

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXII

No. 6

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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THE BIRD OF FIRE

Gold-white wings a-throb in the vastness, the bird of flame went
glimmering over a sunfire curve to the haze of the west,
Skimming, a messenger sail, the sapphire-summer waste of a
soundless wayless burning sea.
Now in the eve of the waning world the colour and splendour re-
turning drift through a blue-flicker air back to my breast,
Flame and shimmer staining the rapture-white foam-vest of
the waters of Eternity.

Gold-white wings of the miraculous bird of fire, late and slow
have you come from the Timeless. Angel, here unto me
Bringst thou for travailing earth a spirit silent and free or
His crimson passion of love divine, —
White-ray-jar of the spuming rose-red wine drawn from the vats
brimming with light-blaze, the vats of ecstasy,
Pressed by the sudden and violent feet of the Dancer in Time
from his sun-grape fruit of a deathless vine?

White-rose-altar the eternal Silence built, make now my nature
wide, an intimate guest of His solitude,
But golden above it the body of One in her diamond sphere
with Her halo of star-bloom and passion-ray!
Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like blood of a soul climbing
the hard crag-teeth world, wounded and nude,
A ruby of flame-petalled love in the silver-gold altar-vase
of moon-edged night and rising day.

O Flame who art Time's last boon of the sacrifice, offering-flower
held by the finite's gods to the Infinite,
O marvel bird with the burning wings of light and the unbarred
lids that look beyond all spaces,
One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of mind
and life, arrives at its luminous term thy flight;
Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire
thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, SABCL, Vol. 5, p. 571)

ON ‘THE BIRD OF FIRE’:

From Sri Aurobindo’s Letters and Observations

[‘THE BIRD OF FIRE’ is] in the nature of metrical experiments [. . .]. [It] is a kind of compromise between the stress system and the foot measure. The stanza is of four lines, alternately of twelve and ten stresses. The second and fourth line in each stanza can be read as a ten-foot line of mixed iambs and anapaests, the first and third, though a similar system subject to replacement of a foot anywhere by a single-syllable half-foot could be applied, are still mainly readable by stresses.

[. . .]

The Bird of Fire is the living vehicle of the gold fire of the Divine Light and the white fire of the Divine Tapas and the crimson fire of Divine Love — and everything else of the Divine Consciousness.

(*SABCL*, Vol. 5, p. 578)

* * *

The Flame means the Bird of Flame and the Bird is the symbol of an inner Power that rises from the “sacrifice” i.e. the Yoga. The last lines mean that it has the power of going beyond mind and life to that which is beyond mind and life.

(*Bulletin*, February 2009, p. 46)

* * *

Sri Aurobindo: . . . Take the line from the Rig Veda which I have quoted in *The Future Poetry*: “Raising the living and bringing out the dead.” When one reads it, it becomes clear at once that it is written from experience. *Ushā*, the goddess of Dawn, raises higher and higher whatever is manifested, and brings out all that had remained latent into manifestation. Of course, one has to become familiar with the symbol in order to grasp the truth.

[. . .]

Disciple: You once spoke of mystic poetry as ‘moonlight’ and of spiritual poetry as ‘sunlight’.

Sri Aurobindo: No, I meant occult poetry. There are two kinds of mystic poetry: occult-mystic and spiritual-mystic. That poem of mine “Trance”, about the moon and the star, or “The Bird of Fire”, is occult-mystic. In “Nirvana”, for instance, I have put exactly what Nirvana is. One is at liberty to use any symbol or image but what one says must be very clear through these symbols or images. For example,

Condition after condition is born,
 Covering after covering becomes conscious,
 In the lap of the Mother he sees. (*Rig Veda* V. 19.1)

Here images are used but it is very clear to anyone knowing the symbol what is meant and it is the result of genuine experience. Take another instance:

“The seers climb Indra like a ladder.”

And along with the ascent

“much that remains to be done becomes clear.” (*Rig Veda* I. 10.1-2)

It is an extraordinary passage expressing perfectly a spiritual experience. Indra is the Divine Mind and as one ascends higher and higher in it or on it, all that has to be done becomes clearly visible. One who has that experience can at once see how perfectly true it is, and that it must have been written from experience and not from imagination.¹

(*Evening Talks*, 2007 ed., pp. 237-38)

* * *

Disciple: X says that your “Bird of Fire” has got creative force. It is a creative symbolic poem.

Sri Aurobindo (*smiling*): I don't know. It is for X to pronounce.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 251-52)

* * *

1. *abhyasthāḥ pra jāyante*
pra vavrer vavriś ciketa.
Upasthe mātur vi caṣṭe. (Rig Veda, V. 19.1)

“State is born upon state; covering after covering becomes conscious of knowledge; in the lap of the Mother the soul sees.”

brahmāṇas tvā śatakrata
ud vaniśam iva yemire.
yat sānoḥ sānum āruhad
bhūri aspaṣṭa kartvam. (Rig Veda, I. 10.1-2)

“The priests of the word climb thee like a ladder, O hundred-powered. As one ascends from peak to peak, there is made clear the much that has still to be done.”

(Both quoted in “The Advent and Progress of the Spiritual Age”, Chapter 24, *The Human Cycle*, SABCL, Vol. 15, p. 253. See also *The Future Poetry*, CWSA Vol. 26, p. 222.)

It is not easy to say whether the poems are esoteric; for these words “esoteric” and “exoteric” are rather ill-defined in their significance. One understands the distinction between exoteric and esoteric religion — that is to say, on one side, creed, dogma, mental faith, religious worship and ceremony, religious and moral practice and discipline, on the other an inner seeking piercing beyond the creed and dogma and ceremony or finding their hidden meaning, living deeply within in spiritual and mystic experience. But how shall we define an esoteric poetry? Perhaps what deals in an occult way with the occult may be called esoteric — e.g., the *Bird of Fire*, *Trance*, etc. *The Two Moons*¹ is, it is obvious, desperately esoteric. But I don't know whether an intimate spiritual experience simply and limpidly told without veil or recondite image can be called esoteric — for the word usually brings the sense of something kept back from the ordinary eye, hidden, occult. Is *Nirvana* for instance an esoteric poem? There is no veil or symbol there — it tries to state the experience as precisely and overtly as possible. The experience of the psychic fire and psychic discrimination is an intimate spiritual experience, but it is direct and simple like all psychic things. The poem which expresses it may easily be something deeply inward, esoteric in that sense, but simple, unveiled and clear, not esoteric in the more usual sense. I rather think, however, the term “esoteric poem” is a misnomer and some other phraseology would be more accurate.

30 April 1935

(CWSA, Vol. 27, pp. 86-87)

* * *

. . . When the symbol is a representative sign or figure and nothing more, then the symbolic approaches nearer to an intellectual method, though even then it is not the same thing as allegory. In mystic poetry the symbol ought to be as much as possible the natural body of the inner truth or vision, itself an intimate part of the experience.

16-18 November 1933

(*Ibid.*, p. 90)

* * *

Lord, what an incorrigible mentaliser and allegorist you are! If the bird were either consciousness or the psychic or light, it would be an allegory and all the mystic beauty would be gone. A living symbol and a mental allegorical symbol are not the same thing. You can't put a label on the Bird of Marvel any more than on the Bird of Fire or any other of the fauna or flora or population of the mystic kingdoms. They can be described, but to label them destroys their life and makes them only stuffed

1. Now called Moon of Two Hemispheres.

specimens in an allegorical museum. Mystic symbols are living things, not abstractions. Why insist on killing them?

8 August 1936

(*Ibid.*)

* * *

These two poems ['The Bird of Fire' and 'Trance'] are in the nature of metrical experiments. The first is a kind of compromise between the stress system and the foot measure. The stanza is of four lines, alternately of twelve and ten stresses. The second and fourth line in each stanza can be read as a ten-foot line of mixed iambs and anapaests, the first and third, though a similar system subject to replacement of a foot anywhere by a single-syllable half-foot could be applied, are still mainly readable by stresses.

The other poem is an experiment in the use of quantitative foot measures not following any existing model, but freely invented. It is a four-line stanza reading alternately

	— — — — — — — — —
	— — — — — — — — —
and	— — — — — — — — —

It could indeed be read otherwise, in several ways, but read in the ordinary way of accentual feet it would lose all lyrical quality and the soul of its rhythm.

The Bird of Fire is the living vehicle of the gold fire of the Divine Light and the white fire of the Divine Tapas and the crimson fire of Divine Love — and everything else of the Divine Consciousness.

(CWSA, Vol. 27, p. 239)

* * *

Your *Bird of Fire* is full of symbolic images, but if one can follow the *bhāva* behind or through them, I believe the appreciation becomes complete.

What do you mean by following the *bhāva* behind? Putting a label on the bird and keeping it dried up in your intellectual museum, for Professors to describe to their pupils — “this is the species and that’s how it is constituted, these are the bones, feathers etc. etc. and now you know all about the bird. Or would you like me to dissect it farther?”

3 December 1936

(*Ibid.*, p. 243)

* * *

Does the line

Late and slow you have come from the timeless Angel

mean that the sadhaka struggled long before the attainment? Does the “timeless Angel” mean the transcendent?

There must be a mistake in the copy. There is a full stop at “timeless”. “Angel” begins a new sentence and is addressed to the bird. It is the Bird who went out to reach the Timeless Divine and comes late (while the Sadhak and the world have been long struggling and waiting in vain) with the gift.

Purani thinks that the “Bird of Fire” represents aspiration. Is this true?

No — the Bird is not merely aspiration.

Is the “Dancer in Time” Nataraja?

Yes.

The “flame-petalled love” you mention in one of the lines is, I think, possible only at some level near the Supermind.

It is possible in the psychic also.

The phrase “arrives at its luminous term thy flight” means, I suppose, the complete descent into the material consciousness after breaking the barriers of mind and life.

No. It reaches the Eternal and brings back to the material world that which is beyond Mind and Life.

25 October 1933

(*Ibid.*, pp. 243-44)

* * *

The Dancer is not the Time-Spirit, but the Divine in Time.

1933

(*Ibid.*, p. 244)

* * *

The flame means the Bird of Flame and the Bird is the symbol of an inner Power that rises from the "sacrifice" i.e. the Yoga. The last lines mean that it has the power of going beyond mind and life to that which is beyond mind and life.

2 December 1933

(*Ibid.*)

* * *

Were *Trance* and the *Bird of Fire* each composed at a single sitting and can the date be given?

The *Bird of Fire* was written on two consecutive days — and afterwards revised. The *Trance* at one sitting — it took only a few minutes. You may perhaps have the date as they were both completed on the same day and sent to you the next.

(*Ibid.*)

* * *

Is *The Bird of Fire* more of a compromise between a quantitative and a purely stress scansion than *In Horis Aeternum* (where the quantity-aspect seems to be less important than in *The Bird of Fire*)?

In the *In Horis Aeternum* I did not follow any regular scheme of quantities, letting them come as was needed by the rhythm. In *The Bird of Fire* I started with the idea of a quantitative element but abandoned it and remodelled the part of the poem in which I had used the quantitative system.

(*Ibid.*, pp. 250-51)

* * *

About that bird, it is true that "one can only see"; but if not more than one can see, don't others need a bit of explanation? To *what region* does it belong? Is it any relation of the Bird of Fire with "gold-white wings" or the Hippogriff with a face "lusted, pale-blue-lined"?

All birds of that region are relatives. But this is the bird of eternal Ananda, while the Hippogriff was the divinised Thought and the Bird of Fire is the Agni-bird, psychic and tapas. All that however is to mentalise too much and mentalising always takes most of the life out of spiritual things. That's why I say it can be seen, but nothing said about it.

5 November 1936

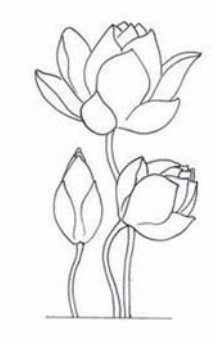
(*Ibid.*, p. 294)

* * *

... One has to avoid mere mistiness or vagueness, one has to be true, vivid, profound in one's images; but, that given, I feel free to write either as in *Nirvana* or *Transformation*, giving a clear mental indication along with the image or I can suppress the mental indication and give the image only with the content suggested in the language but not expressed so that even those can superficially understand who are unable to read behind the mental idea — that is what I have done in *The Bird of Fire*. It seems to me that both methods are legitimate.

16 December 1936

(*Ibid.*, p. 384)



THE DIVINE BIRTH AND DIVINE WORKS

THE work for which the Avatar descends has like his birth a double sense and a double form. It has an outward side of the divine force acting upon the external world in order to maintain there and to reshape the divine law by which the Godward effort of humanity is kept from decisive retrogression and instead decisively carried forward in spite of the rule of action and reaction, the rhythm of advance and relapse by which Nature proceeds. It has an inward side of the divine force of the Godward consciousness acting upon the soul of the individual and the soul of the race, so that it may receive new forms of revelation of the Divine in man and may be sustained, renewed and enriched in its power of upward self-unfolding. The Avatar does not descend merely for a great outward action, as the pragmatic sense in humanity is too often tempted to suppose. Action and event have no value in themselves, but only take their value from the force which they represent and the idea which they symbolise and which the force is there to serve.

The crisis in which the Avatar appears, though apparent to the outward eye only as a crisis of events and great material changes, is always in its source and real meaning a crisis in the consciousness of humanity when it has to undergo some grand modification and effect some new development. For this action of change a divine force is needed; but the force varies always according to the power of consciousness which it embodies; hence the necessity of a divine consciousness manifesting in the mind and soul of humanity. Where, indeed, the change is mainly intellectual and practical, the intervention of the Avatar is not needed; there is a great uplifting of consciousness, a great manifestation of power in which men are for the time being exalted above their normal selves, and this surge of consciousness and power finds its wave-crests in certain exceptional individuals, *vibhūtis*, whose action leading the general action is sufficient for the change intended. The Reformation in Europe and the French Revolution were crises of this character; they were not great spiritual events, but intellectual and practical changes, one in religious, the other in social and political ideas, forms and motives, and the modification of the general consciousness brought about was a mental and dynamic, but not a spiritual modification. But when the crisis has a spiritual seed or intention, then a complete or a partial manifestation of the God-consciousness in a human mind and soul comes as its originator or leader. That is the Avatar.

The outward action of the Avatar is described in the Gita as the restoration of the Dharma; when from age to age the Dharma fades, languishes, loses force and its opposite arises, strong and oppressive, then the Avatar comes and raises it again to power; and as these things in idea are always represented by things in action and by human beings who obey their impulsion, his mission is, in its most human and outward terms, to relieve the seekers of the Dharma who are oppressed by the reign of the

reactionary darkness and to destroy the wrong-doers who seek to maintain the denial of the Dharma. But the language used can easily be given a poor and insufficient connotation which would deprive Avatarhood of all its spiritual depth of meaning. Dharma is a word which has an ethical and practical, a natural and philosophical and a religious and spiritual significance, and it may be used in any of these senses exclusive of the others, in a purely ethical, a purely philosophical or a purely religious sense. Ethically it means the law of righteousness, the moral rule of conduct, or in a still more outward and practical significance social and political justice, or even simply the observation of the social law. If used in this sense we shall have to understand that when unrighteousness, injustice and oppression prevail, the Avatar descends to deliver the good and destroy the wicked, to break down injustice and oppression and restore the ethical balance of mankind.

Thus the popular and mythical account of the Krishna avatar is that the unrighteousness of the Kurus as incarnated in Duryodhana and his brothers became so great a burden to the earth that she had to call upon God to descend and lighten her load; accordingly Vishnu incarnated as Krishna, delivered the oppressed Pandavas and destroyed the unjust Kauravas. A similar account is given of the descent of the previous Vishnu avatars, of Rama to destroy the unrighteous oppression of Ravana, of Parashurama to destroy the unrighteous license of the military and princely caste, the Kshatriyas, of the dwarf Vamana to destroy the rule of the Titan Bali. But obviously the purely practical, ethical or social and political mission of the Avatar which is thus thrown into popular and mythical form, does not give a right account of the phenomenon of Avatarhood. It does not cover its spiritual sense, and if this outward utility were all, we should have to exclude Buddha and Christ whose mission was not at all to destroy evil-doers and deliver the good, but to bring to all men a new spiritual message and a new law of divine growth and spiritual realisation. On the other hand, if we give to the word dharma only its religious sense, in which it means a law of religious and spiritual life, we shall indeed get to the kernel of the matter, but we shall be in danger of excluding a most important part of the work done by the Avatar. Always we see in the history of the divine incarnations the double work, and inevitably, because the Avatar takes up the workings of God in human life, the way of the divine Will and Wisdom in the world, and that always fulfils itself externally as well as internally, by inner progress in the soul and by an outer change in the life.

The Avatar may descend as a great spiritual teacher and saviour, the Christ, the Buddha, but always his work leads, after he has finished his earthly manifestation, to a profound and powerful change not only in the ethical, but in the social and outward life and ideals of the race. He may, on the other hand, descend as an incarnation of the divine life, the divine personality and power in its characteristic action, for a mission ostensibly social, ethical and political, as is represented in the story of Rama or Krishna; but always then this descent becomes in the soul of the race a permanent power for the inner living and the spiritual rebirth. It is indeed curious to note that the permanent,

vital, universal effect of Buddhism and Christianity has been the force of their ethical, social and practical ideals and their influence even on the men and the ages which have rejected their religious and spiritual beliefs, forms and disciplines; later Hinduism which rejected Buddha, his *saṅgha* and his *dharma*, bears the ineffaceable imprint of the social and ethical influence of Buddhism and its effect on the ideas and the life of the race, while in modern Europe, Christian only in name, humanitarianism is the translation into the ethical and social sphere and the aspiration to liberty, equality and fraternity the translation into the social and political sphere of the spiritual truths of Christianity, the latter especially being effected by men who aggressively rejected the Christian religion and spiritual discipline and by an age which in its intellectual effort of emancipation tried to get rid of Christianity as a creed. On the other hand the life of Rama and Krishna belongs to the prehistoric past which has come down only in poetry and legend and may even be regarded as myths; but it is quite immaterial whether we regard them as myths or historical facts, because their permanent truth and value lie in their persistence as a spiritual form, presence, influence in the inner consciousness of the race and the life of the human soul. Avatarhood is a fact of divine life and consciousness which may realise itself in an outward action, but must persist, when that action is over and has done its work, in a spiritual influence; or may realise itself in a spiritual influence and teaching, but must then have its permanent effect, even when the new religion or discipline is exhausted, in the thought, temperament and outward life of mankind.

