

# MOTHER INDIA

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*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## DISCOVERIES OF SCIENCE I

Only by electric hordes your<sup>1</sup> world is run?  
But they are motes and spark-whirls of a Light,  
A Fire of which your nebula and your sun  
Are glints and flame-drops scattered eremite.

Veiled<sup>2</sup> by the unseen Light act other Powers,  
An Air of endless movement unbegun  
Expanding and contracting in Time-hours,  
And the intangible ether of the One.

These surface findings—screen-phenomenon—<sup>3</sup>  
Are Nature's offered reasons but behind  
Her occult mysteries lurk safe unknown  
To the crude handling of the empiric Mind.

All yet<sup>4</sup> discovered are but mire and trace  
Of the eternal Energy in her race.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 166)*

1. the
2. And veiled
3. These things, a front, a screen-phenomenon,
4. Your truths

## KNOWLEDGE BY IDENTITY AND SEPARATIVE KNOWLEDGE

OUR surface cognition, our limited and restricted mental way of looking at our self, at our inner movements and at the world outside us and its objects and happenings, is so constituted that it derives in different degrees from a fourfold order of knowledge. The original and fundamental way of knowing, native to the occult self in things, is a knowledge by identity; the second, derivative, is a knowledge by direct contact associated at its roots with a secret knowledge by identity or starting from it, but actually separated from its source and therefore powerful but incomplete in its cognition; the third is a knowledge by separation from the object of observation, but still with a direct contact as its support or even a partial identity; the fourth is a completely separative knowledge which relies on a machinery of indirect contact, a knowledge by acquisition which is yet, without being conscious of it, a rendering or bringing up of the contents of a pre-existent inner awareness and knowledge. A knowledge by identity, a knowledge by intimate direct contact, a knowledge by separative direct contact, a wholly separative knowledge by indirect contact are the four cognitive methods of Nature.

The first way of knowing in its purest form is illustrated in the surface mind only by our direct awareness of our own essential existence: it is a knowledge empty of any other content than the pure fact of self and being; of nothing else in the world has our surface mind the same kind of awareness. But in the knowledge of the structure and movements of our subjective consciousness some element of awareness by identity does enter; for we can project ourselves with a certain identification into these movements. It has already been noted how this can happen in the case of an uprush of wrath which swallows us up so that for the moment our whole consciousness seems to be a wave of anger: other passions, love, grief, joy have the same power to seize and occupy us; thought also absorbs and occupies, we lose sight of the thinker and become the thought and the thinking. But very ordinarily there is a double movement; a part of our selves becomes the thought or the passion, another part of us either accompanies it with a certain adherence or follows it closely and knows it by an intimate direct contact which falls short of identification or entire self-oblivion in the movement.

This identification is possible, and also this simultaneous separation and partial identification, because these things are becomings of our being, determinations of our mind stuff and mind energy, of our life stuff and life energy; but, since they are only a small part of us, we are not bound to be identified and occupied,—we can detach ourselves, separate the being from its temporary becoming, observe it, control it, sanction or prevent its manifestation: we can, in this way, by an inner detachment, a mental or spiritual separateness, partially or even fundamentally liberate ourselves from the control of mind nature or vital nature over the being and assume the position

of the witness, knower and ruler. Thus we have a double knowledge of the subjective movement: there is an intimate knowledge, by identity, of its stuff and its force of action, more intimate than we could have by any entirely separative and objective knowledge such as we get of things outside us, things that are to us altogether not-self; there is at the same time a knowledge by detached observation, detached but with a power of direct contact, which frees us from engrossment by the Nature-energy and enables us to relate the movement to the rest of our own existence and world existence. If we are without this detachment, we lose our self of being and mastering knowledge in the nature self of becoming and movement and action and, though we know intimately the movement, we do not know it dominatingly and fully. This would not be the case if we carried into our identification with the movement our identity with the rest of our subjective existence,—if, that is to say, we could plunge wholly into the wave of becoming and at the same time be in the very absorption of the state or act the mental witness, observer, controller; but this we cannot easily do, because we live in a divided consciousness in which the vital part of us,—our life nature of force and desire and passion and action,—tends to control or swallow up the mind, and the mind has to avoid this subjection and control the vital, but can only succeed in the effort by keeping itself separate; for if it identifies itself, it is lost and hurried away in the life movement. Nevertheless a kind of balanced double identity by division is possible, though it is not easy to keep the balance; there is a self of thought which observes and permits the passion for the sake of the experience,—or is obliged by some life-stress to permit it,—and there is a self of life which allows itself to be carried along in the movement of Nature. Here, then, in our subjective experience, we have a field of the action of consciousness in which three movements of cognition can meet together, a certain kind of knowledge by identity, a knowledge by direct contact and, dependent upon them, a separative knowledge.

In thought separation of the thinker and the thinking is more difficult. The thinker is plunged and lost in the thought or carried in the thought current, identified with it; it is not usually at the time of or in the very act of thinking that he can observe or review his thoughts,—he has to do that in retrospect and with the aid of memory or by a critical pause of corrective judgment before he proceeds further: but still a simultaneity of thinking and conscious direction of the mind's action can be achieved partially when the thought does not engross, entirely when the thinker acquires the faculty of stepping back into the mental self and standing apart there from the mental energy. Instead of being absorbed in the thought with at most a vague feeling of the process of thinking, we can see the process by a mental vision, watch our thoughts in their origination and movement and, partly by a silent insight, partly by a process of thought upon thought, judge and evaluate them. But whatever the kind of identification, it is to be noted that the knowledge of our internal movements is of a double nature, separation and direct contact: for even when we detach ourselves, this close contact is maintained; our knowledge is always based on a direct touch, on a cognition by

direct awareness carrying in it a certain element of identity. The more separative attitude is ordinarily the method of our reason in observing and knowing our inner movements; the more intimate is the method of our dynamic part of mind associating itself with our sensations, feelings and desires: but in this association too the thinking mind can intervene and exercise a separative dissociated observation and control over both the dynamic self-associating part of mind and the vital or physical movement. All the observable movements of our physical being also are known and controlled by us in both these ways, the separative and the intimate; we feel the body and what it is doing intimately as part of us, but the mind is separate from it and can exercise a detached control over its movements. This gives to our normal knowledge of our subjective being and nature, incomplete and largely superficial though it still is, yet, so far as it goes, a certain intimacy, immediacy and directness. That is absent in our knowledge of the world outside us and its movements and objects: for there, since the thing seen or experienced is not-self, not experienced as part of us, no entirely direct contact of consciousness with the object is possible; an instrumentation of sense has to be used which offers us, not immediate intimate knowledge of it, but a figure of it as a first datum for knowledge.

In the cognition of external things, our knowledge has an entirely separative basis; its whole machinery and process are of the nature of an indirect perception. We do not identify ourselves with external objects, not even with other men though they are beings of our own nature; we cannot enter into their existence as if it were our own, we cannot know them and their movements with the directness, immediateness, intimacy with which we know,—even though incompletely,—ourselves and our movements. But not only identification lacks, direct contact also is absent; there is no direct touch between our consciousness and their consciousness, our substance and their substance, our self of being and their self-being. The only seemingly direct contact with them or direct evidence we have of them is through the senses; sight, hearing, touch seem to initiate some kind of a direct intimacy with the object of knowledge: but this is not so really, not a real directness, a real intimacy, for what we get by our sense is not the inner or intimate touch of the thing itself, but an image of it or a vibration or nerve message in ourselves through which we have to learn to know it. These means are so ineffective, so exiguous in their poverty that, if that were the whole machinery, we could know little or nothing or only achieve a great blur of confusion. But there intervenes a sense-mind intuition which seizes the suggestion of the image or vibration and equates it with the object, a vital intuition which seizes the energy or figure of power of the object through another kind of vibration created by the sense contact, and an intuition of the perceptive mind which at once forms a right idea of the object from all this evidence. Whatever is deficient in the interpretation of the image thus constructed is filled up by the intervention of the reason or the total understanding intelligence. If the first composite intuition were the result of a direct contact or if it summarised the action of a total intuitive

mentality master of its perceptions, there would be no need for the intervention of the reason except as a discoverer or organiser of knowledge not conveyed by the sense and its suggestions: it is, on the contrary, an intuition working on an image, a sense document, an indirect evidence, not working upon a direct contact of consciousness with the object. But since the image or vibration is a defective and summary documentation and the intuition itself limited and communicated through an obscure medium, acting in a blind light, the accuracy of our intuitional interpretative construction of the object is open to question or at least likely to be incomplete. Man has had perforce to develop his reason in order to make up for the deficiencies of his sense instrumentation, the fallibility of his physical mind's perceptions and the paucity of its interpretation of its data.

Our world-knowledge is therefore a difficult structure made up of the imperfect documentation of the sense-image, an intuitional interpretation of it by perceptive mind, life-mind and sense-mind, and a supplementary filling up, correction, addition of supplementary knowledge, co-ordination, by the reason. Even so our knowledge of the world we live in is narrow and imperfect, our interpretations of its significances doubtful: imagination, speculation, reflection, impartial weighing and reasoning, inference, measurement, testing, a further correction and amplification of sense evidence by Science,—all this apparatus had to be called in to complete the incompleteness. After all that the result still remains a half-certain, half-dubious accumulation of acquired indirect knowledge, a mass of significant images and ideative representations, abstract thought-counters, hypotheses, theories, generalisations, but also with all that a mass of doubts and a never-ending debate and inquiry. Power has come with knowledge, but our imperfection of knowledge leaves us without any idea of the true use of the power, even of the aim towards which our utilisation of knowledge and power should be turned and made effective. This is worsened by the imperfection of our self-knowledge which, such as it is, meagre and pitifully insufficient, is of our surface only, of our apparent phenomenal self and nature and not of our true self and the true meaning of our existence. Self-knowledge and self-mastery are wanting in the user, wisdom and right will in his use of world-power and world-knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Life Divine*, SABCL, Vol. 18, pp. 524-29)

## **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 October 2005)*

### **106. Progressive Universe**

Truly speaking, to be practical, the problem could be expressed like this. If the Divine had not conceived His creation as progressive, there could have been from the beginning a beatific, immobile and unchangeable condition. But the minute... How shall I explain it, I don't know. Just because the universe had to be progressive, perfect identity, the bliss of this identity, the full consciousness of this identity had necessarily to be veiled, otherwise nothing would have ever stirred.

A static universe may be conceived. One could conceive of something which is "all at one and the same time": that there is no time, only a kind of objectivisation—but not an unfolding in which things manifest progressively one after another, according to a special rhythm; that they are all manifested at the same time, all at once. Then all would be in a blissful state and there would be no universe as we see it, the element of unfolding would be missing, which constitutes... well, what we live in at present.

But once we admit this principle that the universe is progressive, the unfolding progressive, that instead of seeing everything together and all at once, our perception is progressive, then everything takes its right place within it. And inevitably, the future perfection must be felt as something higher than what was there before. The realisation towards which we are moving must necessarily seem superior to the one which was accomplished before.

And this opens the door to everything—to all possibilities.

Sri Aurobindo often said this: what appeared beautiful, good, even perfect, and marvellous and divine at a given moment in the universe, can no longer appear so now. And what now seems to us beautiful, marvellous, divine and perfect, will be an obscurity after some time. And in the same way, the gods who were all-powerful at a certain period belong to a lower reality than the gods who will manifest tomorrow.

And that is a sign that the universe is progressive.

This has been said, this has been repeated, but people don't understand, you know, when it concerns all those great ages, that they are like a reduction of the universal progress to the human measure.

That is why if one enters the state in which everything, as it is, appears perfectly



divine, one necessarily goes out of the universal movement at the same time. This is what people like Buddha or Shankara had understood. They expressed in their own way that if you could realise the state in which everything appears to you perfectly divine or perfectly perfect, you necessarily go out of the universal movement and enter the Unmanifest.

This is correct. It is like that.

They were sufficiently dissatisfied with life as it was and had very little hope that it could become better; so for them this was the ideal solution. I call it escaping, but still.... It is not so easy! But for them it was the ideal solution—up to a certain point, for... there is perhaps one more step to take.

But it is a fact. If one wants to remain in the universe, one must admit the principle of progress, for this is a progressive universe. If you want to realise a static perfection, well, you will inevitably be thrown out of the universe, for you will no longer belong to its principle.

It is a choice.

Only, Sri Aurobindo often used to say: people who choose the exit forget that at the same time they will lose the consciousness with which they could congratulate themselves on their choice! They forget that.

(M 8: 231-33)

## 107. Each Darshan Marked a Step Forward

In the days when Sri Aurobindo used to give Darshan, before he gave it there was always a concentration of certain forces or of a certain realisation which he wanted to give to people. And so each Darshan marked a stage forward; each time something was added. But that was at a time when the number of visitors was very limited. It was organised in another way, and it was part of the necessary preparation.

But this special concentration, now, occurs at other times, not particularly on Darshan days. And it occurs much more often, on other kinds of occasions, in other circumstances. The movement is much accelerated, the march forward, the stages succeed each other much more rapidly. And perhaps it is more difficult to follow; or in any case, if one doesn't take care to keep up, one is much more quickly out-distanced than before; one gets the feeling of being late or of being abandoned. Things change quickly.

And I ought to say that these Darshan times with all this rush of people serve not so much for an inner progress—that is to say, inside the Ashram—as for a diffusion outside. The use we make of these days is a little different; above all, it is to go farther, have a vaster field, reach more distant points. But the concentration is less and there is this inconvenience of a large crowd, which was always there but which has been much greater during these last years than at the beginning. At the beginning

there was not such a crowd; and perhaps the quality of the crowd was also a little different.

So the joy you were speaking about would rather be a kind of excitement or the feeling of a more intense or more active life; but it is not actually a greater Presence. One puts oneself, perhaps, into a more receptive state in which one receives more, but there is no intensification of the Presence—not to my knowledge.

So it must be within you that you have to find the reason, and the remedy for keeping this joy.

(M 8: 262-63)

## 108. Two Movements

Sri Aurobindo always spoke of two movements: the formation of the individual in order to be able to reach the goal individually, and the preparation of the world.... For the progress of the individual is, so to say, not exactly delayed or helped by the condition of the whole, but this brings about a certain balance between the two. The individual movement is always much more rapid and more penetrating; it goes farther, more deeply and more quickly. The collective movement forms a sort of basis which both restrains and supports at the same time. And it is the balance between these two movements which is necessary. So, the more rapidly one goes individually, the more necessary it is to try to extend and strengthen the collective basis.

(M 8: 263-64)

## 109. Trance or Samadhi

*Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo call “the heaven of the liberated mind”?*

The heaven of the liberated mind? It is a metaphorical phrase. When the mind is liberated, it rises to celestial heights. These higher regions of the mind Sri Aurobindo compares with the sky above the earth; they are celestial compared with the ordinary mind.

Is that all?

*(Silence)*

Somebody has asked me a question about trance—what in India is called Samadhi, that is to say, when one passes or enters into a state of which no conscious memory remains when one wakes up:

*“Is the state of trance or Samadhi a sign of progress?”*

In ancient times it was considered a very high condition. It was even thought to be the sign of a great realisation, and people who wanted to do yoga or sadhana always tried to enter into a state of this kind. All sorts of marvellous things have been said about this state—you may say all you like about it, since, precisely, you don't remember anything! And those who have entered it are unable to say what happened to them. So, one can say anything one likes.

I could incidentally tell you that in all kinds of so-called spiritual literature I had always read marvellous things about this state of trance or Samadhi, and it so happened that I had never experienced it. So I did not know whether this was a sign of inferiority. And when I came here, one of my first questions to Sri Aurobindo was: "What do you think of Samadhi, that state of trance one does not remember? One enters into a condition which seems blissful, but when one comes out of it, one does not know at all what has happened." Then he looked at me, saw what I meant and told me, "It is unconsciousness." I asked him for an explanation, I said, "What?" He told me, "Yes, you enter into what is called Samadhi when you go out of your conscious being and enter a part of your being which is completely unconscious, or rather a domain where you have no corresponding consciousness—you go beyond the field of your consciousness and enter a region where you are no longer conscious. You are in the impersonal state, that is to say, a state in which you are unconscious; and that is why, naturally, you remember nothing, because you were not conscious of anything."<sup>1</sup> So this reassured me and I said, "Well, this has never happened to me." He replied, "Nor to me!" (*Laughter*)

And since then, when people speak to me about Samadhi, I tell them, "Well, try to develop your inner individuality and you will be able to enter these *very* regions in full consciousness and have the joy of communion with the highest regions, but without losing all consciousness and returning with a zero instead of an experience."

So that is my reply to the person who has asked if Samadhi or trance is a sign of progress. The sign of progress is when there is no longer any unconsciousness, when one can go up into the same regions without entering into trance.

But there is a confusion in the words.

When you leave a *part* of your being—for example, when you enter quite consciously the vital world—your body can enter into a trance, but this is not samadhi. It is rather what might be called a lethargic or cataleptic state. When extreme, it is a cataleptic state because the part of the being which animates the body has gone out of it, so the body is half dead; that is, its life is so far diminished and its functions almost suspended: the heart slows down and can hardly be felt and the breathing is hardly perceptible. This is the real trance. But you, during all this time, you are fully conscious in the vital world. And even, with a certain discipline which, moreover, is neither easy nor without danger, you may so contrive that the minimum of force you leave in your body allows it to be *independently* conscious. With training—as I said, it is not easy—quite a methodical training, one can manage to make the body keep

its autonomy of movement, even when one is almost totally exteriorised. And this is how in an almost complete state of trance, one can speak and relate what the exteriorised part of the being is seeing and doing.... For that, one must be fairly advanced on the path.

There are spontaneous and involuntary instances of a state which is not quite the same as this, but very similar: they are states of somnambulism, that is to say, when you are fast asleep and the vital has gone out of your body, the body automatically obeys the will and action of the part which has gone out, the vital part. Only, as this is not the effect of a willed action and a regulated, progressive education, this state is not desirable, for it may produce disorders in the being. But it is an illustration of what I have just said, of a body which while three quarters asleep can obey the part of the being which has gone out and is itself fully awake and quite conscious. This is the real trance.

I have already told you several times, I think, that when one undergoes this occult discipline, one is able to leave one's physical body, go out in the vital and move about quite consciously, acting quite consciously in this vital world; then to leave one's vital being asleep and go out mentally, acting and living in the mental world quite consciously and with similar relations—for the mental world is in relation with the mental being, as the physical world is in relation with the physical being—and so on, progressively and by a regular discipline. I knew a woman who had been trained in this way, who had quite remarkable personal faculties, who was conscious in all her states of being, and she used to be able to go out twelve times from her body, that is to say, from twelve consecutive bodies, until she reached the summit of the individual consciousness, which could be called the threshold of the Formless. She remembered everything and recounted everything in detail. She was an Englishwoman; I even translated from English a book in which there was a description of all she saw and did in these domains.

It is obviously the sign of a great mastery of one's being, and the sign of having reached a high degree of conscious development. But it is almost the opposite of the other experience of going out of one's consciousness to enter a state in which one is no longer conscious; it is, so to say, the opposite.

(*Silence*)

That brings me to something which is both a recommendation and an advice.

We have read in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, and also recently translated from *The Life Divine*, some passages in which Sri Aurobindo gives details, explanations and advice to those who do sadhana and try to have experiences that at times are too strong for their state of consciousness—which brings rather unfortunate results. On this subject I made a remark, and I have been asked to explain my remark. I said:

*“One must always be greater than one’s experience.”*

What I meant is this:

Whatever may be the nature, the strength and wonder of an experience, you must not be dominated by it to such an extent that it governs your entire being and you lose your balance and your contact with a reasonable and calm attitude. That is to say, when you enter in some way into contact with a force or consciousness which surpasses yours, instead of being entirely dominated by this consciousness or force, you must always be able to remind yourself that it is only *one* experience among thousands and thousands of others, and that, consequently, its nature is not absolute, it is relative. No matter how beautiful it may be, you can and ought to have better ones: however exceptional it may be, there are others still more marvellous; and however high it may be, you can always rise still higher in future. So, instead of losing one’s head one places the experience in the chain of development and keeps a healthy physical balance so as not to lose the sense of relativity with ordinary life. In this way, there is no risk.

The means?... One who knows how to do this will always find it very easy, but for one who doesn’t know it is perhaps a little... a little troublesome.

There is a means.

It is never to lose the idea of the total self-giving to the Grace which is the expression of the Supreme. When one gives oneself, when one surrenders, entrusts oneself entirely to That which is above, beyond all creation, and when, instead of seeking any personal advantage from the experience, one makes an offering of it to the divine Grace and knows that it is from This that the experience comes and that it is to This that the result of the experience must be given back, then one is quite safe.

In other words: no ambition, no vanity, no pride. A sincere self-giving, a sincere humility, and one is sheltered from all danger. There you are, this is what I call being greater than one’s experience.

\* \* \*

1. When this talk was first published in 1962, Mother added the following commentary: “There are also some people who enter domains where they are conscious, but between this conscious state and their normal waking consciousness there is a gap: their personality does not exist between the waking state and this deeper state; so, during the passage they forget. They cannot bring the consciousness they had there back into the consciousness here, for there is a gap between the two. There is even an occult discipline for constructing intermediary fields in order to be able to recall things.”

(M 8: 274-78)

## **110. Writing the *Arya* or True Spontaneity**

I suppose most of you come on Fridays to listen to the reading of *Wu Wei*. If you have listened, you will remember that something’s said there about being

“spontaneous”, and that the true way of living the true life is to live spontaneously.

What Lao Tse calls spontaneous is this: instead of being moved by a personal will—mental, vital or physical—one ought to stop all outer effort and let oneself be guided and moved by what the Chinese call *Tao*, which they identify with the Godhead—or God or the Supreme Principle or the Origin of all things or the creative Truth, indeed all possible human notions of the Divine and the goal to be attained.

To be spontaneous means not to think out, organise, decide and make an effort to realise with the personal will.

I am going to give you two examples to make you understand what true spontaneity is. One—you all know about it undoubtedly—is of the time Sri Aurobindo began writing the *Arya*,<sup>1</sup> in 1914. It was neither a mental knowledge nor even a mental creation which he transcribed: he silenced his mind and sat at the typewriter, and from above, from the higher planes, all that had to be written came down, all ready, and he had only to move his fingers on the typewriter and it was transcribed. It was in this state of mental silence which allows the knowledge—and even the expression—from above to pass through that he wrote the whole *Arya*, with its sixty-four printed pages a month. This is why, besides, he could do it, for if it had been a mental work of construction it would have been quite impossible.

That is true mental spontaneity.

And if one carries this a little further, one should never think and plan beforehand what one ought to say or write. One should simply be able to silence one’s mind, to turn it like a receptacle towards the higher Consciousness and express as it receives it, in mental silence, what comes from above. That would be true spontaneity.

Naturally, this is not very easy, it asks for preparation.

And if one comes down to the sphere of action, it is still more difficult; for normally, if one wants to act with some kind of logic, one usually has to think out beforehand what one wants to do and plan it before doing it, otherwise one may be tossed about by all sorts of desires and impulses which would be very far from the inspiration spoken about in *Wu Wei*; it would simply be movements of the lower nature driving you to act. Therefore, unless one has reached the state of wisdom and detachment of the Chinese sage mentioned in this story, it is better not to be spontaneous in one’s daily actions, for one would risk being the plaything of all the most disorderly impulses and influences.

