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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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O LIVING POWER

“O LIVING power of the incarnate Word,
All that the Spirit has dreamed thou canst create:
Thou art the force by which I made the worlds,
Thou art my vision and my will and voice....
But if thou wilt not wait for Time and God,
Do then thy work and force thy will on Fate....
If thou must indeed deliver man and earth
On the spiritual heights, look down on life,
Discover the truth of God and man and world;
Then do thy task knowing and seeing all.
Ascend, O soul, into thy timeless self;
Choose destiny’s curve and stamp thy will on Time.”
He ended and upon the falling sound
A power went forth that shook the founded spheres...
An energy of the triune Infinite,
In a measureless Reality she dwelt,
A rapture and a being and a force,
A linked and myriad-motioned plenitude,
A virgin unity, a luminous spouse,
Housing a multitudinous embrace
To marry all in God’s immense delight...
Around her some tremendous spirit lived,
Mysterious flame around a melting pearl,
And in the phantom of abolished Space
There was a voice unheard by ears that cried:
“Choose, spirit, thy supreme choice not given again;
For now from my highest being looks at thee
The nameless formless peace where all things rest....
Close of the journeying of thy pilgrim soul.
Accept, O music, weariness of thy notes,
O stream, wide breaking of thy channel banks.”...
But someone yearned within a bosom unknown.
And silently the woman’s heart replied:
“Thy peace, O Lord, a boon within to keep
Amid the roar and ruin of wild Time
For the magnificent soul of man on earth.
Thy calm, O Lord, that bears thy hands of joy.”
Limitless like ocean round a lonely isle
A second time the eternal cry arose:
“Wide open are the ineffable gates in front.

My spirit leans down to break the knot of earth,
 Amorous of oneness without thought or sign
 To cast down wall and fence, to strip heaven bare,
 See with the large eye of infinity,
 Unweave the stars and into silence pass.”
 In an immense and world-destroying pause
 She heard a million creatures cry to her.
 Through the tremendous stillness of her thoughts
 Immeasurably the woman’s nature spoke:
 “Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts,
 My sweet infinity of thy numberless souls.”
 Mightily retreating like a sea in ebb
 A third time swelled the great admonishing call:
 “I spread abroad the refuge of my wings.
 Out of its incommunicable deeps
 My power looks forth of mightiest splendour, stilled
 Into its majesty of sleep, withdrawn
 Above the dreadful whirlings of the world.”
 A sob of things was answer to the voice,
 And passionately the woman’s heart replied:
 “Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man,
 To take all things and creatures in their grief
 And gather them into a mother’s arms.”
 Solemn and distant like a seraph’s lyre
 A last great time the warning sound was heard:
 “I open the wide eye of solitude
 To uncover the voiceless rapture of my bliss,
 Where in a pure and exquisite hush it lies
 Motionless in its slumber of ecstasy,
 Resting from the sweet madness of the dance
 Out of whose beat the throb of hearts was born.”
 Breaking the silence with appeal and cry
 A hymn of adoration tireless climbed,
 A music beat of winged uniting souls,
 Then all the woman yearningly replied:
 “Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
 Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
 Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
 Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men.”

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 693-97)

THE MIND OF LIGHT

PHYSICAL MIND RECEIVING THE SUPRAMENTAL LIGHT SRI AUROBINDO CALLED THE MIND OF LIGHT

Birth of the Mind of Light

“In the birth of the mind of Light and its ascension into its own recognisable self and its true status and right province there must be, in the very nature of things as they are and very nature of the evolutionary process as it is at present, two stages. In the first, we can see the mind of Light gathering itself out of the Ignorance, assembling its constituent elements, building up its shapes and types, however imperfect at first, and pushing them towards perfection till it can cross the border of the Ignorance and appear in the Light, in its own Light. In the second stage we can see it developing itself in that greater natural light, taking its higher shapes and forms till it joins the supermind and lives as its subordinate portion or its delegate. In each of these stages it will define its own grades and manifest the order of its beings who will embody it and give to it a realised life. Thus there will be built up, first, even in the Ignorance itself, the possibility of a human ascent towards a divine living; then there will be, by the illumination of this mind of Light in the greater realisation of what may be called a gnostic mentality, in a transformation of the human being, even before the supermind is reached, even in the earth-consciousness and in a humanity transformed, an illumined divine life.”¹

Gradation of Evolution and Role of Mind of Light

“The first gleamings of the new Light would carry in themselves the seed of its highest flamings; even in the first beginnings, the certainty of their topmost powers would be there; for this is the constant story of each evolutionary emergence: the principle of its highest perfection lies concealed in the involution which precedes and necessitates the evolution of the secret principle.

“For throughout the story of evolution there are two complementary aspects which constitute its action and are necessary to its totality; there is hidden in the involution of Nature the secret power and principle of being which lies concealed under the veil cast on it by material Nature and there is carried in that Nature itself the inevitable force of the principle compelling the process of emergence of its inherent powers and characters, the essential features which constitute its reality. As the evolutionary principle emerges, there are also two constant features of the process of the emergence: there are the gradations by which it climbs out of the involution and manifests more and more of its power, its possibilities, the force of the Godhead within it, and there is a constant manifestation of all types and forms of its being which are the visible, indicative and efficient embodiments of its essential nature. There appear in the evolutionary process organised forms and activities of Matter, the types of life and the living beings, the types of mind and the

thinking beings, the luminosities and greatneses of the spiritual principle and the spiritual beings whose nature, character, personality, mark the stages of the ascent towards the highest heights of the evolution and the ultimate largest manifestation of what it is in itself and must become by the force of time and the all-revealing Spirit. This is the real sense and drive of what we see as evolution: the multiplication and variation of forms is only the means of its process. Each gradation contains the possibility and the certainty of the grades beyond it: the emergence of more and more developed forms and powers points to more perfected forms and greater powers beyond them, and each emergence of consciousness and the conscious beings proper to it enables the rise to a greater consciousness beyond and the greater order of beings up to the ultimate godheads of which Nature is striving and is destined to show herself capable. Matter developed its organised forms until it became capable of embodying living organisms; then life rose from the subconsciousness of the plant into conscious animal formations and through them to the thinking life of man. Mind founded in life developed intellect, developed its types of knowledge and ignorance, truth and error till it reached the spiritual perception and illumination and now can see as in a glass dimly the possibility of supermind and a truth-conscious existence. In this inevitable ascent the mind of Light is a gradation, an inevitable stage. As an evolving principle it will mark a stage in the human ascent and evolve a new type of human being; this development must carry in it an ascending gradation of its own powers and types of an ascending humanity which will embody more and more the turn towards spirituality, capacity for Light, a climb towards a divinised manhood and the divine life.”²

Mind of Light: A Transitional Passage

“There is a further limitation or change of characteristic action at each step downwards from Overmind to Intuition, from Intuition to Illumined Mind, from Illumined Mind to what I have called the Higher Mind: the Mind of Light is a transitional passage by which we can pass from supermind and superhumanity to an illumined humanity. For the new humanity will be capable of at least a partly divinised way of seeing and living because it will live in the light and in knowledge and not in the obscurisation of the Ignorance.”³

Mind of Light: Link of Lower Hemisphere with Higher Hemisphere

“It is in this series of the order of existence and as the last word of the lower hemisphere of being, the first word of the higher hemisphere that we have to look at the Mind of Light and see what is its nature and the powers which characterise it and which it uses for its self-manifestation and workings, its connection with Supermind and its consequences and possibilities for the life of a new humanity.”⁴

Mind of Light: A Subordinate Action of Supermind

“The Mind of Light is a subordinate action of Supermind, dependent upon it even when not apparently springing direct from it, in which the secret of this connection becomes evident and palpable.

“The Truth-consciousness is not only a power of knowledge; it is a being of consciousness and knowledge, a luminous many-sided dynamis and play of the omniscient Spirit; in it there can be a spiritual feeling, a spiritual sensation, a spiritual essentiality of substance that knows and reveals, that acts and manifests in an omniscience which is one with omnipotence. In Mind this Truth-consciousness and these workings of the Truth-consciousness can be there and even though it limits itself in Mind and has a subordinate or an indirect working, its action can be essentially the same. There can even be a hidden immediacy which hints at the presence of something absolute and is evidence of the same omnipotence and omniscience. In the Mind of Light when it becomes full-orbed this character of the Truth reveals itself, though in a garb that is transparent even when it seems to cover: for this too is a truth-consciousness and a self-power of knowledge. This too proceeds from the Supermind and depends upon it even though it is limited and subordinate. What we have called specifically the Mind of Light is indeed the last of a series of descending planes of consciousness in which the Supermind veils itself by a self-chosen limitation or modification of its self-manifesting activities, but its essential character remains the same: there is in it an action of light, of truth, of knowledge in which inconscience, ignorance and error claim no place. It proceeds from knowledge to knowledge; we have not yet crossed over the borders of the truth-conscious into ignorance. The methods also are those of a self-luminous knowing and seeing and feeling and a self-fulfilling action within its own borders; there is no need to seek for something missing, no fumbling, no hesitation: all is still a gnostic action of a gnostic power and principle. There has been a descent from full Supermind into Mind, but this Mind though a self-limited is not yet an agnostic consciousness unsure of itself or unsure of its workings; there is still a comprehending or an apprehending consciousness which goes straight to its object and does not miss its mark or have to hunt for it in the dark or in insufficient light: it sees, knows, puts its hand immediately on things of self and things of Nature. We have passed into Mind but Mind has still not broken its inherent connection with the supramental principle.”⁵

New Humanity with Mind of Light

“A new humanity would then be a race of mental beings on the earth and in the earthly body, but delivered from its present conditions in the reign of the cosmic Ignorance so far as to be possessed of a perfected mind, a mind of light which could even be a subordinate action of the supermind or Truth-consciousness, and in any case capable of the full possibilities of mind acting as a recipient of that truth and at least a secondary action of it in thought and life. It could even be a part of what could be described as a divine life

upon earth and at least the beginnings of an evolution in the Knowledge and no longer entirely or predominantly in the Ignorance. How far this would go, whether it would eventually embrace the whole of humanity or only an advanced portion of it, would depend upon the intention in the evolution itself, on the intention in whatever cosmic or transcendent Will is guiding the movements of the universe. We have supposed not only the descent of the supermind upon the earth but its embodiment in a supramental race with all its natural consequences and a new total action in which the new humanity would find its complete development and its assured place in the new order.”⁶

Mind of light Creating New Humanity of Overman Preceding Superman

“A mind of light will replace the present confusion and trouble of this earthly ignorance; it is likely that even those parts of humanity which cannot reach it will yet be aware of its possibility and consciously tend towards it; not only so, but the life of humanity will be enlightened, uplifted, governed, harmonised by this luminous principle and even the body become something much less powerless, obscure and animal in its propensities and capable instead of a new and harmonised perfection. It is this possibility that we have to look at and that would mean a new humanity uplifted into Light, capable of a spiritualised being and action, open to governance by some light of the Truth-consciousness, capable even on the mental level and in its own order of something that might be called the beginning of a divinised life.”⁷

SRI AUROBINDO

(Compiled by Arun Vaidya)

References

1. *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 587.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 585-587.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 590.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 592.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 588-589.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 578.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 584.

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of December 2002)

Is effort necessary at all stages of the sadhana—the effort to be conscious, watchful, reject, aspire, etc.?

This effort is very necessary until towards the end of the sadhana, although it becomes more easy as the consciousness grows and in the end turns into a sort of automatic vigilance supporting the action of the Divine Force.

When does liberation of the vital occur? Is it usually after full psychicisation or after complete purity is established in it?

It depends on the person; it is not the same for all. With some there is a fundamental liberation of the vital at an early stage with the growth of equality and purity, although perfection of detail remains to be worked out; with others it is otherwise, the vital persists till there is a complete psychicisation of the whole nature.

6 March 1933

The peace and equanimity experienced today is of a type not experienced before. It is a sort of emptiness, but not of the quietistic type. There is full force and capacity, with a quiet understanding of when more push and force are required in work. There is an absence of bubbling and effervescing.

That means a union of equality with quiet strength, calm and peace with deliberate power. Also it is in the silent being that the right intuition more easily comes.

Can the hostiles make use purely of egoism?

Yes, it can be used—for through the egoism they may get their opportunity to blind or confuse the consciousness.

Is there anything like “pressure” on the hostiles, either from the supermind or overmind?

There is a pressure on the forces of the lower nature to change—through that the pressure is felt by the hostiles; but whether they change or are destroyed seems to be left very much to them to choose.

Can it be said that anything other than calm, wideness, purity, knowledge, love or bliss comes from the hostiles?

No—there is much of it that is ignorant or imperfect, but not hostile.

Suppose someone has got only one of these qualities to some extent established in him—is it possible for the hostiles to utilise it?

Not to utilise it, but to spoil it by raising up something that leads to disturbance.

Are the hostiles less interested in Mayavadins or quietists because they are not bent upon conquest of the vital and material?

Yes,—but it must not be thought that they leave them alone altogether.

7 March 1933

It seems some local people are interested in trying to disturb us in some way. Yesterday someone was bugling near N's window. Today they were near my room; some were cutting jokes about us when we waited for Mother at 6.00 in the evening. Even a rickshawalla was bent upon a quarrel. Have these people been influenced by subtle hostiles?

It is the opposition of the lower consciousness and nature to the Power that is pressing on that Nature to make it change.

7 March 1933

Yesterday night, just after I wrote the last letter, some boys, apparently instigated by elders, threw a half-dead crow in my room.

We have not a very good neighbourhood here.

In a dream my vital was voraciously eating a variety of things. Then I saw my dead sister; she embraced me and after a time I began to feel an uneasy sensation. Then I found that it was not my sister but a relative with whom I was on affectionate terms. Do these incidents indicate the persistence of desire for eating and sex in the subconscious?

In the subconscious remain all the impressions of the past—it is these that rise up in this kind of dream—or else there are formations of the vital plane (not from your own vital but outside) taking advantage of these impressions. It was not your sister or a relative you met, but some Force taking these shapes—on the basis of subconscious memories and using them for its own purpose.

8 March 1933

In a dream I sat on a plank which was floating in a small pond. It moved about here and there and then without any reason there was a physical sexual effect without any sensation. Before sleeping I had a suggestion that this might happen and there may have been an idea in the subconscious that such an event should occur at times to relieve congestion. Is there any such physical necessity? Does it come from an accumulation of slight sex-sensations? When does it become possible to have complete invulnerability?

I do not believe there is any such necessity. It comes from the subconscious memory of old habit and a pressure on that from wandering vital powers. Invulnerability comes either by enlightenment of the subconscious or by a will in the higher consciousness which creates, first, an automatic control even in sleep and, second, a counteracting memory or habit in the subconscious of not having the movement in place of the habit of having it.

Several impressions and memories of the past are coming up. They occupy a large place in the thoughts and to a certain extent prevent higher thoughts.

Sometimes they come up in order to be thrown away—it helps to clear the subconscious of its stored-up impressions.

Yesterday I heard a door upstairs smashing in the wind. There was a slight thrill of fear, for I thought that somebody might have gone up there somehow. Before coming here I used to have a fear of thieves at night and even now I am rather overcautious. When fear is there, the only idea is one of a protective fight. It shows that some part of my being does not have sufficient faith—otherwise how could fear enter at all?

Yes, that is true. It is probably some very physical part of the lower vital (nerves etc.) whose action is automatic and instinctive (reflexes) and do not obey the mind or higher vital. The higher consciousness has to be got in there also.

9 March 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

SPIRITUALITY

...SPIRITUALITY is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not even a compound of all these excellent things; a mental belief, creed or faith, an emotional aspiration, a regulation of conduct according to a religious or ethical formula are not spiritual achievement and experience. These things are of considerable value to mind and life; they are of value to the spiritual evolution itself as preparatory movements disciplining, purifying or giving a suitable form to the nature; but they still belong to the mental evolution,—the beginning of a spiritual realisation, experience, change is not yet there. Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Life Divine, SABCL, Vol. 19, p. 857)

The money-power belongs to a world which was created deformed. It is something that belongs to the vital world... it belongs to the vital and material worlds. And so at all times, always it was under the control of the Asuric forces; and what must be done is precisely to reconquer it from the Asuric forces.

The Mother

(Questions and Answers 1954, CWM, Vol. 6, p. 251)

BENEATH THE PALACES OF NOON

TELL me the rune word of the moon,
A glittering key of sound
Hid far underground
Beneath the palaces of noon.

There, deep below, moon-waters flow
Between the ivory height
Of unscaled solar light
And earthward curdling banks of woe.

Surely the lotus of wisdom may float
One arm's length out of reach
From earth sorrow-beach
Petal-perfect, silverly remote.

September 23, 1934

ARJAVA

Arjava: Is it perhaps too misty and nebulous?

Sri Aurobindo: No. It is exceedingly beautiful—not misty, only 'silverly remote' which is as it should be.

Mother, if for instance in the long jump one makes an effort to jump a greater and greater distance, how does one do the divine work?

Eh? Excuse me, it is not for the pleasure of doing the long jump, it is to make your body more perfect in its functioning, and, therefore, a more suitable instrument for receiving the divine forces and manifesting them.

The Mother

(Questions and Answers 1954, CWM, Vol. 6, p. 269)

RADHA'S PRAYER

“O THOU whom at first sight I knew for the Lord of my being and my God, receive my offering.

Thine are all my thoughts, all my emotions, all the sentiments of my heart, all my sensations, all the movements of my life, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood. I am absolutely and altogether Thine, Thine without reserve. What Thou wilt of me, that I shall be. Whether Thou chooseth for me life or death, happiness or sorrow, pleasure or suffering, all that comes to me from Thee will be welcome. Each one of Thy gifts will be always for me a gift divine bringing with it the supreme Felicity.”

(Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 224)

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The Mother had reinforced her oneness with Sri Aurobindo:

“Now remember one thing. Sri Aurobindo and myself are one and the same consciousness, one and the same person. Only, when this force or this presence, which is the same, passes through your individual consciousness, it puts on a form, an appearance which differs according to your temperament, your aspiration, your need, the particular turn of your being. Your individual consciousness is like a filter, a pointer, if I may say so; it makes a choice and fixes one possibility out of the infinity of divine possibilities.”

(Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 13, p. 77)

How can one ever forget her matter of fact assertion:

“Without him, I exist not; without me he is unmanifest.”

(A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga, p. 9)

NEVER FORGET THE PURPOSE AND GOAL OF YOUR LIFE

...THERE are some solitary travellers [to discover the psychic] and for them a few general indications may be useful.

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it a sense of universality, limitless expansion, unbroken continuity. Then you decentralise, extend and widen yourself; you begin to live in all things and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, feel in their feelings, live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated by a marvellous consciousness without time or limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation; there are others, many others. All help you to go beyond the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will.

But, as I have already said, the path to that realisation is long and difficult, strewn with snares and problems to be solved, which demand an unfailing determination. It is like the explorer's trek through virgin forest in quest of an unknown land, of some great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery which requires at least as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. A few simple words of advice may be useful to one who has resolved to undertake it.

The first and perhaps the most important point is that the mind is incapable of judging spiritual things. ...in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental opinion and reaction.

...Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as an aid to your progress and immediately make whatever progress is required.

Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure.

Never get excited, nervous or agitated. Remain perfectly calm in the face of all circumstances. And yet be always alert to discover what progress you still have to make and lose no time in making it.

Never take physical happenings at their face value. ...

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing great or small once you have set out on this great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. ...

...never forget the purpose and goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there above you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will suddenly open and

you will emerge into a dazzling splendour that will bring you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have always lived and always shall live, that external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect, freed from all chains, and instead of advancing laboriously under the weight of circumstances imposed upon by Nature, which you had to endure and bear if you did not want to be crushed by them, you will be able to walk on, straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life.¹

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The true sense of Niraya is that particular kind of atmosphere which one creates around oneself when one acts in contradiction, not with outer moral rules or social principles, but with the inner law of one's being, the particular truth of each one which ought to govern all the movements of our consciousness and all the acts of our body. The inner law, the truth of the being is the divine Presence in every human being, which should be the master and guide of our life.

