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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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A DREAM OF SURREAL SCIENCE

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink
At the Mermaid, capture immortality;
A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink
Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey.

A thyroid, meditating almost nude
Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal Light
And, rising from its mighty solitude,
Spoke of the Wheel and eightfold Path all right.

A brain by a disordered stomach driven
Thundered through Europe, conquered, ruled and fell,
From St. Helena went, perhaps, to Heaven.
Thus wagged on the surreal world, until

A scientist played with atoms and blew out
The universe before God had time to shout.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 145)

ON SCIENCE—A LETTER

THE difficulty is that you are a non-scientist trying to impose your ideas on the most difficult because most material field of science—physics. It is only if you were a scientist yourself basing your ideas on universally acknowledged scientific facts or else your own discoveries—though even then with much difficulty—that you could get a hearing or your opinion have any weight. Otherwise you open yourself to the accusation of pronouncing in a field where you have no authority, just as the scientist himself does when he pronounces on the strength of his discoveries that there is no God. When the scientist says that “scientifically speaking, God is a hypothesis which is no longer necessary” he is talking arrant nonsense—for the existence of God is not and cannot be and never was a scientific hypothesis or problem at all, it is and always has been a spiritual or a metaphysical problem. You cannot speak scientifically about it at all either pro or con. The metaphysician or the spiritual seeker has a right to point out that it is nonsense; but if you lay down the law to the scientist in the field of science, you run the risk of having the same objection turned against you.

As to the unity of all knowledge, that is a thing *in posse*, not yet in *esse*. The mechanical method of knowledge leads to certain results, the higher method leads to certain others, and they at many points fundamentally disagree. How is the difference to be bridged—for each seems valid in its own field; it is a problem to be solved, but you cannot solve it in the way you propose. Least of all in the field of physics. In psychology one can say that the mechanical or physiological approach takes hold of the thing by the blind end and is the least fruitful of all—for psychology is not primarily a thing of mechanism and measure, it opens to a vast field beyond the physical instrumentalities of the body-consciousness. In biology one can get a glimpse of something beyond mechanism, because there is from the beginning a stir of consciousness progressing and organising itself more and more for self-expression. But in physics you are in the very domain of the mechanical law where process is everything and the driving consciousness has chosen to conceal itself with the greatest thoroughness—so that, “scientifically speaking”, it does not exist there. One can discover it there only by occultism and yoga, but the methods of occult science and of yoga are not measurable or followable by the means of physical science—so the gulf remains still in existence. It may be bridged one day, but the physicist is not likely to be the bridge-builder, so it is no use asking him to try what is beyond his province.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 200-01)

‘A TRUE SCIENTIST’

IF you meet a true scientist who has worked hard, he will tell you: “We know nothing. What we know today is nothing beside what we shall know tomorrow. This year’s discoveries will be left behind next year.” A real scientist knows very well that there are many more things he doesn’t know than those he knows. And this is true of all branches of human activity. I have never met a scientist worthy of the name who was proud. I have never met a man of some worth who has told me: “I know everything.” Those I have seen have always confessed: “In short, I know nothing.” After having spoken of all that he has done, all that he has achieved, he tells you very quietly: “After all, I know nothing.”

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1953, CWM, Vol. 5, p. 29)

‘NO HYPOTHESES, ONLY EXPERIENCES’

THE other day, P. said to me in passing, “Modern science would neither follow nor believe us.” According to him, scientists acknowledge only “essential hypotheses,” and not having the experience, would take our science for a set of “non-essential” hypotheses. I didn’t argue, or else I would have told him, “We don’t make any hypotheses, far from it, we simply *state our experiences*.” They are free to disbelieve us or to think we’re half crazy or hallucinating—that’s up to them, it’s their business. But we don’t make hypotheses, we speak of things we know and have experienced.

For several hours afterwards I had a vision of this state of mind and found absolutely no need to make hypotheses (you see, P. was speaking of “hypothesising” the existence of different states of being). It’s just as I told you: I have passed that stage; I don’t need inner dimensions any more. And observing this materialistic state of mind, it occurred to me that, on the basis of their own experiments, they are bound to admit oneness—at least the oneness of matter; and to admit oneness is enough to obtain the key to the whole problem!

THE MOTHER

(From a conversation of July 4, 1962)

SHE LEADS US TO HIM SHE BRINGS HIM CLOSER TO US

[A compilation of passages from the Mother's *Questions and Answers*
where she speaks of Sri Aurobindo]

(Continued from the issue of September 2005)

97. Divine in Origin

...what Sri Aurobindo means here¹ is that there is nothing, not even the most anti-divine force, which in its origin is not the Supreme Divine. So, necessarily, everything goes back to Him, consciously or unconsciously. In the consciousness of the one who makes the offering it does not go to the Divine: it goes to the greater or smaller demon to whom he turns. But through everything, through the wood of the idol or even the ill-will of the vital adversary, ultimately, all returns to the Divine, since all comes from Him. Only, the one who has made the offering or the sacrifice receives but in proportion to his own consciousness and to what he has asked. So one could say that theoretically it returns to the Divine, but that the response comes from that to which he has addressed himself, not from the supreme Origin, for one is not in contact with it; one is in contact only with the next step, the next intermediary—no higher.

It is quite certain that if the movement is absolutely unconscious, the result will also be absolutely unconscious; and if the movement is entirely egoistic, the result is also entirely egoistic. It is as in that story by Sri Aurobindo² I read to you one Friday, the first story in which he explained Karma, saying that evil results in evil, and good results in good. Evil begets evil, and good begets good: that is Karma; it is not a punishment or a reward, it is something automatic. Well, if your sacrifice is egoistic and obscure, it will necessarily have an obscure and egoistic result.

* * *

1. "Whoever the recipient, whatever the gift, it is the Supreme, the Eternal in things, who receives and accepts it..." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 20, pp. 101-02)

2. The reference is to the tale "A Dream", written originally in Bengali and published in *The Chariot of Jagannatha*.

(M 8: 81-82)

98. The Gita and Integral Transformation

Mother, the Gita speaks of the true essence of sacrifice, and Sri Aurobindo says, "Its method is not self-mortification, but a greater life; not self-mutilation, but

a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members....”

The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 101

Isn't it physical transformation we aspire for?

When Sri Aurobindo says “integral transformation”, naturally he is speaking of physical transformation. But the Gita does not speak of integral transformation, I don't think so. Because for the Gita, the idea of physical transformation does not exist. As I was explaining to you the other day, the world is as it is and you have but to take it as it is, and not be affected by what it is. For you enter a higher consciousness, you are liberated from outer forms, but they remain as they are. Indeed, some slight mention is made of changing one's character, but there is no question of changing the material world.

(M 8: 83)

99. The Only Thing Valuable

Sweet Mother, I would like to have the explanation of a sentence. Sri Aurobindo has said somewhere, “Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything.”

That means that it is the Spirit, the spiritual consciousness and the divine Presence which give to life all its value, that without this spiritual consciousness and divine Presence life has no value.

The same holds true for the individual, whatever his material capacities and the material conditions in which he lives, his only worth is that of the divine Presence and the spiritual consciousness in him.

And so from the point of view of the truth of things, a man who has no material possessions and no remarkable capacities or possibilities, but who is conscious of his psychic being and united with the Divine in him, is infinitely greater than a ruler upon earth or a millionaire who possesses considerable material power but is unconscious of his psychic being.

From the point of view of the truth, it is like that. This is what Sri Aurobindo means: no apparent and outer things have any true value. The only thing which is valuable is the divine consciousness and union with the Spirit.

(M 8: 135-36)

100. The Needs of the Body

“In sum, it may be safely affirmed that no solution offered can be anything but provisional until a supramental Truth-Consciousness is reached by which the appearances of things are put in their place and their essence revealed and

that in them which derives straight from the spiritual essence. In the meanwhile our only safety is to find a guiding law of spiritual experience—or else to liberate a light within that can lead us on the way until that greater direct Truth-Consciousness is reached above us or born within us. For all else in us that is only outward, all that is not a spiritual sense or seeing, the constructions, representations or conclusions of the intellect, the suggestions or instigations of the Life-force, the positive necessities of physical things are sometimes half-lights, sometimes false lights that can at best only serve for a while or serve a little and for the rest either detain or confuse us.”

The Synthesis of Yoga, pp. 128-29

The necessities of physical things also? I don't understand.

All this, not only physical necessities. All these things are at times lights, that is to say, knowledge diminished and mixed with ignorance, at times false lights, that is, no knowledge at all: simply ideas, conceptions, ways of seeing, ways of feeling—all these things considered as knowledge by the ordinary human consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo speaks even of physical needs, the needs of the body, which are generally considered as imperative and which have their own truth; he says that even that can be only quite a partial light, that is to say, a semblance of knowledge or even something false.

That goes against all modern ideas.

People always have the impression that what they call the needs of the body, what the body demands, is an absolute law; that if it is not obeyed, well, one commits a great wrong against one's body which will suffer the consequences. And Sri Aurobindo says that these needs in themselves are either very partial lights, that is to say, only a way of seeing things, or even no lights at all—completely false.

If one were to study the problem attentively enough, one would find out to what an extent these so-called needs of the body depend on the mental attitude. For example, the need to eat. There are people who literally die of hunger if they have not eaten for eight days. There are others who do it deliberately and observe fasting as a principle of yoga, as a necessity in yoga. And for them, at the end of eight days' fasting, the body is as healthy as when they started, and sometimes healthier!

Finally, for all these things, it is a question of proportion, of measure. It is obvious that one can't always live without eating. But it is as obvious that the idea people have about the need to eat is not true. Indeed, it is a whole subject for study: The importance of the mental attitude in relation to the body.

Sri Aurobindo does not recognise the needs of the body as things true in themselves. He says: it is not true, it is only an idea you have, an impression, it is not something true which carries its truth in itself.

(M 8: 139-40)

101. Division of Works

Mother, about the division of works, Sri Aurobindo writes here: "A Yoga turned towards an all-embracing realisation of the Supreme will not despise the works or even the dreams, if dreams they are, of the Cosmic Spirit or shrink from the splendid toil and many-sided victory which he has assigned to himself in the human creature. But its first condition for this liberality is that our works in the world too must be part of the sacrifice offered to the Highest and to none else, to the Divine Shakti and to no other Power, in the right spirit and with the right knowledge, by the free soul and not by the hypnotised bondslave of material Nature. If a division of works has to be made, it is between those that are nearest to the heart of the sacred flame and those that are least touched or illumined by it because they are more at a distance, or between the fuel that burns strongly or brightly and the logs that if too thickly heaped on the altar may impede the ardour of the fire by their damp, heavy and diffused abundance."

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 132

Psychologically, to what does this division correspond in our life?

I suppose it is different for each one. So each one must find those activities which increase his aspiration, his consciousness, his deeper knowledge of things, and those which, on the contrary, mechanise him and bring him back more thoroughly into a purely material relation with things.

It is difficult to make a general rule.

That means that everything ought to be done exactly, as an offering?

Truly speaking, it depends more on the way of doing a thing than on the thing itself.

You take up some work which is quite material, like cleaning the floor or dusting a room; well, it seems to me that this work can lead to a very deep consciousness if it is done with a certain feeling for perfection and progress; while other work considered of a higher kind as, for example, studies or literary and artistic work, if done with the idea of seeking fame or for the satisfaction of one's vanity or for some material gain, will not help you to progress. So this is already a kind of classification which depends more on the inner attitude than on the outer fact. But this classification can be applied to everything.

Of course, there is a kind of work which is done only for purely pecuniary and personal reasons, like the one—whatever it may be—which is done to earn a living. That attitude is exactly the one Sri Aurobindo compares with the damp logs of wood which are heaped so thick the flame cannot leap up. It has something dark and heavily

dull about it.

And this brings us to something which I have already told you several times, but which presents a problem not yet solved by circumstances. I think I have already spoken to you about it, but still I shall speak about it again this evening because of this sentence of Sri Aurobindo's.

At the beginning of my present earthly existence I came into contact with many people who said that they had a great inner aspiration, an urge towards something deeper and truer, but that they were tied down, subjected, slaves to that brutal necessity of earning their living, and that this weighed them down so much, took up so much of their time and energy that they could not engage in any other activity, inner or outer. I heard this very often, I saw many poor people—I don't mean poor from the monetary point of view, but poor because they felt imprisoned in a material necessity, narrow and deadening.

I was very young at that time, and I always used to tell myself that if ever I could do it, I would try to create a little world—oh! quite a small one, but still... a small world where people would be able to live without having to be preoccupied with food and lodging and clothing and the imperative necessities of life, so as to see whether all the energies freed by this certainty of a secure material living would turn spontaneously towards the divine life and the inner realisation.

Well, towards the middle of my life—at least, what is usually the middle of a human life—the means were given to me and I could realise this, that is, create such conditions of life. And I have come to this conclusion, that it is *not* this necessity which hinders people from consecrating themselves to an inner realisation, but that it is a dullness, a *tamas*, a lack of aspiration, a miserable laxity, an I-don't-care attitude, and that those who face even the hardest conditions of life are sometimes the ones who react most and have the intensest aspiration.

That's all. I am waiting for the contrary to be proved to me.

I would very much like to see the contrary but I haven't yet seen it. As there are many energies which are not utilised, since this terrible compulsion of having something to eat or a roof to sleep under or clothes on one's back does not exist—as one is sure of all that—there is a whole mass of energies which are not utilised for that; well, they are spent in idle stupidities. And of these, the foolishness which seems to me the most disastrous is to keep one's tongue going: chatter, chatter, chatter. I haven't known a place where they chatter more than here, and say everything they should not say, busy themselves with things they should not be concerned with. And I know it is merely an overflow of unused energy.

That is all.

So the division in works is perhaps not quite what one thinks....

102. Opening a Book at Random

Once or twice, as a game, you took one of your books or Sri Aurobindo's and opened a page at random, and read out a sentence. Can these sentences give one a sign or an indication? What should we do to get a true answer?

Everybody can do it. It is done in this way: you concentrate. Now, it depends on what you want. If you have an inner problem and want the solution, you concentrate on this problem; if you want to know the condition you are in, which you are not aware of—if you want to get some light on the state you are in, you just come forward with simplicity and ask for the light. Or else, quite simply, if you are curious to know what the invisible knowledge has to tell you, you remain silent and still for a moment and then open the book. I always used to recommend taking a paper-knife, because it is thinner; while you are concentrated you insert it in the book and with the tip indicate something. Then, if you know how to concentrate, that is to say, if you really do it with an aspiration to have an answer, it always comes.

For, in books of this kind (*Mother shows "The Synthesis of Yoga"*), books of revelation, there is always an accumulation of forces—at least of higher mental forces, and most often of spiritual forces of the highest knowledge. Every book, on account of the words it contains, is like a small accumulator of these forces. People don't know this, for they don't know how to make use of it, but it is so. In the same way, in every picture, photograph, there is an accumulation, a small accumulation representative of the force of the person whose picture it is, of his nature and, if he has powers, of his powers. Now, you, when you are sincere and have an aspiration, you emanate a certain vibration, the vibration of your aspiration which goes and meets the corresponding force in the book, and it is a higher consciousness which gives you the answer.

Everything is contained potentially. Each element of a whole potentially contains what is in the whole. It is a little difficult to explain, but you will understand with an example: when people want to practise magic, if they have a bit of nail or hair, it is enough for them, because within this, potentially, there is all that is in the being itself. And in a book there is potentially—not expressed, not manifest—the knowledge which is in the person who wrote the book. Thus, Sri Aurobindo represented a totality of comprehension and knowledge and power; and every one of his books is at once a symbol and a representation. Every one of his books contains symbolically, potentially, what is in him. Therefore, if you concentrate on the book, you can, through the book, go back to the source. And even, by passing through the book, you will be able to receive much more than what is just in the book.

103. Fantastic Freedom

Mother, some say that our general inadequacy in studies comes from the fact that too much stress is laid on games, physical education. Is this true?

Who said that? People who don't like physical education? Stiff old teachers who can't do exercises any longer? These?—I am not asking for names!

Well, I don't think so.

You remember the first article Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Bulletin*? He answers these people quite categorically.

I don't think it is that. I am quite sure it is not that, I believe, rather—and I put all the blame on myself—that you have been given a fantastic freedom, my children; oh! I don't think there is any other place in the world where children are so free. And, indeed, it is very difficult to know how to make use of a freedom like that.

However, it was worthwhile trying the experiment.

(M 8: 183-84)

104. How will the Supermind Act?

How is the Supermind going to act? What should be done to receive it? In what form will it manifest?...

I have answered as best I could. But it so happens that in Sri Aurobindo's book *On the Veda* there is a note on a certain page, and in this note he answers these questions. I always tell people: if you were to take a little trouble to read what Sri Aurobindo has written, many of your questions would become useless, for Sri Aurobindo has already answered them. However, people probably have neither the time nor the patience nor the will, nor all that is needed, and they don't read. The books are published, they are even, I believe, generously distributed, but few read them. Anyway, here is Sri Aurobindo's answer. Try to think, and if you have a special question to ask I shall answer it.

Listen:

*"The supramental world has to be formed or created in us by the Divine Will as the result of a constant expansion and self-perfecting."*¹

That is to say, to hope to receive, use and form in oneself a supramental being, and consequently a supramental world, there must first of all be an expansion of consciousness and a *constant* personal progress: not to have sudden flights, a little

aspiration, a little effort, and then fall back into somnolence. This must be the *constant* idea of the being, the *constant* will of the being, the *constant* effort of the being, the *constant* preoccupation of the being.

If for five minutes in the day you happen to remember that there is something in the universe like the supramental Force, and that, after all, “it would be nice if it manifested in me”, and then all the rest of the time you are thinking of something else and are busy with other things, there is not much chance that it would come and do any serious work in you. Sri Aurobindo says this quite clearly and precisely. He does not tell you that *you* will do it, he says it is the Divine Will. So don’t come and say, “Ah! I can’t.” No one is asking you to do it. But there *must be* enough aspiration and adhesion in the being to make the expansion of the being, the expansion of consciousness possible. For, to tell the truth, everybody is small, small, small, so small that there is not enough room to put any supramental in! It is so small that it is already quite filled up with all the ordinary little human movements. There must be a great widening to make room for the movements of the Supermind.

And then there must also be an aspiration for progress: not to be satisfied with what one is, how one is, what one does, what one knows or thinks one knows; but to have a constant aspiration for something more, something better, for a greater light, a vaster consciousness, a truer truth and a more universal goodness. And over and above all this, a goodwill which never fails.

That can’t be done in a few days.

Moreover, I believe that I had taken my precautions in this matter and that, when I announced that it had been granted to the earth to receive the supramental Force in order to manifest it, this did not mean that the manifestation would be instantaneously apparent, and that everybody would suddenly find himself transported to a peak of light and of possibilities and realisation, without any effort. I said immediately that it would not be like that. I even said that it would take quite a long time. But still, people have complained that its advent has not made things easier, and that even, in some cases, they have become more difficult. I am very sorry, but I can do nothing about it. For it is not the fault of the supramental Force, the fault lies in the way in which it was received. I know instances in which truly the aspiration was sincere and the collaboration complete, and in which many things that had seemed very difficult in the past at once became infinitely easier.

However, there is a very great difference, always, between a kind of mental curiosity which plays with words and ideas, and a true aspiration of the being which means that truly, really, it is *that* which counts, essentially, and nothing else—that aspiration, that inner will because of which nothing has any value except *that*, that realisation; nothing counts except *that*; there is no other reason for existence, for living, than *that*.

And yet it is this that’s needed if one wants the Supramental to become visible to the naked eye.

And mark that I am not speaking of a physical transformation, for this everyone knows: you don't expect to become luminous and plastic overnight, to lose your weight, be able to displace yourself freely, appear in a dozen places at the same time and what not.... No, I believe you are reasonable enough not to expect this to happen right away. It will take some time.

But still, simply, the working of the consciousness, simply a certain self-mastery, a control over one's body, a direct knowledge of things, a capacity of identification and a clear vision—instead of that hazy and vague sight which sees only the mere appearances that are so deceptive, so unreal, so fossilised—a more direct perception, an inner perception, this ought to be able to come and come quickly if one has prepared oneself.

Simply to have that feeling that the air one breathes is more living, the strength one has more lasting. And instead of always groping like a blind man to know what should be done, to have a clear, precise, inner intimation: it is this—not that: *this*.

These are things one can acquire immediately if one is ready.

* * *

1. This note occurs in Sri Aurobindo's commentary on the fourth hymn to Agni in the fifth Mandala of the Rig Veda, "The Divine Will, Priest, Warrior and Leader of Our Journey":

"O Knower of the Births, the man perfect in his works
for whom thou createst that other blissful world,*
reaches a felicity that is peopled happily with his
life's swiftesses, his herds of Light, the children
of his soul, the armies of his energy."

The Secret of the Veda, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 375

* The footnote occurs here.

(M 8: 203-06)

105. Radha and Krishna

I have received two questions. One is about a passage from *The Synthesis of Yoga* where it is said:

"For there is concealed behind individual love, obscured by its ignorant human figure, a mystery which the mind cannot seize, the mystery of the body of the Divine, the secret of a mystic form of the Infinite which we can approach only through the ecstasy of the heart and the passion of the pure and sublimated sense, and its attraction which is the call of the divine Flute-player, the mastering compulsion of the All-Beautiful, can only be seized and seize us through an

occult love and yearning which in the end makes one the Form and the Formless, and identifies Spirit and Matter. It is that which the spirit in Love is seeking here in the darkness of the Ignorance and it is that which it finds when individual human love is changed into the love of the Immanent Divine incarnate in the material universe."

The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 150

This brings us back to the symbol of Krishna and Radha.

Krishna is the One of whom Sri Aurobindo speaks here, the divine Flute-player, that is to say, the immanent and universal Divine who is the supreme power of attraction; and the soul, the psychic personality, called here Radha, who responds to the call of the Flute-player. So I have been asked to say something this evening on the Radha-consciousness, that is, in fact, on the way in which the individual soul answers the call of the Divine.

It so happens that this is exactly what Sri Aurobindo has described in the chapter we have just read: it is that capacity of finding Ananda in all things through identification with the one divine Presence and a complete self-giving to that Presence. So I don't think I have much to add; what I could say would be a limitation or a diminution of the totality of this experience.

(After a silence) This consciousness has the capacity of changing everything into a perpetual ecstasy, for instead of seeing things in their discordant appearance, one now sees only the divine Presence, the divine Will and the Grace everywhere; and every event, every element, every circumstance, every form changes into a way, a detail through which one can draw more intimately and profoundly closer to the Divine. Discordances disappear, ugliness vanishes; there is now only the splendour of the divine Presence in a Love shining in all things.

It is obvious that from a practical point of view one must be able to remain at a constant and unshakable height in order to be in that state without exposing oneself to fairly troublesome consequences. That is probably why those who wished to live in this state used to withdraw from the world and find the universal contact through Nature.... I must say, without meaning to be unpleasant to men, that it is infinitely easier to realise this state of consciousness when one is surrounded by trees, flowers, plants and even animals than by human beings. It is easier but not indispensable. And if one wants the state to be truly integral, one must be able to keep it at every moment, in the presence of anyone and anything.

(M 8: 221-23)

* * * * *

(To be continued)

TOWARDS A NEW SPIRITUAL POETRY

SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF ASCENDING "PLANES" OF POETIC EXPRESSION

(Continued from the issue of September 2005)

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As the strain of the "Overhead", though the most distinctive of the Future Poetry to which Sri Aurobindo looks forward especially in the English language, is not the sole element of it, we may dwell awhile on the various other signs he sees in recent contemporary work. He¹⁸ marks out as a prevailing characteristic what he terms "intonation" in contrast to the insistence of the metrical fall: "A spiritual intonation, not content to fill and at its strongest overflow the metrical mould, but insistent to take it into itself and carrying it rather than carried in it, is the secret of its melody or its harmony." Thus Meredith has those phrases in which "the metrical sound floats and seems always on the point of drowning in some deep sea of inner intonation,"¹⁹—phrases for the Spirit of Colour who leads

Through widening chambers of surprise to where
Throbs rapture near an end that aye recedes,
Because his touch is infinite and lends
A yonder to all ends,—

"a description which might well be applied to the whole drift and cause of this spiritual principle of rhythm. A. E. is not a great rhythmist, he is too preoccupied with his vision, more of a truth-seer than a truth-hearer of the Spirit, but when the hearing comes, the *śruti*, somehow or other without any expenditure of device the full spiritual intonation rises up and takes possession of the music,—to give one instance only,

Like winds and waters were her ways:
They heed not immemorial cries;
They move to their high destinies
Beyond the little voice that prays.

And in Yeats, a supreme artist in rhythm, this spiritual intonation is the very secret of all his subtlest melodies and harmonies and reveals itself whether in the use of old and common metres which cease to be either old or common in his hands or in delicate new turns of verse. We get it in his blank verse, taken at random,—

A sweet miraculous terrifying sound,—

or in the mounting flight of that couplet on the flaming multitude

That rise, wing upon wing, flame above flame
And like a storm cry the ineffable name.

or heard through the slowly errant footfalls of that other,

In all poor foolish things that live a day
Eternal Beauty wandering on her way,—

but most of all in the lyrical movements,—

With the earth and the sky and the water, remade,
like a casket of gold;
For my dream of your image that blossoms a rose in the
deeps of my heart.

