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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE ISLAND SUN

I have sailed the golden ocean

And crossed the silver bar;
I have reached the Sun of knowledge
The earth-self's midnight star.

Its fields of flaming vision,
Its mountains of bare might,
Its peaks of fiery rapture,
Its air of absolute light,

Its seas of self-oblivion,
Its vales of Titan rest,
Became my soul's dominion,
Its Island of the Blest.

Alone with God and silence,
Timeless it lived in Time;
Life was His fugue of music,
Thought was Truth's ardent rhyme.

The Light was still around me
When I came back to earth
Bringing the Immortal's knowledge
Into man's cave of birth.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 106)

CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE INCONSCIENT

The Inconscient Energy

1

AT one end of existence, the nether material end, we observe the reign of a complete phenomenal Inconscience. No creative consciousness or will can be detected there; we start from something that is but is not aware that it is, things that are but are unconscious that they are or that anything is. Yet it is this vast impalpable Inconscient that seems to have created Matter and the whole material universe.

There is, obvious and undeniable, an Energy that creates and there is a creation; these are the only two affirmations we can make which are beyond doubt. Even if we take the creation to be illusory, still the illusory creation is there and there is a Force or Energy or Power that has created it, whether it be mere unconscious Energy, Prakriti, or an energy of deceptive consciousness, Maya.

What we actually experience here is an energy inconscient or seemingly inconscient which is in constant motion and in that motion takes on forms or produces forms and in these forms it enters into many kinds of activity and engenders a multitude of active relations. Energy and action and the results of action, Prakriti and Karma, this is the whole formula of the material universe. Objects innumerable there are, lives too and things living, a Mind or minds, a Consciousness or consciousnesses or else perhaps mere phenomena in the Inconscient to which we give these names; but all these appear to us as if they were temporary results, events ephemeral or long persistent of the movement of Energy and action, its Karma.

What is this Energy? is it something uncreated and unborn, eternal, absolute though all it produces is created, temporal, relative? If it is born, then whence came it? in or on what does it work? what set it going and towards what? We do not know and seem to have no means of knowing; at least our intellect does not know and has not yet found out any sure way to know; it can only speculate, speculate endlessly in an inconclusive circle.

It is not an unborn eternal Matter from which it is born or of which it is the eternal force or in and on which it works, as was once supposed and as some still suppose. For that is now only a construction of the speculative mind, an idea, a hypothesis, an arbitrary postulate for which there is no discoverable correspondent reality. Matter, as we now know it, is something that we can almost see coming into existence or at least can determine its process of creation; waves of energy materialising into particles and again becoming waves, but finally the waves coalesce and become atoms of what we must needs call Matter. This cannot be the inert inconscient Godhead, original and eternal, out of which all came, in and on which Energy works and produces by automatic necessity or a fortunately self-organising Chance the material world

and all the lives, minds, souls—if souls there are—which in it live and move.

It can be said that this is only a conclusion of Science and Science is unfinished and everchanging; it may refute tomorrow what it affirms today; it may discover that electricity and light, the electron and proton and the photon are not the last word or the first fact; there may be a subtler Matter which is not that but something else—a Matter not formed but motional, vibratory, aetheric. But, still, what can that be but a subtler motion of Energy, a vibration of Energy in Space? And of Space too we do not know what it is,—whether a mere conception of our mind and its sense or an extension of something that exceeds the grasp of our mind and sense,—perhaps an unseizable Infinite.

The Sankhya philosopher affirmed an original indiscriminate Matter which evolves from Prakriti, from the eternal Energy,—is, we might say, its first state of manifestation. But as it is indiscriminate, it is not likely to be in any way determinable by our senses. And, after all, this too is only a creation of Energy, an evolution out of itself or a state which it assumes; we do not get away from the original formula, Energy and its actions and results, Prakriti and Karma.

2

An energy of some Inconscient Existence has created Matter and the material universe. All this material universe is indeed nothing but an inconscient Energy taking form or producing form and in and through its forms entering into all kinds of activity. Energy (Prakriti) and motion and action of Energy, Karma, and results of its action—this is the formula of our universe.

But whence then comes consciousness? How can things in their very nature inconscient and unaware become conscious or develop some kind of awareness? There is here a contradiction which is inexplicable and the more we look at it, becomes more and more inexplicable.

This is possible because inconscience is a phenomenon not a fundamental reality. A phenomenon is something that appears to us, but does not show to us the whole reality of existence or of its own existence; it is a front, a face, a circumstance of something more than itself that does not appear but is—the Reality. Inconscience is a phenomenal state; it is consciousness that is the Reality; consciousness is an inherent and eternal state of being, inconscience is its temporal, temporary and apparent condition when it forms itself by its own energy into Matter and material objects. Its consciousness involves itself in inanimate Matter and seems there an inconscience; its energy too acts as if it were an inconscient energy, doing things without knowing what it is doing, creating a universe but unaware of the universe it creates, contriving millions of devices, but without any intelligence. So it seems, but so it cannot be; there is something hidden from us which we have to discover. It is the consciousness behind the Energy, the conscious Being behind the action that we have to discover.

Consciousness, being, force, energy (shakti), these are the three first terms of the fundamental truth of existence. What we have to know is how they work out together in ourselves and the universe.

*

Chance, some say, does all; the phenomena of consciousness—for there is no such thing as consciousness in itself, only reactive phenomena of sense and mind provoked by outward impacts—are, like everything else, the products of Chance.

But what is Chance, after all? It is only a word, a notion formed by our consciousness to account for things of which we have no true knowledge—and it does not account for them. When we do not know how or why a thing came to pass, we escape by saying, it was chance. We do not truly know how or why the universe happened or things in the universe, so we say “Chance made it; Chance did it.” An intellectual escape, nothing more. If we said “A selection, mysterious to us, out of infinite possibility,” then there would be some truth and some profundity in our thinking.

But the emergence of consciousness out of the Inconscient was more probably a necessity in the very being of being, in the innate movement of being, than merely a possibility. Necessity, then? an inevitable determination in Nature? or a self-determination in the conscious Spirit?

Consciousness and Immortality

1

Our existence is not a freak of some inconscient mechanical Force stumbling into consciousness nor an inexplicable activity on the surface of a blank Nothingness or an impassive inactive Infinite. There is a significance in our life, it moves towards a spiritual end, it fulfils the drive of an eternal reality.

Immortality is the nature of our being, birth and death are a movement and incident of our immortality. Birth is an assumption of a body by the spirit, death is the casting off [of] the body; there is nothing original in this birth, nothing final in this death. Before birth we were; after death we shall be. Nor are our birth and death a single episode without continuous meaning or sequel; it is one episode out of many, scenes of our drama of existence with its denouement far away in time.

2

All depends upon consciousness. For all world-existence is a form created by consciousness, upheld by consciousness, determined by consciousness. All that is is

a consciousness veiled or unveiled, manifesting or concealing its own substance. All is energy of consciousness masked by movement of mind and life and matter and taking forms which are merely motions of the energy stabilised to appearance, yet always in movement; for the consciousness that constitutes these forms is always in dynamic movement; the visible rhythm and self-result of this self-repeating or self-continuing vibration and never resting motion and dynamis is what we call form. Disperse the energy that constitutes it and the form dissolves. Withdraw the consciousness that expresses itself in the energy and the energy can keep up no longer its sustaining rhythm; therefore it disperses, therefore the form dissolves. If we could so intensify the power of the consciousness put out in us that we could keep the energy always repeating, continuing, enlarging, progressing in its rhythm, then, the form might change but need not dissolve and even physically we should be immortal[.]

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays Divine and Human*, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 297-301)

Men do not know themselves and have not learned to distinguish the different parts of their being; for these are usually lumped together by them as mind, because it is through a mentalised perception and understanding that they know or feel them; therefore they do not understand their own states and actions, or, if at all, then only on the surface. It is part of the foundation of yoga to become conscious of the great complexity of our nature, see the different forces that move it and get over it a control of directing knowledge. We are composed of many parts each of which contributes something to the total movement of our consciousness, our thought, will, sensation, feeling, action, but we do not see the origination or the course of these impulsions; we are aware only of their confused and pell-mell results on the surface upon which we can at best impose nothing better than a precarious shifting order.

The remedy can only come from the parts of the being that are already turned towards the Light. To call in the light of the Divine Consciousness from above, to bring the psychic being to the front and kindle a flame of aspiration which will awaken spiritually the outer mind and set on fire the vital being, is the way out.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 233)

‘LET ALL TEARS BE WIPED AWAY...’

January 7, 1914

GIVE them all, O Lord, Thy peace and light, open their blinded eyes and their darkened understanding; calm their futile worries and their vain anxieties. Turn their gaze away from themselves and give them the joy of being consecrated to Thy work without calculation or mental reservation. Let Thy beauty flower in all things, awaken Thy love in all hearts, so that Thy eternally progressive order may be realised upon earth and Thy harmony be spread until the day all becomes Thyself in perfect purity and peace.

Oh! let all tears be wiped away, all suffering relieved, all anguish dispelled, and let calm serenity dwell in every heart and powerful certitude strengthen every mind. Let Thy life flow through all like a regenerating stream that all may turn to Thee and draw from that contemplation the energy for all victories.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 49)

‘ON ABDUL BAHA’

I knew Abdul Baha very well, the successor of Baha Ullah, founder of the Bahai religion; Abdul Baha was his son. He was born in prison and lived in prison till he was forty, I believe. When he came out of prison his father was dead and he began to preach his father’s religion....¹

*
* *

He was the son of the famous Baha Ullah who had been put into prison for spreading ideas that were more progressive and broad-minded than those of the Sufis, and was resented by orthodox Muslims. After his death, his son, the sole heir, became determined to preach his father’s religious ideas, and for this purpose he travelled to many countries of the world. He had an excellent nature. He was as simple as his aspiration was great. I liked him very much....

His sincerity and his aspiration for the Divine were simple and very spontaneous. One day, when I went to visit him, he was to give a lecture to his disciples. But he was sick and could not get up. Perhaps the meeting would have to be postponed. When I came near to him, he said, “Go and take my place at today’s lecture.” I was startled, unprepared as I was to hear such a request. I said to him, “I am not a member of your sect and I know nothing about it, so how can I talk to them about anything?” But he insisted, saying, “It does not matter. Say anything at all, it will be quite all right. Go and talk.... Concentrate in the sitting-room and then speak.” At last he persuaded me to do it....

Then one day he asked me to stay in Paris and take the responsibility for his disciples. But I told him that as I did not myself accept the beliefs of his sect, it was out of the question for me to do so....²

INTRODUCTION TO A TALK

All the prophets, all the instructors who have come to bring the divine word to men, have, on one point at least, given an identical teaching.

All of them have taught us that the greatest truths are sterile unless they are transformed through us into useful actions. All have proclaimed the necessity of living their revelation in daily life. All have declared that they show us the path but that we must tread it ourselves; no being, however great, can do our work in our stead.

1. *Questions and Answers 1950-51* (14 April), pp. 316-17.

2. From an unpublished talk.

Baha Ullah was no exception to this rule. I shall not quote the texts to you, you know them as well and better than I do. How many times Abdul Baha has said: "Do not talk, act; words are of no use without actions, we must be an example to the world."

It is indeed very necessary that each one of us should be an example to the world. For it is only by showing to men how an inner commerce with the eternal truths transforms disorder into harmony and suffering into peace, that we shall induce them to follow the way which will lead them towards liberation. But Abdul Baha is not content to give us this teaching, he is living it, and therein lies all his power of persuasion.

Indeed, who has seen Abdul Baha and not felt in his presence this perfect goodness, this sweet serenity, this peace emanating from his being?

And the revelations of Baha Ullah imparted through the mouth of his son are all the more comprehensible and convincing to us since he is living them within himself.

To some of you, perhaps, this reflection will occur: "If Abdul Baha can realise this beauty, it is because he is the master, but for us..."

Certainly, our indolence could not formulate a better reason for refusing to make any effort, but this is merely a lazy excuse.

There is, without doubt, an almost ineradicable difference between individuals, the one arising from their special role, their place, their status in the infinite hierarchy of beings; but whatever this role or status may be, within it each one can develop his own qualities to perfection, each one can and must aspire to gain the perfect purity, the perfect sincerity, the deep harmony which bring us into accord with the laws of order in the universe.

I knew an old sage who used to compare men to minerals that were more or less crude, more or less rich, but all containing gold. Let this ore undergo the purifying flames of spiritualisation and at the bottom of the crucible will be found an ingot which is more or less heavy, but always of pure gold.

We must therefore seek to release from its matrix the pure gold that is within us. How many methods have been recommended for this!

They are all excellent, but each one applies to a special category of mentality and character, and each individual must find the one that best suits his temperament.

That is why, unless I am mistaken, Miss Sanderson asks one person or another to set forth here his own special view of the question or else the method which he finds most effective.

I do not intend today to expound any one of these methods to you in its entirety.

I would like—since we are taught that our first duty is to act and, moreover, that our acts are for ourselves the most powerful agents of transformation—I would like only to draw your attention to two categories of action which, in my opinion, are not always accorded the full importance they have with regard to others and to ourselves.

They are purely mental actions, but nonetheless, very much alive, very powerful

and consequently very beneficial or very harmful according to the direction imparted to them.

The first is our faculty of mental formation, thought; the second is our activity in states of sleep, which is usually known as dream and is very intimately linked with the first, as you will see.³

The very ancient traditions, whether Chaldean or Hindu, have taught from all time that thoughts are formations: by his thought a human being has the power of giving birth to real, living and active entities.

And it should not be thought that this can be done only through some extraordinary and dangerous practice known as magic. Nothing of the kind.

Any thought that is at all strong and persistent, any desire that is at all intense—which is again a way of thinking—determine mechanically, so to say, in their own medium, a formation whose duration and power of action will depend on the force and intensity of the thought or desire which has given birth to it.

To make myself understood more clearly, I have brought you a few passages from an as yet unpublished philosophical volume.

“All that lives is substantial, but all that is substantial is living. Every state of substance is a world of living forces, of real forms.

“To restrict the real to the sole domain of the forms we perceive is to restrict the universal intelligence to its physical manifestation alone, all light to the one field of our vision.

“However, no space exists where there is no vibration of light, no depth exists where the essence of the intelligible does not assume appropriate forms.”

“So long as we imagine that the whole universal reality is confined to the one order of substance, to the one state of materiality perceived by our senses, we know nothing and can explain nothing.

“When science endeavoured to understand what light is, it had to break out of the too narrow space and too limited area of perceptible phenomena, and it postulated, under the name of ether, a subtle state of reality. But, in reaching this state, it has taken only its first steps on the path of infinite transcendence....

“Thus, we can now become aware that the realm of being which we know is merely the field of manifestation, of a more complete materialisation of its own distant and anterior modes, the last among the fields of life.”

“If we could perceive the living images which thoughts produce around us at each moment, if we could measure the force of their power of formation, we would

3. This introduction seems originally to have preceded the third talk on thought (pp. 83-92) and the talk on dreams (pp. 30-37).

understand what can be created by the concourse of our converging wills and the formidable concert of the collective ideas and beliefs of a people, a civilisation, a race.”

“Certainly, all ideas are not creative to the same degree. In fact, few minds are capable of thinking real thoughts; and most individual mental formations are no more than distortions, malformations of stereotypes formed by some anonymous thinker which have become common property. The forms they assume in the intellectual substance are usually crude and stupid; besides, they do not last long.

“But as soon as an idea becomes an idea-force, a true mental dynamism, it tends to produce and maintain its plastic representation in a more stable and precise form. And great thoughts, co-ordinated syntheses of intellectual force, are in actual fact, in the substance they have assumed, living creations and active entities.”

...

And yet we must kindle the stars that one by one will come to illumine this night. This is, from the mental point of view, what Abdul Baha expects from us all. This is the way to be intellectually an example to the world.

For such an action more than for any other, perhaps, the usefulness of meetings such as this one becomes clearly visible.

By uniting our thoughts for one or two hours around a very pure and lofty idea, in a common will for disinterested progress, we create a mental atmosphere that is ever more luminous and strong. But this is not enough; it would even be very little if, when leaving these meetings, we were to plunge back defenceless into this coarse and heavy atmosphere. For in the mental as in the physical domain we are in a state of perpetual interchange with the corresponding environment.⁴

10 March 1912

NOTES FOR A MEETING

What a true meeting should be.

Mr. Ber talked to us last Friday about mantras.

2 kinds of masters according to Ramakrishna:

The master who gives the mantra and who is thus an indirect means of spiritualisation.

The master who has had the deep experience of divine union and who by his presence alone transmits spirituality—Abdul Baha.

What a single man can do by his spiritual power can be achieved by a group if it unites in a thought of goodwill:

4. This talk continues with passages which have come already in *On Thought—III*, etc.

Chaldean initiation:

“When you are twelve united in righteousness, you will manifest the Ineffable.”

Groups are subject to the same laws as individuals.

More favourable moments due to collective suggestions.

Renewals: the beginning of each new year, whatever date is chosen as a starting-point.

An opportunity is given to awaken in oneself the idea that all things can be new and the resolution to make them so.

Consequently, the usefulness of meeting at fixed times to make favourable resolutions together.

Reading.

3 January 1913

THE DEPARTURE OF ABDUL BAHA

Last Monday, Abdul Baha took leave of us; in a very few days he will have left Paris, and I know many hearts which will feel a great void and will grieve.

Yet only the body is leaving us, and what is the body if not precisely that in which men are most alike, be they great or small, wise or ignorant, terrestrial or divine? Yes, you may rest assured that only his body is leaving us; his thought will remain faithfully with us, and his unchanging affection will enfold us, and his spiritual influence will always be the same, absolutely the same. Whether materially he is near or far matters little, for the divine forces elude completely the laws of the material world: they are omnipresent, always at work to satisfy every receptivity, every sincere aspiration.

So although it may be pleasant for our outer being to see his physical appearance or hear his voice, to dwell in his presence, we must truly tell ourselves that, inasmuch as it seems indispensable to us, this shows that we are still little conscious of the inner life, the true life.

Even if we do not attain to the marvellous depths of the divine life, of which only very rare individuals are constantly conscious, already in the domain of thought we escape the laws of time and space.

To think of someone is to be near him, and wherever two beings may find themselves, even if they are physically separated by thousands of kilometres, if they think of each other they are together in a very real way. If we are able to concentrate our thought sufficiently and to concentrate sufficiently in our thought, we can become integrally conscious of what we are thinking of, and if it is a man, sometimes see or hear him—in any case know his thought.

Thus separation no longer exists, it is an illusory appearance. And in France, in America, in Persia or in China, we are always near the one we love and think of.

But this fact is all the more real in a case such as ours, where we want to come into contact with an especially active and conscious thought, a thought which assumes and manifests an infinite love, a thought which enfolds the whole earth with a loving and fatherly solicitude that is only too glad to come to the help of those who entrust themselves to it.

Experience this mental communion and you will see that there is no room for sorrow.

Each morning when you get up, before you begin your day, with love and admiration and gratefulness hail this great family, these saviours of mankind who, ever the same, have come, come and will come until the end of time, as guides and instructors, as humble and marvellous servants of their brothers, in order to help them to scale the steep slope of perfection. Thus when you wake up, concentrate on them your thought full of trust and gratitude and you will soon experience the beneficial effects of this concentration. You will feel their presence responding to your call, you will be surrounded, imbued with their light and love. Then the daily effort to understand a little better, to love a little more, to serve more, will be more fruitful and easier at the same time. The help you give to others will become more effective and your heart will be filled with an unwavering joy.