We must then, in order to understand the Gita's description of the work of the Avatar, take the idea of the Dharma in its fullest, deepest and largest conception, as the inner and the outer law by which the divine Will and Wisdom work out the spiritual evolution of mankind and its circumstances and results in the life of the race. Dharma in the Indian conception is not merely the good, the right, morality and justice, ethics; it is the whole government of all the relations of man with other beings, with Nature, with God, considered from the point of view of a divine principle working itself out in forms and laws of action, forms of the inner and the outer life, orderings of relations of every kind in the world. Dharma¹ is both that which we hold to and that which holds together our inner and outer activities. In its primary sense it means a fundamental law of our nature which secretly conditions all our activities, and in this sense each being, type, species, individual, group has its own dharma. Secondly, there is the divine nature which has to develop and manifest in us, and in this sense dharma is the law of the inner workings by which that grows in our being. Thirdly, there is the law by which we govern our outgoing thought and action and our relations with each other so as to help best both our own growth and that of the human race towards the divine ideal.

1. The word means "holding" from the root *dhr*, to hold.

Dharma is generally spoken of as something eternal and unchanging, and so it is in the fundamental principle, in the ideal, but in its forms it is continually changing and evolving, because man does not already possess the ideal or live in it, but aspires more or less perfectly towards it, is growing towards its knowledge and practice. And in this growth dharma is all that helps us to grow into the divine purity, largeness, light, freedom, power, strength, joy, love, good, unity, beauty, and against it stands its shadow and denial, all that resists its growth and has not undergone its law, all that has not yielded up and does not will to yield up its secret of divine values, but presents a front of perversion and contradiction, of impurity, narrowness, bondage, darkness, weakness, vileness, discord and suffering and division, and the hideous and the crude, all that man has to leave behind in his progress. This is the *adharmā*, not-dharma, which strives with and seeks to overcome the dharma, to draw backward and downward, the reactionary force which makes for evil, ignorance and darkness. Between the two there is perpetual battle and struggle, oscillation of victory and defeat in which sometimes the upward and sometimes the downward forces prevail. This has been typified in the Vedic image of the struggle between the divine and the Titanic powers, the sons of the Light and the undivided Infinity and the children of the Darkness and Division, in Zoroastrianism by Ahuramazda and Ahriman, and in later religions in the contest between God and his angels and Satan or Iblis and his demons for the possession of human life and the human soul.

It is these things that condition and determine the work of the Avatar. In the Buddhistic formula the disciple takes refuge from all that opposes his liberation in three powers, the *dharma*, the *saṅgha*, the Buddha. So in Christianity we have the law of Christian living, the Church and the Christ. These three are always the necessary elements of the work of the Avatar. He gives a dharma, a law of self-discipline by which to grow out of the lower into the higher life and which necessarily includes a rule of action and of relations with our fellowmen and other beings, endeavour in the eightfold path or the law of faith, love and purity or any other such revelation of the nature of the divine in life. Then because every tendency in man has its collective as well as its individual aspect, because those who follow one way are naturally drawn together into spiritual companionship and unity, he establishes the *saṅgha*, the fellowship and union of those whom his personality and his teaching unite. In Vaishnavism there is the same trio, *bhāgavata*, *bhakta*, *bhagavān*, — the *bhāgavata*, which is the law of the Vaishnava dispensation of adoration and love, the *bhakta* representing the fellowship of those in whom that law is manifest, *bhagavān*, the divine Lover and Beloved in whose being and nature the divine law of love is founded and fulfils itself. The Avatar represents this third element, the divine personality, nature and being who is the soul of the dharma and the *saṅgha*, informs them with himself, keeps them living and draws men towards the felicity and the liberation.

In the teaching of the Gita, which is more catholic and complex than other specialised teachings and disciplines, these things assume a larger meaning. For the

unity here is the all-embracing Vedantic unity by which the soul sees all in itself and itself in all and makes itself one with all beings. The dharma is therefore the taking up of all human relations into a higher divine meaning; starting from the established ethical, social and religious rule which binds together the whole community in which the God-seeker lives, it lifts it up by informing it with the Brahmic consciousness; the law it gives is the law of oneness, of equality, of liberated, desireless, God-governed action, of God-knowledge and self-knowledge enlightening and drawing to itself all the nature and all the action, drawing it towards divine being and divine consciousness, and of God-love as the supreme power and crown of the knowledge and the action. The idea of companionship and mutual aid in God-love and God-seeking which is at the basis of the idea of the *saṅgha* or divine fellowship, is brought in when the Gita speaks of the seeking of God through love and adoration, but the real *saṅgha* of this teaching is all humanity. The whole world is moving towards this dharma, each man according to his capacity, — “it is my path that men follow in every way,” — and the God-seeker, making himself one with all, making their joy and sorrow and all their life his own, the liberated made already one self with all beings, lives in the life of humanity, lives for the one Self in humanity, for God in all beings, acts for *lokasaṅgraha*, for the maintaining of all in their dharma and the Dharma, for the maintenance of their growth in all its stages and in all its paths towards the Divine. For the Avatar here, though he is manifest in the name and form of Krishna, lays no exclusive stress on this one form of his human birth, but on that which it represents, the Divine, the Purushottama, of whom all Avatars are the human births, of whom all forms and names of the Godhead worshipped by men are the figures. The way declared by Krishna here is indeed announced as the way by which man can reach the real knowledge and the real liberation, but it is one that is inclusive of all paths and not exclusive. For the Divine takes up into his universality all Avatars and all teachings and all dharmas.

The Gita lays stress upon the struggle of which the world is the theatre, in its two aspects, the inner struggle and the outer battle. In the inner struggle the enemies are within, in the individual, and the slaying of desire, ignorance, egoism is the victory. But there is an outer struggle between the powers of the Dharma and the Adharma in the human collectivity. The former is supported by the divine, the godlike nature in man, and by those who represent it or strive to realise it in human life, the latter by the Titanic or demoniac, the Asuric and Rakshasic nature whose head is a violent egoism, and by those who represent and strive to satisfy it. This is the war of the Gods and Titans, the symbol of which the old Indian literature is full, the struggle of the Mahabharata of which Krishna is the central figure being often represented in that image; the Pandavas who fight for the establishment of the kingdom of the Dharma, are the sons of the Gods, their powers in human form, their adversaries are incarnations of the Titanic powers, they are Asuras. This outer struggle too the Avatar comes to aid, directly or indirectly, to destroy the reign of the Asuras, the evil-doers, and in them depress the power they represent and to restore the oppressed ideals of the

Dharma. He comes to bring nearer the kingdom of heaven on earth in the collectivity as well as to build the kingdom of heaven within in the individual human soul.

The inner fruit of the Avatar's coming is gained by those who learn from it the true nature of the divine birth and the divine works and who, growing full of him in their consciousness and taking refuge in him with their whole being, *manmayā mām upāśritāḥ*, purified by the realising force of their knowledge and delivered from the lower nature, attain to the divine being and divine nature, *madbhāvam*. The Avatar comes to reveal the divine nature in man above this lower nature and to show what are the divine works, free, unegoistic, disinterested, impersonal, universal, full of the divine light, the divine power and the divine love. He comes as the divine personality which shall fill the consciousness of the human being and replace the limited egoistic personality, so that it shall be liberated out of ego into infinity and universality, out of birth into immortality. He comes as the divine power and love which calls men to itself, so that they may take refuge in that and no longer in the insufficiency of their human wills and the strife of their human fear, wrath and passion, and liberated from all this unquiet and suffering may live in the calm and bliss of the Divine.² Nor does it matter essentially in what form and name or putting forward what aspect of the Divine he comes; for in all ways, varying with their nature, men are following the path set to them by the Divine which will in the end lead them to him and the aspect of him which suits their nature is that which they can best follow when he comes to lead them; in whatever way men accept, love and take joy in God, in that way God accepts, loves and takes joy in man. *Ye yathā mām prapadyante tāms tathaiva bhajāmyaham*.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, pp. 168-76)

2. *janma karma ca me divyam evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ,
tyaktvā dehaṁ punarjanma naiti mām eti so'rjuna.
vītarāgabhayakrodhā manmayā mām upāśritāḥ,
bahavo jñānatapasā pūtā madbhāvam āgatāḥ.*

‘THOU ART THE REASON OF OUR EXISTENCE AND OUR GOAL’

February 12, 1914

WHEN, conscious with Thy supreme consciousness, one considers all earthly circumstances, one sees their complete relativity and says, “To do this thing or that, after all that is not of much importance; yet a particular mode of action will be the best utilisation of a certain faculty, a certain temperament. All actions, whatever they may be, even the most contradictory in appearance, can be an expression of Thy law to the extent that they are infused with the consciousness of that law, which is not a law of practical application that can be translated into principles or rules in the ordinary human consciousness but a law of attitude, of a constant and prevailing consciousness, something that cannot be expressed in formulas but may be lived.”

But as soon as one falls back into the ordinary consciousness, nothing should be treated lightly and with indifference, the least circumstances, the smallest acts have a great importance and should be seriously considered; for we must try at every moment to do that which will make the identification of our consciousness with the eternal consciousness easy, and avoid carefully all that could be an obstacle to this identification. It is then that the rules of conduct having as their foundation perfect personal disinterestedness should find their full value.

With peace in my heart, with light in my mind, the hope born of certitude in all my being, I greet Thee, O Lord, divine Master of eternal love.

Thou art the reason of our existence and our goal.

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 72)

AN INTEGRAL IDEA OF THE DIVINE

Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo mean by an integral idea of the Divine?

EVERYONE forms an idea of the Divine for himself according to his personal taste, his possibilities of understanding, his mental preferences, and even his desires. People form the idea of the Divine they want, the Divine they wish to meet, and so naturally they limit their realisation considerably.

But if we can come to understand that the Divine is all that we can conceive of, and infinitely more, we begin to progress towards integrality. Integrality is an extremely difficult thing for the human consciousness, which begins to be conscious only by limiting itself. But still, with a little effort, for those who know how to play with mental activities, it is possible to widen oneself sufficiently to approach something integral.

You form an idea of the Divine which suits your own nature and your own conception, don't you? So if you want to get out of yourself a little and attempt to do a truly integral yoga, you must try to understand that the Divine is not only what you think or feel Him to be, but also what others think and feel Him to be — and in addition something that nobody can think and feel.

So, if you understand this, you have taken the first step on the path of integrality.

Instinctively, and without even being aware of it, people persist in wanting the Divine to suit their own conceptions. For, without thinking, quite spontaneously, they tell you, "Oh, this is divine, this is not divine!" What do they know about it? And then there are those who have not yet set foot on the path, who come here and see things or people, and tell you, "This Ashram has nothing to do with the Divine, it is not at all divine." But if you ask them, "What is divine?", they would be hard put to it to answer; they know nothing about it. And the less one knows, the more one judges; that's an absolute fact. The more one knows, the less can one pronounce judgments on things.

And there comes a time when all one can do is observe, but to judge is impossible. One can see things, see them as they are, in their relations and in their place, with an awareness of the difference between the place they now are in and the one they ought to occupy — for this is the great disorder in the world — but one does not judge. One simply observes.

And there is a moment when one would be unable to say, "This is divine and that is not divine", for a time comes when one sees the whole universe in so total and comprehensive a way that, to tell the truth, it is impossible to take away anything from it without disturbing everything.

And one or two steps further yet, and one knows with certainty that what shocks us as a contradiction of the Divine is quite simply something not in its proper place.

Each thing must be exactly in its place and, besides, it must be supple enough, plastic enough, to admit into a harmonious progressive organisation all the new elements which are constantly added to the manifested universe. The universe is in a perpetual movement of inner reorganisation, and at the same time it is growing larger, so to say, becoming more and more complex, more and more complete, more and more integral — and this, indefinitely. And as gradually new elements manifest, the whole organisation has to be remade on a new basis, so that there is not a second when *everything* is not in perpetual movement. But if the movement is in accordance with the divine order, it is harmonious, so perfectly harmonious that it is hardly perceptible, it is difficult to see it.

Now, if one comes down again from this consciousness to a more external consciousness, naturally one begins to feel, very precisely, the things which help one to reach the true consciousness and those which bar the way or pull one back or even struggle against the progress. And so the outlook changes and one has to say, “This is divine, or this helps me toward the Divine; and that is against the Divine, it is the enemy of the Divine.”

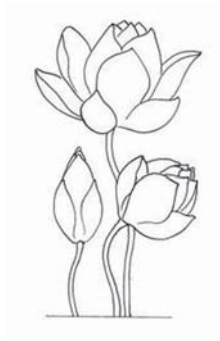
But this is a pragmatic point of view, for action, for the movement in material life — because one has not yet reached the consciousness which goes beyond all that; because one has not attained that inner perfection, having which one has no longer to struggle, for one has gone beyond the zone of struggle or the time of struggle or the utility of struggle. But before that, before attaining that state in one’s consciousness and action, necessarily there is struggle, and if there is struggle there is choice and for the choice discernment is necessary.

And the surest means to discernment is a conscious and willing surrender, as complete as possible, to the divine Will and Guidance. Then there is no risk of making a mistake and of taking false lights for true ones.

4 January 1956

THE MOTHER

(*Questions and Answers 1956*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 8, pp. 1-3)



“ALL WOULD CHANGE IF MAN COULD ONCE CONSENT TO BE SPIRITUALISED . . .”

“Wherever thou seest a great end, be sure of a great beginning. Where a monstrous and painful destruction appals thy mind, console it with the certainty of a large and great creation. God is there not only in the still small voice, but in the fire and in the whirlwind.

“The greater the destruction, the freer the chances of creation; but the destruction is often long, slow and oppressive, the creation tardy in its coming or interrupted in its triumph. The night returns again and again and the day lingers or seems even to have been a false dawning. Despair not therefore but watch and work. Those who hope violently, despair swiftly: neither hope nor fear, but be sure of God’s purpose and thy will to accomplish.

“The hand of the divine Artist works often as if it were unsure of its genius and its material. It seems to touch and test and leave, to pick up and throw away and pick up again, to labour and fail and botch and repiece together. Surprises and disappointments are the order of his work before all things are ready. What was selected, is cast away into the abyss of reprobation; what was rejected, becomes the cornerstone of a mighty edifice. But behind all this is the sure eye of a knowledge which surpasses our reason and the slow smile of an infinite ability.

“God has all time before him and does not need to be always in a hurry. He is sure of his aim and success and cares not if he break his work a hundred times to bring it nearer perfection. Patience is our first great necessary lesson, but not the dull slowness to move of the timid, the sceptical, the weary, the slothful, the unambitious or the weakling; a patience full of a calm and gathering strength which watches and prepares itself for the hour of swift great strokes, few but enough to change destiny.

“Wherefore God hammers so fiercely at his world, tramples and kneads it like dough, casts it so often into the blood-bath and the red hell-heat of the furnace? Because humanity in the mass is still a hard, crude and vile ore which will not otherwise be smelted and shaped; as is his material, so is his method. Let it help to transmute itself into nobler and purer metal, his ways with it will be gentler and sweeter, much loftier and fairer its uses.

“Wherefore he selected or made such a material, when he had all infinite possibility to choose from? Because of his divine Idea which saw

before it not only beauty and sweetness and purity, but also force and will and greatness. Despise not force, nor hate it for the ugliness of some of its faces, nor think that love only is God. All perfect perfection must have something in it of the stuff of the hero and even of the Titan. But the greatest force is born out of the greatest difficulty.”

*Thoughts and Glimpses,
(SABCL, Vol. 16, pp. 392-93)*

AFTER all, the whole problem is to know whether humanity has reached the state of pure gold or whether it still needs to be tested in the crucible.

One thing is evident, humanity has not become pure gold; that is visible and certain.

But something has happened in the world’s history which allows us to hope that a selected few in humanity, a small number of beings, perhaps, are ready to be transformed into pure gold and that they will be able to manifest strength without violence, heroism without destruction and courage without catastrophe.

But in the very next paragraph Sri Aurobindo gives the answer: “If man could once consent to be spiritualised.” If only the individual could *consent* to be spiritualised . . . could consent.

Something in him asks for it, aspires, and all the rest refuses, wants to continue to be what it is: the mixed ore which needs to be cast into the furnace.

At the moment we are at a decisive turning-point in the history of the earth, once again. From every side I am asked, “What is going to happen?” Everywhere there is anguish, expectation, fear. “What is going to happen? . . .” There is only one reply: “If only man could consent to be spiritualised.”

And perhaps it would be enough if some individuals became pure gold, for this would be enough to change the course of events. . . . We are faced with this necessity in a very urgent way.

This courage, this heroism which the Divine wants of us, why not use it to fight against one’s own difficulties, one’s own imperfections, one’s own obscurities? Why not heroically face the furnace of inner purification so that it does not become necessary to pass once more through one of those terrible, gigantic destructions which plunge an entire civilisation into darkness?

This is the problem before us. It is for each one to solve it in his own way.

This evening I am answering the questions I have been asked, and my reply is that of Sri Aurobindo: If man could once consent to be spiritualised. . . .

And I add: Time presses. . . from the human point of view.

27 March 1957

“All would change if man could once consent to be spiritualised; but his nature, mental and vital and physical, is rebellious to the higher law. He loves his imperfection.

“The Spirit is the truth of our being; mind and life and body in their imperfection are its masks, but in their perfection should be its moulds. To be spiritual only is not enough; that prepares a number of souls for heaven, but leaves the earth very much where it was. Neither is a compromise the way of salvation.

“The world knows three kinds of revolution. The material has strong results, the moral and intellectual are infinitely larger in their scope and richer in their fruits, but the spiritual are the great sowings.

“If the triple change could coincide in a perfect correspondence, a faultless work would be done; but the mind and body of mankind cannot hold perfectly a strong spiritual inrush: most is spilt, much of the rest is corrupted. Many intellectual and physical upturnings of our soil are needed to work out a little result from a large spiritual sowing.

“Each religion has helped mankind. Paganism increased in man the light of beauty, the largeness and height of his life, his aim at a many-sided perfection; Christianity gave him some vision of divine love and charity; Buddhism has shown him a noble way to be wiser, gentler, purer; Judaism and Islam how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God; Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities. A great thing would be done if all these God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other; but intellectual dogma and cult-egoism stand in the way.

“All religions have saved a number of souls, but none yet has been able to spiritualise mankind. For that there is needed not cult and creed, but a sustained and all-comprehending effort at spiritual self-evolution.

