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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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O BEAUTIFUL BODY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

O BEAUTIFUL body of the incarnate Word,
Thy thoughts are mine, I have spoken with thy voice....
A vision shall compel thy coursing breath,
Thy heart shall drive thee on the wheel of works,
Thy mind shall urge thee through the flames of thought,
To meet me in the abyss and on the heights,
To feel me in the tempest and the calm
And love me in the noble and the vile,
In beautiful things and terrible desire.
The pains of hell shall be to thee my kiss,
The flowers of heaven persuade thee with my touch.
My fiercest masks shall my attractions bring.
Music shall find thee in the voice of swords,
Beauty pursue thee through the core of flame.
Thou shalt know me in the rolling of the spheres
And cross me in the atoms of the whirl.
The wheeling forces of my universe
Shall cry to thee the summons of my name....
Thou shalt reflect my hidden heart of joy,
Thou shalt drink down my sweetness unalloyed
In my pure lotus-cup of starry brim.
My dreadful hands laid on thy bosom shall force
Thy being bathed in fiercest longing's streams.
Thou shalt discover the one and quivering note
And cry, the harp of all my melodies,
And roll, my foaming wave in seas of love.
Even my disasters' clutch shall be to thee
The ordeal of my rapture's contrary shape:
In pain's self shall smile on thee my secret face:
Thou shalt bear my ruthless beauty unabridged
Amid the world's intolerable wrongs,
Trampled by the violent misdeeds of Time
Cry out to the ecstasy of my rapture's touch.
All beings shall be to thy life my emissaries;
Drawn to me on the bosom of thy friend,
Compelled to meet me in thy enemy's eyes,
My creatures shall demand me from thy heart.
Thou shalt not shrink from any brother soul.
Thou shalt be attracted helplessly to all.
Men seeing thee shall feel my hands of joy,

In sorrow's pangs feel steps of the world's delight,
 Their life experience its tumultuous shock
 In the mutual craving of two opposites.
 Hearts touched by thy love shall answer to my call,
 Discover the ancient music of the spheres
 In the revealing accents of thy voice,
 And nearer draw to me because thou art:
 Enamoured of thy spirit's loveliness
 They shall embrace my body in thy soul,
 Hear in thy life the beauty of my laugh,
 Know the thrilled bliss with which I made the worlds.
 All that thou hast, shall be for others' bliss,
 All that thou art, shall to my hands belong.
 I will pour delight from thee as from a jar,
 I will whirl thee as my chariot through the ways,
 I will use thee as my sword and as my lyre,
 I will play on thee my minstrelsies of thought.
 And when thou art vibrant with all ecstasy,
 And when thou liv'st one spirit with all things,
 Then will I spare thee not my living fires,
 But make thee a channel for my timeless force.
 My hidden presence led thee unknowing on
 From thy beginning in earth's voiceless bosom
 Through life and pain and time and will and death,
 Through outer shocks and inner silences
 Along the mystic roads of Space and Time
 To the experience which all Nature hides.
 Who hunts and seizes me, my captive grows:
 This shalt thou henceforth learn from thy heart-beats.
 For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!
 O lasso of my rapture's widening noose,
 Become my cord of universal love.
 The spirit ensnared by thee force to delight
 Of creation's oneness sweet and fathomless,
 Compelled to embrace my myriad unities
 And all my endless forms and divine souls.
 O Mind, grow full of the eternal peace;
 O Word, cry out the immortal litany:
 Built is the golden tower, the flame-child born.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Savitri, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 698-702)

THE PRESENT CRISIS AND ITS SOLUTION

AT present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it. This new fullness of the means of life might be, by its power for a release from the incessant unsatisfied stress of his economic and physical needs, an opportunity for the full pursuit of other and greater aims surpassing the material existence, for the discovery of a higher truth and good and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being: but it is being used instead for the multiplication of new wants and an aggressive expansion of the collective ego. At the same time Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements, no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life-unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness. All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at his disposal, in the belief that this is his way out to something ideal. The evolution of human mind and life must necessarily lead towards an increasing universality; but on a basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening to the universal can only create a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideas and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and intermixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, because it is not taken up by a creative harmonising light of the Spirit, must welter in a universalised confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life. Man has harmonised life in the past by organised ideation and limitation; he has created societies based on fixed ideas or fixed customs, a fixed cultural system or an organic life-system, each with its own order; the

throwing of all these into the melting-pot of a more and more intermingling life and a pouring in of ever new ideas and motives and facts and possibilities call for a new, a greater consciousness to meet and master the increasing potentialities of existence and harmonise them. Reason and Science can only help by standardising, by fixing everything into an artificially arranged and mechanised unity of material life. A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life.

A life of unity, mutuality and harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being is the only truth of life that can successfully replace the imperfect mental constructions of the past which were a combination of association and regulated conflict, an accommodation of egos and interests grouped or dovetailed into each other to form a society, a consolidation by common general life-motives, a unification by need and the pressure of struggle with outside forces. It is such a change and such a reshaping of life for which humanity is blindly beginning to seek, now more and more with a sense that its very existence depends upon finding the way. The evolution of Mind working upon Life has developed an organisation of the activity of Mind and use of Matter which can no longer be supported by human capacity without an inner change. An accommodation of the egocentric human individuality, separative even in association, to a system of living which demands unity, perfect mutuality, harmony, is imperative. But because the burden which is being laid on mankind is too great for the present littleness of the human personality and its petty mind and small life-instincts, because it cannot operate the needed change, because it is using this new apparatus and organisation to serve the old infraspirtual and infrarational life-self of humanity, the destiny of the race seems to be heading dangerously, as if impatiently and in spite of itself, under the drive of the vital ego seized by colossal forces which are on the same scale as the huge mechanical organisation of life and scientific knowledge which it has evolved, a scale too large for its reason and will to handle, into a prolonged confusion and perilous crisis and darkness of violent shifting incertitude. Even if this turns out to be a passing phase or appearance and a tolerable structural accommodation is found which will enable mankind to proceed less catastrophically on its uncertain journey, this can only be a respite. For the problem is fundamental and in putting it evolutionary Nature in man is confronting herself with a critical choice which must one day be solved in the true sense if the race is to arrive or even to survive. The evolutionary nisis is pushing towards a development of the cosmic Force in terrestrial life which needs a larger mental and vital being to support it, a wider Mind, a greater wider more conscious unanimsed Life-Soul, Anima, and that again needs an unveiling of the supporting Soul and spiritual Self within to maintain it.

A rational and scientific formula of the vitalistic and materialistic human being and his life, a search for a perfected economic society and the democratic cultus of the average man are all that the modern mind presents us in this crisis as a light for its solution. Whatever the truth supporting these ideas, this is clearly not enough to meet the need of a humanity which is missioned to evolve beyond itself or, at any rate, if it is to live, must evolve far beyond anything that it at present is. A life-instinct in the race and in the

average man himself has felt the inadequacy and has been driving towards a reversal of values or a discovery of new values and a transfer of life to a new foundation. This has taken the form of an attempt to find a simple and ready-made basis of unity, mutuality, harmony for the common life, to enforce it by a suppression of the competitive clash of egos and so to arrive at a life of identity for the community in place of a life of difference. But to realise these desirable ends the means adopted have been the forcible and successful materialisation of a few restricted ideas or slogans enthroned to the exclusion of all other thought, the suppression of the mind of the individual, a mechanised compression of the elements of life, a mechanised unity and drive of the life-force, a coercion of man by the State, the substitution of the communal for the individual ego. The communal ego is idealised as the soul of the nation, the race, the community; but this is a colossal and may turn out to be a fatal error. A forced and imposed unanimity of mind, life, action raised to their highest tension under the drive of something which is thought to be greater, the collective soul, the collective life, is the formula found. But this obscure collective being is not the soul or self of the community; it is a life-force that rises from the subconscious and, if denied the light of guidance by the reason, can be driven only by dark massive forces which are powerful but dangerous for the race because they are alien to the conscious evolution of which man is the trustee and bearer. It is not in this direction that evolutionary Nature has pointed mankind; this is a reversion towards something that she had left behind her.

Another solution that is attempted reposes still on the materialistic reason and a unified organisation of the economic life of the race; but the method that is being employed is the same, a forced compression and imposed unanimity of mind and life and a mechanical organisation of the communal existence. A unanimity of this kind can only be maintained by a compression of all freedom of thought and life, and that must bring about either the efficient stability of a termite civilisation or a drying up of the springs of life and a swift or slow decadence. It is through the growth of consciousness that the collective soul and its life can become aware of itself and develop; the free play of mind and life is essential for the growth of consciousness: for mind and life are the soul's only instrumentation until a higher instrumentation develops; they must not be inhibited in their action or rendered rigid, unplastic and unprogressive. The difficulties or disorders engendered by the growth of the individual mind and life cannot be healthily removed by the suppression of the individual; the true cure can only be achieved by his progression to a greater consciousness in which he is fulfilled and perfected.

An alternative solution is the development of an enlightened reason and will of the normal man consenting to a new socialised life in which he will subordinate his ego for the sake of the right arrangement of the life of the community. If we inquire how this radical change is to be brought about, two agencies seem to be suggested, the agency of a greater and better mental knowledge, right ideas, right information, right training of the social and civic individual and the agency of a new social machinery which will solve everything by the magic of the social machine cutting humanity into a better pattern. But it has not been found in experience, whatever might have once been hoped, that educa-

tion and intellectual training by itself can change man; it only provides the human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego. Nor can human mind and life be cut into perfection,—even into what is thought to be perfection, a constructed substitute,—by any kind of social machinery; matter can be so cut, thought can be so cut, but in our human existence matter and thought are only instruments for the soul and the life-force. Machinery cannot form the soul and life-force into standardised shapes; it can at best coerce them, make soul and mind inert and stationary and regulate the life's outward action; but if this is to be effectively done, coercion and compression of the mind and life are indispensable and that again spells either unprogressive stability or decadence. The reasoning mind with its logical practicality has no other way of getting the better of Nature's ambiguous and complex movements than a regulation and mechanisation of mind and life. If that is done, the soul of humanity will either have to recover its freedom and growth by a revolt and a destruction of the machine into whose grip it has been cast or escape by a withdrawal into itself and a rejection of life. Man's true way out is to discover his soul and its self-force and instrumentation and replace by it both the mechanisation of mind and the ignorance and disorder of life-nature. But there would be little room and freedom for such a movement of self-discovery and self-effectuation in a closely regulated and mechanised social existence.

There is the possibility that in the swing back from a mechanistic idea of life and society the human mind may seek refuge in a return to the religious idea and a society governed or sanctioned by religion. But organised religion, though it can provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society; it could not do so because, in governing society, it had to compromise with the lower parts of life and could not insist on the inner change of the whole being; it could insist only on a credal adherence, a formal acceptance of its ethical standards and a conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual. Religion so conceived can give a religio-ethical colour or surface tinge,—sometimes, if it maintains a strong kernel of inner experience, it can generalise to some extent an incomplete spiritual tendency; but it does not transform the race, it cannot create a new principle of the human existence. A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself. Another possible conception akin to the religious solution is the guidance of society by men of spiritual attainment, the brotherhood or unity of all in the faith or in the discipline, the spiritualisation of life and society by the taking up of the old machinery of life into such a unification or inventing a new machinery. This too has been attempted before without success; it was the original founding idea of more than one religion: but the human ego and vital nature were too strong for a religious idea working on the mind and by the mind to overcome its resistance. It is only the full emergence of the soul, the full descent of the native light and power of the Spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental Supernature that can effect this evolutionary miracle.

At first sight this insistence on a radical change of nature might seem to put off all the hope of humanity to a distant evolutionary future; for the transcendence of our normal human nature, a transcendence of our mental, vital and physical being, has the appearance of an endeavour too high and difficult and at present, for man as he is, impossible. Even if it were so, it would still remain the sole possibility for the transmutation of life; for to hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition; it is to ask for something unnatural and unreal, an impossible miracle. But what is demanded by this change is not something altogether distant, alien to our existence and radically impossible; for what has to be developed is there in our being and not something outside it: what evolutionary Nature presses for, is an awakening to the knowledge of self, the discovery of self, the manifestation of the self and spirit within us and the release of its self-knowledge, its self-power, its native self-instrumentation. It is, besides, a step for which the whole of evolution has been a preparation and which is brought closer at each crisis of human destiny when the mental and vital evolution of the being touches a point where intellect and vital force reach some acme of tension and there is a need either for them to collapse, to sink back into a torpor of defeat or a repose of unprogressive quiescence or to rend their way through the veil against which they are straining. What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance. To that call in the being there must always be some answer in the Divine Reality and in Nature.

SRI AUROBINDO

(The Life Divine, SABCL, Vol. 19, pp. 1053-60)

THERE SHALL MOVE ON THE EARTH...

THE gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
The incarnate spirits yearn

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stair-way wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness's end.

A little more and the new life's doors
Shall be carved in silver light
With its aureate roof and mosaic floors
In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a raiment of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you.

SRI AUROBINDO

(From A God's Labour, *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 102)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of February 2003)

Is there any rule that before Darshan there is a period of struggle or retrogression?

Not necessarily retrogression, but there is often a struggle.

Do the wrong movements, vital deviations and periods of physical inertia go on appearing at every stage of transformation?

It is not a rule; but there is very often a strong opposition offered at each stage of the transformation and it may take these forms.

If the lower vital is so recalcitrant that only a “strong Light” can enlighten it, then how can the psychic do it? It can only leave it to the higher Light—isn’t that so?

The psychic when sufficiently developed can be strong enough to make the preliminary clearance.

If the lower vital is so difficult to enlighten, how much more difficult it must be to enlighten or transform the physical? Which “strong Light” can do it? Is it that of the Intuitive or of the Overmind?

It is the supramental alone that can transform the material being, but the physical mind and the physical vital can be very much changed by the action of the psychic and of the overmind. The entire change however is made only when there is the supramental influence. But for the present the psychic is the force that must be relied on for the preliminary purification of this lower nature.

Yesterday I found that when there is any tendency of tamas, it is better to do some physical work side by side with my writing or calculating work. But somebody said that Mother does not like supervisors to do physical work with the workmen. Is there any truth in that?

Absolutely no truth in it. You can do physical work when you feel the need.

I regret my anger, hatred and violent action. The whole night I tried to put forth these ideas and establish them in me: “What do you get by beating someone? Is it the soul or mind or vital of the person beaten that you have to take revenge against?” “He is also doing Mother’s work. How can you hate one who serves the Divine?” And so on. I struggled to push them out and by morning they vanished.

But is it that you identify yourself with the movement and do not reject it? It is not that you have not the power—you have shown that you can do it—your mind is rational enough and your will strong enough to do it. It is evident that something in your mind accepted and identified itself with it, otherwise it could not have happened, not only once in a fit of anger, but a second time as if with purpose. This will not do. You must react at once and stop it. It is inadmissible that you should allow yourself to be possessed and driven by a dark vital Force like that. The irrational feeling of hatred must also be rooted up and cast away for ever. There can be no half measures with these things. The slightest indulgence to such things is a betrayal of the Divine within you.

17 March 1933

Is the Overmind the same as the “supramental reason” mentioned in the Arya?

No—although there is supramentalised overmind which is not very different from it, but overmind has always something relative in its knowledge.

I had a slight curiosity to see a baby, but when I went near one I did not feel the vital-physical charm that I used to. Also I felt that children “pull” at us for eatables and playthings. What is the atmosphere usually around children?

Unconsciousness and desire.

Lines of songs, religious or political, sometimes appear in my mind and they revolve for a time. Is this the physical mind’s activity of “repetition”?

Yes, it is the mechanical part of the physical mind that catches things and repeats them without reason.

18 March 1933

This morning P asked me the cost for flooring his room. I told him, without your permission or C’s. Should the cost be kept secret?

Yes, it is better not to answer or to give an evasive reply.

Today I tried hard to prevent the mechanical repetition of songs but got tired out by their resistance. One line followed another uselessly.

Probably they will drop off of themselves in the end.

At work I got so irritated by my forgetfulness in losing my pencil that I almost wept. Then I became so irritated at not being able to tie a cloth round my head that I thought of injuring my hands. What causes this irritation?

Excitement of the nerves which should be immediately rejected.

How is it that K's Telugu song touched me so much that it brought tears to my eyes, even though I understood neither its meaning nor its music value?

Probably something *behind* the mere idea and the more outer aesthetic value—something in the spirit of the song itself.

Is there any truth that when you mention something about the “hostiles”, they recognise it and are afraid and partly weakened?

It depends—some are; but there are others who are too strong and stubborn to give up easily.

Is it true that when you write “must”, it is from the Supermind, and when you write “may be” or “if”, it is from the Overmind?

No—I can't say that. The Overmind has its certitudes also, though of a less absolute kind than the supramental.

Can the hostiles disappear completely so far as your circle of work is concerned?

In the end—yes.

If the hostiles know our plans and obstruct them, is it not better to reveal their methods and plans to us?

Again, it cannot be said of all cases. Some are helped by being told of the hostiles and their work, others get disturbed—so it is no use revealing to all.

19 March 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

MOON-PROMPTED

A SILVER shimmer and silence
Far out upon the sea:
Silenceward steps of yearning
Inly to Thee,
Mother of tranquil shine.

Soft pearl glimmer in hazing,
Yet moon-revealing, sky:
A hush and a dim heard footfall—
And Grace is nigh,
Mother of innerhood shrine.

Power and immaculate Glory,
Whom outward eyes may greet—
In this hour might the inward quicken,
Cloudlessly meet
Mother and Beauty Divine.

September 24, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: Exceedingly beautiful in all ways. The modulation of the rhythm is exquisite.

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

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 225)

CONCENTRATION

THE movement that stores up and concentrates is no less needed than the movement that spreads and diffuses.

13 April 1935

*

Concentration does not aim for any effect, but is simple and persistent.

*

Concentration on a precise goal is helpful to development.

*

The more we concentrate on the goal, the more it blossoms forth and becomes precise.

*

The Yogi knows by his capacity for a containing or dynamic identity with things and persons and forces.

11 April 1935

*

“Knowledge can only come by conscious identity, for that is the only true knowledge, —existence aware of itself.”¹— Sri Aurobindo

There is always some kind of *unconscious identification* with the surrounding people and things; but by will and practice one can learn to concentrate on somebody or something and to get consciously identified with this person or this thing, and through this identification you know the nature of the person or the thing.

20 May 1955

*

Nothing is impossible for one who is attentive.

*

It is said that the faculty of concentrated attention is at the source of all successful activity. Indeed the capacity and value of a man can be measured by his capacity of concentrated attention.²

In order to obtain this concentration it is generally recommended to reduce one's activities, to make a choice and confine oneself to this choice alone, so as not to disperse one's energy and attention. For the normal man, this method is good, sometimes even indispensable. But one can imagine something better.

*

At times I try to silence the mind, at times to surrender and at times to find my psychic being. Thus I cannot fix my attention on a single thing. Which one should I try first?

All should be done and each one when it comes spontaneously.

16 October 1964

THE MOTHER

(*Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 14, pp. 51-52)

Notes and References

1. *The Life Divine*, Cent. Vol. 18, p. 213.
2. The Mother's note: Generally it comes through interest and a special attraction for a subject.

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

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 225)

PROPER CONDUCT

I KNOW that people are fussy and unreasonable. But unless their consciousness changes, what else can we expect from them?

*

People are here to change their consciousness. Unless they become, *all of them*, *true* to their *aim*, nothing *true* can be done.

*

It is evident that those who want to live here must change not so much their way of living as their way of being.

We are striving towards a consciousness more deep, more total and more true; because our *raison d'être* is to manifest this consciousness.

*

What is the use of being a sadhak if, as soon as we act, we act like the ignorant ordinary man?

*

We are expected to give to the world an example of better life but surely *not* of misbehaviour.

*

The moment one enters the life of the Ashram and takes up the yoga, he ceases to belong to any creed or caste or race; he is one of Sri Aurobindo's disciples and nothing else. To cut jokes about what he was in the past is altogether incongruous and in bad taste, and only helps to keep up in both him and the speaker an old and wrong mental attitude.

January 1929

*

When X, a dancer, came here to see You, many sadhaks flocked around him. They insisted on his performing some dances. But he said he had come here without any dance dresses. He did not appreciate people's desires for dances. He secretly told me that if he came here again he would take particular care not to bring the dance costumes. For he would come not for showing himself off but for the yoga!

He is quite right. Too many people in the Ashram forget that they are here *for yoga*.

7 January 1938

*

The Ashram is meant for Yoga, not for musical entertainment or other social activities.

Those that live in the Ashram are requested to live quietly and noiselessly and if they are not capable themselves of meditation they must, at least, leave the others to meditate.

*

I do not know who is spreading the rumour that I do not like music. That is not true at all—I like music very much, but it should be heard in a small circle, that is, played for five or six people at the most. When there is a crowd it becomes a social gathering, more often than not, and the atmosphere that is created is not good.

*

Apart from the fact that the Ashram is not meant for those who seek the satisfaction of their vital or sentimental desires, but for those who aspire to perfect their consecration to the Divine, I have to warn you that here you must do only what can be done publicly because nothing can remain hidden.

25 April 1958

*

In the Ashram one must do only what one may do publicly, for nothing remains hidden. As for my protection it is equally over all and not over some as against others.

*

It is impossible to give a single answer for all cases. With each person and on each occasion, it will differ. But, at any rate, it can be said that whoever lives in a community must follow, as much as possible, the rules of that community. Moreover people have a right to go against collective rules only when all their actions are prompted exclusively by the Divine in them. If all they do, all they say is done and said as they would do and say in the presence of the Divine, then, but then only, they have the right to say, “I follow my own rule and no other.”

28 January 1960

*

With “personal feelings” nothing can be done in the Ashram.

Rise above personal feelings and the doors of realisation will open.

3 February 1965

*

It is high time that peace and harmony should reign in the Ashram.

*

(About a fight between two Ashramites)

All that seems very much like going back to the time of primitive man in the caves.

We do not wish to live the artificial life of civilised society, but it would be better to climb up the ladder towards a greater civilisation rather than to fall backwards to the rule of the blows.

*

I have sent for the “delinquent” to tell him that this kind of activity is out of place in the Ashram, though unfortunately it is only too often practised here; but I am sending you this letter before seeing him so that you may know that he has nothing to do with what I am writing to you.

But the second part of your letter made me see that, without justifying the aggression, for an aggression cannot be justified, at least your state of mind warrants it. I have rarely seen such a display of hatred and envy, bitter criticism and commonplace morality arising from unsatisfied and repressed desires.

All this is not very nice and immediately takes away the sympathy one could have felt because of the blows you received.

I thank you for reminding me that my position gives me duties and responsibilities, but it is better to call the Grace rather than justice, for if it were to come into action very few would be those who could stand before it.

*

Sexual relations are forbidden in the Ashram.

So, honesty demands a choice between the Ashram and sexual relations. It is a matter of conscience.

12 June 1971

*

The Ashram is not a place for being in love with anyone. If you want to lapse into such a stupidity, you may do so elsewhere, not here.

