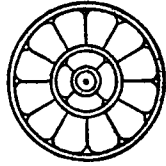


# MOTHER INDIA

MARCH 1958

Price : Re. 1.



Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. X

No. 2

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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Février 1958

Fêter la naissance d'un corps transitoire  
peut satisfaire certains sentiments fiévreux.

Fêter la manifestation de la Conscience  
éternelle peut se faire à chaque minute  
de l'histoire universelle.

Mais fêter l'apparition d'un monde  
nouveau, du monde supramental, est un  
privilege exceptionnel et merveilleux.



21 February 1958

February 1958

To celebrate the birth of a transitory body can satisfy some faithful feelings.

To celebrate the manifestation of the eternal Consciousness can be done at every moment of the universal history.

But to celebrate the advent of a new world, the supramental world, is a marvellous and exceptional privilege.

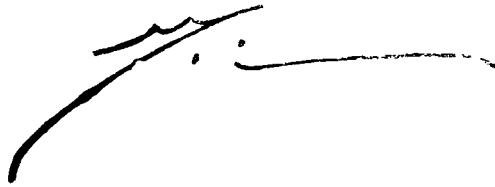


## THE INTEGRAL YOGA

*A Message by the Mother*

In the integral Yoga there is no distinction between the sadhana and the outward life; it is in each and every movement of the daily life that the Truth must be found and practised.

16-3-58



## TO A YOUNG ARTIST

*(An Unpublished Letter of Sri Aurobindo)*

THAT is a great error of the human vital—to want complements for their own sake and to be depressed by their absence and imagine that it means there is no capacity. In this world one starts with ignorance and imperfection in whatever one does—one has to find out one's mistakes and to learn, one has to commit errors and find out by correcting them the right way to do things. Nobody in the world has ever escaped from this law. So what one has to expect from others is not compliments all the time, but praise of what is right or well done and criticism of errors and mistakes. The more one can bear criticism and see one's mistakes, the more likely one is to arrive at the fullness of one's capacity. Especially when one is very young—before the age of maturity—one cannot easily do perfect work. What is called the juvenile work of poets and painters—work done in their early years is always imperfect, it is a promise and has qualities—but the real perfection and full use of their powers comes afterwards. They themselves know that very well, but they go on writing or painting because they know also that by doing so they will develop their powers.

As for comparison with others, one ought not to do that. Each one has his own lesson to learn, his own work to do and he must concern himself with that, not with the superior or inferior progress of others in comparison with himself. If he is behind today, he can be in full capacity hereafter and it is for that future perfection of his powers that he must labour. You are young and have everything yet to learn—your capacities are yet only in bud, you must wait and work for them to be in full bloom—and you must not mind if it takes months and years even to arrive at something satisfying and perfect. It will come in its proper time, and the work you do now is always a step towards it.

But learn to welcome criticism and the pointing out of imperfections—the more you do so, the more rapidly you will advance.

1933





## DEPRESSIONS AND REVOLTS

*(Some Unpublished Letters of Sri Aurobindo)*

*Q : How is it that in spite of the Mother's constant Grace some people here are making big things out of petty troubles and falling into depression and despair ?*

A: Because people are living here under the Mother's shelter and saved from the great sufferings and tragedies of human life, they must needs spin despairs and tragedies out of nothing. The vital wants to indulge its sorrow sense and shout and groan and weep and if it can't have a good or big reason for doing it, it will use a bad or small one. (1-3-1936)

*Q : Somebody told me that when the Mother's spiritual force acts strongly on X, his vital revolts so much against her that it brings an illness in her body at times.*

A : There are many who did that in the past. I don't know that he does it now. But all bad thoughts upon the Mother or throwing of impurities on her may affect her body as she has taken the sadhakas into her consciousness nor can she send these things back to them as it might hurt them. (17-3-1936)

*Q : Do people really throw their impurities on the Mother or does she draw them on herself in order to purify or empty the sadhakas of this stuff ?*

A : There is not the slightest necessity for the Mother drawing impurities into herself—any more than for the sadhaka inviting impurity to come into himself. Impurity has to be thrown away, not drawn in. (18-3-1936)

*Q : I see that some sadhakas and sadhikas remain constantly in despair and gloom. They are not able to get out from that groove.*

A : They are unable for two reasons : 1) because they yield to despair and gloom and the illusion of impotence, 2) because they try only with their own strength and do not care or know how to call in the working of the Mother's force. (10-6-1936)

## THE MYSTERY OF THE VEDA

*(Translated from the original Bengali of Sri Aurobindo in "Vividha Rachana")*

THE Veda Samhita is the eternal source of the dharma, culture and spiritual knowledge of India. But the fountain-head of this source is lost in the cave of an inaccessible mountain and even its initial course is hidden under the strange vines, bushes and flowering trees of a thorny forest, deep and very ancient. The Veda is mysterious. The language, the manner of expression and the form of thinking have been created by another age ; they are the product of a different type of mentality. On one hand, it is extremely simple like the flow of a pure and swift mountain stream ; yet, on the other, this process of thinking appears so complex to us, the meaning of its language so uncertain that from very ancient times disagreements and discussions have continued regarding its essential thought and even regarding the simple words used in every line. Upon reading the commentary of the great scholar Sayanaacharya, one gets the impression that a coherent sense of the Veda never did exist, or else what was there got submerged in the sea of oblivion of all-devouring Time even long before the Brahmanas, which came after the Vedas, were composed.

Sayana was in a quandary when he undertook to find the significance of the Veda. It was like someone who, wearied of pursuing a false light through darkness, stumbled often and fell into holes full of mire and filthy water, yet was unable to abandon the pursuit. The meaning of the fundamental Scripture of the Aryan dharma had to be found but the words were so enigmatic, the synthesis was made up of so many mysterious and profound entangled thoughts that in a thousand places it had no sense at all and, where somehow a meaning could be gleaned, the shadow of doubt fell across it. Many a time, discouraged by this perplexity, Sayana has put in the mouths of the Rishis such ungrammatical language, such complicated, jumbled and halting sentences, and attributed to them such disorderly and incoherent thought that upon reading his commentary, instead of calling this language and thought the Aryan language, the Aryan thought, one is tempted to treat them as the ravings of a barbarian or a lunatic. Sayana is not to be blamed. The ancient lexicographer Yaska also committed the same blunder, and long before him the authors of the Brahmanas, unable to discover the plain meaning of

the Veda, made an unsuccessful attempt to interpret the difficult Riks with the help of their "mytho-poëic faculty." The historians, imitating this method, invested the Veda with a numerous pageantry of purely imaginary events twisting and obscuring its sacred and simple meaning. An example will illustrate the nature and the amount of distortion that the sense has suffered by this treatment. In the second Sukta of the fifth Mandala there is the mention about the compressed or the covered state of Agni and his vast manifestation after a long time. "*Kumāram mātā yubatiḥ samudhvam guhā vibharti ne dadāti pitre...kametam twam yubate kumāram peṣī bibharṣi mahiṣi jajāna. Purvīhi garbhaḥ śarado...yadsūta mātā.*" It means, "The young Mother carries the boy suppressed in the secret cavern and she gives him not to the Father ; his force is undiminished, men see him in front established inwardly in the movement. Who is this boy, O young Mother, whom thou carriest in thyself when thou art compressed into form, but when thou art vast thou hast given him birth ? Through many years grew the child in the womb, I saw him born when the Mother brought him forth." The language of the Veda is everywhere a little dense, compact and pregnant with meaning ; it tries to express a wealth of significance in a few words yet without ever impairing the simplicity of the meaning and the harmony of the thought. Historians could not understand this straightforward meaning that when the mother is compressed or contracted, then the boy is also suppressed or covered. They did not notice or seize the harmony between the language and the thought of the Rishi. They understood, by the word 'peṣī', some fiendish woman who stole the power of Agni ; the word 'mahiṣi' suggested to them 'a queen' and the words 'kumāra samudhva' conveyed to them that a young Brahmin was crushed to death under the wheels of a chariot. Quite a long legend based on this interpretation was fabricated, with the result that the meaning of the Riks became unintelligible. Who was the young man ? or the Mother ? or the fiendish woman ? Was it the story of Agni or of the young Brahmin ? Who is speaking to whom and about what ? Everything is in confusion. Everywhere there is such a torture. Pointless tyranny of imagination has distorted and mutilated the simple yet profound meaning of the Veda and at places where the language and the thought are a little involved, by the grace of the commentator the incomprehensibility has assumed a frightfully hideous appearance.

Let alone this question of individual Riks and metaphors, there was a great deal of controversy in ancient times even regarding the veritable significance of the Veda itself. According to Euhemeros of Greece, the Gods of the Greeks were ever-remembered heroes and kings who with the passage of time were transformed into gods and enthroned in heaven by a different kind of superstition and reckless poetic imagination. There was no dearth of fol-

lowers of Euhemerus even in ancient India. Here is an example : they said that in fact the two Ashwins were neither gods nor stars but two renowned kings, men of flesh and blood like us, who probably attained godhead after their death. According to others, everything is a Solar myth, that is to say, the Sun, Moon, Sky, Stars and Rain etc.—each play of the physical Nature adorned with a poetical name has become a god with a human form. Vritra is the cloud, Vala also the cloud, and the Dasyus (robbers), the Danavas (demons) and the Daityas (titans) are nothing else but the clouds of the sky ; the rain-god Indra, interceptor of sunlight, pierces the miserly clouds unwilling to give rain, and by sending down the rain produces the free flow of the five male and the seven female rivers which fertilise the soil and make the Aryans rich and prosperous. Or else Indra, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Vishnu are only different appellations of the Sun. Mitra is the god of day, Varuna the god of night, the Ribhus who by their will-power fashion the horse of Indra and the chariot of the two Ashwins, are, too, only rays of the sun. On the other hand, there existed a great number of orthodox adherents of the Veda who were ritualists. They said that gods have a human figure, and at the same time, they are the all-pervading guardians of the powers of Nature ; Agni is simultaneously a god with a body and the fire on the altar of sacrifice ; the earthly fire, the undersea fire and the lightning are the three forms of his manifestation. Saraswati is a river as well as a goddess, and so on. They firmly believed that the gods, pleased by the chants and hymns of the devotee, granted him heaven after death and bestowed upon him in this life, strength, children, cows, horses, food and clothing, killed his enemy and crushed with lightning the head of his impertinent and slandering critic; they were always anxious to accomplish such auspicious and friendly acts. This idea was by far the most powerful in ancient India.

Yet thoughtful men were not rare who had faith in the intrinsic value of the Veda, in the Rishihood of the Rishi, and who diligently sought after the spiritual significance of the Rik-Samhita, who looked for the fundamental truth of the Upanishads in the Veda. They held the opinion that the boon of light for which the Rishis prayed to God was not the light of the material sun but the light of the Sun of Knowledge, the Sun which is mentioned in the mantra of 'Gayatri', the Sun which Vishwamitra had seen. This light is '*tatsavitur-varnyam devasya bhargah*,' that power and light of the Divine Sun, this god is '*yo no dhiyah prochodayat*', he who impels all our thoughts towards the principles of the Truth. The Rishis feared '*tamaḥ*', darkness, but not the darkness of night ; they feared the dense obscurity of ignorance. Indra is '*jvātmā*', the soul or the life ; Vritra is neither cloud nor the demon imagined by the poets but the one who impedes the growth of our manhood by covering it up

with the thick night of ignorance, in whom the gods, at first, remain concealed and lost, then rise delivered by the bright light of knowledge emanating from the Divine Word. Sayanacharya has given to these Rishis the name of 'atmavids' or knowers of the Self and he often cites their explanation of the Veda.