“The changes we see in the world today are intellectual, moral, physical in their ideal and intention: the spiritual revolution waits for its hour and throws up meanwhile its waves here and there. Until it comes the sense of the others cannot be understood and till then all interpretations of present happening and forecast of man’s future are vain things. For its nature, power, event are that which will determine the next cycle of our humanity.”

*Thoughts and Glimpses,
(SABCL, Vol. 16, pp. 393-94)*

Mother, here Sri Aurobindo writes: “A great thing would be done if all these God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other; but intellectual dogma and cult-egoism stand in the way.”

How is it possible to fuse into one all these views?

It is not in the mental consciousness that these things can be harmonised and synthesised. For this it is necessary to rise above and find the idea behind the thought. Sri Aurobindo shows here, for example, what each of these religions represents in human effort, aspiration and realisation. Instead of taking these religions in their outward forms which are precisely dogmas and intellectual conceptions, if we take them in their spirit, in the principle they represent, there is no difficulty in unifying them. They are simply different aspects of human progress which complete each other perfectly well and should be united with many others yet to form a more total and more complete progress, a more perfect understanding of life, a more integral approach to the Divine. And even this unification which already demands a return to the Spirit behind things, is not enough; there must be added to it a vision of the future, the goal towards which humanity is moving, the future realisation of the world, that last “spiritual revolution” Sri Aurobindo speaks about, which will open a new age, that is, the supramental revolution.

In the supramental consciousness all these things are no longer contradictory or exclusive. They all become complementary. It is only the mental form which divides. What this mental form represents should be united to what all the other mental forms represent in order to make a harmonious whole. And that is the essential difference between a religion and the true spiritual life.

Religion exists almost exclusively in its forms, its cults, in a certain set of ideas, and it becomes great only through the spirituality of a few exceptional individuals, whereas true spiritual life, and above all what the supramental realisation will be, is independent of every precise, intellectual form, every limited form of life. It embraces all possibilities and manifestations and makes them the expression, the vehicle of a higher and more universal truth.

A new religion would not only be useless but very harmful. It is a new *life* which must be created; it is a new *consciousness* which must be expressed. This is something beyond intellectual limits and mental formulae. It is a living truth which must manifest.

Everything in its essence and its truth should be included in this realisation. This realisation must be an expression as total, as complete, as universal as possible of the divine reality. Only that can save humanity and the world. That is the great spiritual revolution of which Sri Aurobindo speaks. And this is what he wanted us to realise.

He has traced its broad outline in the very book we shall start reading next Wednesday: *The Supramental Manifestation*.

And the first sentence I read today remains the key of the entire problem not only for the individual but also for the collectivity:

“All would change if man could once consent to be spiritualised; but his nature, mental and vital and physical, is rebellious to the higher law. He loves his imperfection.”

I would like us to take this as the subject of our meditation.

(Meditation)

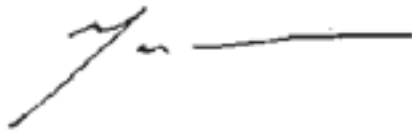
3 April 1957

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1957-58, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 9, pp. 73-79)

Sri Aurobindo says:

*"All would change if man
could once consent to be
spiritualised."*



ITINERARY OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY

(Continued from the issue of May 2009)

Chapter III

Profession: Chemist

FUNDS were dwindling and Philippe found himself trapped: he had either to get a job and his salary would then permit the trio to live and to begin to repay their debts, or he would have to return. Listening to his intuition in conducting his life and ever trusting the “Great Beings”, the organisers of his destiny, “he found the job which was destined for him” and it came to him “just when it was needed”! An additional coincidence: it was the position of a chemist! He had always loved chemistry; as a secondary school student, he had set up a laboratory in a disused wing at La Minelle. And for the Theosophist that he was, alchemy — therefore chemistry — did it not constitute an intellectual imperative and at the same time, a rule of life? His profession of civil engineer would not stand the comparison; “repairing roads and byways, constructing bridges and sewers”!¹ His interest lay in the study of the progress of the physical sciences and he attended the lectures that Albert Einstein gave at the University.

He continued his search for the truth and it seemed to him “that a new spiritual era was opening up for him”. In Tokyo he formed a circle of Theosophist friends and they, certainly, spoke to him of Madame Potel’s childhood friend, Mira Alfassa, the future “Mother” of Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry; she had lived in Japan from 1916 to 1920 with her husband, Paul Richard. Being eclectic, Philippe took pleasure in discussing metaphysics with the new French Ambassador, Paul Claudel, and with Father Heck, the Catholic missionary.

Philippe’s new professional activity did not bring about any change in Paul’s attitude towards him. Rather the contrary: why take his knowledge and his skills “to a foreign factory when one owed them to one’s own country”? His other son, Albert, once his studies were completed, got himself appointed by the colonial administration and left for Indochina as engineer for Public Works. Thus the two sons were in the Far East while their parents stayed alone in Paris. It was from this period that Paul began, little by little, to admit the right of the elder son to lead his life as he thought fit, just as he had accepted it for the younger one, although he could not understand the purpose of such a move.

* * *

1. Cf. Chapter IX.

Tokyo, February 11, 1922

My dearest Parents,

It is quite some time since I wrote to you. Neither have I received anything from you for a still longer time. I think the postal service alone is responsible for this. How often my thoughts go to you and how much I want to see you close to me! This separation is painful to me too, I assure you, but I do not think it is quite useless.

After a long period of struggle and difficulties, not only financial and material but also moral, mental and spiritual, it seems to me that a new period is beginning for me. The struggles were necessary for me — for us —, I realise that very well. As sister Potel wrote to me, not very long back, struggle is indispensable for us. Much suffering comes to us due to our incomprehension and our faults, particularly from our haste. Everything happens, in fact, as it must happen and as we knew it, but more slowly than our enthusiasm would have it. Moreover, we have realised that it is bad to be too much in a hurry, that whatever one may do, everything happens at the moment when it should, that our efforts and our desires cannot advance, even by a minute, the accomplishment of that which must be.

My present situation is a very striking example of that. Since long I knew that along with our carpet manufacture, I had to recommence my study of chemistry, and with this plan in view, I had, even in June, thought of setting up a laboratory. After several explorations, I gave it up, and in the month of October I started looking for a job which would permit me to work in a laboratory while earning a livelihood at the same time. There was not the least bit of hope anywhere, however strange that may seem. In general, the Japanese do not employ many foreign engineers because they have to be paid more than the locals. During the last months of 1921, the business fared rather badly . . . and we wondered how we would get out of this predicament. I then planned to take up any job at all to earn a living and also to do some research in the laboratories of the Imperial University. I did not find anything even there. Finally, after long reflection, I said to myself that it was immoral to live in the financial condition in which we were living and I was firmly resolved to return to France if I did not find something by the first of January. In spite of that, I continued doing what I had to do. On the 26th of December I found a job, **the job which was destined for me**. This is a confirmation that I must stay here for the time being.

I am chemical engineer in the biggest Japanese pharmaceutical company. I work in the Research Laboratory, enjoying complete freedom. I can actually do what I want to, and, from the practical point of view, I am working on the chemistry of perfumes. It is very interesting. Perhaps you will tell me that it was not worth the trouble to go to Japan for that. However, there were many reasons and I myself feel, very strongly, that I am where I ought to be at this moment. In addition to the opportunity of working and doing research in the field which is most to my liking, there is in it a great lesson for me in social work. The director is a very intelligent

man, but what is more, and this is more unusual (for someone who has made a great fortune and who pays 20% a year to his shareholders), much advanced spiritually. He thinks of and works to solve social issues, seeking solutions based on the existence of the spirit, besides those of life and of matter. Indeed his factories are totally different from what I have known and he works in the right direction. You see how interesting this is. At present my monthly salary is 480 yen (in three months it will be 580) and that lets me live and little by little pay off the debts that I have contracted (which, moreover, I should not have accumulated). I am thinking of repaying towards the end of the year the debts I have in Europe.

It is the same with the carpets. After having worked and struggled with such energy to make and sell our product, and having arrived in October at pitiful and terribly lamentable results, and after we understood, not without due thought, that it was not the time to launch the carpets in Japan, here is somebody who, on his own, has offered to help us and everything is now going to resume on a new basis. He is an artist, professor of architecture at the Imperial University, who is not looking for a business deal, but who found our carpets beautiful and who, after having bought a certain number, just wants to help us, unconditionally. We have as an intimate friend, a Czech of French origin, married to a Frenchwoman, who is an architect with much experience in business. He helps us with his advice which is very valuable to us, children that we are in life's struggle.

I can tell you only a few things whereas our life is so full of so many things. To one who knows how to wait, everything comes at the appropriate time, and it was because we did not know that that we were tested (and probably for other reasons as well). What I am narrating to you will perhaps interest you, although you will most likely draw other conclusions than I have done. You would have to live our life with us in order to understand us.

I now understand what it is that I have to do at present and I am trying to do it. What will happen later I do not know and I do not worry about it.

A new spiritual era is also dawning for me. I take your leave for now. Do write to me a little more often. I am interested in your life and I would like to know a little more about the details of the new arrangements at La Minelle.

I embrace all three of you with all my heart and to that I join the best thoughts of my companions.

Signed: Philippe

P.S. Next time I shall send you some photos.

Write to me care of the French Embassy in Tokyo, because I do not know how long I shall stay in this house.

* * *

Tokyo, March 19, 1922

My dear Father,

I was very much astonished by your last letter and above all, very hurt. Perhaps you will not believe me. To be very frank, I do not think that I deserve all the reproaches that you directed at me, especially the one about a lack of affection towards you whom I love so much.

I have probably been tactless and inconsistent, and the difficulties that I have gone through have probably led to a seeming brusqueness, but never have my affection and veneration for you weakened. My love for you now is as much as it was before. I cannot add anything else to this categorical affirmation from my side.

I cannot write you a long letter today, but I did not wish to delay sending you my photo. I work a lot, with interest and courage. I have much work to do on my spirit and my mind; but I am beginning to see more clearly and understand why I left. Have confidence, it was meant to be like this. The test was indispensable for me.

I hope to receive your news soon. I hug all three of you most lovingly. If you do not feel it, I am powerless to demonstrate it to you.

Signed: Philippe

Care of the French Embassy at Tokyo

* * *

Tokyo, April 2, 1922

My very dear Parents,

I have not had any letters for a long time, or rather, I have not had any affectionate letter. For I have received a word from Papa, but so cold and so dry. You bear me a grudge, for what and why?

But let us not talk of that. I have a little time today and I come to chat with you. Today it is the Cherry Festival in Japan and everybody is going to see the trees in full bloom. It is a magnificent spectacle. But I shall go only next week, wishing to profit from this Sunday to stay at home and write some letters.

We have changed our lodging several times and now we are on the outskirts of Tokyo in a little house, very Japanese, not very far from our chosen friends, of whom I have already spoken to you, Monsieur and Madame Raymond. He is Czech, a skilled

and promising architect,² a spiritualist and an idealist, but at the same time a hard-working man and an achiever, having worked in America from which he has taken the good elements, the force on the physical level. His wife is French, brought up in America, intelligent and generous, with a deep knowledge of Theosophy. We meet them very often. They have been very good to us when we were passing through difficult times. In the photos that I am sending to you, Madame Raymond is there but not her husband. These photos were taken in November. The Japanese officer is Zina's student of French; as to the Japanese lady in the white apron, she is our present maid.

Besides the Raymonds, who are true friends, we have a whole crowd of very kind acquaintances, both in the Japanese and the European circles, but mostly Japanese. My friends are closely connected to the Polish Embassy whose envoy is, moreover, absolutely charming. On my side, I am in touch with the French Embassy. The ambassador, Paul Claudel is very kind to me. He is a man of great merit with whom I love to discuss philosophical and religious problems, even though we often differ in our opinions. He is a staunch Catholic, an idealist and mystic; and you know my ideas which have not undergone any change. It is also strange that I should be friendly with Father Heck who is the director of a school for Catholic missionaries. But he is very broadminded and liberal, with a good understanding of Japan where he has lived for thirty years. Naturally, being a priest and a missionary, he is obliged to think in a certain manner, but he is a man who is searching, who is good and loving, which is much.

Also, I must introduce you to Monsieur Soga. He is a former Polytechnician, strange isn't it, who is very much involved in politics. His father is member of the House of Peers and as he will retire next year due to his age, his son will succeed him and moreover enter political life. He is a most delightful person, has remained very French and a friend of France. He is very fond of me and I see him often.

There are many others still of whom I could tell you, from very simple people among whom we lived in Atami or who are around us here, to the influential members of the Japanese nobility who are very close to the Court, but that would require a volume.

2. In 1937-1938, during his stay in Pondicherry, Monsieur Raymond, at the request of Mira Alfassa, constructed a building, 'Golconde', for the guests of the Ashram, and completed a town planning study concerning the first project of Auroville.

[The Mother spoke of Raymond during a conversation with a disciple on 11 June 1969:

Mother: "Have you seen the Raymonds' letter? . . . They have written a very nice letter. In that letter they have written something that I did not know, that Pavitra never told me; they have said that when Pavitra put them in touch with this place, it changed their life completely, the purpose of their life and everything.

Raymond is a great architect. When the Raymonds came here [in 1937-38] and built 'Golconde', I asked Raymond for the plan of the first Auroville that I had conceived of (it was when Sri Aurobindo was living), and it was wonderful. . . .

But it was an Auroville with, at the centre, Sri Aurobindo's house (gesture to indicate above a hill). Sri Aurobindo was living, so we had put him in the centre." — Translators note.]

Our life is very simple, always the same, made up of work, but already, since quite a few months, it is more harmonious on the physical plane, and now, more recently, more harmonious also on the higher planes. I have lived through some hard mental and moral battles, but I think that I have won them and a period of respite always follows a victory. No doubt, other struggles are in the offing, but now I understand much better the meaning of my departure, the reason for all this and the development of my character as preparation for the responsibilities of the future.

Here are some passages from the beautiful letters of Madame Potel who is so helpful to me, so sweet and so strong at the same time, who understands me and who comforts me from far, who helps me also and has helped me to pick myself up. I have a great affection for her and I am very grateful to her. These passages will tell you the essential better than I can:

“. . . Moreover, the path of illusions must be crossed before one reaches the clearing. One arrives at the dawn of true knowledge only after having known the most sombre night. Do not be afraid of your falls; they were serious, but they were so necessary for you! You must build up **your will** completely and that cannot be done without ordeals . . . Regain your courage. Accept the responsibility that your ego has assumed and which has crushed your personality. Go on, at the end is the triumph.

“Philippe, my child, my friend, all my affection and all the love of my sweet Master go to you who are also his child. He is waiting for you in the light, in the joy of sacrifice and in the triumph of the deep faith . . .

“Be strong, be courageous, be joyous and free. You have suffered the attack of evil with its whole train of degradations, it was necessary for you. Liberate yourself! The liberation is already strong . . .”

These fragments will show you very well where I am, what I have suffered and the energy that I have received from this beautiful soul; I will be so happy if you could draw closer to her!

I shall not speak to you of either Étienne or of Zina because I am afraid of displeasing you. Yet they form part of my life and if you love me, you should love them also. I often speak to them of you and they know you better than you know them. In this context, I must, to re-establish the truth, attach a personal letter from Madame Jacquet, wife of the Doctor, to Madame Lubienska.³ It will show Papa the true nature of the relationship between the Jacquets and my friends. The passage from one of Papa's letters on this subject contains a grave error; it is for him to know from where it comes. As the judgment we arrive at is necessarily based on the information we have gathered, I am happy to give you an authentic one.

I have got in touch with Lubienski's parents, who are very good people, suffering much from the knowledge that they are so far away from Poland and pleading with

3. In this letter, Madame Jacquet wrote to Zina conveying her esteem and her friendship.

them to return. His mother says that in her thoughts and her prayers she always joins my name to those of her son and daughter-in-law. I have received a beautiful letter from her.

Why do you alone keep yourselves so remote from us? I love you with all my heart, exactly as before. The distance has not changed anything in me and I suffer from not receiving your affection. And for what? What is it in me that you blame? What in my friends? You admit that *vis-à-vis* my conscience, I could not have acted otherwise. Then?

Whatever that may be, and whatever may be your feelings towards me, my affectionate thoughts always go towards you, especially in my meditations. For I know that we have been separated only on the physical plane, if you did not create the otherwise painful moral and mental separation. I have the feeling of having lost my parents, not because they are far from me, but because they have blocked up the springs of love and cheerful and pure confidence of which their hearts are full. They are holding back the impulse of affection that they have for their son. Well I, with all my strength, and with all my energy, full of love and respectful affection for you, full of tenderness for Albert, I protest against this attitude! I assure you of my unwavering affection, I affirm to you the purity of our intentions, the nobility of our ideal, and I implore you to give me back the affection and the confidence that you have withdrawn from me. I have not proved myself unworthy and I have not done anything for which my conscience rebukes me. Why treat me as though I had betrayed the honour of my parents, as though I had put my family to shame? Listen to your heart, listen to your soul, and listen to my affection and the silent prayer of my friends to open your arms to us!

I await your decision to which I shall submit and I embrace you respectfully and lovingly.

Signed: Philippe

Care of the French Embassy in Japan

* * *

*Draft of a letter from Paul to Philippe,
in reply to his letters of February 11, April 2 and June 2*

My dear Philippe,

Last year I had made a great effort and even though it was extremely painful to me, to tell you what I thought of you. I believed it to be my duty as a father to tell you that you were in the wrong and to reveal to you all my thoughts, at least from the intellectual and rational point of view. Such a letter deserved a reply, if only to clarify

the questions it raised. You never replied to it except for a point of detail concerning Madame Jacquet. You had clearly said to me that you would reply to my letter, but nothing has reached me. You have continued to surround yourself with a mystery and you have not thought it proper to give me an explanation of your conduct. Is it because you are afraid that I shall judge the motives which have shaped it as extremely childish that you dare not reveal them? Is it that the person who has taken hold of your mind forbids you to do it, in order to better maintain her authority? Whatever it may be, I notice it, and so long as you remain inaccessible to me, I must perforce distance myself from you. I had fully expounded to you my ideas in a letter which has remained unanswered. I have nothing more to tell you. But here you are, writing to me to ask me for your share of affection, saying that you are not unworthy of it. I must then tell you my thoughts on this subject, because it does not seem to have occurred to you that it may be even more painful for me to speak of affection than to speak of reason.