THE MOTHER

(Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 13, pp. 119-23)

THREE CONCEPTIONS OF THE WORLD

1. *Buddhist and Shankarite:*

The world is an illusion, a field of ignorance and suffering due to ignorance. The one thing to do is to get out of it as soon as possible and to disappear into the original Non-Existence or Non-Manifestation.

2. *The Vedantic as very commonly understood:*

The world is essentially divine, for the Divine is omnipresent there. But its exterior expression is distorted, obscure, ignorant, perverted. The one thing to do is to become conscious of the inner Divine and remain fixed in that consciousness without troubling about the world; for this external world cannot change and will always be in its natural state of unconsciousness and ignorance.

3. *Sri Aurobindo's view:*

The world as it is, is not the divine creation it is meant to be, but an obscure and perverted expression of it. It is not the expression of the divine consciousness and will, but this is what it is meant to become; it has been created to develop into a perfect manifestation of the Divine under all His forms and aspects—Light and Knowledge, Power, Love and Beauty.

This is our conception of it and the aim we follow.

24 February 1936

THE MOTHER

(*Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 33)

THE SITUATION OF TODAY

(1)

It is not of today, nor of yesterday, but also of the day before yesterday and the day before and the day before. The story is as old as human consciousness itself. Whether it will be the same tomorrow remains to be seen.

It is the fate of all spiritual endeavour to raise in its wake a contrary movement that declares and demands its negation. The Buddha says: surrounded as we are by enemies, let us not be inimical to them. The Christ, as we all know, when being led with a crown of thorns on his head and the cross on his back, heaved a sigh and prayed to the Lord to pardon all those who did not know what they were doing. In the early centuries of the Christian era when Rome sought to spread her gospel of Christendom and extend its frontiers, the vandals rose up against it and from their barbarian soil of Germania swept through the countries like a hurricane, laying waste everything before them till they reached the Holy City itself, pillaging and ravaging it, desecrating the basilica,—leaving their name as an immortal legacy to mankind for such deeds of theirs. And centuries later, the little maid of Orléans, Jeanne D’arc, was burnt alive, because she said that she saw the angels and heard their voices and conversed with God. And Mahammad—whose glory today rings reverberant in all the four corners of the globe—in his day was tracked from place to place like a hunted animal. Since then the situation seems to have worsened, not improved; for even as late as the enlightened nineteenth century, towards its end, we find a poignant picture, by the great dramatist Ibsen, of the social crisis of today, how the people, the masses, are not capable of recognizing their own secular good—not to speak of any higher spiritual welfare—and one who does or tries to do a really good turn to them is dubbed “An Enemy of the People”.

Today the opposition is infinitely greater. The call now to humanity is for an infinitely greater change—an inner change in the consciousness and an outer change in life and material existence. Also the change is to be a radical change, that is to say, from the very root, not merely a superficial reform. The aim is not to leave the world as it is or just a little better in some way, if possible, but to remould it in the very substance and constitution of the Spirit. And the ultimate goal of earthly life is not the Divine’s crucified body, but the perfected glorious body.

Naturally the old habits, the millennial forces, the ignorant and obscure movements of instinct and tradition cannot suffer such an upsetting. Earthly creatures, wherever they are, cannot bear the light that descends to illumine the earth. Its impact is too strong: the beings that abide in cool shades or cosy darkness struggle and wriggle, they fear to be dissolved; they desire no change. But the decree has gone forth. And earth moves... towards the Light.

(2)

Sri Aurobindo founded the Ashram to give a form to the descending light, to make of man an angel, not leaving him to remain an animal or half animal as he now is.

The Mother's dream from her childhood was to find a place upon earth where men would be free, happy, wise, pure, one in love, above want, dwelling in the plenitude of prosperity, both inner and outer. She was building up, she is building up a structure in that direction, naturally under the restrictions and conditions of prevailing circumstances, seeking to open them out for the play of a higher order of consciousness, a superior status of being, a luminous mode of life.

Opposition from the stagnant order, opposition from domains that do not want man to be free from his past and present and become a being of the future, is inevitable in the nature of things. Opposition is also meant to be a test and a training for perfection. Through troubles, tribulations, through whatever accidents and incidents happen, we move unflinchingly to the Divine Fulfilment.

Trials and tribulations are not new to the Ashram. From the first day Sri Aurobindo planted the seed here more than half a century ago,* it has been buffeted by bad weather. He was advised to quit, offered a cosy retreat in the Himalayas by the Imperial British. The French regime offered him an equally agreeable resort, a peaceful haven on the Mediterranean coast of Africa. And even among well-wishers here, some were eager to take him out for a joy ride to... an unknown destination. But Sri Aurobindo had made his choice. This is the holy spot, this is the seat for his sadhana and siddhi—Pithasthan. The Mother has not abjured his choice, she continues.

Even so the Buddha had taken his seat under the Bo-tree and declared: I am here and I do not move. Let my body dry up, I sit firm and go through, to the end.

The passage to heaven, Sri Aurobindo says, lies through hell. Here is his warning and beckoning:

Here must the traveller of the upward way—
For daring Hell's kingdoms winds the heavenly route—
Pause or pass slowly through the perilous space,
A prayer upon his lips and the great Name.**

The nether forces can never divert or deflect the Divine Decree. That alone is carried out and fulfilled. And in His Will is our peace.

When a mountain surges up, lifts its peak high in the heaven, an opposite movement is generated that seeks to drag it down and bring it to the original level ground—the result being formidable glaciers and cataracts and land-slides hurtling down. But through these accidents and incidents—they are no more than that—the mountain remains firm,

* Written in the 1960s.

** *Savitri*, p. 210.

the living structure that is to be there abides in its integrality and greatness, although the accidents look like a tearing and a mauling of its body.

Through all contraries and adversities, through all that are broken and torn, through all that pass and disappear grows slowly and emerges irrevocably that which the Supreme wills towards the final consummation. And one day we all shall see

Built is the golden tower, the flame child born.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

The materialism of the nineteenth century gave place first to a novel and profound vitalism which has taken various forms from Nietzsche's theory of the Will to be and Will to Power as the root and law of life to the new pluralistic and pragmatic philosophy which is pluralistic because it has its eye fixed on life rather than on the soul and pragmatic because it seeks to interpret being in the terms of force and action rather than of light and knowledge. These tendencies of thought, which had until yesterday a profound influence on the life and thought of Europe prior to the outbreak of the great War, especially in France and Germany, were not a mere superficial recoil from intellectualism to life and action,—although in their application by lesser minds they often assumed that aspect; they were an attempt to read profoundly and live by the Life-Soul of the universe and tended to be deeply psychological and subjective in their method. From behind them, arising in the void created by the discrediting of the old rationalistic intellectualism, there had begun to arise a new Intuitionism, not yet clearly aware of its own drive and nature, which seeks through the forms and powers of Life for that which is behind Life and sometimes even lays as yet uncertain hands on the sealed doors of the Spirit.

(*The Human Cycle*, CWSA, Vol. 25, pp. 29-30)

INTERVIEW OF 8 SEPTEMBER 1979

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

(Continued from the issue of February 2003)

P: Now when did you come?

A: 16th December.

L: Sri Aurobindo had retired just before...

A: He had retired a year earlier.

P: Right. I wasn't really quite sure whether...

A: There were darshans or not? But there must have been because this darshan seemed to be a part of a routine...

P: Now we look back, after the thing became established, with a darshan happening on three or later four times a year. We look back, but one does not know whether in that first year it immediately took that fixed shape that we are used to.

A: It was probably on the Mother's birthday, and Sri Aurobindo's birthday and perhaps the 24th of November.

P: But you don't know for sure.

A: I don't know for sure, but you see we knew that there used to be this sort of darshan. I am sure there were a few before....

P: I know at least for sure that in August 1927 there must have been a formal darshan. But otherwise I'm not so sure. I only know for sure that on the 21st February the first part of *The Mother*, that is, "There are two powers alone that...", was issued as a message on that day....

A: Then there must have been a darshan, but I'm not sure...

P: But I have heard no positive evidence that there was an actual darshan at that time.

A: Pujalal will know, Champaklal also.

P: They used to speak even—like when he came out on his birthday even when he hadn't retired—those sort of special occasions were called darshans, even then, so the idea of darshan was already there. But when it got established in the way that later became familiar...

A: On the 15th of August there must have been a darshan, and maybe the 24th of November, because we were told that the names would be put on a list—so that was the rule at that time.

P: So did you find your names on the list?

A: We went to look for our names sort of nervously and there we found our names and we were so happy that we had been accepted for darshan.

P: Could you describe then this first darshan?

A: Yes, of course. We both went in, it was the darshan in the front room at that time...

L: You know what is the meditation hall...

A: The meditation room upstairs where the seat is now, there is a seat there and a seat in the inside room... It was in the front room...

P: That opens onto the courtyard.

A: Yes. There in the centre there is that big seat and Sri Aurobindo and Mother were sitting there.

*

A: So we went in somewhat nervous, there was Sri Aurobindo looking grand...

P: You went up the same staircase?

L: Yes.

A: Mother was looking so beautiful.

P: Sitting not in the end in that small room but in the... on the sofa?

L: On the sofa, sitting side by side...

P: Facing south?

A: Yes, where that seat is now, facing the windows.

L: You are mistaken. The sofa on which Sri Aurobindo's photograph is kept at present with two stools.

P: Yes.

A: It faces the windows to the south.

P: Right. Looking out at a palm tree.

A: Yes. She went first to Mother and Sri Aurobindo and after she finished I followed suit.

P: Were you just sort of run through or did you...?

A: No, there was plenty of time at that time. We were as good as alone in the room. People would wait outside, on the stairs. Then we knelt down and I looked at Sri Aurobindo. As is well-known I began to examine him properly, how he looked, what sort of nose he had, what sort of beard he had and all that.

P: What sort of nose and beard did he have?

A: It was quite an impressive face. After I had finished all that I felt so rotten that I had started examining him like that instead of giving my heart to him. But Lalita was quite devotional.

L: I was absolutely thunderstruck. I had never seen such a... majestic...

A: She was thunderstruck. Of course he was very impressive.

P: Mother was sitting there too?

L: Yes, side by side. Mother kept on smiling.

A: Then we went out and then the next day we met Mother again and we asked about Sri Aurobindo. "What did Sri Aurobindo say?", I asked her, "What did he say about me, Mother?" She said that Sri Aurobindo had said, "He has a good face." Exactly tit for tat, you know.

P: He was examining you back.

A: What right had I to expect anything else? He must have said something much better about her.

P: What did she say?

L: She said that Sri Aurobindo liked me very much...

A: She was much more plastic and open than I was. I was much centred in the mind...

L: I was not an intellectual.

A: But then between that darshan and the next one on August 15th there was a revolution in our lives, that is, in my life. Something broke open in the heart centre and I used always to concentrate in the heart centre, telling Mother, "I want an opening here, not here [the head], here, opening here, open me up here", because I knew that unless this opened really nothing would take place. Then I used to get such a pain in the chest, again and again. As soon as I tried to concentrate there was a pain in the chest.

P: In the middle of the chest? Not in the heart?

A: No, not in the heart, the middle of the chest. So I spoke to the Mother and she said, "I know what is happening, you don't worry about it, it will pass." And then when it passed it was like a wall breaking down and there was a sense of freedom and fragrance and fire. It was the first experience of the psychic being.

L: And as for me I told Mother, "Mother, I won't be able to do this yoga, Amal will be able to do it"—we called him Kekoo at that time. She said, "Why, how do you know?" I said, "Because I am not an intellectual person and Sri Aurobindo is very intellectual." And Mother said, "What has that got to do with his yoga? You just do what I tell you and leave the yoga to me, I will do the sadhana."

P: That was what I was going to ask: what was the sadhana at that time?

A: It was essentially the same as now: Aspiration, rejection, surrender.

P: But how did you consciously pursue your sadhana in those days?

A: Well, I tried to concentrate and be as calm as possible and ask for the heart to be opened. Then when the heart really opened and there was such unbearable ecstasy—you cannot hold it, you wonder whether it could stay, of course it didn't stay all the time—but it was something so phenomenal and after that you are sure that there couldn't be any pleasure in life which could come anywhere near the intensity of this bliss. A bliss which was self-existent and without a cause, independent of all persons, occasions, circumstances, environments.

P: In any way associated with Mother or Sri Aurobindo, or just completely...

A: No...

L: With the Mother...

A: The aspiration towards them. And that seemed to have opened up the thing. Of course Mother helped with my constant insistence that she should open me up. Then between February 21st and August 15th there was this revolutionary change. And then, at the next darshan—I asked the Mother after the darshan, "Please tell me, what did Sri Aurobindo say?" And then she said, "He was very pleased with you, there has been a great change." And that was, of course, heaven to hear. She must have told Lalita something also.

L: Yes, she always said very nice things, that Sri Aurobindo was pleased with me. I

had asked for a change of my name before that and Sri Aurobindo gave me the name of Lalita which means “beauty of refinement and harmony” and it was also the name of one of the companions of Radha. After that I started seeing Radha in Mother, whenever I saw her I saw only Radha. And I told her about it and she said, “Yes, it is a past connection of a very past life, far away. You were with me.” Whenever I told her that I didn’t know the ABC of sadhana, Mother said, “You just don’t bother about it, I am doing the sadhana, you carry on my work”, and one [thing] after another she started giving me as her work.

A: At that time Mother used to come down and move about in the Ashram, she used to come to the dining room and taste all the food first.

L: Not our dining room...

A: No, not this dining room. The dining room at that time was later Prithwi Singh’s room. We would all go there. Sometimes I used to bring my food outside to a table.

P: Not all forty of you all together in that one room?

A: No, there must have been some sort of relay. First there would be twenty or thirty people sitting and then others would come. I think all of us could have been accommodated there, forty people could be there.

L: We were sitting on the floor.

A: Two rows of twenty would be all right.

P: The room where Prithwi Singh lived or the Publication Department?

A: The room where he lived. It’s a big room. Now perhaps there have been some changes in the construction. It was quite a big room. And Pujalal used to serve food at that time.

P: Who cooked the food?

L: It was cooked by ashram servants, but supervised by a sadhika.

A: There were certain things cooked by special people. Nolini was a specialist in payas. He used to cook the payas every week.

L: And Mother always used to come in.

A: Sometimes when I would bring my dish outside and sit she would pass by and look at me and say, “Bon Appétit” and go. It was very lovely.

P: She herself ate there or did she eat with Sri Aurobindo?

L: She ate with Sri Aurobindo.

P: Where?

A: Upstairs.

L: She was always particular and always watchful over all of us throughout our life. In those days she had a lot of time and we were only a few people.

A: And every week we had a special interview with her, for half an hour, or three fourths of an hour, even an hour. Everybody had their fixed days.

P: And she made it part of her routine to see everyone on these fixed days?

A: Yes, everybody personally. And we would talk with her about our sadhana, put to her our problems and she would talk, answer, give us guidance.

L: [Whispers.]

A: Yes, we can stop now.

(To be continued)

OUR MOTHER

WHEN Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were giving their blessings individually to the Ashram people, they prostrated first to the Mother, then to Sri Aurobindo. So the Ashramites approached them from their right side and the head of the Mother was turned towards them. It lasted until Sri Aurobindo left his body. Then the Mother took charge of the destiny of the Ashram. She did it beautifully and organised it perfectly. She received high-ranking personalities, like Pandit Nehru, and made him sit beside her, on her right while the Ashram children were marching in front of them in the playground. I was one of them, proud and happy in a festive ambiance.

Soon, and for a long period, I became very intimate with the Mother. And when her health declined, she wanted me to be beside her as long as possible. She had chosen a low and large bed to rest upon most of the time. So she made me sit on the thick carpet on the floor, and I kept my forearms beside her, near her face, on her bed. I was there for hours, breathing her presence and sustaining her, in a human way, with all my love, till my heart was pierced by an arrow of her suffering that I could not bear. The impossible happened. She was disincarnating. Then she projected her head with force to the left side, toward the place that Sri Aurobindo occupied in her life for years, he who was her only reason of being in time and in eternity. Out of respect for her, nobody dared to turn her head, even slightly, from its extreme and brutal position.

The Mother rests in peace for many years in the *samadhi* made for Sri Aurobindo and for her.

YVONNE ARTAUD

THE BIRTH OF SAVITR

A Poetic Composition based on Sri Surobindo's *Savitri*

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THE MOTHER'S MISSION—DIVINITY IN ACTION

MILESTONES BEFORE AND AFTER 1950

THE Mother was engaged on various fronts of human endeavor to promote the Will of the Supreme. She was Savitri of *Savitri* personified and she was the Universal Mother in the human form carrying on sadhana for earth. She was adored as the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram who provided an anchor and direction to humanity through a representative select group of individuals. She fondly called them a human laboratory for the transformation of consciousness; which included good, bad, and indifferent sadhaks in the Ashram, Auroville, and the followers of Integral Yoga around the world. Some of her spiritual undertakings of divine mystery, such as Yoga of Body we may never be able to fathom fully. Similarly, some of her selections of individuals to work with her in various roles, we will never be able to fully grasp with our human mind that seeks rationality and attempts to comprehend within its mental framework and consequently often fails to recognize the divine providence. Just as it would be futile to attempt to understand Sri Aurobindo through the chronicles of events of his life, the same applies to the Mother. Both of them did not live within our psycho-spiritual mental frame of reference but transcended the boundaries of space and time being integral and operative Avatars of the Divine. However, an attempt is made to briefly describe the milestones of the Mother's mission before and after 1950 (the year of Sri Aurobindo's withdrawal into the Subtle Physical) to portray the divinity in action for the integral transformation of consciousness on earth, which is all about the descent of the Supramental Consciousness right down to the level of the Superinconscious.

1905-1907 Algeria with Max Théon—Discovery of the Mantra of Life and Death

During her stay in Algeria with Max Théon and his English wife Alma who was an occultist par excellence, the Mother exteriorized herself twelve times, up to the upper limit of the creation, whereupon she found the sealed Mantra of Life and Death with her name on it. She did not disclose this secret Mantra to Max Théon, an adopted name of an occultist who fashioned himself as the 'Supreme God' because she did not perceive him to be the agent of Divine. Théon with his gigantic ego wanted the Mantra for himself to become supremely powerful. In fact, the Mother considered him the emanation of the Asura (of Death).

Asura means a very powerful force representing negative vibrations. Asuras are the opponents of gods who are called Suras or Devas in Sanskrit and they represent the positive vibrations. In the Puranic period of India, Devas and Asuras were identified as the children of the Creator and always at odds with each other. Devas were pious and spiritual but the Asuras were powerful with their occultic prowess. The chief attribute that distinguishes an Asura is that he is Ego-Personified and lusts after possessions and power for the self and regards himself to be the center of all existence and everything else

as subordinate to his devouring Ego. A Deva on the other hand remains in consecration to the Divine as One Existence-Consciousness-Bliss with a character teeming with infinite possibilities and prayerfully regards the Divine to be omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. Devas are from the typal world and at the highest level belong to the Overmind.

The on-going battle since the beginning of the creation between the positive and negative forces is of dire occultic and spiritual consequences. Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, depict the battles against the Asuric forces marshalled by Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, respectively. In the twentieth century such a battle was also fought. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother working at the spiritual level saved the civilization from the onslaught of Hitler who was possessed by the Asura—the Lord of Falsehood who had proclaimed himself to be ‘the Lord of Nations’.¹

1926 Descent of Overmind and Collaboration with Sri Aurobindo for Supermind Descent

Sri Aurobindo explained the significance of the Overmind descent: “It [the 24th November 1926] was the descent of Krishna into the physical. Krishna is not the supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually bringing, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards his Ananda.”² This was a pivotal event paving the path for the envisioned descent of the Supramental Consciousness.

In the following narration the Mother tells us about developments after the descent of the Overmind into the physical:

“Suddenly, immediately, things took a certain shape a very brilliant creation was worked out in extraordinary detail, with marvellous experiences, contact with divine beings, and all kinds of manifestations which are considered miraculous... One day, I went as usual to relate to Sri Aurobindo what had been happening—we had come to something really very interesting, and perhaps I showed a little enthusiasm in my account of what had taken place—then Sri Aurobindo looked at me and said: ‘Yes, this is an Overmind creation. It is very interesting, very well done. You will perform miracles which will make you famous throughout the world, you will be able to turn events on earth topsy-turvy, indeed,...’ and then he smiled and said: ‘It will be a great success. But it is an Overmind creation. And it is not success that we want; we want to establish the Supermind on earth. One must know how to renounce immediate success in order to create the new world, the supramental world in its integrality.’ With my inner consciousness I understood immediately; a few hours later the creation was gone and from that moment we started anew on other bases.”

This astounding act of the Mother is a quasarian³ example of unequivocal surrender to the Will of the Supreme and the unflinching pursuit of integral Truth. A world of unprecedented multifaceted splendour was renounced because it was not the integral Truth. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother considered that without the fundamental transfor-

mation of the consciousness there was a potential danger that the Overmind's dazzling marvels based on its multifaceted partial truths would prevent the human race from having the required motivation to seek beyond the golden glitter and therefore miss the real gold—Supramental Truth. With the operative Overmind the beauty and joy experienced on earth would have been unprecedented leading to disincentive for humans to undertake the mysterious highest level of evolutionary integral transformation of the Supramental consciousness. It would have been like scaling the peak of K2 of Himalayas (the 2nd highest mountain peak) and feeling on the top of the world, never caring to explore the highest or to undertake expedition to climb Mount Everest—the highest peak in the world. If their concern were to become a reality then it would have caused almost forever the delay of the divine life on earth based on the integral supreme Truth. Yes, a partial success does hamper the continuity of the journey into new territory of greater glory. If the spirit of the adventure and pioneering drive are lost or subdued, the new frontiers are not explored and the enchanting new world is never discovered. The Mother would not let that happen.

Freewill is an essential feature of the evolutionary world. In the scheme of things, one would believe that the Divine would prefer a conscious collaboration from evolutionary beings—human race. However, the free-will privilege seemed to have fostered the propensity of mankind to seek instant gratification and constant pleasure which lack the longevity and *Rasa*-Quality of Bliss. The free-will opportunity bestowed upon us has facilitated mankind to be contented with partial truths and frequently propelled us to unduly champion the partial truth as the whole truth creating and perpetuating confusion, chaos, conflict, and confrontation resulting in violence, degradation and falsehood devoid of the Truth. Moreover, it has curtailed the intensity and drive of the inner consciousness of humanity to seek and identify with the cosmic consciousness and relate with the universal consciousness both of which are derivatives of the Transcendental Consciousness. Freewill also seemed to have opened a door to inertia by choice, ignorance, and indifference. For an evolutionary being the opportunity of having free-will entails indubitable responsibility to know the options available and the associated consequences to determine the course that is consistent with the divine providence. As for a nation, the freedom enjoyed is not free to the citizens but it requires immeasurable and invaluable commitments to preserve it, the free-will bestowed upon the human race intrinsically requires it to be ceaselessly evaluated for its alignment with the Will of the Supreme even while exploring and actualizing self-identity.

