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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

CONTENTS

<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	
OUT OF ABYSMAL TRANCE HER SPIRIT WOKE (Poem)	... 719
THE INDIAN CONCEPTION OF LIFE	... 721
CHIT-TAPAS	... 728
SOME LETTERS	... 730
<i>Arjava</i>	
STARS (Poem)	... 734
<i>The Mother</i>	
A TRANSITIONAL SPECIES	... 735
<i>Abani</i>	
THE DIVINE MOTHER ANSWERS	... 737
<i>Peter Heehs, Amal Kiran, Lalita</i>	
INTERVIEW OF 8 SEPTEMBER 1979	... 738
<i>Debashish Banerji</i>	
NIRODBARAN’S SURREALIST POEMS	... 740
<i>R.Y. Deshpande</i>	
THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF THE FUTURE	... 741
<i>Arun Vaidya</i>	
THE YOGA OF THE BODY	... 749
<i>Richard Hartz</i>	
THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI	... 753
<i>B. K. Christel</i>	
ASPIRATION TO BEAUTY (Poem)	... 757
<i>Goutam Ghosal</i>	
TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO	... 758
<i>K. V. Raghupathi</i>	
SAMARPANA (Poem)	... 760

<i>Jobst Mühling</i>		
	MAN, ANGEL AND GOD	... 761
<i>K. N. Viju</i>		
	WILD DUCKS NEAR VASHISHTA GUHA (Poem)	... 766
<i>Laurence Binyon</i>		
	INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR	... 767
<i>Roger Calverley</i>		
	THE THREAD (Poem)	... 770
<i>Narad (Richard Eggenberger)</i>		
	TRANSCENDENT GOD (Poem)	... 771
<i>Anonymous</i>		
	INTEGRAL PHILOSOPHY	... 772
<i>Prabhakar (Batti)</i>		
	AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT—XVIII	... 775
<i>Nilima Das</i>		
	SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA	... 780
<i>M. S. Srinivasan</i>		
	THE INDIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	... 785
	REVIEW-ARTICLE	
<i>Pradip Bhattacharya</i>		
	KAIKEYI: “THAT HORRIBLE WOMAN” UNDERSTOOD AT LAST	... 788

OUT OF ABYSMAL TRANCE HER SPIRIT WOKE

OUT of abysmal trance her spirit woke.
Lain on the earth-mother's calm unconscious breast
She saw the green-clad branches lean above
Guarding her sleep with their enchanted life,
And overhead a blue-winged ecstasy
Fluttered from bough to bough with high-pitched call.
Into the magic secrecy of the woods
Peering through an emerald lattice-window of leaves,
In indolent skies reclined, the thinning day
Turned to its slow fall into evening's peace.
She pressed the living body of Satyavan:
On her body's wordless joy to be and breathe
She bore the blissful burden of his head
Between her breasts' warm labour of delight,
The waking gladness of her members felt
The weight of heaven in his limbs, a touch
Summing the whole felicity of things,
And all her life was conscious of his life
And all her being rejoiced enfolding his.
The immense remoteness of her trance had passed;
Human she was once more, earth's Savitri,
Yet felt in her illimitable change.
A power dwelt in her soul too great for earth,
A bliss lived in her heart too large for heaven.
Light too intense for thought and love too boundless
For earth's emotions lit her skies of mind
And spread through her deep and happy seas of soul.
All that is sacred in the world drew near
To her divine passivity of mood.
A marvellous voice of silence breathed its thoughts.
All things in Time and Space she had taken for hers;
In her they moved, by her they lived and were,
The whole wide world clung to her for delight,
Created for her rapt embrace of love.
Now in her spaceless self released from bounds
Unnumbered years seemed moments long drawn out,
The brilliant time-flakes of eternity.
Outwings of a bird from its bright home,
Her earthly morns were radiant flights of joy.
Boundless she was, a form of infinity.

Absorbed no longer by the moment's beat
Her spirit the unending future felt
And lived with all the unbeginning past.
Her life was a dawn's victorious opening,
The past and unborn days had joined their dreams,
Old vanished eves and far arriving noons
Hinted to her a vision of prescient hours.
Supine in musing bliss she lay awhile
Given to the wonder of a waking trance;
Half-risen then she sent her gaze around,
As if to recover old sweet trivial threads,
Old happy thoughts, small treasured memories,
And weave them into one immortal day.
Ever she held on the paradise of her breast
Her lover charmed into a fathomless sleep,
Lain like an infant spirit unaware
Lulled on the verge of two consenting worlds.
But soon she leaned down over her loved to call
His mind back to her with her travelling touch
On his closed eyelids; settled was her still look
Of strong delight, not yearning now, but large
With limitless joy or sovereign last content,
Pure, passionate with the passion of the gods.
Desire stirred not its wings; for all was made
An overarching of celestial rays
Like the absorbed control of sky on plain,
Heaven's leaning down to embrace from all sides earth,
A quiet rapture, a vast security.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Savitri*, SABCL, Vol. 29, pp. 715-17)

THE INDIAN CONCEPTION OF LIFE

[The present article by Sri Aurobindo was published by the Indian Philosophical Congress held in 1950 under the title "The Indian Conception of Life". Sri Aurobindo had sent his blessings for the conference. The version which we have here has some verbal differences from the text that appears in *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (SABCL, Vol. 14, pp. 95-107); at that time the book had not yet been published. The script which was sent to the Congress was a long excerpt from the original article, which was published in the *Arya* review of June 1919. We reproduce it as it appeared in the proceedings of the Congress.]

THREE powers we must seize in order to judge the life-value of a culture; the power of the conception of life, the power of the forms, types, rhythms given to life, the inspiration, vigour, vital execution of the power in the actual lives of men and the life of the community. The European conception of life is one with which we in India are now very familiar, because our present thought and effort are filled and obscured with its presence or its shadow; we have been trying to assimilate it, even to shape ourselves,—our political, our economical, outward self has been especially dominated,—into some imitation of its form and rhythm. The European idea is the conception of a Force manifesting itself in the material universe and a life in it of which man is almost the whole meaning,—in spite of the recent stress of Science on a mechanical Nature,—and in man an effort to arrive at some light and harmony of understanding and ordering reason, efficient power, adorning beauty, strong utility, economical well-being. The free power of the individual ego and the organized will of the corporate ego are the great forces which this life needs for its flowering; therefore the development of individual personality and organized efficient national individuality are of the first importance to the European ideal. They have sometimes run riot and much of the restless and often violent vividness of the historic stir and literary and artistic vivacity of Europe is due to their powerful colours. The enjoyment of life and force and egoistic passion and satisfaction is a constant motive, a loud and insistent strain. But there is the other opposite effort to govern life by reason, science, ethics, art, a restraining and harmonizing utility. At different times different powers have taken the lead. Christian religiosity has come in and added new tones, modified some, deepened other tendencies. Each age and period has increased the wealth and helped the complexity and greatness of the conception. At present the sense of the corporate being dominates, the idea of a great intellectual and material progress, an ameliorated state of the political and social human being governed by science, intelligent utility, liberty, equality, organisation, efficiency, general well-being. The endeavour has become too outward and mechanical, but some renewed power of a more humanistic idea is trying to beat its way in and man may perhaps before long refuse to be conquered by his apparatus and tied on the wheel of his own triumphant machinery: we must not lay too much emphasis on what may be a passing phase. The broad permanent conception of life remains and it is in its own limits a great and invigorating conception.

But the Indian conception of life starts from a deeper centre and moves on less external lines to a very different objective. The peculiarity of the Indian eye of thought is that it sees or searches everywhere for the Spirit, and the peculiarity of the Indian will in life is that it feels itself to be still unfulfilled, not in touch with perfection, not justified in any intermediate satisfaction so long as it has not found and does not live in the truth of the Spirit. Its idea of the world, of Nature, of existence is not physical, but psychological and spiritual; Spirit, soul, consciousness are not only greater than inconscient matter and force, but they precede and originate, and force and matter cannot exist without them. The Force that creates the world is a conscious will or an executive power of the Spirit; the material universe is only a form and movement of the Spirit. Man himself is not a life and mind born of and eternally subject to physical Nature, but a spirit using life and body. It is an understanding faith in this conception of existence and the attempt to live it out and get from the materialised and enter into a spiritual consciousness which constitutes the much-talked of Indian spirituality. It is evidently very different from the European idea, different even from the form given by Europe to the Christian conception of life. But it does not mean that Indian culture concedes no reality to life and follows no material or vital aims and satisfactions. Nor can it be contended that such a conception of existence can give no powerful and inspiring motive to the human effort of man. If matter, mind, life, reason, form are only powers of the spirit and valuable not for their own sake, but because of the Spirit within them,—*ātmanārtham*, for the sake of the Self, says the Upaniṣad, and this is certainly the Indian attitude to these things,—that does not depreciate them or deprive them of their value. On the contrary it enhances and increases a hundredfold their significance. Form and body become of an immense importance when they are felt to be instinct with the life of the Spirit and a support for the rhythm of its workings. And human life was held by ancient Indian thought to be no vile and unworthy existence, but the greatest thing known to us, desired even, the Purāṇa boldly says, by the gods in heaven. The deepening and raising of its richest or its most potent energies is the means by which the spirit proceeds to its own self-discovery. Mind and reason heightening to their greatest lights and powers make embodied life capable of opening to all the greatest light and power of the individual, universal and transcendent being. These are no sterilising and depressing ideas; they exalt and divinise the life of man.

The dignity of human existence, given to it by the thought of the Vedāntic and the classical ages of Indian culture, exceeded anything conceived by the noblest Western idea of humanity. Man is a spirit veiled in the works of energy and moving to self-discovery. He is a soul growing in Nature to self, a divinity and eternal existence, a wave of the God-ocean, an inextinguishable spark of the supreme Fire, identical even in reality with the ineffable Transcendence from which he came, greater even than the godheads he worships. The natural half-animal being which he chooses for a while to seem, is not his whole or his real being. To find his real and divine Self, to exceed his outward, apparent, natural self, is the greatness of which he alone of beings is capable. He has the spiritual capacity to pass to a supreme and extraordinary pitch of manhood and that is the first aim which Indian culture proposes to him, to live no more in the first crude type of

an undeveloped humanity, *na yathā prākṛto janaḥ*; but to become a perfected semi-divine man. But he can do more, become one with God, one self with the Spirit of the universe, one with a Self that transcends the universe. To be shut up in his ego is not his perfection; he can become one with others, with all beings, a universal soul, one with the supreme Unity. To aspire to that perfection and transcendence through his mind, reason, thought and their illuminations, his heart and its unlimited power of love and sympathy, his will, his ethical and dynamic being, his aesthetic sense of delight and beauty or through an absolute spiritual calm, largeness and peace, is the high ultimate sense of his humanity. This is that spiritual liberation and perfection of which Indian thought is so full and which appears to it, however high and arduous, yet in a way quite near, possible and normal to spiritual realisation, but of which the positivist Western mind finds it difficult to form a living and intelligible idea,—the status of the *siddha*, *bhāgavata*, *mukta*. In ancient Europe there was some approach made to it by the Stoics, Platonists, Pythagoreans; it has often been envisaged or pursued by a few rare souls; it is now percolating into the Western imagination, but more as yet by poetry and certain aspects of general thought than by philosophy and religion. But the distinction of Indian culture is to have seized on it, kept it a living and practicable thing, sounded all the ways to this spiritual way of perfect existence and made it the common highest aim and universal spiritual destiny of every human being.

The value of the Indian conception for life must depend on the relations and gradations by which this perfection is connected with our normal living. Put over against the latter without any connection, without any gradations leading up to it, it would either be a high unattainable ideal or the detached remote passion of a few exceptional spirits, or discourage the springs of our natural life by the too great contrast between this spiritual being and natural being. Something of the kind has happened in later times and given some room for the current Western impression about the exaggerated asceticism and other-worldliness of Indian religion and philosophy. But we must not be misled by the extreme over-emphasis of certain tendencies. To get to the real meaning of the Indian idea of life we must go back to its best times and look not at this or that school of philosophy or at some side of it, but at the totality of the ancient philosophical thinking, religion, literature, art, society. The Indian conception in its soundness made no such mistake; it did not imagine that this great thing can or even ought to be done by some violent, intolerant, immediate leap. Even the most extreme philosophies do not go so far. Whether the workings of the Spirit in the universe are a reality or only a half reality, self-descriptive *Līlā* or illusory *Māyā*, whether it be an action of the Infinite Energy, *Śakti*, or a figment of some secondary paradoxical consciousness in the Eternal, *Māyā*, life as an intermediate reality is nowhere denied by any school of Indian thinking. Indian thought recognised that the normal life of man has to be passed through conscientiously, developed with knowledge, its forms perused, interpreted, fathomed, its values worked out, possessed and lived, its enjoyments taken on their own level, before we can go on to self-existence or a supra-existence. The spiritual perfection which opens before man is the crown of a long, patient, millennial outflowering of the spirit in life and nature. This belief in a

gradual spiritual progress and evolution is the secret of the almost universal Indian acceptance of the truth of reincarnation. By millions of lives in inferior forms the secret soul in the universe, conscious even in the inconscient, *cetana acetaneṣu*, has arrived at humanity: by hundreds, thousands, perhaps millions of lives man grows into his divine self-existence. Every life is a step which he can take backward or forward; by his action, his will in life, by the thought and knowledge that governs it, he determines what he is yet to be, *yathā karma yathā śrutam*.

This conception of a spiritual evolution with a final spiritual perfection or transcendence of which human life is the means and an often repeated opportunity, is the pivot of the Indian conception of existence. It gives to our life a figure of ascent, in spirals or circles, which has to be filled in with knowledge and action and experience. There is room within it for all human aims, activities and aspirations; there is place in the ascent for all types of human character and nature. The spirit in the world assumes hundreds of forms, follows many tendencies, gives many shapes to his play or *līlā*, and all are part of the mass of necessary experience; each has its justification, its law, its reason of being, its utility. The claim of sense satisfaction is not ignored, nor the soul's need of labour and heroic action, nor the hundred forms of the pursuit of knowledge, nor the play of the emotions or the demand of the aesthetic faculties. Indian culture did not deface nor impoverish the richness of the grand game of human life or depress or mutilate the activities of our nature. On the contrary it gave them, subject to a certain principle of harmony and government, their full, often their extreme value; it bade man fathom on his way all experience, fill in life opulently with colour and beauty and enjoyment and give to his character and action a large rein and heroic proportions. This side of the Indian idea is stamped in strong relief over the epic and the classical literature, and to have read the *Rāmāyana*, the *Mahābhārata*, the dramas, the literary epics, the romances, the lyric and the great abundance of gnomic poetry, to say nothing of the massive remains of other cultural work and social and political system and speculation without perceiving this breadth, wealth and greatness, one must have read without eyes to see or without a mind to understand. But while the generous office of culture is to enrich, enlarge and encourage human life, it must also find in it a clue, give it a guiding law and subject it to some spiritual, moral and rational government. The greatness of the ancient Indian civilisation consists in the power with which it did this work and the high and profound wisdom and skill with which, while basing society, ordering the individual life, encouraging and guiding human nature and propensity, it turned them all towards the realisation of its master idea and never allowed the mind it was training to lose sight of the use of life as a passage to the Infinite and a discipline for spiritual perfection.

Two main truths are always kept in sight by the Indian mind whether in the government of life or in the discipline of spirituality. First, our being in its growth has stages through which it must pass. Then again, life is complex, the nature of man is complex, and in each life man has to figure a certain sum of its complexity. The initial movement of life is that form of it which develops the powers of the ego in man; *kāma*, *artha*, self interest and desire are the original human motives. Indian culture gave a large

recognition to this primary turn of our nature. These powers have to be accepted; the ego-life must be lived and the forces it evolves in the human being brought to fullness. But to get its full results and inspire it eventually to go beyond itself, it must be kept from making any too unbridled claim or heading furiously towards its satisfaction. There must be no internal or external anarchy. A life governed in any absolute or excessive degree by self-will, by passion, sense-attraction, self-interest, desire cannot be the whole natural rule of a human or a humane existence. The tempting imagination that it can, with which the Western mind has played in leaning or outbursts of what has been called Paganism, not at all justly, for the Greek or Pagan intelligence had a noble thought for self-rule, law and harmony,—is alien to the Indian mentality. It perceived very well the possibility of a materialistic life and its attraction worked on certain minds and gave birth to the Cārvāka philosophy; but this could not take hold or stay. Even it allowed to it when lived on a grand scale a certain perverse greatness, but a colossal egoism was regarded as the nature of the Asura and Rākṣasa, the Titanic, gigantic or demoniac type of spirit, not the proper life for man. Another power claims man, overtopping desire and self-interest and self-will, the power of the Dharma.

The Dharma, religious law of action, is not as in the Western idea, only a religious creed and cult inspiring an ethical and social rule, but the complete rule of our life, the harmony of the whole tendency of man to find a right and just law of his living. Every thing has its dharma, its law of life imposed on it by its nature, but the dharma for a man is a conscious imposition of a rule of ideal living on all his members. This Dharma develops, evolves, has stages, gradations of spiritual and ethical ascension. All men cannot follow in all things one common and invariable rule of action. Nature, the position, the work, aim and bent, the call of life, the call of the spirit within, the degree and turn of development, the *adhikāra* or capacity differ too much in different men; life is too complex to admit of such an ideal simplicity. Man lives in society and by society, and every society has its own general dharma, its law of right stability and right functioning, and into this law the individual life must be fitted; but the individual's part in society, his own nature, the needs of his capacity and temperament all vary, and the social law on its side must make room for this variety. The man of knowledge, the man of power, the productive and acquisitive man, the priest, scholar, poet, artist, ruler, fighter, trader, tiller of the soil, craftsman, labourer, servant cannot all have the same training, be shaped in the same pattern, follow the same way of living or be all put under the same tables of the law. Each has his type of nature and there must be a rule for the perfection of that type, or each his function and there must be a canon and ideal of the function. The main necessity is that, that there must be in all things some wise and understanding canon and ideal; a lawless impulse of desire and interest and propensity cannot be allowed; even in the frankest following of desire and interest and propensity there must be a rule, a guidance, an ethic and science arising from and answering to some truth of the thing sought, a restraint, an order, a standard of perfection. The rule and training and result differ with the type of the man and the type of the function. The idea of the Indian social system was a harmony of this complexity of *artha*, *kāma* and *dharma*.

At the same time there is a universal embracing dharma, but this is a law of perfection of the human soul; it is a growth of the developing mind and spirit of man into the power and force of certain universally ideal qualities which make up in their harmony the highest type of manhood. This was the ideal of the best, the good or noble man, the self-perfecting individual, *ārya*, *śreṣṭha*, *sajjana*, *sādhu*. The ideal was, if preponderatingly, by no means purely an ethical conception, but also intellectual, social, sympathetic, religious, the flowering of the whole ideal nature of man. The most various qualities met in the best, the good and noble man. Benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, patience, kindness, long-suffering, liberality; courage, heroism, energy, loyalty, continence, truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence where these were due, but power to govern and direct, a fine modesty and yet a certain strong independence and noble pride; wisdom, intelligence, love of learning, knowledge of all the best thought, an openness to poetry, art and beauty, an educated capacity and skill in works; a strong religious sense, piety, the spiritual turn, in social relations a strict observance of all the dharma, as father, son, husband, brother, kinsman, friend, ruler or subject, master or servant, priest or warrior or worker, king or sage, member of clan or caste; this is the total ideal of the Ārya, the man of noble nature and upbringing, which disengages itself and indeed is clearly portrayed in the written records of ancient India during two millenniums. An ideal and rational, a spirit-wise and worldly-wise, a deeply religious, nobly ethical, a firmly yet inflexibly intellectual, a scientific and aesthetic, a patient and tolerant, but an arduously self-disciplining culture with a strong eugenistic element was the base of Indian civilisation.

