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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
O SATYAVAN, O LUMINOUS SAVITRI (Poem)	... 279
FOUR PASSAGES	... 281
COME, LET US SLAY HIM (Poem)	... 284
SOME LETTERS	... 285
<i>Arjava</i>	
EXEMPT (Poem)	... 289
<i>Abani Sinha</i>	
THE DIVINE MOTHER ANSWERS	... 290
<i>The Mother</i>	
THE CONQUEST OF KNOWLEDGE	... 291
<i>Peter Heehs, Amal Kiran, Lalita</i>	
INTERVIEW OF 8 SEPTEMBER 1979	... 294
<i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	
THE MOTHER’S FOOTSTEPS	... 296
<i>Champaklal</i>	
REMEMBRANCES OF LONG AGO	... 297
<i>Arun Vaidya</i>	
NATURE CONSENTS FOR TRANSFORMATION	... 300
<i>Richard Hartz</i>	
THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI	... 302
<i>Maggi</i>	
A NEW YEAR DREAM	... 306
<i>Manmohan Ghose</i>	
THE AFTERGLOW (Poem)	... 307
<i>Murli Manohar Joshi</i>	
AN ADDRESS AT THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION	... 308

<i>K. N. Viju</i>		
MEMORY (Poem)	...	313
<i>Narad (Richard Eggenberger)</i>		
THOUSAND-PETALLED LOTUS OF DELIGHT (Poem)	...	314
<i>Kailas Jhaveri</i>		
REMEMBRANCE OF THE MOTHER	...	315
<i>Debashish Banerji</i>		
NIRODBARAN'S SURREALIST POEMS	...	320
<i>Prithwindra Mukherjee</i>		
INDIAN DIASPORA: ROLE, CONSTRAINT, EXPECTATION	...	321
<i>Roger Calverley</i>		
LAND OF DREAM (Poem)	...	325
<i>Kati Widmer</i>		
INTIMATE PORTRAITS	...	326
<i>B. G. Pattegar</i>		
WHO IS A BRAHMIN?	...	331
<i>Prabhakar (Batti)</i>		
AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT—XVII	...	333
<i>Shyam Kumari</i>		
TO BE A GOD (Poem)	...	336
<i>R.Y. Deshpande</i>		
ISLAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE	...	337
<i>Nilima Das</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	...	344
<i>Chunilal Chowdhury</i>		
SALUTATION	...	346
<i>Goutam Ghosal</i>		
TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO	...	348
<i>N. A. Nikam</i>		
SRI AUROBINDO AND MAYAVADA	...	351
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
<i>Bela Ghosh</i>		
<i>Review of SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI by ASOKA K. GANGULI</i>	...	357

O SATYAVAN, O LUMINOUS SAVITRI

DESCEND to life with him thy heart desires.
O Satyavan, O luminous Savitri,
I sent you forth of old beneath the stars,
A dual power of God in an ignorant world,
In a hedged creation shut from limitless self,
Bringing down God to the insentient globe,
Lifting earth-beings to immortality.
In the world of my knowledge and my ignorance
Where God is unseen and only is heard a Name...
You are my Force at work to uplift earth's fate...
Between the extremes of the spirit's night and day.
He is my soul that climbs from nescient Night
Through life and mind and supernature's Vast
To the supernal light of Timelessness
And my Eternity hid in moving Time
And my boundlessness cut by the curve of Space.
It climbs to the greatness it has left behind
And to the beauty and joy from which it fell,
To the closeness and sweetness of all things divine,
To light without bounds and life illimitable,
Taste of the depths of the Ineffable's bliss,
Touch of the immortal and the infinite.
He is my soul that gropes out of the beast
To reach humanity's heights of lucent thought,
And the vicinity of Truth's sublime.
He is the godhead growing in human lives
And in the body of earth-being's forms,
He is the soul of man climbing to God
In Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance.
O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word,
The face of Truth upon the roads of Time
Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God.
While the dim light from the veiled Spirit's peak
Falls upon Matter's stark unconscious sleep...
And Mind in a half-light moves amid half-truths
And the human heart knows only human love
And life is a stumbling and imperfect force
And the body counts out its precarious days,
You shall be born into man's dubious hours

In forms that hide the soul's divinity
 And show through veils of the earth's doubting air
 My glory breaking as through clouds a sun,
 Or burning like a rare and inward fire,
 And with my nameless influence fill men's lives.
 Yet shall they look up as to peaks of God
 And feel God like a circumambient air
 And rest on God as on a motionless base.
 Yet shall there glow on mind like a horned moon
 The spirit's crescent splendour in pale skies
 And light man's life upon his godward road.
 But more there is concealed in God's Beyond
 That shall one day reveal its hidden face.
 Now mind is all and its uncertain ray...
 Carrying the luminous wanderer in the night
 To vistas of a far uncertain dawn,
 To the end of the Spirit's fathomless desire,
 To its dream of absolute truth and utter bliss.
 There are greater destinies mind cannot surmise,
 Fixed on the summit of the evolving Path
 The Traveller now treads in the Ignorance,
 Unaware of his next step, not knowing his goal.
 Mind is not all his tireless climb can reach,
 There is a fire on the apex of the worlds,
 There is a house of the Eternal's Light,
 There is an infinite truth, an absolute power.
 The spirit's mightiness shall cast off its mask;
 Its greatness shall be felt shaping the world's course.
 It shall be seen in its own veiless beams,
 A star rising from the Inconscient's night,
 A sun climbing to Supernature's peak.
 Abandoning the dubious Middle Way,
 A few shall glimpse the miraculous Origin
 And some shall feel in you the secret Force
 And they shall turn to meet a nameless tread,
 Adventurers into a mightier Day.
 Ascending out of the limiting breadths of mind,
 They shall discover the world's huge design
 And step into the Truth, the Right, the Vast.

SRI AUROBINDO

FOUR PASSAGES

Imperialism

BUT there is little chance of such an unprecedented good fortune for mankind. Ideal conditions cannot be expected, for they demand a psychological clarity, a diffused reasonableness and scientific intelligence and, above all, a moral elevation and rectitude to which neither the mass of mankind nor its leaders and rulers have yet made any approach. In their absence, not reason and justice and mutual kindness, but the trend of forces and their practical and legal adjustment must determine the working out of this as of other problems. And just as the problem of the State and the individual has been troubled and obscured not only by the conflict between individual egoism and the corporate egoism of the society, but by the continual clash between intermediate powers, class strife, quarrels of Church and State, king and nobles, king and commons, aristocracy and demos, capitalist bourgeoisie and labour proletariat, this problem too of nation and international humanity is certain to be troubled by the claims of just such intermediate powers. To say nothing of commercial interests and combinations, cultural or racial sympathies, movements of Pan-Islamism, Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Anglo-Saxonism, with a possible Pan-Americanism and Pan-Mongolianism looming up in the future, to say nothing of yet other unborn monsters, there will always be the great intermediate factor of Imperialism, that huge armed and dominant Titan, that must by its very nature demand its own satisfaction at the cost of every suppressed or inconvenient national unit and assert its own needs as prior to the needs of the new-born international comity. That satisfaction, presumably, it must have for a time, that demand it will be for long impossible to resist. At any rate, to ignore its claims or to imagine that they can be put aside with a spurt of the writer's pen, is to build symmetrical castles on the golden sands of an impracticable idealism. Forces take the first place in actual effectuation; moral principles, reason, justice only so far as forces can be compelled or persuaded to admit them or, as more often happens, use them as subservient aids or inspiring battle-cries, a camouflage for their own interests. Ideas sometimes leap out as armed forces and break their way through the hedge of unideal powers; sometimes they reverse the position and make interests their subordinate helpers, a fuel for their own blaze; sometimes they conquer by martyrdom: but ordinarily they have to work not only by a half-covert pressure but by accommodation to powerful forces or must even bribe and cajole them or work through and behind them. It cannot be otherwise until the average and the aggregate man become more of an intellectual, moral and spiritual being and less predominantly the vital and emotional half-reasoning human animal. The unrealised international idea will have for some time at least to work by this secondary method and through such accommodations with the realised forces of nationalism and imperialism.¹

Our Right and Natural Road

The first result of this imperfect awakening seemed likely to be a return to an older ideal, with a will to use the reason and the ethical mind better and more largely in the ordering of individual, of national and of international life. But such an attempt, though well enough as a first step, cannot be the real and final solution; if our effort ends there, we shall not arrive. The solution lies, we have said, in an awakening to our real, because our highest self and nature,—that hidden self which we are not yet, but have to become and which is not the strong and enlightened vital Will hymned by Nietzsche, but a spiritual self and spiritual nature that will use the mental being which we already are, but the mental being spiritualised, and transform by a spiritual ideality the aim and action of our vital and physical nature. For this is the formula of man in his highest potentiality, and safety lies in tending towards our highest and not in resting content with an inferior potentiality. To follow after the highest in us may seem to be to live dangerously, to use again one of Nietzsche's inspired expressions, but by that danger comes victory and security. To rest in or follow after an inferior potentiality may seem safe, rational, comfortable, easy, but it ends badly, in some futility or in a mere circling, down the abyss or in a stagnant morass. Our right and natural road is towards the summits.²

New Intuitionism

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.³

A Dark Tunnel with a Gulf Underneath

In Germany the bridge was there, though it ran mostly through a dark tunnel with a gulf underneath; for there was no pure transmission from the subjective mind of the thinkers and singers to the objective mind of the scholars and organisers. The misapplication by

Treitschke of the teaching of Nietzsche to national and international uses which would have profoundly disgusted the philosopher himself, is an example of this obscure transmission. But still a transmission there was. For more than a half-century Germany turned a deep eye of subjective introspection on herself and things and ideas in search of the truth of her own being and of the world, and for another half-century a patient eye of scientific research on the objective means for organising what she had or thought she had gained. And something was done, something indeed powerful and enormous, but also in certain directions, not in all, misshapen and disconcerting. Unfortunately, those directions were precisely the very central lines on which to go wrong is to miss the goal.⁴

SRI AUROBINDO

References

1. SABCL, Vol. 15, pp. 373-74.
2. *The Human Cycle*, CWSA, Vol. 25, pp. 238-39.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

Perfection is not a Summit

Perfection is not a summit, it is not an extreme. There is no extreme: whatsoever you do, there is always the possibility of something better and exactly this possibility of something better is the very meaning of progress.

SRI AUROBINDO

COME, LET US SLAY HIM

“COME, let us slay him and end his course!
Then shall our hearts have release
From the burden and call of his glory and force
And the curb of his wide white peace.”

But the god is there in my mortal breast
Who wrestles with error and fate
And tramples a road through mire and waste
For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried, “Go where none have gone!
Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And knock at the keyless gate.”

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
At the very root of things
Where the grey Sphinx guards God’s riddle sleep
On the Dragon’s outspread wings.

I left the surface gods of mind
And life’s unsatisfied seas
And plunged through the body’s alleys blind
To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth’s dreadful heart
And heard her black mass’ bell.
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
And the goblin voices flit;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;
All veils are breaking now.
I have heard His voice and borne His will
On my vast untroubled brow.

SRI AUROBINDO

(From ‘A God’s Labour’, *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, pp. 101-02)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of March 2003)

Recently, many thoughts about writing to my wife passed through my mind. But all this showed that I was interested in the affair and that detachment was not yet established. It irritated me that some love is still there for somebody other than the Divine.

THINGS rejected always stick a little in corners of the physical consciousness until the light is let in into these corners.

Again I got irritated with myself because of my lethargy. I was tired out and could not avoid sleeping for a few minutes during work. All this troubles me so much. Even a hostile thought came to give up Yoga. There was also some pain in the abdomen. Was all this the result of some kind of pressure or some resistance of the nerves?

A mixture of the two. In any case these are fragments you need not worry yourself about or get irritated. Of course they have to be got rid of, but that will come as the true consciousness increases.

20 March 1933

Again the feeling came to injure my body severely for some slight mistakes I made.

These impulses towards self-injury or violence to others are, as I said before, hostile suggestions. They must be thrown out immediately and entirely.

There has been a burning sensation the whole day. Even as I write, I feel a sense of irritation in the cerebellar region (back and lower part of the cranium). Is this irritability due to the animal nature in me or is it due to the effect of drinking tea? How can I stop worrying about it?

Yes, it is the animal in the nervous being. Tea is bad for the nerves, so should be avoided. Reject always, quiet yourself—call down the quiet into the cells.

Somebody threw a stone at our house. I saw two boys sitting at a distance and quietly asked them if they had thrown it. They said no. If they had said anything bad, I would have caught them by the throat and given them a beating. If I see anyone doing any such thing, I'll have to show them a little physical violence; there does not appear to be any other way.

It is the same thing—a hostile suggestion. Violence engenders struggle and disturbance, it solves nothing.

Last night in a dream I saw a gramophone. Is it symbolic of the mechanical repetitions of the physical mind?

The gramophone is obviously symbolic of the mechanical mind.

21 March 1933

The object of the hostile suggestions of self-injury and violence appears to be to incapacitate me for the Divine's work and by violence to bring the Ashram into disrepute or legal trouble. Is that it?

Yes, that is their intention in these attacks.

I saw in dream a long railway train and got in a carriage; but when I came to know that it would reach its destination only at noon the next day, I said that I would go by mail or express train. Does this indicate that I am hasty for progress?

THE MOTHER: It can mean also that you do not like to waste your time on the way.

Several hostile suggestions came today. One was: "Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are making fun at your expense; it is just to prevent you from becoming neurasthenic again that they write to you."

That is a repetition of an old and very silly suggestion. These forces are always repeating themselves.

Another hostile suggestion came in reply to my saying, "Well, in the matter of sex I have progressed so much." The reply came, "It is not real progress; there is purity only as long as you do not particularly look at women or pay attention to them." And again, "Where is your calm and equanimity? Every day there is irritation or peevishness in you."

That is another method — to pick faults real or imaginary and discourage and delay the progress by dwelling on what is not yet done and depreciating what has been done.

Again in the evening the thought came, "Where is the aspiration in you for union with the Divine? There is the same consciousness, the same mind, perhaps a little purified vital, but where is the Divine in all this? What is sadhana if there is no union with the Divine?"

Purification, setting right mind, vital, physical is a necessary condition for union with the Divine—otherwise there can always be the danger of union with something not the Divine.

Would it be good to reduce diet now? Or do all these suggestions come because I am not working sincerely?

Why reduce diet? These things do not depend on diet.

On how many planes do the hostiles exist and act?

On all the three ordinary planes, mental, vital, physical. It is only in the psychic or the above mind that they cannot at all act.

Nowadays I am not so alert about the hostiles. I think they have left me.

One must not be too sure of that. A quiet vigilance is always necessary, because they have a great power of repeating themselves. Even when thrown out, they do not give up the hope of entering in again or, if they cannot enter in, at least of harassing and impeding the progress.

What is the difference between a swift intellectual reasoning and discrimination, and an intuitive perception and discrimination?

The intuitive perception or discrimination is self-sufficient—it does not need any reasoning or process of thought to justify it. The intellectual depends on data and steps, even if the steps are hurried over or the data are rapidly seized and swallowed into the intelligence.

22 March 1933

Today there was less headache and burning in the eyes, but there was the feeling of heat around and within me. Is this the heat of some higher consciousness? Is this a process of slow immunisation, so that the heat of that consciousness can remain constantly in all the parts without being felt as heat or anything abnormal?

A heat is sometimes created in the body by the pressure of a Force of tapas because there are things that resist in the vital or in the body habit or in the brain-mind,—the cause of the heat is therefore not the force itself but the resistance. As soon as the system is cleared, there is no sense of heat any longer. But this heat is clearly distinguishable from illness.

In the process of “intuitivising”, is the psychic raised to a higher plane? Or is the mind raised and the psychic merely remains active or stands as a witness behind?

It is not the psychic but the mind that gets raised and transformed and its action intensified by the intuitivising of the consciousness. The psychic is always the same essence and adapts its action without need of transformation to any change of consciousness.

Is it possible to go through the sadhana while doing the type of work I am doing or does it become necessary at some stage to “retire”? I want a definite view so that my interest in work does not slacken.

Retirement in the sense of all meditation without work is not suitable to this sadhana—it is one sided and those who resort to it, unless they are very strong, often lose their balance.

How does the Divine’s wideness manifest itself?

By a widening of all the parts of the being, a sense of largeness and liberation of the mind, vital and physical, an opening to the Divine everywhere and many other signs.

Do the hostiles receive “flashes” from the intuitive plane for their work?

They have their own intuitions (more vital than otherwise) and they are always on the lookout to profit by anything they can catch from anywhere.

What would be the effect of a strong thought from me such as, “The hostile shall yield or be destroyed”? Perhaps it would attack me more strongly?

It might. It is better to proceed by a quiet rejection and growth in consciousness—and not invite battle—though, if a struggle is forced on you, you must meet it with calm and courage.

N asked P how to prevent thoughts and desires. P gave him the Vastuvichara or analytic method of Jnanayoga in detail. I told N about our method of love, self-opening, obedience and rejection with your help. Does the Vastuvichara help in quietening or controlling the vital? The vital is so cunning that it may use the “analysis” for its own purposes.

You are absolutely right. *Vichāra* is good for mental understanding—for vital purification it is quite insufficient and mere *vichāra* can be used by the vital and is.

When shall the victory of the supermind manifest on earth?

One can only say that it advances, but to fix—or at least to proclaim—a time is not permitted, for which there are many good occult reasons.

23 March 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

EXEMPT

To drop through a hole in the sky
 Out of Space,
 Beyond all distance reckoned by
 Our earthly race.

Into forgotten sea
 Of backward time
 Dive and swirl down unerringly
 To a fairer clime,—

Finding some deep sea-cave,
 There to abide
 Till the last buffet and foam-wan wave
 Of Time subside.

September 20, 1934

ARJAVA

Arjava: I feel that the enclosed expresses not at all an admirable or desirable attitude.

Sri Aurobindo: The poem is a good one and the feeling is one that everybody has at one time or another—so though not desirable to have, it is a fit one for expression in poetry because of its appeal. The last two lines are very fine.

THE DIVINE MOTHER ANSWERS

(1)

Mother Divine,

This morning, at the instance of Nolinida I saw Janina to talk about my accommodation at the Nursing Home. She advised me to see and speak to Dr. Sanyal first. So I met Dr. Sanyal and found him rather unwilling to accommodate there any person who was not under his treatment. Of course, he drove the point home in his typical gentle and generous manner and I quite appreciate his viewpoint.

Next I went to Tarak Bose and asked him if he could do anything to meet my end. Obviously he had difficulties but, he told me that he would write to you and see what could be done. He also asked for my co-operation in organising a new Health-Home and Diet-Kitchen. Perhaps I can do so, if such is Divine's Will, but not just at this moment. Any new adventure now, will upset the peace and harmony I am in need of. And I told him so.

Mother, I turned to Naturopathy because it seemed to me to be least harmful of all systems of healing. Otherwise I have no fad for it.

Do you think that I could take treatment from Dr. Sanyal? Should you think so, I am quite agreeable to do it. For, after all, it is not any system of medicine but your Grace that cures. Mother, I am confused and confounded. You know what will be the best course for me to take. So I await your Will and your decision in the matter.

With pronam and submission,

Your child and servant

ABANI SINHA

5.8.62

It is true that the faith cures more than the treatment. You might take Dr. Sanyal's treatment and call for the Divine's help.

With my blessings

(To be continued)

THE CONQUEST OF KNOWLEDGE

THE great Rishi, Bhrigu, shining in splendour, sat on the summit of Mountain Kailas, and Bharadwaja questioned him:

“Who made the world?
How wide is the sky?
Who gave birth to water? To fire? To the wind? To the earth?
What is life?
What is good?
What is there beyond the world?”

And so on. Great were the questions and great must be the Rishi who could answer them all!

But Bharadwaja's mind was the mind of a man who asks and asks ever and again, and never knows enough.

The child is the supreme questioner, he is always asking, “What is this? What is that? How is it made? What makes this thing move? What makes the lightning flash? Why are there tides? Where does gold come from? And coal? And iron? How is a book printed?...” And many more questions besides.