In short, freewill is the Boon we have to become an individualized identity in harmony with the Supreme for eternity and all through the Existence; it is also a curse if not carefully managed, as it will destroy the harmony within, among ourselves, and with the Supreme. This disruption in harmony at all fronts causes a plunge into degradation, degeneration, and decomposition as well as leading to perpetual falsehood, inertia, and ignorance. No wonder Sri Aurobindo characterized mankind's challenge as, "All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony." The capital issue to consider then is how to avoid the separative tendency from the Divine will and avoid being en-

trenched in Ignorance, which is detrimental to the harmony within and beyond. Fortunately, we have the guidance provided in Bhagavadgita—‘unreservedly and freely consecrating the work and fruit of the work to the divine and progressively becoming his instrument, his worker, and his integral Self’:

“The Gita indicates that in order that that may wholly be, the surrender must be without reservations; our Yoga, our life, our state of inner being must be determined freely by this living Infinite, not predetermined by our mind’s insistence on this or that dharma or any dharma. The divine Master of the Yoga, *yogeśvaraḥ*, will then himself take up our Yoga and raise us to our utmost possible perfection, not the perfection of any external or mental standard or limiting rule, but vast and comprehensive, to the mind incalculable. It will be a perfection developed by an all-seeing Wisdom according to the whole truth, first indeed of our human swabhava, but afterwards of a greater thing into which it will open, a spirit and power illimitable, immortal, free and all-transmuting, the light and splendour of a divine and infinite nature.... The baffling problems of our human existence of which Arjuna’s difficulty stands as an acute example, are created by our separative personality in the Ignorance. This Yoga because it puts the soul of man into its right relation with God and world-existence and makes our action God’s, the knowledge and will shaping and moving it his and our life the harmony of a divine self-expression, is the way to their total disappearance.... all doubt and perplexity gone, it can turn to the execution of the command and do faithfully whatever work for God and the world may be appointed and apportioned to it by the Master of our being, the Spirit and Godhead self-fulfilled in Time and universe.”⁴

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo charted the Sunlit Path precisely for such considerations.

1926 Ashram Formed—In the Hands of the Caring Mother

It was only after the Mother finally settled in Pondicherry in 1920 that an attempt was made at collective organisation. She had to see to the outward lives of the disciples. ... At the same time the guidance of the disciples’ inner lives began progressively to pass into the Mother’s hands, so that, when Sri Aurobindo retired into seclusion on 24 November 1926, “the whole material and spiritual charge” of what had now come to be called Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram “devolved on her”. It was in this way that “the Ashram was founded or rather founded itself in 1926”, the informal grouping of seekers taking “the form of an ashram more from the wish of the sadhaks who desired to entrust their whole inner and outer life to the Mother than from any intention or plan of hers or of Sri Aurobindo’s”. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is thus more a spontaneous growth than a deliberate creation.⁵ It became the realisation of the Mother’s long-cherished dream. She once remarked:

“At the beginning of my present earthly existence I was put into touch with many people who said they had a great inner aspiration, an urge towards something deeper and truer, but were tied down, subjected, slaves of that brutal necessity of earning their living, and that this weighed down upon them so much, took away so much of their time and

energy that they could not engage in any other activity, inner or outer. I heard that very often.

“I was very young at that time, and always I used to tell myself that if ever I could do it, I would try to create a little world—Oh! quite a small one, but still—a small world where people would be able to live without having to be preoccupied by problems of food and lodging and clothing and the imperious necessities of life, to see if all the energies freed by this certainty of an assured material living would spontaneously be turned towards the divine life and inner realisation.”⁶

A significant number of non-members living in Pondicherry also take part in the Ashram's life. All regions of India and many countries of Asia, Europe and America are represented. Members are of both sexes and of all ages. No distinction of creeds, caste or national origin is observed. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram in particular has nothing to do with asceticism or retreat from the world. The character of this unique institution stems from the special nature of Sri Aurobindo's teaching. This may be summed up in these words from Sri Aurobindo:

“The way of Yoga followed here has a purpose different from others,—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter.” As this aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga differs from that of traditional yogic systems, so the Ashram that grew up around him “is not an ashram like others.”

“This Ashram has been created with another object than that ordinarily common to such institutions, not for the renunciation of the world but as a centre and a field of practice for the evolution of another kind and form of life which would in the final end be moved by a higher spiritual consciousness and embody a greater life of the spirit.”⁷

ARUN VAIDYA

Notes and References

1. For a detailed account and spiritual perspective reference may be made to *The Light that Shone into the Dark Abyss* by Maggi Lidchi Grassi.

2. A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 219.

3. My own term for *stupendously brilliant and relatively rare*. — AV

4. *Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, pp. 559-61.

5, 6, 7. See *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*, 1990.

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of February 2003)

Savitri and the Record of Yoga

7

THE vision Savitri sees above her near the end of the present Book Eleven seems to be connected in its significance with her mission in the world, to which she is then returning from the spiritual heights where she has heard the voice of the Godhead. For the two sentences describing the face of a youth changing into that of a woman, which we have traced to a manuscript of 1916, are followed by three lines that give a clue to the import of this vision. The lines originally ran in the first draft:

Eyes in which Nature's whole ecstatic life,
Sprang from some Spirit's passionate content,
Missioned her down towards the whirling earth.¹

The earth to which Savitri is guided back by these eyes is no “casual globe” in the midst of a “dead rotating universe”.² It is a centre of the Lila, the cosmic play of Spirit and Nature, the “Krishna-purusha” of the *Record of Yoga* and the “Kali-prakriti” through whom he expresses himself,³ their ultimate unity being symbolised here by the face seen alternately as male and female.

Savitri is “missioned” to return to the earth, and in this connection it may be relevant to observe that in the *Record of Yoga* the idea of a personal mission or life-work comes under the heading of *karma*, the divine action made possible by the union of Krishna and Kali in one's being. Success in this mission depends especially on Kali, of whom Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Karmayogin* as early as in July 1909 shortly after he was released from jail:

Kali when she enters into a man cares nothing for rationality and possibility. She is the force of Nature that whirls the stars in their orbits, lightly as a child might swing a ball, and to that force there is nothing impossible.⁴

Sri Aurobindo has mentioned that even “before he knew anything about Yoga”, he had experienced “the living presence of Kali in a shrine on the banks of the Narmada”.⁵ He had also been given a *stotra* of Kali by a Sannyasi, but “for political success in his mission and not for Yoga”.⁶ When he first met Sister Nivedita in Baroda in 1904, he “had read and admired her book *Kali the Mother*”, while she had heard of him as one who “believed in strength and was a worshipper of Kali”—by which, he explains, “she meant that she had heard of me as a revolutionary”.⁷ During this period he wrote of Mother

India (*Bhāratamātā*) in the form of Kali or Chandi in poems in Bengali and Sanskrit (*Jāgila Jananī* and *Bhavānī Bhāratī*).

At first, then, since Sri Aurobindo was neither religiously inclined in any conventional sense nor had entered seriously as yet the realms of spiritual experience, Kali was practically for him the goddess of revolution. This remained an aspect of his view of her even later. It was expressed in some essays he wrote after his first decisive realisations, but before he had entirely left the political field, as when he wrote early in 1910:

The action of the French Revolution was the vehement death-dance of Kali trampling blindly, furiously on the ruins She made, mad with pity for the world and therefore utterly pitiless.⁸

This “death-dance” is not the whole of Kali. But it is undoubtedly the manifestation of her that most powerfully affects our weak human sensibilities. Essentially, one might say, Kali is the Force of the Divine plunged into and re-emerging from the Inconscience and Ignorance, darkened in her apparent action by the medium through which she is seen—therefore she is known as “Kali, the dark Mother”⁹—but working to bring the world back to the Light by the most rapid and direct route and shattering unsparingly the obstacles in her way. She is the power that drives all evolution and she intervenes most visibly at the critical moments when a leap forward must be taken in the outer and inner life of humanity. According to one interpretation of her name, *Kālī* is the Goddess of Time, the Shakti of *Kāla* the Time-spirit, whose destructive form Krishna assumes before Arjuna’s terrified eyes on the battle-field of Kurukshetra.

Given the revolutionary nature of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga, it is only natural that, of the various names of the Goddess, “Kali” was chosen to designate the Shakti who effectuates the transformation. Her destructive aspect is merely the outward sign of her relentless push towards new creation. Commenting on one of the *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, the Mother brought out the essence of Sri Aurobindo’s conception of Kali:

Sri Aurobindo makes Kali the great liberating power who ardently impels you towards progress and leaves no ties within you which would hinder you from progressing.¹⁰

Early in the *Record of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo distinguished three personalities of Kali to be harmonised in one’s nature, “bala, raudra (karali) & shiva Kali”.¹¹ The second of these is the “fierce” form corresponding to the goddess who is so graphically represented in popular Hinduism. About her black and naked image standing on Shiva’s breast, Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1934:

It is Kali as a destroying Force—a symbol of the Nature Force in the ignorance surrounded by difficulties, wresting and breaking everything in a blind struggle to get through till she finds herself standing with her foot on the Divine itself—then

she comes to herself and the struggle and destruction are over. That is the significance of the symbol.¹²

Sri Aurobindo was asked, “on what plane is she seen like this?” He replied, “It is in the vital.” This perhaps gives a clue to the identity of the three forms of Kali mentioned in the *Record*. For if her second, violent (*raudrā*) form, also called “Karali, the terrible”,¹³ resembles that of the goddess seen on the vital plane, then *bālā Kālī* and *śivā Kālī* may be related to the physical and mental planes below and above the vital in the ascending order of the worlds.

Śivā Kālī, the benign aspect, is always present behind the violent manifestation of the goddess, for “the terrible Kali is also the loving and beneficent Mother”.¹⁴ But on the higher planes of mind, with the evolution of consciousness, the beneficent and harmonious working of Nature-Force would increasingly come into its own and Kali’s love begin to act as a purely creative power with no need for any mask of terror and destruction.

Bālā Kālī, on the other hand, Kali as a girl, would seem to be a symbol of Nature on the material plane in her original innocence, not yet deprived of her “early joy to live”,¹⁵ or else restored to it in a diviner sense. She is the Kali whose power we have already seen as “the force of Nature that whirls the stars in their orbits, lightly as a child might swing a ball”. In the *Record of Yoga* she is “Bala-Kali at play with the Bala-Krishna”.¹⁶ In *Savitri*, also, the two are found together as “youthful Nature and child God”.¹⁷

The three personalities of Kali can all be detected in the description of the face of the woman whom Savitri sees as she sinks through “unseen worlds”. The *śivā* and *raudrā* aspects come first. They are mingled together; however, the order of the lines was revised in the second version so as to emphasise the woman’s beauty in the first three lines and reserve the words “turbulent” and “terrible” for the end of the sentence, as if corresponding to the descent from the mental plane—“the mooned night of mind” of another passage in *Savitri*¹⁸—to the vital. After describing the face of the youth whom we have identified as Krishna, the revised passage continues:

Changed in its shape, yet rapturously the same,
It grew a woman’s dark and beautiful
Like a mooned night with drifting star-gemmed clouds,
A shadowy glory and a stormy depth,
Turbulent in will and terrible in love.

Finally, Savitri approaches the domain where *bālā Kālī*, as physical Nature, “whirls the stars in their orbits”. The second manuscript version of the sentence whose first draft was quoted at the beginning of this article is almost identical to the final text:

Eyes in which Nature’s blind ecstatic life
Sprang from some Spirit’s passionate content,
Missioned her to the whirling dance of earth.¹⁹

The word “dance”, introduced in the revision of the last line, is something more than a poetic metaphor. Occurring in the context of Nature’s “ecstatic life” springing from the “Spirit’s passionate content”, it implies the Lila, the play of the Spirit through its Energy which constitutes the whole phenomenon of the world:

When the Energy is absorbed in the bliss of conscious self-existence, there is rest; when the Purusha pours itself out in the action of its Energy, there is action, creation and the enjoyment or Ananda of becoming.²⁰

The phrase “whirling dance of earth” suggests a comparison between the orbiting of planets around the sun and the round dance of Krishna with the Gopis, the *rāsa līlā*, which is the deepest symbol of the play of divine Ananda in the relation of the One and the Many. In a poem in Bengali, *Mahākālā*, written around the same time (1916-18) as the early versions of *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo used the image of the earth’s dance in this way. The relevant lines may be freely rendered into English as follows:

In varied moods and measures you enjoy
Your single self, O Seer—your self of Time
Incarnate in the year. For you the earth,
A green-robed dancer, whirls around the sun
For ever in an ecstasy of love,
As touched by Krishna’s hand the Gopis whirl
In an unending reckless dance of joy,
Eyes fixed in rapture on their lover’s face,
Aware of him and love and nothing more.
Initiate of that revelry, life moves
In the charmed circle of your dance, O Lord.

However, the moods of this dance of the earth, expressed in the seasons, include not only the enchantment of spring but the rage of the monsoon:

But now, with Titan fury in his breast,
Casting a lightning-glance in search of prey,
Monsoon comes thundering. Hearing the wild moan
Of forests under the relentless siege,
A fierce excitement surges through the blood
And the ear revels in the roar of rain.
Amid this tumult, the strong soul is seized
By a desire to plunge into the fray,
To be a wind that dances with the storm,
In a harsh world of tyrannous misrule
Opposing force with force, to take up arms
And, fighting, pass into the infinite.²¹

This side of existence led Sri Aurobindo to see Kali as the playmate of Krishna. Yet her dance of destruction is part of the same cosmic *līlā*, all of whose movements can be traced ultimately to “the free infinity of the self-delight of Sachchidananda”.²²

In the *līlā* of the Eternal there are movements that are terrible as well as movements that are sweet and beautiful. The dance of Brindaban is not complete without the death-dance of Kurukshetra; for each is a part of that great harmonic movement of the world which progresses from discord to accord, from hatred and strife to love and brotherhood, from evil to the fulfilment of the evolution by the transformation of suffering and sin into beauty, bliss and good, *sīvam*, *sāntam*, *śuddham*, *ānandam*.²³

Thus the mission for which Savitri is directed by the gaze of Krishna-Kali to rejoin the “whirling dance of earth” can only be to serve in some way the unfolding terrestrial purpose of the “Two who are One and play in many worlds”.²⁴ And since, in the last analysis, the motive and meaning of their play must lie in the delight of the play itself, their purpose in this evolving universe would be to arrive at ever higher, purer and fuller degrees of that delight:

Delight of being, Ananda, is the eternal truth of the union of this conscious being and its conscious force whether absorbed in itself or else deployed in the inseparable duality of its two aspects.... The relation in its imperfect, perverted or reverse terms is the world as we see it; but the perfect relation brings the absolute joy of the soul in itself and, based upon that, the absolute joy of the soul in Nature which is the divine fulfilment of world-existence.²⁵

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. These lines are transcribed here as they were first written, before revision. Cf. *Mother India*, February 1982, p. 83, where a transcript of this passage as revised in the same manuscript was published. In the first line, Sri Aurobindo struck through “whole” and wrote above it a word that has been read as “deaf” in the published transcript; but “deep” is perhaps more likely to be the correct reading. In the next manuscript he substituted “blind”. In the last line, “down towards” was changed to “downwards to” in his revision of the first draft. Savitri’s “fall” is, of course, not due to the force of gravity, in spite of such vivid lines as “Fearful rapidities of downward bliss” in the final text (p. 712). It is something more like the soul’s return from the supraphysical worlds where, after the dropping of the physical body, it is said to “sojourn till the impulse to terrestrial existence again draws it downward.” (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 455.)

2. *Savitri* (1993), p. 59.

3. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1019.

4. *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 31.

5. *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 50. Sri Aurobindo was clearly referring to his own experience when he gave this example of a sudden spiritual opening: “Or you stand before a temple of Kali beside a sacred river and see what?—a sculpture, a gracious piece of architecture, but in a moment mysteriously, unexpectedly there is instead a Presence, a

Power, a Face that looks into yours, an inner sight in you has regarded the World-Mother.” (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 199.)

6. *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 19.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

8. *The Hour of God and Other Writings*, SABCL, Vol. 17, p. 378.

9. *The Renaissance in India with A Defence of Indian Culture*, CWSA, Vol. 20, p. 194.

10. Talk of 15 August 1958, *Questions and Answers 1957-58*, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 377.

11. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 66.

12. *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 76.

13. *Kena and Other Upanishads*, CWSA, Vol. 18, p. 133. In Mundaka Upanishad 1.2.4, Karali is listed as the second of the seven “tongues” of Agni. “Kali, the black” is the first. These seven tongues, the third of which is “Manojava, thought-swift”, appear to correspond to the seven worlds mentioned in the preceding verse. If so, “Karali” would correspond to the vital world. This, in any case, is likely to have been Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation of the verse, which he may have had in mind when he used the word “karali” to describe the second form of Kali in the *Record of Yoga*.

14. *Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 45.

15. *Savitri*, p. 706.

16. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 702.

17. *Savitri*, p. 266.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 655.

19. As revised in the manuscript reproduced here, this sentence differs from the text printed in the current edition of *Savitri* (p. 711) only in the capitalisation of “Spirit’s”.

20. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, pp. 43-44. In *Savitri* (p. 697), this “Ananda of becoming” is figured as “the sweet madness of the dance”, out of which our very heartbeats are born; the other state of the bliss of existence is described as its “voiceless rapture”, when it rests motionless in a “slumber of ecstasy”.

21. For the Bengali original, see *Bangla Rachana* (1999), pp. 523-24. The translation is unpublished.

22. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 510.

23. *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 13, pp. 30-31.

24. *Savitri*, p. 61.

25. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 435.

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NIRODBARAN'S SURREALIST POEMS

A Note: During a certain phase in the late 1930s, a rather unusual lode of inspiration was struck by a few ashram poets. Two of these poets—both writing in Bengali—were Sahana Debi and Nirodbaran. In Sri Aurobindo's jocular correspondence with the latter, he called these "surrealist poems of the most advanced kind." Sri Aurobindo explained a number of these poems and both he and Nolini Kanta Gupta translated some of them into English. I have been always fascinated by these poems of Nirodbaran, for the audacity of their images and their constructions. In 2000, I proceeded to translate these poems into English from Nirodbaran's compilation "Swapnadeep". Having the benefit, in many cases, of Sri Aurobindo's explanations and comments, my intention was to provide a glimpse into the rare mystic utterance of these poems to a readership in English. Translation is always a precarious business, translations of poetry even more so and translations of "surrealist poetry of the most advanced kind", it goes without saying, is an extreme hazard. I realized very soon that the character of the two languages—Bengali and English—were so dissimilar that the already obscure original was in danger of becoming even more so in the new language. I was faced with the decision of taming the poems to a more readable form or heightening the original obscurity in them by introducing new principles of poetic construction in English and stretching the suggestive resources of the language. I have taken the second of these roads.

Consequently, I cannot put the blame or praise of the result entirely on the original, much as I would have liked to. The interpretative function dominates and I prefer to call these transcreations rather than translations.

The two main sources of obscurity in these poems are (1) a juxtaposition and referential identification between objects of extreme dissimilarity within the same poem; and (2) the use of complex compounds that demand reflection and can yield inexpressible impressions. The first of these is the general principle of surrealist poetry and undoubtedly what made Sri Aurobindo label these poems as surrealist. The second belongs more to a related genre—that of imagism. While the first has translated more easily into English, it is the second that has given more trouble. Compounds (Sanskrit: Samaas) are common in Sanskrit-derived Indian languages and new words are continuously entering these languages through the use of this grammatical means. In English however, compounds are less common and a profusion of compounds are likely to raise eyebrows.

To "compound" this difficulty, the class of Sanskrit samaas called dvandva, involving a joining of two independent nouns which do not qualify or act upon each other is even rarer in English, but relatively common in Sanskritic tongues such as Bengali. Nirodbaran's surrealist poems make a free and ample use of them. However, their use in modern English poetry is not unknown, having been adapted as a principle of compressed and revelatory poetic construction from the Chinese ideogram by Ezra Pound and other practitioners of Imagism and its relatives. I have utilized this principle regularly in my translations. How far I have succeeded or failed rests upon the reader.

DREAM-EXPECTANCY

ASLEEP soundless night—
 Day's toil-tumult in sleep-imaged peace
 Has found repose;
 Piercing the black curtain the night-birds fly to their nests.
 Their hems laden with soft perfume
 The Winds of Fragrance run everywhere,
 In restless eagerness.
 In the remote distance
 Where the blue ocean melts in blue haze,
 From the unquiet water-mass lifts to the sky—
 Like the bliss-face of a bath-risen maiden—
 The lustrous winter moon.
 Rapture-smile's flower-buds awaken on earth's sleeping body—
 In a honeyed dream.

(To be continued)

DEBASHISH BANERJI

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By Sri Aurobindo, with the Mother's Comments, pages 213, Rs. 60.00.
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TRANSFORMING THE STREETS OF PONDICHERRY

Flowers are the moment's representation
Of things that are in themselves eternal.

Sri Aurobindo

As I walk the once-barren streets of Pondicherry, baking asphalt deserts under a tropic sun, littered with human waste, I am awestruck at the transformation I see today. As I pass under the cooling shade of 'Wisdom' trees and gaze at the brilliant red blooms of 'Realization', before my feet flowers fall carpeting the roads and sidewalks with their multi-coloured offerings.

There are fragrances in abundance as well. I stop to admire the bright yellow trumpets of 'Mind' and two other members of the same family, 'Purified mind' and 'Supramentalised mind' and gather a few 'Transformation' flowers that one can always find in the early morning. I watch a worker, rather rudely, shake down the delicately painted blossoms of 'Aspiration' with their white corolla and orange tube. Hundreds of flowers fall as he shakes the tree and a woman below fills a basket to overflowing with these ephemeral treasures.

There is more, however, much more. 'Spiritual atmosphere' pervades the air, 'Peace in the physical' abounds, 'Supramental action' can be seen here and there, 'Stability in the vital' is in full bloom, 'Health' is abundant as is 'Imagination' with its sweetly fragrant flowers borne in long pendulous racemes.

Truly it is like walking through a living book of flower significances. I see the beautiful 'Intimacy with universal Nature', not yet in bloom, catch a glimpse of 'Higher mind' and my spirit is filled with the sight of 'Spiritual aspiration' and the heart with 'Adoration'. Even 'Surrender of all Falsehood' is before us. It is usually grown as a large shrub but with proper care can be trained as a lovely small tree. As I round the corner I believe I may even have seen the 'New world' in this wonderful journey of the soul on earth. I realize that I have only to look upward and all these splendours await me, crowns of majesty above my head. And there are still more flowers, many that the Mother has not named as yet.

Who has wrought this miracle of change? I can hardly imagine or comprehend the courage and effort, the endless red tape and intransigence of civil authorities in granting permission, the propagation from seeds and cuttings of such varied plant material, the nurturing of young plants, pruning, and helping them up to transplanting size, the arduous labour of digging pits, soil preparation including manures and other amendments to feed and nourish, provide essential drainage with optimum moisture-holding capacity, the construction of barriers to prevent goats, cows and humans from destroying the delicate saplings, constant monitoring, watering, and the care given to each tree is an awe-inspiring accomplishment.

Further, to realize that this is the vision and essentially the work of one man, is an example of what can be accomplished with a single-minded aspiration and an iron will in

offering to the Divine.