You have sent me your declarations of affection. These are nothing but words and not deeds. The fact is there. You left us to go and live with strangers and you expressed your thought in a terrible sentence: "Parents who have given us the physical body do not count when compared to intellectual affinities." Very well. You are 27 years old and you are free. But it is natural that the affection of parents to whom one propounds such a theory, receives a rude blow from it. Nevertheless your mother continues to write regularly and affectionately to you; while you have never, in any of your letters, inquired about her health; and you have found nothing better to thank her than to tell her that she writes very tactless letters because she does not shower with flowers the person who has separated you from your family.

For me, your departure has been a deep sorrow and a cruel deception. Nevertheless, I have taken into consideration this straying, and I thought it to be temporary and I have waited patiently, thinking that you would soon recognise, from the course of events, the absurdity of your projects. The truth of the matter seems to me to have been such but it appears that you have not understood it, and there you are now, giving to a Japanese factory the knowledge that you owe to your country. And all that to help maintain the household and the carpet business of the Lubienskis.

All this does not seem to me to be very good work, and, to draw up a balance sheet of your enterprise, one finds on the debit side too many things, too great a loss . . .

* * *

Tokyo, June 18, 1922

My dear Albert,⁴

It is to you that I am writing today, because being without any news from home for many months, I have to request you at least to explain to me this incomprehensible

4. Letter handed over by Albert to his father who had kept it carefully in his dossier of correspondence.

silence. You must have received several anxious letters from me on this subject; I had even sent by registered post the last one which contained some photos. I must thank you for the books that you so kindly sent me and which I received some time back. Why did you not add a few words?

When I last saw Silvain Dreyfus, he told me: "I hope that, whatever may happen, you never stop writing to your parents." Indeed, I did not think that it would be they who would stop writing to me. Be that as it may, meanwhile I am awaiting confidently the reply that Papa will certainly write to my last letter.

Regarding myself: no great change since you heard from me. I work a lot because I want to free myself from all the debts that I have incurred here. We have already repaid most of them and next month those of Japan will be completely settled. The debts came to around 1,000 yen. After that we shall start on those of Europe. In this context, I think that Papa had to pay a debt of 300 yen⁵ that I had incurred in Japan. I am sorry for it, but it was done without my knowledge and I shall reimburse that too.

I have a distinct impression that the debts that we have incurred have hampered our spiritual work and we must free ourselves from them before going further. Meanwhile a change may take place in our life which has changed little in six months.

I do not have as much confidence in the predictions of the future, because from experience I have noticed how much the future depends on the present. Only the broad lines are drawn, the possibilities; but their execution, the speed, the ease, depends on us. What I know for certain is what I have to do at the present moment, and I try to do that. Until we attain a certain degree of development, we are basically like someone walking through a light fog. We see only that portion of the path which is before our feet, although we know where we are going.

I am still doing chemistry and am now fully conversant with the laboratory work.

There are several Polytechnicians in Japan and I meet them often. You must come here some time, you will find it interesting. But you must leave France with a definite appointment, like this friend who arrived a few days ago to build aircraft for the government. How are you getting along with your studies? You must have finished by now.⁶ What are you planning to do? So many questions I ask myself so often but you do not answer them. In the meantime I have received letters from Monsieur Blech and Madame Potel, which shows that the postal service is functioning properly.

I am sending you quite a collection of photos which will put you a little more in touch with us:

– four photos of carpets; it is not I who am attending to them now, it is Lubienski; we are now [working] at our 38th piece, three workers are sufficient at the moment, but it is going well;

– one photo of the foreigners who work at Hoshi's;

5. To J. F. Wagner.

6. Albert was enlisted in 1917. He had passed his 'baccalauréat' then the entrance examination for L'École Centrale de Paris while he was engaged in Germany; he obtained his engineering diploma in 1923.

– two photos dated Christmas 1921, the Christmas tree at Monsieur and Madame Raymond's;

– one rather romantic photo taken during a springtime excursion in the mountains.

I had asked for a photo of Papa, but in vain; I would like photos of all three of you from time to time.

Talked enough of myself now. However, I can hardly talk about you because I know nothing since such a long time. What is Papa doing these days? What are his thoughts, his intellectual pursuits? I am much concerned about that, I assure you. Why does he not come here with Maman on a voyage? The voyage is pleasant and he loves to travel so much! It costs a lot, it is true! . . . But all the same, perhaps, it will happen one day. I hope so. And Maman's health? La Minelle? Etc. Etc. If you find a little time, write to me, always at the French Embassy, because we are subject to sudden changes of address.

I embrace you with all my heart, dear Albert.

Signed: Philippe

* * *

Tokyo, December 10, 1922

My very dear Parents,

A few days ago I received Albert's letter telling me about his imminent departure. By now he must very nearly be reaching his destination. It is then an accomplished fact and you are alone in France while your two sons have gone to the East. These departures are for me a big problem.

After my sudden departure — thus causing you, unwittingly, much sadness but which I know and I feel deeply because you have not understood the reason for it — now so soon after that, Albert decides to come to the Far East driven by I know not what. For me, everything that happens in the phenomenal world is a reflection of more general causes. But what the true cause of these two departures is, I really do not know. And yet it must exist.

My ideas on what is called *karma* have much evolved since my departure; they have widened, and the functioning of this general law no longer appears in the simplistic form which I had adopted at the beginning. If it then pleases me to call the cause of our separations *karma*, it does not elucidate the matter. In fact, it only means that it is a consequence of prior actions and thoughts, which is evident. Nevertheless, the only definite trait that *karma* retains for me is, in some way, its educative aspect. In all that happens to us, we have a lesson to learn; I would even say the actual lesson that we need to learn. And it is because we have ignored or violated the law in the past that, again today, we find ourselves before a lesson.

So, whatever be the past causes of our separation, causes which matter little in the main, I feel that what is important is to understand the lesson. And I think that in this conclusion, I must agree with you. But it is also the most difficult, because it is we ourselves who have to learn and nobody can really explain it to us!

As for me, I must admit that I do not yet understand all that quite well, although you may think that it is one of my most frequent subjects of meditation. There are moments when I believe that I have understood, then at others I perceive that I know nothing. I have certainly been able to widen my horizons on this subject (without mentioning all the experiences I have passed through) but that is still not sufficient for me and I do not yet consider that I have learnt the lesson.

Philosophically, one could add that if I understood this little event perfectly, I would understand the whole universe and all its laws. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that I do not understand it.

In spite of it all, there is one thing of which I am sure, it is that I did right by leaving. Without prejudging the right or the wrong of the reasons which led to my departure, **given what I was**, I had to leave. If I had stayed, the reasons which would have made me stay would have been bad for me.

I do not know if I make myself clear; it is difficult. I will try differently in another way:

Absolute truth is unattainable by man, and cannot be formulated by the mind. But for each one of us there is a **momentary** and **personal** truth which is the best approximation of the eternal truth that we can seize at that moment. Later, it may turn out to be, and it will surely do so, that this is no longer a truth, but **in spite of that**, it was this truth which, for that moment, was the truth for us. And as we did not have any — absolutely none — means of going beyond, to neglect it would have been to condemn ourselves to rest and inertia.

Papa ought to understand me, because it is a problem to which he has given much thought. As for me, I see it very clearly now, I have no more any hesitation on this subject. What is important is not the greater or lesser validity of this truth, but:

1. the way we seek this truth, if we succeed in shaking off our too personal points of view, of superstitions etc., in one word, if we can adopt a scientific method (in its good sense) for this research;
2. the force with which we seek our truth.

This is what counts, in my opinion, because this is what is liberated in the soul: the faculties of knowledge (1) and of action (2) which are dormant there and which make “a man” before making him, much later, “more than a man”.

It is with these ideas, which are actually mine, that I judge my departure and everything that surrounded it. I am therefore much less rigid. I must tell you this because I wish to be able to write to you at greater length and read your letters more often and it is necessary that you understand me always. Now that Albert is no longer beside you to give me your news from time to time (Ah, not often enough!), do you

not wish to write to me yourselves? As for me, I shall continue to write to you whatever happens, because I do not think that since we are separated physically we should be so spiritually.

I am busy as usual with the same laboratory work which deeply interests me. I have much freedom in what concerns my work, but I am constrained to be present a certain number of hours. I am doing pure chemistry, research in organic chemistry; at present I am working on the synthesis of ionone, a substance used because of its violet-like fragrance.

Outside of my work or profession, my philosophic pursuits have not changed. I have studied the Chinese philosophers a little (in translation, not in the original) and this study has confirmed many of my ideas, broadening them at the same time. Moreover, I was surprised by all that I understood of these philosophers, who are regarded by many as abstruse and incomprehensible, since it is a fact that we find in the writings of a sage only what we already have in ourselves. What more the sage has is that which remains obscure to us.

I have attended a series of lectures at the Imperial University of Tokyo given by Einstein during his stay here. Needless to say how interested I was, although they were in German. I have spent a lot of time, and still do, in the philosophical and mathematical study of his theory.

The French Ambassador to Japan, Paul Claudel, is one of the rare Europeans here who are truly superior, and I hold him in great esteem. I talk to him often. You know Monsieur and Madame Raymond of whom I have spoken to you and whose photos you have seen. If we add two or three other people, — there you have all the Europeans with whom we keep in touch. Among the Japanese we know many, but the question of language is a serious obstacle to the exchange of ideas. I shall speak to you later about my opinion of Japan, if it interests you.

I have spoken to you about myself and not about you because I am in a vacuum regarding you. Albert wrote to me that the cheesemaking at La Minelle had been turned into a co-operative, without giving me further details. What are you doing nowadays? Above all, what are you thinking? These are for me so many unknowns. Maman's health? Albert has told me a little about it but not enough for me to follow him.

There will be lots of things to tell you. I do not even know which letters of mine you have received. So I am going to make it a habit to mention in each letter the date of some of the preceding letters so that you could know which ones you have received. The last two cards or letters were dated the 5th and the 19th of November and addressed to Albert.

This letter will reach you long after the New Year, but as I am sending it before that date, I am loading it with everything that is in my heart for you. I love you, dear Papa and Maman, with a sincere filial love to which I add respect, equally sincere. Words do not mean much in this field, I know, and that is why you do not feel me

close to you in your heart.

My wishes for you? Will you take them seriously? Nevertheless, I shall make one wish above all the others: it is that you regain confidence and hope, confidence in your son and in life, hope in the fulfilment of life. It is the most profound wish that I make before my own conscience, while, very appropriately, I hear in the distance the calm gong from some Buddhist temple.

I embrace you with all my heart.

Signed: Philippe

P.S. I have sent some postcards to all the members of the family for the New Year. If I have not written to you sooner, it is because I needed a quiet moment to write to you at length.

Here is the address at which you can write to me:
Aoyama Rokuhome Kitarmachi 48, in Tokyo.

* * *

Tokyo, January 1, 1923

My very dear Parents,

I have thought much of you during these days of so-called festivity and probably you too have thought of the two of us. Our loving thoughts are therefore joined in spite of the sorrow which is mingled with them — a little from all sides. I sent you a letter sometime back so as to reach you around the New Year, but today I feel the need to put down on this paper something of the sentiments that I have for you.

Of course, I am still without any direct news from you, but what is the use of recalling that, you know it better than me!

Just yesterday I received Albert's letter from Saigon dated December 8; he has arrived safely and he has obtained an assignment in Tonkin as he wished, but I do not know exactly where. For his sake, I would prefer that he went into the interior for some time, for I am a little apprehensive of the colonial civil servants' life at Hanoi or Saigon. Moreover, it is not something peculiar to the government officials, because the life of the majority of the residents of Japan, especially in Yokohama, is really not in the least interesting. One must also have a certain strength to immigrate to the countries of vastly different races without doing harm to oneself. I have observed it very carefully and I have quite a few examples which have proved it to me.

Often, people who are much in the habit of counting on the outside, or living on the surface, first suffer cruelly from isolation. Being unable to adapt themselves or see the good side of the natives, they separate themselves completely from them. The little foibles or defects of the latter exasperate them more and more. Then, if they are

alone or just a few in number, they become melancholic, bizarre. If they form a group, they try to “amuse” themselves and fall to gambling (gambling of all kinds) or drinking. It needs either a great strength of character or a fixed idea, such as a scientific study, of botany, zoology, ethnography or something else, so as not to suffer or, what is worse, to go under.

That is why I say that I shall much prefer that Albert goes to the bush, as he calls it, for a while. When later he will come back to Hanoi, he will have already experienced the painful sides, he will have been in touch with the natives and he will know above all the value of the complaints of the colonists. I hope that sometime or the other it will be possible for Albert to come here. We await him with open arms. There is place for him in our house.

At present I cannot think of the possibility of a pleasure trip to Indochina. All the debts in Japan are settled, but those of France, starting with that of Lang, still remain. Not having any news from him, I shall send his money to Papa.

Recently I have received the copies of *Lotus Bleu*⁷ that Papa has so kindly sent me. I thank him but I am very sorry that there was no word from him with them. It made me very happy to see the address in his handwriting on the parcel; I do not know if you can understand me.

I do not know why Monsieur Blech has publicised what I had written to him. It is terribly incomplete! I spoke to him about Japan because I know that there are certain questions which interest him. But it is difficult to write of the same to you, because there is something between us which you do not wish to help me to remove.

I am sending you a small photo taken in December. I am in good health, a little tired, but I have now been resting for some ten days. What shall I tell you? Of what and of whom should I speak? And yet I could talk to you about all sorts of things.

This first day of the year, I am sending you a token of my filial love for you two and I embrace you affectionately and respectfully.

Signed: Philippe

P.S. My last letters are:

November 5, addressed to Albert in Paris;
 November 19, addressed to Albert in Paris;
 November 23, addressed to Albert in Indochina;
 December 10, addressed to you.

* * *

7. A monthly review devoted to esoterism.

Tokyo, March 4, 1923

My very dear Parents,

A few days ago I received the photographs of the three of you. It is difficult to tell you of my happiness and the deep emotion that I felt on seeing you. It is a very lovely New Year gift and I am infinitely grateful to you for sending it to me.

Of the three of you, the one who has changed the most is Albert: a handsome boy and now a complete man. One curious thing is that this photograph gives him an almost Japanese look. Maman has become a little plump, it seems to me, and she is very pretty with her white hair, of which I knew only one streak. As for Papa, he has not changed one bit and nobody would say that he has a bearded man like me for son. I learnt from Aunt Marguerite that you had a get-together at her house on the first of January and that my card had arrived to let you know that I was with you in thought if not in physical body.

From time to time I get news of Albert who has now received his posting and at the end of March he will leave for the bush. I believe that the region where he will work is healthy and pleasant to live in. That is essential in the colony of Indochina.

On my side, no important event to report. Winter is over and I passed it in good health even though it was cold and humid. I am working in the same company, but I have abandoned pure chemistry to devote myself to perfumery and toiletries. I must say that contrary to what I thought, this is also interesting and also less demanding.

In the moral world, as always, struggle and work, passionate search for the light and the truth, liberation from certain shackles, battle against others, progressive formation of character. I must say that the calm is not my lot yet, but I do not complain, the calm and the storm are both necessary. My companions are also doing well, working and struggling, although in their own way, and they send you their regards.

I thank you again, from the bottom of my heart, for the souvenir that you have sent me and I embrace you tenderly and respectfully.

Signed: Philippe

P.S. I am sending you a rather bad photo, but it is recent.

Last post card: February 3.

(To be continued)

PHILIPPE BARBIER SAINT HILAIRE

(Translated by Aniruddha Sircar from the original French *Itinéraire d'un enfant du siècle* by Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire, published by Buchet/Chastel, Paris, 2001. Our thanks for their kind permission.)

AN OLD LETTER TO AMBU

[*Amal (Amal Kiran, K. D. Sethna) joined the Ashram on 16 December 1927. In 1934 he left for the first time: his grandfather had sent him one more of his numerous invitations to go and see him and the rest of the family in Bombay, citing his old age as an urgent reason to respond to his call. The case was put before the Mother, who gave her consent.*

Before leaving for Bombay on the night train, Amal met the Mother for a last interview:]

In the interview before my departure I asked the Mother how my life should run in Bombay. She said that I did not need to put special restraints on the ordinary course of things but eat, drink and live normally as a person in Bombay would do. At the end of my talk I said: "Please give me one promise. Never let go your hold on me. Even if something in me wants to leave you, never accept it." She answered: "I am like a fairy godmother. Whatever one wishes to have, I can grant. If you wish to separate from me, that too I can grant. But if you want me never to let go my hold on you, I will keep you in my hands forever."

Before parting I put one arm around her shoulders and drew her near to me. She led me to a big photograph of Sri Aurobindo and asked me to kneel before it.

[*Our Light and Delight*, 1980, p. 89]

[*One letter written to Ambu during this visit has been preserved: "energetic, outspoken, humbug-proof, loyal-natured" Ambu was a close friend of Amal's from the early days in the Ashram, along with "scrupulous" Premanand, the librarian. During his subsequent visits to Bombay in 1936 and 1938, Amal sent quite a few letters jointly addressed to his "true pals" Ambu and Premanand.*]

To Ambu, Sri Aurobindo Asram, Pondicherry

47, Warden Road

[*Undated*¹]

My dear Ambu,

I got your letter together with the ingenious arrangement you had made of the rose-petals. When you are capable of such a brain-wave it is no wonder

[1. *The postal stamp of the Pondicherry P.O. reads '28 March 1934' at the back of the envelope.*]

clever people get so easily chummy with you. This remark refers to the surprise you once expressed that you who had no “education” could count poets and philosophers among your friends.

You must have learned by now that after the first week Bombay knocked me clean over with a complication of Influenza, rash on body and a painful throat. I had high fever for two days and to-day for the first time the temperature was normal.* It has again risen a little just now, but that is not important. Fortunately, almost throughout the fever my cheerfulness and confidence remained unshaken. In the whole household I was the most unmoved, unafraid and happy. All this was due to my Mother’s Grace: I kept her rose-petals always near me and, since Wednesday, her reply to my letter also. Both she and Sri Aurobindo replied and their letter reached me almost at the same time my express-telegram must have reached them. Their words made me so happy! Haradhan has written me a postcard saying that he has carefully kept all my furniture in the stores — even the empty butter tins! Please ask him to give the tins to Rambhai’s department. Thank him for his postcard.

How are you, little one? I hope everything is glorious — it must be glorious, for if Mother can make me feel her love and beauty even when I am in idiotic Bombay, how much intenser a paradise Pondy must be! This sentence sounds as if I had never been in Pondy; but what I mean is that my stay in Bombay gives me somehow a new vision and insight about Pondy which I am anxious to realise.

Give my regards to Premanand, Harin, Seeta, Venkataraman, Dilip, Sarat. Also to Romen. And how is Tejdar?

your **B I G** brother Amal.