9 June 1913

THE MOTHER

(Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 2, pp. 108-116)

THE FIRST HUMAN BODIES

[In connection with the Mother's conversation of 11 March 1961 published in the February 2007 issue of Mother India, a reader points out another conversation where the Mother speaks of the appearance of the first human bodies.]

When I thought about the last conversation again, it seemed to me that the difference between the two creations, the animal and the supramental, was so huge that it did not make much difference whether the body was more supple and so on.

The difference is not so huge. The difference is huge in the MODE OF CREATION, that is where there is a huge difference. That is where it is difficult to conceive how we will move over from one to the other and how there can be intermediaries.

Exactly, I suddenly remembered in this connection a quotation from Sri Aurobindo that seemed to me interesting. It is in The Human Cycle, at the end of The Human Cycle. He says: "It may well be that, once started, it [the supramental endeavour] may not advance rapidly even to its first decisive stage; it may be that it will take long centuries of effort to come into some kind of permanent birth. But that is not altogether inevitable, for the principle of such changes in Nature seems to be a long obscure preparation followed by a swift gathering up and precipitation of the elements into the new birth, a rapid conversion, a transformation that in its luminous moment figures like a miracle."¹

This is very interesting.... Yes (*laughing*), he said this to me recently!

It is true.

Basically, once there is a body formed, precisely, by an ideal and an increasing development, a body which has what it takes, and capacities, potential, there may very well be a sudden Descent of a supramental form, just as there was one with the human form. Because that, I know (I know it from having lived it), that when the passage—very obscure—from the animal to man (of which they have found fairly convincing traces) was sufficient, when the result was plastic enough, there was a Descent—there was a mental descent of the human creation. And they were beings (there was a double descent; it was in fact special in that it was double, male and female: it was not a single being, it was two beings who descended), and they were beings who lived in Nature, an animal life, but with a mental consciousness; but there was no conflict with the general harmony. All the memories are absolutely clear of a

1. *Social and Political Thought*, SABCL, Vol. 15, p. 252.

spontaneous, animal life, perfectly natural, in Nature. A marvellously beautiful Nature that strangely resembles the nature in Ceylon and tropical countries: water, trees, fruits, flowers.... And a life in harmony with animals: there was no sense of fear or difference. It was a very luminous, very harmonious, and very NATURAL life, in Nature.

And it is strange, the story of Paradise would seem to be a mental distortion of what really happened. Of course, it all became ridiculous, and also with a tendency... it gives you the feeling that a hostile will or an asuric being tried to use that to make it the basis for a religion and to have mastery over man. But that is another matter.

But that spontaneous, natural, harmonious life—very harmonious, extremely beautiful and luminous and easy!... A harmonious rhythm in Nature. In fact, a luminous animality.

That is how we began, and it began that way because there was a descent of the higher human mental consciousness into the form that existed. The phenomenon may recur in the same way, with the difference that it can be more conscious and willed—there may be the intervention of a conscious will. It would be, or it could happen through an occult process—that, I do not know, there are all sorts of possibilities, one of which could be the conscious passage of a being who has used the old human body for his development and his yoga, and who would leave the form that had become useless in order to enter a form capable of adapting to the new growth.

Here, the two possibilities meet.

THE MOTHER

(From a conversation of 21 April 1965)

“SAKUNTALA” AND “SAKUNTALA’S FAREWELL” CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

[Thirty-five years ago Amal Kiran (K. D. Sethna) published “‘Sakuntala’—A poem from Sri Aurobindo’s manuscripts and its curious history” in *Mother India*. It related a literary incident which had taken place in 1949, soon after the journal had been launched in Bombay.

The correspondence on Amal’s poems “Sakuntala” and “Sakuntala’s Farewell” began in early 1931 in Pondicherry and went on for some months; it was then taken up again in 1933 for a short time. Unfortunately, a few pieces of this correspondence are missing.

Parts 1 and 2 of the following correspondence will not only give an insight into how the poems took shape, but will also supply the background to references made by Amal in his introductory note to “‘Sakuntala’—A poem from Sri Aurobindo’s manuscripts...”. In Part 3 this ‘literary incident both curious and significant’ will be reprinted in full.]

Part 1: 1931

[Typescript sent to Sri Aurobindo, ca. April 1931]

SAKUNTALA

Sage Kanwa let his string of holy names
Hang inattentive, till it slipped away
From his limp, wrinkled hand: he pondered her... [1]
Each year the visiting seasons had beheld
Her beauty cast an aureole round her face,
Guiltless of knowledge save her heart’s own voice
That counted, in spontaneous piety
Of wondering joy, the beads of night and day.
But child to momentary fierce desire
That, meteorlike, had crossed a Yogin’s peace,
Her body baring vague reminiscence
Of that bright passion that had shaped her limbs
In Menaka’s womb of paradisial grace,
Allured her to Dushyanta’s hero-arms.
But such unearthly effluence was her love
That he, the fortunate sovereign of her charms,
Pierced with the lustre of her countenance
The oblivious gloom of his own human birth

And, inward, shone in agelessness of soul!
 She turned all things to glory, and earth's hues
 | Passing into her eyes [2]
 Hung heavened in their deep felicitous dream;
 So when his look, enamoured, plunged therein
 And searched for unforgettable replies
 Its mirroring depths, he saw himself divine,
 Because grown part of her pure loveliness!...

'Twas her last evening in the hermitage;
 For with the morrow she would walk afar
 Into the unknown world—she who had poured
 Her tears of joy upon these sacred groves
 And, when the sun waxed dire with midday heat,
 Eased them with lingering shadow of herself
 Till her associate damsels beckoned her,
 Chiding, “No prince will marry thee, so swart
 And sun-consumed will seem thy tender skin...”
 As Kanwa watched her, joy and grief commingled
 In her bewildered look—joy in her lord
 Whom she would greet at dawn, grief for these soon [3]
 | Lost playmates, birds and quiet lotuses [3]
 And antlered heads that met her, half-amazed
 Yet buoyant, mid the patient heavy trees
 Beneath whose leaves she oft had stretched herself
 And, spite of deepening darkness, grown aware
 | Of each calm moment as a friendly eye
 And felt the smile of a great light upon [4]
 Each limb, as if some god hidden in those
 Innumerable trees upon her lavished
 His hoarded joy of long, sun-gathering years!...

And Kanwa, picking up his rosary, [5]
 Followed her, marvelling whither she would roam.
 She paused beside a tangled creeper gemmed
 With flowers of quivering crimson, and pressed close
 Her mouth, her small breasts warming their cold tips
 Against the fiery blossoms. She embraced
 The yearning plant and softly heard herself: [6]
 “O thou delightful friend, I love thee more
 Since thou, whom, child to child, I once had taught

Thy devious creeping pace.
 Didst recompense that early fostering care
 By making him whose name holds me ensnared
 Prove me his kinship to my simple soul.
 For while he vowed that we were one, however
 Sundered in form, I was afraid, though each
 Melodious word he spoke was truth; how could
 I know that he whose sceptred will was law
 And royally with pleasure peopled his
 Vast hours of wealth could be like me who never
 Had seen a world beyond these avenues
 Of verdant shadows and tranquillities
 Beside cool streams which the wild-drake frequents?
 But of a morning, when the sudden light
 Burst in a shower of rubies upon thee,
 Thy every petal burned a deeper red
 In sweet child-rage, as who should tell the sun,
 ‘I have no need of thy munificence
 To lend me splendour: I was born aflame!’
 That hour, upon thy darling pride, with lips
 That praised thy angered beauty with their smile,
 He dwelt, indulgent, long,—forgetting me!
 Ah, then, I knew his heart was kin to mine,
 Brimful with joy in little flowering things,
 And loved him dearer for that negligence...”

The wood was even as Kanwa’s wonted trance,
 In quest of inmost spirit with dark-shut eyes;
 But as she wandered near its thickest glooms
 The whole night throbbled as though that glimmering core
 Of its mysterious essence stood revealed.
 The drowsing songsters lightly rubbed their beaks
 Against their nests; vaguely
 Bestirred by odours stolen from her hair
 By the dull wind to soothe its loneliness:
 Sudden a various music filled its mood,
 With brief, unseen, premature dawn, but all [7]
 Of one desire. The gurgling rainlark thought
 He cried “Sakuntala!” The white-plumed dove
 Essayed to speak “Sakuntala!” and cooed.
 “Sakuntala!” the koël, dreaming, called

While his habitual iteration left
 His half-awakened throat. And pale birds cheeped
 Surprised irrelevance, although their necks
 Were pregnant with that ravishing appeal.
 Moved by their tones, she honied with her voice
 The air: "No longer shall my feet explore
 blesséd
 These haunts; but ~~blessed~~ sorrow! now that I [8]
 Must soon relinquish your companionship.
 Thy
 {~~Your~~ beauty passes through my aching sense [9] line 24
 it has me
 Into my soul[,] O forest, ~~thou~~ hast held [10]
 A
~~Me~~ willing prisoner in thy ample shades; [11]
 But henceforth I exceed thee, for I hold
 Thy
~~The~~ myriad secrets in my sweet, dim thoughts! [12]
 Nor shall my memory fail you, fragile buds, [13] line 29
 Of poor, wild wayside, nameless fragrances,
 Thin grasses with unrecognised small discs
 Of humble colour—"ye too shall be mine!" }
 And as she syllabled thus, she bent her knee [14] line 32
 [15]
 To touch a drooping weed a toad had crushed
 In leaping blindly on: its one frail flower
 Uttered its sigh to her,
 But, cherishing with infinite tenderness
 Its undistinguished speech, she darkly felt
 An infinite wisdom whispering in her ear
 Its utter fullness through that little throat,
 Though yet, o' erhead, in the obscure of space
 A million stars with great harps tireless swung
 On their predestined and portentous ways,
 Unmirrored by her trembling wonderment!...

 And more than deer or amorous kokilas
 Or even the mother-hearted trees, such folk
 Worshipped her,—on the giant earth she was
 Their only friend: they grieved her nuptials most.
 For other maidens would still love the birds
 That warbled flutelike, and the stately leaves,

And the gay-petalled beauties of the grove;
 But no Sakuntala would come again
 To minister to them; they stretched in woe
 Their tiny ineffectual hands to stay
 Her feet,—and longed for blissful death
 Beneath them as she passed.

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

- [1.] not English. You don’t ponder a person.
 [2.] What is the idea of these halflines? Halflines are not admissible in blank verse.
 [3.] These expressions were good; as you have put them here, without rhythm, without the significance they had in the other poem they fall entirely flat.
 [4.] This upon is too weak for an ending of a line.
 [5.] Very colloquial.
 [6.] ?
 [7.] The stresses in premature are on the first and last not on the middle syllable.
 [8.] blessed
 [9.] Thy
 [10.] Into my soul, O forest, it has held me
 [11.] A
 [12.] Thy
 [13.] [*Lines 29-32 marked by Sri Aurobindo*]
 These are the only few lines that arrested me as having some character—some power of diction and some distinction and firm strength and balance in the movement. The rest is Tennyson and water.
 [14.] [*Lines 24-32 put in square brackets by Sri Aurobindo. In the last paragraph of his letter dated 28 April 1931, Sri Aurobindo refers to these lines: “...The first three lines (of lines 24-32) are weak in rhythm and I have changed them to cure the defect. In the fifth “sweet dim thoughts” might be improved by putting a single adjective. The last four lines are good both in substance and in rhythmic building and movement. In their spirit and manner there is a strong reminiscence* of “Love and Death”, but the rhythmic form is not the same, it has a more smooth and regular motion very distinct, harmonious and effective....”*]
 “+I note that influence in many places in the poem, but Victoria has proved the more dominant power.”]
 [15.] Terribly Tennysonian.

*

I am sending a variant of the opening fifty lines or so of my poem, so that

you may judge which of the two versions is better. In what follows, "Sage Kanwa" occurs only in a passing reference in the second paragraph instead of at the start.

The visiting seasons every year beheld
 Her beauty shed an aureole round her face,
 Guiltless of knowledge save her heart's own voice
 That counted in spontaneous piety
 Of wondering joy the beads of night and day.
 But child to momentary fierce desire
 That, meteorlike, had crossed a Yogin's peace,
 re'mini'scence
 Her body bearing vague reminiscence [1]
 Of that bright passion that had shaped her limbs
 In Menaka's womb of paradisial grace,
 Allured her to Dushyanta's herohood.
 But such unearthly effluence was her love
 That the mere utterance of his name by her
 Would turn his soul an echoing response
 Of gorgeous music kindred to her tone.
 The commonest, insignificant hues of earth,
 When her far, listening look companioned his,
 Hung heavened in a deep, felicitous dream.
 For whatsoever with her eyes she claimed
 She kindled into glory; and his plunge
 Of self-surrender beatific, intense,
 Into those beckoning depths, enveloped him
 With their nobility—he felt divine,
 Grown part of her translucid loveliness!

Nor he alone but all that holy grove
 Wherein she flowered, Sage Kanwa's care, proclaimed,
 By subtle, glimmering signs, its varied life
 Was happy of her presence, and bewailed
 In voices only she could recognise
 The eve of her departure, when her feet
 Roamed, wistful, through the shadows aimlessly,
 Unfollowed by her maidens, and her lips
 Were haunted faintly by a nameless tune
 Where joy and grief commingled—joy in her lord
 Whom she would greet at dawn, grief for these soon
 |Lost playmates, birds and quiet lotuses

And antlered heads that met her, half-amazed
 Yet buoyant, mid the patient, heavy trees [2]
 Beneath whose leaves she had often stretched herself
 And, spite of deepening darkness, grown aware
 Of each calm moment as a friendly eye
 And felt the smile of a great light upon
 Each limb, as if some god hidden in those
 Innumerable trees had lavished on her
 His hoarded joy of long, sun-gathering years!...

She paused beside a tangled creeper gemmed
 With flowers seen quivering crimson at daytime, [3]
 And the eager tips of her young bosom pressed
 Blind kisses on their slumber: she embraced
 The astonished plant, and softly heard herself: [4]

!!

etc., etc.

Sri Aurobindo’s comment:

[1] [*re’mini’scence*] This word takes stress on the first and third syllables.

[2] [*Lines marked by Sri Aurobindo*]

[3] [*Lines 2-5*] Keats and Tennyson at their combined worst.

[4] [*Sri Aurobindo underlined “astonished” and placed two exclamation marks beneath the word.*]

It is slightly better, but the flatness of the rhythmical or no-rhythmical movement prevents it from getting anywhere.

[April 1931]

*

Amal—

I am afraid I cannot say much in praise of your blank verse. I notice that most Indians who write in English, immediately they try blank verse begin to follow the Victorian model and especially a sort of pseudo-Tennysonian movement or structure which makes their work in this kind weak, flat and ineffective. The language inevitably suffers by the same faults, for with a weak verse cadence it is impossible to find a strong or effective turn of language. But Victorian blank verse at its best is not strong or great, and at its usual level it is weak, crude, or characterless. Except for a few poems, like Tennyson’s early “Morte d’ Arthur”, “Ulysses”, and one or two others or Arnold’s “Sohrab and Rustam”, there is nothing of a high order. Tennyson is especially

a bad model and a weakening and corrupting influence, and the “Princess” and “Idylls of the King” which seem to have set the tone for Indo-English blank verse are detestable. There is plenty of clever craftsmanship but it is all false and artificial and without true strength or inspired movement or poetic force—the right kind of blank verse for Victorian drawing-rooms, that is all that can be said for it. As for language and substance his influence always brings an artificial languid prettiness varied by an elaborate false simplicity and an attempt at a kind of brilliant, sometimes lusciously brilliant sentimental or sententious commonplace. I could point out to you any number of examples of these things from your *Sakuntala*—there is the pale ghost of Tennyson everywhere. The main fault however is in the verse itself—everywhere a languid weakness; all the lines, even when there is variation of structure, seem yet to have the same movement or absence of movement; the rhythm has no life in it, no swing, no power, no backbone.

Blank verse is the most difficult of all English metres; it has to be very skilfully and strongly done to make up for the absence of rhyme, and if not very well done, it is better not done at all. In the ancient languages rhyme was not needed, for they were written in quantitative metres which gave them the necessary support, but modern languages need the help of rhyme. It is only a very masterly hand that can make blank verse an equally or even a more effective poetic movement. You have to vary your metre by a skilful play of pauses or by an always changing distribution of stresses and supple combinations of long and short vowels and by much weaving of assonances; or else, if you use a more regular form you have to give a great power and relief to the verse as did Marlowe at his best. If you do none of these things, if you write with effaced stresses, without relief and force or, if you do not succeed in producing harmonious variations in your rhythm, your blank verse becomes a monotonous vapid wash and no amount of mere thought-colour or image-colour can save it.

There is, however, one passage in your poem towards the end which is much better. I have marked it off by brackets. The first three lines are weak in rhythm and I have changed them to cure the defect. In the fifth “sweet dim thoughts” might be improved by putting a single adjective. The last four lines are good both in substance and in rhythmic building and movement. In their spirit and manner there is a strong reminiscence* of “Love and Death”, but the rhythmic form is not the same, it has a more smooth and regular motion very distinct, harmonious and effective. If you can write a whole poem on lines like these, distinct in form, well-built and truly mobile, then you will have justified your ambition to write blank verse. But for that you must resolute[ly] turn your back on the ghosts of Tennyson and Queen Victoria.

*I note that influence in many places in the poem, but Victoria has proved the more dominant power.

28 April 1931

Sri Aurobindo.

I have been rather perplexed about the fate of that half a page of blank verse I had submitted to you for criticism. Is it only because you have forgotten about it or had no time to spare, that you have not replied? Odd thoughts have come to me at times—that it was because I had incurred your displeasure in some way or you wished to discourage my writing poetry at present or I had written in one of my letters that I was anxious to have your opinion and you wanted me to learn patience. I am sure none of these reasons are anywhere near the mark, but I am feeling discouraged in a general way all the same. Could I hope that you would find time to reply one of these days?

Sri Aurobindo’s reply:

I do not know why the holding back of your blank verse should lead to a blank general discouragement in you—there is no proper connection except the adjective. Please do not get so easily upset in future. The only reason for the delay is want of time. I could easily have answered at once that your blank verse is still at fault—there is a withdrawal of Tennyson but not of Victoria. I began however, to slash and cut your verses with my fountain-pen in order to create out of the chaos a stronger version—not as a substitute, but as an example. For want of time I had to discontinue this savage operation and am waiting for a lull to resume it. That is all.

16 May 1931

*

[*Part of a letter to Sri Aurobindo*]

I have had another try at blank verse, this time a very short flight. It is an attempt to reduce “Sakuntala” to quintessential value. I am anxious to have your verdict on it.

[*Sri Aurobindo’s reply*]

P.S. I have made a recast of your blank verse and shall send it to you with comments (if possible) in a few days.

21 May 1931

*

[*Part of a letter to Sri Aurobindo; “P.S.” referring to “Sakuntala”?*]

P.S. Some time back you wrote to me that you had finished recasting my blank verse—not to give a substitute but a kind of example—and that you would send it to me with comments if possible. When shall I get it? Can it by any chance be in the near future?