Both children and men ask questions. They also reply. When we know something, we can answer questions. We can teach, we can spread knowledge.

What shall we learn? What shall we teach? Shall we try to learn everything that has happened throughout the ages? Shall we attempt to learn every word that man can pronounce?

In the poem of the Mahabharata, the following words are used to describe the various kinds of arrows shot by the Pandava brothers and other warriors: sara, ishu, sayaka, patri, kanda, vishikha, naracha, vishatha, prushatka, bhalla, tomara, ishika, silimukha, anjalika. We certainly do not need to learn all these names for arrows. And there are many other names of things that we do not need to learn.

We speak of the news: we think of shipwrecks, murders, robberies, quarrels, law-suits, wars, fires, concerts, weddings, funerals and thousands of other things that we read of in a few minutes and forget about immediately afterwards.

We open the Koran and at the head of the chapters of this sacred book we read the word “News” and immediately we think of shipwrecks, murders... but wait!

The Prophet Mohammed was neither a frivolous person who took pleasure in news of evil deeds nor a gossip who taught nothing noble. Let us read the beginning of the chapter on “News”:

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 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?”

Thus the Prophet kindled hope in the hearts and minds of men and made them think of greater things, things that have a lasting beauty, things that teach man how noble is the world of life.

So we agree that there are words and things and certain kinds of news that are not worth hearing and repeating. But other things, on the contrary, are worth hearing and repeating, even though it may cost us much time, trouble and effort to find them out.

Man’s power lies within his thought. The limbs, the hands that are so skilful, are the slaves of his thought which decides and directs.

And since the human race first dwelt on earth, how great have been man’s conquests over Nature!

We can see this power pictured in the tale of Rama’s crossing over the sea.

When he reached the shores of India, and learned that his dear wife Sita was a captive in the island of Ceylon, he prepared to cross the waters. Vast was his army, but it was made up of monkeys and bears. How could they cross the turbulent waters?

Rama’s intelligence was profound, his sagacity keen and his heart full of courage. First he spoke gently to the old Ocean and said:

“Great Sea, I beseech you, let my army pass.” But after he had waited three days, there was still no reply from the waves.

Then Rama called his brother:

“Lakshman, bring me my bow and arrows. I have wasted my words on this sea, just as a man wastes good seeds by sowing them in sand.”

Rama, the divine hero, shot an arrow into the deep waters and the shaft gave a fiery pain to the ocean, and all the fish were full of fear. Then the spirit of the ocean took the form of a Brahmin who knelt before the Lord with a golden dish full of jewels as an offering.

The Ocean clasped the lotus-feet of Rama and said:

“Great Lord, forgive my sin. I am like my kin of the air, the earth and the fire. They are heavy and slow and so accustomed to power that they do not answer the call of a Lord like you. No hero before you has ever made me obey his will. In you I see my master. Do

what seems good to you.”

Lord Rama smiled:

“Tell me,” he said, “how my army may cross over your realm of waves and storms.”

“My waters,” said the sea, “will bear on their breast the rocks which your soldiers will throw on them and in that way a bridge will be built between India and Lanka.”

Rama turned to his army:

“Let the bridge be built,” he said.

“Glory to Rama,” shouted all the warriors.

They uprooted trees and rocks and even great cliffs, and brought them to the two master-builders, Nala and Nila. And Nala and Nila fastened the wood and stone together so that everything floated firmly on the surface of the sea. Then the army marched across it.

Rama sat on a mountain of India and watched the countless troops moving across the bridge.

Just as Rama forced the spirit of the ocean to obey him, so does man’s thought, the glory of humanity, conquer the sea, and many other things besides. Man masters the wind, since he makes it blow his sailing ships and turn his windmills. He conquers the ice and the snow, for explorers have travelled to the frozen lands of the North Pole and the South Pole and have climbed the highest mountains. He conquers the beasts, for all over the world he slays the animals that are a danger to him and his family: lions, tigers, wolves, snakes and even sharks. Although he has less power over the great ocean, he has made his strength felt on land. And while he has rid himself of the animals that are harmful to him, he has kept and bred the animals that are useful to him: the ox, the horse, the sheep, the elephant, etc.

But all this is the conquest of things by his hands and by his tools and weapons. And hands and tools and weapons are the servants of his thought.

Man conquers by knowledge. And he conquers knowledge: he asks and asks again and again, and perseveres until he really knows.

Some men of whom history tells are known as conquerors: Alexander the Great who conquered Western Asia and Egypt, Julius Caesar who conquered France and England, the emperor Baber who conquered the North of India, Napoleon who became for a time the master of Europe.

But there are other ways of being a conqueror.

You also can be a conqueror. There are things in the world which need to be known and learnt. Ask, seek, learn and conquer. Then you can call yourself a conqueror.

THE MOTHER

(*Words of Long Ago*, CWM, Vol. 2, pp. 243-47)

INTERVIEW OF 8 SEPTEMBER 1979

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

(Continued from the issue of March 2003)

L: Any questions to ask?

P: Well, first that previous transcript, it's all okay?

A: It's not quite all okay. Here and there, there are changes.

P: You've made some literary corrections, I see.

A: Not only literary, some factual too.

P: That's okay. But you shouldn't have cancelled it right out.

A: Why?

P: You should have... oh, I see. We should see what you had and then what you put, that's okay. I mean you shouldn't have obliterated it like that.

A: At first I simply bracketted. There was one factual mistake—about that ambulance and the telegram to the Mother.

P: Hah, that has to be corrected.

A: It was not true. I mean it was a trick of her memory. Memory plays tricks sometimes, you know. Because I was the person who would send the telegram and there was no telegram sent to the Ashram. There was a telegram once sent only to a wayside doctor who came—at 3 o'clock at night, he came with a hurricane lantern, I leaned out of the door and called him up and he came up and he examined her pulse. "It's going on"—he's telling me, you know. He thought she was as good as dead. And he had brought a ready-made mixture for her which we never used because she recovered so fast.

P: But you were contacting mentally the Ashram?

A: Yes, of course we were aspiring, praying, otherwise she would have been... I didn't want to bring a corpse here. And then at Madras as soon as we reached Madras in the morning—we went to a small hotel opposite the station, and she had a full idli-dosa meal.

L: Completely forgotten.

A: Forgotten. As we were eating I remarked about the food, and she said, "Oh, I'm very hungry, very hungry." Then we spent the whole day and got the night train and came back. When she got down at the station—the station came quite early and suddenly—so we just woke up, washed our faces and got down. And she was in her night gown or dressing gown or something. That was a coat and there was something else which was inside—and that is why Amrita remarked to Mother, "That lady who has come to do yoga has come in a European dress." Then Mother said, "What has European dress got to do with Yoga?"

L: He said other things also.

A: All this is humbug, you know.

P: Anyway, last time we had gotten up to your first darshan and you were telling me about the sadhana at that time. What I wanted to know more... you gave as sort of a copy-

book answer: aspiration, rejection, surrender—I mean, what was the life really like? How did you go about aspiring, rejecting, surrendering?

A: We tried to remember the Mother all the time.

P: What were you told to do? What was the form the sadhana took?

A: I don't think we were told anything in particular, but we were given books to read and Purani used to talk to us and he used to answer questions and I used to have intellectual discussions with him also—the Universal Brahman and the Ishwara—how to reconcile the two and so forth. And we would sit also and meditate with him, at times.

L: We used to go and meditate at the end of the pier also, no?

A: I used to go there at 11 o'clock at night. All by myself I used to go to the end of the pier and sit there, with all the drunken fishermen hovering around and coming and looking into my face, "Who is this strange fellow sitting there at about eleven?" It was a little dangerous, too.

L: But we two used to go also in the evening and then some detectives used to follow us.

A: There were detectives all the time hovering about us. They were sitting at the present Ashram Post Office, day and night, almost. And as soon as we passed they used to take some notes.

L: Because at that time...

A: Suspicious [characters]... Most probably fictitious notes. They had to report something. And when we used to go out to the pier... there was an old magnificent pier at that time, which I don't think you ever saw.

P: No, it had been washed away before I came.

A: So I know that even at that time the C.I.D. used to come up and pretend to be very innocent inquirers, "What are you doing at the Ashram" and so on. And I would talk, but she would pull me up, "Don't talk to them, don't talk to them, they are spies" and so on.

P: Were you told they were spies?

A: Yes, we knew...

L: You see, Sri Aurobindo was just out of the political movement and that's why they were after us.

A: You see whenever they asked me a question about something, I would start lecturing, you know, but she would instantly realise the danger and say: "Don't talk to those fellows", and they would use every bit of information against the Ashram.

L: All this I have forgotten.

A: You've forgotten all that?

L: No, these discussions. I've forgotten them. We used to go there, that I remember.

A: And in sadhana all that we were doing was trying to concentrate, concentrate on Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and there wasn't any specific process for that. And of course, the demand to be opened up in the heart. She was devotional by nature. I was not.

P: But even in devotion you need a form—you need someone to approach, you need...

REMEMBRANCES OF LONG AGO

Clairvoyance

ONCE Mother said to me: I saw you when Dikshit had come. I remember. ¹

C: But Mother, I did not come with Dikshit at all; he came alone.

The Mother: But I have seen you, I remember very well!

Now, I have heard things like this so many times; some I distinctly remember. Someone brings a letter from his friend. While reading that letter she sees that person. Or to tell you of another incident:

Once Sri Aurobindo said to Mother that Barin was bringing a letter and he was on the staircase. Mother told Sri Aurobindo that Barin was coming along with another man.

What had happened was that Mother saw the writer of the letter accompanying Barin, though only his letter was in Barin's hand.

Examples of Surrender and Service

You once asked me what were my first impressions when I met Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Well, it is difficult to describe. But I remember this: 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 felt and saw in her an embodiment of Beauty.

Now after all these years of stay with them the total impact on me is this: To me Sri Aurobindo is a living example of *complete surrender*. The Mother is a living example of *perfect service to the Lord*.

Krishna and Sri Aurobindo

When I came to stay here for good, Mahesh came with me. Ostensibly we both came for the same purpose. But I found a difference in Sri Aurobindo's way of dealing with us. To me he was speaking and showing practices of sadhana. But to Mahesh he was speaking of worship and *upāsanā* of Krishna. Later I found out that Mahesh had a strong attraction for Krishna and his way was different from mine. One day, however, when he expressed his difficulty in reconciling his adoration of Krishna with his devotion to Sri Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo told him: There is no difference between me and Krishna.

I Join the Evening Talks

1923. When I asked Sri Aurobindo whether I could join in the Evening Talks, he smiled happily and said: Yes, but you see, there is no chair there. You have permission to come.

As all were sitting on chairs I too was expected to sit on a chair! I did not know

1. Dikshit had come in 1921, the same year in which I came, but earlier.

what to do. But then I remembered that during my first visit I had been introduced to a well-known Chettiar and he had been pleased with me. I felt he would be happy to do something for me. There was much hesitation to go and ask but I had no alternative. I wanted to attend the Talks, not indeed so much for the talk as such as to be able to be there for some time with Sri Aurobindo. My principle was not to ask for anything from others. It was not a *vrata* taken in a religious way but a principle observed as sincerely as I could. However, in this case I set aside my *vrata*.

I went to the bungalow of the Chettiar. There I learnt that the old gentleman had died. His son came and welcomed me. I did not know how to speak in such a situation. But, as usual, the Divine helped me. The gentleman himself started speaking. He said he was happy to see me and would be glad if he could do anything for me.

Hesitantly I said: I need one chair, if possible.

Readily he asked me to follow him and took me to one of his halls where there were rows of chairs. He asked me to choose and I chose one. There were no ordinary chairs in that place. The one that I had chosen was a nicely polished and cushioned rosewood chair.

Returning home I took the chair straight to the verandah upstairs and put it in the row. However, when the talk was to start in the evening I did not sit on that chair. I went straight to Sri Aurobindo's chair and sat on the floor in the space between his chair and another to his left. The space was just enough for one person to sit.

Sri Aurobindo looked aside and smiled. All were surprised. I myself was surprised! For I had not planned to sit there at all!

Library House

When I first came—it was in 1921—Sri Aurobindo lived in the Guest House. When I came for good in 1923, both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were living in the Library House. Sri Aurobindo used to see people upstairs in the mornings in the verandah. At that time it was an open verandah, the three sides of which were covered with big curtains. The windows you see there now were done much later. The hall where Mother distributed the prosperity blessings was her store; on the other side of it was her room (what was later to be my room). The corner room was Sri Aurobindo's. The room at the entrance was Datta's.

The verandah had three doors, the middle one being used as an entrance. The left-side door used to be kept shut and Sri Aurobindo's chair was kept there with a small table in front. Two chairs, one to the left and one to the right of Sri Aurobindo's chair were kept leaving sufficient distance between them and Sri Aurobindo's.

There was a row of chairs opposite the small table. As I said, he used to meet visitors in the mornings. Some sadhaks were allowed to meditate there when he was reading the newspaper. Amrita would come up with the newspaper and also tell Sri Aurobindo which persons were due to meet him that day. Then he would go down and announce the order in which people had to come up. After the interviews were over, the sadhaks permitted

would sit in meditation till Sri Aurobindo completed reading the newspaper. Usually we were three or four of us who meditated there: Tirupati, Rajangam, Kanai and myself. All were sitting on chairs.

The shutters of both the side doors were kept open. And, as I came to know later from Mother, whenever she was in the store, she could see through the shutters the persons passing to meet Sri Aurobindo. That way she had watched me. And it appears she had told Sri Aurobindo then itself: This boy will help me in my work; he will be very useful. (That was long before I took up work.)

I may add she had said something similar of Pavitra. Seeing him she had told Sri Aurobindo: He will be very useful; he will do all my foreign correspondence. (And that is exactly what turned out to be.)

Regarding the disposition of the rooms downstairs: the room where there is now the Reception Service was Moni's room. When Moni left, that room was given to me. The Reception Hall was Nolini's room and the present reading room was Amrita's. What is now Prithwi Singh's office was Bijoy's. And Prithwi Singh's storeroom under the staircase in the courtyard was Barin's.

When Sri Aurobindo came down to the dining room to take food, he came down the Prosperity stairs, passed through Nolini's room, Bijoy's room and then entered the dining room which was where fruits are being distributed now. It is specially interesting to me that everybody receives *fruits* from the very room where once Sri Aurobindo used to take his food.

When Sri Aurobindo and Mother moved into the Meditation House, Amrita's room was converted into a Library and hence that house came to be called Library House.

Cows

Cows were being brought by the cowherds to the courtyard. Mother would come down and herself receive the milk.

CHAMPAKLAL

(*Champaklal Speaks*)

NATURE CONSENTS FOR TRANSFORMATION

COLLABORATION IN THE BIRTH OF A NEW WORLD

THE Mother had said, “Nature is the most material part of the creative force which is concerned with the creation specially of the earth, of the material world as we know it upon earth.”

1 January 1958—New Year Message:

“O Nature, material Mother,
Thou hast said that thou wilt collaborate
and there is no limit
to the splendour of this collaboration.”¹

The Mother elaborated the New Year Message:

“...you should not misinterpret the meaning of this experience and imagine that from now on everything is going to take place without any difficulties and always in a manner that favours our personal desires. It is not on this plane. It does not mean that when we do not want it to rain, it will not rain! that when we want something to happen in the world, it will happen immediately; that all difficulties will be done away with and everything will be as it is in fairy-tales. It is not that. It is something much deeper: Nature, in her play of forces, has accepted the new Force which has manifested and included it in her movements. And as always, the movements of Nature are on a scale which is infinitely beyond the human scale and not visible to an ordinary human consciousness. It is an inner, psychological possibility which has come into the world rather than a spectacular change in earthly events. I am saying this because you might be tempted to believe that fairy-tales were going to be realised on earth. It is not yet time for that.”²

The Mother explained further the New Year Message of 1 January 1958:

“...I spoke of the limitless abundance of Nature, the inexhaustible creatrix who takes the multitude of forms and mixes them together, separates them again and remoulds them, unmakes and destroys them, to move on to ever new combinations. It is a huge cauldron, I said: she stirs things inside and brings out something; it’s no good, she throws it in again and takes something else.... One or two forms or a hundred have no importance for her, there are thousands and thousands of forms, and then as for years, a hundred years, a thousand, millions of years, it is of no importance, you have eternity before you! It is quite obvious that Nature enjoys all this and that she is not in a hurry. If she is told to rush rapidly through and finish this or that part of her work quickly, the reply is always the same: ‘But why should I do so, why? Doesn’t it amuse you?’

The evening I told you about these things, I identified myself totally with Nature, I joined in her game. And this movement of identification provoked a response, a sort of new intimacy between Nature and myself, a long movement of a growing closeness which culminated in an experience which came on the eighth of November. Suddenly Nature understood.

She understood that this new Consciousness which has just been born does not seek to reject her but wants to embrace her entirely, she understood that this new spirituality does not turn away from life, does not recoil in fear before the formidable amplitude of her movement, but wants on the contrary to integrate all its facets.

She understood that the supramental consciousness is here not to diminish but to complete her. Then from the supreme Reality came this order, 'Awake, O Nature, to the joy of collaboration.' And the whole of Nature suddenly rushed forward in a great surge of joy, saying, 'I accept, I shall collaborate.'

And at the same time, there came a calm, an absolute tranquillity so that the bodily vessel could receive and contain, without breaking, without losing anything, the mighty flood of this Joy of Nature which rushed forward as in a movement of gratitude. She accepted, she saw with all eternity before her that this supramental consciousness was going to fulfil her more perfectly, give a still greater strength to her movement, a greater amplitude, more possibilities to her play.

And suddenly I heard, as if they came from all the corners of the earth, those great notes one sometimes hears in the subtle physical, a little like those of Beethoven's Concerto in D-major, which come in moments of great progress, as though fifty orchestras had burst forth all in unison, without a single false note, to express the joy of this new communion between Nature and Spirit, the meeting of old friends who come together again after having been separated for so long.

Then these words came, 'O Nature, Material Mother, thou hast said that thou wilt collaborate and there is no limit to the splendour of this collaboration.'

And the radiant felicity of this splendour was sensed in perfect peace. That is how the message for the New Year was born."³

A great milestone along the march of transformation was attained when the opposition and the passivity of the Nature was transformed in to Her becoming a willing and supportive collaborator.

ARUN VAIDYA

References

- 1-3. *Questions and Answers 1957-58*, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 245-48.

THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of March 2003)

Savitri and the Record of Yoga

8

DURING the main period of the *Record of Yoga*, the period up to 1920 whose later part coincided with the publication of the *Arya* and the beginning of the writing of *Savitri*, we find that Sri Aurobindo was concentrating on the sadhana he described in *The Synthesis of Yoga* as the “Yoga of self-perfection”. The framework of this sadhana was outlined in the *sapta catuṣṭaya* or “seven quaternaries”.¹ But all-encompassing as this Yoga seemed to be, Sri Aurobindo’s aim did not stop there. As early as 13 November 1913, he wrote prophetically in his diary:

A clear distinction must now be made between the vidya-avidya-siddhi which is constituted by the seven chatusthaya & the higher Amrita in which all limitation is removed & Death, etc entirely cease. Only the first will in this life be entirely accomplished.²

Vidyā-avidyā-siddhi is such perfection (*siddhi*) as is attainable in the “Knowledge-Ignorance” where *vidyā*, knowledge of oneness, is subject to the conditions of *avidyā*, the consciousness of division. At its highest, it would be the *siddhi* of what Sri Aurobindo later termed “Overmind”.³ A foundation for the final consummation of such a *siddhi* was laid on 24 November 1926 with “the descent of Krishna... the Overmind Godhead” into the physical, as Sri Aurobindo described it in 1935.⁴ This made a “vertiginous rapidity”⁵ in the completion of the sadhana of the *sapta catuṣṭaya* appear feasible, as we see in diary entries of January 1927.