* Please let Mother know of this. Also inform Lalita.

Harin must be getting on splendidly with his poetry. I wish I could see even a little of it!

I hope you have given those typewritten sheets to Nolini. A.

*

[After returning to the Ashram, Amal “felt an extreme push towards the Mother”; he wrote to her, later on:]

Pardon my writing to you, Mother, without any specific reason; but I felt like telling you that you are my darling. In spite of my thousand and three imperfections, this one sense remains in me — that you are my mother, that I am born

from your heart. It is the only truth I seem to have realised in all these six years. A very unfortunate thing, perhaps, that I have realised no other truth; but I thank you very much that I have been enabled to feel this much at least.

17/9/34.

[*Sri Aurobindo's reply written in pencil:*]

It is an excellent foundation for the other Truths that are to come — for they all result from it.

[*The Mother added below Sri Aurobindo's reply, also in pencil:*]

My blessings are always with you. The Mother.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

Friendship with the Divine is a recognised relation in the sadhana. Friendships between the sadhaks exist and are encouraged by the Mother. Only, we seek to found them on a surer basis than that on which the bulk of human friendships are insecurely founded. It is precisely because we hold friendship, brotherhood, love to be sacred things that we want this change — because we do not want to see them broken at every moment by the movements of the ego, soiled and spoiled and destroyed by the passions, jealousies, treacheries to which the vital is prone — it is to make them truly sacred and secure that we want them rooted in the soul, founded on the rock of the Divine. . . . Friendship and love are indispensable notes in the harmony to which we aspire. It is not a vain dream, for we have seen that even in imperfect conditions, when a little of the indispensable element is there at the very root, the thing is possible. It is difficult and the old obstacles still cling obstinately? But no victory can be won without a fixed fidelity to the aim and a long effort. There is no other way than to persevere.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 23, pp. 818-19*)

THE TRIPLE MELTDOWN

THE “Meltdown” which is shaking the world is not merely financial. It is in fact a triple meltdown in the economic, ecological and cultural spheres, which are closely interconnected. This article examines this triune crisis facing humanity in a holistic perspective.

The Casino Economy

The media attention is focused on the collapse of the financial heavyweights like Lehman Brothers and its immediate cause: Subprime Lending, which means in simple terms giving credit to uncreditworthy borrowers. An article in the journal of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India describes the nature of subprime lending as “the practice by making loans to borrowers who do not qualify for the best market interest rate because of their deficient credit history” and elaborates its following consequences:

The lender banks were aware of the fact that the borrower profile is poor and hedged this risk by charging higher rates of interest, but not fully — people became owners of houses without having adequate income level to repay the loans. And when they started defaulting on their instalments in view of increased interest rates and fall in realty prices, a crisis gripped lending banks in US, which has shaken financial markets across the globe.¹

The collapse of the US investment giant Lehman Brothers and other subsequent events like the gobbling of Merrill Lynch by Bank of America are some of the consequences of the subprime lending crisis. However this present financial crisis is not something new. The world economy has faced many such crises before and experts are almost unanimous that there will be many more to come, which means, the world economy seems to be in a state of critical instability. Bernard Lietaer, an expert in international finance, in his book *The Future of Money*, published in 2001 and written much before the onset of the subprime crisis in US, states with a tinge of prophecy:

The potential breakdown of a large-scale monetary crisis exists. The Mexican Crash of 1994-95, the Asian Crisis of 1997, and the Russian one in 1998 are certainly not going to be the last monetary crises of our times. However, the ‘Big Monetary Crash’ would occur when the US dollar comes under attack. It is not a question of whether but only a question of when.²

Another economic analyst, Viad Grinkevich writing on the American meltdown, states:

Experts are sure the series of bankruptcies will not stop. They also foresee the closing of hundreds and thousands of financial companies.³

There seems to be a deeper systemic fault in the present financial and economic order. To discover these fault-lines we have to move beyond the subprime crisis to the crisis in the economic system as a whole.

The first major problem is the predominantly speculative nature of the financial system in capitalism. Speculative transactions in stock and currency and clever financial engineering, which do not lead to any improvement in tangible wealth or productivity, have overwhelmed the real economy made of production, distribution and trading in products and services which lead to tangible wealth and productivity. In other words, as Viad Grinkevich states, it has become “a system where profit does not depend on real production but is a result of sophisticated financial transaction”.⁴ Bernard Lietaer, writing on the foreign exchange and the currency trading market states:

What happened is that speculative trading (i.e. trading whose whole sole purpose is to make profit from the changes in the value of currencies) has all but taken over the foreign exchange markets. In contrast the real economy (i.e. transactions relating to the purchase and sale of real goods and services abroad, including portfolio investments) has been relegated to a side-show of the global casino of the speculative monetary exchange game. . . . At this point, 98% of all foreign exchange transactions are speculative and only 2% relate to the real economy. Speculation can play a positive role in any market: theory and practice show that it can improve market efficiency by increasing liquidity and depth in the market. But current speculative levels are clearly out of balance.⁵

John Maynard Keynes, one of the founding fathers of modern economics, said:

. . . speculators may do no harm as bubbles on a steady stream of enterprise. But the position is serious when enterprise becomes the bubble on a whirlpool of speculation. When the capital development of a country becomes the by-product of a casino, the job is likely to be ill done.⁶

This is exactly what is happening to our modern economy. The casino culture has usurped honest economic enterprise which creates real wealth for the society. Next to currency trading, the other form of casino culture is the trading in stocks, the Wall Street culture of making money without ethics and effort and creating anything useful for the society. John M. Huntsman, chairman and founder of Huntsman Corpora-

tion, the world's largest privately owned chemical company, writing on the Wall Street culture, states:

There are many professions in which one can find examples of hollow values but nowhere is it more evident than on Wall Street where the ruling ethos seems to be the more you deceive the other guy, the more money you make. . . Wall Street has but one objective and one value. How much money can be made?⁷

This brings us to the true purpose of wealth or money. The main problem with the modern economy is that money, instead of enriching the material and economic life of humanity, is being used for making more money through speculative transactions. This is a complete travesty of the true purpose of economics. As the Mother points out:

. . . money is not meant to make money. This idea that money must make money is a falsehood and a perversion.

Money is meant to increase the wealth, the prosperity and the productiveness of a group, a country or, better, of the whole earth.⁸

So the first step in resolving the crisis is to get back to the real economy and create an economic order which rewards production of real wealth through enterprise, hard work and innovation. As Juan Somavia, Director-General of International Labour Organisation of UN points out:

We have to come back to the basic legitimate function of finance which is to promote the real economy — to lend so that entrepreneurs can invest, innovate, produce jobs and products [and create] public policies and smart regulation that rewards hard work and enterprise once again.⁹

Free-market Fundamentalism

We are now brought to the other major source of instability: the dogmatic and religious faith in the unregulated free market. The hard-core capitalistic thinking which puts a too heavy emphasis on “deregulation” and freedom from all control by the government or any other agency is one of the main causes of the present crisis. In 1971, American President Jimmy Carter delinked the dollar from the gold standard. In the 1980's Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in US simultaneously initiated a massive financial deregulation programme. For example, as Dr. Subramaniam Swamy, a Harvard-educated Indian economist and politician, states:

US banks do not have Statutory Liquidity Ratios (SLR) or Cash Reserve Ratios (CSR) fixed for them. Therefore for every deposit of \$1 US banks lend \$8 by opening paper accounts and effecting transfers.¹⁰

The volume and intensity of financial transactions have increased tremendously with the advent of IT and e-commerce and this cyber economy remains mostly unregulated. But when a human system remains unregulated by appropriate values and standards derived from the enduring and universal laws of the human and natural world, it degenerates into chaos. So the second step in restoring balance to the economic system is to create an enlightened system of regulation which promotes production of real wealth, products, services and jobs, ensures the equitable distribution of wealth and preserves the natural environment.

Interestingly, many hard-core capitalistic thinkers who triumphantly proclaimed a free-market Utopia after the collapse of communism in Russia and the Berlin Wall are now turning grudgingly to government control, Chinese capitalism and Karl Marx! For example a report in a leading Indian daily from London states:

Some British cheerleaders for free-market such as the *Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* have become suddenly interested in Marx. There has been a wave of soul-searching analyses whether he was right, after all.¹¹

If this soul-searching leads to a new synthesis of the essential principles of communism and capitalism, it is helpful to human progress.

The key to this higher synthesis lies in two eastern perspectives. The first is a supra-logical intuition, in the conceptive as well as pragmatic faculties, which can reconcile opposites at a higher level. Interestingly the need for such an intuition is now recognised in modern management thinking. Roger Martin, a Gallup consultant calls this intuition as “integrative thinking” which means “to hold two opposing ideas in the mind at once, and then reach a synthesis that contains elements of both, but improves on each.”¹² The other eastern idea is the concept of dharma, which means the law that “holds together” all creation. The new synthesis has to be based on universal values, ideals and principles which are derived from an intuitive and integrated understanding of the laws of human and universal Nature in all the levels of our being — physical, psychological and spiritual. We must keep in mind, the “free-market” is nothing but a chaos of strife, conflict and struggle driven by competitive greed and self-interest of the physical and vital ego in man; it has no mind, no heart and no soul. The market of the capitalist is the collective expression of the motives and impulses of our lower nature; left to itself, it will only end in violence and disintegration. If we want balance and order in our economic life, the free market has to be regulated by the rational, ethical, aesthetic and intuitive intelligence of our higher nature. This government of our lower nature by our higher self is the essence of the Indian gospel of Dharma.

The Ecological Crunch

But the financial crisis cannot be solved without resolving the ecological crisis. The relation between the financial and ecological crisis can be described in this way: unfettered and unregulated credit — leading to unbridled consumption or economic growth driven more by greed than by real needs — which in turn leads to rapid exhaustion of natural resources at a rate greater than can be replenished — which means unsustainable growth. The financial and the ecological crises are the result of a more or less similar cause: spending or lending more than what is sustainable in the long run. The World Wildlife Fund, WWF, in a recent report, making a comparison between the financial and ecological crises makes the following observations:

- Reckless borrowing against the earth's exhausted bounty is driving the planet towards an ecological 'credit crunch'.
- Growth demands on our natural capital like forests, water, soil, air already outstrip the world's capacity to renew these resources by a third.
- If our demands on the planet continue to increase at the same rate, by mid 2020, we would need the equivalent of two planets to sustain ourselves.
- The cost of bailing out financial institutions during the economic meltdown pales in comparison to the lost value caused every year by ecological damage. The world is losing 2-5 trillion dollars in natural capital every year due to ecological degeneration.¹³

A longterm solution to the problem requires a twofold approach. The first one is a greater emphasis on qualitative growth than on quantitative expansion. The second is a greater emphasis on inner growth in the intellectual, moral, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions than mindless "progress" in the material and economic levels. George Monbiot, a leading environmentalist, suggests that we must adopt a new strategy based on Herman Daly's concept of "Steady-state Economics". According to Daly, nations which are already rich should replace growth which means "more of the same stuff" with development which means "the same amount of better stuff" or in other words qualitative growth.¹⁴ Similarly, another leading environmentalist, Maurice Strong, states:

We desperately need a new body of ideas, a new synthesis. This must centre on the need for a new attitude towards growth and a major transition to a less physical kind of growth relatively less demanding of energy and raw materials . . .

and suggests that this new trajectory of growth has to be

based, to an increasing degree, on the satisfaction of people's intellectual, moral and spiritual needs and aspirations in such fields as culture, music, art, literature and other forms of individual self-development and fulfilment.¹⁵

Interestingly, at the very beginning of the twentieth century, when the ecological environmental movement was yet to be born, Sri Aurobindo said,

. . . in the next great stage of human progress it is not a material but a spiritual, moral and psychological advance that has to be made. . . .¹⁶

This higher and inner progress is no longer merely a matter of moral idealism but has become a logical necessity for our own survival as a race and the fulfilment of our higher potential and destiny. For if we persist in the old ideal of unlimited "progress" in the economic and material realms, we may disappear as a civilisation in an ecological or a nuclear holocaust, or else, even if we somehow survive, we will remain stunted in our higher growth. On the other hand, if we follow the path indicated by the wiser minds of our age, we will not only ensure our survival but also attain our highest potential as human beings.

The Crisis of Values

This brings us to the last part of our discussion, the Cultural Crisis which means a crisis of values. We cannot hope to solve the financial and ecological crisis without resolving the crisis in values. In our earlier discussion we have already briefly outlined some of the value-laden issues, for example, values of capitalism, qualitative growth, and inner development. For the economic, ecological and cultural dimensions are closely interlinked and therefore in a holistic perspective they cannot be taken in isolation. However let us now examine some of the essential problems and issues involved in the choice of right values as related to the field of economics.

The source of all instability is imbalance or lack of balance and harmony. This value of harmony or balance has a particular relevance for economics because the essential process of economics is mutual interchange and striking the right and harmonious balance in all transactions. In achieving this balance the Chinese concept of Yin and Yang may throw some luminous clues. According to Chinese philosophy, Yin and Yang are the twin principles which keep the balance of creation. To the ordinary dualistic mind Yin and Yang may appear as opposites but when viewed intuitively they are inseparable and interdependent complementing principles which by their mutual tension and rhythmic swing sustain creation. Every human activity has its own Yins and Yangs and for sustainable harmony or stability they have to be kept in balance without tending excessively towards either the Yin or the Yang. The

following list gives some of the Yins and Yangs of the modern economic system:

- Saving and spending or consumption
- Lending and security or mortgage
- Growth and stability or sustainability
- Enjoyment and restraint
- Work and leisure
- Production of wealth and its equitable distribution
- Free enterprise and regulation
- Utilisation or consumption of natural resources and their replenishment
- Profit and social responsibility
- Economic globalisation and local cultural diversity
- Efficiency, productivity and expansion of the outer machinery and the inner growth and well-being of the human organism

The main problem with the present capitalistic economic order is that one pole of the Yin-Yang — like consumption, production, growth, enjoyment, free enterprise, efficiency — is pursued more or less exclusively at the expense of the other pole — like distribution, saving, regulation, sustainability and inner growth. The solution lies in finding the right rhythm, balance and harmony between these Yins and Yangs of economics. This requires, as we have briefly mentioned earlier, integrative thinking which can reconcile “opposites” in a higher synthesis. However, to achieve this higher synthesis, we have to keep in mind that these dual poles of economics are not opposites but complementary Yins and Yangs. So to synthesise these dualities we must allow a higher integrating intuition to descend into our silent mind.

The other important part of our quest for a higher culture in economics is to understand its higher purpose in the evolutionary destiny of humanity. The bottom-line of economics is to create wealth through an efficient, productive and ecological utilisation of available resources and ensure its equitable distribution in society. But there is also a higher purpose to economics beyond this bottom-line. As we have indicated earlier, growth in consciousness, will be the aim of future evolution and the higher destiny of humanity. If this aim is accepted then the higher purpose of economics is to facilitate and express this growth in consciousness in the material, economic and social life of humanity.

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It is said, "One cannot make a heap without making a hole", one cannot enrich oneself without impoverishing someone else. Is this true?

This is not correct. If one produces something, instead of an impoverishment it is an enrichment; simply one puts into circulation in the world something else having a value equivalent to that of money. But to say that one cannot make a heap without making a hole is all right for those who speculate, who do business on the Stock Exchange or in finance — there it is true. It is impossible to have a financial success in affairs of pure speculation without its being detrimental to another. But it is limited to this. Otherwise a producer does not make a hole if he heaps up money in exchange for what he produces. Surely there is the question of the value of the production, but if the production is truly an acquisition for the general human wealth, it does not make a hole, it increases this wealth. And in another way, not only in the material field, the same thing holds for art, for literature or science, for any production at all.

The Mother

(Questions and Answers 1950-51, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 4, pp. 375-76)

THE VEDA — A PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION

[*Abstract:*

Today the Vedas are generally regarded either as a manual of rituals or as records of an ancient society. Based on his personal experience, Sri Aurobindo concluded that the Vedas are essentially symbolic in nature and in fact describe the psycho-spiritual journey of the Rishis in their quest for immortality. No doubt these texts are of great relevance for the seeker on the spiritual path but the psychological insights offered by them can serve as practical guidelines, even for the common man in his daily life and in subtle ways create in him an awareness of the larger game of the universe in which he or she is a crucial player.]

1. Introduction

THE Vedas, considered as the most ancient texts in the world, are regarded as the fountainhead of Bharatiya culture. “One might almost say that ancient India was created by the Veda and Upanishads and that the visions of inspired seers made a people.”¹ In fact, throughout the Bharatiya tradition, the scriptures have always been considered with utmost reverence for they speak of that Truth which is considered as the highest source of knowledge — *yasmin vijñāte sarvamidam vijñātam*²— knowing which everything here is known.

Today the Vedas have a varied status in Bharat and the world. Some scholars treat the Vedas as socio-historic texts that describe warring tribes paying tributes to Gods and Goddesses to win their favour. Others, more conservative, regard the texts as a detailed manual for the performance of *yajñas* or material sacrifices. Some others consider them as a repository of an occult knowledge transmitted by sounds, regardless of the meaning. But then the question arises that if these interpretations of the Vedas alone were true, why did the later Upanishadic Seers, whose deep metaphysical insight has been widely acknowledged, hold them in such high esteem? Furthermore, how could these so-called ritualistic hymns or pastoral chants have been the inspiration for philosophical treatises marked for their intellectual genius if they did not contain at least the essence of those unique thought-systems? Judging from their offshoots, there has to be an important aspect of the texts which has been overlooked by those commentators who chose to interpret them merely from a literal perspective.

Based on these arguments if we were to conclude that the content of the Vedas is far more profound than the sense usually attributed to them, one wonders if that knowledge is of any value to the present modern age. Speaking of the relevance of

the Vedas in our contemporary world Sri Aurobindo emphatically said, “The recovery of the perfect truth of the Veda is therefore not merely a desideratum for our modern intellectual curiosity, but a practical necessity for the future of the human race.”³ But how do they qualify as a “practical necessity for the future of the human race”? The answer lies in Yaska’s commentary where he clearly states that the Vedas can be interpreted on three broad levels — *ādhibhautika*, *ādhidaiivata* and *ādhyātmika*, viz. material, occult and spiritual.