But all this was only foundation and preparation for that highest thing by whose presence human life is exalted beyond itself into something spiritual and divine. As Indian culture raised the crude human life of desire, self-interest and satisfied propensity beyond its first intention to a noble self-exceeding and shapeliness by infusing into it the order and high aims of the Dharma, so it raised the nobler life of the self-perfecting human being beyond its own intention to a mightier self-exceeding and freedom by infusing into it the great aim of liberation, *mukti*, *mokṣa*. The Law and its observance is neither the beginning nor the end of man; for beyond the law he climbs to a great spiritual freedom. Not a noble but ever death-bound manhood, but immortality, freedom, divinity are the highest height of man's perfection. Indian culture held always this highest aim constantly before the eye and insistently inspired with its prospect and light the whole conception of existence, ennobled with its aim the whole life of the individual and cast into a scale of ascension to it the whole ordering of society. The well-governed system of the individual and communal existence, which is always in the first instance a natural functioning, a pursuit of interest, a satisfaction of desire and human need, a combination of knowledge and labour with these ends, but must be controlled and uplifted by the ideals of the Dharma, was founded on an education which, while it fitted man for his role in life, while it stamped on his mind a generous ideal of an accomplished humanity, gave him at the same time the theory of the highest liberating knowledge and familiarised him with the conditions of a spiritual existence. The symbols of his religion were filled with suggestions which led towards it; at every step he was reminded of lives behind and in front and

worlds beyond the material existence, of the Spirit who is greater than the life he informs, of the final goal, of the high immortal freedom. He was not allowed to forget that he had a highest self and that always he was living, moving and had his being in God, in the Spirit, he knew that there were systems and disciplines provided by which the great liberating truth could be realized and to which he could turn and follow them according to his *adhikāra*, the claim of his nature and his capacity, he saw around him and revered the practicers and the mighty masters of these disciplines. They were the teachers of youth, the summits of his society, the great lights of his culture, the inspirers and fountain-heads of his civilisation. Spiritual freedom and perfection were not figured as a high and far-off ideal, but presented as the common human necessity, a thing for all to grow into, made possible to all on the basis of life and the Dharma, and the spiritual idea governed, enlightened and gathered towards itself all the other life-motives of a great civilised community.

SRI AUROBINDO

Life is meant for
 seeking the Divine
 life is realised when
 finding the Divine

Life is meant for seeking the Divine [.]
 Life is realised when finding the Divine [.]

CHIT-TAPAS

Being dwelling in consciousness upon itself for bliss, this is the divine Tapas; and a Knowledge-Will dwelling in force of consciousness on itself and its manifestations is the essence of the divine concentration, the Yoga of the Lord of Yoga.¹

*

Knowledge aims at the realisation of true self-existence; works are directed to the realisation of the divine Conscious-Will which secretly governs all works; devotion yearns for the realisation of the Bliss which enjoys as the Lover all beings and all existences,— Sat, Chit-Tapas and Ananda.²

*

...the three powers of the Divine are... the Jiva... God, and Nature. In the spiritual experience we see God as the supreme Self or Spirit, or as the Being from whom we come and in whom we live and move. We see Nature as his Power or God as Power, Spirit in Power acting in ourselves and the world. The Jiva is then himself this Self, Spirit, Divine, *so 'ham*, because he is one with him in essence of his being and consciousness, but as the individual he is only a portion of the Divine, a self of the Spirit, and in his natural being a form of the Shakti, a power of God in movement and action, *parā prakṛtir jīva bhūtā*. At first, when we become conscious of God or of the Shakti, the difficulties of our relation with them arise from the ego consciousness which we bring into the spiritual relation. ...the claim of our being upon the Divine is fulfilled absolutely only then when it ceases at all to be a claim.... This is the sense of the self-surrender of the individual self to the Divine, *ātma-samarpaṇa*. It does not exclude a will for the delight of oneness, for participation in the divine consciousness, wisdom, knowledge, light, power, perfection, for the satisfaction of the divine fulfilment in us, but the will, the aspiration is ours because it is his will in us... it loses all shade of separateness, because the will in us has grown identical with the divine Tapas, the action of the divine Shakti.³

*

As soon as we arise above mind to the supermind, this initial harmony will be replaced by a greater and a more integral unity. The thoughts of the supramental reason meet together and understand each other and fall into a natural arrangement even when they have started from quite opposite quarters. The movements of will that are in conflict in the mind, come in the supermind to their right place and relation to each other. The supramental feelings also discover their own affinities and fall into a natural agreement and harmony. At a higher stage this harmony intensifies towards unity. The knowledge, will, feeling and all else become a single movement. This unity reaches its greatest

completeness in the highest supermind. The harmony, the unity are inevitable because the base in the supermind is knowledge and characteristically self-knowledge, the knowledge of the self in all its aspects. The supramental will is the dynamic expression of this self-knowledge, the supramental feeling the expression of the luminous joy of the self and all else in supermind a part of this one movement. At its highest range it becomes something greater than what we call knowledge; there it is the essential and integral self-awareness of the Divine in us, his being, consciousness, Tapas, Ananda, and all is the harmonious, unified, luminous movement of that one existence.⁴

SRI AUROBINDO

References

1. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 23, pp. 320-21.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, pp. 765-66.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 830-31.

What is the “environmental consciousness” which each man carries about him?

Each man has his own personal consciousness entrenched in his body and gets into touch with his surroundings only through his body and senses and the mind using the senses.

Yet all the time the universal forces are pouring into him without his knowing it. He is aware only of thoughts, feelings etc. that rise to the surface and these he takes for his own. Really they come from outside in mind waves, vital waves, waves of feeling and sensation etc. which take particular forms in him and rise to the surface after they have got inside.

But they do not get into his body at once. He carries about with him an environmental consciousness (called by the Theosophists the aura) into which they first enter. If you can become conscious of this environmental self of you, then you can catch the thought, passion, suggestion or force of illness, or whatever it may be, before it enters and prevent it from entering into you. If things in you are thrown out, they often do not go altogether but take refuge in this environmental atmosphere and from there try to get in again or they go to a distance outside but on the outskirts or even perhaps far off waiting till they get an opportunity to attempt entrance.

7 April 1933

Sri Aurobindo

(*Bulletin*, November 2002, p. 68)

SOME LETTERS

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

There was a sex-dream, but there was no weakness as an after-effect.

THAT is a gain. If there is no after weakness, it removes half the effect—for it is the nervous depression which some feel as a result that is the only danger about it. Otherwise it can be worked out gradually—without harmful reactions.

Today there is some quiet, but it is not as easy to keep out feelings like anger as it is to keep out mental thoughts.

The vital movements are always more difficult to deal with than the pure mental—but it comes with practice.

So many people ask why I am getting thinner or weaker. What should I reply to them?

It is not true. Mother does not see that you have become thin or emaciated—it is quite normal. People are always making suggestions of illness and weakness, especially to those who are practising sadhana more earnestly than others. The best thing is to turn a deaf ear.

Somehow I grew unconscious today and struck a boy. My absorption in the painting work gave rise to anger, so I could not become conscious enough to prevent myself doing the physical violence.

You must carefully avoid that in future. It is most undesirable from all points of view.

In the morning I tried to practise keeping out thoughts and wrong feelings, but I felt they were pushed back towards me.

Some resistance is to be expected; one has to persevere.

About the physical violence: for three or four days I have been working without taking rest from 12.00 to 1.30, as I usually do. So there was no post-dinner rest, which the body was in habit of receiving.

That must be the reason—if there is a nervous strain on the body, the temper easily becomes short.

24 April 1933

There is a feeling that not a day passes without some prominent wrong movement or influence—and in a way the hostiles have been more successful than ever before.

But they are isolated movements now—not a mass attack usually—I think?

As to mass attack, it may be one if I recount all happenings. The night before in dream I saw several women rapidly moving about and then came the sex dream—in the morning anger and a slight injury on the head—at midday I almost forgot to write—in the evening anger again—etc.

That is a frequency of missiles—it does not amount to a mass attack.

While getting slightly angry today, I felt some sort of vibration entering at the back between the scapula.

It must have been an indication of the source and location of the suggestion or influence. Either thoughts or vibrations or some pressure of wrong force can be felt being thrown or sent in a very concrete way when the consciousness is open. When it is not, they come in without being noticed, only the result is felt.

Even a little talk seems to lead to a dissipation of concentrated consciousness. This evening Mother concentrated much on me, but as soon as I came to N and talked about his letter, I felt the concentration dispersed.

It is true; the Mother observed it. You are very receptive to the force, so she poured it in; but she saw that N turned up and the force got dissipated. A short quietude after the reception of forces (for assimilation) would, of course, be very useful if it can be had.

The aspiration is more and more for receiving only the thoughts and impulses from above—only from you. But all types of things come and get mixed up. The mind starts criticising somebody or thinking of somebody.

Yes, of course. It is the old forces and their movements that want to persist in their habitual motion; they are like the gods of the Puranas who did not want the Yogi or Tapaswi to pass beyond their jurisdiction. Keep a calm and tranquil will and the way out will begin to develop.

When Mother stood for a longer time than usual today, there was an after-feeling of vanity in me. In what corners the egoism sticks! Is it not possible to have a strong Vairagya for egoism?

Yes, certainly—the consciousness must get tired of egoism as of falsehood, lust, anger etc.

Where does egoism stand with respect to the universal forces?

Egoism is part of the machinery—a chief part—of universal Nature, first to develop individuality out of indiscriminate force and substance of Nature and, secondly, to make the individual (through the machinery of egoistic thought, feeling, will and desire) a tool of the universal forces. It is only when one gets into touch with a higher Nature that it is possible to get free of this rule of ego and subjection to these forces.

25 April 1933

Is the object behind the movement of the universal forces to manifest themselves on earth?

Yes. The earth is the place of evolution in which all these forces meet and try to manifest and out of their working something has to develop. On the other planes (the mental, vital etc.) there is not the evolution—there each acts separately according to its own law.

What is the true physical mind? What will the present one be transformed into?

It is the instrument of understanding and ordered action on physical things. Only instead of being obscure and ignorant and fumbling as now or else guided only by an external knowledge it has to become conscious of the Divine and to act in accordance with an inner light, will and knowledge putting itself into contact and an understanding unity with the physical world.

Is it not possible to avoid the dissipation of forces received, even when there is contact with others, talk, etc.?

It is difficult. Of course, when one lives very much within on a basis of great calm, equanimity and freedom, it is possible.

What is the nature of a mass attack?

It is an attack on the whole base gained—as opposed to an attack on a few or even a great number of detailed movements.

Does liberation consist in freedom from the action of the universal forces, in rising above them? Or is it something more?

Rising above them, being unaffected by them—of course the most absolute freedom is when they cannot even attack or approach—but that is part of siddhi, transformation. Ordinarily when one speaks of liberation, it means the living in a consciousness to which

these things feel foreign so that even if they touch they can get no hold and the fundamental calm and peace remain unshaken.

Those who reach Turiya or Nirvikalpa Samadhi or Brahma Nirvana, where do they go? In their instruments, are they freed from the universal forces so that they overpass the supermind and go into the Absolute? Or by an absolutely silent mind, do they get union on that plane and are absorbed in the union on the mental plane?

It is supposed that they go into the Absolute straight from the mind. Those who say this, do not know anything of the supermind — their categories are “senses, mind, buddhi, self or spirit”. As a matter of fact what they pass into is the static Silence that stands behind the mind—it is the full intensity of that with the mind drowned in the silence that they call by these names. As for the instruments they do not care about them at all or try to free them. The instruments are part of Nature and they want the inactive Self only free from Nature.

26 April 1933

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

Does awareness of the environmental consciousness come by itself or by effort at concentration?

It may come either way. It means a certain widening and opening which puts one in contact with the cosmic being, the cosmic Force or the cosmic consciousness.

But does knowledge of all these forces bring one nearer to union with the Divine or transformation or victory?

It is obviously a help to transformation to know this part of oneself and be able to deal with the forces before they invade or touch you.

8 April 1933

Sri Aurobindo

(Bulletin, November 2002, pp. 70-71)

STARS

MEN call you far. You are not far enough.
For the beggar earth your alms of holy love
Drop through the consecrated night—consuming fire.

Deafness has mouths belying you as dumb.
From some Deep beyond the deep your rhythms come
Of Titan fingers wakening Truth's implacable lyre.

The craven flee from the calm light of your eyes;
Drunken with darkness, how should they surmise
Intrepid loveliness no haste, no weakness mars?

Bemusing the dim roof of vaulted space
Consentient clouds of golden incense trace
High homage of His Beauty from the enraptured stars.

November 28, 1934

ARJAVA

Sri Aurobindo's comment: A very strong and beautiful poem. There is much felicity in the choice of words and turns of phrase.

Does "universal forces" mean hostile forces or some other forces of ignorance and falsehood?

Universal forces means all forces good or bad, favourable or hostile, of light and darkness that move in the cosmos.

Is it possible to make them recede from the environmental consciousness to their proper place or even away from there?

You mean the hostile forces. Yes, Certainly.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Bulletin*, November 2002, p. 70)

A TRANSITIONAL SPECIES

“If a spiritual unfolding on earth is the hidden truth of our birth into Matter, if it is fundamentally an evolution of consciousness that has been taking place in Nature, then man as he is cannot be the last term of that evolution: he is too imperfect an expression of the Spirit, Mind itself a too limited form and instrumentation; Mind is only a middle term of consciousness, the mental being can only be a transitional being. If, then, man is incapable of exceeding mentality, he must be surpassed and Supermind and superman must manifest and take the lead of the creation. But if his mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it, then there is no reason why man himself should not arrive at Supermind and supermanhood or at least lend his mentality, life and body to an evolution of that greater term of the Spirit manifesting in Nature.”

(Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp. 846-47)

ANYWAY, we have now reached a certitude since there is already a beginning of realisation. We have the proof that in certain conditions the ordinary state of humanity can be exceeded and a new state of consciousness worked out which enables at least a conscious relation between mental and supramental man.

It can be asserted with certainty that there will be an intermediate specimen between the mental and the supramental being, a kind of superman who will still have the qualities and in part the nature of man, that is, who will still belong in his most external form to the human being with its animal origin, but will transform his consciousness sufficiently to belong in his realisation and activity to a new race, a race of supermen.

This species may be considered a transitional species, for one can foresee that it will discover the means of producing new beings without going through the old animal method, and these beings—who will have a truly spiritual birth—will constitute the elements of the new race, the supramental race.

So we could call supermen those who, in their origin, still belong to the old method of generation but in their achievement are in conscious and active contact with the new world of supramental realisation.

It seems—it is even certain—that the very substance which will constitute this intermediate world that is already being built up, is richer, more powerful, more luminous, more resistant, with certain subtler, more penetrating new qualities, and a kind of innate capacity of universality, as if its degree of subtlety and refinement allowed the perception of vibrations in a much wider, if not altogether total way, and it removes the sensation of division one has with the old substance, the ordinary mental substance. There is a subtlety of vibration which makes global, universal perception a spontaneous and natural thing. The sense of division, of separation, disappears quite naturally and spontaneously with that substance. And that substance is at present almost universally diffused in the earth atmosphere. It is perceptible in the waking state, simply with a little concentration and a kind of absorption of consciousness, if this is retracted, withdrawn

from the ordinary externalisation which seems more and more artificial and false. This externalisation, this perception which formerly was natural, now seems false, unreal and completely artificial; it does not at all answer to things as they are, it belongs to a movement which does not correspond to anything really true.

This new perception is asserting itself more and more, becoming more and more natural, and it is even sometimes difficult to recapture the old way of being, as though it were vanishing into a misty past—something which is on the point of ceasing to exist.

One may conclude from this that the moment a body, which was of course formed by the old animal method, is capable of living this consciousness naturally and spontaneously, without effort, without going out of itself, it proves that this is not one single exceptional case but simply the forerunner of a realisation which, even if it is not altogether general, can at least be shared by a certain number of individuals who, besides, as soon as they share it, will lose the perception of being separate individuals and become a living collectivity.

This new realisation is proceeding with what one might call a lightning speed, for if we consider time in the ordinary way, only two years have passed—a little more than two years—from the time the supramental substance penetrated into the earth atmosphere to the time the change in the quality of the earth atmosphere took place.

If things go on advancing at this speed, it seems more than possible, almost evident, that what Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter is a prophetic announcement: The supramental consciousness will enter a phase of realising power in 1967.*

16 April 1958

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers*, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 313-15;

see also: A compilation by Georges van Vrekhem, *The Mother's Vision*, pp. 97-99)

* "4-5-67 is the year of complete realisation." (*Letters on Yoga*, p. 35)

THE DIVINE MOTHER ANSWERS

(6)

Mother Divine,

The Skin-Specialist of the Medical College asked me to find out for myself the cause of allergy and himself suggests that handling of flowers or some such thing may be the cause. Now, I know (and You supported me) that the real cause is much deeper. The real cure too must come from within. I went there for medical help only and not to seek psychological remedy. But when Doctors speak of psychology and that of their own make, is it not better to avoid them?

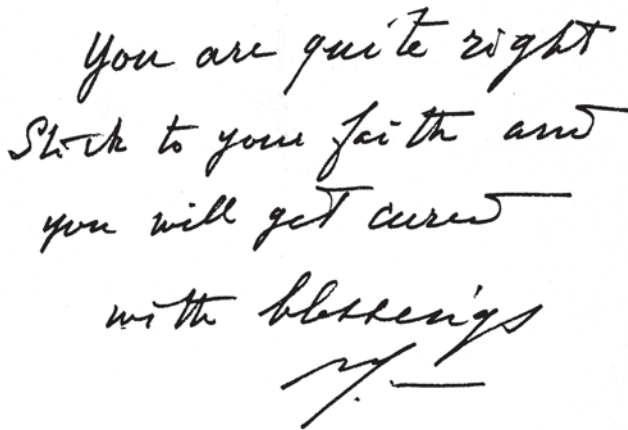
In any case, my choice is Truth and it is final whatever it may mean. Whatever the ordeal for the purification of my nature I must pass through it with or without medical help. But I shall always turn to You for true guidance and real help. May I stick to my faith—this is my ardent prayer to You.

O Divine Mother, Love Divine, Truth Supreme, do not let me fall away from my path; realise in me all, all that for which I have been brought to Your sweet and luminous Presence.

May I remain ever grateful to You with the simplicity of a child and the plasticity of a flower.

With loving pranams,
5.7.67

Your child
ABANI



You are quite right
Stick to your faith and
you will get cured
with blessings
—

You are quite right [.] Stick to your faith and you will get cured [.]
with blessings

The Mother

(To be continued)

INTERVIEW OF 8 SEPTEMBER 1979

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

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

P: I want you to tell me if you wrote in those early days to Mother every day, what sort of thing would you ask her?

A: Sadhana, of course, it was sadhana.

L: What to do and if I had a dream or vision or this or that.

A: She used to address Mother and Sri Aurobindo as “Thou”, I remember that, always “Thou”.

L: Because they were the Divine, so...

A: The old style of intimate exchange.

P: Anyhow, I thought the correspondence didn't start until the thirties when more people came here.

A: No, no.

P: Because I thought that in the earlier days matters were referred directly to Mother and Mother would ask Sri Aurobindo and Mother would bring his oral answers...

A: There was something like that too, but correspondence had already started. Though we didn't have so many letters before 1930, maybe. But that's only three years after I came. But in the meantime there was a correspondence going on. And very soon many people began to send their notebooks. Nirod came, Dilip came, soon after me Dilip came.

P: Most of the notebooks I have seen mostly start around 1933.

A: Could be. At that time perhaps the notebook practice was not very common. We used to send chits and many people used to send such rotten chits because they thought Mother was very economical.

L: Mother was.

A: Torn bits and things like that. I've seen Arjava's chits, you know. Sometimes a torn part of an envelope. And Sri Aurobindo also used to reply on small bits of paper.

L: There were small letters, lots of them written to me, and behind them Mother's answer.

A: And Sri Aurobindo used to write in the margin in very small script, often in pencil.

L: In one of Mother's letters what most astonished me, the other day when I was going through them, was that she had asked my permission whether she could take the pocket money I had, because it was with Amrita, for publishing “*Prières et Méditations*”, because she didn't have enough money. I was feeling so bad, you know, after giving—Mother asking me my permission whether she could take my money or not. She was always like that.

A: She used to give us our pocket money.

L: Two rupees, I think.

A: Five rupees for us, because we were specially privileged. All the Ashram fellows used to get two rupees, but knowing the background from which we had come, she used to give us five rupees...

L: Each.

A: Each of us, for the whole month and we used to return to her three rupees at the end of the month. Such an economical life you cannot imagine.