When you acquire the habit of listening to this inner law, when you obey it, follow it, try more and more to let it guide your life, you create around you an atmosphere of truth and peace and harmony which naturally reacts upon circumstances and forms, so to say, the atmosphere in which you live. When you are a being of justice, truth, harmony, compassion, understanding, of perfect goodwill, this inner attitude, the more sincere and total it is, the more it reacts upon the external circumstances; not that it necessarily diminishes the difficulties of life, but it gives these difficulties a new meaning and that allows you to face them with a new strength and a new wisdom; whereas the man, the human being who follows his impulses, who obey his desires, who has no time for scruples, who comes to live in complete cynicism, not caring for the effect that his life has upon others or for the more or less harmful consequences of his acts, creates for himself an atmosphere of ugliness, selfishness, conflict and bad will which necessarily acts more and more upon his consciousness and gives a bitterness to his life that in the end becomes a perpetual torment.²

THE MOTHER

References

1. *On Education*, CWM, Vol. 12, pp. 32-35.
2. *On the Dhammapada*, CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 278-79.

FAITH—ASPIRATION—SURRENDER

This talk is based upon Sri Aurobindo's *Bases of Yoga*, Chapter 2, "Faith—Aspiration—Surrender".

"In this Yoga all depends on whether one can open to the influence or not. If there is a sincerity in the aspiration and a patient will to arrive at the higher consciousness in spite of all obstacles, then the opening in one form or another is sure to come."

"The opening in one form or another is sure to come"... Are there many kinds of openings?

Oh, yes! First of all there are many different parts of the being and each one can open in its own way, you see; the mental opening and the vital opening are very different in nature and the physical opening is still more different.

What is the physical opening?

That's when the physical body opens to the divine influence and receives the divine forces.

For example, you see, there's a moment when the divine forces come and penetrate all the cells. To begin with, it is the physical consciousness, the body consciousness which opens first to the influence of the Divine and understands and wants nothing else but *this*, the divine Presence, the divine influence. There are also the body's feelings, and the very cells of the body, which can open to receive the force. For instance, when at a certain moment one feels a kind of very intense vibration spreading through the whole body and at that time one feels filled with a strength, an unusual force, a consciousness also, and all things become clear and perceptible, then that's an opening of the body; it is when the body knows, you see, and has succeeded in opening to the influence.

Mother, why is it better to concentrate in the heart?¹

He says here that it is easier. For some people it is more difficult, it depends on one's nature. But it is better because if you concentrate there, deeply enough, it is there that you enter into contact with the psychic for the first time; while if you concentrate in the head you have to pass later from the head to the heart to be able to identify yourself with the psychic being. And if you concentrate by gathering the energies, it is better to gather them here, because it is in this centre, in this region of the being that you find the will to progress, the force of purification, and the most intense and effective aspiration. The aspiration that comes from the heart is much more effective than that from the head.

1. "There is no other method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness; one can concentrate also in the head or between the eyebrows, but for many this is a too difficult opening."

“Will and aspiration are needed to bring down the aid of the Divine Force and to keep the being on its side in its dealings with the lower powers.” What is the meaning of “keep the being on its side”?

“To keep on its side”—it is, for instance... you see, there is on one side—how shall I put it?—let us take the army, the army of the divine forces, on the other side the army of the forces of ordinary nature; so whether to keep on the side of this army or of that, that’s what it means.

You do not understand? That is to say, to go to this side, join this or that side. If I keep on the side of the divine forces I join those who are fighting for the divine forces like an army. If I put myself on the side of the ordinary vital forces of life, I go over to that side and forsake the others, I go over to that side.

Sweet Mother, what does the “knot of the ego” mean?

Knot? Oh! It is an image, you see. But it is something that clings to you and holds you as tightly as a well-made rope knot. And so it is always said that in order to progress truly the first thing to do is to cut the knot of the ego. It is very expressive and makes a good image, doesn’t it? —one is tied up, one is shut up in oneself, bound as in a prison by knots which tie up all the parts of the being together; it is this which produces a cohesion. But at the same time it is a limitation, a limiting. You cannot receive all the forces you would like to, because you are enclosed in this shell made of a heap of knots in the rope that’s tying you.

Sweet Mother, how can we cut the knot of the ego?

How to cut it? Take a sword and strike it (*laughter*), when one becomes conscious of it. For usually one is not; we think it quite normal, what happens to us; and in fact it is very normal but we think it quite good also. So to begin with one must have a great clear-sightedness to become aware that one is enclosed in all these knots which hold one in bondage. And then, when one is aware that there’s something altogether tightly closed in there—so tightly that one has tried in vain to move it—then one imagines his will to be a very sharp sword-blade, and with all one’s force one strikes a blow on this knot (imaginary, of course, one doesn’t take up a sword in fact), and this produces a result. Of course you can do this work from the psychological point of view, discovering all the elements constituting this knot, the whole set of resistances, habits, preferences, of all that holds you narrowly closed in. So when you grow aware of this, you can concentrate and call the divine Force and the Grace and strike a good blow on this formation, these things so closely held, like that, that nothing can separate them. And at that moment you must resolve that you will no longer listen to these things, that you will listen only to the divine Consciousness and will do no other work except the divine work without worrying about personal results, free from all attachment, free from all preference, free from all wish for

success, power, satisfaction, vanity, all this.... All this must disappear and you must see only the divine Will incarnated in your will and making you act. Then, in this way, you are cured.

Mother, how can one strengthen one's will?

Oh, as one strengthens muscles, by a methodical exercise. You take one little thing, something you want to do or don't want to do. Begin with a small thing, not something very essential to the being, but a small detail. And then, if, for instance, it is something you are in the habit of doing, you insist on it with the same regularity, you see, either not to do it or to do it—you insist on it and compel yourself to do it as you compel yourself to lift a weight—it's the same thing. You make the same kind of effort, but it is more of an inner effort. And after having taken little things like this—things relatively easy, you know—after taking these and succeeding with them, you can unite with a greater force and try a more complicated experiment. And gradually, if you do this regularly, you will end up by acquiring an independent and very strong will.

Sweet Mother, are there different aspirations, like mental or vital aspiration?

Yes, each part of the being has its own aspiration which has the nature of the aspiring part. There is even a physical aspiration; the body can.... The cells of the body understand what the transformation will be, and with all their strength, all the consciousness they contain, they aspire for this transformation. The very cells of the body—not the central will, thought or emotion—the cells of the body open in this way to receive the Force.

Is the psychic being in the heart?

Not in the physical heart, not in the organ. It is in a fourth dimension, an inner dimension. But it is in that region, the region somewhat behind the solar plexus, it is there that one finds it most easily. The psychic being is in the fourth dimension as related to our physical being.

What does "a negative Nirvana" mean?

Negative Nirvana? It is not in today's lesson.

Negative Nirvana means quite simply a Nirvana which contains nothing positive. It means a nought containing nothing positive, an absolute nought.

Here we are, my children, that's all.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1954, CWM, Vol. 6, pp. 388-92)

INTERVIEW OF 8 SEPTEMBER 1979

Participants: Peter Heehs (P), Amal Kiran (A), and Lalita (L).

P: I'm here at Amal's house on 8 September 1979 and here with me are Lalita and Amal. Why don't you say your real names, your original...

A: K.D. Sethna and...

Both: Daulat Panday.

P: OK. We're going to talk about—whatever they want to talk about, but especially what the Ashram was like when they came. I think you can start by telling us how you came and how you found the Ashram when you arrived.

L: Well, you see, before I came here I was with another guru who was called Thakur Harnath or in other words Pagol Harnath. Pagol means mad, but madly in love with Krishna. So he had taught me—he was not a yogi, he was a bhakta—and all he said that I had to do, or my whole family, my father, my mother and everybody had to do was to love Krishna. Love him, don't forget him.

P: This was in Bombay that you knew him?

L: Yes, in Bombay. And it was really a remarkable...

P: How was it in a Parsi family that you happened to...

L: Yes, that is what I'm going to tell you just now. You see it was destined like that, otherwise it would not have happened. My maternal uncle had a Gujarati friend who was in school with him. So one day these two people met somewhere and this Gujarati friend whose name was Dwarkadas Kalyandas told my maternal uncle, "You must come and see a great saint who is coming to my place—you must come to see the saint who is going to come to my place." So he said, "But I am a Parsi and a Zoroastrian. I am not at all interested." He said, "All right, just you come to see me, as a friend." At that time this gentleman was staying on Pedder Road. He had a beautiful house. So he went there and he was very much impressed by the saint—we call him Pagol Harnath. And so he came and his wife was my mother's sister and so his wife came and told my mother that there was a saint here and we would all like to go together to see him. My mother was always a very devotional person and so she said, "I'll be glad to come", but my father was reluctant. He didn't believe in all this sort of thing. But just to please her he said, "All right, we'll go."

P: You went along too?

L: Yes.

P: How old were you at that time?

L: My mother passed away when I was fifteen, I must have been thirteen years. Twelve or thirteen years, very young. We fixed on a Sunday because that was the only day that my father could have leisure to come.

P: So then for several years your family had been seeing this Pagol Harnath?

L: Yes.

A: It was she who introduced me to Harnath.

P: So you met him in Bombay too? He was centred in Bombay?

L: No, he was from Calcutta.

A: I was at that time a sort of a self-confident intellectual, who didn't believe in people like Harnath or anything particularly spiritual. And then after I met her she one day hesitatingly spoke to me about him and requested me to accompany her and her father to the meeting which they were having.

P: This was some years after?

L: No...

A: No, just about a year or so after I met her.

P: But I mean after... She was much older than thirteen.

A: Yes. She was grown up. She must have been seventeen or eighteen at that time. And then I went and saw him for the first time and was greatly impressed by him—so [much so] that at that time I could not have any discussion with him as I had thought of having.

L: He was not that intellectual type.

A: No. But, still I asked him a question. I said, "The whole universe is governed by fixed laws. Where is the place for any God there?" He answered in what I might call a sophisticated way, but with a great simplicity and with a depth of power from inside. He said, "How can you have laws without a law-giver?" And I know that if somebody else had made such a statement I would have tried to tear it to pieces. But the way he spoke and the way he looked at me when he spoke simply quelled me and I didn't say anything. I said [to myself] here is something that I never thought of, and some power from the man who seems to know what he is talking about. That was the first spiritual impression I ever received after I grew up. Before that I had a religious faith and all that when I was at school. From that time onwards the interest in spiritual things grew—running after yogis in Bombay and so on and on.

P: And how did you find out about Sri Aurobindo?

A: About Sri Aurobindo, I read a pamphlet in which Sri Aurobindo was supposed to have appeared in two or three places at the same time, and along with that they said he knew about five or six languages—that impressed me much more. A yogi who could appear at three places is commonplace, but a yogi who knew five or six languages was something remarkable. That stuck in my mind.

P: What sort of publication was this?

A: Some kind of pamphlet was there, I don't quite remember...

P: Published from Pondicherry?

A: No, it wasn't about Pondicherry, it was something about Sri Aurobindo. Something about the Indian National Movement and *en passant* Sri Aurobindo came in. Maybe like that.

P: I see. It was just some outside reporting...

A: Yes, yes. Then for several years there was no particular interest. Then we met a Theosophist and that Theosophist told me that nobody except Sri Aurobindo would satisfy me. It was a strange statement from a Theosophist. The Theosophists have already their masters and they have no room for any Sri Aurobindo there as anybody great. He told me, “You are such a complex person. Only Sri Aurobindo can satisfy you and Sri Aurobindo has the cosmic consciousness.” He had been to Pondicherry. Venkatachalan was a Theosophist and an art critic also.

L: But he said that if you want to do yoga you go to see Sri Aurobindo. There is no greater yogi than Sri Aurobindo.

A: And then we went on looking for gurus and all of a sudden one day I went to the Crawford Market (now Mahatma Phule Market) to buy a pair of shoes and there I bought my pair and the box was wrapped in a newspaper and we came home. And coming home, I unwrapped the box and the newspaper fell in front of me like that—straight and the caption was: “A visit to the Ashram of Aurobindo Ghose”. Then I read the whole thing and I said, “This is it. We must go there.”

L: I wrote to the Mother...

A: The guru comes in search of the disciple, you know... like that.

P: So at that time you wrote to Mother?

L: Yes, so I wrote to... I had not heard about the Mother, I wrote to Sri Aurobindo....

A: We both wrote, actually.

L: Asking for permission. And as if being a vegetarian was something very great, I said, “I am a vegetarian.”

A: And the funny thing was that we mentioned that we would like to come to Pondicherry—but first marry and then come.

P: Before you hadn't thought of it?

L: No.

A: In those days nobody was admitted into the Ashram without their photographs being seen, and only if the photographs were approved were they called. But they never asked for any photographs from us. And we asked: If we have so much money in hand how long can we stay in Pondicherry? The answer came through Purani from Sri Aurobindo and Mother: “You can come to Pondicherry and see things for yourselves, and with the money you have got you can go on staying for two or three years.” And so we began to plan to come to Pondicherry.

L: Sri Aurobindo wrote through Purani to me: “If you want to do yoga, why do you want to get married?”

A: Yes, that was a question. But we wanted to get married because of two things. First of all, in those days two people could not travel together unmarried. Secondly, we would have money of our own from the marriage presents so we would be practically independent.

P: Lalita also mentioned the difficulty of her getting away from her father.

L: Yes.

A: And, you see, in those days people would not be very happy to send people out

to an Ashram or anything like that, so a month or so after our marriage we started on a grand tour to Calcutta of all places...

L: No, no. It was because of seeing Pagol Harnath's samadhi....

A: Pagol Harnath's family was in a village nearby: Sunamukhi. We went to Calcutta without telling anybody that we had Pondicherry in mind ultimately.

P: No one in your families knew?

A: Nobody knew, we stayed in the poshest hotel in Calcutta. Then we went to the village where Pagol Harnath's family was.

L: And his samadhi also...

A: There we had to sleep on the floor with rats running all over us. And there she saw Pagol Harnath...

L: I had a vision.

A: Walking on the roof.

P: Let her tell the vision.

L: You see, it was a full-moon night, and there was no sort of toilet there, so I told Amal we will go there, you stand here and I will go to the place that is reserved for toilet and come. When I had finished my toilet and I had got up and was coming down I saw on the top of the house which was just across a few metres away a tall, beautiful, wonderful figure as tall as the sky, full of light, you see, and his hand was extended like this in blessing. And I had never had a vision in my life, excepting when my mother passed away I had seen her in a dream in that way... but that was a dream.

P: And you saw the vision just like that. You were just in an ordinary consciousness?

L: Absolutely ordinary consciousness.

P: You were not in a dreamy or trance state?

L: No, nothing of the sort.

A: It came as a surprise to her, actually.

L: And then coming down, I missed the steps and fell down.

A: Almost sprained her ankle.

L: And I had high fever that night, because of this sudden shock. But I didn't want to tell anybody about it, so I kept quiet and the next morning Pagol Harnath's wife, Kusuma, called me and she said, "What is the matter, how is it that you have fever?" So, instead of answering her question, I put another question, I said, "Is there any way of going up on top of the roof of the small building just opposite?" She said, "No, there is no staircase, nothing. Why are you asking?" Then I told her what I saw, and she said, "You are not the only person, he has appeared to many of his disciples. And his hand being extended like that shows that he approves of your going to Pondicherry to Sri Aurobindo's Ashram and he is giving his blessings." And so after a few days we left the place and we returned to Calcutta. There I said to Amal, "I want to show you his Ashram in Jagannath Puri."

A: That too was Harnath's Ashram.

L: Harnath's Ashram.

A: He had little Ashrams in all sorts of places.

P: I thought he was staying in Bombay.

A: No, he was in this village near Calcutta.

P: Oh, but he would sometimes...

A: Yes, he would come.

L: Sunamukhi was the name of the place.

P: During his lifetime he lived there?

A: Yes.

P: But he sometimes went to Jagannath Puri, sometimes to Bombay—like that?

L: Yes.

A: All sorts of places, wherever he had followers he went and stayed for a few days.

L: And the followers took him and paid for everything.

A: Yes, of course.

P: He was a Bengali?

L: Yes, a Bengali. So I told Amal, “I must show you his Ashram,” so we went to Jagannath Puri. Without him the Ashram was absolutely empty, it was a very small place, you know. Compared to our Ashram here, it was nothing. It seemed quite empty. When he was there everything was so full of...

P: You had been there before?

L: Yes, I had been there before. Just after my mother’s passing I had been there. And it was such a wonderful place at that time when *he* was there, full of joy and light and all that, but now it seemed quite empty. And then after a few days there we started for Pondicherry. But on the way I nearly died of cholera.

A: All night she was like that. I had to tell the guard to arrange for a doctor to see us about 3.00 in the morning.

P: This was as you were going south?

A: Yes, we were going south...

(To be continued)

A CANTO-WISE RÉSUMÉ OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of December 2002)

IV: 1 The Birth and Childhood of the Flame

THE six tropical seasons have speeded through the year and the Goddess of eternal Time has stepped into earthly cycles. Savitri's arrival, marking a signal moment of the gods, is a beauty's festival in the bright and colourful Spring, the chosen season who brings joy to our mortal life. In it shall happen happier and wondrous things, unblemished by death. Indeed, in her birth have taken the heavenly charm and wonder a human body. She has accepted our transient lot, and its travail, in order to accomplish the divine task here. Savitri grows, becomes a student and a scout and a brave warrior. She is dear to everyone in every respect. In every act and thought and feeling of hers is expressed more and more of nobility of the high spirit. An invisible sunlight flows in her veins and her movements display the large significances of life. Her worship and prayer and aspiration become a call which draws an answer from absolute Destiny moulding our mortality.

IV: 2 The Growth of the Flame

Savitri's life opens doors for the secret powers to enter into gracious fields of activity. She acquires the lore of the world, learns its many philosophies and sciences and arts and crafts. But by her native right she also sees something beyond them. She is aware of the universal Self and in her embrace stay all, that she might breathe living happiness into them. But scarcely is recognized her eminence by the world. Only a few get a distant glimpse of her greatness but in it none responds to her. No Aryan prince comes forward to be the partner in her high task. It looks as though she is a matchless poet with herself as his lonely poem. She is a composer of the song of sunbright reality waiting for the flute-player to sing it. If she were a goddess in a shrine no priest would dare enter into it and wave the lamp of adoration around her. Her radiance makes her solitary and alone. None dares to claim her.

IV: 3 The Call to the Quest

This becomes a matter of concern for Savitri's father. Although there are songs of birds and flowers in the palace garden, and the winds are happy, the ancient longing remains yet unfulfilled. But Aswapati the Yogi hears other sounds in the depth of his silent heart. The inaudible promptings of Nature bring to him deeper messages. Not only that. He sees the secret divinity ready to emerge from the soul of Savitri. Behind her life is concealed the life that is to be. Perhaps man has not established contact with his inner being and possibly he understands not what eternity through her speaks to him. Yet that acquiescent attitude cannot be for his good and he must come out of it. There is a mighty Presence in her and she must awake to it. There must arrive to her the one who shall give voice to it. Savitri must discover him in the ways of the world. What her father tells to her reaches her with the power and authenticity of the supreme Mantra itself.

IV: 4 The Quest

But long is the quest and many-winding the path. She has to cross rivers and mountains in search of the joy she came to greet and affirm. Savitri has to take the lyric routes and has to climb the slopes of spiritual sublimity and wideness. She has to meet the urban gods and visit the secluded shrines in the forests. Driven from within, she has to follow her slow lingering road. Where she is going to be led of that she has no knowledge; but she has the certitude that an invisible magnet of love is drawing her to the destined place. It is in the Land of Tapasya that Man and Nature can awake to their eminent reality. Not the crowded cities of mind but god-listening silences of the woods can give to the spirit its wonder of deathlessness. Presently, when the sun is bright in the summer sky, she comes to a grove from where she need not go anywhere else.