Having lived a long lifetime in the presence and companionship of plants and the aspiration of flowers, I wanted to express my deep appreciation for this heroic and dedicated work which shall bring joy to countless generations and will certainly inspire others. He who accomplished this offering of love is named Kabul. He is a child of the Mother.

NARAD
10/12/02

Notes

The spiritual significances or messages of the flowers are those given by the Mother. The botanical names follow the alphabetical listing by significance.

Adoration	<i>Cordia sebestena</i>
Aspiration	<i>Nyctanthes arbor-tristes</i>
Health	<i>Thespesia populnea</i>
Higher mind	<i>Tecoma stans</i>
Imagination	<i>Cassia fistula</i>
Intimacy with universal Nature	<i>Lagerstroemia speciosa</i>
Mind (Yellow flowers)	<i>Thevetia neriifolia</i>
New world	<i>Bixa orellana</i>
Peace in the physical	<i>Calophyllum inophyllum</i>
Purified mind (White flowers)	<i>Thevetia neriifolia</i>
Realization	<i>Delonix regia</i>
Spiritual aspiration	<i>Terminalia catappa</i>
Spiritual atmosphere	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>
Stability in the vital	<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i>
Supramental action	<i>Barringtonia asiatica</i>
Supramentalised mind	<i>Thevetia neriifolia</i>
Surrender of all falsehood	<i>Nerium oleander</i> —double pink flowers
Transformation	<i>Millingtonia hortensis</i>
Wisdom	<i>Samanea saman</i>

Trees absorb the fumes of carbon monoxide and give us oxygen in return. They cool the atmosphere and call the rain, provide shelter and shade, and open us to the beauty of Nature.

AUTUMN

By thy wave I linger,
Silent stream!
Autumn's golden finger
Paints thy dream.

From the beeches falling
Down thy face,
Summer, past recalling,
Drifts apace.

Only mists rise stilly;
A sad peace!
Dank earth yields no lily;
Roses cease.

Here, where I sank lazy
Deep in grass,
No surviving daisy
Tells what was,—

Kingcup blaze of meadow,
Cuckoo-call.
Is it all a shadow
I recall?

Yet when down these reaches,
Swept with cold,
Scarce the wintry beeches
Durst be bold.

Windy magic struck us,
March's rod;
Like sun-beams the crocus
Burst the sod.

And when April after
Showered the ground,
Daffodils in laughter
Danced around.

Oh! the crimson story,—
White and red
May-blossoms in glory
too soon shed!

Scarcely May-time closes,
Burning June
Brings me her musk roses
And her moon.

Blue skies to embolden,
Hot July
Amid cornfields golden
Oped an eye.

Last, for fancy's yearning
Thought to save,
Her frail poppy burning
August gave.

Spring-time's lovely story,
Summer's dream!
Where is gone the glory?
Silent stream!

Calm thy current flowing
Ripples on,
Pang nor memory showing
For what's gone.

Canst thou unregretful
Silent glide,
For no loved flower fretful,—
Flowers that die?

For no sweet bird caring—
Birds that sang
Lost musicians, faring
With no pang?

Memory's sunken anchor,
 Yearns my heart
 Rusts and rusts to hanker,
 Grieves to part.

Thou the present only,
 Car'st to glass,
 Feel'st nor reft nor lonely
 For what was.

Art thou, solemn river,
 Lethe's stream,
 That there comes no shiver
 O'er thy dream?

Autumn melancholy
 Mourns with me
 Summer's spendthrift folly,
 Spring-time's glee.

Gorgeous, trustful, tender
 Autumn sighs,
 Grieving to surrender
 Pomp that dies.

Gone are all the glories.
 Autumn, speak!
 Where for what no more is
 Shall we seek?

Now in falling splendour
 Every leaf
 Fills the heart with tender,
 Wistful grief.

Now with mists September
 Mournful is,
 Sadly to remember
 July's kiss.

Soon October stormy
 Shall with rain
 Through the bare trees o'er me
 Weep again,

And November chilly
 Brown leaves heap
 For the dead year's stilly
 Winter sleep.

MANMOHAN GHOSE

(Songs of Love and Death, 1926)

GLORY TO THE LUMINOUS ONE!

GLORY to Thee, O Luminous One, whose presence in a fraction of a second lights up the three worlds and who is brighter than all the suns of the universe put together, to Thee our dazzled obeisance.

Glory to Thee, O Omnipresent One, who with Her invisible presence in every nook and corner of existence conducts and guides the entire universe towards the splendour and beauty that must be realized. To Thee our humble submission.

Glory to Thee, O Omnipotent One, destroyer of Madhukaitabh, Mahishasur and Shumbha-Nishumbha, without whose sanction not even a leaf can move or the wind blow, or the snow melt or the sun shine, whose strength is like a conqueror's sword, O Tamashi, Rigvedaswarupa, Anandarupa, to Thee our awestruck surrender.

Glory to Thee, O Omniscient One, who possesses all the knowledge of the universe and imparts knowledge to humanity and bears "wisdom in a voiceless bosom", O Satwiki, Samavedaswarupa, Chidrupa, to Thee our conscious prostration.

Glory to Thee, O Trigunamayi, possessor of all the wealth of the universe from whose eyes the eternal's bliss flows uninterrupted, O Rajashi, Yajurvedaswarupa, Sadrupa, to Thee our loving salutations.

O humanity, why veil yourself with pretence of ignorance and unconsciousness as to the identity of That who embodies all these qualities? Is it that "the wide world knew not yet the inhabitant flame?" Why doubt still?!

Does one doubt the presence of the sun behind the veil of night? So why doubt Thy presence behind the darkness or when bad times overwhelm one? Does one doubt the existence of the mighty Himalayas just because one hasn't seen them? Then why doubt the sovereign presence of the Mother enveloping the universe because one has not that vision to see Her? One may argue that the holy waters of the Ganges prove the existence of the Himalayas even if one has not seen the snowclad mountains. Does not the flow of Her uninterrupted Grace prove Her omnipresence amongst us, even if one sees not Her physical presence?

Does one doubt the existence of faraway solar systems? Then wherefrom came the comets or rush the shooting stars down on earth? Then why doubt Her presence because one has not evolved enough or the senses developed enough to feel Her near? It is only when She strikes with a mighty Hand that we are in awe of Her omnipotence or when she saves us from calamity that we are awakened and overwhelmed by Her love and care for us.

She is present in the thunder and the lightning. She is present in the silvery linings of the clouds, in the charm of a full moon night we feel her loving embrace, in the morning rays of a golden sun we are touched by Her warm affection; in the sultry heat of the summer She soothes us with the cool southern breeze; in the twinkling of the stars we perceive her sparkling smile; in the blush of the Grace flower we are enamoured of Her charm; in the sunflower's gaze we are drowned in Her golden aura.

In the nuclei of the atoms we are in awe of Her mighty power, in the bud of humility

we wonder at her soft retreat, in the fragrance of flowers we inhale Her aroma, in the sound of the organ we are awakened by Her velvety touch of our heartstrings. At the touch of Her feet we feel the heartthrob of earth. In the green waters of the sea we take a plunge, a deep plunge in the bottomless depths of Her compassionate eyes. In the white lotuses of the pond She is present as Aditi, the consciousness and the force of the Supreme, and far above all She creates. She is That—the Mother of all the gods and goddesses sustaining the universe, the beauty, the truth and the consciousness, Satchidananda.

O Luminous One, dissolve our doubt with Thy light, as the sun dissolves the dark threatening clouds of menace.

O Douce Mère! this is our earnest prayer:

Let Truth-Consciousness and Bliss reign over the world.
Let Thy Victory be established.

Again the mighty yearning raised its flame
That asks a perfect life on earth for men
And prays for certainty in the uncertain mind
And shadowless bliss for suffering human hearts
And Truth embodied in an ignorant world
And godhead divinising mortal forms.

(*Savitri*, p. 369)

KRISHNA CHAKRAVARTI

PAIN

BEAUTY taught me how to dream,
Wisdom how to love,
But pain has taught me how to yearn
For all that lies above.

Beauty showed me life within,
Wisdom taught me why,
But pain has sown within my heart
A never-ending cry.

Beauty's life is fed by joy,
Wisdom's life is light,
But pain forsakes the sweetest rest,
And plumbs the deepest night.

Beauty pledged my life to truth,
Wisdom sealed the bond,
But pain forsook assurances
And strove to go beyond.

Yearning in the depths of night,
Seeing low nor nigh,
That beyond the pulse of life
Has taught me how to die.

Beauty's sweetness now is pain,
Wisdom knows not why;
All that life has longed to see
Is heard within my cry.

Wisdom's light in beauty's face
My timeless lifelong love,
But pain that sears my cry with grace
Has shown the way above.

ROGER CALVERLEY

GOD'S SURRENDER

THOSE who have chosen to tread the spiritual path know, on the one hand, that the most crucial element in their sadhana is total unconditional surrender to God in which all circumstances and events, favourable or unfavourable, are taken to be ordained by God and all one's thoughts, feelings and actions are by divine motivation. On the other hand, they also firmly believe that God as the creator, upholder and controller of the universe, is all-powerful, ever-free and independent. That being so, the talk of surrender on the part of God is quite unthinkable. But the following shloka occurring in the *Adipurana* does talk of such reversal of God's role in relation to His devotee:

सदा मुक्तोऽपि बद्धोऽस्मि भक्तेषु स्नेहरज्जुभिः।
अजितोऽपि जितोऽहं तैरवशोपि वशीकृतः॥

The Lord says: "Even though I am ever-free, I am bound by the cord of love and devotion of my devotees; though unconquerable, I am conquered, and, despite being independent, I am rendered dependent by them."

Such is the power of intense bhakti on the part of the devotee and such the surrender of the Supreme Being! The sublime inner strength of the devotee who has captured the Lord within his heart is reflected in the following shloka of Saint Surdas:

हस्ताद् उद्धृत्य गन्तासि बलात् मे मधुसूदन।
हृदयाद् यदि निर्यासि पौरुषं गणयामि ते॥

Once, while Sri Krishna (in the form of Balakrishna) was leading the blind saint holding his hand, all of a sudden He playfully withdrew His hand, provoking Surdas to challenge Him in the above words of the shloka, which mean: "O Madhusudana, wresting free Your hands from mine You are walking away! That is no great act of bravery! If You can manage to wrest Yourself free from my heart, then alone I shall acknowledge Your heroism."

From the Lord's own admission of His surrender and the example of the challenge thrown at Him by Saint Surdas, it would seem that the Lord's bondage to His bhaktas is the result of the latter's devotion. Perhaps the truth of the matter is the other way about. It is rather that the Lord binds Himself of His own choice to a human soul, long before the latter qualifies to be called a bhakta; in fact, it is because of the imperceptible way in which God chooses to bind Himself to a potential devotee of His that an ignorant human being is transformed into an *ananya* bhakta of His in course of time. As Sri Aurobindo said, one who chooses the Divine is already chosen by the Divine.

It must be the fond recollection and realisation in retrospect of many a God-lover how, all through the years of his own ignorant meanderings in the labyrinth of life, patiently but imperceptibly, God had been guiding him and protecting him from all pitfalls and perils, *tāpatraya*, until at last a little spark of devotion was lit in him, which progressively

grew into a blazing flame of aspiration and love for God, purified his being and led him to experience the constant presence of God in himself. It is thus that God, by His voluntary bondage to an ordinary mortal, transforms the inconscient clay that he was into the vibrant body of a God-intoxicated bhakta. How else could a confirmed robber like Ratnakara get metamorphosed into the great sage Valmiki? And the wonder of it is that after having worked this miracle, He gives credit for His own bondage to the bhakta! That is His wondrous and glorious *līlā*!

B. G. PATTEGAR

IN SRI AUROBINDO'S ROOM

In the summer of youth I gazed afar
 And followed him as my master-star.
 'neath bridges of night and cloudy skies
 I leaped and lo! my soul uttered cries
 As some dulcet angel's music it heard
 Even as it pulled me towards my Lord.
 With words like flint that magicked a fire
 Burned dark of all the dark desire.
 And there I stood in resplendent light
 So bright it seemed the sun was night,
 When compared with that beyond compare:
 O infinity locked in locks of hair
 Rested on his wide golden brow
 Which beckoned tomorrow to askance now!
 As I gazed and gazed at that mystery's
 Eyes, quiet I fell upon my knees
 And invoked his name in hymning strains
 That yokes the soul in golden chains,
 Chains so pure to human touch
 One can feel that one is loved so much!

BALVINDER BANGA

REMEMBRANCE OF THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of February 2003)

I FINISHED my M.A. with no heart in it. I was intellectually drawn to Sri Aurobindo. I felt the call, but I was not ready for an Ashram life. I had to see the world and be something. I won't go into the details of my life in the USA, but I want to assure you that at every step of my journey, they both, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, alternately or together were with me, guiding and protecting. And I am sure this is true for everybody.

There was something in me that dashed through life without care or thought and rushed 'where angels fear to tread'. But I found out later that it was they who pushed me and They were there to protect me, too.

I decided to go to the USA with her book of *Prayers and Meditations, The Life Divine, Essays on the Gita* and the twin photos of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I had only Rs. 6.000 with me, Rs. 4.000 for the round-trip ship fare and Rs. 2.000 to maintain myself until I found a job. Everyone tried to persuade me not to take such a misadventurous step. But once I make a decision, I can neither look to the right nor to the left. This is true of me in every situation.

Newspapers came out with bold print on the front page: "Heavy Unemployment in the USA". Everyone came with double vigour to prevent my going. But I sailed off without really knowing any danger or risk. I hardly knew anyone in New York. Only a young couple was introduced to me by a friend who had taken me to his friend's wedding. It was a five minutes' meeting. They were leaving before me and invited me to call them when I was there. And the other person I knew was a young American lady, Louise, who had spent one week with my uncle but I was put in charge of escorting her everywhere to acquaint her with the Indian culture, way of life and of course for sight-seeing. She lived about 100 miles away from New York.

I mention this to convey to you that the Mother was not limited to Her physical body, though meeting her was the most beautiful occasion to receive her direct guidance. She knows us better than we do ourselves. She knows every need we have. She prepares and arranges every incident of our life, the people we meet, and the work we do or do not do. This is my conviction in reviewing my entire life. And I can assure you that there is not even one incident of my life, what people call good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, happy or painful where I do not see the imprint of her Grace and benediction.

This very couple received me at the pier when my ship arrived in New York and took me to their home in March, 1954. Now, my first priority was to find a job and enroll in a University so that I did not have to go back to India empty-handed. There too, they helped. I got a job at the United Nations. I read the charter and I fell in love with the work. I felt as if many nations gathered together to help each other and to work beyond their sense of nationality. I lived in my own dream-world as if I was working in a temple of human unity. For, to me it was an exhilarating experience to be among the people of different cultures.

I won't go into the details of this experience but point to the general lines of my growth, because here, again, it is they who put me in this job, as if to prepare me for my future work in the Ashram. I used to attend the meetings of the three councils and the General Assembly, admiring the sharp distinctions the delegates made of certain words like "democracy" or the phrases of the charter and their interpretations of its clauses. It was a training of my mind to be able to look at an idea or a concept from so many different points of view.

I decided to change my course of study from psychology to the study of International Relations and International Organisations and I was given a scholarship.

I went to San Francisco to attend the 10th anniversary celebrations under Dr. Graham's sponsorship. He was the U.N. representative for the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan. I was treated like a princess and interviewed by journalists. My photograph with the governor of California came out in the newspaper. This was at a party given by the governor.

Once I was talking with professor Ahmed Bokhari, who was the Undersecretary-General. The Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld came and as we were walking, a United Nation photographer took a picture.

It was a delight to hear all the delegates—some presidents, prime ministers or foreign ministers—extolling the United Nations, its great work for humanity and rededicating themselves for the realisation of its worthy aims. As I said before, I was living in my dream-world and believed them to be sincere. But soon, my dream was shattered. The very next year, when two crises erupted—the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt for the Suez Canal and the Soviet tanks marching into Hungary—the very same nations twisted the Charter to suit their national interests, trying to prevent the United Nations from interfering in their affairs.

I was shocked and disgusted with the United Nations and knew that it would not be allowed to reach its goals by such self-seeking powers. My idea of working for the United Nations came to an end. I did not want to do my Ph.D. in International Organisation. And when I felt the very ground on which I was standing giving way, Sri Aurobindo came to my help.

I was attending a class on International Organisation. Next to me was an American lady, Marilyn Wiedman with a book of Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, which I had not read. After the class, I asked her if I could borrow her book. She was happy to find a friend who was interested in Sri Aurobindo and lent me the book.

I read it with rapt attention. I found in it the lucid explanation of the role of the United Nations as a step in the right direction, but not the ultimate answer to the problem of human unity. Sri Aurobindo says very clearly that for the ideal of human unity to truly succeed, it must be based on the spiritual foundation, the recognition of the one Self in all, who fulfils himself variously in each. It is the finding of the law of the divine being in each unifying itself with the law of the divine being in all. This spiritual truth alone can provide the truly effective key. The ideal of human unity must take its roots in our soul and become *a central force*, governing our life and be *a necessity of our being* and a

motive force of all our actions.

Then, within a month or so, came the *Bulletin* from the Ashram in which was published a talk of The Mother with a question: Do you want to serve humanity? 'For that first you must serve yourself...transform yourself.' Then, came into my hands another talk or writing of the Mother on why degrees or diplomas are not given in our Centre of Education.

I had almost completed my courses for Ph.D., but I found all that now useless—not completely, because they did help me to develop and widen my faculties of understanding, but useless for the purpose of my aim in life: Human Unity.

Now, I had to embark on the spiritual path and give up those courses. That was a difficult period of my life. I lost my physical mother who loved me so dearly. I had no job. The United Nations did not interest me. I gave up my studies and I was alone. I was taking divorce from a wonderful man I admired as a friend but with whom I had no relationship as a wife. For, I had absolutely no interest in physical relationship. I abhorred it. I had no money. But I did not want to keep the relationship of marriage for the sake of money since this was not true for me. For, I used to keep \$50 in the bank. Then, whatever was saved after my monthly expenses I sent to the Mother. Her *Prayers and Meditations* was my guide. And there, in the introductory note she writes: "A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have—soul, work, wealth—these are the true children of God.... This book is meant for those who aspire for an utter consecration to the Divine." I wanted to be one of these chosen ones!

Well, I could not get a decent job. For, in the fifties, nobody was interested in philosophy. For the delegations to the U.N.O., they found me too highly qualified for the job I was seeking. Besides, the selections for it were made in their own country. However, I did get a job as an assistant to the permanent delegate of Nepal for her foreign minister, because Nepal was a newly admitted country to the U.N. and they knew nothing about the U.N., or anything about their role in the U.N. and the foreign minister had to make a speech at the U.N. I was to work for four hours with them and my salary was fixed at \$100 per week. I prepared the foreign minister's speech and acquainted them with their work. But they did not pay my salary.

Now, an interesting incident took place. Late, one evening, the foreign minister was walking through the Central Park. He was attacked and robbed of his wallet. There was exactly the sum I should have been paid. This showed that what he did not pay willingly, he was obliged to part with, and that too with a beating from the robber!

My \$50 was now reduced to \$10. I received a letter from Usha reminding me of her birthday, when I used to send her some money for her to make something for the Mother as her offering. It was an occasion to offer something to the Mother. How could I refuse? So, I sent her a cheque for \$5.00.

At night, in my prayer to the Mother and to the Lord of the universe, I wrote a letter with tears streaming from my eyes:

"What has happened is beyond my power of understanding. I feel gripped by the deepest darkness of Night and am plunged into the bottomless abyss of void, too numb

for sorrow or pain! Yet, I cannot believe Thou hast forsaken me alone, forlorn and desolate!

"I have felt Thy love at every step of my life and never for a moment have I doubted it. But now, I wish to hear it directly from Thee if my trust was a mere imagination or dost Thou truly love me?"

"I know Thou hearest my voice and answerest my prayers in many ways. But now I wish to hear Thy sweet voice ringing in my ears to confirm that Thou lovest me and thou art ever with me!"

"I feel Thy rose-petalled hand on my forehead as I rise every day and when I go to bed with a prayer on my lips. I know as I look into Thy lustrous eyes that Thou sheddest Thy Light and fillest mine with a fixed, penetrating gaze. But I want to know it from Thee directly that Thou illuminest my path, guiding me at each step.

"I know Thou always keepest me in Thy loving care. But I wish Thou wouldst confirm it in a concrete way and tell me that Thou art always protecting me.

"Ma, give me these assurances in a way that I would never, even for a moment, doubt Thy constant Presence, Thy Light and guidance and Thy Protection in my life. Wouldst Thou not come and give me these assurances?"

I wrote this letter and went to bed tired, with tears streaming.

And the Mother came to me so resplendently in answer that I have no words to describe my gratitude and my delight. It was so wonderful!

After writing my letter, I had a dream in which I was going to post it. It was night. I came out of my house and was walking towards the post-box, which was two blocks away. The street was flooded with *an unusual Light*. I wondered where that Light came from. So I looked into the street on my right.

As I turned, I saw that luminous Light of pinkish gold, brighter than the sun's, flooding the street, where a radiant figure of the Mother made of the same Light was walking towards my direction. There was a gentleman, clad in white, who was talking to Her. He could not understand where She was going with Her gaze so fixed. He asked: "Mother, where are you going?" She said with the same fixed gaze towards me: "Someone is calling me."

And I ran towards her, saying: "Mother, I am calling you."

She came near me and smiled. She took the letter from my hand, glanced at its contents and said with Her hand on my forehead: "I am with you. I love you."

I was thrilled. She left me with that *dazzling Bliss*. But as I woke up, I realized that she had not answered my other questions. I was half asleep and thought perhaps she did not read everything carefully. How stupid of me! One who is with me knows everything and does not need me to tell her anything. But I wanted an assurance from her.

She came again the same night. She was dressed in a beautiful, soft, pearl-white silk saree. She took my hands and said with an indescribable smile: "I am guiding you." And as she disappeared, I woke up.

I thought: "True, the Mother is guiding me. But is she protecting me too so that I act according to Her guidance and not in ignorance? Where is that guarantee?"

So, the Mother, in her great compassion and patience came the third time in a pastel green dress to satisfy my demand and assured me: "I am protecting you. Give drop by drop."

Finally, when I woke up in the early hours of the morning, I could hardly believe that she came three times during the same night, to completely reassure me of her constant love, guidance and protection.

That golden Light, radiating from her golden body is still so vivid before me. All was gold—her body, her clothes and all around her was made of the same light—luminously soft, pinkish, gold, so tangible and living and vibrating.

The experience, though in a dream, is so concrete that even the all-pervading silence whispers her promise to me. And I know beyond any shadow of doubt that she will always be with me with Her sweet love and tender care. She will always guide me at each step of my journey as my path unfolds before me clear in her all-powerful golden light. And she will always protect me with her all-puissant arms enveloping me. This is the invariable certitude she has graciously granted me. And I am sure this is true of every child of hers.