But once one enters the yoga and wants to do yoga, it is very necessary not to be the toy of one’s own mental formations. If one wants to rely on one’s experiences, one must take great care not to construct within oneself the notion of the experiences one wants to have, the idea one has about them, the form one expects or hopes to see. For, the mental formation, as I already have told you very often, is a real formation, a real creation, and with your idea you create forms which are to a certain extent independent of you and return to you as though from outside and give you the impression of being experiences. But these experiences which are either willed or sought

after or expected are not spontaneous experiences and risk being illusions—at times even dangerous illusions.

Therefore, when you follow a mental discipline, you must be particularly careful not to imagine or want to have certain experiences, for in this way you can create for yourself the illusion of these experiences. In the domain of yoga, this very strict and severe spontaneity is *absolutely* indispensable.

For that, naturally, one must not have any ambition or desire or excessive imagination or what I call “spiritual romanticism”, the taste for the miraculous—all this ought to be very carefully eliminated so as to be sure of advancing fearlessly.

\* \* \*

1. It was in the review *Arya*, within a period of six years (1914-1920), that Sri Aurobindo published most of his major works: *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle* (originally *The Psychology of Social Development*), *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Future Poetry*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (originally a number of series under other titles).

(M 8: 281-83)

## 111. Supermind Already Realised

Sri Aurobindo has spoken—I believe I have read it to you, I think it’s in *The Synthesis of Yoga*—of the true mind, the true vital and the true physical or subtle physical, and he has said that they co-exist with the ordinary mind, vital and physical, and that in certain conditions one may enter into contact with them, and then one becomes aware of the difference between what really is and the appearances of things.

Well, for a developed consciousness, the Supermind is already realised somewhere in a domain of the subtle physical, it already exists there visible, concrete, and expresses itself in forms and activities. And when one is in tune with this domain, when one lives there, one has a very strong feeling that this world would only have to be condensed, so to say, for it to become visible to all. What would then be interesting would be to develop this inner perception which would put you into contact with the supramental truth which is already manifested, and is veiled for you only for want of appropriate organs to enter into relation with it.

(M 8: 291)

## 112. Supermind and the Psychic Being

*Is not the Supermind also the psychic being?*

The Supermind is far higher than the psychic being also.

What Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind is the element or the divine Principle which is now going to come into play in the universe. He calls it the Supermind because it comes after the mind, that is to say, it is a new manifestation of the supreme divine Principle. And it is related to the psychic as the Divine was related to the psychic, that is to say, the psychic is the home, the temple, the vehicle, everything that must outwardly manifest the Divine. But it is divine only in its essence not in its integrality. It is a mode of outer manifestation of the Divine, outer compared with the Divine, that is, terrestrial.

(M 8: 298-99)

\* \* \* \* \*

(To be continued)

***Soul, my soul***

*Soul, my soul, reascend over the edge of life,—  
Far, far from the din burn into tranquil skies,  
Cross bright ranges of mind measureless, visioned, white;  
Thoughts sail down as if ships carrying bales of light,  
Truth's form-ropes by the Seers woven from spirit-threads,  
From wide havens where luminous argosies,  
Gold-robed Wisdom's divine traffic and merchandise;  
But there pause not but go far beyond  
Where thy natural home motionless vast and mute  
Waits thy tread; on a throne facing infinity  
Thought-nude, void of the world, one with the silence be.  
Sole, self-poised and unmoved thou shalt behold below  
Hierarchies and domains, godheads and potencies,  
Titans, demons and men each in his cosmic role;  
Midst all these in the lone centre of forces spun,  
Fate there under thy feet turning the wheels of Time,  
The World Law thou shalt know mapped in its codes sublime,  
Yet thyself shalt remain viewless, eternal, free.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 599)



# EINSTEIN'S FOUR-DIMENSIONAL CONTINUUM

## 1

ON April 18, 1955, passed away the most original scientific thinker the world has seen. A host of exceptionally revolutionary ideas were let loose by him from the beginning of his scientific career in the early years of this century up to the very end of his life: it is not more than a couple of years since he propounded his last version of what he called the Unified Field Theory, the fullest expansion of the relativity theory with which his name burst on us in 1904. Perhaps the most notable contribution by his work to the world of thought is the concept of a four-dimensional continuum of space-time to replace Newton's of a three-dimensional space and a one-dimensional time. But the exact significance of it is seldom realised. It is worth while glancing at it from several sides.

There are thinkers who tell us: "The new concept has so revolutionised the view of reality in physics that science would do well to look in a direction beyond materialism." Others say: "It is indeed revolutionary, but its revolutionariness is confined to physics and has no bearing on a philosophical view of reality. By itself it has neither a materialistic nor a non-materialistic implication." A third group declares: "The question of any implication is idle, for the concept stands for no reality at all, not even a physical one. It is simply a geometrico-mathematical picture, an abstract symbolic representation of the connection between phenomena of space and time as they figure revolutionarily in Einstein's physics. It is a mere convenience or device for calculation." A fourth school brings another sort of damper: "It is a revolution, yet not quite a radical one. Physics always recognised four-dimensionality when it took four co-ordinates—three of space and one of time—to specify an event. Relativity theory has added some important details of far-reaching usefulness, but the general framework is still the same."

To strike on the true significance of the new concept we should follow briefly the development of relativity theory by which a revolution was effected in Newton's physics. Newton had held that though every known material mass is in motion and therefore no motion of matter can be measured against any material mass at rest, we are not confined to merely relative measurements among moving masses: there is a motion absolute and not relative, for there is a universal space which is at absolute and not relative rest and which can serve as a frame of reference for measuring absolute motion. Further, if absolute motion is a valid concept, we can know what moment can be regarded as being the same moment at different points of space. For, it is by signals from point to point that time at different points can be expressed and even the fastest signal—light—takes a finite time to travel and, with the possibility of measuring the absolute speed of light against static space, we can allow in an absolute manner for the time-lag between the sending of a light signal from one point and the receiving

of it at another. Calculating the various time-lags we can calculate what moment anywhere is simultaneous with a moment here: simultaneity throughout the universe is a valid concept. That is to say, time can be thought of as uniform everywhere. Absolute time follows from absolute motion and absolute space.

Soon after Newton's life a substance called the ether filling all space was considered inevitable for the explanation of the wavelike movement of light. Because of certain astronomical observations it was also considered as fixed in space. For all practical purposes the ether and absolute space became synonyms. So an opportunity was provided in a concrete form to measure motion against a frame absolutely at rest. A most delicate experiment, repeatedly performed, to measure earth's motion through the ether in the direction of its own orbit showed that somehow the absolute measurement always evaded us. This null result of the Michelson-Morley experiment Lorentz and Fitzgerald sought to explain by calculating that physical changes always take place in our measuring instrument in such a way that they constitute a minus quantity compensating for and cancelling the plus quantity necessary for the absolute measurement. Thus the static ether and through it absolute space were saved for physics.

Einstein launched a double attack on this interpretation. He said that if no absolute measurement can ever be obtained, then whatever be the reason for the failure the Newtonian concept of motion and space is quite gratuitous and serves no useful purpose in physics. Further, if absolute motion cannot be measured, the same moment at different points of space can never be absolutely ascertained. Universal simultaneity is an "unobservable". The concept of absolute time is metaphysics and has no useful place in physics. In addition to the practical inutility, Einstein proved the logical inutility of the three absolutes. He said that the situation of a minus quantity exactly compensating for and cancelling the required plus quantity would arise even if we made measurements against a body moving relatively to another body but acceptable for convenience's sake as at rest relatively to our own motion. So if any compensation or cancellation is taking place, it will not uniquely distinguish an absolutely static frame from a relatively static one. To suppose that the compensation or cancellation conceals an absolute ether or space is logically unwarranted. Again, since in all relativities of motion between two bodies the mathematical terms are not altered by our taking the first body to be at rest and the second to be moving or *vice versa*, the compensation or cancellation can be thought of as happening on either body and does not indicate which of the two bodies is having its motion measured in reference to a static space or ether. This ambiguity leaves us no logical ground for talking of a space-absolute in reference to which the positive quantity of a body's absolute motion is somehow precisely compensated for or cancelled by a negative quantity. And, of course, once absolute motion and absolute space are logically superfluous, absolute time also logically fades out of the picture.

Measurements of space and time were proved by Einstein to differ with the

rates of relative motion. No more can we speak of motion occurring within an unaffected space and time: no more are space and time universal uniform receptacles in which matter in motion exists. There are as many spaces and times as there are relative rates of matter's motion. The sole bond between them is a transformation-rule formulated by Lorentz when he tried to co-ordinate the compensating or cancelling factors proposed by him before Einstein's appearance. The new relativistic interpretation which did not deny those factors but dispensed with their implications of an absolute Newtonian background took over Lorentz's rule as a means of passing correctly from one relative reading to another. It also, by the way, threw light on a somewhat obscure term in Lorentz's rule. The rule allowed for a change in the instrument of measuring space, the shortening of a rod's length in the direction of its motion, but could not explain a corresponding change which appeared to apply to the instrument of measuring time, the slowing down of the rhythm of a clock during its motion. Einstein legitimised the changing time-term since he clearly brought out the relativity of time no less than of space.

The first or restricted theory of relativity stopped here. It did not offer any new absolute or absolutes in place of the Newtonian ones. And those who regard as a mere mathematical device or convenience the four-dimensional continuum or space-time which was later suggested to be the appropriate Einsteinian absolute are evidently of the belief that only relativities really exist. The sole real revolution effected by Einstein is for them the joint difference which space-measurements and the time-measurement undergo according to the difference in motion-rate. Inasmuch as space and time together undergo this difference, unlike in Newton's system, these quantities figure revolutionarily in the system of Einstein, but space is space and time is time and no amount of hyphenating them can be anything save a purely formal affair: there can be no actual fusion of them. The so-called fusing is a useful picture or symbol of the Lorentz transformations which tell us how the space-numbers and the time-number vary with different co-ordinate systems and how the variations are mutually related.

The implication of this "formalist" view of the four-dimensional continuum is that though the Newtonian absolutes of space and time are abolished the relative space and time of Einstein are in fundamental nature the same as Newton's: Newton too was aware that at different standpoints different quantities are obtained for space and time and if he believed that the difference could be adjusted and a uniformity calculated in terms of absolute space and time it was because he did not know of the greater variations introduced by varied standpoints, but this cannot stop space and time from fundamentally differing from each other or involve their fusion.

The exponents of the "formalist" view, in further elaborating their thesis, exploit for their own ends the argument which is properly of the fourth school of interpretation. They inform us: "In a certain sense space and time have always constituted a four-dimensional continuum. Our experience in common life is that nothing happens at

any place except at a particular time and nothing happens at any time except at a particular place: space and time are co-existent and inseparable. Similarly, science uses four numbers to describe events in nature. Positions are characterised by three numbers and the instant of an event is the fourth number. Four definite numbers correspond to every event: *ergo*, the world of events forms a four-dimensional continuum. Even the old physics never denied this. In the new physics the numbers undergo some interesting changes and we have to deal with them more jointly than before, but there is no four-dimensional continuum in a fundamentally different sense than before—a different sense which blurs our common experience that space is space and time is time. Relativity theory, studying them more penetratively and dealing with them more jointly than before, does not involve the equivalence of the space-co-ordinates with the time-co-ordinate. The former co-ordinates are defined physically wholly differently from the latter: a rod is used in the one case and a clock in the other.”

Well, it is indeed true that the physical operations by which the numbers for space and time are obtained are entirely distinct and never fuse, but the rest of the “formal” view has little substance and when we understand its hollowness we shall learn to see this distinction in a proper light. To start with: it is illogical to say that Einstein’s space and time are in fundamental nature the same as Newton’s. Newton could pass to his absolutes because whatever relativities he acknowledged were of a certain sort: if for Einstein his own relativities did not differ from Newton’s in a fundamental way he could have no ground for rejecting those absolutes: some mathematical adjustment would be possible. He could not pass to those absolutes because his relativities were different in fundamental nature. If they were thus different his space and time must also be so. The formalists recognise as much when they emphasise, though mistakenly, that in Einstein’s physics as at first propounded there is no real absolute and that, unlike in Newton’s physics, only relativities really exist here. But they deny a real Einsteinian absolute on account of missing the important point which emerged when Einstein stated his relativities and stopped short of any absolute.

Einstein stopped short not because any absolute was bound to be really inexistent: he did so because his own immediate aim was limited and he never looked in the direction of an absolute. However, one point emerged suggestively. If the relativities were not ultimate and if anything absolute could be found, it would not be in terms of motion, space and time as commonly understood. Another mode of putting this is: the absolute, if any, would not just raise, as those of Newton did, commonly understood motion, space and time to a universal plane of conception. And it would not for a simple reason: the relativities themselves do not involve motion, space and time as commonly understood. They are more radical than Newton thought and the three terms in each relativity are knit together in a way utterly beyond Newton’s thinking. To say that there are as many spaces and times as there are relative rates of motion

does not merely abolish Newton's idea of space and time as universal uniform receptacles in which matter in motion exists. Over and above finding measurements of space and time to be variables of motion, it implies that the space and time of each frame of reference differ with motion in a close co-operation between themselves: when the space-numbers change, the time-number changes too and *vice versa*, as if space and time were quantities perfectly analogous though not of the same kind, instead of being as in Newton's physics non-analogous though never dissociated. Of course, for practical purposes the old division of the space-co-ordinates from the time-co-ordinate is valid: we can assign *à la* Newton relative space-co-ordinates but an absolute time-co-ordinate to any event within common experience. Only when the velocity of objects ceases to be small and comes close to that of light the time-co-ordinate no less than the space-co-ordinates are found relative and we have the observation of both space and time changing instead of the former alone doing so. But the joint change, though mostly unobserved, is always there as of two perfectly analogous quantities. In other words the two quantities depend on motion as if they were differentiations of one and the same quantity: the rod measuring space and the clock measuring time seem two distinguishable modes of measuring a single system of dimensions. Briefly, space and time appear to be somehow the same in spite of being dissimilar: they give the impression of being an identity-in-difference.

The revolution in physical concepts here is surely profounder than what the formalists make out. Although no absolute is yet on the scene, the relativities already suggest some kind of fusion in the nature of space and time. The suggestion, however, loomed a little remote until Minkowski put his mind to the relativities. And it loomed a little remote because no direct mathematical demonstration of the actual identity was present and because the fusion suggested in each set of space-number and time-number was not yet shown to be of any immediate utility in either mathematical practice or mathematical theory. Minkowski was the first to remedy these lacks by seeking in the suggested fusion an invariant behind the Lorentz-transformations connecting the variants that are the relativities—an invariant concealed like a thread on which the transformation-rule hung them like beads and taught us how to pass from one bead to another. He showed that the different observations of space and time about an event from frames of reference moving at different rates could yield a common invariant quantity, an absolute measurement of a non-Newtonian sort corresponding to the non-Newtonian relative measurements, if the time-measurement obtained within each frame of reference were subtracted from the space-measurement. Mathematically, this not only gave the invariant but also illuminated the nature of space and time. For, it is a platitude in mathematics that we cannot add one quantity to or subtract it from another without the two quantities being of the same kind. We can multiply one kind of quantity by another, as mass by velocity to give momentum. We can divide one kind of quantity by another, as energy by time to give horse-power. But we cannot add mass to velocity or subtract energy from time to give any

physical quantity unless they are somehow identical. Similarly we cannot add inches to seconds or subtract seconds from inches unless we mean to imply that somehow the same entity is measured partly by a rod and partly by a clock.

The suggestion emerging from relativity theory that in a certain sense a single system of dimensions rather than two associated systems was being measured came to a clear focus in Minkowski's description of this system as a four-dimensional continuum in which space and time ceased to be separate and fused into one fundamental absolute: space-time. The single entity, space-time, could be split into two systems of dimensions by taking cross-sections, as it were, of it and the various ways in which we make the cross-section give the Einsteinian relativities. If we imagine a geometrical graph of the four-dimensional continuum, then the influence of the different rates of motion on the measurements of space and time will be shown in that the three axes or co-ordinates  $x$ ,  $y$ ,  $z$  of space and the one axis or co-ordinate  $t$  of time will be differently orientated. And the relations between these different sets of axes will be those contained in the Lorentz equations.

Minkowski's space-time is the inevitable background of the Einsteinian relativities. Einstein himself acknowledged it and later developed the concept of it geometrically far beyond Minkowski. We are not concerned at the moment with the development. Suffice it to say here that space-time is inherently implied by the relativities and is just as real or unreal as they. Even, in the sense that the invariant, the quantity on which there is agreement from all standpoints, is more real than the variants or the quantities about which there is disagreement from all standpoints, the universal quantity that is space-time has a greater reality than the space and time that figure in the relative readings.

Having demonstrated that the hyphenating of space and time is no purely formal affair we should exhibit in a proper light the undeniable distinction between them as proved by the wholly different manner in which the numbers for space and for time are obtained. The fact is that the hyphenating does not slur over the distinction. It is a mistake to turn the hyphenating to mean that a fourth dimension of *space* is welded on to the three known to us. Only if such a welding is signified the distinction may be said to suffer a slurring over. Unfortunately this significance is liable to be caught from the final form in which Minkowski stated his description of the four-dimensional continuum. There by a couple of mathematical operations he altered to a plus sign the minus sign between the space-numbers and the time-number and substituted the number of miles light travels in one second—a constant 186,000 in all frames of reference—for the one second itself, thus making the time-dimension equivalent to a space-dimension. The justification of these operations is that thus alone the four-dimensional continuum becomes the absolute of Einstein's relativities in the simplest form possible and best explains the facts of scientific observation and experiment. The operations are a brilliant act of analytic insight into the truth of physical nature and, together with the original formula of subtracting the time-measurement from

the space-measurement, constitute one of the peak performances of mathematical genius in our day. But they do not really add a fourth space-dimension to the other three. The very need of those mathematical operations which brought about an “isotropy” (or similarity in all directions) is proof enough of a certain difference between the three components and the one component in spite of their fusion. A true fourth dimension of space would require no such strange treatment. The treatment is administered just because space-time is an irregular and not a regular four-dimensional continuum or, rather, because it is a four-dimensional continuum irregularly regular. To employ a phrase already used by us, it is by all tokens an identity-in-difference. The criticism that Minkowski overlooked the distinction between a rod and a clock would hold only if the fourth dimension were a regular one—that is to say, spatial.

But, we must add, the irregular element makes no odds to the revolutionary character of this four-dimensionality. It is erroneous to protest as the fourth school of interpreters do, that after all science always recognised four-dimensionality when it took four co-ordinates—three of space and one of time—to specify an event and that we have nothing quite radically revolutionary now. No doubt, the actual basic four-dimensionality of nature is the same in the day of Einstein and Minkowski as it was in that of Newton; but science's recognition of it in the past never took it for a *fusion* of space and time. Now alone we know what exactly should be meant by our regarding the world we live in as basically a four-dimensional continuum that figures in our immediate measurements as spatial and temporal quantities changing in a joint interdependent manner; for now alone can we speak of this continuum as being not of space and time but of space-time. The general framework is not at all still the same.

The fourth school of interpreters, no less than the third or “formalist” group, is off the mark. Space-time is not only real: it is also a radically revolutionary reality.

*(To be concluded)*

K. D. SETHNA  
(AMAL KIRAN)

*(From Science, Materialism, Mysticism, 1995, pp. 92-102)*

*Science is nothing but developed perception, interpreted intent, common sense rounded out and minutely articulated.*

*George Santayana*

# THE MOTHER TAKES CHARGE OF THE ASHRAM

## —A Presentation of Documents—

(Continued from the issue of October 2005)

(4)

### Anilbaran Roy

SRI AUROBINDO came out at about 11 a.m. and one by one the sadhaks went up (there were only two pairs—husband and wife) and offered their pranams and asked his blessing. When I went up I saw Sri Aurobindo—an embodiment of the Truth he is trying to bring down for us. To me it seemed that his appearance was that of *barabhaya*.<sup>1</sup> I worshipped his feet with a few roses and placed a small sum of money (Rs. 5) at his feet. He touched my head. I sat down at his feet, meditated for a minute and then said, “Many kinds of hostile forces are trying to distract me. May I be able to surrender myself completely to you.” He blessed me with a nod of his head, then with the palm of his hand pressed on my head; I felt as if I had got the truth, my whole being became filled with hope and faith, with force and light. I came down after touching his feet and getting his touch again.

Then I went up to Mirra and for the first time entered into Sri Aurobindo’s room, his place of sadhana and rest. I went through the same ceremony before Mirra—but sitting at her feet I meditated for a longer time, about 5 minutes.

From the morning a great calm has descended on me. I can easily surrender myself and open myself to the Higher Truth. This has been a day of consecration for me. I have got my programme of sadhana. Henceforth, I am to give up the ordinary human standpoint and live from the standpoint of the higher light.

The vital forces are trying to seduce me—they seem to say, “Follow us and we [*will*] give you intense enjoyment.” With the help of the blessings of Gurudev, I expect to know their tricks and withdraw my consent from their play.

At 5 p.m. Sri Aurobindo again came out and sat on his chair; Mirra also came with him and sat by his left side beneath<sup>2</sup> the chair. We were altogether 20 sadhaks present including several ladies. Sri Aurobindo spoke for half an hour about the significance of the 15<sup>th</sup> August; the speech has been fully recorded by Purani. Then there was group meditation for about half an hour after which Sri Aurobindo and Mirra went inside.

15.08.1926

*Conversations with Sri Aurobindo*

*Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 1982, p. 40

1. Bestower of boon and protection.

2. Anilbaran seems to mean here that the Mother sat on a lower level than Sri Aurobindo. According to Purani’s description of the Siddhi Day, the Mother sat on a “small stool”, which Rajani Palit describes as Sri Aurobindo’s “foot-rest”.



On the 15<sup>th</sup> August, since the morning I began to feel a sort of profound peace. The experience of light above the head became real. During the afternoon meditation the aspiration within blazed up. All these days I had been as it were on the outskirts of the Yoga; now I am feeling quite within it.

Noted down on 22.08.1926

*Interviews with Sri Aurobindo*

*Sri Aurobindo Circle, 1991, p. 40*

Arriving from Bengal I find an all-round change at Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo has retired and Mirra Devi has taken charge of creating a new world. The nucleus, the central cell (cubical form) will be formed here, of which the life will be the sadhaks present here. Every one of those sadhaks is manifesting a particular power of the universe. I was to be the vehicle of one of the chief powers.

10.12.1926

*Notes from a Sadhak's Diary*

*Sri Aurobindo Circle, 1976, p. 39*

I took part in the group meditation, by the left side of A at midday; and between B and C and in the evening. During evening meditation D saw a vision of golden light by the side of A and I was in the centre of that column of light.

