five times the size of the contemporary Catal Huyuk site in Turkey which has been called the largest Neolithic site in the Near East. In comparison, the entire population of Egypt was around 30,000 persons around 6000 BC, around the same as of Mehrgarh alone! And this is two thousand years before Sumer. There is no break in cultural developments from Mehrgarh to Harappa to modern India—here we have proof of the oldest living civilization in the world.

To substantiate their thesis, after establishing the Vedas as the key to understanding the world-view of ancient India, the authors concentrate in the first half of the book on demolishing the myth of the Aryan invasion and proceed to present the advanced Harappan civilization citing major tectonic changes as the cause of the abandonment of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. In the second part, they discuss the cultural and spiritual legacy of ancient India to highlight not only the profound spirituality but also how ritual gave birth to science, particularly mathematics and astronomy. The work concludes with a presentation of the perennial wisdom of the Vedas, asserting its relevance for saving mankind from rushing lemming-like to its own destruction and for enabling man to realise the potential that lies at the core of his being.

The authors have to be complimented for pointing out that the prevalent belief

regarding the age of the Vedas as between 1200 and 1000 BC is based purely upon an ad hoc pronouncement by Max Muller despite his admission in his last work [1900] that the date could as well be 1500 as 15,000 BC! They proceed to show how the word “Aryan” has been twisted to provide a racial connotation that it never had (notably by Gordon Childe), paving the way for fascist racism. In Darius’ cuneiform inscription of 520 BC he alludes to making “the writing of a different sort in Aryan, which did not exist before,” thus giving it a secondary meaning of language. Colin Renfrew has recently reasserted this. Originally, the word “arya” referred to a quality of character: nobility, and “arya-varta” meant the abode of noble people.

This book is one of the first to highlight the little known metal artefact carbon-dated to 3700 BC of a head with moustache and hair coiled with a tuft on the right that has been given the name, “Vasishtha Head”, now reposing in the Hicks Foundation for Cultural Preservation in San Francisco. Pointing out the remarkable accuracy of the weights found in the Harappan sites that follow a binary system up to 12,800 units, and the meticulous geometric layout of the towns, they bring home how scholars have neglected this evidence of scientific knowledge on part of Neolithic humanity. They list as many as 17 arguments to disprove Mortimer Wheeler’s melodramatic scenario of Aryan hordes destroying these cities. The Rig Veda celebrates the seven rivers, specially Sarasvati, which precedes the mythical Aryan invasion of 1200 BC by many centuries. Astronomical configurations are mentioned that could have occurred only between 2000 and 6000 BC. The Brahmanas and Aranyakas also belong to the third millennium BC. Most important is the fact that the archaeologically established chronology for the cities shows them abandoned far before the alleged attacks in 1500-1200 BC. Just as tectonic changes led to the sudden collapse of the Akkadian empire after Manishtusu (2307-2292 BC), the death of the Bronze Age city of Tiryns in Turkey and of Troy (level VI) and the devastation of the Minoan civilization in Crete in about 1250 BC, so the Indian plate pushing into Asia was responsible for the abandonment of sites like Mohenjo Daro following the drying up of the Sarasvati River and its tributaries (the river had changed its course at least four times) and the emergence of the Kashmir valley. That is why the Indians migrated eastwards to the Yamuna-Ganga valley. A hint of this is found in the Shatapatha Brahmana (1900 BC) that speaks of the conquest of the swampy area east of the Ganga by Mathava Videgha. This conclusion receives considerable support from the recent seminar held by the Geological Society of India on Vedic Sarasvati (Memoir 42, 1999) who record tectonic disturbance and capture of the upper waters of Sarasvati by Yamuna with consequent intense aridity and end of the Indus cities c. 2000 BC. But this was not the only cause. Climatologists R.A. Bryson and A.M. Swain have found that the rainfall pattern switched around 3700 BC, with winter rains disappearing and a dry period setting in lasting over 1500 years (Quaternary Research, 1981). Behind this lay the indiscriminate destruction of forest cover by the city dwellers.

The Vedic people were also seafaring merchants, as there is mention of sea travel in many hymns (cf. L.N. Renu’s *Indian Ancestors of Vedic Aryans*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan 1994, and Bhagwan Singh’s *Vedic Harappans*, Aditya Prakashan), and not just cattle

breeding nomads as the invasion model asserts. Seals dated to about 2400 BC found in the Middle East substantiate this. The standard weights of Harappa were used in Bahrain (Dilmun), an inscription in Harappan script has been found on the Oman coast and it is possible that the Mesopotamian Meluha refers to Harappa. The authors very convincingly argue that the allegedly separate Vedic and Harappan cultures are actually the same Indus-Sarasvati civilization and its script is the origin of the Brahmi lipi. One would have expected them to acknowledge their debt to B.B. Lal's *New Light on the Indus Civilization and The Earliest Civilization of South Asia* (1998), which records how the earliest agricultural field dates to c. 2800 BC in Kalibangan, the earliest earthquake affecting this area c. 2600 BC and the earliest dockyard in the civilized world at Lothal.