P: (Indistinct)

A: Spent on what? Hardly anything, whatever we wanted we got from the stores. And we had no needs. We never used to go to eat anywhere. It was almost unthinkable. For the first few months or so we used to take food from outside. We had fixed up food from either Amanivasan or elsewhere—there was a Mohammedan chap nearby, where now Padmasini has a department and Bula has his department, that used to be a Mohammedan hotel.

L: There was a Parsi there?

A: No, no Parsi. There was a Mohammedan hotel and we used to get food from there. Sometimes. But afterwards we took to Ashram food.

P: It must have been rather strange for you.

A: It was, the Ashram food was rather strange. The outside food was pretty bad too.

L: But we were longing to become Ashramites.

A: Yes. And we used to pull the water up from the well and drink it, there was a well there and we got such extreme, severe diarrhoea. Then Rajangam came to treat us. He was the master physician of those days, the only one. And he came and he sat and he closed his eyes and meditated beside me. I said, “Doctor, aren’t you going to examine me and give me some medicine?” And he said, “Wait,” and he would again close his eyes. And I said, “What are you doing, I want you to do something.” “Yes, I am doing it.” And we had no faith in his meditation, you know. Then he was so disgusted at the end that he brought some medicine for my diarrhoea. He also used to cook fish for the cats of the house.

P: Um, I heard that.

A: Once somebody in the storeroom referred somebody else to Rajangam, “Please ask Rajangam,” but Mother said, “No, he has forgotten all his medicine, all his medicine.” So, poor fellow, he was so humble. He just smiled in a meek way and never said a word.

L: He was always like that, a very humble man.

A: He was the first person in the Ashram to make a complete surrender of all his material goods including a broom-stick.

P: I heard that story.

A: He was the first one.

P: It was not apocryphal, that story?

A: Not at all. A real story, he brought all his goods. Champaklal told me about it. There was a broom, there was this and that, quite a few things he had.

P: But actually Mother and Sri Aurobindo bought the Ashram house with his help.

A: The new house where they were staying?

P: No, not that one.

A: Which one?

P: The 9 Rue de la Marine—the Library House, they purchased that and moved from Guest House to that because of the ten thousand rupees that Rajangam brought.

A: Right. Sometime in February 1927.

P: No, no, this was in 1922. When they bought the first house.

A: The first house in '22. Yes, '22 and then they moved in February '27 from that house to the house in which they stayed afterwards.

L: That's right.

P: Okay.

(Concluded)

NIRODBARAN'S SURREALIST POEMS

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

Sweetheart

ON the wayside sits the beautiful sweetheart:
 From the stalk of her eye Cupid drips.
 Into the restless heart of the traveller comes
 The touch of her longing. With honeyed voice
 Excitement arrives from Spring's bower;
 Flavour of the uncovered virgin
 Pours lightning-tremors into the blood:
 In the pale dawn of the undyed casket
 A moment's dalliance brings profound Black.
 In the attraction-net of mantra-lost sport
 On the forehead of Night's terrible shadow-companion
 Is lit Hell's burning scandal.
 One day in deep sleep's appointed hour
 Who wakes her to a blush with his snow-kiss!

(To be continued)

DEBASHISH BANERJI

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF THE FUTURE

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

ASWAPATI'S work is done and now Savitri's has to begin. To will is the Purusha Yoga. To accomplish what the Purusha has willed is the Shakti Yoga. By this difficult alchemic Yoga she has to make manifest what has been willed. Without her he remains unmanifest. Let us have a brief look at some of the events chronicled in the Mother's annals.

In her prayer dated 25 September 1914 the Mother asserts that the Lord has already willed the birth of a new world. There is a happy confidence that the work in which she has been engaged will soon be accomplished. She affirms that the hour of its realization has now arrived. The prayer is addressed to the Divine Mother who is she herself, as can be discerned from the context:

The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute:
A new Light shall break upon the earth.
A new world shall be born,
And the things that were promised shall be fulfilled.

In 1956 the Mother declared:

Lord, Thou hast willed and I execute,
A new Light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.

This was after the supramental manifestation which took place on the golden Wednesday, 29 February of that year. Some time later, in a talk in July 1957, the Mother clarifies that this new world was not just a continuation of the old world, widened or improved in its scope and in its contents. But "what has happened, the really new thing," she says, "is that a new world is *born, born, born*. It is not the old one transforming itself, it is a new world which is born." The time had arrived and the thing was done. This creation which was already willed four decades ago has now been supramentally established in the earth's subtle physical. There is no doubt that this new world was willed by the Lord, by Sri Aurobindo himself whom the Mother always addressed so. This is very clear from her 1956-declaration: "Lord, Thou hast willed and I execute." The change from "Thou dost execute" of 1914 to "I execute" in 1956 is occult-spiritually packed and is very consequential.

In the course of his long Tapasya, of those forty years or so, Sri Aurobindo must have not only founded the new world in the House of the Spirit,—as we plainly read it in his autobiographical *Savitri*,—but also worked to make it a reality upon earth. From the few dates of its composition that are available we may surmise that this might have been

sometime between 1938 and 1942. Sri Aurobindo's next concern was to bring it down by invoking the descent of Supermind upon the earth. His withdrawal as an act of yogic will hastened the pace towards its realisation.

Sri Aurobindo found it expedient to make a strategic move in 1950 when the difficulty of bringing down the Supermind in the physical became more and more acute. In fact, he had remarked to the Mother just a year before this that for their work one of them would have to go. It had become necessary to descend into death for "consciously experiencing and transforming death,"—as Georges van Vrekhem puts it. Perhaps Sri Aurobindo had already foreseen such a possibility when in the *Record* he wrote in 1913 that the Siddhi of the higher Amrita might not be in this life.

In 1946 the Mother of Delight or Anadamayi Mata had come down into the earth-atmosphere and there was a perceptible change everywhere; but no support or *ādhāra* was available for her action. She is the one who has the greatest power of transformation of the body and therefore for her action to become possible another route had to be discovered. Sri Aurobindo willed it and prepared it through the act of supreme sacrifice in the Yajna of the Divine. It was not a sacrifice in the traditional or conventional sense; but it was an act of yogic will. It was, as the Mother says, a practical way of achieving something that otherwise was not happening. Indeed, it was the Yajna of the Divine to prepare this unyielding matter to respond. By Yajna in which grows the Will-Force is achieved whatever has to be achieved.

Now what the Divine Being or the Ishwara has willed has to be made manifest by the Divine Shakti or the Ishwari. She has to lift up the golden hammer and shatter the golden lid that separates the world from the Supreme. But all this has to happen not by passing through the door of the sun, *sūryasya dvāra* as the Upanishad says, but through the door of death. That is an aspect of the Shakti Yoga when it comes to the question of dealing with the inconscient nature. If until now death had been a sharp and cutting instrument in promoting a certain growth of life on the Path of the Spirit, it ought to become a transformed instrument to remove all that is malignant so that even the physical might be an expression of the Divine's joy of existence. The dark wounding path has to become the sunlit path in its brightest sense. To tread this path is to follow the Integral Yoga of the Future. The Mother's sadhana in the physical as greatly foreseen in *Savitri* and as it progressed during the period 1956-1973 is full of that significance.

On 14 March 1970 the Mother spoke of the work Sri Aurobindo had given to her. He himself had, after 1950, willed and worked so much for the physical life to be governed by the higher consciousness that it became now possible for it to change into an authentic life. But it had to be translated into the process of Time. The Mother was here to achieve it. Soon within just a few years she found that "the physical is capable of receiving the higher Light, the true Consciousness and of *manifesting* it." This is what Sri Aurobindo had told her. The emphasis was on the higher Power working in the physical, of manifesting in it. However, as of 1967 the work on the whole had remained yet undone, although a bulk of it was already accomplished. In fact, she had the early certitude also of it being done. There was even a conscious prayer from the cells of the body to the Supreme: "O

Supreme Lord of the universe, we implore Thee, give us the strength and the beauty, the harmonious perfection needed to be Thy divine instruments upon earth.” Now the age-old illusion that the physical is incapable of opening to the higher Consciousness was altogether removed. The body started responding to it, joyously submitting to it with an attitude of “It is as Thou Willest, Lord, as Thou Willest.” The body was no more as it was, said the Mother. The progress was such that it started breathing divinity, started living in divinity.

“What Thou Willest, What Thou Willest,”—that has been the Mantra of the Mother since the very beginning, since her early *Prayers*-days. In the course of time it became occult-dynamically more efficacious, particularly in the context of the physical bearing the Power that is pressing to manifest. “What Thou Willest, What Thou Willest” is in fact the “receptive surrender” or *samarpana* of the cells of the body and becomes a key movement in the entire process. It is the Mantra of Transformation, the Word whose charged esoteric body can hold the power which makes that realization possible. The Vedic Rishis used the Mantra to climb the ascending slopes of heaven. The Tantric Siddhas established its Shakti in the subtle physical. The Bhaktas by hymning the name of Vishnu attained psychic-spiritual union with him. Indeed, even as the Mantra becomes an operative means for achieving spiritual progress, so also in turn that progress itself makes it more and more powerful. Greater and greater force gathers in its luminous body. We may see this as one aspect of the progress of the Mother’s sadhana over the decades. In “What Thou Willest, What Thou Willest” she discovered the direct Word of Realization in the Physical. All the might is present in it.

When the Mother’s sadhana entered the stage of awakening consciousness of the body’s cells, she found that they started chanting constantly the name of the Lord. They were all the while imploring the Lord for the strength and the beauty, for the harmonious perfection needed to be the divine instruments upon earth. “Om Namo Bhagavate, Om Namo Bhagavate” became the specific Word of Realization. The Mother even spoke of the path that was never trod by anyone. Sri Aurobindo had done it in principle, she said on 26 November 1960. But she also added that the details had to be worked out. In fact it was in that context that some time in 1949 he had decided to go. “You alone can do the material thing,” he told her when it became imperative that one of them had to depart to do the work from a different level altogether.

To make the body’s cells awake to the divine reality was an unprecedented task and the Mother had to discover the means for accomplishing it. It is here that she found the power of the Mantra coming to a definite aid in fixing the higher subtle-luminous in the dark and crude gross. She even suggests (19 May 1959) that Sri Aurobindo would have recognized its efficacy had he reached this stage of the sadhana of the body. The constant repetition of the Mantra gives “a kind of precision, a kind of solidity” that is essential to hold that divine reality in the physical. Only Japa or repetition of the Mantra has direct action on the body. While she was engaged in this intense Japasadhana, she was actually invoking “the Lord of Tomorrow”.

All along the problem had been the mind of the physical. Sri Aurobindo had even

said that when the physical's mind opens to the supramental force and light, that is, when the Mind of Light is established, then can begin the actual process of transformation. This is precisely what Sri Aurobindo was occupied with during his last few years when the golden influx was flooding his entire being. This Mind of Light he gave to the Mother as a parting gift at the time of his passing away, on 5 December 1950. He had given to her earlier the Silent Mind, on 30 March 1914 when they met the second time. Thus the whole Yoga-Tapasya of Sri Aurobindo got automatically and spontaneously established in the Mother. In the richness of that Tapasya she was engaged in the Yoga of Transformation, the Rupantara Yoga, the work that Sri Aurobindo had given to her.

Let us recall here the parable we have in the Aiteraya Upanishad: "The Spirit gathered the Purusha out of the waters and gave Him shape and substance. The Spirit brooded over Him and there were the Gods. They said to Him 'Command us an habitation that we may dwell secure and eat of food.' He brought unto them the cow, but they said, 'Verily, it is not sufficient for us.' He brought unto them the horse, but they said, 'Verily, it is not enough for us.' He brought unto them Man, and they said, 'O well fashioned truly! Man indeed is well and beautifully made.' Then the Spirit said unto them, 'Enter ye in each according to his habitation.' ... [and] Death became *apāna*, the lower breathing." Death is the seizer of food by which the form is nourished, food which is the Breath of Life. Life in the present evolutionary context cannot grow without death. In its absence it becomes stagnant. In fact, it can even get swallowed by the darkness of the primordial Night. The occult fire that is sustained in the stars, asserts Savitri in her forceful debate with the God of Death while claiming the soul of deceased Satyavan back from him, is fed both by life and death, death playing a complementary role to life in the overall progress.

The great stars burn with my unceasing fire
 And life and death are both its fuel made.
 Life only was my blind attempt to love:
 Earth saw my struggle, heaven my victory...

Indeed, a very mysterious process accepting the circumstances of life as it is nourishes our urge towards immortality, which in turn is nourished by an equally enigmatic as well as stiff ordaining agent of creation. But if the transcendental immortality has to be housed here in Man the Mortal, then he has to exceed himself. He has to become Superman. The well fashioned and beautifully made Upanishadic Man cannot be the ultimate crown of this great endeavour. The problem is the physical and it is in the physical that the new tapasya has got to be done. We have to acquire the golden body, *hiranya tanu*, of the Divine Agni. The Integral Yoga of the Future has this as its aim.

This well fashioned Man is presently endowed in his subtle physical only with seven Chakras or centres of occult energy. What is below him and what is above him have not yet entered into its swift functioning. The rush of the Kundalini Force, of the occult Pranic or Vital Energy in these seven Chakras is a great beginning but in the

veritable Yoga of Transformation what is necessary is that the two Chakras below the body and the three above have to materialize and become operative. This is what the Mother was told long ago by her occultist teacher Théon, and it was her experience also. For these Chakras to come into operation it is necessary to do another type of occult-spiritual tapasya. It is only then that the physical can respond to the working of the higher consciousness-force. A new body is necessary for this, a body that must emerge out of the Yajna of the Shakti. In it must be kindled the golden flames invoking the rush of the divine existence-substance as the basis of life in truth-conscient delight of the manifesting Spirit. But how exactly the new body will be made could not be said or disclosed in the thirties. This however became the main thrust of the Mother's sadhana during the last fifteen years or so of her work. The Mantrajapa she had discovered was one possible method to achieve this.

The Mother was concerned with the almighty powers that are shut in the body's cells. She awoke them. Not only that. The cells started joyously vibrating and opening out more and more in the aspiration for the Divine. She said: "I have been sent upon earth to do the work of supramental transformation and the bringing about of the new creation, and I have been trying to do this..." Sri Aurobindo had indicated that the new golden body is to be first formed out of the inner mental, inner vital and inner physical renewed and reshaped. The difficulty that notably comes in the modus operandi is that of the inner physical with its stubborn mind. While this mind, mind within matter, was gainfully formed under the pressure of the difficulties present in the unevolved obscure stuff, it also inherited those very harsh difficulties. If this mind,—the Mind of Night standing across the path of the divine Event as we might see in *Savitri*,—is transformed, then the transformation of the body can follow "quite naturally". The Mother found Mantrajapa to be a definite aid towards this. She was repeating everyday 1400 times the Mantra "Om Namō Bhagavate." When her disciple who recorded her revelations was doing the same Japasadhana for longer hours "it cracked". To hold the power of Mantra there is also needed an appropriate yogic support; there has to be a proper *ādhāra* for it. Possibly it was a specific Mantra for the Mother for a specific purpose. But the important point is, while the Mother was doing the sadhana of the cells with this Mantra, she left the entire result to the Will of the Lord. In one of his talks Sri Aurobindo also spoke of the Mantra that had arisen in him. This was during the Calcutta-period when Lele was with him. Lele asked if he could depend upon it and the answer was "Yes." Lele then found it not necessary to give him any instruction and he told him so. Later by his Yogatapasya "His body's cells awoke to spirit sense." In it did the Yogi-Tapasvin create a new world in the House of the Spirit. How marvellous indeed!

If the mind of the physical becomes a difficulty on the path towards a new body, there is another aspect of it also. There has to be a connection between the new body formed out of the inner mental, inner vital and inner physical with the inmost being that actually supports it with the psychic being who is the leader of the evolutionary march. It is the psychic being which will, says the Mother, materialize and become the supramental being. It will cross over into the new species. It is through it that the supramental will

manifest itself. Materialization of the psychic being will give continuity to evolution and make more and more progress in the Spirit possible. This materialization means the abolition of death. It means immortality in the material world, upon *mrityuloka*. Which also means that whatever is not in accordance with the Truth of things will disappear.

In October 1959 the Mother said something significant about the new world: "... it is not as if this new world of Truth had to be created from nothing: it is fully ready, it is there." *It is fully ready*. Sri Aurobindo had brought it into existence fully. When in one of their occult-spiritual meetings she asked Sri Aurobindo as to when this other world, the real one that is there, so near, would come to take the place of this world of falsehood, he replied: "Not ready." The Mother was given the charge of this "not ready"-earth; she took its entire burden upon herself. Unmindful of the hazard and the consequence she was actually standing on a dangerous brink. But she knew also that it was only by leaving everything to the Divine's Will that there could be authentic progress. Sure enough, she was told: "Annul thyself that only God may be." In it had disappeared the dangerous brink.

"In his will is our peace," wrote Dante,—and when he wrote it in Italian it became one of the most powerful lines in any poetry. But the Mother's occupation was with something yet farther than that. Peace for the earth,—all right; but God's delight in God's creation,—that's the thing. Not only peace; calm, oneness, energy, joy, love, and sweetness she asked for earth and men. While she left everything to the Will of the Lord, yet in that Will she had also something to will. Four great times she was given the choice and she made the choice in it. She as Savitri fought against Death and over him won the toughest victory. She the victorious or Vijayini was offered boons of that victory. But she had something else in her will and she did not accept those boons straightaway. She had the freedom to exercise her own will. A similar thing had happened earlier in the case of Aswapati too. He had set aside what he was advised to do by the Power of Divine Omniscience. Instead he made his own persuasive supplication. He wanted the Divine Shakti to incarnate herself and make manifest the higher world he had established in the House of the Spirit. In this free and well-formed will's employment is the fuller connotation of the Integral Tapasya. It means that the whole being simply lives "only to know and serve the Divine." To know the Divine, to will and to serve the Divine that his Will be done,—this is what we have to practise.

The first word of this Yoga is surrender; the last word is also surrender,—says Sri Aurobindo. In between these two happy surrenders it is its power that grows when is kindled the Yajna to make our will transcendently genuine. While we still live under the sway of the lower Nature personal effort is indispensable. But as we become conscious in our surrender, in our Tyaga, in Samarpana to the divine Shakti, it is she who herself leads us to freedom and perfection of the higher Nature. In the degree it becomes wholesome and integral our progress also gains to that extent an assuring speed of the power who then governs all our activities. In the deepening truth of this divine Samarpana we find ourselves actually engaged in Integral Tapasya in the ways of the Divine Shakti. In it the whole being lives only to know and serve the Divine. Finally it becomes "What

Thou Willest, What Thou Willest.” Not what we think and see for ourselves, but what is thought and seen for us is all that matters. When there is no difference between our will and the Will of the Divine Shakti, then it is she who takes full charge of our life. Then we acquire our genuine free will. That indeed is the object of the Integral Yoga of the Future. In it our masculine tapas-will joined with the feminine tyagashakti approaches the Spirit’s Tapas-Will served in oneness by his inalienable tyagashakti. In it can then be the truest expression of Krishna-Kali in us. When this is unfalteringly achieved then the Being of Delight or Anadamaya Purusha with his Consciousness-Force or Shakti working for his joy comes down wearing a crown of peacock plumes to play on his flute the Song of New Creation.

This song of new creation is born in the death of Death, in his transformation into the being of Truth, he becoming the unveiled Sat-Purusha. Then begins the real re-creation of the Lord and his Shakti, of Krishna and Kali. When we participate in that manifestive activity of theirs, we recognize them as our Ishwara and Ishwari, she at his service, as his Dasi, governing a thousand wills of ours in the possibilities of the dynamic Divine. “When the Unity has been well founded,” wrote Sri Aurobindo in 1916, “the static half of our work is done, but the active half remains. It is then that in the One we must see the Master and His Power,—Krishna and Kali.” Sri Aurobindo was at that time waiting for the final arrival of the Mother to join him to accomplish the active half of the work.