But all evidence indicates that not long after this there was a change of programme. Rather than continuing along the same lines and achieving the spectacular but ultimately circumscribed and insecure results which the overmental Force could have made possible, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—for at this stage one can no longer speak of Sri Aurobindo separately from the Mother—appear to have renounced immediate success on these lines in order to make a far more difficult attempt, with momentous implications for the future.

This was the attempt to bring down a yet higher consciousness and force, the Supermind, which could transform the Inconscient and “create the new world, the supramental world in its integrality”.⁶ The result would be to effectuate a radical change in terrestrial life and establish “the higher Amrita”, including immortality of the physical body, as an earthly possibility. Complete success might not be attainable in a single lifetime—Sri Aurobindo had foreseen this as far back as 1913—but if a decisive break-

through could be made, its consequences might be left to be worked out in centuries to come.

1926-27 marked a transition and a turning-point. The *Record of Yoga*, having been interrupted since October 1920, was resumed at this time; but after a few months, it was permanently discontinued. *Savitri*, on the other hand, once it was likewise resumed after a similar interruption, began to assume a new importance. Perhaps this was because its story was a perfect symbol of the victory Sri Aurobindo expected to be brought within reach by the Supermind: "the higher Amrita in which all limitation is removed & Death, etc entirely cease".

The legend of Savitri, with its vision of the Goddess and its female protagonist, also lent itself well to bringing out from the highest spiritual standpoint the role of the feminine principle in existence and especially the crucial part it must play in a supramental transformation. We have seen that up to 1920, in the earlier phase of the *Record of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo gave the name of Kali to the universal Prakriti or Shakti, the energy of Nature or force of the Spirit, while he referred to the Purusha or Ishwara who enjoys and governs her actions as Krishna. In terms of the *sapta catuṣṭaya*, the union of Kali and Krishna in one's being through the ecstatic surrender (*madhura dāsyā*) of Prakriti to her Lord is the basis of divine action and divine enjoyment. Sri Aurobindo was also seeing Krishna and Kali everywhere he looked in the world "outside" himself. When the *Record* resumes in 1926-27, however, we find no mention of Krishna or of Kali (though the reference to "tertiary dasya" on 11 January 1927⁷ is reminiscent of earlier stages of the sadhana). Rather, we glimpse a new vision of the Ishwara and Shakti which points beyond the overmental Gods and Goddesses and gives a supreme place to the divine Mother in her transcendental status as Aditi.

In a "programme" noted down at the beginning of August, 1919, Sri Aurobindo wrote: "Kali to idealise and fix herself in the gnosis".⁸ The process of "idealisation" meant lifting the movements of human nature from the mental plane into the *viññāna*, also called "ideality" or "gnosis".⁹ As he explored the higher realms of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo gradually discovered level after level beyond the mind. One change he observed as he ascended was in the relation between Prakriti and Purusha in his self-experience and world-experience.

This relation has a separative and a unitive aspect, of which Sri Aurobindo wrote that the "separative aspect is liberative" and the "unitive aspect is dynamic and effective".¹⁰ Both can be partially realised even on the mental level. But the mind, being by nature the faculty that divides and distinguishes, is more suitable as an instrument for separative knowledge. It can arrive at a separation of Purusha and Prakriti, the conscious being standing back and watching as a detached witness the unending flux of the movement of energy in himself and the world. Until then, the Purusha's unity with Prakriti takes the form of his absorption and self-loss in her, an absorption so complete in unconscious Matter that Prakriti's mechanical action seems sufficient to account for all phenomena. The reality of Purusha, soul or consciousness as anything more than an epiphenomenon of biochemical processes may even be doubted or dismissed as an un-

necessary hypothesis by that consciousness itself in its half-wakened ignorance.

When the soul becomes dissatisfied with this state of affairs, its first need is liberation (*mukti*) from its subservience and imprisonment. But escape from bondage does not by itself impart an intelligible meaning to the world. It is not the separation of Purusha from Prakriti but the union of Purusha with Prakriti, recovered on a higher plane, that can fulfil the purpose of their cosmic play. *Mukti* is not an end in itself but a condition for *siddhi*, perfection. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo explained how discovering the unitive relation between Purusha and Prakriti enables the liberated seeker

to arrive at mastery and perfection; while rejecting what is less divine or seemingly undivine in her, he can rebuild her forms and movements in himself according to a nobler pattern and the law and rhythm of a greater existence.¹¹

This can be completely done, however, only by rising beyond mind to *vijñāna*. The separation of Purusha from Prakriti is there increasingly annulled in the consciousness and delight of their unity. This duality tends then to merge into that of Ishwara-Shakti. Sri Aurobindo explains the distinction in this way:

Ishwara is Purusha who contains Prakriti and rules by the power of the Shakti within him. Shakti is Prakriti ensouled by Purusha and acts by the will of the Ishwara which is her own will and whose presence in her movement she carries always with her.... Ishwara-Shakti stands behind the relation of Purusha-Prakriti and its ignorant action and turns it to an evolutionary purpose.¹²

In the *Record of Yoga*, “Ishwara-Shakti” is hardly mentioned.¹³ Up to 1920, “Krishna-Kali” appears to take its place.¹⁴ Krishna and Kali are also Purusha and Prakriti—evidently in the unitive and dynamic aspect of their relation—since the terms “Krishna-purusha” and “Kali-prakriti” are found to occur.¹⁵ But the *darśana* (vision) of Krishna-Kali is distinguished from that of Purusha-Prakriti by the sense of “vivid personality”¹⁶ accompanying the former and by the perception in it of “the Lilamaya [enjoyer of the cosmic play] embracing & occupying all individuals”.¹⁷ Otherwise, what Sri Aurobindo says about the vision of Purusha-Prakriti can be taken to describe Krishna-Kali-darshana as well, as when he records on 9 July 1913 that

there has been enforced a more general perception of the unity of all movements of the Prakriti and of the unity of the mover of the Prakriti & their unity also with the same Purusha & Prakriti in this adhara.¹⁸

The unity that still remained to be fully realised was the unity of the Purusha with the Prakriti, of Krishna with Kali. The key to this unity could be described in the terminology of the *Record* as the “idealisation” of the “Kali-prakriti”. For the ascent through the planes of *vijñāna* or ideality was a progression towards the indivisible consciousness of

the Supermind or divine Gnosis. The result of this ascending movement, from the point of view of the Purusha-Prakriti relation, is described in a passage in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, written when Sri Aurobindo revised Part One in the early 1930s:

At a certain spiritual and supramental level the Duality becomes still more perfectly Two-in-one, the Master Soul with the Conscious Force within it, and its potentiality disowns all barriers and breaks through every limit.¹⁹

Another passage, written during the revision of the same chapter, deals with the same question as it affects the seeker who starts directly from an awareness of Ishwara and Shakti rather than from the distinction between Purusha and Prakriti. Even here there may be a separative and one-sided experience which must be reconciled in the harmony of a higher realisation:

It is when a complete union of the two sides of the Duality is effected and rules his consciousness that he begins to open to a fuller power that will draw him altogether out of the confused clash of Ideas and Forces here into a higher Truth and enable the descent of that Truth to illumine and deliver and act sovereignly upon this world of Ignorance. He has begun to lay his hand on the integral secret which in its fullness can be grasped only when he overpasses the double term that reigns here of Knowledge inextricably intertwined with an original Ignorance and crosses the border where spiritual mind disappears into supramental Gnosis.²⁰

“Knowledge inextricably intertwined with an original Ignorance” is *vidyā-avidyā*, the Knowledge-Ignorance, which extends to the Overmind. In 1927, Sri Aurobindo had reached the “border” of the supramental Gnosis and was preparing to cross over into the higher hemisphere. His diary entries at this time reflect his realisation of the “complete union of the two sides of the Duality” mentioned in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, the “Two-in-one” whose “potentiality disowns all barriers and breaks through every limit”. Such a power could evidently give the long-sought key to “the higher Amrita in which all limitation is removed & Death, etc entirely cease”.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. Asked about the significance of the number 7, Sri Aurobindo once wrote: “The number 7 is the number of realisation—when there are four 7’s it indicates perfect realisation.” (Unpublished letter of 13 January 1934)

2. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 311.

3. *Vidyā-avidyā* is correlated with Overmind in *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 243-44, 250.

4. *On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 136. In the same letter, Sri Aurobindo went on to explain that Krishna is not

limited to Overmind, though he has manifested through it until now: “Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards the Ananda.”

5. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, pp. 1251, 1261.

6. These are Sri Aurobindo's words to the Mother as reported by her in her talk of 10 July 1957 (*Questions and Answers 1957-58*, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 148).

7. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1250.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 1157.

9. The term “gnosis” first occurs in the *Record of Yoga* in June 1919, though Sri Aurobindo had used it earlier in the *Arya* as an equivalent of *vijñāna*. Initially, he seems to have made no distinction between “ideality” and “gnosis”. But when the diary resumes in 1926-27 after a long gap, we find only one occurrence of “ideality” (on 19 January), as a word for the lower planes above the intellect whose “remnants” were then being dismissed. “Gnosis”, on the other hand, was reserved by then for the plane beyond “supermind”, while “supermind” in entries of 1927 before 29 October meant what from that date onwards Sri Aurobindo termed “overmind”. “Gnosis” and “supermind” are almost interchangeable in his later terminology.

10. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 123.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

13. This expression occurs in the entry of 8 April 1914 in a list of the various aspects of Brahmadarshana to be unified (*Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 432).

14. In the “scribal version” of the *sapta catuṣṭaya*, Krishna is explained to be “the Ishwara taking delight in the world” and Kali “the Shakti carrying out the Lila according to the pleasure of the Ishwara” (*Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1478).

15. *Ibid.*, p. 1019.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 816-17.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 813.

18. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 10, p. 285.

19. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 123.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

A NEW YEAR DREAM

BETWEEN the night of the 31st of December 2002, the last of the year and the morning of the 1st January 2003, the first of this year I had this dream:

It was known that a very special child who had come with a gift for humanity had been born and we all went to see.

It was a very beautiful little boy, radiant light-filled and very very *compassionate*, (actually he looked about two and not new-born), and he was standing, supported by the hand of the person who was bathing him and to see him was a balm to the heart. I wanted to share this with you. It was a gift for all of us children of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and for the world.

MAGGI

THE AFTERGLOW

“SHE is here!” to my wild heart I murmur:
I repeat, “It is she, it is she!”
But my wild heart, growing no firmer,
Sighs sadly, “It cannot be!”

O my heart, my wild heart, I answer,
Thy doubting to certainty hush.
How else should that beautiful dancer,
Hope, through my arteries rush?

Could'st thou in my bosom be beating
So wildly, if she were not nigh?
But my heart kept thickly repeating
“ 'Tis but a sweet butterfly.”

“She is here! It is she!” in a whisper
I nudge my wild heart to say.
The leaves announce her and lisp her,
And the flowers by their stillness betray.

The lily is white with its wonder;
Wild rumours the roses apprise.
The doves, they have seen and grow fonder.
Wild heart, believe and have eyes!

The doves in the tree-tops are cooing;
Abuzz in the lime are the bees.
They are wild her sweet face to be wooing.
What ails thee to doubt and to freeze?

MANMOHAN GHOSE

(Songs of Love and Death, 1926)

AN ADDRESS AT THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

[Professor Murli Manohar Joshi, Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development, Science and Technology, spoke to the students and teachers of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education on 31ST December 2002.
The present article reproduces his address.]

I

I FEEL privileged to have visited today this great Centre of Education which bears the name of Sri Aurobindo. One feels here the mighty presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and one is inspired to look at education from an entirely new point of view.

The story of the development of this Centre is that of an adventure. Only the guidance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would have made possible this adventure, and I am sure that India and the world have profited from the risks that have been taken and the results which have been attained. To walk on a path that is followed by others, is comparatively easy; to walk on that path with some modifications is also not difficult; but to chalk out a new path altogether, which has not been conceived by others, is extremely difficult. And it is that difficult task which has been initiated and developed to some very great heights here. For it is only here that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother spoke of education that aims at the development of the supreme faculties of the supermind. And of the supermind only Sri Aurobindo has spoken in such detail and such amplitude that even the Veda becomes alive here and begins to develop further into the unknown terrains of consciousness. It is for this reason that one feels struck with wonder when one enters the portals of this Centre and reads the prayer that the Mother has given for the students, a prayer which all of you know, and I should like to begin with:

Make of us the hero warriors we aspire to become. May we fight successfully the great battle of the future that is to be born, against the past that seeks to endure; so that the new things may manifest and we be ready to receive them.

II

Appropriate to this prayer and this aspiration, this Centre has conducted a number of experiments, and it has become a laboratory for the education of tomorrow.

I should like to share with you that I have myself been in the field of education both as a teacher of Physics and a seeker of the integral education and integral development of the entire world. I have received inspiration from the Vedas and the Upanishads, and I feel fascinated by the modern developments of physical sciences, which seem to bring us back the ancient truths which were discovered long ago in India by great seers and scientists of higher knowledge.

There is today a new vision of reality emerging from new physics. As you know, the old physics was mechanistic; we had then the great figure of Newton. Corresponding to that mechanistic philosophy, but in a larger mould, we had a dualistic philosophy that divided the world into two components—the world of Matter and the world of Mind. The great figure of this philosophy was Descartes.

But a hundred years ago, a brilliant Indian physicist, Jagdish Chandra Bose (who was a great friend of Swami Vivekananda and who had received great insights from the Vedanta) demonstrated to the scientific world that there was no fundamental division between the plant and the animal and the man. He also indicated that even the metal was not divided from the plant. He was returning to the oneness of existence that has been described so repeatedly in the Upanishads.

When Darwin discovered the process of evolution, a series of new philosophies came to be developed, and we have evolutionary philosophies of Bergson, Alexander, Whitehead, Teilhard de Chardin. But none of these philosophies has the thoroughness of the evolutionary philosophy of Sri Aurobindo that bridges particularly the gulfs between Matter and Life and Life and Mind, and Mind and Supermind. In fact, he reverses the entire process of evolution and points out that the real evolutionary force is not material but supramental in character and that Matter itself is nothing but a mode of the Supermind. He, thus, bridges like the Vedic rishis, the three great oceans of existence,—the inconscient, conscient, and superconscient. This is extremely refreshing, and we feel a kind of rejuvenation of thought and life.

It is exactly at this time that there arose physicists like Einstein, who have also been rapidly overpassed. We have Heisenberg, Schrodinger, David Bohm and Bohr. Recent development of Bell's Theorem has brought to light remarkable phenomena of quantum mechanics. Thinkers like Penrose have now acknowledged the presence of the non-computational in the reality that has been so far regarded as subject of measurement and subject of mechanical operation. David Bohm speaks today of Implicate Order; that reminds us of the ancient doctrine of *Brahmāsmi*. Bohr has propounded the theory of complementarity similar to the complementarity that we find in the Isha Upanishad. This creates a new ground for research, and one feels persuaded that an integral vision of reality will soon emerge that will interconnect all domains of existence into one unity by a thread of oneness.

This will have radical consequences for sociology and ideas governing the philosophy of social unity and even human unity of which Sri Aurobindo has spoken at length in his *Human Cycle* and *Ideal of Human Unity*. I can see very clearly the interconnection between Sri Aurobindo's vision of a world union of free nations, a vision of a spiritualised society and the vision of integral education, and I feel that a new alternative of the present moulds of thought is now being built in the world. And in that new turn of humanity, Sri Aurobindo's message and his work for the manifestation of the supermind will have direct consequences. It is against this background that I am visiting here today and feel inspired to share with you my concerns in the field of education.

III

Indeed, while the problem of education is worldwide, I look upon Indian education as a crucible of experiment through which a new system of education will emerge. As I visualise it, the new system will be integral in character, which can be adapted by every country in its own way so as to suit its own national genius. Basically, I feel that Indian education is today in the grip of various ills which have resulted from the 1835 minutes of Macaulay on Indian education. As a result, we stand deprived of our roots in the Sanskrit language and our great cultural heritage; we have been denied access to the profundities of the knowledge that we find in the Vedas and in the Upanishads, which are universally acknowledged to be the works of supreme knowledge; we hardly know today the three greatest national poets, Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa, as a result of which we have no access to the deep genius and temperament of India; we have been kept ignorant of the precious heritage of Indian science; we do not know that the so-called Pythagorean Theorem was formulated many centuries before Pythagoras in India and is to be found in the Sulba sutras; we do not know the wonders of ancient Indian astronomy; we are abysmally ignorant of Aryabhatta and Bhaskaracharya; we have become insensitive to the beauty and charm and profundity of Indian art; we know practically nothing of Indian melody and its secret roots in the chanting of Samaveda; we do not know our great edifices of Dharmashastra and numerous other sciences which were developed up to their peak points of sociological and political insight. We do not know our great social ideal of *loka sangraha*. We are thus compelled to take rapid measures to remove the causes of this ignorance and create new curricula and new textbooks and reference books.

Our second set of questions relates to the methodology of education. We have only begun to speak of child-centred education, but how remote are we still from the insights that Sri Aurobindo has given in respect of teaching-learning process? As we all know, Sri Aurobindo wrote in his book *A National System of Education* that there are three principles of teaching, and he has formulated them in a most striking and stimulating manner. The first principle of teaching is, he said, that nothing can be taught, and that the role of the teacher is not that of a taskmaster but of a guide and of a friend, who suggests but never imposes. The second principle of teaching, he said, is that the child should be consulted in his growth, that the child's inner dispositions should be respected. In other words, he advocated the application of the principles of *swabhava* and *swadharma* in the processes of teaching and learning. And, thirdly, Sri Aurobindo stated that the third principle of teaching is to lead the child from the known to the unknown, to take him from near to far, and to base all learning in the concreteness of experience. This is not merely child-centred education but soul-centred education. And we feel greatly inspired to break the barriers of the present obstinacy and to develop rapidly the system that would respect these profound insights that Sri Aurobindo has formulated.

My third concern is related to the scheme of education. The present scheme limits our pursuit of education within a small boundary of basically five subjects: language, mathematics, science, history and geography. The integrality of knowledge, the inter-

connection of knowledge, and inter-disciplinarity in the pursuit of knowledge can hardly find any suitable room in this scheme. In India we had a scheme where the central emphasis was laid on the knowledge of life; if the Vedas and the Upanishads can be described as books of science and we ask ourselves as to what science they basically taught, our answer will be that it was the science of living. This science of living is to be brought into forefront and it is to be placed in the centre of the educational scheme. Our recent efforts at value-oriented education is an attempt at this new departure. Again, in the ancient system, language was taught with a kind of thoroughness which is greatly missing in our system. We may also note that in the ancient system, mathematics was a special sub-study of astronomy; and today astronomy, which can expand the horizons of students to the widest mysteries and surprises, is almost absent from our school scheme. We are unable to explain the relevance and significance of mathematics in its larger perspective. While we teach something of physics and chemistry, we neglect the physical body of our students, and we do not teach students lessons of cure, of hygiene and of the inner processes of physical health and of mental health. We do not take care of the problems of strength, agility and beauty of the body. Finally, we have very little place in our scheme for three great instruments which Sri Aurobindo has called the instruments of the perfect education of the soul; namely, poetry, art and music.

Fortunately, as I came here and learned the great work that has been done by this Centre of Education, I begin to see a new light. I find that the Mother's book *On Education* begins with an all-comprehensive chapter entitled *Science of Living*. I find here the Mother advising students to develop exercises by which their minds can become widened, and their soul nurtured. Elsewhere she speaks of the importance of the study of astronomy, geography and natural sciences,—not with an ordinary motive but with the motive to feel the vastness of reality and intimacy of the presence of divinity in things. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have spoken of the value of art, and as I am told, Mother herself used to teach young students how to recite poems and how to perform dramatic presentations. She herself was a superb artist and an extraordinary pianist, and she has filled the atmosphere of this Centre with great pulsations of music and art forms. And Sri Aurobindo's great poems and the greatest of them all, the epic *Savitri*, serve here as a constant lever of upliftment of imagination, of sensitivity and creativity. Sri Aurobindo has spoken of history and of human sciences, and his writings are filled with a new uplifting vision that vibrates centrally with the message of spiritual brotherhood.