V: 1 The Destined Meeting-Place

Designed in the sky but built upon the earth is the place where Satyavan and Savitri are to meet. It is the quintessential cosmic space and time that shaped its bright emerald reality. The breeze is fragrant and the mountains serene and the streams carry the murmuring happiness of life in their crystal flow. If fate should walk through that windswept realm of wonder and joy, it would do so only to bring the longing souls of love together. There is already the soft rustling air of expectancy and Nature is awaiting the chosen to come together. The spell of Destiny shall cast its charm on lives of the exceptional two. Unspoiled by thought and pure in its zealous gladness there burns high the incense of aspiring hope. A small pretty shrine of Shiva is guarding it against inadvertent Time. Here driven by the unknown voice of the summer arrives Satyavan to meet Savitri.

V: 2 Satyavan

Noble and erect and youthful in his Aryanhood is Satyavan. He is a Veda-knower and he has grown in companionship of nature and there is the glow of a Rishi on his face. No wonder, Savitri was seeing a dream when her first glance fell on him. A miracle is done and into her life marches this alchemic splendour. An equal change takes place in Satyavan. There was until now a distressing lacuna in his life and he was looking for that which would fill it. Now it has come to him from the fortunate unknown. The joyful doors of his heart see a hidden sweetness walking into it even without knowing it. Savitri in the depth of her soul recollects her long past and recognizes the two eyes which through the ages claimed her. The presiding deity of Time took a Manvantara, an aeon, to prepare the body of Love and so has now Satyavan come to meet Savitri. Thus they arrive to discover each other and the moment stands tranquil, watching the wonder.

V: 3 Satyavan and Savitri

It is Satyavan who has to make advances and court Savitri, the sunlight who had driven itself unto him. Such things of joy and beauty he had seen but was amazed that here was she reaching him out from the heavens of happiness. He entreats her to step down from her speeding chariot and visit the creeped hermitage ready to receive her. There he read

things of eternity with the eyes of the spirit. There he conversed with Nature. There he felt oneness in all that exists. But he also carried with him a sense of lamenting despondency, that body and soul have so far remained disunited. Yet he had the secret conviction that one day even the physical shall discover the true meaning of existence. It is that hope which is now getting kindled in him. Savitri shall bring about the miracle. In the union of Satyavan and Savitri shall be the union of Spirit and Matter. In the happy authenticity of such an intuition in their souls they pledge to join together. And the Gods of Nature and of the Sky shower marriage blessings on them.

VI: 1 The Word of Fate

But the incontinent love has to presently face the worldly odds, the odds of mortality. But complex is the web of Destiny and there is also the higher involvement. Narad has taken on himself an onerous task. Savitri has come to know Love, but she must also know Death. To timely impart that knowledge he hastens to Aswapati's palace and foretells the impending doom. He comes down from his paradisaal home, singing five songs that culminate in the glory and marvel about to be born on earth. He is warmly received. Savitri discloses her meeting with Satyavan; but alas it has also something ominous in it. Narad skirts it in the beginning but is persuaded to divulge the truth. In the sequel he as if tightens the grip of adverse fate by speaking about the death of Satyavan one year after the marriage. However, for Savitri's mother Malawi this is altogether unacceptable. She pleads with her, in the way of human pragmatism, to make another choice. But Savitri is firm in her resolve, maintaining that it was her soul's decision and it was not necessary for her to reverse it.

VI: 2 The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain

The emotion-charged mother questions the way the heavenly powers toy with the human lot. She wonders how at all grief and pain should have found a place in God's creation. Or could it be that some disastrous power managed to mar his beautiful work? She seems to be miffed by destiny and is reacting sharply. But Narad reveals the sense of mystery that lies behind it. It is pain that shapes the fiery spirit, ultimately to triumph over all obstacles. In any case, it was man's soul that had longed for adventure and he should not complain about it. It saw the possibility of a new creation emerging out of ignorance and opted to participate in it. Narad asserts that Savitri's will is fully in accord with that original wisdom and she must be left to live in it. Satyavan's death is the spirit's exceptional prospect and the sage convincingly as well as prophetically tells that such an opportunity should not be squandered away. God-given is her might and she needs no other help to carry out her work. She as the incarnate Shakti must meet Death and transform him.

VII: 1 The Joy of Union; the Ordeal of the Foreknowledge of Death and the Heart's Grief

The royal party takes Savitri to the Shalwa forest and her heart's desire is fulfilled. However, in the foreknowledge of Satyavan's death the utter unknown is gaping into her

future about which the dwellers of the hermitages know the least. In the meanwhile, for the newly wed each other's company is unforgettable bliss. But that happiness makes Savitri's anguish more poignant. The approaching doom brings grief to her joy. No doubt she attended the day's household activities with care, as would a goddess with the worldly tenderness; yet deep in her self she remains sad. She is, for a moment, even thinking of going as *sati* with her dead husband. The year is fast coming to a close and she lives resigned to her inescapable fate. Her daily tears only become an offering to the unsatisfied god. Yet, gathered within, Savitri is calm. Soon would Satyavan die and she should be prepared to meet the eventuality.

VII: 2 The Parable of the Search for the Soul

Human Savitri remains helpless in a downcast mood. But she is attentive enough to receive the summons from her summit's being. Her dejection itself thus becomes a yogic state; it becomes Vishad Yoga. She is reminded of the mission she has come to accomplish. First she should find out her soul and make in it all her actions the actions of God. She must possess the might that conquers Death. Savitri at once obeys the directive and with that begins her occult inward journey. She witnesses the play of the subconscious forces and also the possibilities that can bring the gods down. If out of Matter and Life emerged Mind, so can a being with diviner faculties arrive here. To mould humanity in God's shape or discover a new world or create a new world are present as three alternatives and Savitri becomes the centre for the action. In the last alternative the creation established by Aswapati in the House of the Spirit shall become manifest on earth. But for any of these to happen it is essential that first the heavenly soul should be found.

VII: 3 The Entry into the Inner Countries

Savitri should discover her soul,—not for herself but for humanity. She has to step into the inner countries and meet its dread before she can make progress. There all the elemental energies swarm around her and there are the vital godheads, and the agents of the physical mind with their tenacity in ignorance, and the leviathan creatures of the fallen life, and the shady questioning beings, and the thinkers fixed in their own rigid thoughts and notions and beliefs. Savitri cuts her way through the darkness of all these dubious hues. But she also meets the bright gods who bring to her messages of greatness. She mingles happily in their company, longing yet for their spiritual light. But she is also conscious of the fact that nothing can be achieved without finding her soul. She asks for the guidance and is told that she should take up the world's highway and go all the way to its source. There she will see the occult Fire burning on a stone and the deep cavern where resides her soul. She proceeds accordingly.

VII: 4 The Triple Soul-Forces

Savitri goes deeper within and meets the three Shaktis of her soul. First is the Mother of Compassion full of suffering and divine grief, Karunamayi Mata, nursing the little spirit of man. Her task is to change this world of pain by patient work. Challenging her there

stands the small life-force with its sorrow. But because of this God's labourer there is hope. The next in the inner world of Mind is the triumvirate of wisdom-love-bliss, Jnana-Prem-Anandamayi Mata. She battles against all that thwarts progress on the road. But the fallen gods in the earth-nature oppose whatever she is trying to bring to her. She has power, yet she is unable to function here. Savitri proceeds further. If the physical world is to bear the higher descent, there must work the Mother of light-joy-peace, Prakash-Harsha-Shantimayi Mata. However, this goddess meets the opposition of an arrogant will. Savitri has to bring the absolute Wisdom, that in it might be born the divine family.

VII: 5 The Finding of the Soul

This promise can bear fruit only in the soul of Savitri. While nearing the mystic cave she experiences a strange darkness that knows the Unknown. But silent she moves on and all is the spirit's vastness. Now she is standing in front of a rock-temple with the figures of gods and goddesses carved on its walls. She sees in stone images breathing presences, deathless and divine. They are the supreme aspects climbing to Sachchidananda. Savitri crosses the tunnel through the last rock and suddenly Soul and Oversoul rush into each other. They become one. The transcendental Mother's Power, the divine Mahakundalini, floods her entire being. Lotus after dynamic lotus opens and the lower Nature becomes an instrument of the higher Nature. There is a greatening of spiritual happiness everywhere. Across death and birth the first stage of perfection is reached in life.

VII: 6 Nirvana and the Discovery of the All-Negating Absolute

But the Siddhis Savitri has attained are not sufficient. Her outer nature has yet not undergone any fundamental change and all her relationships are still human. A greater Night must therefore show her a truer Sun. She must recognize that to give a body to the Unknowable, or to burden with bliss the static Supreme, or to call down God in the human mould is premature. So she is advised to assent to emptiness, that all in her may reach the corresponding absolute. Presently she stands as a silent witness and observes the birth of thoughts; but in her spiritual immensity she does not allow these thoughts to approach her. The result is that Truth and Bliss and Love and Force are there now with her in their pristine glory. She has come to that highest Non-being which has the power to strike out the Void, revealing the One who exists unmanifest behind it. She attains formless liberation with the realization of the divine beyond the impersonal and is least concerned if she is going to disappear altogether in it or new-become the All.

VII: 7 The Discovery of the Cosmic Spirit and the Cosmic Consciousness

Beyond the Creation, beyond Sachchidananda, beyond the manifest Reality Savitri has reached the ultimate Supreme, Paratpara, the Absolute or the utter Unmanifest, the Greater Darkness of the Ancients wherefrom no return is possible. Had she merged into it it would have been a total *laya*, dissolution, and her mission would have been altogether lost. This is a delicate situation, dangerous, but a necessary experience also in her yogic pursuit, that whatever is this Nature's must disappear. By dissolution she would have

crossed the realms of death; but Savitri has to enjoy immortality in birth. Her connection with this world is age-old and the little hermitage and the forest and the human life have a meaning in her transcendental realization. The Spirit of the Earth would not allow her to depart in that way. She is all that which holds death and supports the cycles of existence. The creation is a part of that Reality and the functioning its well-meant movement. Savitri has become the full divine Shakti in Space and Time.

VIII: 3 Death in the Forest

The fated day of Satyavan's death has arrived and Savitri gets ready well before the sunrise. In that auspicious hour or Bhadramuhurta she worships Durga, the Protectress of the World. Then, taking the permission from her parents-in-law she accompanies her husband to the forest where he has to go for the daily work. Even as they enjoy each other's company in the happiness of nature, Savitri is at the same time haunted by the foretold doom which will befall on Satyavan when arrives the marked moment. While Satyavan is attending to his job, of cutting the branch of a tree, he suddenly feels exhausted and there is profuse sweating as well as intense pain. He comes down from the tree and puts his head in the lap of Savitri. The noon has become dark with the presence of Yama, the God of Death. Savitri knows that Satyavan is there no more now with her.

IX: 1 Towards the Black Void

Calm and ungrieving, Savitri holds dead Satyavan in the embrace of her soul. Presently an endless force descends in her and she is a different person. Whatever of humanity had yet lingered in her has now disappeared in the greatness of that death. Assuming full control of the situation the Yogini rises to face the dreadful God. The hour has come and she should at once take up the unfinished task of the past. But this has to be done in the face of the opposing Spirit of the Night. Savitri releases Satyavan from her clasp lest he should suffer in it. His luminous spirit moves out of the body and is compelled to proceed through the dimness of that land. Formidable Death is behind him and he is fully under his sway. The perilous silences of the realm shall hence keep him shut from the light of the day. But Savitri, discarding her mortal sheaths, follows them. She is sternly warned not to do so and is commanded to return to earth; but she refuses.

IX: 2 The Journey in Eternal Night and the Voice of the Darkness

The Yogini has transgressed the law and must pay the price for that act of hers. She must bear infliction of the terror and accept the denial as an incontrovertible fact. Yet her soul persists to be. Savitri survives, but she cannot have her Satyavan back. Instead, her exceptional daring can claim gifts from the Lord of Darkness. Whatever Satyavan had wished while he was living, all those things could be easily hers. His blind father would get the eyesight and also the lost kingdom. But those gains do not mean much to Savitri. Offended Death speaks in forbidding words. She is told that her venturesome act should not cause the Furies to awake; instead she should go by the wisdom shown to her by him. But Savitri is the worshipper of Love and only by him shall she go. Indeed, in her birth all

his suns were conscient and, replies she, Death should be fully cognizant of it. Death, however, carries in his imperial majesty the sword of ruthless will and Savitri, once more a Wanderer in the unending Night, travels through the unyielding vasts.

X: 1 The Dream Twilight of the Ideal

Savitri's affront cannot be taken lightly and she must be chastised for that. In fact she has committed a double sin, of harbouring spiritual superiority and of the will-to-be even in the Nihil. In that heavy and bare darkness, that terrible darkness she must atone for it. She does it and moves through the dream-ideal. There is her Satyavan, wonderful and lovely and charming. In it all pain becomes bliss. But then it could very well be that this dream-ideal was nothing but Savitri's own yearning for Satyavan, an imagination. She wanted to make him the centre of her joy and it is that which has taken this form. However, in the existence of Death even this stands at once nullified. The occult fact is that this dream-ideal cannot be safe in this mortal world. Savitri should go to the root of the matter and remove the cause of the failure. It lies in Death and therefore he must go. Indeed, he becomes negatively a touchstone for the Divinity's presence in Matter.

X: 2 The Gospel of Death and Vanity of the Ideal

Earth's failure to bear the dream-ideal is tied up with the unconscious circumstance presently prevailing here. Avatar has come and Avatar has gone but nothing worthwhile has really been achieved through the ages. Savitri should therefore abandon the emotional pursuit of Satyavan's return and live in life's worldly pragmatism. Perhaps in its acceptance human suffering would not become so distressing. But she asserts that her emotion, her love is heaven-born and what she prizes is not the dream-beauty of this world; rather it is God the Fire whom she cherishes. Death ridicules it as her delusion which she must dispossess. Not only that; he is a staunch materialist and asserts that, not on Self but on Matter is founded the creation. Therefore in his theory all human love automatically gets reduced to a chemical process going on in the human body. Hence Savitri should accept the little joys that are now available to her and eventually pass into everlasting sleep of the Night.

X: 3 The Debate of Love and Death

Death's path is to lead Life to a yet deeper void. But Savitri asserts the truth which builds the worlds, worlds of the Spirit. She maintains that there is a plan behind all this in which Death himself unwittingly turns out to be a significant participator. Indeed, it was an enterprise of delight that had initiated the whole programme in the freedom of the will, even if it meant a risk or a disaster. Had this delight not been there whatever is would have collapsed. In this delight is founded true love. But for Death all this talk of glorious love is just the trickery of the Mind. Death offers several gifts to Savitri—excepting Satyavan's life. In this deadlock finally she would be the loser and the Siddhi of her Shakti Yoga would not be achieved. Hence she must step back and in her house of meditation kindle a fire to perform the Primordial Sacrifice, *Adi Yajna*. She sees that

there the Yajna is being performed by the Lord of the Creation and his golden Spouse and the oblations are being offered to the transcendental Reality. Savitri henceforth becomes the shaper of the events.

X: 4 The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real

To imagine that Truth can exist on earth, that this corporeal body can house God is, according to Death, a disorientation, a deep hallucination. But for Savitri this is an indisputable reality. She is certain that Spirit and Nature can and ought to come together. Above the climbing hierarchy are ever present Truth and Love and Bliss and Beauty and she tells so to Death. The descent of that Truth can make this earthly life divine. But Death is least impressed. He insists on Savitri revealing to him her conquering power. At once a mighty transformation comes upon her. The force of Mahakundalini rushes into her and Darkness sees God's living Reality. She commands Death to release the soul of Satyavan. Death resists but he is consumed by her fire. There, waiting on the inscrutable Will, stand together Satyavan and Savitri,—but separated by a translucent wall.

XI: 1 The Eternal Day: The Soul's Choice and the Supreme Consummation

The eternal day has dawned. However, a choice has yet to be made. Savitri has vanquished Death but earth has yet to receive the boons of that victory. There are endless realms of beauty and wonder and the young couple could well live in those realms. Savitri has now to reject this Empire of Light, escape from this bright snare also. It could easily become a wide gate for disappearance into the everlasting day. But she maintains that, after all, it was to bring God down to the world on earth that they had taken birth and it cannot remain unfulfilled. Hers is the perfect affirmation of the divine in the material. Savitri makes a choice and asks for Peace, Oneness, Power, and Joy. Identifying herself with the Will of the Supreme she prays for those boons for the good soul of the earth. 'Be it so, *tathāstu*' declares the Lord and Savitri's heart is glad. The seal of sanction is put on the incarnate Word and Superman shall wake in the mortal Man. This earthly life shall become the life divine. With the Boon held dear the two return to earth.

XII Epilogue: The Return to Earth

The Epilogue in the Vyasa story of Savitri runs briefly as follows: Yama has departed and Savitri comes to the place where the dead body of Satyavan is lying. He regains his consciousness and makes enquiries about the terrifying figure who had dragged him with him to a strange world. Savitri mentions that it was the Ordainer of the Worlds himself who had come, but hastens to add that it was now all over. They prepare to hasten to the hermitage, as it was getting pretty dark in the night. In the meanwhile, the old parents of Satyavan get concerned for his having not yet returned to the cottage. The Rishis in the forest try to dispel their apprehension with assuring words. Soon arrive Satyavan and Savitri. They are questioned as to why they were late in coming back. Satyavan tries to answer something, but he is unable to do so in proper detail. At the pleading of Gautama Savitri narrates everything. She begins with the prophecy made by

Narad and the purpose of her accompanying Satyavan that day to the forest. She narrates her encounter with Yama and how she received several boons from him. The mighty God, she tells, was immensely pleased with her utterances of the Truth and, finally, among several boons granted a life of four hundred years to them. The Rishis speak again and again about the extreme good fortune or *mahābhāgyam* of Savitri and depart to their cottages.

“To feel love and oneness is to live,”—that is the mantra of life in Sri Aurobindo’s epic *Savitri*. In it the primordial Night, dreaming in silver peace, guards the mystic light and a greater dawn is awaited.

(Concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

PLATONIC

MANY a time, I sought you
 In the eyes of those I beheld.
 Mother, sister, mistress or friend,
 I sought to clasp your hands of love
 To guide me on these perilous worlds.

But a step or two and they turned away
 Each for a way of their own.
 Orphaned I cried and no one came
 Till despair conquered your helpless child.

Then you came—an intimation
 Of a sunshine beyond the skies,
 A love enveloped with soothing warmth,
 A hand guiding through crowded ways.

All forms that earth bears
 Mirror your love’s true worth.
 None among your children, Mother,
 Inherited your true loveliness.

K. N. VIJU

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of December 2002)

Savitri and the Record of Yoga

5

WHEN Savitri, after hearing the voice of the godhead, returns to earth drawing the soul of Satyavan with her, she sees above her as she falls the face of a youth changing into that of a woman. The symbolism of this vision, described in terms evocative of Krishna and Kali, reveals another connection between *Savitri* and the experiences documented in Sri Aurobindo's diary, the *Record of Yoga*.