[*Sri Aurobindo's reply*]

As for the blank verse it was not so much a recasting as my own version of what your poem might have been; the comments are still asleep in the limbo of the unwritten. I am not a prophet, so I cannot predict to you the near future.

18 June 1931

*

[*Part of a letter to Sri Aurobindo*]

Your not being a “prophet” is not without its optimistic side too. Suppose you had prophesied that the comments won't awake from the limbo of the unwritten in the near future. Then there would have been no help for it; whereas now I can at least pray for the best.

19 June 1931

*

(*To be continued*)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

Kalidasa ranks among the supreme poetic artists with Milton and Virgil and he has a more subtle and delicate spirit and touch in his art than the English, a greater breath of native power informing and vivifying his execution than the Latin poet. There is no more perfect and harmonious style in literature, no more inspired and careful master of the absolutely harmonious and sufficient phrase combining the minimum of word expenditure with the fullest sense of an accomplished ease and a divine elegance and not excluding a fine excess that is not excessive, an utmost possible refined opulence of aesthetic value. More perfectly than any other he realises the artistic combination of a harmonious economy of expression, not a word, syllable, sound in superfluity, and a total sense of wise and lavish opulence that was the aim of the earlier classical poets.

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Renaissance in India*, CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 358-59)

**SIX POEMS WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS
AS NOTED BY NIRODBARAN**

(1)

To Mother

Sweet, Beloved, tell me why,
Though the waters meet the sky,
Though the sun-rays kiss the sea,
You don't ever come to me.

When beyond the dark and light,
All things reach your holy height,
Will you wash away my sin,
Will you let me enter in?

How long must I wait, my dear,
In this trembling and fear;
Will you ever forget my past,
And take me to your soul at last?

Cleanse me, dear, and come to me,
I'm lonely as the dark still sea;
Touch me with your Truth-rays' shine,
Come to me, O Love Divine.

1946

Sri Aurobindo's comment: good

(2)

Praised be Thou who touchest me
With Thy wand of ecstasy:
When the seven meanings pass
Through the lucencies of glass,
Twining to a rod of white
Drawn unto Thy Sun-delight;
When the entranced moon-waters roll,

In the caverns of the soul,
 Deep reverberations stored
 Of the laughter of the lord;
 When the stars of destiny
 Break their Karmic seals and free
 In the being's living breath
 Secrecies of life and death,
 Placing in my hands the key
 Of Thy folded mystery;—
 Sweet Enchanter, round me close
 Magic circlets of Thy Rose.

Sri Aurobindo's comment: very fine

(3)

Maya

Your puzzles and pretences
 Escape my new-learnt skill;
 How many more wild senses
 Must I unravel still?

 Oh stop this hectic spreeing,
 And give to me the bliss
 Of Your most pure white being,
 —O Love, my Love, just this.

1944?

Sri Aurobindo's comment: very good

(4)

Love, every time You come to me
 And say You've come to stay,
 I put on my brief ecstasy,
 And then I run away.

You ask too much, my heart's afraid
 To give up all,—it flies,
 Resumes its old safe masquerade,
 And hugs its old sweet lies.

In patient trust You wait and call,
 And wait for many a day;
 But when I don't return at all,
 You quietly go away.

And all my heart's stone of pain,
 I curse me that I fail:
 But when, O Love, You come again,
 I still repeat the tale.

1946

Sri Aurobindo's comment: very good

(5)

Sonnet

I asked for darkness; thought me wise and strong,
 And fit in faith to meet its heaviness;
 It came, unstarred and mute, lest I transgress
 To love it only for its stars, its song;—
 So set me free of sin, inconscient wrong,
 To leave me in my lonely, pained distress;
 My crumpled impudence to break, and bless,
 And distribute as bread to the world's throng:

And I, left limp, then saw it face to face,
 In silent purity against my wound
 With healing touch; and suddenly I knew
 The secret of the nights that pass unmooned,
 The winter-hunger, blindness, choked disgrace,
 Knew all my dark, my sorrow is but You.

1940

Sri Aurobindo's comment: good

(6)

Prison

Why don't You let me go?
 I cannot rise
 Unto Your pureness, or
 Look in Your eyes.

Love, don't torment me so,
 But let me be;
 Forget me, leave me out,
 So I be free.

You crush me with Your love,
 I sit confused,
 Nor can take joy in things,
 As once I used.

You hover round my soul
 All day and night,
 And press me in and stop
 My coward flight.

I wish You'd never come,
 I cannot fly...
 And yet, if You should go,
 Love, I would die.

1945 or 46

Sri Aurobindo's comment: same

PAINTING AS SADHANA

Krishnalal Bhatt (1905-1990)

(Continued from the issue of April 2007)

18

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

1941

24-Jan-41: [*end*] ...for me. He is ready to take once a week. [“(Learning Mathematics)” is pencilled here.]

Kindly let me know whether you approve of my studying the subject? And if so whether I can do it with Chandulal?

Mother: Yes, you can study with Chandulal.

My love and blessings.

October: [*Krishnalal's mother passed away.*]¹

1955

9 Feb. '55: Mother,

From Ahmedabad my brother and some friends are eager to hold an exhibition of my paintings. I think it better to have the exhibition, not only of my paintings, but those of all the artists of the Ashram. The photographic section also may be included. So it will be an exhibition of the cultural activity of the Ashram.

If Mother thinks it can be done then I may write to them showing our willingness. If it is to be held it will be in the month of May (1955). It will be convenient at that time because they are going to celebrate the 60th birth anniversary of Purani.

I will propose to them that they should organise and bear the expenses. It is likely that other centres in Gujarat connected with the Ashram may want to hold the exhibition. I think if we select 125 or so, paintings and photographs, that will be alright. My brother insists on my presence there during that period. I think it would be better if someone of us here goes with the paintings so that they are handled properly.

Mother: It is better if I speak to you about it.

Tomorrow (Friday) morning at 8.30.

Blessings

[The touch of Sri Aurobindo in their lives in December 1907 turned Chhotubhai and Ambubhai into such powerful dynamos that many who came in contact with them

were deeply influenced. Although they could no longer personally lead it, their Mandal continued to dedicate itself, as best it could, to their ideals. Here was an occasion—completing sixty (Shashtipoorti) is, traditionally, an occasion for celebration—every member was determined to contribute his utmost. The main events were held in Baroda where the movement was born, but Ambubhai visited all the major centres and so did the exhibition. At Ahmedabad it was put up in a large new building built for such public expositions.

There is no record in the Ashram Archives of Krishnalal ever leaving the Ashram after 1946.]

1956

29 February: *The Supramental Manifestation.*²

*One day in this month, Promode Kumar Chatterjee (Krishnalal's old teacher who till now knew nothing about the Ashram) "saw a vision, too vivid to be forgotten. A pair of divinely beautiful swans, golden, was streaking through chidakasha (the ether within the heart) at dawn. An artist to the fingernails, the first thing he did when the beatific vision faded was to make a pencil-sketch of it. Later on he applied the colours. Although he found this vision rather remarkable, he had no idea that he had become an unconscious witness to a momentous happening."*³

*Promode Kumar would come to the Ashram, for the first time, in October 1958, when along with many of his other creations, he would show the Mother this painting which he had called 'The Two Swans'. She "put him wise, and, to the obvious delight and astonishment of the painter, she spontaneously wrote, then and there, the caption of the picture on its lower margin, Les annonceurs du monde Supramental—The Heralds of the Supramental World." She had the painting printed at the Press as a card, and distributed copies at the Darshan of 21 February 1960.*³

29 March: *The day of the Mother's arrival and meeting with Sri Aurobindo in 1914. At the time of Pranam, she distributed copies of a print of 'The Golden Purusha', (a painting done by Krishnalal in 1934), captioned with the following lines typed in French from her Prayer of 25 September 1914:*

The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute:
A new Light shall break upon the earth.
A new world shall be born,
And the things that were promised shall be fulfilled.⁴

4 April: *The day Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pondicherry in 1910. The Mother distributed at Pranam copies of a print of Krishnalal's painting of the red lotuses with the following sentence from one of Sri Aurobindo's letters as caption:*

The Supramental is a truth and its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable.

24 April: *The day of the Mother's arrival in 1920—a Darshan day since 1939. The Mother distributed at Pranam the following message:*

Without care for time, without fear for space, surging out purified from the flames of the ordeal, we shall fly without stop towards the realisation of our goal, the supramental victory.

24 November: *The thirtieth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's Siddhi Day. The Mother distributed at Pranam a card with a painting by Krishnalal of a vision he had seen while meditating on the Mother's message of 24th April quoted above. Beside the vision—a slender human figure emerging from a universal fire and soaring up towards a golden sun beckoning from beyond a remote peak—was printed her message of 24th April written out by her.*

1960

Mother: Krishnalal,

You can give to Jagadish [*Pandya, a young Ashramite*] what he needs to do some drawing and let me see what he does. If he has some gift, we shall help him.

But the best would be if he learnt technical and engineering drawing.

13.12.60: Mother,

Mrs. Tompkins asked me if I could do Mr. Tompkins' portrait.

I have done it and am sending it to Mother to see it.

Mother: It is all right.

Blessings

1962

1 Mar.'62: Mother,

It seems definite that Vasudev will be relieved from his present work. He is going to depend upon Mother's decision for his future work.

If Mother has not decided any work for him as yet we have a proposal for Mother's consideration.

We need one person to organise: 1) the picture store, where drawings and paintings are increasing more and more. 2) The painting materials. 3) Occasionally the theatre work and exhibitions. 4) When the art-gallery will be ready he may be given charge of it.⁵

Pranam

Jayanti

Krishnalal.

Mother: Very good. I fully agree.

Mother [*on a card on which is printed in black, in Gothic script*]

God speaks to the heart, when the brain cannot understand him.

10-8-62

To Krishnalal
with love and blessings.

[*10th August 1933 was the day Krishnalal first stepped into his guru-griha—the ultimate home of every seeker. His diary entry of 1933 reads:*

In one and half years of my acquaintance with Leelavatiben [Mrs. Purani] at Ahmedabad, higher sentiments for Art and Yoga were awakened in me. I turned towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A scrutiny of my past life made me feel the help of an Unknown Force. And I was made to feel that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga was the only true path for me. I also got some spiritual experiences under her guidance.⁶ Finally, with the help and guidance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, I could leave for Pondicherry, in spite of very adverse circumstances, for Their Darshan.

August 10, Thursday: I got down from the train at Pondicherry in an emotionally charged condition. After booking in the hotel, as I was making arrangements for my bath, Ambubhai came. I was seeing him after many years. His ways of talking, his style of walking were still the same, but with something powerful added—the light of Yoga. I had suppressed my emotions about my leaving Ahmedabad since the last three days. They gushed out in the afternoon in Nanubhai's room in a cascade of weeping. Now I am at peace.

I did not receive permission for the Mother's Darshan today. But I saw Her as a shadowy figure dressed in green-coloured clothes in the pale evening light when She came out to walk on the terrace.

The food here is very simple, tasty and nutritious. Though there is no allure of strong spices, I have taken to it as if I have been eating it since a long time.

Ambubhai took me for a walk in the evening and I understood that gradually he is trying to influence me to remain here for a long stay. I also met Pujalalbai in the afternoon. He still remembers our family with great warmth and affection.

August 11, Friday: I had sent a note last night requesting permission for the Mother's Darshan. Accordingly I received it today. There is no ritual as such for the pranam. Mother was distributing flowers to everyone from the terrace. Instead of going to receive the flower, I took a good position for observation. I have no words to describe Her. A person of a delicate build, a smiling face like that of the Goddess of Compassion.

A chaitanya (Consciousness) from which world? I cannot understand.]

1965

12 Jan. 65: Mother,

Bharati-di wants to publish a book in French of Indian mythological and other stories. She wants to have it published in a foreign country—Japan, France or Sweden.

She wants to have it illustrated by me, because there are many stories with animals and birds as characters. Satprem had approached me on behalf of Bharati-di and suggested about my taking up this work.

I do not have time enough to attend to that work, so I agreed on condition that I may do the illustrations gradually as I find time.

I have illustrated 5 or 6 stories, out of 38, which she has liked. I send them herewith to show to Mother.

I think she will get some royalty on the book. The publishers also pay for the illustrations. I have not yet talked about the remuneration for this work. If some money is earned through this work it may be helpful in furnishing the studio.

Mother: It is all right.

Blessings

[*Undated*]: [*end*] File with ‘B’ will have numbers B.1, B.2, B.3, etc., and so on with all the files. In this system the advantage will be that any new flower-plate can be added at the end in its own particular file, instead of at the end of the whole lot. E.g. if the new flower is ‘Divinité’ and we have 50 plates in the file ‘D’, then the plate of ‘Divinité’ will be numbered D.51. In the new edition of “Le Rôle des Fleurs” corresponding numbers of these files can be introduced.

Richard is ready to help in rearranging the numbers.

Mother: Very good. You can do so.

I have already asked for the necessary files for the arrangement.

Blessings.

11-11-65: Yesterday at noon-time I was resting—not in deep sleep. In dream or in an experience I heard someone knocking at one of my closed windows on the road side. I did not pay attention. It was as if somebody had come to the open window from the other side. I did not see anybody but I felt I was lifted swiftly and carried up in the lying down position in space—nothing was there.

I had become very big in size. I was being turned round and round [*sketched in the margin is an arrowed whirling-circle—the arrows pointing to its movement from the inner smaller to the outer larger circles*] vigorously. I felt as if I was merging in the space. At that moment I became conscious of a slight fear of the whole movement. But soon I decided to allow it to continue. But the movement slowed down and I was brought down and laid in my original place and position.⁷

Was it to be continued without fear?

Mother: It is always better not to fear.

Without the fear you would have known what to do or even done the right thing without thinking about it. —Blessings.

1966

[?June]: Mother,

I pray for Mother's Blessings

On my birthday the 1st July

with pranam

Krishnalal.

Mother: Yes.

[This is a small handmade paper (h.m.p.) folder: On the left flap is a line-drawing of a man (in brown water-colour), his arms stretched sideways-downward-oblique, standing over a curved line also painted brown signifying, obviously, the earth. Overhead is the Mother's symbol, small and golden, from which rings of gold clouds rise up to descend as waves growing larger and larger, while golden rays are flashing out from the symbol. On the right flap are Krishnalal's prayer and the Mother's writing: 'atheist'.]

1969

27.12.69: Mother,

I have prepared Blessing-cards for offering on the New Year day.

May I come on the 1st January for offering and Pranam?

Mother: All right

Blessings

[This is a white h.m.p. card cut-out in the form of a rose; darker pink lines stress the petals.]

1970

29.3.70: Mother,

Let me grow more and more in Mother's consciousness.

with pranam

Krishnalal

Mother: Love and blessings.

*

* *

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

(To be continued)

S. V. BHATT

Notes and References

1. His father passed away on 31 December 1945. On 23 May 1946 he had to leave for Ahmedabad with Kanta who was severely ill. After a fortnight in Bombay he took her to Poona but a fortnight later they had to return to Ahmedabad where she passed away.

2. See *Collected Works of the Mother*, volume 15, p. 202.

3. "The Art of Promode Kumar..." by Gurudas, *Mother India*, April 1977, p. 299. As to how his painting of the Darshan of 24 April 1950 was installed in the Meditation Hall, see *Champaklal Speaks*, 2002, pp. 252-53.

4. Later Mother made some alterations in the message and distributed it on 24 April in 1956. (See *Mother India*, November 2004, pp. 1008-1017.)

5. See "Mother's sketches" in *Champaklal Speaks*, 2002, pp. 97-98.

6. One of the vision-experiences is recorded in his letter of 7.10.33; see *Mother India*, January 2006, p. 37.

7. Compare this to his experience of the day he received the news of the death of his child and of his brother (whose calls for a visit he had not satisfied) cutting off the relationship: "...I thought it good to remain quiet. So I went to my room and began to aspire for peace. After some struggle my mind was thrown in the background, and I felt my head very light and cool. I felt also Mother's presence and her aspect in vision—there were different lights and visions too. In between, I had lapses when some hostile atmosphere was trying to attack me especially a black shadow was covering the right side of my body. By asking for Mother's help I was protected from all that. One hour passed like that, still I tried to separate myself and go deep. And quite a new experience, for me, began. My physical body seemed to be sinking somewhere and becoming smaller and smaller and some body like a vibration separated and seemed to be revolving just over the physical body. I felt a great pressure of that vibration as if it will break me down. At that time I remembered that I had such experiences before when I used to suffer from fever. The vibration-like body seemed big like an elephant in proportion to my physical body which was like that of an ant."

Sri Aurobindo: "The experience must have been that of your vital being coming out of the body and standing above it."

MOMENTS, ETERNAL

(Continued from the issue of April 2007)

The Mother in Her Mahasaraswati Aspect

JUST as for Durga-puja, Lakshmi-puja and Kali-puja, the Meditation Hall was tastefully decorated for Saraswati-puja as well. The Mother would bring down the Mahasaraswati aspect on this day. We received a special flower-blessing then.

When the Mother came down, I was naturally overcome with memories of celebrations of Saraswati-puja in Feni when school-children and all the little ones from the locality participated with so much fanfare. There was a competition between the schools and colleges of every locality to see whose depiction of Ma Saraswati was the most beautiful. How lovely those depictions of Ma Saraswati used to be, really! It was as if this goddess robed in white had come and installed herself within us on this day. With all our devotion, faith and love we would make offerings at her feet. For this was the puja of the little children and the young. The boys would come together to make a little mountain of earth and sand. And a little stream would come cascading down it. On either side were placed beautiful flowers, birds and different types of creatures. The children would run to gather *palash* ('Beginning of the Supramental Realisation') flowers. We girls used to collect *genda* ('plasticity') flowers. Feni is full of flowers. There were endless rows of trees on the way to Birinchi bursting with *palash*. These flowers were placed all around the image of the goddess and on the mountain. This puja cannot be done without this offering of *genda* or *palash*. We would fill our hands with these flowers and offer them at the feet of the Mother. The priest went on reciting the verses in a solemn voice filled with devotion. We would repeat the verses after him trying to keep in tune and go on offering flowers to the deity. And in due time the Mother's feet were covered with these flowers.

On this Saraswati-puja day, Parichand-da and Jatin-da used to get us huge quantities of these flowers. After coming here I found out that these flowers were meant for decorating the Mother's chair and the space around it. The spiritual significance of the *palash*, the Mother has said, is 'Beginning of the Supramental Realisation'. Without Ma Saraswati the work of the other goddesses would not be complete. Therefore for the full Supramental realisation this goddess too is needed. That is why Mother Nature beckons her with this offering of *palash*. And so from age to age by offering these two varieties of flowers at Ma Saraswati's feet the youth are marching ahead on the path of Supramental realisation.

We girls used to wear a red-bordered yellow sari and flit around like a swarm of butterflies. Wearing this sari on Saraswati-puja is a must. Books, notebooks, pens and inkpots were laid at the Mother's feet. In everybody's heart was the prayer: O Mother, grant us knowledge and intelligence. In the evening the boys performed an arati-

dance in front of the Mother! They put so much heart and feeling into it as they lit the incense powder and worshipped the goddess that we felt Saraswati had really descended! Then plays and dance-dramas and song and music and recitation were organised in every locality.