I have noticed that physical education has received great attention here at this Centre. You have been provided by the Mother with extraordinary facilities for the development of the human body through a regular programme that includes gymnastics, athletics, combatives and aquatics. What is significant is that these facilities are fully utilised and I see everywhere great testimony of meticulous care that is being bestowed on the health of both students and teachers. The physical education system that has developed here can be regarded as an exemplary model and should be emulated everywhere.

Of deeper significance is the wisdom that has been imparted by the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on all matters that are essential for attainment of integral

perfection. A most invaluable treasure you have consists of the Mother's talks with students; the valuable compilations of the answers that she has given to various questions put to her by students over a number of years is her precious gift to all of us. It is remarkable that the Mother, in spite of her great load of work and responsibility, found a good deal of time to spend with the students and teachers of this Centre and to supervise their development,—physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual. These books, *Questions and Answers*, need to be studied in depth by educationists so as to derive the highest lessons of pedagogy and to implement them through new methods and contents of education.

IV

I should like to remember on this occasion the great event that took place in 1951, when the Mother decided to create this Centre of Education as a memorial to Sri Aurobindo. That decision was packed with immense significance for the country and the world, and one can see how fruitful this great decision has been. A great light has been spread from here, and as Mother had declared in her message on the day of the inauguration of the Centre, Sri Aurobindo has been presiding over this formation with all his creative genius.

I am also happy to remember and pay my tribute to Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji who had been specially invited by the Mother to Chair the inaugural event. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji was verily an embodiment of the highest values of education, and as an admirer of his personality and work, I feel encouraged by the fact that, as I have learnt, the Mother had identified him as one of the rare personalities of India endowed with the required qualities to enhance the fulfilment of India towards its real destiny.

I should also like to recall that behind this Centre of Education lies a long period of yogic sadhana, the beginnings of which we have read with great enlightenment in Sri Aurobindo's *Uttarapara Speech*. In that speech, Sri Aurobindo has described his vivid experiences and realisations of the universal presence of the Divine and Sri Krishna's assurance that if India is rising, it is not for herself but for the sake of humanity. In that speech, Sri Aurobindo speaks of the assurance that the great work of India will be fulfilled. We are today filled with gratitude that Sri Aurobindo has given to us and to India and the world the most precious boon of supramental light, and I am reminded of what he has told us of the way we should be engaged at this hour, which can be truly regarded as the Hour of God:

In the hour of God cleanse thy soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it. All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow. Even if thou conquer for the moment, it is the worse for thee, for the blow shall come afterwards and cast thee down in the midst of thy triumph. But being pure cast aside all fear; for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God; but he who can stand up in it on the truth of

his purpose is he who shall stand; even though he fall, he shall rise again; even though he seem to pass on the wings of the wind, he shall return. Nor let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear; for it is the hour of the unexpected, the incalculable, the immeasurable. Mete not the power of the Breath by thy petty instruments, but trust and go forward.

But most keep thy soul clear, even if for a while, of the clamour of the ego. Then shall a fire march before thee in the night and the storm be thy helper and thy flag shall wave on the highest height of the greatness that was to be conquered.

MEMORY

MEMORY grows—an upbound tree,
On its branches are born
Flowers of numerous hues.
Some thorns and leaves
Green or yellow, dry or fresh.

A lonely owl sits on a branch,
A bird crying all my misdeeds,
A dove sits on another
Singing of days to come.

Amidst the cries of two birds
A storm swept away the tree
And then nothing remained
Save the quietness of a void
And the mind unaware of passing time
Winged to skies, a tireless bird.

K. N. VIJU

THOUSAND-PETALLED LOTUS OF DELIGHT

ONLY the material sheath remains,
Sacred raiment of the Godhead's robe
Symbol of the sacrificial gains
For man endured, achieved on this bright globe.

A perfume trailing like a wind-blown veil
Exulting in the breeze's light caress,
A fragrance like the heavenly asphodel
And all our lives a summary of bliss.

Behind the Ashram's scented gates we file
The little that we are we give to Her
Abandoning desires for awhile
The world beyond a busy whirring blur

Of energies and entities that thrive
In life's environment, on human fate.
Alone She is the light in which we live,
Destroying fixity to new-create

Ourselves that we may find on Rapture's height,
The thousand-petalled lotus of delight.

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

REMEMBRANCE OF THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of March 2003)

ONCE, the Mother's used things were on sale. And Usha selected the Mother's watch for me. She told Dyuman-bhai that she had no money to pay for it right away. Dyuman-bhai replied that if it was for Kailas she need not worry. I used to send a cheque every month, but I did not send anything special for the watch. When the watch arrived, you cannot imagine my delight. It was as if the Mother was constantly with me, keeping Her second-to-second watch. I wore it day and night except when I took my bath.

I felt myself so near to the Mother in close embrace that I did not feel any need to come to the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo was guiding me through his books, *The Mother* and *Savitri*, which I had purchased from Mrs. Montgomery and used to take with me to work so that I could read it in the subway from home to work and on return, as well as during the noon break for lunch. And the Mother's constant contact was with me through Her watch. And yet, as my relationship grew quite close, my aspiration to meet Her face to face concretely, physically, also grew. I asked Her when I could come to the Ashram. Her reply was always: "Not yet!"

But I wanted to see Her and be here for Her birthday and the Lord's Day, February 29th 1960. However, since Her reply was 'Not yet', I sent her a cheque for \$860, the money I had saved for my coming and my offering.

Then, I met Jayant Patel who had come on a business trip with gold brocade sarees, which he showed me. I purchased one golden coloured one to send to the Mother. When it arrived here, they asked for duty equal to the price of the saree. This I thought was silly since it was Indian. The Mother refused to pay the duty and returned the saree. But that what was meant for the Mother must go to the Mother. I sent it with someone. And it arrived during one of the Puja days and She used it for that occasion. I mention all this to let you know that in my contact with the Mother, time played an important role. Everything was well timed.

Then, I had asked Her for Her Golden Book on Her 80th birthday to be sent by sea since, being heavy, it would be too expensive by air, saying I could wait. But the Mother sent it to me by air.

Then, there was an International Cultural Exhibition where the countries of the world had built their pavilions and exhibited their unique products. I saw an Indian pavilion where Gandhi was represented extensively as the Father of the Nation, with his books, sayings and handicrafts from the villages. Nehru was represented as the first Prime Minister, with his midnight message on the Independence Day and his writings. And the different states were depicted with photographs of their different costumes and customs so that one could feel the uniqueness and diversity of India.

But nowhere did I see any mention of Sri Aurobindo. So I went to the Director, Mr. Panikkar. I said to him: "A lot of thought must have gone into preparing this Exhibition..." He interrupted me and said: "Oh, yes! Do you like it?" I said: "It is good, but

it is soulless.” He asked: “Soulless? What do you mean?”

I said: “In this large Exhibition, there is no mention of Sri Aurobindo, the soul of India, who ignited the nation with the fire of aspiration for India’s independence, much before Gandhi-ji came on the scene.” He replied: “Sri Aurobindo is not only the soul of India, he is the soul of the world. Tell us what we should have. Why don’t you write a letter to us, stating how much space you need.” I said: “I will, but in the meantime, you could at least exhibit his books.” “Oh, certainly!” Then, he called his secretary and asked him to send a telegram to the Ashram, requesting the entire set of Sri Aurobindo’s works.

I wrote a letter to Mr. Panikkar and addressed it to his office at the Ministry of International Trade in New Delhi, on the 3rd of June. The Prime Minister Nehru had just passed away. I said that the beautiful dream of Nehru in his pledge on the 15th of August would remain unfulfilled without the help of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, who alone can lead India to her true greatness. For, only when a nation is led by a leader (of the elite), can it truly fulfill its highest destiny.

It was a long letter with copies sent to the Mother, Shri Surendra Mohan Ghose and Sudhir Ghose. The Mother approved and gave me twenty marks out of twenty. She wrote to me later that they were preparing for the Exhibit of which Udar was put in charge. For your information, I shall read out some extracts of the letter which the Mother enthusiastically commended: “It is indeed strange that the Americans who are looked upon as the most materialistic in the world, have a separate huge pavilion for one of their religious leaders, Billy Graham; whereas we Indians who pride and boast of having the greatest spiritual history, have completely ignored one of the greatest spiritual leaders of our time. It is indeed sad that the soul and spirit of India is conspicuously absent in the Indian pavilion.

“If I love India and am proud to call it my heritage, it is the India that is being rebuilt at the feet of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Gandhi has been given prominence at the Indian pavilion and I recognize him as a religious man, a moral and ethical man, a leader of the masses, but he was certainly not a spiritual man. He had, no doubt, the unique contribution of building the mind and the character of the masses. But it is not given to the leader of the masses to lead the nation to its highest glory. A great country like India whose true wealth lies in her spiritual culture, can be led to fulfill her mission only by Sri Aurobindo.”

And I ended this letter with a request for a room by the side of the fountain for an exhibition of Sri Aurobindo’s works, the Ashram products and the activities of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education with quotations taken from the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the chairperson of the Exhibition Committee and the letter was read out to her at a meeting. She commented that it was a strong letter and they had to do something. They gave us the room I had asked for. This was communicated to the Mother and Udar was put in charge. I informed Narad and Anie about it.

This was in June and I left in July. But to my knowledge, in spite of the Mother’s writing to me, “We are preparing for the Exhibition,” nothing came out of it.

Now, during this period of four years, many interesting things happened. Maggi had come to America. She had come as a representative of World Union, which had established a working relationship with World Goodwill. She wanted me to be a representative of World Union at the United Nations and to write articles on the happenings there in the light of Sri Aurobindo. I accepted it and wrote my first article on the acquisition of Goa by the Indian government. Then, I got an article from Dr. Adiseshiah, who was the Deputy Director General of UNESCO on the United Nations. I wrote a brief comment on the idea of Human Unity in relation to this article.

When I went to see the office of the World Goodwill, I came across the influence of Alice Bailey on their work. I was given a copy of her unfinished autobiography and found that she was an occultist and a medium. She received inspiration to write as was dictated to her by some Tibetan master. I was curious, rather interested in developing such a faculty. I asked them if there was any training centre and they gave me the address of the Rosicrucian Society in California. So, I wrote to them and they sent me papers to sign. I wrote to the Mother before becoming a member of their Society.

A reply came from Nolini-da: "The Mother says categorically that you must have nothing to do with them. You must be miles away from such contacts. They will not only not help you, they are positively dangerous and misleading. You must have a complete and integral faith in the Mother. Whatever is necessary for the growth of your soul will come directly from her. You will not have to go a-begging elsewhere."

Then, once I met a lady at a grocery store. We were waiting in a line to pay at the cash counter and we struck up a conversation. I invited her to my house. When she came and saw that I had books of Sri Aurobindo, she was amazed and asked me if I was his disciple. She said that she knew a lady who was also a disciple of Sri Aurobindo.

Then, when she told that lady about me, she said that she wanted to meet me as she had a message from the Mother for me. When I was given this information of the message, I was naturally anxious to receive the mother's message. So, I called her up and she told me that she had been to the Ashram and the Mother had given a message for me. But she could not reveal it over the phone; I would have to go to her house. Something within me told me not to go. I told her that I did not go socially to anyone's house. I asked her whether it was possible for her to come to my house. She accepted and we fixed up for tea on Saturday afternoon.

She came and as soon as she sat down, she put on the table three tiny packets: one containing sugar, the second had salt and in the third pepper or something else. She said that these were the bonds of friendship. I was told from within not to use them.

I brought tea and snacks. She started to tell me how she had gone to Chennai [Madras at that time] on a steamer and she was led to Pondicherry where she met the Mother. She pulled out a blessing packet signed with blessings by the Mother. She then gave me the Mother's message in cryptic terms: "A golden butterfly comes and sits on my hand." I asked her what it meant and she told me: "You alone can understand it."

Then, she asked me when I had seen the Mother last. I said that it was in 1950. So, she asked me if I would like to see her again. When I said: "Certainly," she asked me why

I had not gone. I answered that I could not afford to waste the Mother's money. She said that money could be no problem if I worked with her. To this she added that she saw the Mother on the 18th of every month and if I wanted to see the Mother, I could go to her house.

As she was inviting me, she began to shake and close her eyes, pointing to the photos of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo I had behind me on the bookcase. She suddenly got up, saying: "There! There! There is light! There is light! I cannot see. I must go." She prepared to leave. I was puzzled by the phenomenon. I escorted her to the door. As she was waiting for the elevator, she said: "Come on the 18th, if you want to see the Mother." And she left.

The 18th passed. I did not go to her house, nor did I call her or have any contact with her. Then, I met my friend again at the grocery store. When I told her about my meeting with her friend, she said she knew it since that lady had told her about it, adding that I was completely protected by the Mother and she could not do anything with me. She ended by saying that this lady was very powerful. Once they had gone together to a museum, and were in the Egyptian section. That lady put a stone in her hand. She was lifted high above the ground.

Well, such experiences are interesting and even inviting, but the Mother protected me from her influence. Again, this is to show that the Mother is not limited to Pondicherry.

In 1962, I heard that the Mother was very ill. I sent a letter and a telegram enquiring about her health, because one evening when I came home, I saw the photo of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo fallen on the ground with a crack in the glass over the Mother's side.

The Mother was reduced to a skeleton at that time. She could hardly lift her finger even to sign a cheque. But I was told that she took a pen and wrote on a slip of paper: "Write to Kailas. Do not worry. Doing well. Love. Blessings. Mother." Nolini-da sent me the telegram and further wrote to me, enclosing the slip and another enclosure: "You will be further comforted, nay, delighted, ecstasied by the enclosure too, which is a copy of her tape-recorded message on the day of her victory." The 12th April message was enclosed. So great was her nobility and her concern that I was indeed grateful.

Once Nolini-da wrote to me: "Dear Kailas, your little bird has reached safely and the Mother has installed it on her writing table. It looks like the Divine's messenger—flying out and flying in, carrying messages to and from the Divine! Mother is progressing very well in her physical condition. She is slowly taking up again all the threads of her outward activities. With her blessings to you and all my cordial greetings, Nolini Kanta Gupta." I was naturally happy to be informed.

Well, I always received blessings, communications and messages from the Mother where even the address was written in her own hand. She always sent me birthday greetings by telegram and the card by post. The offerings sent by me by cheque were acknowledged either by Nolini-da or Amrita-da. And I had the unique privilege of receiving back the cheques with her signature after the money was deposited in her account.

Then, in February 1964, when Eric was leaving for the Ashram, I asked him if he would take something for the Mother. He agreed. So I went to the best shopping centre in

New York: Saks Fifth Avenue. I had \$50 in the bank, plus the savings of the week and my weekly salary which I would receive on Friday.

I chose the best French perfumes: ‘Voulez-vous?’ ‘The Supreme Moment’. The names were significant and important to me. I took also a ‘Lotus’ talcum powder, three cakes of the French soap ‘Arpège’, soap bubbles, etc. Then, I went to see the gowns. I saw a beautiful golden kimono, woven with embroidered cherry blossoms. I remembered the Mother’s experience of identification with a cherry blossom tree. I chose that gown for the Mother’s birthday.

As I was about to leave, the saleslady persuaded me to see other gowns, among which was one of orange-pink colour. It was Indian silk brocade, with a lovely design in golden thread. I liked it very much but my pocket was almost empty until Friday and Eric was leaving before that. I told the lady that I could not afford it before my salary day. She said that she could keep it in reserve for me. I said that it would not help since I had to send it to India with a person who was leaving before Friday. She called her manager in case he could help. He said: I am only a manager, not the owner. I wish to help you, but I cannot. We can reserve it for you if you like.” I left the shop, thanking them.

(To be continued)

KAILAS JHAVERI

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

An overview of Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought. The first part, comprising three-fourths of the book, is an anthology of Sri Aurobindo’s writings on topics such as “The nature of consciousness”, “The make-up of the human being”, “Self and ego”, “The subliminal and the subconscious”, “The psychic being”, “Sleep and dreams”, “The psychology of faith”, “Cosmic consciousness”, “The psychology of collective development” and “Growth towards a greater psychology”. The second part consists of essays by the editor “that further illuminate various aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s thought and vision”. A glossary of terms is included.

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NIRODBARAN'S SURREALIST POEMS

(Continued from the issue of March 2003)

In the Celestial Abode...

In the celestial abode, bathed in starry night
Who lights Memory's clustered torch?
In the forgetful heart of the retrospective maiden
Calm eyes uncloze, wavelet-curved,
Of the slow bud. The dream-net of Delight
Slowly floats into the face of the sky.
The nascent moon paints the invisible Swan
In the offering-hour-enraptured lake-garden.

Within the ocean, unreachably distant,
The portrait of the rainbow-hued lady lies hid.
In syllables of the delight of the seer's conscious hands
Its image universalizes, thrill-adorned.
In the lightning-home of the worshipful mind
Desire's forest-path's day-ender laughs!

(To be continued)

DEBASHISH BANERJI

THE BIRTH OF SAVITR

A Poetic Composition based on Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*
by R. Y. Deshpande

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INDIAN DIASPORA: ROLE, CONSTRAINT, EXPECTATION*

I

DURING the early years of the 20th century, in spite of merciless immigration laws, several batches of labourers—mostly from Upper India—managed to settle in the States of Washington, Oregon, California and Northern Nevada, obviously via Vancouver.

Taraknath Das from Kolkata and his associate Guran Ditt Kumar from Bannu—both known to Sri Aurobindo at the National College, and emissaries of the revolutionary leader Jatin Mukherjee—had begun publishing the *Free Hindustan* in English (receiving contributions even from Tolstoy), and the *Swadesh Sewak* in Urdu, encouraged by the Irish revolutionary George Freeman (‘Fitzgerald’) of the *Gaelic American* group of papers.

Simultaneously, hardly twelve years after Swami Vivekananda’s Chicago speech on *Vedānta*, three patriot friends met regularly in New York: one Musalman (Maulana Barakatullah from Bhopal), one Hindu (Chhagan Raj Verma from Kutch, better known in the Federal Police reports as Husein Rahim), and one Catholic (Samuel Joshi from Mumbai). In close connection with Das and Kumar, and with the help of a lawyer called Myron Phelps (disciple of Vivekananda),¹ they fought for the status of Indian immigrants. Soon, sent by Sister Nivedita, Bhupendranath Datta—Swamiji’s revolutionary brother, associated with Sri Aurobindo’s *Yugantar*—joined them.

Very concretely, in the teeth of a general climate of animosity, Das and Kumar formed several associations and opened night schools for the Indian immigrants, encouraging them to learn English, to think of their rights in the new country, and of their debt to the Motherland left behind.

In those years, the State of California tried in vain to grow rice. The *Hindoos*—meaning Hindu, Sikh and Musalman Indians—with their knowhow produced in no time a bumper crop of rice; they introduced vegetables like the *tindā*, as yet unknown there; they compelled a well-deserved note of appreciation for being the cheapest available workers, for their sober and honest ways of living, for their upright stature, and for their moral and physical hygiene.¹

At this juncture, some of us may remember what Sri Aurobindo considered to be the characteristics of the Aryan mentality: knowledge, generosity, love, courage, force, humility, lofty ideals. According to him, the greatest duty of the Aryan is to defend the weak and punish the despot. The Aryan implied no racial category, but stood for a level of culture and education. Even the so-called illiterate folk from India, exemplified thus, before the world, several specific values of our culture.

A few months before the First World War, Lala Har Dayal reached the American West Coast, and federated all these associations, with the help of Das and Kumar, before

* Keynote speech delivered at the Franco-Indian seminary organised by the Indian Professionals’ Association at the Maison de l’Inde in Paris on 29 June 2002.

injecting in the hearts of his countrymen a fiery patriotism, in the name of the *Gadhr* ('revolution').

Mean time, Jatin Mukherjee's emissaries in Germany had received from the Kaiser a promise to deliver during the War arms and ammunition to Indian ports, supporting a general insurrection all over India. Informed that Jatin Mukherjee and Rasbehari Basu—with full collaboration from Indian soldiers in various regiments—had been preparing the Insurrection, thousands of these patriots from America gave up their jobs, left their comfortable homes, their family and children, and returned to India to sacrifice their life for the Motherland.