The passage in its earliest form, found in the notebook used by Sri Aurobindo in 1916 for his first known draft of the poem, is remarkably similar to the final version. It begins at the bottom of the page from which the lines on the "beautiful slave of God" were reproduced in a previous instalment. The face of the youth is seen first:

Pursuing her in her fall implacably sweet
A face was over her which seemed a youth's
Crowned as with peacock plumes of gorgeous hue
Framing a sapphire, whose heart-disturbing smile
Insatiably attracted to delight.¹

The crown of peacock plumes, along with other features, identifies the youth unmistakably as Krishna, reminding us of Sri Aurobindo's early translation of a poem of Vidyapati where Krishna is referred to as "Caanou":

His coal-black curls assumed with regal grace
A peacock's plume above that moonlike face.²

The smile of this youth seems to be the smile referred to in Sri Aurobindo's explanation of *hāsyā*, "laughter", the last element of the first division of the *sapta catuṣṭaya*, about which he writes:

It is in our internal being the image of the smile of Srikrishna playing, *bālavat* [childlike], as the eternal *bālaka* [child] and *kumāra* [youth] (No diacritics here in Sri Aurobindo's Manuscript) in the garden of the world.³

Krishna's essential qualities of delight and beauty were brought out even more clearly when Sri Aurobindo added two new lines in his next version of the passage depicting Savitri's return to earth. The new lines are italicised below; here the wording of the

sentence is already the same as in the printed text:

Pursuing her in her fall, implacably sweet
 A face was over her which seemed a youth's
Symbol of all the beauty eyes see not,
 Crowned as with peacock plumes of gorgeous hue
 Framing a sapphire, whose heart-disturbing smile
 Insatiably attracted to delight,
*Voluptuous to the embraces of her soul.*⁴

This youth evidently symbolises the Sarva-sundara, the All-beautiful, whom Sri Aurobindo by that time was seeing wherever he looked, even in what would appear as ugliness to ordinary eyes. On 30 May 1915, for example, he had written in his diary:

The Krishna-darshana [vision of Krishna] is reestablished in its first intensity; the difficulty of the unbeautiful face concealing the Sarva-sundara is conquered in fact, though it attempts to return & does recur as a reminiscent experience.⁵

Krishna as the Anandamaya Purusha, the Soul of bliss in the world and beyond the world, is likewise the Enjoyer (*bhoktā*) alluded to in the *Record* under the heading *Krishna-darshana* in the entry of 8 July 1914:

Strong sukshma-physical perception at meals of the universal bhokta, Bala Krishna, behind all taking the bhoga of the ego for himself without the knowledge of the ego—⁶

A week later, however, Sri Aurobindo wrote of a different, though complementary experience:

It is less Krishna than Kali who is now manifest in all beings & things, but that is as it should be. Otherwise, the Krishnadarshana itself would be incomplete.⁷

For if the vision of Krishna, the epiphany of divine personality in its various degrees and intensities, is regarded in the *Record of Yoga* as superior to the purely impersonal vision of the Brahman, Sri Aurobindo found it equally necessary to fuse perception of the “masculine” aspect of the integral reality with perception of its “feminine” aspect. In *Savitri* the relation between these aspects is symbolised, first of all, by Satyavan and Savitri themselves, and it is significant that it is the woman who incarnates the force, the Shakti, that can conquer death. As the poem grew, the theme of the “Two who are One”⁸ developed in many poetic and philosophical guises, beginning with the passage now found near the end of Book Eleven.

The description of the face seen by Savitri continues in the first draft:

Often it changed, though rapturously the same,
 And seemed a woman's dark and beautiful,
 Turbulent in will and terrible in love,
 A shadowy glory and a stormy depth,
 Like a mooned night with drifting star-gemmed clouds.

The dark beauty of this woman and the epithets “turbulent”, “terrible”, “shadowy” and “stormy” are all suggestive of the “terrible though always loving and beneficent Kali”,⁹ of whose might and glory Sri Aurobindo wrote around 1913 in an essay, “The Evolutionary Aim in Yoga”:

For us the embrace of Krishna is enough and the glory of the all-puissant bosom of Kali. We have to transcend & possess Nature, not to kill her.¹⁰

Though Kali as she appears in the *Record of Yoga* shows few signs of being related to the Hindu goddess with that name—normally considered to be the consort of Shiva, not Krishna—Sri Aurobindo's choice of this name of the Shakti was not altogether unconnected with the tradition surrounding the goddess Kali, especially in Bengal. His respect for that tradition is evident in writings such as *Essays on the Gita*, where in the chapter on Kurukshetra he observes, after speaking of that “repellent aspect of existence” which yet, perhaps, “holds in itself some secret of the final harmony”:¹¹

It is only a few religions which have had the courage to say without any reserve, like the Indian, that this enigmatic World-Power is one Deity, one Trinity, to lift up the image of the Force that acts in the world in the figure not only of the beneficent Durga, but of the terrible Kali in her blood-stained dance of destruction and to say, “This too is the Mother; this also know to be God; this too, if thou hast the strength, adore.” And it is significant that the religion which has had this unflinching honesty and tremendous courage, has succeeded in creating a profound and wide-spread spirituality such as no other can parallel. For truth is the foundation of real spirituality and courage is its soul. *Tasyai satyam āyatanam*.¹²

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. Cf. *Mother India*, February 1982, p. 83, where a transcript of this passage from the same manuscript was published. There a full stop was printed after “sweet” at the end of the first line transcribed here. The manuscript has a full stop neither there nor at the end of the preceding line, after “space”, so a full stop must be supplied editorially; but it is better to put it after “space” in agreement with later manuscripts.

2. *Translations*, CWSA, Vol. 5, p. 423.
3. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 6.
4. Cf. *Savitri* (1993), p. 711.
5. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 856.
6. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 538.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 554.
8. *Savitri*, p. 61.
9. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 381.
10. *Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 112.
11. *Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 41.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 45. The Sanskrit phrase is a reference to Kena Upanishad 4.8.

LAKSHMANJHULA AT HARIDWAR

(The holy town of Haridwar marks the transition from the foothills of the Himalayas to the ascending snow peaks, tallest in the world, from which originate the Ganga and other Himalayan rivers. On the white sand banks of the Ganga here, next to a rope bridge, Rama's brother Lakshman is believed to have meditated, silencing the noisy river with his arrow prior to his inward plunge.)

THE boisterous river rushing between sharp rocks
 Turns a corner and falls strangely mute
 Wide and stately, grown suddenly mature
 One moment a maiden, the next the mother of the world,
 Unfathomable; A rope bridge sways
 Like an ascetic's necklace of sticks across her breast.

On visibility's edge an ancient memory burns:
 Young and tender the limbs of the ascetic boy
 A thought is a look, a look an arrow, an arrow fire,
 Which quenches forever the laughter of the maid,
 A moment grown all eye and speechless
 The heavenly river now burdened with human knowledge.

YAJNA SACRIFICE

Notes from Sri Aurobindo

Self-sacrifice is the sacrifice of oneself by oneself to one's Self, 'This Self's immortal Self'.

(Mundaka Upanishad III 2)

VEDA recognizes an Unknowable, Timeless Unnameable above all things not seizable by the mind. Impersonally it is *Tat*, That, the One Existence; to the personality it reveals itself out of the deep secrecy of things as God or *Deva*, nameless though he has many names, immeasurable and beyond description, though he holds in himself all description of name and knowledge and all measures of form and substance, force and activity. God is both the original cause and the final result, the builder of worlds, lord and begetter of all things, Male and Female, Being and Consciousness, Father and Mother of worlds and beings, and also their Son and ours; for he is the Divine Child born into the Worlds who manifests himself in the growth of the creature. He is the wise and liberating Son born from our works and sacrifice, the Hero in our warfare, and the Seer of our knowledge, the White Steed who gallops towards the Upper Ocean. God is *Rudra, Vishnu, Prajapati, Hiranyagarbha, Surya, Agni, Indra, Vayu, Soma, Brihaspati, Varuna* and *Mitra, Bhaga* and *Aryaman*, all the Gods.

The soul of man soars as the Bird, the *Hamsa*, past the physical and mental consciousness to the heaven of Truth to find God waiting, leaning down helpfully, always the Friend and Lover of man, the pastoral Master of the Herds who gives us the sweet milk and the clarified butter from the udder of the shining Cow of the infinitude. He is the source, and outpurer of the ambrosial Wine of divine delight and we drink it drawn from the sevenfold waters of existence or pressed out from the luminous *Soma-plant* on the hill of being and uplifted by its raptures we become immortal.

Such are some of the images of this ancient mystic adoration. Our sacrifice is the offering of all our gains and works to the powers of the higher existence. The whole world is a dumb and helpless sacrifice in which the soul is bound as a victim self-offered to unseen gods. The liberating word must be found and his life be a conscious and voluntary offering in which the soul is no longer the victim, but the master of the sacrifice. The illuminating hymn must be framed in the heart and mind, the all-creative and all-expressive Word that shall arise out of his depths as a sublime hymn to the Gods. Man can achieve all things. He shall conquer. Nature shall come to him as a willing and longing bride, he shall become her seer and rule her as her King.

Dawn comes after a starlit Night and the arising of the Sun of Truth brings with it the effective sacrifice. The luminous herds are rescued from the darkling cave of the *Panis*; by the sacrifice the rain of the abundance of heaven is poured out for us and the sevenfold waters of the higher existence descend impetuously upon our earth because the coils of the enfolding and obscuring and withholding serpent *Vritra* have been cloven

asunder by the God-Mind flashing lightnings; in the sacrifice the *Soma* wine is distilled and uplifts us in the streaming of its immortalizing ecstasy to the highest heavens.

By the hymn of prayer and God-attraction, by the hymn of praise and God-affirmation, by the hymn of God-attainment and self-expression, man can house in himself the Gods, build in this gated house of his being the living image of their deity, grow into divine births, form within himself vast and luminous worlds for his soul to inhabit.

The new dawn will repeat the old, the hidden Sun will be recovered. The soul is a battle-field full of helpers and hurters, friends and enemies.... We create for ourselves by the sacrifice and by the word shining seers, heroes, to fight for us, children of our works. The *Rishis* and the Gods find for us our luminous herds; the *Ribhus* fashion by the mind the chariots of the gods and their horses and their shining weapons. Our life is a horse that, neighing and galloping, bears us onward and upward; its forces are swift-hooved steeds, the liberated powers of the mind are wide-winging birds; this mental being or this soul is the upsoaring Swan or the Falcon that breaks out from a hundred iron walls and wrests from the jealous guardians of felicity the wine of *Soma*. Every shining godward thought that arises from the secret abysses of the heart is a priest and a creator and chants a divine hymn of luminous realization and puissant fulfilment. We seek for the shining gold of the Truth; we lust after a heavenly treasure.

Mind-born and mind-yoked is the ever-recurrent simile of the chariot, i.e., the bodily vehicle in which the solar spiritual Self takes up its stand as a passenger for so long as the chariot lasts, the sense organs are the steeds and the reins are held by the directing mind on behalf of the passenger. When the horses willingly obey the rein, the chariot conducts the passenger to his proper destination; but if they pursue their own ends, the natural objects of the senses, and the mind yields to them, the journey ends in disaster (mind is twofold: bound by senses or independent of them).

The soul of man is a world full of beings, a kingdom in which armies clash to help or hinder a supreme conquest, a house where the gods are our guests and which demons strive to possess; the fullness of its energies and wideness of its being make a seat of sacrifice spread, arranged and purified for a celestial session. The *Rig-Veda* becomes thus the high-aspiring Song of Humanity; its chants are episodes of the lyrical epic of the soul in its immortal ascension.

The *Vedas* are the outer worship for the profane, but inner discipline for the Initiate. Sayana, a great Indian commentator, and Orientalists make it nature worship. They are secret words for purified and awakened souls. The extraordinary incoherence disappears with the inner interpretation. A thread of sense exists with the inner meaning. These rhythmic hymns, called *Srutis*, 'that which is heard', were not composed by the intellect, but a divine word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of a man who had previously made himself fit for impersonal knowledge; they were formed from the intuitive illumined mind. These hymns are also called *mantras*, for they are full of spiritual power. These *mantras*, though written in nature-images, have both an inner and an outer sense, for these seer-poets were also occultists who knew that the inner as well as the outer results could be obtained by the secret power of thought and words, and so

these hymns came to have a dual use and meaning. Human phenomena as well as divine noumena could be brought into being by the power of these *mantras*. The outer or external meaning, the apparent interpretation of the images and happenings of physical nature that were used became the basis of all the orthodox ceremonial practices of the Indian civilization known as the *Karmakanda*, the ceremonial or 'works' portion of the *Veda*, and which was later interpreted and promulgated by the *Purva Mimansa* philosophy. The whole science of Vedic sacrifice and worship which is used even to this day for obtaining of desires spiritual and material in all affairs of Indian life is based on this occult knowledge contained in these outpourings of the inspired Vedic *Rishis*. But it is the luminous Truth of the Spirit, the inner meaning, which is the basis of the tradition that the *Veda* is the sacred book of wisdom, containing the true law of nature which can lead man to a higher consciousness and understanding. The perfect and intricate rhythms, the diction, the refined and noble and beautiful poetry of the *Veda* are evidences that they are a creation of a high culture. Such excellence in beauty, truth and art are only consonant with highly developed minds in tune with the heart's eternal truths and the Infinite Reality.

The Greek Mysteries, Orphic and Eleusinian, prepared rich soil for Pythagoras and Plato but the *Veda* is the basis of the Greek Mysteries. The *Veda* is the ancient psychological wisdom. For the Aryas, the word was *Arata*, out and push forward in other fields. For the Greeks, it was *arete*, virtue.

The *Upanishads*' real work was to found *Vedanta* rather than to interpret *Veda*. The true use of *mantra* and sacrifice was displaced by a leaning towards asceticism and renunciation. So the external use of *mantra* and ritual was exaggerated to hold its own. So it came to be the *Veda* for the priests and the *Vedanta* for the sages. An Age of Intuition passed into an Age of Reason. The direct words of the *Upanishads* caused the mystic symbols of the *Veda* to be forgotten from lack of use among sages. Buddhism completed the rift. It sought to abolish the *Veda* and used the popular tongue. The Brahmins, to counteract this, produced new tenets of religious worth, simpler, which were the *Puranas*. The *Veda* went from the priest to the scholar where it lost its true value and sanctity in meaning, but the scholars have kept the text in perfect condition to be taken up again by the intuitive.

Sayana's naturalistic interpretations of the *Veda* are the bases of European Comparative Mythology studies. The dominance of Sayana's ritualistic interpretation has deprived India of the living use of its greatest scripture, but it will also be the springboard from which we leave to penetrate the Vedic Secrets, for the *Veda* has a double meaning in a system of parallelisms. There are internal and external deities. The *Veda* is primarily for spiritual enlightenment and self-culture. The *Puranas*, legendary histories, and the *Itihasas*, epics, may have been parts of Vedic culture before their present forms were evolved.

JYOTIPRIYA

(Courtesy: www.pair.com/ewcc/jyoti/journal.htm)

JOURNEY'S END

WISDOM comes from the mountaintops,
Knowledge hales from the sea,
But earth knows not the spell to bind
My true love's life to me.

Wisdom moves in thoughts that feel,
Knowledge thinks to see;
Life has showed me love is blind,
My love I cannot see.

Wisdom went from me in the night,
Knowledge left before,
But one had entered in my room
And by the selfsame door.

Wisdom could not tell me who,
Knowledge knew not why,
Dark within the empty room
He stood so nearly by.

Wisdom climbs to the mountaintops,
Knowledge dives in the sea,
But journeys end in the darkened room
Where love first came to me.

ROGER CALVERLEY

THE MAGIC BOX

I WILL put in the box

The swirl of autumn leaves,
Antlers from great stags,
Diamonds from mines.

I will put in the box

A leaping dive from a curious dolphin,
The sweet juice from a mango,
A crashing tidal wave.

I will put in the box

Sparks from fireworks,
The last gurgle from a baby,
And some butterfly wings.

My box is decorated with diamonds and gold,
With secrets at the bottom,
And dangers on the top,
All tied up with ribbons.

I surf on a tidal wave,
In my magic box,
Then the waves carry me ashore,
To an unknown ancient time.

MAYA GUPTA (10) Buxlow Prep School

Note: In February Maya's school submitted some of their children's work to be considered for this year's Young Writers' competition. The competition was organised in conjunction with primary schools all over the UK, our aim being to encourage children of all ages to read, write and enjoy poetry.

This year, the eleventh successful year we have run the competition, we have received a tremendous amount of entries—in excess of 72,000 nationwide! From this figure we have been able to produce a collection of anthologies featuring young writers from all over the UK.

I am therefore delighted to state that Maya's poem *The Magic Box* has been chosen for publication in a book representing young poets. The poems selected for the book are those that express the best imagination, perception and use of language.

Managing Editor: Young Writer's Competition

SOME GLIMPSES OF THE HINDU-BRAHMO INTERCHANGE DURING RAJNARAIN BOSE'S TIME

(Continued from the issue of December 2002)

6. Some reminiscences from Kanauj and Meerut

ON the following evening we arrived at Miraki Sarai, very close to Kanauj, where we were guests of Lala Kishorilal—a resident of Prayag and by profession a Munsif. Lalaji has written and subsequently printed a book about all the Hindu residents of the Northwest. He presented each one of us with a copy of that book. In my earlier narrative I had forgotten to mention that an enthusiastic Calcuttan—Mahendranath Ghosh, who was a relative of an Allahabad resident Neel Kamal Mitra, was very keen to visit the land of our father. He was also given a gift of the said book. While discussing the book Lala Kishorilal made a remarkable observation—during the last Kumbh Mela he had seen with his own eyes in Haridwar, Bokharas from Samarkand dressed up as Moghuls as well as Hindus. I had just said that this was a remarkable observation; but actually it is not all that remarkable. We had earlier read many English accounts in books and newspapers that in those places many Hindu traders have settled for generations. In Lalaji's book it is written that during the reign of Kanauj's Raja Birsingh, five Brahmins were delegated to Gaur by the Raja. On the day after we accepted the hospitality of Lala Kishorilal, we set out for a sightseeing visit to Kanauj. The ugliness of the city saddened us. The Kanauj of Jaychand and Sanjukta is no longer the Kanauj of today. The city that once boasted 24000 pan shops and where all participated in its daily festivities now consisted of mainly innumerable overgrown and dilapidated houses with a pervasive silence. The sight was indeed a chilling and a heartrending one. We saw that Jaychand's Fortress was now only a tobacco field. After inspecting the Hindi School of Kanauj we went to a Brahmin's Sanskrit school. Bhattacharyya Mahasaya did not welcome us in the traditional manner by offering us the usual 'arghya' (Hindu ritual offerings)—instead he offered us 'attar', in conformity with the Muslim tradition, and Gujarati cardamom. We examined the students of this Sanskrit school and were quite satisfied with their performance. Bhattacharyya Mahasaya and others told us that it is believed that some of their brothers and their friends now live in Bengal. In Kanauj a wealthy Muslim with the name of Mire Bangali has a dilapidated house. He had earned a lot of money in Bengal and then returned to his native Kanauj where he built this house. Visiting the land of my father led me to have an undescribable state of mind. We really seemed to visualise vividly through the eyes of our imagination the five Brahmins ('Pancha-Brahman'), turbaned and with large leather sandals on bullock-carts, and along with them the five Kayasthas either on elephants or on horse-driven carriages, and some others on other modes of transport on their way towards the Ganges.

7. The Brahmos and the controversial marriage bill

Both the Hindus and Muslims alike objected to the bill. They argued that the suggested law would only encourage people to disregard their own religion. The officer who succeeded Maine Sahib was Stephen Sahib. He was about to implement a slightly amended version of the said law along with a clear rebuttal to the objection raised, (however, with the law applicable as the Brahma Marriage Bill and valid for only an exclusive Indian community—the Brahmos), when an objection was raised from unexpected quarters — the Adi Brahma Samaj. On the day preceding the day set aside for passing the Bill formally, some Brahmos from the Adi Brahma Samaj voiced their objections to Stephen Sahib. They emphasised the essential unity underlying both the Brahma and the Hindu religion and also said that the Brahmos did not get around with a ‘I am a Brahma’ sticker on their forehead; they would rather remain within the Hindu fold and be treated likewise; thus if the amended Bill were to be called the Brahma Marriage Bill, it would only cause difficulties for them. This unexpected objection bewildered Stephen Sahib. Around this time the famous lawyer Srinath Das’s son Upendranath Das along with some other sceptics petitioned Stephen Sahib that if a separate law was enacted for the Brahmos, and if they (the sceptics) got married without any religious affiliation, then even those marriages should be acceptable and a further law should be enacted to safeguard this. Inspired by such arguments the Civil Marriage Act was suggested for the benefit of all those people who had abandoned the conventional and established religions of India. Since the Governor General was just about to depart for Simla it could not be officially promulgated. After the Governor General and the other Council members like Stephen Sahib left for Simla, Srijukta Saradaprasad Gangopadhyay and Nabagopal Mitra also left for Simla to represent the Adi Brahma Samaj and brief Stephen Sahib. Saradaprasad Gangopadhyay was the eldest son-in-law of Maharshi Debendranath Thakur. Nabagopal Mitra was known as the Father of Physical Education of Bengal and was famous for being the first person to initiate the practice of yoga exercises among the youth of Bengal. He was a special counsel to us during the Brahma remarriage movement. When Stephen Sahib met Sarada Babu and Nabagopal Babu he said, “We have come to understand the mechanism of your propaganda quite well, you do not want the aid of Englishmen.” Keshab Babu did not want to have any links with the Hindu religion. Just prior to his departure to Simla I told Keshab Babu, “If you clearly say that you are not Hindu, then that will help me formulate the required legislation relatively easily, particularly because we are considering a secular Civil Marriage Act, especially for those who have abandoned the established religions.” Keshab Babu replied, “I am prepared to say that I am not a Hindu.” I was quite surprised at this. The indifference of Maharshi Debendranath Thakur was a main reason among many others. When Keshab Babu severed his links with the Adi Brahma Samaj, he became somewhat uninspired. He always used to tell us that “at the moment we have two main jobs—having our regular Wednesday prayers at the Adi Brahma Samaj, and publishing the magazine *Tattwabodhini* every month.”