During the *Record*-period 1912-20 we see the Krishna-Kali aspect occurring repeatedly as the most fundamental experience of Sri Aurobindo in the context of the Spirit’s dynamism in life. In his noting dated 1 January 1915 he writes: “Kali is now everywhere revealed in the *bhāva* of the *madhur dāsī* dominated by Krishna and administering to his *bhoga*.” Then, again, in February 1920: Krishna Kali relation founded on *madhura dāsya* is the foundation of tapassiddhi, the power to change the world. In fact the fourth Chatushtaya is full of it. Krishna taking delight in the world, Kali carrying out Lila according to the pleasure of the Ishwara, Divine Action and Divine Enjoyment form the entire basis of this divine dynamism in the creation. Belonging to the same period we also have, as pointed out by Richard Hartz, the early draft of *Savitri* in which the coming down of Krishna and Kali figures as the finest thing that can happen to us. It is with that most excellent boon that Savitri returns to earth with the soul of Satyavan:

Pursuing her in her fall implacably sweet
 A face was over her which seemed a youth’s
 Crowned as with peacock plumes of gorgeous hue
 Framing a sapphire, whose heart-disturbing smile
 Insatiably attracted to delight.
 Often it changed, though rapturously the same,
 And seemed a woman’s dark and beautiful,
 Turbulent in will and terrible in love,
 A shadowy glory and a stormy depth,
 Like a mooned night with drifting star-gemmed clouds.

This Tapassiddhi of bringing down Krishna and Kali is the entire purport of the yogic *Savitri*. Whatever stood in its way had to be removed and the path cleared to usher in the divine Event. In it is won the higher Amrita that was postponed earlier. In it is the Siddhi of the Integral Yoga of the Future, a Siddhi that does not remain static, but by the work of Kali in the will of Krishna keeps on adding to itself realizable possibilities of the vast yet widening Truth-conscious Delight.

“The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness,” wrote Sri Aurobindo in 1928. The supramental change was decreed by him and he and the Mother had set themselves to work out its inevitability. But to realize it in us there is needed the call and we have to be ready to receive what they are constantly showering on us. Tapahprabhava and Devaprasada, as the ancient Scripture says, together can bring fulfilment to our longings, to our soul’s aspiration. To be engaged in that spiritual growth, to live and work and enjoy divinely in the Divine is the Integral Yoga of the Future.*

(Concluded)

R. Y. DESHPANDE

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THE YOGA OF THE BODY

(Continued from the issue of July 2003)

The Descent

THE Mother had a very strong experience on 21 February 1972 that “something new has manifested in the world and that all who were ready and receptive could embody it.”¹

The First Supramental Body Formation

The Mother, for the first time on 24 March 1972, saw her body formation in the supramental body. It was a very white, pretty, harmonious, and sexless form.²

The feasibility of transformation of the human body into the Supramental form was established. Transformation of the body to become supramental was no more a theory, dream or wish. The reality was knocking on the door. From that cherished moment on, the human race truly began to be the transitional being at an accelerated pace! The momentous evolutionary progress was in offing from then on. The “Pralayas” of Hindu cosmology were the evolutionary stages and the Dance of Lord Shiva was to regenerate Existence tending towards the Supreme. Until now, the cycles of creation-destruction for the evolutionary recreation were needed. However, with the feasibility of the Supramental becoming operational in physical, such cycles of creation-destruction for the progressive evolutionary recreation will no longer be needed. The Mother’s narration of her dialogues with Max Theon, the occultist par excellent and Sri Aurobindo, the Supramental Avatar on the topic of the “Pralayas” on April 12th 1972 reassures us that the future with the operational Supramental, will not have to go through destruction for the evolutionary recreation.³ However, the caveat is that the human mind must fall silent and the reign of the ego must end (during the transition to the operational Supramental)!

The Divine, through the works of the Avatars—Sri Aurobindo and the Mother — has raised the mankind closer to Him, to become Him. What was being accomplished in the body of the Mother paved the path for the evolutionary process to accelerate on earth. In the transition towards the Supramental Being, as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and verified through the Mother’s numerous experiences we know that there will be an intermediary being—Overman. The Mother had indicated that Overman will be an on going evolutionary process and progressively become numerous. She had also hinted that some of them might already be in various stages of progressive evolution and be among us in the sea of humanity. May be true to their ego-less mind, they might be carrying on their divine mission incognito. We can only salute them and their advent to facilitate and expedite the operational Supramental on earth for the new creation process, made feasible by the Mother for the human race.

The next remaining step for the Mother was to demonstrate the feasibility of receiving the Supramental Consciousness in the body leading to the Supramentalised Being in the earthly setting.

The Supramental Consciousness in the Mother

The Mother's body was the house of the old physical mould, physical mind supercharged with the Supramental Consciousness; Supramental Form that was sexless, luminous and harmonious, and it was still undergoing transformation for the feasibility of the Supramentalised Being. She was the Supreme's evolution's churning-pot where the past was receding, the present was shaping up and the future was emerging.

On 6 May 1972, the Mother narrated her ongoing transformation and experiences with the evolving role of the Supramental Consciousness within her body:

“there is as though a golden Force which is pressing down that has no material consistence and yet seems to be tremendously heavy....”

“...and which is pressing upon Matter, thus, to compel it to turn towards the Divine inwardly...”

“With the formidable Power that is *pressing* upon the world... the two extremes were becoming more extreme, as though what is good was becoming better and what is bad is becoming worse....”

“The values have intensified, become precise.... things that were neutral become absolute; a little error becomes categorical in its consequences, and a little sincerity, a little true aspiration becomes miraculous in its result....”

“...everything is willed with a view to the conscious ascent of the world. The consciousness is preparing to become divine....”

“...this Supramental makes the creation more sensitive to the higher Power... which must make Matter more sensitive and more... ‘responsive’ to the Force.

“...yet this Puissance, this Power that is *not material*, becomes more concretely powerful upon earth than earthly material things....”

It is not material and yet it is more concrete than Matter!

“This is the protection and the means of defense for supramental beings. It will be a thing which is not material in appearance but which has a greater power *over Matter*....”

“...it has the power to move Matter, it can produce a *material* accident; and it can efface the consequences of an absolutely material thing—it is stronger than... Matter. This is what is altogether new and incomprehensible; and therefore it produces a kind of panic in the ordinary consciousness of people...”

“...that which is crushed is the thing that resists, that is not receptive.... It is our habit of centuries... which resists... It has only to open itself.... It is extraordinary.... It is magnificent.”

“It is truly a new world.”

“It is this in the body which finds it difficult to adapt itself to this new Power and creates the disorder and difficulties, the illnesses....”

“if the whole consciousness (the whole of the most material consciousness—the

most material) were receptive to this new Power... one would become for-mi-da-ble.”

“But one essential condition: the reign of the ego must be ended....”

“Several times there have been moments when my body felt a kind of new unease and anxiety; and there was as though something which was not a voice, but which translated itself in words in my consciousness: ‘Why are you afraid? It is the new consciousness.’ It came several times. And then I understood.”⁴

The Mother’s narration of 30 August 1972, is about her rapid transformation where the new creation was taking place with the new consciousness operating within her:

“...if the consciousness is quietly open to the Divine, everything is all right.”

“But now I see very well, very clearly—very clearly: consciousness is replacing thought....”

“My body is beginning—just beginning—to know that the divine side means a life, a life progressive and luminous; but the accumulation of past experiences says: ‘Oh! it is not possible!’ which delays and spoils things.”

“...as soon as the body gives up the true attitude, it becomes painful, everything hurts, everything is suffering—the impression is there as of death, of dissolution everywhere. Therefore it is that which strengthens... the imbecility of Matter.”

“‘What Thou wilt.’ ...has become my only refuge....”⁵

The Mother’s Yoga of Physical Transformation was getting ever more intense, with the categorical outcome at each step. The deep-rooted tendencies and attitudes of human nature were fighting with tenacity and ferocity in opposition to the transformation initiated and growing with the new consciousness within her. Her being became the battle ground for the total transformation. The Subconscious was fighting to revert to past, the Supramental was advancing the process of integral transformation. The Mother was the earth consciousness personified. She represented the human race in deep turmoil—its hopes and aspirations on one side and deeply entrenched fear and preference to the past on the other side. Her Avataric mission was to overcome the opposition of the subconscious and evolve man into the Supramental Being. She was facing the Four Opposing Matter Forces that Sri Aurobindo had categorized. She was undergoing the battle for the divine life on earth, so vividly portrayed by Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri*.

The Mother’s narration of 25 October 1972, provides us with some clues about the monumental war fought by her within for divinised mankind’s future:

“In the subconscious all the contradictions are accumulated....”

“It is as though the battle of the world was being fought within my consciousness.. it is the subconscious of the earth. It is interminable....”

“It has come to such a point that to forget, to forget the Divine even for a minute spells a catastrophe....”

“It is the Divine who... who must do the battling.”⁶

The being that was once Joan of Arc, was now engaged in the Avataric role at the terrestrial level for the human race to undergo the transformation of consciousness to pave the path for the Supramental Being to manifest on earth.

The Wondrous Moment arrived on 8 November 1972. In her own words: “I have had for a moment—just a few seconds—the supramental consciousness. It was so wonderful.... I have understood that if we were made to taste of that now, we would not wish to live otherwise.... It is like the harmonisation of contraries.... total, tremendous, and a perfect peace.”⁷ This was the beginning of the final chapter towards the supramentalisation of the being. The Supramental Consciousness within her body was increasingly becoming active and more effective as conveyed by her on 30 December 1972: “I feel myself a growing force... but it is of a new quality... in silence and in contemplation.”⁸

The Mother had undertaken the mission to pave the path of divinity for humanity—to ensure the future of our choice. She accomplished her mission in establishing the feasibility of operative Supramental Consciousness within the human body for it to suitably transform into the stuff of the Supramental to enable eventual manifestation of the Supramental Being on earth.

(Concluded)

ARUN VAIDYA

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 311.
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5. *Ibid.*, p. 319-21.
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THE COMPOSITION OF SAVITRI

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

Savitri and the Record of Yoga

13

In Book Two, Canto Fourteen of *Savitri*, Aswapati is led into the world-soul or psychic realm “by a mysterious sound” which at times resembles one physical sound or another, yet is no sound in particular:

A murmur multitudinous and lone,
All sounds it was in turn, yet still the same.¹

In the earliest known draft of this passage, the specific sounds Aswapati seemed to hear were those of a flute, a cricket, thunder and the sea, mentioned in one line each. Several other sounds were eventually introduced (though thunder was omitted), the description of them was elaborated and the passage grew to half a page. The first to be added were the sounds of anklet bells and bees, and we find the following early version of the passage in a notebook where a draft of the canto now called “The World-Soul” was written under the heading “The Psychic World”:²

It seemed sometimes to the seized ravished ear
The lonely blissful yearning of a flute,
A single cricket’s rash and fiery cry,
Or jangling silver laugh of anklet bells
Or bee-croon honey-drunk in summer isles
Or the far anthem of a pilgrim sea.

In the *Record of Yoga*, some of these sounds are referred to where Sri Aurobindo speaks of the development of the faculty of subtle hearing, *śravaṇa* or *sūkṣma śabdadr̥ṣṭi*, forming part of the more general faculty of *viśayadr̥ṣṭi* or subtle sense-perception. At the beginning of August 1919, he wrote in his diary:

Śravaṇa comes with strength or persistence only in the old symbolic sounds, cricket, ticking, bells, thunder etc....³

Some of these “old symbolic sounds” had been listed a few years earlier in the entry of 29 June 1914. There, “flute, bells, cricket” were included among the “typical sounds” which, it was noted, had for some days been

loud, constant & uninterrupted for minutes together in the closed ear. Today they achieved the same manifestation to the open ear.⁴

Elsewhere the flute is mentioned among certain “symbol shabdās”.⁵ In his letters in the 1930s, Sri Aurobindo also made a distinction between “symbol sounds... which have a connection with the sadhana” and sounds that are “merely the sounds of the other planes”.⁶ The symbolic sounds connected with sadhana seem to be those “like the sound of bells, crickets, etc.” which are not only “signs of the opening of the inner consciousness”, but “seem even to help the opening”.⁷

In *Savitri*, Aswapati is led by these sounds not merely into an inner consciousness, but into the inmost depths of the soul. In its origin, the mysterious sound he hears as this multitudinous murmur is evidently the *anāhata śabda* or “unstruck sound”, always welling from the rapturous heart of things, which gives its name to the *anāhata cakra*, the emotional centre in the subtle body with the psychic being behind it. For if a formless spirit has become the soul of form,⁸ a silent spirit must likewise have become the soul of sound. In a state of profound awareness, all that is heard by the inner or outer ear reveals “the soul of the sound and its expression of the one universal spirit”. In that internality, there is a “going of the sense into the depths of the sound... so that the ear is always listening to the infinite in its heard expression and the voice of its silence.”⁹

Aswapati thus enters into “a wonderful bodiless realm”.¹⁰ Travelling through the worlds as a representative of the race, it is not just his individual psychic being that he finds, but the psychic world. The position of the psychic being and the psychic world in relation to the other parts of our being and the other worlds was explained by Sri Aurobindo in a letter:

The psychic being stands behind mind, life and body, supporting them; so also the psychic world is not one world in the scale like the mental, vital or physical worlds, but stands behind all these and it is there that the souls evolving here retire for the time between life and life.¹¹

The special status of the psychic, Sri Aurobindo went on to say, is a logical consequence of its role in the evolutionary process:

If the psychic were only one principle in the rising order of body, life and mind on a par with the others and placed somewhere in the scale on the same footing as the others, it could not be the soul of all the rest, the divine element making the evolution of the others possible and using them as instruments for a growth through cosmic experience towards the Divine. So also the psychic world cannot be one among the other worlds to which the evolutionary being goes for supraphysical experience; it is a plane where it retires into itself for rest, for a spiritual assimilation of what it has experienced and for a replunging into its own fundamental consciousness and psychic nature.¹²

This peculiar relation of the psychic principle to the ascending hierarchy of the planes of being, represented in *Savitri* by the “world-stair”, is made still clearer in another letter:

There are in fact two systems simultaneously active in the organisation of the being and its parts: one is concentric, a series of rings or sheaths with the psychic at the centre; another is vertical, an ascension and descent, like a flight of steps, a series of superimposed planes with the supermind-overmind as the crucial nodus of the transition beyond the human into the Divine.¹³

It might seem as if the concentric system could be disregarded by those who only want to climb the steps leading to the supermind. If this transition “is to be at the same time a transformation”, however, Sri Aurobindo saw that the “series of conversions upwards” and the “turning down to convert the lower parts” could not succeed without “a conversion inwards, a going within to find the inmost psychic being and bring it out to the front”.¹⁴ In another letter, he wrote:

In this yoga the psychic being is that which opens the rest of the nature to the true supramental light and finally to the supreme Ananda. Mind can open by itself to its own higher reaches; it can still itself and widen into the Impersonal; it may too spiritualise itself in some kind of static liberation or Nirvana; but the supramental cannot find a sufficient base in a spiritualised mind alone.¹⁵

This necessity of the Yoga would appear to be the rationale behind Aswapati’s detour from the direct upward route when he makes the transition from Illumined Mind to Intuition via the World-Soul. Mind in him has already opened to its own higher reaches and widened into the Impersonal. But Intuition, as we have seen, “is the first plane in which there is a real opening to the full possibility of realisation”.¹⁶ The decisive movement which begins at this point cannot be fulfilled by relying on the mind and its knowledge alone, overlooking the deeper insight of the heart and the psychic being. When Aswapati has the vision of the Divine Mother after he emerges from the world-soul, it will be “in a sovereign answer to his heart” that the “eternal veil” is “half-parted”.¹⁷

In the Gita, *jñāna* culminates in *bhakti* for the Purushottama or Supreme Being in whom the dichotomy of Kshara and Akshara, the mutable world and immutable Self, is reconciled. But the Gita, as Sri Aurobindo observed, “follows the Vedantic tradition which leans entirely on the Ishwara aspect of the Divine and speaks little of the Divine Mother because its object is to draw back from world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation beyond it”.¹⁸ Even Sri Aurobindo’s sadhana in its early phases, as recorded in the diary of his Yoga up to 1920, retained some features of this leaning on the Ishwara aspect; *dāsya* (surrender), for example, was to the Ishwara or Krishna, though it might be “directly or through the Deva-shaktis”.¹⁹ But by the time he wrote *The Mother*, in 1927, he had recognised that for a sadhana of terrestrial transformation, the central role of the Divine Mother is essential: “The Supreme demands your surrender to her...”²⁰

Psychic *bhakti* for the Divine Mother and surrender to her are the keys, then, to the supramental Yoga. Sri Aurobindo explained her relation to the Purushottama, Akshara and Kshara Purushas of the Gita as follows:

In regard to the Purushottama the Divine Mother is the supreme divine Consciousness and Power above the worlds, Adya Shakti; she carries the Supreme in herself and manifests the Divine in the worlds through the Akshara and Kshara. In regard to the Akshara she is the same Para Shakti holding the Purusha immobile in herself and also herself immobile in him at the back of all creation. In regard to the Kshara she is the mobile cosmic Energy manifesting all beings and forces.²¹

Though she pervades all the planes, however, her presence is not normally felt in the Akshara and Kshara until it has been realised in the Purushottama. The passage in Book Two, Canto Thirteen of *Savitri* about the “nameless Force”, quoted from an early manuscript in the last instalment, was later revised by Sri Aurobindo to bring out this sense of her absence in the experience of the immobile Self or Akshara Purusha, compelling Aswapati to go further in search of what he has not yet found:

Deep peace was there, but not the nameless Force:
 Our sweet and mighty Mother was not there
 Who gathers to her bosom her children’s lives,
 Her clasp that takes the world into her arms
 In the fathomless rapture of the Infinite,
 The Bliss that is creation’s splendid grain
 Or the white passion of God-ecstasy
 That laughs in the blaze of the boundless heart of Love.²²

(*To be continued*)

RICHARD HARTZ

Notes and References

1. *Savitri* (1993), p. 289.
2. This sentence is transcribed here as it was first written in the manuscript, before it was revised.
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6. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 953.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 952.
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10. *Savitri*, p. 290.

11. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 439.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 439-40.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
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17. *Savitri*, p. 295.
18. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 72.
19. *Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1112.
20. *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 4.
21. *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 72.
22. *Savitri*, pp. 286-87.

ASPIRATION TO BEAUTY

A FRAGRANCE from the beyond
 A Mystery from your ever-blossoming heart
 A special gift for a special day
 A Flower
 A thousand-petalled moment of grace
 From the ocean, a Voice whispered:
 "Carry on, carry on."
 Here, it is a jungle of thorns
 There, it is a garden of flowers
 The new world is being born
 The victory is marching on
 With your magic wand, make Wonders
 Make this day the most beautiful day
 Receive the pearls of knowledge and the blessings
 From the Supreme Soul
 Dance in happiness forever
 A tear of joy
 A Flower
 A thousand-petalled moment of Beauty
 A million-petalled moment of Bliss.

B. K. CHRISTEL

TAGORE AND SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

Tagore's Poetry : The Psychic and the Great Foreknowledge (2)

SRI AUROBINDO never says that anybody from the mental province can guess the Supermind. We have to read his prose very carefully. He says, "It would be difficult for the normal unilluminated or untransformed mental conception to express or enter into something that is based on so different a consciousness with a radically different awareness of things; even if they were seen or conceived by some enlightenment or opening of vision, another language than the poor abstract counters used by our mind would be needed to translate them into terms by which their reality could at all become seizable by us."¹ Tagore's capacity is certainly different from what Sri Aurobindo calls "the normal unilluminated or untransformed mental conception". Tagore's is not the ordinary human mental conception. It is rather an extraordinary human mental conception. That helps him guess the supernature here and there in his fine mystic poetry. Sri Aurobindo goes on to clarify the issue:

...it is only when we have already had experience of a higher intermediate consciousness that any terms attempting to describe supramental being could convey a true meaning to our intelligence; for then, having experienced something akin to what is described, we could translate an inadequate language into a figure of what we knew. If the mind cannot enter into the nature of Supermind, it can look towards it through these high and luminous approaches and catch some reflected impression of the Truth, the Right, the Vast which is the native kingdom of the free spirit.²

As Tagore frequently draws his inspiration from the higher mind, the illumined mind and the intuition, the guesswork becomes easier for him.