There we have, very near to the ear of the sense, that inaudible music floating the vocal music, the song unheard, or heard only behind and in the inner silence, to catch some echo of which is the privilege of music but also the highest intention of poetical rhythm.”²⁰

Further even than by the opening of the inner doors upon the inmost recesses of our being are we borne by the passage through us of mysteries beyond those very recesses. The latter are still part of our embodied existence and not some ether of superhuman reality that is an unknown self of us waiting for embodiment. To render expressible this “Overhead” ether—actually hidden world after world of a far finer concreteness than anything we know and therefore impalpable-seeming—is the supreme aim of the Future Poetry.

I have already listed the Overhead gradations. Let me quote some brief pointers by Sri Aurobindo²¹ to their specific activities. First, the Higher Mind or Higher Thought. “The Higher Thought has a strong tread often with bare unsandalled feet and moves in a clear-cut light: a divine power, measure, dignity is its most frequent character.” Sri Aurobindo continues with the rest of the planes: “The outflow of the Illumined Mind comes in a flood brilliant with revealing words or a light of crowding images, sometimes surcharged with its burden of revelations, sometimes with a luminous sweep. The Intuition is usually a lightning flash showing up a single spot or plot of ground or scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision to the surprised ecstasy of the inner eye; its rhythm has a decisive inevitable sound which leaves nothing essential unheard, but very commonly is embodied in a single

stroke.” About the Overmind inspiration above all these, Sri Aurobindo writes: “...the Overmind thinks in a mass; its thought, feeling, vision is high or deep or wide or all these things together: to use the Vedic expression about fire, the divine messenger, it goes vast on its way to bring the divine riches, and it has a corresponding language and rhythm.” Sri Aurobindo has the additional remark: “These, however, are only general or dominant characters; any number of variations is possible. There are besides mingled inspirations, several levels meeting and combining or modifying each other’s notes, and an Overmind transmission can contain or bring with it all the rest,...”

Here two side-issues may be noted. “There are... in mental poetry”, remarks Sri Aurobindo,²² “derivations or substitutes for all these styles. Milton’s ‘grand style’ is such a substitute for the manner of the Higher Thought. Take it anywhere at its ordinary level or in its higher elevation, there is always or almost always that echo there:

Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree

or

On evil days though fall’n, and evil tongues

or

Blind Thamyras and blind Maeonides,
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.

Shakespeare’s poetry coruscates with a play of the hues of imagination which we may regard as a mental substitute for the inspiration of the Illumined Mind and sometimes by aiming at an exalted note he links on to the illumined Overhead inspiration itself as in the lines... [to Sleep]:

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy’s eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?

But the rest of the passage falls away in spite of its high-pitched language and resonant rhythm far below the Overhead strain.”

The second issue arises from Sri Aurobindo’s answer to me on whether a particular type of substance would constitute “Overhead-ness”. He²³ wrote: “You speak, for instance, of the sense of the Infinite and the One which is pervasive in the Overhead planes; that need not be explicitly there in the Overhead poetic expression or in the substance of any given line: it can be expressed indeed by Overhead poetry

as no other can express it, but this poetry can deal with quite other things. I would say that Shakespeare's lines

Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain

have the Overhead touch in the substance, the rhythm and the feeling; but Shakespeare is not giving us here the sense of the One and the Infinite. He is... dealing as he always does with life, with vital emotions and reactions or the thoughts that spring out in the life-mind under the pressure of life. It is not any strict adherence to a transcendental view of things that constitutes this kind of poetry, but something behind not belonging to the mind or the vital and physical consciousness and with that a certain quality or power in the language and the rhythm which helps to bring out that deeper something."

To get a general sense of "that deeper something" and the way in which intensity of vision, intensity of word and intensity of rhythm function on the various levels of Overhead poetry I may pick out a few lines familiar to students of literature, about which I happened to question Sri Aurobindo. I was in search for a precise evaluation of them. Here are three snatches from Vaughan with Sri Aurobindo's brief estimates:

Rapt above earth by power of one fair face.

"Difficult to say. More of Higher Mind perhaps than anything else—but something of illumination and intuition also."

But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

"Illumined Mind with something from Intuition."

I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright.

"Illumined Mind with something from Overmind."

6

To come to grips with the highest Overhead—the Overmind note—I may dilate a little on two well-known lines—from Milton and Wordsworth respectively—characterised by Sri Aurobindo as sheer Overmind-creations. Since the subject of

both is ostensibly the intellect at its profoundest activity I may introduce them by first citing for comparison a couple of notable phrases with an affinity to the theme of these two yet falling short of the supreme plane. Hamlet, after the baffling appearance of his father's ghost ends his address of amazement to it with the words:

...we fools of nature
So horridly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.

The typical Shakespearean thrust of vitality is here, but through an accent of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Poetic Intelligence in the third line, a striking locution which without any mystery in its communicative process makes us think of the mysterious. A different speech, attuned to the mysterious mental movement spoken of, meets us in three lines of Keats's from the Ode to Pan embedded in *Endymion*:

... solitary thinkings such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain.

Sri Aurobindo²⁴ says in general: "...the 'substance' of these lines... is of the highest kind and the expression is not easily surpassable, and even as regards the plane of their origin it is above and not below the boundary of the overhead lines." Coming to particularity, he²⁵ observed: "Higher Mind combined with Illumined." Both poetic excellence and Overmind-substance are achieved: still, the very vibration of such substance is lacking. One of the instances Sri Aurobindo points out of this rare stir of sound matching the sense is the concluding line of that cry in the oration of Milton's Belial:

who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through Eternity...?

Sri Aurobindo has two comments in relation to this line. The broad fundamental comment²⁶—a perception by a mystical aesthesis—runs: "One has the sense here of a rhythm which does not begin or end with the line, but has for ever been sounding in the eternal planes and began even in Time ages ago and which returns into the infinite to go sounding on for ages after. In fact, the word-rhythm is only part of what we hear; it is a support for the rhythm we listen to behind in 'the Ear of the ear', *śrotrasya śrotram* [of the Upanishad]. To a certain extent, that is what all great poetry at its highest tries to have, but it is only the Overmind rhythm to which it is altogether native and in which it is not only behind the word-rhythm but gets into the word-

movement itself and finds a kind of fully supporting body there.”

The second comment touches on a very sensitive point—the impossibility of the slightest modification in the wording. Even in non-overhead poetry the verbal turn is of great importance, yet slight variations would not matter critically, provided the general sense remained the same. The case is entirely different with Belial’s culminating phrase. Sri Aurobindo²⁷ remarks: “Milton’s line lives by its choice of the word ‘wander’ to collocate with ‘through eternity’; if he had chosen any other word, it would no longer have been an Overhead line,...”

Sri Aurobindo has compared Milton’s lines, which express a seizure of the Overmind afflatus, with the three lines by Wordsworth inspired by Roubiliac’s statue at Cambridge

Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

A revelatory art is here. While the “prism” shows an outward orientation of the great scientist, the “silent face” conjures a sense of inwardness, a concentrated mood, and the next line suggests how such a face fits perfectly the sculpture-medium in whose stillness its possessor’s genius is caught for all time as if in a superb trance. Again, the impression of all time for the marble image is sustained by this image’s pointer to the endless exploration of the hitherto unknown which preoccupied Newton’s mental powers. The inward absorption carries a secret dynamic drive. There is a crescendo in the uplift of the expression. The opening pentameter may be considered the Poetic Intelligence’s forceful clarity bordering on the Higher Mind’s large-moving vision and then in the next the Higher Mind itself comes into full action with its wide rhythmic sweep breaking, as it were, beyond into something yet more intense by means of the last word “ever” which exceeds the pentametrical span by a syllable. With this technical excess we are led on most naturally to the culminating scene—the passage of a unique adventure of speculation across distance after uncharted distance towards Nature’s supreme truths.

I employ the term “truths” rather than “facts” both because Wordsworth’s picture has an aura of philosophic elevation and because Newton’s own penetration of Nature was covertly suffused by an intuition of Supernature. For instance his concept of uniform absolute space in which was one absolute time at every point had for its background his notion of God’s omnipresence and omniscience. If we wish to cull from the work of Wordsworth himself a hint of this hidden all-pervading divine sensorium of all-knowledge in a visible form, we should cite two other lines from the same poem, *The Prelude*, imaging a play of the aurora borealis:

Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,

Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

Of course the general “Overhead” voice gets now and then not only into English poetry but also into the poetry of other nations, as for example in Rimbaud’s

Est-ce ces nuits sans fonds que tu dors et t’exiles,
Million d’oiseaux d’or, ô future Vigueur?

which, perhaps without much loss of the Illumined Mind we may ascribe from Sri Aurobindo’s characterisation of the second line when it was shown to him by itself, may be translated:

Within such fathomless nights do you sleep, exiled,
Millions of golden birds, O Vigour to come?

What is rare is the voice from the sheer top, the mantric Overmind, except in ancient Sanskrit and, among modern languages, English which has developed the richest power of suggestion in a packed turn of phrase. The Vedic hymns celebrated the effort to reclaim by means of Yoga what they designated the Lost Sun, the Divine Light that has got submerged in a material Nature which appears to begin as a blind unconsciousness and out of which evolve various forms struggling to live and feel and know. The whole evolution from the original involution of the Godhead cannot but be an endeavour to realise in terrestrial terms the full divinity of all our members, including our material substance which is subject to disease, decrepitude and dissolution. This divinity, on the one hand, awaits in, and exerts pressure from, what Sri Aurobindo has called Supermind, a realm of perfect archetypes of all our members, in which the Ultimate Reality—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, the Upanishadic Sat-Chit-Ananda—has formulated the basic goal of the present cosmic manifestation. On the other hand, it lies latent at the very root of things and pushes upward to meet the descent of its own supramental counterpart. In Sri Aurobindo’s vision, the attainment of an extra-terrestrial heaven or an all-transcending Nirvana is not the aim of earth-history. A divine mentality, a divine vitality, even a divine physicality are to be sought by the soul which is a spark of the Eternal Spirit and which takes up the mental, the vital, the physical instruments again and again in new shapes in a series of rebirths on an aeonic path to perfection.

(Concluded)

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On Overhead Poetry

It has not been absent from English literature: Vaughan, Wordsworth, Shelley, Francis Thompson and AE have it perhaps more frequently, but no English poet has proved continually a channel of its peculiar intensity. For that matter it is no more than sporadic in all languages except Sanskrit. And, even in Sanskrit, parts of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita stand alone as its embodiment en masse. To be holy scripture is not necessarily to be overhead with the revelatory rhythm with which the Indian Rishis often uttered their realisations....

It is not always easy to distinguish the overhead style or to get perfectly the drift of its suggestion. There must be as much as possible a stilling of ourselves, an in-drawn hush ready to listen to the uncommon speech; and we must help the hush to absorb successfully that speech by repeatedly reading the verse aloud, since it is primarily through the rhythm that the psychological state with which an overhead poem is a-thrill echoes within us, stirring the eye to open wider and wider on spiritual mysteries and the brain to acquire a more and more true reflex of the transcendental that is the truth of things, waiting for manifestation.

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(Sri Aurobindo—the Poet, 1999 ed., p. 123, 124)

EINSTEIN AND THE SPECIAL THEORY OF RELATIVITY

(Continued from the issue of September 2005)

5. Some Elements of Relativity

In his famous June 1905 paper Einstein notes that all attempts failed to discover any motion of the earth relative to the aether and therefore the introduction of the aether becomes superfluous. He then goes on to make two postulates:

(i) **The principle of relativity:** The laws of physics are the same in all systems which are moving with a constant velocity and rectilinearly with respect to each other (called inertial systems) and there is no preferred system of reference. Examples of inertial systems: we may neglect the small effects due to the spinning and the orbital motion of the earth, and treat any set of coordinate system fixed on the earth as our inertial system: like a train, ship or airplane moving at a constant speed with respect to the earth.

(ii) **The principle of the constancy of the speed of light:** In all inertial frames the speed of light in empty space has the same value c ($= 300,000$ km/sec) which is independent of the motion of the emitting body. This postulate can be expressed in general as the postulate of a universal limiting speed c for physical entities.

Einstein thus got rid of the preferred aether coordinate system, in absolute rest, by an infinite set of coordinate systems, the inertial frames, which are in uniform motion with respect to each other. The first postulate in part was already in use in laws of mechanics, but the second postulate is completely a brand new one and it introduces effects which baffle common sense. Let us imagine a passenger from a moving train throwing a stone in the forward direction. Now a person standing outside will see the stone coming at him with a speed which is a sum of the speed of the stone, as thrown by the passenger, and the speed of the train. But if the speed of the stone happens to be that of the speed of the light, our theory of relativity tells us that the person standing outside will also see it with the same speed, that is independent of the speed of the train. Einstein explains this by stating that the measurements of distance and time (needed for the speed determination) are not the same in a stationary frame of reference and in a moving system contrary to what we have learnt in our childhood. This strange thing is due to the constancy of the speed of light and the strange behaviour becomes obvious only when the moving system is close to the speed of light, and that is why it was not noticed earlier in laws of mechanics where the speed involved is very much lower compared to the speed of light.

Many attempts were made to invent relativity theories without the second postulate (i.e., the constancy of the speed of light) but this did not succeed. One of the early high-energy physics experiments is worth mentioning in connection with

the speed of light being independent of the motion of the source. T. Alvager *et al* (1964) measured the speed of 6 GeV photons from decay of fast moving neutral pions with speed $0.99975 \times c$, where c is the speed of light and GeV is a unit of energy. The neutral pion, an unstable particle which decays to two photons, was produced in a reaction at the CERN laboratory, Geneva. They determined the speed of photons, emitted along the flight direction of pions. It was measured to be equal to c with high precision. Since photons are the particles of light rays, so the expectation of the photon speed from the Galilean transformation was the sum of the speed of light and the speed of the neutral pion, which is $(c + 0.99975 \times c)$, that is almost twice the speed of light; this is in complete disagreement with the measured value. The result brings out that the motion of the neutral pion does not get added to the speed of the photon in agreement with the second postulate of the relativity.

Starting with the two postulates Einstein, in 1905, came out with the Special Theory of Relativity with new concepts of space and time and derived the Lorentz transformation from the first principle without recourse to electrodynamics. The results follow from a simple kinematics and logical arguments. The results are however very strange as mentioned earlier and some of them are: (i) moving objects contract along the line of motion ('length contraction' which is discussed earlier), (ii) moving clocks run slow (time dilation), (iii) relativistic addition of velocities is very different from the classical one we are used to, and (iv) the equivalence of mass and energy.

Length contraction: It was difficult for people to understand the kinematic origins of the relativistic relations like length contraction etc., and therefore in 1911 Einstein had again to stress on this: "The question whether the Lorentz contraction does or does not exist is confusing. It does not 'really' exist in so far as it does not exist for an observer who moves (with the rod); it 'really' exists, however, in the sense that it can as a matter of principle be demonstrated by a resting observer."¹ Thus the length contraction is not a dynamic (or any molecular) effect, as originally proposed by Lorentz and Fitzgerald, rather it is just the consequence of the two postulates. If the object is moving with respect to an observer A, then the observer A notices the contraction in length, whereas a second observer B—who is moving with the object—will not notice any contraction in length.

Time dilation and the twin paradox: Einstein also formulated the concept of time rather precisely and brought in the union of space and time. There are as many times as there are inertial systems. Let us assume, following Einstein, two railway stations at A and B with two stationary clocks (with labels 'a' and 'b' respectively) whose times are properly synchronised (meaning that the two clocks are showing identical time for a very long period). Now if the clock at A is moved with a constant velocity v along the line AB to B, then on arrival at the station B, the clock 'a' will be found to lag behind that of the clock 'b'. If the time recorded by the clocks 'a' and 'b' for the journey from A to B as Δa and Δb respectively, then relativity gives us the following relation between them: $\Delta a = \Delta b \sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}$, and when v is very small

compared to c then the above relation becomes: $\Delta a \approx \Delta b (1 - \frac{v^2}{2c^2})$. This means that if the clock 'b' measures as one second the time taken, then the clock 'a' will show the time gap to be less than one second by the amount $(\frac{v^2}{2c^2})$. As the velocity v approaches the speed of light, but not exceeding c , the clock 'a' will more or less come to a stand-still. Thus the moving clocks run slow.

The above example tells us that the times of two persons would be the same if they are at rest with respect to each other and different if they are moving with respect to each other. This has led to the so called 'twins paradox'. One of the twins, let us say A, goes on a space journey with speed close to the speed of light, while his partner twin B stays back on the earth. After sometime A returns to the earth and finds that his partner twin B has aged much more than him. Now where is the paradox? One may argue that since the movement is relative, therefore twin B was moving in opposite direction with respect to twin A and hence twin A should look much older to twin B. How do we understand the two situations? The two situations are not really equivalent. Twin B is at rest all the time on earth, and as per the principle of relativity he is in the same inertial frame all the time. On the other hand, twin B has not been moving with constant velocity all the time, because he has to start his engine, he has to turn around to return home—meaning he has felt the accelerations—and so he has not been in one inertial frame. As a result the argument of relative motion is not correct. So, the rule of the game is that the man who has felt the accelerations is the one who would remain younger. This strange behaviour of time is in reality a fact of daily life for particle physicists who are playing with umpteen number of unstable particles (examples: neutron, muon, pion, kaon etc.) moving with high speeds at the particle accelerators. Now an unstable particle disintegrates with some specific mean lifetime, which is the characteristic of that particle. It is a well known fact that this mean lifetime increases with its speed, which is a direct manifestation of time dilation of relativity, and this has been tested to a very high precision. Because of the mean lifetime being a function of speed of the particle, one lists mean-lifetimes of a particle to be the time measured when the particle is at rest.

Let us, for a change, hear what Einstein himself had said about the importance of the concept of time while having conversations during the 1950s with R. S. Shankland—a well-known physicist. The conversation was published in 1963 in the *American Journal of Physics*. Shankland writes: "I asked Professor Einstein how long he had worked on the Special Theory of Relativity before 1905. He told me that he had started at age 16 and worked for 10 years; first as a student when, of course, he could spend only part-time on it, but the problem was always with him. He abandoned many fruitless attempts, 'until at last it came to me that time was suspect!'"² Einstein also mentioned in his review article of 1907: "...it turned out that it was only necessary to formulate the concept of time sufficiently precisely...." Before the advent of relativity one assumed a universal time meaning that it remained the same for all observers; that is, there is no transformation equation for time t in the Galilean

transformation equations.

Addition of velocities: Next we discuss the problem of the addition of velocities in relativity. Let us suppose that a missile is fired from a spaceship with velocity v in the forward direction and the spaceship itself has a velocity u with respect to the ground station. Our aim is to know how fast is the missile moving from the point of view of a man standing on the ground. Einstein gives us the expression for the resultant velocity $w(u, v)$ as: $w(u, v) = \frac{u + v}{1 + uv/c^2}$, which is not just the algebraic sum of two velocities ($u + v$), but there is an extra factor $(1 + uv/c^2)$. Now let us imagine that the missile is fired at half the speed of light ($v = c/2$), and the spaceship itself is moving at half the speed of light ($u = c/2$). The resultant velocity is given by: $w(c/2, c/2) = \frac{c/2 + c/2}{1 + (c/2)(c/2)/c^2} = 4c/5$. Thus in relativity we get the resultant velocity as $4c/5$ and not $c/2 + c/2 = c$. Let us take another example and replace the missile by a light signal moving with velocity c ($v = c$) and the velocity of the spaceship remains as u . Then the resultant velocity is: $w(u, c) = \frac{u + c}{1 + uc/c^2} = c$, and not $(u + c)$. Therefore, if something is moving at the speed of light inside the ship, it will also be moving at the speed of light when measured by the man on the ground. Well, this is what is expected as per the second postulate of the theory of relativity. (Note that the extra factor $(1 + uv/c^2)$ is very close to unity as long as u and v both are much smaller than c .)

Equivalence of mass and energy: A very important offshoot of relativity is the relation between mass and energy. In his second paper on relativity, 1905, Einstein writes: "The mass of a body is a measure of its energy-content; if the energy changes by L , the mass changes in the same sense by $L/(9 \times 10^{20})$, the energy being measured in ergs, and the mass in grammes." Here 9×10^{20} is the square of the velocity of light, the unit used is cm/sec. This is summed up in the famous equation of Einstein: $E = mc^2$, where E is the energy and m is the mass of the body. Since the weight of an object is proportional to its mass, it means that energy has also some weight. By writing the above relation in terms of mass: $m = E/c^2$, it is clear that to see a little bit of mass a very large amount of energy needs to be converted, because the value of the speed of light is very large; no wonder then that nobody has imagined earlier that a close relationship could exist between energy and mass (or weight). The equivalence of mass and energy is being used to understand very many physics phenomena. Let us give a few utility examples of this relation: (i) A fission of a uranium nucleus, on being hit by a neutron, emits two lighter nuclei and a few neutrons. This reaction yields a substantial amount of energy which is calculable from $E = mc^2$, here m is the excess mass of the initial state over the final state particles, and the energy is released in the form of kinetic energy of the decay products. (ii) Our sun is known to emit a radiation at the rate of 4×10^{26} watts. Then how much does the mass of the sun decrease per year due to this energy loss? The rate of loss of the sun's mass is: $E/c^2 = \frac{4 \times 10^{26} \text{ watts}}{(3 \times 10^8 \text{ m/sec})^2} = 4.4 \times 10^9 \text{ kg/sec}$, which is nearly 10^{17} kg/year . Since the mass of the sun is: $2 \times 10^{30} \text{ kg}$, there is no immediate danger of the sun running out of matter. (iii) The conversion of energy into matter is a regular feature in experiments of particle

physics. A typical experiment consists of shooting very high energy particles like protons (the nucleus of a hydrogen atom) from a particle accelerator to a thin target like liquid hydrogen or helium, or a metal sheet of copper or iron. The target is surrounded by detectors to catch all the particles emerging out of it. Now, what happens inside the target? The incoming fast moving protons make collisions with the target nuclei, which are protons and neutrons (target nuclei are only protons in the case of hydrogen). What is the outcome of these collisions? Imagine hitting one brick with another; the outcome will be very many small pieces of bricks and no surprises among the pieces. But with the collisions of two protons there have been many surprises and discoveries. A part of the kinetic energy of the fast-moving proton gets converted into producing a number of new particles which did not exist initially and the two colliding protons retain their identity—this is a direct example of creation of matter from energy and completely understood via the equation $E = mc^2$.

Another novel feature of the relativity theory is that there can be a particle with zero mass (unthinkable in classical mechanics) moving with the speed of light, that is the particle having only energy and no mass. An important example of such a particle in nature is the photon, which is our particle representing light rays.

Einstein has also taught us that the mass of an object increases with velocity: $m = m_0 / \sqrt{1-v^2/c^2}$, where m is the mass of the body when it is not moving. Why was this not realised earlier in practice? It is because the change expected is significant only when the velocity is close to the velocity of light. Here is a numerical estimate. A typical speed of a satellite around the earth is: $v = 8$ km/sec. Now the fractional change in mass of the satellite as per relativity is: $(m - m_0) / m_0 = (1 - v^2/c^2)^{-1/2} - 1$, where m_0 and m are respectively the mass of the satellite while it is resting on the ground and while it is up in the air with velocity v . The right-hand side of the equation can be approximated to $\frac{v^2}{2c^2}$, for values of v small compared to c , which is nearly 3×10^{-10} , that is a change expected to the tune of one part in three billion, which is nearly impossible to detect. If the speed of the satellite happens to be 130,000 km/sec (nearly 40% of the speed of light) then one would see an increase in the mass of the satellite by 10%.

The relativity theory has also brought in simplicity. For example in classical mechanics we are taught two different concepts: mass and kinetic energy ($= mv^2/2$), and two important conservation laws, namely the law of conservation of energy and the law of conservation of mass. These two laws in relativity have been united into one law, the law of conservation of total energy, where the latter is a sum of rest energy ($= m_0 c^2$) and the kinetic energy (when the particle is at rest, its mass is m_0 and the corresponding energy $m_0 c^2$ is called the rest energy). It is the total energy which remains the same in any physical process. Now, with the superiority of the relativity theory it became clear that some corrections are needed in the laws of motion when the speed of the object becomes comparable to the speed of light. The recipe is to replace the mass m , which is assumed to be a constant in classical mechanics,

by Einstein's formula: $m = m_0 / \sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}$. As a result define momentum as: $p = mv = m_0 v / \sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}$, and define force as the rate of change of momentum (in classical mechanics the force can be defined either by the rate of change of momentum or by the mass multiplied by acceleration, but in relativity these two are not the same because the mass is no longer a constant in relativity). One can demonstrate the effect of this change by applying a constant force on a body for a long period. One finds that the body picks up speed with time, but the rate of picking up speed decreases so that it never actually crosses the speed of light. What happens is that with increasing speed the mass becomes heavier and heavier and so the rate of increase in the speed decreases (note that the momentum continues to increase because the mass is increasing). Does this modification in the laws of motion mean that we cannot use the good old Newtonian laws of motion? As long as the speed of an object is much less than the speed of light, one can merrily use Newton's laws of motion without any fear of making a detectable deviation from the correct result.