8. A hilarious account of how Miss Akroyd got provoked

Towards the end of 1872, Miss Sharpe sent a gift for my wife through Miss Akroyd. On the very next day after Miss Akroyd arrived in Calcutta, I went to visit the famous barrister Manomohan Ghose for some reason. After our conversation he enquired, “would you like to meet Miss Akroyd? She has a gift for your wife from Miss Sharpe.” I replied, “I would like to do so very gladly.” Thereafter, he ushered me upstairs to the first floor and introduced me to Miss Akroyd. After the introduction he went out for a walk. I started discussing a number of our current social issues with Miss Akroyd. I said, “If we conquered England and encouraged the English to copy our ways, then would you have liked it?” She said “no”. I then enquired, “If a Sahib wore a dhuti and wandered along the streets of London then what would you have done to him?” Miss Akroyd replied by saying that, “We would instantly clap him to Bedlam” meaning of course “we would admit him to a mental asylum”. As a rejoinder I said, “As you hate such actions, likewise we too equally hate the anglicised England-returned Bengalis who dress up like Englishmen.” While discussing the issue of emancipation of women I remarked, “Without proper education female liberty can be harmful.” She said, “You are right, female liberty without education would be a frightful evil.” I hadn’t quite realised that although outwardly she seemed to agree to my views, inwardly she was actually getting quite angry. Unfortunately I then said, “You consider English manners to be perfect.” This immediately provoked her to stamp her feet on the floor and bang and slap the table top, and sparks seemed to emanate from her eyes. I began to apprehend that she might actually hit me. Rather shakily I started telling, “I beg to be excused madam, I didn’t mean anything wrong.” Around this time Manomohan Babu returned from his walk. Before he had left he had seen two individuals exchanging pleasantries and upon his return he almost witnessed a riot-like atmosphere. I excused myself and left immediately. And just as I was about to leave Miss Akroyd did a namaskar to me, although on our first meeting she had shaken hands. By doing a namaskar she wanted to convey that, “Since you love your nationalistic spirit so much, we really ought to do namaskars to all of you in accordance with your ideologies.” I was also not one to be easily rebutted—I went and told Manomohan Babu, “Tell Ma’am sahib that her namaskar looked rather cute.”

9. Brahmos and the Upanayana ceremony

In the year 1873 (in the month of Magha 1794 *sakabda*) the revered leading acharya tried to incorporate and remould the ancient thread ceremony (upanayana ceremony) within the Brahma Samaj as far as practicable. In the earlier ceremonies there was a ritual (*kriya*) called the upanayana but that was merely a ceremony where a young boy was brought in front of a Brahma preacher who was asked to shoulder the responsibility of the boy’s religious education. But in the amended form, after accepting the ‘upabita’, the novice was inducted (given a *diksha*) with the Gayatri Mantra. If in other countries it was quite acceptable by the cultured elite to use the symbol of a lion with a raised fore-

leg as an emblem of respectability, then I see no harm in the Brahmos who originate from the Brahmins and who are also from the same lineage as the ancient Rishis, to do away with idolatry and accept the 'upabita' as their emblem of respectability. The Caste system in some form or the other is bound to exist in all forms of human society—if not in the same form as ours, the divide between the rich and the poor would definitely exist. Even the latter is a sort of caste system. At the moment we must ensure that we admit no admixtures with idolatry, since in lieu of the worship of an infinite number of gods, it is forbidden for the Brahmos to even worship a finite number of gods. In accordance with the amended procedures, Debendranath Thakur performed the upanayana rites for the youngest of his two sons—Somendranath Thakur and Rabindranath Thakur. About two to three days prior to the upanayana ceremony, I went to visit my second son-in-law at Nibadhahi, Duttapukur. I happened to sit in the same courtyard that was used for the upanayana ceremony on the day I was returning from Nibadhahi. I had no idea that a mere 'shudra' could not sit there. If I had known that such a rule existed, then I would not have dared to sit there. Since it is against my nature to interfere with any well thought out rules formulated by social leaders, I rather choose to think it to be my duty to respect such rules. Initially I was against the reformed upanayana rituals, but considering the fact that without the present version of the upanayana it would be impossible to accomplish Hindu rituals in its entirety within the Adi Brahma Samaj, I decided to be a part of it.

10. Christians, Hindus and Brahmos—interactions with Routledge Sahib

Routledge Sahib, the Editor of *Friend of India*, although a Christian, had profusely proclaimed the Hindu religion's supremacy. During the uprising of the Brahma Marriage Bill he had specially helped the Adi Brahma Samaj. He went back to England in 1873. Since he had supported the Indians and had written on their behalf in the *Friend of India*, the Zamindars of Uttarpara, in order to mark their gratitude, had organised a general meeting where many famous personalities like Dr. Rajendralal Mitra and others were present. Some of us from the Adi Samaj were present in that meeting. I sat at the rear and this prompted one of the Zamindar Babus to say, "you are a supporter of our National Religion, it is not at all proper for you to sit at the back, come let me take you to the front." Saying this he led me to the row where Dr. Rajendra Mitra and the others were seated and made me sit near them. When Routledge Sahib returned to England he incorporated certain views of the Adi Brahma Samaj as well as some of my own views on the supremacy of the Hindu Religion in his *English Rule and Native Opinion in India*—the legible portions from the article are now appended below :

"In September 1852 the walls of Calcutta were placarded with an advertisement of a lecture to be given by the minister of the elder body of the Brahmists (termed the 'Adi Samaj'—Adi Church) on the superiority of the Hinduism to all other religions. Reference has been made in an earlier chapter to one essential and vital difference between the two Brahmist Churches both professing to follow the great first Brahmist, Rajah Ram Mohan

Roy. The younger body, the body of Keshab Chandra Sen, may be said to be very akin to the Unitarian Christianity. The elder believe that Hinduism, although overgrown with excrescences, has for its germ and origin the worship and unity of One True God and that a return to the teaching of the Vedas, would return to a pure though a poetical deism. I had at this time lived in India about two years and had sent home what I must term strictly and rigorously accurate, though not unquestioned, pictures of what may be seen at the festivals of Durgah and Jagannath and I had also in those two years formed an impression that Englishmen do not rightly comprehend the faiths, or the men influenced by the faiths of India. The advertisement, however, was a startling one. Did the minister of the Adi Samaj (a scholar and a gentleman I afterwards found) actually mean to assert in the face of the missionaries and educated English of Calcutta, that Hinduism is superior to Christianity? I found he did; and before the controversy which this lecture caused had ended, I had come to the conclusion that the Hindus, may, in God's good providence, and without an absolute adherence to Christian channels of faith and form, find their way backward to the key of all truth, the oneness of the most High God. I did not think, and do not now think, of defending Hinduism. I did, and do, desire to show somewhat of the character of many Hindu scholars and thinkers who still claim to be actuated and guided by Hinduism.

Since that time I have endeavoured in different ways to draw attention to the literature of these two Brahmoist bodies—a literature so marvellously devotional and so imbued with a spirit of love of God and man, that one might seek far for a parallel to it, save in the most devotional works of the old Catholic divines. I find such passages as these: “Is not progress to be perceived in the sacred writings of the Christians also? Was it not a great transition from the Elohim of Moses to the God of the New Testament? A change passes over the Jewish religion from fear to love, from power to wisdom, from the justice of God to the mercy of God, from the nation to the individual, from this world to another, from the visitations of the sins of the father upon the children to every soul that shall bear its own iniquity; from the fire, the earthquakes and the storms, to the still small voice.... Let us be pure and holy in our lives. Let us make sacrifices for our religion. Lord God, our Father, our Saviour, our Redeemer! to Thee we look up for succour, for we are weak. Always grant the light of Thy countenance, for that light alone is our only consolation amid the darkness and danger of our situation. Forsake us not, but infuse patience, firmness and fortitude into our souls, so that we may stand as witnesses of Thy glory to generations to come.”

In the same spirit, a writer of the same body claims for Brahmoism the words of Abou Ben Adhem's dream—“Write me as one who loves his fellow-men.” This literature is ever growing and its spirit pertains to both the Brahmo bodies. Each has its pamphlets, its newspaper, its societies for moral and social, as well as religious progress.

The Minister of the Adi Samaj undertook to prove, in the face of the younger Brahmo body as well as of Christian Missionaries:

“That Hinduism is superior to all religions, because it owes the name to no man; because it acknowledges no mediator between God and man; because the Hindu worships

God as the soul of the soul and can worship in every act of life—in business, in pleasure and in social intercourse; because while other scriptures inculcate worship for the rewards it may bring or the punishment it may avert, the Hindu is taught to worship God and practise virtue for the love of God and of virtue alone; because, being unsectarian and believing in the good of all religions, Hinduism is non-proselytising and tolerant, as also is devotional to an entire abstraction of the mind from time and sense, and possesses an antiquity which carries it back to the fountain-head of all thought.”

11. Richard Temple's riparian entertainment

Sir Richard (Richard Temple) on his luxurious boat conference entitled *Boats* (August 1875) had invited some publishers for a river cruise. On that day many eminent personalities were also invited. That day witnessed a brilliant and mixed spectacle comprising both the poor publishers and these eminent people. We noted an expression of surprise on the faces of these dignitaries. They were thinking “Where on earth have these fellows come from?” When Eden Sahib took over as the Lt. Governor from Sir Richard, he removed our names from the list of invitees from the Belvedere Raj Bhawan. Special arrangements were made by *choto lat* for providing refreshments for all those who were included on the luxury river cruise. Through the courtesy of the family members of Rajendranath Mitra, the Assistant Secretary to the Bengal Government, a thousand ‘paans’ (‘paner khili’ in Bengali) were arranged. Soda water, lemonade, icecream and ‘sandesh’ were in plentiful supply. I saw the famous yet miserly son of the deceased Raja Narsingh gulping down the plentifully available icecream with great gusto. Although I was inclined to partake of some refreshments, I decided not to do so after Takechand Thakur (Pyarichand Mitra) cautioned me against openly having refreshments on an English boat. Actually, I personally had no hesitation to have refreshments on an English boat, but I thought it to be my duty to obey the elderly gentleman. Pyarichand Mitra Mahashaya was much loved by my late father as well as by myself.

(It is hoped that the above translated extracts have enabled the readers to have a sensitive understanding of Rajnarain's involvement with the contemporary Brahmos and Hindus. It is also clear that the above anecdotes, incidents, and memoirs point to the fact that even within the premises of the then Brahma movement, Rajnarain's loyalty to the Hindu faith remained undiminished. Possibly, this may have had an indirect influence on the young and adaptable mind of Sri Aurobindo. In addition, these reminiscences also highlight some of Rajnarain's outstanding personality traits, in particular, his courage, fearlessness, sense of humour, liberalism, and above all his unmistakable nationalistic spirit. Rajnarain died in September 1899. That Sri Aurobindo had high regards for this great soul, is clearly evident from one of his early sonnets, Transiit, non Periit. Sri Aurobindo, with his poetic genius, has truly summed up all of Rajnarain's virtues in this sonnet and appropriately hails him as a 'strong and sentient spirit', this being the hallmark of Rajnarain's unique personality. The sonnet [belonging to the early period] which so

eloquently sums up the quintessence of Rajnarain's character is given below as an appropriate conclusion to these reminiscences.)

Transiit, non Periiit

Not in annihilation lost, nor given
 To darkness art thou fled from us and light,
 O strong and sentient spirit; no mere heaven
 Of ancient joys, no silence eremite
 Received thee; but the omnipresent Thought
 Of which thou wast a part and earthly hour,
 Took back its gift. Into that splendour caught
 Thou hast not lost thy special brightness. Power
 Remains with thee and the old genial force
 Unseen for blinding light, not darkly lurks:
 As when a sacred river in its course
 Dives into ocean, there its strength abides
 Not less because with vastness wed and works
 Unnoticed in the grandeur of the tides.

(Concluded)

SATYAJIT GHOSH

The Leaping Tongues

Why does a flame leap? The flame holds on to its source, the wick, which is elongated and the core of the flame, consisting of oxygen, hydrogen and carbon, combusts. This process is known as oxidation. The core of the flame becomes lighter due to the gaseous combustion, the lighter gases at the core of the flame (like carbon dioxide) move upwards and the air from beneath the flame fills the void at the core. The lamp continues to burn in leaps. Hence we have leaping tongues.

LINES

I SIT by the hearthfire lonely,
The vacant armchair by,
And think of the sweet days only
When she who is gone was nigh.

The flame in the dying embers
Flickers with shadowy fall,
And the senseless wood remembers
And glows memorial.

You know what memory's charm is,
Shining mahogany back!
For your stillness softly warm is
With the one thing that I lack.

And my heart from dying ashes
Suddenly flickers aflame
To the glory that abashes
And the hope without a name.

Vividly but for a moment
The air with her is sweet,
Across Time's angry comment
Her eyes and my eyes meet.

Her old gaze shining tender,
That loving look, I see
Reproach me with soft splendour
That I should lonely be.

That sweet gaze spiritual
Fades on my deep desire,
Only a moment's fuel
Kindles to my soul's fire.

The wind without is weeping.
Of the churchyard it tells,
Where the daisies are creeping
And the mute earth mournful swells.

The wind in the pine is solemn,
 Its great boughs sigh and groan,—
 The pine-tree like a column
 Upon the hillside lone.

In a patter come the showers;
 Mournfully beats the rain;
 The landscape blurring, the flowers,
 It streams on the window pane.

I sit by the hearthfire lonely,
 Her vacant armchair by,
 And think of the sweet days only
 When she sat smiling by.

MANMOHAN GHOSE

(Songs of Love and Death, 1926)

AS SHE GUIDES OUR FEET...

JOINED hands leading steps between mountain stones
 'Cross vast plateaus and raging torrents wide
 Through forests dim and high sweet seas of bloom
 Where love itself stands bare against the sky,
 The opposites and extremes of life are met
 To work and rend their pattern into form,
 Momentary sorrow, fears and joys
 Fall back and pale in future's brilliant sun.
 If arms enfold and touches seek caress
 And voiceless eyes commune in being's depths
 'Tis life's small symbol ways seek to express.
 In silence joys are shared and harmonies meet
 As toward the silent sun She guides our feet.

MARY HELEN

IN DEFENCE OF BHARATI'S SONGS*

SIR, in support of this motion, I do not think I need advance elaborate or detailed arguments. For, I know, Sir, I am not exaggerating the feeling of any Member of this House who is a Tamilian, or who knows Tamil, or who is a patriot, or who is not afraid of patriotism, when I say that one wants no arguments to support this vote of censure on the action of the Madras Government in having acquiesced in or directed the City Police to seize what will remain, in spite of the Madras Government's activities, so long as the Tamil language lasts or a single Tamilian exists, as the most priceless and patriotic songs in that great language.

Sir, late Subramania Bharati was a man on whose tongue the Goddess Saraswati can honestly be believed to have danced the dance of patriotism. If he had been born in any free country, why in any country of the world except India, that man would have been made the Poet Laureate of the country, would have been given honours and titles by a Government which knows how to respond to the feelings of the people, and would have lived and died among the most honoured of the nation. But Sir, being the slave country that we are, he had to live as an exile in Pondicherry, enjoying the hospitality of the French Government and die a broken wreck, because he found no use for himself under the auspices of this Government. But Sir, martyrs and patriots before him have gone to the same fate. Subramania Bharati lived and died a patriot. I want to repeat, Mr. President, that so long as the Tamil language lasts, you may confiscate all the copies which exists—even as our sacred Vedas were handed down from generation to generation, for aeons, without a single piece of writing, by the memory of our ancient Hindu ancestors, even as Macaulay was able to repeat every line of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, I have no doubt that, so long as a single Tamilian lives, these songs will remain the priceless heritage of the Tamil race. I can inform this House, Mr. President, after this ill-advised action of the Government, we are starting a propaganda for getting by heart every song of Subramania Bharati, and although the Hon. the Law Member and the Hon. the Home Member may between them confiscate every printed word of those patriotic songs, human ingenuity has not yet invented any machinery which is able to 'confiscate' thoughts and memories. Thoughts and memories will flourish, and wherever the Hon. the Law Member or the Home Member goes they will hear only these songs sung, and they will have to apply cottonwool to their ears if they want to save themselves from being polluted by hearing these brave and patriotic songs.

Sir, the origin of this action is not even complimentary to this Government. This Government is here governing the bulk of the Tamilians in whose language these poems are written. These poems are a quarter of a century old. For nearly twenty-five years, these songs have been sung throughout the Province, and I appeal to my Hon. friend the Chief Minister who, I know, is a very good student of Tamil, whether he has not heard and enjoyed these songs, whether he has not heard and felt his pulse beat quicker, and his

* A speech delivered in the Madras Legislative Council, sometime in 1925.

blood run warmer in his veins, when these magnificent, soul-stirring songs were sung. I am sorry my two friends who crossed the floor are not here. If they were here, they dare not contradict me when I say that some of the elections by which they came to this very Council, which gave them the opportunity to cross the floor and become Ministers, were these patriotic songs sung by boys and girls in public meetings. Sir, do you know that in this Tamil country, if you want to get up a magnificent meeting, if you want to sustain the interest of the audience, the most usual method is to get these songs sung? I wish I had the voice to sing a few of these songs here, which will melt even the stony hearts of the Hon. the Law member and the Home Member. I will read some of them, and even a prosaic reading of these songs will melt the hearts of these people.

Then, Sir, what are these songs? I am not going to dwell on their seditious nature, under your ruling. I merely want to tell the House these are songs with the like of which one is familiar in English literature, such as praising the country, praising her natural beauties, praising her great heroes and heroines, praising her great achievements, expressing unmitigated love for the motherland, expressing joy in her present and hope in her future. Are these unworthy of any nation? These have been proscribed. I have got copies here and I can make a present of them to the Hon. the Home Member or the Law Member. I will make a present of them to the Council Library and if the police want them they can go and search there and take them. I shall read from the first book of songs in order to convince the House that there was no need for the Government to confiscate this literature:

Vande Maataram enbom
Maanila-t-thaayai vananguvadenbom (Vande)
Jaathi mathangalai-p-parom—Uyar
Janmam iddesattil eythinarayinum
Vediyar aaiyinum onre—Anri
Veru Kulathavar aayinum onre
Eena paraiyarkalenum — Avar
Emmudan vazhndhu ingiruppavar anro?
Cheenathaar aay viduvaaro? pira
Desathaarpor-p-pala theengizhaippaaro (Vande)

We will worship our Mother, we will not mind to which caste or which religion, our fellow citizens belong; if they are born in this country, all of them are our brothers. Even if they are called Paraiyas (Harijans), are they foreigners?