I felt light though I had only \$5 in my hand and I was on tea and toast for days. My landlady came forward to tell me that I could pay my rent after I had my job. This was purely the Mother's Grace. And again, by the Mother's Grace, I got a secretarial job with a friendly American Baptist Convention.

Now, I could borrow money so that my first salary cheque could be offered to the Mother, and the same amount from the borrowed money could be given to the agency that had procured the job for me. Within a month, my debts were settled.

The Mother had sent me the De Luxe edition of Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother*, signed by her with her blessings. Now, it had become my guide, like her *Prayers and Meditations* which had inspired my utter consecration.

My last job was with a music company as an assistant-cum-secretary to the director of contemporary classical music. My boss was charming and was proud to have an Indian assistant wearing a saree. There were very few Indians in those days. It was a well-paying job.

My work with BMI was not only to look after the correspondence of my boss, to fix his appointments with composers, conductors and publishers, but I also prepared the material for writing small brochures on the life and works of the contemporary composers. This involved attending concerts, when their music was included in the performances, and to assist them in parties hosted by BMI. It was interesting work with a dynamic director who appreciated my assistance beyond words. And I acquired a spontaneous interest in western classical music and attended the best orchestras in the world.

Now I could send exotic things to the Mother from rich America. Though far in distance, I wanted to be close in contact with the Mother. The Mother had asked me through Nolini-da if I would work with Mrs. Montgomery who ran the Sri Aurobindo Centre in New York. The Mother knew about the difficulty of working with her. So, I was warned. I said that if the Mother wanted me to work with her, there would be no difficulty

for me. The Mother sent us her blessings. And I decided that whether rain or storm or shine, I would go to her every Saturday for whatever work she had. She was a perfectionist and meticulous in her demands. And I took it to be a challenge I would meet under all circumstances. For me it was the demand of Mahasaraswati. And I am proud to say that the Mother helped me. For, when I was about to leave for the Ashram, she was in tears. For, nobody could work with her comfortably.

During this period, I was asked by her to contribute to her Fund for our Centre of Education instead of sending money directly to the Mother. I asked the Mother and she asked me to continue sending to her directly and not through the Fund.

Then, I was introduced by Mrs. Montgomery to Admiral Rutledge who was coming for a visit to the Ashram. I thought of sending something with him for the Mother. Vasudha-ben was my contact with the Mother. So I asked Usha what the Mother would like to have. She asked Vasudha-ben, who told her that the Mother generally did not ask for anything, but if I liked, I could send her a packet of "Wash-'n-dry" paper napkins saturated with eau de cologne. So, I asked the admiral and he said he would gladly take a gift for the Mother if it was small and light. So, I sent a packet from which the Mother used one piece a day.

Now, this was the only thing I knew the Mother wanted and since she liked it, I sent her a bigger box by post. Now, for me, these packets were my symbolic representation, coming close to her body with a daily prayer: Mother, "Wash-'n-dry" me, as you do your body. Interestingly enough, the packet sent through the admiral was coming to an end and Vasudha-ben told the Mother: "This is the last packet." The Mother smiled and said: "Oh!"

And you would not believe it, but my parcel arrived the very same day in the afternoon. The Mother asked Vasudha-ben to open it. And low and behold! It was the box of "Wash-'n-dry" packets. So, the Mother said to Vasudha-ben: "Did you say in the morning that that was the last packet?" Vasudha-ben understood the Mother's mysterious ways. And I was delighted that my contact with the Mother remained uninterrupted.

Then, Bula-da asked Usha if I could send "Beam-O'-Light" for the Mother. This is an automatic light that comes on when the usual current goes off. Whenever the current failed the Mother was in difficulty. What would I not do for the Divine Mother? I enquired at the place indicated and asked them if their equipment was good for Indian voltage and whether they could mail the literature on it to me and to the Electric Department of the Ashram. They did. And on receiving the okay from Bula-da, I asked them to insure the packet and send it to him. The packet arrived on June 6th or so. And the light was duly installed on my birthday, June 11th. The Mother was pleased that there would always be light in her room. For me, the identification with the light was so strong, that I was filled with delight. Already, I had received her telegram wishing me a Happy Birthday with her Love and Blessings, as she usually did.

(To be continued)

KAILAS JHAVERI

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

Death

As from a dream, I can still recall my first acquaintance with death: candles and frankincense thickening the air, the lone oil-lamp burning in front of the carved screen with the sacred icons, hushed rooms filled with people. I was crouched in a corner and had my eyes fixed on Grandma.

She looked strange and different, not the Granny I knew. Seeing her distant and isolated by the side of the coffin, I was aching with the impulse to go near and be with her. But I could not; something invisible held us apart. Pale, drained and motionless, she was wrapped in aloof silent impotence. She looked crushed and monumental at once and her bearing mesmerised me.

At that early age life's details and random happenings were a confusing maze I was yet to explore. I was still too young and, although feelings were simple enough to deal with, emotions remained an unmapped territory. I could not relate to grief and sorrow or to their gravity; it was all too new, too abstract. I could sense them though, and that something final and irreversible had taken place. Uncle Gabriel was gone and Granny was bearing the loss of a son.

It took a decade for death to happen again in the family and when it did, again it brought the same bundle of emotions (same sense of loss and impotence, same finality and gravity), and one had to simply bear. I was fourteen when father died and this time I kept my eyes fixed on mother. Sitting by the coffin, she too was pale, drained and motionless, aloof and crushed by the irreversible. Her loss overpowered me, it also added to the difficulty I had in grasping and dealing with my own emotions. Only a little while later, when Granny's turn came, I knew grief for real—that aching throbbing void that was mine alone to manage, nurse, grasp and handle. Mesmerised again, this time it was myself being crushed; her loss was heavy, too great. But then, so was the strength I felt, the same strength Granny must have summoned to help her bear—the one that had made her the monumental archetypal figure of my dream-hazed memory.

I held on to that strength. I could not oppose death, but in his presence I felt I had a choice; I could reach out for a state of steadfastness that seemed to accompany his crushing weight, nobility almost. His grand finality provided emotions that were similarly grand and through them the heaviness of grief was reversed to lightness. Instead of mourning for her, I grasped and nursed the love we two had shared; alive in my heart, Granny lived on.

Then, for a long time, death happened only to distant others.

Meanwhile, I thought of it. In a peculiar way, death held an attraction. Nothing morbid, mine was a rather practical philosophical quest: born into life, we conclude it by dying our death—when the circle is closed, then what?

Traditionally, religion is supposed to answer such questions, yet the Christian glorification of life after death was for me far from adequate. Not only did it seem to be

insulting the creation, its riddle produced more questions than those it answered. The circle birth-life-death seemed to be asking for birth again. Otherwise, I reasoned, why bother with life in the first place. Indeed, death appeared to be screening off something and this something could only be related to life—how?

One of humanity's means to fathom and understand existence is through a deeper religious sense; using this sense man probes the spirit, that substance he hardly knows, yet feels enveloping everything and giving sustenance to him and all.

I used the same means, but probing proved to be neither easy nor simple; Lady-Life put up her demands and offers and they were too attractive and innovative to ignore or refuse; her setup did not encourage deeper or serious concentration on Death, her seeming rival. At best, one had to accept him as an occupational hazard. But I did not, it just didn't seem right. Death was there, a permanent invisible figure over my shoulder which I could almost sense: a point of reference and a friend whom one day I would finally meet face to face. On the other hand, life was a reality I could at least touch and breath in. Inexorably bound together, I pictured the three of us (life, death and I) as a subtle, inseparable trio of which (really!) I knew nothing much.

But I travelled, far and wide, and this helped. Perspectives grew larger and wider and assumptions were infused with tolerance and understanding; a journey does that.

Moreover, the journey brought me to Pondicherry, India. I was reading at the Library when someone dropped the question (loudly addressed and to nobody in particular): "We are off to cremate the Countess, who is coming?"

I did not volunteer. Not only was I still new to the place, I didn't even know who the Countess was, or had been for that matter. But the invitation caught me, its tone did; there was a ring to it, unusual for the subject. With a jolt, it kindled my interest; death isn't something people speak lightly of, not usually. I looked at the person inviting us; I knew him vaguely, he was the library in-charge. A pleasant fellow, now with a glint in his eyes—mischievous almost, with a sprinkling of joy. What a strange attitude, I thought, refreshing though!

I put the book aside; this called for a pause. Not only was there someone who seemed to be breaking loose from attitudes, he also happened to be doing so by using my very own pet-subject of interest—was there something to learn?

There was. First, the place grew on me and it became home. Then, the lightness of attitude that had so impressed me that morning became a state of being I could slowly seek and recognise. My pet-subject too, it widened and enlarged itself and it became more specific; the probing that had started years ago was given a focal point upon which I could base myself and explore from.

We live haphazardly. Accepting life's gift, we seldom consider its meaning as such and the value it may contain; ignoring any responsibility we might have towards it, we invariably and usually waste it. The small little ends of our concerns and the narrow little lanes of the mundane are where we regularly wander and lose ourselves in. We are oblivious of what truly makes Life.

Mostly unable or unwilling to make a shift of perception, we are too weak to deter-

mine a change of attitude and, as for the gift, we hardly ever look at it, never too closely. We neglect and we do not search nor do we look for what life might be concealing. Yet, if we ever concede to doing so, when we start shaking off the covering stupor of our existence, the picture changes; something-other surfaces and our perspective alters. The gift becomes a means and life has a goal—there is a shift then into another consciousness: a different, new attitude.

The attitude worked and made a difference; Death, although still invisibly hunched over my shoulder, no longer bided his time; I could see him take shape and seep into life. Disguised and uninvited, he was admitted through cracks and burrows. Unknown or unattended, the vast unexplored areas harboured in the being were now seen as easy grounds for him to take hold of and possess as he pleased.

Slowly, the instances of his advent were seen for what they were—countless little clones of his that ravaged and pockmarked the being, the gift, life. Looking at myself, I was scarred all over! Indeed, Life contained Death and Death was not the end of the line, not the way I had first thought of him. Birth-life-death ceased to be once and for all; there was a movement they were involved in and the movement was elliptical. Anything could occur, at any point of it.

Interesting, intimidating too—had I no control over it then? After all, this was supposed to be my territory, my life, my being, and my gift—surely, there must be something I could do? Indignant and despite the helpless intimidation felt, I resolved to fight. Starting with what was obviously mine, I had to admit that psychological quirks and ignorant negligence, my very own inability in handling them and lack of self-knowledge, were but death's points of entry. Just seeing them for what they were initiated the battle (for a battle it was!) and the difficulties I had continuing it only helped to clarify the resolve. Even though far from solving death's riddle (its meaning and necessity were still too clouded and unclear), life's gift had enough in itself to get me started; it supported me. Besides, there was an inheritance that was legitimate and that I could dig into, my Greek past.

I had never shed it off; it was all there in little fragments left over from myths and stories I grew up with and in the education I had received. It was even preserved as a racial memory; it happens when one is born into an old culture, one shares its subtle roots and nuances. Dormant perhaps or blurred, the past is always there; it has been, and always is within one's reach, should one wish to reach for it. The Delphic *Know Thyself* is one dictum every Greek knows and, having come that far with my understanding of life and death, it was almost natural to set it as a goal.

But, how was I to really start knowing myself? Unlike what happened in India, the mystic knowledge that had once been in Greece had departed from the symbols that remained. No newer spiritual movement or schools of Yoga replaced either the symbols or the experience that had brought them forth and, already seven centuries before the Common Era, Heraclitus¹ gave a direction that would rather cultivate logic. The remnants from the old apocryphal religion were left to become official superstition and conventional pageantry and, when Christianity came, it did not help much either.²

But my travels did; I was in Pondicherry. Fortunately, all that was lacking in the Greek tradition, all that had been lost or never searched for, I could find here in abundance; I plunged into it.

A true Greek, there is very little devotion in me (logic is a Greek invention, remember?). When I first opened (and became captive of) Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, my enthusiasm and the initial strong pull I felt were based on the fact that 'it made sense'. Indeed, that was all I could think of, minutes after opening the book for the first time! I was simply enthralled, not only did it make sense, it was doing so through powerful verse and first-hand experience. It bore into most intimate places and from there it grew; it was a tool and it provided guidance.

Like Satyavan, wasn't I too the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance? Oh, yes, it made perfect sense indeed; it also made it apparent that I should seriously get on with that searching for myself and try to get in touch with my soul—in spite of Death, against his constant stealing in.

"Whichever way you will follow, you shall never find the soul's limit; its cause is that deep," so Heraclitus concluded, and within reason because, as he also said, "I have searched for myself."

Humanity's bounding limitations become obvious as soon as one sets out for the discovery of one's soul. Its fleeting reality makes us all captives and fugitives and our relation to it is at once most intimate as well as almost chillingly estranged. A paradox, a deep oxymoron; yet, delving into it carries the key to our existence. To make things more complicated (or, perhaps, more interesting!), the soul is screened off rather securely by planes of our being that are closer to the surface, and they cover it. These are assertive parts, easier to respond to and more available to get involved with; their sum is the state Sri Aurobindo described as that of average or natural humanity. *Humanity*, he said, *is a mental existence in a living body; its basis is matter, its centre and instrument mind and its medium life.*

How true, and how well did I know this kind of existence! Impulses filtering into the mind, the mind stuck into thinking about things and constantly distracted in doing so, the body hampered and unable—what a regular and basic misery, it only pushed on my resolve to be stronger!

There was plenty of help, the resolve itself seemed to bring it; a rather peculiar mixture of ancient utterances and my own speculations coupled with an on-going psychological quest. Heraclitus's *ever-living fire*,³ helpful and cryptic as usual, did not elaborate; in contrast, the Veda urged that Agni must be kindled. I meditated on the first, yet it was the urgency of the second that moved me to do so.

Kindling the fire had begun with mental understanding; it continued with a movement that involved will and asked for sacrifice. The hide-and-seek game I had intellectually started with Death (the 'battle' I had 'initiated'!), developed into something more concrete and it became practice—a psychological ascent, a seeking. *How shall we give to Agni?* The ancient Seers' cry became mine. I sought secrets of ancient truths in enigmatic fragments and Heraclitus's aphorism, *Gods are mortal, men are immortal*, tanta-

lised and fascinated me—was this not a conclusion of a lost practice? Furthermore, what had that practice been?

Again, it was the Vedic Rik that gave the clues. *He who in the sacrifices is the priest of the offering, full of peace, full of the Truth, him verily form in you by your surrenderings; when Agni manifests⁴ for the mortals the gods, he also has perception of them and by the mind offers to them the sacrifice.*⁵

And so the focus was brought into the heart's hearth, its 'seat' of golden orange hues and the ruddy occupant it housed. Finally, I was coming to grips with the gift and with life. With death too, things changed a bit. Little by little I was getting to know myself; a quiet hidden resident was discovered, a presence sweet and vibrant. I was not the mind nor my impulses or body, not only. There was a centre in me and from there I could learn to operate. Ah, how inadequate words can be! yet, this much is true: I was slowly getting to know Love, and Mother too.

She had always been there, variedly named: Lady-Life, Goddess, Nature, Energy, Force of the Worlds—whatever the name, the ever-growing list had been relative only to whichever perception of Her I could manage. But now she had become intimate; she was no longer 'out there', somewhere, distant. She was here with me and her closeness is helping to further settle the perspective on death.

For Death has kept on happening, at large and in close quarters. I witnessed him claim a friend first, then mother, another friend recently. Each occurrence took place several years apart and each one marked a distance covered. As with an old acquaintance, these sporadic meetings with him compel a review, a reestablishment of position; my daily encounters with him too, they press on—where have I been, where am I going?

On the Path, Life is a Journey.

KATI WIDMER

Notes and References

1. Heraclitus (born c. 540 BC, Ephesus, in Anatolia – died c. 480), Greek philosopher remembered for his cosmology, in which fire forms the basic material principle of an orderly universe. Little is known about his life, and the one book he apparently wrote is lost. His views survive in the short fragments quoted and attributed to him by later authors [from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*].

2. From Sri Aurobindo's essay on Heraclitus. It has been slightly paraphrased.

3. The full aphorism is: "This world was created neither by the gods nor by the mortals; it always was, is and will be the ever-living fire kindling in measures and being extinguished in measures."

4. Or "enters into the gods".

5. *The Secret of the Veda*, CWSA, Vol. 15, p. 276.

TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of February 2003)

Two Kinds of English Prose

It is now easy to judge the English writings of Rabindranath Tagore, because the three volumes from *Sahitya Akademi* are before us. The cultured Bengali has not been quite appreciative of Tagore's English, which, he says, is not English English. But then, it is an insult to one of the greatest writers of non-fiction from the Indo-Anglian school. It is true that Tagore's English is not as smart as Sri Aurobindo's or Sethna's, but who can deny the great thoughts behind his English, which he expresses in his own peculiar way? In the context of globalization of the English language, Tagore's Bengali-flavoured English has to be valued in its own light.

The point is: his English reads well and takes inspired leaps at times. There are moments when he suffers from vagueness, but even his vagueness puts on a mystic colour and has a sweeping impact on the readers. When he expresses an Aurobindonian idea, he has his own style.

To be able to love material things, to clothe them with tender grace, and yet not to be attached to them, this a great service. Providence expects that we should make this world our own, and not live in it as though it were a rented tenement. We can only make it our own by some service, and that service is to lend it love and beauty from our soul. From your own experience you can see the difference between the beautiful, the tender, the hospitable: and the mechanically neat and monotonously useful.¹

There is a superfluity in this passage, which is due to a Bengali way of thinking. Bengali is a feminine language, except for the prose of Swami Vivekananda. Tagore enchants us with his ornamental Bengali. And it is this tendency which has affected his English. Now let us see how Sri Aurobindo uses the language.

Mastery of the material does not mean having plenty and profusely throwing it out or spoiling it as fast as it comes or faster. Mastery implies in it the right and careful utilisation of things and also a self-control in their use.²

In his prose Sri Aurobindo uses poetry only when it is a necessity. Tagore can seldom check his poetry in prose and quite often it is a very Bengali poetry that he is translating into English.

When all my thoughts were furiously revolving, like dead leaves, in a whirlwind of desire for raising funds, a picture came to my hand.³

Yet there are wonderful aphorisms by Tagore in very smart and catchy English. They have the scent of an Emerson or a Thoreau, but they are unmistakably Tagorean. Around 1920, his English expressions reached the acme of perfection, especially in his maxims.

The sign of greatness in great geniuses is their enormous capacity to borrow, very often without their knowing it; they have an unlimited credit in the world market of culture. Only mediocrities are ashamed and afraid of borrowing, for they do not know how to pay back their debt in their own coin. Even the most foolish of critics does not dare blame Shakespeare for what he openly appropriated from outside his own national inheritance. The human soul is proud of its comprehensive sensitiveness; it claims its freedom of entry everywhere when it is fully alive and awake.⁴

Tagore is virtually echoing Eliot's attitude to tradition and creativity. But the language is his own and the last sentence is the best. It shows Tagore's mastery of the wisdom style even in an acquired tongue. The critic of language will find a slip here and a jarring note there. But can he deny the expressive quality in Tagore's English? Can he deny the originality of his thought? He does not write like Sri Aurobindo or K. D. Sethna. But, he writes well, sometimes very well. Of course, there are moments of dullness in his English prose, moments when he is fascinated by the graceless words like 'rudimentary', 'unobstructive', 'appraisement' and 'apportionment'. Those are moments, perhaps, when he is thinking out a Bengali word or idiom and then searching for its English equivalent.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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1. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. 3, p. 61.
2. Sri Aurobindo, *Bases of Yoga*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Pondicherry, 2001, p. 65.
3. *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. 3, p. 271.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE POETIC ACT AND THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

(Continued from the issue of February 2003)

d. The aesthetic experience

This is the response of the reader to the poetic work. The reader is called *sahṛdaya*, ‘of like heart’ with the poet; and the aesthetic sensibility, *sahṛdayatva*, is the ‘consent of the heart’,—i.e., capacity to identify oneself with the heart of the poet. The poet has, in the work, clothed in words *rasa* awakened in his heart.

The *sahṛdaya* is not the common reader of poetry; he has special propensities which enables him to perceive the deepest levels of symbolic expression, and to make the experience of *rasa* immediate and real. This is possible when the mind’s mirror becomes completely clear, *viśadābhūte mano-mukure*, as Anandavardhana said, or when the doors of perception are cleansed, as Blake said. The world expressed in the poem is the inner world of the poet in which indefinite varieties of emotive elements, *vibhāva*, etc., are held together. How can the reader enter into that world?

If the poet’s inner world were narrowly personal it would remain for ever closed to the reader. But it was universalized (*sādhāraṇīkṛta*), for it arose out of the *sthāyin*, the pure (poetic) state which is common to all men. It is therefore theoretically possible for everyone to relish a poem, as it is theoretically possible for everyone to be a poet. However, we have seen that his encounter with the outside world is incapable of producing any modification in the *sthāyin* unless it has already reached, under the influence of *saṁskāra* (*vāsanā*)—impressions from experiences—a state of potential dynamism. Likewise the reader has to have his *saṁskāra* more or less similar to those of the poet, so that his encounter with the stimulating object which is the poem, can act upon his heart’s latent (poetical) state and produce there the *rasa* similar to that which the poet experienced. The affinity of heart would mean that both the poet and the reader have similar *saṁskāras*. The *saṁskāras* of the reader may perhaps be called “beliefs”, *pratyaya*.

Abhinavagupta while discussing the obstacles to the tasting of *rasa*, makes a few significant remarks about belief without however elaborating his ideas. We shall try to bring out some of the implications of these remarks which have many similarities with the Western theory about the aesthetic relevance of belief.

saṁvedyam a-saṁbhāvayamānaḥ saṁvedye saṁvidam niveśayitum eva na śaknoti
(...) *tad (vighnam) apasārane hṛdaya-saṁvādo loka-sāmānya-vastu-viśayaḥ*
a-loka-sāmānyesu tu ceṣṭiteṣv a-khaṇḍita-prasiddhi-janita-gāḍhāruḍha-
*pratyaya-prasarakārī prakhyāta-Rāmādi-nāmadheya-parigrahaḥ.*¹⁹

He who considers the object of experience as improbable, cannot, indeed, dip his mind in it (...) This incapacity is removed by the heart’s assent which rises from its contact with experiences common to all. But in respect to experiences not common

to all, subjects like Rāma which are known far and wide should be chosen, because this choice will strengthen the deep-rooted belief evoked by the uninterrupted renown of these subjects.

When we analyse this passage we can find two levels of beliefs, 'natural' and 'cultural'. The first is the heart's assent, *hṛdaya-saṁvādaḥ*, common to all humanity, 'endemic in the human situation itself'. The natural beliefs are free from the variable factors of the cultural context. The cultural beliefs are not universal; they are variable. "They vary directly with our particular cultural and social environments, and are often intelligible only to those who share the same background. Moreover, they are often held in explicit opposition to the beliefs of other cultures. With respect to such beliefs, therefore, we commonly have a problem of interpretation. But even when this problem has been overcome, it still by no means follows that the object becomes immediately expressive or interesting. It may remain nothing more than a series of *symptoms* indicating the attitudes, beliefs, and emotions of someone else, which is quite another thing."²⁰

When Abhinavagupta speaks of *pratyaya*, belief, it is of this cultural belief that he is speaking. For an Indian, Rama and his exploits get the spontaneous assent of the reader in the aesthetic and emotive realm even if he is critical about the verisimilitude of these exploits. Does it mean that Sanskrit poetry cannot be appreciated and enjoyed by someone who has not the same ingrained cultural beliefs? This question was not put by the pre-modern Indian aestheticians. But we have to put it today because Indian poetry—not only modern but also ancient poetry, has readers from various cultural environments.