Antimatter: There are umpteen important applications of the theory of relativity, but here we will mention only one of them. We have been discussing the modifications in classical mechanics, dealing with large objects, brought in by the theory of relativity when the objects start to travel very fast at speeds comparable to the speed of light. Similarly, the classical mechanics need modifications when the objects are very small, namely to the size of particles in the atomic world (atoms, protons, electrons etc.), which are less than 10^{-8} cm, and this modification, which we have not discussed, is taken care of by quantum mechanics. Finally, there are situations when the objects are both fast and small, and this requires implementation of relativistic considerations into quantum mechanics. This was first done in 1928 by Paul Dirac while studying equation of motion for electrons. He ended up in his equations with an expression in terms of square of E , that is E^2 , where E is the energy of the electron. Now, in order to get the expression for E one will have to take a square root of E^2 . As is well known there are two possible solutions: one with a positive sign ($+E$) and the other with a negative sign ($-E$). But as per common sense the positive energy solution is the normal one, whereas the negative energy solution is unphysical. But Dirac had other ideas. To come out of the impasse he proposed a very strange solution and it is that the negative energy solution belongs to a particle which is an antiparticle of the electron, later called the positron. This particle was discovered in 1932 by Carl Anderson while studying cosmic rays (these rays are subatomic particles incident on earth's atmosphere from outer space). The two particles, electron and positron, obey certain rules of correspondence: their masses are equal, the charges are reversed, and the most important property is that when they come together they annihilate each other liberating their mass in the form of energy, like giving out energetic photons.

Following Dirac's theory and the discovery of the positron, it soon became

clear that every particle must have a corresponding antiparticle. Since then one has produced in the laboratory a variety of antiparticles: antiproton, antineutron etc. This idea can naturally be generalised to atoms. But what do we mean by an antiatom? Just replace all the particles inside an atom by their corresponding antiparticles. As an example: a hydrogen atom consists of an electron moving around a proton, and therefore an antihydrogen atom will have a positron moving around an antiproton. Thus the stuff made out of atoms will be different from the stuff made out of antiatoms. The former we call matter which is what we are made out of, and the latter should then be called antimatter. But even by a mistake do not bring matter and antimatter together; if it is done then you have had it: they will instantaneously annihilate each other with a great explosion. The converse is also true, namely the conversion of energy leads to an equal amount of matter and antimatter.

The first observation of antihydrogen was made at the CERN laboratory, Geneva, in 1996, thus heralding the formation of antimatter in the laboratory. What about our universe? The visible universe that we know of currently is composed of matter particles: protons, neutrons and electrons. All attempts have failed so far to find any trace of antimatter in the universe. On the other hand, the Big Bang origin of the universe (meaning the conversion of energy) some fifteen billion years ago should have created an equal amount of matter and antimatter. It is possible that there are regions in space filled with antimatter which have not been explored so far. The hunt is on for the antimatter. A special and sophisticated detector, called Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer (AMS), is expected to be flown in the Space Shuttle Mission soon in search of antimatter. Let us wait for a few more years to know the outcome of the search.

Hendrik Lorentz (1853-1928): Hendrik A. Lorentz, 1902 Nobel Prize winner in physics, made a very significant contribution, next only to Einstein, towards the development of the theory of Relativity. His name will always be remembered for the famous Lorentz transformations. Einstein's thoughts and feelings about Lorentz were: "I admire this man as no other, I would say I love him." In 1915 Lorentz wrote in one of his lecture notes the reason for his failure to discover relativity: "The chief cause of my failure [in discovering special relativity] was my clinging to the idea that only the variable t can be considered as the true time and that my local time t' must be regarded as no more than an auxiliary mathematical quantity".¹

Summary: We give here the summary by quoting from the book of Max Born (1954 Nobel Prize winner in physics):³ Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity may be condensed into the following statements: "Not only the laws of mechanics but those of all physical events—in particular, of electromagnetic phenomena—are completely identical in an infinite number of systems of reference which are moving with constant velocity relative to each other and which are called inertial systems. In any of these systems lengths and times measured with the same physical rods and

clocks appear different in any other system, but the results of measurements are connected with each other by Lorentz transformations.”

(Concluded)

S. N. GANGULI

References for further reading

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2. Robert Resnick (1968): *Introduction to Special Relativity*, John Wiley & Sons.
3. Max Born (1962): *Einstein's Theory of Relativity*, Dover Publications.
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Whence is it that nature does nothing in vain; and whence arises all that order and beauty which we see in the world?

Sir Isaac Newton

*

We no longer pretend to be able to grasp reality in a physical theory; we see in it rather an analytic or geometric mould useful and fertile for a tentative representation of phenomena, no longer believing that the agreement of a theory with experience demonstrates that the theory expresses the reality of things. Such statements have sometimes seemed discouraging; we ought rather to marvel that, with representations of things more or less distant and discoloured, the human spirit has been able to find its way through the chaos of so many phenomena and to derive from scientific knowledge the ideas of beauty and harmony. It is no paradox to say that science puts order, at least tentative order, into nature.

Emile Picard

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Scientific principles and laws do not lie on the surface of nature. They are hidden, and must be wrested from nature by an active and elaborate technique of inquiry.

John Dewey

THE MESSAGE OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

THE moralist—the Christian moralist particularly—has dubbed the atomic bomb as the Devil's engine; while the practical politician retorts that the accursed machine has cut short the war, saved more lives on the whole and reduced the extent and duration of suffering and agony. In any case the new weapon is so radical and devastating in its effectiveness that even politicians do not seem to be without a qualm and heart-burning, not in the moral but in the physical and nervous sense. The atom bomb is a bombshell not upon your enemies alone, but it is a boomerang likely to turn back upon yourself, upon the whole of humanity and human civilisation. Archimedes asked for a fulcrum outside the earth to be able to move it out of its orbit; we have found out something with which one hopes and fears one would do much more.

Man's invention of death-dealing weapons has an interesting history. It is, curious to say, the history of his progress and growing civilisation. The primitive man fought with the strength of his God-given limbs—tooth and nail—to which he subsequently added the crudest of weapons, clubs, of wood or flint. A revolution was brought about when iron was discovered and archery invented. Next revolution came with the appearance of gunpowder on the stage. And then the age of gun-cotton and T.N.T. which held sway till the other day. An interim period of poison gas and chemical warfare was threatened, but everything now has gone overboard with the advent of the atomic bomb and the threatened advent of the Cosmic Death-Ray.

In one sense certainly there has been a progress. This march of machinery, this evolution of tools means man's increasing mastery over Nature, even though physical nature. The primitive man like the animal is a slave, a puppet driven helplessly by Nature's forces. Both lead more or less a life of reflex action: there is here no free, original initiation of action or movement. The slow discovery of Nature's secrets, the gradual application and utilisation of these secrets in actual life meant, first, a liberation of man's conscious being originally imbedded in Nature's inertial movements, and then, a growing power to react upon Nature and mould and change it according to the will of the conscious being. The result at the outset was a release and organisation on the mental level, in the domain of reason and intelligence. Of course, man found at once that this increasing self-consciousness and self-power meant immense possibilities for good, but, unfortunately, for evil also. And so to guard against the latter contingency, rules and regulations were framed to control and canalise the new-found capacities. The Dharma of the Kshatriya, the honour of the Samurai, the code of Chivalry, all meant that. The power to kill was sought to be checked and restrained by such injunctions as, for example, not to hit below the belt, not to fight a disarmed or less armed opponent and so on. The same principle of morals and manners was maintained and continued through the centuries with necessary changes and modifications in application and finds enshrined today in International Covenants and Conventions.

But a new situation has arisen for some time past. The last Great War (World War No. I) was crucial in many ways in the life of humanity. It opened a new direction of man's growth, opened and then closed also apparently. I am referring to the tragedy of the League of Nations. That was an attempt on the part of man (and Nature) to lift the inner life and consciousness to the level of the outer achievements. The attempt failed. Man could not rise to the height demanded of him. Now the second World War became logically more devastating and shattering; it has given the go-by to all ethical standards and codes of honour. The poison gas was not used not because of any moral restraint or disinclination, but because of practical and utilitarian considerations. The Atom Bomb, however, has spoken the word.

That word is a warning that unless man changes, becomes master of himself, he cannot be truly master of the world. He cannot command the forces he has unleashed unless he has command over his own nature. The external immensity, the bloated mass that his physical attainments are, unless armoured and animated by an inner growth, will crash by its own weight. The mammoth, the mastodon, the huge pachyderms, in spite of, rather because of their inordinately one-sided growth could not stand the demand of life and perished. Likewise man will not possess the world but the world will engulf and devour him in its aboriginal hunger of unconsciousness, if he does not take a right-about turn and declare his conversion. The Frankenstein that man has raised can no longer be met by merely human devices—reason and morals—but by a higher discovery and initiation.

The Bomb has shaken the physical atmosphere of the earth as no other engine has done. It has shaken the moral atmosphere too not in a lesser degree. Reason and moral sense could not move man, so Fear has been sent by the Divine Grace. Dante said that God created Hell in his mood of infinite love and justice—that seems to be the inevitable gate through which one has to pass to arrive at the Divine. We are indeed in hell today upon earth, a worse can hardly be tolerated.

Indeed this is the bleak winter of human consciousness—yet can spring be far behind?

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Vol. 1, pp. 77-79)

Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them.

Albert Einstein

MOMENTS, ETERNAL

(Continued from the issue of September 2005)

Disease and Healing

My life is filled with Her ruthless Grace.

In those days I used to feel that the Mother was quite ruthless. Today my eyes fill up with tears. It is only one who has received this terrible Grace who can know how the Mother has saved us from innumerable disasters and continues to do so even today.

One day in the Playground, the Mother came out of Her room in order to take the salute at the March Past. Evening had almost fallen. All of us (Minnie-di, Milli-di, Gauri, Violet and I) were standing as usual next to the map of India, waiting for the Mother. The Mother arrived and looked at us gravely for a while. We stiffened with fear. "What had we done, now?" we wondered.

The Mother declared in a firm, grave voice:

"Never think, not even by mistake, that I shall leave you."

Hearing these words from the Mother frightened us even more. The Mother continued:

"As the mother cat carries her kittens holding them by the neck and transports them from one place to another, I too will drag you by force."

Then She stretched Her hands in such a way, as if to take us by the neck, that we recoiled a little.

"You will not be able to rid yourself of me," She went on.

We went on staring at the Mother's face with fear and astonishment. We could not quite understand what was going on.

"Good Lord! Why is the Mother so angry with us? We are like terrified kittens."

We were frightened to be so close to the Mother. But I went on calling Her. We did not get to hear any stories or to laugh or even to ask any questions that day. We all sat still like well-behaved children near Her. From time to time I looked up at Her. She seemed steeped in some deep thought, beyond the known or the unknown. But when had we really known the Mother? Then that fear inside began slowly to recede.

We sat with the Mother and felt a little more relaxed. The clouds of fear thinned out. At that moment, even though the Mother looked very distant, we felt as if She was ours. The Mother seated in Her Maheshwari aspect, immobile, calm,—a formidable Vastness radiated from Her all around. Who knows what sort of a path the Mother was preparing for us? Where was She taking us? Where would this path end? What lay at the end of the path? That too was a mystery. The reason for our birth itself was a mystery. All these thoughts and worries began troubling the mind as I sat close to Her.

After father had finished his Playground activities he came home and enquired: “Tell me, what did the Mother tell all of you so loudly? All of you sat absolutely still! What happened? You looked terrified!”

I told father in great detail what the Mother had told us. Father sat still for some time. He lifted his hands in salutation to the Mother’s picture. He had tears in his eyes.

“What has happened to him?” I wondered.

Then father said:

“How lucky we human beings are! The Mother will personally take each one of Her children forward on their path. Why? Don’t you know about Ramakrishna’s example of the baby cat and the baby monkey?”

Then suddenly I remembered.

The Mother says:

There are two paths of Yoga, one of *tapasyā* (discipline), and the other of surrender. The path of *tapasyā* is arduous. Here you rely solely upon yourself, you proceed by your own strength.... The other path, the path of surrender, is safe and sure.... In other words, you may follow, as Ramakrishna says, either the path of the baby monkey or that of the baby cat. The baby monkey holds to its mother in order to be carried about and it must hold firm, otherwise if it loses its grip, it falls. On the other hand, the baby cat does not hold to its mother, but is held by the mother and has no fear nor responsibility; it has nothing to do but to let the mother hold it and cry *ma ma*.

A rock had been lifted off my chest, as it were. I bowed to the Mother a thousand times.

Let me also quote what Sri Aurobindo told Nirod-da when he brought up this baby monkey and baby cat comparison regarding the sadhaks.

Nirodbaran: Even Ramakrishna’s baby cat type of sadhak has to make a decisive movement of surrender and compel the rest of the being to obedience, which, let me tell you, Sir, is the most difficult thing on earth.

Sri Aurobindo: I never heard that the baby cat was like that—if it were, it would not be a baby cat. (It is the baby monkey that is trying to become a baby cat who does that.) But you have evidently so great a knowledge of spiritual things (surpassing mine and Ramakrishna’s) that I can only bow my head and pass humbly on to people with less knowledge.

From this answer of Sri Aurobindo’s we can understand even better how the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have surrounded us with infinite Compassion and have been dragging us along the path of Truth despite our physical and vital tamas and the mind’s innumerable, hard resistances.

I offer my infinite salutations at the Lotus Feet of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. They have surrounded us with divine Compassion forever. These words of the Mother keep coming back to me:

“Never think, not even by mistake, that I shall leave you. You will not be able to rid yourself of me.”

Right from my childhood I used to get a slight fever by evenfall. This happened because of my enlarged tonsils. When I was almost fourteen my tonsils were removed. But the fever did not leave me. I however continued to do everything in that condition. After coming to the Ashram my fever increased even further. Every evening when I went to see the Mother, She would immediately ask me how I was. I could not say anything. She held me in Her affectionate arms and concentrated for some time. With the Mother’s gentle touch my body and mind would fill with peace. After taking the flower-blessings from Her I would slowly go back home. And in this way the days passed, one after the other. One day my fever was very high. When I reached the Mother in the evening I could hardly stand. The Mother asked me:

“How are you?”

I just stood before Her speechless. Then all of a sudden, the Mother took hold of my neck in Her tight grip and started shaking me. In pain I began crying loudly.

“Mother, let go of me, let go of me. It’s very painful.”

But the Mother continued shaking me.

“*Dis, ‘Je me porte bien.’*” (Say, ‘I am well.’)

I was flabbergasted. My body was burning with fever. How could I say I was well? No word came out of my mouth. The Mother’s grip tightened.

“*Dis, ‘Je me porte bien.’*” I kept crying out of pain.

“*Tais-toi. Tais-toi.*” (Quiet, be quiet.) “Sri Aurobindo is in the other room.”

On hearing Sri Aurobindo’s name my crying increased even more.

The Mother did not stop shaking me by the neck. She kept saying:

“*Dis, ‘Je me porte bien.’*” and She continued to shake me at the same time.

Just to be free from the Mother’s vice-like grip I repeated, still crying:

“*Je me porte bien. Je me porte bien.*” (I am well. I am well.)

The Mother had managed to get me to say ‘Je me porte bien’ and She was now happy and responded with

“*Très bien. Très bien.*” (Very good, very good.)

I returned home crying. At night a deep drowsy sleep came over me. That day this childhood fever that had not left me for a single day suddenly disappeared out of fear of the Mother!

And in this way the Mother protected Her children from so many ordeals and continues to do so even today. But at that moment I felt how ruthless the Mother was!

My life is filled with Her ruthless Grace.

From the beginning of 1950 I suffered quite a lot. I had several big multiple-mouthed boils one after the other under the armpits. Physically those years were indeed testing times for me. When I first went and told the Mother about it, She asked me to go and see Dr. Satyavrata. I was unhappy. The Mother said:

“You know, Satyavrata is not just a good doctor. He believes that the doctor can prescribe medicines to the patient, he can diagnose a disease but what makes the patient healthy is the compassion of some invisible Power. He has experienced this again and again in his life.”

I just stood there silently. Satyavrata was Chitra’s elder brother and a friend of our elder brother. In fact, he was very close to him. It was difficult for me to accept someone of my age as a doctor. There is a saying “The village sadhu does not get alms.” The Mother did not tell me anything more. I had somehow decided that it was only the Mother who could get me out of this hardship. I went on from day to day relying entirely on the Mother’s Compassion. At night I could not sleep. I would keep walking to pass the time. Sometimes I stretched myself in an easy chair and keeping a pillow on either side tried to put my arms gently on them to get some relief. My body was boiling with fever. And days went by in this way. My left arm was all swollen and red. I was in real misery. And the Mother would ask me daily:

“How are you?”

One day I lost my patience and told the Mother:

“Mother, you only have to wish and you can help me come out of this suffering.”

And I showed Her my left arm and how pus was oozing out of it.

“You see how even the nerve has got affected. Why don’t you cure me, Mother?”

And I started weeping out of pain. The Mother held me by the shoulders and looked at me with Her gentle eyes.

“You will understand when you become conscious that through this pain from the boil I am saving you from so many other dangers.”

The Mother’s Love was evident in each word She uttered. I felt extremely ashamed. Holding onto Her Feet I said in a choked voice:

“Mother, forgive me. I could not bear this pain, that’s why I said these things. Please forgive me, Mother.”

The Mother held me in Her arms and remained in a meditative state for a long time. I’m sure you have understood that after this I came out of this miserable condition.

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The year had hardly ended and I was once again in the grip of boils. This time it was the right arm. It was an unusually big boil with multiple mouths again and it was painful. Every evening the Mother asked me with great concern:

“How are you?”

She would hold me by the shoulders and concentrate for a while. But the boil

just refused to burst. And my body heated up with the rising temperature.

One day the Mother told me:

“Your body looks like Pavitra’s. There is no receptivity at all. You are like a *Transformation* tree which has no solid base, whose roots are not deep enough.”

At another time She said:

“You were born without any vitality.”

When the Mother spoke to me about the *Transformation* tree I suddenly remembered the tree standing in the middle of the Ashram. When I came here in 1944 for good I witnessed a powerful cyclone. In Feni there used to be frequent storms. Chittagong suffers from the fury of cyclones and storms almost every year. But I had never seen a cyclone right on the coast like this one. Huge mountain-like tidal waves came crashing onto the road. The pier shook under its impact. The whole town was devastated. There was a huge *Transformation* tree in the Ashram, where the cactus garden is today. Under the force of the stormy winds this tree had got uprooted. That’s why when the Mother said that I had ‘no solid base’ I thought of this *Transformation* tree.

To come back to the real story, then.

I heard what the Mother said but did not reply. I could not deny that my body was indeed going through all kinds of miseries.

One evening when I went to see the Mother, all of a sudden She took on such a fierce form that I was terrified. She declared:

“Listen, you must leave this place tomorrow itself. I shall get your ticket to pack you off tomorrow. Go now and get ready.”

As soon as I heard that I had to leave this place I was mortified. Where could I go? How could I live without the Mother? I hugged Her and started weeping uncontrollably.

“I won’t go, Mother. I won’t go, Mother.”

“You must leave. And you must leave tomorrow. Now run along and prepare your bags.”

I burst into sobs again. Crying all the way I went back home and lay in bed like one in a drowse. Towards the later part of the night that drowsiness disappeared. When I opened my eyes I saw Bibha and Maya sitting next to me and looking at me.

“What’s wrong with me? Why are you both looking so worried?”

They replied that on hearing me cry they had rushed here. “We saw you lying in a drowse and repeating ‘I won’t go, Mother. I won’t go, Mother.’” The whole bed was covered with blood and pus. Both Bibha and Maya prepared warm compresses all through the night. Somehow I had not realised anything at all. My body was extremely weak. They fed me tea and bread and dressed me. The Mother used to come down every morning at ten and give flower-blessings. I went and joined the line too. Just when I was near Bula-da’s room the Mother spotted me from far. I entered the Meditation Hall. I kept telling myself:

“My body is not receptive. Then how did my boil burst?”

Very proudly I stepped forward toward the Mother. But the Mother did not even look at me. She just put some flower-blessings in my hand and bid me farewell. After a lot of thought I understood that the Mother had taken on Her Mahakali form in order to root out this sluggishness from my nature, this inability to receive the Mother’s Force. It had been possible for this fire of aspiration to rise in my body to rid itself of all these overwhelming obstacles and difficulties only due to the swift and victorious help of Her Force. In an instant the grip of that negative energy that had been torturing me so much for the last two or three years loosened.

From time to time I remember this harsh terrible face of the Mother.

How terrified I was that day! I did not understand then how the Mother’s infinite Compassion and Grace had dissipated all the obstacles in a flash. How true it is then, *My life is filled with Her ruthless Grace.*

My body and being overflowed with gratitude for this deliverance from unbearable pain and I bowed at the Mother’s Feet. Now I understand the reason why the Mother puts on this terrible form of Rudra. It would be untrue to say that I was not scared but now I feel Her profound Compassion behind it.

Days went by. And then suddenly once again unbearable pain returned! This time to my head. After some time it was discovered that a huge boil had formed right in the centre of my head. I decided not to tell the Mother anything about it and simply bear the pain. The Mother could however understand that something was wrong. I could not bend down after receiving the flower-blessings and would directly come away.

One day the Mother suddenly held my head very hard. I cried out aloud in pain.

The Mother exclaimed:

“*Encore! Non, non!*” (Not again! No, no!)

She roared so loudly that all those who were working upstairs came rushing down to see who the Mother was scolding in that way. I was however confident for I knew the danger had been averted. I woke up from my sleep very early. There was no more pain in the head. I felt my head and there wasn’t the slightest hint of a boil there!

And so in this way my life went from year to year, from one ordeal to the next. The boil came back again. This time it came up at such a spot that I found it difficult to walk or even sit. After hesitating for a long time I was forced to tell the Mother about the problem. The Mother blew up once again:

“*Je dis: Non, Non!*” (I say: No, No!)

And once again on seeing this Rudra form I was confident that I was cured of my boil. In the evening when She came to the Playground to take the salute at the March Past in front of the map of India, She once again said very loudly:

“*Non, Non!*”

Everyone turned towards me in surprise. They all wondered why Priti was getting

such a scolding from the Mother.

After finishing Her classes the Mother returned to the Ashram. I too went back home. I felt terribly sleepy. After a long time I just slumped happily into the arms of sleep. I woke up early in the morning. There was neither pain nor any fever in the body. The boil had vanished!

My life is filled with Her ruthless Grace.

(To be continued)

PRITI DAS GUPTA

(Translated by Maurice Shukla from the original Bengali *Abismaraniya Muhurta*)

If you remain truly still (it is difficult to be really and truly still—in the vital and the mind it is very easy, but in the body's cells, to be perfectly still without being tamasic is a little difficult, it has to be learned), but when you are able to be truly still, there is always a little light—a warm little light, very bright and wonderfully still, behind; as if it were saying, “You only have to will.” Then the body's cells panic: “Will, how? How can I? The illness is on me, I am overcome. How can I? It is an illness”—the whole drama.... Then something with a general wisdom says, “Calm down, calm down, (laughing) don't be attached to your illness! Calm down. As if you wanted to be ill! Calm down.” So they consent—“consent”, you know, like a child that has been scolded, “All right, very well, I'll try.” They try—immediately, again, that little light comes: “You only have to will.”

The Mother

(Integral Healing, p. 77)

PAINTING AS SADHANA

Krishnalal Bhatt (1905-1990)

(Continued from the issue of September 2005)

3

Shantiniketan—2

5.9.32, Monday: Someone started a line drawing even while working on a painting. Seeing that, Nandababu forbade him to work simultaneously on two things. Your thoughts must be concentrated only on the picture you are doing. If, while colouring, you need to rest, let your mind dwell only on the things you need to do for that work. The first thing you must do, as soon as you wake up in the morning, is to look at your work in progress; you will get a completely different impression of it. When a child gets a toy it has been craving for it does not put it down, even at night it keeps it on its pillow, and the moment it awakes takes it up. Like that remain completely immersed in your painting.

8.9.32, Thursday: Nandababu taught us how to make brushes. Squirrel hair or hair from a calf's ear can be used. Make a paper cone—like the one made for holding fried nuts, puffed-rice, savouries, etc.—with a tiny opening at the tip. Put a clump of hair inside the cone and gently slap the tip over a hard surface. The hairs will start coming out in the shape of a brush, tie them at the rear and cut the lot to the required length; insert the tied end of your brush into the hollow tip of a pigeon feather.

At Nandababu's, from 9 to 10.30 p.m.: We had gone for a conversation. He himself initiated the talk.

He advised us not to stick to only one type of painting, but experiment with as many subjects as we could. Animals, Nature, Humans, to try out all in order to find out in which of them we worked best. To learn clay-modelling too. Who knows, you may be a better sculptor than a painter!

Can sentiments be expressed through landscapes?

Choosing a landscape itself depends on one's feelings and inclinations. One may find the evening scene enchanting, while another melancholic. Don't try to express any particular sentiment in your landscape. Draw what you find beautiful and express what you have felt, then only will your sentiment be echoed in the viewer's heart. In the end, in their utmost intensity, all sentiments are one, are common to us all. Achieve the harmony of physical Nature and feelings.

Was there a place for landscapes in Indian art?

In the Moghul and Rajput paintings they did play a role, though never without human figures. But if they impress you on their own, without any human presence,

draw them like that. Don't concern yourself with whether or not importance was given to them in earlier times, but only whether they impress you or not.

Tradition: *When one sees the paintings of some current painters, it seems they are belabouring one single style in all their paintings. Is that desirable?*

Never fall into any traditional groove. Imbibe newer techniques and styles, and for that go to Nature. Nature is always invigorating; get your inspiration from her and your creations will always be fresh.