I had never imagined that one day I would see this beloved goddess Saraswati in such a lovely form with my own eyes! My heart spilled over with delight. A long-cherished dream of childhood got fulfilled all at once!

Sri Aurobindo has written:

Mahasaraswati is the Mother's Power of Work and her spirit of perfection and order.

We were always surprised by the Mother's guidance in the field of work. She was at every moment guiding us in order to show us how to accomplish the smallest work with perfection.

The Mother always expected from us work that was flawless and perfect. She did not tolerate any defect or imperfection. Here I am reminded of an amusing incident. Our Press had just started printing books then. A few copies of these newly printed books were first sent to the Mother. The Mother's eye fell straight on the page where a word had been misspelt: in place of a 't' there was an 'f'. Oh Lord, how upset She was! We had to open all the books and replace the 'f' with a 't'. We sat quietly rubbing out the 't's' and writing 'f's' in their place. We did this with the utmost concentration. The Mother was naturally delighted with this response from us. It was quite astonishing that every time in proof-reading a book or any other publication, the mistake that had escaped our eyes would inevitably be picked up by the Mother!

All these departments that have come up in the Ashram have done so only because of Mother Mahasaraswati's untiring, skilful, sleepless guidance and working.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

When she takes up the transformation and new-building of the nature, her action is laborious and minute and often seems to our impatience slow and interminable, but it is persistent, integral and flawless.

How the Mother would keep giving detailed instructions, hour after hour with such infinite patience, about the running of each department! Day after day, year after year, the Mother continued doing Her work in us in Her aspect of Mother Saraswati.

I had gone to see the Mother. Everyone was standing on the staircase, flowers in their hand. Nobody, however, seemed to be coming down after the pranam of the Mother. Slightly impatient, we peeped in to see that the Mother was speaking with a young boy. Unbelievable! We were taken aback. Sometimes She would stand in a corner of the Playground and explain something to a little girl. At other times, the

Mother would be engaged in a conversation with someone in the Interview-room while the 'Marching' was going on. Until the Mother came out, Pranab could not stop the 'Marching'. The people had to go on marching. Then the Mother finally would come out of the Interview-room, totally calm, relaxed, walking firmly and quietly. She did not lose any patience at all until She had finished Her work to perfection. How many things have we learnt from the Mother, really!

Bonjour! I greeted the Mother and got into the room. After taking the flower-blessings I was planning to go to work and so I was somewhat in a hurry.

The Mother greeted me and got absorbed in Her work. She had a lot of work! She was taking one rose after another and arranging them in different flower-trays. However, She was in no hurry at all. There were so many people waiting outside. I always managed to arrive just when it was time for the Mother to arrange flowers! So I kept watching the Mother and thinking: Why can't She just ask me to help Her arrange them? And the work would be done in no time. But by Herself the Mother would take a long time. The Mother looked at me a little and then once again got absorbed in Her work. It was only much later that I understood that the Mother was at every moment showing us how to accomplish work to perfection. And time was invaluable in this endeavour at flawless work. *Our aim is perfection*, and so however long it might take, the Mother kept working relentlessly with every child of Hers and with every department of the Ashram. And She continues to do so even today. The Mother has given the name of *Mahasaraswati's Perfection* to one of the flowers and it was our good fortune to have got a taste of this sleepless, untiring way of the Mother's working. In Her eyes no work is too small or too big. Whatever the work, to do it as perfectly as possible is Mother Mahasaraswati's principal goal. We can give innumerable instances of the Mother's untiring, sleepless work in each one of us.

Sri Aurobindo has written:

...leaning over us she notes and touches every little detail, finds out every minute defect, gap, twist or incompleteness, considers and weighs accurately all that has been done and all that remains still to be done hereafter. Nothing is too small or apparently trivial for her attention...

(*To be continued*)

PRITI DAS GUPTA

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

THE DATE OF THE MAHABHARATA WAR

(Continued from the issue of April 2007)

To summarise the arguments set forth in the first part of this article:

1. We were first enabled by the *Vedanga Jyotisha* to place the beginning of the Kali era approximately at about 1173 B.C.
2. After enquiring into the date of Garga and of the Yavana invasion V. G. Aiyer spoke of, we noted that he fixed “the end of the Yuga” for the retirement of the Greeks from Hindustan. From this statement we inferred that the Yuga, which ended sometime before 165 B.C., must have begun a few years before 1165 B.C.
3. In explaining the figures given by the classical historians, we concluded that the Kaliyuga must have begun in 1177-76 B.C.
4. The Malabar era furnished us with another authority for fixing the commencement of the Kali era in 1176 B.C.
5. We found that if the Kali commenced at the winter solstice immediately preceding the year 1176 B.C., the details of the *Mahabharata* would lead us to place the War at the end of the year 1194 B.C.
6. The Tradition recorded in the *Rajatarangini*, enabled us to fix the date of the War about 1190 B.C.
7. From a statement made by Aryabhatta that the Rishis were in Magha in 1192 B.C., we inferred that the War might have taken place at about 1195 B.C.
8. The average duration of the reigns of the monarchs of the five foremost powers of our hemisphere served to assist us in fixing the date of the War at about 1198 B.C.
9. From a shloka of Garga quoted in the *Brihatsamhita*, we inferred that the War occurred in 1194-93 B.C.
10. We also found that the first year of the Brihaspati cycle of 60 years actually corresponds, as might naturally be expected, to the date of the War as given by Garga, i.e. 1194-93 B.C.
11. We applied the elements of the *Vedanga Jyotisha* to a shloka contained in the *Mahabharata*, which fixes the day of the winter solstice occurring soon after the War, and concluded that the war should have taken place in the latter part of 1194 B.C.

Thus we find all this cumulative evidence derived from different sources converging to the result that the Kali era began at the winter solstice occurring at the end of 1177 B.C., and that the Mahabharata War took place at about the end of 1194 B.C. In arriving at these conclusions, we had the testimony of the only historian that India

can boast of who lived in the twelfth century A.D., of the greatest of the astronomers of India who flourished at the end of the fifth century A.D., of another brilliant astronomer who shone in the second century B.C., and of a versatile Greek historian who was also an ambassador at the court of the first great historic Emperor of India who reigned in the fourth century B.C. We had also the authority of the oldest astronomical work of India which claims to be a supplement to the Vedas, of an ancient era which forms such a “splendid bridge from the old world to the new”, and of the famous sixty-year cycle. We tested these conclusions by what we may call the common-sense process based on the lists of kings contained in the *Puranas*. We have met and disposed of the arguments of those that give an earlier date.

So far we have been treading on more or less firm ground. But if we attempt to fix the actual days of the year 1194 B.C. when the War may be supposed to have been fought, our authority will have to be the epic itself, by itself an unsafe guide. The *Mahabharata* is unfortunately neither the work of one author, nor of one age. It has been recently proposed to start an Indian Epic Society mainly for sifting out the older portions of our incomparable epic. But the labours of such a Society, when brought to a successful termination, will not militate against the authenticity of the texts we are presently to discuss. Most of these belong to the War portion of the *Mahabharata*, which, according to Weber, is recognisable as the original basis of the epic.

We have already referred to a shloka of the epic, which states that the winter solstice, which took place soon after the War, happened on the fifth day after new moon in the month of Magha. In the very next shloka, Bhishma tells Yudhishtira that he has been lying on his ‘spiky’ bed for the previous fifty-eight nights. Among Hindus it has for long been considered good for one’s future state, for death to occur in the period between the winter and summer solstices. The grand old Bhishma did not allow the arrows sticking into his body to be removed lest he might die before the commencement of the auspicious period, but rather preferred to suffer the excruciating pain, to which one with a less magnificent physique would have speedily succumbed.

The War is expressly stated in the epic (*Ashramavasika Parva X.30*) to have lasted for eighteen consecutive days. Moreover, in the *Dronabhisheka Parva* (Sections II and V), Karna is said to have refrained from taking part in the War for the ten days during which Bhishma was the generalissimo of the Kaurava army. In the last chapter of *Drona Parva* it is stated that Drona who was the next Commander-in-chief, was slain after having fought dreadfully for five days. Karna led the army for the succeeding two days (*Karna Parva I.15*), and on the night of the next day (*Salya Parva I.10-13*) after Karna’s death, the War was brought to an end. When Yudhishtira was lamenting the death of Ghatotkacha on the fourteenth night of the War, Vyasa told him that in five days the earth would fall under his sway (*Drona Parva CLXXXIV.65*). From these references also it is clear that the War continued for eighteen consecutive days. As Bhishma was mortally wounded on the tenth day of the War, as the War lasted for eight days more, and as Bhishma is reported to have stated (*Anusasana Parva CLXVII.26-27*) on the

day of the winter solstice that he remained on his bed of arrows for fully fifty-eight nights, the interval between the end of the War and the solstitial day was fifty days. As a matter of fact this very number of days (*ibid.* 6) is stated as the period of the stay of the Pandavas in the city of Hastinapura which they entered on the next day after the War (*Stri Parva XXVII, Shanti Parva XLI and XLV*¹), until they set out on their last visit to Bhishma on the day of the winter solstice. The epic says:

The blessed monarch (Yudhishtira) having passed fifty nights in Hastinapura recollected the time indicated by his grandsire (Bhishma) as the hour of his departure from this world. Accompanied by a number of priests, he then set out of the city, having seen that the sun ceasing to go southwards had begun to proceed in his northward course. (*Anusasanika Parva CLXVII. 5-6*)

After Yudhishtira reached Bhishma, the latter addressed him in these words, “The thousand-rayed maker of the day has begun his northward course. I have been lying on my bed here for eight and fifty nights” (*ibid.* 26-27). We may therefore conclude that the winter solstice took place on the fifty-first day from the close of the War.

On the next day after the close of the War, Sri Krishna and the Pandavas paid a visit to the dying Bhishma, whom Sri Krishna addressed in the following words: “Fifty-six days more, O Kuru Warrior, art thou going to live” (*Stri Parva XXVII; Shanti Parva XLI, XLV and LII*). One need not be misled by the prophetic nature of this expression and declare it to be of no historic value. It might well have been a fact and put in the form of a prophecy by the compiler of the epic. But it may be asked how Bhishma could have lived fifty-six days after the close of the War, if only fifty days had elapsed from that time to the winter solstice when Bhishma hoped to give up his life-breath. But the explanation appears to me to be simple enough; though the winter solstice occurred fifty days after the close of the War, Bhishma does not seem to have died on the solstitial day, when the arrows were extracted from his body but appears rather to have lingered on till the sixth day after the winter solstice. We have seen that the solstice took place then on the fifth lunar day after new moon in the month of Magha. It was on the sixth day from this, that is, on Magha Sukla Ekadasi, that Bhishma, “that pillar of Bharata’s race”, seems to have “united himself with eternity”. Tradition asserts that Bhishma died on this very day, and our almanacs even now make note of the fact and call the day by name of “Bhishma Ekadasi”. To this day, death on the eleventh lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month of Magha is held in great esteem, and next to that, death on such a day of any other month. Possibly the supposed religious efficacy rests on the memory of the day of the royal sage’s death.

As the fifty-ninth day after Bhishma’s fall corresponded to Magha Sukla

1. Though the Pandavas desired to pass the period of mourning which extended for a month outside Hastinapura vide *Shanti Parva* 1.2, their intention seems not to have been carried out.

Panchami, Revati or Aswini Nakshatra, the day of Bhishma's overthrow, which took place on the tenth day of the War, happened, in accordance with the 84 principles of the *Vedanga*, on Margashirsha Sukla Panchami, in Dhanishtha Nakshatra; and the Amavasya preceding it happened on the fifth day of the War in Jyeshtha Nakshatra. As a matter of fact, Dr. G. Thibaut gives this very Nakshatra for the last Amavasya but two of the third year of a five-year cycle, which particular new moon our Amavasya actually is. We may therefore conclude that the War began on the fourth Nakshatra preceding Jyeshtha or in Chitra of the month of Kartika and ended in Rohini Nakshatra in Margashirsha month.

The Pandavas tried many milder means before they at last resorted to the arbitration of war; they even proposed to sacrifice their interests to some extent, if war could thereby be averted. Sri Krishna was the last to be sent on a mission of mediation and he started for Hastinapura (*Udyoga Parva*, LXXXIII.7) "in the month of Kaumuda, under the constellation Revati at the end of the Sarad (autumn) season and at the approach of the Hemanta (dewy season)." According to the commentator and also to the translator, Kaumuda is the Kartika month. As the latter half of autumn corresponds to the month of Kartika, we may be certain that the statement means that Sri Krishna left for Hastinapura in the Revati Nakshatra of the month of Kartika. His efforts at reconciliation having been of no avail, he seems to have returned to the Pandava camp in Pushya Nakshatra for, as soon as he left Hastinapura, Duryodhana asked his warriors immediately to march the army to Kurukshetra (*Udyoga Parva* CXLII.18), "For to-day the moon is in the constellation of Pushya". A little before Sri Krishna's departure from Hastinapura, he proposed to Karna, "In seven days will there be new moon; let the War be begun on that day which, they say, is presided over by Indra." As the commentator says, "Sakradevatam" denotes the Jyeshtha Nakshatra, which is presided over by Indra. The verse, therefore, indicates that the approaching Amavasya was to happen in Jyeshtha Nakshatra. This serves to confirm our inference drawn from other texts that the Amavasya, which occurred on the fifth day of the War, took place in Jyeshtha Nakshatra. But, to say that the new moon would occur on the seventh day seems to be certainly wrong, for Krishna was speaking to Karna in Pushya Nakshatra and the Amavasya was said to occur in Jyeshtha, the tenth Nakshatra from Pushya. Probably *saptamat* is an error for *dashamat*.

The War, however, did not begin in Amavasya as suggested by Sri Krishna for, Duryodhana moved out his army to Kurukshetra on Pushya Nakshatra. The Pandavas too seem to have marched out of Uplavaya on the very same Pushya. Both the contending parties were in such a hurry to march their armies to the battlefield, because Pushya Nakshatra was considered auspicious for such purposes. Yet, it was not possible to begin the actual fighting on the very same day. Much remained to be done before the armies could meet each other in battle array. If Sri Krishna returned from Hastinapura with the answer of Duryodhana on Pushya Nakshatra it is reasonable to allow some time for the marching of troops, for the ground to be cleared, for the pitching of

tents, for the divisions of the armies to be properly effected, and most of all, for the allied princes to bring on their respective divisions to the field of battle. It appears to me that all these preliminary arrangements were gone through during the interval of the five days between Pushya and Chitra, in which Nakshatra the fighting actually began. But our epic says that both the parties were prepared for battle on the day when the moon had gone to the region of Magha (*Bhishma Parva* XVII). The natural interpretation of the expression is that on that day the moon was in Magha Nakshatra. In that case we have to suppose that though the armies were almost ready for war in Magha Nakshatra, the first shot was not fired till after the lapse of three more days. The armies began their march to Kurukshetra in Pushya, were organised in effective divisions in Magha, and actually engaged in battle in Chitra. Or, it may be that 'Magha' is an error for 'Maghava'. The expression then would mean that the moon had entered the region of Indra, that is the star Chitra presided over by Indra. If the emendation proves to be correct we have here another testimony to the correctness of our conclusion that the War began in Chitra Nakshatra.

It must be borne in mind that the epic was cast into its present form more than a thousand years after the date of the War. There are many statements in the epic which conflict with one another, a circumstance which can be accounted for only on this historic basis. One such conflicting statement occurs in the *Gadayudha Parva*. On the last day of the War Balarama returned to Kurukshetra from his pilgrimage to the banks of the Sarasvati, whither he had gone on the eve of the War in utter disgust with this horrible fratricidal War. He said (*Salya Parva* XXXIV.6), "Forty-two days have elapsed since I proceeded forth; I left on Pushya, I have returned in Sravana." The epic states expressly that the Pushya Nakshatra on which Balarama went away on pilgrimage was the one (*Salya Parva* XXXV.10-15; *Udyoga Parva* CLVII.16-35) on which the Pandavas set out of Upaplavya to the field of battle. It also certainly implies that the Sravana Nakshatra on which Balarama returned happened on the last day of the War (*Salya Parva* LIV.32). If these statements are to be taken as authentic, the obvious inference is that the War, which began with the marching of armies to Kurukshetra on Pushya, came to an end in Sravana forty-two days later.

This conflicts directly with the natural inferences we have drawn from the other statements, namely, that the winter solstice occurred on Magha Sukla Panchami fifty days after the close of the War, that the War lasted for eighteen consecutive days, that the Amavasya which occurred on the fifth day of the War took place in Jyeshtha Nakshatra, and that Sri Krishna left for Hastinapura on his errand of peace on Revati Nakshatra of Kartika month and returned to Upaplavya on the next Pushya. To avoid such a contingency two explanations of this manifestly corrupt text are possible. We have either to suppose that the statements about Balarama's departure on the eve of the War and about his return on the last day thereof are spurious as being opposed to the united testimony of other texts, or that the verse under discussion requires a little emendation. In the former case the inference to be drawn from the shloka is that

Balarama left for the Sarasvati in Pushya Nakshatra twenty-seven days before the march of troops on the next Pushya Nakshatra to the battle field and that he returned to Kurukshetra in Sravana some days before the close of the War. If, however, the shloka is incorrect, we may best correct it by changing 'forty-two' into 'twenty-four'. If Balarama had left on pilgrimage in Pushya and returned on the last day of the War, that being the twenty-fourth from the day of his departure, the last day of the War would happen in Rohini, a result which is identical with the one we have already deduced from other texts.

There is one other conflicting verse which we shall briefly discuss. On the fourteenth night of the War there was a tremendous battle between the contending parties. It is hinted in the epic (*Salya Parva* LIV.32) that the moon rose up on that night after three-fourths part of it had expired. This is certainly a mistake; for the new moon having taken place on the fifth day of the War, the moon should have disappeared below the western horizon about an hour and a half before three-fourths of the night was over. On the evening of the fourteenth day of the War, Arjuna's vow to kill Jayadratha having been fulfilled, the Kurus, burning with revengeful thoughts, continued the strife far into the night. The epic would have us believe that during the first half of the night a tremendous battle raged in total darkness resulting in the death of Ghatotkacha, that both the armies therefore lay down to sleep for some time, and that on the rise of the moon at about three o'clock in the morning, both the sides recommenced their fighting. It is more probable that the War continued for as long as the moon was shining and that the armies rested when the moon had set. The poet was perhaps led to make this mistake by his anxiety to render the night sufficiently horrible for Rakshasa heroes to fight with their powers of illusion.

But, barring these two conflicting statements which too may be explained away, all other texts serve to support our conclusion. We are told that:

1. the winter solstice happened on Magha Sukla Panchami;
2. the tenth-day battle happened fifty-eight days before it;
3. Bhishma, who died on Magha Sukla Ekadasi, gave up the ghost fifty-six days after the close of the War;
4. a period of fifty days intervened between the end of the War and the winter solstice;
5. the War lasted for eighteen consecutive days;
6. the Amavasya, which occurred soon after the commencement of the War, happened in Jyeshtha Nakshatra;
7. the armies began their departure to the field of battle in Pushya Nakshatra; and
8. Krishna had proceeded to Hastinapura on his mission of mediation on the preceding Revati Nakshatra in the month of Kartika.