The excellent analysis of data from the Neolithic site of Mehrgarh points out the use of the potter's wheel, bow drills and domestication of cattle in the early fourth millennium, much before the so-called invasion. There is a direct development from Mehrgarh to Mohenjo Daro and the Rig Veda, including biological continuity with no evidence of alien immigrants. As B.B. Lal has pointed out, the commonalty of chalcolithic people in Afghanistan, north eastern Iran, south central Asia and north western India is adequate to posit this as the original home of the Rig Vedic/Harappan people. The arguments could have been even stronger if the authors had cared to consult K.D. Sethna's very important book, *Karpasa in Prehistoric India* (Biblia Impex, 1984). Cotton finds mention in the earliest Sutras but is absent from the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas. Hence, if the Rig Vedic people came after the Harappans, how can they be ignorant of cotton, which has been found in several Harappan strata including Alamgirpur near Delhi? Similarly, the Rigveda and the Avesta do not know rice, while it is present in several Harappan sites within and outside the Indus valley. Therefore, the Rigveda has to precede the Harappan Culture. Silver is known from 4000 BC only, and is not found in this Veda, which must therefore antedate it. Sethna's *Problem of Aryan Origins* (Aditya Prakashan, 1992) provides some more clinching arguments that the authors would have done well to study: Harappan seals with evidence of spoked wheels are dated to 1900 BC, far before the supposed invasion which Wheeler claims had introduced the chariot and spoked wheel; evidence of equine remains is available dated before 2000 BC and even at Hallur in Karnataka c. 1800-1500 BC. Therefore, the Aryans whom Asko Parpola and Wheeler would like to immigrate to India c. 1600-1400 BC cannot have introduced the horse in the Deccan centuries before their arrival! If the horse is a conclusive sign of Aryan presence, then it is in India long before the Harappan Civilization in Neolithic sites. Moreover, a terracotta horse-like figurine with a saddle on its back has been found in Balu in the Harappan urban phase. Sethna also provides evidence, going back to much before the second millennium BC, of heavy flooding of Harappan settlements, with five floods found in Mohenjo Daro itself, each lasting for several decades. Considerable rise in the coastline of the Arabian Sea is also a geological fact he cites. Hence, there is no need to posit an invading Aryan horde to demolish imaginary dams where natural forces are at work. Further, points out Sethna, if invasion came from the north, why is it southern Mohenjo Daro instead of northern Harappan sites that shows noticeable decline in material

prosperity? The coup de grace is administered with evidence from undersea excavations at Dwaraka, dating the submergence to c. 1400 BC, tallying with statements in the Mahabharata and the Harivamsa. If the Kurukshetra war occurred around this time, surely the period of the Rig Veda would have to be considerably anterior to it and by no means c. 1500 BC. How could the Aryans invade just a couple of centuries before the great war? Necessarily, therefore, the Rig Veda precedes the Harappa Culture that ended around the middle of the second millennium BC.

In their presentation of the antiquity of the Indian Civilization, the authors lose the advantage of brilliant research by Sethna in his *Ancient India in a New Light* (Aditya Prakashan, 1989) that cites convincing evidence for identifying Megasthenes' Sandrocottus with Chandragupta of the Gupta dynasty. Scholars have blindly accepted Fleet's chronology of Fa-Hien as visiting during the reign of Chandragupta II, though he does not mention any king and his descriptions of social conditions do not tally with the Gupta regime. Similarly, Fleet misrepresents Al-beruni's travelogue. The Arab categorically refers to the Gupta Era as celebrating the end and not the beginning, as Fleet states, of a dynasty that had come to be hated. Fleet even conjectured Skandagupta battling the Huns though there is no such reference in the Junagadh inscription of Rudradaman I as Sethna proves. The Ashokan monuments have affinities not with Achaemenid art but with Mesopotamia and carry on the tradition of the realistic treatment of the Indus seals, the hall at Mohenjo Daro and the high polish of Harappan jewellery. Inscriptions at Mandasor of Dattabhatta and Yasodharman are analysed by Sethna to clear many misconceptions about the date of Ashoka whom he establishes at 950 BC, with Buddha's death in 1168 BC and Mahavira's in 1165 BC. This would have convincingly supported the effort of the book under review to illuminate the dark backward and abysm of a critical portion of our antique time.

If the thesis the three authors have presented motivates those interested in the history of the birth of civilization to think afresh, untrammelled by preconceptions foisted by western scholars and their Indian followers over the last hundred years, it will be a consummation devoutly to be wished.

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