Jatin knew that logically, in a country under bondage—owing to leakage and betrayals—such an ambitious plan could not but fail. He did consider this failure to be a pathway to success. Indeed—as the eminent historian Amales Tripathi² reminds us—this operation dealt a serious blow to the British colonial policy, since definite chances were on the side of the Indians. He quotes the overtly admitted report by Charles Tegart—that notorious Commissioner of Police in British India—that the driving power of Jatin and his colleagues was immense; that this uprising had been extremely well conceived; that it could lead to Great Britain's defeat in the First World War.

Out of the ashes of these martyrs, and with the help of those who survived, in 1915, rose the phoenix of revolution incarnated in the Mass Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi.

II

In tune with Rabindranath Tagore, we often sing: *Bhārata bhāgya vidhātā*. Whether we believe in such a Destiny or not, probably genetics can admit the reality of an individual plan or pattern of volition and becoming. This is what our ancestors meant by *dharma*: a law determining even the respective place and rotation of each planet, the adequate season for seeds to sprout and plants to blossom, a one-pointed devotion to one's personal duty, an inner urge to realise the innermost ambitions, aspirations, ideals.

According to Sri Aurobindo, again, *All problems of existence are problems of harmony*: the *dharma* of the individual becomes the most efficient when it is in harmony with the *dharma* of the community (*jāti-dharma*); that is what has been illustrated by the Indian immigrants, who went even farther, by showing that the *jāti-dharma* reaches its maximum force when it is in harmony with the *dharma* of the epoch (*yuga-dharma*).

Profiting from the gifts of different religions, the *sanātana dharma* ('Perennial Philosophy') of India seems to have enriched itself with lessons of devotion and humble attachment from the *purāṇas*, of compassion and friendliness from the Buddhists, of love from the Christians, of equality and fraternity from the Musalmans: the *sanātana dharma*, thus enriched—in this *kali-yuga*—was destined to lead mankind.

III

What are the possible constraints?

In the 70s, I had an office at the Centre of Asian Studies, located at the Avenue du Président Wilson in Paris. One day, the watchman informed me that someone called Balarama wanted to see me. Though I was expecting no visit, I decided to rid that unknown Balarama of a rude reception. Visibly he was one of the American adepts of the Hare Krishna movement, come to sell a few LPs of their production. Immediately on making himself comfortable, he posed point blank personal questions concerning my religion, my caste, my food habits, whether I had any fixed time for daily meditation, how long I could meditate.

Irritated, I sent him back the volley of enquiry, to learn that he was Brāhman and vegetarian. Having wanted to know, *since when?*, and, on noticing how embarrassed he felt, I told him that Mukherjee is an anglicised form of Mukhopadhyay: it was composed of two words: first of all, *mukh* (meaning in Sanskrit mouth, as in Italian *bucco*, in French *bouche*, in Anglo-American, ‘Shut up your mug!’), leading to the adjective *mukhya* or principal); and the second word *upādhyāya* means a Spiritual Master. Hence, I am Brahman: my genealogical tree goes back twenty-seven generations, up to the 12th century, when Ballal Sen ruled over Bengal. Utterly shocked to learn that I was not even vegetarian, he asked if I thought of penitence. I replied: ‘Not at all!’

Then I explained to him that for geo-cultural reasons, there are regions in India where even Brahmans and Buddhists eat fish, just as in the West, Protestant clergymen can marry. The Hindu Tantriks eat and drink whatever they like. And—I added mischievously—it seems that our ancestors in the times of the Upanishads, used to be sitting in front of their cottage, and noisily crunching a roasted veal for their supper. I told him further how, in recent decades, Swami Vivekananda—the majestic Hindu saint—admitted having eaten, while abroad, whatever his hosts could afford to offer him. He did not at all feel guilty for it.

A couple of months ago, I went to listen to a scholar specialised on Hindu mythology as recorded in the *purāṇas*. What a sharp memory! How beautiful his presentation! All of a sudden, in the manner of a zealous missionary, the learned speaker started enumerating the must-have qualifications for a Hindu. Though I appreciated this effort to revive certain values of Hinduism on the face of fundamentalism surging from all sides, I felt uneasy owing to something in that process... and I asked myself up to what extent this rigid and joyless presentation of our religion cared for a harmony with *yuga-dharma*, with the spiritual soul-cry at its core.

Aware of the same reaction tormenting people in the mainland, I wanted to be sure whether it would be honest for a Non-Resident Indian to serve as a docile spring-board for this dive backward in Time.

IV

What can we expect for our future?

The *Bhagavad Gita* has amply discussed several questions concerning *dharma*. The couplet 37 from the 2nd Chapter teaches us:

*hato vā prāpsyasi svargam
jīvā vā bhokṣase mahīm*

(“Slain, thou shalt attain heaven; victorious, thou shalt enjoy the earth.”)

We hear in the couplet 35 from the 3rd Chapter:

*svadharme nidhanam śreyah,
paradharmo bhayāvahah*

(“Death in one’s own law of being is better, perilous is it to follow an alien law.”)

No comment.

Sri Krishna, the Divine Lord, advises us at last, in the couplet 66 from the 18th Chapter:

*sarvadharmān parityajya
māmekam śaraṇam vraja*

(“Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in Me alone.”)

It is time for me to leave you with these musings.
I appreciate your patience and your sympathy.³
Iti Shivam !

PRITHWINDRA MUKHERJEE

Notes and References

1. A word about these so-called anecdotes: specialists accept them as *facts and figures* (received from the President Wilson Papers). As a Fulbright scholar, the Author consulted in 1981 the Federal Archives from Washington D.C. to Berkeley and San Bruno (California) to complete his thesis for the State Doctorate (supervised by Raymond Aron) on the *Intellectual Roots of India’s Freedom Movement, 1893-1918*, at the Université Paris IV.

2. *Swādhīnatā saṅgrāme bhārater jātīya congress (1885-1947)*, Ananda Publishers Pr. Ltd, Kolkata, 1991, 2nd edition, pp. 77-79.

3. A footnote concerning Taraknath Das (1884-1958): There is enough material to consider Taraknath Das to be the virtual creator of the Gadhr movement (though it waited for an eccentric leader like Har Dayal to get its final shape). In the midst of a multifarious activity, he sought Sri Aurobindo’s guidance in his spiritual life and—as far as I remember—Purani quotes the Master’s satisfactory comment on the progress Das had been making (*Evening Talks*). An outstanding international figure specialised in international relationship (the subject he taught at the Georgetown University), he never accepted Pakistan as a settled fact. After 46 years of life abroad, in 1952 he returned to India on a short visit, wanted to meet the Mother, had an interview with her: extremely pleased to have received the man, the Mother was heard to mention “his whole consciousness is awaiting the reunification of the Motherland.” Knowing him to have been my grandfather’s close associate, the Mother had arranged for him to dine at our place and I spent an unforgettable evening talking with him of his life as a revolutionary.

LAND OF DREAM

DISTANT land in the distant west,
World of mist and gleam,
Golden sand where vessels beach
In the spirit's vision-dream,

Land of longing, shore of peace,
Emerald isle of rest,
Haven-shoal of toil's surcease
In the final round of quest,

Lead the wearied sailor home
From the unrelenting sea,
Lead the bard from the wilderness
To the springs of melody,

Lead the lover, sick at heart,
To the form his tears adore,
And the child who sends his soul to the sea,
Lead him to the farthest shore.

Lead the builder, lord of form,
To a high foundation-place
For the raising up of monuments
To the dreams of all his race.

And the unborn babe in the virgin womb
Of the world that waits to be,
Lead him to the realm of wonder's birth
And the quest that will make him free.

Isle of dream in the dreaming deep
On the marge of the vast unknown,
Unfold in each that form of thee
Whose truth he calls his own.

ROGER CALVERLEY

INTIMATE PORTRAITS

Of Journeys and Travels

Soon I'll be on my way to Greece!
I look forward to it and I am quite excited, I admit—but why?
What's in a journey? What are travels?

GARY and I are travellers. Our first visit to Patmos Island and how we went about it (on foot, absorbing and taken over by its essence everywhere,) portrays our approach. We knew very little about the place when we first landed there; one of Christianity's great bastions, it is dotted with monasteries, libraries and churches—all very famous and a pilgrim's must. It is an establishment of millennia and it has everything that makes a religious centre. If there was anything we wanted it was to feel for ourselves what made it so. We were neither pilgrims nor tourists; we just wanted to find out about its reality. And we did. Surrounded by that divine element of the sun-drenched Aegean Sea, there was something in Patmos' atmosphere that exceeded the religious. It breathed out a univocity and in it we let ourselves be nurtured.

Travels are an accentuation of life. As if drawn in bold outlines, details usually missed in the day-to-day ordinariness are brought forth and horizons become distinct and wider. Patterns crumble during a journey and complacency is shaken off; it must be shaken off, as soon as the traveller sets out. The challenge of the unforeseen asks for it and also for the traveller's alertness, action and observation. The traveller makes a commitment (notice that I use the word traveller, not tourist; the two are very different).

There is a cave in Patmos, the cave where St. John had his Apocalyptic vision (what now is the Revelation chapter of the New Testament). In this cave we would sit and meditate amid the tours visiting it. In the visitors came and out they went, stopping only to light a candle, cross themselves and listen to their guides. They listened attentively and they looked around dutifully and they were very impressed and very well informed, indeed.

But, that was all. Very few stayed on after their guide had made for the exit; most of them perhaps failed to feel what was there, that 'something' lingering beyond the guide's words and descriptions. They missed the presence filling and permeating the cavern. How they could miss it, remains a mystery. For there was a presence; strong, tangible almost, it brought down a force and it was to this force that we came back again and again, day after day walking our way up the cobblestone donkey-path—a ritual almost and a symbol for the ascent. This daily act in itself framed our quest. It also pronounced the difference between them and us, the tourists and travellers.

Even when they happen to share the same journey, tourists and travellers stay always apart; they see, do and go separately; their approach and actions differ. A traveller seeks and sees; the tourist goes unmindfully. The traveller strides into and meets the unknown, the tourist stretches only within the safety of the prearranged. Tourists con-

sume, travellers absorb; the first go and remain unaware, the others grow along and take part.

Gary and I went as travellers in Patmos. We were thrilled and captivated by its beauty and the exhilaration of the delightful moved us on. The new and the different affected us and helped explain the old and the settled. The ageless calm of the Cave was profound and touched us deeply. We trod the road ahead and walked the little path behind the foliage as we trekked to the cave and then found ourselves walking somewhere inside.

Travellers, indeed, yet, what kind of travellers, I must explain.

There is a sloka to Usha, the Dawn-devi. It is one of my favourites and it says it all:

This is she who has the vision and she awakens man and makes his paths easy to travel and walks in his front. How large is her chariot, how vast and all-pervading the goddess, how she brings Light in the front of the days!*

The trick is not to lose sight of the Goddess in front!

A thousand-mile journey starts with one step says the Chinese sage, and a famous Greek poet wished for the journey to be long. An Odyssey beckons at each and every moment and Odysseus lies hidden and dormant within; journeys and travels are an old and cherished symbol of the spiritual life. It took us more than half an hour to climb the hill to the Cave each day and each time we made a journey out of it.

It seems to me there are at least two kinds of journeys, the ones that cover physical distance and the others that go much further. The two may be interlaced and occasionally happen within each other, yet the first does not necessarily involve the second.

When we boarded the Easter ferry for Patmos (for it was a week before Easter when we sailed), we did not know what to expect; actually, we didn't expect anything. We enjoyed the ride and we went from one side of the ship to the other to see the dolphins frolic and follow us and we lost ourselves in flaming reveries when the sun dipped into the Aegean waters in the evening. At noon we had marvelled at the second mechanic's skill in modelling and watched him spray-paint the miniature boat he had made in his spare time—a sparkling white he painted it and no words were exchanged. The result of his concentrated deftness was a statement in itself.

There is much that a journey implies: transport to places and meetings with people, excitement and change in invigorating and unexpected circumstances, fascination even. But is this all? Is this what travels are about?

Once again, what *are* travels?

During my first years in India I used to visit an elderly lady regularly. We enjoyed each other's company and our talks varied. "When you board a train," Akka asked one morning, "do you keep your baggage on your lap? Do you insist on carrying it on your head?" She looked at me with that amused twinkle in her eyes that I adored and I smiled

* *The Secret of the Veda*, CWSA, Vol. 15, p. 553.

at it and she was pleased. I liked her simplicity; Akka had an elder-sister's way and a charming knack for metaphors. "No, you do not!" she continued. "You put that luggage of yours up on the rack, you tuck it under the seat, you make yourself at ease and you sit back and enjoy your journey. Isn't that so?"

It was. Just like the sage and the poet, Akka was talking about *the* Journey and that particular morning it was life's burdens she was speaking of. In the years that followed the echo of her words kept on visiting my mind and my heart kept remembering her attitude, that perpetual amusement and that 'lightness' that were hers. I was just getting onto the path then and Akka had already started the journey decades before.

The Path, the Journey; these are symbol-words. Helpful and pregnant with meaning, they are real indeed; they are born out of a reality of consciousness. The Beyond is always there, any traveller would tell you so.

The route matters little; it is a particular bent one wants to have. A slight shift in outlook and an inclination to seeking, a willingness to know and a drive, a deep-rooted need that compels with an inner urgency. Obsessed-like, one needs to go and find out; one finds it imperative to move on and by doing so the way eventually creates a larger seeing; one steps into infinitely more revealing, exciting and rewarding activities. Glimpses of the Play appear; longing culminates itself into quest and travels become truer then, multidimensional.

In the cave there were a few rows of very tall high-backed chairs. They were not made for comfort: the high backs kept the head erect and the chair-arms were too high to be restful. Obviously, they were aids to wakefulness. As we sat on them and experienced the governing ideas of their construction, we knew we had travelled into an antique monastic discipline!

Undoubtedly, distances covered and remarkable meetings and places are means, milestones on the way; yet journeys attain their fullness only when they reach out for the psychical, when they turn to seek the contact which exceeds the apparently human.

Greece has a tradition similar to that of the Vedic symbols, and remnants from that Time of Truth are scattered everywhere, as if waiting to be rediscovered. Half forgotten, they persist and surface in the literature, in the people, even in the present religion that forced their replacement. In our wanderings about the island we stumbled constantly upon them and we saw that inner Greece is a parallel to the outer. Not only was the cave a reaffirmation of the presence and force of the Goddess once worshipped there, but we also saw how that element was still working in the people—subtly, as subtly as they themselves tapped into it and applied it to their lives.

One fine Sunday morning we were strolling the deserted streets of Patmos harbour town. It was too early for the cave to be open and most of the shops were closed. We were enjoying the quietude and had no intention of shopping, yet in we walked into a tidy little place that happened to be open to look for incense. A young woman, busy cleaning, greeted us (in English, for she had heard us conversing with each other) and you should have seen the happy surprise that lit up her face when I responded in Greek!

She carried on with her work, yet she was intrigued to know how and why and

where a Greek and a Canadian had come together—curiosity, we thought, but we were wrong; her interest had other motives. She had observed foreigners and had seen what sets them apart from the Greeks in general and from herself in particular.

“Foreigners are attached to money,” she announced. “They earn it to keep for themselves, while we Greeks earn it to give freely; we, Greeks, *do* with it. . . .” Her voice trailed off, her sincerity was charming. She could not have been more than twenty years old and she was certainly not articulate about what she clearly felt and perceived. Yet, the roots of her perception ran deep; she had access to a sense of wisdom. She knew money for what it was, a force largely misused and in the wrong hands.

Apparently, there was no envy in her; she was simply stating a fact that she had arrived at through her own experience. Born and brought up on the island, whatever she knew was stamped with the same brooding quality that was the essence of the island itself.

Brooding, I say, and that’s exactly what the island was felt to invoke; its pace induced contemplation. Although most of the island’s inhabitants were involved in the tourism trade (so competitive, strenuous and demanding), they were not at all hurried, never short-tempered or unpleasant. Busy and concentrated on their business, they were concerned, gracious and open-hearted. Plus, they had uplifted business to an act that did more than only make money. Their establishments, always neat and clean, were made beautiful by the simple touches of a plant here, an arch or a whitewashed back wall there, a welcoming smile; simple things, all of them: heartfelt.

Gary and I speculated on this and tried to place a finger on its cause—what was it, where did they learn to be so, how did they do it, on what was their poise founded? It must have something to do with the island itself, its atmosphere and its being, we concluded one morning halfway up the cobblestone way. We had encountered that presence in ourselves and had received its force in the Cave—could this be what had started the island’s tradition of worship?

For there was a subtle and on-going act of worship interwoven into the life and the attitude of the people; a refined practicality which was definitely far removed from the mind—a truly spontaneous act that continued things in the tradition befitting to the Goddess. Artemis had a temple on the island that had been replaced by a mighty Christian monastery. Although no longer the obvious presiding deity, Her essence was enduring and guiding. The island life was full of an inner attitude—it must be that which created the surrounding (physical and otherwise) beauty.

During the Easter week, we had many opportunities to observe and partake in the pompous celebrations and rituals of the Christian faith. However, we usually walked away from them. They were too pretentious and of no interest; no depth in them, whatsoever. Merely religious, they were meticulously removed from the spiritual atmosphere we felt in the Cave.

Luckily, they weren’t our only source of attraction or inspiration. We developed our experience of the island life, the island Mother. The Goddess had retreated from the superficiality of the present worship, but she had not been erased from existence; she

could not be erased. She had not deserted the place and her smile was all over it; we only had to smile back!

We chose the same hard wooden seats each visit. There was a little room attached to the north end of the cave in which a caretaker-priest presided. He would come out on occasion to bless the Greek pilgrims, but he retreated inside when the foreign groups arrived.

A journey happens in its attitude, this I believe. Roads always took me somewhere good and, happily, I didn't miss the path when I stumbled upon it one day. (I took it and never looked back!) Now a live-travelogue is on (my very own *Odyssey*, no less!) and its spell spreads out in little-big fables of events. Like so many others in Pondicherry, I, the traveller, cycle down the street and journey up the days; anything that happens touches life and gives it depth.

However, and truthful as I may be to the *Odysseus* within, I have never shunned the travels without. After all, it is the journey that creates Ithaca (*Odysseus's* island and a Greek symbol for the Goal) and I still love to go places. The act itself provides a perspective and a yardstick. Travelling the without reverberates with the consonance of the discoveries within. The symbol-words find a firmer ground and they define themselves further; they enrich reality and fill it with Depth. The Path is reaffirmed in the happenings of a journey and the Journey itself is granted a substance through the details of the ordinary. There is always something more and else in a gesture, a feeling, a place or a glance and the magic of the unexpected assists in bringing closer the hidden and the unknown. Life ceases to be lived in the abstract and ideas are checked against their application. Any questions about sincerity, self-giving or faith are answered promptly and accurately and a comparative study between one's beliefs and one's actual actions takes place.

I have made a practice out of travel. A rather productive occupation, it renders all journeys into a meaningful and inspiring activity—any travels, all movements; I use them to look for anything that may be found. For there is always something, no matter how small or big. The trick is to refuse to be overburdened by its weight. It is the journey (remember?), not the baggage.

And lest we forget, it is the Goddess who brings Light in the front of the days!

KATI WIDMER

WHO IS A BRAHMIN?

FOR any organisation or system to effectively function, it needs a well-knit hierarchy with clearly defined roles for its different levels or components. For example, a machine has various parts, each with its own specific function; but all together working in unison lead to the effective functioning of the machine as a whole. The human body is another example, the head responsible for receiving information and deciding the action, the other parts and limbs performing their respective functions. The need for such a hierarchical structure applies also to the society and the nation. The much-maligned caste system in India was evolved for the purpose of meeting this need for a hierarchy as part of a homogeneous and harmonious social order. The Purusha-sukta in Rigveda gives a symbolic description of this order in which the Cosmic Purusha has the Brahmin for his face (guidance), the Kshatriya as his shoulders (administration and protection), the Vaishya as his midriff (production and distribution) and the Shudra for his legs (service).

