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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE BODY

This body which was once my universe,
Is now a pittance carried by the soul,—
Its Titan's motion bears this scanty purse,
Pacing through vastness to a vaster goal.

Too small was it to meet the giant need
That only infinitude can satisfy:
He keeps it still, for in the folds is hid
His secret passport to eternity.

In his front an endless Time and Space deploy
The landscape of their golden happenings;
His heart is filled with sweet and violent joy,
His mind is upon great and distant things.

How grown with all the world conterminous
Is the little dweller in this narrow house!

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 149)

THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The Triple Enigma

EXISTENCE, consciousness and the significance of our conscious being,—a triple enigma confronts us when we look at them to discover their origin, foundations, nature, their innermost secret. We begin with a riddle, we end with a mystery.

Existence itself is the first riddle. What it is we do not know, we are ignorant how it came to be at all, we cannot say whether it is an eternal fact or a temporary phenomenon. It may be only an appearance or it may be real, not in itself but as a manifestation of some hidden Reality; but then of what is it the manifestation and how came it into being or why had it to be?

Consciousness of existence is a second insoluble miracle. It seems not to have been and now is and it may be that some day it will not be; yet it is a premier fact and without it being would not know of its own existence. Things might exist, but only as a useless encumbrance of a meaningless space,—consciousness makes being self-aware, gives it a significance. But what then is consciousness? Is it something in the very grain of being or an unstable result or fortuitous accident? To whom does it belong? to the world as a whole? or is it peculiar to individual being? Or has it come from elsewhere into this inanimate and inconscient universe? To what end this entry?

The significance of our conscious being in an inconscient material world is the last and worst enigma. What is the sense and justification of the individual, his consciousness, his feeling of self, his personality? Is our individuality real or apparent, temporary or permanent, a minor circumstance or a central secret of the whole? Has it a meaning in the universe or in something beyond the universe? or is it only a chance outburst of Nature with no sense in it or any but a mechanical purpose?

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All these problems arise in our consciousness and in our consciousness alone can be found their solution—or to it or through it perhaps from a greater consciousness the solution must come. On the nature and validity of our consciousness depends the nature and validity of the discovery we shall make or the conclusions to which we can come. On the power of our consciousness depends the possibility or impossibility of putting into the terms of life the solutions our knowledge discovers. But most of all the appearance and development of consciousness in the inconscient world is the decisive factor, the one thing that gives its existence a light of meaning, a possibility of purpose, a hope of fulfilment and the soul's self-finding. To know, then, the nature of consciousness, its process, its birth, growth and destiny is for us a study of supreme importance.

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All the problem of existence turns around three things, the nature of being, the nature of consciousness and the secret of the dynamics, the energy of existence by which being and consciousness find each other and manifest what is within them. If we can discover these three things, all is known which we fundamentally need to know; the rest is application and process and consequence.

The problem of consciousness is the central problem; for it links the other two together and creates their riddle. It is consciousness that raises the problem it has to solve; without it there would be no riddle and no solution. Being and its energy would then fulfil themselves in form and motion and in cessation of form and motion without any self-awareness and without any enjoyment or fruition of their form and motion. Existence would be a fact without significance, the universe an inanimate machine turning for ever—or for a time,—without any reason or issue in its turning. For it to have any significance there must be either a Mind or some other kind of Awareness that observes it, originates it perhaps, has joy in its turning, works out something by the turning of the machine for its own satisfaction or dissatisfaction; or there must be a consciousness that emerges by the turning and reveals being and energy to themselves and leads them to some kind of fulfilment. Even if it is only a temporary consciousness that emerges, yet that must be the one significant fact of being, the one thing that lights up its movements, makes it aware of itself, raises it to something that is more than a mere dead or blank self-existence, a One or a Many that is yet worth no more than a zero.

Even if what fundamentally is in being, is not consciousness but a super-conscience, yet that must be one supreme kind of self-awareness, if not also all-awareness; for otherwise there would be no difference between superconscience and inconscience; the two would be only top-side and bottom-side of the same blank, yet mysteriously but vainly fruitful reality.

In the ancient tradition eternal and infinite Being and Consciousness carry in them as the result of their oneness or coexistence an eternal significance of Bliss, Ananda. If we suppose Being-Consciousness to carry in them an eternal and infinite energy that creates, as we say, expresses, as the Sanskrit term better puts it, the universe, then the bliss of eternal conscious being would contain in itself a bliss of eternal energy of consciousness and being finding itself in the joy of self-expression, self-manifestation, self-creation. That would be a sufficient explanation of the appearance of a phenomenal universe, there is in fact no other that is satisfactory. These then are there the three or the four terms underlying all the secret of existence,—Being, Consciousness-Energy, Bliss of being, Ananda.

It would not materially affect the fundamental satisfactoriness of this explanation that the world we live in is not a world of bliss, not a world of consciousness,—though it is in its evident appearance, a world of being and of energy of being, that it is in its phenomenal basis inconscient and works itself out through process and labour and, when consciousness appears, through joy of being but also through pain of being.

If the eternal creative Energy takes joy in that, has the Ananda of it (and without consciousness there can be no joy or Ananda), as a poet in the creation of his tragedy or comedy, then that would be a sufficient explanation of the existence of this universe, though we would still have to seek for its significance, the reason of this choice of pain and labour.

Consciousness then is the centre of the riddle. If we know what is Consciousness, where its action begins and ends—if it has a beginning and an ending, what is its process and the significance of its temporal appearance and action, we shall then be able to look deeply into being and its energy and understand and solve all their enigma.

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But here in our world of Matter the original and fundamental phenomenon we meet everywhere is a universal Inconscience, Consciousness appears to come in as only an incident, a development, a strange consequence of some ill-understood operations of Energy in inconscient Matter. It arises out of an original Inconscience, it dissolves or sinks back into the Inconscience. Once it has appeared it persists indeed but as a general phenomenon precariously manifested in individual living beings. It has the seeming either of an uncertain freak of inconscient Nature,—a disease some would conjecture, a phosphorescence playing upon the stagnant waters of inconscient being, active at certain points of animation, or a guest in a world in which it is alien, a foreign resident with difficulty able to maintain itself in a hardly amicable environment and atmosphere.

According to the materialist hypothesis consciousness must be a result of energy in Matter; it is Matter's reaction or reflex to itself in itself, a response of organised inconscient chemical substance to touches upon it, a record of which that inconscient substance through some sensitiveness of cell and nerve becomes inexplicably aware. But such an explanation may account,—if we admit this impossible magic of the conscious response of an inconscient to the inconscient,—for sense and reflex action [yet] becomes absurd if we try to explain by it thought and will, the imagination of the poet, the attention of the scientist, the reasoning of the philosopher. Call it mechanical cerebration, if you will, but no mere mechanism of grey stuff of brain can explain these things; a gland cannot write Hamlet or pulp of brain work out a system of metaphysics. There is no parity, kinship or visible equation between the alleged cause or agent on the one side and on the other the effect and its observable process. There is a gulf here that cannot be bridged by any stress of forcible affirmation or crossed by any stride of inference or violent leap of argumentative reason. Consciousness and an inconscient substance may be connected, may interpenetrate, may act on each other, but they are and remain things opposite, incommensurate with each other, fundamentally diverse. An observing and active consciousness emerging as a character of an eternal Inconscience is a self-contradictory affirmation, an unintelligible

phenomenon, and the contradiction must be healed or explained before this affirmation can be accepted. But it cannot be healed unless either the Inconscient has a latent power for consciousness—and then its inconscience is phenomenal only, not fundamental,—or else is the veil of a Consciousness which emerges out of a state of involution which appears to us as an inconscience.

There is no doubt a connection and interdependence between consciousness and the inconscient substance in which it resides and through which it seems to operate. Consciousness depends upon the body and its functionings, on the brain, nerves, gland-action, right physiological working, for its own firm state and action. It uses them as its instruments and, if they are injured or unable to act, the action of the consciousness may also be in part or whole impaired, impeded or suspended. But this does not prove that the action of consciousness is an action of the body and nothing else. There is an instrumentation and if the instrument is impaired, the user of the instrument can no longer manifest himself rightly through it; if it is destroyed, he cannot operate any longer unless or until he can get another instrument. This then has to be seen whether the phenomena of consciousness are such that they make it necessary to suppose such a use or instrumentation of the body.

If so then either there must be a conscious being in us that is other than the body or else a conscious Energy that thinks, senses, observes, acts intelligently through the physical instrument. This is what we actually observe in our experience of ourselves that there is such a being or else such an energy at work in us and this self-experience is surely as valid, as binding as the accompanying experience of an inconscient substance or building of inconscient Matter which is its field and habitat. Both sides of the phenomenon must be given their value; to reject Matter as an illusion of Consciousness or Consciousness as a freak or disease of Matter are equally one-eyed views which miss the true problem and are not likely to lead to a satisfying solution.

It is certainly possible, *prima facie*, that Consciousness may be a subordinate phenomenon dependent on Matter or, more accurately, on the Energy that formulates Matter. Our need then is to discover its exact nature, origin, function in a material world and the utmost limit of its possibilities for the human being; for to man matter is only a basis of his life, a material of his works, an opportunity; what is really important to him is consciousness, for it is his consciousness and use of consciousness that gives him his significance and importance to himself and the world; without it he would be nothing and mean nothing.

At any rate this is the fact that faces us, that there is an apparent Energy that seems to have built up this world which first in the animal and then more amply in man has become and works as a conscious Energy and that this transformation is the crucial and capital fact of our universe. It may well be that in it lies the secret of the significance of that universe. It may turn out on deeper enquiry that a Conscious Energy has created as its field an inconscient substance and is veiled in its creation and emerges in it, a Power, a Godhead releasing itself slowly and with difficulty out

of its self-made chrysalis of material Inconscience.

It is not sufficient to examine the material, the physiological processes accompanying the functioning of consciousness and attempt to explain the functioning by its physical processes. This leaves consciousness itself unexplained; if it accounts to some extent, but imperfectly, for sense phenomena or mechanical thinking, it does not account in the least for the most important powers of our conscious energy; it does not account for reason, understanding, will, creative thought, conscious selection, the conscious intellectual and spiritual action and self-development of the human being. Yet these are of capital importance, for it is here that consciousness begins to unfold itself out of its chrysalis or matrix of inconscience and a half-conscious first working and reveal its true nature. Here consciousness acts in its own right, in its own field and not as a product of the body. To see how the body uses consciousness may be within limits a fruitful science, but it is more important to see how consciousness uses the body and still more important to see how it evolves and uses its own powers. The physiological study of the phenomenon of consciousness is only a side-issue; the psychological study of it independent of all reference to the body except as an instrument is the fruitful line of inquiry. A body using consciousness is the first outward physical fact of our existence, the first step of our evolution; a consciousness using a body is its inner spiritual reality, it is what we have become by our evolution and more and more completely are [.]

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 271-77)

Because God has willed and foreseen everything, thou shouldst not therefore sit inactive and wait upon His providence, for thy action is one of His chief effective forces. Up then and be doing, not with egoism, but as the circumstance, instrument and apparent cause of the event that He has predetermined.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 438)

‘LIKE A CAGED BIRD’

January 4, 1914

THE tide of materialistic thoughts is always on the watch, waiting for the least weakness, and if we relax but one moment from our vigilance, if we are even slightly negligent, it rushes in and invades us from all sides, submerging under its heavy flood the result sometimes of numberless efforts. Then the being enters a sort of torpor, its physical needs of food and sleep increase, its intelligence is clouded, its inner vision veiled, and in spite of the little interest it really finds in such superficial activities, they occupy it almost exclusively. This state is extremely painful and tiring, for nothing is more tiring than materialistic thoughts, and the mind, worn out, suffers like a caged bird which cannot spread its wings and yet longs to be able to soar freely.

But perhaps this state has its own use which I do not see. . . . In any case, I do not struggle; and like a child in its mother’s arms, like a fervent disciple at the feet of his master, I trust myself to Thee and surrender to Thy guidance, sure of Thy victory.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 46)

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS: ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE ASCENT TOWARDS GOD

To judge the events of history, a certain distance is needed; similarly, if one knows how to rise high enough above material contingencies, one can see the terrestrial life as a whole. From that moment, it is easy to realise that all the efforts of mankind converge towards the same goal.

It is true that collectively or individually, men follow very different paths to reach it; some of these paths twist and turn so much that they seem at first sight to move away from the goal rather than to lead towards it; but all are going there, consciously or unconsciously, swiftly or more slowly.

What then is this goal?

It is one with the purpose of man's life and his mission in the universe.

The goal: "Call him what you will, for to the wise, he is the Possessor of all names."

The Tao of the Chinese—The Brahman of the Hindus—The Law of the Buddhists—The Good of Hermes—That which cannot be named, according to the ancient Jewish tradition—The God of the Christians—The Allah of the Muslims—The Justice, the Truth of the materialists.

The purpose of man's life is to become conscious of That.

His mission is to manifest It.

All religions, all the teachings of all the sages are nothing other than methods to reach this goal.

They can be classified into three principal categories.

First method—intellectual: The love of Truth, the search for the Absolute.

By discernment, study, reflection, analysis, control and concentration of the thought, one dispels the illusion of personality, a whirl of atoms in a single substance which is itself nothing but an appearance: a condensation of the ether.

When we say *myself* what do we speak of? The body? The sensations? The feelings? The thoughts? All this has no stability. The appearance of continuity comes from a rigorous determinism obtaining in each of these realms of the being; and into this determinism there enter as many external as internal agents. Where then is the self, that is to say, something permanent, constant, ever the same? In order to find it, to find this absolute, we must proceed from depth to depth, from relativity to relativity—for all that is in form is relative—until we reach That which is Unthinkable to our reason, Unutterable to our language, but knowable by identification—for we carry That in ourselves, it is the very centre and life of *our* being.

Second method—the love of God. It is the method of those who have a developed religious sense.

Aspiration towards the Divine Essence of all things that we have perceived in a moment of integral illumination.

Then self-consecration to this Divine Essence, to this Eternal Law, integral self-giving, at every moment, in all one's actions. Complete surrender: one is now only a docile instrument, a faithful servant before the Supreme Master. The Love is so complete that it causes a detachment from all that is not the Divine Absolute and perfect concentration on Him.

“Besides, it is not impossible to rise higher than that, for love itself is a veil between the lover and the Beloved.”

Identification.

Third method—the love of humanity.

As a consequence of a clear vision, an intense perception of the immense suffering of humanity, there arises the resolution to consecrate oneself entirely to making this suffering cease.

Self-oblivion in the giving of all one's thoughts, all one's energies, all one's activities to succour others, in however small a degree.

“With your hearts overflowing with compassion, go forth into this world torn by pain, be instructors, and wherever the darkness of ignorance rules, there light a torch.”

This consecration to humanity manifests in four domains. One can give to others in four ways:

Material gifts. Intellectual gifts: knowledge. Spiritual gifts: harmony, beauty, rhythm. The integral gift, which can be made only by those who have followed the three paths, who have synthesised within themselves all the methods of development, of becoming conscious of That which is Eternal: the gift of example. The example which is not self-conscious and which one gives because one *is*, because one lives in the Eternal Divine Consciousness.

THE MOTHER

(Found among the Mother's manuscripts and published in *Words of Long Ago*,
CWM, Vol. 2, pp. 125-27.)

A CONVERSATION OF 7 APRIL 1929

Will you say something to us about Yoga?

WHAT do you want the Yoga for? To get power? To attain to peace and calm? To serve humanity?

None of these motives is sufficient to show that you are meant for the Path.

The question you are to answer is this: Do you want the Yoga for the sake of the Divine? Is the Divine the supreme fact of your life, so much so that it is simply impossible for you to do without it? Do you feel that your very *raison d'être* is the Divine and without it there is no meaning in your existence? If so, then only can it be said that you have a call for the Path.

This is the first thing necessary—aspiration for the Divine.

The next thing you have to do is to tend it, to keep it always alert and awake and living. And for that what is required is concentration—concentration upon the Divine with a view to an integral and absolute consecration to its Will and Purpose.