I call you today
to break down
the falsity of the shadow-illusion
of my mind.
Let my life be filled up
with your Truth, your Peace
your wonderful white Presence,
your strength and your flame.³

As if to explain the poetic aim of Tagore or justify his mental perception of the supramental, Sri Aurobindo observes:

An Unknowable which appears to us in many states and attributes of being, in many forms of consciousness, in many activities of energy, this is what Mind can ultimately say about the existence which we ourselves are and which we see in all that is presented to our thought and senses. It is in and through those states, those forms, those activities that we have to approach and know the Unknowable.⁴

That is Tagore's poetic endeavour: to catch the eternal in finite forms. How far he succeeded is another question. But, a curious blend of poetry and Sadhana makes him an extremely interesting person. The point is: when he can open the psychic so easily in poem after poem, especially in the early and middle part of his life, it is natural that he is automatically inviting the supermind principles to invade him through his mental filter. For the psychic inevitably pushes us towards that Supreme Reality, where we have that integrating Light, the consummating Force, the wide entry into the supreme Ananda. Moving in the hemisphere between the Man and the Rishi, Tagore seems to have been enjoying his half-thoughts and at the same time pining for the supreme status lying beyond his reach. He seems to have understood or even realised that nothing should come between him and the Divine. But things came between them and that made him sad. That is not quite an Aurobindonian melancholy. But then, it was very real, very intense. Surely, he sought release in lovely lyrics; he spoke it out; he spoke about his faulty choice. He rose and then went to sleep. When he rose again he thought of the greater possibilities which had come his way. The cry came back from time to time, the cry for the boatman to take him across. Almost each time he feared the end of all, he remembered his God; the psychic came forward; the being was instantly illumined. God was not far from him or he was not far from his God. He could return easily to his psychic. That is not a mean spiritual achievement for a public figure.

Before the end of my journey
 may I reach within myself
 the one which is the All,
 leaving the outer shell
 to float away with the drifting multitude
 upon the current of chance and change.⁵

(To be continued)

GOUTAM GHOSAL

References

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SAMARPANA

(Lines written in Dhvanyaloka)

I STAND on my proxy consciousness
and ponder on this city of palaces, lights, trees and flowers
with the child-like curiosity to learn human history
embossed in labour, servitude, cruelty, gold and ivory.
Old thoughts flourishing like wild flowers in a wild land.

Here after 1 a.m.
in my cabin silence
grows the mythical Shivalinga
among the rustic strange sounds
to engulf me in its shadow.

New thoughts betray the old
among the moon-lit leaves
and walk to the milky shadows
to discover a silent growing dream
beneath the trunk in the roots
to learn the new meaning of life.

Alas! It is nothing else—here's soothing silence.

K. V. RAGHUPATHI

MAN, ANGEL AND GOD*

RAINER MARIA RILKE'S POETIC VISION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

II

THREE spheres of reality speak to us out of Rilke's poetry. One is the world or the "outward", another the immanence of the world-inner-space. That he lays all emphasis of his expression on the unity of these two is understandable, as his consciousness received from them the most concrete impressions. Yet such a unity is only realisable out of a third region of being; therefore this region is the implicit foundation of all pure expression of Rilke.¹ Even for those beings in whom, according to him, this unity proves to be accomplished—the "Angels"—the unity is not their own as a self-creation. There is a greater reality, the transcendence, out of which the Angels once stepped forward and whose human equivalent is the soul belonging immediately to it as its pure representative—a reality that has willed and effected them as beings of that unity. Only with the presupposition of this third depth of being is it possible to understand the significance and the place of those luminous beings of the intermediate region that is the world-inner-space, beings who got hold so mightily of Rilke—

Who, if I cried, would hear me among the angelic
Orders? and even suppose one took
Me suddenly to his heart: I would vanish by his
stronger being.

There stands in the first lines of the *Elegies*, far and overmighty, the power of its "great unity" of the Here and the Beyond. ("Angels—it is said—would often not know if they moved among the living or the dead.") Glorious on their summits of creation they are to us human beings "almost deadly birds of the soul."

* *Mother India*, January 1955.

1. For elucidation of some new concepts used as a basis for interpreting and systematising Rilke, see Sri Aurobindo's writings.

(*Editor's Note*:—Essentially a poet, Rilke works out no philosophic vision of whatever spiritual truths he intuits. Nor perhaps can it be said that he intuits a sufficient number of them to indicate on their own one specific spiritual philosophy. There have been several schemes into which Rilkeans have sought to fit them. But it seems that their richest suggestion can be discovered if we attempt to read and connect them in the light of the knowledge on which Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is built and with the help of some of his concepts and terms. This does not mean that they are a direct fore-glimmer of this knowledge and that Rilke was somehow moving in the direction of its light. Also, the suggestion they yield in our re-viewing of them does not go beyond a certain point in the Aurobindonian vision of life-transformation. Still, it is Rilke's distinction that in a general way his poetic sight can be taken up into the greater context of significance with considerable ease.)

Should the Archangel now, the dangerous one, behind the stars,
take one single step downward and hereward:
beating high up, our own heart would slay us. Who are you?

The angelic being is too magnificent. We cannot receive it. "Each Angel is terrible" for us, a power which must destroy our life. And such all beauty is—that little part which we have from the overwhelming beauty of the Angel and which we "endure"—nothing

but the beginning of the terrible that we still barely endure,
and we admire it so because it serenely disdains
to destroy us.

The pure increase of beauty in its force becomes as dangerous for our existence as the stream of fluid gold for the earthen vessel. Only the fact that the Angels disdain us—we to whom they are indifferent—saves us.

Do not believe that I woo you,
Angel, and even if I wooed you! You would not come. For my
invocation is full of way-thither; against so strong
a streaming you cannot stride. Like a stretched
arm is my calling. And its hand open upwards
to grasp remains before you open, like defence and warning,
unimaginable one—spread out.

Is such ambivalence my whole happening before the Angels: wooing and warning, grasping and defence, calling and obstructive streaming? "And still, woe be to me, unto you I sing", for it cannot be otherwise than that the folk of the valleys strive towards the hills, than that the god inborn in man, against all predominance, presses still towards his own light. High upon the superconscious heights of the "world-inner-space" dwell mighty subjective forces: the Angels: "early achieved ones", the first-born and "favoured ones, of the Creation," themselves "mountain-ranges, auroral ridges of all beginning." They are the "pollen of the blossoming godhead", the seeds of which the divine bloom lets itself be ravished by huge cosmic winds, that there may be world. They are the great "hinges of light", that quality of pure spiritual being of which they themselves consist, and so the ability is their own, to change the direction of the light which they are, according to the law of the hinge innate to them. This ability is the in-standing godhead of their pure light-being, who entering on its way of involution starts to assume, as "hinges of light" in Angels, the first individual forms. They are "corridors", leading channels through which the light, not overshadowed or dimmed by any self-will, flows on in exactly determined streams; "stairways", steps out of the highest divine Namelessness into the involution towards the chaotic depths of the unconscious Nihil; "thrones" of the Godhead, "spaces of essence", greatest cosmic encompassings of manifested being, configured Will in pure

relatedness to the Highest; “shields of felicity”, they hold themselves protectively before the blissful godhead, stifling in their own delight all suffering, all falsehood and inferiority which dares to rise out of the lower spheres up into them;

tumults

Of stormily rapturous feeling, and suddenly, separate,
mirrors: drawing up their own
 outstreamed beauty back into their faces again,

“in the whirl of their return to themselves.” In this way nothing escapes them. They do not diminish. What they put forth they absorb back as their own, indestructible but wholly dissolved in movement. In this too they are superior to us; for we “evaporate; alas, we breathe ourselves out and away.” Yet whatever escapes me, may it be! “Angel, to you I still show it, here! In your up-looking may it stand safe at last, now finally upright.” So may the Angel receive what escapes us, the “most evanescent ones”: a “smile”, “pillars”, “a disappearing town”. In his region, under his wing it yet becomes at the end essential and stands there erect and only now “real”.

To illuminate the relation between Angel and man, Rilke uses the image of the marionette stage. Here the “doll” is dancing and is, with “its face of mere appearance”, the prototype of pure contentless form, an outside without inside. It is “full” seemingness, is wholly and only doll. It does not even try to deceive us as being “less than a thing”. Different is man when he dances: he is “costumed” and throws his little unripe will again and again into the dress, so that he may be the “dancer”. Yet this does not last long “and he becomes a bourgeois and goes through his kitchen into his apartment”. He is not pure. A self-centred will tries to determine the ego which he is. But he is not able to conceive that his will belongs to another region of being and that this ego with which he identifies himself is only a “doll”, only “appearance”. Since long he has known that the value of a doll is conditioned only by the content which the child introjects into it and through which it then signifies this or that to the child. But that his ego too is “less than a thing” without those contents which find themselves introjected into it out of his sphere of “world-inner-space”, to grasp this he lacks courage. But, because it is thus, because both doll and ego are meaningless without the introjections which justify their being, their value must be measured by these which dance their movements on the stage of the “outward”. As spectator the ego is not useful any more. Instead of looking at itself it acts the conditionless expression of deeper vibrations. Yet a being follows its own play: the soul, the inmost self.

... If I am in the mood
 to wait before the marionettes’ stage, no,
 to look so completely at it that, to outweigh
 my seeing, at last as player
 an Angel must come there, who plucks up the husks,

What has happened? Something grand: I have become the seeing one. I have withdrawn myself into the soul out of the action in which I was involved in the ego, and I am only the seeing henceforth. I do not act any more, I live a vision: an Angel must in my place carry on the play. For, that there may be world, the play must go on. I leave my ego to the Angel. He is the magnificent cosmic player. He holds innumerable strings in his hands.

Angel and puppet: then at last there is play.
Then comes together what we constantly
separate by being here. Only then originates
out of our seasons the circumference
of the whole changing. Over and across us
then plays the Angel.

Far out at the margin of “existence” plays the Angel with our ego that we, when we had chosen it for our dwelling-place, we had sought to withdraw from his influence which seemed to us “almost deadly” and which has belonged already to him, the super-mighty one, since eternity. To his play we surrender our ego; and beyond us, overpassing all our narrowness, our anguish and our smallness, he plays his play glorious and real.

In the image of the marionette-stage Rilke proves himself again a revealer of true humanhood. For this is certain: so we must live: deep in our own soul, safe and free from the play of the cosmic powers. To him who may be anxious about his earthly existence the poet says “Angel and puppet: then at last there is play”. Quickly the doubter will learn that all activity and movement whose originator he believed himself life-long to be, rests eternally in the hands of the Angels who, as no ego overshadows them, cannot do otherwise than serve divine order. To leave his actions to them, is the demand put by Rilke.

What follows now is, doubtless, the crowning of the visionary poetry of Rilke—a demand following the previous one in the opposite direction: “So not only is it necessary not to look down upon all the Here and degrade it but these phenomena and things, especially for their temporariness which they share with us, shall in an inmost understanding be conceived and transformed. Transformed? Yes, for it is our task to imprint this temporary and frail earth so deeply, with such pain and passion, that its essence ‘invisibly’ resurrects in us. *We are the bees of the Invisible. We gather ecstatically the honey of the visible in order to amass it in the great golden hive of the Invisible.* Earth has no other escape than to become invisible: *in us who, with a part of our being, share in the Invisible, and who can increase our possession of invisibility while being here,—in us alone this intimate and constant transformation of the visible into the Invisible which no longer depends on being visible and graspable can accomplish itself just as our own fate constantly becomes in us at the same time more present and invisible....* The Angel... has nothing to do with the angel of the Christian heaven. The Angel,... is that being which stands security for conceiving in the Invisible a higher range of reality.—Therefore ‘terrible’ for us because we, lovers and transformers of his, are still hanging on to the visible.—All worlds of the universe plunge themselves into the Invisible as their next

deeper reality: *some stars increase themselves immediately and vanish in the infinite consciousness of the Angels—others are dependent on beings who slowly and laboriously transform them, in whose terror and delight they reach their next invisible realisation. We are...these transformers of the earth, our whole being, the flights and the plunges of our love, all that enables us to perform this task (besides which no other essentially exists)."*

The visionary seeing of the soul gains its significance as precondition for the transformed state. For the earth is "dependent on beings who slowly and laboriously transform" it and only we human beings can be these "transformers of the earth". For we alone are able to live, behind the cosmic process, in our soul, what has proved to be a necessary condition for a true transformation. Entangled in the more or less lower movements of our nature, it is impossible to reach a realisation. And this realisation is Rilke's concern: no change shall be effected but a transformation—that means a great work: what has been visible shall become invisible, the objective wholly recede into the subjective world and thus get realised. This each one has to accomplish alone in himself. The call is there to enlarge the human consciousness to the cosmic consciousness. This is the claim which Rilke feels and according to which he strove to live as best he could. The knowledge (not a mental taking for granted but a consciousness living deep in the inward) of the identity of our own being with all universal existence, to experience oneself in all things and all things in oneself, to bridge the gap between the ego and the non-ego so that everything may configure itself to a harmonious unity, no longer containing anything foreign or unknown: this is the sign of the beginning of cosmic consciousness. The human desperation in front of such conglomeration of one's own and not one's own, which one thinks one has to fear as a dissolution of individuality, has its origin in our ignorance of the soul. The ego is conceived as the centre of personality and, where such opinion rules, an enlargement of the ego, amounting almost to a dissolution must naturally lead to terror and resistance. But we know that the centre of man is not his ego—a "puppet" wholly made "out of appearance"—but his self, the true individuality of the soul. When one lives in it the dissolution of the ego loses all its terror. On the contrary: the consciousness of an infinite enrichment, of a liberation from an anguished personality's narrow limits, of a great understanding and happy intimacy, the feeling of vibrant participation in all life, of being at home in an infinite community, yes, even to experience all this with such intimate "inliness" that it can be called one's own—this wins its profound joy out of the safety in one's own soul, the indescribable security of the soul's peace which it grants and the absolute knowledge deeply imbedded in it of the high beautiful value of such a spiritual experience. This transformation is to Rilke so great a necessity and duty that, for him, beside it "no other essentially exists". Its fulfilment seems to him in his life-long wrestle for a pure subjective universality the summit of all striving. And thus the Angels must serve him as an example, these masters of the original unity of the Here and the Beyond. But now it is easy to conceive why the Angels in just this situation have to step back behind man. For, although the realisation is accomplished in them, has been there from all beginning, yet they, as pure beings of the "world-inner-space" and

the “outward”, who by being typical and not evolutionary are in the proper sense soul-less, and therefore lack immediate relatedness to the transcendence, cannot fulfil the transformation of the earth. What happens in the spheres below does not concern them. It is their task to accomplish the unity of both regions in enormous movements from moment to moment always anew. As the greatest cosmic forces they keep up the condition whose high presence is indispensable for every lower effort for its realisation. They are the preservers attesting from all eternity the unity of the entire universal existence—guaranteeing gods of the cosmic consciousness.

(To be concluded)

JOBST MÜHLING

WILD DUCKS NEAR VASHISHTA GUHA

THE wild ducks at play
playfully floating,
with the tides, rocking,
yet calm and poised.

Now they take to wings—
Ganga! Your message?
No Bhishma are we,
On a bed of arrows,
Waiting Uttarayana*
The message you sent
what be it?

Two children at play
Sitting by the shore
Be it a blessing, a kind gesture.
Deliverance or mukti, not yet...
A longing to be there, a bit long.
Watching you, thinking of you
Back even in the sickening city!

K. N. VIJU

* Northern Solstice.

INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

YET after all he was Indian in his nature. His verse follows the forms and traditions of English poetry, but his temperament and attitude were Eastern. Physically he responded joyfully to the congenial ardour of the Indian climate. What a glorious pleasure the sun, and the heat of the sun! He revelled in the floods of sunlight, the luxuriant leafiness. The country itself was full of charm and romance; he loved the primeval simplicity of the people and their life. Only he remained outside it. Mentally, he was torn in two. I often urged him to take a theme from Indian legend; and he attempted a poem on Savitri among other Indian subjects. But it would not shape itself. He felt the need to Europeanise the atmosphere in some sort, and then the essence evaporated. Thus he hovered between two hemispheres, not wholly belonging to either.

In one respect, in his acceptance of tradition, he was certainly more Oriental than Western. I had given him at parting Bullen's Lyrics from the Elizabethan Song Books, and he found in these, and in *Campion* especially, an unceasing delight. "How we have sacrificed form and expression in our devotion for modern thought and for contemporary subject matter, and the idea that a poet should have something new to say! How did people first come to have this idea? The Elizabethans don't seem to trouble themselves much about having a new poetical mission. What old and time-worn subjects they chose, seeming evidently to care for nothing except for rhythm and expression, on which they spend the whole power of their art."

Love Songs and Elegies by Manmohan Ghose appeared in 1898 in Mr. Elkin Mathew's Shilling Garland. This little book was all that he was to publish except some occasional poems in magazines. He was now at Dacca where he was professor for some five years. Then for a time (from 1902) he was promoted Inspector of Schools and travelled about his district of Chota Nagpore. One of his letters describes with some humour long uncomfortable journeys in remote parts of the district—journeys by night in an ox-cart in which he lay jolted and full of apprehension of tigers, and turned out shivering in the morning to examine a squad of children under a hedge in Tennyson's "Princess", a poem he disliked. Did the ghost of Lord Macaulay smile complacently on that incongruous scene?

Finally, Ghose was appointed professor at Presidency College, Calcutta. Our correspondence had lapsed. For many years I heard nothing from him. I knew that he was married; I learnt later, that his wife was an invalid.

At last, during the war, he wrote. I then learnt the full tragedy that had befallen him. The beautiful and happy-natured wife, whom he worshipped with an extreme devotion, had been stricken ten years before with a mysterious nervous ailment, completely depriving her of speech, paralysing her right limbs and causing aversion from all food. For a space of five years there was a partial recovery, then the malady which was combined with hysteric symptoms resumed its mastery. Day after day till the release of death,

Manmohan's entire life was divided between his college lecture-room and the sick-room, where he devoted himself with unending patience to attending on the beloved sufferer. The prolonged nervous strain resulted in utter fatigue, utter despondency, and finally broke his health. The renunciation of all society prevented any compensating distraction. "For years not a friendly step has crossed my threshold. With English people in India there can be only a nodding acquaintance or official connection, and with Indians my purely English upbringing and breeding puts me out of harmony; denationalised, that is their word for me."

Love, harmony, happiness, he had found; home had become home at last; and then, in so brief a space, this had been taken from him.

Poetry and his children—two daughters—were his consolation. He continued to write, though he never cared to publish. Apart from his fellows, knowing little of the currents of contemporary literature, with no help from friendly criticism, he wrote verse which sometimes showed little signs of his isolation, in being out of touch with the most exacting standards. A tendency to become obscure from grammatical inversion, to indulge in a certain prolixity, occasional failure to cope with elaborate rhyme-structure—but he would set himself tasks in intricate and dissyllabic rhyming which would have daunted most English poets—these blemishes might easily have disappeared in revision which he did not live to make. The devotion of his love for his wife, the desolation of his loss, inspired the groups of poems called "Immortal Eve" and "Orphic Mysteries," containing the finest and most original of his lyrics.

During all these heavily burdened years he never relaxed for a moment in his duties as a professor. His habitual reserve and aloofness caused him to be regarded by strangers as cold and austere; in reality, as those few who came to know him in his home discovered, he was simple, natural, affectionate and sympathetic. But he did not invite familiarity. To his pupils he seemed always to breathe a world of his own: they admired him from afar as he emerged from a mysterious seclusion and spoke, not as if to them, but to some ideal audience. It was as if they overheard his soliloquies. Those who were not in his class passionately envied those who were. All testify to the extraordinary fascination of his lectures. His mere voice, as he read or recited poetry, took them with a spell. His powers came not so much from the felicity of his phrasing as from the entire faith he had in what he held up for admiration; his possession by its beauty. "If the highest test of a teacher," writes one ex-pupil, "be to create an attitude of mind, then Ghose was the teacher par excellence." Another writes that he would cherish his memory even more as a creative teacher than as a poet and scholar.

To hundreds and hundreds of young Indians he opened a magic door away from the class-rooms and text-books, and through him they heard the poets of our country speak as with living voices.