The work that stays stuck to tradition loses vitality and perishes. We have to accept the assistance of Nature and keep our present Indian art robust. Study Nature deeply, and boldly express whatever you feel in it. Will someone else like it or not, what will the teacher say, how will the public respond—don't let such things bother you. Whatever you want to express draw it in your own way.

Don't let technique bother you, either. When you express your feelings, don't think about whether your technique is European or Chinese or Japanese, keep working in your own way. You won't be able to express yourself without a technique, but a painting that has technique without any feeling will never touch the heart. One knowing all about musical compositions can create a classical piece, but he won't be an Ustad until his creation moves the heart, it won't inspire anyone. Therefore feeling must get the first place.

Work when you are inspired. But try also to bring down the inspiration— don't sit idle until it comes. No bhakta experiences the full-blown love for God on the very first day; that is why he begins with, and keeps increasing, his cycles of japa and devotional songs. It is from that that he finally arrives at the absolute and unshakable bhakti. Like that we too must keep working continuously and thus prepare the ground for the right inspirations to descend.

When does the student leave his guru and begin working independently?

Nandababu had asked Abanibabu this same question, and that is what he explained to us: The newly married couple is in the beginning rather shy with each other and a mediator is required to get them properly acquainted. Then gradually, as they get over their shyness, they automatically begin to forget the mediator. Likewise the guru, inducing the student to range freely all over his art and consolidate their kinship, sets him free.

[Nandababu belonged to the generation when brides and grooms never met until the day of marriage, but he was not unaware of the winds of change. Here is a reminiscence of a student of the day: "In Shantiniketan, some of us took our bath at the well. All around there were cashew trees, and when they bore new leaves or fruits the place was even more beautiful. Among the seven-eight who took our bath there, there was Bhargava—one year my senior. Tall and extremely fair, he was in love with his handsome, well-built body. Coming from a wealthy family he was always well-dressed and sported a gold-chain round his fair neck. Girls were naturally attracted

to him. One extremely beautiful south Indian girl was greatly infatuated and once came to his room with a couple of friends. My room was just beside—actually a thatched hut. It so happened that just as the girls were coming out, Nandababu passed by. ‘What are you doing here in the boys’ hostel?’ he asked. From that day that girl never came to our hostel.

*

When Bhargava would take his bath at the well, we others had to wait. However late we got, he just filled bucket after bucket and went on bathing like a king. Such was our fear that we couldn’t say anything and waited for our turn until his royal bath was over.

Jayant Parekh had only recently joined the first year. One day Bhargava was taking his bath and a few of us waited at some distance. Parekh turned up. I believe he had been observing our plight for some days. He kept quiet for a while, then went up to Bhargava and sternly told him, “Hurry up, I too have to take my bath.” Mahabali Bhargava had never been so addressed. From where has this insect come? Derisively he said, “Don’t you see I’m bathing? Go to the bathrooms if you are in a hurry.”

Immediately a powerful slap sent him crashing along the parapet. Parekh picked him up by the ears. “I hear you are married, that’s why I am letting you off, else I’d have broken all your bones. Now get out and don’t ever come to this well.” Bhargava was never seen near that well again.

Parekh used to do 300 push-throughs and 400 half-knee bends every day. His body was made, as it were, of the “ashta dhatus”. When we sat down to eat, he asked to be served one full pile of chapatis. Interestingly, for one with a wrestler’s body, his work was unusually delicate. Always ready to serve everyone—at the well he would fill bucket after bucket for us to bathe freely. To cut out mounts for our pictures, to take our prints of the lino-cuts, to go to Calcutta to bring materials for our painting work, Parekh was always there. When Pandit Hazariprasad Dwivedi hurt his leg, Parekh went every day to massage him. Even when Bhargava had some trouble in his legs, Parekh massaged him with the same affection.

But he did not seem to be doing the work for which he had come here—painting.

(From *Bhaat Bhaat Ke Log-2—Memories of Shantiniketan-14*, by Amritlal Vegad in *Navanit Samarpana*, November 2004, pp. 88-89.)

* * *

12.9.32, Monday: Showed Nandababu my picture and sought permission for finishing it. Seeing the texture of my grass he began to comment on it and, at the same time, painting it with his brush.

He talked of the rules governing grass, hair, flames of fire, and folds in clothes. The first three twist as they rise—blades of grass twist as they grow, tufts of hair tend to curl, and the flames of fire spiral as they mount.

When drawing the lines of grass etc., don't draw them merely for the sake of outlining; delineate them so that one experiences their texture: "To feel what we are drawing and then to draw it,"—that is Abanibabu's method.

13.9.32, Tuesday: He was advising me to indicate the details of the tree trunk in my picture: Now is the time to study trunks. Search out this type of trunk, observe and examine it in every minutiae. Observing and noting every characteristic detail of a subject at the time one takes it up is most useful. And while the work is in progress, concentrate your thoughts only on it and continue to collect all necessary data about it.

3.11.32: One morning, when Nandababu returned from a trip to Jagannathpuri during the Puja holidays, we went to him. He gave us milk and breakfast and then described his trip.

He had spent a few days at Jagannathpuri. He was charmed by its seashore. He has made cards of the sea and the seashore. He has drawn a perspective of the turbulent sea covering eight cards placed side by side: foam-crested swells are climbing high up, spraying water far into the air; foamy breakers are rushing onto the beach and dissipating themselves. Stretching out into the distance is a straight horizon. (Nandababu told us that when a large horizon extends in front of you it appears curved, but don't draw it like that.) There were many other cards that he had done there. But it was Puri's ocean that captured him: "The ocean at Puri is the best; nowhere in the whole world is there one like it."

Thereafter other topics came up.

Mangalashtaka (eight-verse hymn sung on auspicious occasions): He looked at Kanubhai's album *Mangalashtaka*; didn't seem to have liked it much. He chose the "Griha-pravesha" for criticism: The groom has already entered, while with the colourful wedding garland round her neck, the bride has taken a step over the threshold. This scene, Nandababu said, is a good comment on today's society—the bride is being dragged into jail, as it were.

This launched him into the question of marriage. He dwelt on the need of harmonising the old and the new ideas of marriage.

For depicting subjects from Mahabharata (or Ramayana) what should one study to know the dress and atmosphere of the time?

You must read the Mahabharata many times—at the least four-five times. And you must read with *sraddha* (faith), not the barren mentality of scholars or historians or one nit-picking on trivia. "You should read with deference." Then you will automatically realise what you need to know for doing your picture and you will not need to study any other authority.

While you are working on a scene, concentrate on the feeling or the rhythm that has to be expressed. Drawing beautiful faces, don't forget the expression. Wanting to

do a running man, if one gets entangled into the details of leg-muscles, one forgets the disposition required to portray the precise speed and rhythm. Often the study of muscles in motion is faulty and one ends up with a lifeless rather than a living runner. Our mind quite naturally is taken up by beauty and anatomy and we miss the deeper realities. One must cultivate a dynamic awareness to free ourselves from this pitfall.

25.11.32: We went in the evening after eight, in order to catch Nandababu alone. When alone with him we can talk about things other than techniques. The doors were closed—we thought he had closed them and was working inside, it being winter. We knocked on the doors and he came out. We planned to ask him about some talks with Abanibabu in Calcutta.

Is art individualistic?

Yes, true art is individualistic. Not everyone can attain to true art. Many may understand it but it can't be said that therefore they can also produce it. One needs to be gifted for that.

If you do a picture in a particular way in the belief that people like it that way, it is no longer true art, it becomes commercial art. In pursuing true art there is also the prospect of dying a destitute. It may happen that people won't like your work and no one may buy it, but that is no reason why you should try to please the public. It will then no longer be true art. True art is individualistic. Truth cannot be covered or hidden. One time or another it will find appreciation. Art is for art's sake.

There should be no ownership rights over art. It should remain open to all. Once it starts being owned, it will lose its true *swarupa*. You may be charmed by a beautiful child and want to keep it tied to yourself, but others may love it as much and also want to possess it. This creates jealousies; and as a result everyone including the child suffers. If instead each were to spend what he can for the child's happiness and welfare, it would bring an all-round satisfaction.

Create such paintings that are *peaceful*, that don't excite the senses, e.g. nudes. Draw nothing that may excite the viewers' passions.

But our artists and sculptors have created nude images!

Yes, they have. But not for the sake of depicting or detailing nudity! Their principal concern or focus is on the inner poise and the body's stance. The current European art seems to be depicting nudity for the sake of the sheer physicality of the model; the works are sensationalist and unsettle the mind. Earlier European, Egyptian, or Asian images of nude divinities, dancers, musicians, etc. were always concerned with the body's posture or movement, and so their nudity never agitated the viewer's mind and sensations. No doubt the artists or sculptors themselves must have experienced the passions or sensations that a nude body evokes.

Because our method of drawing is more decorative we can sufficiently suppress those vibrations of nudity. Suggestively delineating some part we can pass over its details, whereas the realism of Western art insists on detailing the nudity of the nude.

That is why we may not mind seeing Indian paintings or sculptures of nudes in the company of our families but hesitate viewing with our families nudes as depicted by European artists.

True art imparts a feeling of inner joy or happiness.

But if we are drowned in it how will we paint it?

Joy demands, it itself impels, expression.

Yogis and tapaswis experience ananda but remain silent; they don't write or paint. How do they live without expressing it?

They may not speak, write, or paint, but the manifestation is there. Doesn't their very presence bring us peace? That is their expression.

One may experience that delight, but then one is pulled willy-nilly into the shackles of so many things, that it seems to dry up and one doubts if one can ever experience it again!

Once the seed is sown, it is bound to take roots and grow. Make it a habit to find time from all your work and responsibilities and achieve a calm in which you can contemplate on your self; that way you will avoid making mistakes when under stress or pressure.

Keep the companionship of good people; make artists your friends. Artists can be found almost everywhere: one who is busy creating anything—designs, decorations, beautiful objects etc. with no regard for such pedestrian things as money, name, fame—is an artist. Befriend such people, for you will garner beneficial things which help you to always keep in mind the path you have chosen. Good reading too is very helpful. Become more and more cultured. The atmosphere around us also can help us progress. All these things will prevent us from falling into a rut.

Have faith in God. Remind yourself that there is also a portion of the Divine in yourself.

27.11.32, Egg-tempera on wood: I got a piece of wood of the size of my painting and smoothened the rough surface with a *rando* (plane) and sandpaper. Always take a used piece, e.g. from rejected furniture, but preferably of teak wood. Fresh wood contains an oily or sticky substance that may come out after some time and spoil your work.

First apply a wash of gelatine solution. Then a wash of the same solution mixed with white stone or chalk. The stone has to be first ground down into very smooth, fine chalk-powder, which is soaked well in water; decant the top water and use the chalk sediment. After applying each wash add a few drops of water to your solution, so that the later washes are thinner and thinner; otherwise cracks are likely to appear on the background surface of your painting. You must get a layer at least as thick as an eggshell, for this you need to apply between 20 to 30 washes. Make sure each wash is perfectly even; for getting evenness you will have to move your brush up and down and sideways and crossways. Don't apply any wash until the previous one has

dried. When you have finished all the washes and your surface is dry, take a very fine sandpaper and smoothen the surface out as best you can. Again, over this apply four or five washes. You can also add conch-powder or any other fine white powder, in the gelatine solution.

Now trace out your drawing over this surface. Begin colouring by applying the lighter colours first. Always use freshly made colours, using a fresh egg every time; in case you cannot avoid using the colours over two days, add boric powder to your egg-solution.

For my painting Nandababu gave me some beautiful colours from his own stock. Try and get Windsor-Newton powdered colours; they are considered the best for this work. Take out only the quantity you will use on the day you work and mix it in the egg-solution. Grind the colour into a fine powder with the flat top of a glass cork or any glass object. Take only the amount of powder you will need and with clean water make a paste with your fingertip. This paste should not be allowed to dry up, as it would harden and become unusable; always use clean ordinary water whenever you need to moisten it again, though once or twice you may also use the egg-solution. Don't start applying a second colour until the first one has fully dried, else the dampness will spoil your painting.

If your painting has a white portion, get it done in the beginning as you may not be able to obtain the same white later. If it is only tiny dots of white that your painting needs, you can do them at the end.

A painting done by this process has to be preserved very carefully at least for six-seven months, during which period no water should be allowed to touch its surface or any scratches made. It takes at least that much time for it to set properly. After a year or so it will fix sufficiently for you to clean it with soap water. Egg-tempera paintings done correctly stay intact for many years without cracking.

Nandababu had seen an egg-tempera in Japan which was in good condition after a thousand years, of course cracks had appeared. He said that if a linen cloth is attached or pasted on the wood before doing the egg-tempera no cracks will appear even after a very long time.

Egg-tempera on a wall: I did an egg-tempera on wood. The same technique can be used on the wall but with some differences, so I met Masoji (*the other teacher*) and collected the necessary information about it.

In order to do an egg-tempera on a wall, the wall can be of two types. One is the plain ordinary wall: the chunam must be scraped off the wall with a wooden scraper or emery-paper and the wall-surface smoothened out. Second, a wall plastered by kiln cement can also be used. Masons generally know the proportions required to do that. After that plaster has dried it can be smoothened out with emery-paper so that the painting done over it is also smooth.

Once the wall is ready, before working on it, it should be fully cured. Then prepare a solution of egg: break one egg and beat it until you get a consistent liquid;

add about a litre of water and then strain the mixture. Apply one vertical and one horizontal wash of that mixture to your wall. Then add in it a little white colour so that you get a white background. Then, over it trace your drawing. Perforate the outlines in the sheet on which you have drawn by a needle point. Holding the sheet on the wall, press a pouch of dry colour all along the outline, this will transfer your outline onto the wall.

The colours you are going to use on the wall must be properly ground and kept soaked in water, so that they are at hand whenever you need a fresh stock of colour for use. Whenever you need a colour, decant the water covering it, take the quantity of sediment you need with a spoon and mix it with the required quantity of egg-solution.

Use the yellow of the egg for the colours; the white is useless. The quantity of water you add must be double the quantity of the egg-yolk you have and must be properly mixed.

Always begin with light colours. If you need a green, first apply a yellow then add blue to it. (If you can copy the egg-tempera that I have done on wood, you can obtain sufficient brightness and freshness.)

After you have finished your painting apply a wash of the egg-solution to prevent any ill-effects of exposure to air and water.

To fix it fully: take one pint of turpentine, a lump of wax the size of a betelnut, and half a spoonful of glycerine, heat them together until the wax dissolves. Apply this to the tempera like a wash or spray it.

For tempera on a wall, don't use vegetable colours, prepare your own clay colours by mashing them by hand. You can obtain clays to make yellow, *guerua* (saffron), blue (which seems to be available in Jaipur) and green; for black use soot or kohl (antimony) and for white, zinc white or chalk.

(To be continued)

S. V. BHATT

THE MOTHER TAKES CHARGE OF THE ASHRAM

—A Presentation of Documents—

(Continued from the issue of September 2005)

(3)

Extracts from Pavitra's¹ Conversations with Sri Aurobindo

Mother told me that my vital being had been repressed. There is some truth in it. My education has been purely scientific and I had no artistic culture. I did not derive any help from art. I am far from clinging to conventional ideas of morality, but I have repressed certain tendencies of the vital only in order to get a relative freedom and mastery. I have respect, but certainly little of emotional emotion. So the vital is of very little use to me. But what is to be done? I suppose it will open to the higher light and nothing is to be tried from below.

It will open in the process of yoga. But something more than a passive self-surrender is necessary. In this yoga, a mere waiting upon the force to come down if it wills, won't do. You have done nearly all that could be done by the mind above, and the opening through a pure mental process would no doubt require a long time. Therefore you have to rely on the higher force. But simply waiting is not sufficient. You have to call it down, and see how it works, make demands upon it.

And this must be done in the vital as well as in the mind.

09.08.1926

(Bulletin, February 1971, p. 28)

* * *

Mother told me yesterday that the awakening of the psychic in me depended much upon an attitude of mine. Can you tell me something more about this attitude?

She did not say anything else?

No.

...It is difficult to say. (*Silence*) This attitude can only become permanent when the

1. Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire, a French disciple renamed "Pavitra" by Sri Aurobindo, who settled in the Ashram in 1925. For more on his life, read Mrityunjoy Mukherjee's reminiscences published in the issues of *Mother India*, 1988 May to 1989 January.

mental is no longer the prominent factor in life. It all comes to the same thing.... You have to rely upon the power that comes from above and realise that it is something more than a power....

The divine as personality?

We are always using mental words that mislead. Yes, it is true that it is the support of all personality. The Vedantic standpoint of the impersonal absolute, which has spread so much in the later years,² it is only one aspect of the truth. It appeals very much to the mind, especially to the modern mind, but when the consciousness rises above mind, it is clearly seen as a partial aspect of the truth. It is the power that has personality as a guna. It uses the impersonal to rise above the limited egoism of our personalities. The impersonal view of the divine is somewhat larger than our personal conception, limited by our mind. But it is mind that limits personality. It has an existence above mind. You have to recognise that the power is not a mere power.

It is true that, for the present, I only see it as a working power.

Because you are always in the mind. But when the psychic opens you cannot retain this standpoint. It becomes too vivid and too real.

Have I to rise in the supermind for that?

The psychic opening will raise you to that.

Up to my coming here I stuck to the Vedantic idea of impersonality and even now I cannot realise with the mind what is truly meant by divine personality. How can the mind take the right attitude?

It can call for it. When it will get a glimpse of it, it will more easily put itself in the right movement.

11.09.1926

(*Bulletin*, April 1971, pp. 30, 32, 34)

* * *

Mother spoke with A. G. about my difficulties in meditation. Today she took me aside and we meditated together for half an hour, at 4.30. The force prepared

2. Vivekananda.

above my head, then descended, particularly to the level of the mind and tried to open the mind. Outer thoughts were kept at a distance, though they tried to penetrate.

The day was not particularly well chosen, for I have been meditating with difficulty since some days.

Later, after having heard what I had felt, Mother told me:

Yes, the force descended. It descended right to your feet; but in the lower regions it was rather outside than within.

At the beginning you had a very strong aspiration. Then something must have disturbed you; all the time there remained a peaceful and calm aspiration. You have a power of aspiration but it has been almost completely strangled by the mind.

The force which descended at first is a force of wisdom, of pure knowledge which descended to the level of the solar plexus. There, there was a sort of order to open the mind. There was an opening but it had a geometrical form: a triangle. And within, a sort of representation of the idea you have formed of the divine.

A force of calm, a silence, descended afterwards. You say you did not feel it. Yet it was there and you will perhaps feel it soon. Much more descended than what you are aware of at present. But it is not lost for the subconscious and it will be realised little by little. There is in you a great capacity of calmness, which may serve as a useful base for a descent and subsequent manifestation.

Yet in that, in this calm, there was Ananda.

There was some response in the lower centre, but the response was feeble and mostly recorded by the subconscient.

In short, I do not think this will take very long now. There is a certain rigidity in the mind, but that is common to all westerners.

Did the force descend as far as the vital plane also?

Yes, naturally, and even on the physical, but outside you rather than within.

There is certainly a great difference from my ordinary meditations. Now I feel, perhaps better than during the meditation, that there is something there quite close, which descended.

14.09.1926

(Bulletin, April 1971, pp. 36, 38)

* * *

Mother must have told you about our meditation of last Tuesday [14.09.1926].

After the meditation I felt very deeply the presence of a great calm force which was behind me. It did not enter my consciousness but I felt it nevertheless backing me.

When in meditation, the divine force comes readily down. It works through the navel centre on the vital and also it seems on the physical. There is not any powerful vibration of the lowest centre, but I feel as if a force was expanding in the physical itself. It seems to me quite distinct from the vital.

You say it expands?

...I would rather say it permeates the subtle physical part of the body. But I am not perfectly sure of it. Let us wait and see.

Behind the chest centre, which is always very active, I feel the presence of something and from there my aspiration goes above and unites with the force coming down. I see a kind of connecting line between this centre and the top of the head. It is a straight line. Is there anything like that?

It means that your psychic aspiration is rising and calls the force down. A connection is formed. At the end all the centres will be connected in that way.

My mind is still active on the old lines. How is it that it does not stop!

The old habit recurs! But it does not matter much as long as the aspiration is able to bring down the force. The mind by itself could not do much; but the force that comes from the Divine is more powerful.

18.09.1926

(Bulletin, April 1971, pp. 40, 42)

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Now there is something I don't understand. When I meditated with Mother last Tuesday [28.09.1926] the divine force came down. But what is the part of either you or Mother in such a coming down?

I don't understand!

Well! The divine force comes from inside. How can it be brought down by somebody else? It is not a mere tuning of the vehicles, a quieting of the mind which could be done from outside, but a real call....

The explanation!?! It is a fact, is it not?

Yes.

Then that is sufficient.

But I meant to say this. Suppose I had not come here, but remained doing yoga elsewhere, I and God would have been the same, but this coming would not have happened. Is there any kind of intermediary centre of divine force, for instance, in the spiritual force which is here above?

Even in the case of those who look only for liberation and try to merge into God, such a help from someone who has realised before is generally necessary because the forces of ignorance are too strong....

02.10.1926

(*Bulletin*, August 1971, pp. 40, 42)

* * *

Interview with Mother—

Do not seek the truth with your mind!... All that you have done so far, all that you have learnt ought to be put aside. What holds you back is your education and your mental habits.

A Hindu who had the deep experience you had last time would have drawn knowledge from it. That experience truly would have brought knowledge, it was beautiful enough, wasn't it? and you felt all its power. But your European mentality came in the way. Your inner being opened, put itself in a receptive attitude which allowed the descent. Instead of trying to reason, plunge into the experience itself.

If I asked a question it was not that my mind was anxious or wanted so much to convert everything into mental terms. My mind has suffered hard blows and it is no longer so exacting. I feel a truth quite close: there is a part in me which knows it. But from time to time a question comes up in my mind, without its attaching much importance to it.

When you put the question to it, it was on the point of speaking. But it cannot speak before the psychic being is open.

If that experience could have brought along the desired change of attitude, all would have been transformed. But that must come, it is bound to come. You are on the eve of that. It depends on your opening to the Divine.

Next week you may come to the small meditation-room. You may feel something.

That is why I am asking you to come.

03.10.1926

(*Bulletin*, August 1971, pp. 44, 46)

* * *

[*After a meditation with the Mother*]

The receptivity is good. As soon as you are seated, the force descends and you receive it. What is missing is something in the consciousness. You do not get sufficiently absorbed in the inner experience. If that were so you would return with the full knowledge of what happened.

Between your head and chest a line of light is set up, a column, but not round, a square column so to say, of gleaming light. It is like a cage, the preparation of an abode for what is going to descend.

Yesterday evening, he [*Sri Aurobindo*] spoke to you about the four aspects of the supermind, did you follow? Well, this white light comes from Maheshwari, it is a light of knowledge and purity. It is she who is the great preparer of yoga. When that is ready generally an aspect of power (Mahakali) descends, which takes a personal form, whilst the force of Maheshwari is impersonal (at least here). I was expecting to see this descent. But the work of preparation was long—of assimilation and cutting off from the exterior, that took almost the whole time. At the same time a third ring separated you as though to cut you off from the world where you live externally and also from your past. This force comes from Mahalakshmi.

The force of purification is always there now, preparing, regulating. I am always following you though I do not see you physically. As the preparation was very good I thought something would manifest in your consciousness today. But one must not be in too great a hurry, it will come another time.

Before coming here all my meditations were in a wrong direction. Purely mental. I had no idea of what the inner experience was. That is why perhaps I have these difficulties. But perhaps this too was useful after all?

Yes, as a preparation of the instrument.

But what we are doing here is so different from what people are in the habit of thinking, even here in India, and so much more in Europe or in...²

12.10.1926

(*Bulletin*, August 1971, pp. 50, 52)

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2. Here, several pages from Pavitra's notebook were torn out.

Are there not two methods? One consists in looking at the thoughts as they cross the field of the mind. The other in losing consciousness of them by concentrating upon the inner movement.

I think you can now enter the second movement. And you must keep in mind that the more you can overcome the idea of working by yourself, the quicker you will go. Allow things to be done for you.

I think that means keeping always the inner connection with the force within.

Yes. Till you become one with the force. All things will be directed from within. The inner consciousness will remain calm and peaceful though for some work you may enter again the outer movement and come back again.

I suppose this idea of self will also disappear, for it has no “raison d’être” and is troublesome.

Yes, it will.

I have at times the sense of transparency, the thoughts happening as local activities which I am looking at.

There are two ways: one by oneself—it is slow—one by allowing everything to be done by the Divine—it is quick.

Mother has told you about your taking part in their meditation?³

I think I misunderstood. I thought she meant my meditation with the group here with you.

No. With them.

What I got in my meditations with Mother is invaluable. And I know that much more has been received than I am conscious of. In fact I am but little conscious of what happened.

But Mother told me that you received well enough.

Yes, certainly. But I only feel a deep and strong and luminous force coming down. My knowledge is informal.

3. See Conversation dated 03.10.1926.

Anyhow you are able to follow the movement. Very few are conscious of all that happens.

I am thankfully willing to participate in the meditation. But I will do what you decide, as you know better.

16.10.1926

(*Bulletin*, November 1971, pp. 28, 30, 32)

* * *

Interview with Mother—

I think I have understood what you meant. Since yesterday I have changed everything in my meditation. Instead of doing things myself as though I was directing the force, I quite simply open myself and remain passive. Almost the whole day through I could keep the contact with the force and opened myself to its action.