Concentrate in the heart. Enter into it; go within and deep and far, as far as you can. Gather all the strings of your consciousness that are spread abroad, roll them up and take a plunge and sink down.

A fire is burning there, in the deep quietude of the heart. It is the divinity in you—your true being. Hear its voice, follow its dictates.

There are other centres of concentration, for example, one above the crown and another between the eye-brows. Each has its own efficacy and will give you a particular result. But the central being lies in the heart and from the heart proceed all central movements—all dynamism and urge for transformation and power of realisation.

What is one to do to prepare oneself for the Yoga?

To be conscious, first of all. We are conscious of only an insignificant portion of our being; for the most part we are unconscious. It is this unconsciousness that keeps us down to our unregenerate nature and prevents change and transformation in it. It is through unconsciousness that the undivine forces enter into us and make us their slaves. You are to be conscious of yourself, you must awake to your nature and movements, you must know why and how you do things or feel or think them; you must understand your motives and impulses, the forces, hidden and apparent, that move you; in fact, you must, as it were, take to pieces the entire machinery of your being. Once you are conscious, it means that you can distinguish and sift things, you can see which are the forces that pull you down and which help you on. And when you know the right from the wrong, the true from the false, the divine from the undivine, you are to act strictly up to your knowledge; that is to say, resolutely reject one and accept the other. The duality will present itself at every step and at every step you will

have to make your choice. You will have to be patient and persistent and vigilant—“sleepless”, as the adepts say; you must always refuse to give any chance whatever to the undivine against the divine.

Is the Yoga for the sake of humanity?

No, it is for the sake of Divinity. It is not the welfare of humanity that we seek but the manifestation of the Divine. We are here to work out the Divine Will, more truly, to be worked upon by the Divine Will so that we may be its instruments for the progressive incorporation of the Supreme and the establishment of His reign upon earth. Only that portion of humanity which will respond to the Divine Call shall receive its Grace.

Whether humanity as a whole will be benefited, if not directly, at least, in an indirect way, will depend upon the condition of humanity itself. If one is to judge from the present conditions, there is not much hope. What is the attitude today of the average man—the representative humanity? Does he not rise in anger and revolt directly he meets something that partakes of the genuinely divine? Does he not feel that the Divine means the destruction of his cherished possessions? Is he not continually yelling out the most categorical negative to everything that the Divine intends and wills? Humanity will have to change much before it can hope to gain anything by the advent of the Divine.

How is it that we have met?

We have all met in previous lives. Otherwise we would not have come together in this life. We are of one family and have worked through ages for the victory of the Divine and its manifestation upon earth.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1929-31, CWM, Vol. 3, pp. 1-3)

OUR REAL NATIONAL ANTHEM

OUT of all the fatuities with which modern India is infested, the most egregious is the long drawn-out discussion on the choice of a national anthem. The two songs that have been pitted against each other are really like two worlds apart and it is supreme lack of insight to set them up as equal candidates for election posing us a most perplexing problem. Once we understand, first, the prerequisites of the ideal national anthem and, secondly, the living associations and potencies of Bankim Chandra's *Bande Mataram* on the one hand and Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana* on the other, there cannot remain the slightest doubt that nothing except *Bande Mataram* can be the creative cry and the sustaining call on the lips of resurgent India.

We are often told that the prime consideration is that a national anthem should be suitable for collective singing, that it should have an effective orchestration. But these are, for all their importance, purely technical points. And woe betide the nation which appoints a committee of technicians to decide its anthem! Orchestral skill has certainly to be brought into play and a popular song which ultimately fails to be made suitable for collective singing will never get accepted. But such a song exists only in the imagination: the very fact that a song has been popular implies that it has possibilities of collective and orchestral treatment. The right kind of treatment may not be easy to come by; yet to say that there is a fundamental defect in the popular song, rendering the right kind impossible, is to indulge in extreme partisanship for a rival ditty and in gross underestimation of a country's musical talent: already we have more than one excellent notation of *Bande Mataram*, to balance that for which *Jana Gana Mana* has been commended. In the controversy about a national anthem, the prime consideration, where a popular song is concerned, can never be a technical one. We have to go down to its significance and its emotion, we have to look at its history and its impact on the times.

What would be the ideal national anthem? Most people would think immediately of the stirring language and music of *La Marseillaise*. If we look at the history of this song and its impact on the times, it will be seen to fulfil every demand we can stipulate: it appeared at the right psychological moment, expressed the precise mood of revolutionary France wanting to be a republic, and on its magnificent flood an entire country swept to liberation from century-old bondage. It is also intensely inspired—every word rings authentic and carries the high passion that filled both philosopher and commoner, the passion for man's erect and unobstructed growth. We cannot hope for a fierier strain packed more creatively with a whole nation's yearning for liberty, equality and fraternity. But, though from a political and social angle it is the example *par excellence* of what a national anthem should be, it leaves certain wider and deeper needs unsatisfied.

The Reality of National Being

The ideal national anthem must not only express the political and social man or even the complete self of thinking and feeling individuals composing a people, but also bring home to us the reality of national being. What is a nation? Of course, a nation must have certain common cultural features in all its geographical distributions and linguistic differentiations. These common features require for their complete crystallisation, so to speak, a well-defined territory, a distinguishable physical shape of the land in which they have emerged. Certain collective confrontations of momentous and perilous issues turn all the more concrete the common and widely prevalent traits of cultural consciousness held within marked boundaries of mountain and river and ocean. But if we stop with these definitions and believe that we have done with nationhood when we have applied them to an aggregate of individuals we shall be committing a folly to which the modern mind is excessively prone—the folly of regarding the diversity of existence as real and concrete and the underlying unity as merely conceptual and abstract. But a nation can never be an aggregate of individuals any more than a country is just a large piece of land. When we speak of India we are alive to the presence and power of a single being whose outermost shell is the territorial expanse indicated on our maps and whose more subtle and plastic body is the collection of human beings living in that expanse and sharing and expressing certain cultural characteristics. But our too intellectual turn leads us to dismiss this awareness as a figurative mode of feeling: we declare that we are only practising patriotic personification and that there is no actual entity beyond the individuals inhabiting the land. But this is a patent self-deception. No patriot has ever fought and died for anything except a vast, moving and mighty supra-individual personality—a hidden Goddess, a gigantic Beloved, a great Mother. Especially as a great Mother this personality inspires him, for a country is felt as either fatherland or motherland and the latter aspect is the most intimately alive and commanding. Not in the cold dissecting rational mind but in the heart with its mysteries and profundities, its intuitions of the beyond, its inexplicable visions of the superhuman and the divine, the essence of patriotism, as of every other individual-transcending passion, lies. A patriot who does not stir to the call of the great Mother that is his country and that is the unifying force of the millions inhabiting it is an impotent imposter. Or else if one feels the tremendous Presence and yet intellectually denies it one is effective for various ends but the schism within him will always impair his effectivity and his very triumphs will be unrounded and carry a proclivity to defeat.

The Vital Value of Nationalism

The ideal national anthem, therefore, brings out in full the reality of the single Being whose multiple expression is the myriads living in a country. And, mind you,

it is the national Being and not just the Spirit of Man or the universal Spirit that is to be present in it. Nationalism has no meaning without this particularity. We may argue against the power of Nationalism, we may say that modern progressive thought minimises Nationalism in the hope of achieving a world-unity. But the very fact that we are talking of a national anthem implies the importance of the national Being. And the implication is perfectly justified. In point of fact, this Being is so far the only supra-individual entity that has concretely emerged in human consciousness. The sense of the Supreme Divine may be very strong in individuals, it may even be an effective force in certain human collectivities or nations, but not every collectivity or nation possesses it, whereas the sense of a Britannia, a *belle France*, a Cathleen ni Houlihan, a *Bharat Mata* is most vivid. Millions have lived and died for the national Being. Even avowed atheists are instinctively awake to it. Even the Russian Communists have a feeling of “Holy Russia”, and if there will be a split in World Communism it will come, as portended in the case of Yugoslavia *versus* Russia, by way of an intense awareness of the distinct character of a national collectivity. Furthermore, not only is the national Being an already realised if not always intellectually acknowledged entity, but also is it a valuable, an essential part of the scheme of human evolution. Neither the consciousness of the one Spirit of Man in all countries nor that of the universal Spirit should annul the consciousness of nationhood. The wonderful world around us and above us and within us is never a featureless and colourless unity: it is a one-in-many, a unity-in-diversity, and we should err as much by stressing the single and the uniform as by concentrating exclusively on the multifold and the various. Life is not necessarily divided and broken up by being myriad-aspected; it is made richer, more capable of self-expression, more free and fiery, provided the inner unity is not forgotten or erased. Just as the uniqueness of the individual must never be regimented out of existence but carefully woven into a social symphony, so too the uniqueness of the national collectivity must be cherished without setting it at odds with the rest of mankind. Every large human aggregate has its distinct qualities of culture that are precious and that could never emerge if the aggregate did not stand out in its own rights. Nationalism is vital to the full development of humanity. Consequently, no national anthem can be ideal unless it brings, however subtly and refinedly, to the forefront the typical national Being of a country: even if all humanity or all divinity be hymned, there must be in the face and figure of the invoked Spirit something clearly and fervently national.

The Typical Genius of the Indian Nation

When we say “national”, we must not mean merely a vague image of the country’s consciousness. There must be a powerful suggestion of the precise colour and shape of the country’s culture. Aggressiveness and fanaticism are, of course, to be avoided, though not at all the martial mood which keeps the sword ready and the soul keen-

edged to combat any attempt at physical conquest or psychological enslavement. The powerful suggestion that is desirable cannot wholly come without this mood of manly self-sanctity, this ardent defensive attitude. But such an attitude itself is not sufficient to give the needed force of national individuality. What must be articulated is the typical genius of a nation. Thus, England's genius is a practical dynamic expansive life-instinct, with a background of vague poetic idealism. France's genius is an ordering brilliant clarity of intellect allied with a warm and often tempestuous enthusiasm for personal rights. The genius of India is in the first place an intense mysticism deriving from an ineradicable intuition of the Godhead that is the All and even more than the All, a creatively emanating and manifesting Consciousness and Delight, and in the second place a richness of varied, complex, adventurous, even fantastic-seeming forms of existence which yet carries a certain stability and self-balance by being rooted in a spontaneous organic energy. Something quintessential of this genius must pervade any anthem that aims at being ideally national in India. And here a point of considerable moment is the true meaning of Indianness.

When we speak of Indian spiritual culture expressing itself harmoniously with a varied vitality we mean the culture whose initial significances and original splendours are to be found in the Rig Veda and whose wide and luminous developments are in the Upanishads and the Gita and the Tantra and whose culmination and complete outburst of light we find today in the poetry and prose of Sri Aurobindo. This is not a narrow religion that cramps and divides: it is a profound synthesising multi-faceted movement of revelatory and transformative power not only expressed in inspired *sutra* or *sloka*, penetrating exposition or evocative exegesis, but also in the very stuff of the living consciousness and in the very gesture and action of the living body. Indian spiritual culture, true to the multiply-single Divinity of its vast intuition and experience and to the *élan* of its audacious diversely creative life-force, stands like a parliament of all faiths and philosophies, a federation of all ethical and social forms. No doubt, a few lines of growth have become rigidly assertive, but, in their exaggeration of some aspects out of the many that were natural to the Indian genius, they are not fundamental. Not these unplastic survivals of certain necessities called for by particular circumstances are what we mean by cultural Indianness. They conflict with the norms and forms set up by several religions. But the basic soul and shape of cultural Indianness can take into itself the uniqueness, the subtle nuance, of every religion. This remarkable quality of it has been evident to the students, in the West no less than in the East, of its prolific scripture and literature. Hence Indian spiritual culture cannot be objected to as being sectarian. But, on the other hand, we should be de-nationalising it if we refused to admit whatever ideas or terms in it distinguished it from the Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Sikh, Jain or even Buddhist culture. It has, for all its catholicity, characteristics of its own, and these characteristics it must retain in one manner or another if it is to be in any valid sense Indian. Take away these characteristics and it ceases being what the world knows it to be. Expunge them from a national

anthem which claims to be Indian and you have a general non-descript religious terminology, lacking in all national savour and drained of all distinguishable and dynamic vitality. The Godhead hailed must bring the light and colour and configuration of what the descendants of the Rishis have felt and seen. The feeling and seeing are, because of their essential catholicity of motive, really acceptable by even a person who though in India does not think and pray with a consciousness in direct tune with the typical Indian spirituality; but if anyone takes objection to them because of their non-Islamic, non-Christian, non-Jewish, non-Zoroastrian, non-Sikh, non-Jain and even non-Buddhist suggestion, then he fails to understand what ultimate India is and he is trying to rob her of all genuine cultural value and to suppress a national genius that is, from the mystical and metaphysical viewpoint, the most wonderful in existence and, from the worldly and pragmatic viewpoint, no less wonderful by its wealth of varied creativeness and its capacity of almost unlimited organic assimilation. The concept of secularity prominent today in our Constitution must never encourage us to water down this genius: its function is discharged as soon as it ensures freedom of religious belief and ceremony, absence of bigotry, non-discrimination on communal grounds. Over-touchiness with regard to the minorities is a blunder no less serious than riding roughshod over them. As settled dwellers in this sub-continent they are to be granted equal civic and individual rights with the majority that is called Hindu; but for their sake the majority must never diminish the marvellous potentialities of cultural Indianness. The national anthem of India cannot be ideal without burning with historical India's own distinct beauty of worship together with her broad vision of the universal Divine. If it does not thus burn, the India whose representative utterance it claims to be is just an artificial construct and not a grandly alive entity: she will be just a gilded simulacrum and the sum-total of her history will be a cypher.

A last hint remains now to be given about the ideal national anthem for us. When a country's genius itself is cast in the mystical mould, when to be truly Indian is to be charged with an instinct of the Divine and a presence of the Eternal in a way not common to other nationalities, the ideal national anthem will hardly echo the essential nature if it sings of God as a Power separate from the national Being rather than as having a core of identity with it. To draw everywhere a line, however faint, between the two and to suggest merely that God presides over or guides the Being that is India is to make the song miss the exquisite finishing touch that is the ever-so-little-more without which we are worlds away from truth and perfection. Our national Being, the Mother-Power whose children we are, must itself be visioned and voiced as ultimately the Supreme and the Eternal standing here in the evolving cosmos and in the process of time with the face and figure of our country's Soul but with all the glories of the Infinite Mystery suffusing them and spreading from them to the ends of the earth. Break up the core of direct identity and you at once muffle the master-tone of the anthem.

The Merits and Defects of “Jana Gana Mana”

Let us proceed to ask: does Tagore’s *Jana Gana Mana* fulfil the several *desiderata* we have mentioned? There is no denying its noble sentiment, poetic merit and musical charm. After all, it was the incomparable Rabindranath who composed it, and it has a fine accent of country-wide friendliness as much as of gentle devotion to God. We must dismiss at once the ludicrous charge that it is an eulogy of George V on the occasion of his visit to India or even the cunning accusation that it lends itself easily to the apotheosis of any particular Indian deemed worthy of praise, say, Gandhi. The phrase running like a refrain through the whole poem “Thou dispenser of India’s destiny”—cannot be interpreted in its context as signifying anything except God, for this dispenser is addressed also as “Eternal Charioteer”. Nor must we allow ourselves to be misguided by the contention that, because *Jana Gana Mana* refers only to certain provinces and not to all, it is insufficiently national: the song is intended to be a hymn to the one God who is pictured as looking after and uniting the diverse races of India, and the geographical names thrown in are poetically suggestive of some of the physical and ethnological features of the country, no aim is there to make an exhaustive inventory of places and races: the aim is to give a notion of India in her broad and general entirety moving in rhythm to the will of the Lord. Yes, Tagore’s piece has a fineness deserving respect. But has it the qualities that are wanted in the ideal national anthem for India?