All these point but to one conclusion, namely, that the War, which lasted for

eighteen consecutive days, concluded on the fifty-first night before the winter solstice.

At present the winter solstice falls on the 21st of December. The Gregorian system, which is the basis of the calendars of all Europe except Russia, Greece and Turkey, involves an error of less than a day in 3524 years. As the War took place in 1194 B.C., or 3094 years ago or 2776 years before the calendar was last corrected by Pope Gregory XIII, we may be certain that the winter solstice which occurred on the fifty-first day after the close of the War, would have happened, as now on the 21st of December (New Style). We may, therefore, conclude that the War commenced on the 14th of October, and was brought to a close on the night of the 31st of October, 1194 B.C. Whether or not this precise date, based as it is on data furnished by the *Mahabharata* alone, proves to be acceptable to the critical eye of a historian, we may at least be sure that the War took place in the latter part of the year 1194 B.C.

(Concluded)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

One of the elements of the old Vedic education was a knowledge of significant tradition, Itihasa, and it is this word that was used by the ancient critics to distinguish the Mahabharata and the Ramayana from the later literary epics. The Itihasa was an ancient historical or legendary tradition turned to creative use as a significant mythus or tale expressive of some spiritual or religious or ethical or ideal meaning and thus formative of the mind of the people. The Mahabharata and Ramayana are Itihisas of this kind on a large scale and with a massive purpose. The poets who wrote and those who added to these great bodies of poetic writing did not intend merely to tell an ancient tale in a beautiful or noble manner or even to fashion a poem pregnant with much richness of interest and meaning, though they did both these things with a high success; they wrote with a sense of their function as architects and sculptors of life, creative exponents, fashioners of significant forms of the national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society, a certain strain of philosophic idea runs through these poems and the whole ancient culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception and living presentation.... The work of these epics was to popularise high philosophic and ethical idea and cultural practice; it was to throw out prominently and with a seizing relief and effect in a frame of great poetry and on a background of poetic story and around significant personalities that became to the people abiding national memories and representative figures all that was best in the soul and thought or true to the life or real to the creative imagination and ideal mind or characteristic and illuminative of the social, ethical, political and religious culture of India.

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Renaissance in India*, CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 345-46)

THE STORY OF GOLCONDE

ON seeing the booklet “*Golconde*”—a monograph published by SAARIC—I remembered how, as a child, I had seen it in 1940 already under construction. In 1942 I used to go every morning to work with my mother to a place where linen for the future Golconde was being cut, stitched and embroidered by hand. And I thought of all those whose work made the realisation of this dream in the physical world come true.

Situated at No. 7, Rue Dupuy is a building made of reinforced concrete. No one can miss its presence, so distinct is it from the other French colonial type of houses around it. This is Golconde, a well-known ‘dormitory’ of the Ashram. People have widely acclaimed this construction. We quote here from the pages of the monograph where we read the comment by architect Jeffrey Cook:

In one of the most remote parts of India, one of the most advanced buildings in the world was constructed under the most demanding of circumstances concerning material and craftsmen. This reinforced concrete structure was completed primarily by unskilled volunteers with the most uncertain of supplies, and with virtually every fitting custom fabricated. Yet this handsome building has a world stature, both architecturally and in its bioclimatic response to a tropical climate of 13° N of the equator (p. 4).

Again in the same monograph on page 5 is quoted what Charles Correa and Ashish Ganju have said:

Golconde is the finest example of modern functional architecture built in India in the pre-independence period.

The work commenced in October 1938 and it took almost a decade to be completed. The final finishing of some parts of the floor was done sometime in early 1960. The history of the construction of this building has no analogy with others where a large labour force works under the supervision of engineers and contractors to build a big structure in the shortest possible time. This building however, had on the contrary, a slow growth, almost an organic one, where individuals worked in total love and dedication to develop a concrete structure. They were few in number—a handful of labourers working in harmony with a small number of engineers, supervisors from diverse walks of life.

They were all sadhaks. This was their way to serve the Mother. All through these years of construction the Mother gave Her guidance and help for the outer

problems of constructing the building. Simultaneously She also sorted out the human problems of the disciples working there. The people and the building developed together. The following pages are an attempt to highlight the services rendered by people whose dedicated work made the Mother's dream come true: "In the physical the Divine manifests as Beauty."

What was important was that the process of building should be a means of learning and experience in the life of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, where not only the spiritual but all other aspects of man's nature must be developed and perfected. Here I was to do a technologically complicated modern building with former priests and monks from Tibet, India and Indo-China, former professionals from all over the world, including some French and British. (Antonin Raymond—*An Autobiography*)

We incorporate here a handwritten note from Agnes Sammer, wife of François Sammer, dated October 1974. Both of them were here in the initial stages of the construction. This is what she felt was the *raison d'être* of Golconde:

The realisation of Golconde was not merely the constructing of a beautiful modern house in reinforced concrete for sadhaks, but a vehicle for the spiritual awakening and development of innumerable people who otherwise might not have been touched by the Light for a long time to come.

It was the first practical means of contact and communication of any important size between East and West that the Ashram had....

From many points of view Golconde is a milestone in the spiritual growth of the sadhaks of the Ashram. In its way, it too is a temple, joining men and women of all the world irrevocably to the Divine, like a "jewel" from the original mine that gave it its name.

Even after 60 years the interior and the outer surroundings are as new as when the building was first completed. This has been possible because of the strict maintenance work carried out by the caretakers of the building. The Mother had assigned the maintenance of the Golconde to Mona Pinto.

Udar Pinto was an aeronautical engineer who had a business in Pondicherry. His wife Mona, English by birth, and he had their first Darshan of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in August 1937. Soon Udar rounded up his business and both Mona and he became a part of the Ashram community. At that time Golconde was under construction. Both were asked to work there.

Some years prior to the completion of the building Mona started getting ready the linen for Golconde. By 1941, Sumitra Nahar, Rajsena Nahar, Taraben Doshi started working with her. In 1942 Ila, my mother and Phuti-di (a cousin of Sahana) were also

asked to join this work. My younger sister Amita and I used to go there along with our mother. The Mother rented a small house for this work, and named it “Little House”. It was really little, situated on the corner of Manakulla Vinayakar Koil Street and Rue St. Gilles. This area is now part of the Ashram workshop, “Atelier”. In those days you pushed open the gate of this house and walked across a small open space. Just a few metres away in front of you, was a covered verandah, which led to a longish room with large doors, as in all French houses. One window on the northern side opened on to Rue St. Gilles. On the southern side there was a narrow passage between this building and the Atelier. It led to a small open space behind the house, which was turned into a garden.

In the long room, which was the workroom, we would see big bundles of unbleached buff-coloured thick cotton cloth. These were measured and cut to the required size by Mona and my mother, Ila. We were then taught to carefully pull out all threads for about one or two centimetres on the two sides of the cut cloth pieces. We were also taught to do some hemming of the sides, working on the drawn out threads to produce different effective designs. Sanjivan—one of the Ashram artists—drew beautiful designs to be embroidered in cross-stitch on these sheets. The colour schemes of these were also chosen by him. These were to serve as bed-covers in the dormitory. Everything was hand-stitched. The choice of cloth was, I think, in keeping with the structure of Golconde where materials used are kept, as far as possible, in a natural state, without any glazing or colouring.

As soon as this building was ready, the Mother appointed Mona as the person in charge of Golconde. Each room was provided with a set of furniture of simple beauty made out of Burma teak, with the inside of the cupboard drawers made of red cedar. The furniture was designed by Sammer, one of the architects of Golconde, and made by Udar.

The Mother said:

Golconde is not a guest house. It is a dormitory (*dortoir*) in which those who reside there can meditate and do their sadhana in beautiful surroundings, in very fine rooms and with many of the little daily jobs done for them, to keep them more free for their sadhana... In the old days, the Rishis used to live in the mountains and their disciples lived in caves in these mountains. Golconde is the modern equivalent of the caves for the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

Let us recall a few lines from Sri Aurobindo’s essay, *The National Value of Art*:

Art galleries cannot be brought into every home, but, if all the appointments of our life and furniture of our homes are things of taste and beauty, it is inevitable that the habits, thoughts and feelings of the people should be raised, ennobled, harmonised, made more sweet and dignified. (CWSA, Vol. 1, p. 447)

Due to the influx of visitors during World War II this building, which was to be a dormitory to house special sadhaks for their sadhana, had to be opened to visitors, even before it was fully completed. Thus it has now come to be known as a guest house. Visitors started coming in 1944. At that time a full-time watchman, Shivalingam, used to reside in the building. By 1945 the Mother started allotting rooms to some inmates. The first person the Mother sent to stay in Golconde was Noren Singh Nahar. Soon Chandubhai, Tehmi-ben and her parents also joined them. Thus some permanent residents were there in the building as well as a few visitors who stayed for a while. Only those who were permitted by the Mother were given accommodation in Golconde.

Aster, an ex-student of the Centre of Education, writes of her experiences during her stay in Golconde with Ashram-inmates and visitors of that time, the mid 1950's:

There is an experience that rests vibrant, and intact, deep in our consciousness. Like in a time capsule, fresh and untouched by the passing years, which have not taken away any of its intensity or its many-sided savour and richness.

One was a student of the Higher Course at the Centre of Education. We were young and earnest, and in a rush... for, questing was in our veins... and the times were heady like an early maturing wine!

It began in the year 1955—with a sense of heightened anticipation in the air. A sense of great 'goings-on'... of something being 'worked upon' mightily. But one did not know what 'that' was. Something was 'happening' or, going to,—this sense was palpable. As we lived in this inner effervescence... Sri Aurobindo seemed very 'busy'... busy 'doing' something! On asking the Mother, "What is He doing?"... She would smile, in Her most enigmatic manner, and say, "Wait... you will find out!"

Such were the times we lived through with the approach of February 29, 1956.

A couple of months later, as one went to the Mother in the morning, She said, "I want you to go and live in Golconde. It is a great experience of beauty. I will speak to Mona—you move in tomorrow." I lived, at the time, with my parents, very near the Ashram.

In less than twenty-four hours, one came to live in another 'space'. A space whose lines and dimensions were like works of art. Where form and space had an intimate relationship which gave a value to both. Where textures and colours sharpened our distinctive enjoyment of their variousness. Where the living space of the room flowed into the green of the garden to draw the freshness in. And the sun, by a mere tilt of the louvres, streamed in with the effulgence of its rays... sprinkling stardust in our eyes! To live in that space was to be bathed in a sea of beauty. The 'body' had found its home and moved and lived in an air to which it was kin.

And that space was peopled richly—people rich with the intensity of their

spirit. Each in his own way and yet forming a 'whole'. The sense of 'one being' was strong—as though we had all come to be together and, in some indefinable way, made completeness possible. The feeling was very real—from day to day, as the years went by.

The first and foremost person—was Tehmi-ben. The 'inner' presiding deity of the place! The sweetness of that being was like nothing one has ever known. She took upon herself the charge of keeping me under her sheltering wings. She must have sensed that I needed it! The Mother's Balcony Darshan in the mornings was very important for me—and Tehmi-ben realised that I needed a wake-up call if I were to make it in good time, alas! Without a word from me, she took it upon herself to do just that. Each morning—for all the years I was there.

And there were her parents. Whose love and warmth wrapped us up quietly.

Sutapā—with her unswerving movement towards the goal. Direct, one-pointed she was. There was no mistaking that. It inspired one—and the lightly 'glamorous' image only made this more interesting and offered the near perfect contrast to Tehmi-ben, in her pristine simplicity of attire! The three of us often had midnight sessions at the game of scrabble—with a seriousness that would have been commendable in a classroom!

The Balcony Darshan lived on in unexpected ways! Marie Abel, the sculptor, had a studio in the basement. She would go for the Darshan and then start to work just after. She told me that she had very poor eyesight and could not actually 'see' the smile on Mother's face as She came on the balcony. Often, on a morning, she would call me to her studio to show the work she had done and ask, "Did the Mother smile like this today?" And, so She did!

There was Gautam—fresh and new, and so happy to be here... near Mother.

And Mani-ben—utterly dedicated in her sense of duty. Only next in command to Mona! We were in slight awe of that efficiency...

Mona was with us in the mornings... when the wheels began to turn and Golconde's physical maintenance was held firmly in place. As it has been for over half a century now. The eye to detail and the care needed was her passion. Her notices, meant to ensure that, were put on the wall in inks ranging from blue to green to red—marking the degrees of latitude she was prepared to give us! We took these with the utmost seriousness.

There was Udar to bring a kind of exuberance to the tea-time sessions in the basement lounge. Like a court gathered around him, we listened to tales of the early days at the Ashram. Or, of our daily lives. There was a sense of humour and joy which offered a balance to the intensity in the air!

Huta was there. An atmosphere of a deep consecration to the Divine surrounded her entire being—and it was an experience to be in its presence. And Champaklal-ji came, on many a morning, to give a letter or a card from Mother. It was, as if, we all 'received' his coming with the messages from Her!

Monsieur André's stay at Golconde—always in the room in the far corner, from where he could see the Mother's in the Ashram—was a rare privilege for us. A 'presence' we were very conscious of, pervaded the space.

Mme Kobayashi, a friend of Mother's from her years in Japan, was to visit and stay in Golconde. Our anticipation was great. What would she be like—a friend of Mother's? How should we receive her in our midst?... And what an experience that was. A being of such grace—that flowed through the entire being—and reached out to whatever she touched. She invited some of us to a tea ceremony she arranged—for which the setting of Golconde was perfect. And we learnt how the simplest acts of life can be made occasions for experiencing the greatest beauty.

And there were so many others who came regularly—very earnest beings who were part of our life in Golconde.

One thinks of Eléonore, Fashion Editor of *Vogue* magazine from New York! Sophisticated, in powder-blue crisp outfits—every inch of Fifth Avenue, with French touches! The charm was unmistakable—and within was a great love for Mother and a deep commitment to the practice of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. An inner strength that was adamant in its action. She came regularly and stayed a few weeks.

There was Roger Anger. First, looking around with curiosity. Then, with a growing attraction to Mother and commitment to Her work. It led him finally to the work of Auroville, as architect. Direct in his personality, deeply enamoured of beauty—and with a gaze that looked only to the future!

And Patricia—later, Rijuta. Something like Audrey Hepburn about her! Her look was of an intensity that could pierce a wall—but a dazzling smile set that right! It seems she wanted to join a convent in South America—but landed here, where all life is a field of yoga! Her husband, Michael Lunin, came hurriedly to retrieve her. But to no avail! Instead, he built her a beautiful home to live in, with high cloistered walls—and returned.

There was Admiral Rutledge from the American Navy. Drawn to Mother and Her work—and eager to see how America could help.

There were others—a young German couple, interested in Sri Aurobindo's work and specially in psychology. And another from Stanford University, with similar interests.

Later in 1956, Michael Murphy, who had studied with Professor Frederic Spiegelberg at Stanford University, came to live here for about a year and a half.

He was on an earnest, spiritual quest—attracted to Sri Aurobindo. There was a total concentration of his being on the path to be worked out—and he became part of the life of the Ashram with astonishing ease. In a very rich manner ...as he also had a very special interest in the 'psychic' side of sports.

When Mike left to return to America, he seemed to stride forth with a strong

‘sense of mission’—that he carried around him very palpably at that time. As though he had things to do! And which he did.

He founded the renowned Esalen Institute in the 1960’s, which had created new pathways, widening the existing intellectual and spiritual horizons in the country. His monumental work, *The Future of the Body*, stands as testimony to his pioneering work. Today, he speaks from a deep, authentic spiritual experience which commands great respect in a world looking for inner realities.

A raiment of spun ‘gold’ held us all together as one being... in the spaces of Golconde, steeped in a sense of timeless beauty. Such is also the matrix of the ‘future’ ... that is taking shape. A transparency of beauty unlike anything that has been known.

In those days all the V.I.P.’s, Pandit Nehru, the King of Nepal, General Cariappa and many others were taken to visit Golconde.

(To be continued)

CHITRA SEN

The signs of the consecration of the vital in action are these among others:

The feeling (not merely the idea or the aspiration) that all the life and the work are the Mother’s and a strong joy of the vital nature in this consecration and surrender. A consequent calm content and disappearance of egoistic attachment to the work and its personal results, but at the same time a great joy in the work and in the use of the capacities for the divine purpose.

The feeling that the Divine Force is working behind one’s actions and leading at every moment.

A persistent faith which no circumstance or event can break. If difficulties occur, they raise not mental doubts or an inert acquiescence, but the firm belief that, with sincere consecration, the Divine Shakti will remove the difficulties, and with this belief a greater turning to her and dependence on her for that purpose. When there is full faith and consecration, there comes also a receptivity to the Force which makes one do the right thing and take the right means and then circumstances adapt themselves and the result is visible.

To arrive at this condition the important thing is a persistent aspiration, call and self-offering and a will to reject all in oneself or around that stands in the way. Difficulties there will always be at the beginning and for as long a time as is necessary for the change; but they are bound to disappear if they are met by a settled faith, will and patience.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 670)

BANKIMCHANDRA CHATTERJEE

(1838-94)

I

THE CULT OF THE MOTHERLAND

RAMMOHAN ROY (1772-1833) endeavoured to modernise the body and the mind of Indian society influenced by its transactions with the West. At the same time, he wanted to install at the heart of Indian nationalism the vision and the teachings of the Vedanta. This thesis contained in itself the antithesis that the Arya Samaj led by Dayananda was going to promote, recommending a total abstraction of foreign influences while infusing in national life the oldest message of the Vedas. Such an antithesis, in its turn, would beget a series of syntheses, complementary to each other: the very first of them was manifest through the life and the works of Bankim-chandra Chatterjee.

Bankimchandra had distinguished himself in the first batch of candidates for the highest qualification that the new University of Calcutta offered, in 1858. He wrote remarkable essays on various subjects: Shakespeare's theatre, Dryden's poetry, Addison's prose, as well as mathematics (mainly the conic sections), mechanics, astronomy, physics, mental and moral sciences, Sanskrit and Bengali literature etc. Perfectly abreast with the strides taken by Indian and Western philosophers, Bankimchandra would remain till the end of his life an admirer of the Positivist thought: several times in his works, there are direct allusions to Herbert Spencer, Auguste Comte, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. In a study on Equality, he announced already the advent of Communism and of Internationalism, proclaiming Buddha and Christ to have been the first two prophets of this cult of the contemporary world. While imbibing the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Bankimchandra evoked with clarity and precision the contributions of as yet little known thinkers like Robert Owen (1771-1858), Louis Blanc (1811-1882), Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and Etienne Cabet (1788-1856). He professed with enthusiasm two topics that preoccupied him: first of all, social parity between classes (proprietors / labourers); and, especially, equality between women and men.