I felt you very close all the day.

But this puts me to sleep.

There is nothing against that. During sleep, in you as in many others, there is no resistance left. Everything opens and the working is perfect. If you feel inclined to sleep don't resist it.

About the meditation, what have you decided?

It is decided if you are yourself ready within.

I consider this meditation as infinitely valuable, and accept it gratefully.

I must ask you not to feel surprised in your outer consciousness if you see certain things which could set you wondering. They consider this room (*for meditation*) a temple and behave as they would in a temple only replacing the idol by a human figure. That gives them the plenitude they need. You are brought up differently...

Do not fear. First of all, this won't surprise me, I understand very well their feeling. I do not act altogether like them, probably because, as you say, I am brought up in other conditions and have less need of outer manifestations. I

obey, however, what I feel within. As for being surprised, why?

17.10.1926

(*Bulletin*, November 1971, pp. 32, 34)

* * *

I am so tired of my mind.

But these movements are not so important. They are the remnants of the old way of working and they will fade away.

I am awaiting a more radical change. Up to the present, though something very luminous is dawning in me, there is no radical change of consciousness. I am still the old self.

What are you expecting?

Well! Many things. For instance I will see my lower self as I see others' selves. I will be no more bound by the body...

Of course the time will come when you will see the movements of nature in you as in others. But what you are waiting for, is it not a mental demand? It is better not to make such demands, for they always misrepresent the Truth. What you are asking for is the Truth and you must not state in advance that the Truth must be so and so. The mental representations, even the best ones, are imperfect and they become obstacles. What is needed is to realise the experiences as a part of yourself.

Then it is too much to wait for such a change? I am awaiting a change. Perhaps it is wrong to await something?

No, but it is wrong to state in advance what the change will be.

Now, in meditation I only open myself to the force and allow it to work. I am not acting upon my mind any longer; that is why it is so restless at times. This change in my meditation occurred last Saturday. I was then very conscious of the presence in me and I kept the touch with it the whole day. But since that day, though it is still working, I am not so much conscious of it. Sometimes the force acts in the mind, sometimes in the central being. What shall I do? I have left the idea of directing the force.

(Sri Aurobindo smiles)

But shall I follow all its movements?

Remain open and passive and follow. That is what you have to do. The force will transform by itself and by its own means and ways. The way of doing it with the mind is slow and imperfect, though the mind sometimes thinks it to be the best, because it feels itself acting. That is wrong. The mind does not know the conditions and the means. That force acts with a directness of which the mind is incapable. And you are receptive enough to allow it to work. Obstacles may arise, obstacles in the physical, vital or mental, as they arise always. But that does not matter. They will be worked out and rejected. Do not try to do something by yourself....

23.10.1926

(*Bulletin*, November 1971, pp. 40, 42)

* * *

This divine aspect is, in short, the individual Higher Self?

You are speaking of the *jiva*, the individual element which persists and presides over the reincarnations? It is more than that. These *jivas*, mostly, except for certain very rare cases, are like emanations of divine beings who have put forth outside themselves numerous *jivas*. And it is these *jivas* that incarnate.

In your case the divine aspect in question has put itself forth in *jivas*. But there is one of these which represents more directly this aspect—as the direct projection or emanation by which it will find its fulfilment. And this *jiva*, from what I can see, has already incarnated thrice upon earth, you would be the fourth. When an emanation like this prepares and chooses its vehicle, that preparation is made all the same under the distant guidance of this force. And often there are certain tendencies in childhood which cannot be understood till the day one becomes conscious of the aim of one's life. Then these tendencies, sometimes quite opposed to the milieu, to heredity, take on their *raison d'être*. Besides, it is only when one penetrates the depths of consciousness that one really becomes aware of the reason of things.

And what is there behind you is your real Self, clothed with all the experiences of a terrestrial life.⁴

06.11.1926 -13.11.1926

(*Bulletin*, February 1972, pp. 36, 38)

* * *

4. The following note is part of a preceding page torn from Pavitra's notebook:

Mother: "At the beginning it (*the Jiva in question or the real 'Self'*) remained behind. But gradually as your consciousness grew clear, it came close. I spoke to you about it only when your consciousness was sufficiently transparent for you to begin to perceive."

My vital being begins to take part fully in the meditation. And I have the sensation that my consciousness extends from the head to the feet, like a transparent and calm medium. It would be quite limpid if the physiological sensations of sight would stop, which they do sometimes but not always.

Then I have the consciousness of a presence behind me, the sensation of which is a duplicate of my consciousness. Even I feel it as if it were of the same size as my physical body and it presses to unite with my outer consciousness.

Today the unification was nearly done, though I did not experience any change of consciousness. I have the impression it came into me and only a slight touch would have been required to awake my full consciousness of it.

This luminous consciousness, is it not the physical consciousness? I mean the whole physical, physical mind, vital and body?

It is, I suppose, the normal consciousness, including the physical, and the consciousness behind is the inner one, which tries to unite with the outer one....

...I feel as before something very deep and grand.

Yes.

13.11.1926

(*Bulletin*, February 1972, pp. 38, 40)

* * *

Conversation with Mother—

What did you see yesterday?

My physical eyes did not see anything special. But I felt very powerfully the force and majesty.

One must not expect to see a complete change. Yet, some see very different aspects.

I saw a luminosity, a halo.

Yes, it scarcely goes further. Still, some see changing aspects.

I saw in fact modifications of the shadows of faces which could give this idea of successive changes; but as this was unsteady, I did not pay much attention to it.

There are different aspects which manifest successively. The modifications are still

imperfect, for the flesh and what is most physical is not transformed; it penetrates into the blood. Yesterday it was above all the wisdom aspect which manifested in all its power—the knowledge in the Word.

There is quite a work going on in your eyes. You feel it?

Yes. I have spoken about it several times.

All depends on how much your outer consciousness is united with the inner. When you have overcome the difficulties of your outer being, you will pass through a progressive initiation. I shall show you, through the eyes, all that is there in the universe.... You will then see the exact place of all these things.

You must get rid of all these difficulties.

Is there something special I should do?

The best thing, as you know, is to open yourself and ask that it be done.

13.11.1926 - 20.11.1926

(*Bulletin*, February 1972, pp. 42, 44)

* * *

I suppose she must have told you the way I am going on.

Yes.

There is nothing much that's important to add. I am conscious of the process of identification with that greater consciousness which is behind me; but it is not yet done. The difficulty resides always in the outer consciousness and the mechanical part of the mind which carries me away.

That is again the old story. You are paying too much attention to these workings.

20.11.1926

(*Bulletin*, February 1972, p. 44)

Compiler's Note

The above excerpts from Pavitra's Conversations with Sri Aurobindo show chronologically how the Mother gradually took up the responsibility of his sadhana. Pavitra

has the typical difficulties of a seeker from the West with a mind that comes in the way of his surrender to the Divine. He is more used to the idea of “the impersonal Divine” than “the divine personality”. Sri Aurobindo doesn’t assert either his or the Mother’s authority; he simply states that “the Vedantic standpoint of the impersonal absolute” is only one aspect of the truth and that “when the psychic opens you cannot retain this standpoint”. On **14 September 1926**, Pavitra has his first individual meditation with the Mother and notes “a great difference” from his “ordinary meditations”. On **28 September 1926**, he feels the divine force coming down during his meditation with her, but he wonders about the whole process of descent. How could somebody outside him bring down the divine force within him? What is the role of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in it and are intermediaries between the Divine and the disciple at all needed? Sri Aurobindo replies that even in the case of those who seek for liberation, “such a help from someone who has realised before is generally necessary because the forces of ignorance are too strong”. On **3 October 1926**, the Mother tells him “not to seek the truth with [his] mind” and invites him for collective meditation in the “small meditation-room”—this is Sri Aurobindo’s room in the Library House where, according to Champaklal and Purani, the Mother had started conducting collective meditation for a small group of disciples a few weeks before the Siddhi Day. During the same period, Sri Aurobindo himself was giving collective meditation to his disciples in the upstairs verandah of the same house. When Pavitra takes the former location for the latter, Sri Aurobindo clarifies that the Mother did not invite him to join his (Sri Aurobindo’s) but her collective meditation. It takes a few more days (**17 October 1926**) for the Mother to call Pavitra once again to her collective meditation. She cautions him in advance “not to feel surprised” if the other disciples look upon her as a deity in a temple. “That gives them the plenitude they need,” she says, justifying their attitude, but she doesn’t expect him to have the same approach because he has been “brought up differently”. By now, there is a greater proximity between the Mother and Pavitra who considers his meditations with her “infinitely valuable”. He is “tired of his mind” and does not try to do things by himself. Instead, he “opens himself to the force” and allows it to work within him. The Mother has initiated him into the way of the psychic. At this point, many pages of the Conversations are unfortunately missing. So we don’t know exactly when he joined the Mother’s collective meditations in the evening, but by **30 October 1926**, he seems to be attending them. Though Pavitra’s meditations with Mother have been mentioned several times before this date, these could be individual and not collective meditations with her. He seems to have been given every Tuesday (in addition to a few other days) at noon time to meditate with her individually.

By the **second week of November 1926**, the relationship between the Mother and Pavitra is that of a Guru and disciple and what Sri Aurobindo called the “brightest period in the history of the Ashram” has begun. This was an occult phase of sadhana in the Ashram when the sadhaks had marvellous experiences and came into contact

with divine beings due to the descent of the Overmind. Mother tells Pavitra about the particular emanation presiding over his life:

In your case the divine aspect in question has put itself forth in jivas. But there is one of these which represents more directly this aspect—as the divine projection or emanation by which it will find its fulfilment. And this jiva, from what I can see, has already incarnated thrice upon earth, you would be the fourth. When an emanation like this prepares and chooses its vehicle, that preparation is made all the same under the distant guidance of this force. And often there are certain tendencies in childhood which cannot be understood till the day one becomes conscious of the aim of one's life. Then these tendencies, sometimes quite opposed to the milieu, to heredity, take on their *raison d'être*. Besides, it is only when one penetrates the depths of consciousness that one really becomes aware of the reason of things.

*One is reminded of Haradhan's diary notation around the same time when the Mother similarly explored his past lives during meditation and found that he had been an occultist in a previous life. The date of Pavitra's last available conversation with Sri Aurobindo is **20 November 1926**, only four days before the Siddhi Day (**24 November 1926**) when Sri Aurobindo retired after handing over the charge of his disciples to the Mother. In the case of Pavitra as with a few others, this transfer of authority would not have made much difference because the ground had already been prepared for it.*

(To be continued)

Compilation and Notes by
RAMAN REDDY

...personally too she has stooped to descend here into the Darkness that she may lead it to the Light, into the Falsehood and Error that she may convert it to the Truth, into this Death that she may turn it to godlike Life, into this world-pain and its obstinate sorrow and suffering that she may end it in the transforming ecstasy of her sublime Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Mother, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 36)

TO THE DIVINE BELOVED

If I were pure
I could endure

Thy clasp divine
And be fully thine!

By enjoyments fed
By passions led

The false soul of desire
Attracted by the mire

Misses the Rose
Which innocent grows

Deep in my bosom's fire
Beyond all desire!

Yet will I seek
Till flesh grow weak

Then delivered from sin
The true soul within

Will have of thee Love
The union I dream of!

HEMANT KAPOOR

SRI AUROBINDO'S CRITICISM OF THE WEST

THE thesis of this paper is that there is an inseparable relation between Sri Aurobindo's criticism of the West and his defence of the values of Indian culture, and that the former does not, though born of the urgent need to defend the latter, fall short of the common standards of judgement anywhere, and that it states the facts without distortion, aiming at justice, sanity and measure.

In the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century, there was, it is true, an intelligent opposition both in India and in the West by at least a few to the Western notions of progress, to the false claims of the West and to its idolatry. For instance, there was in India Swami Vivekananda who never minced words about the West even while speaking to the Westerners. On his return from his first journey to the West, he observed in one of his lectures:

Europe is restless, does not know where to turn. The material tyranny is tremendous. The wealth and power of a country are in the hands of a few men who do not work but manipulate the work of millions of human beings. By this power they can deluge the whole earth with blood. Religion and all things are under their feet; they rule and stand supreme. The Western world is governed by a handful of Shylocks. All those things that you hear about—constitutional government, freedom, liberty, and parliaments—are but jokes. [. . .]

The West is groaning under the tyranny of the Shylocks [. . .]. The whole of Western civilisation will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. (*Complete Works*, 3: 158-59)

Not many would have agreed with Swami Vivekananda when he spoke these words more than a hundred years ago. How could the Westerners have taken this warning seriously, when they self-flatteringly believed themselves to have reached the pinnacle of civilisation—when they condescendingly declared that it was now their “divinely ordained mission” to civilise the East? (Of course, they have succeeded in their mission—they have “civilised” the East, which in effect means that they have made it as material, ruthless and predatory as the West.) Even those who might have seen the point of Swami Vivekananda's criticism would have only found him too extreme. But the present crisis of the West, for which it can only blame itself, which makes even the mightiest Western powers live in constant fear of the attack of one terrorist group or another (all of which were created by these mighty powers themselves at some point of time for their self-interests) goes only to show how prophetically he had spoken then. The anguish with which many a Western thinker now speaks of the West's degeneration clearly shows that there was nothing extreme about Swami Vivekananda's statement, though his prediction of fifty years may have been a little wide of the mark. In his *Is Indian Culture Obsolete?*, Michel Danino

reminds us of the great French writer André Malraux's observation: "I see in Europe a carefully ordered barbarism" (16), and quotes another Western thinker Pierre Thuillier, the French historian of science, to show how misled we are in our ideas of the West:

Westerners remain convinced that their mode of life is the privileged and definitive incarnation of "civilisation"; they are unable to understand that this "civilisation" has become as fragile as an eggshell. At the end of the twentieth century, political, economic and cultural elites behave as if the gravity of the situation eluded them. [. . .] Those who profess to be progressive clearly no longer know what a culture is; they no longer even realise that a society can continue to function more or less normally even as it has lost its soul. [. . .] In their eyes, a society is dead only when it is physically destroyed; they do not realise that the decay of a civilisation is inner before anything else. (15-16)

There is a growing awareness among the Westerners of the maladies afflicting the West for all its talk of "progress"—maladies that have led to the inner decay of its civilisation—for which this penetrating analysis of Thuillier stands as a good specimen. The French journalist François Gautier's diagnosis of the failure of the West also testifies to this awareness:

The other reason for the failing civilisation of the West, is that it greatly misused the mastery it had achieved over technology and material. Instead of putting this mastery to the service of truth, instead of turning it towards the spirit of evolution, it used it for domination and the satisfaction of the Western man's senses. (*Arise, O India*, 155)

But what is most surprising is that when the Westerners themselves speak thus about the fragility of their civilisation, admit that its inner decay cannot be hidden for long, and shudder, thinking of its impending disaster, the Indians are happily ignorant about all this, and continue to indulge themselves with their "ideas" and "images" of the West. With their hopelessly idealised view of the West, and a still more hopelessly distorted, if not ignorant, view of India's heritage, they draw a comparison between the two only to arrive at the conclusion they want to—that India is backward, for it lags far behind the West in progress, that its social organisation is detestable, for it always keeps the individual in fetters, and never allows him the freedom of doing what he likes, that its civilisation is a barbaric one, for it is this which is solely responsible for its backwardness and for its life of fetters, and that its religion is also, being not only a polytheistic one but also an irrational animistic cult of monstrosity, immeasurably inferior to that of the West. A crude spirit of admiration for the West combined with the cruder spirit of hostility to India and its past has,

owing to such imbecile comparisons, firmly set in, and it is only too natural for the modern educated Indians now to be as vocal about their hatred of India as they could be, condemning its poverty, illiteracy, overcrowding, ugliness, unhygienic conditions etc. And any writer, whether Indian or foreign or expatriate, who vociferously attacks all these things with the ulterior motive of throwing mud at India's past becomes a great celebrity with them. The more violent the writer is in his attack on the Indians, the more popular and successful he is with them. A nation-bashing writer becoming a great success with the people of that very nation can happen, it seems, only in modern India, because it is here that we have a "unique" educational system which makes the children feel ashamed of their own country, which even after over fifty years of independence still refuses to, as if in deference to Macaulay, offer them a knowledge of its own great cultural achievements of the past, though it is a land abundant in them.

The point here is that one needs to have a good deal of understanding of the Western impact on India—understanding of the way it has changed the very structure of the Indian mind, and of the changes it has effected in the modes of feeling and thinking—to have a true perception of the modern Indian mind. Without such a deeper knowledge of the Western impact on India, one is liable to be carried away by writers like William Archer and V. S. Naipaul who, through their works, create the impression that the whole of India is a very big open lavatory (because Indians, having no civic sense, turn every open space into a latrine); its civilisation is barbaric (because its people cannot even describe the sex act, are capable only of saying, 'It happened'); its religion is oppressive, spreading and justifying evils like caste and superstitions; India has nothing to offer the world except the Gandhian concept of holy poverty; everything about India has thus the distinct stamp of backwardness and inferiority. What Sri Aurobindo says in some other context about the mistake of the unaided intellectual reason faced with the phenomena of the religious life suits these writers to the ground:

Its mistake is like that of a foreigner who thinks everything in an alien country absurd and inferior because these things are not his own ways of acting and thinking and cannot be cut out by his own measures or suited to his own standards. So the thoroughgoing rationalist asks the religious spirit, if it is to stand, to satisfy the material reason and even to give physical proof of its truths, [. . .] So too he tries to judge religion by his idea of its externalities, just as an ignorant and obstreperous foreigner might try to judge a civilisation by the dress, outward colour of life and some of the most external peculiarities in the social manners of the inhabitants. (*The Human Cycle*, 143)

A rich sense of the standards by which Sri Aurobindo evaluates the Western civilisation will alone help us see through the designs of these self-styled evangelists

of Westernism (who prescribe the complete Westernisation of India as the panacea for all the evils it is ridden with) in thus slandering the Indian civilisation, one of the oldest and the greatest the world has ever seen. A critical study of these writers will certainly be rewarding—they are really cases in point in that they do, with their missionary zeal for Westernism, with their habit of pouring contempt on the very notion of Indian civilisation, and with their complete denial of the very value of the past, represent the general educated mind of the modern and post-modern age, and as such, stand as the most fruitful contrast to Sri Aurobindo who, in the line of his great predecessor Swami Vivekananda, did all that he could to impress on the Indians the value of their glorious heritage and to deliver them from the glamour of the West. An in-depth study of his reply to Archer would not only help us resist the impressive, all swaying ideas of journalists like Naipaul (whose numbers have lately swollen into thousands) but would also show them up to have been guided by some ulterior motives in denigrating the values of the Indian civilisation, and in waving high the flag of the West. Srinivasa Iyengar points it out in the first edition of his biography of Sri Aurobindo, while commending his reply to Archer:

...Sri Aurobindo enables the reader to take a peep into the true inwardness of Indian culture and helps him to grasp the core of authentic—"sane and virile"—spirituality in the abiding monuments of Indian culture. Especially is Sri Aurobindo's appreciation and eloquent defence of Indian Art valuable to us, since we are often apt to be led away by the Archer-like fulminations of most Western, and even some present-day Indian, detractors of our artistic heritage. (245)

Sri Aurobindo's magnificent defence of Indian culture matters very much to us in another, much more important respect also—it is the cornerstone of his criticism of the Western civilisation. It could even be asserted that it is his incomparable mastery of India's great cultural, philosophical and religious achievements—Vedas, Upanishads, religion, poetry, philosophy, painting, sculpture, Ramayana and Mahabharata, all of which Archer rejects as a repulsive mass of unspeakable barbarism in one wholesale condemnation, that enabled him to see the West for what it is—aggressive, material, utilitarian, predatory, inhumanly selfish and unspiritual. One could not agree more with Peter Heehs when he states, "this return to the religion of his forefathers was connected with his rejection of Western cultural values" (*Sri Aurobindo: A Brief Biography*, 34). It should also be remembered here that his maternal grandfather Rajnarain Bose had earlier, with his mastery of English and Sanskrit, defended the Indian tradition against the Christian polemic of missionaries such as Alexander Duff and Krishna Mohan Banerjea.

It is for this reason that Sri Aurobindo's defence of Indian culture deserves the most serious study. *The Foundations of Indian Culture* is what the modern educated,

de-Indianised and westernised Indian mind needs very badly now, for it is the most effective antidote to the corrupt forces of Westernism. M. P. Pandit calls it “a monumental work which has unfortunately not received adequate attention”. (*The Concept of Man*, 350) There cannot be a more passionate and more intelligent defence of the values of the Indian civilisation, establishing at the same time how the destruction of these values would be calamitous not only to India but to the whole world. If Sir John Woodroffe's book *Is India Civilized?* deals with, while answering Archer's rationalistic attack, the whole question of the survival of Indian civilisation and the inevitability of a war of cultures, Sri Aurobindo, in his book, goes one step further and shows that the real question is not whether India is civilised or not, “but whether the motive which has shaped her civilisation or the old-European intellectual or the new-European materialistic motive is to lead human culture.” (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, 11)

The very purpose of the book thus inevitably leads him to make a detailed study of the West, its values, its successes and failures, its chosen directions, its ruling passions and self-destructive interests and impulses. His thorough study of the West, which involves understanding, mastering and value-judging with high and rigorous standards, makes him question its very foundations—science and reason, the so-called solid foundations: Does the future of humanity lie in a culture founded solely upon reason and science? (*FIC*, 13).

(*To be continued*)

M. S. RAMESH

Let us not, either, select at random, make a nameless hotchpotch and then triumphantly call it the assimilation of East and West. We must begin by accepting nothing on trust from any source whatsoever, by questioning everything and forming our own conclusions. We need not fear that we shall by that process cease to be Indians or fall into the danger of abandoning Hinduism. India can never cease to be India or Hinduism to be Hinduism, if we really think for ourselves. It is only if we allow Europe to think for us that India is in danger of becoming an ill-executed and foolish copy of Europe.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 41)

AMONG THE NOT SO GREAT

CHARU-DA-Bhater (Charu Chandra Deb Sarkar)

Who will pray, he must fast and be clean
And fat his soul, and make his body lean.

CHAUCER, *The Summoner's Tale*

I COULD see his lean body, it couldn't be leaner. But his soul was beyond my ken. Let's hold judgment till later (if one can judge).

Who is this, another Charu Chandra? (We have already met two—C. C. Dutt, known as Dadu and C. C. Mukherji known as Bula-da.) This Charu-da is quite a bit different and quite a bit similar to the other two. The similarity, of course was—they were all devoted children of the Mother. We, the other children, gave him the title “BHATER Charu” = Charu of the Rice. Actually Dadoo and Bula-da were never referred to as “Charus”. But there were some more “Charus”, so the title “Bhater”. (The why will be clarified later.)

Charu-da was born long, long ago in 1887 in the village Mala, in Bengal, on the 17th of November. His family was quite well-to-do, and possessed cultivable lands. In 1907, at the age of 20 Charu-da was in Calcutta (Kolkata). He was a student of Arts in the Intermediate course at the Ripon College. It was about this time that he came across the paper *Bande Mataram*—whose editor was Sri Aurobindo Ghose. One of the students of English used to read the paper aloud to the others. A spark was lit in young Charu—he did not feel its tingle yet, though he thought that this man, the author, was a very learned man. Those were the days when Khudiram was arrested and hanged, and the country was seething with unrest. Sri Aurobindo too was arrested. Some young men were collecting money to help Sri Aurobindo's cause. When approached for a contribution, Charu said: “I don't know the man, nor do I know much about his principles. Why should I pay for him? Why does he do such things as to land himself in jail?” But as his friends persisted, and seeing some others give Re. 1/- to Rs.10/- or even ½ a Rupee—Charu said: “All right, because you have tried so hard, I will give you an Anna (1/16 of a Rupee = now 6 Paise). If you are not satisfied I will not give you anything.”!

Many of the students supported Suren Banerjee or Rashbehari Bose. (There were two factions in the Congress party then! One under Rashbehari and the other under Bal Gangadhar Tilak.) In one meeting in College Square, Charu was present when Sri Aurobindo spoke—He spoke softly. Though Charu could not hear much, he was impressed. Something touched his soul. The spark was being fanned; Sri Aurobindo's appearance and bearing also touched Charu. He found Sri Aurobindo to be simple and austere, tendencies which he had himself so admired.

Charu, though he was beginning to admire Sri Aurobindo, had more respect for

the moderates—S. N. Banerjee and Rashbehari Bose. Sri Aurobindo and B. G. Tilak were in the opposite camp, extremists. Charu bought photos of S. N. Banerjee and Sri Aurobindo. He framed the first with an 8-Anna (1/2 Rupee) frame and Sri Aurobindo's with one of 3 Annas! He was as yet swayed more by S. N. B. whom he took to be the leader of the nation. But slowly the tide in him was turning in favour of Aurobindo Babu. Below the picture it was mentioned that Aurobindo Babu had given up a job of Rs. 800/- and taken up one for Rs. 100/-—a great sacrifice. Another event went against S.N.B. At a conference that Charu had attended, S. N. Banerjee raised a sum of Rs. 10,000/-. This was to be spent for development work in the villages. Charu had a school in his village, and was expecting some funds to reach his school. But alas, nothing came. This annoyed Charu. Then he also heard that Sri Aurobindo had written about the Vedas and the Gita. So more “advantage” Sri Aurobindo! These were but the external reasons. Some inner chords were plucked and his soul was set astir, the flame was catching. Now Charu's heart was moving on a new and different path. Charu subscribed to the magazines *Karmayogin*, *Bande Mataram*, *Dharma*—and he was fully convinced that Sri Aurobindo was the man to follow, that he was the Future of the Nation. Charu even went to an astrologer to find out if Sri Aurobindo, who was in prison, would be freed—so anxious was he. (The astrologer did assure Charu that Sri Aurobindo would be freed. The man himself seemed anxious that Sri Aurobindo be freed.)