Onru pattal undu vazhvu—Nammil
Otrumai indril anaivarkkum thazhve
Nanri therinthidal vendum—Intha
Gnanam vandaal pin namakkethu vendum? (Vande)

I commend these lines to the particular attention of the Hon. the Law Member and

the Chief Minister and the Home Minister. If we are united we can live; if we are not united we are all equally humiliated—Treasury Bench and the Opposition alike (*Laughter*). Then I appeal to the Tamilians. Have you heard any more inspiring lines than these? I have not.

Chenthamizh naadenum pothinile—Inba
Then vanthu paayuthen kaathinile—Engal
Thanthaiyar naadendra pechinile—Oru
Sakthi pirakkuthu moochinile—

(*Chenthamizh*)

I do not know, Sir, if there is any Tamilian in this House or outside whose heart will not melt at these songs. I ask them to remember this, that these songs are now declared forfeited to His Majesty by the action of a Government which are to a certain extent kept in those treasury benches by us. The music of it is so great that even a halting reader of those songs like myself can make an appeal to the members here.

I have listened to the Hon. Law Member shouting here yesterday; he has not even read these songs, but still he has forfeited the book. I can understand if the Government has chosen one of those songs or two and said that those songs should be forfeited. They have not done anything of the kind. These two volumes consist of some of the most moving songs on our religion and letters, apart from pure patriotism.

What They Sang

I shall finish by referring to similar songs in English literature which Englishmen sing in their country, which they sing even in our own country in private dinner parties and other places. They sing of the glories of England “Britain shall rule the waves, Britain shall never be slave but Indians shall always be slaves.” That is the burden of their songs, if they are to be judged by the results of the actions. Lord Tennyson sang:

At her girdle clash
The golden keys of the East and West!
Her mailed hand keeps the keys of such teeming destinies.

William Blake wrote—

Their mighty wings stretch from East and West.
Their nest is in the sea, but they shall roam
Like eagles for the prey.

Then England’s message in Parker’s words:

Then Courage, all brave mariners
And never be dismayed
Then be bold—work for gold
When the stormy winds do blow.

Lord Tennyson says:

*The fleet of England is her all in all
Her fleet is in your hands.
And in her fleet her fate.*

I want to point out three capital differences between the English nationalistic literature and ours. English nationalistic literature boasts of its own strength and speaks of the confusion and destruction of their enemies. "God save the King, send him victories, happy and glorious and confound his enemies." That is the Englishman's song. The Englishman's psychology is that God has to deal with only two categories, England and her subjects on the one hand and her enemies on the other. That is, God must give up all His other work and constantly save England and confound her enemies. Humanity has come under these two categories, England and her subjects on the one hand or England and her enemies on the other, whereas the message of Subrahmanya Bharati is the message of all races, of poets, philosophers and seers of all nations.

Let India be free and happy and the other nations of the world be free and happy. Is it for preaching this message of peace on earth and goodwill to all men that the Madras Government which does not understand the A B C of patriotism or nationalism has ventured to lay its profane hand on this sacred literature? We are constantly told that we are a nation of many races and creeds. Bharati was a Brahmin by birth, and I appeal to non-Brahmins in the South—several of them were his friends and I do not want to name them—to say whether throughout his literature, there is a single trace of caste or communal bias or superiority or inferiority. He talks only of Indians as a whole, he knows no distinction of class or creed, race or religion. He is the most cosmopolitan that I know of among modern authors. Is it for preaching this harmony among men that his books are sought to be forfeited by this Government? It seems to me that this action of the Government cannot be justified on any basis whatever, either of duty or of reason.

S. SATYAMURTY

(Courtesy: *Bhavan's Journal*, 7 November 1976)

WHO IS THE BOSS?

WE have looked long at the sky and at earth
and asked: there must be an authority?

Who is the boss?

After that we have learned to look at ourselves
and, asking repeatedly the same question,
we discovered our supportive powers, our
archetypes, our totem animals, our neteru.

And simply by carefully, lovingly collecting
them, we were permitted to enter
paradise again, where man and
his soul powers are one.

We have unmasked the King,
the secret oneness of the many:
our true self.

It was a difficult way.
Many times, while looking at a face,
We were tempted to say: “No!
“No! that I am not!”

That attitude barred ourselves
from the solution.

Only by uniting
all our archetypes—
all our faces:
the nice and the terrifying ones,
the inviting and the dispelling,
the ancient and the new,
into a single all-encompassing
harmonious, triumphant
oneness,
visible and invisible
at the same time,
can we know
that this oneness is
the boss, and the soul
and the secret face
of the electron, the galaxy
and man.

MEDHANANDA (His last poem)

CHANDELIERS

THE crystal chandeliers are in every tree this morning,
But until the sun rises to light them
They are cold and icy glass,
Lifeless, and darkened without light.

But as the sunlight shines through the trees,
Every branch is transformed into fiery crystal,
Conducting and performing a symphony of light
To celebrate the dawn and the gift of sight.

Just let me be a crystal chandelier,
Aglow in the light of the rising sun.
This is enough for me today,
To be a crystal candelabra for the morning light.

ALLAN STOCKER

Fides et Ratio: Faith and Reason

Galileo in 1616 maintained that these can never contradict each other. For holding this view he had to suffer and pay a heavy price.

Pope John Paul on 16 October 1998 quotes Galileo and confirms the truth that was held by the scientist. Though it is a belated recognition, its significance must be recognised.

GREAT SINGERS OF TAGORE SONGS

A Consciousness Approach

THEY were interpreters. They were taught to sing, not to interpret. It was a choice of their creative spirits, the choice of the inmost being. They interpreted instinctively. They were perhaps asked to feel and mean the word. They did.

That made them discover the secret vibrations of the inmost self, which give a rare status to Art. Inspiration has its ways—queer ways. It made them suspend the intellectual mind, to see only and sing. It made them simple and natural. Even the Nature-songs sung by Santidev Ghosh indicate efforts to tap the deeper emotional centres. There are times when he is able to reach the deepest self with the utmost simplicity of a child. Greater still is his effort to interpret the incantatory verse of Tagore. In such moments, the moonlit even-fall and the smell of Rajanigandha take our longing souls beyond the ocean of Beauty in search of a far-away bliss. When we appreciate today's Mohan Singh or Swapna Ghosal or Swastika Mukherjee we appreciate their efforts to revive the spirit of Rabindrasangeet, the free natural spirit, the simplicity and the quest for the soul-value of the mantric word.

The technique of inspired art eludes the eye of the intellect. Speaking on the Transcendentalists, Perry Miller and Sherman Paul repeatedly draw our notice to a technique which is entirely governed by vision.¹ The inspired efflux shapes out its own technique. I refer to this because there are people who find fault with Sahana Devi's technique. To appreciate Sahana Devi requires a different kind of sensitivity, an ear of the soul.

The best Indian songs are rarely high poetry. Quite often the poetry is mediocre and the *Sur* is not the best manifestation of a *Behag* or a *Kedar* or a *Kamod*. The words and the tune seek to marry in the right spirit and therefore each of them seeks to sacrifice. Out of this sacrifice, a new art is born.

This new art—neither the tune nor the poetry—is totally independent, a new product. It is a *third art* born through the sacrifice made by the *Sur* and the words. Rabindranath Tagore far outshines others in this field. Atulprosad Sen is another master. But, he works within a limited field.

Initiated listeners of Indian music will remember the popular songs of the 50s and the 60s created by the combined efforts of lyricists and composers,—Naushad-Shakeel, Sahir-Ravi, Roshan-Mazrooh, Madan Mohan and Raja Mehdi Ali Khan—which shine bright still escaping the dust of time. There also one sees that marriage, that mutual sacrifice of words and tune. Unlike Naushad and Sahir, Tagore could handle his words and tune independently in his search for the *third art*. Naushad and Shakeel were co-creators of *third art*.

Female singers have usually been more expressive than male singers. The reason is simple. Women can open the psychic more naturally than men. Dilip Kumar Roy knew the secret. He practised what he preached—"A singer sings only when his soul sings."

Unfortunately he was not a singer of Tagore songs. The Calcuttans will never forgive me for excluding Debobroto Biswas from my list of “greats”. I appreciate his voice, not his expressions. He suffered from melodrama and moved far away from the psychic, our true emotional centre. Notice the restraint of Suchitra Mitra when she sings *purāno janiā cheonā* and the lack of that when Debobroto handles the same song. Suchitra’s problem lies in her strong intellectual sense. The intellectual mind is too predominant in the later Suchitra, which obstructs her true emotional fire. Her strong point is her technique; her weakness is also there. Yet Suchitra remains a great singer by virtue of her earlier efforts, where she uses her emotion remarkably in songs like *toomi kon bhāngoner pathe ele* or *ekodā toomi priye* or *deyā neyā phiriye deyā*. The early Suchitra Mitra is a remarkable blend of power and sweetness in songs like *āji godhuli lagone* and *bhebechhilem āsbe phire*.

Subinoy Roy, the best male singer of Tagore songs, is as technically perfect as Suchitra. He expresses the quiet and the serene with remarkable effect. Sweetness, discipline, pain, peace—Subinoy Roy combines many virtues. Yet he could have been a greater singer if he preferred the simple magic of the inmost being over his stress on the “aesthetics”, which is certainly a high virtue below the “highest”.

The songs were given a new dimension by the great female singers like Sahana Devi, Rajeswari (Vasudeb) Dutta, Malati Ghosal, Kanika Banerji, Renuka Dasgupta, Kanak Das, Nilima Sen, Savitri Krishnan, and a few others.

What was common in them? All of them were great naturals. Purists will find a slip here or a jarring note there. But then, nothing can obscure their controlled emotional glow. The luminous leaves the veil behind and comes out straight through their songs. Was Kanika conscious of that play when she sang *āmi rūpe tomāy bholābo nā*? Did Rajeswari really try to find out the source which coloured her vital despair in *āji je rajanī jāy*? One never really knows. But the thing is there, very authentic stamp of our veiled identity. Even Tagore, an aesthete, couldn’t have hoped so much.

The more one thinks of Sahana Devi, the more one becomes conscious of the true attitude to a song. I heard her sing when she was 90. The song floated out of her room, moved out into the sea and then went straight up to woo the high far blue.

Gasping for breath in her large room, that frail figure left a different message for me that afternoon in Pondicherry. She didn’t need to make gestures or acrobatics with an imported microphone in her hands. There was one language there—the language of the soul. Sri Aurobindo knew it as “the soul of the emotion.”²

The psychic has hidden its face because of the tension of professionalism. The other obstacle to true music is the chaotic use of instruments and the noise produced by that electronic mishmash.

Tagore-songs are basically noiseless songs. Their magic lies in their noiseless sweetness. The computer is welcome, but not computerized music. For, the computer is an impotent instrument to measure “Consciousness”. We need the old flute, the old violin and the old esraj to do that. Let us return to that noiseless sweetness in the field of music. Noiselessness! how sweet is the word! That alone characterizes the achievement of a

Malati Ghosal or a Sahana Devi or a Santosh Sengupta. The singers today are like loud competitive microphones in puja pandals struggling hard to raise their voices so that we may identify them. Alas! we don't know them. Only the noise reaches us.

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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2. Sri Aurobindo. *The Future Poetry*, SABCL, Vol. 9, p. 15.

HARMONY

You seek light
 And you live on air,
 To you each minute seems delicious
 To you sudden changes of mood are unknown;
 Only the impassive calm lights up your landscape divinely serene,
 You flood your everlasting grace on the world.
 Queen of the day and queen of the night,
 Fabulous funambulist,
 You trust the forces of the beyond
 And walk on the path of life
 With the natural majesty of the Sages;
 Your sovereign beauty
 Floats in tune with the pulse of the Universe
 And gives rhythm to the steps of those who pay you their homage.

CHRISTEL DELABOUÈRE

RELEVANCE OF SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION FOR THE EMERGING TECHNOLOGICAL SCENE

(Continued from the issue of December 2002)

THE social organs which will dominate the knowledge-society of the future will not be business or politics but the organs of education, culture and spirituality which will impart this higher knowledge to the people.

In our present society, the organ of business and its motives and values and leaders dominate the social life. The other social organs like politics and culture and education play a subordinate or supportive role to business. For example, at present there is a growing demand and pressure on the educational system to create a system of education which will prepare the individual for the "New Economy". We must note there that the demand is not for a system of education which will prepare the individual for the whole of life or to create a better human being but to provide skilled employees and great entrepreneurs to run and lead the "New Economy",—as if human society is nothing but economics, business and commerce! But human society also has other important organs like culture, religion, education and politics which also need good workers and great leaders. Our society needs great teachers and educators; it needs good politicians, efficient and honest administrators, and great statesmen to provide political and administrative leadership; it also needs great thinkers, artists, philosophers, saints and sages to provide creative ideas and higher values. A holistic system of education must be able to serve the knowledge-needs of these other organs of the society. But the present social consciousness is not very much interested in the development of these other organs of the society because it is dominated by the temperament, mentality and values of the commercial man. Here again, we are not making any moral judgement on the present condition of the society but only describing the fact of the present society. For such may be the evolutionary needs of the present age. But as the human society evolves and moves on to a higher level of consciousness, the power-balance between the different organs of the society will begin to radically change and herald the true knowledge-society which we are talking about. In this knowledge-society of the future, the dominant social organs will be those institutions of culture, education and spirituality which will impart the knowledge that will lead to the higher evolution of humanity in the mental, moral and spiritual dimensions of life. And the other organs like business and politics will play a subordinate and supportive role to the dominant organ of culture.

But this scenario we are sketching is not entirely futuristic. In almost all ancient civilisations the dominant social organs were not business but religion, culture and politics. For example, in the golden era of the Vedic age in ancient India, society aspired for spiritual knowledge which liberates the soul. In the ancient Indian Upanishads, we can find descriptions of people from every section of society seeking spiritual knowledge. There are in them descriptions of king-sages giving spiritual instructions to high-caste brahmin seekers; a poor cart-driver who is an illumined yogi instructing a king on spiritual

knowledge; a wealthy merchant belonging to the low-caste; an illegitimate child of a woman who tells her son that she “knows not who was his father”; he seeking spiritual knowledge from a sage. We are perhaps moving towards a similar type of knowledge-society in the future, but in a future humanity which is mentally and technologically more advanced than that of the Vedic age. But there will be a more systematic and scientific approach to spiritual knowledge and an attempt towards a more extensive and widespread diffusion and application of spiritual knowledge for the enrichment of the whole life of man.

And Information Technology in this future society will be an instrument of education and culture for disseminating this higher knowledge to the society.

Here come some of the unique potentialities of IT (Information Technology). Among all technologies human mind has invented so far, IT along with the modern communication technology has the highest potential to make knowledge the dominant motive of human life and herald the true knowledge-society. For the modern information-communication-entertainment technologies—ICE as they are called now—with the audio-visual aids and techniques like the multimedia, graphics, animation, etc. can make knowledge and learning a joyful, interesting and entertaining activity. In fact, ICE technologies can make education entertainment and entertainment education. And in the eastern spiritual tradition there is a precious body of psychological and spiritual knowledge which can steer the higher and future evolution of humanity towards its spiritual destiny in a higher level of consciousness. If this higher spiritual knowledge can be presented to the people with ICE technologies it can bring an immense benefit to humanity.

We would like to repeat here that we are not trying to underscore the use of IT in other areas, like commerce. We also recognise the way in which IT is transforming business in a very positive direction. What we are trying to emphasise is that this potent and powerful technology is not being used sufficiently in those areas in which it can have the maximum positive impact for the future evolution of humanity. Modern business is using IT not only extensively but also with great enterprise, dynamism, creativity and innovation. If IT is used with the same enterprise and creativity in education, human development and health care it can have a much more positive impact on humanity. For this to happen there has to be an elevation in the motives and values and vision of humanity to a higher level, towards those higher motives, values and vision which will lead to the fulfilment of the evolutionary destiny of humanity and the planet earth. It is such a light and vision which Sri Aurobindo brings to humanity.

To understand fully and clearly the role of IT in Sri Aurobindo’s vision, first we must have a clear perception of Sri Aurobindo’s integral evolutionary vision. The evolutionary destiny for the individual is a fully conscious being housed in a conscious body and for the collectivity a globally conscious humanity.

What is the role of IT in realising this spiritual destiny of ours? This spiritual destiny can be realised only by a spiritual education and culture which brings about a spiritual transformation in human consciousness. As we have said already, IT can be a powerful tool for this spiritual education of the individual and the collectivity. It can also help in

creating an ideal external environment in which the inner unity of humanity can emerge. This inner unity has to emerge as the result of a moral and psychological change or transformation in the human consciousness. This inner change in the collective consciousness can come either from a strong pressure of the external environment or an inner pressure from the divine consciousness which guides the evolution or from a conscious collective spiritual discipline, some form of collective yoga. The information and communication technology by its capacity for easy and quick networking and global connectivity can considerably accelerate the pace of external unification of humanity. This global cyber-environment will have a corresponding psychological impact on humanity, preparing the human consciousness for the eventual realisation of its inner unity. For, as we have said, a psychological change in human consciousness can be effected either by the pressure of the external environment or by an inner discipline. The first is a very slow process of natural evolution taking many millenniums. The second is a rapid, potent and direct process which can achieve in a few years what the external or environmental influence can achieve in thousands of years. But an external unification achieved by IT has one unique advantage over that of other methods. IT with its audio-visual images and its potent impact on the mind and senses can create an environment with much greater psychological impact on human consciousness than any other form of outer environment. So an external unification of humanity in the cyber-space will prepare and habituate the human consciousness and life, both psychologically and socially, for the eventual realisation of the inner unity in the inner space of human consciousness.

In the light of this discussion we may say that Information Technology (IT) can help in preparing Matter to realise its ultimate spiritual destiny which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is conscious Matter. When we look at the evolution of IT with a discerning eye, we will see that it is a movement towards creating an intelligent material environment responsive to the consciousness of man. According to some IT prophets, in the future, every material object or gadget from doors and windows in our home or electric shavers to the automobile will have a microchip, which is a tiny electronic brain, that will monitor and control that object or gadget according to our needs, tastes and requirements; and all these tiny electronic brains will be connected through TV and the Internet into some sort of a global electronic brain. And again when we examine the evolution of Computer Technology, we will see that it is a movement towards replicating human consciousness and its faculties in a Machine which means Matter. This movement at present has given birth to a new field in computer science called "Artificial Intelligence" or AI in short. The aim of AI is to simulate or replicate human consciousness and its faculties in a machine. According to some computer experts, the computers of the future will be able to think, feel, sense, speak, communicate and interact with man. What is the hidden significance of this evolution of IT? When we examine the evolutionary process of Nature, we will find that consciousness—in whatever degree or level—begins to manifest in matter when the material organism acquires a certain complexity and appropriate instruments to manifest a given level of consciousness. We can see a similar pattern in the evolution of IT. IT will give to Matter and the material environment the needed com-

plexity and the instrument so that the consciousness hidden in Matter may manifest and communicate with man. This will create a conscious and intelligent material environment responsive to the consciousness of Man.

(To be continued)

M. S. SRINIVASAN

THE MOTHER

By Sri Aurobindo, with the Mother's Comments, pages 213, Rs. 60.00.
ISBN 81-7058-671-2

This book contains *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's spoken comments on passages from that book, made during her evening classes at the Ashram Playground. The first set of comments were made in 1951 and the second in 1954. The publisher's note says, "These comments do not form a systematic commentary on Sri Aurobindo's work, but are rather explanations of certain passages, phrases and words. The Mother usually began the class by reading out a passage from the book, then commented on it or invited questions from those gathered around her."

Available at SABDA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry 605 002

Please see "New Publications" for ordering information.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of November 2002)

IN this article I am going to present Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's poems with Sri Aurobindo's comments which have moved us to deep admiration. All art worth the name must go beyond the visible, must reveal, must show something that is hidden.