Unfortunately it fails on every count. There is not the intense consciousness of India as a mighty supra-individual Being: the mention of the country or of the nation is on the purely ideative or nobly sentimental level; the deep heart has not felt the huge presence and the words are vacant of its intimate force. India the puissant and beloved Mother does not flame out of the poem. There is not even an apostrophe to her as the Mother. The one sentence which brings in the term runs in Tagore’s own translation: “Thy mother-arms were round her and thine eyes gazed upon her troubled face in sleepless love...” Here it is not India but God who is the Mother. This clinches the point that the poem is not directly an invocation of the national Being, much less does it visualise this Being in all its powerful particularity. As a result the ardour to preserve and defend it from losing that particularity is absent: the warrior and the hero are dumb in *Jana Gana Mana*. Neither does it embody the essence of historical India, the country that had created sublime scripture and royal epic and beautiful drama, gripped life with a happy inexhaustible versatility, built grandly in stone and wood, fashioned majestic institutions, cast the lines of harmonious polities and thrilled with the luminous colourful patterns of the careers of memorable men, the country that had grown a passionate pilgrim of both eternity and time and developed a flexible yet ineradicable individuality numerous centuries before Islam’s crescent ever dawned on its farthest horizon. Where in *Jana Gana Mana* are the recognisable features of cultural Indianness? We have only a blurred beauty, a diffused light which can never

serve to draw forth the deep *swabhava* of the national Being which has broken through all bonds and risen again with its world-unifying yet characteristically Indian face. Those two words, “Eternal Charioteer”, are scarcely clear enough to stamp any vivid Indianness upon it: they make just a poetic image, they do not call up the figure of Sri Krishna who charioted Arjuna at the same time to triumph over his enemies and to the Vision of the Cosmic Deity—the Vision that is itself so typically Indian. Throughout the poem we feel a disappointing though never undignified washing away of the fact that the force of unification cannot come by an assembled and outwardly constructed “universal religion” but only by plunging into the wide vibrating heart of the Indian spiritual consciousness which, behind all sectarian excrescences, holds in its multi-rhythmed rapture the secret of a spontaneous fundamental universality. To achieve lasting and natural unity of being we must not annul Indianness but be Indian in the central infinity-focussing sense and develop out of its ancient spiritual potencies a new vision that is no less recognisably Indian for all its modernism and secular State-idea. Lastly, *Jana Gana Mana* keeps a cleavage between the concept of India and the concept of the Divine, instead of making them converge and fuse: India here is only the country whose destiny is dispensed by God, she is collectively held to be separate from the Supreme in the phrase about the latter, “Thy finger points the path to all people”, and in the sentence about the former, “My country lay in a deathlike silence of swoon”. There is indeed a pervading suggestion that India has a spiritual aspiration and adventure, but it is not set aglow and her spiritual origin and destiny are not revealed with a flaming finality by making the Supreme shine out through her Soul.

The Paramount Qualities of “Bande Mataram”

All that *Jana Gana Mana*, despite its fineness, fails to convey is brought out with rare felicity in *Bande Mataram*. The unique union, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, of sweetness, simple directness and high poetic force in *Bande Mataram* is difficult to translate with absolute accuracy into English verse from the original Sanskrit interspersed with a few Bengali words. But the inspired drive of it is admirably caught in general in Sri Aurobindo’s own rendering which is born of his having felt it in his very bloodstream during the days when he led the revolt of Bengal against foreign rule:

Mother, I bow to thee!
 Rich with thy hurrying streams,
 Bright with thy orchard gleams,
 Cool with thy winds of delight,
 Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
 Mother free.

Glory of moonlight dreams,
 Over thy branches and lordly streams,—
 Clad in thy blossoming trees,
 Mother, giver of ease,
 Laughing low and sweet!
 Mother, I kiss thy feet,
 Speaker sweet and low!
 Mother, to thee I bow.

Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,
 When the swords flash out in twice seventy million hands
 And seventy million voices roar
 Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?
 With many strengths who art mighty and stored,
 To thee I call, Mother and Lord!
 Thou who savest, arise and save!
 To her I cry who ever her foemen drave
 Back from plain and sea
 And shook herself free.

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
 Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
 Thou the love divine, the awe
 In our hearts that conquers death.
 Thine the strength that nerves the arm,
 Thine the beauty, thine the charm.
 Every image made divine
 In our temples is but thine.

Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,
 With her hands that strike and her swords of sheen,
 Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,
 And the Muse a hundred-toned.
 Pure and perfect without peer,
 Mother, lend thine ear.
 Rich with thy hurrying streams,
 Bright with thy orchard gleams,
 Dark of hue, O candid-fair
 In thy soul, with jewelled hair
 And thy glorious smile divine,
 Loveliest of all earthly lands,

Showering wealth from well-stored hands!
 Mother, mother mine!
 Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
 Mother great and free!

Not a single demand in order to get the ideal national anthem for India is left unanswered here by a poetic language and rhythm that come with the mystical inevitability of what is called the *mantra*—the visionary word springing by some identification of the hidden poetic self with the deep heart of the thing to be uttered, and catching in the moment of identification the secret divine truth and reality which has figured forth that thing. Not only is each phrase replete with precise and necessary significance, but the various phrases form an unfolding scheme both artistically and philosophically satisfying, a three-stepped progression which, in a speech delivered at the end of January 1908 in the grand square of the National School of Amraoti, Sri Aurobindo is reported to have explained. As with the individual, so with the nation, there are three sheaths or bodies—the gross or outer, the subtle or inner, the causal or higher. The first consists of the physical elements, the shape, the visible organic functioning. In Bankim Chandra's poem it is the rapid rivers and the glimmering orchards, the winds and the harvests waving, the moon-magical nights in forest and on riverside. A transition from the outer body of the Nation-Mother to the inner is through the human populations, the warrior men who are the physical instruments of the fine frenzy of freedom that is hers. Their teeming vitality is the cry of independence she sends forth from the inner to the outer—the inner that is a formation of beautiful disciplined powers, an inspired energy, a pure passion, an illumined thought, a righteous will, an aesthesis enchanting and refining. This subtle sheath of her being bears hints of a still greater mode of her existence and by those hints the supra-individual and national self of her mingles, in our enthusiasms as well as in our meditations, with all the symbols of the Infinite and the Eternal our religious nature instals everywhere in our land. That still greater mode is the prime creative archimage, at once single and many-aspected, whose evolving expression is the vast world with its nations and peoples. Cause and controller from its transcendental status, it is the Divine Truth of all formulated being, the ever-living supreme Personality whose power and bliss and knowledge are the perfection towards which we aspire in this country of ours when we love so vehemently the soil sanctified by hero and saint and seer and when we fling ourselves so happily into the service of the majestic and maternal Presence that we feel to be the indivisible India stretched in a myriad harmonious moods across space and time.

The revelatory vision and the mantric vibration distinguishing *Bande Mataram* throw *Jana Gana Mana* entirely into the shade. And it is no wonder that not Tagore's but Bankim's song has been the motive-force of the whole struggle for India's freedom. Until it burned and quivered in the hearts of our patriots and rose like a prayer and

incantation on their lips, the country was striving with an obscure sense of its own greatness: there was a vagueness, a lukewarmness, a fear: we were overawed by the material prowess and pomp of our foreign rulers and our efforts to find our true selves were spoiled by either an unthinking imitation of the West or else a defensive anti-Western conservatism. We had not struck upon the master-key to the problem of national existence. Then, out of a book that had been neglected when it first appeared, the music of *Bande Mataram* rang into the ambiguously agitated air of the nation's reawakening consciousness. Sri Aurobindo was at that time the political guru of Bengal. He realised at once the creative energy packed into this poem. With a gesture as of an ultimate world-secret found at last, he scattered the words of Bankim Chandra all over idealistic Bengal from whose "seventy million voices" that are rightly celebrated in the poem they spread to Gujarat and Maharashtra and beyond. In his own life he incarnated the presence of the mighty Mother with her aura of mystical consciousness. Under the spell of this presence a giant determination and zest took birth in the entire land, beginning a movement whose goal was bound to be independence. No sacrifice was too exacting, no suffering too poignant to be endured, not death itself could terrify. Laughing and singing, the patriots fought and served and died. Through all the long years during which the struggle for swaraj went on, *Bande Mataram* stimulated and supported the peoples of India, instilling into them a hope and a strength beyond the human. It is the one cry that has made modern Indian history; not political speeches, but this magical strain breaking through Bankim Chandra from the inmost recesses of resurgent India's heart and interfused by Sri Aurobindo with India's mind and life as the true national anthem, brought us, in 1947, on the fifteenth of August which was also the seventy-fifth birthday of Sri Aurobindo, our political liberation. To put such a saviour-song on any other footing than that of national anthem is to be disloyal to the Power that has given us a new birth. To overlook the fact that it has been a saviour-song because it is ideally the national anthem of India is to set ourselves out of tune with the glorious future calling to our glorious past.

K. D. SETHNA
(AMAL KIRAN)

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NIRODBARAN: AN IMPERISHABLE LIGHT

It was 17th July 2006, 8.40 p.m.; a Monday evening. I was in my room at the Ashram's Lake Estate and about to retire. I received a buzz on my mobile. A text message at this hour? From whom could it be? I read it carefully. "Nirod-da left his body at 7.50 p.m." This was from a friend of mine. I was stunned, as if half broken. I sat down on my sofa, and fixed my eyes on Sri Aurobindo's photo. Tears rolled down. Something in my heart was churning. There was an emptiness which no one could fill. I watched myself at that moment and tried to understand what this message meant to me. It had touched me to the core of my heart, instantaneously.

Just the day before and even that very morning when I was in the Ashram I enquired with his attendants about his health, although somehow I had a strong feeling that at any moment he might leave his corporeal body because this is the way I have been seeing the passing of the great souls in Ashram. So the message of his departure was expected at any time. I was hardly concerned with his departure from his material body. But still it touched me deeply. I wondered why.

There is a part within me which has a spontaneous love for him, not based on any intimacy in our outer life. I sat before the photos of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and tried to explore the depth of my feelings for him. I felt that we had lost the physical presence of someone who was a true child of the Mother, who had grown up from the age of thirty to seventy in the grand physical presence of the Avatar and the Divine Mother in the scintillating atmosphere of Sri Aurobindo Ashram; a person who represented an extension of that grand presence had withdrawn; a great privilege had disappeared from the earth atmosphere.

Nirodbaran was chosen to be a personal attendant of the Lord, Sri Aurobindo, for twelve years and then to assist the Divine Mother for another twenty-three years. Many devotees and admirers received inspiration in their dreams and visions from Sri Aurobindo, "Nirod is representing us and is doing our work in the Ashram". And to some others, "Nirod is there who can guide you spiritually". A person of that calibre and inner status was among us for the last thirty-three years (after the Mother's physical departure), directly helping and guiding a number on the path of the Integral Yoga. People came to him from many corners of the world and having met him, received hints in their dream about him and turned their life entirely towards the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Nirodbaran was a light to all spiritual seekers of Integral Yoga and his life was an inspiration kindling all hearts to turn towards the Integral Yoga. His representation was an authentic representation of Sri Aurobindo's thought and action. He had seen the infinite personality of the Lord, Sri Aurobindo, very closely with human eyes, he had listened to the immortal voice of the Lord with a human ear, he had followed the footsteps of the Lord's invitation very steadily on the path of Integral Yoga. He was a man of the highest spiritual privilege. Sri Aurobindo was everything for him, the

Supreme, the supramental Avatar, the Lord, the teacher, the Brahman, the Guru, the father, the friend,—everything.

He knew very well from the Mother that Sri Aurobindo represents the Supreme on earth. So he has been able to bring the Supreme's figure to mankind through his careful watching of the Lord's movements day and night. He has tried to follow the silent communication between the Lord and the Divine Mother, he has observed the Divine Mother's care to the Lord. He has dared to ask the Lord all the ambiguous, stupid, mundane questions of mankind. At the same time he has conveyed the transient, feeble and weak personality of the human being to the Supreme through his correspondance.

Nirodbaran was a symbolic representation of a great mystery. When an Avatar comes to earth for the evolution of earth consciousness, He brings some of His Vibhuti to carry out the task of this difficult transformation. They become His greatest devotees and close followers who remain by His side to complete all his important assignments. As the heroes like Arjun, Uddhav, Sanjay, Vidura, Bhishma and the Pandavas were with Sri Krishna in the Mahabharata, similarly with Sri Aurobindo were there Champaklal-ji, Nirod-da, Pavitra-da, Nolini-da etc. No one can replace those personalities (specially brought upon the earth) in the history of Sri Aurobindo's Avatarhood. We can see in the anecdotes of each one's early life, hints of "Morning shows the day". Because they have been chosen by the Divine to become the legendary comrades of the Divine in the history of the Supramental evolution on earth, they are the forerunners of mankind. They are like the chosen ones mentioned in *Savitri*:

One among many thousands never touched,
Engrossed in the external world's design,
Is chosen by a secret witness Eye
And driven by a pointing hand of Light
Across his soul's unmapped immensitudes. (p. 80)

When he was a little boy in a small village near Chittagong (now in Bangladesh), reared by the hands of the teacher as a nursery child among the many children of the village, a monk noticed him and predicted, "This child if he happen to rise, he will reach a very great spiritual height in his life." Nirodbaran was not only a great personality of this great adventure but also one among the few great pillars of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Nirodbaran obtained his medical degree from Edinburgh and was on the cross-roads of life to fulfil his ambition. Probably that was the period when God touched his life and he was pulled by the intoxicating love of the Divine Mother to Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry and became a major player in the Divine game. He was drawn to the Mother since 1930, decided to join Ashram finally in 1933 and came directly under the physical guidance of Sri Aurobindo in the capacity of a personal attendant of Guru in the year 1938.

Sri Aurobindo moulded Nirodbaran as a poet, Karmin, Yogi and a Jnani according to his human aspiration in conjunction with Divine's will. He stood before the Divine as an ordinary human being and dared to ask all kinds of questions—innocent queries of mankind. He dared to argue with the Divine with all the doubts, disbelief and the impossibilities that man represents; writing from the plane of unconsciousness and ignorance, he received from the Lord the answers to the questions and the certitude of transformation of human nature into Divine nature.

Nirodbaran came to the Divine as an imperfect man, as a character representative of humanity. As he grew up under the Divine's guidance he developed his human eyes to follow secretly each of the Divine's movements and its purpose of Avatarhood on earth. Nirodbaran was one among the few who had brought to light many facets of Sri Aurobindo's supreme personality. It was as if man had met the Supreme in person, seen His magnanimity with his inner eyes and translated it in human language by which every ordinary human being can now onwards feel familiar with and live directly with the Supreme.

* * *

When I learnt of Nirod-da's physical departure, what struck me most was the kind of lamentation that besieged me all of a sudden. What was he to me that this message could break my heart? Of course it didn't destroy me. Rather it awakened me instantly from my slumber in ordinary consciousness. As I sat there that evening, looking at the photos of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, I felt a quivering within me.

In a deep silence, I was engrossed in the thoughts of my acquaintance with him these last fifteen years. I understood that though physically it was with Nirod-da that I had a contact, yet it was as if he were the representation of my Lord, Sri Aurobindo. Till that time I didn't notice it, but just after his departure it was revealed so clearly to me that this privilege of Sri Aurobindo's presence behind the physical presence of Nirod-da, which was available to us so closely in our ignorance has now been withdrawn from us. Of course as I have heard from one of his close friends that one of the boons the Divine Mother has given him personally that Sri Aurobindo's presence would always be there behind him.

When I looked at Nirod-da, I found his identity as a person always associated with Sri Aurobindo and His yoga. I have seen Nirod-da all the time living in the world of Sri Aurobindo—either talking about Him or His yoga, listening to the experience of several devotees, writing on Him, speaking about his reminiscence of Him, or remembering Him in silence, breathing all the time His atmosphere and finally sleeping in the Lord's room. He had nothing in his life other than Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. As Narad was to Lord Narayan similarly we can see Nirodbaran to Lord Sri Aurobindo. He has seen Sri Aurobindo as an Avatar and lived with him accordingly till his last breath. Amal Kiran said, "Nirod is always in my heart and he can never be dead." And

his close friend Esha-di said, “I do not feel like going to his funeral to have our last meeting because he will definitely come to meet me as a representative of Sri Aurobindo in the land where I will be sent after my physical departure.”