The answer to this question cannot be a simple and straightforward yes or no. There are various complex psychological and cultural cross-currents which will have to be understood before we can really give any answer.

But a sympathetic reader can enjoy much of the poetry written in a different cultural context because of his natural beliefs, the assent of his heart; for great poetry is capable of touching the reader on different levels, of communicating the universalized, *sādhāraṇīkṛta*, emotive experiences.

Beliefs are then the *saṁskāra* and *vāsanā* of the reader; because of these the reader is partially or fully capable of penetrating into the *rasa*-world of the poet which is the poetic work.

This affinity or consent of the heart is therefore a prerequisite of aesthetic experience, but it does not follow that the reader having an affinity with the poet will automatically and fully enjoy the poem. As in the case of the poet we have spoken of a power, *pratibhā*, creative genius, poetic inspiration, by means of which he is able to infuse the words with his vision, likewise in the case of the reader there has to be a similar *pratibhā*, which is the power that goes forth in search of the vision embodied in the aesthetic presentation. In fact Sanskrit poetics speaks of two kinds of *pratibhā*, the creative and the receptive. The receptive *pratibhā* is an intuitive faculty in the reader which however has to be kept alert and sharpened by constant study of poetry.

The concept of *rasa* is fundamental to Sanskrit poetics. *Rasa* is the 'sap or essence

of a thing and its taste'. On the side of poetic act, *rasa* is the essence of a thing in the form of universalized poetic perception which reveals the truth of the object not in its aspect of knowledge, scientific, philosophical or otherwise, but in its aspect of emotion. (In Indian thought the Absolute is cognized as Being-Consciousness-Delight. Poetically it is Delight, *ānanda*, that becomes the primary principle, emotive and aesthetic, and manifests itself as *rasa*. It is also the 'soul of poetry'; Being, *sat*, would then correspond to the 'body of poetry' and Consciousness, *cit*, to the cognitive aspects.) From the standpoint of the poet, *rasa* is not different from the poetic perception, *pratīti*, of the essence of things.

From the standpoint of the reader it is *āsvādāna*, tasting, or *bhoga*, enjoyment of this essence which is called *rasa*. The goal of the poetic act is to concretise the *rasa* into expression; the goal of the aesthetic act is to seize the *rasa* in the poem and enjoy it. And the two acts are linked together by the suggestive power of speech, *dhvani*. *Rasa* cannot be directly communicated, there is need of a go-between. *Dhvani* is this go-between which turns speech into a creatively moulded symbol whose aim is to suggest to the reader psychic states impregnated with aesthetic emotion. We can perhaps say that the receptive intuition (*bhāvayitrī pratibhā*) of the reader grasps the suggestion (*dhvani*) which works adequately in the reader's heart prepared favorably by his "beliefs" (akin to the poet's *saṁskāras*) and awakens out of the latent universal (poetic) state the perception which was at the basis of the poetic act. In the case of the poet the perception led to expression; in the case of the reader it leads to enjoyment.

The perception is really an unfolding. Words both join and stand between the inner experience of the poet and the aesthetic enjoyment of the reader. It is by divesting the words of their superficial levels of meaning that the sensitive reader enters into the utmost depth of symbolic and evocative meaning, *dhvani*, which leads spontaneously to the *rasa*—enjoyment. This is a direct encounter, *sākṣātkāra*.

In Indian aesthetics, *rasa* is seen as delight, even when at the origin of the poetic act the contact with the natural world produces sorrow, pain, terror, anger, disgust. The Upanishads say: "Brahman is bliss. For truly, beings here are born from bliss, when born, they live by bliss and into bliss, when departing, they enter." But in our daily life we do not have the experience of delight, instead we live in a relativist world of pleasure and pain. Like some mystic experiences aesthetic experience can give us the unified and universalized sense of joy. Aesthetic experience has been recognized as "akin to the experience of the Supreme." The duality of pleasure and pain exists only in relation to personal interests, to I-ness and my-ness. But aesthetic experience of delight is possible because the poetic act reaches beyond the ungeneralized to the generalized. "It is because," writes a modern Indian philosopher, "we do not seek the essence of the thing in its contact with us, but look only to the manner in which it affects our desires and fears, our cravings and shrinkings that grief and pain, imperfect and transient pleasure or indifference, that is to say, blank inability to seize the essence, are the forms taken by the *Rasa*. If we could be entirely disinterested in mind and heart and impose that detachment on the nervous being, the progressive elimination of these imperfect and perverse forms of *Rasa* would be possible and the true essential taste of the inalienable delight of existence in all its

variations would be within our reach. We attain to something of this capacity for variable but universal delight in the aesthetic reception of things as represented by Art and Poetry, so that we enjoy there the *Rasa* or taste of the sorrowful, the terrible, even the horrible or repellent; and the reason is because we are detached, disinterested, not thinking of ourselves or of self-defence, but only of the thing and its essence.”²¹

Generalization or detachment from personal interests is therefore a fundamental need for aesthetic experience. According to Sanskrit poetics a love-scene in real life is not a work of art because it is related to personal interests, and it evokes in the mind of the spectator transitory feelings like envy, desire, disgust, shame. But when this same scene is transposed to the domain of art, poetry, drama, painting, it acquires a different meaning: the love is no longer that of the particular man and woman. In this case, if any transitory feelings like disgust or desire arise in the mind of the reader or the spectator, they only become ‘obstacles’ to the full enjoyment.

We can conclude by saying that according to Sanskrit poetics at the end of poetic act stands *rasa*, as the essence of poetry, as perception of delight in things, and at the end of aesthetic experience stands the same *rasa* as the taste of that delight, and between the two there is *dhvani*, suggestion which serves as an instrument to evoke *rasa* in the reader’s heart.

(Concluded)

RANAJIT SARKAR

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21. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (cent. ed.), p. 108.

ISLAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE

The Prophet Of Islam

THE Hijra—Flight—of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in 622 marks the beginning of Islam. In giving birth to a new civilization and moulding the destinies of nations it played a remarkably significant role, particularly in its early centuries. To the anarchic life of tribal Arabia it brought a purpose, to disorganized societies another sense of creative dynamism. Mohammad had received a command to preach to his people the ideal of Submission to the Almighty and to live in it. This is the true Islam and it transcends all spatio-temporal considerations. In fact what could be more glorious than that and who will dispute it? That later it took a different turn is perhaps another unfortunate matter.

Because of his radical teachings to the common masses, Mohammad became a threat to the ruling establishment in Mecca of the time. When his uncle Abu Talib advised him to desist from the preaching, Mohammad replied with great faith in his God: "I ask you not to give up your people. I ask you not to stand by me. But the One and Only God is my witness when I say that even if they were to place the sun on my right and the moon on my left, I would not cease from advocating the truth of the One God. I must go on doing so until I die. You can do what you think best." At this critical and also decisive moment in his life he received a command from the High and acted in its guidance. Along with his close associate Abu Bakr he left Mecca and went to Medina. His entry was marked by spontaneous singing and joyful cries of its inhabitants. There he started giving his message to the common people. Soon Mohammad became the leader of a political unit which developed afterwards into what is called God's Representative, the Caliphate. Within one hundred and fifty years after his death in 632, we see the rise of a vast Islamic Empire stretching across the far lands and seas of three continents. Islam's golden age is marked by the founding of the city of Baghdad in 764 by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mansur, the Victorious. Its glory lasted for about five centuries when in 1258 the Mongols sacked it in the darkness of the mediaeval age.

We are all familiar with the name of Harun Al-Rashid, the Upright, and with the passionate tales of the *Arabian Nights*. During this period we also witness a sudden flourishing of first-rate scientific work. We shall soon talk about these varied achievements in some detail as contributions of Islam to Society and to Science in particular.

The Prophet's stately gift to Arabia and to mankind in general was the Revelations he received from the Supreme. That is its greatness and any person who is sensitive enough will at once feel the spiritual atmosphere that is present in them. The prophetic words of Solomon were fulfilled in the arrival of Mohammad, the most praised one.

Sri Aurobindo refers to the Prophet of Islam as a supreme Yogin, Yogishreshtha:

Arjuna was not the best among his contemporaries. In spiritual knowledge, Vyasa was the greatest; in all kinds of worldly knowledge of that epoch, Bhishma the best; in the thirst for knowledge king Dhritarashtra and Vidura led the rest; in saintliness

and sattwic qualities Yudhishtira was the best; in devotion there was none equal to Uddhava and Akrura; his eldest brother Karna, the mighty warrior, led in inborn strength and courage. And yet it was Arjuna whom the Lord of the worlds elected; it was in his hands that he placed divine weapons like the Gandiva bow and gave to him eternal victory; it was through him that thousands upon thousands of India's world-renowned fighters were made to fall; and he founded for Yudhishtira his undisputed empire as a gift of Arjuna's prowess. Above all, it was Arjuna he decided as being the one fit recipient of the supreme knowledge given in the Gita. It was Arjuna who alone was the hero and the principal actor in the Mahabharata; every section of the poem proclaims the fame and glory of him alone. This is no undue partiality on the part of the supreme Divine or of the great Vyasa the author of the Mahabharata. This high position derives from complete faith and self-surrender. He who surrenders to the Supreme with complete faith and dependence and without making any claims all responsibility for his own good or harm, weal or woe, virtue or sin; he who wants according to His behests instead of being attached to works dear to his own heart; who accepts the impulsions received from Him instead of satisfying his own propensities, who puts to use in His work the qualities and inspirations given by Him instead of eagerly hugging the qualities admired by himself—it is that selfless and faithful Karmayogin who becomes the Supreme's dearest friend and the best vehicle of His Power, through him is accomplished flawlessly a stupendous work for the world. Mohammad the founder of Islam was a supreme Yogin [Yogishreshtha] of this type. Arjuna too was ever on the alert to make an effort at this self-surrender; this effort was the cause of Sri Krishna's love and satisfaction. He alone who makes a serious effort at self-surrender is the best fitted to receive the Gita's teachings. Sri Krishna becomes his Teacher and Friend and takes over all responsibility for him in this world and in the next. (*Bengali Writings*, SABCL, Vol. 4, p. 79; see also *Mother India*, June 1999, pp. 629-30)

Let us read, says the Mother, the beginning of the chapter on *News* in the Quran (*Words of Long Ago*, CWM, Vol. 2, p. 244):

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
 Of what are they speaking together?
 Of the great news.
 Are they disputing about it?
 No, but they wish to know.
 Surely, they will know.
 "Have we not made the earth as a bed?
 And the mountains as the tent-pegs?
 Were you not created in pairs?
 And have we not made you sleep for your rest?
 And made the night for a mantle?

And the day to earn your bread?
 And built above you the seven firmaments?
 And set there a burning light?
 And made showers of water fall from the brimming clouds
 To bring forth grain and herb everywhere
 And gardens thick with trees?"

There is an enchanting sweetness in these verses and the authenticity of the spiritual inspiration is unmistakable. This is what we must accept and must keep aside all that is based on prejudices or interpretative presentations made by the lesser souls.

We find Mohammad very often absorbed in spiritual contemplations. He used to retire to a cave called Ghar-i-Hira in Jabal-an-Nur (Mountain of Light). There he prayed, meditated, and shared his meagre provisions with the travellers who happened to pass by. In 610, when he was forty and it was the fifth consecutive year of his annual retreat, one night an angel came to visit him and announced that Allah had chosen him as His messenger to all mankind, *Russul*. Mohammad saw in a vision that he was received in heaven by Allah and was witness to the marvels of the celestial regions. He brought back with him, for his community, the divine gift he had received there. Thus was established the Islamic communion between Man and God, the words of greeting exchanged between them. The voice which he heard became the text of the Quran. What it proclaims is to live in the Will of the Lord. That is Islam. Indeed, what is in it that can become sectarian or fundamentalist? In fact, to be able to accept the Will of the Lord and to imbibe it in life's thousand conducts, in thought, in emotion, in work, in all the activities we are engaged in can be one of the finest things that can happen to us. In his will is our peace, wrote Dante and when he wrote it in Italian it turned into one of the finest poetic lines carrying in it the power of some overmental greatness. The Mother's own Mantra was, particularly when her Yoga entered the cellular domain for the transformation of the physical: "What Thou will'st, What Thou will'st—*Ce que tu veux Seigneur, Ce que tu veux Seigneur*." To make the Will of the Lord the foundation of our daily existence entails great spiritual development and it is imperative that we engage ourselves for it. It does not come without assiduous practices. For the Will of the Lord to work, nothing of our will should remain.

Mohammad preached to the people of the city of Medina to trust Allah. Abu Bakr was frightened when the pursuers, in 622, came close to the cavern in which he and the Prophet were hiding. He had even expressed the doubt about their safety in the place, hardly 4 km away from Mecca. But at the entrance of the cave suddenly there formed a huge spider's web and the enemy agents thought that the fugitives could not be hiding there, behind the web curtain.

When Mohammad informed his wife Khadija of his experiences, she said: "You are faithful and never utter an untruth. Therefore, you may obey the call and follow the voice." She became his disciple and thus the first follower of Islam.

The Muslims consider Mohammad as the final messenger of Allah. He is said to have been of sturdy build with a large forehead, was handsome and of fair complexion.

Abu Bakr has this couplet on him: "As there is no darkness in the moonlit night so is Mustafa, the well-wisher, bright." A biographer tells about him the following: "His laugh was mostly a smile. He kept his feelings under firm control. He lived a simple life and had very few spare clothes. His house was but a hut. Even when he had become the virtual king of Arabia, he lived an austere life." The Prophet told his followers: "O people! Mohammad has no sons among ye men, but verily, he is the Apostle of God and the last in the line of Prophets." He also warned them to beware of Satan.

Here is a lyrically glowing account of the Prophet: "The personality of Mohammad! It is most difficult to get into the truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes. There is Mohammad the Prophet, there is Mohammad the General; Mohammad the King; Mohammad the Warrior; Mohammad the Businessman; Mohammad the Preacher; Mohammad the Philosopher; Mohammad the Statesman; Mohammad the Orator; Mohammad the Reformer; Mohammad the Refuge of Orphans; Mohammad the Protector of Slaves; Mohammad the Emancipator of Women; Mohammad the Law-giver; Mohammad the Judge; Mohammad the Saint... And in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is like a hero... If a conqueror is a great man, here is a person who rose from helpless orphan and a humble creature to be the ruler of Arabia, the equal to Caesars and Chosroes in all their pomp, one who founded a great empire that has survived all these 14 centuries. If the devotion that a leader commands is the criterion of greatness, the Prophet's name even today exerts a magic charm over millions of souls, spread all over the world... He had not studied philosophy in the school of Athens or Rome, Persia, India, or China. Yet, He could proclaim the highest truths of eternal value to mankind. Illiterate himself, he could yet speak with an eloquence and fervour which moved men to tears, to tears of ecstasy. Born an orphan blessed with no worldly goods, he was loved by all. He had studied at no military academy; yet he could organize his forces against tremendous odds and gained victories through the moral forces which he marshalled. Gifted men with genius for preaching are rare. Descartes included the perfect preacher among the rarest kind in the world." (K. S. Ramakrishna Rao, in *Islam and Modern Age*, 1978)

Rao quotes Sarojini Naidu as follows: "It was the first religion that preached and practised democracy; for in the mosque, when the minaret is sounded and the worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and the king kneel side by side and proclaim, 'God alone is great.' "

Apropos of the remarkable figures or Vibhutis of the world, Sri Aurobindo says the following: "...the greatest men of action the world has known were believers in Fate or in a divine Will. Caesar, Mohammad, Napoleon, what more colossal workers has our past than these?" (*The Supramental Manifestation*, SABCL, Vol. 16, p. 284)

Mohammad as Ahammad was born of the Qureish tribe in Mecca on 20 April 570. But he lost his father Abdullah before he was born and his mother Aminah when he was a child; his uncle Abu Talib took care of him. From an early age he showed a remarkable aptitude for concentration. When he grew up he earned a great reputation for his honesty and integrity. Because he was extremely trustworthy, he became known as Al-Amin. A

rich widow, Khadija who was the owner of a number of caravans, took him in her employment and consigned to him her goods to be taken for sale to Syria. Delighted with the unusual profits she obtained, as also by the personal charms of her agent, she offered him her hand. When Mohammad married her he was twenty-five years old and she forty. It is argued that Khadija probably gave out that age for herself so that she, to comply with the laws of the time, could appoint him as her agent without prior permission from any guardian. She might have been just twenty-eight when they married. By the way, Mohammad had, according to the count of Will Durant, ten wives and two concubines. His last and favourite wife was Abu Bakr's daughter Ayesha in whose arms he died on 7 July 632. It is said that many of Mohammad's marriages were for political reasons. In any case his harem, as his life, was simple even when he became the king of the land. His last words were: "To my Friend, the Highest of the High, the Highest of the High."

In his spiritual life Mohammad received guidance through the angel Gabriel. What he got was extraordinary; in fact he had an access to the Ocean of Knowledge and even to his most intimate associate Abu Bakr only a very little of it was disclosed. After the Prophet's death Zaid Ibn Tabit, the amanuensis, collected four copies of a manuscript containing the Revelations and gave to Abu Bakr, the first Caliph. All other versions which differed from it were ordered to be destroyed. This text became the Quran, the book which is often read and is revered by every Muslim. It is taken as the final word of the Prophet and in no circumstance can it be questioned or dishonoured. Structurally the sequence of revelations as collected in the text is not chronological in order, but is traditional as the arrangement of the Prophet himself. The Quran was revealed to Mohammad piecemeal. "It is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little, for it is with strange lips and a foreign tongue that the Lord spoke to his people." The inspiration of the Prophet progressed from inmost things to outmost things and that is reflected in the text as we have it. "All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth glorifieth Allah, and he is the Mighty, the Wise." He also told his followers that whatever is given to them by the Messenger of God should be accepted and whatever is forbidden must be set aside. "Lo! Allah is stern in reprisal," they are warned.

When Mohammad started preaching in Medina many of its inhabitants gladly accepted his new teachings and became Muslims. However, among the large Jewish community that lived in the city only a few were converted to his faith. Relationship between the two communities soon began to deteriorate and there was bloodshed. Mohammed enforced his position in the region through successful military drives. Neighbouring tribes entered into agreement and in 628 he concluded a treaty with the Meccans. It allowed the Muslims to enter Mecca for performance of the holy pilgrimage. In 630 Mecca came under the control of Mohammad without much resistance. This increased his importance and in 632 he was able to perform the Hajj. But soon he died and was buried in his own house that had already served as a mosque. It still exists and is considered by the Muslims as the second most important mosque.

In 605 there broke a fire and the Ka'bah draperies in Mecca got burnt. Also a

torrential rain after that affected the building. Donations from people were received in great amount and reconstruction of the Ka'bah was undertaken. Mohammad participated in the work and transported the construction stones. The honour of transposing the ancient black stone, which marked the starting point for the ritual of circumambulation, fell upon him.

In Mohammad's meditative practices and the disclosure of the heavenly truths to him there were at times long pauses, but he always remained calm and undisturbed. When there were such interruptions in the revelations he used to get, the sceptics in the city would mock at him and say that God had forsaken him. However, during the three-year waiting the Prophet had given himself to more and more prayers and to spiritual observations. The revelations were then resumed and "God assured him that He had not at all forsaken him: on the contrary, it was He who had guided him to the right path: therefore he should take care of the orphans and the destitute, and proclaim the bounty of God on him. This was in reality an order to preach. Another revelation directed him to warn people against evil practices, to exhort them to worship none but the One God, and to abandon everything that would displease God. Yet another revelation commanded him to warn his own near relatives." "Proclaim openly," he was directed, "that which thou art commanded, and withdraw from the Associators (idolaters). Lo! we defend thee from the scoffers." According to Ibn Ishaq, the first revelation had come to the Prophet during his sleep, "evidently to reduce the shock. Later revelations came in full wakefulness."

The Prophet insisted on the belief in One Transcendent God, in Resurrection and the Last Judgement. "The distinction between the Transcendental, the Cosmic, the Individual Divine... exists in all spiritual disciplines... the Mahomedans even speak of not two or three but many levels of the Divine until one reaches the Supreme." (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 510) Mohammad invited men to charity and beneficence. He took the necessary steps to preserve, through writing, the revelations he was receiving and ordered his adherents also to learn them by heart.

Mohammad received at Mecca the following message of unity and it is well called the essence of Quran (CXII). It is profound in its philosophical implications and must be considered as one of the finest things that can be spoken of the Creator.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful:

Say he is Allah, the One!
 Allah the eternally Besought of all!
 He begetteth not nor was begotten.
 And there is none comparable unto Him.

The two characteristic features of Islam are: harmony of relationship between the temporal and the spiritual; universal brotherhood without distinction of class or race or tongue. It permits "a full enjoyment of all the good that God has created, enjoining at the same time duties towards God, such as worship, fasting, charity; the only superiority which it recognizes is a personal one, based on the greater fear of God and greater piety."

Reward or punishment after death form part of its ethics.

There is a constant refrain in the Quran: "All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth glorifieth Allah, and he is the Mighty, the Wise." If we have to see this beautiful revelation in the Aurobindonian context we at once recognize the presence of the two powers of Maheshwari and Mahakali in it, strong Wisdom and wise Strength. But for the operation of these two powers it is also assumed that there is a sufficient basis, a proper *ādhār*, in men and society to receive their gifts for their spiritual progress. In its absence can come obscurantism with a very retrograde trend getting set.

About the Quran, Will Durant writes as follows: "Mohammad used a mode of utterance half poetry, half prose; rhythm and rhyme are pervasive in it, but irregular; and in the early Meccan suras there is a sonorous cadence and bold sweep of style that are completely felt only by those familiar with the language and sympathetic with the creed. The book is in the purest Arabic, rich in vivid similes, and too florid for Occidental taste. By general consent it is the best, as well as the first, work in the prose literature of Arabia." (*The Age of Faith*, p. 176) Perhaps some of the utterances carry in them a power of revelation that comes from some plenary source. We have almost an Upanishadic ring in the *Thunder*: "Allah it is who raised up the heavens without visible support... and ordered the course of the sun and moon... and spread out the earth, and placed therein firm hills and flowing streams." (p. 177) There is no doubt that a certain spiritual force had descended in the advent of the Prophet, ushering in perhaps one of the dawns that are spoken of in *Savitri*. But its overmental splendour was too short-lived and before "the vision and prophetic gleam" could grow into day it slipped into something else. "Mahomed, as we know," says Sri Aurobindo, "only developed the existing social, religious and administrative customs of the Arab people into a new system dictated to him often in a state of trance, in which he passed from his conscient into his superconscient self, by the Divinity to his secret intuitive mind." (*Social and Political Thought*, SABCL, Vol. 15, p. 425)

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

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

(Continued from the issue of February 2003)

Bio-technology (Contd.)