2. The Psycho-Spiritual Interpretation

Sri Aurobindo, in his book *The Secret of the Veda*, states that the Veda becomes relevant to humanity as a whole only when it is accorded its *ādhyātmika* or spiritual interpretation. As a true scientist who is confident about the results of an experiment that he has himself undertaken, Sri Aurobindo arrived at his conclusions from his personal experiences when, during the course of his *sādhana*, he realised that oft-recurring figures like that of Ila, Saraswati and other Vedic Godheads were closely associated with specific psychological states and processes. This led him to enquire whether these Godheads could in fact be symbols of profound psycho-spiritual truths. He realised that the Sacrifice mentioned in such detail is not just an outward act but primarily a conscious inward movement for self-purification and self-perfection. The offering to the Gods symbolises an invocation to the higher forces in man that seek to raise him beyond his narrow human confines. To confirm his discovery of the symbolic nature of the Vedas, Sri Aurobindo attributed this deeper psycho-spiritual meaning to the Vedic texts. He respected two rules: 1) the meaning of a word should remain the same throughout the whole Veda and 2) it should be philologically justified. Once these rules were followed, the hymns systematically acquired a certain coherence and became not only consistent in their expression but also revealed the universal applicability of the Vedas. The texts were no longer obscure and arbitrary chants of nomads and farmers but glorious songs of the inner adventures of the Rishis whose sole quest in life was the discovery and realisation of Truth, Light and Immortality which are symbolised by the bringing down of the Waters and the recovery of the Lost Herds. This profound aspiration of theirs is best reflected in the Upanishadic mantra:

*Om asato mā sadgamaya
tamaso mā jyotirgamaya
mṛtyormā amṛtam gamaya*⁴

This mantra is commonly translated as: “Lead me from Falsehood to Truth, from Darkness to Light, from Death to Immortality.” But there is another possible meaning that can be derived from the change of the preposition ‘from’ to ‘of’. Based on

this change, the mantra may be translated as: “Lead me to the Truth of the Falsehood; lead me to the Light of the Darkness; lead me to the Immortality of Death.” This seldom-acknowledged translation brings forth the secret search of the Rishi to discover techniques for a kind of alchemy to make base metal into gold, to turn undivine matter into its potential divinity.

Seen from this perspective, one understands better why the texts were guarded with such fierce secrecy and passed on only to the initiate who by a rigorous discipline of self-purification had made himself a worthy recipient of that knowledge. Furthermore in the Veda one often finds terms like ‘*ninyāni vācāmsi*’ meaning secret words that reveal the symbolic or esoteric nature of the texts.

Based on this new light, it is important to re-examine what the Vedas are all about. The word Veda comes from the root ‘*vid*’ meaning ‘to know’ and also ‘to obtain’, ‘to discover’. ‘Veda’ therefore means ‘knowledge’ or ‘the knowledge to be obtained or discovered’ and it has always been revered by tradition as such. The Vedas are also known as ‘*śruti*’ or ‘hearing’ because they were not composed by any poet, *apauruṣeya*, but were heard by the Rishis or Seers in the form of mantras during their meditation. The Rishis were thus called *kavayah satyaśrutayah* — *hearers of the truth*. Defining the mantra, Sri Aurobindo says:

The theory of the Mantra is that it is a word of power born out of the secret depths of our being where it has been brooded upon by a deeper consciousness than the mental, framed in the heart and not originally constructed by the intellect, held in the mind, again concentrated on by the waking mental consciousness and then thrown out silently or vocally . . . precisely for the work of creation. The Mantra can not only create new subjective states in ourselves, alter our psychical being, reveal knowledge and faculties we did not before possess, can not only produce similar results in other minds than that of the user, but can produce vibrations in the mental and vital atmosphere which result in effects, in actions and even in the production of material forms on the physical plane.”⁵

Such was the powerful content of the Veda and this explains the need for it to be couched in symbols in order to protect it from the profane.

2.1 Symbolism of Key Words

In *The Secret of the Veda*, Sri Aurobindo elaborates on the psycho-spiritual approach to the scriptures saying that if key words like *ṛtam*, *ghṛtam*, *go* and several others are attributed their symbolic sense, several passages and expressions that are otherwise absurd in content, become suddenly very meaningful and practical.

The word *ṛtam* represents an important concept in the Vedas. Derived from the

root 'ṛt', Sri Aurobindo translates it as 'Right'. Sayana on the other hand gives the word several meanings in order to suit his ritualistic interpretations. He once refers to it as 'sacrifice'⁶ or 'water'⁷ or even the 'sun'⁸. Once in a while, he renders it as 'truth in action'⁹ or as a 'prayer'¹⁰. Sri Aurobindo is very particular in attributing a consistent meaning to the key words of the Veda because by doing so he realises that the hymns acquire a far greater cohesion than is normally attributed to them by the ritualists or the historians. Seen from the psycho-spiritual angle *ṛtam* is an important aspect of the experience of *Satyam*, *Ṛtam*, *Bṛhat* — the Truth, the Right, the Vast — for it stands for 'truth-in-action'¹¹. While *Satyam* normally signifies 'beingness' or 'truth in existence', *Ṛtam* is the Law of the dynamic Divine, the Truth-consciousness, which is the source of creation as well as the Law of its conscious evolution. The Rishis knew of this conscious power of the Supreme and sought to be guided by it on their path to immortality.

Another word that is crucial for grasping the esoteric sense of the Veda is the word *ghṛtam* which is an important ingredient for the Vedic Sacrifice. In the Veda, Indra's Horses are described as *ghṛtāṣṇu*. *Ghṛtam* commonly means clarified butter so a literal translation would imply that Indra's horses are dripping with 'clarified butter'! But Sri Aurobindo describes *ghṛtam* as 'clarified mind'. This interpretation is easily understood if one bears in mind that the language of the Vedas, namely Sanskrit, is an associative language where the word used to denote an object generally describes some aspect of it rather than serving as a mere nomenclature. This possibility arises because the Vedic language is not like the later classical ones where language reached a definite form and shape but is complex and its structure is full of an amplitude and multiplicity and range of suggestions that coexist at different levels. Whether this is due to an insufficient vocabulary or if it is done deliberately with a great mastery and skill to hide something, remains to be answered. Accordingly, the common feature between 'clarified butter' and 'clarified mind' is the process of clarification. *Ghṛtam* is the final result of opaque butter being subjected to heat. Thus exposed to heat, the opaque butter acquires a certain translucency. This end product which is the very essence of milk is called *ghṛtam* which comes from the root 'ghṛ', meaning 'to shine'. Similarly, when the mind is opaque and lacks clarity, one can apply heat on it by the power of will and aspiration symbolised by Agni, and purify it to obtain a transparent product which is the essence of mind, viz. 'clarity of mind' or "a rich and bright state or activity of the brain-power *medhā*, as basis and substance of illuminated thought."¹² We thus can understand how *ghṛtam* can symbolise clarity of mind. This imagery becomes more appropriate when we place it in the context of Indra's Horses being *ghṛtāṣṇu*. Indra according to psycho-spiritual sense represents the Illumined Mind and Horses, in many cultures, denote Force, Strength and Power. Therefore when Indra's Horses are described as *ghṛtāṣṇu* it becomes more meaningful to interpret the expression as, 'the Powers related to the Illumined Mind are associated with clear and brilliant thoughts' rather than 'Indra's Horses dripping with clarified butter'.

The word 'go' also plays a significant role in understanding the deeper sense of the hymns. Literally translated as 'cow', this word has another etymological sense of 'light'. From the psycho-spiritual standpoint the Cows represent 'spiritual illuminations'. It is not difficult to understand the connection between 'Light' and 'Knowledge' because in modern terminology also we often use the expression 'to be enlightened' as synonymous with 'gaining knowledge'. Seen from an exoteric perspective, the Rishis perform sacrifices to Gods and ask for Herds of Cows as gifts. Reviewed from a symbolic angle, the Rishis or Seers of Truth perform an inner Sacrifice with the help of Agni, the divine Will, and ask in return riches in the form of spiritual illuminations.

In order to fully appreciate the role and need for the increase of Cows in the Rishis' quest for Immortality one has to understand the fourfold doctrine practised by them.

3. The Four Elements of the Doctrines of the Mystics

The first element of the doctrine declares that in his present stage man is essentially imperfect in every respect but must strive to attain to his perfection. Moreover, the Vedic Rishis realised that in the scheme of creation and in the evolution of consciousness man has a critical role to play for he contains in himself the lowest tendencies of the beast as a result of the subconscious and inconscient worlds in him as well as the lofty potential of the Gods who belong to the superconscious realms characterised by the Truth, the Right, the Vast. The Rishis call on man to outgrow his mortal tendencies and to ascend in his inner consciousness and live in a world of Truth, Light and Immortality also called Swar which is higher and superior to our world of existence. The second element of the doctrine states that the purpose of human existence is to discover once more the path to the great world of Swar, which is also the home of the Truth, the Right, the Vast, and considered as the world of the Sun. This path to be discovered is known in the Veda as '*ṛtasya panthāh*' or 'the way of the Right'. The third element of the doctrine of the Veda is often portrayed using three images.

The first is that our life is a battleground of Forces. Our existence is the result of a constant struggle between the powers of Light and Truth, the Devas, who are companions and allies in man's adventure to immortality, and the powers of Darkness and Falsehood, the Dasyus, who hamper at every step man's onward journey to self-realisation. This battle between the two opposing Forces of Light and Darkness is best depicted by two Vedic legends which contain in a seed-form the crux of the Veda. They are the legends of Indra releasing the Waters, streams of Truth, *ṛtasya dhenavah*, from the grip of Vritra and that of the Angirasa Rishis and the Lost Cows, a story that will be elaborated later in detail.

The second image is that of a *Yajña* or Sacrifice. As mentioned earlier this Sacrifice does not refer to an outer ritualistic act but implies an inner action of offering

and receiving. The *Satapatha Brahmana*¹³ says that Man must sacrifice himself completely and perfectly in order to become divine even as the Divine sacrifices himself to become the world and man. Sacrifice is an act of creation; each time it is performed it recreates the performer as well as the Cosmos.¹⁴ The whole Universe according to the Rishi is engaged in a constant sacrifice where one increases in oneself that to which one sacrifices. But this sacrifice is generally unconscious. The Vedic Rishi therefore extols the need to make this into a conscious act. He knew that through a constant sacrifice to the higher powers man can not only acquire the nature of God's consciousness, but has also within him the capacity to transcend these powers. The Vedic Rishis not only brought forth the importance of the Vedic *Yajña* but also laid down the method to perform this *Yajña* in the most effective manner. They recognised that first Agni, Fire, or the Divine Will, had to be lit. Once lit, it had to be kindled constantly with *Ghṛtam*, clarified thoughts, *Mantra*, the inspired word of truth and *Soma* or the underlying delight of existence. They also gave an assurance that when this was done in a selfless manner then the Gods would shower man with the gifts of Cows — spiritual illuminations, Horses — spiritual energies, gold — purity, sons — renewed spiritual energies and many other such gifts that are symbolic of inner spiritual wealth and that will help him on his journey of self-perfection.

The third image of the Veda is that of a journey, an ascent. The individual is seen as a hill with several layers of consciousness which he has to ascend with the help of sacrifice and battle till he reaches the illumined summits of the solar world of the Truth-Consciousness, Swar.

The fourth element of the mystic doctrine of the Vedic Rishi speaks about the supreme secret of the ultimate Reality. It declares that it is one “*ekam sat*” or “*tad ekam*”.¹⁵ This one Reality is attributed different names according to its special aspects and functions “*ekam sad viprā bahudhāh vadanti*”.¹⁶

The Rishis spent all their energy in the pursuit of and adherence to these doctrines. They declared that any individual who agreed to work on cultivating his or her inner being or consciously became a warrior of Truth, fighting incessantly for the armies of Light against those of Darkness was an Aryan. Later historians falsely depicted Aryans as a race of people from a specific region who conquered the Indian subcontinent and subjugated the native Dravidian population. Sri Aurobindo disproved this theory and insisted that the Aryan was essentially a psycho-spiritual concept — and anyone ready to pursue the inner adventure in quest of immortality was eligible to be called as such.

The Rishis recorded their various psycho-spiritual findings in the hymns of the Veda. These texts therefore speak of the highest of spiritual quests and realisations. Are these discoveries then in any way relevant to the average individual for the dealings of his daily life?

Let us apply the psycho-spiritual reasoning to the Legend of the Angirasa Rishis and the Lost Cows and see if it offers valuable guidelines for modern man in this materialistic age. The Legend is as follows.

4. The Legend of the Angirasa Rishis and the Lost Cows

The Cows of the Angirasa Rishis have been stolen by the Panis, Dasyus and Vritras and have been hidden in dark caves. The Angirasa Rishis then, with the help of Sacrifice, invoke the help of Indra, who, full of the Soma wine, comes charged with the thunderbolt to retrieve the stolen Cows. Sarama, the Divine Hound, traces the Robbers who try to win her over so that she does not give away their hideout. She declines their offers and leads Indra to their den. A fierce battle follows where Indra defeats the dark forces of the Panis, Dasyus and Vritras and finally liberates the Cows. But we find in the Vedas that although the Cows are liberated by Indra they are lost again and again. The entire episode in quest of the lost Cows is repeated involving new characters who penetrate deeper into the caves to retrieve the stolen Cows until eventually the Sun that had initially got lost in the darkness is released and it ascends the hill of being to its own home of Swar.

Literally understood, this story appears to be a typical myth where the Gods fight the evil Forces and emerge victorious. But if it were merely so, it would have had no direct appeal or relevance to the modern, rational and utilitarian mind. It is only when one reviews the legend from a psycho-spiritual angle that it acquires a profound relevance to our contemporary times, for, it not only explains the conflicts in man's nature but also provides solutions to them.

Seen from the psycho-spiritual basis, the Angirasa Rishis are Agni's powers and symbolise those Aspiring Souls that go forth with brilliance to achieve their goal by kindling Agni, the divine Will in them, and performing the Sacrifice. The Cows denoted by the word '*go*' mean 'Light' or 'Spiritual Illuminations'.

The villains in the story are the dark forces or the Panis, the Dasyus and the Vritras. The word '*Pani*' meaning 'dealer', 'trafficker' comes from the root verb '*pan*' meaning 'to deal in', 'to barter'. The Panis are those "powers of the falsehood and ignorance who set their false knowledge, their false strength, will and works against the true knowledge, the true strength, will and works of the gods and the Aryans."¹⁷ They don't perform the sacrifice and are thus the misers of existence,¹⁸ the forces in man which are constantly engaged in a kind of bargaining and bartering long-term joys for short-term pleasures. They steal the Lights from him and keep them for themselves without offering them to the Gods.¹⁹ We can easily recognise these forces at work within us. True to their name, they are only concerned with temporary results and are forever preoccupied with petty calculations such as, "If I give this I will get that in return and vice versa." Similarly, the word 'Dasyu' comes from the root '*das*' or '*dah*' meaning 'to divide, injure, hurt'. The Dasyus are the dividers and plunderers, the hurters and the haters²⁰ in man's consciousness who steal his happiness by causing innumerable divisions in him. And finally, the word 'Vritra' comes from the root '*vr*', 'to obstruct, to cover'. These are the forces in man that cover and imprison his inner truth and limit him from being a complete and harmonised

being. As portrayed, the band of Dasyus and their allies appear to be absolute villains bent on hindering and destroying man's progress on his godward march but the Rishis saw beyond their apparent façade and recognised their more significant role in the whole scheme of the Universe. Sri Aurobindo says that, "Their office is to disturb that which is established in order to push man below or give him an opportunity of rising higher by breaking that which was good and harmonious in itself but imperfect, and in any case to render him dissatisfied with anything short of perfection and drive him continually to the Infinite, . . ." ²¹

In order to defeat these Forces the Angirasa Rishis perform a Sacrifice, for, the Rishis knew that "Self-fulfilment by self-immolation, to grow by giving is the universal law." ²² They knew also about the Upanishadic formula which said, "The eater eating is eaten" . . . "That which refuses to give itself, is still the food of the cosmic Powers" ²³ Following the third element of the mystic doctrine, the Rishis recognised that the Universe was engaged in a constant process of exchange and that the nature of this exchange would determine the quality of an individual's life. If he sacrificed to the Gods he would win the Cows of the Sun, if he chose otherwise, he would be a victim of the Forces of the darker world.

4.1 The Psycho-Spiritual Interpretation of the Legend

Re-examining the Legend from a psycho-spiritual perspective we see that the story of the Panis and their allies who have stolen the Cows of the Angirasa Rishis and hidden them in Caves, means that the negative forces have stolen the Divine Illuminations from the Aspiring Souls and hidden them in the dark unconscious nooks of man's being. Robbed of their precious possessions, the Angirasa Rishis perform an inner Sacrifice to invoke the help of Indra, the Illumined Mind, to retrieve their stolen Insights. In response to their call Indra drinks the Soma wine, the elixir of Divine Bliss and armed with the thunderbolt needed to pierce through the dark cloud of the subconscious, charges into the Caves to rescue the Cows. It is interesting to note that Indra drinks the Soma before his mission. This is very significant because Soma represents supreme Delight, Ananda, which can be experienced only when one knows one's essential reality as the Immortal Self. Possessing this knowledge of immortality or *amṛtam*, another name for Soma, one becomes completely fearless, an indispensable quality needed to go into battle. Therefore, intoxicated with absolute Ananda, Indra or the Illumined Mind takes the help of Sarama, the Divine Hound, to trace the Cows. Here too, Sarama, literally understood as the Divine Hound, symbolises Intuition. The significant trait common to a Hound and Intuition is that both can lead one to a specified goal without needing to rationalise the process of arriving at it. Thus in the Legend of the Lost Cows, Sarama, representing Intuition, first discovers the hideout of the Dasyus in the Caves. Another detail of the story which is interest-

ing to note is that once exposed, the Panis and their allies try to win over Sarama.²⁴ This corresponds to the psychological tussle experienced when confronted with the choice between doing what is good, *śreyas*, and that which is pleasurable, *preyas*. As the Legend continues, Sarama remains loyal to Indra, the Illumined Mind, and leads him into the dark Caves where the Cows, the Divine Illuminations, have been hidden. Following the discovery of the Cows, a fierce battle ensues between Indra and the army of the dark Forces where ultimately Indra emerges victorious by slaying the Panis and their allies. The Illumined Mind then rescues the Divine Lights from the unconscious parts of man's being.

The Rishis observed that the Legend of the Angirasa Rishis and the Lost Cows repeats itself constantly in their consciousness. The Divine Lights that the Illumined Mind wins for them are constantly stolen and have to be recovered with the help of various Forces of Light. This experience and inner struggle is experienced by the Rishi till eventually he succeeds in liberating the lost Sun that was initially lost in the unconscious depths of man's being. The Sun, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the symbol of Truth, for, just as sunlight helps us see the external world clearly, the light of Truth gives clarity of inner vision. Therefore it is only appropriate that the Illumined Mind should liberate the hidden Truth from man's unconscious parts so that it can ascend the Hill of Consciousness till it reaches its own Home, Swar. Having reached its own realm, the Sun shines forth in its full brilliance once more illuminating everything in its reach.