In 1918 Ghose's health, broken by the shock of his wife's death, failed completely. Repeated illnesses were followed by a gradual loss of eye-sight. One of his keenest pleasures was in pictures and sculpture. In the earlier years after his return to India, he had spent much of his savings on photographs and books of reproductions which I sent

him from Italy or London. He would spend happy evenings contemplating them. But now these, and the beauty of the sky and flowers, were taken from him. In 1921 he was obliged to retire. For years he had been looking forward to freedom from the irksome routine of his profession, in order to write at ease. Even now, blinded, broken in health, and prematurely aged, he remained courageous and serene. He continued to compose poetry, and he looked forward to accomplishing a cherished dream of returning to England, the beloved nurse of his youth. His passage was taken for a date in March, 1924. But on January 4th he died. As he lay dying "Lear" and "Macbeth" were read aloud to him at his own desire. He was not yet fifty-five.

Would Manmohan Ghose have achieved more if he had been a purely Indian poet—if his father, with a whole-hearted faith in western culture, had not transplanted him to England at the tender age of seven, so that all his most impressionable years were spent in a foreign country? Perhaps; for on his return to India he wrote English verse in surroundings from which they drew no natural nourishment, and his isolation hampered him. He began a drama on the story of Nala and Damayanti, which was never finished; but otherwise his poems were little concerned with India. They are full of English imagery, of the trees and flowers of England. Circumstances had prevented him from being like Rabindranath Tagore, an interpreter to the West of Indian thought and life. But at least he was an eloquent interpreter of the West to India. He admired the Bengali language, but it seemed to him lacking in a certain quality which he found in English. No Indian had ever before used our tongue with so poetic a touch, and he would coin a phrase, turn a noun into a verb with the freedom, often the felicity, of our own poets. But he remains Indian. I do not think that an Indian reader would feel him as a foreign poet, for all his western tastes and allusions. Yet to us he is a voice among the great company of English singers; somewhat apart and solitary, with a difference in his note, but not an echo. I hope that fate, so malignant to him in his life-time, may not pursue him after death with the hasty and cheap criticism that his verse is neither Indian nor English, and so dismiss it. On the contrary, it is both Indian and English; that is its interest. We English, ready enough to adorn with haloes of romance any country not our own that is sufficiently far off, are apt to feel embarrassed and incredulous if a like tribute is offered to our own land. But why this coyness? We are vain of our efficiency in business and administration, and parade it before the Eastern world. Is it not something for pride also that England could be to this Indian a nursing-mother of imagination and the dear home of the Muses? Yet with English people I fancy that the Orientalism of a Flecker or a Lafcadio Hearn finds much readier sympathy than the romantic admiration of England that inspired Manmohan Ghose. I remember that I myself was quite annoyed with him for persisting in choosing a Greek legend, Perseus, for the subject of a long poem rather than an Indian one. How unreasonable this was! I should not have been annoyed with myself for wanting to write a poem on Savitri or Nala and Damayanti. Let us become acquainted with the riches of India's tradition by all means, but let us make exchange of our own best also, and regard with sympathy the effort of one like Ghose, for whom England was above all the country of immortal poets. Oscar Wilde wrote of his early poems: "His verses show how quick and

subtle are the intellectual sympathies of the Oriental mind, and suggest how close is the bond of union that may some day bind India to us by other methods than those of commerce and military strength!" Was this a fond aspiration? Not so fond as the delusions of those who think only in terms of politics and business.

I think of Manmohan Ghose as I first saw him, breaking the silence of our classroom with his fervent Shakespearean appeal; I think of his isolation in his own country, dazzled by the glory of its sky, but restless with cravings of the mind; of his strange, doubly-exiled lot; of the tragic succession of disappointments and disasters that befell him; above all of his unfaltering fidelity to a chosen ideal, his inner secret of serenity and fortitude, and I remember the lines in the *Poet's Epitaph*:

He is retired as noonday dew
 Or fountain in a noonday grove;
 And you must love him ere to you
 He will seem worthy of your love.

(Concluded)

LAURENCE BINYON

THE THREAD

My life and my awareness
 Are a white thread
 Which has no beginning,
 And no end.
 I have been tying knots
 In the thread of my life
 In the belief that I was the maker
 Of my own self-form.
 Now, I no longer believe.
 I have felt what I hungered to know,
 And known what I must become.
 I must untie those knots
 By which I bound the thread of my awareness,
 And flow once more
 From the beginningless beginning
 To an endless end.

ROGER CALVERLEY

TRANSCENDENT GOD

How long before the doors so tightly sealed
Against the Presence and the force of Love
And shuttered windows of the mind shall yield
To light's descent and bliss revealed above.

When shall the sorrow of the world abate
And oneness tie the tattered threads of dreams,
A harmony beyond to consecrate
And to the seas of God unite the streams

Of life that run in narrow rivulets
Or flow meandering through sunless plains
And in our rushing fantasies forgets
The source and substance of the soul's domains,

A heart that widens consciously to know,
A spirit seeking for its misplaced key,
Transcendent God who fills this world below
And waits our turning towards Divinity.

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

THE MOTHER

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

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

Available at SABDA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry 605 002

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INTEGRAL PHILOSOPHY

Introductory Lecture

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

WE have stated briefly the position of the sceptic, the position of the rationalist, and now we may state the position based upon spiritual experience. This position holds that reason is not the highest instrument of knowledge; there is a capacity in man to know the Supreme Reality. But here too there is a conflict since there is a variety of spiritual experience and each set of experience is opposed to the other. There are three fundamental experiences in terms of which we can translate the multitudinous variety of spiritual experience. The first is the one in which the seeker realises himself as the inactive Witness Self or Purusha to which an entirely alien principle of active Nature or Prakriti presents its construction of the world as Object. This is the experience on which the Samkhya philosophy is based. According to the Samkhya, there is an ultimate dualism, that is to say, there are two ultimate realities which are alien to each other and although they stand side by side they cannot be reconciled to each other.

The second is the experience in which one merges oneself into the pure and indeterminable eternal existence of the Infinite beside which there is nothing else. And then if we look at the universe in relation to this experience we are told that that universe is a lie, an illusion, an existence which in fact never existed except to the false vision. This is the experience which is at the basis of the Illusionistic Monism and of Shankara's Qualified Illusionism.

The third is the experience in which one finds in the Infinite the true self of himself as well as of the universe, but here one does not lose his individuality and the reality of the universe. Rather the individual is realised as the eternal portion and child of the Divine and the universe as the Lila or play of the Supreme. This is the experience which is at the basis of many religious philosophies and particularly of the philosophy of Ramanuja. The philosophy of Ramanuja is called Qualified Monism because he holds that ultimate reality is One, the Supreme Ishwara, which is not without any quality, Nirguna, but has, on the contrary, the souls and the world as His qualities, He is the Saguna, one with qualities.

One of the important features of spiritual experience is that it gives absolute certainty as to its truth; the experience is self-luminous and therefore requires no proof or evidence to show that it is valid. But precisely because of this the conflict between these experiences becomes very acute. For if each one claims exclusive truth and denies the truth of the other, how are we to accept any? In India, this conflict has arisen and still continues. But we cannot afford to remain long in this conflict. Our mind seeks always reconciliation and harmony; and thus we are forced to seek for a still higher truth in which the claims of all these spiritual experiences are rightly recognised and their exclusiveness remedied.

In *The Life Divine*, we are presented with this higher truth, the truth of the Integral

Divine, the Divine which is not merely the Purusha of the Samkhya or the Nirguna Brahman of Shankara or the Saguna Brahman of Ramanuja, but it is the Divine which has all these aspects and yet transcends them all. We call Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as the Integral Philosophy, for it integralises first the various aspects of the Supreme Reality, and second, it shows the fundamental relation between that Reality and the universe and thus harmonises the conflict between Matter and Spirit.

Thus when we get the solution of all the conflicts and become mentally certain about the truth of the universe, it is easier to find out the purpose of our own life and the work with which we have to occupy ourselves. *The Life Divine* has then a message to give us, a lesson to teach us, a direction to show us, a power to give us for the realisation and fulfilment of our life. It is then to receive this message, this lesson, this direction and this power that we shall study this most sacred book, the Veda, the supreme Word.

And as a preface to our study, I shall give you a summary idea of the plan of the book.

The Life Divine is in two parts. The first part entitled "Omnipresent Reality and the Universe" deals with the problem of the nature of the Ultimate Reality and whether and in what way it is related to the universe of the triple existence of Matter, Life and Mind. In considering this problem, Sri Aurobindo gives a critical exposition of the main theories of Reality and shows how partial truths can be reconciled in an integral view of Reality. While expounding and analysing the nature of Matter, Life and Mind, he utilises all the available data from the most ancient times to our time of the unprecedented discoveries and inventions in various fields and disciplines of knowledge. He takes each major element of our universal existence and shows how its ultimate is in the Omnipresent Reality; and in discovering this relation he shows how inevitably and logically we are forced to look for and find a link between the Ultimate Reality and the Universe. This link he calls the Supermind and gives a detailed exposition of the concept of the Supermind in its essential nature and principle.

The second part is in two sections: the first section is entitled "The Infinite Consciousness and the Ignorance". It takes us to a more detailed consideration of the nature of the Ultimate Reality as the Infinite Consciousness with all its epistemological implications. A new logic which he calls the Logic of the Infinite is formulated along with its application. Theories of Dream, Hallucination and Illusion are given thorough examination in the context of the philosophy of Shankara and of the extreme Illusionism. This leads us to the more important examination of the human mind whose chief characteristic is Ignorance. The nature of Ignorance is analysed, its boundaries fixed and its relation to Knowledge determined. Then the most baffling question of the origin of Ignorance is raised and answered with the help of the psychological concept of Tapas or the Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness. Finally, the nature of Evil, Error and Falsehood is analysed and shown to be the resultant of the Ignorance which not being the primal principle could be remedied.

The final section of the Work entitled "The Knowledge and the Spiritual Evolution" takes us to the climax of the entire line of reasoning pursued so far by showing how the

Integral Truth which is obscured at present can be made manifest through certain processes and necessities of the working of Nature itself. Sri Aurobindo analyses and develops his theory of Spiritual Evolution and illustrates it by an examination of humanity's development through the ages upto its present stage of achievement. The theory of Rebirth also gets here a complete examination, and together with the theory of supraphysical worlds, Rebirth is shown to be acceptable as a machinery that Nature has adopted for its spiritual evolutionary purpose. Finally, Sri Aurobindo shows how Nature developed so far should make a further ascent from Mind to the Supermind. In the chapter on "The Ascent to the Supermind", he describes the various intermediary stages on the way to the Supermind. In the chapter "The Gnostic Being", he gives an idea of the nature of the supramental being in psychological and existential aspects. The final chapter considers and visualises what will be the nature of the divine life on earth; it examines the various current theories of Social Reconstruction and of the present critical stage through which humanity is passing, and at the end it shows on what lines humanity could safely plan for the building up of a future ideal humanity or superhumanity.

(Concluded)

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AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT—XVIII

KIRAN CHOWDHURY

A simpleton, a pundit

There is more simplicity in a man who eats caviar on impulse than in a man who eats grapefruit on principle.

G. K. CHESTERTON

KIRAN CHOWDHURY was born in Chottogram (Bangladesh) in 1912. He was a dear friend of mine. He was known to many and many more have heard of him (many anecdotes are orally passed on). He was a legend even in his lifetime. I write about this friend just to perpetuate (so to say) the memory of an interesting simple man. I could not ignore this old man. I cannot categorise him as “great” nor as “not great” so he fits in as “a not so great”. I was one of his favourites. He had other favourites too, amongst whom should be included cows and goats.

A “pundit” it is said is one who knows something of everything and everything of something. Kiran-da knew something of everything or at least of many things but of nothing did he know everything. Because of the first trait he could have been and was a useful man. But somewhere in his makeup a complex, a mixture of oversensitivity, oversimplicity bordering on childishness got him into trouble. Not all (most) could be charitable to his shortcomings.

Kiran-da was not an impressive figure physically. He was short and compact, of dark complexion—a darkness enhanced by an abundance of dark body hair. The growth on top, where it mattered, grew sparse, but elsewhere the abundance persisted. A round face, nothing remarkable except for the eyes and eyebrows. He held his eyes wide-open as if staring and blinked less than is usual. It gave him a “surprised” look. The eyebrows were thick, bushy with no gap in between, seemed like only one, stretched from temple to temple. His voice was effeminate and seemed permanently hoarse. He liked to sing and went always for the classical. He floated off into a rapture by his own singing. He knew something about the classical music of the North and practised it. (Some more about music later.)

Kiran-da joined the Ashram in 1938. In the early 40s he lived in the old Bakery House (now the North Block of our School). He was an enterprising man, strong and energetic, willing to work, with ideas crowding each other too fast for him to work them out. His ideas were not just fancy bubbles. They were backed by quite some working knowledge. He could and did put them into practice... but... we can conclude later. Let us first trace Kiran-da’s career through the 45+ years I knew him, with many ups and downs, but always interesting. I always wondered (still do) how he could gather all the knowledge into his not-so-bright a brain. I am led to wonder too—What is knowledge? What is intelligence? What in our cranium enables one or disables another?

Whatever my wondering, Kiran-da too seemed to be dogged by these complexities and contraries. Luckily for him, I think he looked for the fault outside himself (anyway most of us take umbrage similarly for what befalls us).

Kiran-da, as mentioned, lived in the “Old Bakery”. There was a very noisy milling machine in a common room of the building (hence the name). Kiran-da was the miller (in 1945-1946). He had some time and much energy left over, and many an idea clamouring to be let out. He and Sailen (Anil Baran Roy’s brother) joined hands and heads—they wanted to make some Handmade Paper (HMP). This we might say was the great-grandfather of our present HMP. They collected old paper and soaked it to a near-rotting state. They laid their hands on an old pestle and mortar. The soaked paper was then pounded by hand in that mortar. It was heavy work. They then added some more water, spread the mess on some tray, drained the water and dried it. And lo—you got your HMP. Very soon the venture ran into trouble—not technical but “social”. The duo were free from their work only at night, so their pounding started then. One can imagine the plight of the co-dwellers who were trying to sleep, meditate or whatever else—they could not take this thumping. Moreover the town (at night) was silent—no traffic, no radio or TV. And people were more sensitive to noise—not, as now, deaf to it or benumbed by it. It was but a matter of days before they were asked to stop. But soon enough a solution was found. Jyotin-da was incharge of the Laundry (present location). He allowed the pounding to be done there. It was a more “away” place. They shifted. I have no idea of the quality or quantity of paper they produced. But soon for the same old reason they had to shift again. They resettled at the place that is now our House Maintenance Dept. on Aurobindo Street. That is where I saw it in 1945. Sailen-da had left the job by then. He had gone on to become a teacher in our school. Sudhir-da (Sirkar—Mona’s father) had stepped in. (Sudhir-da cannot be dealt with so easily or offhand in this article. He is too great from all our points of view. Suffice it to say that he was a close collaborator of Sri Aurobindo and more, his personal attendant, friend and “son” in his political days in Bengal. Sudhir-da was deported to the Andamans by the British and returned unbroken with the “fire” unquenched. He settled here to again serve his “father” and guru as before.)

Sudhir-da and Kiran-da brought in some improvements in the HMP. The paper was now pulped by footwork (not arm strength). There was a thatched hut in front of their work place (now appropriately Sudhir-da’s son Kalu has built his house on the spot). A cement cistern served as a mortar. A seesaw-like apparatus made of a beam (wood) with a vertically downward round wooden pestle fixed at one end, was the new machinery. The seesaw went up and thumped down as a man/woman stepped back or forward on it. The pestle descended into the cistern with the seesaw’s movement and pulped the paper. The pulp was taken across the road and made into paper. No rollers or hydraulic presses were around. So, we got soft, thickish, roughish paper. These were made into notebooks. We used only pencils in our school. We had to write very lightly, else the impression went on to the next sheet. It was like an etching. It was very difficult to read under a 25W bulb at night. Not that we read much.

Along with the paper-making the two friends expanded and diversified—into dye-

ing. That was the undoing. The smoke etc. brought some protests from the increasing neighbourhood population. By now Sudhir-da had quit to take up pottery. Again Kiran-da got a reprieve. A new place was offered him, a big one—the present location of HMP.

This new place was bought by the late Khodabhai, I am told, and offered to the Mother. It was a coconut grove with just a front wall (South) and a gate. (There are some such gardens and groves outside town. They are fast disappearing, swallowed by the city. It is often said that cities are the graveyards of villages—buried too is the silence and serenity.) Kiran-da shifted to the new place. A tin-roof shed was built. Kiran-da lived in one corner, the rest was his working place. He started off in right earnest on several fronts. Many a night did we (some of us boys) spend there, and after many cups of tea came to know of Kiran-da's works and his dreams and his troubles.

He started to build a wall to surround the whole area (no New Creation's Blocks existed then). The job was big and he was alone. He went ahead—he would watch the workers, count the bricks being unloaded at night. Everything else and other work were then forgotten. At about that time he planned to prepare some essence of rose (attar). He needed, he said, 100,000 country roses. He could procure maybe a few dozen per day. He spread them out on the floor, daily adding more. But the first lot would not wait (fresh) for the 100,000! They started to dry or rot. The project was, as far as I know, abandoned. Then there were ideas to start ceramics, dyeing and what more I don't know. All started but none developed to any great extent. The surprising fact was he *did* have the needful know-how for all these projects.

There were two sitar boxes in a corner of his room. When we asked him about them he drew out one and played us a raga or two, regardless of one or more missing strings. He even showed us a notebook where he had some notations given by the grand old man of Indian Music—Allauddin Khan. (Who had come to the Ashram and gave two concerts, one in Mridu-di's house, i.e., Prasad House and at night in Arogya House!)

Such was Kiran-da's multi-sided genius, a bit erratic and muddled up. One can well imagine that a cloud or two would appear over Kiran-da's uneven horizon. There could be many reasons for someone to rub him the wrong way—and it inevitably happened (I do not know the details). Kiran-da was disturbed. He went to see the Mother, in the evening to talk to Her. It so happened she was indisposed and was not seeing anybody. So Amritada told Kiran-da that it was not possible to see the Mother. Kiran-da was angry, desperate and puzzled. He thought: "Why stay here, when the Mother is not solving my problem?" He went back to HMP, handed the keys of the place to the watchmen and walked away.

Kiran-da of many skills worked his way South, Trichy, Dindigul, Coimbatore, etc. He took contracts from police for dyeing, and some other work and carried on for some time. He was used to hard times and hard work, but somewhere a dissatisfaction lurked. He was drawn back to this place—his Home. So one day he turned up. Things had changed here. HMP was a real factory with a different head and setup. So started a new chapter for Kiran-da—the same with a different diversity and setting.

Kiran-da's mind was ever casting about for new fields of action. He tried dairy

farming (cows and goats), soap or shampoo making, growing seaweed or algae as food products and he tried too once again a steady job in Corner House which Pranab-da tried to fix up for him, to give him a chance to settle down. He was given a room in the Sports Ground. (Pranab-da was one of those who understood and befriended him and whom he admired, respected and loved.) I cannot recount all these events in their chronological order but that is of no importance.

Dairy & Corner House (CH)—These two go together; for, some of the feed for the cows went from CH. Kiran-da had some good friends. I think they often helped him financially. He got a piece of land about 3-4 km down the ECR (East Coast Road). He also got 4-5 cows. He treated the cows almost as humans. If he got a bar of chocolate, the cows had the first go at it. He also had a few theories about what to feed them. He fed the food rejects and peels from CH but supplemented that with some newspaper or other paper! He soaked these in water and fed the cows this slurpy concoction. 5 cows gave 5 litres of milk. I have never visited his dairy. He lost the cows. I think some were stolen or he sold them and got cheated too in the transaction.

He carried all the food rejects in a gunny on the carrier of his cycle. He could not ride the cycle (too old, both he and cycle) but he pushed it all the way. Some miscreant even made off with the sack when he parked the cycle to answer “a call”. Kiran-da tried to shout to the man that it was not worth his while to steal that sack, but the man ran. When he did realise the truth he dumped the sack but landed a slap on poor Kiran-da—probably angry at being cheated!

Kiran-da was ready for any common product—be it ink (remember the fountain-pen days), boot-polish, shampoo, soap, ceramics, etc., etc.

The factory that supplied the swimming pool with liquid soap had shut down. Kiran-da was at hand—he was ready to make it, if I gave him the raw materials. He had it ready in 2-3 days time. One of the best we ever had.