Nirod-da was a yogi and a devotee.

He was egoless by nature and sought no recognition for himself. He was a humble worshipper of Truth and the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. He was an ideal Sadhak as required in Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga.

I really appreciate Nirod-da and I would like to thank him for ever.

KRISHNENDU

***Nirodbaran:** I have always seriously thought that all men are after happiness which is a deformation of Ananda. Their acts of desires, sin, lust, striving after power,—in one word, all their activities, are guided by that one principle: seeking for Ananda, or happiness, if you like...*

[Sri Aurobindo drew an arrow indicating “happiness”.]

***Sri Aurobindo:** A mistake; many men are not after happiness and do not believe it is the true aim of life. It is the physical vital that seeks after happiness, the bigger vital is ready to sacrifice it in order to satisfy its passions, search for power, ambition, fame or any other motive. If you say it is because of the happiness power, fame etc. gives, that again is not universally true. Power may give anything else, but it does not usually give happiness; it is something in its very nature arduous and full of difficulty to get, to keep or to use—I speak of course of power in the ordinary sense. A man may know he can never have fame in this life, but yet work in the hope of posthumous fame or on the chance of it. He may know that the satisfaction of his passion will bring him everything rather than happiness—suffering, torture, destruction—yet he will follow his impulse. So also the mind as well as the larger vital is not bound by the pursuit of happiness. It can seek Truth rather or the victory of a cause. To reduce all to a single hedonistic strain seems to me very poor psychology. Neither Nature nor the vast Spirit in things are so limited and one-tracked as that.*

(Nirodbaran’s *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, 2nd Complete Ed. 1995, pp. 482-83)

PAINTING AS SADHANA

Krishnalal Bhatt (1905-1990)

(Continued from the issue of December 2006)

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[Krishnalal's correspondence with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo]

1937

20-Jan-'37: Mother,

Yesterday I sent one copy done from Ajanta painting. I did it on a piece of wood which cracked a little while I was working on it, as it became wet by water-colours. I think some precaution should be taken to prevent it from cracking more due to weather. It can be fixed in the groove of a specially made frame. Can Chandulal see it and suggest anything?

Sri Aurobindo: It is a little difficult perhaps but Mother has asked Chandulal to do whatever can be done. Chandulal thinks it will not break any more.

25. Jan. '37: Mother,

Herewith I send a card which can be given to Romen to-morrow.

Mother: The card is very pretty. I have sent it to Romen.

Blessings.

3. Mar-37: Mother,

We have done portraits of Romen with his sitar. We wish to offer the pictures to Mother and at the same time to have more practical hints on portrait painting. We feel that we are lacking much in this line, and so Mother's guidance will be much helpful.

If there is no inconvenience may we request for an interview when Mother finds time?

[Signed also by Sanjiban]

Sri Aurobindo: As soon as it is possible, Mother will call you.

23.3.37: Mother,

Sometimes I want small pots of plants which I require to keep in my room for some days for drawing and painting. I have asked Manubhai and Jyotin. They have no objection. I shall keep them according to the instructions.

Sri Aurobindo: Very well.

27.3.37: Mother,

What is meant by ‘difficulty’ in our sadhana? And what is its nature?

Sri Aurobindo: The main difficulty in the sadhana consists in the movements of the lower nature, ideas of the mind, desires and attractions of the vital, habits of the body consciousness that stand in the way of the growth of the higher consciousness—there are other difficulties, but these are the bulk of the opposition.

10.6.37: Mother,

Since some 3 or 4 days I don’t get sound sleep. A little of constipation is also there. And there remains nervous strain. I get some pain on the heart, I think, I don’t know if it is on the chest muscles or inside.

Sri Aurobindo: You can consult Becharlal about the pain.

21.6.37: Mother,

I took medicine from Becharlal for the pain on heart. Pain stopped and so the medicine is also stopped. But now and then I get a little pain on the heart, but I am not inclined to take the medicine unless You find it quite necessary. I am attending to all my usual works, and going out for a walk as before.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not necessary to take medicine, I think.

K: But as yet sleeplessness is continued more or less. I get sleep very late—twelve or one o’clock or so. And in morning I wake up at about five and don’t get more sleep. During day also I lie down but don’t get sleep.

[Undated]: [end] ...I do not know how to relieve the strain on nerves. Lately I was remaining more reclusive. If that is the reason for this strain I think of taking a walk in the morning and do some outdoor sketching, and do sometimes studies with Sanjiban and like that come out from the seclusion. I would be happy to have your suggestions. I have done a picture and a study from nature which I will bring to You when I come next Friday.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, Mother approves of this idea. It may release the tension of nerves and prevent the brooding on the suggestions.

29-6-37: Mother,

I asked Jwalanti whether she had time and no inconvenience to take my French lesson. She said that she was ready to help in such matters with Mother’s approval.

So may I know what You think about it?

Mother: You can go.

K: If you approve she has given me time on Tuesday and Friday at 11am to go to her place.

Mother: Since some time I wanted to tell you that the cards you are sending me daily are very good. I shall use them to send the blessings of 15th August to France and elsewhere.

With my love and blessings.

6-7-37: Mother,

Now I don't remain in the nervous strain as before and so am getting better sleep than before though not quite sound. But I find that more or less like a cinema-film ideas come of how I am injured, how I was given blows in the vital, and so I feel repulsion against the persons who did that and still show in some way the same attitude. When I received the blows I could keep quiet and firm, but now I don't know why those things rise and go on. I wish I should be free from such repulsion towards any person.

Sri Aurobindo: When these thoughts arise, there should be no acceptance, and as far as possible the mind should pay no attention to them and turn away elsewhere. I do not mean to struggle with them for that will only bring strain, but to detach yourself from them, refuse to regard them as your own, ignore and not attend to them, as far as possible.

8-July-37: Mother,

I was told by somebody that I was going on indulging in my desires—especially sex impulse—under the pretext of my weakness. About this weakness I have written to you quite in the beginning and again I had a talk with you when I confessed it. As far as I am conscious of this confession to you or to some whom I trust as friends I never wanted to cheat them, i.e., behind the confession wanting to continue my desires. But I may be mistaken in this, so I think it best for me to put it before You and be sure of my confession.

Sri Aurobindo: The question is whether there is any indulgence of the desires or not. If you do not give them any indulgence however slight in action, if you keep away from all opportunities for stumbling etc, then it is all right. Then there is the inward indulgence, attachment, etc.—if you sincerely reject that from within, then it is all right.

6.8.37: Mother,

Sometimes when I go to sleep at night I find some disturbance. As if the consciousness is covered up, I fall asleep for a short time and all of a sudden I wake up and find myself suffocated and helpless as one would feel when drowned. Last night it was more.

During daytime I don't find any disturbance; but to-day in the morning meditation I went in that suffocated condition.

Can this be due to my going to the hospital for the ear-treatment?

Sri Aurobindo: It is not likely. This kind of attack is often due to a resistance somewhere in the being. When it comes you should call in the Mother with a will to get rid of the resistance and open.

27.9.37: Mother,

I have finished two pictures which I want to bring to You.

I will be very glad if You allow me an interview if possible at Your convenience.

Mother: The end and the beginning of the month are very busy times for me, but as soon as it is possible I will call you.

31. Oct. 37: Mother,

I have received an invitation for sending pictures to an exhibition to be held at Karachi in December under the auspices of the Gujarat Sahitya Parishad. They undertake to take care of the things and send them back carefully.

I put it for Mother's consideration.

Mother: How do you intend to send the pictures? will somebody take them there?

Apart from that, no objection.

Blessings.

2. Nov. 37: Mother,

Pictures can be sent to the exhibition by post or railway. They should be sent without frames, so that they can be rolled and packed in a roll made of thin tin plate. This is what I think if You approve of it.

Mother: Will they not pay customs?

If not, it is all right.

29-11-37: Mother,

I have not written any prices for the pictures of Karachi exhibition.

If You mean to put them for sale I may write their prices.

Mother: It is better not to sell the pictures.

Blessings.

(Dec.'37): [end] ...come down?

Why was this movement? And what was it that I had to come in the normal consciousness and not expand or not go up and receive from above?

Mother: It was the vital ascending to join the higher consciousness. The pressure was necessitated by the resistance in the outward being.

In such cases one must remain very quiet and fearless so that the movement can complete itself.

1938

(1937-38?): Mother,

Herewith I send Kamala's drawing book for You to see.

I would like to know how you find her work.

Sri Aurobindo: Mother finds that she is doing very good studies.

(8.1.38): Mother,

Yesterday I went to Nakashima to give him the money. As he had told me before, I had to give him Rs.15 but now he said that it was only Rs.7, which sum he did not like to take. I pressed him for it but he did not want to accept it. So I return the whole sum to you.

As for the two books, shall I give them to the library?

I wish to keep them with me only if you permit me to do so.

Mother: You can keep the books—but if somebody wishes to see them, I will send him or her to you.

11/1/38: [end] ...have instructions.

If it is possible may I request for an interview at your convenience?

[pencilled here “(oil paintings)”]

Mother: I will let you know as soon as I shall have some time.

P.S. I have given your list of requirements to Chandulal who will do the needful.

18. Jan. 38: Mother,

Last night I got disturbed and could not sleep well. When I went to sleep thoughts began recurring at random. I tried to keep quiet but on the contrary got a strain on the nerves and heaviness in the head. I woke up very soon due to some sounds of the procession in the street. And the thoughts began to move again. Also the thoughts of losing the balance of mind began. I got up, walked in the room for some time trying to be quiet. Again I went to sleep. I had some dreams and after about an hour woke up and the disturbance continued like the first time. After some time again I slept; this time I woke up twice but there was no disturbance.

I have not found any cause for that in my outward dealings.

Since some time I find that thoughts go on moving. I try to remain quiet and aloof from them, but sometimes succeed and sometimes get strain on the nerves. Thoughts are not of anything in particular. Yesterday I had the thoughts about painting and also I saw some colour schemes but then everything began to muddle up with the heaviness in the head. I don't understand as to where the defect lies.

P.S. Sometimes in sleep I feel going on what I have talked or read during daytime.

Mother: Why do you get upset about such things?

Do not worry about them and they will lose their power.

Blessings.

18.4.38: Mother,

Since 15 or 20 days I find that I remain fatigued. During day-time I work in G. office but due to the fatigue in the body I can't work steadily. Before evening I am completely exhausted.

In my food and sleep I am as usual. I don't find the cause of this weakness. I am interested in the work also.

Mother: You may need a tonic. You can ask Nirod for one.

Blessings.

[Nirod gave him Melatone, but ten days later, he (Nirod) wrote to Sri Aurobindo, "Melatone didn't give him much good effect. As it looks like nervous fatigue, Kola may do him good. If you have any more Nergine, he could resume it, perhaps." But Mother's stock was over.]

6/July/38: [end]

These pictures seem to have been done by some artists of Rajput tradition.

Mr. Raymond has presented to me his new book on architecture. I think of presenting to him four or five of these pictures.

Mother: It is all right.

20/Sept/38: Mother,

The pictures which were sent out for the exhibition [*to Karachi in Dec. 1937*] have come back. They were carelessly handled and so are torn in some places. One of the big landscape-pictures is torn much near a corner and also in the middle. I shall try to repair them.

I think of showing them to:— Sunderanand, Mr. & Mrs. Sammer, Jwalanti, Krishnamurthy (who comes for pranam), Jyotindra, Pujalal, and perhaps a few more ashram people.

I may arrange them in my room for one day if you approve of it.

Mother: Yes, it is all right. [*signed*]

8. Oct.'38: Mother,

Since to-day morning I feel a little feverish. My legs and joints ache. I may take medicine if you find it necessary.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, you should have it treated.

17.10.'38: Mother,

I saw one enlarged photo of Sri Aurobindo with Jatindra. I would like to have one like that. Will you kindly permit me for one? If you sanction, Jatindra says, it can be ordered from Bengal.

Sri Aurobindo: Yes.

(*To be continued*)

S. V. BHATT

PAVITRA-DA'S LABORATORY

PAVITRA-DA was one of the brilliant students of the prestigious French Ecole Polytechnique. He graduated as an engineer.

When he was in Japan in 1922, he started a chemical laboratory. This lab became famous and was visited by many dignitaries including His Imperial Highness, Prince Chichibu. This lab served Pavitra-da for some time as his means of earning a living.

He arrived in Pondicherry in 1925 and stayed in the Rosary House. When the northern block of the main Ashram building was constructed, he was given a room on the northwest corner.

Pavitra-da was the Director of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and set up its laboratory in the early fifties.

Pavitra-da's laboratory was on the western side of the first floor of the Ashram building. The Mother had named the room "Alchemy". Abhay Singh and Sujata used to work there under Pavitra-da's guidance. Later, I continued the same work. It is a small room of about 3m × 5.5m. A door on its western side opens to his bedroom.

Most of the items prepared here were according to Pavitra-da's formulae, which have now been given to the Chemistry section of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

Preparations for the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's use

Pastilles, a type of peppermint lozenge, were prepared for Sri Aurobindo. Before the Second World War, these were procured from France. But the supply of pastilles as well as many other items was stopped because of the war. Once the pastilles were prepared for the Mother also.

Pavitra-da once prepared a perfume named "Muguet" for the Mother, after obtaining its formula from France. She liked this perfume very much and it used to be prepared for Her exclusive use. Bath salts and some other items were also prepared for the Mother's use.

Items which were given to others by the Mother

Apart from the above-mentioned items, some of the other preparations were: powder, face cream, shaving cream, tooth powder, hair lotion, blue water for eye wash, and anti-bourbillon for chilblains. Pavitra-da guided Jatindra-da of the Bakery in producing washing soaps also.

Many of these items were distributed to the inmates by the Prosperity. Nowadays some of them are prepared in the Prosperity department for the use of the inmates.

BORN FREE

Rudra! Rudra! I too am wroth with you
Ever waiting in your cave to strike.
There is a tidal wave that rises to the brain:
It is my ire.
There is a raging in the heart:
It is my fire.

No sooner has Lord Shiva bestowed his boon
And hardly have we felt the sweetness of its kiss,
Rejoicing in the end of pain, come none to soon,
And which of life's joys accords the greatest bliss,
Our grateful heart rejoicing,
Our throat singing Great Shiva's praise,
Than we see your trident raise
Its fearsome shadow over our now troubled head.
Hard on the heels of Lord Shiva's fine bestowing
You have caught us, all unknowing,
To sow again dread havoc in our lives,
To steal the honey from our hives
And the sweetness of our wives,
To rob our nest
And to blight the land with every kind of pest.
You have put all hopes to flight.

Now you are here nothing can come right.
You storm across vast stretches with your heedless stride,
Kicking huge boulders to the sea.
There is no nook for us in which to hide.
We are flies stuck in the amber of innocent desires,
Our hopes all spent that yesterday Lord Shiva lit.
Today pale ghosts and goblins through them flit.
What is the use of anything
If every time you've wreaked your great destruction
You come with gifts again
Inviting us to call you by a benevolent name?
How can our hearts have rest
When we know this day's bright sun
Is destined for a bloodstained West?

Let it sink once and for all.
 Let no trace of sweet memories be retrieved
 That we may never more remain deceived.
 Let your compassion fly beyond recall.
 What do you say Great Shiva,
 You than whom nobody stands above?
 If no God is greater than you Mahadeva
 What can we aspire for, to whom appeal
 When Rudra places upon our brow his dreaded seal?
 Speak if you have words!

These words I'll say:
 There stands one higher and far above
 Though in me He lives: His name is Love.
 'Tis He who gives, He who withdraws
 'Tis He who opens and closes the doors.
 He is drought. He is rain.
 He is destruction and its gain,
 Of one thing be sure: nothing is vain.
 So take the bitter with the sweet.
 To reject either is to refuse your fate to meet.
 To reject both is death
 Which nobody is free to choose.
 Love life and its vicissitudes.
 Whether to win or lose is not for you to say.
 Be sure, whichever is meted out to you,
 It is by Love which speeds you on your way.
 Live then in full measure till your last breath.
 In the very end the mystery will be unsealed
 And the secret of all riddles be revealed.
 Once your life's path is fully travelled
 Then will the enigma be unravelled,
 Then will you see what lies behind your world so tangible.
 Within its folds are hid beauties unimaginable
 That only half reveal themselves in dreams, music and poems
 Sown upon your path as omens
 On which the mind spins its own themes.