After the afternoon meditation Sri Aurobindo saw me for a few minutes. A remarkable change has appeared in his personal appearance—to me he appeared thinner, taller and brighter. I expressed my regret that I was away from Pondicherry at this critical time. Sri Aurobindo said that the unpleasant experiences I had in Bengal were necessary for me and that my absence on the 24<sup>th</sup> November would not affect me. He gave me three instructions. 1. A new world is being created here into which I am entering and I must now make a definite choice to give up all old world relations and ideas. 2. I must now make a full surrender to Mirra Devi who has taken up the work of new creation. 3. Nothing of what is going on here should be given out to the outside world, as hostile forces, coming to know of these [things], may try to frustrate them. He explained to me the particular power that was to manifest in me. I have a particular work (which is God's work) to do but not in the old way. Henceforth I must take all my instructions from Mirra Devi.

11.12.1926

*Notes from a Sadhak's Diary*

*Sri Aurobindo Circle, 1976, p. 39*

During the morning interview Mother changed my place for the evening meditation to the side of A, with whom she said I had intimate relation in reference to the work and power that is to manifest in me.

At night during sleep I had a forceful attack in the form of a nightmare just at midnight. E cleared it off.

12.12.1926

*Notes from a Sadhak's Diary*

*Sri Aurobindo Circle, 1976, p. 39*

During afternoon meditation, I saw a ball of golden light seated on a semicircular base of blue above another semicircle of red light. This ball of light descended down to my heart. I felt that now I had got faith established in me and my doubts had been killed fundamentally.

15.12.1926

*Notes from a Sadhak's Diary*

*Sri Aurobindo Circle, 1976, p. 40*

In the morning I described this descent of light to Mother and said that I took it as a symbol of faith established in me. Mother explained that it was not merely a symbol, but a reality. That day a being had incarnated in me and he was represented by the ball of light and the blue base represented faith. Mother told me how during the afternoon meditation yesterday D saw a new being entering into me. D described his experience to me thus: "A question arose in my mind as to who you were. A sudden flash of light came to me and by an intuition I at once saw that you were V. After that whenever I look at you I find your face resembling that of V. Mother told me that in the evening yesterday F also got a similar intuition."

V was created at the beginning of the world and he was reincarnating again and again. But this is his last incarnation. All the hopes and aspirations of V will be fulfilled through me.

During afternoon meditation I found that my faith was firmly established and the next item of sadhana I should take up was "Surrender". After meditation Mother blessed me with a beautiful rose—the symbol of surrender.

16.12.1926

*Notes from a Sadhak's Diary*

*Sri Aurobindo Circle, 1976, pp. 40-41*

This morning I described to Mother the above experiences and told her that my former self was dead, and that she had given birth to a new self in me, my higher self; henceforth all my old relations were gone and all new relations would be determined only through her, as she was now my real mother and I had now really entered into her family as a newborn babe to be nourished and grown by her. Mother, after hearing all this, smilingly remarked: “You have done this gloriously.”

19.12.1926

*Notes from a Sadhak's Diary*

*Sri Aurobindo Circle, 1976, p. 42*

### *Compiler's Notes*

*The 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1926 brought Anilbaran Roy spiritually close to the Mother. From the morning “a great calm” had descended into him. When Sri Aurobindo came out to bless his disciples at 11 a.m. on the upstairs verandah of the Library House, Anilbaran bowed down to him and meditated at his feet. Then, for the first time, he went and bowed down to the Mother and meditated at her feet. (There is no mention of it earlier in his Conversations with Sri Aurobindo which begin in **May 1926**.) At this point, Anilbaran still referred to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as “A.G.” and “Mirra” in his diary notes.<sup>3</sup> As some of his original manuscripts are not available, we don't know whether he started referring to Sri Aurobindo as “Sri Aurobindo” before his departure from Pondicherry on **1 October 1926**. The diary notes of A.B. Purani and Haradhan Bakshi make this transition from “A.G.” to “Sri A” in **mid September-October 1926**. Anilbaran most probably followed suit because he referred to Sri Aurobindo as “Sri Aurobindo” from the very first day of his return from Bengal on **10 December 1926**.*

Arriving from Bengal I find an all-round change at Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo has retired and Mirra Devi has taken charge of creating a new world....

*When he came back, Sri Aurobindo had already retired and handed over the charge of his disciples to the Mother. Anilbaran did not take long to adapt himself to the new situation and to accept the Mother as Mother and address her as such. The next day Sri Aurobindo gave him an interview and instructed him to “make a full surrender to Mirra Devi” who had “taken up the work of new creation”, and to take henceforth all his directions from her. (Note that Sri Aurobindo himself used the name “Mirra Devi”.) The very next day, on **12 December 1926**, Anilbaran referred to the Mother*

3. Anilbaran's original diary notes have the initials “A.G.” and not the name “Sri Aurobindo” with which the editor of the *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, 1999, replaced it.

as “Mother” in his diary notes and never again as “Mirra” or other variants such as “Mirra Devi” and “Shri Mirra Devi”. Subsequent diary notes confirm his acceptance of the Mother as his spiritual guide and Guru. Sri Aurobindo later wrote to a disciple in the thirties, “Anilbaran recognised the Mother as divine at first sight and has been happy ever afterwards.” After this instantaneous acceptance of the Mother, there followed a period of intense sadhana under her guidance. Anilbaran’s “Notes from a Sadhak’s Diary” are perhaps the best record of sadhana during what Sri Aurobindo called “the brightest period in the history of the Ashram”. On **16 December 1926**, Mother explained to him about the being of V (most likely Vivekananda)<sup>4</sup> which had entered into him during a collective meditation and wanted to fulfil its aspirations through him. The Mother had put him in contact with his inner godhead as she had done also in the case of Haradhan and Pavitra. The diary notation of **19 December 1926** records Anilbaran’s unreserved surrender to her:

This morning I described to Mother the above experiences and told her that my former self was dead, and that she had given birth to a new self in me, my higher self; henceforth all my old relations were gone and all new relations would be determined only through her, as she was now my real mother....

*(To be concluded)*

*Compilation and Notes by*  
RAMAN REDDY

4. See Sri Aurobindo’s list of past lives of sadhaks—*Record of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol. 11, p. 1344.

*This morning my prayer rises to Thee, always with the same aspiration: to live Thy love, to radiate Thy love, with such potency and effectiveness that all may feel fortified, regenerated and illumined by our contact. To have power to heal life, to relieve suffering, to generate peace and calm confidence, to efface anguish and replace it by the sense of the one true happiness, the happiness that is founded in Thee and never fades.... O Lord, O marvellous Friend, O all-powerful Master, penetrate all our being, transfigure it till Thou alone livest in us and through us!*

*The Mother*

(On board the ship “Kaga Maru”, March 7, 1914, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 91)

## THE OBSERVER AND THE OBSERVED

### 1

SCIENCE means objectivity, that is to say, elimination of the personal element—truth as pure fact without being distorted or coloured by the feelings and impressions and notions of the observer. It is the very opposite of the philosopher's standpoint who says that a thing exists because (and so long as) it is perceived. The scientist swears that a thing exists whether you perceive it or not, perception is possible because it exists, not the other way. And yet Descartes is considered not only as the father of modern philosophy, but also as the founder of modern mathematical science. But more of that anon. The scientific observer observes as a witness impartial and aloof: he is nothing more than a recording machine, a sort of passive mirror reflecting accurately and faithfully what is presented to it. This is indeed the great revolution brought about by Science in the world of human inquiry and in human consciousness, *viz.*, the isolation of the observer from the observed.

In the old world, before Science was born, sufficient distinction or discrimination was not made between the observer and the observed. The observer mixed himself up or identified himself with what he observed and the result was not a scientific statement but a poetic description. Personal feelings, ideas, judgments entered into the presentation of facts and the whole mass passed as truth, the process often being given the high-sounding name of Intuition, Vision or Revelation but whose real name is fancy. And if there happened to be truth of fact somewhere, it was almost by chance. Once we thought of the eclipse being due to the greed of a demon, and pestilence due to the evil eye of a wicked goddess. The universe was born out of an egg, the cosmos consisted of concentric circles of worlds that were meant to reward the virtuous and punish the sinner in graded degrees. These are some of the very well-known instances of pathetic fallacy, that is to say, introducing the element of personal sentiment in our appreciation of events and objects. Even today Nazi race history and Soviet Genetics carry that unscientific prescientific tradition.

Science was born the day when the observer cut himself aloof from the observed. Not only so, not only he is to stand aside, outside the field of observation and be a bare recorder, but that he must let the observed record itself, that is, be its own observer. Modern Science means not so much the observer narrating the story of the observed but the observed telling its own story. The first step is well exemplified in the story of Galileo. When hot discussion was going on and people insisted on saying—as Aristotle decided and common sense declared—that heavier bodies most naturally fall quicker from a height, it was this prince of experimenters who straightaway took two different weights, went up the tower of Pisa and let them drop and astounded the people by showing that both travel with equal speed and fall to the ground at the same time.

Science also declared that it is not the observation of one person, however

qualified, that determines the truth or otherwise of a fact, but the observation of many persons and the possibility of observations of all persons converging, coinciding, corroborating. It is only when observation has thus been tested and checked that one can be sure that the personal element has been eliminated. Indeed the ideal condition would be if the observer, the scientist himself, could act as part of the machine for observation: at the most he should be a mere assembler of the parts of the machine that would record itself, impersonally, automatically. The rocket instruments that are sent high up in the sky to record the temperature, pressure or other weather condition in the stratosphere or the deep-sea recording machines are ingenious inventions in that line. The wizard Jagadish Chandra Bose showed his genius precisely in the way he made the plant itself declare its life-story: it is not what the scientist thinks or feels about the plant, but what the plant has to say of its own accord, as it were—its own tale of growth and decay, of suffering, spasm, swoon, suffocation or death under given conditions. This is the second step that Science took in the direction of impersonal and objective inquiry.

It was thought for long a very easy matter—at least not extraordinarily difficult—to eliminate the observer and keep only to the observed. It was always known how the view of the observer, that is to say, his observation changed in respect of the observed fact with his change of position. The sun rises and sets to the observer on earth: to an observer on Mars, for example, the sun would rise and set, no doubt, but earth too along with, in the same way as Mars and sun appear to us now, while to an observer on the sun, the sun would seem fixed while the planets would be seen moving round. Again, we all know the observer in a moving train sees things outside the train moving past and himself at stand-still; the same observer would see another train moving alongside in the same direction and with the same speed as stuck to it and at stand-still, but as moving with double the speed if going in a contrary direction: and so on.

The method proposed for eliminating the observer was observation, more and more observation, and experiment, testing the observation under given conditions. I observe and record a series of facts and when I have found a sufficient number of them I see I am able to put them all together under a general title, a law of the occurrence or pattern of the objects observed. Further it is not I alone who can do it in any peculiar way personal to me, but that everybody else can do the same thing and arrive at the same series of facts leading to the same conclusion. I note, for example, the sun's path from day to day in the sky; soon we find that the curves described by the sun are shifted along the curve of an ellipse (that is to say, their locus is an ellipse). The ecliptic is thus found to be an ellipse which means that the earth moves round the sun in an ellipse.

But in the end a difficulty arose in the operation of observation. It proved to be not a simple process. The scientific observer requires for his observation the yard-stick and the time-piece. Now, we have been pushed to admit a queer phenomenon

(partly by observation and partly by a compelling deduction) that these two measuring units are not constant; they change with the change of system, that is to say, according to the velocity of the system. In other words, each observer has his own unit of space and time measure. So the elimination of the personal element of the observer has become a complicated mathematical problem, even if one is sure of it finally.

There is still something more. The matter of calculating and measuring objectively was comparatively easy when the object in view was of medium size, neither too big nor too small. But in the field of the infinite and the infinitesimal, when from the domain of mechanical forces we enter into the region of electric and radiant energy, we find our normal measuring apparatus almost breaks down. Here accurate observation cannot be made because of the very presence of the observer, because of the very fact of observation. The ultimates that are observed are trails of light particles: now when the observer directs his eye (or the beam of light replacing the eye) upon the light particle, its direction and velocity are interfered with: the photon is such a tiny infinitesimal that a ray from the observer's eye is sufficient to deflect and modify its movement. And there is no way of determining or eliminating this element of deflection or interference. The old Science knew certainly that a thermometer dipped in the water whose temperature it is to measure itself changes the initial temperature. But that was something calculable and objective. Here the position of the observer is something like a "possession", imbedded, ingrained, in-volved in the observed itself.

The crux of the difficulty is this. We say the observing eye or whatever mechanism is made to function for it, disturbs the process of observation. Now to calculate that degree or measure of disturbance one has to fall back upon another observing eye, and this again has to depend upon yet another behind. Thus there is an infinite regress and no final solution. So, it has been declared, in the ultimate analysis, scientific calculation gives us only the average result, and it is only average calculations that are possible.

Now we come to the sanctum, the Shekinah, of the problem. For there is a still deeper mystery. And pre-eminently it is an Einsteinian discovery. It is not merely the measuring ray of light, not merely the beam in the eye of the observer that is the cause of interference: the very mind behind the eye is involved in a strange manner. The mind is not a *tabula rasa*, it comes into the field with certain presuppositions—axioms and postulates, as it calls them—due to its angle of vision and perhaps to the influence upon it of immediate sense perception. It takes for granted, for example, that light travels in a straight line, that parallels do not meet, indeed all the theorems and deductions of Euclidean geometry. There is a strong inclination in the mind to view things as arranged according to that pattern. Einstein has suggested that the spherical scheme can serve as well or even better our observations. Riemann's non-Euclidean geometry has assumed momentous importance in contemporary scientific enquiry. It is through that scheme that Einstein proposes to find the equation that will subsume the largest number of actual and possible or potential facts and bring about

the reconciliation of such irreconcilables as wave and particle, gravitation and electricity.

In any case, at the end of all our peregrinations we seem to circle back to our original Cartesian-cum-Berkeleyan position; we discover that it is not easy to extricate the observed from the observer: the observer is so deep set in the observed, part and parcel of it that there are scientists who consider their whole scientific scheme of the world as only a mental set-up, we may replace it very soon by another scheme equally cogent, subjective all the same. The subject has entered into all objects and any definition of the object must necessarily depend upon the particular poise of the subject. That is the cosmic immanence of the Purusha spoken of in the Upanishads—the one Purusha become many and installed in the heart of each and every object. There is indeed a status of the Subject in which the subject and the object are gathered into or form one reality. The observer and the observed are the two ends, the polarisation of a single entity: and all are reals at that level. But the scientific observer is only the mental purusha and in his observation the absolute objectivisation is not possible. The Einsteinian equations that purport to rule out all local view-points can hardly be said to have transcended the co-ordinates of the subject. That is possible only to the consciousness of the cosmic Purusha.

## 2

Is it then to say that science is no longer science, it has now been converted into philosophy, even into idealistic philosophy?

In spite of Russell and Eddington who may be considered in this respect as counsellors of despair, the objective reality of the scientific field stands, it is asserted, although somewhat changed.

Now, there are four positions possible with regard to the world and reality, depending on the relation between the observer and the observed, the subject and the object. They are: (1) subjective, (2) objective, (3) subjective objective and (4) objective subjective. The first two are extreme positions, one holding the subject as the sole or absolute reality, the object being a pure fabrication of its will and idea, an illusion, and the other considering the object as the true reality, the subject being an outcome, an epiphenomenon of the object itself, an illusion after all. The first leads to radical or as it is called monistic spirituality the type of which is Mayavada: the second is the highway of materialism, the various avatars of which are Marxism, Pragmatism, Behaviourism etc. In between lie the other two intermediate positions according to the stress or value given to either of the two extremes. The first of the intermediates is the position held generally by the idealists, by many schools of spirituality: it is a major Vedantic position. It says that the outside world, the object, is not an illusion, a mere fabrication of the mind or consciousness of the subject, but that it exists and is as real as the subject: it is dovetailed into the subject which is a kind of linchpin,



holding together and even energising the object. The object can further be considered as an expression or embodiment of the subject. Both the subject and the object are made of the same stuff of consciousness—the ultimate reality being consciousness. The subject is the consciousness turned on itself and the object is consciousness turned outside or going abroad. This is pre-eminently the Upanishadic position. In Europe, Kant holds a key position in this line: and on the whole, idealists from Plato to Bradley and Bosanquet can be said more or less to belong to this category. The second intermediate position views the subject as imbedded into the object, not the object into the subject as in the first one: the subject itself is part of the object something like its self-regarding or self-recording function. In Europe apart possibly from some of the early Greek thinkers (Anaxagoras or Democritus, for example), coming to more recent times, we can say that line runs fairly well-represented from Leibnitz to Bergson. In India the Sankhyas and the Vaisheshikas move towards and approach the position; the Tantriks make a still more near approach.

Once again, to repeat in other terms the distinction which may sometimes appear to carry no difference. First, the subjective objective in which the subject assumes the preponderant position, not denying or minimising the reality of the object. The external world, in this view, is a movement in and of the consciousness of a universal subject. It is subjective in the sense that it is essentially a function of the subject and does not exist apart from it or outside it; it is objective in the sense that it exists really and is not a figment or imaginative construction of any individual consciousness, although it exists in and through the individual consciousness in so far as that consciousness is universalised, is one with the universal consciousness (or the transcendental, the two can be taken together in the present connection). Instead of the Kantian transcendental idealism we can name it transcendental realism.

In the other case the world exists here below in its own reality, outside all apprehending subject; even the universal subject is in a sense part of it, immanent in it—it embraces the subject in its comprehending consciousness and posits it as part of itself or a function of its apprehension. The many Purushas (conscious beings or subjects) are imbedded in the universal Nature, say the Sankhyas. Kali, Divine Nature, is the manifest omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent reality holding within her the transcendent divine Purusha who supports, sanctions and inspires secretly, yet is dependent on the Mahashakti and without her is nothing, *śūnyam*. That is how the Tantriks put it. We may mention here, among European philosophers, the rather interesting conclusion of Leibnitz (to which Russell draws our attention): space is subjective to the view of each monad (subject unit) separately, it is objective when it consists of the assemblage of the view-points of all the monads.

The scientific outlook was a protest against the extreme subjective view: it started with the extreme objective standpoint and that remained the fundamental note till the other day, till the fissure of the nucleus opened new horizons to our somewhat bewildered mentality. We seem to have entered into a region where we still hold to

the objective, no doubt, but not absolutely free from an insistent presence of the subjective. It is the second of the intermediate positions we have tried to describe. Science has yet to decide the implications of that position; whether it will try to entrench itself as much as possible on this side of the subjective or whether it can yield further and go over to or link itself with the deeper subjective position.

The distinction between the two may after all be found to be a matter of stress only, involving no fundamental difference, especially as there are sure to be gradations from the one to the other. The most important landmark, however, the most revolutionary step in modern science would be the discovery of the eternal observer or some sign or image of his seated within the observed phenomena of moving things—*puruṣah prakritistho hi*, as the Gita says.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(From the *Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Vol. 1, pp. 321-28)

*To reject doubts means control of one's thoughts—very certainly so. But the control of one's thoughts is as necessary as the control of one's vital desires and passions or the control of the movements of one's body—for the yoga, and not for the yoga only. One cannot be a fully developed mental being even, if one has not a control of the thoughts, is not their observer, judge, master,—the mental Puruṣa, manomaya puruṣa, sāksī, anumantā, īśvara. It is no more proper for the mental being to be the tennis-ball of unruly and uncontrollable thoughts than to be a rudderless ship in the storm of the desires and passions or a slave of either the inertia or the impulses of the body. I know it is more difficult because man being primarily a creature of mental Prakriti identifies himself with the movements of his mind and cannot at once dissociate himself and stand free from the swirl and eddies of the mind whirlpool. It is comparatively easy for him to put a control on his body, at least on a certain part of its movements; it is less easy but still very possible after a struggle to put a mental control on his vital impulsions and desires; but to sit like the Tantric yogi on the river, above the whirlpool of his thoughts, is less facile. Nevertheless, it can be done...*

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 24, p. 1257)

## MY EXPERIENCE WITH THE INDIAN ARMY

(A Talk at the Integral Psychology/Yoga Conference, December 2004, Pondicherry)

WELL, friends, I will first have to introduce myself as one who has never gone through an academic course in psychology. All these words, cognitive psychology, parapsychology have all come to me only very recently, and therefore I am quite a stranger to those things.

Secondly, for me, psychology has no meaning if it has no practical application. By which I mean that it makes the human being happier, more self-controlled, more a master of situations within and outside himself. Otherwise I think it is a total waste of time.

Thirdly, how did I get into this business? Sometime in the early 90's the Chief of the Army Staff of the Indian Army, General B. C. Joshi invited me to help raise the level of motivation in the Army from the normal level that is there everywhere, to a spiritual level. A rather difficult job. However, I accepted it. But before I get down to what I tried doing, it is necessary to know the structure of the Army organisation, very briefly. Now there are two or three very important points in the Armed Forces.

First of all, it is a collective organisation where the individual is always secondary to the group. The individual sacrifices himself to the group. In fact, the very first thing the newcomers are taught before being commissioned is the famous motto of Chetwode which says that "the safety, welfare and honour of the country comes first and foremost; the safety, welfare of the men whom I command comes next; the safety, welfare and happiness of myself comes last." Now by this very fact, let me tell you, that they are open to spirituality because the essence of spirituality is to forget oneself, not to be egocentric. And this is drilled into the recruits right from day one. So this is number one.

Number two is that the Army is an organisation which is very hierarchical. A Major, if he has a problem, can only approach a Lieutenant Colonel. He won't, he is not permitted to move even one step further. A Major General goes only to a Lieutenant General. So it is a strict, clear hierarchical organisation.

Thirdly, it is centred on the ego where rewards and punishments are doled out by a very rational system no doubt, but it is this ego that is the spur. And in this organisation, I was asked to bring in a certain element of spirituality. Now, the idea was to prepare capsules right from the pre-commissioning level up to the highest level, because the Army has training courses for the newcomers before they are commissioned; and then after they are commissioned till the stage of Lieutenant Generals, regular courses are given to them. So General Joshi wanted me to introduce capsules which were to be offered,—there was no question of compulsion as far as this was concerned,—and these were to be offered mainly to the officers and sometimes to the jawans. And the hope was that this little spark of fire would turn

into a blazing inferno, in the words of General Joshi, and would motivate them at a higher level.

There is another very important point that you have to understand: that the day an officer is commissioned, or a jawan is commissioned, he takes an oath in which he says that he is prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the organisation and for the country. Now, none of us has to do that. You can join Delhi University, and the moment you are dissatisfied you can walk out. You can join the corporate world, and the moment you are dissatisfied, you can say to hell with it all. But here, you have no choice; once you are in, you are there for 20 years, or 15 years, depending on whether you are an officer or a jawan. And the beauty of it is that this is an Army where there is no compulsion. You need not join the Army. And everyone who joins the Army, when he takes the oath, he means every word of it. Now this is the whole beauty of it, they have not done it blindly, they have done it knowingly; they have done it consciously, very deliberately, and you will see that when there is a possibility of a war, every soldier and officer who is in a peace-time station is dying to be in the very midst of the battle, knowing very well that tomorrow he may not come out alive. Now it is on this that you have to lay hold, and that is why the Mother made a reference which I shall now give you. Sometime in 1967 there was a problem somewhere in Bengal between the police and the Army; Mrs. Indira Gandhi who was then the Prime Minister of India, was quite close to the Mother. Mother sent an urgent message to Indira Gandhi, "For God's sake, support the Army. It is India's only hope. The Army is good but it is not supported." Now this is not an off the cuff comment, and emotional, sentimental stuff. There is solid stuff there in the Army, because to be prepared to sacrifice one's life,—after all, that is the most precious thing a man has got! survival is the first instinct,—and when the soldiers go consciously and deliberately and are prepared to sacrifice themselves, it only means that there is a spark of spirituality.