Thus we see how the Legend of the Angirasa Rishis and the Lost Cows acquires an entirely new dimension when seen from the psycho-spiritual angle. But the question that still arises is: how is this story relevant to the common man? Can it help the average individual to understand himself better and provide practical answers to his psychological problems?

4.2 Application of the Psycho-Spiritual Interpretation

As an example, one can apply the story in a contemporary situation in an academic milieu and see its implications. We shall study the case of a young scholar who is hoping to discover something really meaningful through his research work. Being a researcher he is expected to sacrifice his time and energy to discover new knowledge. When he is full of concentration, dedication and will power and is constantly striving to gain new insights into his subject with the attitude only of acquiring knowledge, *i.e.* for the joy of knowing and not for fame or money, the Angirasa Rishis in him, perform a Sacrifice to knowledge by pouring his energies and 'clarified thoughts', *ghṛtam*, into the Fire of his Will. His Sacrifice is richly rewarded, for knowledge grows in him and he becomes a *vidvān*, a knower, thus increasing his possession of Cows or Lights of knowledge. But the scholar also has various other interests and

commitments that constantly require his attention and time. With regard to the progress of his research work, these small engagements act like the various tools used by the Panis, Dasyus and Vritras in the scholar's psychology. True to their nature the Panis in him no longer perform the Sacrifice to the higher Powers but for their own self-interest. They hijack his well-being and prevent him from striving after more ennobling pursuits. They start tearing him apart because although he would like to dedicate his full time and energy to pursuing his research work, the army of the Panis persistently leads him away from his goal and entices him with every possible distraction. They steal from him the Cows of knowledge and hide them in the unconscious parts of his being. With time, he gets so preoccupied with the other activities that he becomes disoriented and starts drifting away from his goal. But somewhere deep inside him, the Angirasa Rishis sleep not! They force him to awaken to his real mission and perform an inner Sacrifice once more. The scholar agrees to cooperate with them and by means of the inner Sacrifice, by placing Agni, the divine Will in front as *purohita*, he invokes, as the summoner, *hotr*, the help of Indra, his Higher or Illumined Mind, to take charge. This Mind, full of the Ananda of existence, *i.e.* charged with positive energy, takes the help of Intuition to locate the hidden and treacherous forces in him. When they are tracked down, there is a fierce struggle between the scholar's Higher Mind and the army of the Panis. If Indra loses the battle temporarily, the scholar in his external life continues to be distracted at the cost of his studies and his ultimate aim of acquiring deeper and greater knowledge. But if eventually Indra emerges victorious as the Legend goes, the Higher Mind of the scholar wins and consequently retrieves the cherished Lights of knowledge. The outward consequence of this victory is probably reflected in a bold decision to give full priority to his research work, to keep aside all other engagements or make them collaborate with his aim and with renewed energy to set out once more in the discovery of the deeper Truth of his investigations.

5. Conclusion

A little bit of introspection reveals to us that as individuals we have a relatively inconsistent temperament. There are times when we are elated, at other times depressed and sometimes merely indifferent. Do we ask ourselves what is responsible for these fluctuations? Are we the ones who create these moods or are we victims of Forces that use us as their battleground? If we are victims of Forces, what are these Forces and do we have the power to choose on whose side we would like to fight?

The Vedic Rishis, after intense meditation, self-study and inner strife, discovered this knowledge of man's psychology as recorded in the Vedas. They realised that man's consciousness is at every moment an open arena for the clash of universal occult forces. Every choice that we make in life is determined by the result of the

battle within us, of Indra and the other Gods versus the Panis, the Dasyus and their companions; positive forces, that are concerned with our well-being and our aspiration to be a better and more complete individual and the negative forces that hinder in every way possible our attempt to perfect our being. When we choose, by first lighting in us Agni the only god awake in the night, the discoverer of the path and caller of the other gods, when we choose to side with Indra and the Gods, then are they victorious and the result is the recovery of the ‘Cows of Illumination’ and the liberation of the lost ‘Sun of Truth’ in our consciousness. This Sun shines forth once more and replenishes our lives with positive energies of Light and Truth and gives us a clear vision for action. On the other hand, when we become allies of the Panis, the darker forces in us are victorious. We thereby find ourselves harassed with petty problems and senseless anxieties, with no peace of mind whatsoever. In such a case however, one can fall back on the Legend of the Lost Cows or rather the Legend of the Lost Illuminations to provide us with a solution — for when the Cows are stolen and hidden in the Caves, the Angirasa Rishis, through an intense inner Sacrifice and with the help of Agni, their Will, request the intervention of the Illumined Mind to help liberate the lost Lights. Either way, the outcome of the battle always lies in our hands!

Seen from this perspective we can effectively conclude that the Vedas are not merely ritualistic or historic texts but contain deep psycho-spiritual truths of man’s nature. According to Sri Aurobindo, they are the earliest records of man’s quest for self-perfection and can therefore serve as an invaluable guidebook for every seeker on the path of Truth, Light, Bliss and Immortality. It is because of this intrinsic sense contained in the Vedas that they have survived all these aeons and will continue to do so as long as man remains a battleground of these Forces. Furthermore, it is because the Vedas possess this knowledge of human nature that they acquire a universal quality. And it is because they reveal to man the ultimate purpose of his existence that the recovery of the true understanding of Vedic psychology and its application becomes a necessity — not only for Bharat but for the entire world — to ensure a meaningful and glorious future for the human race.

ANURADHA CHOUDRY

(Courtesy, *The Advent*, August 2008, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry)

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In the Veda there is no idea or experience of a personal emanation or incarnation of any of the Vedic gods. When the Rishis speak of Indra or Agni or Soma in men, they are speaking of the god in his cosmic presence, power or function. This is evident from the very language when they speak of Agni as the immortal in mortals, the immortal Light in men, the inner Warrior, the Guest in human beings. It is the same with Indra or Soma. The building of the gods in man means a creation of the divine Powers, — Indra the Power of the Light, Soma the Power of the Ananda, — in the human nature.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 110-11)

AMERICA RESPONDS

A FRIEND of the United States once famously said that one can always count on America to do the right thing — after she has exhausted all other possibilities. As history would have it, on January 20, 2009, she finally exhausted her other possibilities, and did the right thing. The inauguration of Barack H. Obama as 44th President of the United States was a day of victory for the American people and for the ideals of democratic government everywhere. All who witnessed the event, whether in person or by television, could not help but feel the spiritual power of the moment. For one remarkable day the psychic consciousness of the nation shone forth with a splendence we have not seen so brightly for almost half a century. And not only Americans marked the making of history, but indeed one felt the collective soul of all watching humanity swell and breathe deeply, draw in the hope-filled air of a new dawn and a greater day.

Of course we know the glow will fade — if it has not done so already — and that the world's problems will resist any quick or easy solution. We understand that the new President is just one human being standing against a huge and obstinate machinery of inertia both at home and abroad, and that his final balance of successes and failures will take years to measure. We also understand that the evolution of consciousness is inherently slow and difficult; that, as Sri Aurobindo has explained, this world of conflict we see with physical eyes is only the outer expression of an inner battle between spiritual forces of light and darkness that must be seen and mastered inwardly in order for life to reveal its divine potential. But rather than giving us cause to dismiss the inspiration of Obama's inauguration, the fact that its light is transient should give us even more reason to plumb this remarkable occasion for its full measure of meaning, so as to fortify ourselves for the long path ahead.

That a black President now lives in a White House once built by black slaves for white masters, is self-evident proof that America continues to advance towards the ideals of liberty and equality enshrined in her founding documents. Her progress remains slow and hampered, now and as it has always been, but her gains are real and every few generations she takes another large step forward, as she did recently. This aspect of the inauguration was writ so large on that day that no observer missed it, and President Obama himself chose wisely not to distract from the point with an excess of words. Many observers also commented on the marvel of a peaceful transition of power, which we have come to take for granted but which still merits periodic awe. Yet what no one said explicitly, but was implicit behind all the expressions of the day, was that this peaceful passing of power to a leader whose forebears were powerless, was America's real response to the terror of September 11, 2001. For the essential criticism that Osama Bin Laden has made of the United States — if we may

translate his primitive violence into articulate statements — is that the nation is an oppressive and hypocritical empire, that it may speak with a silver tongue but rules with an iron fist. And one must concede that during the height of the Bush administration at times one had to ask if there was not, in fact, a kernel of truth to this allegation, and wonder whether America's light was waning.

However, the election of Barack Obama to the highest office of the land reminded America, and the world, that the answer to this gray doubt is a resounding “no”. This exceptional man gave voice to the many millions of ordinary Americans who every day keep the aspiration for human unity alive with the small things they do to build towards high ends. January 20, 2009 was the day that the American people stood up *en masse* and said, “No, we are not oppressors. We are not perfect, but we can disagree without bloodshed, we can correct mistakes without killing those who made them, and we can progress. We will judge human beings not by their creed or the colour of their skin, but by the quality of their character. And we will practise freedom no matter how difficult the circumstances. We choose again to reach towards the future, rather than cling to the past.”

To arrive at this transformational moment, America had to confront her own errors as well as endure the attack of those Asuric powers that seek always to slay the evolving soul in humanity, but whose opposing action ultimately serves only to perfect the divine manifestation. There can be no doubt that Al-Qaeda is the visible, material instrument of hostile invisible powers that stand behind this physical world and seek to control it. America's initial response to the attacks of September 11 was to project her energies outward in a premature and misguided war in Iraq, and to look for what in the Muslim world needs fixing, rather than looking within and putting her own house in order first. However, the wisdom of yoga teaches that we must respond to hostile attacks by taking them as an indication that something in our own consciousness is amiss, has allowed the attack to occur or perhaps even invited it. This spiritual principle holds as true for communities and nations as it does for individuals, and when we take the lesson to heart, then the Grace can turn hardships into boons and falls into steps towards a greater rise.

In the case of the United States, a series of errors and weaknesses needed attention, and indeed the pressure of adverse circumstances served to bring these problems to light. First, the American public had become uninformed and passive in the political process, and unconcerned about the pressing issues that attend the birth of the 21st century. The “stolen” election of George W. Bush awoke America to the fact that even she cannot rest on the laurels of her democracy, and subsequently eight years of his authoritarian and divisive leadership ultimately hastened the advent of change by creating the counterpoint of conditions from which Mr. Obama could emerge. Critics of Mr. Bush riled at his evident defects and failures as a President; however, from the perspective of yoga one must also note that his faith in God is genuine and in his own bumbling style he managed to bring the country's problems to the surface more swiftly with his

decisive errors than others might have with their vacillating successes. Thus, the “decider” from Texas became an effective albeit unwitting and inarticulate instrument for the divine work, and arguably the most important contributor to the victorious rise of Barack Obama.

Second, Mr. Gore’s loss in 2000 forced him to turn within and heed the voice of his soul’s calling. After a fruitful period of meditation, Mr. Gore went on to awaken the American public to some inconvenient truths about global warming and the impact of the country’s gluttonous consumption on the natural environment. Had he won the election, he would not have received the galvanising blow of defeat that drove him towards the absolutely critical task of speaking out about global warming, and as President he would have been too preoccupied with the aftermath of September 11 to pursue his environmental agenda as persistently as he did. Thus, through loss, Mr. Gore became an effective, willing, and articulate instrument for the divine work, and prepared Americans to listen seriously to the gifted leader who was to come.

And thirdly, the financial system of the United States had become over-inflated and corrupt. This aspect of the country’s internal disorder was the most concealed, and when it finally emerged, spun out of control precipitously. Seven Septembers after the fall of the World Trade Towers, almost to the day, the American financial system imploded on Wall Street, at the very feet of the fallen towers. This uncanny coincidence of both time and location has been entirely missed by the mainstream media, probably because there appears to be no outer connection between these two large events, but to the inward eye they are obviously related. On September 11, 2001, the hostile forces laid a dark finger on the concealed cancer of the United States, no one looked or listened for the inner lesson, and so seven years later the problem manifested as a massive material disaster which can no longer be ignored — and starting *exactly* where Al-Qaeda struck.¹ It was by speaking out against the country’s misguided reaction to this event (i.e., the war in Iraq) that Barack Obama first rose to prominence. It was the financial disaster on Wall Street that cemented his political victory. And it shall be by his handling of the resultant economic crisis that his performance as President will ultimately be judged. Thus, two fateful Septembers frame the stage of history on which Mr. Obama now stands.

Finally, let us also note that the timing of September 11 is highly significant, and it is impossible to understand the inner meaning of current events in the United States without recalling the original and luminous sense of that day. For most of recorded history the Western world has sought to buy, steal, trade, or otherwise exploit the treasures of the East, taking these in the most literal and material sense. But the

1. The time lapse of seven years is an interesting detail, and suggests a process of manifestation from the spiritual to the physical that roughly corresponds to one year for each of the major planes of consciousness associated with the seven chakras. Further analysis of social and political events in the United States during those seven years might or might not reveal specific correspondences along these lines, but in any case the final inner connection between the two disastrous Septembers on Wall Street stands as a spiritual fact.

greatest treasure of the East, especially of India, is something impalpable and immaterial — the inner wealth of her spiritual consciousness. September 11 was the extraordinary day when Swami Vivekananda delivered the real jewels of the East to the Western world, freely and with a heart full of brotherhood, at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago. Heralding the dawn of a new age of spiritual unity among the peoples of the world, he greeted his “sisters and brothers of America” with the glorious and all-embracing knowledge of the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, not the grotesque mistranslation of Allah’s will handed to us 108 years later by Osama Bin Laden. Fitting, then, that the same soil of Chicago that bore Vivekananda’s call to global harmony in 1893, in 2009 sent her junior Senator to the White House to renew America’s commitment to her highest ideals, and to the eternal aspiration for human unity. As well the great Swami could have spoken these words at the inauguration of President Obama as when he first uttered them on that first and still only September 11 that the world will, in the end, honour as sacred:

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world, of the wonderful doctrine preached in the *Gita*: “*Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.*” Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.

MICHAEL MIOVIC

In America any boy may become President and I suppose it’s just one of the risks he takes.

Adlai E. Stevenson Jr.

ARE WE READY?

HISTORY sets the course by precedents; it interprets and seeks the reasons for what was and attempts to define the future.

However, the continuous intervention by the Divine Force changes the course of history. No matter how much research is done in linking the macro-trends to local or global issues in areas such as work and daily life, and the impact of technology on society, the future will shape itself without warning.

So far, it seemed that globalisation, knowledge and technology were all converging as never before. This had the potential of creating a harmonious world built on a superior understanding of the meaning of life amongst the people of the world.

As we entered the 21st century, there was hope. People were expecting the emergence of a new world order. After 9/11, there was a certain restlessness and a sense of insecurity, not only in the US but in most parts of the world. In a typical human reaction, all believed that the worst was over. But the change did not take place.

In the distant past, we thought the world was flat; next, we decided it was round; but now we all know it is crooked!

Since the Mother's message of 1970:

The world is preparing for a big change.
Will you help?

(CWM, Vol. 15, p. 175)

there has been a steep and rapid worsening of the human condition. The world is wrapped up in ugliness and vulgarity. What has hit the world today has never before happened in human history. Every single country, every single company and every single individual has been badly affected and shaken. It did not matter whether you were rich or poor, man or animal or even whether you were a good or a bad human being. Many social projects, for instance, are struggling to survive. The sudden lack of funds has affected every single humanitarian project around the world.

This global destruction was not caused by earthquakes, tsunamis, fires or any other act of nature. It is totally man-made. It has seen the collapse of every single political system, be it capitalism, communism or any other political system. The impact of this calamity is not fully absorbed nor properly understood.

The Divine is not punishing man, man is punishing himself.

It is an astonishing fact that nobody is able to explain this phenomenon. I have read comments by leading economic experts from all over the world, but no two

experts seem to agree. It is truly beyond anyone's comprehension.

I believe that in the last few decades, many people in power were possessed by hostile forces. The last and final battle is being staged. They have demonstrated and displayed the lowest forms of human behaviour: ego, hatred, jealousy, ignorance, greed, falsehood, wickedness, wastage and gross misuse of power.

Look what is happening to religions!

No two religions are the same — but fundamentalism is!

Let us look at some facts. The US President has announced very recently that this deep financial crisis will continue for years. China has officially declared that 20 million of its people are jobless. India has underestimated its unemployment figures pegged at 5 lacs. Some thousands of Indians will be back in the next few months from US, Saudi Arabia, Dubai and reportedly from some Asian countries, including Singapore. These Indians were sending back some 43 million dollars a year.

Some of the biggest American iconic companies that dominated the world stage in cars and in the financial sectors are broke and are being bailed out by their government. President Obama has declared certain laws to restrict the Wall Street bankers from drawing the huge amounts of monies that they have been doing for some years now. Each of the bankrupt companies paid their chief executives salaries between 14 to 22 million dollars annually.

As if this was not enough lack of sensitivity, the moment the first instalment of bail-out money was received, they helped themselves to huge bonuses!

The Mother once said,

Honest business is getting more and more risky.

(CWM, Vol. 15, p. 258)

Some people in the world believe that this too will pass. I think not. This is a formidable wake-up call for man. These conditions will continue to haunt us till we embrace the Mother's call for change. This time around, the Divine Force has hit hard — irrespective of geography, history, wealth, poverty.

The impact of the current disaster has begun to change the attitudes of people. A study just completed in several parts of the world suggests that people will not go back to their old ways. They intend to exercise caution in every aspect of life.

France is the birthplace of luxury fashion. The biting recession has begun to feel like a morality play. High-end consumers have suddenly suppressed their appetite for luxury goods. Until now, it was considered to be a recession-proof industry. Now its existence is being threatened.

People believe that the era of vulgar display of high living is over and that a new way of life will emerge. They called it "a crisis of values". Some others have called

it, “The international ritual of purification.”

This unprecedented crisis could be seen as a wake-up call of the Supramental Force. The Mother has said,

All the ages and millennia of human life that have elapsed so far have prepared the advent of this *new state*, and now the time has come for its concrete and tangible realisation.

(CWM, Vol. 15, p. 245)

I believe that since 1970 when the Mother said that the world was preparing for a big change, the Supramental Light has been navigating its way through the maze of human follies. The drama seems to be in its final act.