When the mortal prison bars are shed
 You will be taken by Love's hand,
 You will be led

To where you see the whole,
 The universes' play as though within a little bowl.
 Then will you understand
 That which is One and sole
 Of which your life's a single strand
 And yet the whole.
 Then will you of doubt be free
 And your sorrows so keenly felt
 And you yourself will melt
 For they and you are He.

'Tis true that nothing yet can in this life endure,
 Nor bliss nor pain
 Nor drought nor rain
 For Love alone is pure to stand the fire of everlastingness
 The only one that will not jade.
 All the rest must sink or wholly fade.
 Only when you find Him will your heart have rest.
 Till then call courage,
 Sink in the trough and ride on the crest,
 With the trust of a child at its mother's breast
 Unless a very special Grace reveal to you
 The secret of His word,
 The one that issued with His breath,
 The one that drives me
 And that stands my law above.
 It is the law that guides me,
 The secret of unutterable Love.
 Go then and seek no more. Live with faith and courage only.

O Mahadeva, Bestower of boons,
 Grant me then this Grace
 No other shall I ever ask:
 That I may see this face to face.

That I may not grant though you may ask.
 It is outside my power.
 It is Love's task.
 Match only love with love, not with desire.
 You may yet see all in this same hour.
 Fling self and all you have into the fire

That burns all sin and gives the purity that you require.

I flung my heart, my soul, myself.
 The fire I'd lit had no power to burn.
 It showed me the worlds and the stars that turn
 By joy impelled.
 All things inscrutable
 Were rendered readable:
 Destruction and its secret gain,
 Of drought the rain.
 All sacred mysteries were at once made plain,
 The why and wherefore of each vast and littlest thing
 In kindness You refused not to explain.
 Everything in whole and intricate part
 Was shown to ease my restless heart.
 Your wisdom it could no longer doubt
 Its justice never disbelieve.
 All questions were in one sweet moment put to rout.
 Then with my heart all overborne
 My little light of mind was by your breath of Love blown out,
 That Breath that issued with the Word
 That created universes and created me,
 A man to ask and grow and love, born free.

MAGGI

*O Thou that lovest, strike! If Thou strike me not now, I shall know that
 Thou lov'st me not.*

Sri Aurobindo

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 427)

MOMENTS, ETERNAL

(Continued from the issue of December 2006)

The Four Aspects of the Mother

THE MOTHER used to tell us so many things on Her own...

She was once walking in the Playground as the March Past was to begin in some time. She came and stood under the Neem-tree. She stood leaning against the wall in silence for a while. Then rather unexpectedly She began:

“I have come this time in all my aspects. This had never happened before in the history of the earth, I have never come in this totality.”

I looked at Her, wonder-struck. Looking gently at me, the Mother just smiled. I asked Her all of a sudden:

“Are you Mother Durga?”

The Mother smiled a little once again and nodded in agreement. I saw Mother Durga before me! What an indescribable form! Sri Aurobindo’s *Durga-stotra* flashed in my mind:

Mother Durga! Rider on the lion, trident in hand, thy body of beauty armour-clad...

Then I asked:

“Are you Mother Mahalakshmi?”

The Mother nodded once again in the same way. A mysterious smile lit up Her face yet again. An otherworldly loveliness flowed from Her. Standing close to Her, my heart filled up with a marvellous newborn joy. I felt the magic of the Mother’s immaculate beauty. There was so much enchantment in that magnetic beauty of Hers. Sri Aurobindo’s lines echoed in my ears:

Above them is the miracle of eternal beauty, an unseizable secret of divine harmonies, the compelling magic of an irresistible universal charm and attraction....

My uncontrollable curiosity compelled me once again and I could not help asking:

“Are you Mother Mahasaraswati?”

The Mother answered each of my questions with the same compassionate love and for a few seconds revealed to me Her aspect of Mahasaraswati. Her patience was infinite. I couldn’t control my curiosity and the questions kept coming irresistibly.

“Mother, are you Rajrajeshwari?”

Once again the Mother nodded in agreement.

“Tranquil is she and wonderful, great and calm for ever.”

I felt the Mother very distant as She stood before me solemn and immobile.

I kept naming all the gods and goddesses and it was always the same question: “Are you Mother Anandamayi? Are you Mother Chandi? Are you Mother this, Are you Mother that?”

The Mother just kept nodding in assent. My bag of questions was inexhaustible! Finally, at the end, I asked Her:

“Are you Mother Mahakali?”

That vast amazing form of the Mother comes up before my eyes even today. How unattainable She looked as I stared at Her helplessly. Where was that ever familiar Mother of ours? That form of Hers was so unfamiliar that a terrible fear gripped me. But the Mother came back to normal within a flash. With a soft smile She took my hands into Hers. However, I could not come out of that state even with the divine touch of Her hands. I just stood there silently.

Sri Aurobindo’s description of Mahakali in the sixth chapter of *The Mother* flashed in my mind. Seeing the Mother in these different forms, I was overwhelmed by an unearthly sort of feeling. The Mother began talking to me as before and my fear slowly dissolved. The Mother was smiling again. I again found my Mother in Her form of a friend.

I had the same experience on another occasion. One day Manoj asked the Mother in the Playground:

“Mother, why did you create boys and girls?”

The Mother kept quiet for some time. Then She laughed and said:

“Your seeing humans as boy or girl is not quite right. When I talk to you, I don’t think this is Manoj or that is Priti. I talk to the soul or the inner being that is within each one of you. This soul is not male or female. So don’t rack your brains with all these outer differences. You know that I am neither male nor female. One day you will realise who I am.”

The Mother looked at both of us with mysteriously happy eyes. It felt as if somewhere...I had a vision of Her in Her immensity. Just for an instant. And then once more She assumed Her usual form. I don’t know why but I felt that was indeed Her real form.

The Mother in Her Maheshwari Aspect

Quite unexpectedly the Mother would become still, immobile, quite distant...and keep staring into space. Her eyes were looking into some faraway place of which we had no idea. She was giving flowers to each one and blessing them with a gentle smile on Her face. But She was so steeped in a meditative state, so majestically immense and deep at that time that we could not find our Mother of everyday then. This

Maheshwari form of Hers was beyond our comprehension. She was surrounded by an infinite vastness, by an unparalleled, incalculable glory. I do not have the words or the ability to describe that incredible loveliness. Why, even a little child would arrive in front of the Mother and gape at Her face overawed. Even the little ones would feel as if the Mother was lost somewhere faraway.... As soon as they had received the flowers from Her hand they would run away and then keep looking at the Mother from a distance. Had these sensitive children experienced something? As they all assembled at a distance and looked at the still, tranquil image of the Mother, they would become quiet too. The usual cackle of children inside the Ashram would abruptly cease. And in that atmosphere of quiet everything felt wonderful even if I did not quite understand the reason for this. Like the rays of the sun, this stillness and tranquillity would penetrate each one of us and make us quiet. There was pin-drop silence all around then. How can one ever forget that kind of atmosphere? This inexhaustible, tender stillness and silence pervading the air?

*If Lord of the Universe I call thee,
Ah then, so far dost thou seem to me!*

Experiencing the Mother in her aspect of Maheshwari or Aditi made us feel very faraway indeed since we were so used to knowing Her as our friend and comrade. Like the five Pandavas who had always known Sri Krishna as their friend, we too had the same rapport with the Mother. Even after receiving the vision, and experiencing the Mother in Her different forms and aspects, we were still used to seeing Her as our friend and that is how She was always present in our hearts and minds. Like Bhishma, Dronacharya and the others looked up to Sri Krishna as an Avatar, Nolini-da, Amrita-da, Pavitra-da, André-da, Nirod-da, Dyuman-da, Purani-ji and so many other senior sadhaks always looked upon the Mother as Mother Aditi Herself, as Maheshwari. Whenever the Mother called out Pavitra-da's name he would at once answer the call with the greatest humility and obedience. As soon as André-da entered the Tennis Court, the Mother would wave Her tennis racket to greet him. And André-da would respectfully advance towards Her with folded hands.

Our rapport with the Mother was the rapport of Arjuna with Sri Krishna.

The Mother in Her Durga Aspect

The Mother is arranging flowers in Her first-floor room. Mridu-mashi is sitting by the door with her flower-garland. Mridu-mashi would come daily at this time to offer pranam to the Mother with her flower-garland. I don't know what happened on that day but as soon as I entered the Mother's room to get her flower-blessing, Mridu-mashi exclaimed:

“Mother, Priti is Saraswati, Pratima (Sarkar) is Lakshmi, and myself, I...”
 And saying this she jumped up and rushed to the Mother’s Feet and roared:
 “I am Mahishasura!”

And she laughed a terrible laugh. She kept laughing like that looking at the Mother and I could hardly recognise Mridu-mashi. Her features looked strangely altered. Suddenly the Mother stood up and strongly pressed Mridu-mashi’s head down with Her Foot. I felt as if Durga was slaying the demon Mahishasura. For an instant the Mother revealed Her Durga aspect. Mridu-mashi’s uncontrollable laughter would not cease as the Mother, her eyes blazing, stood with Her Foot firmly pressing Mridu-mashi’s head.

(To be continued)

PRITI DAS GUPTA

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

ERROR OF EXTOLLING VITAL LOVE

Whatever may be the glamour of a vital love, once it falls away and one gets to a higher level, it should be seen to have been not the great thing one imagined. To keep this exaggerated estimate of it is to hold the consciousness back from the pull towards the greater thing with which that cannot for a moment compare. If one keeps a fervour like that for an inferior past it must make it more difficult to develop the entire person for a higher future. It is indeed not the Mother’s wish that anybody should look back in a spirit of enthusiastic appreciation to the old vital love. It was indeed “so little” in any true estimate of things. It is not at all a question of comparison or of extolling the vital passion of one at the expense of that of the other. It is the whole thing that must dwindle in its proportions and recede into the shadowy constructions of the past that have no longer any importance.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Mother, SABCL, Vol. 25, p. 364)

NARAD REMEMBERS

(Continued from the issue of December 2006)

THÉMIS ON POETS AND POETRY

HERE are some more of Tehmi's comments on poets and poetry.

Tehmi: Sri Aurobindo wrote a short commentary on my poems.

*

Those who don't love poetry must be missing so much.

*

I think it is a real grace and a gift if one loves poetry.

*

Poetry has to sing—it must sing. The moderns have lost that.

*

The world won't get to *Savitri* easily. Its tone is epic.

*

On A. E. (George Russell): The English don't like him very much.
(When I asked if it could be due to his mysticism she said, "Possibly.")

*

On Matthew Arnold: His genius is different, it is not poetic poetry.

*

On Blake: I like him very much. Very powerful. His early lyrical poems are of a different type but "Songs of Experience" are very good, very powerful. His "Songs of Innocence" are apparently very simple but they are like songs of the soul. His early lyrical poetry is easy to understand but the later poetry is difficult to understand.

He must be studied slowly and profoundly. His prophetic poems are very difficult.

*

On Robert Bridges: Very nice, although I haven't read much of him.
(She did remember the poem on mountains as I read it to her: "Beautiful are the mountains whence ye come.")

*

On Rupert Brooke: Very lyrical poetry.

*

On Byron: More externalised—although there are some passages that are very fine, on the whole it is more external.

*

On Chesterton: Chesterton is very lively, always.

*

On Coleridge: A wonderful poet but he has a very small output.

*

On Dante: Dante has meaning. We would enjoy him if we read him.

*

On Dante's *Inferno*: Visionary, meaningful and symbolic.

*

On Emerson: He is not a poet. His genius is not poetic at all. He is a thinker.

*

On Kipling: A vigorous rhymer.

*

On Meredith: Meredith is quite a difficult poet. But it is all so far away, so far back, I can't remember.

*

On Milton: Milton has a lot of music without too much meaning—he is very musical—his music goes on and on. He is very sonorous but it is more word music.

*

On William Morris: Conscious and overdone. Not spontaneous.

*

On Christina Rossetti: A very small output but what she has written is very fine.

*

On Shelley: I would put Shelley along with Wordsworth, not above.

*

On Swinburne: Quite poetic, complexly poetic, but more of a poetry of words—that is the main impression—not simply and purely poetic, complexly poetic we might say.

*

On Tennyson: A little lollipoppish. Too sweet!

Most of his work I don't like at all but "Crossing the Bar" has quite a different rhythm and is quite deep.

*

On Dylan Thomas: I haven't read much, some here and there, but good.

*

On Francis Thompson: Overloaded, decadent. Decadent means when something is overdone and not really natural, overworked.

*

On Henry Vaughan: Very nice.

*

On Yeats: Yeats has a more realistic turn than A. E. who is more 'airy-fairy'. Yeats is very strong, very powerful, certainly one of the 20th century's greatest poets.

* * *

From Tehmi's papers:

[As I remember:]

Amrita and I were talking about Wordsworth's poetry and I quoted to him this passage saying how well it describes our Mother—as though written for Her. He asked me to type it out for him—then in the afternoon took it “up” and read it out to Mother.


Mother wrote this and sent it to me.

—Tehmi

Facsimile of the lines from Wordsworth sent to the Mother:

Thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace,
Not know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon Thy face.
Flowers laugh before Thee in their beds,
And fragrance in Thy footing treads...
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens through Thee are
fresh and strong.

Love and Blessings



(To be continued)

NARAD (RICHARD EGGENBERGER)

NEAR NIROD-DA—SRI AUROBINDO’S SERVITOR

AFTER crossing many hurdles and overcoming numerous difficulties and ordeals I reached the Ashram on 21st February 1975—the day of the Divine Mother’s Birth and a Day of Darshan (*i.e.*, seeing the Divine Incarnation face to face).

In course of time, I came in contact with many dedicated servitors of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: Ramakrishna Das (Babaji Maharaj), Prapatti-ji, Ravindra-ji, Nolini-da, Champaklal-ji, Bansidhar-bhai, Dyuman-bhai, Pujalal-ji, Madhav Pandit-ji, Jagannath-ji, Amal-kiran-da, Pranab-da and Jugal-da. They have not only been an inspiration to me, but have also literally taught me how to proceed along this great path prepared by the Master and the Mother.

One among them I knew mainly through his books: *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, *Sri Aurobindo for All Ages*, *Sri Aurobindo’s Humour*, *The Mother—Sweetness and Light*. This was our revered Nirod-da (Nirodbaran Talukdar), M.B. Ch. B. Edinburgh (the equivalent of M.B.B.S.). Though a doctor, he entered the path of the Integral Yoga of Transformation by working in the Building Service and the Timber godown on his Guru’s command. I not only read his books but also started translating some of them into Oriya with his kind permission. These were published serially in the monthly *Navaprakash* and the quarterly *Navajyoti* and later brought out in book form.

When I saw him, even at that advanced age, decorating our Master and Mother’s Samadhi with flowers in the early morning and also at noon, I was overwhelmed with joy and spontaneously I learnt from him the way of service and surrender to the Divine. But I had no close contact with him. Our intimacy developed in a simple way through a miraculous act of the Mother’s Grace.

One day, five years ago, he had come for a walk with his niece to the Tennis Ground where I work and stay. I saw him from a distance, offered a spontaneous salutation (Namaskar) and at once noticed that his legs were dry and his feet cracked.

Seeing him in that condition I asked, “Nirod-da! Why are your feet so dry and cracked? Don’t you massage your legs with oil?”

“No,” he replied. “Who will do it regularly?”

Immediately I asked, “May I do it?”

His niece replied, “Of course you can, if you wish to and have the time.”