As an example we can quote the explanation of the 'atmavids' given for the hymn addressed by Gotama Rohugana to the 'maruts', the Winds. In this Sukta Gotama invokes the Maruts and prays to them for light :

*'yūyam tatsatyaśavasa āviṣkarta mahitvana  
vidhyatā vidyutā rakṣaḥ  
gūhatā guhyam tamo viyāta viśvamantriṇam  
jyotiskartā yaduśmasi.'* (I-86-10)

According to the Ritualists, the light mentioned in the two Riks is the light of the physical sun. "The Rakshah, devourer who has covered up the light of the sun by darkness, O Maruts, destroy that Rakshah and reveal again the light of the Sun to our eyes." According to the 'atmavids' a different meaning should be given : "O ye who are mighty with the strength of the Truth, manifest that supreme knowledge by your greatness ; pierce with your lightning the Rakshasa. Conceal the darkness reigning in the cave of the heart, that is to say, let the darkness sink and disappear in the flood of the Truth-Light. Repel every devourer of manhood, create the light for which we long."<sup>1</sup> Here the Maruts are not the winds who disperse the clouds but the five vital energies. 'Tamaḥ' is the psychological darkness in the heart, the devourers of manhood are the six adversaries,<sup>2</sup> jyotiḥ is the Light of knowledge, the living form of the Truth. Thus interpreted we find simultaneously in the Veda the spiritual knowledge, the basic idea of the Upanishads, and the Rajayogic system of 'pranayam'.

Thus far is the story of the indigenous bungle regarding the Veda. In the nineteenth century, the Western Pundits girded up their loins and came into the arena producing a more intense foreign imbroglio. Even to this day, only to keep afloat, we are struggling hard against the huge waves of that flood. The European Pundits have erected their new and brilliant temple of phantasy on the old foundations laid by the ancient lexicographers and historians. They

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo's own later English translation reads .

"O ye who have the flashing strength of the Truth, manifest that by your might , pierce with your lightning the Rakshasa. Conceal the concealing darkness, repel every devourer, create the Light for which we long "

<sup>2</sup> i.e., lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. (Translator's note)

do not much follow the 'Nirukta' of Yaska, but explain the Veda with the help of recent lexicons compiled to their liking in Berlin and Petrograd. By giving a novel and bizarre form to the Solar myth of the ancient historians of India, by putting new paint on the old colours, they have dazzled the eyes of the educated community of this country. The Europeans also hold the view that the gods mentioned in the Veda are only symbols representing various activities of physical Nature. The Aryans used to worship the Sun, Moon, Stars, Planets, the Dawn, the Night, the Wind and the Storm, Rivers, Streams, Sea, Mountains, Trees, and such visible objects. Filled with awe at the sight of their fascinating movement, the barbarians adored these things in their chants as poetical personalities. Again, seeing in them the conscious play of multiple Gods, and wishing to establish friendly relations with these Powers, they prayed to them for victory in battle, for prosperity, long life, health or children. Terrified by the darkness of night, they performed rituals and sacrifices for recovering the Sun. They were even afraid of ghosts and solicited the gods in a piteous manner to drive them away. The hope and ambition of gaining heaven by offering sacrifices, and similar ideas, were in fact quite befitting the barbarians of a prehistoric age.

There is victory in the battle, but battle with whom? They say it is the war between the Aryan race, which lived in the land of the five rivers, and the true Indians, the Dravidians; it is the constant fighting against the neighbouring people and the internal strife of the Aryans. The Europeans followed the method of the ancient Indian historians who used to fabricate various historical episodes on the authority of separate Riks and Suktas, with the difference that instead of letting their imagination run riot and building up such extraordinary stories full of unnatural and strange incidents as the death of a Brahmin youth crushed under the wheels of the chariot conducted by Jāra (son of Jara), Rishi Vrisha, who is then recalled to life by the power of the mantra, and the theft of the force of Agni by some fiendish woman, they tried to reconstruct the ancient history of India with the help of such true or fanciful tales as the battle of the Aryan Tritsuraj Sudas against ten kings of mixed race, the priesthood of Vasistha on one side and the priesthood of Vishwamitra on the other, the theft of cattle of the Aryans and the obstruction of the flow of their rivers by the cave-dwelling Dravidians, the despatch of the Aryan envoy or royal ambassador to the Dravidians in the parable of Sarama (the Hound of Heaven), etc.

The disorder which these Occidentals have created in their attempt to coordinate mutually contradictory symbols of physical Nature with historical metaphors is beyond all description. It seems, to justify it, they say, "What can we do? The mentality of those ancient barbarian poets was very confused, that is why we have been obliged to use such contrivances; but as far as our

## THE MYSTERY OF THE VEDA

explanation is concerned, it is perfect, genuine and faultless." Anyway, the long and short of it is that, in spite of the interpretation offered by the European scholars, the meaning of the Veda remains just as incoherent, confused, incomprehensible and complicated as it had become at one time by the explanation given by the Eastern scholars. Everything has altered yet remains the same. It is true that hundreds of thunderers hailing from the banks of the Thames, the Seine, and the Neva have poured on our heads the seven celestial rivers of new learning, but none of them have been able to remove the obscurity produced by Vritra.

We are enveloped in the same darkness as before.

NIRANJAN

## HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

*Reminiscences of Various People in Contact with the Mother*

*(Continued from the last issue)*

### “TO MY DEAR CHILD”

Once I was staying in the Golconde. A painter also lived there. One day he was painting a lily which bloomed in the pond in the courtyard. I liked the lily-painting very much. I asked him if he would give me that painting. Of course, he could not oblige, for, he said, he wanted to offer it to the Mother.

After one year, on 15th August, when I went to the Mother, she gave me the same piece of painting with these words on it :

“To my dear child,  
With my love and blessings.”

### “WHY FEAR IT ?”

Once I had fever. During sleep I saw a lion trying to jump upon me with a loud roar. I could see that it was made of earth, yet I was very much afraid of it.

I prayed to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sri Aurobindo instantly stood by me and told me : “The lion is also created by God. Why fear it ?” Immediately the lion became quiet and tamed and lay down near my feet. I patted it on the head and it behaved like a cat.

### “THE DIVINE, THE ONLY BOSS”

Once a newcomer was brought to me to see my department. He had come to stay in the Ashram permanently. The sadhak who brought the newcomer to me, told me while departing, that he would again come the next day with the newcomer.



## HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

The newcomer had devoted the best part of his life to my line of work before coming over to Pondicherry and was well-experienced.

I had doubts in my mind as to why he was being brought to me. "What is this movement?" I thought. "Why was I told that he would come again? Is he being brought here as the future head of my department?" The truth is that I have always felt repugnance to the idea of being a boss or of being bossed since I left my job in Calcutta and came over to Pondicherry permanently.

Before sleep that day, I prayed to the Mother in some such words: "I leave the matter to you. Whatever you decide will be welcome. But I do not want anybody to come between myself and the Divine."

I did not have a very comfortable sleep that night. When I got up in the morning, I was delivered a letter from the Mother which read thus:

"I am sending X to visit your..., because...is his chief interest in life.

"He will be very willingly a co-worker, if you welcome him as such. As for being a boss, he has never thought of such an absurd thing and he knows quite well that there is no boss but the Divine.

"So, I am sure you will welcome him as your brother and as a child of mine."

On reading this letter, all my doubts were gone and when the person came to me, I received him with an open heart as a comrade in common service to the Divine.

### "THE NIGHT-WATCHER OF SOULS"

The anteroom, beside the Mother's present Drawing Room in the Playground, was under renovation and I was supervising the work.

There was to be built a bathroom for her behind this ante-room. The old room was there, only it was to be reconstructed to suit new purposes. The old foundations had been dug up and the mud-walls were exposed. After the day's work, the labourers left.

At night, at about twelve or one o'clock, there was heavy rain. I suddenly got up at night and thought of the half-finished work in the Playground exposed to danger in that heavy rain. I feared that the mud-walls might give way as a result of the water seeping into the foundations and there was every possibility of the roof falling down.

At that hour, I could not but pray to the Mother. As soon as I called "Mother", to my wonder she appeared before me. Her countenance was so vivid that she was beyond a shadow of doubt present to my wide open eyes. I told her, "It is raining heavily and the bathroom wall is exposed to the danger

of falling down. The roof also might collapse. Now it is your responsibility. I am helpless.”

The Mother listened and withdrew. I felt myself relieved of a heavy burden. My worry washed away and with a happy feeling I went to sleep. After a short while I found to my wonderment that the rain had completely stopped though it had threatened to be a heavy shower.

Next morning, I went to the Playground and saw that everything was all right. So I continued my daily work.

Before the daily blessings, our Engineer went to the Mother as usual. When he was with the Mother, she asked him, “Did last night’s rain do any damage to the construction work in the Playground?”

As he did not know anything about my previous night’s worry or my consequent experience, and was unaware of any possible damage by the heavy downpour, he was at a loss to give any precise answer. He simply told the Mother that he would enquire.

On coming to the site of the work, he told me the whole story. As he was relating it, I started to recall the previous night’s happening. I told him how the Mother had appeared and what I had told her.

He used to go to the Mother once again at about 1 o’clock. He related to her my experience and asked her whether it was all true.

The Mother said, “Yes”.

#### “MYSTERIOUS GRACE”

A friend of mine, a naval doctor, lived in Barrackpore. For some reason he had to leave his daughter at Calcutta for her studies.

He approached me and asked whether his wife and daughter could stay with me for a time. I had no objection, if I could be of any help to him. I told him that they were fully welcome, if they did not mind the inconvenience they might have to suffer for all my defects of temper etc. They brought their luggage and put up with me.

His son, a young boy of twenty-five, had enlisted in the Air Force. He was then in Bangalore. We got a letter from him that he wanted a watch and some fifty rupees for his personal expenditure. These were sent to him.

After the lapse of a few days, the parcel and the money-order came back unacknowledged. We were surprised. We wrote to the Air Force authorities to let us know the whereabouts of the boy. No answer was received. We wrote again, but to no effect.

The boy’s mother wept and moaned. But what could be done? Those

## HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

were the days of war, the year 1942. He must have been sent on active service to the front.

I used to console her that the Divine Mother in Pondicherry would protect her son if she kept up her own spirits. "You should keep faith in the Mother and pray to her. She will surely listen to your call."

But the woman was far from the ways of prayer and would not believe in such "meaningless airy" things, so much so that she would grumble when her daughter sat with us in collective meditation.

One day I returned home at midnight leaving them at one of their relatives' houses to attend a marriage party where she had gone, on my persuasion, with great reluctance, for she was all the time sorrowful, lamenting her misfortune.

As I got into my room, I turned the radio-knob. Some European music was going on. My hand was still on the knob when suddenly I saw the Mother standing opposite me as if physically, with graceful slimness, gorgeous dress, crowned forehead, white bright face, glittering eyes and piercing look. I could also see some light radiating from the middle of her forehead. "The boy is coming tomorrow", she spoke, smiled and faded away.

In the morning, before going to my office, I handed over my house-key to another lady who was staying in the upper flat. That day I returned home early, eleven o'clock instead of twelve, to see whether the boy had come back. I met only the bewailings of my friend's wife. With seeming sternness, I almost shouted: "Why all these lamentations all the time? Your son is coming today. No more bewailings. Why cry about your misfortune and make a fuss for nothing?"

At midday as we sat around the table for lunch, the door-bell rang. I told the girl to see who was calling. As soon as she reached the main door and opened it, we heard a loud scream. We got frightened. I rushed to the door only to see the brother and sister standing face to face, the boy outside the door bewildered, and the girl inside gasping in dread with wide-open eyes, the door half-closed.

"Why? Can't you recognise me?" the puzzled boy was asking his puzzled sister. She could not believe that it was her own brother who had come back.

The incident turned this family to draw spiritual solace and inspiration from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

### "MY WILD PROPHECY"

I went for my usual work in the fields. That day we had to plough the field before planting paddy.