I am using this word spark, because don't think that all these military men are floating somewhere near the overmind and the supermind; it's not true at all. They are from the same common stock as you and I, but the training, the demands create a certain situation by which they move, or more precisely there is a *possibility* of their moving upwards.

Now why do people join the Army? In a free country like India where there is no compulsion, why do people join the Army? I have analysed and found five basic motivations. The normal motivation, as everywhere in the world, is to make a living. Especially for jawans, when they have no jobs, they join the Army; at least they know that they are going to get food, clothing, housing, and some money. Officers join not only for that but also for a career because there is the glamour. Every time an Army officer comes dressed in uniform, all the young men look up with eyes glittering, you know. So there is a career there, a style of living, which once experienced has a very strong attraction for people. Thirdly, there is a spirit of adventure, especially

when one is young. There is in the Army a tremendous spirit of adventure. Fourthly, there is the spirit of patriotism. And this comes out every time there is a war, you will find that immediately after the war there is a rush to join the Army; and this rush is very big because suddenly the feeling of patriotism comes up. And finally there is the spirit of self-sacrifice which is not very common but which does come at certain moments. And this is the highest and noblest element in the human being; so you can see this whole gradation.

When I was first asked by Matthijs to give a talk I had decided to give the topic as 'Self-Recognition, Self-Realisation and Resultant Self-Shaping'. Please note this term 'resultant self-shaping'. Now there is a message behind this. The message is that whatever we do in life, in what might be called behavioural psychology,—I have heard this word only in the last three days,—all our behaviour is entirely dependent on what is happening inside. A thief is a thief first inside and then he goes to the shop and steals. A murderer is first a murderer inside and then he does the act of murder. A sex lunatic is one already inside; if you want to change anything, anything in the world, you have to change the inside. So this is where I started with the Army and I told them this, but it was very difficult to get this across. The first idea I tried to get across was the concept of consciousness. It was very difficult. I told them that consciousness is the root of creation, that consciousness evolves, consciousness goes from the physical to the vital and then to the mental, and finally to the psychic and the spiritual.

And one must note that the Indian Army is made up of all the religions in the world; and straightaway there were some objections. How can you have this? There were some who refused to accept the concept of evolution. It took me some time to get the idea across, but within six to eight months there was a complete reversal of their position. Everyone began to accept the concept. However, here I have to mention one thing, that right from day one I had to take the utmost care to see that I did not project Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The Army is secular in the sense that it does not have a cult figure because then immediately it will be Sai Baba and Ramana Maharshi and so on and so forth. So in fact, in my very first paper, when I presented it and I put in a few quotations and I put there the names of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the Chief told me, "Remove the names, paraphrase it a little bit, change one comma here and there, a little change and put it as if it was yours, and I will get it through, otherwise I will have to face a hell of a protest because there will be a lot of noise." So I had to do that. But it didn't take too much time for them to realise that I came from the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and the result was that books began to be bought in a very big way. One of the most popular books in the Indian Army is *Living Within* by Dalal and also *Looking from Within* and *Growing Within*,—these three books are extremely popular. Of course, the *Sunlit Path* also has touched many people.

So I had to get across this idea of consciousness. Why did I insist on con-

sciousness? I wanted to show first of all that there are levels of consciousness, secondly that behaviour depends on the level of consciousness in which one is; so very briefly I will give you some points. For example, somebody who is living entirely in the physical consciousness, he'll be dull, inert, lazy, unwilling to make any effort. The characteristic of the physical being is inertia basically. Secondly, when one lives in the vital being, the characteristics are energy, enthusiasm, drive, and desire; this desire which is a help becomes the root problem after some time. For as it is said, desire is the helper at one stage, desire becomes the bar at a later stage. So the second level of consciousness is the vital consciousness. An Army without a vital consciousness will not survive. It is the driving force. The third level is the mental consciousness. When you are living in the mental consciousness you are objective, you stand back, you watch. A referee on the basketball court has to be living in the mental consciousness. Also as another example, when I am writing an ACR (Annual Confidential Report) I have to be completely detached. The fourth level is the spiritual consciousness and here I have to touch upon a point because we use this word "spirituality" rather loosely. When one is living in the spiritual consciousness one's motivation is absolute. Now what is the meaning of this word "absolute"? The opposite of absolute is "relative". Today, for us all, human beings, at almost every moment of our life, our experiences are relative. My happiness is relative because it depends on external circumstances. Somebody praises me, I am very happy. Somebody criticises me, I am unhappy. My peace is entirely dependent on the circumstances outside and sometimes inside. My love is still worse; I love you as much as you love me, I love you because you love me, it's pure commerce. It's hardly ever that you find a human being who has peace which is absolute, who has love which is absolute. An example of absolute love is Jesus Christ: you put him on the cross and he says, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Even in that moment of being crucified he is showering his love. But the normal human being says, "You kick me, I'll kick you back." And this is whether I kick you physically or I kick you in some other way. It comes down to the same thing. You will find it is *extremely* difficult to get into this state of absolute consciousness, and yet, this is what I want to point out, there are soldiers and officers who *knowing full well the consequences*, have sacrificed their life to save their own commander, to save their own unit and nation. Now this is a motivation of an extraordinarily high order. And all these people who have got the Param Vir Chakra and the Maha Vir Chakra, have been moved at that time by a total, non-calculating motive force that drove them. The same person after six months can be absolutely egoistic, showing his Param Vir Chakra all over. It only means that spark for rising to a great height, that possibility is always there.

So the question is how do we move from the physical consciousness to the vital consciousness to the mental and ultimately to the psychic and spiritual. The first thing therefore, as I said, is self-recognition. Self-recognition means awareness. We must become aware of the levels of consciousness. That by itself takes time; everything

is the play of consciousness.... Consciousness is an independent factor.

So a series of exercises were given to the officers. Naturally when you are addressing 250 people like this, nothing happens. But we have held workshops where 15-20 officers were present, these exercises have been done. Once they have begun to perceive there is something called consciousness, the next thing, as the Mother says, is the *shifting* of consciousness: deliberate, concentrated shifting of consciousness. Little by little, with a few exercises you will understand this. Here is one example: I have decided that every morning as I get up at 5:30, by 6 o'clock I will get ready and go for a run, a four-kilometre run to keep myself fit. When I get up I feel, oh god, again I have to do this! You are in the physical consciousness. Shift! And kick yourself up a little bit and say, no! I have to prove to my commander that I am a good officer, and then you move to the vital consciousness.

So, the first thing is to sit at home and do this exercise of being in the physical consciousness, being in the vital consciousness, being in the mental consciousness. This you are doing deliberately. All of us are constantly shifting from the physical, vital, mental; not deliberately, not knowingly, it is just happening. It is very few who are conscious of themselves, and who know what they want and can consciously shift their consciousness. It is very, very important.

There have been officers in the Indian Army, very senior officers, who had a bad temper. They couldn't stand fools. And if someone said what the officer thought was nonsense, in typical Army language, he didn't say, "You are talking nonsense," he would just say, "You are a damn bloody fool." You can't speak that language to a senior officer. It leads to great disharmony.

This General knows he is suffering from this defect and is wondering what to do. I said, the first thing is this, "When you are losing your temper go to the bathroom and put some cold water on your head." That is physical, but you can't do that always. Learn to shift your consciousness, shift from the vital to the mental. And you see we are being taught this in a basketball game when we get angry we are asked to count ten. That counting to ten is really another way of shifting from the vital consciousness to the mental consciousness.

Now, the next step is to develop the ability to be able to live at the level of consciousness that one wants, consciously. This is the second step that has to be done. So first is awareness of consciousness, second is the ability to shift one's consciousness when you are at home all by yourself. The third is to do it in actual life circumstances, which is a little more difficult, sometimes in fact very much more difficult. It means a full gathering of one's self. And fourthly, there is something that we will discover, all of us, if we look carefully at ourselves, we shall find that we are made up of not just 4 parts but 400 parts. The physical has got its subdivisions, the vital has got plenty of subdivisions, the mental has got all its subdivisions and each one is pulling in different directions. In one state of consciousness one goes this way, when one comes down one goes in another direction. The result is what you do in the

morning you undo in the evening. What you do well for a week you undo completely in the next week.

It is indispensable therefore to go to the next step, what Mother calls the integration of consciousness. Integrated around what? You have to pick up the highest part of your being. I am not speaking of the psychic being because the psychic being is not open-the-tap-and-you-will-get-it. It needs a very severe and intense discipline. But the higher parts of your being, the higher mental or even something a little higher, are quite close to the psychic being. Keep that at the centre of your being and every thought, every feeling, every sentiment, everything that happens, has to be referred back to that. And if that is done consciously, deliberately, by the very fact that you have started doing it, this awareness itself will lead you gradually to a sort of cohesion in the being. Little by little, an organisation of the being will take place.

In that process one of the most important things is to develop the will power because the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. I know what has to be done and I go on doing the wrong thing. And the proof is the smokers. Every smoker sees on his cigarette packet, "Smoking is injurious to health" and keeps smoking. He knows it is wrong and yet goes on doing it. Now this is the big problem of the human being, all of us. We cannot escape from this defect; it is a question of more or less. We have to integrate the whole being; we have to develop the will power. So this is very, very fundamental. These four exercises were given to them; the first was the awareness of consciousness, the second was shifting the consciousness in one's room when one is quiet, the third was the deliberate shifting of consciousness in actual life, and the fourth was the integration of consciousness. It is a first but very important step.

This was regarding motivation. And you will find that the Army has a structure which is absolutely pyramidal. Every year from the IMA (Indian Military Academy) about a thousand officers are commissioned. Each officer, each young man who is 22 years old thinks that after 35 or 40 years he will become the chief. So there are a thousand aspirants for a single post, therefore there will be 999 disappointments, one success. And the unique thing in the Army is that there is only one chief, one vice chief, 50 odd Lieutenant Generals, around 150 Major Generals and so on; the numbers are fixed and so it looks like a pyramid. And as one goes up the pyramid the disappointments increase. Frustrations start building up if career and reaching the top are the chief motivating force and aim. Therefore you have to start shifting your aim early. And I have seen people suffering intensely. There was a Brigadier in the Indian Army in Secunderabad. I was invited by him to give a talk, I went. In the middle of my talk, he said, "Please excuse me," and rushed out. Afterwards I asked him what the matter was. He had to catch a plane to go to Delhi. The Army Board was meeting, he was a Brigadier and he desperately wanted to become a Major General. So he had to put in a word here, put in a word there. Poor fellow, he came back disappointed. I was then staying in another Brigadier's house. And when I told my host all this, he said, "I don't worry because there is something called the Grand



Design; if it is designed that I am going to be a Major General, I will become one; if it is not designed I can rush to Delhi any number of times, nothing will happen.” So, the poor fellow came back; he didn’t get the promotion while this other man sitting quietly in Secunderabad was promoted to Major General. The first officer’s wife came running to me, as she was very disturbed: “I want peace, can I come to the Ashram?” I said, “You can always come to the Ashram but I can assure you that you can sit at the Samadhi for four hours and yet you will get no peace. The peace has to be installed and brought in from inside. If you are clamouring and dying that your husband must become a Major General, I can write it down, you will not have peace.” But this is one of the strongest motivating forces in the Armed Forces, and in all human beings, in all of us, you and me included. You take out the ego from the human being, he becomes a doormat. There will be absolutely no initiative, no enthusiasm. A little criticism, and see what happens and how we get upset. So it means a lot of consciousness, a lot of work on oneself. So this is the first point.

The second point I wanted to speak of is Leadership. Now the basis on which the whole concept of leadership is built, is a sentence from Sri Aurobindo in the *Foundations of Indian Culture*: “The man who most finds and lives from the inner self, can most embrace the universal and become one with it; the Swarat, independent, self-possessed and self-ruler, can most be the Samrat, possessor and shaper of the world in which he lives, can most grow one with all in the Atman.” (*The Renaissance in India*, CWSA, Vol. 20, p. 49) So if you want to lead others, first learn to lead yourself. You must become complete master of yourself. You see, and that is why it is not necessary to go storming about in the world; Sri Aurobindo sat in one room and is completely changing the world. He didn’t give lectures, didn’t go about all over the place, and did not do anything. He did it at one stage but afterwards he sat in one place having attained complete self-mastery. And once that self-mastery is established, everything changes. Now this is a very important thing and this is very evident in the Armed Forces because in the Armed Forces everybody knows everything about everybody else. You can talk any amount and brag about yourself; but when you are truly loved and respected it comes out clearly when the time comes for leaving your unit. It is said that when a Major General is being transferred to another unit and in the farewell ceremony all his soldiers stand in line and shout “*Major General ki jay*”, be sure that he is not popular. When they don’t speak a single word and the voice is choked and sometimes tears come out, be sure that he is loved and something has happened. And that is because in the unit, everybody knows everything about everybody else. So you have to have not only the power that authority gives you but you have to have that inner power that comes only because you have complete mastery of yourself, you are transparent in your dealings with everybody.

I’ll just give you two examples of the power of consciousness and we’ll finish with that. This is not something new. I know of a very senior officer who was a Major General in Kashmir. He was posted in Rajauri, heading the 25 Division, which

covered a huge area of a few hundred square kilometres under his responsibility, with a very large number of posts on the border and any day the threat of some trouble from the Pakistanis. How did he supervise all these? Today he is a devotee of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, at that time he was not. He had not heard of consciousness, but every evening he used to sit for meditation, sit quietly and concentrate on the whole area. And as he was passing from one area to another in his meditation, there would be suddenly some disturbance. He would note it down. Immediately after the meditation, he would ring up the brigadier of that area and would warn him to be careful, "Tonight or tomorrow morning there will be trouble." And invariably, there was trouble. Now all this was done by the projection of consciousness to different areas. And indeed, it was done very effectively.

Similarly, one of the most important elements of consciousness in the Armed Forces is to identify yourself with those who are serving under you. So when someone comes to you with a complaint, come down to his level of consciousness. Identify yourself totally with him. After that, rise and go back to your level of the higher consciousness. Very often, you don't care to listen to what they say; you remain always in your position and level of consciousness. In other cases, quite often when you listen, you just are swept away by those people. So get inside, get identified with the consciousness of the complaining officer, and afterwards get out and above and then act. The Mother has explained this somewhere. So, very interestingly, when I went to Deolali a few years ago, there was a party where there was a huge gathering of officers and jawans. One young officer, who had come to Pondicherry for a workshop, a young fellow, he was a Major, he was 32 or 33, he looked me up and said, "Sir, I want to thank you because I have tried this identification exercise and the results have been fantastic, unbelievable."

I'll give you one last story, it is not a story; it is a fact. In 1971 the Bangladesh problem was going on. And I do not know if you all know, the Mother was *deeply* involved in that war. She said, "It is my war." The war had not yet started, but she said, "It is my war." Mother wanted a map of Bangladesh. And I remember one student, who is unfortunately no more; he went to the Physics laboratory and got a small map, got it enlarged and that map was put right in front of the Mother. And she used to concentrate on it regularly. I'll give you just one incident. The Indian Army had decided that on 5<sup>th</sup> December they would launch their operations against Bangladesh which was known at that time as East Pakistan. The Indian Army had decided to take the offensive. The decision was taken at the very top. But there were some serious questions to consider. There would be tremendous international repercussions because already India was supposed to be interfering in Bangladesh, and this would have created hell of a trouble. So the Army Commander, General Arora called an officer who was close to the Mother and said, "I am writing a letter to the Mother, please hand it over." He wrote the letter to Mother stating the problem that he had to face. That officer was flown to Madras, from Madras he was driven

down to Pondicherry, he came on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December. He gave the letter to one of the secretaries of the Mother. Mother read the letter, Mother smiled, signed and wrote Her Blessings. She got the letter on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, and sometime on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, that junior officer who was sent by the Army Commander returned to Calcutta. After reaching Calcutta, he handed over the letter with Mother's signature and blessing to the Army Commander. And that same evening at around 5 o'clock Pakistani airplanes attacked India. The whole problem was solved! Because here was Pakistan which attacked the airports in India—the whole problem was solved because then India had only to defend herself. Now this is another act of consciousness but this is an act of the highest level of consciousness. This is a fact.

Thank you, all.

KITTU REDDY

*...the divine Power in us uses all life as the means of this integral Yoga. Every experience and outer contact with our world-environment, however trifling or however disastrous, is used for the work, and every inner experience, even to the most repellent suffering or the most humiliating fall, becomes a step on the path to perfection. And we recognise in ourselves with opened eyes the method of God in the world, His purpose of light in the obscure, of might in the weak and fallen, of delight in what is grievous and miserable. We see the divine method to be the same in the lower and in the higher working; only in the one it is pursued tardily and obscurely through the subconscious in Nature, in the other it becomes swift and self-conscious and the instrument confesses the hand of the Master. All life is a Yoga of Nature seeking to manifest God within itself. Yoga marks the stage at which this effort becomes capable of self-awareness and therefore of right completion in the individual. It is a gathering up and concentration of the movements dispersed and loosely combined in the lower evolution.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(The Synthesis of Yoga, CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 47)*

## MOMENTS, ETERNAL

*(Continued from the issue of October 2005)*

### **Disease and Healing** (Continued)

MINU sprained her leg very badly and could not walk. She somehow limped her way up with great difficulty to the Mother.

“Why are you limping like that?” the Mother asked.

“I can’t even stand, Mother.”

The Mother looked at her gravely and said:

“Walk straight.”

Minu was scared to death. She hesitated a little.

“Walk, I said!” the Mother instructed firmly again.

There was such a power in Her voice that Minu truly began walking with great effort. And within a few days she could walk and move about absolutely normally.

There was a girl who would get fever almost regularly. One day when she went up to see the Mother her body was burning hot. The Mother began scolding the girl. She was scolding her so loudly that I could hear everything standing at the back of the line. And I was laughing within me. How many times I had faced the same roar myself! The girl came down weeping while the Mother kept looking at her from behind. I had hardly got into Her room when She said:

“Just see how I drove her fever away with my scolding and she feels I do not love her!”

I had got used to being scolded by the Mother and so I just smiled weakly. After making my pranam I rushed to that girl’s house. She was lying in bed and wailing away tearfully.

I told her:

“You know, it was to drive away your fever that the Mother shouted like that. And you came away thinking that She doesn’t love you!”

After getting that scolding this girl never had a fever again. How many are the ways in which the Mother’s Compassion can work!

\*

Our Tennis games were in full swing. One of the girls would often get stomach pain just at that time. Sometimes she could not go to play. Sometimes the game had to be stopped because of this.

One day this girl went to the Mother. She was supposed to go to play tennis that day. But she was in the throes of a terrible stomach pain. The moment she told the Mother that she would not be able to go to play tennis because of the stomach pain,

the Mother raised Her voice again. She got such a scolding from the Mother that she came back home crying. Her other friends tried to make her understand that if the Mother had told her to go to play, she should certainly make the effort to go. Her stomach pain would get all right. The most astonishing thing was that her stomach pain did disappear and she never had this pain again! And she could play tennis regularly again.

\*

Our mother (Bibhavati) would often trip and fall. She kept slipping on all kinds of surfaces. Her knees were so badly battered that she would be unable to walk for several days. We children had got used to seeing her fall like this from childhood. And even after coming to the Ashram this habit did not leave her. Her knee pain would make her helpless. Amrita-da would often go and tell the Mother about this. In the beginning the Mother used to listen very seriously and hand over some flower-blessings to Amrita-da for her. Once, after mother had stumbled yet again and Amrita-da went to report to the Mother, She shouted:

“Why does Bibhavati keep falling?”

She was very angry. From that day the falls stopped. In a flash such an age-long habit disappeared! When the Mother uses Her own Force then all difficulties and obstacles vanish in an instant. That is where we can see Her Mahakali form. For speedy results the Mother often took on this terrible form.

\*

Our father was a professor at the Feni College. It was on Sri Aurobindo’s instructions that he had accepted this job in a small town like Feni. He was not at all bothered about his salary. The youth of that time were focussed on one thing alone: to follow Sri Aurobindo’s ideal and guidance in life. On the Mother’s instructions he left his worldly pursuits and came away to the Ashram with his wife and children for good. But even such a man as he had not got over his habit of taking snuff.

Father had not been able to go to the Mother’s room for pranam for a few days. He was unable to come out of a terrible bout of hiccups for days on end. We too were a little worried about this. One evening when I went to the Mother, She enquired:

“Why has your father not come to me for a few days?”

I told the Mother about his bout of hiccups.

The Mother remained silent for a while. Then She said:

“Bring your father to me right now.”

I rushed home and told father about the Mother’s instruction. Father came with me to the Ashram. His hiccups did not stop. As soon as father entered Her room She scolded him loudly.

“You are addicted to snuff, aren’t you?”

Father was surprised and nodded meekly. The Mother got very angry and started rebuking him strongly. Like one guilty he stood there with bowed head while I was enjoying this scene of father being scolded. So the grown-ups too get scolded by the Mother!

The Mother ordered in a most firm tone:

“Go home at once and throw away all the boxes of snuff you have!”

Father took the flower-blessings from the Mother and came down. His hiccups had stopped just listening to the Mother’s scolding. From his first-floor verandah father started throwing his valuable snuff-boxes onto the street one by one. His face was worth watching then. Everything was possible on the Mother’s instructions. The Mother had freed father from such a long-standing addiction in a second!

We just stood there and watched father. He never took snuff ever again. He followed the Mother’s instructions to the letter right till the very end. Where did father get this strength? Whose ruthless Grace had delivered father from the grip of such an addiction?

*At every instant,*

*You have blessed my life with Your hands.*

*How can I rekindle those moments back to living reality again?*

\*

One day as I got up from the chair after lunch I had an unbearably excruciating pain in the stomach. I felt as if everything was coming out of the stomach. I fell to the floor crying out loudly. There was nobody at home. Just then Manoj returned from the Dining Room after lunch. He came running as soon he heard me crying. I told Manoj:

“Please inform the Mother immediately that I have this terrible pain in my stomach. I can’t bear it.”

Manoj ran to the Mother and told Her about it. After hearing everything She gave Manoj many *juin (jasmine)* flowers in a handkerchief and said:

“Ask Priti to keep these flowers on her stomach and to try and lie peacefully. All the pain will go away.”

Manoj rushed back home and handed me the flowers and repeated what the Mother had told him. I lay down at once in bed and placed the flowers on my stomach. No sooner had I done so that I fell into a deep sleep. I felt incredibly peaceful. The pain had just vanished! In the evening the Mother came to the Playground. I was waiting for Her. After coming out of Her room She headed straight for the Interview room. She did not seem to have noticed me. I called out from behind “Mother”. She stood still on hearing me. I overtook Her and asked:

“Mother, what was wrong with me?”