Some girls wheedled him to make them some shampoo. How could he refuse? It was easy to flatter Kiran-da. So the girls had their shampoo at a fraction of the market price. He also made some ink for our Prosperity distribution, for fountain pens.

Diet & Nature—Kiran-da worked in CH but I don't think his heart was in it. He longed for open air and an open road in front where he could run freely his oft changing ideas. He left CH and consequently the Sportsground. His next interest and venue shifted to “Laundry Land”—what was till recently Autocare. His mind now was all for Nature Cure. A natural way of life, of eating and of everything. He got interested in that new fad of seaweed diet, algae (spirulina) powder and what else I wouldn't know. He wrote to Sweden and got the seed or spore for their culture in sterilised & packed test tubes. He even sounded me to get him a certain sea-bird from the Andamans that carries some seaweed spores from its feeding grounds on the open sea to its nest on shore. I couldn't, and wouldn't, fulfil his wish. Following Nature's way he discarded footwear, went in for dew-bath, sand or mudbath, sunbath and, fortunately, a simple bath (did he use soap?—I can't be sure). Walking along, talking to me on our football field he suddenly stooped down and picked two or three mushrooms and popped them into his mouth. I asked him,

“What if they are poisonous?” He smiled at my ignorance and said, “Don’t worry. I know.” He was getting older all these many years—he was still healthy enough. He took no medicines. One popular belief is that bacteria avoided him. Yet the inevitable was happening. He lost one, then two and more teeth. He would not take dentures—it was not natural. Moreover they were *false* teeth, so more the reason to avoid them. During some of the conversations we had he said he was convinced he would live 100-125 years. Maybe he saw a shadow of doubt in my eyes, he remarked very matter-of-factly but innocently: “*Jāninā tumi thākbe ki nā*” (I don’t know if you will be there). He also believed that after 100, new teeth would grow to replace those falling out. He showed me his skin yet quite shiny and wrinkle-free. He asserted that his hair too would reappear in abundance. I peered over his bald pate and remarked that there was not much evidence of new hair. He said in reply: “As of now, I am not losing any hair.” I had to content myself with that.

Music—I spoke of Kiran-da’s two sitars—they were long neglected, so lost more wires and much else. He brought them over to Matriprasad and wanted him to get one ready by cannibalising and repairs. I don’t think Matri could do it.

Kiran-da possessed a harmonium too (when living in the Sportsground). He wanted to give vent to his voice. Being an early riser, and 4.30 or 5 a.m. a good time to sing, he opened up at that hour. His co-dwellers were non-appreciative and even non-co-operative, intolerant. Kiran-da could not understand them. He came to me. I told him it is difficult to get people to change. It would be much easier and nicer if he did his singing out in the open. He could get on one of the galleries. He did so and was content. Sang for himself, his god and the sky.

Later—In spite of all he did, Kiran-da’s health was giving way. He gradually weakened. His step shortened, barely went beyond the length of his foot. Yet he made his painful way to his land. But it had to stop. Then his speech slurred, and the hands started to shake. He was afflicted by Parkinson’s. He was put in our Nursing Home and I visited him every 10-14 days and saw the slow decline. Yet he believed he would go home and work. He wanted me to check on his books, a few belongings and a microscope. The room was taken over by white ants. The books were half eaten up. Even the microscope was covered by them. I gently broke the news to him.

Kiran-da sank slowly and on 19 July 2001 in the evening, I was informed that he had quietly passed away. I was the nearest of kin and had the dubious honour of anointing him before consigning him to the flames.

So lived amongst us Kiran-da—an interesting man, honest, guileless and very simple. He started but never ended anything—i.e., to our ways of thinking. He, for one, felt he had achieved much—so now where do we go? I would wish we rather dwell on his honesty, simplicity and wonder at his ability to move from one thirst to another without quenching any. There lies his claim on me not to ignore him. So again I anoint him before consigning him to our collective memory.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

SRI AUROBINDO'S account of the nature of poetry, its source and the manner in which the poet reviews it may sound mystic to some people. The Muse is reputed to be wayward, her movement, her spirit and form unpredictable. It is true that poetry cannot be reduced to a rigid and mechanical process or system, nor does this study intend to do so. It intends to indicate broad lines of possible development, especially of the psychological factors involved based on a study of the past.

Sri Aurobindo says that poetry like everything evolves. Its nature, function and law remain the same but within them there is evolution. The evolution takes place from the simple to the complex, from the superficial to the profound, and it can be studied.

Poetry is a psychological phenomenon and its evolution means, primarily, the evolution of the psychological motive and power behind poetry. The kind of mentality, feeling, and vision seeking expression in poetry constitutes the element of primary importance in the evolution. The technique, the form, the language, the structure—the body of poetry—are of secondary importance.

Poetry has been a constant cultural activity of the human spirit and, viewed on a large canvas of time, can reveal the lines of its evolution. Though it may start from any of the natural instruments—intellect, emotion, passion, sensation—it is in its deepest origin a power of the soul, the true being in man. Poetic vision follows the evolution of the human spirit through its outward consciousness.

In the beginning man's mind turns to the physical world around him, to life, to outward action. The poet takes hold of this material, casts it into the mould of his own thought or religious idea or some conception of reality. He may see into these outer things some spiritual truth. Even this inner truth, the spiritual reality he expresses in the forms and figures of the physical life and physical Nature.

Vedic poetry furnished an example of that type. Poetic vision, even in those early times, saw and disclosed divine qualities in obvious and external things, in objects and in the action of men. In the delineation of human personality it is the outer being, the extraordinary physical power or powers, that the poet sees and renders. But behind the outer appearance he sees the powers of Gods working in outer human situations. (In the Western Tradition the Greek Homer also represents this poetic vision.)

Raised from the physical plane the poetical vision sees the passion, surge and power of life—the joy and sorrow, pain and wonder, terror and beauty, hope and despair, pride, love and hate, jealousy and romance. It turns everything to a moved thought, sentiment or sensation of the life-soul. Whatever thought-element is present, it is the calm light of reason or thought moving in its own sovereign might, but thought arising out of life.

The wide comprehensive awakening of the mind, the very intellectualism of it has given the modern mind a greater and stronger subjective turn. The subjective personality of the poet is more important today than traditional or conventional compliance on his

part. It is the self of the creator that counts.

The modern man has his eye turned more to the Future than to the Past and Present. In thought he more consciously looks towards the future than men used to do in the Past.

One unique and intuitive touch can be found in Sri Aurobindo's poetry that at no period of his life was he unaware of the spiritual reality behind the material actuality. Never did he countenance either of the classic negations, the denial of the materialists or the refusal of the ascetics. In some of the philosophical poems discussed in the chapter *Musa Spiritus*, there are doubtless intimations of an intellectual formula, world views reared on the sure foundations of his mystic or yogic experiences.

The section of longer poems, entitled *Nine Poems* in the Volume of *Collected Poems* deserves a middle place in the evolution of Sri Aurobindo's poetic art. If we have on the one hand poems named *Urvasie* and *Love and Death* on the other there is *The Rose of God*.

Sri Aurobindo on His Early Narrative Poem *Love and Death*

“The story of Ruru and Pramadvura—I have substituted a name [Priyumvada] more manageable to the English tongue—her death in the forest by the snake and restoration at the price of half her husband's life is told in the Mahabharata. It is a companion legend to the story of Savitri but not being told with any poetic skill or beauty has remained generally unknown. I have attempted in this poem to bring it out of its obscurity. For full success, however, it should have had a more faithfully Hindu colouring, but it was written a score of years ago [1899] when I had not penetrated to the heart of the Indian idea and its traditions, and the shadow of the Greek underworld and Tartarus with the sentiment of life and love and death which hangs about them has got into the legendary framework of the Indian Patala and hells. The central idea of the narrative alone is in the Mahabharata; the meeting with Kama and the descent into Hell were additions necessitated by the poverty of incident in the original story.”¹

(*Note of Sri Aurobindo on the subject found among his papers; the time of this Note must be about 1919. The Poem dates back to 1899.*)

Amal Kiran says in his book *Sri Aurobindo—The Poet*:

[Sri Aurobindo] has made it difficult for us to attempt restraint in speaking of the marvellous imaginative alchemy of *Love and Death* or the pure epic strength and sweep of *Baji Prabhau*, his two hitherto published poems of long breath.* In the former he touched in one magnificent flight heights which can only be called classical. This is high praise indeed, but is it after all inapt to ask if anything could be more Shakespearean

* “The Imaginative Alchemy” of the still earlier published but unknown *Urvasie*, which has greater length than either of these, has been dealt with in some detail in the first part of *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo* (1948). —K.D.S., 1970.

than, for example, this little soliloquy of Ruru on returning to Priyumvada after having stolen from her side in the early morning to go “seeking comparisons for her bloom” among the best that he could pluck from woods of the earth’s prime?

And she will turn from me with angry tears
 Her delicate face more beautiful than storm
 Or rainy moonlight. I will follow her,
 And soothe her heart with sovereign flatteries;
 Or rather all tyranny exhaust and taste
 The beauty of her anger like a fruit,
 Vexing her soul with helplessness; then soften
 Easily with quiet undenied demand
 Of heart insisting upon heart...

Or, take this burst of sublime language, like fierce rain:

For what is mere sunlight?
 Who would live on into extreme old age,
 Burden the impatient world, a weary old man,
 And look back on a selfish time ill-spent
 Exacting out of prodigal great life
 Small separate pleasures like an usurer,
 And no rich sacrifice and no large act
 Finding oneself in others, nor the sweet
 Expense of Nature in her passionate gusts
 Of love and giving, first of the soul’s needs?

Or, hear Yama the God of Death address Ruru when that impetuous boy offers half his life as a sacrifice to recover the snake-bitten, prematurely lost Priyumvada:

Not as a tedious evil nor to be
 Lightly rejected gave the gods old age,
 But tranquil, but august, but making easy
 The steep ascent to God. Therefore must Time
 Still batter down the glory and form of youth
 And animal magnificent strong ease,
 To warn the earthward man that he is spirit
 Dallying with transience, nor by death he ends,
 Nor to the dumb warm mother’s arms is bound,
 But called unborn into the unborn skies.

Or, again, relish the psychological subtlety of word and rhythm, where to the essentially

Shakespearean note is added a sensuous felicity peculiar to Kalidasa:

...“Priyumvada!”

He cried, and at that well-loved sound there dawned
 With overwhelming sweetness miserable...
 When he had called her by her liquid name,
 Where the voice loved to linger. He remembered
 The chompuc bushes where she turned away
 Half-angered, and his speaking of her name
 Masterfully as to a lovely slave
 Rebellious who has erred; at that the slow
 Yielding of her small head, and after a little
 Her sliding towards him and beautiful
 Propitiating body as she sank down
 With timid graspings deprecatingly
 In prostrate warm surrender, her flushed cheeks
 Upon his feet and little touches soft;
 Or her long name uttered beseechingly,
 And the swift leap of all her body to him,
 And eyes of large repentance, and the weight
 Of her wild bosom and lips unsatisfied;
 Or hourly call for little trivial needs,
 Or sweet unneeded wanton summoning,
 Daily appeal that never staled nor lost
 Its sudden music, and her lovely speed,
 Sedulous occupation left, quick-breathing,
 With great glad eyes and eager parted lips;
 Or in deep quiet moments murmuring
 That name like a religion in her ear,
 And her calm look compelled to ecstasy;
 Or to the river luring her, or breathed
 Over her dainty slumber, or secret sweet
 Bridal outpantings of her broken name.
 All these as rush unintermitting waves
 Upon a swimmer overborne, broke on him
 Relentless, things too happy to be endured...

Then observe those passages and lines which achieve by grace, balance, poignancy or strength of diction a many-shaded aesthetic quality which puts us at a most pleasurable loss to decide whether they are more Virgilian or Dantesque. Begin with this glimpse of morning in a wood where he

... felt slow beauty
 And leafy secret change; for the damp leaves,
 Grey-green at first, grew pallid with the light
 And warmed with consciousness of sunshine near;
 Then the whole daylight wandered in, and made
 Hard tracts of splendour, and enriched all hues.²

(To be continued)

NILIMA DAS

References

1. *Collected Poems*, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 258.
2. *Sri Aurobindo—The Poet* by K. D. Sethna, pp. 9-11.

...No path of Yoga is so easy and to imagine that by leaving the world and plunging inside oneself one automatically shuffles off the vital and external nature is an illusion. If I ask you to develop equanimity and egolessness by work done with opening to the Divine, it is because it is so that I did it and it is so that it can best be done and not by retiring into oneself and shutting oneself away from all that can disturb equanimity and excite the ego. As for concentration and perfection of the being and the finding of the inner self, I did as much of it walking in the streets of Calcutta to my work or in dealing with men during my work as alone and in solitude....

Sri Aurobindo

(Bulletin, April 2002, p. 32)

THE INDIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from the issue of August 2003)

India's Golden Age: The Achievements of the Gupta Empire (contd.)

THE other factor of which we have to take note in the Gupta achievements is that economic prosperity and political unity were not pursued as ends in themselves but as means towards the cultural regeneration of the nation or, in other words, towards conscious emergence of the unique cultural genius and identity of the nation. In the Gupta period, ancient India came nearest to achieving a self-conscious cultural and political unity based on Aryan values and ideals. We see for the first time in Indian history the emergence of a nation-wide feeling of patriotic cultural nationalism proud of its cultural heritage. If the ancient Vedic sages tried to arrive at political unity on the foundation of an inner spiritual and cultural oneness, the Gupta emperors tried to consciously revive and rejuvenate this inner cultural unity—established by the Vedic sages—on the foundations of outer peace, order, security and stability provided by a highly efficient and centralised economic, social and political organisation.

But the effort of the Gupta emperors could not reach its logical fulfilment because of a combination of causes and circumstances. First of all the idea of political nationalism was not yet born in the consciousness of the race. Political nationalism is the conversion or crystallisation of a vague psychological sentiment into an organ of power and unity; it rises from a dynamic social awareness that a common and unique cultural heritage of a nation should translate itself outwardly in the form of a free association of mutually co-operating regional units under a common political organisation and leadership. During the Gupta period such an idea was not yet born in the consciousness of the race. Under such conditions war and conquest remained the only method of unification. And ancient India was somehow not able to evolve enduring and unifying political institutions—like, for example, the Mikado of Japan and the Emperor of China—which could unify the spiritual and secular authority in a single centre of power and also command the respect of the entire nation. So the work of unification was left to the effort of strong and capable kshatriya personalities who could keep the nation together through military strength, political statesmanship, administrative ability or the force of their personality and character. When the central authority became weak due to lack of such a strong leadership, the centrifugal forces of the regional and provincial egos—which were so strong and obstinate in ancient India—began to reassert their independence to the detriment of unity. Added to this difficulty was the constant and repeated invasion of Hunnish barbarians which might have absorbed much of the energy of the government in military and administrative organisation. The third factor is the inherent defect of a highly centralised and bureaucratic organisation of the Guptas which to a certain extent stifled the growth and vitality of self-governing popular institutions.

But we have to give credit to the Gupta emperors and the ancient Indian political

tradition for the achievement that the Gupta regime never became despotic, but always liberal, lenient and benevolent and somehow was able to ensure that the people were free from undue bureaucratic interference. Fa-Hsien, the Chinese traveller who visited India during the Gupta regime, wrote that the general administration of the Gupta regime was free from all vexations which state interference in individual life normally causes. The people paid no hard-tax, remained generally unharassed by officials. The subjects were left largely to follow their own intentions and the criminal law was singularly lenient. People, especially pilgrims and traders, travelled freely within the empire wherever they wanted without fear and bureaucratic restrictions. Land-revenue had of course to be paid but there was no registration or official restriction. Such a happy state of affairs can only be attributed to two factors: first, the enlightened tradition of the ancient Indian political culture which imposed high ideals of humane and benevolent leadership on the royal throne, constantly emphasising that the king's life should be a sacrifice to the well-being of the people and the maintenance of Dharma and repeatedly warning of the dangers of despotism; the second factor is the character and personality of the Gupta emperors who tried to live according to these high ideals. Thus the high-quality political leadership of the Gupta regime, to a certain extent, neutralised the limitations of the systems of administration.

This brings us to the problem of political leadership. Modern political thought pays very little attention to this problem of maintaining the quality of political leadership and the need for grooming the right type of high quality leaders for manning top positions in government and administration. In modern democracies people with charisma and mass popularity come to positions of power in politics and government. But the question is whether mass-popularity is enough to govern a nation. Is it not necessary to ensure that people with the right capacity, character, temperament and vision come to positions of power in politics and government? It may be answered that ancient Indian monarchies were no better because they were based on heredity. This was undoubtedly a great defect of the ancient Indian polity. But to compensate for this deficiency, Indian polity evolved counterbalancing checks, institutions and ideals like the Council of Ministers of high character, competence, experience and wisdom to advise the king, a rigorous character-building education, training and discipline for the crown-prince and imposing high standards of self-sacrificing idealism on the ruler.

But modern democratic systems of government have not been able to evolve such enduring institutions and ideals which can maintain the quality of political leadership at a high level or at the least prevent it from degenerating into utter mediocrity and corruption. The lesson modern governments have to learn from this aspect of the Gupta achievements is the need for giving a much greater attention to the quality of political leadership or, in other words, to ensure that people with the right character, temperament, capacity and vision come to positions of power in politics and administration.

Obviously, we cannot go back to the old forms and systems of the ancient Indian polity. But the modern political thinker and professional have to give deep thought to the problem of how to harness the best and the highest available intellectual, moral and

spiritual resources and leadership potential of the community and make them hold the reigns of power and decision-making or if that is not possible, at least make them a living and effective influence on the government. For this the first condition is to create an enlightened and progressive mental environment in politics which inspires high thinking and soaring aspiration and idealism in this field.

One of the major defects of the twentieth century political environment is lack of creative thinking and idealism. After the great creative outburst of the eighteenth century philosophical movement which gave birth to the ideals of the French Revolution—Liberty, Equality and Fraternity—and later the thought of Karl Marx which triggered the Russian Revolution, political thought in the present age has lost much of its creative vigour. Most of the modern political thought which came later is either narrowly pragmatic or else a brilliantly ineffective academic speculation. This is in contrast to that of the modern Vaishya-system of commerce and management which was not only pragmatic but also creative, innovative and progressive. It was moving towards higher ideals transcending the narrowly utilitarian motive of profit, efficiency and productivity. Something similar must happen in politics.

But in politics mere creative thought and idealism are ineffective without living institutions and traditions to translate them into concrete realities. Democratic conception of the society with its ideals of individual liberty, government by people's representatives and empowerment of the masses has come to stay as a great force of the future. The leadership problem in a democratic polity can be solved only by educating the masses in the ideals of true leadership or, in other words, the type of leadership which will lead them to their highest well-being and fulfilment. Not only do the existing and potential leaders have to be educated and trained in the art and science and values and ideals of true leadership but also the masses have to be educated to choose the right type of leaders.

We have to create research and advisory institutions which can enlighten the consciousness of political life with progressive and creative thought, ideals and vision and help political leaders in policy formulation. We have to create educational and training institutions to educate and train the existing and potential leaders of polity to live, implement and exemplify the ideals discovered by the progressive thought and intuition of the age. We have to create popular institutions which empower the masses and educate them in the rights, responsibilities and ideals of true democracy and the ideals of democratic leadership.

But the future India has to create something more than all this. She has to create a spiritual democracy which promotes the freedom and development of the inner being of man leading to the discovery of his universal spiritual self beyond Mind and a new social order which will awaken and manifest the spiritual solidarity of humanity in the outer life.

(To be continued)

KAIKEYI: “THAT HORRIBLE WOMAN” UNDERSTOOD AT LAST*

A Review-Article

OUR greatest national epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, bristle with irony. The ostensible root of the misfortunes visited upon the protagonist is also the bedrock on which the epic is founded. Would the world have the Song Celestial, if Dhritarashtra, the veritable trunk of the tree of adharma, had not asked Sanjaya to relate what was happening on *dharma-kshetre kurukshetre*? And what would be left for the Adikavi to relate in the life of Rama devoid of fourteen years’ exile? The Mahabharata story can exist, its epic status unimpaired, without the Gita; but without a Kaikeyi, the Ramayana? It degenerates into a tame “and they lived happily ever after” fairy tale with the marriages of the four brothers. Yet, over the millennia, Kaikeyi has been bracketed with Shakuni as the villain-of-the-piece and her role ever seen as on a par with Dhritarashtra’s. Actually, Kaikeyi’s fate has been worse than Shakuni’s.