## MOTHER INDIA

Before doing so, we always put leguminous crop. When nicely grown we plough it down to the soil to increase the fertility of the soil.

It was late in the afternoon and, as we reached the fields with the tractor, I just looked up at the declining sun. Suddenly I saw within the circumference of the sun the Mother looking vivid and brilliant. The disc of the sun was a little bluish and around it hung a cluster of clouds. I closed my eyes and re-opened them to confirm that I was not dreaming. I could again see as before the Mother's figure very distinctly. Therewith came to me a spontaneous feeling, as if a symbolic message were conveyed to me, that there would be rain soon, although there were no signs of rain at that time.

I told the tractor driver and the workers to hurry up. I said to them, "The rain is coming soon. Finish the scattering of the seeds before it starts pouring."

They were amazed at my wild" prophecy.

It rained cats and dogs just as the scattering was over.

*Reported by HAR KRISHAN SINGH*

# SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

## SOME IMPRESSIONS

THE word 'Ashram' brings before the mind's eye a picture of a modest abode of some great sage, far removed from the 'cited haunts of men', in the deep recesses of a remote forest replete with the wealth of Nature. There on the bank of a flowing river stands in serene solitude a small hermitage where the sage, who has renounced all worldly cares and duties, sits in silent communication with God. This silent sanctuary remains untrodden by the dusty feet of men of the world and is peopled by a handful of chosen disciples who render service to their Guru and learn the ancient lore under his instructions. There strict Tapasya is enjoined and food is strictly regulated to fruits and roots. For the most part of the day there is no activity at all. The only activity is the one of complete withdrawal from the world and a silent contemplation of the eternal Brahman. All life there is a life of unconditioned silence of the soul.

But here at Pondicherry, a visitor stands completely disillusioned and to an extent even shocked to find that there is no Ashram of the conception based on the knowledge of ancient scriptures. Here exists a world in itself, seething with activities of all kinds, scattered in about 200 buildings, simple yet grand in their simplicity. Here there is no guru thinned by Tapasya, with long nails and matted hair, withdrawn and remote from all life about him; here instead is the Divine Mother, the eternal Shakti, immaculately dressed, reigning supreme over the 1200 odd Ashramites. Here there are men, women, children of all ages, Indians, English, German, American, French, each given to some active work or other, because the Mother's fiat is "Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body's best prayer to the Divine." Here there is a University and a school, a playground, tennis courts, a swimming pool and activities and sports for physical education, a plantation, a poultry farm and a dairy, a garage and a workshop, a weaving department and a cottage industries department, a press and a publication department, a provision store, a library, a tailoring department, a laundry, flower service, bakery and a secretariat !—all managed with efficiency and discipline by the Sadhaks. Here also are guest houses and a restaurant and a common dining room where simple food is served. Here there is none high or low, and each one does his allotted work with zeal and cheer, for he is conscious that he is collaborating in an experiment of a rare

kind. The most amazing fact is that there are no codified rules and regulations except only the broad elementary rules of non-smoking, non-drinking, continence, etc., rules which are common to any community, religious or sectarian, dedicated to spiritual advancement. Here all laws evolve from within the individual as naturally as anything else, because the Mother's force works in a powerful way and automatically corrects, controls and regulates the thoughts and actions not only of the Ashramites but of the visitors too. For the Mother is never absent; She is present everywhere here with each one and Her compelling presence is so visibly felt that one is obliged to admit the truth of Her observation that "Here, at Pondicherry, you cannot breathe without breathing my consciousness."

To see boys and girls of grown-up age and full of life mixing freely might well lead any thinking individual to shake his head and ask : "Is there not in this free mixing of young men and women a seed of potential danger which may at any moment blow up the moral being in man ?" The question is natural enough indeed. But the answer, if one tries to understand the system of this Yoga even a little, is simpler still. It must be remembered that here for the first time in the history of spiritual progress is tried an experiment of a signal character. Here there is no Yoga for the emancipation of a single individual, a denial of the natural laws of living. Here is practised the Yoga of terrestrial transformation and the transformation of the essential human, a bundle of errors and weaknesses, into the Divine. It does not end with the transformation of "the thinking principle", *citta vṛtti nirodhah*. It seeks to transform the material nature also and the bringing down of the Supramental Force on earth by Sri Aurobindo is the living illustration of such a transformation. To have a glimpse of the Mother is to see the Divine face to face and this is precisely what is sought to be done in respect not only of the Sadhakas but of the entire human race ! Here therefore the law of suppression turns itself into a law of transformation and all errors and weaknesses work out their redemption because the Force is so living and powerful that it goes on breaking, mending, reshaping and transforming those who have made it their life-work to collaborate in this Yoga. This is not only true of the Ashramites; it is true also in respect of the visitors. If they are sufficiently open, they will find to their utter amazement that some process which they are neither able to define nor describe nor even understand goes on within them chastening, subduing, transforming the very vitals of their being. They feel it and wonder. It is only because of this living Force that men and women move in the heaven of "Divine Liberty" governed by the enlightened and natural laws of their being. But this is still a small world in itself with its errors and weaknesses, its little loves and cares but here again it is essential to remember that an error or weakness is not condemned or

punished with ostracism. Here all imperfections are taken to be treated as so many aids to the ultimate transformation, and they exhaust themselves without causing any damage in the very futile process of their display ! But the Mother's force is compelling and She who is the Mother cannot let Her children suffer. She makes Herself responsible for all the imperfections and therefore the process of perfection becomes spontaneous and natural.

Here great stress is laid on physical fitness as the body is not treated as of secondary importance. For the fundamental of this Yoga is the transformation of the body also. It is therefore that physical exercises in which old and young of both the sexes take part are an important item of the daily routine. Even the Divine Mother sets the example by playing tennis, at the age of eighty, for half an hour daily. Here therefore medical examination of each inmate is undertaken with great care; and dispensaries, Allopathic, Ayurvedic, Homeopathic, each in charge of competent doctors, are run efficiently.

Morning Balcony Darshan and evening collective meditation are also important items of the daily activity. The Divine Mother appears in the balcony at 6-15 a.m., each day and all collect to have Darshan. Late in the evening She conducts collective meditation. Here also it is remarkable that attendance is not compulsory. Those whose duties keep them away are not expected ; nor do they have missed it. For it is the Mother's wish that none should deflect from his duty since She is ever present with each one. An ineffable Divine Light plays about here at all times and the sweet Divine smile transports everyone into regions of Bliss and Peace. For in Her presence thoughts are silenced and bliss and peace prevail. Such indeed is Her love and such Her power.

Here, as Sri Aurobindo's passing away has shown, death stands not a proud victor but the vanquished, crest-fallen and humbled. His dark dreadful mantle is shed from his shoulders. He is no longer the merciless collector of human harvest but stands silent at the gate of life as a Divine collaborator ready to play his part in the Divine Plan ! Here too the inexorable laws of Karma, which bind and pitilessly rotate the unfortunate human in the unceasing giant wheel of birth and death, stand transformed into the laws of liberation.

Here "miracles" do not happen, yet every hour is living and is a marvel. The plenitude of Heaven seems to flow in abundance in the blessed place, and blessed indeed are those who have dedicated themselves to the service of the Divine Mother. Blessed also are those who have breathed of this heavenly influence for however short a while. It may sound like a tall claim, almost impudent, but it is still correct to say that those who, in the hurry and bustle of this fleeting material existence, have not found time to breathe of this influence even once in life have missed the essence of living, the central purpose of their lives, indeed their very soul !

26-2-1958

V. V. BAXI

## THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY: FEBRUARY 21, 1958

O Mother-heart of infinite tenderness  
Pulsating through the cords of cosmic life,  
Higher and higher swell thy harmonies  
Within the chambers of a human frame,  
In unison with the answering hearts of men.  
We revel, walking hand in hand with Thee  
Each birthday round of Thy succeeding years.  
But all successions through the prism of Time  
Are glistening facets of Eternity.  
Man seeks felicity with the dead or those  
Unborn, while God's own hour stands facing him.  
The measures of the Heavens invade our norms;  
The broken world shall rise up plenary;  
Our stagnant selves be open estuaries  
To the triumphal surge of Thy redeeming Force;  
In the plastic sea of Thy infinity  
The stress of the Whole sustains our fragile parts.  
Thou makest all life a process of divinity :  
Thy gaze—a lightning call of grace burnt in the flesh,  
Thy smile—delirious bliss that pours from Paradise,  
Thy speech—ringing vibrations of the eternal Word,  
Thy touch—a reconditioning of the cells of being,  
Thy tread—quickenng caresses on the breast of Earth,  
Thy name—one golden answer to all Why and How.  
For ever and for ever may we be  
The ardent pilgrims of the sunlit path,  
The luminous wavelets of delight, O Mother,  
Upon the oceanic bosom of Thy love.  
In that great Poem—Thy new humanity—  
Let each one be a blessed rhyme of Thee.

NARESH BAHADUR



## THUS SANG MY SOUL

*(Continued from the last issue)*

### II. THE EARTH-CRY AND THE ADVENT OF THE MOTHER

*(Continued)*

#### 5. INVOCATION

O star from Silence's ocean,  
O sun of omnipotent motion,  
Sun-star of deathless golden power  
From Thy Nought-scraping skyey tower,  
Descend into my dustiness.

Descend, O Mother and bless  
With Thy immortalising Stress  
Our brittle bodies and clay-souls.  
O fill our hearts' thirst-widened bowls  
With Thy Love limitless.

#### 6. O THUNDER POWER OF THE DEATHLESS SUN

O Thunder Power of the deathless Sun,  
O unbent peak of the Terrible Supreme,  
Cast Thy eye of light on the basal dumbness,  
On the stubborn sleep of the unchanging clay,  
On the stagnant stone-mind that knows no stir.  
Throw Thy clairvoyance through the dense walls  
That resist the light which flows from Above  
And check the Grace knocking ceaseless at the eyeless gates.  
The pseudo-lords of life command but know not how to lead,  
The earthly princes exact but never dream of giving,  
The mortal powers are doomed to stumble and fall,  
For they love their weaknesses, their failings and their chains.

## THUS SANG MY SOUL

Obscurity prevails in the faltering powers of earth,  
Blind are they to supernal verity.  
Freedom's law is not for them that creep in dark,  
Light and liberty are for those who would dare and act,  
Perpetual insight for them who would ever love.  
O Strength Supreme of the Immaculate,  
Lean down with thy masses of timeless force.  
Laughing, crush the falsities that oppose Thee!  
Singing, dance that God awake in man,  
That consciousness-seed sprout in the closed hearts,  
That cry for Grace vibrate in blind souls  
And Thy life divine become an earthly fact!

### 7. LIFT THE WORLD TO THY COMPASSION

O Mother, lift the world to Thy Compassion :  
Forswearing falsehood, in Thy service grown,  
Pure it may flower in utter consecration  
Unto Thy aureoled sweet sun-face alone.

Lured, griped by earth-born gaudy glittering charm  
Man has forgotten Love's all-salving message,  
Yet through world-ethers vibrate its pinions warm  
Protecting, clear for him the Heavenward passage.

Thy Love be all his breath, his blood and bone,  
His house, his cot, his playthings, swaddling hands,  
His work, his beauty, faith, delight or moan,  
Diving sea, soaring sky, death's soothing hands !

Let all the world be charged by Love's enticement,  
Love's lightning kindle each hearth, each head and heart,  
Love rule and probe man's action and advisement,  
Never from earth Thy infallible Love part.