She did not even raise Her eyes and continued to walk.

“Why do you need to know that?”

I was nonplussed.

Gauri and I used to go to the Mother in the evening together. After taking the flower-blessings we would come back home chatting all the way. One evening I don't know what happened but just as I reached Minu's house all of a sudden, as I was talking, I fell almost unconscious on Gauri's shoulder. Poor Gauri somehow dragged me home.

“Go and lie down a little,” she told me, “while I go and inform the Mother about it.”

I lay there drowsily. In the meantime, my mother, Bibhavati, learnt of it and came to my side. She sat next to me looking worried. Then Gauri returned. She had brought flowers from the Mother.

“The Mother has asked you to place these flowers on your chest and lie quietly.”

Both Gauri and my mother closed the door and went away. The following day I had hardly reached the Mother that She started scolding me badly.

“What do you think? When you come to me I do some work on all of you. But you lose it all on your way back home! You cannot stop chatting even for a second! Sit quietly for a while and then go back home. You know, the connection had almost broken. The psychic being had not yet got back and you just left! You cannot imagine the danger you have gone through!”

Gauri was just behind me and she could hear everything. After that day both of us would sit quietly for some time in the Meditation Hall after receiving the flower-blessings from the Mother. Only then would we go back home. And so I came face to face with death on several occasions. Thanks to the Mother's limitless compassion each time I came back alive.

\*

Once I had a severe cold. So much so that I could not even stand in the Playground. The Mother noticed it and threw one glance at me. I was terrified.

After the March Past She looked at Millie-di and said:

“Take Priti to your house. Make her drink a glass of lukewarm water with some lemon and honey.”

And She went inside. I went with Millie-di to her house. Even as we were talking she prepared the glass of lukewarm water with honey and lemon.

“Priti, sit down in the chair and drink this water slowly. This is the Mother's medicine.”

And truly after drinking that I started feeling much better. Now I always tell people to drink this whenever somebody complains of a cold.

\*

I suffer a lot from constipation. The discomfort has continued even with exercises. In the morning as soon as I saw the Mother She went in and got a short stick. She placed the stick on her back and started walking with long strides. She walked like this a number of times to show me. Then She gave me the stick and I walked a number of times as She had shown me.

“Every morning when you get up, walk like this a few times.”

Then She went inside and got a large glass. Showing me the glass She said:

“Drink seven such glasses of water immediately on waking up.”

I couldn't believe my eyes. How will I ever be able to drink so much water? But after drinking it I truly felt great relief.

Another girl was suffering terribly from piles. The Mother told the girl:

“Every day sit for a while in a bucket of cold water. The swelling and the pain, both will diminish within a few days.”

The girl did as instructed and magically within a few days she got totally cured of her piles!

How can I rekindle those moments to living reality again?

\*

Tapati and I used to go to work at the Press in the morning. One day we noticed that Rajsen, Sujata, Sumitra, Suprabha, Chitra, Shivarani-di and several other Press-workers were rearranging the Press equipment neatly. And with what enthusiasm! The Mother had told Chitra that She would come to see the Press in the evening. Chitra was running around doing all kinds of work. Then the Mother arrived in the evening. We all stood up. The Mother did not look at anyone. She went into every room, stood next to every machine and asked all sorts of questions! We stayed a little behind the Mother. A chair was arranged for the Mother to sit in one of the rooms. The Mother entered this room, looked around and then sat down. Next to the Mother's chair a tray with toffees was placed. Everyone went one after the other to receive a toffee from Her. We too joined the line. Chitra was now near the Mother and I noticed that her face was a little sad. I wondered what was wrong. Then the Mother went back to the Ashram. In the evening when I went to the Mother, She asked me in a slightly worried tone:

“Do you know what has happened to Chitra? When she came to me to receive a toffee I noticed that she was a little sad.”

I told her:

“Mother, you had told Chitra that you were coming to the Press in the evening. She spent the whole day very enthusiastically arranging everything in the Press neatly. She really worked a lot. We all worked very hard. But you did not look at us even once. Poor Chitra, she is the youngest of the lot. Probably she felt a little bad about it.”



While listening to me the Mother went into trance. Then after some time She gave me some flower-blessings and I came down. Nothing escaped the Mother, not even a little girl's sad face from among the hundreds coming to Her.

In this way, so many small, apparently insignificant weaknesses of our nature would be revealed in the presence of the Mother. And She always helped us to overcome our human weaknesses. How many things She has taught us, really!

Let me recount to you an amusing incident about Chitra. We had just begun working in the Press. We had to work from morning until half past eleven. Chitra would feel very hungry and when she felt hungry her stomach would start hurting. But it was not possible to get anything to eat at ten. Her work place was quite far. When the Mother came to know about this She started giving her a chocolate packet everyday. It was a well-known French chocolate.

\*

There was another girl who was very weak. The Mother was very concerned about her. Every morning She would Herself prepare a glass of glucose and go and give it to her. And slowly the girl became healthy. This faith of the little ones in the Mother was such that it started working even in the atoms of the body.

\*

“Mother, look, I seem to have a new skin problem on my neck,” a girl told the Mother. The Mother rubbed that spot with Her finger very hard for some time. It was quite a sight to see the Mother doing this. And the skin problem just vanished!

\*

A boy fell from the vaulting box and hurt his spine very badly. The Mother was present in the Playground when this happened. She rushed to the boy and sat next to him. She pressed the spot like Mahishamardini. The whole Playground stood still in a hush. We were all calling the Mother. Everyday after Her game of tennis the Mother would go to see this boy in his house. She would sit there and talk to him. In a few months the boy became all right. I had never imagined that this naughty boy would be able to walk straight after such a serious injury.

\*

Chitra Jauhar is Lata and Tara's sister. Let me recount an interesting incident about her. The Mother used to distribute toffees to the little ones in the Meditation Hall upstairs at noon every day. We all waited, leaning against the wall.

“*Bonjour, mes enfants,*” (Good morning, my children,) the Mother would greet us all on entering.

We would all respond together:

“*Bonjour, Douce Mère.*” (Good morning, Sweet Mother.)

There was so much noise and movement that the Mother would often remark:

“It’s like being in a huge cage of birds! Chirping away all the time!”

But Her face wore an indulgent smile. She would take a toffee from the tray and give one to each one. One day just then Chitra had an awful bout of hiccups. The Mother turned to her for a moment. Then when She came to Chitra to give her a toffee, all of a sudden She gave a big thump on Chitra’s back very earnestly. Then She continued distributing toffees to the other children. We were simply shaken! What was the matter? Why did She thump Chitra’s back so hard? In that single thump Chitra’s hiccups stopped! And we all burst out laughing.

\*

Once during this toffee distribution Arunkant (Usha and Urmila’s brother) who was just four or five fell asleep. His body was covered with innumerable boils. And there was a poultice on each boil. In fact, we used to call him “Poultice Babaji”. He was a roly-poly kind of boy. The Mother would personally examine Arunkant’s condition every day. That day She told Lallubhai:

“Please go and drop Arunkant home.”

Lallubhai was just not able to lift Arunkant. He observed in Bengali:

“*Eta ekta besh bhari jinish aachhey!*” (This is some heavy stuff!)

On hearing Lallubhai speak Bengali we all burst out laughing. The Mother wanted to know why we were laughing. After we explained the reason, the Mother herself started laughing. What an uproarious scene that was! Sri Aurobindo’s room was just across. I wonder what He must have thought about us youngsters laughing like that!

(*To be continued*)

PRITI DAS GUPTA

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

*You must put a strong will for getting rid of your illness and you must remain quiet and unperturbed by the results. The two are not contradictory. One should accompany the other.*

*The Mother*

(*Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 15, p. 158*)

## ALL-PERVADING

In the rustling  
Of the breeze  
You whisper  
To my keen ear,  
In the drizzling  
Of the rain  
You shower your grace,  
And envelope me  
In the smiling sun  
While green grasses  
Gaze at me  
In endless envy.

Even if there is nothing  
And only fog or murk  
Surrounds my life,  
I stumble with  
Bleeding toes and knees...  
You pinch me jokingly  
To remind me  
Of Your never-failing warmth  
And reawaken  
My regal repose.

ASHALATA DASH

## SRI AUROBINDO'S CRITICISM OF THE WEST

*(Continued from the issue of October 2005)*

SRI AUROBINDO shows how Archer, being a rationalist through and through, identifies civilisation with the cult and practice of the materialistic reason because of which he denies that India is civilised, and declares her greatest past achievements—the Upanishads, the Vedanta, Buddhism, Hinduism, ancient Indian art and poetry a mass of barbarism, the vain production of a persistently barbaric mind. He also explains how incomprehension of deeper things, along with distaste for them, is a rule with Archer, but nevertheless takes pains to answer him, because, he finds in him a typical Westerner who, taking advantage of the present material downfall of India and her prostrate condition, tries to persuade the world that she had never any strength and virtue in her. He satirically says:

It is an easy task in this age of the noble culture of Reason and Mammon and Science doing the works of Moloch, when the brazen idol of the great goddess Success is worshipped as she was never before worshipped by cultured human beings. (*FIC* 62-63)

But when such things—the nakedness of India, her population, her illiteracy and ignorance and the squalor of her poverty—are flung in her face as signs of barbarism or as evidence of the worthlessness of her culture, Sri Aurobindo counters it, not with emotional outburst, but with passionate intelligence—intelligence that distinguishes the essential from the non-essential, the truth of which is proclaimed by passages such as:

...culture cannot be judged by material success; still less can spirituality be brought to that touchstone. Philosophic, aesthetic, poetic, intellectual Greece failed and fell while drilled and militarist Rome triumphed and conquered, but no one dreams of crediting for that reason the victorious imperial nation with a greater civilisation and a higher culture. (*FIC* 63)

Indian civilisation must be judged mainly by the culture and greatness of its millenniums, not by the ignorance and weakness of a few centuries. A culture must be judged, first by its essential spirit, then by its best accomplishment and, lastly, by its power of survival, renovation and adaptation to new phases of the permanent needs of the race. In the poverty, confusion and disorganisation of a period of temporary decline, the eye of the hostile witness refuses to see or to recognise the saving soul of good which still keeps this civilisation alive and promises a strong and vivid return to the greatness of its permanent ideal. (*FIC* 64)

It could thus be seen from these passages that a full-length study of Sri Aurobindo's *The Foundations of Indian Culture* would be exceedingly rewarding. It would certainly help an Indian rid himself of all the dirt and falsifying ideas that he is fed with subtly from his schooldays; would help him form a refined sensibility and a cultured mind, with which he could see the value of the great Indian past. Realising its value would, in return, help him understand the true causes of India's present degradation, show him the ways and means of uplifting this fallen nation; in short, it would serve as an inspiration to renewed and greater achievements. Again, an inward sense of the great past achievements of India would provide him with nerves of steel not only to resist the onslaught of the whole lot of critics like Archer and Naipaul but also to see through their ulterior motives. Of course, no one could deny the existence of problems like poverty, illiteracy, overcrowding, corruption etc. in India, for they are there for everyone to see. And it must also be admitted that the post-independent rulers, policy makers and the opportunistic politicians of India are much more responsible for their continuance than the British rulers, though the seeds were sown during their colonial rule. It is also true that no Indian can, with these problems besetting India, hold his head high. So, he must strain every nerve to acquire an intelligent perception of them, and to strike at their roots. There can hardly be a difference of opinion over all this. As Sri Aurobindo puts it:

The courage to defend our culture against ignorant Occidental criticism and to maintain it against the gigantic modern pressure comes first, but with it there must be the courage to admit not from any European standpoint but from our own outlook the errors of our culture. (*FIC* 35)

But what is inadmissible is the menace of journalism which finds in serious problems like poverty a thriving business. Curiously enough, these journalists also offer remedies at times. Without having a serious concern for any of the problems of India, they deal with all of them in terms of worthless ideas borrowed from the West, and come out with the astonishing discovery that unless India gives up all her past and copies the West *in toto*, she is bound to suffer. The burden of all their song is, Sri Aurobindo points out, if India does not materialise, rationalise and westernise her whole being, she "will stand out as a living denial, a hideous 'blot' upon this fair, luminous, rationalistic world", (*FIC* 6) and no one can save her from being wiped off the face of the earth. Her culture is good only for those who do not want progress of any sort.

This is what is bandied about everywhere in India, of course with endless variations which do not differ in the essentials. But an eye that looks deeper than the surface can see that there are at least two false misleading assumptions here. One is holding India's ancient culture responsible for her present degraded condition. In what way it is responsible, nobody explains, and nobody bothers to ask also, but it is

simply taken for granted. That evangelical influence has much to do with the denigration of Indian culture cannot be denied. Trautmann says:

Evangelical influence drove British policy down a path that tended to minimize and denigrate the accomplishments of Indian Civilization and to position itself as the negation of the (earlier) British Indomania that was nourished by belief in Indian wisdom. (Quoted in Danino, *The Invasion*, 23-24)

It is really ironic in the extreme that the nation which produced great souls like Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo to proclaim the value of the Indian civilisation and to show how its survival is important not only to India, but to the whole of mankind, has now only “progressive” thinkers who feel ashamed of their own heritage and hold it responsible for all her present problems—has now only ultra-modern men and women who consider it demeaning to have even a vestige of the Indian past and culture in them. No wonder, they hardly pay any heed to the warning of Sri Aurobindo:

The culture which gives up its living separateness, the civilisation which neglects an active self-defence will be swallowed up and the nation which lived by it will lose its soul and perish. (*FIC 3*)

The tragedy is that the modern Indian mind has now lost all its power of comprehension, with the natural and inevitable consequence of hating what it does not understand. In fact, sound thoughts, such as we find in Sri Aurobindo, are anathema to it. For instance, it can only, not being able to comprehend Sri Aurobindo, feel annoyed with him, when he says:

It is for her [India] now to recover herself, defend her cultural existence against the alien penetration, preserve her distinct spirit, essential principle and characteristic forms for her own salvation and the total welfare of the human race. (*FIC 4*)

But one who works along the lines of Sri Aurobindo would easily see that India’s present state of degradation has nothing to do with her culture and that it is not, as is too often assumed and asserted, actually the result of serious flaws in her culture, but rather the result of neglecting this very culture, failing to rejuvenate it and allowing it to become marginalised in its own land.

This habit of blaming India’s present degradation on her ancient culture leads to another, and even more dangerous assumption, born of the thinking that everything is wonderful about the West. The general Indian mind is so much hypnotised by the West—its progress, its cleanliness, its science, its rationalism, its democracy and its

emphasis on unrestricted freedom for all the individuals—that it can only conceive of it as a 'heaven' on this wretched earth. It cannot even imagine anything against it, though great thinkers of all ages and all countries had too many doubts about it. They made no bones about uttering the bitter truth that the West, for all its healthy appearance and looks, bears in its heart seeds of death. Here is Rabindranath Tagore on his own disillusionment with the West:

The spirit of violence which perhaps lay dormant in the psychology of the West has at last roused itself and desecrates the Spirit of Man....

I had at one time believed that the springs of civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. But today when I am about to quit the world that faith has gone bankrupt altogether.... (*Crisis in Civilization* 22-23)

In his "A Preface on National Education", Sri Aurobindo speaks of the need to challenge the sufficiency of the assumption that European civilisation is the thing that we have to acquire and fit ourselves for so as to live and prosper well. He warns us that there cannot be a greater act of absurdity than to build blindly on the sinking foundation of the West:

The scientific, rationalistic, industrial, pseudo-democratic civilisation of the West is now in process of dissolution and it would be a lunatic absurdity for us at this moment to build blindly on that sinking foundation. When the most advanced minds of the occident are beginning to turn in this red evening of the West for the hope of a new and more spiritual civilisation to the genius of Asia, it would be strange if we could think of nothing better than to cast away our own self and potentialities and put our trust in the dissolving and moribund past of Europe. (*On Education*, 11-12)

Not even a century has passed by since Sri Aurobindo made this prediction about the dissolution of the West, but the process seems to be complete now—it has reached the point of culmination, though life in the West seems to be still, to all outward appearances, very rosy and most desirable, because its cities are very clean and modern. But then the West has, besides its share of corruption, poverty and illiteracy, far more essential problems, says Danino who can, being a Frenchman, justly boast of a first-hand knowledge of the West. Using cases in point drawn from the recent history of mankind, he raises some important questions in this regard—questions which would unsettle the minds of the idolaters of the West:

Why do we constantly hear of some American snatching a semi-automatic weapon and spraying passers-by with bullets? Why do a hundred thousand U.S. students go to school and college everyday carrying a weapon? Is it the West or

India which invented manic depression, child abuse, the psychopath and serial killer? Or even simply the “killer” instinct? Why is it that few Western economies can survive without massive arms sales, most of the time to Third-world countries, thus fuelling hundreds of wars around the globe while at the same time preaching peace and human rights? (*Indian Culture*, 12-13)

Can these questions be brushed aside on any account? Don't they, by giving us the specification of details, spell out the process of dissolution of the West, which Sri Aurobindo spoke of years ago? Don't they lay bare the truths about the West and make us feel that its whole impressive edifice, having been built on very unhealthy foundations, are going to collapse before long? One might wonder at the ability (that looks magical) with which Sri Aurobindo predicted the disintegration of the West so early. It is with the sheer force of his intelligence that he perceived that a civilisation or a life governed totally by self-interests would only create abysmal disorder and chaos which would eventually lead to self-destruction.

An internal or external anarchy cannot be the rule; a life governed in any absolute or excessive degree by self-will, passion, sense-attraction, self-interest and desire cannot be the natural whole of a human or a humane existence. The tempting imagination that it can and that this is the true law is a lure with which the Western mind has played in characteristic leanings or outbursts.... (*FIC* 103)

The truth of these statements is alarmingly realised as the consequences of the life of rank selfishness promoted by the West have, after being hidden for long, become unbearably glaring. It is not only human relationships that have suffered and have almost become impossible because of the selfish values of the West, but it is also the relationship with Nature. The West has so completely broken away from Nature that it only regards her now as so much inanimate matter to be plundered. It certainly does not scruple to lay the entire earth waste for the sake of its commercial interests. One cannot with reason defend the West against the charge laid at its door—that it alone is out and out responsible for the present ecological crisis which threatens the very existence of the whole human race. Because these instances are not, the Frenchman rightly argues, aberrations, they are the logical outcome of the selfish values of Western society, which is why those monstrosities are growing not rarer and rarer, but increasingly frequent, widespread, and insane. This is precisely what great men like Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Sri Aurobindo boldly declared years ago. Coomaraswamy observed in his *The Dance of Shiva*:

The war in Europe is no unfortunate accident, but the inevitable outcome of European civilisation. How clearly this was already apparent towards the close of the nineteenth century is to be seen in the remarkable words of Viscount



Torio, published in 1890: "Occidental Civilisation...must ultimately end in disappointment and demoralisation. Peaceful equality can never be attained until built up among the ruins of annihilated Western states and the ashes of extinct Western peoples." (154)

Sri Aurobindo too predicted long back:

But the purely intellectual or heavily material culture of the kind that Europe now favours bears in its heart the seed of death. (*FIC* 5)

For my part I see failure written large over all the splendid and ostentatious achievements of Europe. Her costliest experiments, her greatest expenditure of intellectual and moral force have led to the swiftest exhaustion of creative activity, the completest bankruptcy of moral elevation and of man's once infinite hope. [. . .] The bankruptcy of the ideas of the French Revolution, the bankruptcy of Utilitarian Liberalism, the bankruptcy of national altruism, the bankruptcy of humanitarianism, the bankruptcy of religious faith, the bankruptcy of political sincerity, the bankruptcy of true commercial honesty, the bankruptcy of the personal sense of honour, how swiftly they have all followed on each other or raced with each other for precedence and kept at least admirable pace. [. . .] The firm materialism which was its life and protection, is beginning also to go bankrupt, and one sees nothing but craze and fantasy ready to take its place. (*India's Rebirth* 79-80)

This is what then distinguishes Sri Aurobindo's criticism of the West—his defence of the values of Indian culture against the malignant attacks of the Western critics. In fact, it was born of this urgent need for defence, but then Sri Aurobindo did not, as most others would have done in similar circumstances, take a partisan attitude and distort or sacrifice the truth for that purpose. This becomes obvious from the very fact that his predictions about the West have turned out to be too true.

(*Concluded*)

M. S. RAMESH

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*Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinite is native to it. India saw from the beginning,—and, even in her ages of reason and her age of increasing ignorance, she never lost hold of the insight,—that life cannot be rightly seen in the sole light, cannot be perfectly lived in the sole power of its externalities. She was alive to the greatness of material laws and forces; she had a keen eye for the importance of the physical sciences; she knew how to organise the arts of ordinary life. But she saw that the physical does not get its full sense until it stands in right relation to the supra-physical...*

*Sri Aurobindo*

(*The Renaissance in India*, CWSA, Vol. 20, p. 6)

## WE WHO WANDER HERE

To walk in the shade of great protecting trees  
Whose branches crowned with blessings cover me,  
Alive to signal moments such as these  
I turn within that inner eye to see

The reality behind this world of forms  
Whose beauty breaks upon the subtle sight  
As flower meadows in eternal light  
Beyond all dreams and measurable norms.

Still, the grasses of the earth in greenness glow  
And I am hesitant these joys to leave,  
Alone by the spirit's growth one day shall know  
That earth and worlds beyond are but one weave,

A tapestry of some near God's design  
Woven on the infinite loom of space,  
And we who wander here are but a sign  
Of future possibilities and grace.

To look anew at earth and sea and sky  
And know the Infinite nor question why  
But learn to live and unlearn how to die  
Eternal love our human destiny.

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

## ‘MOUNT EVEREST OF INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH’

*(The following extempore interview with Manoj Das by P. Raja had been arranged by All India Radio and was broadcast in its National Programme on 18 June 2005)*

Introduction by P. Raja (*slightly abridged*):

The veteran journalist and author, M. V. Kamath, asked in one of his review-articles, “What is Manoj Das? A social commentator? A psychiatrist? A sly peeper into people’s hearts? Or just a plain story-teller?” Mr. Kamath provided the answer himself: “Manoj Das is all this and an incorrigible Indian, besides.”

Born in a coastal village of Orissa in 1934, Manoj Das grew up among Nature’s splendours—with an evergreen meadow between his house and the sea and a pair of lakes abounding in lotuses. But he also suffered the experience of a horrible cyclone devastating his area, followed by a famine and an epidemic that killed thousands of people. Added to that, his affluent house was twice plundered by gangs of deadly dacoits while Manoj, aged six, looked on with disbelief. Such paradoxical touches of heaven and hell probably enriched his creative mind at its formative stage and by the time he was in High School he was already being rapidly published in his mother tongue, Oriya.

But the range of his experiences continued to expand. He led several movements as a student leader. He taught English in a college at Cuttack before he came over to Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry in 1963 where he continues to be a professor at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

P. Raja: Welcome to this National Programme of the AIR, Dr. Manoj Das, where we are expected to have some extempore exchange which, I am sure, will interest so many of your readers all over the country.