Sri Krishna says in the Gita:

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः।

The fourfold order was created by Me according to the divisions of quality and active function.

Obviously the Gita does not take the fourfold order in the narrow sense in which it is commonly understood now, whereby one's heredity becomes the sole criterion for deciding the caste to which one belongs.

Sri Aurobindo says: "...the fourfold order of society is merely the concrete form of a spiritual truth which is itself independent of the form; it rests on the conception of right works as a rightly ordered expression of the nature of the individual being through whom the work is done, that nature assigning him his line and scope in life according to his inborn quality and his self-expressive function." (*SABCL*, Vol. 13, p. 14)

Again, "The ancient Chaturvarnya must not be judged by its later disintegrated degeneration and gross meaningless parody, the caste system.... birth is not and cannot be the sole test of Varna. The intellectual capacity of the man, the turn of his temperament, his ethical nature, his spiritual stature, these are the important factors.... The whole system of society, founded on the four Varnas, was made a harmonious means for the elevation and progress of the soul, mind and life from the natural pursuit of interest and desire, first to the perfection of the law of our being, Dharma, and at the end to a highest spiritual freedom. For man's true end in life must be always this realisation of his own immortal self, this entry in its secret of an infinite and eternal existence." (*SABCL*, Vol. 14, 111-15) "...the human soul and the human mind are beyond caste." (*Ibid.*, p. 405)

This assertion is echoed in the following shloka:

जायते जन्मना नैव चाण्डालो द्विजोपि वा।
सर्वेपि जन्मना शूद्रः जायन्ते कर्मणा द्विजाः॥

It means, “Neither the outcaste nor the twice-born (i.e., brahmin) is defined by birth; all are sudras at birth and they become brahmins by virtue of their actions.”

A much more stringent requirement is laid down in the following shloka for a person to qualify to the status of a brahmin:

जन्मना जायते शूद्रः संस्कारात् द्विज उच्यते।
वेदपाठी भवेद्विप्रः ब्रह्म जानाति ब्राह्मणः॥

That is, “By natural birth a man is born a *sudra*, an ignorant person; through purificatory rites he becomes a *dvija*,¹ the twice-born; through study and knowledge of the scriptures, he becomes a *vipra*, a sage or wise man; through the realisation of the Supreme Spirit he becomes a *brahmana*, a knower of Brahman.”

Thus the clinching condition for a person to be called a brahmin is that he should have realised the Supreme.

B. G. PATTEGAR

1. It is interesting to note that the term “dvija”, literally “twice-born”, also means “bird”. While the brahmin is figuratively “twice-born”, the bird is literally so, because, as the egg is its first birth, its second is when it emerges as the bird from the egg.

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT—XVII

TINKORIDA

*Three pearls, three shells
On that Sea Shore,
Grammar, simplicity and sincerity,
Within them they bore.*

TINKORI MITRA was one of our favourite teachers. We loved him, so we vexed him. What he taught was English Grammar, a subject which was, for us at least, neither here nor there. (Now I wonder at its complexity and utility, but then when younger I was sure.) He was a “mastermoshai” to the core. He taught to any who was willing to learn and to some unwilling ones too. We called him “Tinda”. (There was another Tinkori, a Banerjee, a music teacher of a much later era and of a very, very different ilk.)

Tinkorida was born in 1892, probably in a place called Shibpur, Bengal. Not much is known about his early youth. It would seem he was always a “mastermoshai”. He lived for a period, around 1913, with his brother’s family in Shibpur. He taught History, Geography and English. He was not bound to the family life and relatives. His work, i.e. teaching and its fulfilment seemed to be his main concern. All this may show him as a non-caring and remote character. No; he was a very considerate and understanding person. He tried not to inconvenience anybody in any way. He usually went out early and returned late, for often he helped students individually. Once in a while if he happened to come back later than usual, and thought the others had all finished their dinner and were readying themselves to retire, he quietly returned to the school and spent the night there in some corner! He came home the next morning. He had not the heart to disturb or give cause for them to fuss over him. Even during the vacations he went about helping the students, sometimes calling them home.

The headmaster of the school (Shibpur) was a pundit. He knew even Latin and Greek. He was also acquainted with our Nolinida. Late Mohinida (who looked after Tinda towards the end of his life) was Tinkorida’s student in Shibpur. Tinkorida came to the Ashram in 1942 intending it to be a short visit. He stayed a month, then two and then decided to settle here permanently. The old headmaster did not appreciate this sudden move of Tinkorida’s. Tinda never went back. In fact, I don’t think he went anywhere more than 5 km from the Ashram. Cazanove and Rizièrè were the distant places he went to, that too for harvesting with all of us—schoolchildren, teachers, etc. Those days during harvesting the school was closed (or those who chose to work were exempted from attending classes) for 3-4 days. It is not that we bunked classes.

Tinkorida continued his old profession of teaching grammar and English here in the Ashram School. He also worked in the Granary and I think in the Dining Room too. We met, back in 1947 or 1948, as teacher and student across the classroom. He was one of the very rare persons who saw poetry in grammar—in English grammar at that. He

seemed to relish it like we would a bestselling novel. To us it was dry as dust and as unpalatable. Fifty minutes of it gave us “pins and needles” of the brain. Oh! But how he tried and how we resisted. He was too good, simple and kind-hearted for us. We arrived late, either playing games before the class started, or going out to pluck some mangoes to be distributed and eaten during the class (he didn’t know about it). Sometimes he saw us going out when he was entering the classroom. He would chide us, but we went. Once in a while as a desperate measure he would threaten to leave the class and go away. He did it once, but we ran after him and pleaded and said we would fall at his feet. Then he went all soft and felt embarrassed and quickly came back, sat on his chair and all was forgotten. I don’t remember how far past the front cover of that thick red grammar book we ever got—not very far, one would suspect. But all this was just from “bell to bell” of that class. We met in the Ashram, Playground, harvesting, etc.—neither he nor we let the “grammar” come between us.

Tinkorida was neither a sportsman nor a sports lover in his pre-Ashram days. He considered football a game for savages. But here he did join the group activities (not games), just the marching and exercises in the body-building Gym. He was naturally endowed with some strength. (He did heavy physical work in the Granary. It gave him quite some exercise and strength.) He and I had struck a deal. We all went to the Dining Room after the Mother’s Distribution in the Playground. The agreement was that he would carry me piggyback half the way and I would carry him rest of the way. I would jump on to his back outside the Playground and get down only at the crossing of Jawaharlal Nehru Street and François Martin Street. Then I would try to pick him up. But he felt very embarrassed and pleaded not to be picked up. I think only once did I forcibly give him a lift—that too only part of the way. He was a great worker and more—he was a nice, gentle and a sincere person. His mind was ever a clean slate—nothing of the past, even of the previous one hour, was carried over. Once someone in a jocular vein asked him, pointing a finger at me: “Tinda, he was very naughty, and troubled you, did he not?” Tinkorida cut him short, saying: “Is that any of your business?” Actually we were great friends. He would ask me almost everyday in the Gym: “*Tomaké èk chaud débo?*” (Shall I give you a slap?) I would turn my bare back to him and say: “Yes, please give me one.” He would swing his hand, and gently lay it on my back.

Tinkorida retired from school, I think, due to old age. Later he took ill, and his mind too wandered a bit. One evening someone told me, “Tinkorida is missing.” It was around 8 p.m. I hopped onto my bicycle and went zigzag and went down one road and up the next. By good fortune or chance, I found him near the Railway Station. He was stopped by an open drain a foot wide. It appeared too wide for him to cross over. When I approached him, he asked me: “*Dèkho to bhai, ami par hoté parbo ki?*” (Can you tell me if I will be able to cross over?) I asked him, “Tinda, where are you headed?” He pointed South (the wrong, opposite direction) and said: “Home—but I can’t cross the water.” I got him to sit at a nearby tea-stall, called a rickshaw and brought him home. Not long after that I heard that he had crossed that last River—that was on 13th of June in 1978.

I can well imagine what might have happened on that 13th of June:

A knock at Tinda's door.

Tinda: Who is there?

Yamaraj: It is me, Yamaraj.

Tinda: O God! Come in—but you should have replied, “I Yamaraj” and not “me, Yamaraj”.

Yamaraj: I am sorry—but it was so long ago.

Then he slipped in with a smile and helped Tinda up, and off they rode into the silent, soft sky.

PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

RECORD OF YOGA

By Sri Aurobindo

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The diary of Sri Aurobindo's yogic experiences between 1909 and 1927. Most entries are from 1912 to 1920. Other materials he wrote relating to his practice of yoga, such as “Sapta Chatusthaya” which formed the basis of the yoga, are also included.

NOTE: The complete text of “Record of Yoga” was brought out serially in the “Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research” journal. This is the first time that it has been brought out in book form (in both soft and hard cover). This material did not appear in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL) set. Those who already have the SABCL set of 30 volumes may prefer procuring the hard cover editions as they are bound in cloth, light cream in colour, with PVC jacket and match the colour and binding of the SABCL set. However the size (14cm x 22cm) is smaller than the SABCL volumes.

In writing his diary Sri Aurobindo used a special terminology which included words from Sanskrit and other languages, as well as abbreviations, symbols and markings. The special terminology is explained in a separate glossary which will be issued later.

Available at SABDA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry 605 002

Please see “New Publications” for ordering information.

TO BE A GOD

My mom explains
That when in heaven
The gods take a shower
Then here on the plains
It suddenly rains.
The sun tries then
Alas in vain
To peep through the clouds,
But surely he also gets wet
In that rain,
Though he tries again and again
To shine through the rain.
My mom explains.

“Do gods bathe even at night?”
I wondered.
“My child, in heavens
There is no night.
It is always sunny and bright.”
“Then when do gods sleep
And when do they rest?”
“Child, gods never sleep
Always they keep watch
Lest the oceans spill
And the stars tumble.
Gods never tire,
They never grumble.”
“Mom, how can I become a god?
Please explain.”

“O my son, to become a god
Is given to few.

To be the master of oneself
Is the first cue.
One must also never lie
And always hold
Truth’s flag high.
One must be calm
And like a sweet psalm.
Pure in mind
To all beings kind,
To be a god is an art
That is mastered
By some rare benevolent heart.”
Thus more explained my mom,
“Child, one can always try,
First, to be strong,
And never to do wrong
And never to cry,
It is always good to aim high.”

“Mom,” then said I,
“It may be very hard,
But I will be on guard,
And try not to stumble
And not to fall.
I will hold my head high
And be vast like a sky.”

My mom explained,
“O my son, one day
Then, the Lord
May make you an angel
Or even a god.”

SHYAM KUMARI

ISLAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE

(Continued from the issue of March 2003)

The Perfumes of Arabia

NOT Mecca the birthplace of Mohammad nor Medina where he became the Prophet and King, but Baghdad of the Abbasids was the centre of Islamic culture and civilization for five great centuries. Founded in 762 by the mighty Caliph Al-Mansur on the banks of the Tigris this old Babylonian city, aptly called the Gift of God, remained in its conquering glory until the Mongols subjugated it in 1258. Baghdad as capital of the Caliphate became in the Middle Ages the centre of power and also had the distinction of being a meeting place of the intellectual world. A blaze of philosophical, scientific and literary creations brought to mankind another spirit of life's opulence. The poet Anwari praised it as the headquarters of learning and art, with gorgeous crafts on display in streets and marts. Here were a thousand splendid mansions, villas and palaces "simple without, but within, nothing but azure and gold.... The royal palace at Baghdad had on its floors 22,000 carpets and on its walls 38,000 tapestries out of which 12,500 were of silk."

Seeing the dead body of Mohammad in 632, Abu Bakr said: "God is our witness. Death will not come upon you twice over." Since then Islam was on its stridency and nothing could hold it back even in distant lands across rivers and seas. During the time of Mohammad tension had already begun to grow between those who accepted Islam as preached by him and the followers of the old Jewish religion. The years 622-30 saw the courageous Prophet enforcing his position by successful military campaigns in the lustre of Damascus steel. These continued with multiple vigours in later years. Before long through victory and expansion the Muslim armies swept across the Arabian Peninsula, going to distant places and annexing territories from Spain to Persia.

In 634 an army of 18,000 Arab Muslims under the leadership of a brilliant commander, Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, was at the Euphrates delta on way to conquer Persia. The enemy force, though vastly superior in every respect, was convincingly defeated and the captured soldiers were taken as captives. This battle, known as the Battle of the Chains, was the beginning of the march of the Muslim spirit through the pages of history. "Accept the faith and you are safe," the Sassanids were told; "otherwise pay tribute. If you refuse to do either, you have only yourself to blame. A people is already upon you, loving death as you love life." The Persian tribes rallied briefly under Rustum but soon, in May 636, he was killed on the banks of the Euphrates and all was over.

Islam then quickly spread throughout the Middle East and moved across North Africa. In 711 Tariq Ibn Zayyad crossed the distant strait now named after him as Jebel Al Tariq or the Hill of Tariq, Gibraltar. India and Southeast Asia came under its sway in the course of time. The reasons for its expansion can be attributed to the strength of the Arab armies with a vitality that the aggressive life-force had put into them. The use of horse and camel cavalry added to its early military victories and triumphs.

The establishment of Caliphate rule brought great political coherence to the vast empire that got built in such a short period. There was the Promise of the Great, as if bringing with it the sanction of fulfilment: "Caliphate will be established among you on the path and pattern of prophethood." Caliphate or Khilafat has all along been taken as the divine institution and when it was at its peak it also marked the Golden Age of Islam. It is even said that "the establishment and superiority of Islam and existence and stability of Khilafat are inseparable." (*Dar-us-Salaam* by Chaudhry Rehmat Ali) It is in this context that we have to understand what Mahatma Gandhi wrote about it when the Ottoman Empire was breaking up at the end of the First World War. For him Khilafat was, rather regretfully, more precious than India's independence. "To the Mussalmans Swaraj means, as it must, India's ability to deal effectively with the Khilafat question." He further added: "It is impossible not to sympathise with this attitude... I would gladly ask for postponement of the Swaraj activity if we could advance the interest of the Khilafat."

Three great Abbasid names, roughly during the period 750-850, that brought renown to the Muslim pride and triumph stand out distinctly: Al-Mansur, Harun Al-Rashid and his son Al-Mamun. Al-Mansur,—“tall, slender, bearded, dark, austere, no slave to woman's beauty, no friend of wine or song,”—was an excellent orator and administrator. His empire stretched from western China to northern Africa. Harun, the Caliph of the Arabian Nights,—“a gay and cultured monarch, occasionally despotic and violent, often generous and humane,”—brought wider cultural horizons that also included scientific works. Al-Mamun,—“though capable at times of the fury and cruelty that had disgraced Harun, was usually a man of mild and lenient temper,”—set up an institute, the House of Wisdom, to promote learning and render ancient manuscripts into Arabic. Amongst translations from Greek writings one of the first was Ptolemy's astronomy based on the geocentric system. Built on this foundation we have three centuries that mark the zenith of Islam's golden age when there was an unrivalled intellectual activity in several fields such as science, mathematics, technology, art, literature including biography, history and linguistics. Along with these also prospered agriculture and trade.

About the cultural expansion during the period of Al-Mamun an Arab historian states the following: "He looked for knowledge where it was evident, and thanks to the breadth of his conceptions and the power of his intelligence, he drew it from places where it was hidden. He entered into relations with the emperors of Byzantium, gave them rich gifts, and asked them to give him books of philosophy which they had in their possession. These emperors sent him those works of Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen, Euclid, and Ptolemy which they had. Mamun then chose the most experienced translators and commissioned them to translate these works to the best of their ability. After the translating was done as perfectly as possible, the Caliph urged his subjects to read the translations and encouraged them to study them. Consequently, the scientific movement became stronger under this prince's reign. Scholars held high rank, and the Caliph surrounded himself with learned men, legal experts, traditionalists, rationalist theologians, lexicographers, annalists, metricians, and genealogists. He then ordered instruments to be manufactured."

Here is an account of an intellectual afternoon in the reign of Al-Mamun: "Al-Mamun used to hold a salon every Tuesday for the discussion of questions in theology and law... The learned men of diverse sects were shown into a chamber spread with carpets. Tables were brought in laden with food and drink... When the repast was finished, servants fetched braziers of incense, and the guests perfumed themselves; then they were admitted to the Caliph. He would debate with them in a manner as fair and impartial, and as unlike the haughtiness of a monarch, as can be imagined. At sunset a second meal was served, and the guests departed to their homes." (*The Age of Faith*, Will Durant)

The Academy of Wisdom in Baghdad soon became an active centre of learning in several branches of knowledge. Irrespective of race and religion scholars worked open-mindedly to preserve the universal heritage. It is said that the "rush toward Baghdad was as impressive as the horsemen's sweep through entire lands during the Arab conquest."

Baghdad was a city with the population of almost a million people. The attention that was paid by the ruling monarchs in harnessing the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers brought rich dividends to the kingdom. The development of elaborate irrigation systems yielded large quantities of grain not only to feed its citizens but also to export to other places. At this time Baghdad was second in size only to Constantinople.

The privileged at the Caliph's court were probably invited to play polo or go hunting. Horseracing for the aristocratic echelon and cockfights and ram-fights for a lower level of society were common pastimes. Popular entertainment was offered in public places. Masudi writes: "In Baghdad, there was a street storyteller who amused the crowd with all sorts of tales and funny stories. His name was Ibn Maghazili. He was very amusing and could not be seen or heard without provoking laughter. As he told his stories, he added many jokes which would have made a mourning mother laugh and would have amused a serious man." There were also street hawkers who offered extraordinary products to their gaping customers.

"The cultured residents of Baghdad," narrates an observer, "liked their pleasure. They gathered secretly in cabarets, and some of them met in Christian monasteries on the outskirts of the city. The Book of Convents by Shabushti is really a description of the city's taverns. Wine was certainly drunk in these places. The Bacchic poets of the time were there to testify to that. Snow sherbets were eaten. Concerts were given in rooms cooled by punkahs. Abu Nuwas exclaims, 'in how many taverns did I land during the night cloaked in pitch-like blackness? The cabaret owner kept on serving me as I kept on drinking with a beautiful white girl close to us.' Gambling houses were also popular. Chess, especially, was highly favoured and backgammon was second in popularity. It is probable that the shadow-theater was a form of entertainment also."

We get a flavour of the general sensuous manner of the *Arabian Nights* in the story of an obsessive prince winning his beloved: "...how desirable the mysterious Princess Duniya was said to be, how beautiful and how expert in the art of silk embroidery, he fell into passion for her which worked greatly in his heart..." The Isle of Camphor and Crystal where she lived must be conquered. Finally, Taj Al-Muluk wins his Duniya.

That wine and love can lend themselves as metaphors to the lyric-mystical expression of a Sufi poet is well illustrated in Omar Khayyam (1048-1122). He wrote a tract on algebra which won him the patronage of a rich and influential doctor in Samarkand. Later he became the personal physician of Sultan Malik Shah. He also wrote treatises on physics and mathematics and reformed the Persian calendar. Maker of tents and an astronomer-poet, he is said to have been a God-intoxicated mystic. In his Rubaiyats the occurrence of the potter-pot image is very common. There is also the alchemist's belief that in this intoxication life's leaden metal shall be transmuted into gold. In fact he went farther in stating that the enchanted sword of Virtue shall be victorious in the world of evil, as was warrior-king Mahmud of the time.

The possibility of seeing the spiritual behind the unsubstantial, of the enduring behind the fleeting can dawn on us when we understand the significance of the cosmic play which is also a play of delight in its truest sense.

Ah, fill the Cup:—what boots it to repeat
 How Time is slipping underneath our Feet:
 Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday
 Why fret about them if Today be sweet!