Charu reading Sri Aurobindo's writings, came across one, wherein it was strongly advocated that “...schools should be under national control”. Charu immediately resolved never to approach the Government for help, which would amount to Rs. 25/- anyway. He himself volunteered to teach without a salary and would give Rs. 3/- every month to the school. Some of his friends agreed with his plan, though some were not so convinced. A dividing line was faintly appearing. Incidentally, we have here, with us, a young man Charu had recruited as a teacher in his school. He is Benoy-da; he is an old Ashramite, now 101 years old. He used to work in the D.R. (Dining Room) filling sugar tins. He was quite a good runner—light on his feet and he had a good style. Now he is bent double, but moves about on his own power. He saw and sees the world around him quite well with one eye. The other gives a glassy stare—for it is of glass.

Charu continued to work in and for the school. All the while his admiration for and faith in Sri Aurobindo grew. He even started “Japa”, i.e. repeating Sri Aurobindo's name in the evenings. He read “Hymn to Durga” but was not sure he understood it. At that time he read an article on Hathayoga, but concluded that it was not an indispensable part of the yoga Sri Aurobindo practised (during His imprisonment). But Charu was puzzled. He thought: “Then what yoga is Sri Aurobindo practising? Sri Aurobindo is a Rishi. But where are His matted locks, where His ochre robes, His *rudraksha mala*, His *kamandalu*?” etc. Thus questioning, it dawned on him that the present-day Rishi needed not all these external signs. His achievements may be hidden.

Charu concluded too, through all these clashing thoughts, that to “preach without practising” is to fail in any endeavour, to impart knowledge of Brahma without being a Brahmagyani was an impossibility. He thought of all the difficulties that the Nation was facing: “Who can solve all these tremendous problems? It needs an ideal man, a “Rishi”. Who is that Rishi? Sri Aurobindo—was the answer—He is that ideal man, the Rishi—but where is He?”

For Sri Aurobindo had disappeared from the scene. Some said He had gone to a lonely place to continue His yoga. Some others said that He had gone to a foreign country—even Germany! There was no *pucca* news about Him.

It was now dangerous to take Sri Aurobindo’s name, or sympathise with Him or exhibit His photograph and read His books openly. Once the police did come to search Charu’s house. Someone unfavourably disposed towards Charu pointed out to the sub-inspector a photo of Sri Aurobindo in the meditation room. The SI looked and shrugged it off saying, “Oh! That has no great bearing on our search. These photos are sold in the open market.” The SI also noticed some copies of *Karmayogin* and *Dharma*. He later took Charu aside and told him to remove them. Charu thanked the SI and sent up a silent prayer to his Guru.

Those were troubled times. Charu tried to put into practice Sri Aurobindo’s ideas of Education. Charu introduced new books like *Brain of India*, *Uttarapara Speech*, etc. as text books. New concepts such as not to impose a mass of books on the students were tried out. Some of the teachers asked: “What—no books?” “Why is religion being introduced?” Those concepts bothered them. Charu himself had found it difficult at first to grasp what Sri Aurobindo thought, wrote and spoke about. It was doubly difficult to explain to others even what he understood. Most of them (Indians) were used to think or were led to think and work under yokes—of foreign rule, or orthodoxy and tradition. Sri Aurobindo’s thoughts were new, revolutionary and scary to most then (to many even now). The students were more amenable to the new, revolutionary ideas than the teachers. The latter were stuck with some old and orthodox methods. Some parents were afraid to enrol their children in such a school. But Charu persisted.

Some “incidents” (if we may so name them) buoyed persons like Charu. One of Charu’s friends had an experience. Charu and some friends used to worship (perform *pooja*) before a photo of Sri Aurobindo. They offered some flat rice (*chidê*), puffed rice (*mudi*) and a banana. They often wondered how to know that the Lord had accepted the offering! One night one of them “saw” Sri Aurobindo and “heard” Him say: “I have accepted your offering.” The devotee then addressed Sri Aurobindo: “I have heard you are a portion of Sri Krishna (Vishnu). Show me your four arms, like He has.” He was amazed and through tears of joy saw Sri Aurobindo with four arms, with “*Shankha, Gada, Chakra* and *Kamala*” (Conch, Mace, Disc and Lotus). But he noticed with some consternation that the *mala* (garland) they had put on the photo was missing on the Lord of his vision. The dream-vision ended.

He got off his bed, lit a lamp and hastened to the Pooja Room. To his greater amazement he found that the *mala* had fallen off the photo, the string had snapped. He collected the flowers, restrung the *mala* and put it back where it belonged. (Some say “Seeing is believing”—but often believing gives sight).

Then there were some rumours trickling down that Sri Aurobindo had gone to Chandernagore and then “no—He has left Chandernagore and gone to Pondicherry” (out of British India). Then Haradhan Bakshi (known to us as one of the *ATNSG**) came over and took Charu along with some others to Chandernagore. The occasion at Chandernagore was the celebration of the 22nd birth anniversary of Sri Motilal Roy. Charu and his friends went there with an eagerness, hoping to meet Sri Aurobindo also. They were in for a great disappointment—for He was not there.

After the celebration Charu and friends returned to Mala. Haradhan Bakshi accompanied them. They brought some new land under cultivation. Charu himself ploughed the fields. He was full of enthusiasm for he thought the produce could be sent to Sri Aurobindo. They (Haradhan too) wanted to start a new school named “Prabartak Sangha Vidyapith”. Then Haradhan slowly revealed to them that Aurobindo Babu had cut Himself away, right from the roots, from all those Sanghas. They heard too that Sri Aurobindo had asked Motilal to stay back at Pondicherry. But Motilal went back to Chandernagore. But matters did not go so well and Charu broke off from the Sangha. A plan for Haradhan to go to Pondicherry to sort out matters also fell through. One Mr. Kirti Chandra Gangopadhyaya said he could go to Pondicherry—but had no money. He was given Rs. 15/-—to go, but he did not go. Nothing seemed to be working. Then after all these efforts and false starts, Charu along with Haradhan left for Pondicherry on the Vijayadasami Day of 1925.

That was Charu in Bengal in the earlier part of the past century. It was but a preparation—a ploughing and a sowing. We will come to the “harvest”—reaped what? Who harvested? Maybe what follows could reveal the answers!

Charu-da at Pondicherry—Charu-da sallied forth from his old familiar haunts and origins towards his avowed Gurus and a new life. Charu-da came to Pondicherry on the 3rd of October, 1925. He met Sri Aurobindo and a new chapter opened. There is an interesting, very tellable story—could be related to this “new chapter opening”. Charu-da met Sri Aurobindo and was talking to Him. He (Sri Aurobindo), educated as He was in *pucca* British ways, kept repeating, at appropriate intervals: “I see... I see.” This puzzled and alarmed Charu-da, a *pucca* Bengali, much steeped in the traditions of rural Bengal. Charu-da thought: “What is He seeing? Something perhaps not so good inside me.” (The story goes a step further—Charu-da, the next day, buttoned his *kurta* higher up so that Sri Aurobindo would not “see” too much. But, the Guru kept saying, “I see... I see” all the same! It was much later that Charu-da came to know that it was quite an innocent “*Anglesi*” way of letting the speaker

* *Among the Not So Great*, a series published in *Mother India* and later issued as a book.

know that He was with the speaker, that He was listening. Thus did Charu-da come under Sri Aurobindo's scrutiny and care.

Charu-da was lodged in the room in Atelier near the Gate—to the right (ground floor). Many changes have been made through the decades. Next to him was another old-timer, a Telugu gentleman, the late Krishnayya—an interesting man himself. Charu-da did not stay too long, then left for Bengal. When in Bengal Charu-da fell quite ill. At that time, when he lay feeling physically miserable, he had a darshan (vision) of Lord Narayana. Charu-da identified Him as Sri Aurobindo. He returned to Pondicherry in 1928. During his first stay here, a Frenchman named Barbier Saint Hilaire arrived. He was later named "Pavitra" by Sri Aurobindo (all would, or should be knowing him. He was a great man by all accounts. Suffice it to say he was very close to the Mother, a yogi, Her "*sarathi*", and the 1st Director of Education of our school. He was a scholar and scientist. He had already searched far and wide for a Guru—from France to Mongolia and finally found them (Mother and Sri Aurobindo here—but all that is another story for another day). When Pavitra-da arrived, he was put to work for Charu-da!! (Can anyone imagine such a scenario now: a newly arrived sadhak given to work for another older sadhak!? Pavitra-da humbly went about doing the work assigned to him. But Charu-da was not completely pleased. He did not very much relish the fact that a "Christian" should be his worker—specially touch his drinking water (*kuja*). He did allow the water to be brought, but later discreetly threw away that water and brought some himself! Then Charu-da left for Bengal, maybe to settle and finish some half-done work there. He came back in 1928 on the 4th of April. (Sri Aurobindo had arrived here on the same day 18 years earlier.) Charu-da came and enquired: "*Kothai amar shaheb chakor?*" (Where is my white servant?) But by then Pavitra-da had passed his test and moved on, to be closer to and serve the Mother. (Pavitra-da had started a workshop—the precursor of present Atelier.)

Charu-da too moved on, he was put in charge of the Dining Room counter. He served then as faithfully as any. The brand of faith that some of the old-timers mustered, which ruled their lives here, which saw them through many ups and downs, would seem to us now too rigid, cumbersome and somewhat straight-laced. But then who draws, or where to draw the line between "good" and "too good" in such matters? Let's move on with the story. Then came along a young man—(late) Ravindra-ji. He was made the "in-charge" of the counter in D.R. Charu-da stepped down and continued working, without even a whisper of resentment or dissent. It seems some know-all, a worldly-wise man, pointed out this irregularity in "appointments". Charu-da snuffed such talk saying, "*Ma ekta kukoorke rakleo ami amar kaj korbo.*" (Even if the Mother appoints a dog, I will continue my work.) At the D.R. counter was the place I first saw Charu-da, the day I arrived. I think he was serving bananas at breakfast time. At lunch he served RICE—unfailing, punctual and meticulous, thereby earning his title "Bhater". I don't remember seeing him at night, i.e. when we the young ones went there after the Mother's Distribution at the Play Ground. (It is interesting to note that

long before, in the days when the Mother was not coming to the Play Ground, the D.R. closed down by maybe 6.15 p.m. We had our dinner before 5.30 p.m., before going to the Play Ground. We were home by 7 p.m.—and off to bed.)

Charu-da, the man, whom I saw on that first day of my arrival, (nigh 60 years ago) was not very impressive; very soon I had to change my views. What I saw was an old wisp of a man. (He seemed the “same old” person decades later. He never through all the years changed size or shape.) He was quite tall—and not much else. An emaciated body may sound a bit strong, but it was so. High cheekbones, a cage of ribs and thin arms and legs all covered by a healthy skin. The eyes held anybody who cared to look and more so when someone happened to rouse his temper. That temper was ever ready to erupt (common in some of the *Among the Not So Greats*?!). He wore quite a respectable beard and long flowing hair—always neatly groomed. Neither the eyes nor the lips held any promise of a smile—until years later. Rather they saw red and showed red when the temper blew. He wore a simple *dhoti* and a *chaddar* covering his upper body. A cloth was tied on his head during his serving in D.R.

(Could we, after all these years, dare a knowledgeable guess as to the reasons for the “short-fuse-tempers”? It was perhaps that they threw themselves at their Gurus’ feet with full faith and conviction. In simple terms—to serve Them only, the best they could—as a means of progress in their sadhana. They surrendered everything, and expected all to do the same. So they could not tolerate any lapses or half-way measures in themselves or in others. Any move out of the straight path [narrow] in terms of discipline, timings, quality and quantity of work and even incapacity, were taken as weaknesses to be severely and instantly dealt with, without pity or self-pity. They got used to “no compromises”. Of course, short tempers are not uncommon now, nor were they ever non-existent. Only their triggering-off reasons are different.

Charu-da was, for a long time, living “alone” here, as did most other sadhaks, i.e. with no other family members. But at the back of his mind he had an idea that he would offer his lands [at Mala—and he did] and bring in 101 devotees from Mala to the Ashram. He did attract many from that area. Many of his family members also were drawn in, nephews, nieces, grand-nieces and grand-nephews and....) Many of these had not even seen Charu-da. Arriving here they had their first glimpse and taste of him. They may have heard of him in awe if not plain fear but now (meeting him) the feeling was justified. Take that first meeting Sukhen (grand-nephew) had with him. The poor chap had just arrived from Mala and went to see Charu-da as a mark of respect. Charu-da didn’t give him a chance even to enter his room. He asked: “*Samadhi hoye eshchho?*” (Have you been to the Samadhi?) Sukhen said, “No.” Then Charu-da, with signs of some rising heat, “Why then have you come here,—go, go to the Samadhi first.” Sukhen hurried off to the Ashram. Before Sukhen’s arrival (a very recent event), his aunts and many others from Mala were already settled here—many were here before 1945—Benoy (teacher in Mala—sugar-tin filler), Abinash, Surendra (Dairy), etc.

You could get into trouble with Charu-da for no apparent reason at all. (He must have had some reason.) This incident took place within 2-3 days of my arrival. I was very “*kuchcha*” (unbaked, innocent). I, along with my brother and two or three others (more *pucca* = baked) entered the Ashram, going in for the general daily Blessings of the Mother. As we went past the “gateman” who happened to be Charu-da at that hour, one of my older companions whispered to me, “Say loudly ‘Charu-daa’.” I did as bid. Then someone said, “Run.” I was bewildered, but ran and looked back. There was Charu-da, red-eyed, making straight for me. I was frightened; I ran, took the Rockery passage and ran out of the Ashram. He followed me out to the corner and there left off the chase. I think I sneaked in later. This was my first encounter with Charu-da. He soon forgot and forgave—must have,—for he never took up the chase nor the topic again.

I have described Charu-da as “emaciated” for want of a better word. Thin and long as he was (when Sri Aurobindo said “I see...”, He must have seen right through him), he amazed me and my brother every once in a while. He was a friend of my uncle, Pantulu (another Vesuvius-*ATNSG*). Every time (on occasions) my aunt made some Payas, my uncle would keep aside about a litre of it and ask us to go deliver it to Charu-da. He could put it away in one go or two. This was before the days of fridges and before the arrival of any of his kin. Where did it all go? Apart from this luxury, he had only what was given in the D.R. Later, his nieces would make him some *Luchi*, fried brinjal and/or toast for breakfast. But you could never even speak of non-veg in his presence (including eggs). Sukhen again was at the receiving end when, unthinking, he said he would go and get some eggs. “*Beriye jao*” (Get out) was the order given.

Charu-da worked on in the D.R. a long long time. I heard it said that he was never late, not a single day. But he was getting old. It was probably not easy for him to stand for long hours, all the while chopping up lumps of rice and serving queues of people. It was thought to ease him out of his work in the D.R. But how? He was too deeply attached to this work. He would be most unhappy to leave. But finally it was done—the Mother too cajoled him—a new job was found for him and She gave him a pair of new special *dhoties & kurtas* to wear when on duty—he was to be the gate-keeper (*Dwarapalaka*) of our Play Ground. So he was not retired completely. Then began the sweetening and softening of Charu-da (this, I believe). He came into contact with children and the youthful. This was a new atmosphere, a new current which soaked and softened Charu-da. Yet it was not as if a magic wand was waved and “behold”! an overnight transformation. Neither was it (the change) complete—but there was a beginning and a movement towards mellowing. We have heard and seen Charu-da of old. Now—for the new Charu-da.

New Charu-da—We the young befriended him and could now talk to him on somewhat equal terms. On occasions he would even concede a point in an argument—all with relative calm and a smile—quite unthinkable a few years back. Children

who had not experienced the “Charu-da of old” were more free. Some of them even could stroke his beard, and one young girl even wove his beard into plaits!!

Once our 1st Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru came to visit the Ashram. In the evening he arrived at the Play Ground Gate with his retinue. Charu-da could recognise Pandit-ji, his daughter Indira Gandhi, and make out that some others, Lal Bahadur Shastri and the Consul General, were of the entourage. He let them in. Then came an ordinary looking man, dark-complexioned, in a plain white shirt and *dhoti* (South Indian style). He didn’t look “official”. Charu-da stopped him. It was his bounden duty. Fortunately for all concerned, someone noticed the happening and succeeded in convincing Charu-da (it must have taken quite a lot of convincing) that the man was a V.I.P.—in fact it was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu—Mr. Kamaraj. Charu-da stepped back and Kamaraj being what he was, all humility and understanding (I gathered so from a book on Kamaraj), smiled and entered the Play Ground and took his seat.

It made a very interesting, if not prophetic, photo of the Mother, Pandit-ji, Indira Gandhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Kamaraj and the Consul General of Pondicherry—i.e. one Prime Minister, two future Prime Ministers, a Chief Minister and a Consul General—all lined up with the Mother!

Charu-da was a man of rules—all very hard and very fast. Ideas and principles having once entered him found it hard to come out. But he was fair in that he imposed them on himself as much as he tried to impose them on others. There was a strip of lawn on one side of the entrance passage in the Play Ground. It was with some effort that it was grown there, on a slope, to prevent erosion of the Ground. To keep it green, effective and beautiful there was a strict rule: “DO NOT STEP ON THE GRASS.” But rules very few like, and understanding, obey them. The others have to be coaxed to obey. Charu-da had a busy time on this score. Some of the boys, just to tease him, would run right up to the edge and jump and cross over. This kept Charu-da on the red alert. He was a bit puzzled—was this jumping over within the law or not? Once in a way, someone blundered—he/she did step on the grass—by chance, by a studied chance, or plain ignorance, whatever the case, for Charu-da it made no difference. He would pick up his *dhoti* and give chase. I hate to think what could have been the outcome IF Charu-da had been strong and fast. As it was, if he could stop the miscreant there was a bit of verbal and moral scorching with a stiff dose of “discipline”. I was witness once when the trespasser was a new man, a visitor. He was standing with a foot on the grass. Charu-da came at him with burning eyes and gesticulating said something in some language. The poor man could not understand much as to what was happening, but he moved off in a hurry. I then approached Charu-da and said: “Charu-da, the man is new to this place, does not know our rules. So, you could forgive him.” Charu-da agreed and added: “*Amio na jene ekbar pa rekhechchilam.*” (I too stepped on the grass once, not knowing the rule.) I sympathised and said. “It’s O.K., since you did it unknowingly.” But Charu-da disagreed saying:

“*Na, na, Sri Aurobindo bolechen—agyan ekta pap.*” (Sri Aurobindo has said: “Ignorance is a sin.”) The dialogue had to end there.

One of our ex-students, Prabhat, was often at the receiving end of some practical jokes played by his friends. He was (is) an affable type, usually wore a smile, except when he had to discard it for a look of bewilderment. On this day Prabhat was seen approaching the Play Ground for his group activities. The friends (group members) went up to Charu-da and told him “One of our group boys (Prabhat) is coming. He has the habit of drinking! See his eyes—red and drooping, and his sleepy smile.” Charu-da was convinced and ready. Prabhat stepped in and Charu-da barred his way saying, “*Beriye jao.*” (Get out.) Prabhat probably thought it was a joke or the order was for someone else, so tried to skirt Charu-da and enter, making matters worse. Prabhat was now a bit shaken out of his reverie—he looked helplessly on. The friends then came to “see” what the trouble was. They pleaded with Charu-da and assured Charu-da that they would take Prabhat in and see to it that he made no trouble. They explained to Charu-da that Prabhat was actually a good and gentle boy. Charu-da then let him in.

Charu-da continued the Gate duty for as long as he could. Then that body, wasted as it was, could not keep pace with that fire-spirit within. It was slowly losing ground and gave up—Charu-da passed away on the 8th of February, 1974. The fire was extinguished, the embers glowed for a while, the ashes would soon cover them. But, we—some of his many relatives and I, could blow on our “long ago” memories, blow away some ashes—a few embers were alive... so were we able to bring back Charu-da to the warmth of our Present.

This was Charu-da who fattened his soul and made his body lean. There was not much that he had for people to sit up and take note. It would seem rather that he did much, went through a great many travails to arrive at the feet of his chosen Guru. Once there he melted into the melange of sadhaks. It was only the Guru who said, “I see..., I see...” Charu-da was right when he suspected the Guru is “seeing” something more than meets our eyes. Perhaps Charu-da himself did not “see”, yet fattened his soul—that led him surely and safely to this Haven.

R. PRABHAKAR (BATTI)

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from the issue of September 2005)

SOCIALISM is the great challenge of the future. If it gets hold of the leading nations of the world, it would undoubtedly impose itself on the others. In that case, the function of the World-State would be to combine the different socialisms into one great system. Uniformity is becoming, more and more every day, the law of the world, and uniformity is bound to lead to centralisation. In actual practice, socialism has undergone many different developments—National Socialism in Germany, Fascism in Italy and Marxian Socialism in Russia. But all these are equally antagonistic to individualism. There is one obstacle in the path of a World-State which should be taken note of and that is race-sense. Though irrational, it is a very strong feeling. But it is bound to vanish, ultimately, with increased intercourse—cultural, intellectual and physical. It is a legacy left to us by past history—history of a period when men were not guided by reason.

The extreme form of the World-State, as dreamed of by the modern thinkers, is then “a strict unification, a vast uniformity, a regulated socialisation of united mankind”. It might seem a chimerical Utopia, to the unthinking mind, but the speculations of the political philosopher are the logical conclusion, the inevitable end of the secret urge towards human unity. It is, however, necessary for us to appraise the gain and loss of the State principle. Must we accept it? Sri Aurobindo describes how in Asia the State idea, though it was affirmed, could not advance beyond a certain point. “The State machine existed only for a restricted and superficial action; the real life of the people was determined by other powers with which it could not meddle. Its principal function was to preserve and protect the national culture and to maintain sufficient political, social and administrative order—as far as possible an immutable order—for the real life of the people to function undisturbed in its own way and according to its own innate tendencies.” Some such unity for mankind might be brought about, instead of a centralised World-State, if the important nations could keep intact their nationalistic instinct and resist the domination of the international State idea. The result would not be a single State, but a single human race with a free association of its nation-units.

Which of the two would be preferable? What is the World-State going to give us? How long is it going to endure? The results of such a State would, making due allowances, be much the same as those of the ancient Roman Empire,—assured peace of the world, great development of ease and well-being, the solution of important problems of life by the united intelligence of man, a marked cultural and intellectual uplift, the rise of a common language. But all this is on the credit side. On the debit side, there would be, after a time, a dying down of force, a static condition of the

human mind and human life, a stagnation, decay, disintegration. The soul of man would begin to wither in the midst of his acquisitions. The reasons for the disintegration would be much the same as in the Roman analogy. It may be argued that the World-Government is going to be a free, democratic organism where liberty and progress would not be hampered in any way. But, really speaking, there is no such guarantee. To begin with, democracy in the future international State may be quite different from what we have known it to be. As a matter of fact, has not Sri Aurobindo made it amply clear that Socialism, the antithesis of individual liberty, may be the keystone of the future State? The rule—even perhaps the tyranny—of the majority is a concomitant of all democratic forms of Government. But, says Sri Aurobindo, “... what the future promises us is something more formidable still, the tyranny of the whole, of the self-hypnotised mass over its constituent groups and units.”

Originally, individual freedom was the ideal of the democratic movement, but what has actually come about is that a huge mechanism, a gigantic group-being, a leviathan, has taken the place of the monarch and the aristocracy. The legislators and administrators represent this leviathan and not their electors. The individual is helpless against its usurpations, and his only remedy is a retreat into the freedom of his soul or the freedom of his intellectual being. But is there any assurance of either kind of freedom in the new State? Freedom of thought and speech no longer exists in Russia. They had certainly vanished from Germany and Italy too, during the Axis regime. As to religious liberty, it is being slowly and steadily ground out in Soviet Russia, just as it had been in Nazi Germany, by State pressure. If the individual is stifled, society becomes stagnant. “The free individual is the conscious progressive: it is only when he is able to impart his own creative and mobile consciousness to the mass that a progressive society becomes possible.”