Manoj Das: Thank you, Dr. Raja, for your optimism. But quiz is not my cup of tea. May I hope that you will spare me questions that are beyond me.

P. R.: Beyond you? Your range of creativity and experience is too vast for any interviewer to cross it! My first curiosity is about the fundamental inspiration behind your creativity. When and how did you take to writing? Can you recollect the factors contributing to it?

M. D.: As you already know, I was born in a charming area—and a village which lay charmed under the spell of solitude—inaccessible even by bullock carts because of giant sand dunes around it. I remember one of my earliest responses to the wonders of Nature. I had barely learnt to run when during a cloudy twilight I saw a beautiful rainbow spanning the eastern sky, its ends appearing to be not very far, hiding behind the trees forming the horizon of the meadow. I ran and ran to catch

hold of it until a villager came rushing and lifted me and left me at home. Indeed, a child belonged to the entire village and my villagers were such a kind lot!

Then came the cyclone and the famine, reducing the villagers to their skeletal existence and then, one midnight, descended the bandits, stripping us of our possessions and reducing us to penury in a matter of an hour. But, by the way, even such fearful episodes were not without their contribution to my exposure to the element of the unpredictable in human nature. Let me recount to you a symbolic instance: The bandits had tied the arms of my father at his back while he sat on his bedstead observing calmly the family heirlooms, mostly in various forms of gold and the precious jewellery of our deity and those of my mother, being packed before his eyes. But when he saw one of them making a bundle of three of his *hukkas*—the smoking apparatus—with silver filigree work on them, he burst out at the fellow: “Had there never been a gentleman in your fourteen generations past? How do you think am I going to have a smoke after you scoundrels leave?”

The fellow left the finest of the *hukkas* behind.

P. R.: Amusing indeed!

M. D.: Isn't it? And amazing too. Well numerous such incidents shaped my perception of man and the world. Sometimes I wonder, how could have I written without them? Of course experiences galore are staring at us always—yes—for all of us—and in all situations. That's why when I receive any tribute for my writing I remember a scene in some picture of Charlie Chaplin. The vagrant hero or anti-hero had passed his night sleeping on a bench before a public park. He sits up when a battalion of soldiers pass by, marching before him. And, lo and behold, they begin saluting him. He at once springs to his feet and returns the salutes in style. But as they disappear, doubt creeps into his mind: what made them show him that singular reverence? He looks around. And he discovers a majestic statue of Abraham Lincoln standing behind him! When I too keep on discovering the factors that made me a writer, I question my eligibility to absorb the tributes. I am of course not belittling the role of inspiration inherent in a writer. But even that is a gift, not something which I could have obtained if I wished.

P. R.: As a researcher on your fiction while I am, like so many others, impressed by your handling of English, I understand from scholars in Orissa that in Oriya literature your position is simply nonpareil. How did you master felicity in both the languages?

M. D.: There is nothing unique about it. So many have achieved much more. Felicity in my mother tongue came naturally, primarily due to my mother, Kadambini Devi, a great lover of literature and a poet who had no ambition to become known. She initiated me to the finest works in Oriya literature even before I had learnt the alphabet. So far as my writing in English is concerned, I was provoked into it. I was in the B.A. classes when a friend read out a passage on the Indian village life written by a so-called celebrity in English. It was a portrayal bereft of realism, devoid of the

spirit of rural India. I thought, born and brought up in a remote village, amidst undiluted rustic air, I had a duty and a right to project the milieu through English for those who cared for it. But my entry into the spirit of the English language was possible only through the writings of Sri Aurobindo. The scholars—British or Indian—are yet to appreciate the magnitude of felicity and dignity he achieved for English, the height of expressiveness the language has received in his hands.

But be it English or Oriya, I am a beginner and, considering my advanced age, will remain a beginner till the end—a school boy in Oriya and a kindergarten student in English, I mean the English as Sri Aurobindo has shown it.

P. R.: Interesting. So, Sri Aurobindo has been your Master not only spiritually, but also in a literal sense, initiating you into the core of the spirit of the English language.

M. D.: Right, but not for me alone, but for any number of writers—including among others, probably his best students, a genius like Amal Kiran né K. D. Sethna and the doctor-turned-poet Nirodbaran. By the way, you probably know that these two veterans are now centenarians and are luckily with us. Scholars who study Amal Kiran's correspondence with Sri Aurobindo on several issues of language and literature, including the issues emerging out of the Master's magnum opus, the epic *Savitri*, find it a gold mine.

P. R.: Thanks for referring to the great epic *Savitri*. That reminds me of what I read in the newspapers—some people doubting the authenticity of the revised edition of the epic. Do you mind shedding some light on it?

M. D.: The doubts are baseless. The earlier editions of the epic contained several errors because of several factors—wrong reading of the Master's handwriting, unwittingly committed omissions, absence of professionalism in proof-correction, etc. Most of the errors were in punctuation. The Ashram Trust established an archive exclusively devoted to preservation and correct reading of the manuscripts of the Master and the Mother. Luckily the manuscripts and most of the later additions and alterations made by Sri Aurobindo were there. It was decided to make a thorough comparison of those papers with the different earlier editions or reprints and prepare a version of the works as error-free as possible, while the guidance of men like Amal Kiran and Nirodbaran, Sri Aurobindo's close assistant, was still available and before the copyright of the works expired. Why on earth should the Ashram change even a comma in the writings of the Master? Is it not its sacred duty to do its best to present to the world correct versions of his works? The irony is, the Archives brought out a booklet listing the changes made which were in fact the errors corrected. That put the idea into some people's heads to raise some sort of a hullabaloo. In any case nobody is stopping anybody from going on reading the earlier editions! For your information, each new edition had been marked by some corrections that had been detected till then. You can rest assured that the revised edition of the epic is the most dependable edition, so far.

P. R.: Is the Western world's response to the works of Sri Aurobindo encouraging?

M. D.: The situation, if I can put it in this way, is relative. One like me who believes that the more the world understands the vision of Sri Aurobindo—that the evolutionary force had not been exhausted with the creation and mental development of man—that a glorious future can be man's if he opened up to the Light Sri Aurobindo shows—the world's response is not yet encouraging. But speaking objectively, in a world habituated to the old ways of thoughts, concepts and awfully attached to the traditional ways of love and hate, even whatever impression Sri Aurobindo has created so far is quite encouraging. His works have been translated into most of the major languages of the world. A fact we cannot ignore is, Sri Aurobindo did not believe in creating an alternative religion nor did he believe in propaganda. The change and awakening must come by its own law, inevitably perhaps, for nothing can ultimately forestall the Power of Transformation and the evolutionary destiny of man.

P. R.: Coming back to you, do you feel satisfied with the reception your works receive in English when compared to their unique popularity in Oriya?

M. D.: There is a vast difference between the two. You see, each of the major Indian languages has a strong continuity of its own, going back several centuries—I should say even millennia, for they have been born of the common stock of sensibility, moulded by the heritage of say, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Thirukkural and works of that profundity. A Hindi or Tamil or Bengali or Gujarati or Oriya reader is spontaneously led to appreciate a modern work in the backdrop of that sensibility. That is a quite complex psychological situation and cannot be stated in brief. On the other hand Indo-Anglian literature is a contemporary phenomenon. It has a wider readership, but not a homogeneous one, unlike a Marathi or a Telugu readership. May I make bold to say that the Indo-Anglian readership is yet to stabilise, yet to assume a sound critical personality. But that will happen, sooner or later. Meanwhile, I have a faithful readership in English, though much smaller compared to my readership in my mother tongue when we remember the vastness of English readership.

P. R.: Yet another question which pleasantly surprised me when I was doing my doctoral research on your writings was your familiarity with the classical Indian literature. Even the regular columns you used to write in some of the leading newspapers were steeped in your easy reference to ancient works while you were discussing current issues. How did that come about?

M. D.: Quite naturally. If there is a green mountain in front of your house, you will like to climb it; if there is a charming lake, you will like to swim in it. The mighty tradition of Indian literature is simply irresistible; isn't that so?

P. R.: But those who write in English today, I am afraid, hardly read the ancient classics. What is worse, some of them have made caricatures of the epic characters!

M. D.: Indeed, it is not easy to delve into the spirit of the past and appreciate the situations and characters created by a Vyasa or a Valmiki, in their proper perspective.

Judging them without the totality of their context is not only ingratitude but also violence. But it is so avant-garde to be ungrateful! Surrealists found it quite an art to put a moustache on Mona Lisa. The caricatures you are speaking of are the result of the inability to comprehend something mighty and an audacity to measure them in the light of one's own puny ideas of realism.

And, if you bear with me, that reminds me of a story: One day a frog stood on the banks of a lake and angrily shouted at an elephant which was blissfully bathing in it and asked it to come out immediately. The surprised elephant obliged the frog. Several creatures had been drawn to the spot, curious to know what the matter was. But as soon as the elephant emerged from the water, the frog looked embarrassed and apologetic. "You see," he explained to the gathering, "I had left my swimming trunks here and had gone to a friend. Coming back, I saw my costume missing. Since the elephant alone was in the lake, I thought he must have put it on!"

But there are hundreds of writers in all the Indian languages who evolve their own plays, poetry and fiction out of the elements in the epics. There is nothing wrong in it. That is rather a tribute to the epics. Such creative writers are there in English too.

We are passing through an age of confused values. Nevertheless, I feel sure, both the Indo-Englian literature and its readership will find better days. Sri Aurobindo is a class apart. Those who read him do so for a different quest, with different expectations. However, he will continue to tower and shine as the Mount Everest of Indian writing in English.

(Courtesy All India Radio)

***Seer deep-hearted***

*Seer deep-hearted, divine King of the secrecies,  
Occult fountain of love sprung from the heart of God,  
Ways thou knewest no feet ever in time had trod.  
Words leaped shining, the flame-billows of wisdom's seas,  
Vast in thy soul was a tide washing the coasts of heaven,  
Thoughts broke burning and bare crossing the human night,  
White star-scripts of the gods born from the presses of Light  
Page by page to the dim children of earth were given.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 603)



## SRI RĀDHĀ'S FLUTE-CALL

None could guess when Lord Sri Krishna  
Left His charming bamboo-flute  
On the solitary bank of holy Yamunā;  
No spiritual seeker on Earth could find it  
But the Queen of Devotion, Sri Rādhā.

Nowhere was the frolicsome, bluish lad  
In sight. Yet, His romantic aroma  
Wafted on the gentle breeze of Mathurā,  
Brindāvan, Govardhan and Varshānā,  
Creating a mystic thirst for seizing 'Kānhā'.

The dark green bowers of *Nidhivan*  
And places with hallowed memories  
Quivered with deep and profound emotion  
As Sri Rādhā blew some throbbing notes;  
The Divine music invoked 'Kanheiyā' alone.

The sweet, Soul-enchancing flute-music  
Resonated and danced. Overflowing  
Like the libation of ancient Vedic hymns,  
It poured the nectar-stream of Ganges  
From *Gangādhara*'s matted hair, swinging.

Mother *Vāg Devi*, adored as *Vedamātā*,  
Gifted the most wonderful Word-Power:  
It mingled with the celestial Fugue  
Created by the dedicated aerial minstrels:  
Yamunā's ripples embraced the music-shower.

Thus sang *Rādhārāni*'s flute-music:  
"May the dawns be sweeter day by day,  
May the people become pure and heroic,  
As the simple cowherds laugh and play,  
Seeking Krishna's company, night and day.

"May the nights be sweeter and brighter  
With the smiling moon and twinkling stars;  
May the Earth's dust be sweeter and holier  
By touching Krishna's dancing altars;  
May His footprints sublimate Earth-Nature.

“May the forgiving Sky-God, be brighter  
 And sweeter with His all-merciful  
 Gift of rains and the enlivening rays  
 Of the Golden Sun; let the winds be full  
 Of Krishna’s loving fragrance for ever.

“May all things, animate and inanimate,  
 Be full of supernal purity and sweetness;  
 Let human nature be angelic and generous;  
 May all children be truthful and courageous,  
 May their sterling devotion be consummate!

“Oh Darling of the cowherd maidens!  
 Don’t you know, neither *Rādhārāni*  
 Nor a single *Gopabālā* living in *Vrajbhoomi*  
 Gets a wink of sleep without your *Darshan*  
 Or your lilting music thrilling our nerves!

“I am sure, you left me forlorn here  
 On the sand-beds of river Yamunā,  
 To vanish into the air like a great trickster  
 Suddenly, due to lack of my *Tapasyā*,  
 Or because of my mawkish character!

“The silver-white, romantic, full-moon light,  
 Dancing on the smiling and shivering  
 Ripples of Yamunā, turning more bright,  
 Resurrects the *Rāsaleelā*-dance. Is it calling  
 The sixteen thousand *Gopis*, silently weeping?

“All our tears of delight and separation  
 Have dried up after endless waiting for you,  
 All our hopes of living are facing extinction  
 Without your beauteous visage in view;  
 None in the Universe can take your position!”

Rendering all these feelings musically  
 Sri Rādhā collapsed on the lonely bank;  
 Mother Earth felt the poignant tremors,  
 The *Tamāla* trees shuddered at head and shank;  
 Yamunā’s surging waves wept desperately;  
 Lord Krishna, at last, manifested, graciously.

# PAINTING AS SADHANA

Krishnalal Bhatt (1905-1990)

*(Continued from the issue of October 2005)*

4

## Krishnalal's Shantiniketan Notebook—3

4.12.32: There is a great difference between a brush and a pencil. The blanks in a pencil-drawing can be filled by pencilled lines. But if you have to do that with a brush, one wash with the brush pressed on the surface fills the whole space. He demonstrated some drawings done in these two ways. He advised us to get well acquainted with brush-strokes:

Study Nature deeply. You will never be able to reproduce everything you observe: the ratio of observation to creation will be three to one, you will be able to do only a quarter of what you will perceive. If you see a thing now and come to it again after ten years more of study you will find something totally new.

You may want to be decorative but how will your decorative art succeed without your knowing the real natural state of your subject? If you don't spend time and energy learning the subject in the actual state, you might get into the habit of working with little or no background labour and your work will gradually become cheap and worthless. Your progress in art too will stop; you will start churning out stereotyped work. Your idea of a flame might be excellent but if the flame you have drawn doesn't look at all like the real thing, what use is your excellent idea?

To be a true artist, study Nature in every detail, study also traditional paintings and at the same time learn to think independently.

30.12.32: It seems at present thoughts of painting techniques are in full flow in Nandababu. The chief motifs and themes of your painting must be radiant, striking; use fresh and assorted colours in your paintings; many such things he has been saying nowadays.

Seeing me copying the Rajput style in my egg-tempera paintings, he told me a few things: Those painters knew how to use numerous colours in the same painting—in spite of using such a diversity in a small picture they could bring in a beautiful harmony among them all. In our pictures nowadays shades of indigo and grey predominate and freshness perishes.

While colouring we have to take into account the limited tablets or tubes of colours available to us, so the gorgeousness of colours cannot always be reproduced. We may have a wide variety of colours with us, but that does not help in deciding which ones are needed in a particular picture. For that we have to take refuge in

Nature. We must study what colours are mixed in Nature. Examine all the colours of a flower, how many types of greens, or yellows, or violets are included in them. Try out a painting using exactly those colours. In Nature, one or more of those colours will predominate while the others are there only to help bring out this very predominance. If you can reproduce that in your painting it will possess the same freshness and sparkle and complexity of colours.

In the shaded portions of our paintings, we tend to throw in a concoction of any available colour ending up with a shabby tone which we content ourselves by calling “shade”. But you must learn to recognise the colours in a shade—it has a clear, unique hue. If you can obtain that, your shade will acquire character and bring out the colours you have used for “light”.

Today there was a display at the H.B. Museum, of the paintings that were to be sent for the Calcutta exhibition. Each student selected three of them on a chit and submitted the chit to Nandababu. In the afternoon Nandababu saw all those paintings and made some general comments on their merits and demerits, i.e. strengths and weaknesses.

And he spoke at length on colours. In the majority of our present Indian paintings, he reiterated, we find the use of indigo and grey shades which create a dull or shabby or misty atmosphere.

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### ***The course for teaching drawing***

#### To general students

1. Form: Knowledge of the outline and characteristics differentiating various subjects—depth, colour and movement.
2. Drawing from memory: reproducing the subject as if it were a picture in the mind, i.e. visualising it.
3. Knowledge of perspective.
4. Knowledge of practical geometry.
5. Knowledge of ornamental designs—black & white; colour.

#### To artists

1. Study of Nature: Rapid movements while sketching; go into details; build a strong association with the subject; know it thoroughly.
2. Study traditional techniques: Technique means to express one’s ideas in the simplest way in a variety of materials and mediums. a) Know the conventions of the period represented by the artist; b) Understand the culture of that period; c) Study the experiences of the artists of that period; d) Identify yourself with the artists of that period.
3. Imagination: To grow in imagination one must know the highest culture of

one's own time and also of the past. Read good books on literature and religion. Look at the old masterpieces of artistic creations. Keep company with good and cultured men to make your mind gentle and cultured. Keep always a peaceful mood. Cultivate love towards all.

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### *In the company of Srijut Nandababu*

Nature—its observation and imagination: Once some students were sketching a hawk. They sketched it the way it was sitting. Nandababu too came up there. In a short time he observed the hawk from all the different angles.

When we took our sketches to him, he described the characteristics of the hawk by drawing them, from the observations he had made. He pointed out those which differentiate it from the other birds—which classify it as a hawk.

The hawk is a bird of prey. Because it is stronger than most birds it can snatch them in mid-flight and holding the weight firmly, keep flying. This is the reason why its feet are closer and higher up on its chest than those of other birds, and the talons are very solid. Even its wings are in the shape of a scimitar and its eyes are fierce. Our ancient artists and sculptors drew on their observations of such things in Nature when they had to portray the terrible asuric shaktis. If you draw eyes like a hawk's—the pitch black iris in the middle of the white—you can convey the ferociousness of an inhuman cruelty. Nandababu advised us to observe Nature like this and basing ourselves on it create something original.

Puritanism and Art: Once a very prudish student joined the art course. Nandababu started coaching him but his puritanism prevented him from accepting everything. Finally, to rid him of this drawback, Nandababu asked a friend of the student to get him to take up smoking. One who aspires to be an artist cannot afford to be imprisoned in dogmas.

Perfection: Nandababu's attention was drawn to the Urdu script. He felt that from the point of view of form its letters were almost perfectly completed. So he began to practise writing them. With the help of an Urdu teacher, he prepared the type of slate on which they were written and the *kitta*, and learned how to hold it. In his free time, i.e. when he was not working at the Kalabhavan, he practised writing those letters. I had to visit him at his house for some work. I found that he had finished his dinner and had sat down to practise this script. Paper, *kitta*, and black *russanai* (ink). There were many sheets on each of which he had written a single letter. He showed me which ones were good shapes and which were difficult to write correctly. In Urdu, he had learned after much effort, the rounded ones have to be drawn as perfectly elliptical as eggs. He kept practising until he obtained the perfect shape. Finally he explained

why he was so particular about getting the correct shape. He was not copying these letters because he wanted to learn the Urdu language. But because he wanted to infuse in his hands the control required to draw on paper any shape as clearly and perfectly as it was in his mind. If only, while explaining something to his students, he could draw it fully and clearly, would they be able to absorb whatever they could according to their own understanding.

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### *On an excursion*

In December, we students of Kalabhavan had the good fortune to visit Vikramshila and the Rajamaharaj in Nandababu's company. We got to know him better and also found plenty of time for conversations with him. He was dressed in his travelling costume: a large loose silk kurta worn like a *kafani*, short pyjamas, going down to the calves, a specially tailored cloth-cummerbund on which were hooked a cloth-wrapped ink-pot, a brush etc., a large scarf, bandana, on the head, and loose blank sheets of paper and a pad of cards for the drawings. He looked like a warrior prepared to sketch anything at any moment. He told some of us who had come without any paper or pencil, "You have set off for a hunt and left your gun at home?"

Similes based on elements in Nature: Our train was approaching the Kalgong station. Far away on the horizon a white line came into view and seemed to come nearer gradually until we at last realised it was the bank of the Ganges. It was a large sandy bank. A strong wind was blowing, kicking up a lot of the sand. It was afternoon but the scene was extremely beautiful. Nandababu too seemed to be lost in it. Presently he told us the image that had come up in his mind: "As if Shiva had covered himself in ashes." Then he started explaining to us how to cull similes and metaphors from Nature. When fingers or arms are compared with shoots, creepers, or horns, it is not to say that they are hollow or thin or weak like those things but that they are as beautifully curved or textured as them.

Of mornings and evenings: Once Nandababu stood admiring the evening sky. He was thinking about the differences in the colours between the morning and the evening sky. He declared that there is no particular difference in colours. In the morning the birds have just woken up and are warbling in what seems to us, because we too have just woken up, a fresh and melodious voice so that the scene acquires a particular character. Similarly it is circumstances, not so much the colours of the sky, that make us give the evening its distinctive atmosphere. Sometimes when we are sick and awake after a long sleep in the evening we feel it is morning.

An incident on the Ganges: We felt like taking a cruise on the Ganga. We hired a boat. The boatman turned out to be a rogue. He took our party of twenty-four aboard

in spite of having been hired to ferry some passengers and goods from the next village to another one. After having harassed us a lot he provided us a ride of only three miles in 36 hours. We were so furious that we stopped the journey and wanted to take back whatever money he had already taken from us. Now the official of the ghat at which we got off asked our boatman for toll tax. This brought about a sudden change in the fellow. Normally boatmen make the passengers pay the toll. This fellow who so far had behaved extremely rudely suddenly began pleading with us to pay the tax. Disgusted with the rascal we all refused to give him anything, convinced that he had got the punishment he deserved, and we laughed at his predicament. When none of us offered to pay anything at all he went to Nandababu and fell at his feet. Nandababu told the fellow that it was because he had harassed these young babus so much that they refused to help him and scolded him for his behaviour. Yet in the end he asked our treasurer to pay up. So much had the rascal harassed us that none of us wanted to look at him.

Later Nandababu told us that it was true that the boatman was a scoundrel but because he was poor we ought to pity him. It was his ignorance that made him cheat and harass us, and it is society more than he himself who is responsible for his ignorance. These people are so poor that if we didn't give the one rupee tax, it would be very difficult for them to get anything to eat.

The last day: On the morning of the last day of our journey, Nandababu sat down to make his cards. By the evening he had made twenty-four of them. Each one was different, with something new, all of them related to our journey. Each of us, twenty-four, then received one from him as a souvenir of the excursion.

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### *On Artists and Society*

Artists should be fully involved in society. Their art-work should not become something isolated or aloof from everything. The foundation of art should be in society. One winter a big exhibition was held in Europe. Artists from all over Europe had been invited to come and exhibit their works. Many of the best artists had come. But there were some who, while they had attained to great heights in their field, were not in a condition to pay for a good shelter and food. Society may not or would not be able to maintain all of them in a good state, but had their work been such that society would not have managed without it, surely it would have maintained them in a much better state.