Heaven’s blessings poured over me. I immediately went to my room, brought a bottle of coconut oil that I had got from Prosperity and asked Nirod-da if he would sit on the long cement bench nearby for me to massage his feet. He sat down and I massaged him softly, using the oil. He enjoyed it and blessed me, placing his hand on my head. Then, to my heart’s content, his niece said, “If you can, ...do it regularly. The Mother will bless you.” Nirod-da also gave his consent with a benevolent smile. So, from that day I began massaging his legs in his room, beside the Samadhi. After his breakfast, Nirod-da used to sit in his armchair, facing the Samadhi. I would sit in

front of him, place his leg on my knee and massage one leg and then the other. Seeing me there many devotees told me, “You are lucky.” I too believe I was fortunate indeed.

Another day, while walking in the Tennis Ground, he came to my room. I have no words to express my happiness on seeing his feet grace my room.

In the course of time I came closer to him. Though he was such a great personality, he was so simple that anybody could tell him anything. He was kind enough to give me a few minutes daily to sit near his feet while he poured his fatherly love and affection on me.

Quite often he would tell me, “You know, my Guru Sri Aurobindo used to say, ‘Nirod is not a doctor to me. He is my servitor.’ ” He was a doctor, who came to the path of Integral Yoga and became a faithful servitor and companion of his Guru, the divine Incarnation Sri Aurobindo. He was elevated to being a scribe of his Master’s great epic, *Savitri* (as Ganesh was to Vyasa). He was also a writer, poet and professor. I have seen many devotees going to him for advice and benefit from it.

Several persons offered oil for massage, or napkins, etc. It was all very helpful and I express here my heartfelt gratitude to all of them. Many encouraged me with their sympathetic words and goodwill. I continued massaging (though with some interruptions and irregularity) till Nirod-da was admitted to the Ashram Nursing Home for the last time. There I would go to see him in the evening and also his friend, Amal-kiran-da and other patients. Those attending on him would often ask me to lightly massage his legs and hands so that these would not become stiff. The doctors allowed it and one of them showed me how to make Nirod-da do some hand exercises. And to our surprise, when I would lightly massage or move his hands, even though he was in a so-called coma, he would sometimes blink his eyes and even look at us as if he was very much conscious and doing his sadhana silently and inwardly. What experience he was going through nobody knew. We could only see the outward form. We haven’t yet invented a device to detect an inner experience.

Jugal-da encouraged me very often to go to the Nursing Home to see Nirod-da. When I would go to see him, his attendants used to call him, “Mama (Uncle)! See, Ramachandra has come. He will do the massage.” Or “Nirod-da! See, who has come.” Then without delay, offering my pranam, I would massage his legs. He seemed to be in a coma. But I never thought that nor did I give any importance to it. For me he was very conscious. I looked upon him as if he was resting. So, I continued to greet him and talk to him as usual. Seeing his right hand becoming stiff, I told him, “Nirod-da! Now you have to do some hand movements, please.” And holding his right hand first, I pulled it down very gently, consciously invoking the Divine Mother. Reminding him of the sixteen counts of the Mass Exercises,—that some of us as well as he used to do in his H group days in the Playground,—I would count, “One, two, three, ...” and would bring his hand down at sixteen and then lift it up again. But to my utter surprise, on Saturday, 15th July, he himself brought it down at ten. I just held his hand and after doing the movements for a few times, I placed his hands on his sides and

gently covered him. I did my pranam and came away.

But alas! I didn’t know that it was to be my last meeting. I couldn’t go there the next two days. On Monday, the 17th July 2006 at about 7.50 p.m. he left his body. Isn’t it meaningful that the 17th (November) was also the date of his birth.

I came to know about Nirod-da’s departure at 8.30 p.m. I felt as if he was with me. I felt neither sorrow nor any grief. I went hurriedly to Pranab-da and told him, “Dada! Nirod-da has passed away.”

He had already been informed and he told me in Bengali, “*Ooni Mayer kachhe chole gechhen.*” (“He has gone to the Mother.”) Having been thus comforted, I went back to the Ashram and waited. Nirod-da was brought to his room after 9.25 p.m. and laid on his bed. I sat on the floor beside his bed.

Some slokas of the Gita came to my mind and I also remembered some words of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on death. (I later checked in the books to get the words right.)

*Na jāyate mriyate vā kadācinnāyam bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ;
Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato’yam purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.*

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 2 / 20)

“This is never born, nor does it ever die; nor is it that having once become it shall again become. It is unborn, eternal, ever existent, ancient; slain is it not in the body being slain.”

*

*Vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya navāni gṛhṇāti naro’parāṇi;
Tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇānyanyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī.*

(*Ibid.*, 2 / 22)

“Just as a man, casting away his worn-out garbs, puts on others, new ones, so too the embodied Spirit, casting away old and worn-out bodies, goes over to other new ones.”

*

*Dehino’sminyathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā;
Tathā dehāntaraprāptirdhīrastatra na muhyati.*

(*Ibid.*, 2 / 13)

“As the embodied soul (master of the body) has childhood, youth and old age occurring to the body, so too is his change over to another body. The calm and wise man is not disturbed or perplexed in that regard.”

*

The soul, not the body, is the reality.... for as the soul passes physically through childhood and youth and age, so it passes on to the changing of the body. The calm and wise mind, the *dhīra*, the thinker who looks upon life steadily and does not allow himself to be disturbed and blinded by his sensations and emotions, is not deceived by material appearances; ...

(*Essays on the Gita*, p. 56)

*

*Jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyurdhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca;
Tasmādparihārye'rthe na tvaṁ śocitumarhasi.*

(*Bhagavad Gita*, 2 / 27)

“Since, certain is the death of the born even as of the dead re-birth is sure, therefore, in what is inevitable, thou hast no reason to grieve.”

*

(*The English versions of these slokas are taken from Maheshwar-bhai's Bhagavad Gita in the Light of Sri Aurobindo.*)

I also remembered what Sri Aurobindo has written about death in *Savitri*:

And victory's star still lights our desperate road;
Our death is made a passage to new worlds.

(p. 194)

*

Our being must move eternally through Time;
Death helps us not, vain is the hope to cease;

(p. 197)

*

Death is a passage, not the goal of our walk:

(*Ibid.*)

*

I had forgotten the time. At 11.00 p.m., I was reminded that it was time to close the main gate. Offering my pranam I came out.

The next day, I stayed near him from the morning till noon, and again from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. with some other attendants and relatives. I was asked to take

some photos. I was hesitant as he looked like a wounded soldier. But I brought the camera and took some photos. In the afternoon the bandages were removed and he once again looked as if he was alive and asleep. Again I was told, "Now you can take some photos." And I did.

At 4.00 p.m. a big, solid wooden coffin with Sri Aurobindo's symbol in brass on the lid and the inside lined with a golden velvet was brought in. Manoj-da requested the visitors to go out and let Nirod-da's relatives and those who had served him to concentrate for a few minutes. Nirod-da's body was placed inside the coffin and taken around the Samadhi, then to the waiting van. I joined with the relatives and the bearers considering myself one of them, as the duty of a son to the father. I believe, Nirod-da had granted me this privilege and I am happy to have carried it out.

Many had gathered inside and around the Ashram to offer their last tributes to Nirod-da. We came out by the Garage gate where the Mother's car was kept.

At Cazanove a pit had been made ready. With the others gathered there, I too offered jasmine 'Purity' flowers. The coffin was closed and lowered. All of us offered soil to fill the pit. Then we placed lighted incense sticks and made our pranams. In this way the last rites were performed. Nirod-da's body has been placed in front of Nolini-da's samadhi, so very happy and in peace forever.

After three days, on 20th evening, I went to the Nursing Home to see Amal-da. He and Nirod-da had been the best of friends from the early days of the Ashram. Helping him to his bed from the wheelchair, I asked, "Amal-da! Are you not missing Nirod-da? Where is he now?"

"He is within my heart," he revealed.

"That's what I wanted to know from you," I said happily and then with a Namaskar returned to the Playground for the meditation.

That night, Nirod-da's remembrances emerged in my mind one after another like scenes of a film.

When I used to massage Nirod-da's legs in the morning, I noticed that Nirod-da was like a child in our hands and he allowed us to do all. I found him self-poised with neither any likes or dislikes nor any attachment or preference.

Once I had been on night-duty at the Nursing Home and that was a most unforgettable night I passed with this great sadhak and disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. I wanted to be with him day and night.

For Nirod-da's centenary I thought of preparing a booklet of his writings and some photographs of him. He never grumbled or said "No" when I wanted to take his photos inside his room or anywhere outside the Ashram. The booklet, *A Centenary Tribute to Nirod-da* was nearly ready. I wished to get some lines from *Savitri* in Nirod-da's recent handwriting. So I made this request to him on 14th November 2002, three days before his birthday. Though he was not writing any more, he agreed and asked me for pen and paper and asked me what he should write. Two lines from *Savitri* came to my mind:

We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion, we must grow divine.

(p. 67)

He was happy to hear this and wrote it down. Handing over the pen and paper he said, "You know, as my handwriting was good, Sri Aurobindo chose me to pen *Savitri*. So I became his scribe." I said, "Ganesh wrote *Mahabharata* listening to Vyasa and you noted down *Savitri* hearing Sri Aurobindo. How fortunate you are, Nirod-da!"

"Yes, very much by His Grace and Love," he answered smilingly.

The message card on 24th November Darshan carried those same lines from *Savitri*. What a wonderful surprise.

Another memorable moment with Nirod-da was when I requested him to answer five questions on India that I heard during the Playground meditation. After reading the questions, Nirod-da said, "It is difficult for me to answer these questions. It would be better if you ask Amal. He will give you the correct answer."

I said, "He has already written his answers."

Nirod-da asked eagerly, "Let me see."

I showed Amal-da's handwritten answer and asked Nirod-da, "Now, are you not interested in writing something? I know Sri Aurobindo has told you many things about India. It will be nice if you take the trouble to pen a few lines."

Then he wrote below Amal-da's answers: "I agree fully with my friend Amal Kiran and I hope that what he says and believes will fulfil itself for the good of the country." And signed below it, "Nirodbaran".

What a deep friendship that their feelings are identical and express the same ideas though in different words!

Lastly, I would like to mention here a recent dream. I saw a large patch of cloud in a semi-circle in the Eastern sky over the sea near Pondicherry, and many small, almost decorative cloud-patches around it. In each of the upper patches of the clouds were different gods and to the right, in one patch, Nirod-da's smiling face was seen very clearly. I was amazed when I woke up from the dream. Why was Nirod-da in the clouds? After a while his name came to my mind, Oh! he is Nirodbaran. 'Nirad' means cloud and 'baran' is master or possessor. I got the answer to my question and was happy to see Nirod-da in this dream. He has gone to his own realm and I hope he will come back again with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to fulfil Their work.

Let Their Will be done.

RAMACHANDRA PANI

DEVOTIONAL POETRY IN TAMIL

(Continued from the issue of December 2006)

11. The Child Devotee

THE Bhakti Movement that rose in Tamil Nadu and inundated the rest of India in course of time, had two major strands: Vaishnavism and Shaivism. The hymnologists of both were roughly contemporaneous. Like the Vaishnava Alwars, the Shaiva Nayanars came from all strata of the society and did not favour differentiating people in terms of gender or caste. But not all the sixty-three Nayanars were hymnologists, though all of them were intense devotees of Shiva. How did this magic number originate?

Again, when was it that Shiva gained such ascendancy in the Tamil psyche? The early literature of the Tamils has not much to say about Shiva. In their fivefold divisions of the land, each with a presiding deity, Shiva finds no place. According to Tolkappiar, certain gods 'desired' (*meya*) particular areas as their residence. Vishnu (Tirumal) desired Mullai (forest areas); Subramania (Muruga) preferred the mountainous Kurinji; Indra resided in Marutam (pastoral areas), and Varuna in Neytal (seashore). The hot regions of Palai (desert) were favoured by Surya, Kali or Agni. Yet, the opening verse of the anthology, *Kuruntokai* is attributed to Shiva himself:

Beetle with beautiful wings that art seeking
Honey in flowers always! Tell the truth
And do not dissemble for my sake.
Of the flowers that you have known,
Are there any that are scented sweeter
Than the tresses of my beloved,
Peacock-sheened, with perfect teeth?¹

Thus there must have been widespread Shiva worship in the early times, for both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have plentiful references to legends associated with the deity though the Vedas refer only to Rudra. Then came the post-Sangam period when Shaivism and Vaishnavism had to contend against Jainism for supremacy. A legend recounts that Sundarar (9th century?), a devotee of Shiva, went to Tiruvarur to worship Tyagaraja, the presiding deity. He found devotees of Shiva sitting in the hall at the entrance and singing prayers. However, without saluting them, he went in. Viranmindar, one in the group of devotees burst out: "Henceforth both Sundarar who failed to salute us and Shiva who accepts his salutations are strangers to us!" The Lord then told Sundarar the greatness of such devotees. Immediately Sundarar was contrite and said he was actually the devotee of devotees in a poem: "I am a servitor of the servitors of the holy people who live in Tillai (Chidambaram)."

The poem refers to sixty-three devotees by name.

Sekkilar who came later, wrote the *Peria Puranam* on the sixty-two devotees of Shiva and opened and closed the epic with the life story of Sundarar. The hagiological epic became very popular as the *Life of the Sixty-Three Saints*. There is also a story current that Arulmolittevar (later to be known as Sekkilar) was the Chief Minister of Kulottunga Chola II (12th century). Since the Chief Minister found the king tending towards Jainism as he loved the Jain epic *Jeevaka Chintamani* which, incidentally, had too much romance in it, he wrote *Peria Puranam*. A few of the devotees listed in the work were hymnologists. Prominent among them are Tirujnanasambandhar, Sundarar, Tirunavukkarasar, Tirumoolar and the Lady of Karaikal. Among other great hymnologists who were later included in the Shaivite scriptural canon *Panniru Tirumurai* is the poet of honeyed speech, Manickavachakar. The enormous publicity gained by *Peria Puranam* invited inclusion as well, so the canon now has twelve Books, and is revered as the main scripture of Tamil Shaivism, also known as Shaiva Siddhanta.

The first three Books of *Panniru Tirumurai* contain the hymns of Tirujnanasambandhar. In many temples to Shiva in Tamil Nadu, there would be a niche containing sixty-three images as consecrated to the sixty-three saints. One of them is of a charming little boy, keeping time with cymbals. This is immediately recognised as the child-devotee, Tirujnanasambandhar. He was born in Sirkali (also known as Brahmapuram) to the Brahmin couple, Sivapada Hridayar and Bhagavati. When he was three years old, his father took him to the local tank as usual and made him sit on the steps while he went into the waters. The boy was thirsty and called out to his father. There was no reply and the boy began to weep. It so happened that at that very moment Shiva and Parvati were wandering in the skies above. The Divine Mother immediately descended and fed the boy with her own milk drawn into a golden cup. The little boy, his thirst slaked by the sweet milk saw before him the wonderful vision of Shiva looking at him with great affection. At that moment Sivapada Hridayar returned from his bath and found his son's mouth dripping with milk. Being an orthodox Brahmin, he was aghast and asked the boy to point out the person who had fed him. The child lisped in numbers and the divine numbers came, even as he pointed to the spires of the temple of Brahmapureswarar:

The Lord with bejewelled ears
 Riding the Bull; crowned
 With the crescent moon
 Of white brilliance,
 The Thief has stolen my heart.
 In days of yore he accepted
 The worship of Brahma; He is
 The Lord of Brahmapuram.²

This is the opening verse of *Panniru Tirumurai* and is considered very holy. From now onwards Tirujnanasambandhar began peregrinating around South India, worshipping at various shrines and singing of Shiva in soulful accents. At the temple of Tirukolakka the boy was enthralled in the presence of Lord Saphapuriswara and began singing, keeping time with his hands:

In Kolakka the fish leap in the ponds
 Where the ladies bathe happily.
 What is this figure with matted hair,
 The crescent moon, ashes
 And a strip of loincloth?
 My Lord has Uma as part of himself;
 He wears the crescent on his crown.
 When the gods saluted his feet
 He drank poison, to save the world.

As the little boy sang, Shiva was immensely gratified and there appeared in Tirujnanasambandhar's hands a pair of cymbals, decorated with the mantric syllables, 'Namashivaya'. From now onwards, it became for the boy a long day's journey into the brilliance of bhakti poesy.