Endowed with a deeply critical and analytical intelligence, a consciousness alert to social and historical problems, a temperament on the lookout for spirituality, often disdainful of religious formalism, Bankimchandra by his learning and his intuition was indeed a man more prudent and perspicacious than a number of his contemporaries. Indian by heart, he did not let any emotional admiration influence his standpoints, either concerning Indian tradition or Western thinkers. Persuaded, like Comte, that a moral and religious regeneration based on the understanding of some fundamental principles of faith should necessarily precede all well-intentioned reform, Bankim-

chandra preferred to avoid abrupt revolutions that would bring about, once for all, a rupture with the Past: a rupture that would require, sooner or later, according to Bankimchandra, a stepping back, in order to settle problems hastily left out.¹ Innovative in his vision of promoting a just and accelerated action, Bankimchandra was uncertain in his affinity for Auguste Comte every time that thinker wanted to replace God by humanity. Humanity, a concrete divinity, finally and concretely dependent on the love of its supporters, was “relative, modifiable and perfectible.” Sharing with Comte love of man as a principle, *manushya-priti* (phil + anthropy)—where order is the basis and progress is assimilated into the final goal—Bankimchandra affirmed, however, that God was the only mediator between man and man: Indian philosophy had given him enough examples like Buddha who, while aiming at serving mankind, had had the experience and the knowledge of Nirvana. With his belief in love for human creatures as emanations of the Divine and the love of the Divine in a spirit of consecrated action, he remained faithful to the secret of Hindu activism, while accepting the principle of loving one’s neighbour as one loves the Divine, as taught by Mill, Bankimchandra also went back up to the First Commandment of the Old Testament. Purification was to be obtained by a long apprenticeship (*anushilan*) for making all components of the being and all moments of life compatible with the chosen ideal. This would serve as an essential key to all religious practices of the world: “One who has attained psychological purification is, indeed, the best Hindu, the best Christian, the best Buddhist, the best Muslim, and the best Positivist.”²

Similarly, in spite of his admiration for Mill and for Bentham, in spite of his understanding of their beneficent mission, Bankimchandra did not accept as a total truth the utilitarian philosophy: incapable of admitting it like a surrogate of religion, he retained the ethical applications, without serious consideration whatsoever for its materialistic implications. He seemed to derive a parody out of it: “utility = you till eat I” (‘You plough, therefore I eat’). It reminds Amale Tripathi of the apt observation of John Plamenatz: “For Mill, as much as for Bentham, the virtuous man is above all a good calculator.”³

While condemning Darwinism, Bankimchandra denounced, as did Keshub Chunder Sen, the politics of auto-enrichment of the great nations, attacking and enslaving at the same time those who were weaker than them, according to the rhetoric of the fishes (*matsyanyaya*). He was reminded of Herbert Spencer’s favourite notion: self-protection is a universal law of creation meant for the divine intention. Patriotism in its narrow meaning was for Bankimchandra a very futile goal.

A magistrate in his professional life, Bankimchandra had suffered the abuses of the colonial administration that oppressed the natives in a discriminatory way. Before the persecution of the indigo planters led by the Morel establishment in Jessore, in

1. Amale Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge*, p. 10.

2. *Prachar*, a Bengali review, February, 1885.

3. *The English Utilitarians*, p. 100.

November 1861, Bankimchandra had hurried, even risking his own life, to the affected areas. After having the malefactors arrested, he had transferred the suit to the Court of Calcutta where he earned an absolute victory. This gesture was to be the cause of many prejudices against him later in his career. In the teeth of these tensions, anxious to concentrate more on his literary activities, Bankimchandra published, in 1872, his famous magazine *Bangadarshana* (“Contemplating Bengal”). In the introduction of this magazine, Bankimchandra announced: “As long as the educated and literate children of Bengal will not express themselves in Bengali, very little can be done for their progress. We have spared no pains to make this magazine worth reading. It can express the learning, the imagination, the experiences and the light of the writers’ mind. Vehicle of their thoughts, it can spread knowledge in Bengal.” Bipin Chandra Pal would write about this magazine that it occupied in the history of enlightenment in Bengal, a place identical to that of the Encyclopaedists in the history of French thought during the Age of Enlightenment. Rabindranath Tagore would add: “The *Bangadarshana* appeared like the first rain of the season, much expected, a majestic voice coming from above. All streams and all rivers of Bengali literature attained suddenly their fullness. Poems, plays, novels, essays, magazines and newspapers filled the air of Bengal with pleasant voices of the dawn. And the Bengali, then, jumped from his childhood towards his youth.”⁴

While the whole country devoured with an unforeseen gusto the novels by Bankimchandra—the first sociologist of modern India—at the same time, he poured forth historic, social, political, literary, musicological and philosophical essays. He delivered some of his most intimate observations on national degeneration, taking refuge behind his character, Kamalakanta, the opium-eater, and speaking in a tone of simple good-hearted satire. Under the pretext of reflecting on English pedagogy that trained only to produce small clerical employees for the British commercial agencies in India, Kamalakanta brought out a notice that he seemed to have seen, during a fair, before a kiosk held by some Europeans who proposed to their customers experimental sciences in the form of a coconut:

MESSRS BROWN JONES AND
ROBINSON
WHOLESALEERS...
ESTABLISHED SINCE 1757
ON THE FIELD OF PLASSEY.
MESSRS BROWN JONES AND ROBINSON
OFFER TO THE INDIAN PUBLIC
A GREAT VARIETY OF
COCONUTS,

4. Sisirkumar Mitra, *Resurgent India*, p. 184.

PHYSICAL AND METAPHYSICAL,
 LOGICAL AND ILLOGICAL,
 GOOD ENOUGH TO DISLOCATE THE JAWS
 AND TO BREAK THE TEETH OF
 ALL INDIAN YOUTH
 IN NEED OF
 CURBING THE DENTAL SUPERFLUITIES

The tradesmen shouted: Come, O little man with a tanned skin, come and have a taste of experimental sciences. Look at this Experience Number 1: these are punches, efficient in blowing the teeth up, crushing the head and breaking the bones. We are here to demonstrate, provided that you lend us your own head or your sufficiently tender bones. We are clever in joining together and cutting asunder material objects, we are specialised in the analysis of matter by chemical or electric or magnetic processes; but, above all, we are infallible in analysing brains by blows with our fists. Strength of gravitation, composite attraction of the molecules, magnetic attraction are all known to us, but we are the best experts in traction by the hair. In this world, one can note so many alloys between material objects; for example, the simple union of oxygen and nitrogen in air, the chemical mixture of hydrogen and oxygen in water and the phenomenon of the punch on your backs. Therefore, if you want to realise all these marvellous events, put forward your heads for our experiments. You will see how, thanks to gravitation, these coconuts are going to fall on your heads. You will also make acquaintance with the astonishing resonant mystery that one calls percussion and you will note that, by the presence of a nervous network inside your brains, you will feel the pain it causes. Pay in advance so that you can enjoy your experiences free of cost.⁵

Kamalakanta explained in this narration the way the European tradesmen pounce on the neighbouring stand held by Brahmanas, to seize their coconuts, to return to their boutique and crack its luscious kernel with the help of a perfected strong European tool and to taste brutally all its sweetness. Amazed, Kamalakanta wanted to know what was happening: “These are Oriental studies,” came the answer.

It is always Kamalakanta—Bankimchandra’s mouthpiece—who, in his opium drowse, had a vision of India, the unhappy Mother, and felt uneasy before the glorious form of the Divine Mother, creator of the universe. The sketches of Kamalakanta served Bankimchandra to stimulate the whole nation and to install in its heart this golden image of the Motherland, to demonstrate the Power and the Stature of this Divinity, to execute Her Will. Bankimchandra elaborated this vision in three of his

5. Bankimchandra Chatterjee, *Rachanavali*, Vol. II, p. 77.

most popular novels: “*Abbey of Joy*” (*Anandamath*), where he published for the first time the future national anthem of free India, *Bande Mataram* (“Mother, I bow to Thee”); “*The Lady Chaudhurani*” (*Devi Chaudhurani*, considered to be the *Emile* of Bankimchandra the pedagogue); and *Sitarama*, the Hindu hero who fought against the Muslim empire to protect the autonomy of his principality. Very often, in order to rouse his compatriots, finally, with an ardent desire to strive for political liberation from British rule, Bankimchandra evoked allegorically the oppression of some historic Muslim reign, in order to avoid a direct persecution from the British government. Otherwise, keeping mainly in view the complex reality of India as a nation, composed of Hindu and Muslim citizens, he looked for a total emancipation of both these communities. It is sufficient to follow the internal data in Bankimchandra’s writings to be convinced that this is a fact. In the novel *Sitarama* (1884), he put forward a Muslim saint—Chandsa Fakir—who tells the Hero:

My child, I learned that you came to found a Hindu kingdom. If you do not have any equal consideration for Hindu and Muslim subjects, you will never establish your kingdom in this country that is at the same time home of the Hindus and the Muslims. Instead of being considered as a Kingdom founded on the right law (*dharma-rajya*), you will reign on a kingdom of sins. It is the One who created the Hindus as well as the Muslims. It is He who chose to create so-and-so as Muslim. Because both of them are His children, both of them will be your subjects. It is a sin to discriminate between subjects. A kingdom of sins cannot last long; since you know that God is in the heart of the Hindus as much as in that of the Muslims, how dare you distinguish between the two? Being Muslim myself, I make no distinction between Hindus and Muslims.⁶

In the epilogue of his novel *Rajasimha*, Bankimchandra warned the readers against all possible interpretation of an animosity against the Muslims:

All Hindus are not necessarily good; nor all Muslims necessarily bad. All Hindus are not necessarily bad, nor all Muslims necessarily good. Good and Evil exist in equal parts in both these communities. Besides, it must be admitted that since it was the Muslims who had during so many centuries ruled over India, certainly the Muslims were superior to their contemporary Hindus, having necessary qualities to govern. Along with all other virtues, someone who practises the right law (*dharma*)—be he Hindu or Muslim—is a superior being. Someone who, in spite of other virtues, does not practise the right law is a lower creature. By not practising the right law, Aurangzeb set crumbling his empire with him. *Rajasimha* practised the right law: though he was the sovereign of quite a small

6. Quoted by Hirendranath Datta in *Darshanik Bankimchandra*, pp. 233-34.

kingdom, he was capable of braving and defeating the Mughal emperor. Such is the theme of the book. The best historic analogy that Bankimchandra found with Aurangzeb was Philippe II of Spain.⁷

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Spokesman of a whole peasantry, starved, exasperated, oppressed; spokesman of an intelligentsia deeply frustrated in its thirst for justice, for fairness, for occasions to dedicate its competence to the service of the Motherland; spokesman of an understanding that stopped accepting British politics as beneficent for India—Bankimchandra professed more and more overtly in his novels and in his essays the indispensable need to resort to the native means of self-determination. Addressing the irresistible strength of the Indian proletariat, underlining the invincibility of these hundreds of millions of children of Mother India, putting forward the efficiency of the traditional martial arts in cases where the voice of reason remained a dead letter with the government, Bankimchandra showed in his novel *Anandamath* (1882) how rebellion became indispensable against a power hostile to the people's interests. According to him, the ideal man of action—the longed-for leader—had to be initiated by a spiritual master, must have practised lessons of self-perfection (*anushilan*), must have united his patriotic love to that for his God: “The mother, as well as the Motherland, are more glorious than Heaven” (*janani-janmabhumish-cha-svargadapi gariyasi*). This awareness of the necessities of the hour and this inspiring message were adopted very quickly by eminent contemporaries like the poet Navinchandra Sen (1846-1909), the novelist—originally historian—Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909) and the Tagore brothers, Jyotirindranath (1849-1925) and Rabindranath (1861-1941). Their evocation of the glorious episodes inspired by the people's socio-political history—not only Bengali, but Rajput, Marathi, Sikh and even of the mythological battle of Kurukshetra—nourished the quest for a national identity. The brilliant pan-Indian lecture tours of Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1925) were situated in this same perspective; the latter advised his friend Yogendra Vidyabhusan (1845-1904) to inspire popular sympathy with biographies in Bengali of such personalities as *Mazzini* (1886), *Garibaldi* (1890), *Wallace*, the Scottish revolutionary (1886). Rare were the readers of the time who did not get intoxicated by the deeds of these heroes that Yogendra described with passion.

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An aesthete drawn to the charms of life, an admirer of its beauty in Nature and in human beings (as much physical as psychic), at the same time a champion of the

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-32.

highest ethics that revealed the spiritual essence of existence, Bankimchandra embodied a rare convergence of a rigorous ideology lived in a spontaneous serenity. The ideal man that Bankimchandra worshipped in Indian history was Janaka. King and saint at the same time, this personality counted on Rama his son-in-law, as the founder of the empire of Truth (*Rama-rajya*, the utopian empire that would serve Gandhi as a nostalgic reference to the Hindu millenarian dreams). Fundamentally opposed to all coercive and ascetic practices, himself an honest head of the family, Bankimchandra was on the lookout for the divinity in man: it is only after 1880 that he affirmed in his works the personification of God accepting a human material body in the person of Krishna, the divine incarnation. How to justify by his positivist methods the viability of a modern Vedic vision? Disappointed by the conventional teachings of the Vedanta which worshipped a God without attributes and being much too abstract, he was in need of a personal God. His wayfaring was somewhat analogous to that of Saint Augustine: to try and recover the vestige in the human mind, directing the sharpened tip of the illumined creature's mind towards an unchangeable light.⁸ The Brahmos (the *élite* reformed by Rammohun, worshipper of the Absolute without attributes), in their thirst to have a personalised relationship with God had introduced notions of the Father, the Friend, the Master. Then why not grant the man of the street the right to offer his cults to a God with human faces? In his commentaries on the *Gita* and in his work dedicated to the discovery of the personality known as Krishna, Bankimchandra argued that human imperfection is a sufficient proof in favour of his own perfectibility. The religion (or the duty) of self-perfection, *anushilan*—a term that corresponds to John Stuart Mill's "cultivation"—represents the "victory of the immanent divinity in human personality, quelling the instincts that envelop and bereave it of light." God being the Supreme, the culture of human faculties, processed in a spirit of consecration to that Supreme, ends up by a constant communion with the cosmic Self. At this juncture, Bankimchandra seemed to anticipate the idea of transforming humanity into Divinity. Much like his positivist effort to install the historic Christ, while etching the historic personality of Krishna out of a thick gangue of mythological miracles, he raised a God's anthropomorphic portrait: adolescent, he maintained an intimate contact with the animal, vegetable and farming life; then, adult, came to the throne of Mathura, father of a family and a powerful statesman—contrary to the Buddha and the Christ—he became Friend and Counsel of Arjuna, the best among warriors in an ethical quest of the right action, ready to receive lessons in self-perfection. Farther, choosing to drive Arjuna's chariot in the decisive Battle between the forces of the future and those opposed to progress, in the midst of confusion and destruction, Krishna was to play the role of the symbolically clairvoyant: a state of things judged indispensable for the advent of a new order of things, of a new cycle in evolution. Such, according to Bankimchandra, is the heart of the teaching we derive from the *Gita*, the essence of

8. *De Trinitate*, L.ix.c; xii.

the regenerative epic message of the *Mahabharata*. For him, spirituality was based more on one's conduct than on one's belief, and the *Gita* as a driving force for the new era corresponded marvellously to his social teaching. Thanks to the key of the divine Love personified by Krishna, Bankimchandra widened the Benthamist mission of the "greatest good to the greatest number" in respective phases: (a) love for oneself; (b) love for one's kin; (c) love for one's Motherland; (d) universal love; (e) love for the Supreme.

This ascending scale leading to a deification or divinisation of life had especially been chalked out by the traditional Indian Scriptures and, it will find a considerably new turn in Sri Aurobindo, as the future hope for Humanity. Heir of the political applications of Bankimchandra's vision, too, Sri Aurobindo will hail him as the Creator of the Bengali prose and literature ("the sweetest voice that ever expressed in prose"), Creator of a nation (who learned to forget the canine method of agitation at the profit of the leonine). Sri Aurobindo heard in Bankimchandra's accents the prophetic throbbing of the Seers of long ago, of the Vedic *rishis*.⁹

(*To be continued*)

PRITHWINDRA MUKHERJEE

9. Sri Aurobindo, *The Harmony of Virtue*, SABCL, Vol. 3, pp. 72-102; *The Hour of God*, SABCL, Vol. 17, pp. 344-47.

The work of Bankim Chandra is now of the past, because it has entered already into the new mind of Bengal which it did more than any other literary influence to form; the work of Rabindranath still largely holds the present, but it has opened ways for the future which promise to go beyond it. Both show an increasing return to the Indian spirit in fresh forms; both are voices of the dawn, seek more than they find, suggest and are calling for more than they actually evoke. At present we see a fresh preparation, on one side evolving and promising to broaden out from the influence of Tagore, on the other in revolt against it and insisting on a more distinctively national type of inspiration and creation; but what will come out of it, is not yet clear.

Sri Aurobindo

(*The Renaissance in India*, CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 29-30)

A VISIT TO RISHABCHAND

(Pages from a journal kept during a stay in the Ashram in 1959-60)

THIS afternoon I went to have a talk with a senior sadhak here called Rishabchand. I found him sitting in the Ashram Furniture Department, at his desk. He got up, and led me upstairs to his flat on the first floor. It was a large room, half bedroom and half study, with a demi-partition between. The colour scheme was grey and white, with a pale greenish-grey distemper on the walls. Everything was of spartan simplicity and cleanliness. A typewriter stood on a small table by one wall, on a white cloth and itself covered with a white cloth, as if it were a surgical instrument. The desk at which Rishabchand had seated himself was covered with a number of crystal paperweights, pens, pencils, paperknives, blotters, and, at one end, stood a worn dictionary and a row of notebooks between carved wooden bookends.

“Would you like a glass of water?” he began. I said I would, and he disappeared into his bedroom and after a while came back with a glass for each of us.

I had said I wanted to have a talk with him, having admired his writings, but what, now, had I to ask him? We sat facing each other across the desk. He is in his fifties, or early sixties perhaps, with a lean scholar’s face, and smooth black hair brushed back and round the ears down to his shoulders. He looked at me quizzically with kind eyes.

I started the conversation by saying that I was going back to England, and asked him what was the best way to help people in the West to understand Sri Aurobindo and what was happening in the Ashram.

He smiled and said something could be done, but that the best thing was to be oneself, in some part a realised being. If one had found one’s true self then there was no question about what to do: one’s work would flower out naturally from one’s soul. A certain amount could be done on the purely mental level—towards a clear understanding of the theory—but to be effective one must have some fire in oneself when one spoke of such things as God and Spirit, and one must have some experience of them, personally. One must realise one’s psychic being.

I asked him if this was a thing deliberately to aim at, or if one should aim only at realising the Divine, and that the psychic being was the part of one which realised the Divine.

He replied that the psychic being was itself a part of the Divine, and one should certainly aim to find it in oneself. What else was any use? he asked. Everything else changes and is unstable. The body is never the same; now it is a child, then a boy, a man—then it grows old and dies, and what has one to take away from this life if one has not found one’s true nature, and where does one go? Even if one wrote poetry like Shakespeare, or was a philosopher like Russell, what was the use if in the next life one knew nothing of it. Perhaps one would read one’s own books, and not know that

one had written them. There was, in the Ashram, a man who had been Victor Hugo—and now he was reading Victor Hugo!

I said how in meditation I had tried to visualise the heart-centre and concentrate on that, but that recently I had read in Sri Aurobindo that one should not do this but rather take one's stand in the heart-centre and from there aspire for the Divine. Did this mean shifting one's centre of consciousness from the head to the heart?