As far back as 1924, the actor playwright Manoranjan Bhattacharya sought to redeem Shakuni’s character from the indelible stain of “motiveless malignity” in his brilliant *Chakravyuha*, depicting an intriguing understanding existing between him and Krishna. In the 1990s, Dr. Dipak Chandra attempted to justify Shakuni’s conduct in a novel of doubtful success.

Kaikeyi, however, remained a character no one appeared willing to touch with the magic wand of redemption. For, does she not present a picture of heartless selfishness, womankind at its most degenerate, driving the avatara himself into exile, for the sake of her son’s inheritance? It is this “horrible woman” about whom Amreeta Syam dares to write. Her daring is all the more astonishing as it flies in the face of universal condemnation typified in the reaction of the author’s own mother recorded in the “Dedication”: ‘To my mother who asked, “Why are you writing a book about Kaikeyi? She was a horrible woman.” ...And then grew to like the “horrible woman” for herself.’ Syam’s Kaikeyi is by no means Valmiki’s one-dimensional character. She is fully fleshed out through a series of dramatic monologues; not pristinely pure like Kaushalya, so uninterestingly *Satvik*; nor, like Sumitra, a dumb shadow mutely serving the elder queens with not a thought to spare for herself or her progeny. No wonder, Kaikeyi was Dasharatha’s favorite, as the only interesting feminine company he had been able to acquire in his large harem!

There are overtones of Greek tragedy in Syam’s portrayal of her character. For, Kaikeyi tempts fate by “Forever grabbing/at things/not hers”—imagining that all four are her sons; that Rama is her first born (although Bharata resembles her husband the most, she neglects him, even berates her brother for favoring Bharata instead of Rama, and has to be reminded that Bharata is his nephew); that Dasharatha and Ayodhya are hers only; and, later, that Bharata belongs only to her, forgetting that he also belongs to

* Amreeta Syam: *Kaikeyi* (Writers’ Workshop, Calcutta, 1992)

his father, his brothers and most of all, to himself. In a Sophoclean touch, she dares to question the blind sage's curse on childless Dasharatha, for where is the son to fructify it? Caught in the maelstrom of her ego's obsession, she invites destruction by scorning Dasharatha's importunate reminders about the curse as she insists on being granted her two boons.

Syam's depiction of the sequence leading to the reversal in Rama-doting Kaikeyi's attitude rings completely true psychologically. When Rama ignores her desires for the first time and leaves her apartments to spend the night before the coronation in Kaushalya's chamber, Kaikeyi suddenly awakens to the realization that Kaushalya and not she will be the Queen Mother, and it is not her son Bharata who will be crowned. 'Reason' and 'Instinct', in Syam's words, "the ego's grasping claws and the heart's selfless love" are at war. The interaction with Dasharatha over the two boons is utterly engrossing writing, pulsating with the flow and counter-flow of differing emotions, punctuated by the repetitive death-knell of "My two boons/My King", till exulting "reason" wins the day at the cost of her life's greatest love, leaving Kaikeyi "with victory/cold and gloating". She is left in complete isolation, pictured forth in a superb image: "The apartment closed around me... the walls/of the room/grew cold with/a forgotten curse."

The build-up to the final reversal of the situation and her recognition of the unacceptable nature of her decisions is inexorable. First, when the city does not welcome Bharata, she ignores it and interprets his decision to bring back Rama as a ploy to win over the subjects. Here Syam departs from the original in not having Kaikeyi accompany her son on this mission, in order to remain true to the characterization she has painstakingly brought alive. When Bharata refuses to rule from the throne, Syam has Kaikeyi urge him in open court (again none of the other queens put in an appearance) to govern the kingdom. When he leaves Ayodhya, she realizes that she has lost her sons and her husband for nothing. That is when she longs to recapture the happiness of the past, the absence of which she had been too busy to notice in the bustling days.

Syam's treatment could have achieved even further depths of insight if she had taken into account the research of N.R. Navlekar—as Dr. Dipak Chandra did in his 1983 novel, *Janani Kaikeyi*—which brings out two major factors explaining the conduct of Kaikeyi. The first is that Kaikeyi is the youngest queen, which is the secret of the fascination she exercises over Dasharatha. The second is that her father, King of the mountainous Kekaya kingdom, agreed to middle-aged Dasharatha's importunate requests putting the same condition that the fisher-king, Dasaraja, put to Shantanu in response to his request for the hand of Satyavati: that his daughter's son would inherit the kingdom of Ayodhya. It is to avoid this eventuality that from early childhood Dasharatha keeps sending Kaikeyi's children to their maternal uncle's kingdom far from Ayodhya. His intentions become quite transparent when he rushes through the formalities of declaring Kaushalya's son as the heir-apparent in the absence of Kaikeyi's sons, and takes care not to inform his favourite queen Kaikeyi. It is Manthara, the faithful family retainer accompanying Kaikeyi from her father's house, much as Shakuni comes with Gandhari, who reminded the oblivious Kaikeyi of her husband's broken promise. That is when Kaikeyi sees through Dasharatha's

intrigue to go back on the undertaking forming the basis of their marriage, and utilizes his commitment to grant her two boons in order to win back for her son his birthright. Dipak Chandra adds to this the further motivation of Dasharatha not wanting a son of mixed blood (he makes Kaikeyi non-Aryan Harappan) on the throne.

Kaikeyi lets nothing stop her in safeguarding her son's inheritance—the threat of widowhood, which becomes a reality; the outrage of all Ayodhya, which turns into the implacable condemnation of all generations to follow. The tragedy of Kaikeyi lies in the rejection of her awesome sacrifice by the very person for whom she went through fire: her son Bharata.

Syam has arranged her work in five parts, portraying the complex and intriguing process of Kaikeyi's development as a character in four phases: The Wife, The Mother, The Widow and The Crone who introduces these accounts in a Prologue; and ends the portrayal in an Epilogue by a question mark that looks forward through the mists of time to the present day.

Syam grips our attention from the very first page, for here is Kaikeyi herself speaking to us, spanning the thousands of years separating us with the Prologue, "I". By selecting the autobiographical technique she seizes the reader per force and takes us inside this intriguing, much detested character. And what an unerring touch she uses to evoke our sympathy, the essence of fondness or *vātsalya rasa*! Kaikeyi is content watching her grandchildren play. This is capped with a picture that cannot but arouse a response—"Grey haired crone with withered eyes clutching at palace walls". This soft picture undergoes a complete metamorphosis in the second section of the Prologue, where the crone transforms into her past queenly person: ambitious, loving her husband, proud of her sons, glorying in her race. Since these are qualities in which all humankind shares, she puts before us the unanswerable question: Why does no one name their daughters Kaikeyi? Syam ends the Prologue with an answer to this question, which is typical of the character she brings alive before us: there has never been another Kaikeyi because, in her own words, "Perhaps I am incomparable".

Syam paints the child Kaikeyi (she is never given a proper name, and in this resembles Kaushalya, the princess of Koshala) as spoilt (born after 7 sons), educated, adept at fencing and riding (because of which she is able to save beleaguered Dasharatha's life when his charioteer is slain) and keen to be Queen, not consort. Syam marries her off at 13 to middle aged Dasharatha, with whose "ravaged eyes and sweet smile" she, strangely, falls in love despite her dreams of reckless men "Striding across worlds with dreams in their eyes and Empires lying conquered at their feet and only one Queen by their side". Naturally, we find her burning with hatred for timid, devout, correct Kaushalya, raging to "scratch poison-tipped nails across her smooth face", unceasingly praying for her death. In a superb tour de force, Syam turns the tables on Kaikeyi: "She did not die/ She nursed me through birth pangs". And it is here that Syam's creativity catches the eye yet again. She departs from the original in which Kaushalya gives birth to a daughter Shanta, and instead makes Kaikeyi's first child a girl, Sarayu, and has Kaikeyi determine to fight for her daughter's rights to inherit. But it is decreed otherwise, as Syam puts it so epigram-

matically: "My child, who lived hardly a month and brought her mother Sumitra", as Dasharatha needs an heir. Syam provides Kaikeyi with a biting comment on male chauvinism: "Did I not want children too? But I could hardly marry another man to bear them". Kaikeyi gallops out of Ayodhya in affront, causing people to shriek and drag children out of her way and spends two months in Kekaya in agony of separation from her beloved husband, before her mother-in-law visits Kekaya to ask her to return in her own interest, lest Sumitra capture Dasharatha.

True to character, Syam shows Kaikeyi grateful for this excuse of mother-in-law's command to get back to her husband, only this time she does not return alone. Her foster-sister (daughter of her wet nurse) Manthara accompanies her. Kaikeyi emerges tactless, not clever like Manthara, although she cannot abide stupidity, and driven by emotions. And Manthara? She has no hump, but is so tall and lissom that the envious Ayodhyans call her hunchbacked, but also regard her, in their ignorance, as a demoness because her skin is ebony.

Kaikeyi is shown as Dasharatha's favourite queen, with whom he goes away on a second honeymoon after Sumitra is brought to Ayodhya. He does not spend a single night with the new queen. Kaikeyi exults. But where Kaikeyi would have liked to poison a co-wife, Sumitra is more clever and wins her compassion by waiting upon her hand and foot. Beautiful Sumitra with shadows under her eyes a queen born to serve. So much so that Kaikeyi even sends Dasharatha to Sumitra's chamber one night, and sleeps peacefully! It is Sumitra alone who keeps in touch with her after the exile takes place.

Kaikeyi exults in her supremacy and yet is perversely angry that her husband does not take care of his other wives! It is during this dalliance that the kingdom is attacked, and Kaikeyi saves her husband's life, permanently fracturing her little finger in the process and wining two unconditional boons from her husband. The crooked finger and destiny are shown interlinked in tragic irony, for Kaikeyi does not even dream of the occasion on which she will ask for the boons, and their terrifying impact.

The insecurity Kaikeyi suffers from because of having two co-wives, no heir to Ayodhya and lack of faith in the promises of men, despite her love for Dasharatha, drives her to cling to gems, an obsession which her subjects criticize: "I loved the glow of colours and brittle shades and shapes / the cold fire in stones". She loves to be ever glimmeringly clad, every inch a queen both for the sake of her husband and because of her inner insecurity. Yet there is an innate generosity of heart in this jealous, possessive, insecure woman, which makes her, "warmed by his (her husband's) glance", give Sumitra the extra share of the sanctified fertility-gifting payesh; which leads her to regard Kaushalya's Rama as her own son, neglecting her own son Bharata in his favour; which is seen in her anger at the finalization of the marriages of the sons without her concurrence, being transformed into a deep love for Sita in whom she sees a younger Kaikeyi.

Syam alters the story of Rishyashringa and his putreshti yajna into an account of a nameless ascetic with burning eyes who is sent by the numerous progenied Kekaya Queen Madhuri, another invention of the author. Syam makes no bones about Kaikeyi pinning the cause of childlessness on Dasharatha, with a hint that she alone among the queens is

fertile. But for this she has to ignore the Rishyashringa story, because that sage married Shanta, Dasharatha's daughter by Kaushalya given away in adoption to his friend Lomapada, King of Anga, much as Pritha is given away by her father Shurasena to his friend Kuntibhoja. Dipak Chandra in his novel on Kaikeyi also pinpointed the cause in Dasharatha's own infertility caused by his large harem, and portrayed Rishyashringa as a sage-physician conducting the king and his queens through a year-long regimen of medicinal treatment to restore fertility and potency.

It is in Section XXI of the poem that we receive a rude jolt when Syam has Kaikeyi muse on even taking a lover to resolve the impasse of childlessness. This is grossly anachronistic and spoils the atmosphere carefully built up so far with great success. Queens taking lovers is a phenomenon foreign to the Epic and Puranic world of India, and is a medieval development. It is also wholly out of character with all that Syam reveals of Kaikeyi throughout the poem.

One is also uncomfortable with Syam's sudden use of the Roman "June" sandwiched between *yajna* and *payesh*. If the month of torrential rains was to be evoked, surely the mood could have been created far more effectively, in tune with the ambience of the poem by using the traditional Sanskrit name of the month, *Ashadha*?

Kaikeyi's dark side, her shadow-self feeding on insecurity and fear of subjects rebelling, is Syam's unique contribution to our understanding of this character. Unknown to Dasharatha, she weaves a network of spies to guard the royal throne—ever so ironically—for Rama. Again anachronistically, Syam has her pre-empt Kautilya in selecting wandering beggars, priests, and bored housewives for this purpose, with Manthara as the go-between. Finding Ayodhya's general Siladitya (again a name not featuring in the Epics/Puranas) too keen to launch an attack on a neighboring kingdom, which would inevitably lead to new taxes and arouse public outcry of which Dasharatha is blissfully oblivious, Kaikeyi turns Catherine de Medici, and removes the general through a gift of poisoned wine to his wife. She consistently regards her husband as too uncomplicated a man to rule intelligently enough to hold on to his inherited kingdom! That is why she never shares with him the information her spies bring her.

It is Kaikeyi who schools Rama in the tricks of kingship, the need for hypocrisy, the absolute necessity of prizing the subjects above all for they can make or break the king. She does not, however, tell him of her spy network, or of people's emotions being fickle, or of the murders, for she wants to remain the perfect mother in his eyes. Syam has Kaikeyi (queen and royal mother) put a rhetorical question to herself, which is brilliant in its incisive psychological probing:

Is hypocrisy an essential part of motherhood?

Syam sketches with swift simple strokes pen-portraits of the four wives the sons bring home. This is a major contribution, because Valmiki gives them no individuality at all, but for Sita. Syam also gives Kaikeyi the credit of drilling into the princes the necessity of keeping to a single wife—the fruit of her own experiences—instead of this being a cardinal virtue enunciated by Rama alone, as has been traditionally accepted.

In Sita, she sees a younger version of herself, possibly because of her doting on

Rama, which replaces her indignation at her favourite being married to a foundling. Marble-cold Mandavi is the beauty of the family, never leaving the palace even when Bharata retires to a village, but Penelope-like constantly embroidering curtains and robes that are never used. Shrutakirti, all life and laughter, is a non-entity losing herself in Shatrughna, not "lost herself behind Shrutakirti" (sic, p.81), and remains a mere shadow. Urmila's fiery nature matches Lakshmana's and "their fights raged/around the palace". But we miss mention of her after Lakshmana's return from exile. The tragic irony that dogs Kaikeyi's fate also encompasses the four princes, for none of them has a happy married life.

It is Kaikeyi who understands the agony of Sita in her chastity being questioned twice over before cheering crowds by Rama, and her disappearing forever. Kaikeyi will not be another Indumati—Dasharatha's mother, who went to Kekaya to bring back the offended Kaikeyi—because, as she says so sensitively,

A woman can only take so much pain again and again from a husband once loved.

That phrase, "once loved" reverberates with significance and takes us back to the ineffably poignant scene Syam paints of Kaikeyi meeting Sita after the return from exile and, with "hot rage" burning through her veins, asking her whether it is true that the first question Rama had put to her was concerning her chastity,

But Sita only smiled
And rested her head
On my lap
And I dared not
Probe further
The shadows under
Her eyes
Passed unnoticed.

Kaikeyi urges Sita to protest against the banishment, which occurs because Rama follows the lesson she had taught him to give primacy to the subjects' wishes. But Sita acquiesces because

She was disillusioned
A love that dims
and sputters into
nothingness
is often worse
than no love
at all.

It is Kaikeyi who points out to Rama the necessity of having his wife beside him for the horse-sacrifice. Rama has a golden statute of Sita made. In a pregnant statement,

Syam's Kaikeyi looks into the heart of the character whose obsession was proving himself to be a greater raja, pleaser of his subjects, than any of the Surya dynasty:

The pure cold metal
 was perfect for
 him
 who turned away
 from a human being
 kingship bled emotion
 out of him.

In an intriguing parallel, the coming of children leads to deprivation. Just as Sarayu's birth lost Kaikeyi her exclusive hold on her husband, the return of Lava and Kusha loses Kaikeyi her dearest daughter-in-law Sita, forever. Syam gives a modern interpretation to the disappearance of Sita. It is no mythical vanishing into the bowels of the earth. Kaikeyi will have no such myth-making, for

Does the earth ever crack
 Open
 for the sufferings of mankind?
 Her Sita wanders off none knows where.
 She left to regain
 self-respect
 a modicum of
 dignity
 and I let it
 be at that.

With the Epilogue, the poem comes full circle, Kaikeyi playing with her grandchildren,

A face crumbling
 into the blur
 of age

realizing that inheriting a throne, as she sought to achieve for Bharata, does not go hand-in-hand with happiness. She warns future generations not to imitate Rama who turned even the image of his wife into metal; implores us not to become oblivious of the man and wife in the process of their deification.

Kaikeyi leaves us with perplexing questions that hang
 unanswered amidst

wandering stars
 And thoughts lie
 buried in unshed tears.

Why is Kaikeyi held solely responsible for what happened? Why did no one stand up against her when she demanded her two boons, instead of

Listening helplessly
 to Kaikeyi !
 As if she was an oracle.

For, could she not be confused too? What were the other two queens doing, the ministers and the royal priest? Was the personality of Kaikeyi so overwhelming, her hold on the kingdom so unquestioned that none dared challenge her will till her own son returned to disobey her?

Kaikeyi proffers two pieces of advice born of the bitter wisdom churned out of her life's tragic experiences:

Ask questions, my grandchildren,
 Always.
 Rule with your
 Hearts
 But keep a little
 of yourselves
 aside
 for life and
 laughter.

Syam ends her poem on a note of high exaltation and nostalgia, firing the imagination, evoking echoes of Browning's "Last Ride together", as Kaikeyi's memories wing back to her golden days of love:

Two horses galloping
 With the wind
 The black-haired woman
 Impatient, laughing
 And the steady warmth in
 the man's eyes
 the love in his
 voice.
 Dasharatha.

Syam's poetic genius is characterized by a vivid and fresh imagination. Kaikeyi's

crowned hair is compared to

The brilliance of stars
 Across black night skies.
 Her horse is
 Black splendour
 Galloping—a thunder of black foam
 Across the blue meadowed hills.

The most romantic images come in her description of Kaikeyi and Dasharatha's sylvan retreat in Section XI, where she speaks of the deep woods

Touched with
 honey purple
 and glistening green,
 twilight bathing
 skins
 Polished gold....
 A forest idyll
 Immersed in colour deep flowers
 And happiness

But her range exceeds this with facile ease in the vibrant, cryptic, sinewy images thronging the description of war in Sections XIII-XV, as Kaikeyi blazes through the battlefield, smiling through her terror at the acclaim of victory. After Dasharatha's death, her inability to feel anything is described, as if she were marooned on a desert island

Where no feelings
 Prevail
 Only waves lap the
 Silent shores
 Endlessly,
 And to
 Grey walls from
 which colour
 had fled
 Closing in on the
 memories we
 shared.

Seven years after his death, she feels "jagged pain" strike her for the first time, and sheds her first tears in abject helplessness when Bharata looks through her, when she demands he send soldiers to help Rama rescue Sita.

She lives on in the city, a detested legend, her isolation and misery communicated ever so pithily:

While in the palace
Moth-eaten days
Ate time up.
All she has left
were thoughts
Prowling like scavenging
Rats in my
brain.

Yet, the spirit is not dead. Feeling Ayodhya’s air hanging heavy with accusations, she laughs her old laugh and would live again,

Ride white hair streaming
behind me
gallop away
the fears about
Sita’s fate.

The author had wanted to draw Kaikeyi out as “a character in shades of grey...A warm-hearted, complex woman...Gentle, stubborn, arrogant, confused. A woman bent on getting her own way even if it ultimately destroys her happiness”. And how brilliantly she succeeds in this attempt! *Kaikeyi* is an undoubted triumph, following hard on the heels of the superb *Kurukshetra*, which provided new insights into the psyche of Draupadi, Subhadra and Bhanumati.

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

(Courtesy: www.boloji.com/women/kaikeyi)