Poetical speech "is the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds." "The aim of poetry, as of all true art, is neither a photographic or otherwise realistic intimation of Nature, nor a romantic furbishing and painting of idealistic improvement of her image but an interpretation by the image she herself affords us not on one, but on many planes." Creation of that which Nature conceals from us, when rightly approached, reveals her to us. Sri Aurobindo's appreciation of Harin is sufficiently warm. His poetry has a genuine poetic quality with many fine lines.

Sri Aurobindo in his comments on the poems of the poets who drew inspiration from him tried to take them to the vision of the future poetry. We are presently going to give some examples of his comments on Harin's poems.

THE GATE SWUNG INWARDLY...

The Mahalakshmi Vision

The gate swung inwardly and opened wide
Upon a marbled City white as snow;
What was a breast upon its either side
Grew to a cool-fire concentrated glow
Of moonlight that in slumbrous beauty rippled
Across the domes and turrets chiselled nude
As though out of milk-marble, rarely-nippled,
Illumined to this City of Her Motherhood.
A flight of creamy steps of dreamy shine
Led to the central Palace which did seem
An imagery of moon-glinted wine
Upbuilt in a poem of a dream.
And every step was dappled green and blue,
Violet and grey, white shadows of dark slaves
Who, swart and naked, climbing two by two
Did bear trayed treasures on their curly heads
Of fruits and flowers,—sheer wealths of yellow-reds
Deep purples, ripe cerises, mellow mauves,—

Plucked from unrifled orchards, secret groves,—
 Jewels and incense, drawn from fiery caves;
 Thrice precious eyeballs of gold-mailed dragon
 And scented breath of paradisaal monster.
 Clear wandering wines in many a carven flagon
 In whose wild flow I saw the noon and dawn stir
 Rich-glimmeringly.... These they bore and seemed
 While moving towards their Queen, that they were single-dreamed.
 Lo! Wondrous music ran across the air
 As though each note were silver-saddled mare
 Prancing in the still moonlight, curbed unseen
 By the pale angel-riders of the Queen.
 Then on Her breath's soft undulating breeze
 Time floated like a solitary boat
 Laden with undiminished treasures
 Of diamond, emerald, sapphire, peridot,
 Warm countless gems wrenched from unmined Infinities.
 The gate swung to again upon the Vision
 Of that lone City lambent and elysian.
 Then what were breasts on either half of it
 Became half-spheres with fiery vapours lit,
 And curling clouds of smoke as though they came
 From cloven chaos, and the funeral-flame
 Of worlds reduced to cinders,—and behind,
 Their correspondences of half-spheres held
 Twin lotuses untroubled by the wind
 Of outer worlds reeling with mist and mirk
 Veiling their own, white symbols of Her mystic Work.

23rd Sept, 1933, 8 morning

Harin: Has the Mahalakshmi Vision been rendered well enough—Why have certain colours come in—(they were vivid in the Vision)—and what level does it have... Can it be included?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, the high level is there. It is magnificent poetry.¹

THE HEAVENWARD ANGUISH...

The heavenward anguish of the Mother-Bird
 Shot downwards in rare poignancies of Light:
 Each fledgling on the lower levels heard
 And strove to spread itself in sprouts of flight.
 The Mother-Ocean rising from repose
 Called to her own from aether-states of sky:
 Each drop that heard her voice in rapture rose
 To meet the circling vastness of the cry!
 Beyond the darkness-brimming space afar
 The Light of Lights called, "Higher! higher and higher!"
 Below, from a long sleep, awoke each star
 And panted keenly for the Fountain-Fire.
 And colour ran on every side for joy,
 And music leaped on every side for bliss!
 O who shall [ever]* fathom or destroy
 The Moment of true Metamorphosis?
 Higher and higher they rose: the fledgeling bird,
 The drowsy drop, the listening star, and stirred
 Into invisible glories as they went
 Winging their way through the lone firmament,
 And in their heavenwardness they trailed, each one,
 Through swift ascensions right beyond the sun
 The moon and all the myriad lesser lights,
 From lowest depths of earth to lordliest heights
 Beyond the furthest heavens, columns that came
 Out of smoke-swirls, like tall and elegant flame
 Multiplied to solid grandeur in the Mansion
 Of new Manifestation... In each column
 Whirled all creation's creatures as in solemn
 Cold depths of water in a cave of glass.
 And as I watched I knew a strange expansion
 Of Consciousness through which I saw them pass
 Into Significances that surpassed all speech;
 When through still Nothingness I strive to reach
 Even the meaning's shadow, but alas!
 All for a fleeting moment was a blank
 Grey-naked as a lotus-widowed tank:
 But soon I saw the mansion float above

* N.B. The metre demands two syllables. —Amal Kiran.

Immaculate, light-poised as a dove,
 While far below in depths of smoky-gold,
 Forgotten worlds on worlds in darkness rolled
 Unnoticed and unguided, like a bare
 Vision of Growth, slow-dying of despair.
 Vapours and mists and jet-black shadows curled
 Funereal remnants of Time's broken world!
 Then once again beyond the heavens I heard
 The Fountain-Fire, the Ocean and the Mother-Bird.

1-20, Noon, 25th Sept, 1933

Harin: Mother-Bird, Fountain-Fire,—
 the Vision born of the 2nd Piece—Has it any
 correspondence at all—
 and what sort of theme has it turned out to be?

Sri Aurobindo: The poem is a very beautiful one. But the second piece of [Mother's] music was a dance of faeries in the moonlight. The few lines marked* seem to correspond, but for the rest the movement of the music must have started the sense of another kind of dance, the whirl of new-creation.²

STRANGE

It is the strangest thing to be
 Eternity.
 And gaze
 on small unnumbered days
 Go by—
 To be the silence at the end,
 And then descend
 Alone
 Into a world of moan,
 And cry.
 It is the strangest thing to live
 A fugitive
 On this
 Wild earth and love and kiss
 And plan...

* Not shown here.

I, the immortal voiceless one,
 To have begun
 These coloured blossoms on the grave
 Called man.

Sri Aurobindo to Dilip Kumar Roy: I have always admired Harin's poetry... His language and rhythm are always beautiful, and he has grown in ease and mastery; his images also are fine and vivid. The thought is not always successful—there is sometimes excess of exaggeration, sometimes a fall... This poem, however, is original in rhythmic movement and perfectly phrased and constructed in which there is no exaggeration or fall of thought anywhere.

(This is one of Harin's pre-Pondicherry period poems; it was sent by Dilip Kumar Roy to Sri Aurobindo.)³

BESIDE HIM SAT THE QUEEN OF LIGHT AND LOVE

Beside Him sat the Queen of Light and Love:
 Sweetening for us the huge unbearable Power
 Which He is drawing for us from above,
 Her cool smiles concentrated to a flower
 Of benediction large and luminous
 Strange-scented, petalling the gloom in us
 With soft translucences through whose serene
 Broke into coloured hope all life's despair;
 Mother! Without your smile could we have seen
 That full Magnificence of the Unseen
 Seated beside you, knit
 In heavenliest Union distant and aloof
 Under a narrow roof
 Some finite builded for the Infinite?
 Without you, Mother, could we ever bear
 The grandeur of the Master who has tested
 Terrific Beings through the mist
 Of time's long challengings?...
 Through Him without whom you could not exist
 And you through whom His Dream is manifested
 We climb black mountain-peaks of change and fate
 On glad invulnerable wings
 Drunk with immeasurable soarings great
 With blessings from the Queen of queens, the King of kings!

The air with Him was sable-silver gleaming
 As though in every hair
 Of Him the Dream of Him itself was dreaming!
 And in His calm and soft and lordly feet,
 The aimless wanderings of every being
 In every road and lane and street,
 Seemed lulled in perfect rest
 And ended in an ultimate far freeing.
 And in His fingers were
 Touch-hungers of the universe agreeing
 In a last Harmony of Touchlessness!
 Deep in His master-breast
 World-multitudes were gathered, gripped and blessed
 By Him alone who knows the way to bless.
 While there, beside Him, Mother, you
 Were like a waterfall which poured and poured
 Deep, conscious emanations of the Lord,
 With your own sweet effulgence shining through!
 Mother, your look was like a first caress
 Of Loved and Lover in some last
 Immortal consummation of the Vast.
 Was it a dream within a dream we saw
 Or Vision of Awakening without a flaw?

Harin: Kindly give me your remarks as I go on at this poem. It will help immensely—
 This came today (between 11 to 12.30—in two different periods of inspiration) in
 continuation of 15th August.

Sri Aurobindo: The poem as it goes on rises in power and beauty and richness of
 expression.⁴

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

1. *Mother India*, February 1998, pp. 102-03.
2. *Ibid.*, March, pp. 178-79.
3. *Ibid.*, April, p. 232.
4. *Ibid.*, May, pp. 318-19.

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE POETIC ACT AND THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

(Continued from the issue of December 2002)

b. The psychology of poetic creation

The task of the poet is to express the 'vision' in words. How does he do it?

It has been said, "There is no idea in this world which does not take the form of speech; all knowledge appears to us imbued with speech".⁶

This certainly is an extreme position, but in the realm of poetry,—poetry which is an 'art of language'⁷—the truth is undeniable. However if we regard the whole of the aesthetic field, we will have to add form, sound and colour besides words and speech.

To the poet all objects, ideas and feelings appear as words. But what the poet wants to express is not objects, ideas or feelings, but the *rasa*, the dynamic essence, which has arisen in his heart. Poetry has therefore been defined as "Speech imbued with *rasa*."

In this definition we find resolved the dichotomy of poetic 'body' and 'soul', an important element of Sanskrit poetics. The body of poetry is speech with word and sense as its two aspects; the rhetorical devices related to both word and sense belong also to the poetic body. *Rasa* is the essence, the soul, the dynamic delight experienced by the poet. The poet has to express this soul, but he has at his disposal only the elements of the poetic body. How to reveal to the reader the *rasa* with words which are themselves without *rasa*? Such is then the problem of poetic creation.

But before taking up the problem of expression proper we must consider its pre-requisites. The experience of *rasa* is a necessary cause for the poetic expression, but it is not a sufficient cause. The experience can be too narrowly egoistic, in which case there will be no poetry. Let us analyse the two experiences of pathos we have seen above, Valmiki's and Rama's. The former led to the production of poetry, as Anandavardhana so aptly puts it:

... *krauñca-dvandva-viyogatthaḥ śokaḥ ślokatvam āgataḥ* (DL. I, Kār. 5)

... the sorrows arisen from the separation of the two krauncas was changed into a couplet.

In contradistinction to this picture of poetic transmutation we have the image of Rama's sorrow which is unexpressed, *anirbhinna*. What is needed for expression is a certain distance, a certain detachment from the egoistic nature of the experience. The experience has to be made universal, general, *sādhāraṇa*. In the case of Rama the emotions are bound in his private self; whereas Valmiki's sorrow is detached; he sees in the separation the pathos that is in the nature of things themselves. The distance is not created by the fact that Valmiki's private self was not affected: not because it was a bird that was killed, the mate of the dead bird that wept; but Rama on the other hand was suffering for his own

wife; it was a very personal pain. This difference in outward (*laukika*) relation does not change either the nature of the emotion or its truth. The difference lies in the distance that the poet takes from his too personal involvement with the emotions. He does not deny life's emotions, only he recollects them in tranquillity (*śānta*).

The experience then becomes *alaukika*, impersonal, conditioned by no other considerations except the purely aesthetic ones; for poetry *rasa*-experience is only the necessary prerequisite, not the sufficient cause. There can be no poetry without words—vehicles by which the poet's *rasa*-experience is communicated to the reader. Anandavardhana says that the subjective *rasa*-experience of the poet imports *rasa* to all objects of the world; if he does not have the *rasa*-experience then the whole world is without *rasa*.⁸

We should note that the poet does not use directly the objects of the world; he uses words. The poet's experience of *rasa* is extra-linguistic but he recreated this experience in a linguistic form. The problem of poetic creation is this transfer of an experience from life to literature.

We have seen that the objects of the created world act as stimuli which help to reveal the *rasa* hidden in the poet's heart. The poet's aim is to create a similar world with words which will function as stimuli, to excite the reader's permanent (poetic) state, *sthāyin*, into *rasa*. But the world created by the poet is not an imitation of the real world; it is a new creation founded on a special power, different from the power of denoting, that words assume in poetry.

It was recognised that words could variously convey the meaning of a statement to a reader—the different levels of this capacity are denotation, *abhidhā*, indication, *lakṣanā*, import, *tātparya*, inference, *anumāna*. But none of these are recognised to be capable of creating the poetic world. Here a higher power was attributed to words which made all the difference between the poetic speech and the non-poetic speech; this power is called *dhvani*, suggestion. The highest poetic word is that which has the power to suggest to the reader the vision which the poet wants to communicate.

This idea of suggestive *dhvani* may be compared with what Kandinsky says about words: "The word is an inner sound. It springs partly, perhaps principally, from the object denoted. But if the object is not seen, but only its name heard, the mind of the hearer receives an abstract impression only of the object dematerialized, and a corresponding vibration is immediately set up in the 'heart'."⁹ The poet is one who has the power, *pratibhā*, to bring out this suggestiveness of speech. *Pratibhā* is an inborn creative power which has been explained variously as poetic inspiration, poetic imagination or creative genius. N. Stchoupak writes that *pratibhā* as understood by Indian rhetoricians is a "luminous reflection of the poet's personal genius without which his skill for choosing and combining words would remain irremediably unproductive."¹⁰ This capacity is linked with the first necessary condition of poetic creation, *rasāveśā*, absorption of *rasa*, which is characterized by the power to create beauty in its purity, *rasāveśā-vaiśadya-saundarya-nirmāna-kṣamatvam*.¹¹ This is the basic condition: but along with this the poet must be master of his material and technique—a wide culture and a finished skill without which

the working of *pratibhā* is hindered.

Pratibhā is then the power that changes vision into expression by creating a poetic world of speech. The poet does not comment, does not explain; he never makes a statement. He holds before the reader an intensely concrete world of speech in which word and sense have blended harmoniously. Apparently that is all; and for a casual reader this beauty and perfection of the poetic body would seem to be the end of poetry. But when one enters deeper one sees that the poetic expression differs essentially from the non-poetic, for the former acquires a kind of slant, an obliquity which deviates it from the normal speech. This oblique speech, *vakrokti*, is, according to some, the only poetic figure of which all other figures, metaphors etc., are but formal manifestation; it is a kind of heightened or extra-ordinary turn given to expression.

Of this intensified expression the essence is *rasa*, towards which the reader is led by the suggestive power, *dhvani*, of words. Such is the word-world, the poem, created by the poet. In this world, words do not reflect the objects of the mythological historical world which are bounded by personal interests, including scientific and philosophical interests, but are expressive quanta of the poet's vision.

These expressive quanta have been called 'symbols'; poetic words are neither reflections of objects nor carriers of conceptual significance. They are themselves linguistic message-objects of the poetic world which hold their own suggestive meaning, free from all conventional significance. The choosing, grouping and combining of words according to the mysterious law of *pratibhā* changes words into aesthetic signs which acquire the power to touch the heart and evoke, rather than signify, the poet's experience of *rasa*. What Maurice Blanchot writes about 'symbols' corresponds to the poetic word, *rasātmakamī vākyaṃ*, word with the poetic resonance of *dhvani*, as envisaged by Indian rhetoricians: "The plane from which it (the symbol) starts us off is but a springboard lifting us up or hurling us down towards a different region into which all roads of entry are missing. Through the symbol a leap is taken; we are shifted to another level,—a sudden violent shift—, there is an exaltation, a fall, not a passing over from one meaning to another, from one unpretentious meaning to a great richness of significances, but to something that is other, that seems to be other than all possible meanings. The shift of level, a dangerous movement towards the depths, more dangerous towards the heights, is the main fact about symbols."¹²

Poetry is then the symbolization in words of the poet's experience of *rasa*, made possible by the power of poetic imagination, poetic genius capable of producing a connected whole of unspeakable wealth of *rasa*.¹³ When poetry is composed it carries within itself, independent of the poet, of the objects of the world, the power to evoke the experience of *rasa* in the reader's heart.

(To be continued)

Notes and References

6. Bhartrihari, *Vākyapadīya*, I.23.
7. "Un art du langage", Paul Valéry.
8. *śṛṅgārī cet kaviḥ kāvye jātām rasamayam jagat / sa eva vīa-rāgas / cen nīrasam sarvam eva tat //* (*Dhvanyāloka*, p. 250)
9. *Op. cit.*, p. 34.
10. Intr. to *Uttararāmacarita: La Dernière Aventure de Rāma*, Paris 1935, p. LII.
11. Abhinavagupta, *Locana*, on *kārikā* I of *Dhvanyāloka*.
12. Maurice Blanchot, *Le Livre à venir*, "Le Secret du Golem", Paris 1959, p. 180.
13. Kant says that the forte of Genius is to produce "a connected whole of unspeakable wealth of thought". Vide, D. N. Gotshalk, *Form and Expression in Kant's Aesthetics*. P. 253 in: *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 7, 1967, pp. 250-266.

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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Epic Threads—John Brockington on the Sanskrit Epics edited by Greg Bailey & Mary Brockington; Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000; pp. 366 + bibliography & index.

WHERE the Indian family is concerned, *Ramayana* is by far the more comfortable of the two great epics. When Annie Besant wrote her adaptations of these, she found that in Valmiki's composition black and white are quite unambiguously contraposed and Rama is so obviously the ideal hero that the petit-bourgeois householder is not confronted with any awkward moral issues. *Mahabharata*, on the other hand, pitilessly holds up a mirror to the greed, anger and lust that are the stuff of human existence, raising far too many knotty questions around its heroes. Rama is more remote, "safe" and readily worshipable as a divine incarnation than Krishna. But was *Ramayana* always the paean of praise to the Vishnu *avatara* whom Tulsidas brought into every village home of the Hindi heartland as *maryada purushottam Ramachandra*?

In *Righteous Rama* [OUP 1984] Brockington had made his first attempt to trace the evolution of the epic, subjecting it to linguistic and stylistic examination to find five distinct layers the text went through to establish Rama as the moral ideal of righteousness:

1. Orally transmitted c. 5th – 4th century BC—all shloka stanzas of books 2-6, i.e. 37% of the text.
2. Orally transmitted c. 3rd – 1st century BC—all verses in longer metres in books 2-6 (4.27% of the text) and 54 sargas of book 2, 23 of book 3, 19 of book 4, 28 of book 5, 36 of book 6.
3. Written c. 1st – c. 3rd centuries AD—books 1 and 7 (24.57% of the text) and possibly parts of the end of book 6.
4. Written c. 4th - c. 12th centuries AD—passages marked with (*) or Appendix I of the Critical Edition with good manuscript support.
5. Written c. 12th century AD onwards—passages marked with (*) or Appendix I with poor manuscript support.

He also made a very important point regarding the difference between the two great epics of India. *Mahabharata*, as it evolves, depicts a steady tendency to shift from the dramatic to the ethical viewpoint, while the evolution of *Ramayana* shows a change from the poetry of action to the poetry of feeling, emphasising the emotional and lyrical at the expense of the heroic. Frank Whaling's 1980 study¹ showed that around 4th century BC Valmiki is known simply as belonging to Koshala, ignorant of Central and South Indian geography. This changed by the 1st century BC in the Balakanda to a famous sage whose ashrama was near Gliga. By the 2nd century AD in the Uttarakanda Valmiki has become a friend of Dasharatha and a Bhargava. In the latest texts he is a robber belonging to a low caste. According to Whaling, a ballad of 12000 verses split in *adhyayas* developed into cantos (*sargas*) with tag verses of variant metres. Then regional variants sprang up interpolating geographical cantos and supernatural material. Finally, under Brahmanical

influence, came the legendary part of the Balakanda and the entire seventh book with the mythic origin of the epic through divine inspiration.