*(To be continued)*

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

## THE 'SEEING SOUL' AND THE 'SEEKING MIND'

(Continued from the last issue)

### B) *In Philosophy's 'Sanctum Sanctorum'*

An inconclusive's play is Reason's toil.  
Each strong idea can use her as its tool;  
Accepting every brief she pleads her case.  
The eternal Advocate seated as judge  
Armours in logic's invulnerable mail  
A thousand combatants for Truth's veiled throne  
And sets on a high horseback of argument  
To tilt for ever with a wordy lance  
In a mock tournament where none can win.<sup>1</sup>

### XI. A DILEMMA FOR BURIDAN'S ASS

'To be, or not to be' : such was the question teasing and tormenting the puzzled Prince of Denmark. But Hamlet's burden was lighter, for, in his ratiocination, he was confronted with a problem of the Aristotelian bivalent logic admitting of no more than two truth-values.

And although the *dénouement* might appear to be a bit of a tragedy, the logical ass of the philosopher Buridan solved its problem quite well, for did it not decide to starve rather than be illogical (almost a sacrilege for its species!), when offered the alternatives of two equally large and succulent bundles of hay, for it could find no logical justification for preferring one to the other !

But the problem facing us is a shade more complicated, for we are here face to face not with a puzzle of two-valued logic, but almost with one of Reichenbachian poly-logic! We purport to show that the exigence of visualisation plays an equally dominant role in the domain of philosophy and amongst the philosophers. But whom can I possibly choose as the high priests of this realm of ethereal abstraction ? Is there here any universally agreed list of names ?

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, B. II, C. 10.

And what is, after all, philosophy? And who is a philosopher? We are here bewildered in a maze of conflicting opinions and mutually destructive estimations. "What is truth?", asked the disconcerted Roman procurator of Judea, and during the last two millennia the philosophers have debated in vain to provide an all-satisfying answer to this query. But, alas, have they been able to define even their own profession?

Einstein once described science as 'an attempt to make the chaotic diversity of our sense impressions correspond to a logically uniform system of thought'. And Bertrand Russell said in a famous *bon mot*: "In mathematics no one knows what he is talking about, nor, whether what he is saying is true." Perhaps the philosophers—at least, we expect, some of them—would retort: 'philosophy is an effort to know what we talk about.' But what is its *modus operandi*? Is it characterised by what they call in French *esprit questionneur*? M. Duhamel gives us an instance of this incorrigible mania for 'why so'. In course of a conversation he has with Cuib, "a time comes when I am forced to withdraw from the discussion and confess: 'I do not know'. Then he looks me in the face and interjects: 'Why is it that you do not know?'"<sup>1</sup>

This uncritical filibuster of 'why' and 'how' is indeed a dangerous pastime and often lands the metaphysician in the quicksand of infinite regress. In this connection, who can fail to recollect that classical joke, although it is made at the cost of the *bon sens* of the metaphysicians?—

A: "I see two birds."

B: "How do you know that you see two birds?"

A: "How do you know that I do not know that I see two birds?"

B: "How do you know that I do not know that you do not know that you see two birds?"

A: "How do you know, etc., etc."

And so goes on *ad infinitum* the abracadabra of the two philosophers!

But let us be serious. We have referred to the definition of philosophy as being the attempt to know precisely what one talks about. When pushed to the logical end this degenerates into a style of speech almost unintelligible to any one outside the circle of its exclusive devotees. The modern philosopher, we are told, will disdain to say 'I was seated at my table'; instead, he will say something like this:

'One of a certain string of events causally connected in that sort of way which makes a whole series into what is called a "person", has a certain "spatial-temporal" relation to one of another string of events causally connected with

<sup>1</sup> G. Duhamel, *Les plaisirs et les jeux*, 106.

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each other in a different way and having a spatial-temporal configuration of the sort denoted by the word "table".<sup>1</sup>

This sort of Chinese word-puzzle could not but evoke strong reaction from others. In fact, a psycho-analyst has ventured to assert that the 'essential difference between science and philosophy would seem to be, not that science deals with significant and philosophy with meaningless problems, but that science deals with those that are clear-cut and philosophy with those which have not got beyond the stage of being only dimly felt'. Professor Jerusalem of Vienna expressed this by saying that philosophy begins with an "intellectual discomfort".

And philosophers themselves are now divided into two main schools of thought : those who try to ask and answer metaphysical questions, and those who try to show that all metaphysical questions are meaningless. Wittgenstein, for example, recommended in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that the right method of teaching philosophy would be to confine oneself to propositions of the sciences, leaving philosophical assertions to the learner, and proving to him, whenever he made them, that they are meaningless. In fact, the modern discipline of semantics has shown very clearly that some of the traditional problems of philosophy have their origin in a lack of discrimination between a class and a class of classes, and this is particularly so in case of the problems concerning the use of the word 'to exist'. Certain philosophers have, to some extent, acknowledged this diversity of connotation of the verb 'to exist' and used instead the expression 'to subsist' while speaking of the class. But we must then realise that 'subsistence' is a term with a meaning completely different from that of 'existence', otherwise this terminology merely increases the confusion.

In fact, the meaning criterion arose, historically, from the desire to eliminate metaphysics. Philosophers hoped to find a device that could determine, for any kind of isolated sentence, whether or not it was meaningful. Obviously, too much was demanded. For, as E.H. Hutten has remarked : "A criterion is not a gadget, like a pocket-rule, that we need only to lay on to take the measure of a sentence. How pleasant it would be if we could so simply get rid of all meaningless sentences ! There are, alas, a great many ways in which one can, deliberately or accidentally, talk nonsense. Logic cannot cure all linguistic ills, only logical ills".<sup>3</sup>

And the result is, as Cicero pointed out long ago, that 'there is nothing

<sup>1</sup> Joshua Whatmough, *Language : A Modern Synthesis*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> R.E. Money-Kyrle (Ed.), *New Directions in Psycho-Analysis*, p. 421.

<sup>3</sup> Ernest. H. Hutten, *The Language of Modern Physics*, p. 70.

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so absurd but that it may be found in the books of the philosophers'. Indeed, philosophy appears sometimes to be "as useless as chess, as obscure as ignorance, and as stagnant as content....Doubtless some philosophers have had all sorts of wisdom except common sense; and many a philosophic flight has been due to the elevating power of thin air."<sup>1</sup>

But let us cry halt to this damaging criticism; for, we are here to taste the 'dear delight' of philosophy, and not to sit in judgement over it. Although it is a fact that philosophers, through the ages, have debated and deliberated almost *ad nauseam* without ever succeeding in producing any agreed set of truths, or even an agreed definition of true philosophy, although it may be a fact that they have sometimes argued only for amusement and have contradicted and refuted one another "like puppy-dogs who delight to tear and pull at all who come near them", the result being that philosophy 'finds itself in the midst of ruins of its own making' — Matter being challenged by the protagonists of Mind, Mind being destroyed by the champions of Matter — let us be a bit wiser albeit with a grain of illogicality and heed the famous advice of the wit: "No matter, never mind", and pass on to the consideration of visualisation in philosophy, however, tangled the jumbled heap may be: *Non ragonam dit lor, ma guarda e passa.*<sup>2</sup> But before that let us digress a little and peep into the general structure of philosophic thought and of philosophic argumentation; for that will offer us later on a proper perspective and canvas on which to point out the significant appearance of the exigence of visualisation, here, there, everywhere.

## XII IN THE CLOUDLAND

Philosophy is indeed a formidable subject dealing with the world of tenuous abstraction far removed from this buzzing, booming domain of the sensible concrete; so much so that the philosophers are reputed to belong to a tribe the members of which do not happen to understand each other. Did not Yvon Belaval jibe at these high priests 'monastically isolated from the world' when he stated that a rumour goes that there exists a tacit mutual understanding amongst the philosophers that they would never put to each other too 'brutal' or too insistent questions about what they meant, for otherwise, in reply, they are likely to speak either too less or too much and, in either case, the confusion will be worse confounded making things absolutely unintelligible. Remember, in this connection, Gide's Gallic joke: "When a philosopher happens to reply

<sup>1</sup> Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*, p. xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> "Let us think no more about them, but look once and pass on", Dante, *Inferno*, iii, 60.

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to your enquiry, you will very soon forget even what you had asked of him". Thus the philosopher may be as authoritative as a German, but, alas, he is rarely—if ever—as clear as a Gaul.

And this is so not because he is as terse as the Delphic oracle of whom Heraclitus declared: "The Lord to whom the Delphic oracle belongs does not speak, nor does He hide, He hints." The philosopher is rather a vociferous creature. He errs on the side of excess. Let us note a few classical instances.<sup>1</sup>

Kant disdained examples and the concrete; for, they would have made his book *The Critique of Pure Reason* too long, he argued. But even so, the book ran to some 800 pages!

A Frenchman once asked Hegel to put his philosophy into one sentence. Hegel preferred to answer in 10 volumes; and when they were written and published, and all the world was talking about them, he complained that "only one man understands me, and even he does not."

Schopenhauer ruefully declared: "I only intend to impart a single thought. Yet, notwithstanding all my endeavours, I could find no shorter way of imparting it than this whole book....Read the book twice, and the first time with great patience."

And what to say of Caird's slashing attack on Hegel: "The height of audacity in serving up pure nonsense, in stringing together senseless and extravagant mazes of words, such as had previously been known in mad-houses, was finally reached in Hegel, and became the instrument of the most bare-faced general mystification that has ever taken place, with a result which will appear fabulous to posterity, and will remain as a monument to German stupidity."<sup>3</sup>

We have already referred to Kant. Let us hear what Paul Ree has to say about him: "In Kant's works, you feel as though you were at a country fair. You can buy from him anything you want—freedom of the will, and captivity of the will, idealism and a refutation of idealism, atheism and the good Lord. Like a juggler out of an empty hat, Kant draws out of the concept of duty a God, immortality, and freedom,—to the great surprise of his readers."<sup>3</sup>

### XIII. THE WARRING TRIBE

But, strange to note, notwithstanding all this verbiage, the philosophers most often fail to communicate their ideas adequately to their educated fellow-

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*.

<sup>2</sup> Caird, *Hegel*, in the Blackwood Philosophical Classics, pp. 5-8.

<sup>3</sup> In Untermann, *Science and Revolution*, p. 81.

men; and what is all the more startling, they fail to illumine and impress even other fellow-philosophers. Thus, remarks C.E.M. Joad, "subsequent philosophers while agreeing that Kant's thought was exceedingly important, have rarely been able to reach agreement as to what precisely it was. The amount of expository and critical writing that Kant has evoked is prodigious, but it cannot be said that this vast corpus of explanation and criticism has succeeded in reducing Kant's views to a clear, simple and agreed statement."<sup>1</sup>

In our own days, A.N.Whitehead offers an equally baffling situation. Indeed, so obscure is his writing that few contemporary philosophers have any assurance that they have fully grasped its import. To quote again Joad : "What does Professor Whitehead mean by that ?" There is no question which is so frequently asked by contemporary philosophers; none which it is more difficult to answer. That Whitehead's views are of first-rate importance is almost universally agreed. But there is no sort of agreement as to what they are."<sup>2</sup> The irreverential layman, the non-initiate into the mysteries of philosophy, cannot but chuckle over the implied joke peeping through this last couple of sentences.

And this chuckle is liable to burst into boisterous laughter when he is awakened to the revelation that a philosopher wishing to be clear becomes in the very process recondite and obscure ! Thus it is that Spinoza, resolving to make his thought Euclideanly clear, cast his philosophy into geometrical form; 'but the result is a laconic obscurity in which every line requires a Talmud of commentary.'<sup>3</sup>

This obscurity of thought may reach such gigantic proportions as to completely exasperate a not too indulgent reader. The story goes that when Kant gave the manuscript of the *Critique* to his friend Herz, 'a man much versed in speculation,' Herz returned it half read, saying he feared insanity if he went on with it !