Sekkilar as well as traditional memories have recorded Tirujnanasambandhar's travels. Many touching and socially valuable incidents are associated with his travels. The boy used to travel from one temple to another and devotees came on their own and joined his retinue. According to Sivagurunatha Pillai, these travels may be considered as follows:³

- Age 3-7: four pilgrimages
- Age 7-14: fifth pilgrimage
- Age 14-16: sixth pilgrimage
- Age 16 (the last year of his earthly life): seventh pilgrimage

It was during his fourth pilgrimage when Tirujnanasambandhar was on his way to Chidambaram, that a Dalit devotee, Nilakantha Yazhpanar along with his wife Matanga Choolamani, joined the pilgrim group and it was indeed a great joy for the listeners to hear Nilakantha accompany Tirujnanasambandhar on the lute. They had known each other earlier and when Nilakantha had come to Sirkali to meet Tirujnanasambandhar, the latter had taken him into the temple and the two had offered *gānanjali* to Shiva. The tuneful music and the pellucid Tamil had drawn even the gandharvas to the skies above the temple. It is said that the young devotee's verses were set to music by Nilakantha. The companionship between the orthodox Brahmin and the lowly Dalit is surely a golden leaf in Bhakti Movement.

It was also during this pilgrimage that a command from the presiding deity of Tirunelvayil Arathurai temple granted the devotee a pearl-decked palanquin and pearl-crusted trumpet. In his next travel, Tirujnanasambandhar reached Tiruppachilasrama. The daughter of the local chieftain was then very sick with epilepsy. When he learnt of the great hymnodist coming to worship in the local temple, the chieftain took his daughter there. On learning of the problem, the devotee sang soulfully, praying to the Lord in a decad of verses:

The moon gleams as a streak
Which he wears on his matted crown.
Ornamented with snakes and circled
By the demon-servitors, he accepts
Offerings from anyone who gives.
He is the blue-throated Shiva
Who is decked handsomely
Residing in Pachilasrama. Is it right
For him to watch this damsel's plight?

As the rituals of worship concluded in the sanctum, the young girl woke up from her deep swoon and was relieved of the disease. Another miracle ascribed during this time was how a few petitioning verses by him relieved his retinue of a severe attack of shivering and fever. Even now, the faithful believe in reciting this decad when seeking relief from fever:

O ye who speak of karma's effects
As following in births!
Is it not amiss on the part
Of good people to seek
A way to overcome it all?
Let us serve with our hands
And praise the feet of our Lord.
Say Neelakantham! the evil past
Will then not trouble us anymore.⁴

As we go through the decads in the first three Books of *Panniru Tirumurai* (there are more than 4158 verses), we also become part of the entourage of Tirujnanasambandhar and worship in more than three hundred temples with beautiful names like Tirukaruvur, Tiruchirapalli and Tiruparaithurai and discover the exciting local legends connected with the temple. Of the Tiruppanandal temple, he sings:

If you wish to destroy the evils
Of the past, and the sicknesses

That rise in the body, praise Him
 Repeatedly; He is crowned
 By Ganga stream, the young moon,
 And fire-belching snakes
 On his long matted locks.
 He is in Tadaikaicharam
 At Tirupanantal.

The legend of the temple refers to a young girl Tatakai (not the demoness of *Ramayana*) who used to worship the Shiva Linga in the Shiva temple at Tiruppanandal daily by offering him a garland of fresh flowers. One day, when she was about to garland the Linga, her upper garment began to fall away. She stood not knowing what to do, for if she moved her hands with the garland, she may be put to shame in front of others who were worshipping in the temple at that time. Sensing the young girl's dilemma, Shiva bent his head and she garlanded him easily. The temple came to be known by the name of the girl devotee. Tirujnanasambandhar sings in ecstasy as he imagines the crown of Shiva that had bowed before the devotee to accept the flower offering in his decad on the temple.

A well known miracle is associated with the temple at Tirumarugal. A young man of the business community had come with his beloved to the temple, and had been bitten by a snake and had died. Unable to ignore the deep sorrow of the girl, Tirujnanasambandhar began to sing in praise of the deity, Ratnagireeswara:

Resident of Marugal where blossoms
 The lily in bunches! O Shiva
 Who resides in my thoughts!
 The Primal being, the Lord of all!
 My father! Is it right for you to watch
 This girl in total distress?

The young man was relieved of the snake's poison and all was well.

Of the other Nayanars, one who were coeval with Tirujnanasambandhar was Tirunavukkarasar. When the two met, the latter was advanced in age but each had immense respect for the other. After all, in the world of Bhakti, age has no significance. Together they travelled to various places. When they came to Tirumaraikkadu (Vedaranyam), they found the doors of the temple of Lord Vedavaneswara closed. On enquiry they were told that the Vedas had come to worship, and had later gone away after sealing the temple. Tirunavukkarasar then addressed the Lord to help them adore the Lord. Immediately the doors opened. After the rituals, the two came out with their entourage and Tirujnanasambandhar sang a decad:

Darling of Maraikkadu worshipped
 By the Vedas that speak in one voice
 Of grace! The holy place surrounded
 By flowering gardens! Be pleased
 To seal the doors again!

And the doors closed on their own. It is but natural that in hagiology, one must needs wade through such miracles, but it may be remembered that for centuries the common man has loved to remember and re-enact these marvels. For instance, it is sheer joy to watch how in Sirkali the temple celebrates the Milk Festival in a big way to remember the manner in which the Divine Mother fed the boy devotee.

Another miracle remembered by the devout is the manner in which Tirujnana-sambandhar effected a change of heart in the King Koonpandiyan who was a Jain. The Pandyan king's consort Mangaiyarkkarasi and Chief Minister Kulachirai were followers of Shiva and they invited the boy prodigy to Madurai. Approaching Madurai, also known as Alavay, and looking at the spires of the temple of Shiva, Tirujnana-sambandhar began to sing:

Mangaiyarkkarasi, dear daughter
 Of the Chola king; Bangle-ornamented,
 She is gentle and shy; a veritable Lakshmi
 Who is consort of the Pandyan king.
 Lord Shiva whom she serves daily
 Is flame-hued; chief of demon hordes;
 The Supreme who gave us the Vedas
 And their significance; this is Alavay
 Where he resides with Goddess Angayarkanni.⁵

In the same decad he praises Kulachirai as well. Once Tirujnana-sambandhar was established in a suitable residence, a war of attrition began between the Jain priests of the king and Tirujnana-sambandhar. When his Math was burnt down by the Jains instigated by the king, the young devotee sang verses to counter the evil minds. The king fell sick and he felt that his body was on fire. All that the Jains did through medication and chanting failed to cure the king. Invited by the suffering chief, Tirujnana-sambandhar graciously entered the palace, smeared the king with the Holy Ash and sang the celebrated decad, "Mandiram aavadhu neeru". The verses praise Tiruavalavay which is known as the Silver Hall where Shiva danced. Shiva himself is said to have ruled over Madurai as Somasundara Pandya. This decad also is sung by the faithful as a cure for all maladies:

The Holy Ash is praised by the Vedas;
 It chases away scorching sorrows;

It grants revealed knowledge, and removes
 The ills of ignorance and sin. Worthy of praise,
 It is eternally true. Such is the Holy Ash
 Of the Lord of Alavay, circled by fields
 And streaming waters.

The repetition of “neeru” (Holy Ash) gives the entire set of verses a mantric élan and indeed the opening verse refers to the Holy Ash as mantra (“*mandiram aavadhu neeru*”), and goes on to say that it is worn by sages, grants one realisation, teaches us the way of devotion, enables the aspirant to master the various siddhis and that Ravana was proud to wear the same. Such repetition creating sonorous waves lulling the mind into a devotional mood is a familiar style of Tirujnanasambandhar.

In connection with his Madurai visit, we are told that he held a debate with Jains in which the latter were worsted. It is also said that thousands of Jains were hanged for having lost the contest. There is, of course, nothing to substantiate this story in the hymns of the three Nayanars, Tirujnanasambandhar or Sundarar or Tirunavukkarasar. A stray reference in a poem by Nambi Andar Nambi (who anthologised the first seven Books of the *Panniru Tirumurai*) may have given rise to this gory legend which goes totally against the character of the child devotee. We see him as a gentle person, with a childlike joy in singing about Shiva, giving place to no separative thoughts. He was obviously one who preferred the stage of debate to the killer sword. In fact he is always seen as resuscitating people. Legend has it that when the young girl Poombavai died, her father had preserved her bones in a pot. When Tirujnanasambandhar came to Kapaliswara temple in Mylapore, the father brought the pot to him, praying for restoration of Poombavai’s life. The poet listed the various festivals of the temple and queried: “O Poombavai, how can you go without seeing them all?”

On the beaches of the high-waved sea
 Where reside fishermen who spear huge fish
 Are thick, green-leaved gardens where rests
 Shiva in the Kapaliswara temple. O Poombavai,
 How can you go without seeing the Adirai festival?

It is enough to say that his presence transformed the people in a big way cementing an unquestioning faith in him, and they moved over to the worship of Shiva. Indeed such was the total transformation of the King of Madurai that Koonpandiyan came to be known as Ninraseer Nedumaran and is now worshipped as one of the sixty-three saints.

Returning to Chola land from Madurai, Tirujnanasambandhar once again began his peregrinations which took him to Kalahasti. This is the place where the hunter Kannappa prepared to blind himself totally when he saw blood oozing out of the eyes

of the Lord's image. The young devotee could feel the vibrations of Kannappa's presence who was said to reside in his subtle form at the feet of Shiva.

A portion of him is Uma with bamboo-like
Shoulders; He rides a bull,
Wears the pure white crescent
On his matted tresses and dances
In the crematorium. His Hill
Is Kalahasti, where the hunter
Used his mouth as the pot to worship,
Gouged out his eyes with the killer arrow
And pressed it on Shiva, reaching His feet.

The time had now come for the divine singer to merge in the eternal. He was but sixteen and Sivapada Hridayar naturally wanted to see his famous son as a bridegroom. It was decided that the young man's wedding should be solemnised with Stotra Poornambika (Chokkial) from Tirunallur. Fellow devotees like Neelanakkar and Murugar came to take part in the celebrations in Tirunallur where the temple of Shiva was called Perumanam. The auspicious moment arrived as he held the hands of the bride. Suddenly Tirujnanasambandhar felt that he was within an immense circle of brilliance. What was it but the experience of Shiva consciousness, a state of supreme Ananda? Why go through this human wedding which was like little children building sand castles, when the Supreme Joy beckoned from within?

I do not want the wedding where we stamp
The stone;⁶ don't you realise my feelings
After listening to my songs composed
In Kazhumalam and other holy shrines?
Won't you accept the Perumanam
Indicated by my scented hymns?
My Lord of Perumanam at Nallur!⁷

My Lord! Perumanam at Nallur
Has scents wafting from little girls
Building sand-castles spread with pearls.
You have taken as part of your image
The Divine Mother, of shoreless grace.

Tirujnanasambandhar then prayed to the Lord to allow him to reach Shiva's feet and called upon devotees of the Lord desirous of Mukti to come and join him. He then sang a decad on the benefits of reciting the Panchakshara (Sacred Five Syllables),

verses that are dear to the heart of not only Shaivites but the lovers of Tamil language as well:

The four Vedas shine with truth
 With the sacred syllables within;
 My Lord's name, Namashivaya
 Leads to the Golden Path all those
 Who recite it with love melting the heart
 Within, and eyes streaming without.

As the guests recited the verses, they entered the brilliance led by Tirujnana-sambandhar. The temple stood as before, a silent witness to the divine happening.

But the hymns have remained with the devout through 1500 years, the original tunes kept with a fair amount of accuracy by the institution of Oduvar (the traditional reciter in temples to Shiva). Musicologists point out that the hymns are set to music in twenty-two ragas (*pan*). Some of the ragas are to be sung in daytime and some in the evenings. There is also the work, 'Tiruvezhukootrirukkai' which is a chithra-kavi (picture-poem) limned as a chariot. There is not much of colourful mythology here for unlike Vishnu, Shiva does not have incarnations. However, Ravana being humbled when he sought to uproot Mount Kailas and the failure of Vishnu and Brahma to find the crown and the feet of Shiva are repeated now and then.

Bridal mysticism is also noticed in some of the verses. Here is the poet as a love-lorn lady sending a parrot as her ambassador to Shiva:

Caged parrot! Come hither.
 I shall feed you
 With honey and milk.
 Do repeat to me the names
 Of the crescent-crowned Lord
 Of Thonipuram on the sea-beach
 Rich with pearls and corals.

As with the Vaishnavite Alwars, this bridal mysticism was directly inspired by the love (*aham*) poetry of the ancient Tamils. It is astonishing that in this huge mass of versification, there is not much that makes us feel dull for being repetitive. This speaks volumes for the poet's phrase-making ability, depiction of different moods and a steady guidance through *shanta rasa*. In spite of all that hagiology tells us, the verses themselves are placid waves in the lake of bhakti, which achieved the quiet transformation to Shaivism in the Tamil country. To conclude with G. Vanmikanathan's summing up of the child devotee's achievement:

For a child of no more than sixteen years, Tirujnana-sambandhar showed a

remarkable understanding of human nature and a spirit of rare conformity with the common man's aspirations and foibles in spite of his own unrivalled knowledge of the Past, Present and Future, of here, of the hereafter and of Anmai—a region beyond the hereafter, that is, the several future births. These are called Inmai, Marumai, and Anmai.

Tirujnanasambandhar did as much for Shaivism as Adi Shankara Bhagawad Pādāl did for Vedantism. Sri Adi Shankara acknowledged the services of Sambandhar when he referred to Sambandhar as 'Dravida Shishu', the Dravida Child, in his *Saundaryalahari*.⁸

(To be continued)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

Notes and References

1. Translated by Prema Nandakumar.
2. All translations from Tirujnanasambandhar are by Prema Nandakumar.
3. M. Muthiah, *Tirujnanasambandhar* (2006), p. 12.
4. Serving with hands ("*kai vinai seythu*") refers to such activities like plucking flowers and offering them to the Lord and saluting Him.
5. Angayarkanni means "one who has eyes like beautiful fish", a sobriquet of Meenakshi.
6. Part of the ritual in a Vedic wedding where the bridegroom helps the bride place her foot on a stone mortar.
7. There is a very attractive wordplay with "Perumanam". The name of the temple also means "a grand wedding" and a "fine scent".
8. *Peria Puranam: A Tamil Classic on the Great Shaiva Saints of South India* (1985), p. 271.

A correction:

The penultimate line on page 1048 of the December issue of the journal should have been

To its omnipotence leave thy work's result.

and not as it was printed.

The error is regretted.

LEAFING THROUGH *HITLER AND HIS GOD*

Hitler and His God by Georges Van Vrekhem. Published by Rupa and Co. New Delhi, 2006. 700 pp. Price: Rs. 395.

“When Darkness Deepened”

GEORGES VAN VREKHEM has endeared himself to a large number of readers with his first book on Sri Aurobindo—*Beyond Man*. His second book, on the Mother, also met with a general appreciation. The two books that followed were cast in a different mould, dealing as they did, with the next stage of evolution (*Overman*) and the dynamics of social change (*Patterns of the Present*). The next book from this author, it could be expected, would deal with the nitty-gritty of the mechanics of transformation. But we are caught by surprise. Instead of moving into the future, we are taken to the past, a rather dark chapter of our recent past.

We might wonder, “Why a book about Hitler? It is common knowledge that he was evil. Does it serve any purpose to bring up all that we have left behind?”

The author’s explanation is simple:

Libraries have been written about Hitler and Nazi Germany, yet several of the best-known and most widely read historians agree that he remains enigmatic. “The more extensive the material at our disposal and the greater the historical distance, the more puzzling Hitler seems to become,” writes Christian von Krockow. Allan Bullock, author of such essays like *Hitler—A Study in Tyranny* and *Hitler and Stalin—Parallel Lives*, admits in a conversation: “The more I learn about Hitler, the harder I find it to explain... I can’t explain Hitler. I don’t believe anybody can.” And to H. R. Trevor-Roper “after fifty years Adolf Hitler remains a frightening mystery.”