There are always places in society where artists are needed. He reminded us, as an instance, of the boat we have travelled in. In its prow some crude sculpting had been done as a sort of embellishment. Whether the boatman appreciated art or not he had felt impelled to have at least that much decoration; however ignorant he may

have been, to that extent he had accepted art. In that way almost everyone, whether at his workplace or at home likes to have some artistic object or the other. Artists have to discover such objects that bring joy or pride and try to build their art on that.

How can art be connected to society?: To show what sort of relation artists had with society in olden times, Nandababu gave us the example of ancient Tibet. In Tibet there are many large monasteries spread far and wide, far away from each other. They always had work for architects and sculptors. They could travel from monastery to monastery right across the country, and when they finished at the last one they could always return to the first where they would again find work waiting for them. In that way the artists could travel with their family from one end of the country to the other always getting sufficient work to do and getting enough sustenance from the monasteries. And since their children travelled with them they learned the trade from their childhood and thus the tradition was carried on.

Artist and Intuition: During our excursion Nandababu had told us two stories to describe the mentality of an artist:

1. A king in Japan wanted a horse of noble stock. Many horse dealers and experts came forward but no one could offer him a horse he liked. Finally the king entrusted the job to an artist. Some experts began to laugh among themselves. The artist set off on his search with some men the king sent with him. Wherever they saw horses they camped for some time. They came across many excellent breeds but he was not satisfied with any. His companions could not understand why he did not select even those without any blemish or defect. Thus they travelled on, until the artist saw a horse and immediately chose it and asked the king's men to buy it. They wondered why he chose it without examining it carefully for any defect or blemish. When they returned to the king everyone began asking the artist about the pedigree, colour, gender etc.—but the artist knew nothing of all this! The king declared that even if he had no idea of these things, the horse must be of noble stock because artists know such things by intuition.

2. Once a Chinese artist went to Japan. He found shelter in a temple. He stayed there for a long time but never made a single painting, he kept on roaming around the place. People in the temple could not resist taunting him sometimes on this. Once he found a tree which inspired him. Thereafter, every morning he began to put a painting outside his room. His neighbours wondered how he could finish a painting every morning when he was spending the whole day outside. To get to the bottom of the mystery they decided to spy on him during the night. They made a peephole in one of his walls. When he went inside for the night they looked inside. They found him standing on one leg, flapping his hands, hopping around, mimicking all the movements of a stork. Next morning he put outside a painting of a stork. They realised that he spent the whole day observing his subject and, back in his room, he tried to infuse



his observations into himself and try to become his subject. That is how it became natural and easy for him to portray it. When the artist understood that they had learnt his secret he left the place.

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### *Notes on the art of Fresco*

Jaipur Fresco: Thirty-three pages of Krishnalal's Shantiniketan notebook are notes in English entitled "On Jaipur Frescoes", evidently copied from a book on the subject but he has also added a few of the experiences the class had while learning this art-form. After a paragraph about the background history, he notes the instruments required, the materials used—stone, agate, deodar wood, steel rods, cloth, strings, vessels for holding the paints, lime, marble dust—the process of preparing the colours and the types of walls preferred. He writes, "The walls for this sort of fresco work should not necessarily be of bricks. It can be done also on stone or wood or cement and even on asbestos sheets. Of course ordinary plaster or the plaster which sticks to a brick wall will not stick to these other surfaces. For the different kinds of surfaces the mortar used is of different kinds. One has also got to be very careful in applying the first plaster because if this does not stick properly the whole plaster will come off when the polishing is done. Our work at Shantiniketan, on both the occasions was executed on brick walls. On the first occasion our brick wall was already covered with ordinary lime and sand plaster. So it was not necessary to remove the plaster, but the second time the plastered wall was whitewashed and as lime had already set on it, it was useless as it would not catch the lime. The other plaster coatings, the mortar were also not strong enough. So we had to remove the plaster and the brick wall was laid bare. Then as an ordinary mason plasters the wall we did the plastering with lime and sand plaster. Although this plaster was levelled it was kept a little bit rough so that the next plaster coming over it would stick to it nicely. Jaipur fresco as well as Pompeian fresco where the surface is made smooth, polished and shining like a mirror, is always done on marble and lime plaster." The next eighteen pages are filled with instructions on preparation of the lime, the types of lime, the technique of application, preparing the plaster, its application, and then the process of painting.

Then follow Krishnalal's notes on Italian fresco work copied from an article by Shri Binodebehari Mukherjee in *Prabasi*. At the end of which he says: Srimati Pratimadevi has learnt this technique from the French expert St. Hubert and she is teaching it now, living among the artists in the Ashram (*i.e.* *Shantiniketan*).

With this ends Krishnalal's Shantiniketan notes. He seems to have left Shantiniketan sometime in the middle of January 1933.

(To be continued)

S. V. BHATT

# THE PURANAS AND OUR CENTURY

(Continued from the issue of October 2005)

## 23. Aftercourses

LIKE the Alvars and the Acharyas of South India, Sri Aurobindo considered the *Vishnu Purana* as giving a fine account of all aspects of Krishna:

The Vishnu Purana is the only Purana I have carefully read through. I wonder how it has escaped general notice that it is also magnificent poetry. There are also some very humorous passages. In one a disciple asks his Guru whether the king is on the elephant or the elephant on the king... The Guru jumps upon the shoulders of the disciple and asks, "Am I on you or you on me?"<sup>1</sup>

This may not come as a surprise to the students of Alvar literature, for all the commentators on the hymns of the Alvars relied only on the *Vishnu Purana* and considered it verily a gem among the Puranas, though the commentators were not unaware of the other works of the genre. While all the Alvars were full of admiration for the other incarnations, their total affection was given to Krishna, partly because the *Vishnu Purana* was the first work to describe the childhood, boyhood and youth of Krishna. Also, it was because Krishna was considered the most recent of the avatars.

There is a moving reference in one of the Manipravala commentaries as to why the Alvars are partial to Krishna and speak passionately of his manifestation and ministry. The commentator says that the loss of Krishna is recent for the hymnologists. It happened when Dwapara Yuga was ending and Kali Yuga was on the horizon. Aren't our memories, happy as well as sad, keener regarding the loss sustained recently? Hagiology places the Alvars at the beginning of Kali Yuga and hence the reference does touch our heart.

Could this be the reason why Adi Sankara also admired Krishna with ecstatic exhilaration? His *Moha Mudgara* opens: "*Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam, Govindam Bhaja mūdhamate.*" Even more astonishing is that in *Prabhodha Sudhakarā*, a poem of 257 verses on the advaitic path to enlightenment, he gives some lovely pen portraits of Krishna in the section on how to meditate: *Dhyānavidhi-prakaraṇam*.

*Mandārapuṣpavāsitamandānilasevitam parānandam*  
*Mandākiniyutapadam namata mahānandam mahāpuruṣam*

1. Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* (1966), p. 254.

*surabhīkṛtadigvalayam surabhiśatairāvṛtam sadhvaparitah  
surabhūtikṣapaṇaparam surabhīyam yādavam namata.*<sup>2</sup>

After all the rainbow Ananda of Brindavan and the regal prosperity of Dwaraka which have made the Dashama Skandha of the *Bhagavata* dear to the heart of the devotees for all time, the eleventh Skandha opens with the curse of the Holy Men directed at the Yadavas. The sombre event is simply told. Krishna had invited some eminent sages like Vishwamitra and Vamadeva to perform certain rites in Dwaraka. Some young men of eminent Yadava families wished to have some fun with the elderly people. They dressed one of them, Samba, Krishna's son by Jambavati, as a pregnant woman. They brought Samba to the rishis and with a show of humility requested them to predict whether a boy would be born to this 'lady'. Incensed, the sages issued a curse: "O fools! She will deliver a pestle, and that will be the ruin of your clan." So indeed it came to be that the boys found an iron pestle within the clothes of Samba. The boys ran to King Ugrasena with their woeful tale. The first adhyaya of the eleventh Skandha concludes thus:

Ugrasena, the Yadava king, had the pestle powdered, and along with the residuary bit of iron, had the whole thing thrown into the sea. Now a fish in the sea happened to swallow that bit of iron, while the filings were all washed ashore by the waves, where they all miraculously grew into a kind of grass called Eraka. The particular fish that swallowed the iron piece was caught among others in the net cast by a fisherman in the sea. He took the iron piece from the stomach of the fish and forged it into an arrow head. Though the Lord knew all these details, and was capable of counteracting their evil effects, he did not care to do so. Being himself the Time-spirit, all these events had indeed his approval.<sup>3</sup>

We may never know the actual cause of the fratricidal war amongst the Yadavas that led to their complete destruction but this colourful simile indicates that there was a terrible civil war in which no one was spared. All that we know is that the events had Krishna's tacit approval. As an incarnation, was he tired by now in trying to straighten the dog's tail, as it were, to make humanity tread the dharmic path all the time? For, even before his withdrawal, the *Bhagavata* begins to speak of future incarnations (Buddha and Kalki), conveyed as the sermon of the Navayogis by Narada to Krishna. In fact, the eleventh and twelfth Skandhas are "aftercourses". The spaces

2. "Bow to the Supreme Person (Kṛṣṇa), the giver of great bliss (who is himself the nature of) the highest Bliss, who is served by the gentle breeze made fragrant by Mandara flowers and whose feet are attended by the celestial river Ganga. Bow to the descendant of Yadu, who has made the surrounding region fragrant, who is surrounded on all sides by hundreds of cows, who is intent on destroying the fear of the gods and who is agreeable to the cows." (verses 189-190) Translated by Samvid.

3. All translations from the *Bhagavata* in this series are by Swami Tapasyananda.

are packed with matter and there is little time for the glorious contexts of a Gajendra Moksha, a Narasimha Avatara or a Vamana wonderment that give us not only the story but bring to us the multifoliate colours of nature and the delicate hues of character and temperament.

Sermonising takes a lion's share of the narrative. Considering that the *Bhagavata* was written when India was being battered by waves of Islamic hordes, this was understandable. The listeners heard of the glory and the grandeur of the past of India. Now they were nearer to their own times, and if they had become weak now and were being overrun by a foreign power and a foreign religion, it was entirely of their own making. They had lost domestic unity. Both the Kaurava and Yadava dynasties fell because of internal non-cooperation. So why blame the Delhi Sultans? Or their Afghan forebears?

During the 11 and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries when the *Bhagavata* was being recited, the consciousness of the audience would have been very much disturbed by a variety of information and rumours regarding the Turkish onslaught on Indian communities and the destruction of people belonging to the Vedic heritage. Those were the centuries when Mohammed of Ghajni attacked India seventeen times in the course of twenty-seven years and destroyed innumerable idols. For instance, the Shiva Lingam of Thaneshwar temple was broken to pieces by him and set up as steps for a mosque built in his native city of Gajni. He also splintered the fifteen-foot Somanath Lingam after cutting down hundreds of Brahmin priests who tried to guard their deity. As far as the Indians belonging to the Vedic and Shramanic streams were concerned, they received nothing but destruction from the hands of a succession of terrors like Ghori Mohammed and the Slave Dynasty of Delhi. As for Alauddin Khilji and his commander, Malik Kafur, the less said the better. Why revive the terrible memories? Suffice it to say that these destructions were very close to the experience of the earliest listeners of the *Bhagavata*. The poet naturally sought to put balm on their wounds by insinuating that the fall of the Indian to Islamic sword was due to his own deficiencies, external and internal. It was then time to remember the Right Path and seek protection from an Avatar.

The sermon of the Avadhuta is one such attempt to place before the listeners the values of virtuous living. The Avadhuta tells King Yadu that he has had twenty-four gurus. Twenty-four? Yes, says the wandering ascetic and begins with earth as his guru who taught him the values of patience. Among the other teachers are air, moon, the python, the ocean and an elephant. Even a fish is a teacher:

Just as fish perish by swallowing the angler's baited hook, so do men perish through the attraction of the palate which causes intense excitement to the mind. By abstinence wise men conquer all the senses except the palate, whose craving only becomes intensified by much abstinence. Even if a person has gained mastery over all the other senses, he cannot be called a conqueror of the senses,

until he has subdued the palate. If the palate is conquered, all the other senses are as good as conquered.

Since the disturbed times betokened no good for Vedic studies, yagas and yajnas, the *Bhagavata* gave prime place for devotion and good company. What price mastery of yogas and performance of *yajnas*, if one does not have constant association with holy men? Towards attaining devotion and realisation, one must constantly strive for sattvic consciousness. The lengthy answers of Krishna to Uddhava on this subject are now fondly referred to as *Uddhava Gita*. The counter to the scourge of iconoclastic invaders is also suggested by Krishna, and certainly the poet of the *Bhagavata* was throwing a challenge to the invaders, and it is a path of not “sword for sword” but constructive devotion:

The devotee with means should construct pucca buildings as My temples and have My holy image established there. He should lay beautiful flower gardens there and make endowments of cultivated lands, bazaars, houses, villages etc., for the conduct of proper and unbroken worship either daily or on special occasions. In this way he should seek to attain to My being. By the installation of an image one could become an emperor; by building a temple one could attain Brahmaloaka and by doing all these three one could attain to My being.

This teaching has not been in vain. Ever since this injunction by the *Bhagavata*, there has been unceasing temple-building activity on the scale laid down by Krishna. The temples were built in such a way as to become community centres and each temple had its own garden (*nandavana*) and kitchen, with the message of Sanatana Dharma saying that no one need wander about hungry. Even the ruins tell us of a great time past. Consider the historical revelation that comes upon us when wandering within the fort-walled city of Patan situated on the banks of the Saraswati river in Gujarat. The city has undergone a millennium or more of Islamic attacks. During the reign of Sarangdev Waghela in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Gujarat was invaded many times. When Karandev was the ruler, Ulugh Khan, commander of Alauddin Khilji looted and destroyed Patan completely and the city could never rise again to its former glory. Further, the people received a psychological setback when the soldiers who invaded Patan seized Queen Kamaladevi and forced her to become Sultan Alauddin’s begum in Delhi. Ahmed Shah founded Ahmedabad in 1412 A.D. and Gujarat’s capital was shifted to Ahmedabad from Patan in 1468. With this, the famed city of Patan, once praised for its step-wells (the Rani-ni-Vav or Queen’s Stepwell is a tourist must) and temples, lost its imperial pride. All the same Patan also tells us that the message of the *Bhagavata* was not in vain. Hinduism has not only survived but is now poised to become the sought-after Religion of Peace for the world which lies wounded in the shattering explosions of terrorist bombs.

The eleventh Skandha is thus as important as the tenth for through his instructions to Uddhava, Krishna instructs all future generations. The very essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* is reiterated in the *Uddhava Gita*:

*Jñāne karmaṇi yoge ca vārtāyām daṇḍadhāraṇe  
yāvānartha nṛṇām tāta tāvāsteham caturvidah  
martya yadā tyaktasamastakarmā niveditāmā vicikīrṣito me  
tadāmṛtatvaṁ pratipādyamāno mayātmabhūyāya ca kalpate vai.*<sup>4</sup>

After Uddhava is directed to go to Badrikashrama and perform tapasya there, we get to watch the mutual destruction of the Yadavas and the withdrawal of Balarama and Krishna from the physical universe. This is the moment we had come across early in the first Skandha of the *Bhagavata*, when Yudhishtira had been troubled by evil omens. There had been a drastic change in seasons, men were increasingly in the grip of anger, greed and untruthfulness (*krodha, lobha, anṛta*). What more, the family concept evolved and nurtured through centuries was now endangered: “Mutual quarrels between parents, friends, brothers and married couples (*pitṛ māṭri suhrd bhrāṭṛ dāmpatīnām*) were becoming the order of the day. Ah, the poet of the *Bhagavata* is speaking to his audience and he is speaking to us as well.

The twelfth Skandha may be taken as our times, as it takes place in Kali Yuga, since Krishna’s withdrawal from the human scene is said to coincide with the inauguration of the new yuga. The twelfth Skandha is yet to get serious attention from historians, for they alone would know how to extract the significant historical material that the Skandha might contain or speak of in symbolic terms. Unfortunately, the Puranas are yet to be studied in-depth by our scholars who have devoted much valuable attention to our epics. Probably because the two epics have been spoken of as “itihasas” (thus it happened—history), there has been a deflection of attention away from the Puranas which could throw valuable light on Medieval India.

Conceived in the shadow of the external scourge, the twelfth Skandha is necessarily sombre. As we proceed we seem to be wandering deeper into darkling caves. We enter from what is dismissed as mere legends to what may be termed as shadowy history and gain the presence of the Shishunaga dynasty with its famous Kings Vidisara (Bimbisara) and Ajatashatru. Presently the nine Nandas meet us. The *Bhagavata* says that Mahananda’s son by a Shudra woman, Nanda, destroyed all Kshatriya kings, verily like Parashurama. The Purana utters prophecies regarding historical events with a commendable attention to detail. The end of the Nandas

4. “For a high-minded devotee like you I am verily the four ultimate values of life—morality obtained through Karma; wealth and prosperity obtained through trade, industry and state-craft; Siddhis obtained through Yoga; and liberation obtained through enlightenment. When a man abandons dependence on all self-centred actions and resigns himself to Me, he then becomes very dear to Me. Established in the sense that he is the Immortal Spirit, he becomes fit to be one with the Universal Being, Brahman.”

comes in the hand of the Brahmin Chanakya who inaugurates the Maurya dynasty through his disciple, Chandragupta.

For the student of the *Bhagavata* as a text of devotion coming in the Vedic stream, this twilight region is important. Vedic Hinduism had now to contend with three major opponents: Foreign invaders (Alexander of Macedon, Demetrius, Menander and Apollodorus of Bactria), Buddhism and Jainism. Interestingly enough, there is no anti-Buddhist fervour in the Purana. The *Vishnu Purana*, according to Sri Aurobindo, is anti-Buddhist and often the rulers (like Kanishka, Ashoka) were Buddhists too. It is interesting that the *Bhagavata* accepts even Buddha who was anti-Vedas as an incarnation of Vishnu: "Then when the iron Age of Kali advances, he (Vishnu) will be born as Buddha in Gaya in the land of Kikatas as the son of Ajana, in order to delude the enemies of the Devas (*buddho nāmnājanasutah kaikateṣu bhavishyati*).<sup>5</sup> The poet of the *Bhagavata* must have known that the Buddha avatara will never be subsumed by the mainstream Vedic approach.<sup>6</sup> Though poets like Jayadeva have mentioned Buddha as one of the avatars, the common man, ever since Krishna withdrew from the scene has been looking at the horizon for the appearance of Kalki. Reciting the Lord's names was his armour against the "pashanda" cults. Hence the poet of the Purana says that Kali Yuga has one excellent virtue. People are prepared to perform *nama-sankirtana*. So he assures the devotee of Krishna:

Whatever is attained by one through meditation on the Lord in Krita Yuga, through the sacrificial rite (*Yajna*) in the Treta Yuga, and ritualistic worship in the Dwapara Yuga, all that is obtained by Kirtana alone in the Kali Yuga.

The *Bhagavata* is not merely an array of legends. It is a compendium of history, ethics, philosophy and spirituality. The Purana celebrates life, family, friends. At the same time it teaches detachment by coming to the subject now and then, so that the repetition sinks in the consciousness of the devotee. What comes through as crisp shlokas of high import in the *Bhagavad Gita* gets repeated here but each time the lesson is accompanied by a dramatic flair. After commending the superior good of family life (*grihasthashrama*), the poet describes the householder who develops an

5. Skandha One, chapter 3.

6. It may be mentioned here that the genius of Sanatana Dharma has constantly tried to find ways of reconciliation so that the bitterness of a generation's experience is not carried on into the future. By drawing Buddha within the avataric fold, the Dharma was trying to close the fissures in the nation's unity. The Puranas have had a major hand in seeking such unity by trying to transform history. The *Matsya Purana* speaks of a renegade Brahmin Rama Sarma who lived on the banks of Gautami. By his tapasya he extracted a promise from the Lord Viswanatha at Benaras that he would become a king. It so happened that an elephant sent by royal emissaries of a Muslim kingdom garlanded Rama Sarma and so he became the well known king, Ghazni Mohammed. Since he could not return to his Vedic religion any more, he took to Islamic ways and went on a spree of breaking idols. The Purana speaks of further dramatic turns in Rama Sarma's life and the manner in which he built the Sri Venkateswara temple at Alarmelmangapuram!

(See Kizkovalamedu Krishnamachariar, *Ashtaadasa Puranangal*, 2005, pp. 582-85)

excessive attachment for his family. And then:

He will be given to such thoughts as this: “Alas! Sorrow-stricken by my death, how will my old parents and my wife with orphaned children get on in this world without me!

Naturally he gets lost in lower births in future time:

The association with sons, wives, dear friends and relatives is no better than the chance gathering of a group of travellers in a caravanserai. Just as dream relatives change in the recurring dream states that follow sleep, so do those of the waking life change in repeated embodiments.

This teaching comes to us with a bang as we watch the last moments of King Parikshita. So absorbed are we listening to Shuka’s discourse, that Parikshita has become one of us. Yes, we have all been gathered together to listen to the *Bhagavata*! Then the realisation comes. Ah, one of us, this Parikshita, is going to leave us forever! When he speaks, he speaks for us, he shows us the way as he is one of us. His “vote of thanks” is simply beautiful:

I have indeed achieved my highest end in life by being the object of your blessing. From your mouth I have been able to hear about the greatness and excellences of Sri Hari, the Infinite without birth and death... O holy one! For me who have attained the Brahmic state of Bliss beyond all fear through your instruction, Takshaka and other spectres of death hold fear no more.

If the *Bhagavata* has taught us how to live an ethically pure life through the narratives in the first eleven Skandhas, it uses the twelfth Skandha to teach us how to withdraw from life by giving Parikshita’s example. He had no grudge against Takshaka who would surely come to inflict the fatal bite. He is fond of his son Janamejaya but does not lament at the prospect of leaving the world and thus parting from his dear wife and child. “Ripeness is all”, is the image the Purana presents of Rajarishi Parikshita in his last moments:

He was seated facing north on the banks of the Ganga on a seat of Dharba grass spread with their tips towards the east. Free from all doubts and all attachments, the great Yogi that he was, he sat there fully absorbed in the experience of the unity of the Self with Brahman.

Takshaka comes disguised as a brahmin and his bite is so poisonous that Parikshita is reduced to ashes immediately. Parikshita’s son now performs the Sarpa



Yaga. In this thirst for revenge, Janamejaya opens a no-holds barred attack. Innumerable serpents, all innocent, perish in the holy fire while Takshaka takes refuge in Indra's court. Led by Janamejaya, the priests will not stop and now not only Takshaka but even Indra who has given him shelter finds himself in danger, as he is drawn along with his celestial chariot where Takshaka is hid to the sacrificial site. The whole scenario as painted by the Pauranika is uncannily like the 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon of terrorism. Those who give succour to the terrorists are themselves in danger, while thousands of innocent human beings perish all over the world. Fortunately, Janamejaya has come in the tradition of Sanatana Dharma. He listens to the wise counsel of Brihaspati and stops the vengeful snake sacrifice.