The inevitable upshot of all this is that there has not lived a single philosopher under the sun who has not been accused by some other philosopher of verbalism and verbiage. Indeed, every one amongst the philosophers has been extolled and denigrated in turn by his fellow-brethren. Thus, "Plato is philosophy, and philosophy Plato," exclaims Emerson; but Aristotle attacks the Platonic 'realism' 'with all the vigour of a first polemic', for *Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas* — "Dear is Plato, but dearer still is truth."

<sup>1</sup> C.E.M. Joad, *Guide to Philosophy*, p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 559.

<sup>3</sup> W. Durant, *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>4</sup> Ernest H. Hutten, *op. cit.*, p. 17.



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And what about Aristotle himself who reigned for nearly twenty centuries as *Ille Philosophus* : The Philosopher? After two thousand years of logic-chopping with the machinery invented by Aristotle, philosophy fell so low that 'none would do her reverence.' And the reason is that misled by every-day language Aristotle made the subject-predicate relation the only form a sentence can possess. Modern logicians have shown that many other formal structures are possible, and needed, for a correct analysis of language. In fact, "the dead hand of Aristotle—supported by ecclesiastic authority—lay heavy on logic and prevented its development for nearly two millennia. Logic became barren, and 'logic-chopping' the most fruitless of undertaking, a matter for ridicule."<sup>4</sup> Also, because Aristotle in his *Logic* threw the emphasis on classification, the popularity of Aristotelian Logic retarded the advance of physical science throughout the Middle Ages. "If only the schoolmen had measured instead of classifying! How much they might have learnt!"<sup>1</sup>

Coming to modern times, Schopenhauer calls Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* 'the most important work in German literature' and considers any man a child until he has understood Kant. But a famous modern philosopher has announced that 'Kant is the greatest disaster in the history of philosophy'.

Schopenhauer, in his turn, has been prescribed 'medical diagnosis' for his philosophy of pessimism. Bergson, too, has been dubbed by another philosopher rather a painter than a philosopher, because of his metaphoric abundance. And how great indeed is the number of philosophers who would like to banish Pascal and Nietzsche from the stately realm of high philosophy; for, are they not poets rather than philosophers?

But Nietzsche, on his part, has something to fling at his sophisticated comrades: "Philosophical systems are shining mirages....The philosophers all pose as though their real opinions had been discovered through the self-avowing of a cold, pure, divinely indifferent dialectic,...whereas in fact a prejudicial proposition, idea or 'suggestion', which is generally their heart's desire abstracted and refined, is defended by them with arguments sought out after the event."

But what is interesting to note is that every philosopher considers his system most well-constructed and his vision most clear and absolute. Not all of them possess the modesty of Socrates to declare: "One thing only I know, and that is that I know nothing". In fact, unlike science, philosophy has got no universal rails on which to run its carriage of argumentation. Here every single philosopher is a phenomenon by himself. The philosophers differ

<sup>1</sup> A.N. Whitehead *Science and the Modern World*, p. 30.

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among themselves as regards their 'ideas of the Idea', their language of discourse and their methods of philosophic demonstration. There are 'geometers' like Descartes and Spinoza, 'analysts' of the brand of Leibniz, 'poets' like Pascal and Nietzsche and even 'etymological' and 'syntactic' types like the modern phenomenologico-existentialists. So far as 'ideas' are concerned, there are schools of 'image-copy', 'image-expression', 'image-metaphor' and even 'image-movement'. This wide diversity of approach offers us a rich panorama testifying in a remarkable way to our theory of visualisation even in this domain of abstract thought. We proceed now to show that, however transfigured in appearance, visualisation plays its role as a secret support to all philosophers : *verb* and *vision* are joined in a happy wedlock.

*(To be continued)*

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

# KATHA UPANISHAD

## A COMMENTARY

(Continued from the last issue)

### I. i. 8<sup>1</sup>

आशाप्रतीक्षे संगतं सूनुता चेष्टापूत्ते पुत्रपशूश्च सर्वान् ।  
एतद् वृद्धक्ते पुरुषस्याल्पमेधसो यस्यानश्नन्वसति ब्राह्मणो गृहे ॥

YAMA has understood what Nachiketas wanted to convey to him by the preceding verse. In his capacity of the Guardian of the Path leading to Immortality, he has seen that an aspiring soul has come to him and he is too glad and willing to do the work given to him by the Divine. He has seen that Nachiketas is no ordinary soul, for no ordinary soul can come so close to the revelation of the real significance of Yama. Nachiketas is no ordinary guest, he is the seeker after the knowledge of the Brāhmaṇ. Yama, therefore, says in this stanza that he would be a person of poor understanding if a Brāhmaṇa guest were to remain in his house without getting the treatment he deserved and such a person will find all the good he may have done, all the things he may have achieved during his life, to be going away from him.

Yama has understood the challenging undertone behind Nachiketas' words and the demand covertly expressed by them. The latter is Brāhmaṇa, for his consciousness is firmly set on the attainment of the Supreme and the former can no longer keep him back from what he deserves. Nor does he want to keep him back. Nachiketas wanted the Infinite, the Vast, he wanted to widen towards and into it, and if Yama were to come in his way, if Nachiketas were compelled to remain in his limited consciousness and not permitted to grow into and become the Infinite, (anaśnan, privative of the present participle of the root aś—to enjoy, to pervade, to widen, for 'whatever is wide, ample, vast is bliss, whatever is little is misery,') the whole blame would be on Yama. Even an ordinary guest, according to the Āryan idea of hospitality and spirituality, must be considered a form assumed by the Divine and is to be honoured as the Divine, atithi—devo bhava. And Nachiketas is an extraordinary guest. 'Hope and expectation,

<sup>1</sup> *ññ-pratikṣe samgatam sūnūtam cha, istāpūrte putra-pasūnscha sarvān ;  
etad vṛṅkte pursuasya alpa-medhaso, yasyānaśnan vasati brāhmaṇo grhe.*

all he has attained, the happy and truthful words he has spoken, all the charitable works he has done and all his sons and cattle' are taken away from him if such a guest remains neglected in his house.

What Nachiketas wants from Yama is Immortality, Delight, Vastness of the Infinite. And Yama is very willing to give it to him.

I. i. 9<sup>1</sup>

तिस्रो रात्रीर्यदवात्सीर्गृहे मेऽनश्नन्ब्रह्मन्नतिथिनमस्यः ।  
नमस्तेऽस्तु ब्रह्मन्स्वस्ति मेऽस्तु तस्मात्प्रति त्रीन्वरान्वृणीष्व ॥

Hence Yama further tells Nachiketas that since the latter had dwelt in his house for three nights as a guest worthy of reverence, Yama would give him three boons, one for each night. Once again we come across a tremendously symbolic language and the number three is found to be still persisting. We have already noted that the question of Nachiketas to Vājaśravasa was repeated three times (St. 4) and also Nachiketas has passed through three stages of evolution in his individual as well as representative status (St. 5); and here there is a mention of three nights and of three boons and in St. 17 we shall find a mention of the triple Fire of Nachiketas with its triple joint and threefold karma. All these triplicities are not merely a coincidence or accidental, but form part of a very coherent and thoroughly-grounded knowledge, into the profundities of which the seer of the Upanishad had entered with the help of his Yogic vision.

The three nights alluded to in this verse are not the natural periods of time between sunset and sunrise, nor are they the periods consisting of twentyfour hours each. They refer to the three periods of evolution during which the soul remains submerged in the darkness pervading the physical, vital and mental levels of evolutionary Nature and during which he dwells in the house of Death, without consciously attaining to the vastness of the Spirit, anaśnan. During the first night the soul passes through the various levels of Matter, arranged in an ascending order. At this time the night is so dark and the soul, though inwardly conscious, is outwardly so inert and unconscious that there is hardly any sign of day. But still wherever there is night, however dark and unending it may appear to be, there is always an alternation of night and day, and never an interminable night. As a matter of fact, night and light are not exclusive of each other. On the contrary, the two coexist, not side by side, but

<sup>1</sup> *tsro rātrīr yad-avātsīr grhe me'naśnan brahman atīthir manasyaḥ ;  
namste'stu brahman svasti me astu tasmāt prati trīn varān vṛṇīṣva.*

overlapping each other and interpenetrating each other. Even before the principles of life and mind have manifested, there is an inherent light in the darkness of the night of Matter. To use a Vedic image, Agni or Fire is always there even when the sun is not visible; even the stars in the heaven may provide some light to the dark earth when the sky is not overcast with clouds. To use another image from the Veda, Night and Dawn, Uṣā and Naktā, are twin sisters, different in form, one bright and the other dark, but always full of harmony towards each other. Even the word 'day' means two things,—sometimes only the luminous half of the twenty-four hour period, sometimes the whole of that period. So too the word 'night'; we often say such things as 'two or three nights' journey', which does not mean that there is no day intervening, but the word 'night' is used to express the whole period of the diurnal cycle.

Thus the first night mentioned by Yama is that during which the soul symbolised by Nachiketas, dwells on the plane of Matter, the second night is that of his stay on the plane of life manifested in Matter, and the third one, on the plane of mind manifested in Matter. The three nights become progressively less and less dark, but still there is no real light there, for the real light is the spiritual light. Until that comes, there is no Dawn and the vision of the soul is enveloped in the narrow horizons permitted to him by the slowly receding darkness of Ignorance; not only his vision but his movement too is restricted within the same bounds. He cannot become vast, he cannot expand and widen his knowledge, his being, his bliss. He has to remain during all these three nights unwidened, unextended, unpervasive, anaśnan. Although he is one with the universe, he does not enjoy his oneness with it, for he is not aware of it. Although he is one with that which transcends the universe, that oneness too he does not know, he does not experience and take delight in it. There is the fence of the ego, there is the wall of Ignorance cutting him off from both the Universal and the Transcendent.

That these three 'nights' do not mean the natural period between the sunset and sunrise is made clear from a Rig Vedic passage which we will give here in full and explain at some length as it gives us a closely parallel situation to the one described by the Upanishadic seer in this portion of the Nachiketas tale. It is a hymn of the seer *Kakṣvān*, son of *Dīrghatamas* and grandson of *Uṣij* or *Uṣija*, addressed to the twin deities *Aśvins*. It deals with the legend of one Bhujyu, the son of Tugra and his rescue from the ocean where he was cast by his father and the part played by *Aśvins* in leading him to the supreme goal. The whole legend, like all others found in the Veda, is symbolic and its psychological and spiritual significance can be seen through the almost transparent words in which it is clothed.

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*tugro ha bhujyum aśvinodameghe, rayim na kaśchin mamṛvān avāhāḥ ;  
tam ūhathur naubhur ātmanvatibhir, antarikṣa-prudbhir apodakābhiḥ.*

*tisraḥ kṣapas trirahātirvrajadbhir, nāsatyā bhujyum ūathuḥ pataṅgaiḥ ;  
samudrasya dhanvannādrasya pāre, tribhī rathaiḥ śatapadbhiḥ śaśasvaiḥ.*

*anārambhaṇe tad avīrayethām, anāsthāne agrabhaṇe samudre ;  
yad a vinā ūhathur bhujyum astam, śatāritrām nāvam ātasthivāmsam.*

(Rig Veda I. 116. 3, 4, and 5)

Like Nachiketas in the Katha legend, Bhujyu is the principle person in this Rig Vedic one ; as a matter of fact, he is Nachiketas' counterpart. Nachiketas is a seeker after the supreme Knowledge, whereas this Bhujyu, as his very name suggests, is a seeker after the enjoyment of the divine Bliss. He too is the psychic entity which has commenced its journey, or rather, voyage towards the Supreme from the Inconscience and passes through the three levels of Matter, Life and Mind, which are the planes of mixed darkness and light, of mixed ignorance and slowly emerging knowledge ; these three are described as 'three nights and three days' during which *Aśvins*, the Divine Healers, the celestial Riders of the Horse, covertly help the derelict soul to cross the dangerous ocean of this universal existence. These *Aśvins* are the twin principles of the divine Bliss pouring down into Matter and Mind and healing the thousand and one wounds sustained by the soul in the course of his evolution ; and this healing is effected by the Life-Energy raining down from the supreme *Saccidānanda*, which is its original home where it dwells in its purest and most potent form.