"Yes," he replied. According to him, we start as mental beings, but the ideas and imaginary picture we have of the heart-centre can be a help towards finding it. They focus the will. One has, first of all, to make up one's mind that one must find the Divine, that nothing else matters, that that is the aim of one's life. Then one must try to go inward, deep, deep into oneself, forgetting the outer world and the body—and then "The Divine will show you what to do. Do it for a few days, and then some experience will come and help you and teach you what to do next. Perhaps it may come unexpectedly in the early morning, just after you have woken up—suddenly a glimpse, a lifting of the shutters, for just a moment, to encourage you, and then it is gone." But one must be sincere. That is the one essential condition. Once, in a children's class the Mother had asked what was the most important quality a sadhak should have. One child said, "Faithfulness." She agreed, but said there was another more important thing one should have. Other children suggested love, or aspiration, or peace, and then one said, "Sincerity," and to that she said, "Yes, sincerity. That is all one needs,—an absolute sincerity, at all times, and the Divine will save you!"

"Once you made up your mind," went on Rishabchand, "that nothing else was of any value, that it was the Divine alone you wanted to find, then He Himself would help you. 'He who chooses the Infinite is chosen by the Infinite.' If one is sincere, then the Divine Himself comes to one's aid and works out one's problems for one. Pray to Him, and say, 'I know that I want to find my true nature but how can I do it? This and this are my difficulties...' and you will see how the Divine helps you, so that everything in one's life seems to gather together, to co-operate, to lead one to realisation. Books, people, events—all come and help one, just when they are needed, and one sees afterwards that nothing else could have taken their place at the time."

I asked him if one could believe that the Divine was helping even when one no longer felt the original aspiration and dedication that one had had in one's best moments of faith. Was He working on one even then, or was it only when one was open and aware of the Divine Presence that He could reach one?

Rishabchand answered that at first it was inevitable that the aspiration should be intermittent and variable, but that one should not lose heart or worry, and that, as time went by, the alternation of light and dark would lessen until the time came when the whole of one's life was lived in the light. There were two ways in which the Mother could act on one. She could act through the subconscious, whatever one's attitude might be, so that gradually, very gradually, one changed—but this was a slow way—or she could act through one's consciousness, with one's co-operation and right attitude

—and this could result in very rapid change.

Was it right, I asked him, to “work out one’s desires” through experience, or did that result in a contamination and weakening of the being. I was thinking of those sadhaks who had left the Ashram to take up married life “because that experience was necessary to them.” Sometimes they came back again, at a later stage, with their families.

Rishabchand, however, said the only way to free oneself from desires was to become conscious of them and offer them to the Divine. Who ever heard of desires weakening through being given what they wanted? They grew stronger, and never became satisfied. The choice to be made was whether one could live happily without finding God, or not. If one found one could get along without feeling the need of Him, then one should find one’s satisfaction through some good work, philanthropic activity, study or family life, but if not, if one could not be satisfied by the ignorance, then one must offer all attachments to the Divine, and He would deal with them.

He described how, in about 1917, a mystic from Bengal came to Sri Aurobindo and asked if he could stay with him. He was told he might stay. And this man had been having very high experiences—even of Sachchidananda. But, when he had been in Pondy for a while, all this stopped, and he began having the most lurid attacks from all sorts of the lowest types of forces. He went to Sri Aurobindo who said yes, he knew what was happening to him, but it was all right. He should remain calm, and offer all the things that came into his mind at his, Sri Aurobindo’s, feet, and they would be dealt with. The fellow went away, but came again after a few days and said he could not stand it any longer, that he would go mad if he stayed, so he was going back to Bengal. Sri Aurobindo said that was all right, that he would in time recover his former experiences of Sachchidananda, but that this other side of his nature would never be transformed, but remain as it had always been, repressed, unexperienced and untransformed. The man went away.

Another question that came to me was whether one should only come to the Ashram once one had become established in a certain degree of peace, when one was ready to go on to something beyond. Rishabchand said no; many came who had not found peace and yet had a sincere seeking for God.

Before I came away from Rishabchand I told him how I had had a foretaste of joy on the evening of my “birthday”—and how it had come involuntarily, like a contact with some deep-flowing current in my being...

He said it always came involuntarily. There was nothing we could do to command it, but that, once it had come, it would come again, and that one had simply to go within, telling oneself one would find what was hidden there, and then, at other times of the day, remember the Divine as often as one could.

“When I was young, I read a book by the strong-man Sandow,” he went on, “and he tells one to say to oneself every time one bends one’s arm that it is getting stronger and harder and thicker, and go on bending it, and then eventually it becomes all these

things. Similarly one must tell oneself one is drawing nearer to one's true being, and that it is possible, and that the Divine Guide is leading one—and then one day it will be so."

This talk with Rishabchand has set me trying once more to go inward. I may know in the head many of the answers he gave me, but I am still ignorant of the Kingdom of Heaven that is there within, the inner light, and this, as he said, is, ultimately, the only worthwhile knowledge.

15th February, 1960

DICK BATSTONE

It seems to me that you must know by this time about the psychic being—that it is behind the veil and its consciousness also; only a little comes out in the mind and vital and physical. When that consciousness is not concealed, when you are aware of your soul (the psychic being), when its feelings and consciousness are yours, then you have got the consciousness of the psychic being. The feelings and aspirations of the psychic being are all turned towards truth and right consciousness and the Divine; it is the only part that cannot be touched by the hostile forces and their suggestions.

* * *

The psychic being emerges slowly in most men, even after taking up sadhana. There is so much in the mind and vital that has to change and readjust itself before the psychic can be entirely free. One has to wait till the necessary process has gone far enough before it can burst its agelong veil and come in front to control the nature. It is true that nothing can give so much inner happiness and joy—though peace can come by the mental and vital liberation or through the growth of a strong samatā in the being.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, Vol. 24, SABCL, p. 1098)

DEVOTIONAL POETRY IN TAMIL

(Continued from the issue of April 2007)

14. The Prime Siddha

CALL it a churning or an integration, the Bhakti Movement was a noble experiment in including the very best yogic and spiritual processes in its world, while rejecting all that enfeebled man and opposed humanism. Thus the divisive factors of caste and untouchability had no place in the agenda of the devotional mystics. But tested pathways to god were welcomed and sculpted to suit the aspirations of the common man. One of the ancient trails to achieve union with the Divine, the way of the Siddha was infused into the Bhakti Movement by Tirumoolar.

Like yoga and tantra, the Siddha tradition has been with us from times immemorial. There is the Nath Panth of North India which traces its beginnings to Machindranath. Gorakhnath was the most famous of the Nath paramapara which excelled in occultism. In South India we have the Siddha cult which lists eighteen major Siddhas. There is also a vast corpus of writings attributed to them. Some of their poems remain in circulation even today. The Siddhas include Pambatti Siddhar and Sattaimuni but the best known of them all is Tirumoolar. The reason is obvious. He alone is found among the sixty-two names enumerated in Sundarar's "Tiruthondar Tohai" (List of the Holy Devotees), and his three thousand verses form the tenth Book of the Shaiva canon, *Panniru Tirumurai*.

Tirumoolar's history as narrated by Sekkilar in his *Peria Puranam* begins with the journey of Shivayogi, a disciple of Nandikeswara on Mount Kailas. Shivayogi came down to South India to meet another Siddha, the sage Agastya. On his way, he tarried for a while on the banks of the Cauvery at a place called Sathanur. He found that a cowherd had fallen down and the cows were standing around the body shedding tears. With his occult powers Shivayogi realised that the cowherd Moolan was dead. Unable to bear the sorrow of the cows, Shivayogi entered into the body of Moolan after hiding his own physical frame inside a hole in a huge tree. The cows mooded with delight and they all trudged back home.

Now Shivayogi in Moolan's body encountered a major problem. Moolan's wife was aghast that he was no longer interested in domesticity. She complained to the elders of the village who examined Moolan. They found that this was no more the illiterate cowherd but someone who had risen high in consciousness. Meanwhile Shivayogi simply removed himself to Tiruvavaduthurai and sat beneath a peepul tree in meditation. He is said to have lived for 3000 years and if we go to the Tiruvavaduthurai Math today, we can have darshan of the peepul tree under which Tirumoolar is said to have composed the hymns now known as *Tirumandiram*.

Though only Sundarar has referred to him by name, apparently Tirumoolar was very much in the thoughts of the other very famous two: Tirujnanasambandhar and Tirunavukkarasar. Many of his hymns are favourites among devotees, though essentially Tirumoolar's poetry is metaphysical, enshrining the mystic experiences of a yogi's adventure in several realms of consciousness. Indeed, *Tirumandiram* is a very fine example of how philosophy and yoga can be the subject of sublime poetry. Tirumoolar says that he is positing Nandikeswara's yoga through his work:

Shiva-yoga is to distinguish the *cit* from the *acit*;
Yoga of penance is to attain self-illumination;
Other types of Yoga are not Yoga proper: to attain Shiva-ananda
Nandi has bestowed this new type of Yoga.¹

The three thousand and odd verses of *Tirumandiram* have been divided into nine Tantras which have 232 subdivisions in all. The opening verses known as 'payiram' (preface, contents) are prayers, and a little autobiography as well. The very first verse states Tirumoolar's unshakeable faith in the Upanishadic dictum: *Ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*. Using the prosodical device of rising numbers, the verse is sublime:

He who is One became two with Shakti,
Appears as the trinity, knows the four Purusharthas,
Victor over the five senses, spreads as the six adharas,
And the seven in the beyond, and is part of the eight.²

For Tirumoolar Shiva is the Supreme who holds the contraries in an inseparable knot:

Scorching more than fire, cooler than waters,
Sweeter than the child, He is ever close to us;
To his devotees he is dearer than a mother,
The One with matted locks, His grace is not known
To anyone.³

As for himself, he is calling upon Shiva to gain knowledge. Tirumoolar then praises the components that help the aspirant—like the Agamas, the Guru and the pathway he took to come down to this world:

1. *Tirumandiram*, verse 122. Translated by T. N. Ganapathy.

2. Verse 1. All translations from Tirumoolar are by Prema Nandakumar unless otherwise stated.
Eight: earth, water, fire, wind, space, sun, moon, soul.

3. Verse 3.

There is the subtle space within the sages
 Who meditate upon Shiva and who excel
 In the knowledge that overcomes Desire, the gods,
 The Asuras and human beings. I came through that path
 To this world.⁴

The first Tantra has insightful verses on Shaiva Siddhanta and seeks to explain the Pati-Pasu-Pasham triad:

There are the Lord, the jiva and the Attachment.
 Like the Lord, the jiva and attachment are eternal.
 Yet, jiva and attachment do not reach the Lord;
 With the Lord's grace to jiva, attachment will vanish.⁵

Much of this Tantra deals with the ethics of living. Tirumoolar first dints into our mind the fleeting nature of human life. The physical body is not immortal and even the dearest relative or friend does not accompany the body beyond the physical. One of the oft-quoted verses in this Tantra says:

People of the town gathered and wept aloud;
 Discarding the given name they called it a corpse,
 Took it to the cremation ground abounding in greens,
 Immersed themselves in the stream and forgot his presence.⁶

This is so even for the highest in the land. And yet, Tirumoolar wonders, people do not give up desire and continue to have attachment for earthly things. Tirumoolar then speaks of the impermanence of wealth. In fact, what is the point in amassing wealth? Our Siddha has a very apt simile. Look at the honeybee which strives so much to collect drops of honey and constructs a whole honeycomb on the branch of a tree. A strong man comes and takes it away to enjoy the nectarean contents! Nor is one's youth permanent, and people who see all the time the sun rising in the east moving pretty fast to sink in the west do not give a thought to their own approaching

4. Verse 83. Cf:

I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
 Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
 Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
 Forerunners of a divine multitude
 Out of the paths of the morning star they came
 Into the little room of mortal life.

(*Savitri*, Book III, canto iv, p. 343)

5. Verse 115.

6. Verse 145.

old age. Of course, life cannot be linked to the body for all time. Having said all this, Tirumoolar places before mankind certain disciplines based on humanism and the need to care for living beings.

What is the finest blossom which is apt for worshipping Shiva? It is the vow of non-killing. It follows then that one must avoid meat. Now comes the characteristic warning: do not be tempted by the female body! The evils of poverty are enumerated and the aspirant is asked not to lay his thoughts on earning riches but go in search of Truth. Tirumoolar extols the Vedic fire sacrifice if properly performed and understood as the rising of the powers within oneself to meet the fire of Shiva at the crown. The Brahmin who follows his fire rituals with sincerity deserves high respect.

The Tantra also speaks of the right conduct for a king and deals with love in detail. Love is God, proclaims Tirumoolar:

They say there is love and Shiva.
They do not realise that love is Shiva.
When everyone realises that love is Shiva
They are transformed into the image of love.

He shines in tiger skin that has a sheen
Rivalling gold; a gleaming crescent glows
Sheer white brilliance on him. My immense love
Has conjoined with this dancer in the crematorium.⁷

Tirumoolar votes for education and derides the illiterate. He comes out strongly against the drinking of intoxicants and has a pointed criticism directed against the followers of Tantric rites which call for the consumption of wine.

The second Tantra opens with references to the eight holy places where Shiva is said to have performed eight heroic deeds. Though Tirumoolar is generally positing only his experience of Shiva Yoga, occasionally he refers to the myths and legends associated with Shiva. Certainly, this aspect of Tirumoolar's poetry is important for the Bhakti Movement whose popularity was mainly due to the hymnology which introduced the commoner to his legendary past. A decad celebrating Shiva's heroism brings together eight famous temples dedicated to Shiva: Tiruvatikai, Tirukkadavur, Tirukorukkai, Vazhuvur, Tirukovalur, Tirupariyalur, Tirukandiyur and Tiruvirkudi. Even as Tirumoolar refers to the deeds, he brings out the symbol behind the legend in a trice. The destruction of Andakasura of Tirukovalur, for instance.

Once Parvati closed the eyes of Shiva with her hands in a playful mood. As she perspired, the heat of Shiva's third eye created a babe in her hand. It was a demoniac being without sight and was named Andaka. Shiva gave him to Hiranyaksha. Andaka

7. Verses 270, 271.

got back his eyesight by praying to Brahma and cast lustful looks at Parvati. He then went to war with Shiva who pierced him with his trident ending his career:

The gods prayed to the Lord that Ignorance
Residing in the souls like an Andaka was torturing
Them; Shiva pierced the same to nothingness
By his trident which is flaming knowledge.⁸

This approach of positing the legend and its symbol by Tirumoolar is something unusual in the Bhakti Movement. Tirumoolar has meditated upon the origin of the legends which has been part of his yogic sadhana and has indeed come up with several such explanations, as in this very familiar story of Shiva destroying Tripura.

The Tripura or three cities were the three flying fortresses made of gold, silver and iron possessed by the demons Vidyunmali, Tarakaksha and Kamalaksha. They had got the fortresses by pleasing Shiva through severe penance. But the boon turned out to be a curse for the gods as the demons kept flying and destroying the residences of the gods. Shiva decided to end their nasty reign and requested Vishnu to make for him a unique chariot that would be battle-strong. Vishnu used the sun and the moon as wheels; time, space, sacrifice, the five elements and the rest were used to make the front portion of the chariot; the Puranas became the flag; the mountains were used as canopy, the Vedas became the horses, Vasuki as the bow string, Mount Meru as the bow, Brahma as the charioteer. Vishnu himself became the bow. The three fortresses were decimated in no time by Shiva.

Tirumoolar the Siddha can only laugh at the superstitious folk who are taken in by the legend without any idea of it as a symbol of something else:

The Ancient One who wears the stream on his matted locks
Destroyed the three cities, say the ignorant.
Destruction of the triple *malas*⁹ is symbolised here.
Who knows it was the *malas* that were destroyed?¹⁰

For, the ancient sages would not have spent their spiritual powers in weaving such impossible myths and legends. But they would have used these legends to convey the significances of philosophy and spirituality. Tirumoolar wants us to get at the original thought-processes that created the legends as symbolic worlds. According to him the sacrifice performed by Daksha is symbolic of man-woman relationship. If union does not take place with thoughts of the Divine, the result is the destruction of the semen.

8. Verse 339.

9. Triple *Malas*: According to Shaiva Siddhanta, the soul is covered by three impurities: egotism, the results of deeds, and illusion.

10. Verse 343.

Shiva wears skulls and bones as they symbolise form and knowledge. He says that if Shiva does not wear these symbols of what the gods possess, the connecting link between births of human beings will be cut off for ever. The Siddha marvels that though this Supreme who creates, guards and destroys is very much in the lotus of our heart, we are unaware of His Presence. Such is the power of his veiling himself (*tirobhavam*):

He is within the heart, the flame,
And never moves away even a span.
Yet the heart knows not his form
Though the heart is always with Him.¹¹

The *Ashtanga Yoga* (*Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana* and *Samadhi*) is the subject of the third Tantra. Tirumoolar is very firm on this point. Reaching into the state of Samadhi by following the time-tested principles of the eight-fold yoga is the sure way to realisation, and each of the eight states is explained in a simple manner by the Siddha. What is *Niyama*?

It is the fostering of purity, compassion,
Limited intake of food, patience, honesty,
Truthfulness and firmness. And the rejection
As evil of lust, stealing and murder. The aspirant
Must follow this discipline.¹²

The discipline helps the aspirant to gain the eight great siddhis: *Anima, Mahima, Garima, Laghima, Vyapti, Prakamya, Ishitva* and *Vashitva*. All this is possible with the guidance of a guru. Tirumoolar proceeds to give an idea of overcoming death through this yoga. One of his verses in this context speaks of the need for guarding one's body's health:

If the body falls, life withdraws. Aspirants
Who are weak in body do not attain true knowledge.
Having learnt the method of guarding one's body
I have looked after my physical and the life within.¹³

Attaining the state of Samadhi is not easy, but once it is attained, we enter the royal path to realisation:

11. Verse 431.

12. Verse 556.

13. Verse 724.

Entering samadhi, many yogas are achieved.
 Constant divine consciousness needs it not.
 At-one-ment with Shiva makes it superfluous.
 The sixty-four arts are mastered by samadhi.¹⁴

Tirumoolar goes deep into the technical details of his yoga in the fourth Tantra as the aspirant who has disciplined himself thoroughly through *Ashtanga Yoga* can now look forward to realisation. The Siddha gives details of various *yantras* (mystic drawings) and the *mantras* (mystic syllables) to be written on them, and the presiding deities of the different *yantras* like Tripura, Shambhavi and Navakshari.