(Van Vrekhem, *Hitler and His God*, p. 6)

In the introductory note to his play, *Perseus the Deliverer*, Sri Aurobindo refers to:

“...the dark or violent life-forces which are always there subdued or subordinated or somnolent in the make-up of civilised man”.

(CWSA, Vol. 3, p. 328)

The Hitler phenomenon can be understood fully only when we take into our purview not just the historical events, but also the occult forces at work and most importantly, the fact that human nature still harbours much that allows the nether influences to gain mastery over man.

Georges Van Vrekhem's book is an attempt to revisit that era, the period when human civilisation and all its achievements were held at ransom by the forces that made Hitler's Germany the scourge of mankind.

The book is divided into three parts: 1) When Hitler became the Führer; 2) The Roots of Nazism; 3) Hitler and His God. It is in this last part that Sri Aurobindo's vision and his action against the agents of darkness is taken up. The first two parts are a necessary preparation, the laying of the groundwork, for a better appreciation of the third part, for only when we have seen at close quarters what Hitler's Germany represented can we appreciate a little better the light that emanated from Pondicherry and worked unseen to save the earth.

The epigraph taken from *Savitri* captures the atmosphere of that period:

A race possessed inhabited those parts.
A force demoniac lurking in man's depths
That heaves suppressed by the heart's human law,
Awed by the calm and sovereign eyes of Thought,
Can in a fire and earthquake of the soul
Arise and, calling to its native night,
Overthrow the reason, occupy the life
And stamp its hoof on Nature's shaking ground...

(p. 214)

The question that Van Vrekhem takes up is:

How had this come to pass? How had the former Austrian corporal, once compared to a worn out stray dog, reached such a pinnacle of power that Joachim Fest could write: "If Hitler had succumbed to an assassination or an accident at the end of 1938, few would hesitate to call him one of the greatest German statesmen, the consummator of Germany's history"?

(*Hitler and His God*, p. 6)

Part of the answer lies in the personality of the man:

"At one time I have within myself chosen my way in spite of totally inimical surroundings," said Adolf Hitler, "and I, an unknown and nameless man, have kept walking until the final success. Often declared no longer existent and always wished to be non-existent, in the end I was the victor."

There must have been a time "when Hitler became Hitler", when the non-entity turned into a seer and a politician who, in a very short time, accomplished feats deemed impossible: wipe out the humiliation of the Versailles Treaty, build up a prostrate and despondent Germany, and unify the country into an efficient

war machine for his megalomaniac and criminal overt and covert goals. There must have been a source of power supporting this rootless, often ridiculed and always underestimated man to build up a powerful and ruthless political party, inspiring him to overcome the most critical situations, and impelling him to take his stand above all those superior to him inside and outside Germany. There must have been a fountainhead of the evil that through this man tried to ravage humanity and make it regress into a state of barbarism supposed to belong definitely to the past.

(*Ibid.*, p. 7)

An element of the answer is to be found in the tremendous power Hitler had of captivating his audience with his speeches, a power which in later years would become mesmeric in its sway:

...as he (Hitler) also had the gift of the gab, Mayr [Captain Mayr was the chief of the propaganda section] put his name on the list of participants in a “oratory course” for army propagandists...

... The lectures were followed by discussion groups. Here Hitler came into his own. He had always been what one might call a profuse “monologist” when agitated, unstopably pouring the flood of his words over any individual listener as if addressing a crowd.... Speaking was no longer an idiosyncrasy; it became his assigned duty as an army propagandist who had to educate wrong-thinking leftists into right-thinking German patriots.

K. A. von Müller has narrated how, after one of his lectures, his attention was drawn to a group “spellbound by a man in their midst who, with an unusually guttural voice, talked to them uninterruptedly and with increasing passion. I had the strange feeling that their excitement was caused by him and simultaneously caused him to speak in return. I saw a pale, lean face under an unmilitary strand of hair, with a clipped mustache and striking big, light blue, fanatically cold eyes”.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 14-16)

Another vital element was the influence of secret or occult societies that shaped Nazism:

The *Thule-Gesellschaft* was a secret society, extensively and sometimes fancifully treated in books on the occult side of Nazism.... Yet the body of historical facts concerning the Thule Society is so large that it must be accorded its proper place in any history of Hitler’s life and of Nazism. Without this information an indispensable episode in Hitler’s life remains lacking.

(*Ibid.*, p. 22)

“The Thule people were the first to sacrifice their lives for the swastika.”

—Hermann Gilbhard

(*Ibid.*, p. 21)

Besides meetings of the nationalistic and anti-Semitic associations, Thule organised a great variety of activities of its own... There were lectures on runes, on German history and prehistory, on the Eddas and the Song of the Nibelungs, on other volkisch subjects.... Astrology, numerology,...the use of the pendulum...were studied.

But there was another side to the Thule: the occult activities...sessions of the pseudo-masonic Germanenorden-Walvater: the return to a “wayward Aryan into Halgadam”...“interest in the Cabbala, and in Hindu and Egyptian beliefs... [a fascination with] the mystical ideologies of ancient theocracies and secret cults....”

Taking all this into consideration, there can hardly be any doubt that another focus of interest in Thule was spiritism.... In Germany the evocation of otherworldly spirits was then at an all-time high...Spiritism...was the search for a “new form of transcendental experience”...

(*Ibid.*, pp. 40-41)

These societies were not stray mushroomings in Germany. They were part of a much wider phenomenon, a transitory phase in evolution when an attempt was being made to break free from the bondages of reason:

Around 1880 a remarkable change took place in the European consciousness. The acquisitions of the Enlightenment had already been questioned by the Romantic Movement at the beginning of the century. Now a powerful wave of vitalism and intuitionism restated the rights of the emotional components of human nature. This change was initiated in the arts, foremost by the Impressionist “light explosion”. In quick succession Nietzsche, Freud, Bergson and Proust—to name only a few of the important innovators—appeared on the cultural scene. All contended [against] the sole rule of reason; the human being burst out of the straitjacket of the rational mind. The result was that it felt, in some ways, disoriented in its newly acquired liberty, while in other ways it felt dizzy because of the new perspectives and possibilities. It was the time that the coming of one kind of “superman” after another was proclaimed to be the destiny of humanity. Nietzsche’s “re-evaluation of all values” created a euphoria and simultaneously a deep fear, for most customary and trusted beacons seemed to vanish.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 22-23)

Coming to the central figure of the drama, we find that there are many indications of what Hitler's line of thinking was. For instance:

In *Before Hitler Came*, Sebottendorff reproduces some of his [Hitler's] writings in the Thule publications.... "The German needs a *Führer* who imposes himself on him."

(*Ibid.*, p. 42)

Where had Hitler got the idea to found a party...? From where did he have the idea that "it was a new ideology and not a new election slogan that had to be proclaimed"? ...There are secrets in between the lines of *Mein Kampf* which are part of the "enigma" that keeps the historians guessing.

(*Ibid.*, p. 54)

It is some of these enigmas that the book tries to unravel.

Then there is the question of Hitler's madness. If he was really mad, would it not imply, legally speaking, an escape from the responsibility for his deeds?

Hitler is still often represented in the popular media as a madman obsessed by a few fixed ideas. There is truth in the obsession, but he was not a madman. "Hitler was not mad," writes John Lukacs, "he was responsible for what he did and said and thought... He had very considerable intellectual talents."

(*Ibid.*, p. 65)

Hitler's "mentor" was Dietrich Eckart.

With Eckart, Hitler came into his own....

"The two formed a team in which Hitler was the avid and quickly learning disciple", writes Mosse.

What happened between Eckart and Hitler during their frequent meetings remains unknown. It is nonetheless undeniable that Hitler generated a sudden burst of energy which would make him, within a short time, the undisputed leader of a dynamic party....

(*Ibid.*, pp. 75-76)

The change was dramatic. He who had spoken of himself only as a "drummer", preparing his countrymen for the coming of the destined leader or *Führer*, "the Strong One from Above", would soon himself be addressed as "unser *Führer*", our leader. The Hitler cult had been launched.

Another important detail to be noted:

It looked like a remarkable coincidence that so many of the top Nazis, actors in the great German drama, converged at the same time on the Munich scene.

(*Ibid.*, p. 96)

Although the others were to be part of the grand scheme of things, the main architect was Hitler.

Ernst Hanfstängl [in his autobiographical book, *The Missing Years*,] writes

that Eckart told him one night in Berchtesgaden: “You know, Hanfstängl, something has gone completely wrong with Adolf. The man is developing an incurable case of *folie de grandeur*. Last week he was striding up and down in the courtyard here with that damned whip of his and shouting: ‘I must enter Berlin like Christ the Temple of Jerusalem and scourge out the moneylenders’, and more nonsense of that sort. I tell you, if he lets his Messiah complex run away with him, he will ruin us all.”

(*Ibid.*, p. 112)

Eckart, nonetheless did not give up on his pupil. In a poem he wrote for the Führer’s birthday, he would proclaim:

Who want to see, can see! The Force is there, causing the night to flee!

(*Ibid.*, p. 113)

He believed that Hitler “was under a Star” and remarked:

When there is a man whom Destiny has chosen to save Germany, then that man is Adolf Hitler, and no other.

(*Ibid.*, p. 114)

Towards the end of his life he is supposed to have said: “Follow Hitler. He will dance, but it is I who wrote the tune. We have given him the means to communicate with Them....”

(*Ibid.*)

About the writing of *Mein Kampf*, Van Vrekhem quotes from Karin Wilhelm:

He who writes this sees himself in his prison cell like Johannes in his cave on Patmos and is in his solitude open for inspiration.

(*Ibid.*, p. 124)

Then there is this quote from Jäckel:

Rarely and probably never in history has a ruler, before he came to power, put down in writing, as Adolf Hitler did, what he subsequently carried out.

(*Ibid.*, p. 128)

And this from William Shirer:

It might be argued that had more non-Nazi Germans read [*Mein Kampf*] before 1933 and had the foreign statesmen of the world perused it carefully while there was still time, both Germany and the world might have been saved from catastrophe.

(*Ibid.*, p. 126)

Van Vrekhem quotes from *Mein Kampf*:

Do you feel that Providence has called you to proclaim the Truth to the world? If so, then go and do it. But you ought to have the courage to do it directly and not use some political party as your mouthpiece, for in this way you shirk your vocation. ...

Out of the army of millions who feel the truth of these [volkisch, nationalist and anti-Semitic] ideas, and even may understand them to some extent, one man must arise.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 148-49)

And Van Vrekhem adds:

There is no doubt which man the author had in mind.

(*Ibid.*, p. 149)

Another passage from *Mein Kampf*:

The great protagonists [of history] are those who fight for their ideas and ideals despite the fact that they receive no recognition at the hands of their contemporaries. They are the men whose memories will be enshrined in the hearts of the future generations.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 149-50)

On which Van Vrekhem remarks:

Hitler was already building a mausoleum for himself and reserving his place in the Walhalla of the great.

...According to Jäckel, "Hitler held himself for the prophet of a new world vision."

... To give his vision a concrete shape in the world he needed an organised body of men who would execute his commands. Religious world-reformers call this a Church; Hitler will later call it "an Order", and even say "we too are a Church".

(*Ibid.*, p. 150)

In Sri Aurobindo's *Perseus the Deliverer*, a savage cult of Poseidon holds sway. This deity demands human sacrifice. Polydaon, the priest of Poseidon, uses his position to satisfy his own ambitions and in the course of the play we see him growing in stature till he feels that he is a god, that he has become Poseidon:

What moves within me?
 I am athirst, magnificently athirst,
 And for a red and godlike wine. Whence came
 The thirst on me? It was not here before.
 'Tis thou, 'tis thou, O grand and grim Poseidon,
 Hast made thy scarlet session in my soul
 And growest myself. I am not Polydaon,
 I am a god, a mighty dreadful god,
 The multitudinous mover in the sea,
 The shaker of the earth: I am Poseidon...

(CWSA, Vol. 3, p. 476)

But a time comes, as it must to all that opposes the Light and Truth, when the dark power that possessed the human withdraws. Evil is defeated and its instrument is cast aside, shattered. The following passage describes the end of Polydaon:

I was Poseidon but this moment.
 Now he departs from me and leaves me feeble:
 I have become a dull and puny mortal.

... ..

He stands beside me still
 Shaking his gloomy locks and glares at me
 Saying it was my sin and false ambition
 Undid him. Was I not fearless as thou bad'st me?
 Ah, he has gone into invisible
 Vast silences!...

... ..

But whose was that dimmer and tremendous image?...
 A horror of darkness is around me still,
 But the joy and might have gone out of my breast
 And left me mortal, a poor human thing
 With whom death and the fates can do their will....
 But his presence yet is with me, near to me....
 Was I not something more than earthly man?...

(*with a cry*)

It was myself, the shadow, the hostile god!

I am abandoned to my evil self.
 That was the darkness!... But there was something more
 Insistent, dreadful, other than myself!
 Whoever thou art, spare me!... I am gone, I am taken.
 In his tremendous clutch he bears me off
 Into thick cloud; I see black Hell, the knives
 Fire-pointed touch my breast....

... ..

He falls back dead.

(Ibid., pp. 505-06)

Perseus, who is missioned by Athene to lead the people of Syria to a more enlightened state, reveals the real meaning of the downfall:

Who then can save a man from his own self?

 This man for a few hours became the vessel
 Of an occult and formidable Force
 And through his form it did fierce terrible things
 Unhuman: but his small and gloomy mind
 And impure dark heart could not contain the Force.
 It turned in him to madness and demoniac
 Huge longings. Then the Power withdrew from him
 Leaving the broken incapable instrument,
 And all its might was spilt from his body. Better
 To be a common man mid common men
 And live an unaspiring mortal life
 Than call into oneself a Titan strength
 Too dire and mighty for its human frame,
 That only afflicts the oppressed astonished world,
 Then breaks its user.

(Ibid., pp. 506-07)

The indications are clear.

* * *

The blurb on the back cover begins with these words:

Hitler remains an enigma in spite of everything that has been written about him.

Maybe he will remain a mystery even after many more books have been written on the subject, precisely because there were hidden dimensions and unseen forces that were at work, and these are not given to most men to see. Georges Van Vrekhem's book brings together, perhaps for the first time in English, material from a large number of authentic sources, especially eyewitness accounts and first-hand narration, details about the Third Reich without which our understanding of the era would remain insufficient. *Hitler and His God* will surely go a long way in helping us to fathom the Hitler phenomenon a little better.

‘An Old-fashioned Browser’

ON THE WAR

Some forces are working for the Divine, some are quite anti-divine in their aim and purpose.

If the nations or the governments who are blindly the instruments of the divine forces were perfectly pure and divine in their processes and forms of action as well as in the inspiration they receive so ignorantly they would be invincible, because the divine forces themselves are invincible. It is the mixture in the outward expression that gives to the Asura the right to defeat them.

To be a successful instrument for the Asuric forces is easy, because they take all the movements of your lower nature and make use of them, so that you have no spiritual effort to make. On the contrary, if you are to be a fit instrument of the Divine Force you must make yourself perfectly pure, since it is only in an integrally divinised instrument that the Divine Force will have its full power and effect.

4-7-1940

Sri Aurobindo

(*On Himself*, SABCL, Vol. 26, p. 393)

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; she saw that the complexity of the universe could not be explained in the present terms of man or seen by his superficial sight, that there were other powers behind, other powers within man himself of which he is normally unaware, that he is conscious only of a small part of himself, that the invisible always surrounds the visible, the suprasensible the sensible, even as infinity always surrounds the finite. She saw too that man has the power of exceeding himself, of becoming himself more entirely and profoundly than he is,—truths which have only recently begun to be seen in Europe and seem even now too great for its common intelligence. She saw the myriad gods beyond man, God beyond the gods, and beyond God his own ineffable eternity; she saw that there were ranges of life beyond our life, ranges of mind beyond our present mind and above these she saw the splendours of the spirit.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Renaissance in India, CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 6-7)