The *Bhagavata* then proceeds to the final movement which is a vision of glory. The Purana celebrates Vishnu and through the vision of Sage Markandeya we draw closer to the concept of Yogamaya. On the sage's prayer, Vishnu grants him an experience of Yogamaya. The sage is caught in a pralaya and finds a babe on a banyan leaf floating on the waters and spreading illumination. It is a vision of sheer charm, "that wonder-inspiring infant that the sage saw lying on a banyan leaf, sucking its uplifted toes placed in its mouth." But then, wonder of wonders, the sage sees all the universes inside the infant! The bewitching smile of the Lord who is within us is seen outside also (*sa bhagavān sākṣāt yogādhiśo guhāśayah*), but all this is for just a moment. The vision of Vatapatra-shayi vanishes and Markandeya is back in his Ashram wondering at the experience and becomes a Mahayogi with unwavering devotion to Vishnu.

The twelfth Skandha also performs an important service in giving a detailed enumeration of the symbolism of Vishnu's *divya mangala vighraha*. Though bhakti yoga calls for the presence of a Divine Personality as the *ishta devata* to meditate upon, the *Bhagavata* would not have us stop with the external image. Vishnu is the sweet babe on the banyan leaf but he is also the Supreme Purusha. All the ornaments and armaments seen on his person are but the various aspects of the One Supreme who is Unknowable. As the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* says, words return from this Supreme Brahman without being able to describe him.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, how can one describe an image of pure sattva?

The *Bhagavata* makes an attempt:

What He wears under the guise of the jewel Kaustubha is the pure Jiva-consciousness. The spreading effulgence of the Jiva is what is seen on His chest as the mark Srivatsa...

7. *yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha  
ānandaṁ brahmaṇo vidvān na vibhēti kutaścaneti*

He who has known that Ananda of the Brahman from whom words aligned to the mind return without being able to size it, that person will not be afraid of anything.

The Mahayogi of our times who also had, like Markandeya, seen and understood the Illumination has made an attempt too to draw the figure of the Supreme who is the One, the fourfold Vyuhas and the Delight of Existence:

He bore all godheads in his grandiose limbs.  
 An oceanic spirit dwelt within;  
 Intolerant and invincible in joy  
 A flood of freedom and transcendent bliss  
 Into immortal lines of beauty rose.  
 In him the fourfold Being bore its crown  
 That wears the mystery of a nameless Name,  
 The universe writing its tremendous sense  
 In the inexhaustible meaning of a word...  
 In him shadows his form the Golden Child  
 Who in the Sun-capped Vast cradles his birth...  
 He is the carrier of the hidden fire,  
 He is the voice of the Ineffable,  
 He is the invisible hunter of the light,  
 The Angel of mysterious ecstasies,  
 The conqueror of the kingdoms of the soul.<sup>8</sup>

Come to think of it, that is all we can know of the Supreme and all that we need to know.

*(To be concluded)*

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

8. *Savitri*, Book XI, canto i.

*Q: In the Srimad Bhagavatam, there are many passages on Vedantic knowledge, apart from the stories.*

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, it is that that gives the Bhagavatam its great authority as a Scripture.

*Bulletin*, August 2005

## A LESION

I was often prompted  
To expect in exchange;  
Least I got in response.  
Disheartened, dejected,  
With unfamiliar furrows  
Listlessly fell my face.  
To the Arbiter I referred  
For Her judgement.  
Not to commit folly of the kind  
A lot She enjoined  
Albeit a little I did.  
To this as I listened not  
Anguish and rebuff  
One after another  
I was made to suffer.  
Lo! I now realise  
This anguish, this rebuff  
Helped in the long last.  
A lesion to myself  
It made me teach,  
A thermocautery on my back  
It was like.  
All it was at Her behest;  
All to Her I owe,  
To Her only I bow.

GOPAL KRISHNA SATPATHY

## **INDIANS IN ADVERSITY— THE HIDDEN STRENGTH WITHIN**

By a most unlikely coincidence, I happened to be in Mumbai during the recent deluge (July 26-28<sup>th</sup>, 2005), trapped for thirty hours under a leaking hangar at the airport. The swanky new terminal was to be inaugurated on July 28<sup>th</sup> by the Prime Minister. It was a sunny morning on 26<sup>th</sup>, got a bit wet by 12 noon when it started to rain incessantly. After helping out with a student's Ph.D. thesis,—which was a victory over circumstances,—at the heat pump laboratory of IIT, I was deposited at the JET terminal by 2 p.m.—sans lunch. Later, this student had to stay in the bus for 18 hours, stranded by floods on the road and wade through for 4 hours to reach Andheri from Powai, albeit safely. But the roads were not flooded till 2.30 p.m.

We were duly checked in and security-cleared for take-off at 3 p.m. Then the heavy deluge began and the floors of the departure lounge started getting water. Everyone was silently curious, playfully taking off their shoes to avoid skidding. By 7 p.m. the runways were flooded, the ceilings were leaking and flights started getting cancelled! Hopes were still high except for some anxiety, but the truth sank in when the power went off. Except for captive power for the lighting, the other units failed—the air conditioning and computers went dead, booking counters got flooded and tickets had to be hand cancelled by 10 p.m. as well as returning of baggage to those who did not want to wait. How this miracle was achieved by a harried airline staff (most of them were ladies in their mid-twenties) is a story by itself. Since it was becoming stuffy inside the terminal, I preferred to go to the outside hangar-like hall and was lucky enough to get a chair. Fortunately, the toilets were functional and drinking water was available.

The inner strength became evident now. People accepted the hard reality without any unnecessary or overt reaction. Except for the security and airlines staff, practically everyone fell asleep—on chairs, on luggage trolleys, on luggage checking counters, on wet floors with newspapers serving as bedsheets. In fact some were even snoring. I said to myself that if my countrymen could sleep so well in the middle of this mess then they must surely be at peace! People in slums do it all the time but slum dwellers don't frequent airports! No complaints, no quarrels. Personally I had asked Mother to help me to remain calm and not to react under any circumstances. She granted my prayer. So there was a great lesson for me in this entire episode.

The worst-hit passengers were the IT boys and girls who had only their briefcases with laptops, and they were shivering in their wet clothes. Many of the wet clothes had to be discarded and some of the smart kids had to be in their inner wear, wrapped in towels and lungis given by others. This was necessary to avoid getting pneumonia and they accepted the gifts most graciously. Some overseas guests were heard muttering in the beginning while the rain outside came battering down. Soon they too stopped and tried to make do, but they did not sleep. There was practically nothing

for dinner as the small snack shops had run out of everything, even biscuits. We still did not know that the roads outside were flooded because telephones and cell phones went dead by 9 p.m. and there was no way to know what the condition outside was. It was truly a rehearsal for a 21<sup>st</sup> century post-modern fiasco.

In any adverse circumstances, people tend to open up and share. Spontaneously, some shared their food and even the few cell phones as long as they worked! In our small group a lady scientist from Nigeria, who had come to sign a MOU with the Neem Foundation in India in Mumbai, fell in a gutter and was badly hurt. We tried to help her in our small ways. Instantly, all barriers broke and we became friends and shared thoughts and experiences. She was deeply touched by the Indian capacity to bear a crisis like this so patiently.

By 5 a.m. on 27<sup>th</sup> July the new life cycle began. Some breakfast could be had at the workers' canteen outdoors but one had to get wet and wade through to get there. Some cell phones started working, and these were freely shared to be able to inform one's kith and kin. By lunchtime, the airlines staff put their act together and lunch was served to passengers as well as staff in the airport restaurant upstairs. From there one could see that the runway was still under water and probably damaged. With 5000 people being kept in suspense by the airlines staff, the passengers began to badger them rather harshly. Their fault was that they had kept the passengers dangling, instead of telling them clearly that planes could not fly under such weather conditions and that the runway was not safe. They went on saying that things would return to normal, first, by 12 noon, then by 4 p.m. and finally they said that the planes would not be able to take off on 27<sup>th</sup> as well. After this announcement things were much quieter. Since by now, one back road was open, I chose to go back for the night to IIT. Luckily a taxi came our way. Along with 3 IT kids we drove back and one of them went to his office (still under water) after this ordeal—and we Indians are not known to be conscientious!

Around noon the next day, the weather started clearing up and passengers helped the airlines staff to get all passengers of 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> organised. All tickets had to be reissued and made by hand as the computers were still down. A young duty supervisor at JET Airways earned everyone's admiration by her efficient and deft handling of the situation. We were airborne by 8 p.m. on 28<sup>th</sup> July. There was a long queue of aircrafts on the runway, like cars on a busy road during a traffic jam! Since most of the stranded passengers had rested, nobody was complaining as is our usual habit. Some of us met again in the boarding hall and it was such a joy after sharing the ordeal together.

For me, it was a reminder of the fact that the Indian psyche has inbuilt trust and equanimity—only it becomes operative in the face of a calamity or an emergency!

## SRI AUROBINDO—THE SOUL OF INDIA

*(Continued from the issue of September 2005)*

THE fourth canto of the first book of *Savitri*, “The Secret Knowledge”, is a long canto. It has three sections. In the first section Aswapathy sees the signals of eternity, the veils of the Inconscient, and the Superconscient planes. The second section shows Spirit and Matter as the dual participants in the cosmic drama. Spirit in Matter and Matter transformed by Spirit—both are manifestations of the Life Divine. In the third section man is seen as the mariner on the voyage over mystic seas. This canto describes the climb of human consciousness to the eternal; by a new spiritual adventure, Aswapathy gets to know the bases of “The Secret Knowledge”.

Aswapathy stands on a height and looks “towards greater heights”. There is the climb of consciousness, from the material to the vital and to still higher planes; there is a descent of consciousness from the higher—the highest—to the lower realms; and there is the meeting, the fusion, and the transformation.

On a height he stood that looked towards greater heights.  
Our early approaches to the Infinite  
Are sunrise splendours on a marvellous verge  
While lingers yet unseen the glorious sun.  
What now we see is a shadow of what must come.  
The earth’s uplook to a remote Unknown  
Is a preface only of the epic climb  
Of human soul from its flat earthly state  
To the discovery of a greater self  
And the far gleam of an eternal Light.

*(Savitri, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 46)*

Aswapathy sees the “Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy”.<sup>1</sup> It is true that in the outer aspect of our existence, Life and Mind seem to be the only powers that can and do create their structures of dreams including the ideals of individual and collective perfection. But if the reality is to be built up by a power as yet unborn, it, however, must be born in and must act on life.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

This world is a beginning and a base  
Where Life and Mind erect their structured dreams;  
An unborn Power must build reality.  
A deathbound littleness is not all we are:  
Immortal our forgotten vastnesses

Await discovery in our summit selves;  
Unmeasured breadths and depths of being are ours.

(*Ibid.*, p. 46)

M. P. Pandit says: “This, our terrestrial world, is not everything, it is only a beginning, but it is also a foundation. It is the material base on which first life and then mind build their organised dreams. The reality cannot be built by them; that can be built by a Power which is as yet not manifest—the Power of the Spirit.”<sup>2</sup>

M. P. Pandit adds: “We usually identify ourselves with the little movements of life surrounded on all sides by death. But that is only a part of existence; we are not that alone. Our limitations, our death are only a part of the story, much is to follow.”<sup>3</sup>

There are the depths and widenesses possible to Man’s consciousness of which his surface nature has no knowledge. There is in him a Divine splendour, an immutable Ecstasy. Man, though outwardly small and insignificant, can rise to those infinite regions of light, power and bliss.

M. P. Pandit refers to “the signals of eternity that one begins to experience under certain favourable conditions.”<sup>4</sup>

These signs are native to a larger self  
That lives within us by ourselves unseen;  
Only sometimes a holier influence comes,  
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives  
And a diviner Presence moves the soul;

(*Ibid.*, p. 48)

“We do not usually see these signs. But they are normal, native, to a larger Self. When we speak of ourselves, when we say ‘we’, we always refer to the external self, what Sri Aurobindo calls the desire-self, the ego-self. But that is only a bubble on the surface. Within us, there is a Self which is older, larger than our external self, what they call *Atman* in Sanskrit.”<sup>5</sup>

Above the world the world-creators stand,  
In the phenomenon see its mystic source.  
These heed not the deceiving outward play,  
They turn not to the moment’s busy tramp,  
But listen with the still patience of the Unborn  
For the slow footsteps of far Destiny  
Approaching through huge distances of Time,  
Unmarked by the eye that sees effect and cause,

(*Ibid.*, p. 54)

The world-creators hear the unborn tread of far destinies. They watch through Nescience's veils. In man's darkest extremity, this Power will descend to help him; the mind's inner chamber will be charged with a new potency, and all earth will grow "unexpectedly divine".

Thus will the masked Transcendent mount his throne.

...

In Matter shall be lit the spirit's glow,

...

Night shall awake to the anthem of the stars,

(*Ibid.*, p. 55)

Spirit and Matter are one. They are partners in the cosmic dance. The secret spirit in the inconscience sleeps. It turns into realities the as-yet-unrealised. It is the actor and the act, the author, the player and the play.

M. P. Pandit says: "We have created large gulfs between God and ourselves, Spirit and Matter, the beginning and the end. We need to close this big gap. We need to re-unite the solitary consonant of the limited, self-shut finite with the free and open vowels of Infinity: only a consonant cannot yield a sense, only vowels cannot make meaning, both the consonant and the vowels have to be joined for a meaningful word to emerge.... As of now there is a gulf between Matter and Mind; we tend to treat them as distinct and unrelated to each other; they must be joined, a link must be forged between the two. This link alone can form the needed connecting passage, however narrow and slender, for the soul which is ascending from the inconscience of Matter to the superconscience of the Spirit. For this upward journey it is necessary that a bridge is formed first between Matter and Mind before the further ascent to the Spirit becomes possible. From Matter to Life, from living Matter to Mind the links have to be forged."<sup>6</sup>

A hyphen must connect Matter and Mind,  
The narrow isthmus of the ascending soul:  
We must renew the secret bond in things,  
Our hearts recall the lost divine Idea,  
Reconstitute the perfect word, unite  
The Alpha and the Omega in one sound;  
Then shall the Spirit and Nature be at one.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 56-57)

"The Alpha—the first letter of the (Greek) alphabet—and the Omega, the last letter, now far from each other, have got to be brought together and united to form one sound; thus alone can we form the perfect word of expression instead of making ado



with the present truncated forms of speech. Thus will the Spirit and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, which are now in the position of contraries, become one in their working even as they are one in their secret essence.”<sup>7</sup>

There are Two who are One and play in many worlds;  
In Knowledge and Ignorance they have spoken and met  
And light and darkness are their eyes’ interchange;  
Our pleasure and pain are their wrestle and embrace,  
Our deeds, our hopes are intimate to their tale;

(*Ibid.*, p. 61)

Knowledge and Ignorance, light and darkness, pleasure and pain are the dual appearance of that one Reality working out its common purpose through the apparent opposition. Here in this world “A part is seen, we take it for the whole”. The dual element in nature has divided the functions. On one side is the Soul, the Purusha, on the other, there is Nature, Prakriti. In the actual play of the universe, the Purusha has forgotten himself and he consents to do what Nature wants him to do.

M. P. Pandit says: “There have to be two, but actually they are one. The One polarises itself for the purposes of the play, the manifestation. The Para Shiva, the absolute Reality forms itself into Shiva and Shakti. It is the One Para Shiva poisoning itself as Shiva and as Shakti. And they play together not only in this world, but in other worlds too; for there are as many as seven planes of existence and many worlds on each plane.”<sup>8</sup>

It seems as if

He knows her only, he has forgotten himself;  
To her he abandons all to make her great.

(*Ibid.*, p. 62)

...the thousandfold enigma has been solved  
In the single light of an all-witnessing Soul.

(*Ibid.*, p. 68)

It is with this attainment of the Purusha-consciousness as the witness that the liberation of the human consciousness can begin.

Aswapathy from height to depth, from summit to abyss, became the voyager of Eternity.

A sailor on the Inconscient’s fathomless sea,  
He voyages through a starry world of thought  
On Matter’s deck to a spiritual sun.

(*Ibid.*, p. 71)

Out of Matter's mask, a design of the world grew clear:

This ever she meant since the first dawn of life,  
 This constant will she covered with her sport,  
 To evoke a Person in the impersonal Void,  
 With the Truth-Light strike earth's massive roots of trance,  
 Wake a dumb self in the unconscious depths  
 And raise a lost Power from its python sleep  
 That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time  
 And the world manifest the unveiled Divine.  
 For this he left his white infinity  
 And laid on the spirit the burden of the flesh,  
 That Godhead's seed might flower in mindless Space.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 72-73)

(*To be continued*)

NILIMA DAS

#### *References*

1. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 46.
2. *The Book of Beginnings* by M. P. Pandit, p. 182.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 218-19.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

*The higher consciousness is a concentrated consciousness, concentrated in the Divine Unity and in the working out of the Divine Will, not dispersed and rushing about after this or that mental idea or vital desire or physical need as is the ordinary human consciousness—also not invaded by a hundred haphazard thoughts, feelings and impulses, but master of itself, centred and harmonious.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 744)

## ON AMAL'S BIRTHDAY

Your head has the silence of the starry sky,  
And the heart the depth of the ocean,  
To the zenith of high spirituality you fly,  
You plunge into the sea of god-emotion.  
Your vision envisions the divine  
No mortal eyes can reach,  
Fairest drink of rarest wine—  
The Divine's grand glory you teach.

Mother's new-born child you are, Amal,  
So simple and humble, yet so tall!  
Your love is all-pervasive like earth's air,  
You embrace all with your care,  
O clear ray of the divine Sun,  
Fill sad earth with light and fun.

ARUN KUMAR SEN

## NAVANIT STORIES

### ENDURE!

IN the town of Gadag in Karnataka there is a large community of Kutchi-gujaratis. My childhood friend Visanjibhai lives there. Naturally my heart is pulled there and ever so often I visit the town. There, I<sup>1</sup> always feel as if I am in my Kutch, and my being spontaneously echoes the inspired line of our poet Khabardar: “Wherever lives a Gujarati, there lives Gujarat.” Only one who, living in a foreign town, has enjoyed the intimate hospitality offered by the people of his own community will understand what I mean. Host and guest, both feel as if their native land has materialised and is embracing them. The experience creates an ineffable sweetness, beyond the reach of any pen.

“Shivjibhai! Come and hold a kirtan session in my house,” one of them would say. “Come and give a discourse at my place,” another would insist. Children, tender as flowers, would come warbling their parents’ invitation, or bright-eyed youngsters with their new-found poise; and of course the elderly with their evident thirst for peace and assurance. At times I would be in an unenviable quandary about whose invitation to accept that day. Discourses and kirtan are my natural programmes. And if my audience enjoys it why should it not satisfy me? Seeing my words bring happy smiles on their faces fills my heart with joy. When my anecdotes strike home I feel I have fulfilled my responsibility, and I pray, “Lord! Your gifts to me have done Your work. Even if I cannot do anything else for You, let my speech be my service to You.”

Today is the last day of my present sojourn in Gadag. In an hour my train leaves the station. This is the last house I am visiting. Everyone here has asked me to say something. Of the two women in the house—the *sasu* and *bahu* (mother and daughter-in-law)—the *sasu* is suffering from dysentery and she has suddenly had to rush to the *vado* (the toilet, which in the houses of that time used to be in the courtyard).

When she went out, the *bahu* came to me and said, “Please give some good advice to my *sasu*, sir. Her tongue is as long as my arm and as poisonous as a cobra’s. The whole day she keeps criticising and scolding me. I doubt if I can continue to live in such circumstances. Please do tell her something, sir.”

“Yes, of course. I will certainly talk to her. And you will see, she will change in a single day; have a little patience, dear. But meanwhile may I tell you just one small thing?”

“Why not, sir. And why just one, tell me many things, big or small.”

“All right, then. Whenever she scolds you, tell her this—and nothing else, mind you. And you must always say it from your heart, sincerely, ‘Please endure me, mother, I am your child.’ Just that much.”

1. All the stories published in the booklet *Navanit* were created by Shivjibhai from his personal experiences. They were edited and retold by Pujalal with Shivjibhai’s permission.

She accepted gladly. Since the older woman was taking too long and I would have missed my train, I left without seeing her.

After two years, I have come again to Gadag, to refresh myself by her sweet, warm embrace. Some days later, after word had spread of my arrival, the *sasu* whom I could not meet on my last visit and about whose problems I had completely forgotten, turned up—a deep peace and joy were evident on her face. “What was the magic you did last time you visited us?” she asked with a smile. “It has transformed the lives of everyone in our family! I cannot imagine what you did or said in the short time I was not in the house, but within days after you left, our lives began to change and our household to grow into a heaven; we seem to be bathed, day and night, in showers of happiness and love!”

“But madam, I don’t know what you are talking about. I can’t remember anything special that I did on my last visit to your house!”

“But how can you say that, sir? Before you came there that day, our family had degenerated into an arena of quarrels and squabbles. Every time I said anything to the *bahu*, however calmly and reasonably it be, she used to scream at me, ‘If I am so inefficient and careless, why didn’t you get another *bahu*?’ I would lose my self-control and blurt out something or the other, and she would keep arguing... you know how these things go on and on. Our house had become a fish-market or even worse. But from the day you whispered something into my *bahu*’s ears, as I suspect you did, oh, what shall I say? She has been transformed. Every time a little ghee was accidentally spilt by her, instinctively, without a second thought, I used to chastise her, but all she would say is ‘Mother, please put up with me. With all my faults I am your child!’ If she put even a little more salt than I would have put in any dish, I would yell a sharp rebuke, ‘Hasn’t your mother taught you how to cook?’ and so forth, but the poor thing would just say, ‘Mother, please suffer me. My mother failed to teach me, but you are mother aren’t you? I shall learn from you.’ The first time I was taken aback, left with nothing to say. Then, as this behaviour of hers continued, day after day, my heart started replying, ‘*Bahu*, I won’t only tolerate you, I shall cherish you as my own child. I don’t have half a dozen *bahus*, have I? I shall treasure you in my heart. Even if I have a thousand other *bahus* you shall be the iris of my eyes.’ From that day, we have had no quarrels or arguments! Love and harmony have possessed us; peace and happiness have settled in our lives and even touched our neighbours!”

All the while that the *sasu* was talking, I felt I had entered an ineffable world. Actually, it was quite by chance that this *mahamantra* “Endure!” had come to me that day when I had visited this family. O Lord of Love, inspire all of us with more and more of such powerful mantras. This single word has transformed a hell into a heaven, cooled those flaming hatreds into fountains of nectar, dissolved those quarrelling egos in the smiling embrace of hearts, changed those wild cacophonies

into sweet symphonies that echo in every life all around them. What a *mahamantra*, as simple as it is easy: “Suffer! Endure!”

PUJALAL

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

*Endurance is the capacity of bearing without depression.*

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*To know and be able to bear and endure, undoubtedly produces a firm and fixed joy.*

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*The most important is a steady, quiet endurance that does not allow any upsetting or depression to interfere with your progress. The sincerity of the aspiration is the assurance of the victory.*

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*The things we cannot realise today we shall be able to realise tomorrow. The only necessity is to endure.*

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*In silent endurance, one step forward towards victory with the help of eternal love.*

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*Open to the Divine Grace and thou shalt endure.*

*The Mother*

(*Words of the Mother*, CWM, Vol. 14, pp. 174-75)