Therefore, what is uncertain or bygone need not worry us when the present is with us to enjoy. It avails not to regret the passage of Time when the timeless now is today. In it is all sweetness, the true joy of life. This is the moment in which we can achieve all that can be achieved here. So "Omar Khayyam would have no hesitation in divorcing the barren woman Reason and take in his bed the Daughter of the Vine for life's pleasures." That the ideas of the Upanishads with experiential connotations are present in such Sufist poetry is unmistakable. "Sufism repeats [these Upanishadic thoughts and perceptions] in another religious language," says Sri Aurobindo. (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, SABCL, Vol. 14, p. 270) This trait with its glittering sensuous decorativeness has arrived in recent times in Indian poetry also. While reviewing in the *Arya* Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's first book of poems *The Feast of Youth*, Sri Aurobindo says the following: "...the Moslem mind has the tendency of mosaic and arabesque, loves the glow of many colours, the careful jewellery of image and phrase; its poetry is apparelled like a daughter of the Badshahs.

Her girdles and her fillets gleam
 Like changing fires on sunset seas:
 Her raiment is like morning mist,
 Shot opal, gold and amethyst.
 (Sarojini Naidu, *The Sceptred Flute*, p. 53)

"...[we witness here] carefully compressed artistry of the Persian poets..." (*The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol. 17, pp. 306-07)

In Baghdad songs and music were perhaps more important than in other places. Poetry continued to be cultivated with the same care as was exuberance. Generally the Islamic artists and poets were occupied with the joys and sorrows of love. Ibn Khaldun the historian writes: "The beautiful concerts given at Baghdad have left memories that still last." The taste of the time is well indicated by what the great artist Abu Nuwas said: "Wine flows among us in an ornate goblet in which the Persians had carved all sorts of figures. Horsemen at Khosrau's side aim at an antelope with their arrows."

But unregenerate vitalistic life not very unoften becomes turbulent and invariably there is a lot of civil blood flowing in streets and palaces. Thus Ibn Muqaffa, the creator of secular Arabic prose, was hardly thirty-six years old when Al-Mansur got him executed in 757. His work entitled *Kalila and Dimna* is said to be a masterpiece of Arabic prose with literary qualities that have never been denied by Arab writers. Similarly in 809 Harun Al-Rashid the Upright in his last agony ordered the rebel leader Bashin "to be cut to pieces limb by limb and himself watched the execution of the sentence." In all these cases the causes at times could be political, but the acts were always ruthless and inhuman. This characteristic of tribal Arabia came from ancient days and persisted even during the sunshine of civilization. The Umayyad princes and leaders were treacherously slain. They were invited for a dinner and, while they ate, hidden soldiers put them all to the sword. "Carpets were spread over the fallen men and the feast was resumed by the Abbasid diners over the bodies of their foes, and to the music of dying groans." (*The Age of Faith*, Will Durant) Ibn Muqla, the calligrapher, was the vizier of three Caliphs, "an honour that earned him the cruel punishment of having his right hand amputated. It is said that he attached a reed pen to his arm and wrote so well that there was no difference between the way he wrote before and after he lost his hand."

But let us move on to the winning cultural aspects of Islam. A number of fortunate circumstances came together to make its golden age possible. "Perhaps most significant was the creation of a vast empire without internal political boundaries, largely free from external attack. Trade began to flow freely across the Asian continent and beyond. The wisdom of India and China mingled with that of Persia, ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt. Thanks in part to Mohammad's assertion that 'the ink of scholars is more precious than the blood of martyrs,' Islamic leaders valued—in fact, sought out—the intellectual treasures of their subject provinces. Arabic became the language of faith and power, and likewise of theology, philosophy, and the arts and sciences."

Muslim scholars made important and original contributions in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and chemistry. "They collected and corrected previous astronomical data, built the world's first observatory, and developed the astrolabe, an instrument that was once called a mathematical jewel. In medicine they experimented with diet, drugs, surgery, and anatomy and in chemistry, an outgrowth of alchemy, isolated and studied a wide variety of minerals and compounds." Public education spread rapidly. At about the same time the so-called "Arabic" numerals, actually imported from India, began to replace cumbersome Roman numerals. In the sequel of intellectual history the concept of zero was carried by the caravans of the Arabian scholars to the European countries.

In the meantime, the paper industry was born. A Chinese prisoner of war had been brought to Samarkand towards the end of the Umayyad period in 795. "There he began a paper industry using linen and hemp, imitating what he had seen in his own country. For a long time Samarkand remained the center of the industry but, in addition to Baghdad, paper was manufactured in Damascus, Tiberius, Tripoli in Syria, Yemen, the Maghreb, and Egypt. The city of Jativa in Spain was famous for its thick, glazed paper."

This marked another phase of splendid development. The number of manuscripts of original as well as translated works grew on a large scale throughout the Muslim Empire. The appearance of publishing houses and selling of books around the main mosques became a common feature. "Scholars and writers met in them and copyists were hired there. In addition to the public libraries open to everyone there were reading rooms where anyone, after paying a fee, could consult the work of his choice."

In the wake of these activities the ancient treasures of knowledge in Greek, Roman, and Sanskrit languages spread widely. It is even maintained that the Hellenic classics travelled through Arabia to Medieval Europe and made the Renaissance there possible. Literary discussions among the scholars became more common; their secular and not so much theological character is a noteworthy feature. In this respect the 9th century personality of Jahiz dominated the scene. A "prolific writer with a vast field of interest," he "pushed sarcasm to the point of mocking irreverence toward Divinity, more in the style of Lucian than of Voltaire. It is due to the tremendous talent of this prodigious artist that Arabic prose became more important than poetry."

Khali the inventor of Arabic prosody and the first author of a dictionary, Sibawaih with the distinction of codifying grammar, Mubarrad who wrote a didactic work, Abu Hanifa and Ibn Hanbal as the founders of jurisprudence, Hunain Ibn Ishaq to whom Arab science owes so much, Kindi the "philosopher of the Arabs," lived in Baghdad in this richly intellectual milieu. Kindi's successor Farabi with his more scientific mind was the true creator of Arab peripateticism. "This 'second master' after Aristotle continued along Kindi's path in affirming the similarity of Aristotle's and Plato's views. In addition, he adopted the Platonic theory of emanation. His Model City is an adaptation from Greek philosophy in which he describes his conception of the perfect city. This scholar, who was also an excellent music theorist, contributed to the evolution of philosophical language. This master of logic also created a harmonious system that was a credit to his merit, his rigour, and his knowledge." Thabit Ibn Qurrah, a money changer, was also a scholar in Syriac, Greek and Arabic and authored some "seventy original works in ethics, music, astrology, mathematics, astronomy, mechanics, medicine, physics, philosophy." He was associated with the construction of scientific instruments. Al-Magest is a significant Arab work and proved to be the basis for cosmology for the next 500 years.

"Baghdad's first great school of religious law was founded in 1067. Abu Hamid Al-Ghazzali, earlier a professor at the Madrasa Al-Nizamiya, abandoned his post to become a wandering mystic. In his writings we find the synthesis of mystical and orthodox points of view. He is regarded as the greatest reformer of Islam." Perhaps their most significant single achievement was the establishment of medicine as a science based on observation

and experiment. Islamic scientists developed the rudiments of what would later be called the scientific method. The most well known Islamic mathematician was Al-Khwarizimi, who pioneered the study of algebra. His textbook on the subject became a standard in European universities for centuries.

The Abbasids imported the technologically advanced “ondanique” steel from India and processed it at their centers of weapons’ manufacture at Damascus and Toledo, both of which cities won fame for their blades. A wide variety of products such as pearls, livestock, paper, sugar and luxurious cloth were exchanged for their necessities. The cloth trades also included export of gold and silver thread for embroidery, gum for glazing, and needles, looms, and dyestuffs. Important advances in agriculture were also made in the Golden Age. Muslim engineers perfected the waterwheel and constructed elaborate underground water channels called qanats. Important books were written on soil analysis, water, and what kinds of crops were suited to what soil. Indeed, its agricultural exports “transformed the diet of medieval Europe by introducing such plants as plums, artichokes, apricots, cauliflower, celery, fennel, squash, pumpkins, and eggplant, as well as rice, sorghum, new strains of wheat, the date palm, and sugarcane.” The introduction of numerous varieties of fruits and vegetables and other plants to the West was becoming a new phenomenon to shape things and events in a different manner. “Nothing in Europe could hold a candle to what was going on in the Islamic world until about 1600,” said Jamil Ragep, a professor of the History of Science at the University of Oklahoma. The Muslim courage regrets that the spirit of Tariq that crossed the strait of Gibraltar and the Pyrenees ended with the martyrdom of Musa towards the end of the 15th century. Soon on 17 April 1492 at Santa Fe the Catholic sovereigns granted permission to Columbus to set his sails for the discovery of new routes to the fabulous India.

We may briefly put Islam’s contributions to the world of history in Sri Aurobindo’s words written about a hundred years ago: “When Mahomedanism appeared, Christianity vanished out of Asia, because it had lost its meaning. Mahomed tried to re-establish the Asiatic gospel of human equality in the spirit. All men are equal in Islam,—whatever their social position or political power,—nor is any man debarred from the full development of his manhood by his birth or low original station in life. All men are brothers in Islam and the bond of religious unity overrides all other divisions and differences. But Islam also was limited and imperfect, because it confined the ideal of brotherhood and equality to the limits of a single creed, and was further deflected from its true path by the rude and undeveloped races which it drew into its embrace. Another revelation of the old truth is needed.” (*Bande Mataram*, SABCL, Vol. 1, pp. 757-58)

(To be continued)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of January 2003)

WE can justify that Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future implies the probability of emergence of the divinisation of man and the individual, that is, of the Gnostic Being. He will evolve the immediate environment and will bring the total change of social order and head towards the realisation of human unity. New poetry and art will be born. The Gnostic Age must have a distinguishing vitality and significance.

Sri Aurobindo is a 'future' poet who brings a new era in literary history and speculations of the future poetry and literature.

We can analyse the characteristics of his poetry, the essence of poetry, rhythm and movement, style and substance, poetic vision and the mantra, the ideal spirit of poetry, the sun of poetic truth, the soul of poetic delight and beauty.

K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran) as a critic and exponent of Sri Aurobindo's poetry writes: "Sri Aurobindo is not only the poetic artist; in fact, he is chiefly something else and something more. Again, the art of poetry at its subtlest and greatest is itself an instrument of the art of life and even channels a way for a force and a value beyond both life and poetry: the force is felt as a rapturous inspiration, the value cognised as a luminous revelation. So a perceptive plumbing of the artistry of self-expression in a poet like Sri Aurobindo is especially bound to overpass the domain of art proper, the inner intuitive form of consciousness no less than the outer linguistic form of communication. Sri Aurobindo's universal humanity, his far-ranging contact with secular living, his comprehensive venture to convert the human into the divine, his movement towards an all-round sagehood and seerhood, his long mission to establish on earth a wider liberty one with a deeper self-law, a more inclusive love in tune with a higher light, are sure to break out in whatever he does. A book about the poet in him must bring in his transcendence of the poetic art. It may bypass the story-teller and the plot-weaver, the message-giver and the theme-builder. But to omit his transcendence of poetic art is a sin the book would be powerless to commit, even if it strove to do so.

"All the same, the act of transcending is brought home mainly in connection with the poetic art. It is Sri Aurobindo the poet who stands here in the forefront. And through his inward-outward creativity of perfection in word, phrase, line and passage all the rest of him has to assume a body."¹

Sri Aurobindo explains: "Poetry, even perhaps all perfect expression of whatever kind, comes by inspiration, not by reading. Reading helps only to acquire for the instrument the full possession of a language or to get the technique of literary expression. Afterwards one develops one's own use of the language, one's own style, one's own technique. It is a decade or two that I have stopped all but the most casual reading, but my power of poetic and perfect expression has increased tenfold. What I wrote with some difficulty, often with great difficulty, I now write with ease. I am supposed to be a philosopher, but I never studied philosophy—everything I wrote came from Yogic experience, knowledge

and inspiration. So too my greater power of poetry and perfect expression was acquired in these last days not by reading and seeing how other people wrote, but from the heightening of my consciousness and the greater inspiration that came from the heightening.”²

Sri Aurobindo maintains that the poet’s word acquires the extraordinary intensity and evocative power because “it comes from the stress of the soul-vision behind the word...”³ Words in poetry are not merely just words picked up at random from a dictionary and joined together somehow. The poetic word is verily a symbol. The true poetic word thus strives and catches the inward eye, to reach the inward ear and sink into the deeper profundities of the awakening or awakened soul.

Sri Aurobindo mentions: “I was not seeking for originality but for truth and the effective poetical expression of my vision.”⁴ “... it is Yoga that has developed my style by the development of consciousness, fineness and accuracy of thought and vision, increasing inspiration and an increasing intuitive discrimination (self-critical) of right thought, word-form, just image and figure.”⁵

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

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SALUTATION

(A free English rendering of the poem *Namaskar* by Rabindranath Tagore)

ACCEPT O Aurobindo, Rabindra's salutation!

O my friend, and the friend of the country, thou art the voice incarnate of the soul of the Motherland! Fame is not for thee, nor wealth, nor petty comfort. Thou hast not asked for any trifle gift or ignoble pity, never extended begging bowl for alms. Thou art ever awake for absolute perfection without any hindrance, for which the god in man is absorbed day and night in Tapasya; to achieve it the poets sang in thunderous words the epic songs and the great heroes went out on hazardous ventures! Before him the earthly base bowed down its shamed head in obeisance and death forgot to cast its dread...

Thou hast demanded the best boon of the Providence, thy legitimate right with full confidence and unhesitating hope in a fiery language tinged with the glory of Truth. Has the Lord listened to thy prayer by now? That is why resounds the call of the conch of his victory! Is it for this that he has put on your right hand the flame of extreme sorrow with cruel affection, the light of which piercing the century's age-old darkness glitters like a pole-star? Victory, O the victory to thee! Who will shed tears today, who will fear, which coward will curb the Truth to save himself? Wipe, O weak, wipe away tears from your tired eyes...

One who has descended on earth with god's lamp in hand, tell us, which king can punish that messenger of Rudra, God of Destruction? The binding fetters bow down to worship his feet and the prison-bars welcome him. The angry Rahu, the ascending node, by striving to devour the Sun, abrogates himself in a moment like a shadow! Punishment! punishment is for him only who cannot come out breaking the self-created shell of falsehood, the artificial confinement, for fear of chastisement.

The impotent, fearless and free, never treated injustice as unfair for the sake of religion. And the shameless who denies humanhood, his god-gifted natural right, in public, due to dread and greed, is proud of his ill-fate, and his business is to bargain over the affliction of the country. To him the food is, as if, like inauspicious mother's blood. That coward's head is bent with the burden of unending chastisement, and he is ever in jail though outside the royal prison.

Seeing thy image in gaol amidst sorrow and insult rings in my ears the joyous song of a liberated soul, the music of a glorious pilgrim, the ecstasy of everlasting hope and the grave and dauntless voice of vast death! O poet, beholding your face, the muse of Bharat has produced a tremendous vibration into her lyre! There is not a note of sorrow in it, no petty shame, meanness and apprehension. That is why I hear, coming from somewhere, the stormy roar of the sea, the mad onrush of the fountain released from stony confinement and the thunderous clarion of clouds awaking the Bhairava, Shiva. Amidst the waves of this high-pitched music accept O Aurobindo, Rabindra's salutation.

Then I bow down to Him who playfully creates anew the anvil, the deluge, who brings forth life from death, fosters well-being on the bosom of danger, sets the devotee

smiling on the thorny path, empty handed, to fight against adversaries, who speaks in diverse voices and in different episodes of history, in all noble work, extreme effort and maximum gain. "There is no sorrow, no wound, no loss and fear. Where is the pseudo-king and his sceptre; where is death and tyranny against crime? O the coward, O the fool lift up your head high, I am, you are, and there is the Truth immutable!"

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of March 2003)

Man's Extension

BOTH in Tagore's prose and poetry, there are very obvious flashes of Aurobindonian thoughts, thoughts which form the basis of Sri Aurobindo's major works. I call them Aurobindonian thoughts, because they are the basics and the essentials in the dreamer of *The Life Divine*. While in Tagore, a chameleon and a butterfly, they are just a few among his endless discoveries. Certainly, they are permanent beliefs in the life of an aesthete with an intuitive eye, which opens quite often to the deeper mysteries of life and the eternal law.

Spiritual life is the emancipation of consciousness. Through it we find immediate response of soul everywhere. Before we attain this life, we see men through the medium of self-interest, prejudice or classification, because of the perpetual remoteness around us which we cannot cross over. When the veil is removed, we not only see the fleeting forms of the world, but come close to its eternal being, which is ineffable beauty.¹

This sounds a bit bookish with its strong memory of the scriptures. But, quite often the experiential stuff may be seen in exciting metaphorical modes:

Existence is the play of the fountain of immortality. Wash your soul with its water, you who are old, and feel that you are of the same age with the flower that has blossomed this morning and with this light which carries fresh in its countenance the first smile of creation. This is freedom, freedom from the mist which for the time being masks our spirit with the semblance of blurred age, hiding from us the truth that we are the children of the immortal. Could the child bring such a joy to the heart of man if age and death were true? Does not that joy come from a direct recognition of the truth of deathless life, of endless growth and ever-renewed hope of perfection?²

Tagore was about 60 when he wrote this and the other passages I am going to refer in this chapter. The passage cited above speaks of Tagore's awareness of a new concept of youth and evolution. While obviously influenced by the Upanishadic concept, Tagore has virtually used the idiom of Sri Aurobindo in the last interrogative sentence. By 1920 Sri Aurobindo had already got a clue to the immortality of life. Also, his theory of evolution accepts the fact that perfection is not an end-stopped stage of consciousness. The soul runs continuously after the ever-progressive new. But where does the journey end? What is the map? What are the details of the track and the destination? Sri Aurobindo gives a

concrete shape to Tagore's poetic inkling of perfection. Like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo knows that all birth is a progressive self-finding, a means of self-realisation. But then he knows a little more than the older poet.

To grow in knowledge, in power, in delight, love and oneness, towards the infinite light, capacity and bliss of spiritual existence, to universalise ourselves till we are one with all being, and to exceed constantly our present limited self till it opens fully to the transcendence in which the universal lives and to base upon it all our becoming, that is the full evolution of what now lies darkly wrapped or works half-evolved in Nature.³

Tagore thinks it out in a different style just because he is on the borderline of spiritual consciousness. His is the style of a mystic, because he is not a spiritualist proper. And yet to the common intelligence Tagore is more attractive than Sri Aurobindo when he talks of man's gradually expanding self:

Man truly lives in the life that is beyond him; he toils for the unknown master; he stores for the unborn, he leaves the best harvest of his life for reapers who have not yet come; the time which is yet to be is truer to him than the time which is. Man offers himself as a sacrifice for all that lies in the future—All this shows that man is not yet born, his history is the history of birth-throes. Our greatest men bring in their life the message of man's future birth; for they dwell in the time to come, making it ready for ourselves.⁴

Apart from his assured sense of the evolutionary drive in man, Tagore seems to have been struggling to comprehend the greatest value of man. It is not quite certain in the above passage, and yet he seems to have been moving around half-consciously that particular purpose of man which the Mother has highlighted in a significant prayer, dated August 29, 1914:

Man is the link between What must be and what is; he is the footbridge thrown across the abyss, he is the great cross-shaped X, the quaternary connecting link. His true domicile, the effective seat of his consciousness should be in the intermediary world at the meeting-point of the four arms of the cross, just where all the infinitude of the Unthinkable comes to take a precise form so that it may be projected into the innumerable manifestation.⁵

Man is the connector, the blessed species with a marvellous capacity for extension. He is destined to play a major role in creating a new species out of himself. Sri Aurobindo observes:

Man's greatness is not in what he is, but in what he makes possible. His glory is that

he is the closed place and secret workshop of a living labour in which supermanhood is being made ready by a divine Craftsman. But he is admitted too to a yet greater greatness and it is this that, allowed to be unlike the lower creation, he is partly an artisan of this divine change; his conscious assent, his consecrated will and participation are needed that into his body may descend the glory that will replace him. His aspiration is earth's call to the supramental creator.⁶

What Tagore sees half-consciously in terms of poetry, two anthropologists from Pondicherry see it as an inevitable future. But, is it always half-conscious? Sometimes, Tagore knows too clearly that man is a transitional creature and that he is not an end-product in Nature's lab. Let us see how Tagore expresses the idea :

Man has a feeling that in him the creative manifestation of life has come to the end of a cycle, ready to ascend to one still wider and higher. When life first evolved its physical senses from the depth of amorphous darkness, it came to a wondrous world of forms, and this adventurous spirit of life is yet urging the spirit within man to develop an inner vision which will lead him through these endless forms into a world of infinite meaning, where he will cross the boundaries of the senses to a freedom which is ineffable.⁷

It is an interesting passage because the poet seems to have known here the laws of science to some extent. It is perhaps wrong to think that Tagore was influenced by Sri Aurobindo around 1920, when the evolutionary philosopher had almost completed his major treatises on the divine life. There is very little similarity between their English expressions. Unlike Radhakrishnan, Tagore was an original philosopher and was too proud about his originality. Copying was against Tagore's nature and even if he had seen some essays in *The Arya*, he had seen them as a creative writer. Besides, he had known other evolutionary philosophers and had believed in them through his experiential knowledge.