Bhujyu is the principle of evolutionary joy which always wants to reach its supreme abode, its own home, *astam*, in *Saccidānanda*. His father *Tugra*, the Impeller (from *tuj*—to impel, to push, to urge), pushes him out of the Inconscience into the ocean of manifested existence, this field of Death and *Yama*. This seeker after joy has to pass through a long-drawn and terrific struggle before he could arrive at his voyage's end. The goal he has set before him is the attainment of the triple complete Felicity, the supreme Treasure, even in this lower *Prakṛiti* governed by *Yama*, the Lord of Death and universal Law ; *sahasram ūjā yamasya pradāne jīgāya* (I.164.2). In the Vedic numerological symbolism, ten means the perfection on one plane, *viz.* the physical, hundred signifies the perfection on two planes, *viz.* the physical and the vital, and thousand symbolises the perfection on all the three planes, physical, vital and mental.

But this triple perfect Delight cannot be had unless one has known the Bliss on the highest levels of *Saccidānanda*. Moreover,<sup>7</sup> the soul is not conscious of his goal of bliss in his superficial mental awareness evolving with difficulty in this world, which is full of pain and misery. It is here that the work of *Aśvins* is needed. The principle of the Delight of Life inheres in both Matter and Mind and secretly supports and carries the soul upward towards his cherished goal. The action of *Aśvins* continues throughout the three nights and three days during which they carry the human soul, Bhujyu, on their miraculous boats, which are boats only when they move over the waters, but become three chariots with six horses when on dry land and become flying birds when they soar through the high heavens. These are all symbols of the action of *Aśvins* on the various levels of the soul's evolution, the physical, vital and mental. *Aśvins* carry out this mighty work of leading Bhujyu over the ocean which had no beginning, (or, no base) which gave no place to stand upon, no support to cling to.

We can easily see the parallelism between the two episodes of Bhujyu and Nachiketas. As a matter of fact, Bhujyu and Nachiketas are not two different persons, but are identical, for every human soul, or, for the matter of that, any soul manifested in this world, has the two urges, one towards the attainment of more and more knowledge or wider and wider consciousness and another towards the attainment of greater and greater joy, simultaneously present in him. And that is why we find so many points common between the tales of both, especially the mention of the three nights and the reference to the function of Yama in providing for the evolving soul, the ultimate objective of divine Bliss which he has to attain.

As regards the three 'nights' and the profound significance contained therein, we shall now examine another passage, this time from the Atharva Veda. It is to be found in its eleventh *Kāṇḍa*, *Sūkta* fifth, mantra third :

*ācārya upanyamāno brahmacāriṇam kṛṇute garbham antaḥ ;  
tam rātrīs tisra udare bibharti, tam jātam draṣṭum abhisamyanti devāḥ.*

It literally means : 'The preceptor who initiates the disciple makes him the inner womb or foetus ; him he holds within the belly for three nights ; him, when born, the gods, from all sides come together to see'. But in the deeper meaning the disciple is the soul who in evolution moves towards the Supreme, for he is *Brahma-cārin*. The womb, *garbha* or *udara*, is the Inconscience and the three nights are the three evolutionary stages through which the soul passes. The initiation of the soul is called *upanayana*, literally taking or leading him near the Supreme. When the soul is born all the gods, the symbols of the divine energies, cluster round him to see him. This birth is not the

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physical birth of the body, but the soul's birth into the higher spiritual regions for it is what is called the second birth. The womb or foetus mentioned above is further described in mantra seventh thus :

*brahmachārī janayan brahma.. garbho bhūtvā' mṛtasya yonau.*

'The Brahmacharin having become the foetus in the womb of Immortality, gives birth to the Brahman.' This mantra leaves no doubt whatsoever about the real implication of the whole passage. The three nights then are the same as those mentioned in the Rig Vedic legend of Bhujyu and in the Katha legend of Nachiketas.

It is interesting to note that the seer *Kakṣivān* a little later on in the same Rig Vedic hymn gives another mantra which throws light on what *udaka* or water in the seventh stanza of *Kaṭha* signifies. It runs thus :

*parāvratam nāsatyā'nudethām, uchchābudhnam chakrathur jihmabāram ;  
kṣarannāpo na pāyanāya rāye, sahasrāya tṛṣyate gotamasya.*

(Rig Veda I.116.9)

We do not know whether the Gotama referred to here is the same as Gautama of the *Kaṭha* (infra st. 10), but anyway there is a good deal of family resemblance between the two. This Rig Vedic Gotama was thirsty for the thousand-fold Felicity and, as we have already noted, the number thousand means perfect perfection of anything on all the three planes of manifested existence. This thirst is quenched by *Aśvins* in what appears to be a miraculous way. They upturn the Well (*avatam*) of the Beyond (*parā*), so that its bottom goes up and its mouth below, just as we might invert a cup while drinking from it, so that Gotama, the perfect in consciousness, can also become perfect in Bliss, by drinking the waters pouring down (*kṣarannāpaḥ*) from that inverted Well of the Supreme. These waters are the same as that asked for by Nachiketas from Yama in stanza seventh of the *Kaṭha*. Both are the waters of the Bliss of *Saccidānanda*, of Immortality.

Yama is well aware of the extraordinary nature of his guest and also the cryptic way of putting his demand before him. He is only the Law set up by the Divine and is appointed to look after the normal working of the universe. But he is no hard-hearted adamant person he is supposed to be by most of the humans. He is not a dark-faced, terrible titan, but a godhead of Light, a divine being. Seeing the pure flame of his guest's aspiration he bows down before him, *namaste'stu brahman*, and asks a benediction of him, *svasti me'stu*, 'May my existence be full of bliss (*su*)', suggesting thereby that thenceforward Death should not be the painful event which it always is. And to show the truth of what he had asked he immediately tells Nachiketas to ask three boons of him.



## KATHA UPANISHAD

The most terrible deity, or one who is supposed to be the most terrible, hides behind this appearance a most gracious and loving heart.

But why three boons? Yama says, 'Therefore (*tasmāt*) choose three boons in accordance with it (*prati*).' What is meant by this *tasmāt*—'therefore'—and what is meant by *prati*—'accordingly, in accordance with' ? They are obviously connected with the three 'Nights'. 'As you have stayed in my house for three nights, therefore ask three boons corresponding to the three nights.' The human soul is shrouded in a veil of triple Ignorance ; he does not know what this world is, he does not know what other worlds are, he does not know what the Supreme Reality is. Therefore, if Nachiketas wanted *udaka*, the mystic waters of Immortality and Bliss, this threefold veil must go ; he must find his liberation first in this physical world, then in the subtler worlds of heavens and lastly in the supreme planes of the Spirit ; the first thing he must have is the *ādhibhautika mukti*, the second *ādhidarvika mukti* and the third *ādhyātmika mukti* ; he must realise the *kṣara*, the *akṣara* or *amṛta* and the *uttama* or *avyaya*, to use the language of the Gīta and some other Upanishads. These are the three boons offered by Yama, the attainment of which is absolutely necessary before one can become the possessor of the Supreme Peace and Bliss.

I.i.10<sup>1</sup>

शान्तसकल्पः सुमना यया स्याद् वीतमन्युर्गौतमो माभिमृत्यो ।  
त्वत्प्रसूष्ट माभिवदेत्प्रतीत एतत्रयाणा प्रथम वर वृणे ॥

And Nachiketas asks the first boon, but in a very peculiar way, which would rather sound queer to us. He asks, as a matter of fact, a double or twin boon, one for his father and another, indirectly, for himself. 'O Death', he says, 'May the Gautama, in relation to me, have his higher intellectual and volitional mind silenced, his sense-mind full of bliss and his life-mind freed from passions and impulses ; assured in heart let him greet me from thy grasp delivered ; this boon I choose, the first of three.'

Nachiketas does not ask anything directly for himself, for he knows that having once seen and met Yama even while alive, he has nothing to fear from Yama ; he can easily come back to the waking level from his subliminal *samādhi* and once again resume his normal life ; moreover he knows that Yama will release him from his grasp as a matter of course, for Yama was so friendly and affectionate towards him and further he has not gone to Yama at the latter's

<sup>1</sup> *sānta-samkalpah sumanāh yathā syād, vīta-manyur gautamo mā'bhī mṛtyo ;  
tvat-prasūṣṭam mā'bhivadet pratītaḥ, etat trayānām prathamam varam vṛṇe.*

behest, but of his own free initiative. Hence he takes his return to earth for granted. What, then, does he ask as his first boon, and for whom ?

He asks mukti or liberation for his 'father'. Let us remember what we have noticed in the beginning of this Upanishad, that not only Nachiketas but also his father, *Vājaśravasa* was doing Yoga ; we have also seen that this *Vājaśravasa* is the portion of the Divine come down to colonise the earth, he comes down as the higher Inspiration, in the involutory descent; he is the involutory counterpart as well as the progenitor, of the evolutionary soul ; he is the other and companion bird, described in another Upanishad, who along with the soul clings to the tree of existence, though he is not quite the same. For the other bird is the Divine in that aspect of his which stands aloof, does not participate in the activities of the world and is consequently not affected by them ; but the aspect of the Divine that is symbolised by *Vājaśravasa* is that which has taken a plunge into the Ignorance of the lower Prakṛiti, accepts the limitations of the world, suffers diminution, gets mixed up with and tarnished by the influences of the lower. It is that aspect of the Divine, which, like the soul, bears the burden of darkness and evil and pain ; it is the *ḷsara ātman*, the Divine in his mutable form, the divine Inspiration, pure at its source but getting itself lost in the obscurity of the Inconscient into which it descends.

Whatever experiences are undergone by the soul in its upward journey, are also undergone by this representative of the Divine in us, for the two are close companions. Just as the soul is struggling in the grip of bondage and ignorance, so is he. This element too is to be freed along with the human soul ; this higher Inspiration too is to be extricated from its mixture in the elements that come up out of the Inconscient in the evolution. Just as the human soul is awaiting to be liberated, so the Divine too is awaiting his own liberation.

And it is for this reason that *Vājaśravasa*'s doing Yoga is justified. In evolution, there takes place first the manifestation of Life, then the Life-mind, then the sense-mind and last the thinking and consciously willing mentality; but in involution the reverse is the process. *Vājaśravasa*, the pure divine Inspiration, in its coming down along the ladder of involution becomes mixed up in these various levels of mentality in the reverse order, and when his liberation comes the silencing of these other elements too comes in that order. First the thought-mind and volitional mind, then the sense-mind and finally the life-mind become silenced. First, *Vājaśravasa* has to become *śānta-samkalpa*, that is to say, that there should be a settled peace and calm established in this highest mentality. Then the sense-mind has to become full of peace and bliss, *sumanāḥ*, for bliss is the goal the sense-mind is always seeking, whether consciously or unconsciously, and liberation brings about the attainment of this

goal. And lastly the life-mind is to be freed from its turmoil of passions and lower impulses, *vīta-manyuḥ*.

One may object that the Divine is always free and does not need to be liberated as does the human soul. But this is true in a certain sense only; for the Divine too is bearing the burden of the lower Prakriti, along with the soul; he too has become immanent in each individual and shares with him his darkness and his difficulties and his efforts to come out of them. In his pure essence the Divine is always *mukta*, but when he comes down in lower Nature, he too consents to become bound and to pass through the struggle of this lower existence. But all this is only in relation to the soul, *mā'bhi*, and not in his absolute essence; for *śravas* (or *vājaśravas*) in its pure state is neither *samkalpa* nor *manas* nor *manyu*; but the involutory *śravas* is entangled into these three elements one after another, until in the Inconscience it loses all its original Light and Force. When evolution commences it comes out along with the soul.