In the next chapter, Sri Aurobindo explains how in the course of progress both oneness and diversity are equally necessary. Unity is undoubtedly the very basis of life. The race is moving steadily towards it and must one day realise it. But uniformity is not the law, life exists by diversity. Each individual, each group, though one with the others in its universality, must retain its own unique character. This rules out over-centralisation and insistence on uniformity. “Therefore the unity of the human race to be entirely sound and in consonance with the deepest laws of life must be founded on free groupings, and the groupings again must be the natural association of free individuals.” This ideal may or may not be attainable in the near future, but we must keep it always before us. The division of humanity into natural groups may be taken as intended by Nature, and one great principle of this division is the diversity of language. At one time, not very long ago, there was a strong feeling in favour of a common language and the Esperantist movement made considerable headway. But that feeling has lost all its intensity and rightly so. For to run after the chimera of one language means a failure to understand the principle of unity in diversity. Sri Aurobindo sums up the point thus: “...it is of the utmost value to a nation, a human

group-soul, to preserve its language and to make of it a strong and living cultural instrument. A nation, race or people which loses its language cannot live its whole life or its real life." We have said already that uniformity is not what man seeks. His goal is the unity of the race in spite of the diversity of language and culture and religion. To give human life its full play, there must be diversity of culture and "differentiation of soul-groups". Diversity of language is inextricably mixed up with variety of culture and with national variation. If man sacrifices this national variation and forms a single uniform humanity, very probably he would be a gainer in many directions,—peace, economic well-being, efficient administrative machinery and so forth—as happened in the Roman unity in the olden days. "...but," asks Sri Aurobindo, "to what eventual good if it leads also to an uncreative sterilisation of the mind and the stagnation of the soul of the race?" Various instances are cited including that of India, but in view of the establishment of a republic in India and the growth of the British Commonwealth of nations Sri Aurobindo's remarks here have, in part, lost their precise point. With regard to the elimination of linguistic diversity, some new principle has to be found by which unity of the entire race can be achieved without sacrifice of the richness and completeness of life aimed at, and often achieved by the nation-groups.

If, therefore, the natural diversity of the units is to be preserved and, at the same time, the unification of the race is to be accomplished, a free world-union, rather than a centralised World-State, is indicated as the means. Obviously, this would be a method, quite different from the one by which the Nation-State has been built up. Just before 1914, the ideal of this State seemed to be on the point of being crushed by the weight, on the one hand, of the huge world empires, and on the other, of the progress of the international ideal. If we wish to see national idealism not shattered and, at the same time, to give full chance to the growing ideal of human unity to develop we have to find a method of harmonising the two. Nature works by balancing opposite forces. She tries centralisation and decentralisation by turns. She may destroy the Nation-State as she has destroyed the tribal and city States in the past; or she may preserve the nation as a brake or a counterpoise against a too rapid trend towards unification. The most important development in the last half century has been the growth of huge monstrous empires which swallowed up small independent States, under one pretext or another—often without any pretext at all. Korea, Abyssinia, Morocco, the Boer republics and many others lost their individual existence. Then, fortunately for the lesser States, the robbers fell out. Korea saw the end of Japan's rule, Abyssinia shook off the yoke of Italy. England had to disgorge Ireland. The cataclysm of the two wars changed the face of the globe. Egypt, India, Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia came out of the tutelage of their erstwhile masters. The Turkish empire disintegrated, giving birth to a number of free states—Iraq, Hedjaz, Syria, Israel, etc., just as, a few decades before, Greece and the Balkan States had gone out of that empire. Turkey, however, lived on as a strong but well-knit Nation-State. It can be

said definitely that the ideal of free nationalism has established itself all over, though some powers still lag behind in full recognition of it and some others hold it not so much in practice as in principle.

Anyhow, as things are today, the world is not going to be divided into a small handful of world-empires. First of all, we can safely bank on the probability of thieves falling out. Next, the world in general is not disposed to brook any preposterous claims like the White Man's Burden or the Nordic's right to dictate to others.

It is in this setting that we have to judge international bodies like the League of Nations. Today the U.N.O. has practically supplanted the older body. Even this august assembly is on its trial. Still man has to grope his way through the darkness in order to get to the light beyond. We shall have to revert to this subject when we deal with the last chapter [of *The Ideal of Human Unity*.]

(*To be continued*)

C. C. DUTT

(This instalment first appeared in *Mother India* in January, 1952)

The modern mind does not believe in God, but it believes in Nature: but Nature too is not to be deceived; she enforces her law, she works out always her results from the thing that really is and from the real spirit and character of the energy we put into action. And this especially is one of the ages in which mankind is very closely put to the question. The hopes, the ideals, the aspirations that are abroad in it are themselves so many severe and pregnant questions put to us, not merely to our intelligence but to the spirit of our being and action. In this fateful examination it is not skill and cleverness, machinery and organisation which will ultimately prevail,—that was the faith which Germany professed, and we know how it ended,—but the truth and sincerity of our living. It is not impossible for man to realise his ideals so that he may move on to yet greater undreamed things, but on condition that he makes them totally an inner in order that they may become too an outer reality.

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Human Cycle*, CWSA, Vol. 25, p. 602)

EVERY DAWN...

Every dawn
breaks into a new song
sung by my songster soul;

Every eve
sends my child-soul to sleep
with a lullaby by the Divine Mother
playing Her maternal role.

Every bellow of my lung
breathes in and breathes out
Thy Love's indomitable passion;

Every beat of my heart
beats rhythmically with Thine own
Universal pulsation.

Every thought of mine
flies to Thee with the wings
of an aspiring flame;

Every fall of mine
give me the strength to utter
Thy infallible stupendous Name.

ABANI SINHA

NOMENCLATURE APROPOS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S PSYCHOLOGICAL SYSTEM: A HISTORICAL NOTE AND REAPPRAISAL

Introduction

In the short history of psychology there have been many thought currents and approaches to the understanding of human nature. Since the last decade of the 19th century, psychology has been crossing a number of hurdles. Firstly, it had to get over the mechanistic bias of models based on physical science. Secondly, it is still grappling to outgrow the Euro-American-centric perspective. There has been a growing recognition in the world that a complete psychology cannot ignore the place of consciousness and the importance of a “Beyond-Ego” principle as a centre of integration within the structure of the personality. In this context, the psychological insights inherent in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo assume relevance and need a systematic exploration from historical as well as contemporary developments. This is especially important as Sri Aurobindo describes the evolutionary and futuristic models of man, embodying higher and higher consciousness. In recent years influential psychologists like Ken Wilber have drawn inspiration from Sri Aurobindo’s model of consciousness. Furthermore, some academic institutions in India and the West have been offering courses where the psychological insights of Sri Aurobindo are often presented under some nomenclature or the other. A host of websites have surfaced on Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought, often associated with various unrelated topics. In this context, it is important that Sri Aurobindo’s thought should not be confused, misrepresented, distorted or mixed up with other ideas or else its spirit and essence will be lost. There have been numerous attempts to use an appropriate nomenclature that would reflect the original perspective of Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought inherent in Integral Yoga. The term “Integral Psychology” which was initially used for this purpose is now being identified with several different things and has been even owned as a domain name as an Internet website with a different significance. Keeping this in view and need for clarity regarding Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought, this paper aims at showing how the concepts regarding nomenclature have been evolving and altering even among Aurobindonian scholars. Further, it attempts to arrive at a nomenclature that suits the Zeitgeist and also truly reflects Sri Aurobindo’s psychological thought.

The Beginnings

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), the great Indian Philosopher, Revolutionary, Mystic, Poet and Yogi presented to the world the vision of Integral Yoga where the human being is considered to be a transitional being with a possibility of developing higher states of consciousness embodied in evolutionary terms. His extensive writings on

philosophy, sadhana, and life as part of a comprehensive Integral Yoga contain deep psychological insights. An understanding of these insights is necessary for formulating a new psychological approach that will move from illness repair models to evolutionary and transformative models for true well-being and psychological growth. Sri Aurobindo's writings cover the period from the last decade of the 19th century till the end of his earthly life. But the main body of his writing was systematically presented between 1914 and 1921. It was only in the 1940's that Aurobindonian scholars started extrapolating the scattered psychological insights in his writings and using them to approach psychology from a consciousness perspective.

The beginning of the psychological quest by Aurobindonian scholars can be traced to an article entitled "A Psychological Appreciation of Sri Aurobindo's System of Integral Yoga" written by Dr. Indra Sen which appeared in the 1944 issue of *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual* (Sen, 1944). Ever since, the pursuit of psychological concepts implicit in Integral Yoga has grown steadily, culminating in the landmark publication of *A Greater Psychology* (Dalal, 2001) and a number of other related publications in India and the West. As early as 1946, Indra Sen spoke on this topic to a professional audience when he delivered his speech "The Urge for Wholeness" as the presidential address to the Educational and Psychology Section of the Indian Science Congress (Sen, 1946).

In the early published literature we do not find any specific nomenclature to describe the psychological insights of Integral Yoga. Indra Sen was clear that new terms should be considered. Further, he pointed out that "...our present psychological terms are adapted to the description of the general waking consciousness, and, it appears that as the base of experience and field of data become wider, the terms too shall have to be made elastic and given fresh form and meanings" (Sen, 1944). Sen in 1946 introduced the concept of Psychic Consciousness as a form of consciousness that was higher than the mental (actually it is a deeper consciousness that stands behind the ego-bound surface personality). He explained that unlike the ordinary consciousness that works through dualities and polarities, the psychic consciousness manifests spontaneity, depth and wholeness. He further defined "wholeness" as "a tendency to progressive perfection of organisation" and described that this was the principal trend of not only of human nature but of organic evolution as a whole. Sen incidentally used the term "Integrated Personality" in this lecture (Sen, 1946). The term "Indian Yogic Psychology" to explain the contribution of the "Self-Poised Consciousness of the Gita" and the Psychic Consciousness in Sri Aurobindo's system was subsequently used (Sen, 1947). Later, he spoke of the "Integral Standpoint of Sri Aurobindo's Psychological System" (Sen, 1959).

Emergence of "Integral Psychology" as a terminology

The beginning of the usage of the term "Integral Psychology" in literature can be

traced to the year 1957 when Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri and Prof. Frederic Spiegelberg conceived the idea of holding a commemorative symposium on the Integral Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo (Chaudhuri & Spiegelberg, 1960).^{*} The symposium contained various articles contributed by eminent Aurobindonian scholars where for the first time the term “Integral” was used extensively with variations (viz Integralism, Integralist, and Integrated). The symposium was organised in five parts: Philosophy, Epistemology and Psychology, Yoga and Ethics, Literature and Miscellaneous. Here, Indra Sen used the term “Integral Psychology” in the sense that ordinary waking consciousness inherently carries the subconscious as well as the superconsciousness. Further, he commented “An Integralism is thus characteristic of all Indian Psychology. However, at the hands of Sri Aurobindo, it receives an elaborate treatment, which enables Indian psychology to take the form of a well-developed Integral Psychology” (Sen, 1960).

The term “Integral Psychology” started being used by others since 1960 to refer to Sri Aurobindo’s psychological perspective. Jobst Muhling wrote a serialised article in three consecutive issues of *Mother India* where “ordinary psychology” whose watchword is “Know Thyself”, was differentiated from “Integral Psychology” whose watchword is “Be Thyself”. In this article Muhling also used the term “Integral Spiritual Psychology” (Muhling, 1960).

Many variations of the term Integral Psychology started appearing in a published form in the 1980’s. Dr. A. S. Dalal used the term Integral Psychology in an article titled “Integral Psychology: an outline of the psychological thought implicit in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga” which was published in *Sri Aurobindo Circle* (Dalal, 1981). Dalal subsequently discontinued using the term “Integral Psychology” because he found the term being used by different writers for different things (Dalal, 2002). Indra Sen’s book *Integral Psychology* subtitled “The Psychological System of Sri Aurobindo” appeared in 1986 (Sen, 1986). Kishore Gandhi’s class notes prepared in 1966 were later published in *Mother India* in 1986 where the term “Integral Yogic Psychology” was used (Gandhi, 1986). Madhusudhan Reddy used the term “Integral Yoga Psychology” as the title of his book (Reddy, 1988).

Serialising an article titled “Integral Psychology”, Goswami gave a definition of “Integral Psychology”: “Integral Psychology is a system that takes into consideration all aspects of an individual’s life—physical, vital, mental, environmental, social, cultural and spiritual—that make him/her a human person. It is called ‘Integral’ especially because of its focus on the process of integration (of the aspects) that goes on continually in all normal human beings” (Goswami, 1987). However, when these articles were published in a book form, he used the term “Global Psychology”. He preferred the term “global” as it did not have an exclusively Eastern or Western bias.

^{*} There is anecdotal evidence that the term “Integral Psychology” might have been used even earlier by Dr. Indra Sen in his informal talks.

“Man is looked upon as an individual unit on this globe; he is to integrate all his experiences at all different levels eventually to grow into a global person” (Goswami, year not cited).

Subsequent Usage of the Term “Integral Psychology”

The term “Integral” came to be used subsequently by various persons for psychological systems other than that of Sri Aurobindo. Loyd Fellows founded the Institute of Integral Psychology in the 1970's and during its active years (1976-1985), M. P. Pandit, Dalal, V. M. Reddy and Robert Gerard participated in its activities. Robert Gerard used the term “Integral Psychology” for his own psychological system—an integration of theosophy, occult psychological research and other sources (Gerard, 1982). Ken Wilber uses the term “Integral” for his system which is an integration of nearly a hundred psychological systems (Wilber, 2000). He himself has been greatly influenced by Sri Aurobindo though his use of the term “Integral Psychology” is different from the classical Aurobindonian perspective. In view of this, Dalal prefers to use the term “Integral Yoga Psychology” to refer unambiguously to Sri Aurobindo's psychological thought. Ken Wilber who owns the Internet domain with the term “Integral Psychology”, concurs with Dalal (Dalal, 2002).

In recent years psychologists in different parts of the world have been using the term “Integral Psychology” with different meanings. Paul E. Herman in 1983 described Integral Psychology as an “emergent East-West study of human psyche”. Haridas Chaudhuri in an unpublished manuscript approached Integral Psychology with insights from various schools of Eastern and Western Psychology while focusing on the multidimensional richness and individual wholeness of the human personality (Chaudhuri, 1973).

Conferences and seminars have been organised since 1999 till date on Integral Psychology with different connotations in the US and India. Workshops, training programmes, websites, academic courses and publications on Integral Psychology have also slowly started mushrooming in psychology. These significant developments have to be taken into account in order to understand the Zeitgeist. Confusion, ambiguity and mistaken perceptions are prevailing in psychology, which have many ramifications that need to be addressed in the context of Sri Aurobindo's psychological perspective of Integral Yoga. The term “Integral” in Integral Yoga has a deep meaning embedded that needs to be brought into the light (the term “integral” has to be differentiated from an eclectic and synthetic approach).

Integral Yoga Psychology

In 1936, Sri Aurobindo used the term Yogic Psychology: “I mean by Yogic Psychology an examination of the nature and movements of consciousness as they are revealed to us by the processes and results of Yoga” (Sri Aurobindo, 1994). Early in the 1940's

Sri Aurobindo had commented: "A direct experiential and experimental psychology seems to be demanded if psychology is to be a science and not merely a mass of elementary and superficial generalisations with all the rest guesswork or uncertain conclusion or inference" (Sri Aurobindo, 1994). Sri Aurobindo had stated as early as 1917-18: "A complete psychology cannot be a pure natural science, but must be a compound of science and metaphysical knowledge." "A complete psychology must be a complex of the science of mind, its operations and its relations to life and body with intuitive and experimental knowledge of the nature of mind and its relations to supermind and spirit." "Psychology may begin as a natural science, but it deals already with superphysical and must end in a metaphysical enquiry. If one side of the process it studies and its method of enquiry is physical, the other and more important is non-physical; it is a direct observation of mental operations by mind without any regard to their physiological meaning, support, substratum or instrumentation" (Sri Aurobindo, 1994).

It naturally follows that any nomenclature for describing the psychology implicit in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo must bring out the Yogic and experiential insights of Sri Aurobindo's psychological thought. It must also bring out its integral nature as a comprehensive science of consciousness that deals with the totality of Being.

In fact any nomenclature to describe Sri Aurobindo's thought must ideally reflect these basic themes:

- (a) The different facets of the human being can be integrated around a "Beyond-Ego" principle or a Soul-principle which can eventually replace the ego;
- (b) Such an integrated being is capable of evolving along the hierarchies of consciousness that extend from the inconscience to the superconscience;
- (c) A transformation of consciousness can manifest newer models of the human being capable of expressing higher states of consciousness in earthly terms.

Summary and Conclusions:

The term "Integral Psychology" was initially used to describe Sri Aurobindo's psychological system. It was Indra Sen who first used the term for this purpose. However, even for Sri Aurobindo's psychological system, other different terms have also been used (Gandhi, 1986 & Reddy, 1988). The varied usage of the term "Integral Psychology" in different parts of the world calls for the seeking of another nomenclature, which would denote an unambiguous Aurobindonian perspective that acknowledges both the mystical and scientific dimensions as well as the evolutionary movement in consciousness to manifest newer models of the human being. In Sri Aurobindo's perspective, the term "integral" does not carry an eclectic connotation (which is conveyed by Gerard's and Wilber's use of the term) but points to a distinctive, dynamic, evolutionary, transformative movement in consciousness. The term "Integral Yoga" is Sri Aurobindo's unique creation in concept as well as in practice and the

term "Integral Yoga Psychology" would at this point of time convey the psychological perspective in Integral Yoga without any admixture, confusion or distortion. This is necessary for the enrichment of psychology which is a growing discipline and for ushering the greater psychology that needs to be developed.

Table showing the historical shifts in nomenclature

S.No.	Year	Nomenclature Used	Nomenclature Used by	Comments
1.	1944	No specific nomenclature	Indra Sen	First published article on Sri Aurobindo's Psychology. Published in <i>Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual</i> .
2.	1946	No specific nomenclature	Indra Sen	First lecture on Sri Aurobindo's Psychology at Indian Science Congress. "Psychic Consciousness", "Integrated Personality" were used.
3.	1947	Indian Yogic Psychology	Indra Sen	The term was used for both the perspective of Gita and of Sri Aurobindo. Published in <i>Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual</i> .
4.	1959	No nomenclature but mention of "Integral Standpoint of Sri Aurobindo's Psychological System".	Indra Sen	Published in <i>Mother India</i> .
5.	1960	Integral Psychology	Indra Sen	First publication using the term "Integral Psychology" for Sri Aurobindo's psychological system. Published in <i>Commemorative Symposium</i> , edited by H. Chaudhuri and F. Spiegelberg.
6.	1960	Integral Psychology, Integral Spiritual Psychology	Jobst Muhling	Differentiating contemporary Western psychology from Sri Aurobindo's Psychology.
7.	1966	Integral Yogic Psychology	Kishore Gandhi	Later published in 1986.

S.No.	Year	Nomenclature Used	Nomenclature Used by	Comments
8.	1973	Integral Yogic Psychology	Haridas Chaudhuri	Unpublished Manuscript.
9.	1970's	Integral Psychology	Loyd Fellows	Name of Institute in USA. Inspired by Sri M. P. Pandit.
10.	1981	Integral Psychology	A. S. Dalal	Published in <i>Sri Aurobindo Circle</i> . He discontinued using the term afterwards.
11.	1982	Integral Psychology	Robert Gerard	Integration of Theosophy, Occult Psychology etc.
12.	1983	Integral Psychology	P. E. Herman	The term is used in the context of the emergent East-West study of the human psyche.
13.	1986	Integral Psychology	Indra Sen	Collection of published and new articles on Integral Psychology, Comparative Studies etc.
14.	1987	Integral Psychology	C. R. Goswami	Integration of all aspects of life. Published in <i>Srinwantu</i> .
15.	1988	Integral Yoga Psychology	Madhusudhan Reddy	Essays on Sri Aurobindo's psychological thought published as a book.
16.	1989/1990 (year of publication is not cited)	Global Psychology	C. R. Goswami	Changed "Integral" to "Global".
17.	1999	Integral Psychology	1 st International Conference on Integral Psychology, held at Matagiri, NY State, USA.	Focused exclusively on Sri Aurobindo's Psychology.
18.	2000	Integral Psychology	Ken Wilber	Integration of about 100 psychological systems. Nomenclature patented.

S.No.	Year	Nomenclature Used	Nomenclature Used by	Comments
19.	2001	Integral Psychology	2 nd International Conference on Integral Psychology, held at Pondicherry, India.	Focus shifted from exclusive Aurobindonian approach to consciousness studies in general.
20.	2003	Integral Psychology	3 rd International Conference on Integral Psychology, CIIS, California, USA.	Consciousness approaches in general.
21.	2004	Integral Psychology	International Seminar on Integral Psychology, Pondicherry Psychological Association, & IAAP, Pondicherry, India.	Varied approaches example Hatha Yoga, Healing etc. The name of the seminar was changed to "Integral Yoga Psychology".
22.	2004	Integral Yoga Psychology	SACAR for a course on Sri Aurobindo studies.	On-line University for advanced studies in Sri Aurobindo's thought.
23.	2005	Integral Psychology	Conference on Integral Psychology & Transformation. Held at Auroville in January 2005.	
24.	2005	Integral Yoga Psychology	Institute for Integral Yoga Psychology, Pondicherry (supported by MIRAVISION TRUST).	Forum for exclusive studies of Sri Aurobindo's psychological system.

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THE PURANAS AND OUR CENTURY

(Continued from the issue of September 2005)

22. Rukmini's Bhuvanasundara

THERE is the Krishna who holds the hand of Radha in the Raslila and moves in step with the assembled cowherdresses; there is also the Krishna who marries Rukmini in Dwaraka and later drives the chariot of Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Are they one and the same? Lost in the folds of time, much of our ancient history and mythology have been rewoven and recreated through the intervening centuries. It is certainly a rich ground for researchers to separate or unite the Krishnas of Gokula and Dwaraka. But for the fond religious mind of India which prefers to breathe in the spiritual spaces of symbolism, it hardly matters whether there was one or whether there were many Krishnas. Suffice it to us that there was a Krishna who was the All-Blissful, All-Beautiful Divine Personality, the Anandamaya Purusha whom the sadhaks of the yoga of divine love adore all the time. And that there was also a Krishna who had compassion for womanhood, who could rescue damsels in distress and bring comfort to the sorrowing mother-heart. Krishna is the experienced reality in each heart that has opted for the yoga of Divine Love.

Krishna of the Gokula days bids goodbye to his childhood and boyhood when Akrura comes to the cowherd settlement to take him to Mathura. The song of the Gopis just before he goes away makes it clear that they were not unaware of his divinity. Even the flora and fauna of Brindavan know it, they sing:

When Krishna, surrounded by followers singing panegyrics in praise of him, and revealing his undecaying splendour like that of the Supreme Being, moves in the forest calling through the sound of his flute the cows that are wandering in the valleys—then the forest trees and creepers are seen bending their heads, as if in salutation, with the full load of flowers and fruits, and seem to recognise the Divinity of Krishna by the horripilations of tender leaves on them and the showering of sweet flower-nectar.

An ordinary cowherd; the Supreme Being. Krishna who is easy to reach, full of *saualabhya*. Krishna who is almost impossible to attain, the image of *paratva*, the Supreme Being. Such are the extremes which coalesce into the personality of Krishna in Brindavan. His becoming the scion of Yadava royalty helps the synthesis. As far as the common man is concerned, the King is the visible divine in Sanatana Dharma. But Krishna is Krishna whatever the status in which he finds himself. After a few more heroic achievements (saving Nanda from the python Sudarshana, the destruction of Keshi, the killing of Vyomasura), Krishna accepts the invitation of Kamsa sent

through Akrura to attend the Bow Festival at Mathura. The Tenth Skandha which is all about Krishna has some of the finest hymns in the *Purana*. Akrura's prayer to Krishna reveals how the Lord is unable to veil his divinity! But this going away from Gokula has a terrible finality about it. We never see him returning to the beloved haunts in Brindavan.

Krishna and Balarama reach Mathura, Kamsa is killed and Vasudeva and Devaki are released from the prison. Krishna sets up his grandfather Ugrasena as the King. The various tribes that had fled Mathura's environs in fear of Kamsa return home and there is universal joy. It is now time for Krishna and Balarama to study at Sandeepani's Ashram, definitely a crash-course! With his attention to detail, Sri Shuka says that "endowed as they were with great powers of concentration, they mastered the sixty-four subjects of study in sixty-four days."

The Tenth Skandha's crowning-point is Krishna's rakshasa wedding (*rakshasa vidhana*) with Rukmini. It is a gracious story which begins in the 52nd chapter of the Skandha. Interestingly enough, Arulaladasar's (16th century) Tamil version of the *Bhagavata* begins with Rukmini's story. Instead of Sage Shuka narrating the *Purana* to King Parikshita, here Sage Narada retells the events to Rukmini. After introductions, the *Bhagavata* story proper opens with the birth of Rukmini in the sixth "padalam" (canto). King Bhishmaka of Vidarbha has five strapping sons: Rukmi, Rukmarathas, Rukmabahu, Rukmakeshi and Rukmamali. But the King performs tapasya for a girl child, repeating the eight-lettered Ashtakshara.¹ Narayana gives him the boon of a daughter and commands Lakshmi to be born as the Vidarbhan Princess.

Usually, when Lakshmi manifests on the earth, she is "*ayonija*" (not born of human womb). Sita, for instance. But Arulaladasar moves away from this received tradition and brings the Divine very close to the human beings. The childhood and girlhood of Rukmini are described with much fondness by the poet, as if he were presenting a parallel history of Krishna's childhood and boyhood described by the Tamil hymnologist Perialwar. There are cradle songs; a variety of childhood games played by Rukmini like building sand castles and breezing in the swing. Presently she is a young girl, beautiful, intelligent, full of devotion to the Lord.

Sage Narada learns of Lakshmi having manifested as the Vidarbhan Princess and comes to see her. She welcomes him with humility and devotion. Seated before him, Rukmini begins to hear from him the legends of the *Bhagavata*. Sage Narada begins with Gajendra's rescue. The familiar legends are retold in the subsequent cantos by Narada to the attentive Rukmini. Among them are Varaha, Kapila, Narasimha, Dhruva, Prithu, Vamana-Trivikrama and Ajamila. We move on in quickened pace through the legends of Rukmangada, Ambarisha, Parashurama and Rama and in the 23rd canto Krishna is born. Narada describes Krishna's life in Gokula

1. It may be mentioned here that King Aswapati of Madra also performed tapasya for a child by repeating the 24-lettered Gayatri Mantra and was gifted with Savitri.

in the course of forty-two cantos. When he takes leave, Rukmini's heart is full of Krishna and she decides to marry him.