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

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SRI AUROBINDO AND MAYAVADA

(Continued from the issue of March 2003)

1. Dr. Indra Sen observes that Śaṅkara and Sri Aurobindo are both monists, but Śaṅkara “constantly dichotomizes” and Sri Aurobindo “always reconciles”. Śaṅkara’s position is: *brahma satyam jagan mithyā jīvo brahmaiva nā ‘parah:* “Brahman is the only Reality; the world is an illusion of a false appearance; the individual soul is identical with Brahman.” Brahman is one without a second. The two main points of Śaṅkara’s teaching are: (a) that Brahman undergoes only an “apparent modification” in creating the world; (b) that the appearance of a world of multiplicity is due to *avidyā*, an original or ‘primitive’ Ignorance, which is *anādi* or is beginningless but has an end. In discussing the question of this symposium the main point on which it is necessary to dwell is to see whether: (a) in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of *The Life Divine** this sense of “apparent modification” is also present, or whether it is transcended; and, (b) whether Sri Aurobindo does, or does not, find it necessary to postulate, also like Śaṅkara, an ‘original’ Nescience or *avidyā* or Ignorance in his philosophy. It will not be sufficient merely to accept or reject Sri Aurobindo’s weighty arguments against *māyāvāda* in chapters V and VI in Vol. II of *The Life Divine* but to make a survey of the general features of the philosophy of *The Life Divine*.

2. Throughout Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of *The Life Divine* there is present a certain logical distinction which I shall call the distinction between ‘Appearance’ (or illusion) and Manifestation; and, I shall analyse the logical pre-suppositions of the Appearance-Theory and the Manifestation-Theory. While Śaṅkara’s *advaita* may be called Appearance-Theory, the *advaita* of Sri Aurobindo may be described as Manifestation-Theory. From among the several meanings of the term appearance in Western and in Indian philosophy I shall arbitrarily select one meaning: appearance “must belong to reality and yet it cannot belong to reality”.

So Appearance is in its nature essentially inconsistent and self-contradictory and complex and false: it is *sad-asad-vilakṣaṇa*, “other than real and unreal”. (*Essentials of Indian Philosophy* by M. Hiriyanna, p. 161). Secondly, ‘appearance’ is always due to a “*misperception*”¹ or wrong judgment; and, in either case appearance presupposes error. If there is no error *within* there is no appearance of multiplicity without. Thirdly, the Appearance-Theory implies the conception of a transcendental Reality which is above and behind appearance and the true nature of Reality is correctly stated by the logical law

* N.B. All references to *The Life Divine* are to the volumes published by the Arya Publishing House, Kolkata, 1939-40.

1. The term ‘misperception’ is used by McTaggart in *The Nature of Existence*, Vol. II, chapter XLVI: “Some percepts are perceived as having characteristics which they do not possess”. So, error is “in the observing subject”. “But when the error is one which is believed to be shared by all thinking beings in the universe... and when the effects of the error are not such as to prevent the formation of an orderly and uniform system of experience, it often happens that the error is called phenomenal truth”. (p. 206)

of non-contradiction or Identity which says: A is A; or, its true nature is correctly stated by excluding negatives: *neti, neti*, 'not-this', 'not-this'. Sri Aurobindo designates his philosophy "realistic advaita" or realistic non-dualism and the nature of Reality is to him *saccidānanda* (existence-consciousness-bliss) but the world is *not* an "appearance" of *saccidānanda*. It is a real Manifestation of *saccidānanda*. "The pure existent is then a fact and no mere concept; it is the fundamental reality. But, let us hasten to add, the movement, the energy, the becoming are also a fact, also a reality." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 99) The relation of *saccidānanda* to the world in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is not "that of an original reality and phenomenal unreality, but of an original to a resultant and dependent, a temporal and manifested reality". (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 197)

So what are the logical implications of this theory of Sri Aurobindo which defines the relation between the world and *saccidānanda* as Manifestation? The following are some of the logical implications of the Manifestation-Theory; these implications progressively define the relation between Reality and the world of manifested phenomena in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

(1) B may be said to be a manifestation of A, when B is 'dependent upon' A and is dependent upon no other. (E.g. the world is a real creation of Brahman and is dependent upon it.)

(2) If B is a manifestaion of A, B 'belongs to' A, and B 'reveals' A; it reveals A's essence. In the Manifestation-Theory, if B is the manifestation of A, then, A is the material cause of B. In the Appearance-Theory this is not the case: e.g. Brahman is *not* the material cause of the world.

(3) In the relation of Manifestation A is *never without* B, where B is a manifestation of A. A is never without *some* Manifestation. As Sri Aurobindo puts it: there is "an eternal recurrence" but not an "eternal persistence" of Forms.

(4) In manifestation there is an integral relation between opposites: the Eternal in the Temporal, Spirit in Matter, Unity in Multiplicity, the Static in the Dynamic, the Divine in the Human. This relation is integral in the sense that one is necessary to the other and does not contradict the other, while the advaita of Śāṅkara "definitely denies that there can be any relation at all between two such disparate entities as spirit and matter." (*Essentials of Indian Philosophy* by M. Hirianna, p. 160).

So the Law of integral Manifestation is not the Logical law of Identity which says A is A, but the comprehensive and inclusive Law: A is both A and not-A.

(5) Since there is an integral relation between Reality and its manifestations *all* manifestations of Reality are real, because all manifestations are of the *same* Real. "If Brahman alone is", says Sri Aurobindo, "then, all that is, is Brahman."

(6) Manifestation is a Process; it is a 'yet to be'; Reality is "labouring to realize the Idea"; and the Process of manifestation is an Evolution; thus the tremendous importance of the idea of evolution and of its application to spiritual life in the philosophy of *The Life Divine*. In this evolutionary process the Future is of overwhelming importance and so Sri Aurobindo's vision is described as a "Vision of the Future".

(7) There are two aspects of Manifestation: Descent and Ascent:

Manifestation of A in B is a “Descent”. It is a “Veiling”. By an act of self-oblivion Spirit has ‘veiled’ itself in Matter, according to Sri Aurobindo.

If the Descent of Spirit in Matter is a “Veiling” the self-discovery of Spirit in Matter is an Ascent; and the Path of this Self-discovery in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of *The Life Divine* is not *jñāna* as in Śaṅkara or *bhakti* as in Rāmānuja, but an integral *yoga* which is “a labour of self-discipline and self-perfection, which is a sacrifice to the Supreme”; “a sacrifice of works, a sacrifice of love and adoration, a sacrifice of knowledge.” (*The Synthesis of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo, p. 103). The two processes of Descent and Ascent are always going on, and they constitute the cycle of cosmic existence; thus we are brought to the fundamental problem of the *why* and *how* of Existence and of the Cosmic Process of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy.

3. It may be noted that there is a distinction between the *being* of things and their *becoming*. Why is there Being at all and why is there any Becoming at all are two distinct questions and need distinct answers. Existence is not an inscrutable mystery, but is a delight of existence. “For who could live or breathe if there were not this delight of existence as the ether in which we dwell? From Delight all these beings are born, by Delight they exist and grow, to Delight they return”. (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II, 7; III, 6).² Existence is a Delight because “absoluteness of conscious existence is illimitable bliss of conscious existence; the two are only different phases of the same thing. All illimitableness, all infinity, all absoluteness is pure Delight”. (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 115) “Delight of being is universal, illimitable and self-existent and not dependent upon particular causes.” (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 123)

The particular problem which the subject of this symposium raises is not the why of Existence but the why of Becoming. The philosophy of *The Life Divine* says that Becoming is a *Līlā*, a Play: “the play, the child’s joy, the poet’s joy, the author’s joy, the mechanician’s joy of the Soul of things eternally young, perpetually inexhaustible, creating and re-creating Himself in Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that Self-representation, Himself the Play, Himself the Player, Himself the Playground.” (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 129). Supposing this is true, the play must imply a Method; as there is ‘a method in madness’ so there is a Method in everything; there is a method in Play. So we come to the how of cosmic Becoming. According to the philosophy of *The Life Divine*, the *method* of Cosmic Play is: “the Formless imposes Form upon itself”; this self-imposition is in the nature of a ‘formative’, ‘limiting’, ‘measuring’ consciousness which is a consciousness of self-division and self-oblivion. “It is to find himself in the apparent opposites of his being and his nature that *saccidānanda* descends into the material Nescience and puts on its phenomenal ignorance as a superficial mask in which he hides himself from his own conscious energy, leaving it self-forgetful and absorbed in its works and forms.”³ (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 361) “The Ignorance is a necessary, though quite subordinate term which the Universal Knowledge has imposed upon itself that movement

2. Quoted by Sri Aurobindo.

3. It is asked: *where* is the Ignorance? On what *plane* of Being does this occur? The answer in *The Life Divine* is: on the plane of *mind*. (Vol. II, p. 363)

might be possible, not a blunder and a fall, but a purposeful descent, not a curse, but a divine opportunity.” (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 36) So there is an original ignorance in the philosophy of *The Life Divine* as in Māyāvāda which is the cause of phenomenal multiplicity. The point is *not* that the multiplicity is real in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy and is unreal in Śaṅkara’s philosophy; the point rather is that *Līlāvāda* has the same metaphysical pre-suppositions as *Māyāvāda*, and uses the same method as Māyāvāda to explain cosmic Becoming. Sri Aurobindo distinguishes between two senses of the term Māyā: (a) a measuring, limiting and formative consciousness; (b) a certain cunning or fraud or illusion or enchantment. (Vol. I, p. 127) It is in the second sense that the term Māyā is used, he says, in Māyāvāda.

Now, if the doctrine or the Lila has refuted Māyāvāda, it has ‘refuted’ it in the Hegelian sense in which a lower category is refuted by *including* it in the higher. The philosophy of *The Life Divine* implies both the meanings of Māyā. The first possibility of there being any cosmic becoming consists in a measuring, limiting and formative consciousness; while the actuality of the Descent of Spirit in Matter is possible by a “Veiling” which is another name for ‘cunning’. It is the ‘cunning’ of *saccidānanda* that it “loses itself in the appearance of non-being and emerges in the appearance of discordant Rhythm of varied pain, pleasure and neutral feeling, love, hatred and indifference; infinite Unity loses itself in the appearance of a chaos of multiplicity and emerges in a discord of forces and beings which seek to recover reunity by possessing, dissolving and devouring each other. In this creation the real *saccidānanda* has to emerge.” (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 139) Yes, the real *saccidānanda* could emerge only from a real *saccidānanda*. Real *saccidānanda* is at the end because it is at the beginning. So the question is: Has *saccidānanda* undergone a real or only an “apparent modification”? There is no unambiguous and straightforward answer to this question because, two different standpoints, the empirical and the transcendental, are involved in it; and, on this point, Līlāvāda is in no better position than Māyāvāda, which says that the world is empirically real and transcendently ideal. The motive of realistic Līlāvāda is to “justify the presence of reality in all its appearances”, which F. H. Bradley said is ‘the last word of philosophy’; so according to Līlāvāda everything is real because it is of the same Real. Realistic Līlāvāda, after all, asserts, like Māyāvāda, the Law of Identity: A is A; ‘All this is Brahman’, because Brahman is the All: *brahmaiva sarvam nānyad asti*: Brahman “alone is; nothing else is”.

4. Between the Māyāvāda of Śaṅkara and the Līlāvāda of *The Life Divine*, there is a Major premise which is common to both. Māyāvāda says:

The world is a Dream
Dreams are unreal
Therefore, the world is unreal.

The Līlāvāda of *The Life Divine* says:

The world is a Dream
 Dreams are real
 Therefore, the world is real.

In refuting the Māyāvāda doctrine that the world is a dream, the philosophy of *The Life Divine* does not merely discuss this theory but constructs an elaborate metaphysical (and not a psycho-analytical) theory of Dream to prove its minor premise: "Dreams are real". The outlines of this metaphysical theory of Dream are as follows:

(i) In Sleep, the waking activities are in abeyance, but the "inner consciousness is not suspended but enters into new inner activities."

(ii) The whole of this inner activity we do not remember; we remember only *what is near the surface*.

(iii) Near the surface there is "an obscure subconscious element which is a receptacle or passage for our dream experiences and itself also a dream-builder." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 155) (It is the subconscious that is the dream-builder).

(iv) But behind it is the "subliminal" self which is the totality of our inner being and consciousness; this subliminal self "is quite of another order."

From this it would look as if the subconscious which is intermediate between the waking self and the subliminal self is the dream-builder. The philosophy of *The Life Divine* observes: "But the sub-consciousness is not our sole dream-builder." (Vol. II, p. 156) The substance of the difficult and rather paradoxical argument on p. 157 in *The Life Divine* is: we dream not only in *dreams*, but in 'dreamless sleep'. "We are dreaming there but unable to grasp or retain in the recording layer of subconsciousness these more obscure dream figures." (Vol. II, p. 157) If this argument is correct then the implication is that, the deeper we go into our inner being the more we discover that we *dream*: "If we develop our inner being, live more inwardly than most men do, then the balance is changed and a larger dream consciousness opens before us; our dreams can take on a subliminal and no longer a subconscious character and can assume a reality and significance." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 159) This may be true; but the meaning of the term 'dream' has changed and it seems that we ought to substitute for the Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum* the proposition: *I 'dream', therefore, I exist*.

5. Throughout the philosophy of *The Life Divine* there recurs the term 'the logic of the Infinite'. The extraordinary merit and charm of the philosophy of *The Life Divine* is that, while it denies the logic of idealistic Māyāvāda, it does not deny the reality of its spiritual experience. It recognizes that the experience which Māyāvāda "formulates into a philosophy accompanies a most powerful and apparently final spiritual realisation." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 212) What Līlāvāda, however, denies is the logic of Māyāvāda. Like Modern Realism, Līlāvāda denies the ultimate validity of the Law of Contradiction. Speaking of Realism and of mathematical logic Professor C. D. Broad says that it does "not welcome contradictions as proofs that such and such features in the apparent world

are unreal". (*Contemporary British Philosophy*, First Series, p. 781) Likewise, but in a different manner, the philosophy of *The Life Divine*: "But what appears as contradictions to a reason based on the finite, may not be contradictions to a vision or a larger reason based on the infinite." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 229) "To understand truly the world-process of the Infinite and the Time-process of the Eternal, the consciousness must pass beyond this finite reason and the finite sense to a larger reason and spiritual sense in touch with the consciousness of the infinite and responsive to the logic of the Infinite which is the very logic of being itself and arises inscrutably from its self-operation of its own realities, a logic whose sequences are not the steps of thought but the steps of existence." (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 219-220) This must bring us after all, to a sense of "dichotomy" between the logic of the finite and 'the logic of the infinite', between thought and existence. So, there is a dichotomy in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as there is alleged to be in Śaṅkara's philosophy. This dichotomy is such that it leaves Māyāvāda unrefuted.

6. But there is no treatise which has urged such powerful arguments against the doctrine of the unreality of the world and has endeavoured to present to us the true philosophy of our Upanishads with a logic and a light all its own, which conveys so successfully the sense of the reality of the Divine and the divine operation in things than the profoundly important two volumes of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*.

(*To be continued*)

N. A. NIKAM

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo's Savitri, by Asoka K. Ganguli, Published by Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry. Price: Rs. 90, pp. 288. ISBN 81-7060-183-5

Savitri is a cosmic poem, written by a cosmic poet, on a cosmic canvas. For this supreme creation no epithet can be applied to express its entire beauty. It is a creation with architectural beauty and stands immortal in the field of literature. It is an eternal fountain pouring forth knowledge, bliss and wonder. It is the drama of the universe, written in a poetic form.

It is not the story at a particular time and place; it is the story of the ascension of consciousness of man to higher planes by slow degrees. It is the record of the struggle of the human soul to rise from the inconscient to the superconscient. It is the story of the enlightened spirit, the Soul of the World, of release from the bondage of death. Death is told to release the Soul of the World, called Satyavan.

It relates the struggle of man to discover the soul, to be united with the universal spirit beyond time and space, to experience the joy and bliss of the pure and absolute Self of the Transcendental Divine.

The great poem has attracted many readers and writers to express their awe and wonder.

Prof. A. K. Ganguli is one of them. He has opened a new horizon, and made a new approach to the Supreme Poem.

By virtue of his profound knowledge of English poetry and literature, he has tried to discover something new.

The author as a scholar and as an aspirant soul has probed deep into the poem's earthly and unearthly planes.

He expresses his thoughts and feelings in four chapters: namely, *Making of a New Poetry*, *Savitri as an Epic*, *Evolution of Consciousness* and *Transformation of Consciousness*.

In the first chapter he states that Sri Aurobindo's poetry is entirely different from the traditional conception. "Poetry of Europe sings of the humanity of man, poetry of Sri Aurobindo sings of the divinity of man." He says that Sri Aurobindo is a great poet, a driving force for the birth of a new age and a new humanity, a super-humanity; the poet's mission has been to liberate humanity from the bondage of suffering and misery due to his limited consciousness. The poet's mission is to liberate what is hidden in man. He is a spiritual adventurer to the Unknown. He finally discovers that the Unknown is not unknowable. From his spiritual experiences he enriches the earth with splendour, marvel and joy. An ordinary poet has the power to enrich the life of the common man, to make him conscious of the beauty of Nature and heart of man; but a great poet, the poet of the future will be the forerunner of a new humanity, the race of the sons of God. Ganguli deals at length with the nature and mission of new poetry, its growth, aim and object, the new creation on earth, the power to transform the consciousness of humanity, its aesthetic

value, the power to create a greater life.

The first chapter can be treated as a prelude to the whole book; at the same time it gives the quintessence of the whole book.

In the second chapter, the author states in what way *Savitri* is different from the great epics of the world in its theme, technique and poetic vision.

In the existing epics of the world both the individual and collective struggles of the nation for the establishment of a new order by destruction of the old order are depicted. Also there is the struggle of an awakened mind to attain a higher consciousness.

“A total reversal of epic method now enters into English poetry. The epic describes the battle of the human soul against the omnipotent power of the inconscient. It is thus a pure subjective element which enters the epic for the first time and here lies the newness of *Savitri*... It may be said that *Savitri* is Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual autobiography.”

In the next two chapters, Ganguli deals with a very important subject—the evolution of consciousness and the transformation of consciousness. He has dealt with the two aspects of evolution, Evolution of Consciousness or Spiritual Evolution and the Transformation of earthly life to life divine.

Prof. Ganguli presents in detail all the different stages of evolution, human and spiritual, and finally how the highest stage of evolution will transform the consciousness of the world.

The last chapter starts with the words of the Mother “*Savitri* is a Mantra for the transformation of the world.”

“*Savitri* is the poetry of Transformation. To attain the seemingly impossible task Sri Aurobindo gives to the world his magnificent Yoga of Transformation,”—says the author.

The style of writing is lucid and spontaneous. A distinct attempt of clarity and logical development of thought is the special feature of the book.

BELA GHOSH