I believe the structure of societies will be altered dramatically. If people believe that this moment will pass by, they are living in a fool’s paradise. In fact, companies and countries believe that the economies will shrink in size as people redefine their needs. A few weeks ago, the chairman of a global company said, “80% of the products and services we use today will not exist in the next 5 to 8 years.” He asked his audience, “Are you future-ready?”

The Mother in Her message was addressing every single human being on earth. She was persuading them to accept and welcome the working of Her Force. Alas, the response seems to have been very poor!

The Mother said,

That is the very essence of Sri Aurobindo’s teaching, the aim of the group he has allowed to form around him, the purpose of his Ashram.

(CWM, Vol. 15, p. 245)

With all the humility I can muster, I believe the battle for the change of consciousness begins with each one who is connected with Them anywhere in the world. We don’t need to point fingers at the way the world is going. We are all a part of it. Each single day, all the followers of the Mother will need to ask themselves whether they are helping Her cause or are becoming a hindrance.

The Mother has drawn out a path with these words:

Change . . .

1. Hatred into harmony
2. Jealousy into generosity
3. Ignorance into knowledge
4. Darkness into light
5. Falsehood into truth
6. Wickedness into goodness

7. War into peace
8. Fear into fearlessness
9. Uncertainty into certainty
10. Doubt into faith
11. Confusion into order
12. Defeat into victory

(CWM, Vol. 15, p. 223)

Those golden words should continue to ring in our ears every single day, because the change in consciousness is bound to come.

And also these words from Sri Aurobindo's *Thoughts and Glimpses*:

Wherever thou seest a great end, be sure of a great beginning. Where a monstrous and painful destruction appals thy mind, console it with the certainty of a large and great creation. God is there not only in the still small voice, but in the fire and in the whirlwind.

The greater the destruction, the freer the chances of creation; but the destruction is often long, slow and oppressive, the creation tardy in its coming or interrupted in its triumph. The night returns again and again and the day lingers or seems even to have been a false dawning. Despair not therefore, but watch and work. Those who hope violently, despair swiftly: neither hope nor fear, but be sure of God's purpose and thy will to accomplish.

(CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 209)

RAM SEHGAL

It is so with all things in the path of sadhana — one must persist however long it takes, so only one can achieve.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 23, p. 623)

WANDERING IN THE ARCHIVES OF MEMORY

(Continued from the issue of May 2009)

9. Kurukshetra Line-up

WHEN does one talk about getting old? I think it happened to me when I was inching towards my fortieth birthday. A woman's frustrations are apt to be at the highest pitch around this time. Suddenly the stray silver strand discovered when plaiting the hair does the trick. Am I *that* old? Another thought comes careening into one's perception. I have wasted my best years! Doing what? Oh dear, cooking, cleaning, ironing, haggling with the vegetable vendor, waiting in the dispensary every other day with a sick child, what else!

Fortunately, the reading habit is a great help in trying to steer clear of any rising hysteria. What will the Mother think! It is a few years since she has withdrawn from the physical, but she is a living presence. It is not like 'Big Brother Watching You'. This is a loving grandmotherly figure who will of course get upset if we stray from the sunlit path. But she will not punish. She is too kind. She would say, 'Forty, and already inviting the clouds of depression? These words should be erased from your dictionary!'

I believe this is exactly what she told Surendranath Jauhar once. One day he had become quite depressed and complained to her: "I am very unhappy, very sad, I am feeling miserable, discouraged, disappointed, depressed and very much disgusted." The Mother assured him that these words were absent from her dictionary. "In my dictionary the words are happy, cheerful, joyful, encouraged, hopeful, exhilarated and pleased."

All this is hindsight. At the moment of recognition that one is (growing) old, the reaction is one of anger or tiredness or both. We have just moved into a sumptuous bungalow and the three children are jubilant. It has spacious open space around, fenced in properly. My eldest daughter in her teens is delighted. "Amma, we can now have a huge garden!" Yes, there is plenty of area and the previous occupants have left it barren except for some plantain trees in the backyard. I do not join her enthusiasm. "As if I did not have enough on my hands! The job of employing a gardener, the expenses, you have no idea." My hands are busy slicing vegetables in the kitchen.

"But amma, we can have a *karia-pathā* tree right outside this kitchen window, and you can pluck as many leaves as you want. I am going to get a tiny plant from my friend's house, they have many." She is now a Plus-Two student of science and the brain is getting filled up with botany and zoology and chemistry and physics and what not. There is no stopping Ahana because she has got her younger sister and

brother on her side. And I hear the father at the back: “A good hobby. I will get you the basic implements.” Bhuvana is out with a paper and pencil, screaming: “Let us make a list!” A small spade, a hoe, a shovel, of course. “Appa, you must get me my own watering can!” says the possessive Bhuvana. And how many metres of garden hose?

But I have a dark joy in having the last word. “Yes, yes, you will buy the spade and the shears and what not. And then push off on your tours. I will have to see that the devils (*pisāsu* in beautiful Tamil!) do not hurt themselves, the tools are safely put back . . . I tell you . . .” No one heard me. Forty-year-old mothers can be so tiresome. One should not talk back. This is how our garden was launched.

It became my joke to refer to our garden as the Drainage Garden. In the colony where we lived, there were several independent houses of big officials who had set up gardens. Whenever the gardens were pruned, they used to throw the cut branches over the wall into the meandering rainwater drain. Not a day would pass without one of the children coming in with a piece of greenery picked up on their way from the school. Even little Raja turned up one day jabbering how he had got a “little plantain tree with huge yellow flowers”. We planted it immediately as the roots were intact and within six months there was a whole row of canna plants with their heavy flowers nodding graciously. Ahana would put up a serious face and teach us the scientific name of all these plants in our Drainage Garden. Soon I found that I did not have time to feel frustrated at all. Those were the days when I was getting a glimpse of the way Mother was giving her own names for flowers and so I was happy. It was a day of celebration when the tuberose bud bloomed in full: New Creation!

Then came this day when Ahana returned from school, flung away her bag, and threw down one big bundle of some creeper. “Amma! See what I got! From Rao aunty’s house: they had thrown away a whole lot of *Passiflora caerulea*! Look at our luck!” “You are an idiot, you are. Why did you pick up the whole lot of it? Suppose there had been something inside and it bit you? You will never learn!” It was painful to see her face grow sad, so I quickly covered up my temper. “What is this creeper? I do not understand all your scientific words.” Ahana brightened up again. “They call it ‘passion flower’, says my teacher.” I bent to the tangled mass. There were some flowers, already wilting. “Oho, Ahana, what passion flower? It is *Pandavulu-Kauravulu*!”

By the time the children had changed and were seated with their milk and snacks, I had plucked half a dozen flowers from the creeper and placed them in a plate of water on the table. Ahana gave us a lecture from her bio-notes, pointing out the five sepals and the circlet of filaments and the three stigmas and so on. “I do not know all that. We call it *Pandavulu-Kauravulu* in Telugu because of those five green sepals each of which has a *topi* and which are surrounded by the hundred Kauravas. Ahana calls them filaments, but they are really Kauravas, those bad brothers.” The children know about the Pandavas and Kauravas thanks to the *Amar Chitra Katha* and Rajaji’s

Mahabharata. I wonder what is it that they have absorbed from these books. But for me with a childhood that knew no Enid Blyton, Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew and who else, the Pandavas and Kauravas were very real.

This was because when I was a child, there was in our house a six-volume set of the *Mahabharata* in Tamil rendered into prose and published in 1930. My father had reviewed it. He was just twenty-three and reviews brought him a little income for subsistence as he struggled in Chennai to complete his M.A. The volumes carry his pet name 'Rajaram' in his handwriting on the frontispiece. Whenever I take them to read the intervening decades simply vanish, for my amma brought me up on this staple diet in the 'forties.

The author had used a sonorous Tamil style. I do not think I really understood the story line or the clashing of passions but the style kept me completely engaged. Perhaps it is from those days that I imbibed a love for phrases. Amma was never in a hurry. Occasionally she would explain. Sometimes her voice would grow sombre but there were also times when I laughed at the way she read some passages when bad people found themselves in unenviable situations. Like when Duryodhana described the Sabha:

A Brahmin from the Himalayas gave a conch to Yudhishthira. It was huge, like a moon and was covered with gold. Yudhishthira gave it to Arjuna. He received it and blew the conch. All the kings fell down in a swoon! Only eight persons — the five Pandavas, Dhrishtadyumna, Krishna and Satyaki — did not swoon. As I also became senseless they laughed at me.

I would get up, twirl myself, say “*nanna venum*” (he deserved it!) and sit near her again. I guess amma went on with the reading till she found me fast asleep. My approach to the *Mahabharata* is no more such a good-bad division. I have realised there are innumerable shades of grey in the epic. Subsequently, while reading the *Mahabharata* in Sanskrit I realised that this Tamil version by Varakavi Subramania Bharati (not the poet) is mostly a transcreation. But no matter. Those were the days when a mere recital of names sounded so sublime to the child's ears: Sudakshina, Vratacharini, Saindhava, Chitrasena, Uttarakumara. And I saved in the hard disc of memory such 'useful' information as how the jackals howled when Duryodhana was born and Shiva took the four Vedas as dogs when he went to Arjuna as a hunter.

By the time my children were growing up there was no such single-focus at home. Each had his or her favourite paperback in hand and it was all English. No strangers to Vyasa or Valmiki thanks to Rajagopalachari's condensations in English, they yet had a wider variety to choose from and were fast building their personal libraries. The *Pandavulu-Kauravulu* reminded them of Vyasa again, and they said it was the right name. They felt the flowers, and smelt them. A mild, pleasant scent. It was decided then and there that this creeper would not only be planted, but would be

given a prominent place. Immediately there was a Planting Council rivalling the War Councils in the epic. Since Ahana assured us that a cutting would be just fine, we planted half a dozen of them here and there.

It was amazing when two of them placed outside my study window began to grow. The growth was phenomenal. Before three months were over, we had long creepers with plenty of bright green leaves and healthy, purple flowers. Then it was time for some cajoling and begging on the part of the children. Their father agreed to spend one whole Sunday away from his badminton in the Officers' Club. They went out shopping and got some rods and soon the pathway to the garage had this decorative arch. Daily we went anxiously to the creepers and saw to it that they climbed on and on and up and up, and downwards on the other side, to make the arch complete. Beauty descended on our Drainage Garden, as daily we vied with one another in counting the blossoms. When a Punjabi friend came and saw the creeper she went into ecstasies and said they call it *Jhumkalata* in Hindi as the flowers are like ear-ornaments called *Jhumkas*. From then on if we went near the creeper and saw the flowers, our heads would automatically shake a little to watch the purple *Jhumkas* sway in the breeze.

One day I cut a piece of the creeper which had two blossoms and some buds at the end, and placed it in the vase before the portraits of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in my study. The flowers remained very fresh till night. Before putting off the light, I had one last look and told myself that the next morning these flowers would have wilted. But no matter, I can always cut another length!

The next morning the two flowers had fallen down. But I had a feeling the buds were slightly larger in size. So I left the creeper shorn of flowers in the vase. Imagine my surprise when on the fourth day two of the buds had grown nearly to full size and opened, spreading a rare brilliance around! I shouted and Ahana came running. For us this was a great discovery. So *Pandavulu-Kauravulu* became a permanent fixture in my flower vase.

It was also time to think for a while why the Mother had named the flower Silence. The two younger children simply said: "The flower does not speak like us, so the Mother named it Silence." Ahana's lecture on how jasmines also do not speak, "*Kanakambaram* does not speak, even the plantain flower does not utter a word" went unheard. It remained for us two to discuss the significance, but we could not fathom the 'why' of it. I do not know whether it was Ahana or me who said: "Mother must have wished us to know that there are so many filaments yet they are silent, so even if there are many students in a class, all of them must observe silence." At least the flower made us reflect on the values of silence though our house was a stranger to this virtue!

One day I found out that if the Andhras called it *Pandavulu-Kauravulu*, they had another explanation for its structure in the West. Quite intricate too! It was called 'passion flower' because it symbolises Christ's Passion. The three stigmas are the three nails used to secure Jesus to the Cross, the five anthers indicate the five wounds suffered by him. The corona of filaments the crown of thorns placed on him. In fact,

they give a minute explanation referring to the tendrils as the whips with which he was driven. After coming across this explanation, looking at *Pandavulu-Kauravulu* or holding the flower in my hand invariably opens two scenes before me. There is a vast army, chariots, horses, infantry, cavalry, elephants, while at a corner the blind King Dhritarashtra turns to Sanjaya:

*Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre samavetā yuyutsavah
Māmakāh pāndavāschaiva kim akurvata Sanjaya*

Look at his arrogance: *My people for the Kauravas! Did this arrogance lead to the fall? Did it all happen? Is it mere imagination? There are millions of our rationalists who question every component of our Sanatana Dharma. But I am comforted by Sri Aurobindo who does not accept the Gita to be a latter-day insertion in the epic. The conversation must have happened on the battlefield where the Pandava and Kaurava armies had lined up to begin the fratricidal fray, for Krishna returns to the situation repeatedly:*

We must accept the insistence of the author and give its full importance to this recurrent preoccupation of the Teacher and the disciple. The teaching of the Gita must therefore be regarded not merely in the light of a general spiritual philosophy or ethical doctrine, but as bearing upon a practical crisis in the application of ethics and spirituality to human life.¹

Invariably I am drawn to my *Gita* shelf. So many classics! *Jnaneshwari* of Saint Jnaneshwar, the *Gita Rahasya* of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the gentle yet forceful Tamil commentary of Sister Subbulakshmi, the exegetic volumes of Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva . . . all I can do is bow my head in salutation and get on with life.

Nor does *Pandavulu-Kauravulu* ever fail to remind me of Sri Aurobindo's immortal lines in *Savitri*:

It is finished, the dread mysterious sacrifice,
Offered by God's martyred body for the world;
Gethsemane and Calvary are his lot,
He carries the cross on which man's soul is nailed;
His escort is the curses of the crowd;
Insult and jeer are his right's acknowledgment;
Two thieves slain with him mock his mighty death.
He has trod with bleeding brow the Saviour's way.
He who has found his identity with God
Pays with the body's death his soul's vast light.²

1. *Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 12.

2. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 445.

Such is my one-track mind that when I read this passage or open my *Gita*, the flower springs to my vision! It is as well for I see the actual flower but rarely these days. Once a year, when I go to Nainital, if I am lucky enough, I might see a creeper on some fence with one or two blossoms greeting me. It is not a familiar sight in the place where I live now. My own close association ceased with those three years when it was a daily splendour in our garden. A real or imagined snake was the problem. Probably it has something to do with my birthplace Kodakanallur! One day the vegetable vendor who had put down her wares, screamed: “*Ayyomma, pāmu!*” I came out running, carrying the little basket in which I buy the day’s requirements. “*Ekkada choochave? Where did you see?*” She categorically pointed out our pride, the lush creeper of *Pandavulu-Kauravulu*. I could see no serpent but fear has many mansions. The entire load of leaves and flowers seemed to be swaying and moving like so many serpents with their jewels gleaming in the sun. I put the basket down and went near the creeper to check but the lady screamed again and drew me back. She then gave me a lecture on how our generation has simply no idea of plants and creepers. Will anyone keep this creeper so close to the window? Allowing all those tendrils to peep in? And the curtains stylishly swishing around hiding snakes and scorpions? With children who keep jumping around all the time, it is obvious I have no brains (*buddhi ledhu*). She had a point of course and we were such good friends that she had no inhibitions in pulling me up. Our rural community has a native genius which is unrivalled by the educated Indian.

The next thing we did was to have another Council of War the same night and it was decided with so many sighs that the creeper be cut down the next day. So it was done and the passageway to the car shed became exposed and barren in no time. We consoled ourselves that we would plant a couple of cuttings near the fencing which was fifteen feet away from the house. It was done. The cuttings were duly watered by me whenever I cleaned black *gram dal* for someone said this is good for the plant. We imagined how it would curtain the fencing and we would be able to see the flowers and pluck them easily also as they would be within reach. Certainly we would take the precaution of first tapping the fence from a distance with a long stick, to get the snakes away, if any.

Vain imaginings! Did the *Pandavulu-Kauravulu* creeper think ill of our ingratitude? Perhaps there had been no snake. The rays of a coastal sun may have played a trick on the creeper which may have deceived our alert vendor. Perhaps she had been carrying the load of brinjals and pumpkins for quite a distance and was tired. She was, after all, quite old. But the moment a snake was mentioned, from somewhere fear descended upon us all, especially because she had disapproved of the creeper being so close to the window. When the parents and children sat together in various poses and contradicted one another and re-contradicted themselves, it was very obvious the reptile had won. For the Mother has said:

Fear is also a terribly contagious collective thing — contagious, it is much more catching than the most contagious of illnesses. You breathe an atmosphere of fear and instantly you feel frightened, without even knowing why or how, nothing, simply because there was an atmosphere of fear.³

Such an accurate description of the scene which I see through the film of thirty years. The cuttings wilted in the hot sun, despite being protected by baskets. And soon they withered away. For many days the dining table conversation would often get back to the creeper and we would sigh: “One could often count sixty flowers on some days!” “Just one span with a couple of flowers and a few buds! Nothing like that for a flower vase in the altar!” But like everything else, other interests came into our life and soon it was time to move out of the city.

But the flower has been imbedded in my memory because of its associations with the *Gita* and the Passion of Christ. When sitting in meditation, it is wonderful to remember this flower for meditation and wonder why the Mother named it Silence. For meditation usually needs external silence, and then, internal silence is a must. And what is silence? Is there strength in silence? Then I am drawn again to *Savitri*. Sri Aurobindo had found Savitri to have gathered her strength from sheer silence. Vyasa’s *Upakhyana* which he admired shows Savitri mostly silent. But when she speaks, she speaks to the point. As when she tells Aswapati that she had chosen Satyavan and there is no question of changing her mind. *Na dwitīyam vrunomyaham*: Having chosen once, I shall not choose again! This reading of Savitri’s character and yoga as being structured by silence has been given in detail in the epic. What more does one need to make the day holy than have a *Pandavulu-Kauravulu* blossom on the palm, watch its glorious petals shimmering with beauty and silence and hidden significances and murmur, recognising the face of Savitri herself in it:

At once she was the stillness and the word,
A continent of self-diffusing peace,
An ocean of untrembling virgin fire;
The strength, the silence of the gods were hers.⁴

(To be continued)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

3. *Questions and Answers 1953*, CWM, Vol. 5, p. 318.

4. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 16.