When the King of Vidarbha convenes a meet of his courtiers to discuss Rukmini's marriage, Rukmi opposes the choice and presents the case of Shishupala. It is decided to get Rukmini married to the Chedi king. Arulaladasar's Rukmini calls the son of the court priest, promises him two hundred rich villages if only he would go to Krishna with her message and bring back an answer. The famous seven verses which form Rukmini's message in the Sanskrit *Bhagavata* are now presented as forty pellucid Tamil hymns: "Ask Krishna to come and take me as King Aja married Idumati and took her to Ayodhya!"

The *Bhagavata* takes a very brief look at the birth and childhood of Rukmini, just six slokas. Suddenly we find Rukmini sending a trusted Brahmin as her messenger to Krishna. The Brahmin who is received with great respect by Krishna delivers his message. The seven verses of this "letter" are justly famous and they begin with Rukmini addressing Krishna as the Bhuvanasundara:

Hearing about Thy virtues which, entering into the hearer's heart through the ear, generates bliss in the person's whole being, and hearing also about the beauty of Thy form which fulfils the highest expectations of one's sense of sight, my mind, O Achyuta, has entered into Thee, overcoming all feelings of bashfulness. O granter of Moksha! O noblest among men! Which noble-born girl of marriageable age, virtuous and self-controlled, will not for husband choose Thee who art well-matched to her in point of nobility of birth, character, form, education, youth, wealth and glory?²

2. Compare the reaction of Savitri when she is asked by Aswapati to go out in the world and choose her life-companion:

As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then, falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains:
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
Are seized unutterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change...

(Book iv, canto iii)

It is no exaggeration to say that the verses beginning with *śrutavān guṇān bhuvanasundara* have been mantric utterances for the bhakti yogin during the last millennium.

Further on, Rukmini uses a famous simile which implies a challenge to Krishna. Shishupala's marrying her defying Krishna would be like "a jackal attempting to carry away the fare of the lion."³ She then suggests even a plan of action for Krishna! Rukmini would be worshipping in the temple of Parvati as part of the preliminary rituals on the eve of the wedding. The message concludes with what sounds almost as a command:

On the occasion of the marriage ceremony arranged for tomorrow, deign to present Thyself incognito at Vidarbha, and surrounded by Thy generals and defeating the armies of the kings of Chedi and Magadha, capture and marry me by force according to Rakshasa rite, the bridal money paid on the occasion being Thy might.

Mām rākṣaseṇa vidhinodvaha vīryaśulkaṁ. Krishna does her bidding with cheer, and abducts her as she comes out of Parvati's temple after worship. They are pursued but the enemies led by Rukmi are defeated by the Yadava army, while Rukmi himself, tonsured, has to retire in disgrace. Now it is Balarama who comes to the foreground and one cannot but admire his poise and perfect sense of propriety. Again, Balarama's presence in the Rukmini-Krishna episode underlines the importance of the Puranas for our own century. Keeping ourselves to a cultured level of discourse is becoming extremely rare in these days when the people in power get away with everything. The *Bhagavata* declares that even the hero of the Tenth Skandha is not above being censured for misbehaviour! When Balarama comes to know of the treatment meted out to Rukmi by Krishna, he says: "You have done something repulsive (*jugupsitam*)."³ This is equal to killing the relative!

Shuka creates a scene where we see Balarama turning to Krishna and Rukmini alternately. Krishna is criticised harshly for his behaviour towards Rukmi while Rukmini is consoled by him with gentle words:

Do not think ill of us for deforming your brother. For the enjoyments and sufferings we experience in life are not caused by others, they are of our own making. For, the truth is that man reaps the fruits of his actions.

The marriage of Rukmini and Krishna takes place in Dwaraka. Sage Shuka says that Kama who had been burnt to ashes by Shiva was now born as Pradyumna to Rukmini. We do not hear of Rukmini for some time, busy as we are with the other

3. The seventh century poetess Andal uses the same simile but in a modified form and says Shishupala's attempt was like a dog sniffing and polluting the cooked "havis" prepared by Vedic scholars to offer to Agni. Commenting upon this change, an ancient Tamil commentator says that Rukmini was a Kshatriya princess and for her the lion-jackal simile is natural; but Andal being a Brahmin could think only of ritual pollution of the sacred "havis".

marriages of Krishna. The list of his wedded wives include well-known names like Satyabhama, Mitravinda and Jambhavati and the sixteen thousand women he released from Narakasura's prisons. All this sounds incorrigibly like a Harry Potter magic circle.

But Krishna having eight queens is yet another complicated legendary symbol. The "eight-wives" idea is found in Jainism as well. The ancient Tamil epic, *Jeevaka Chintamani* (circa 9th century A.D.) speaks of the hero marrying in that order, Gandharvadattai, Gunamalai, Padumai, Khemasari, Kanakamalai, Vimalai, Suramanjari and Lakhanai. Each marriage has a background of "love at first sight" or "swayamvara" or just political expediency, as in the case of Krishna. Neither Jeevakan's Gandharvadattai nor Krishna's Rukmini express any opinion about the other marriages of their consort. On the contrary, the *Bhagavata* has cantos specifically devoted to underline the total love the wives have for Krishna.

In the sixtieth canto of the Tenth Skandha we have a romantic idyll. Krishna is in the inner apartment and the beautiful Rukmini is fanning him. He asks her suddenly why she chose him who was inferior in wealth and position to Shishupala and all the other kings in the Vidarbhan swayamvara. It is a repeat performance of what Rama had told Sita in the Lankan battlefield. He had rescued Sita from Ravana only to avoid a blot on the proud Ikshvaku lineage and now she was free to go and choose anyone she wanted, even Bharata! Krishna says:

Therefore, it is better you seek some noble Kshatriya prince who will be a real match for you and will be able to fulfil all your aspirations in this world and the next.... I, whose function it is to put down the power and prestige of evil men, took you by force, O high-minded lady, only to destroy the pride and self-laudation of these senseless kings revelling in their might.

Sita belonged to an earlier age and so she could reply to Rama in appropriate terms and render him speechless and inactive. By the time we descend from Treta Yuga to Dwapara, the position of women seems to have reached a new low. Rukmini does not even have the courage to face this sudden bolt from the blue. Rendered speechless by fear, she falls down in a dead swoon, "suddenly like a plantain tree before a strong wind, with all her hair dishevelled."

Krishna, of course, does the needful to bring her back and assures her that it was all in fun: "Can't you see that for those who maintain a household and follow its ways, these few moments spent in such love-crossings hold forth the highest joy?" It is not quite easy to reconcile the blobs of philosophical lecturing mixed up with romantic posturings presented by Krishna, but one thing is clear: dear Krishna underlines the nature of a patriarchal society where the male can never have enough of the luxury of praise. He gets that in plenty from Rukmini now. In a long passage she praises Krishna in superlative terms to raise before us the Anandamaya Purusha,

One who contains all the Purusharthas coveted by mankind. It is, of course, good to know that Krishna can be accused of everything except dishonesty. So he tells Rukmini: “It is to hear these words of yours that I teased you with my sarcastic speech.”

In yet another canto we get to meet all the wives of Krishna as they converse with Draupadi. The interesting material in this concourse is what Nagnajit’s daughter, Satya, tells the ladies: that Krishna had brought under control seven oxen of tremendous strength and sharp horns in a contest to win her hand. This is an import from the typical “*Eru-thazhuvudhal*” (Subduing the Bulls) contest in ancient Tamil culture. The winner won the bride. “*Eru-thazhuvudhal*” became the myth of Krishna subduing the seven bulls of Kumbha to marry his daughter, Nappinnai. The Arulaladasar version of the *Bhagavata* includes both the Satya and the Nappinnai legends and in both of them, Krishna subdues seven bulls and gains his *veera-sulka*. Just as Radha sweeps the stage in North India, it is Nappinnai who rises before us when we think of Krishna’s wives.

In Arulaladasar’s Tamil version of the *Bhagavata*, Kumbhaka, a rich Yadava of Mithula was the brother of Yashoda. Kalanemi’s seven sons were born as bulls and had been part of Kumbhaka’s cattle wealth. When it became impossible to control them, Kumbhaka requested his King, Vehulaswa, to subdue them. But all the King’s army could not succeed in the mission. Kumbhaka sent a message to Nanda who sent his son, Krishna, to do the needful. When Krishna accomplished the mission, a jubilant Kumbhaka celebrated the marriage of Nappinnai with Krishna. He also gifted Krishna with rich presents and seven maidens: Kamalai, Neelai, Radhai, Mandarakai, Palikai, Chandrikai and Induvalli.

When Krishna reached Brindavan with his bride, the joy in the cowherd settlement knew no bounds:

The kindly Yashoda with Rohini
Drew close to her son, melted with love,
Embraced him with both her hands
And experienced joy inexpressible.⁴

Thus we find Krishna already married to Nappinnai when living as the son of the cowherd chief, Nandagopa. Indeed, Nappinnai (also referred to as Pinnai) is considered the first (and chief) consort of Krishna in ancient Tamil texts. The Alvars speak of her with great affection. Both Radha and Nappinnai are cowherdesses. Rukmini was a Vidarbhan Princess. Satya’s father, Nagnajit, was a King of Kosala. Satrajit (father of Satyabhama) belonged to Dwarakan royalty, Mitravinda was a princess of Avanti. Bhadra was the daughter of the Kekaya King. Jambhavan (father

4. Translated by Prema Nandakumar.

of Jambhavati) and Surya (father of Kalindi) were no ordinary beings. The matrimonial complexities of Krishna makes one thing clear. At some stage in our history, the cowherd Krishna with his cowherdess consort and friends was merged into the royal “Yadava Dwarakaadheesh” who married royal consorts beginning with Rukmini. Even the cowherdess Nappinnai is transformed into Satya, the daughter of King Nagnajit. But such is the synthesising genius of Sanatana Dharma that Krishna remains the Immortal Diamond in the yoga of divine love and all these princesses and cowherdesses blaze like the rays of that diamond. We choose any one of the rays and immerse ourselves in bhakti yoga. But in North India, usually it is Radha and Krishna in the *rasamandala* of devotion. In the Tamil world it is Nappinnai and Kannan who are enthroned in our heart. Apparently, the heart of bhakti cannot be swayed by the trappings of royalty!

But Rukmini? She remains the manifestation of Lakshmi herself to accompany Narayana in his Krishna incarnation. Hence, there are several interior adjustments of approach when dealing with her. Radha is termed as the *Hladini Shakti* of the Lord, even as Nappinnai is visioned as Neela Devi. Rukmini is held as Lakshmi herself. But, again, for the devotee slipping into the area of ecstasy, Gokula presents the world of beauty, of love in its purest form, of flute-calls and cows, of Brindavan’s varied groves where the Raslila goes on, where the *Kuravai Koothu* is danced with abandon.

As for the regal side of Krishna, for the glory that was Dwaraka and the grandeur that was Mathura, we have the post-Brindavan exploits and weddings. Here Rukmini is the Chief Consort, all love and gentleness, compassion and beauty. Temples have been raised to her in several places all over India. The temple that readily comes to our mind is in Dwaraka. The main temple, Jagat Mandir is said to be more than two millennia old and the presiding deity is Ranchhodji in whom Meera Bai is said to have merged. However, it is the temple of Rukmini in Dwaraka that is more popular with the pilgrims. She is seen as Lakshmi herself who can alleviate all the sorrows of the devotee. The temple itself is beautiful and is nine hundred years old. Krishna’s domestic life with Rukmini has been presented in charming paintings on the temple walls.

The visitors to the temple are told that it was Durvasa’s curse that led to the temple being built outside the town. Once Krishna and Rukmini had invited Sage Durvasa for a meal. Before Durvasa had taken his food, Rukmini felt thirsty all of a sudden and Krishna fondly made the Ganges flow into her hands for the nonce. As Rukmini was assuaging her thirst Durvasa saw her and pronounced a curse since Rukmini had broken the injunction that a host may not touch food till the guest has had his meal. Was it not Krishna’s proximity that had made her commit the sin? She will thenceforth live apart from Krishna!

Rukmini, as the consort of Vithoba in Pandharpur is dear to the devotees. The Mother never fails the children! The hagiological work, *Sri Maha Bhaktha Vijayam*

and the Pandharpur pilgrimage by followers of the Varkari Sampradaya have given the temple, Vithoba and Rukmini an ever-growing popularity. Rukmini is again the consort of Parthasarathi in the famous Tiruvallikeni temple in Chennai. There is some food for cogitation when we realise that Rukmini is associated with the temples in Dwaraka and other places, in Brindavan the cowherdess rules still. We have temples to Radharamana, Radhamohana, and Radha Krishna and in Brindavan the greeting is always a resounding “Radhe! Radhe!”

All the same, the cowherdess Radha is absent in the *Bhagavata*. Nor do we find there Nappinnai, the daughter of the cowherd Kumbhaka. The Tenth Skandha closes with a charming idyll of Krishna enjoying domestic bliss in the garden city of Dwaraka. The *Purana* says that here were his sixteen thousand one hundred and eight consorts. Here were tanks laden with a variety of flowers like Kalhara, Utpala and Kumuda. Here too the birds and animals lived in perfect harmony. Here swirled the sounds of music produced by a variety of string and wind instruments. No touch of the sensual mars the scene though here is rich sensuousness in the prattle of the wives. This was an offering of selfless love of the purest kind. Here was *kainkarya* which is the very life-breath of the yoga of divine love:

By virtue of this kind of love bestowed on Krishna, the greatest of all endowed with yogic powers, the consorts of Krishna attained to the highest spiritual state.... How holy were those ladies who, looking upon Him, the Lord and Teacher of the whole universe, as their husband, stroked His feet and performed intimate services for Him! The glory of this form of austerity consisting in Divine service cannot be adequately described.

On his part, the Lord, in keeping with what he had preached in the Gita, lived as a perfect householder though he was the Supreme who had nothing to hold him down to earth's ways. “The Lord, who is the goal of all spiritual aspirants, observed the duties of a follower of the Vedas, and demonstrated in His life the state of the householder, in which the three ends of life, Dharma, Artha and Kama, are realised.”

The *Bhagavata* says that the Yadavas in Dwaraka where King Ugrasena ruled and Krishna was the *sutradhāri*, had consecrated all their thoughts to the Divine. Had they not the Divine himself living as one amongst them? Ah, but the mind caught in the world-wide-web of scientific and technological advance demurs now and then. Can all this be true? Could this idea of a cowherd becoming a Yadava royalty be just a brilliant shadow of human imagination? Krishna is called “Bhuvanasundara” by Rukmini. He must have been attractive. But sixteen thousand and odd wives? Does this not go totally against human experience?

Sri Aurobindo assures us that the All-Beautiful Krishna cannot be denied nor the entire received tradition of the devotional path. It is no use setting up our little minds in the court of history and prattle about human fictions:

But we have to judge by spiritual experience, and in a total spiritual experience we shall find that these things are not fictions and symbols, but truths of divine being in their essence, however imperfect may have been our representations of them.

(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part III, ch. 5)

The *Bhagavata* is not the only work to speak of Krishna's story. Among other works are the *Vishnu Purana* and *Harivamsha*. There is then the *Mahabharata*. Spiritual experience can never be compartmentalised and this experience is the very basis of bhakti yoga. Where devotion holds the key, we can only salute Sage Shuka and the seers of all our yesterdays who have been the flaming pioneers helping us today to walk on the sunlit path towards the highest Goal, the Anandamaya Purusha:

By constant and continuous practice of hearing, singing about, and remembering the glorious deeds of the Lord, man's devotion to Him grows day by day, and by virtue of it, he attains to the state of the Lord, overcoming the otherwise irreversible and inevitable approach of death which engulfs all beings. It is seeking that state that kings go to the forests abandoning their kingdoms.

This experience of the *Bhagavata* has remained unchallenged till today. Many of us—perhaps millions—have tried to appear brainier than the teachers, priests and devotees wholly engrossed in the tales of Krishna and the ritualism that goes with it. But the *Bhagavata* ambience has always had the last laugh and we find ourselves willing prisoners in this Ananda Yoga, a merging in the Delight of Existence:

But in this our human tabernacle—
the Castle of the True King—
after Body and Mind there still remains
the Brindavan of the Heart.

'Life!' the passions cry; 'Love!' the heart answers.
And Life and Love play their chess
For a win, till they burst into a blaze
Of unitive ecstasy.⁵

(*To be continued*)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

5. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Krishna Geetam*, 'Envoi', verses 11-12.

THE GREAT EVENT

There is a silent beam of light within the mind
That shines down into depths of deepest wells.
It has the recall of a kind
That knows the secret of our cells.
It runs upon the waters of their codes
And penetrates their interstices.

Angels with furlèd wings swim through
To waken dormant scenes of the Descent
“Awake. Awake. Remember.”
The Time has come for the great Event.
The Mother rises now through fathoms beckoned by the moon.
Shiva in a golden chariot rides forth to wake her from her swoon.
Destruction is no longer in their dance.
They move in an ecstatic trance
Their feet spin forth a shining golden stuff
Of Life. The world has waited long enough.
And taking up this yarn immortal
It draws it from the seizure of Death’s portal.

Angels unfold their wings and take their trumpets out
Flourish them aloft then blow them in one loud victorious shout
Announcing of wondrous things the day:
NOTHING BARS THE WAY
NO THING BARS THE WAY

MAGGI

NAVANIT STORIES

A DROP OF PRACTICE

THE thought that at last after so many years he would meet his dearest friend, had filled Ashok with such happiness that he did not feel claustrophobic in the narrow alleys of Surat which assailed his senses accustomed to the open spaces of his village; he had no time to let the stink of the rubbish and excreta bother him, no time to let the intricate motifs of ancient balconies arrest him, no time to be distracted by the bustle of women and young girls filling buckets of water, washing clothes, bargaining astutely with wily vegetable-vendors and gossiping boisterously, or by the children laughing as they ran wildly, playing in the ever-shifting spaces that all this constant traffic afforded them.

He was immersed in the memories of his friendship with Sanjay: the sweet childhood and boyhood when they had played, laughed, studied, competed, argued, quarrelled and reunited, the unforgettable events they had gone through together as they grew up to manhood. Vivid scenes crossed his mind, old conversations echoed in his ears, old plans and dreams revived.

Suddenly Sanjay's house was before him and he rushed inside. Even before his cries of "Sanjay, Sanjay," overflowing with affection and enthusiasm, reached his friend's tiny room, he had crossed its threshold. Engrossed in a big book, Sanjay was curled up in a rickety old easy-chair whose canvas had never been washed. Ashok's third shout of "Sanjay!" exploded in his ears tearing him out of his cosy cocoon. They rushed into each other's arms and after a while sat facing each other—eyes poring into eyes and smile broadening smile.

"What are you reading with such concentration?"

"Oh, it's a fascinating book on gardening, Ashok. How to describe it to you? It is written by Pestonji Pocha, the greatest authority on gardening. How delightfully he describes the art of growing indigenous plants like roses, jasmines, *malatis*, and also the foreign plants like dahlias, crescent moon etc. He has such a lucid and gripping style. When he is on the subject of orchards one almost sees the luscious mangoes, chikoos, oranges, pineapples, apples sprouting up and, within a few minutes, ripening and swinging within our reach. Why with just a little imagination I can even taste them! Such an absolute mastery over the subject and the language!"

"Is that so? Then give me the book, let me also enjoy it. After all I am a farmer."

"No, my dear friend. You will not be able to enjoy it the way I do. How can you appreciate the man's knowledge and style of writing when literature is not your field? Ploughs, bullocks, carts etc. are quite enough for you."

"O my dear pundit-ji!" Ashok laughed, "So what if I am not a scholar? It is quite enough for me that you are one. But you can at least tell me what I *can* understand from all that this great man has written, even if just a grain of what has so strongly

gripped your attention?"

"Impossible. There is a whole universe in this volume! It is impossible for me to decide what will be within your capacity to understand. Every page is an ocean of marvel."

"All right, then give me a tiny drop of one page. Or have you learned only to read and relish all alone by yourself? Come on, share something with a friend. Tell me something down to earth, something my farmer mind will understand."

"Okay, here is something easy to follow. Mango trees are planted at forty-feet intervals, that is for those luscious *kalami* mangoes, understand? Chikooos and oranges at intervals of twenty feet, bananas and citrus at ten-feet intervals."

"Now tell me what he says about growing them."

Ashok read out Pocha's details regarding soil, irrigation, fertilizers, mulches, nurseries, the precautions to prevent diseases and insects etc., adding with a smile, "You see how demanding a work growing an orchard is? Why don't you just stick to growing your usual crops. Forget all this, tell me how you have been; tell me about everybody in your family; tell me how you spent all these years." And so they turned to the joyous task of updating their relationship.

After a few days of the famous Surati hospitality, Ashok returned to his village. From the very next day, he started to implement what he had learnt. He selected a portion of his land that seemed most suitable from the point of view soil and availability of water, procured seeds, saplings, fertilizers, implements etc., and hired labourers with experience of this work. Soon the nurseries came up and, in due course, neatly maintained groves of mango, chikoo, orange, citrus, banana, and pomegranate.

Four years passed. The trees began to bear fruits. His unstinted labour had created a living, vibrant book which even the most simple-minded could enjoy without the slightest brain-strain. He decided to present the best of the first crop to Sanjay. "After all, all this is the child of his knowledge. And how it has changed my entire life!"

Life in Surat, however, was unchanged. This time it was the gratitude and eagerness to offer the fruits of his labour that insulated Ashok from the claustrophobic atmosphere and the stink and bustle of the alleys he hurried through. Once again, when he burst into the tiny room, Sanjay was curled up in the same aging easy-chair, its canvas now stained and torn, lost in his web of words. Once again, it was only his third shout that plucked the bookworm out of his blissful black hole. He put down the two large baskets he had brought, and embraced his friend whose eyes were glued to the baskets.

"What are you staring at? These fruits are from your own orchard!"

"My orchard? Am I a dumb oaf pushing ploughs and wading in muck all day?"

"Of course not, my noble pundit-ji. And yet, they are the fruits of your knowledge! Have you forgotten that book by Pestonji Pocha you were lost in when I visited you last time? And how I had to plead for just a bit of it? Well, I followed the instructions you gave me and here is the result; just the tip of it, to be sure."

“My God! So you went back and started an orchard? But you are an amazing fellow! All I did was feast on imaginary gardens and orchards; while you have gone and created a live one! And that too from just a few sentences I condescended to read out to you? I’m stunned! What fantastic oranges you have grown! I never imagined they can be so lustrous! And these sweet limes, my mouth waters at the mere sight of them! What a brilliant coat of gold these bananas have; are they real? These mangoes must be sheer nectar, such a divine smell! And can chikoos be so big? And these pomegranates, I must say they look like teenage girls, youth bursting at the seams! You are a wizard!”

“My poor Sanjay! Ever the dreamer; vanished again into literature and poetry! Get out of that chair first. Go and pack your bag. Tomorrow you are coming with me to your orchard. Afterwards, you can return if you must to your literature and poetry.”

The next day they went to Ashok’s village. Within an hour Sanjay had experienced the defining impact physical environment has on one’s mind and body. He could fill his lungs with sheer energy, he could walk with a vigour he had never possessed before, his mind could escape from the world of words. The clean and well-maintained houses, farms, orchards, rendered Sanjay speechless,—what a contrast from the chaos in his alley and his room!

Gradually, it dawned on him that all that is put in books remains confined to their pages, or at best lives as occasional waves rising and failing in the mind—which amounts to the same thing. Unless it is materialised, unless it changes one’s life and nature, it is only in a false gleam that one enjoys the fruits of one’s knowledge. Reading and writing about great and wonderful things, discussing, debating, expounding, propagating them in captivating literary styles among the “like-minded”—none of all that creates a single living fruit.

“Ashok! I salute you. You were always a true friend, but from today you are my guru. My name may mean complete victory, but all that I have won so far, all the knowledge stuffed in my mind, now seems empty and unreal!” he couldn’t help saying when they parted.

PUJALAL

(Translated from *Navanit*, published by Shivasadan Granthamala Karyalaya, Maddhada, Gujarat, 1945)

Shun the barren snare of an empty metaphysics and the dry dust of an infertile intellectuality. Only that knowledge is worth having which can be made use of for a living delight and put out into temperament, action, creation and being.

Sri Aurobindo, “Thoughts and Aphorisms”

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 443)

As the beginnings of the supramental life... develop, perhaps not in a very obvious way but very surely, it becomes more and more obvious that the most difficult way to approach this supramental life is intellectual activity....

In this new substance which is spreading and acting in the world, there is a warmth, a power, a joy so intense that all intellectual activity seems cold and dry beside it.... A single moment, a single impulse of deep and true love, an instant of the understanding which lies in the divine Grace brings you much closer to the goal than all possible explanations....

And so we may say that it is truly when the circle is complete and the two extremities touch, when the highest manifests in the most material, that the experience will be truly conclusive.

It seems that one can never truly understand until one understands with one's body.

The Mother

(Questions and Answers 57-58, CWM, Vol. 9, pp. 324-26)