Nachiketas knows all this and that is why he chooses as his first boon the liberation of this divine element. This liberation pertains to the earth with its triple evolutionary consciousness of mind and life and matter. Just as the soul is undergoing the yoke of change and death, so too this divine *Vājaśravas* is undergoing the same cycle of birth and growth and decay and death. This divine element has chosen to be the companion of the human soul in order to lead him, to show him the way. Its work is done when the soul attains his freedom; its labour is over only when it has assured itself, *pratītaḥ*, that the soul has escaped from the jaws of death and greets him for that escape, *tvat-prasṛtam mā' bhavadet*. It is only then, that is, only after the soul attains his freedom from death, that the divine element itself can become free from death.

This then is the first boon chosen by Nachiketas and placed before Yama namely, the double liberation of himself and his father, of the human soul and its divine companion, from the clutches of Death.

I. i. II<sup>1</sup>

यथा पुरस्ताद् भविता प्रतीत औद्दालकिरारुणिर्मत्प्रसृष्टः ।  
सुख रात्रीः शयिता वीतमन्युस्त्वा ददृशिवान्मृत्युमुखात्प्रमुखम् ॥

Yama in reply to Nachiketas' request willingly grants the boon, saying, "*Vājaśravasa*, son of *Uddālaka Aruāi*, will be released by me, and will even as before be assured that his work is done, and will happily sleep through the nights, for he will now have no more trouble arising from the lower passions

<sup>1</sup> *yathā purastāt bhavitā pratītaḥ, auddalakir aruṇir mat-prasṛtaḥ ;  
sukham rātrih śayitā vīta-manyuḥ, tvam dadṛśivān mṛtyu-mukhāt pramuktam.*

of the life-mind." What his work was is given in the last quarter : it was to see that the human soul is freed from the jaws of death.

It is not for nothing that Yama calls *Vājaśravasa* '*mat-prasṛtaḥ*, — released by me.' At first sight it would appear that it was Nachiketas and not *Vājaśravasa* who had gone to the world of Yama, and therefore Nachiketas was justified in calling himself '*tvat-prasṛtam mām—me* delivered from thy grasp.' But Yama applies that same epithet to *Vājaśravasa* too. For both the human soul and its divine companion have to be released.

The words '*yathā purastāt—*as before' do not refer to the state of consciousness of *Vājaśravasa* before Nachiketas enraged him by the silly repetition of his childish question 'to whom will you give me?', as the usual way of interpreting this Upanishad would have us believe. For we have already seen that there is no question of *Vājaśravasa* getting angry. On the contrary, he is doing Yoga and the questions and their answers have got the profoundest psychological and evolutionary significance behind them. Hence, 'as before' would mean before the divine element came down into this evolutionary movement. '*Vājaśravasa* will be even as before' would in this sense mean that the divine Inspiration will become, even in its manifestation in lower Prakriti, as pure and as divine as it was before its manifestation.

The transcendent Divine has certainly no doubt that even if he were to manifest himself in this difficult lower world he could remain divine, but when once the plunge is taken, that element which takes such a plunge becomes subject to all the uncertainties and doubts that are natural to the state of ignorance; even when an *avatāra* descends on earth his condition is much the same as that of any other human being, at least so far as his outer consciousness is concerned; for he too has assumed a human frame, *mānuṣim tanum āśritaḥ*, he too has taken up all the limitations that an ordinary person is labouring under. Thus, the divine element symbolised by *Vājaśravasa* is not at all sure *after* it has come down that its work of carrying the evolutionary human soul beyond death will be accomplished; although *before* its plunge it was quite sure that it could be done. This assurance is once again restored to him on his seeing Nachiketas freed from Death; for Nachiketas' liberation brings in its wake *Vājaśravasa's* liberation too.

With this assurance once again restored to him he will be able to sleep in bliss through the three nights, or rather what were, but will no longer be, the three nights in the lower Prakriti; for the nights would have become days, illumined as they will be by the victorious Light of his liberation.

(To be continued)

BABHRU

## THE NEED FOR SIGNIFICANCE

WESTERN Psychology, infant science though it may be in comparison to the adult and vaster science of Yoga, has long discovered the human being's need for 'importance', the need of some feeling of stability and security engendered by the belief in his own consequence. 'Significance' is perhaps more suggestive of this deeply-felt need.

Schizophrenia, we are told, is one of the maladies involving the patient's withdrawal from harsh circumstances that have become painful and distressing to the ego, to an imaginary dream-built set of circumstances which are pleasant and enjoyable; he finds a vaporous world in which he is king and emperor and so acquires the huge satisfaction of a sublime Significance. The underpaid mill-girl becomes in fantasy the glamorous film-star, the office-boy becomes the millionaire tycoon.

In the children of a family the need for significance is often observed, and care must be taken by the parents not to display overmuch affection towards the one in preference to the other. The latter would at once suffer from feelings of being unwanted and insignificant. Repetitions of such treatment would be effective in swiftly implanting the seeds of future mental ill-health and neurosis, because of all things the natural love of parent for child is the most necessary factor in the child's well-being and growth.

As we grow older, into adulthood, we do not normally lose the need for significance although it is curtailed and modified in accordance with the ego-group or society. Here, as in other elements of our psychology, the 'child is father to the man,' for who does not respond with pleasurable feelings of self-satisfaction when he is treated with special deference by another ?

And it might well be asked how many mountains have been scaled, rivers crossed, feats of daring accomplished, not entirely because these things seemed worthwhile in themselves, but because the participant needed significance, the relief from insecurity caused by a haunting inferiority, or the desire to consciously 'prove his worth' in the face of secret feelings of worthlessness, and in the eyes of others.

The mature adult is of course able to perceive this motivation, at least to some extent, but it can be noticed that the scholar and the 'intellectual'

justifies himself by his intellectual prowess and powers of comprehension, and thus gains the desired egoistic significance. Considering himself a most interesting character he finds it incomprehensible that others also should not find him interesting. The athlete justifies himself by his physical prowess and sportsmanship and feels secure in his significant achievements on the field. A little crowd-adulation he takes as his right. The writer, the artist, even the lover justifies himself in his distinctive ability to write, to paint and to love and seldom calls in question his *raison d'être*. And in ordinary relationships, in mutual friendship—which is often little more than a vital clinging and a reciprocal vital support—the need is appeased by each affording the other the regard of significance.

“But,” says the Mother, “each is justified (not by these things) but by the Divine that is in them,” and we at last see that the need for significance is but one of a constellation of symptoms of the ego-bound soul, belonging to the infancy of our spiritual growth. Nor like many other bonds of the Ignorance is it so easy to eradicate in its entirety. It will be recalled that the disciples of Christ disputed among themselves who was the greatest of their number. (Which called forth the magnificent rejoinder of the Master : ‘He who is the greatest among you, let him be your servant.’)

It has been said that there is none so spiritually blind as the self-important. The vision necessarily becomes distorted because it is fogged by the emanations of self, which cannot treat of things as they are, but only in relation to itself, and only in relation to itself can it value them. The ego here is in the position of the little boy who found the beautiful antique sculpture of no value because it was not big enough for him to stand on in order to reach the jam in the cupboard!

And while the spiritual aspirant may succeed in removing or renouncing the need for importance in its grosser forms, the more subtle forms can yet remain. We may renounce the distinction of ‘being a baker’ because we can bake, but we see with dismay that the flour still clings to our hands; what we often fail to see is that we choose to be a baker rather than a soul.

Our self-conception has to be drastically altered, the soul must somehow be severed from the false realities with which it is identified, the scale of values on which we have patterned our lives demolished and rebuilt. Possessed of skill, we must acknowledge the Creator of all skills, possessed of knowledge we must recognise the Source and the goal of all Knowledge, possessed of gifts we must gladly confess the great Giver. The false, temporary, insecure support afforded by self-significance and self-justification must be replaced by the everlasting sustenance of the Divine; our scale of values must be repatterned with God as centre and God as circumference.

## THE NEED FOR SIGNIFICANCE

For in the end it is surely not what we know or what we can do that can bestow upon us a true significance, but what we are; and what we in truth are is infinitely more than the ego and its needs. We at last come to perceive that the only thing significant, the only thing important, the only goal worthy of a life's endeavour is the Divine, and that we *are* really, and wonderfully, significant, because He dwells within us.

GODFREY

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Pioneer of the Supramental Age** : Sri Aurobindo, The Enshrinement and the Future. Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi Branch. Pages 184; price Rs. 7/-

THE recent historic Enshrinement of Sri Aurobindo's Relics (Hair and Nail) inside a beautifully built small marble monumental structure having a dome supported by four spiralling pillars, at the Delhi Branch of the Pondicherry Ashram on the 5th December last year has occasioned the compilation of this anthology of articles by eminent writers drawn to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from various walks of life and having various ways of approach to them. The book is a commendable introduction to the outgoing movement of Sri Aurobindo's work of world-transformation.

The Editor, Jay Smith, has done a really admirable job by putting together the moving and inspiring addresses, radio talks and other articles and extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which depict in brief their life, their pioneering message of the Supermind and their dynamic work of supramentalisation of the human race.

Among these are two addresses, one by Chintaman D. Deshmukh, former Finance Minister of India, the other by Haribhau Upadhyaya, and an essay by the French writer Jean Herbert on the Practical Value of Relics. The articles and a radio talk by the Editor on various aspects of Sri Aurobindo's work and on the Enshrinement have been written with genuine enthusiasm and in an appealing style. We have some other articles by Naresh Bahadur (who contributes also a poem), Indra Sen, Sisirkumar Mitra, Surendra Nath Jauhar, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar and Suren Mohan Ghosh. That by Naresh Bahadur is an outstanding evocation of the Mother's Balcony Darshan—poetic insight at work in felicitous prose, charged with fine spiritual feeling. Melville de Mello's Radio Newsreel account is another charming feature of the book, which presents a "vivid and sensitive" portrayal of the events of the Enshrinement Celebrations.

This souvenir volume, whose price has been kept much less than the cost price, is excellently printed and profusely illustrated with photographic pictures of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, Enshrinement events and Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi. With a cover page in tricolour, it is indeed a "labour of love". The only criticism one may offer is that in the tricolour design the Delhi branch tends to be more emphasised than the Pondicherry Ashram even though the latter is technically made central by the artist.

BANDHA



**Lights on the Tantra** by M. P. Pandit. Publishers : Ganesh & Co., Madras 1957. Pp. 71 Royal. Price Rs. 3/- only.

The author is well-known for his work in the unfolding of the esoteric significances of the symbolic images used by the Rishis of the Upanishads and Vedas. Everywhere by his penetrating insight he strikes the heart of the highly spiritual lore of ancient India. His approach is further strengthened by his spiritual life and solid erudition. His earlier works, *The Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishad*, *Aditi and Other Deities in the Veda* and his forthcoming book, *Sri Aurobindo and the Upanishads* are worthy contributions by India towards the rehabilitation of ideal and spiritual values which she has held aloft through the millenniums.