Epic Threads is a selection of Brockington's studies that is possibly one of the supreme examples of "lower criticism." The Western obsession with an "ur epic" is grimly pursued through lexical microscopic analysis to determine the accretions, perhaps missing the point Whaling made that the significance of the epic lies not in the cause but in the effect, the end, that is what Rama developed into for people as a symbol of meaning from Rama the man through Rama the successor of Indra to Rama the avatara of Vishnu, though not yet worshipped. The papers span the period 1969-1995 and are arranged in four sections: linguistic evidence of stages of composition in six papers during the period 1969-1982; manuscript studies in two papers of 1986 and 1991; four papers setting forth the implications of such analysis (1976-77, 1995-97); finally three papers on the relationship between the two epics (1978, 1985, 1986). An extremely useful table has been added from *Righteous Rama* plotting the stages of composition of the *Ramayana* (reproduced above). Brockington's thesis is that it is not just the "growth" of a martial ballad through padding, such as the Bala and the Uttara Kandas, into a classical epic. It is also, as Greg Bailey perceptively notes in his learned introduction, a thematic and theological development mirroring changes in the socio-cultural and religious context. Brockington furnishes exhaustive statistical and typological surveys of linguistic features from the Ayodhya, Aranya and Kishkindha Kandas, analysing even particular manuscripts within recensions to reveal peculiarities of syntactic structures, using raw linguistic data of the numbers and statistical frequency of occurrence of words, phrases, and grammatical forms. The focus is non-narrative and the plot is referred to only for explaining particular linguistic features.

The first two papers analyse the verbal and nominal systems, inferring that "the high frequency of periphrastic futures in the first part of the Ayodhya Kanda is due to interpolation or rewriting." This corrects the misconception propagated by Louis Renou that such usage is not found in this epic. Paninian rules of using different past tenses according to situations are found not to be followed with any regularity while rules regarding compounds and use of the suffix *tak* with *han* are also contravened in the Ayodhya and Aranya Kandas. By inference, these precede Panini. Further, whereas in *Ramayana* the perfect is the most common past tense, in the Udyogaparva of *Mahabharata* it is the imperfect that is more frequent. Again, at least 600 of the approximately 5700 long compounds in the former occur in the latter, showing their stereotyped nature. These are used in dramatic or emotional passages and occur frequently in the later parts of both epics, specially in the war portions (as much as 30 to 40% of all shloka stanzas). Refrains are most common in Ayodhya Kanda, personal epithets and stock *padas* in Aranya Kanda and repeated *padas* and long compounds in Kishkindha Kanda. Unfortunately, Brockington does not spell out the implications. In terms of the nominal system, *Ramayana*, like *Mahabharata*'s older portions, falls in between the Brahmanas-Sutras and classical literature. Important findings for dating the epic are the infrequent use of a gerundive as a prior part of a compound, whereas it is characteristic of Buddhist Sanskrit,

and the use of multi-member *dvandvas* and *-dhara* compounds that are absent from the early Upanishads. The eight books of Ayodhya and Aranya Kandas that are abnormal in other respects also show a heavy incidence of *vriddhied* derivatives, thus arguing for considerable interpolation (e.g. Bharadvaja entertaining Bharata's army, Bharata's return to Ayodhya, Lakshmana's description of winter, Sita's dissuasion of Rama from unprovoked killing, Rama's visit to Agastya's hermitage). Brockington points out that the significant increase in the proportion of long compounds from the Ayodhya to the Kishkindha Kanda argues for interpolated material retained even in the Critical Edition. Lakshmana's entry into Sugriva's palace, the entry of the Vanaras into Rikshabila, Hanumana's views of Lanka and Ravana's palace, his emotions on seeing Sita, the killing of Aksha—all show an unusually high proportion of long compounds. Brockington even isolates a particular class of compounds beginning with *krodha* peculiar to the Balakanda and with *taptakancana* in the Aranya Kanda that are wholly absent from Ayodhya Kanda. His conclusion is that *none of the compounds of more than eight syllables can belong to the genuine epic*. The syntax of cases is simple, regular with infrequent use of prepositions or their substitutes and of periphrases, all indicating that "the genuine epic dialect belongs to the older strata of the language."

By studying stereotyped expressions, Brockington concludes that the epic is the work of a conscious artist working "within the limits, and in the spirit, of a living epic tradition." It is an eye opener to find that only Rama is called *satyaparakramah* in Ayodhya Kanda frequently, and that this recurs just once in Aranya and Sundara Kandas, is absent in Kishkindha Kanda but becomes frequent in Yuddha Kanda. In Aranya and Yuddha Kandas, he is most often described as son of Dasharatha, which is absent in Ayodhya Kanda. *Aklistakarman* is restricted to Rama in the epic but is applied to both Krishna and Partha in the *Mahabharata*. Stock epithets for Sita are only three in Ayodhya Kanda, but increase in Aranya Kanda and later, all relating to her being Janaka's daughter and belonging to Mithila and Videha. In the forest she is most of all Vaidehi and slender-waisted. A common phrase she shares with Draupadi is *dharmapatni yashasvini*. Ravana is most commonly described as *ravano rakshasadhipah*, Hanuman as *marutatmajah*. The implications of these findings are spelled out in the paper "The names of Rama" where he infers that this is due to the shift in emphasis to Rama as a morally righteous hero. Brockington cites no reason for concluding that "the story of Surabhi at 2.68 is undoubtedly borrowed from the *Mahabharata*" (p.122) despite the admission that there is only one really close parallel in language. In the last paper of the book he summarises this study by dividing these formulaic expressions into four main groups: those frequently occurring in both epics and indicating a common inherited tradition; those occurring only in *Mahabharata* or borrowed from it in later parts of *Ramayana*; those peculiar to *Ramayana* or only in the late passages of *Mahabharata*; and those occurring only in later parts of both epics showing interlinkages with the Puranas. The analysis suggests that "redactors of the Northern recension were more familiar with the *Mahabharata* than those of the Southern" and that the two traditions had merged by the time of the later parts of the epics. The fourth variety has a broad religious import reflecting the altered

area of interest and could be a consequence of epic transmission having been taken over by Brahmins. The parallels or borrowings are concentrated in certain books of each epic, which helps to unravel their textual history.

Figures of speech are analysed to reveal that the epic is in the early stages of formation of the corpus of standard imagery that characterises classical Sanskrit literature. Thus, there are few similes referring to the lotus, in contrast to its profusion in later literature. Similes are the commonest figure of speech and others are used very sparingly only at dramatic points of the narrative towards the later parts of the epic. This is where the suspect passages differ strikingly, as they amplify a detail or episode by using a figure of speech. Finding that one in six of similes in Ayodhya Kanda, one in four in Aranya Kanda and one in five in Kishkindha Kanda have exact or similar parallels in *Mahabharata*, Brockington concludes that there was a common stock of similes shared between the epics and displaying the homogeneity of the epic tradition. He also points out the greater frequency and sophistication in using figures of speech in *Ramayana* than in *Mahabharata*, but does not realise that this is what sets apart the *kavya* from the *itihasa*. An important finding is that Indra predominates among the gods mentioned in the similes, with no mention of Vishnu and Shiva in Ayodhya Kanda. The suspect passages abound in similes referring to Vishnu. Brockington identifies four similes of Shiva and two of Vishnu as interpolations retained in the Critical Edition besides 2.85 (Bharata's army being entertained) and 2.88-89 (the beauties of Chitrakuta). The fact that similes referring to cattle reveal no veneration of the cow indicates the antiquity of the epic. The elephant accounts for the maximum number of similes referring to animals, followed closely by snakes (frequent in Sundara Kanda). The natural world predominates in Ayodhya and Kishkindha Kanda similes, the gods in the Aranya Kanda. The ocean occurs frequently in Ayodhya Kanda but is absent in Kishkindha Kanda (where mountains are much more) and rare in Aranya Kanda. Ayodhya Kanda has ten similes involving the night that do not recur elsewhere. Brockington concludes that "*the similes reflect a pattern of society and culture characteristic of a fairly early period*" and the usage bears out the dating of the original epic as having been composed by the fourth century BC.

In the earliest stage of the text, proverbial expressions are few, accounting for just a quarter of the total and many occur for the first time in *Ramayana*. Over 40% occur in the reworked or added portions; some revealing a didactic element that is so obvious in the Shanti and Anushasana parvas of *Mahabharata*. Brockington improves upon Sternbach's specialisation in this field by noting 72 proverbs of which 52 recur in the later epic as well (Sternbach and Hopkins mention 20). Over a third of these do not occur in other Sanskrit texts. Many of the proverbs recurring in *Mahabharata* relate to the evils of a king not protecting his people and to a kingless state. He points out that in the Northern recension, proverbs are twice as many as in the Southern, and the *alamkaras* are also more frequent, reflecting the more polished text of the former.

Studying the syntax of the epic, Brockington finds that the connective particle *uta*, frequent in the later epic, is rare in Valmiki and restricted to added passages. The relative system is simple with infrequent use of the double relative, restriction of a causal sense

to *yad*, rare occurrence of pronominal adjectives and similar forms (even *yatah* is seldom used). Sentences are connected by a connective particle often stressed by use of anaphora through repeating the verbal idea of the earlier sentence by an absolutive or participle. He concludes what is surely axiomatic, viz. “the earlier portions were written in what is basically a very simple, straightforward style...” complex constructions becoming more frequent later.

A major contribution by Brockington is his research showing that several assertions in the Critical Edition are mistaken and the simple contrast posited between Northern and Southern recensions “does not adequately represent the complexities of the chain of transmission involved.” He finds that the Southern recension is not as uniformly consistent as presumed, that the interrelationship between various recensions is far more complex than recognised so far and that Kerala had a definite alternative tradition. His textual study of Malayalam manuscripts of the Ayodhya Kanda shows that those selected for the Critical Edition do not represent fully the Malayalam subrecension. He found around 125 manuscripts that the editors did not use until the Uttara Kanda. Only 29 mss were used for the Ayodhya, Aranya and Sundara Kandas against 41 for the Uttara. He also discovered that the manuscript evidence in the Critical Edition is incomplete. No Oriya mss have been used and only one Maithili. He found that attention had not been paid to checking the mss for their alignment that can alter not just from one kanda to another but even within a single Kanda. He points out that the Varadaraja commentary is the oldest extant one on the text and would contain valuable clues. His findings warrant reopening the “closed” status of the Critical Edition for taking full account of the wealth of available material. He makes a pathbreaking suggestion that needs to be taken up by editors of the epic: instead of the Critical Edition’s system of assigning mss to recensions or to script versions, which is too limiting in either slotting a particular mss to a version or dismissing it as contaminated, a better model would be the Venn diagram of mathematics (T.S. Eliot would have condemned this as a typical instance of “jargon”). This model (p. 204) depicts the different originals that have formed a specific mss while avoiding the impossible task of reconstructing the entire chain of transmission.

After such intensely demanding reading, the remaining papers show a welcome move into the area of “higher criticism”, an exemplary instance of which can be found in Sri Aurobindo’s writing in the early years of the twentieth century:

“The longer speeches in the *Ramayana*, those even which have most the appearance of set, argumentative oration, proceed straight from the heart, the thoughts, words, reasonings come welling up from the dominant emotion or conflicting feeling of the speaker; they palpitate and are alive with the vital force from which they have sprung...they have, like his (Homer) the large utterance...of the primal emotions...Valmiki, when giving utterance to a mood or passion simple or complex, surcharges every line, every phrase, turn of words or movement of verse with it; there are no lightning flashes but a great depth of emotion swelling steadily, inexhaustibly and increasingly in a wonder of sustained feeling, like a continually rising wave with low crests of foam.”

Brockington cannot scale such heights, but examining the religious attitudes in the

epic by drawing upon his study of similes he finds that the religious pattern is more archaic than has been generally recognised. The elaborations of Brahmanic literature are absent, leading him to propose “a definite dichotomy between Brahman and Kshatriya in the immediate post-Vedic period.” The pantheon is markedly Vedic (even Garuda occurs more often than Vishnu, with whom he has hardly any association in the epic; neither has Shri). Indra is the most important deity and commissions Rama’s exploits. Whaling showed that Rama’s heroic exploits follow the paradigm of Indra’s victory over Vritra and he actually uses Indra’s weapon and chariot. Indra even says that with his help Rama will defeat Ravana whose son has conquered him. Thus Rama is his successor in the battle against the demons.² Brockington’s findings are that Varuna has faded in importance, his twin Mitra is absent, and his *pasha* (noose) has been taken over by Yama. There is no serious thought regarding life after death, or of a previous existence. Destiny is assigned a limited role. Brahma becomes prominent in the second stage as the creator (but not four-headed) and replaces Indra as boon-bestower. It is he, and not Vishnu, who as a boar raises up the earth from the waters. While in *Ramayana* it is Indra who restores the dead warriors to life at Rama’s request, in the *Ramopakhyana* of *Mahabharata* this is changed to Brahma. Ganesha is absent, but Skanda is mentioned as Kartikeya and Guha. Shiva is not regarded as superior to the gods and is usually referred to as Rudra along with his wife Arajaputri and mount Nandi. References to images are totally absent till the third or fourth stage. Buddhism and Jainism are unknown. There is little sign of cow-veneration (Bharadvaja offers Rama beef at 2.48.16 and Rama refers to the sage Kandu killing a cow at his father’s command). The Asuras are characterised more by power than by demonic traits. The meagre detail regarding sacrifices mostly relates not to the sages but to the Rakshasas who are associated with *caityas* (cult spots). Both epics make no reference to any fixed or constructed place of worship. Religion is projected more as social duty, matching the *Kshatriya* background of the epic, and less formal aspects of worship receive emphasis. The *ashvamedha* description comes in the later Bala and Uttara Kandas, and it is interesting to see the similarity between the description in the Bala Kanda and Yudhishtira’s *ashvamedha* (Vyasa cites the example of Rama when urging Yudhishtira to perform this sacrifice). Rama is wholly human in the earliest stage. Hanuman denies identification with Vishnu twice and explicitly calls Rama human in 5.48.11 and 49.26. In the second stage, Rama begins to display divine qualities and is compared particularly with Indra (60 times at least), while Lakshmana is compared to Vishnu, in keeping with the early tradition of Vishnu being the youngest of the Adityas. Indra remains the standard comparison for the warrior king as the *Kshatriya*’s ideal. Indra loses ground in Bala and Uttara Kandas to Vishnu and Shiva who gain status considerably. The latest parts subordinate Shiva to Vishnu. In the third stage, around the second century AD (Bala and Uttara Kandas and sarga 105 of Yuddhakanda) Rama is identified with Vishnu. This is consolidated in the fourth and fifth stages.

Another important contribution of Brockington is showing that Valmiki’s Rama is quite different from the hero of the vernacular versions of the epic. He draws heavily upon his papers on religious attitudes and stereotyped expressions to show how the

stereotyped expression *ramo dharmabhritam varah* changed in meaning from “a pillar of the correct social order” to “best of upholders of righteousness”. It is interesting to see how the same conclusion was arrived at without lexical analysis on thematic grounds by Whaling who points out that Rama upholds the ideal of a transcendent dharma which cannot be pinned down in terms of Dharmashastra but which is operative in the practical world in books II to VI. Brockington ignores Whaling’s perceptive insight that Valmiki stresses Rama’s Aryan ancestry while Vyasa is not concerned about Krishna’s, and that Rama has none of Krishna’s philosophical brilliance. However, it is interesting that in book VI after the fire ordeal Indra and Brahma refer to Rama as Krishna!³ He is a dynastic hero promoting the idea of raja dharma and presiding over the ideal kingdom as an ideal individual setting norms of dharma, of human relationships and of heroism.

Whaling also made the telling point that the critical century of the Ramayana tradition was not that of its composition in the fourth century BC but when people came to believe in him as God (Tulsi and Kabir in the 15th century AD). Brockington points out that while filial duty is the mainspring of the first part of the plot, it is devotion to Sita in the second. Moral scruples creep in at the second stage (Sita advising Rama against killing Rakshasas, Rama justifying killing Vali, the fire-ordeal). Later still Sita has to prove her chastity by appealing to the earth and Rama’s character has evolved from the martial to the moral, from the hero to the avatara. The analysis of “the names of Rama” reveals the relative lack of stereotyping in epithets stressing his strength, prowess, and pugnacity, suggesting that the martial aspect was not particularly important in the conceptualisation of his character. Moreover, the popular image of Rama as the bowman has no support in the epic where this appellative is applied more often to Lakshmana and as often to others, including Rakshasas. Surprisingly, allusion to Rama’s wisdom (*ramasya dhimatah*) is not noticeably frequent except in the fourth stage. Brockington points out that the reference to Rama’s wisdom in the context of Sita’s banishment “indicates the (later) poet’s explicit approval of the attitudes involved.” The terms indicating Rama’s parentage decline in frequency while the more general dynastic terms *raghava* and *kakutstha* increase, with a shift to the elaborate *raghunandana* in the later stages—the form preferred from Kalidasa to Tulsidas.

A parallel examination of “the names of Sita” is fascinating in revealing that she is depicted as a much more independent and forceful figure by Valmiki than she is made into in later versions and in the popular conception. She is ready to argue with Rama and it is her wishes that prevail at two crucial junctures of the plot (the exile and the golden deer). Even in the third stage, the same spiritedness is displayed in undergoing the fire-ordeal and calling upon the earth to vindicate her. The commonest epithets applied to her are patronymics—*Vaidehi*, *Maithili*, *Janakatmaja*, *Janaki*, in that order. All such epithets allude to her as Janaka’s actual daughter, the most striking being 5.31.12 where she refers to herself as *duhita janakasyaham* and none allude to her miraculous birth. *Surasutopama*, comparing her to a god’s progeny, is exclusively applied to Sita in a way that cannot be paralleled among the stereotyped epithets applied to Rama. Adjectives denoting ornamentation are not part of her basic image (*sarvangashobhana*

stresses her inherent beauty).

In an extremely important comparative study of the epic and its summary (*Ramopakhyana*) appearing in *Mahabharata*, Brockington is able to place the latter to the end of the second stage of *Ramayana* and prior to the composition of the Bala and Uttara kandas. He guesses that Ravana's genealogy was included in *Ramopakhyana* earlier than in *Ramayana* because otherwise more of the Uttara Kanda would have found place in it. He rules out "reverse borrowing" because the stereotyped expressions typical of *Ramayana* occur in *Ramopakhyana* in sequence with the narrative while those characteristic of *Mahabharata* occur more randomly. He even shows that *Ramopakhyana* is based on an older form of the Northern recension (best represented in the extant NE recension) that had not diverged as far from the Southern as now, thus silencing dissent against Sukthankar's conclusions, and encouraging taking them further.

The vexed question of dating the epic receives an extremely valuable input from the study of four passages in *Mahabharata* and *Harivamsa*, two of which treat Rama as Vishnu's avatara and the other two include him among 16 ancient kings. Brockington shows their common dependence on the end of the Yuddhakanda, with the Shanti Parva passage drawing directly on it being the earliest, treating Rama as a mortal hero. The *Harivamsa* version is familiar with the Uttara Kanda's divinisation of Rama and is expanded in the Sabha Parva passage. The Drona Parva passage is familiar with Rama as mortal hero and as avatara. Brockington concludes that such evidence corroborates dating the final version of *Ramayana* well ahead of *Mahabharata*'s final redaction, sometime in the middle of the later epic's growth.

The conclusions that emerge from such a rigorous presentation of evidence can assuredly constitute the foundations of what one may describe as the "higher criticism" of the epic. Brockington's work encourages the completion of a complete lexical study that should no longer be regarded as a Sisyphean task today with digitised versions of the epics available for computerised analysis. It is fascinating to see how "lower criticism" has moved through its microscopic analysis to a finding posited long back in Sri Aurobindo's "higher criticism": "His (Valmiki's) picture of an ideal imperialism is sound and noble and the spirit of the Koshalan Ikshwakus that monarchy must be broad-based on the people's will and yet broad-based on justice, truth and good government is admirably developed as an undertone of the poem." The difference is that precisely because of his preoccupation with minutiae and "righteous Rama", Brockington loses a sense of proportion and does not realise that unlike Vyasa for whom in *Mahabharata* good government is the "uppermost and weightiest drift...He (Valmiki) is a poet who makes occasional use of public affairs as part of his wide human subject." (Sri Aurobindo)

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

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