The four pathways of Shaiva Siddhanta is the subject matter of the fifth Tantra. An aspirant may choose any of them. The path of Charya is singing the greatness of Shiva and worshipping in temples. It is the path of the devotee:

Go ye to country and city and holy temples
 Search for them and sing, "Lord Shiva!"
 Bow to the Lord and offer yourself.
 The Lord will make your heart his temple.¹⁵

Those who choose the Kriya path must give high precedence to the external details of being a Shaivite like smearing oneself with the holy ash and performing rituals associated with the worship of Shiva. The path of yoga takes the aspirant to Kundalini yoga which when practised to perfection makes his body appear as a wooden post:

Following the guidance of the guru, withdrawing into oneself
 One must remain indrawn as a wooden post;
 Even if there are irritations one may not scratch oneself
 Nor be disturbed by other external forces. Such a yogin
 Is capable of becoming one with Shiva.¹⁶

14. Verse 631:

Sixty-four arts. The traditional Indian enumeration of the arts are: a knowledge of linguistics, calligraphy, mathematics, Vedas, Puranas, grammar, law, astrology, dharma shastra, yoga shastra, mantra shastra, the shastra of omens, sculpture, medicine, physiology, history, epic, aesthetics, recitation, drama, (nritya) dance, sound, lute, flute, mridangam, keeping to time, the art of missiles, the science of gold, the art of the chariot, of the parrot, of horses, lapidary, geology, of warfare, of wrestling, of attraction, incantation, of enmity, art of love, of being sweet-tempered, of charming others, art of transmuting baser metals into gold, of music, the language of ants, the language of lizards, of minerals, of dance, science of poison, battling with hands, entering space, traversing in the skies, entering another body, ability to be invisible, jugglery, conjuration, art of remaining unscorched, remaining in water without being affected, remaining without breath, ability to see without sight, ability to convey without speech, containment of semen, containment of hearing, the ability to divide without cutting, black magic.

15. Verse 1445.

16. Verse 1457.

The fourth path is one of Jnana. A person who attains Shiva-knowledge needs nothing more! Tirumoolar also speaks *in extenso* of the varied approaches to Shiva: as a devotee, a friend, a son, a servitor. The sixth Tantra is about the different sadhanas (tools) to gain Shiva-knowledge. The seventh Tantra has important inputs regarding the place of a guru in an aspirant's spiritual life. The importance of a guru is noted quite early in the first Tantra of *Tirumandiram*:

Clarity sweeps over the aspirant
By seeing the Guru, repeating the guru's name,
Listening to the Guru's teaching
And meditating on the Guru's holy image.¹⁷

Tirumoolar says that a guru is one who reveals to the disciple the true nature of existence and so he is the one who illumines the spaces within the heart of the disciple. To perform this Shiva Yoga of transformation from darkness to light in the disciple's heart, the guru has to be Shiva himself:

Siva-Yogam consists in making a mystical equation between the guru and Sivam. The oneness between the guru and Sivam is of an extraordinary character. For want of a better expression, the oneness between the guru and Sivam is termed as super union or Yoga and this is what is termed as Siva-Yogam. Yogam here means the progressive reduction of I-consciousness to the point of its complete breakdown and its merging with Sivam, the Absolute. Siva-Yogam is infinite awareness.¹⁸

The guru wipes out worldly attachments and cleanses the disciple of delusion. Once delusion withdraws with utterance of the word given by the guru, it is all Ananda consciousness for the Syllable itself is blissful (*sugamāna sol*). Tirumoolar has also warned against false gurus. He has mentioned that seven Maths follow his tradition. They go by the names of Tirumoolar, Kalangar, Agorar, Tirumalikai Dhevar, Nadanadar, Paranamandar and Bogar.

The eighth Tantra is a search for the Divine within one's body and to make the body the temple of god. Tirumoolar refers to the five sheaths (*Annamaya, Pranayama, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya* and *Anandamaya*) and how Shiva is a presence in all this:

The illumined soul is the residence of holiness.
That soul is the stage for hallowed tapasya.
The Supreme Lord comes here with the Mother
Who is Grace and stays for ever.¹⁹

17. Verse 139.

18. T. N. Ganapathy, *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular* (2006), p. 378.

19. Verse 2364.

Once the body becomes illumined by the Divine the transformation from earthly life to the life divine becomes a matter of course. This stage of transformation has been pointed out by Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri*:

When all thy work in human time is done,
 The mind of earth shall be a home of light,
 The life of earth a tree growing towards heaven,
 The body of earth a tabernacle of God.
 Awakened from the mortal's ignorance
 Men shall be lit with the Eternal's ray
 And the glory of my sun-lift in their thoughts
 And feel in their hearts the sweetness of my love
 And in their acts my Power's miraculous drive.
 My will shall be the meaning of their days;
 Living for me, by me, in me they shall live.²⁰

The final Tantra may be described as a series of visions including the one of becoming the brilliance of Shiva. One gains the visions of the Supreme Dance of Shiva by becoming one with the Pranava syllable during meditation and by reciting the Panchakshara (Namashivaya). Easier said than done! So Tirumoolar says:

Who has seen the divine Dancer, the flame supreme,
 Dancer of Ananda who is in the Pranava, the Dancer
 Seen in the golden sheen in the space, the Dancer
 In the golden haze on the forehead, the Handsome Dancer,
 The Dancer at Tillai, the Wondrous Dancer?²¹

Verses such as this are in the royal path of the Bhakti Movement. While the complex terminology in much of the *Tirumandiram* deals with the technical details of the Shiva Yoga propounded by Tirumoolar, these verses that have a direct bearing upon the visual signs of the Supreme as Shiva and Shakti have been cherished fondly by the devotees through millennia. Here is a scene revealed in the vision of Tirumoolar. So how did Shiva dance?

As the Vedas danced, and the Agamas too,
 The knowledge of poesy danced and the universe,
 The servitors of Shiva and the whole of earth moved,
 My Lord essayed the dance of Jnana-Ananda
 Aided by the Shakti of Sound....

20. Book XI, canto 1, p. 699.

21. Verse 2723.

Dancing for the joy of the souls, My Lord
 Danced the novel dance; danced in the forest
 Of their ignorance; in their thoughts he did;
 In the *sushumna*, in shoreless knowledge too.²²

Devotional ecstasy is always the final winner!

(To be continued)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

22. Verses 2729, 2736.

All love, indeed, that is adoration has a spiritual force behind it, and even when it is offered ignorantly and to a limited object, something of that splendour appears through the poverty of the rite and the smallness of its issues. For love that is worship is at once an aspiration and a preparation: it can bring even within its small limits in the Ignorance a glimpse of a still more or less blind and partial but surprising realisation; for there are moments when it is not we but the One who loves and is loved in us, and even a human passion can be uplifted and glorified by a slight glimpse of this infinite Love and Lover. It is for this reason that the worship of the god, the worship of the idol, the human magnet or ideal are not to be despised; for these are steps through which the human race moves towards that blissful passion and ecstasy of the Infinite which, even in limiting it, they yet represent for our imperfect vision when we have still to use the inferior steps Nature has hewn for our feet and admit the stages of our progress. Certain idolatries are indispensable for the development of our emotional being, nor will the man who knows be hasty at any time to shatter the image unless he can replace it in the heart of the worshipper by the Reality it figures. Moreover, they have this power because there is always something in them that is greater than their forms and, even when we reach the supreme worship, that abides and becomes a prolongation of it or a part of its catholic wholeness. Our knowledge is still imperfect in us, love incomplete if even when we know That which surpasses all forms and manifestations, we cannot still accept the Divine in creature and object, in man, in the kind, in the animal, in the tree, in the flower, in the work of our hands, in the Nature-Force which is then no longer to us the blind action of a material machinery but a face and power of the universal Shakti: for in these things too is the presence of the Eternal.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Synthesis of Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 20, p. 149)

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Auroville Architecture: towards new forms for a new consciousness—Photographs by John Mandeem. Designed and published by Prisma, Auroville, 605 101, Tamil Nadu, India (prisma@auroville.org.in), 2nd edition, 2007, 139 pages.

THIS is a much-awaited and much-needed book (modestly termed a brochure) with striking photographs in colour. As mentioned in the Foreword, it outlines a variety of architectural approaches in an explanatory fashion without attempting any critique or analysis. The first few chapters detail features of planning, more as identification notes rather than a critique or explanation of planning criteria involved. Planning will require a separate book. Auroville is a highly symbolic town right from its nodal building, Matrimandir, to its four plus one zones but without explicit reference to principles of *Vāstushāstra*. It stands alone and has its own *Shāstra*.

In ancient times, India had many architectural treatises such as *Manasāra*, *Māyamala* etc. which detailed not only principles of monumental architecture but also contained a detailed catalogue of vernacular houses even with details of furnishing and furniture apart from dimensions. The underlying grammar was not explained. In recent times, Chandigarh brought architecture into the mainstream of national consciousness. Auroville is the latest happening with tremendous potential for evolving new concepts, materials, techniques of construction and latest technologies for efficient use of resources towards sustainable habitat.

This book is a first exploratory catalogue of these pioneering trials for purposes of research and record. This book should reach all the Schools of Design, whose students flock in large numbers to Auroville for their projects. It is also a tribute to many senior architects from many lands, who have devoted their lives and work to the realisation of a network of communities from a barren land and trained villagers to be part of competent building teams. Younger professionals are profiled for their adventure, novelty and daring of their designs. However, except for the novelty of forms and sincere seeking, there is hardly any thread of continuity, which could be called Aurovillian, either in designs or in their relation to planning requirements of the pro-posed city. Auroville has still to discover its architectural message without crippling individual creativity.

All planned towns have efficiency but feel more dead than alive. The architectural problem of how to keep the vibrancy without losing efficiency has been partly solved in the evolution of Auroville in its free-flowing forms within a green canopy of trees. They are almost enchanting to experience. This has been partly captured in the images in the book particularly with regard to public building such as Afsaneh Guest House and Auromode for example.

Auroville Architecture is a record for seniors and an invitation for youngsters. It captures the spirit of Auroville's adventure of Beauty in Matter through its photographs

and write-ups quite effectively. It deserves a place on all bookshelves of discerning readers, a place in the libraries and schools of architecture. A cheaper edition for students would be much appreciated.

C. L. GUPTA

On Architecture

Architecture is one part science, one part craft and two parts art.

David Rutten

*

Architecture begins where engineering ends.

Walter Gropius

*

Architecture ...the adaptation of form to resist force.

John Ruskin

*

Architecture is the learned game, correct and magnificent, of forms assembled in the light.

Le Corbusier

*

Architecture is music in space, as it were a frozen music.

F. W. J. von Schelling

NAVANIT STORIES

BE YOUR OWN SELF

What is in you, is in no one else

LIKE a sovereign of the roadways, stands a magnificent *vad* (banyan). His sombre green canopy welcomes the passersby, relieving with his cool shade all fatigue and worry. Birds of every kind snuggle in its heavenly embrace, their orchestras resounding across its vast vaults. Oppressed by the fierce onslaught of summer, herds of cows, buffaloes and other animals seek the protection of its benevolent sanctuary.

In adjacent beds, in a vegetable garden nearby, stand a *bhindo* (lady's finger) and a *kothmeer* (coriander). Every time the *bhindo* looks towards the *vad* his face crumples up, his eyes lose their sheen, life loses its charm and his heart darkens in gloom. Sighs well up: "*Arerre!* That *vad!* How great! How majestic! What a solemn cloud-shadow it spreads! Travellers experience contentment under it, the birds cannot cease praising it! Its glory has spread all over! And where am I? What ill fate is mine! My handful of leaves can hardly shade my own body, what has it then for others? No bird wanders over to greet me; nor ever will. Shame on me; my life is wasted."

While he thus laments, the *kothmeer* beside him keeps smiling as it sways to and fro. Boundless Ananda is hers; life's *joie de vivre* manifests in every leaf of hers. Turning to her with his wounded mind the *bhindo* cries out, "Come now, dear *kothmeer*, what are you chuckling at? Look at that *vad* and look at us! Is there any comparison?"

With a greater mirth spurting through her, *kothmeer* laughs, "But dear *bhinda-bhai*, is my life dependent on that *vad*? If he is great we shall respect him, won't that be enough? But why should I be distressed? I am not born to shelter the world and make birds sing. Am I lacking anything I ought to have? Why should I not smile in joy? Why should I lower myself by a comparison with him? Your regrets are useless: you will become a vegetable dish, will the *vad*? True, you don't have what he has, but does he have what you do? My dear simpleton, why make such contrary comparisons? Only the mindless do that and invite misery. Why ruin our happiness ourselves? So I shall never stop smiling and laughing. Look, have you got what I have? And this *vad* with whom you compare yourself and mourn, even this mighty *vad* does not possess what I do! He can never replace me, never achieve what I do, you see? My very presence in any dish spreads such an aroma of freshness and fragrance that those who eat it begin to exclaim "Oh, how delicious..." Where stands your *vad* in comparison? So, dear *bhinda-bhai*, smile as I am doing; don't forget that what is in others is not in you, and what is in you is in no one else. Let us rejoice in what we have in us; leave the fools to lament."

All is a Play of Seasons

I was out on a walk. I saw a gigantic *vad* in front. A high dome of thick leafage; cool silent shade; haven of compassion! Shiva's living presence—a sacrosanct, tranquil, equanimous abode! It seemed the materialisation of a Saint's soul-aspiration for universal welfare. This darshan immobilised me—my worshipping eyes and praying heart were caught in it. Then, in an ancient cavern echoed a deep voice. The *vad*'s soul spoke to mine:

“Traveller! You are charmed by the dense expanse of this *vad*? Your prana exults in the rhythmic Ananda resonating among these thick-sapped emerald leaves with the azure peeping round them, doesn't it? But let me tell you, all is a Lila of Seasons. Stricken by the curse of Winter, there was no such roof over me. This gorgeous opulence had crashed to the ground, and blown by the wild impatient winds my shrivelled leaves roamed in the wilderness, spreading the tale of my woes. Those times passed. Then from every limb of mine, as if a subterranean Ananda were bursting forth, sprang out of every pore of my stiff inert body smiling shoots, wrapping me in bliss. It was indeed a rebirth. My beautiful body began to vie with the Dawn-lighted east for reflection in the world's eyes; and when the sapphire began to play with crimson, what more was left? Birds, beasts and humans, all turned up to take pleasure in me. Refrains, choruses, ditties, on all scales and pitches, began to reverberate; everyone wanted to befriend me. And I welcomed them all with open-armed friendship, sharing my affluence with all.

Those days too passed! It was but an episode, wasn't it? Ungrateful insects burrowed and tore through my compassionate body. Storms and cyclones came, thunderclaps frightening the fearful and lightnings crashed. Floods came and went. But I am here still! Those seasonal sports too passed.

Do you know why? Though parts of my roots seem to be on the surface, they actually reach deep down. To drink the nether waters has been their goal; it is those inexhaustible waters of the Patala-Ganga that have kept me standing still, they enable me to watch unmoved these dramas of the Seasons! Had I not plunged that deep I would have died long before—storms would have uprooted me or hostile times sucked my life-forces and reduced me to a feast for termite colonies.

Life, O traveller, is at the mercy of the Seasons, one ends and another begins. I have learned that when all possessions disappear, one must not feel helpless; when Spring bestows abundance, not to swell up with pride, but enjoy it with equanimity, sharing it courteously with those less fortunate. To bear troubled times with the same unruffled poise, and with a faith-filled heart imbibe the immortalising sap flowing into you from the Depths and thus in all circumstances keep your roots alive. All the rest is a theatre of the Seasons!

Nija-rasa

Glory to Thee, Lord! Glory to Thee! For our sake you have stacked Books of Knowledge right in front of us. If our eyes are open, wherever we look, wherever we go, a page of Life's lessons lies open before us. How fortunate, if our eyes could always be on the lookout for them!

Look at that dog. A creature most of us drive away in disgust, that dog curled up there with a piece of bone. See how he holds it with his forelegs and keeps biting it. He seeks God-knows what juice in that dry stick of a bone, turning it this way and that, now biting, now licking it, and now shutting his eyes as if lost in some great bliss. "Stupid mutt!" you say. "A worthless dry-as-dust piece of bone; all he will get is painful jaws, and yet look at the way he holds on to it!" But are you being objective? He is not stupid, he is wise; he has mastered the art you and I have not even thought of achieving, he has the Siddhi of extracting *rasa* from what seems completely *nī-rasa*. Nothing is *nī-rasa* for him. You see, he has no dearth of *rasa* in himself, it overflows and fills up this dust-like piece of bone, and then he retrieves it with added flavours. He is that wealthy creature who is born full of *nija-rasa*; who pours out generously his own *rasa* on the *nī-rasa* and fills it with *rasa*.

How fortunate you are, dog! If only we humans too could inform the joyless with our own joys and learn to lose ourselves in that eternal *rasa-ānanda*!

Nija-ānanda

Remarkable! How carefree! Self-lost! *Alamgir*—Emperor of the world! Wah, Spring's delight, wah!

Standing in the middle of the Rajamarga is the being the world calls 'donkey'. High-raised neck and high-pointing ears. Unconquered, unyielding. Cares for no one; he has no worries. Self-dependent, liberated. *Masta*; just *masta*! If his inner condition were expressible, he would have thundered:

"Men of the world, you laugh? I know I am not a horse; nor have I the self-insulting hope to be called one. What glory could that bring? I am a donkey and take pride in being one. I am not ashamed of my *swabhava*, but rather confidently rely on it. Why cover myself with the greatness of another's personality? In perfecting my own personality is the fulfilment of my *swadharma*. My happiness is founded on my own being, my joys flow from my own self.

"What if I am not harnessed to some Guvender-Sahib's buggy? Do not lumber across boulevards with royalty lolling on my back? I don't want another's importance. I am what I am, and shall revel in it.

"Laugh all you wish to; laugh till your stomach aches. If you want it I too can join in the merriment. I won't feel slighted by your ridicule, my face shall not pale. For I live in my own happiness, *Nijānandamaya* I am, and shall remain, nay my self-

delight shall increase day by day. You could praise me, but for that too, I have no time; my happiness depends on no one. I don't need to pretend to possess what I don't; let him who has it enjoy it. I am satisfied with the qualities I have, fully content. You are free to hold whatever opinion you have of me, stupid or clever. But I too am free; I care not for anyone's opinion. I am what I am, engrossed in my *nijānanda*... lost in it."

PUJALAL

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

And in Nature each of us has a principle and will of our own becoming; each soul is a force of self-consciousness that formulates an idea of the Divine in it and guides by that its action and evolution, its progressive self-finding, its constant varying self-expression, its apparently uncertain but secretly inevitable growth to fullness. That is our Swabhava, our own real nature; that is our truth of being...

Sri Aurobindo

(*Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 519)

A Nation is building in India today before the eyes of the world so swiftly, so palpably that all can watch the process and those who have sympathy and intuition distinguish the forces at work, the materials in use, the lines of the divine architecture. This nation is not a new race raw from the workshop of Nature or created by modern circumstances. One of the oldest races and greatest civilisations on this earth, the most indomitable in vitality, the most fecund in greatness, the deepest in life, the most wonderful in potentiality, after taking into itself numerous sources of strength from foreign strains of blood and other types of human civilisation, is now seeking to lift itself for good into an organised national unity. Formerly a congeries of kindred nations with a single life and a single culture, always by the law of this essential oneness tending to unity, always by its excess of fecundity engendering fresh diversities and divisions, it has never yet been able to overcome permanently the almost insuperable obstacles to the organisation of a continent. The time has now come when those obstacles can be overcome. The attempt which our race has been making throughout its long history, it will now make under entirely new circumstances. A keen observer would predict its success because the only important obstacles have been or are in the process of being removed. But we go farther and believe that it is sure to succeed because the freedom, unity and greatness of India have now become necessary to the world.

Sri Aurobindo

(The Karmayogin, CWSA, Vol. 8, p. 23)

With Compliments from Well-wishers

Be quiet always, calm, peaceful, and let the Force work in your consciousness through the transparency of a perfect sincerity.

6 June 1937

The Mother

(Words of the Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 136)

With Compliments from B.