ACCORDING to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, at present our planet is moving towards a radical evolutionary transition, towards a revolutionary spiritual transformation. In this great transformation, there will be a radical and quantum change in Nature, in human nature as well as terrestrial nature. There will be a radical change in the physical and psychological nature of man and also in the very nature of Matter or the material world. Matter itself will undergo a spiritual transformation. This means in the great transformation which is coming all the so-called established laws of Nature,—even some of them considered as eternal, for example, the law of Death—will change. This includes all the laws of physics, biology, psychology, sociology or politics. So in Sri Aurobindo's vision, bio-technology may help to fulfil some of the future evolutionary possibilities in Matter. For example, as we have indicated earlier, in Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future, Matter will undergo a spiritual transformation. According to the Mother, this new transformed Matter of the future, will not be rigid like the present matter; it will be flexible, fluid, luminous, plastic and responsive to the consciousness of man. Bio-technology may possibly have a role to play in creating this new Matter.

So what are the indications, suggestions or guidance we get from Sri Aurobindo's vision for the future of bio-technology? To know precisely and clearly what are the possibilities which are harmful and what are beneficial to humanity we must have an intuitive and holistic vision of physical and biological Nature or better still a direct communion with the universal consciousness of Nature and, as a result, a direct inner guidance from the wisdom of Nature. But at present our scientific community doesn't have this intuitive vision or inner guidance. So in the short-term the right approach for the future of bio-technology is to process cautiously and slowly, weighing carefully all the ethical, ecological, human and social consequences of every bio-technological experiment and project; greater time, effort and money have to be spent on fundamental research in understanding the laws which govern the totality of the physical and biological nature; the relationship between various organisms at the level of the DNA; and the long-term ecological consequences of bio-technology. Indiscriminate commercial exploitation of bio-technology by Big Business for purely commercial motives has to be severely curtailed and regulated. For the long-term, the scientific and technological community as a whole has to be educated, trained, habituated and sensitised to higher values like holistic and long-term vision, human well-being, ethical issues and a greater emphasis on understanding the truth of things rather than on immediate practical application. And, finally, the community of scientists and technologists of the future have to develop the higher faculties which will help it to come into direct contact with the

consciousness of Nature in the physical world.

Energy and Environment Technologies

The third cluster of technologies which will dominate the future will be those technologies which will help in creating a system of energy-sources that can power an eco-friendly and sustainable socio-economic development. What is the essential principle or criterion for choosing the right technology system? It is to study how Nature creates, sustains and distributes energy in the physical and biological world and imitate or reproduce these in our energy systems.

The sun is the source of energy in the physical and biological world. So solar energy is probably the most eco-friendly and sustainable energy-source. And when we examine how the sun produces energy we see it is by a process of fusion of hydrogen atoms, suggesting fusion technology to be the choice.

The Mother is reported to have said to one of her disciples that fusion technology by splitting the atom, which is mostly the basis of the atom bomb and nuclear energy, is anti-nature and harmful to the material world. For to sever or tear apart the links formed by Nature is to go against the ecology of material Nature. On the other hand nuclear fusion technology is in perfect harmony with Nature because it is the technology by which she generates primal physical energy in the sun. So all forms of solar technologies and fusion technologies are possibly the most environment-friendly and sustainable technologies of the future.

The other important technology of Nature is Recycling. The scientists who have studied the biological world have found that recycling is one of the basic energy policies of Nature. Nature never allows anything to go waste; the waste of one organism becomes the food of some other organism. In our energy management strategies also we have to follow the strategy of Nature. Our industrial systems not only consume a lot of energy but also discharge immense amounts of energy in the form of gas, heat of waste products. If these are dumped into the environment, they become an environmental hazard. On the other hand, if they are recycled they become a source of energy.

After the industrial system, the other major consumer of energy with many environmental implications is the transportation sector, especially the automobile. It is interesting to note that some of the futurist trends of Research and Development in the automobile industry are moving towards some form of fusion and recycling technologies.

It is now recognised by most of the auto-experts that an ideal, environment-friendly energy-source for the car of the future will be the hydrogen-powered fuel cell. The hydrogen fuel-cell produces electricity by a form of fusion technology; it combines hydrogen with oxygen in a reaction to produce electricity and water. Here the essential principle is fusion. At present such a hydrogen-powered automobile is still in the drawing-board stage and not yet a commercially viable technology. But it has certainly become the long-term goal of all the major auto-manufactures of the world like Ford, GM, Toyota, and Chrysler. As an auto-analyst in *Time* writes, "the long-term goal is the hydrogen-

powered fuel cell, a system that does away with dirty internal combustion engine in favour of a clean chemical reaction that produces... water.”

The other model of the future automobile is a hybrid vehicle with two power trains: gas and electric. “The gas engine consumes fuel, while the electric system recaptures energy from braking in the form of heat, as well as power from the generator and regular battery (which is in turn recharged by the gas engine). The stored electric energy can later be used to boost acceleration or to run the car during idling, enabling it to burn less gas. There is no need to recharge as that happens automatically every time you stop and you can get phenomenal range and fuel efficiency.”⁴ We can see here a near perfect system of recycling in which every form of energy—mechanical, thermal, electrical and chemical—that is generated or released is reused or recycled to minimise waste of energy and maximise the utilisation of energy.

(Concluded)

M. S. SRINIVASAN

Reference

4. *Span*, “Reinventing the Wheel”, March/April 2000, p. 29.

COLLECTED WORKS OF THE MOTHER

A second edition of the Collected Works of the Mother in a uniform library set of 17 volumes is currently under publication. The format will be as follows:

Number of pages: 420 pages per volume on the average

Size: 9.5" X 6.5" (24 cm x 16 cm)

Typeface: Sabon, 11 point

Paper: acid-free

Cover: cloth-bound in hard cover, with hand made paper jacket wrapped in PVC plastic

The set will be available some time in 2004.

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EDUCATIONAL IDEAS OF SWAMI DAYANAND

(Continued from the issue of February 2003)

Educational Ideas

RESPONSIBILITY of Family for Education of Child: According to Swamiji, the mother is the first teacher of a child. She plays a vital role in the education of children up to five years. One of her most important tasks is to develop the speaking power of the children. The Mahabharata states that Abhimanyu, while in the womb of his mother Subhadra, could learn the technique of penetration of the wheel formation of soldiers that had been narrated by his father Arjuna. This episode gives stress on the fact that education actually starts from the moment a child is conceived in his/her mother's womb. Life-long education is no longer from cradle to grave. It is now regarded as extending from womb to tomb. This has not only been accepted in India but also in the West. Swamiji therefore put much stress on the responsibility of the mother. "Blessed is the mother who never ceases to impart religious tone to the mind of her child from the time of conception till his knowledge is perfected."³ Swami Dayanand also emphasised the responsibility of the father and other members of the family. According to him, preliminary education has to be imparted by the family. Family plays a vital role in giving shape to the character and personality of the child. Hence, the home atmosphere should be congenial for the growth and development of the child.

Education for Moral Development

Development of Disciplined Behaviour: Swami Dayanand gave importance to the role of family in developing disciplined behaviour. He was against any kind of laxity or pampering in dealing with children. He was a strict disciplinarian.

Development of Virtues in Students: Swamiji insisted on development of virtues such as truthfulness, effort, and application.

Stress on Punishment for Training of Character: Swami Dayanand was for punishment in education. This is not accepted by the modern educational practices. Indian educators like Tagore, the Mother, and many others have completely banned the role of physical punishment.

Meaning and Function of Education

According to Swamiji, ignorance can be attributed to defective faculties and the lack of education. Education can destroy pain and sufferings of others by bestowing knowledge and truth upon them. Education is that which helps one to acquire knowledge, culture, righteousness, self-control and the like virtues and eradicates ignorance and evil habits. The functions of education include: 1. development of character; 2. development of a

firm and contented mind; 3. development of the habit of forgiving; 4. abstaining from sin and vice in thoughts; 5. becoming free from dishonesty; 6. attaining purity of mind by cultivating freedom from hatred and prejudice, and attaining purity of body by cleaning it with water, clay, etc.; 7. achieving control of the senses; 8. developing intellectual ability by nurturing habits such as non-use of toxicants and other materials harmful to the human body, maintaining good company and practising yoga; 9. becoming truthful in thought, word and deed; and 10. developing a calm and quiet mind.

Scope of Education

According to Swami Dayanand, the scope of education is very broad. It starts at the moment of conception and continues till the death of an individual.

Education for National Integration

Swami Dayanand saw the positive role of education in fostering national integration. He pointed out the role of education in taking care of differences in culture, customs, language and manners. Education helps individuals to go beyond these differences.

Education for International Understanding

Swami Dayanand pointed out the role of education for promotion of international understanding. According to him, the Vedas stress internationalism.

Stress on Universal and Compulsory Education

Swami Dayanand put stress on the universalisation of education for all children. The teaching of children should start from the age of five or eight. The schooling should continue till the girls are 16 years and the boys 25 years old. Swamiji quoted the saying of Manu that “Both state and society should make it compulsory upon all to send their children (both male and female) to school after the 5th or 8th year. It should be a penal offence to keep a child at home after that age.”⁴

Intellectual Development

According to Swamiji, there are 6 kinds of inferential knowledge. These are: 1. Cause-Effect; 2. Vaisheshika; 3. Samyogi (Concurrent Learning); 4. Samavay (Attributing); 5. Ekartha Samavyayi, and 6. Virodhi (Sweet Bitter).

Scheme of Studies: Swami Dayanand mentioned scheme of studies such as: 1. Phonetics; 2. Grammar for 3 years consisting of areas such as *astadhya*, *dhatupath*, *gangapath*, *unadhikash* and *mahabhyasa*; 3. Nighantu and Nirukta (Vedic Vocabulary and Philology by Yaska) for 6 to 8 months; 4. Chhandogya Grantha by Pingal for 4

months; 5. Manu Smriti, Valmiki Ramayana and Vidura Niti; 6. Upanishads and Vedantic Shastras; 7. Vedas—Sam, Yajur, Atharva and Rik; and 8 Upavedas including Ayur Veda, Dhanur Veda, Gandharva Veda and Artha Veda.

Evaluation of Levels of Learning: According to Swamiji, evaluation can be carried out through five tests. The areas to be covered by tests are: 1. Knowledge of the Vedas and nature of God; 2. Knowledge of the Laws of Nature; 3. Knowledge of Practice and Teaching of Aptas—pious, truthful, unprejudiced, honest and learned; 4. Knowledge of Life based on purity and conviction of one's soul. There are eight kinds of evidence. These are: 1. Pratyaksha; 2. Anuman; 3. Upamana; 4. Shabda; 5. Itihas; 6. Arthapatti; 7. Sambhava; and 8. Abhava. Pratyaksha relates to direct cognizance or direct contact of five senses with objects. Anuman relates to inferences and follows direct cognizance. Upamana refers to analogy. Shabda refers to testimony, the word of the apt who is a thorough scholar, well versed in all sciences and philosophy, physical and spiritual; is virtuous, truthful, active, free from passion and desires; is imbued with love for others. Itihas refers to history/biography. Arthapatti deals with deduction and conclusion. Sambhava refers to possibility, and Abhava refers to negation and non-existence.

Education for Social Development

The function of education, according to Swami Dayanand, is social development. During the days of Swamiji, the society was very much influenced by casteism. Swamiji preached against casteism and suggested educational programmes for students belonging to all castes. At that time, non-Brahmins were not allowed to read the Vedas. He put forth strong arguments in favour of making reading of the Vedas open to everybody. According to him, Varnas should not be based on birth criteria. Vishwamitra, a Kshatriya, could become a Brahmin and Matanga, the so-called outcaste, could become rishis. Swami Dayanand was a social reformer. According to him, no one should be contented with one's own welfare only, but should look at the society to which one belongs.

Education of Women: Swami Dayanand stressed education of women. As education starts from the time of conception of an individual in the mother's womb, the education of the mother becomes very important. Her ideas, attitudes, interests and activities would have great influence on the baby. According to Swamiji, education of women should include the study of the Vedas.

Education for Physical Development

Swami Dayanand saw the importance of physical education. The intellect becomes subtle through physical development. It helps the mind to grasp obtuse and profound subjects.

On Teachers

Swami Dayanand recognised the role of teachers. Teachers should be persons of noble

character. “Only those persons are qualified to teach who are masters of their art and are imbued with piety.”⁵ They should be intelligent, religious and pious. The teacher/Acharya is the one who teaches the science of the Vedangas and Upangas and who helps the students to live righteously and to live a life free from bad habits and vices. A good teacher is a spontaneous innovator and helps the students to liberate themselves from the cobwebs of learning, leading them to the luminosity of true knowledge. It is possible for an effective teacher to transmit knowledge more through silence than through discourses. The story of Swamiji is an example of such type of learning and teaching.

Home Visits by Teachers: According to Swami Dayanand, teachers should undertake visits to the homes of students. The visits are very helpful in providing individual attention.

Vedic School

Swamiji underlined the opening of Vedic schools. The first stage of study covered six schools of philosophy, the Upanishads, Manu Smriti, and Grihya Sutras. The next stage covered four Vedas, four Vedangas, four Upavedas, and books on Astronomy, Grammar, Adjunct Linguistic and Literary Sciences. Although the school had students from the four Varnas of the Hindus, sudras were not expected to study the Vedanga proper.

Location of a School under Gurukula System

According to Swami Dayanand, the school should be located at a distance of more than 5 miles (8 kms) from a town or a village.⁶ The students should not have any contact with their family members during the period of their study. Whenever they go out, their teachers should accompany them.

Stress on Single Sex Schools for Students Above 8 Years of Age

Swami Dayanand insisted on the establishment of separate institutions for girls. He said that the seminary should be located in a sequestered place. The school for the boys should be situated at a distance of at least 3 miles (5 kms) from that of girls. All employees of the boys’ schools should be men and all employees of girls’ schools should be women. Children up to 8 years of age could study in a common school. When they attain 8 years of age, they should be sent to the single-sex schools concerned.

On Students

According to Swami Dayanand a Shishya (pupil) has characteristics such as (a) capacity for acquiring knowledge and true culture, and (b) possession of an unimpeachable moral character. The students should be eager to learn and should be devoted to their teachers. They should not have inertia in body and mind. They should not use intoxicants

and should not become victims of lust, irrelevant talks, neglect of study, too much of emotion, etc. They should be truthful and cultured. The students should abstain from following 8 kinds of sexual excitement in relation to persons of opposite sex: 1. looking upon them with an eye of lust; 2. embracing them; 3. having sexual intercourse with them; 4. intimately conversing with them; 5. playing with them; 6. associating with them; 7. reading or talking of libidinous subjects; 8. indulging in lascivious thoughts. The students should be thorough scholars, well versed in all sciences and philosophies. They should be virtuous, truthful, active, and free from passion and desires and should be imbued with love for others. They should have similar dress, food, etc. While staying in a gurukul or a school, they should not have any correspondence with their parents. They should not indulge in activities such as mutual meeting (*paraspara darshan*), touch (*sparsana*), sole eating (*ekanta sevana*), greeting (*sambhasana*), gossip (*bisayalap*), play (*krida*) and material thought.

Conclusion

Swami Dayanand's educational ideas are based on his theory of man and his development. Certain ideas such as Brahmacharya's role in education are still valid. The institutions named after him try to follow his ideas. But the functioning of these institutions depends on the ideal teachers and students, who are rare.

(Concluded)

SUNIL BEHARI MOHANTY

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
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ACROSS THE IMAGED VASTS

ACROSS the imaged vasts of time and space,
The figment woven by mind's limiting scope,
His winged feet sped scorning all thought's walls
Which form this little room of mortal life.
She saw him then through sleep closed lids
Of laughing longing joy and disbelief
That bodies being far could be so close.
His heart in front, a circle of light and gold
Spilled stars and ocean foam around their feet;
Through hands there passed love's link, a silver thread,
And heaven lent her soft light for their head.
His smile of greeting melted in her smile
And eye's embrace closed all remaining space.

MARY HELEN

December 13, 1969

A GREATER PSYCHOLOGY

An Introduction to the Psychological Thought of Sri Aurobindo—Edited by A.S.Dalal
Pages: 426; Rs. 225.00; ISBN 81-7058-659-3

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SRI AUROBINDO AND MAYAVADA

(Continued from the issue of February 2003)

OBVIOUSLY if Śaṅkara had recognized the proper sphere of application of this law he would surely have been spared all the dualisms and sharp divisions which so tenaciously pursued his search for a monism. In the West, it has been the merit of Hegel to have clearly recognized that the Absolute Idea must reconcile the very last contradictions and antinomies. It was, indeed, a supreme perception which showed him the necessity of a larger synthesis inherent in the nature of two contradictions. And it was surely a feat of philosophical genius, which enabled him to conceive of Synthetic Reason and the Dialectic Process as a higher function of thought indispensable to the consideration of the Absolute Reality.

Sri Aurobindo's perceptions in this connection are in fact clearer and more definite. "An Omnipresent Reality," says he, "is the truth of all life and existence, whether absolute or relative, whether corporeal or incorporeal, whether animate or inanimate, whether intelligent or unintelligent.... All antinomies confront each other in order to recognise one Truth in their opposed aspects and embrace by the way of conflict their mutual unity. Brahman is the Alpha and the Omega. Brahman is the one besides whom there is nothing else existent."¹³ Such ultimate Reality in which all antinomies confront and realize their 'Unity' will obviously lie beyond our Intellect and Reason, which rely upon the law of non-contradiction. Says Sri Aurobindo: "Our way of knowing must be appropriate to that which is to be known."¹⁴ Now a greater reason than ours is obviously operative in the ultimate Reality which being all-inclusive must reconcile all contradictions and whose "essence is a higher spiritual unity" and, therefore, a higher spiritual reason or intuition is necessary to know it. Such reason must be "more vast, subtle, and complex in its operations"¹⁵ so as to be able to comprehend the "unbounded variability" of the life of the Infinite. Our normal reason works indirectly through representative ideas and has to infer and build up constructs of reality on the basis of fragmentary gathered data. The larger and higher reason must necessarily be an instrument of direct knowledge and essential truth. If we are able to recognize that our normal reason in its search after truth is limited to an indirect approach and can at best achieve constructs of reality—and obviously this faculty is a great advance on the perception of the animals and the continuation of evolution is a fact—then the possibility of a direct instrumentation of knowledge becomes fairly obvious. Now the data of facts that this instrumentation might yield can be of immense importance to philosophical thinking. Such data will probably give us new unities in place of the distinctions and oppositions of our intellectual reason. But our intellect too is, to an extent, capable of a larger action, as in the West, Hegel had shown; and that by itself can prevent the catastrophic consequences of sharp mutilations of reality as has happened in Māyāvāda. "Our intellect," says Sri Aurobindo, "must consent to pass out of the bounds of finite logic and accustom itself to the logic of Infinite," and continues he, "if we insist on applying finite logic to the Infinite, the omnipresent reality

will escape us and we shall grasp instead an abstract shadow.”¹⁶ This is exactly what happens in Māyāvāda, which is a perfect demonstration of the incapacity of our common logic, born out of our practical handling of the finite objects of the world, to deal with the issues of ultimate Reality.

Thus ultimate Reality must be Integral Reality and it would be wrong to suppose that such Reality would be a relational whole involving the fallacy of infinite regress. Bradley was right in affirming that if Reality were constructed on the basis of relational judgement, absolute knowledge would be impossible. But the view here presented is not of such a relational whole; it is of an intimate Unity, which however being not abstract blankness but real unity involves inner relations, presented to it in a perception of self-identity.

Śaṅkara’s severe conception of Identity and his exclusive prepossession with the Upanishadic descriptions of the Unity of the Brahman in negative terms proved absolutely determining for his philosophy. The Absolute Reality should be to him nothing but just Identity. Any difference meant a denial of it. Every determination, as in Spinoza, meant a limitation of the Absolute Substance.

To Sri Aurobindo, however, identity necessarily involves difference and the higher the identity the richer its content and the more complex its organization. Surely things of the world cannot be attributed to the Brahman, because He is more than the world. Therefore, the Upanishads describe Him by the terms *neti neti*, not this, not this, but they also describe him positively in the terms *sarvam khalu idam brahma*, All this is Brahman, or *annam brahma*, Matter is Brahman, *prāṇam brahman*, Life is Brahman, etc.

Here are the two basic positions and perceptions, which make all the difference between the two philosophies.

To Śaṅkara the Brahman is also the Supreme Universal in which no particulars can have any place. “Brahman is devoid of anything of a like kind or of a different kind and has no internal variety.”¹⁷ This universal obviously becomes a supracosmic Transcendent Reality. But the nature of relations between the Particular, the Universal, and the Transcendent as conceived here could not but lead to Māyāvāda and we must carefully examine them. This again implies an old controversy which has raged long and furiously both in the East and the West and we are conscious of the abstractions that vitiated the old discussions. Sri Aurobindo affirms, “The Universal particularizes itself in the individual; the individual contains in himself all the generalities of the Universal,”¹⁸ and they both represent the Immanence of the Absolute which must rest upon the Transcendence of the Absolute. “The transcendent,” says Sri Aurobindo, “contains, manifests, constitutes the cosmos and by manifesting it manifests or discovers as we may say in the old poetic sense of that word, its own infinite harmonic varieties.”¹⁹ The individual, the universal, and the transcendent are thus necessary to one another and they together constitute the three poises of the Absolute. Now if this relation between them is correct then the individual and the universal can certainly not be sundered from the Transcendent; but if they are, the consequence irresistibly will be, on the one hand, the unreality of the world including all the moral, religious and spiritual effort of man and,

on the other, a complete poverty of the Transcendent.

We know that the spiritual experience or *anubhava* of *nirviśeṣacinmātram* (undifferented consciousness as such) represents to Śaṅkara the Ultimate Reality because it is not contradicted by anything further. It is most interesting that Sri Aurobindo has a full appreciation and understanding of this experience. Says he, "the mind, when it passes those gates (the gates of the Transcendent) suddenly, without intermediate transitions, receives a sense of the unreality of world and the sole reality of silence which is one of the most powerful and convincing experiences of which the human mind is capable."²⁰ Buddha's basic spiritual experience was different. Now while each spiritual experience is intense and powerful, we have to recognise that in the spiritual realm too, perhaps more than the intellectual, there are large ranges and varieties of experiences. Sri Aurobindo's contribution in this connection is of the highest importance to the interpretation of Indian philosophy. He has given us an ascending order of these experiences and also a criterion of their relative valuations. Śaṅkara's experience, says he, is higher than Buddha's, but if Śaṅkara had taken a step further he would have arrived at an experience which presents the *nirguṇa* Brahman and the *saguṇa* Brahman in a single unity. To Sri Aurobindo's philosophy this fact of spiritual experience is basic and determining, as that of the *nirguṇa* Brahman was to Śaṅkara. Obviously this contradicts, contradicts in Śaṅkara's sense of the term, his own experience. Applying his own criterion of Truth then shall we not say that this special experience of the unity of the *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* must be taken as the final until a yet higher experience becomes available?

Between this experience of the Supreme Unity of the *saguṇa* and the *nirguṇa* Brahman and our normal experience of plurality Sri Aurobindo describes a spiritual experience of a unique character and significance. This is his well-known Supermind. In it the unity is presented in and with plurality as a fact of immediate experience. In mind the plurality is the more marked and evident experience and the unity has to be constructed through piecing together of detached data. In the Supermind the unity is the direct experience but the plurality is, as it were, nascently present in it. It is the instrumentation which creates out of the spaceless and timeless Absolute through self-extension the world of space and time. Sri Aurobindo says that in the *Ṛg-veda* the description of the *ṛta-cit*, Truth-Consciousness, seems to suggest the Supermind and this is, he affirms definitely, the proper solution of illusionism as it is "the intermediate link" between the Absolute and the world, which "can explain them to each other."

The fact of the Supermind is equally a matter of logical inference. We have already shown how a higher instrumentation of knowledge than mind is implied in and suggested by it. Now the Supermind is really the stage and form of the cognitive action which may best be described as the experience of the 'many-in-one' or the 'one-in-many'. As a universal principle it would represent the consciousness which holds the divided 'many' of the mind in an essential unity. Looked at from above the Transcendent Absolute must needs have an instrumentation through which the unity begins to translate itself into a plurality.

If we recognize our responsibility to accept all experience as valid, the Spirit as

well as the material world, then Supermind is the best idea to explain their relation. And it is an idea as much supported by logical need as by experience, present and Vedic.

Śaṅkara had said that his Absolute undifferentenced consciousness was a fact of his experience. But an absolute Being is to him equally a necessity of common experience. All unreal and passing things imply to him something abiding. Buddha could deny the world process as *anitya* (passing show) but for Śaṅkara the *anitya* (passing) world must imply a *nitya* (abiding) Brahman. Says he, "Wherever we deny something as unreal, we do so with reference to something real."²¹ Śaṅkara's thinking here is very cogent. The temporal implies the eternal, the apparent the real, the relative the Absolute. He apparently saw the inter-relatedness of these pairs and the impossibility of thinking of the one without the other. But was it then not arbitrary to call one member of these pairs unreal, virtually the one which was the starting-point and which led on to the other. If he had faithfully followed the trend of his original thinking, which had relied upon the inter-relatedness of these pairs, then he would have logically arrived at the concept of a Brahman, which in Its rich unity must have comprehended both the aspects of these pairs.

The whole-hearted monist that Sri Aurobindo is, he naturally asks: "If Brahman is the only reality, why speak of Māyā at all?" And if you do it, says he, "there will always be some form of ultimate dualism." And is the Māyāvādin, with all his subtle logic, really able to escape an ultimate dualism? Sri Aurobindo also urges that "the world cannot be all an illusion" since "it has real objectivity for us in any conceivable sense of the term." But "if the world is an illusion, then illusion in some sense is." And, therefore, the Brahman cannot be the only reality.

However the world is not the full reality of the Brahman and, therefore, an element of illusion, ignorance, Māyā or Avidyā has to be admitted as operative in the cosmic process. But it can only be conceived as a power of the Brahman through which he creates a world in space and time. The mind and the ego, which are the limited terms of knowledge and being subject to division, can also be nothing but willed creations, serving as transitional stages in the process of cosmic evolution. The purpose of cosmic evolution, and of the original involution, its necessary correlate, can only be the delight of becoming or *līlā*. The original involution and the self-withdrawal implied in it released the force of *Avidyā*, necessary for the joy of the rediscovery of the Brahman through evolution. It created the possibility of a superficial, partial and divided regard of things in the world. Ignorance is, therefore, only "a half-knowledge evolving towards knowledge."²²

The concept of the *Īśvara* is a most curious phenomenon in Māyāvāda. It is the Lord and the Creator of the world and the Māyā is a real power to it. This Supreme Immanence in the world is perhaps an admission of the need and demand of the religious nature of man. But the Māyāvādin refuses to recognise that the religious need in itself requires an eternal principle of experience and that an *Īśvara* which is as illusory as the world it creates, cannot satisfy it.

Māyāvāda, we will concede, affords much satisfaction to the logical reason for the subtlety and sharpness of thinking and to the spiritual instinct for a fundamental reality, even though it leaves us in a sharp contradiction. But so far as our religious and the active

aspects are concerned, it completely disappoints us.

There is also another way of looking at this phenomenon of the *Īśvara*. The *Īśvara* is the representation of the Absolute Brahman in the world or the Brahman itself as It appears to us in the world. Looked at from the world It is real as immanent Brahman, so is his power of *Māyā* or *Avidyā* and so is the world. But looked at from the transcendent Brahman all this becomes unreal. Evidently, as Sri Aurobindo says, there is “a missing link” between the transcendent and the immanent Brahman. Should Śaṅkara have seen the necessity of a positive relation between the two, the whole picture of his philosophy would have been different.

The individual human existence too is as unreal as the world, for *Māyāvāda*. The Vedantic thought and the seeking for Brahman, which takes place in this world would also then be unreal. Is this not a consequence as suicidal as that of scepticism, which saying that no knowledge is possible affirms something and thereby refutes itself. The Mayavada philosophy is obviously destructive of its own seeking (*jijñāṣā*) for the Brahman, its supreme objective. And Liberation or Mukti too, which is oneness with the Brahman²³ involves a most interesting contradiction. Says Sri Aurobindo “The individual soul can only cut the knot of ego by a supreme act of egoism, an exclusive attachment to its own individual salvation.” Other souls seem to be of no consequence because they “who were equally myself remain behind in bondage.”²⁴

We may now bring our consideration of *Māyāvāda* to a close. The question with which we started “Has Sri Aurobindo refuted *Māyāvāda*?” will recur to us. *Māyāvāda* is an old subject and many of the objections which Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy raises are bound to appear familiar. But there is an evident freshness and originality about them, because they arise out of the present-day cultural situation and answer to the curiosity of the modern mind. However the greater strength of a criticism must always lie in the constructive solutions it can offer for the same problems and herein consists the true originality and the unique satisfactoriness of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy. These constitute also the more powerful refutation of *Māyāvāda* and in this connection we would repeat that we have to carefully consider and recognize whether the “mind” and the “ego” are just “intermediate representations” and “transitional stages” or not. If they are, then philosophical thinking must no longer take them as final in the cosmic evolution and should rather seek to determine the nature and the conditions of the higher instrumentations of knowledge as an epistemological inquiry precedent to the ontological determinations. The “Larger Reason” with an understanding for “the logic of the Infinite” is a function and ready possibility of our normal rationality. It can easily pave the way to an appreciation of the other instrumentations of knowledge leading to the decisive “Supermind”. Philosophy limited to the mind and intellect will always have to proceed upon exceedingly partial data and will always have to remain content with a construction or a reconstruction of reality. A *knowledge* of reality will always remain denied to it. Our philosophical divergences under such circumstances will always remain ununderstandable and irreconcilable. Philosophy can surely show greater progress than it has done, but then we must be able to recognise that besides sense and reason there can be other cognitive

processes, which may yield fresh data and suggest new explanations. Thus the advance of philosophy and the solution of its many insoluble problems lies, as Sri Aurobindo says, in “an extension of the field of our consciousness and an unhopd-for increase in our instruments of knowledge.”²⁵

(To be continued)

INDRA SEN

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14. *Ibid.*, Vol. II (1), p. 437.
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17. Sajāṭīya-vijāṭīya-svagata-bheda-rahitam: *Indian Philosophy*, II, p. 353.
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24. *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 60.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

(N.B. This instalment concludes Indra Sen’s paper presented at the Indian Philosophical Congress 1950.)

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BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Champaklal Speaks, edited by M. P. Pandit, 3rd edition revised and enlarged by Roshan. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department, Pondicherry-605002. Available at SABDA. Price: Rs. 175.00.

It is not a book to be reviewed. It is almost a diary of Champaklal-ji which gives an account of his life. This book is meant for the readers whose lives are surrendered and devoted to the Divine Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The Mother has written in her *Prayers and Meditations* and mentioned in the preface: “Some give their soul to the Divine, some their life, some offer their work, some their money. A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have—soul, life, work, wealth; these are the true children of God.” Champaklal-ji in his own life tried to consecrate and justify these words of the Mother.

On 18th March 1975 when this book was first published Nolini-da said: “Champak-bhai, your book is extremely nice. I have not read it fully, but from what I have seen the substance is very good.”

In the preface of the 1st edition Champaklal himself had clearly elucidated: “... This writing is neither for intellectuals nor for ‘advanced sadhaks’ but it is written only for those who are by nature and attitude like Champaklal.” This book is inscribed from his own sweet memory in a devotional way. No wonder, M. P. Pandit concluded the first edition with these words: “For what Champak-bhai speaks is nothing but *Mother Sri Aurobindo, Mother Sri Aurobindo.*”

Nirod-da writes about Champaklal: “Two sadhaks of recent time stand apart from all others whose image will always remain untarnished in our memory. One is Nolini-da and the other is Maharaj Champaklal, two true yogis—one predominantly a *homo intellectualis*, the other essentially a *homo psychicus*. Both of them attained rare heights of consciousness, each following his own path indicated by his swadharma.” (back-cover of the book)

Again, from the preface of the book’s 2nd edition, written by M. P. Pandit, “*Champaklal Speaks* inspires us to ponder over his extraordinary life and fills our hearts with reverence for his Lord and the Mother. We can see that his observations are the experiences in his daily life. The reminiscences recreate the atmosphere of the days when Sri Aurobindo and the Mother worked together on this earth to transfigure the consciousness of their disciples and all mankind as well as to reveal a new future for the entire earth.”

Champaklal-ji was deeply interested in a photograph of himself with the Mother which she captioned as “My Lion”. Once, on seeing the photo, Pranab’s uncle Charubabu exclaimed: “Mother, here Champaklal looks like Durga’s lion!” And Mother forcefully replied, “He is my lion.”

Truly speaking Champaklal’s rendering unique service to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is like Hanuman’s service to Rama and Sita. He himself considered it as “the *Ramayana* of my life”. Roshan who has revised and enlarged the 3rd edition writes in the preface: “Champaklal-ji was not satisfied merely with reading and rereading his *Ramayana*

and losing himself in the memory it rekindled. He made corrections and added marginal notes in his copies of the first two editions, for he wanted to perfect his book as far as possible.”

He was taught by the Mother to become a perfect worker of the Divine. It is true that there are other planes of greater perfection, but this is the only one which is most dynamic, spontaneous, perennially creative and destined to lead to a perfect perfection. It is integral and is in constant contact with the Divine.

Roshan made a translation of the book’s first two editions into Gujarati, *Champaklalna Sansmarano*. While revising it, Champaklal gave her 40 newly-written episodes to include, especially about his upbringing, childhood influences of saints and yogis, about all that gave form and force to his aspirations and the past yogic training which helped to render a genuinely dedicated, consecrated long service to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Also, Champaklal himself decided which photographs were to be printed. These have been incorporated in the present 3rd edition. Besides, Roshan and her helpers carefully scrutinized the previous editions, did research for footnotes, and checked the text of *Spiritual Games* and *Birthday Messages*.

One can find that Champaklal-ji’s observations are based on profound truth. They are revealed to him through his experience in the daily association with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. One instance I am quoting from is his correspondence of 25 May 1935. He wrote: “Where am I going, what am I doing?” Sri Aurobindo replied: “... where you are? In the Mother’s presence here and close to me. Where you are going? Towards union with the Divine through dedication and service. What are you doing here? Service and self-giving to the Divine”. When Champaklal’s health was deteriorating Nirodbaran inwardly heard Sri Aurobindo say: “*I have been waiting. He will come straight to me.*”

I am giving some recollections and diary notes of Champaklal-ji and the valuable comments of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, Blessings, Love for him.

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

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

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

Sri Aurobindo

* Champaklal had requested Sri Aurobindo to give a prayer to him. In reply Sri Aurobindo wrote the above prayer.

— Champaklal’s note.

Champaklal's reminiscences: It is said that children inherit their parents' assets, then, why did I not inherit anything from my father? I sometimes wondered in the early years of my life in Pondicherry, but now I realise that my *samskaras*, my inner orientation, is the wealth he has bestowed on me, a treasure no amount of spending can diminish. In my work with the Mother all that my parents taught me about work proved very useful. Mother was always happy with my work and often expressed her happiness in words.

Grace arranges my work: One day I said to the Mother: "Mother, I would like to wash my father's (Sri Aurobindo's) dhoti." She smiled and said that she would ask Sri Aurobindo. The next day I went to Sri Aurobindo he looked at me and said: "You want to wash my dhoti?"

C: "Yes."

Sri Aurobindo: "Are you ready?"

I looked at him in surprise and wondered why he asked that.

Sri Aurobindo: "You know, people will mock at you, laugh at you, joke about you. Are you ready for all that?" When he saw that I was eager to do this work in spite of such possibilities, he looked at me affectionately and smiled. He said so because the Ashram atmosphere was like that at that time. But very soon Mother changed it entirely.

As I look back, I clearly see that it was the Mother who made me ask for this work. For it is not in my nature to ask for anything for myself. True, I always aspired to be able to spend all my time and all my energy in the service of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. This aspiration got fulfilled in different ways, often to my utter surprise.

Living Examples: You once asked me what were my impressions when I first met Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Well, it is difficult to describe them. But I remember this much, that I felt I was in the presence of Shiva when I saw Sri Aurobindo. When I saw the Mother, I felt an extraordinary closeness to her and saw in her an embodiment of Beauty.

Now, after all these years of stay with them, the total impact on me is this:

Sri Aurobindo is a living example of complete surrender.

The Mother is a living example of perfect service to the Lord.

(p. 39)

Steadfast and Meticulous: I was not 'educated' in the sense the word is commonly used. Yet Sri Aurobindo showered his infinite grace on me and called me to his Ashram. My ideas were indeed somewhat conservative and I was and still am to some extent, quite temperamental. I did not possess the insight to see things in the overall perspective nor was I aware in those days that one ought to have such a comprehensive view. It was Mother who taught me this. I still lack that integrality, but when it is necessary, she herself will grant it to me. Of course, I was not absolutely stupid. Whoever tried to clarify his point of view I kept myself open to understand it, and I acted with equality and love to the best of my ability. However, when I came in contact with others I often felt that they could not understand me. It was said: "Champak is obstinate and trying; once he

decides to something he does not let go.”

I remember, Mother once commented about this aspect of my nature to Sri Aurobindo, just by observing me from far.

When Sri Aurobindo lived in Library House, the present Fruit Room was his dining room. Nolini, Amrita, Bijoy and Moni, who lived in Library House, also dined with him. One day while eating, Sri Aurobindo said, “Mirra (as Mother was then called) told me that Champaklal has a steadfast and meticulous mind. It is the first time she has found such mind in an Indian.” (pp. 54-55)

Thought Communication: Mother used to place a vase of flowers on the table in the verandah of Library House where those who were permitted would meet Sri Aurobindo in the mornings. One day I found that the vase was no longer there and there were no flowers. This continued for some time. Finally one day I arranged some flowers in a vase and put them on the table. When she saw them, Mother asked me: “When did you get this idea of keeping flowers here?”

C: “I had been thinking of it for many days. But I felt you may not want it and what you do not want I did not want to do. Why do you ask, Mother?”

Mother: “Why I am asking is this: the other day when we spoke about clarity of mind I put this idea of keeping flowers in the atmosphere—that somebody should bring flowers for Sri Aurobindo. I wanted to see who receives it first. Now I see that you have been first. Very interesting, very interesting.” (p. 66)

“*I am Your Mother*”: 13.9.1926

Mother: “One day you came running and weeping to me and fell into my lap. ‘Be my mother, be my mother.’ I answered, ‘I am your mother’.” (p. 68)

Surrender Yourself Completely: 20.11.1926

While giving me something, Mother said: “Surrender yourself completely to me—you will realise your Self.” (p. 69)

The Being Who Wants to Manifest: ... Mother said: “The Being we want to manifest in you demands your complete surrender. He is one of four brothers. He wants to manifest in you and is waiting for you to be ready. And that Being wishes that I should work in you.”

On another day, she said: “The Being has entered into you.”

The next day she said: “To bring down immortality four pillars are needed. Of them Purity is Kanai.

Faith is Tirupati.

Adoration is Rajangam.

Aspiration is Champaklal.” (p. 70)

Champaklal becomes a Demigod: Long back, I had once told Mother: “I want to see the Divine with these very physical eyes.”

Mother had replied: "You will see Him."

On 22nd December, Mother told me: "There is something in your nature that has to be removed. It is not an easy task. Leave it to us, we shall do it."

Later, on the day fixed by the Mother, Amrita, Purushottam and I presented ourselves before her in the verandah upstairs. Mother called Amrita "the Hound of Heaven"; she often did some of her occult work through Purushottam. When we three went upstairs we found Mother seated in Sri Aurobindo's chair. She looked very different that day, really magnificent.

The occult work began. I was made to lie on the floor and went into a half-conscious state. The Maheshwari aspect of the Mother commenced her work through Purushottam. He sat on my body and pummeled and kneaded it thoroughly. I could hear the sound of his blows, but I was completely passive. The pounding went on for almost half an hour. (Hearing the noise, Purani rushed upstairs, but seeing the Mother, he went back quietly.) Also, a lot of hairs were pulled out of my head; later they were offered to Mother who took them in her hand and gave certain instructions regarding them.

Immediately after the work was over I rushed to Mother and embraced her. For a long time she held me close to her like a small child and made me a divine child. What can I say about my experiences during that session?

When Mother narrated to Sri Aurobindo all that had happened, he remarked, "Champaklal has become a demigod." (p. 71)

Occult Workings: In Library House, meditations were held in the verandah upstairs, with people sitting around Sri Aurobindo.

After some time Mother started a group meditation in Sri Aurobindo's room. She used to sit on Sri Aurobindo's cot. This meditation was meant only for women, but Mother herself asked me to join saying I could do my work afterwards. People used to joke that Champaklal is a woman. But I continued. And, you will be surprised to know, gradually, one by one, all asked for permission to join, and meditations with Sri Aurobindo automatically stopped.

During these meditations the occult work was highly interesting. Once, on a deep impulse from within, I collected a number of lotuses, counted the number of persons in the Ashram and took as many lotuses inside the room. I had counted along with those who were present, those who were not in the room. When my turn for pranam came, I took the lotuses to Mother, I held each lotus in my hands, looked at Mother, concentrated and identified myself with one of the ashramites, then offered it to her on behalf of that person; in this way I offered one lotus for each ashramite. As I was doing this Mother's face changed completely and it gave me the impression that she had become the Lord of the Universe. At the end of the meditation Mother asked me: "How did you get the idea? Very interesting." (p. 73)

Mother's Faith in Champaklal: When the new bathroom for Sri Aurobindo was made, there was a proposal to install an electric geyser there for making hot water. Mother was

told that if the button was switched on without checking if the tap on the pipe was open, the result could be disastrous. The Mother immediately gave instructions that none of the attendants should touch the switch except Champaklal. However, later this plan was dropped and another arrangement made. (p. 102)

I am very pleased: 1.6.1940.

Mother: I am very pleased with your work.

I like your faithfulness,

I like your sincerity,

I like your steadiness,

I like your regularity,

I like your courage. (p. 107)

Two Lotuses: (Champaklal had painted 2 lotuses and offered these paintings to the Mother on his birthday on 2 February 1940)... When Mother brought them to Sri Aurobindo I was there. She showed them to him and said: "See, how nice they are! Today is Champaklal's birthday; he has done these paintings for me. If you write the significance on them I will give them to him. He wants you to write on the white lotus and I on the red."

With a beautiful affectionate smile Sri Aurobindo said: "Umm." Then he wrote above the white lotus:

Aditi

The Divine Mother

And under the red lotus he wrote:

To Champaklal

With Blessings

2.2.40

Sri Aurobindo

After writing, he looked at me and gave a sweet smile. Then above the red lotus Mother wrote:

The Avatar

Sri Aurobindo

And under the white lotus she wrote:

To Champaklal

With blessings to my dear child

2.2.40

Mother (p. 105)

"*Champaklal is in my month*": Nolini came and informed Mother of the coming birthdays of certain disciples whom she generally saw.

Mother: "But Champaklal is in my month!"

Recently someone studied old calendars and he claims that the Mother was born on *vasant panchami* (the fifth day of the lunar month of Vasant, another name for spring). I too was born on *vasant panchami*. Is it not interesting?

So, had I known it that day, I could have said, “Mother, not only the same month, but also the same day.” (p. 100)

Birthday cards: I do not remember when Mother started giving birthday cards. Children used to receive flowers from her when they came to her. They would be given extra flowers on their birthdays. On those days she also started giving roses.

I always had a liking for children who were open to Mother, whether I knew them personally or not. I wanted to give something which they would learn to value when they grew up, but I wanted that my present should be associated with Mother or Sri Aurobindo. So I began to paint flowers and asked Mother to write the name of the child and “blessings” on the card, so that it became priceless. She might write the name, blessings and the date, or maybe only blessings, though on birthdays she usually wrote the name. I would present these cards to the children of visitors even if it was not their birthday. I used to give my card in Mother’s hand and Mother would write on the card in the presence of the child so that the child would remain for more time in Mother’s presence, would be happy to see her write and also, if the child were wise, would learn many things from that experience. But this was possible only because in those days there were very few children. Some children used to put both their hands on Mother’s feet and look at her so expressively while she was writing, that it was a very interesting sight. On some occasion, when I did not give a card, Mother asked: “Champaklal, you have nothing for this child?” That made me feel bad, and so I started making cards for all her children. Mother was very happy about it. Soon I started making cards for adults. But I was not painting for everybody: pictures of Mother and Sri Aurobindo were pasted instead.

When people learnt that the Mother was using folders for this purpose, they started preparing and offering them to her. Mother would look at them and remark: “Pretty”, “Very pretty”, “Excellent”, “Beautiful”, “Wonderful”, etc. Sometimes she would say that the picture was useless, quite useless, and would give it to me for covering up. I would cover such pictures with Sri Aurobindo’s or the Mother’s picture or that of some landscape, bird or animal and take the card back to her.... (p. 244)

2-2-65

Champaklal

This year, I feel clearly that you have become a part of myself.

For ever love

The Mother

Birthday Messages: Mother said a few days before my birthday: “Champaklal, what do you want? You bring a beautiful card.” And when it was taken to her, she was very happy and began to feel it with her hand again and again. The following quotation had been pasted below Sri Aurobindo’s photography:

“I do not want tens of thousands of disciples. It will be enough if I can get a hundred complete men, purified of petty egoism, who will be the instruments of God.”

Be simple,
Be happy,
Remain quiet,
Do your work as well as you can,
Keep yourself always open towards me.
This is all that is asked from you.*

The Mother

NILIMA DAS

* When Champaklal started working with the Mother, during a conversation she told him what is written above. Champaklal requested the Mother to write it and the Gracious Mother wrote and gave it to him. — Champaklal’s note.