The first chapter, "What are the Tantras ?" brings home the synthetic nature of the Tantras and strips them of the host of misconceptions that have swirled round the word in modern times. The author assigns each spiritual discipline its right place in the progressive development of India's spiritual achievements. He writes, "The fact, as it appears unmistakably on a close study of these scriptures, is that just as the Upanishads represent the revival and continuation of the Jnana (Knowledge) content of the Vedas, as the Brahmanas seek to conserve and prolong the ritualistic basis of the Vedic religion, the Agamas take up the esoteric teaching and practice of the Vedic mystics and go on to develop and build upon it, in forms and means suited to the changing conditions and needs of later times." Further on he says, "The Rishis of the Veda evolved and perfected an inner discipline and religion which was essentially intuitive in character and symbolic in form suited to the fresh and unsophisticated humanity of that age. The Upanishads record the beginnings of an endeavour in which the human mind is taken up successively in its different gradations from its summits of illumined intelligence downwards and treated to the light of the Spirit—a course which proceeded through the age of the Smritis and culminated in the Darshanas. The Tantric discipline extends the claim of God farther and deeper, it takes up the emotional and dynamic parts of man, the heart, the will and the life-being and seeks to develop them too in the mould of the Spirit. The Tantra has thus been an important and even an inevitable step in the progressive and self-extending Soul-Movement of the country."

Though Tantra — and perhaps every philosophy that seeks to encompass all the facets of the Spirit — has lent itself to the most perilous distortions, yet it appears to be among the boldest attempts ever made by the seekers of spiritual realisations to loosen the Gordian knot and not merely to cut it asunder

in a mood of exasperated frustration. This is its philosophical outlook as adumbrated by the author. "They proclaim there is One Supreme God who is the Creator and Ruler of the Universe; the universe is a cosmic manifestation of the Divine and man also is an individual manifestation of the same Divine. Man has all the principles of Creation veiled in himself; his body holds the universe in essence and even the creative Power of God is there latent in him. To awake to it, to discover and release these powers in action, to realise his own godhead and embrace the larger Godhead in the creation around is the one Ideal which all the Agamas proclaim, the one Goal to which all their roads of self-culture and discipline, *upāsana*, lead. The way they show is the way of action, not withdrawing from action. To exert oneself in all the parts of the being endowed by the Divine, in the mode and manner intended by the Divine, for the glory and self-manifestation of the Divine, — this is the central truth of their sadhana." The Tantras aim not merely at the individual salvation but also at the creation of a collective spiritual endeavour. "The will and aspiration of an individual can best develop and flourish when it is buttressed by nourishment from an environment of like wills and aspirations. The collective thought and feeling also derive an impetus and gain a lead by strong individual Force. The Tantra keeps both these truths in view in developing its Kriya Pada. Ceremonial worship, specially on a collective scale, has a strong dynamic effect on the consciousness of its participants. It generates an atmosphere and releases vibrations in which the godward emotions of the heart, the truth-aspiring flowings of the mind gather movement and spread out in abundance and even the cells of the physical body throb in response to the Call of the Spirit."

The third chapter deals with the Kundalini Yoga with descriptions of all the centres and the next chapter describes the sadhana, the place of the guru, the mantra, the devata propitiated etc. The whole course of the yoga has been set forth step by step with all its proliferations. A chapter is devoted to the Secret Ritual. The author has the gift of writing both knowledgeably and agreeably and the book is a brilliant exposition of the intricate symbolism of the Tantras, which most readers will find more understandable than most of the books published so far on the subject.

R. KHANNA

**The Book of Mirdad : A Lighthouse and a Haven** by *Mikhail Naimy*. Publishers N.M. Tripathi Ltd., Booksellers, Bombay, 2. Pages 210; price Rs. 7-50

Mikhail Naimy is not a new name to those who keep themselves abreast of the progressive spiritual and mystic ideas in various countries. He is the second name from the Arab world which has most recently and in a short span of time, become legitimately famous : the first is Kahlil Gibran whose *The Prophet* is among those books that stand out for their uniqueness of style and substance.

Mikhail Naimy's homely and cryptic style which can be compared, in a way, to the Vedic and Upanishadic way of writing, explains in simple yet strikingly harmonised words a philosophy of life which one can consider the essence of the Vedantic philosophy of the East and the ancient mystic wisdom of the West concerning Man, Nature and God.

The work of this Lebanese, like his compatriot's, contains universal non-sectarian truths of a high moral and spiritual order which can go a long way in governing man's life in a liberated unifying manner and bringing balance, understanding, peace and unity among various conflicting societies. The book stands above religious bias and bigotry of any kind and will give joyous solace and satisfaction to any impersonal seeker after peace, harmony and perfection.

The story of the book is woven with greater charm and with a profounder mystical atmosphere than the one by the author of *The Prophet*. Gibran write with a deep and direct vision of truths and in a simple aphoristic language by which they hold the reader's heart in a strange intoxicating spell. But, though both he and Naimy have a striking community of thought and both go above the range of mere thinking, Naimy deals with his topics with a wider sweep and achieves a richer idea-crystallisation, a more definite philosophy and a more comprehensive language than the works of Gibran.

Yet one may be led to question whether it is not Gibran himself who has been the original conscious or unconscious inspirer of Naimy's bent of mind and style of writing. So, even if the latter comes to claim a wider field of influence in the world of modern mystic and spiritual thought, his name will always remain closely linked with that of his now deceased "bosom friend".

A few comparisons here may not be out of place.

#### LOVE

"Love is the Law of God...

"And whom, or what, is one to love ? Is one to choose a certain leaf upon the Tree of Life and pour upon it all one's heart ? What of the branch that bears the leaf ? What of the stem that holds the branch ? What of the bark that shields

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the stem ? What of the roots that feed the bark, the stem, the branches and the leaves ? What of the soil embosoming the roots ? What of the sun, and sea, and air that fertilize the soil ?...

“You have no friends so long as you can count a single man as foe. The heart that harbors enmity, how can it be a safe abode for friendship ?

“Love neither lends nor borrows; Love neither buys or sells; but when it gives, it gives its all, and when it takes, it takes its all. Its very taking is a giving. Its very giving is a taking. Therefore is it the same to-day, to-morrow and forevermore...

“Love is an active force; and save it guide your every move and step, you cannot find your way; and save it fill your every wish and thought, your wishes shall be nettles in your dreams; your thoughts shall be as dirges for your days.”

“Love is not a virtue. Love is a necessity...”

—Mikhail Naimy

“Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.

“Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;

“For love is sufficient unto love.

“Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself.

“But if you love and must needs have desires, let these be your desires :

“To melt and be like a running brook that sings its melody to the night.

“To know the pain of too much tenderness.

“To be wounded by your own understanding of love;

“And to bleed willingly and joyfully...”

—Kahlil Gibran

## LIFE AND DEATH

“Life is a gathering in. Death is a scattering out. Life is a binding together. Death is a falling away. Therefore is Man—the dualist—suspended 'twixt the two. For he would gather in, but only through scattering out.

“All Time is lifetime...”

“Your father is not dead, Himbal. Nor dead are yet his form and shadow. But dead, indeed, are your senses to your father's altered form and shadow...

“A piece of wood, be it to-day a green branch on a tree and a peg in a wall to-morrow, continues to be wood and to change in form and shadow until consumed by the fire within it. Likewise shall Man continue to be man, when living as when dead, until the God in him consume him; which is to say, until he *understands* his oneness with The One. But that is not to be accomplished in that twinkling of an eye which men are pleased to designate as lifetime...”

—MIKHAIL NAIMY

“For what is to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun ?

“And what is it to cease breathing but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered ?”

“Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose hand is to be laid upon him in honour.”

—Kahlil Gibran

SPEECH

“The Silence I commend unto you and not a mere respite for your speech-worn tongues.

“The fruitful silence of the Earth do I commend unto you, and not the fearful silence of the felon and the knave.

“The patient silence of the setting hen do I commend unto you, not the impatient cackling of her laying sister.

“Refrain from speaking much. Out of a thousand words uttered there may be one, and one only, that need in truth be uttered. The rest but cloud the mind, and stuff the ear, and irk the tongue, and blind the heart as well.

“The silence I would usher you into is that interminable expanse wherein nonbeing passes into being, and being into nonbeing. It is that awesome void where every sound is born and hushed, and every form is shaped and crushed; where every self is writ and unwrit; where nothing is but IT.”

—Mikhail Naimy

“You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts;

“And when you can no longer dwell in the solitude of your heart you live in your lips, and sound is a diversion and a pastime.

“And in much of your talking, thinking is half murdered.

“For thought is a bird of space, that in a cage of words may indeed unfold its wings but cannot fly.”

—Kahlil Gibran

The background against which the whole story stands is antique and mystic and keeps up one's interest throughout. The story starts with the beginning of existence spoken of in the Book of Genesis where we have the mention of the Flood and Noah's Arc. Mirdad is the principal figure in the story who comes as the stranger to the old mountaneous monastery, The Ark, having eight residing monks, and by and by reveals his divinehood by words and acts of wisdom and virtually becomes their undeclared *Murshid*, Master, in the place of its old heir-guardian who has lost all inner control on the monks because of his egoistic and jealous behaviour, even though he has remained the head of the affairs of the monastery.

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These are the words which Mirdad speaks for the first time after seven years' stay in the monastery as a servant :

"Your eyes are veiled with far too many veils. Each thing you look upon is but a veil.

"Your lips are sealed with far too many seals. Each word you utter forth is but a seal.

"For things, whatever be their form and kind, are only veils and swaddling-bands wherewith is Life enswaddled and enveiled...

"The eye can veil, but cannot pierce the veils.

"The lip can seal, but cannot break the seals...

"To pierce the veils you need an eye other than that shaded with lash, and lid, and brow.

"To break the seals you need a lip other than the familiar piece of flesh below your nose.

"First *see* the eye itself aright, if you would see the other things aright..."

"If your world be such a baffling riddle, it is because you are that baffling riddle. And if your speech be such a woeful maze, it is because you are that woeful maze.

"Let things alone and labor not to change them. For they seem what they seem only because you seem what you seem. They neither see nor speak except you lend them sight and speech. If they be harsh of speech, look only to your tongue. If they be ugly of appearance, search first and last your eye.

"Ask not of things to shed their veils. Unveil yourselves, and things will be unveiled. Nor ask of things to break their seals. Unseal yourselves, and all will be unsealed.

"The key to self-unveiling and self-unsealing is a word which you forever hold between your lips. Of words it is the slightest and the greatest. Mirdad has called it THE CREATIVE WORD."

Thus starts the book in a direct, imaginative and challenging style and goes on to explain the Creative Word, I, the source and centre of all things.

"When you say *I*, say forthwith in your heart, 'God be my refuge from the woes of *I* and be my guide unto the bliss of *I*'. ...Your *I* is but your conscious being, silent and incorporeal, made vocal and corporeal...

"As is your Consciousness, so is your *I*. As is your *I*, so is your world. If it be clear and definite of meaning, your world is clear and definite of meaning; and then your words should never be a maze ; nor should your deeds be ever nests of pain.... The purpose of removing the poison from the *I* is to have the taste of the sweetness of Understanding, and that of weighing the *I* is to know the joy of PERFECT BALANCE."

Then the author speaks, through the tongue of Mirdad, of Man as God

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in Swaddling-Bands, of God's and Man's Word, of the Master and the Servant.

We have chapters on Judgment, Creative Silence (Speech at best an Honest Lie), Prayer, Insult, Money, Death, Time, Logic and Faith, Life after Death, Omnipotence, Marriage, Old Age, Authority and on many other topics.

In the closing chapters, Mirdad establishes direct contact with the people, utilising the occasion of the Day of the Vine, when the pilgrims bring numerous precious gifts to The Ark. To all he opens the gates of the monastery which till then was meant for the chosen few, gives general initiation to the people and establishes with them the double-way contact of love.

The paper and printing of the book are praiseworthy. There is also a frontispiece photographic picture of the author. We recommend this book to all lovers of spiritual thought.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

## IS OUR CHRONOLOGY FOR ANCIENT INDIA CORRECT?

### *Some Criticisms and Suggestions*

16

WHAT is called the first confirmation of Fleet's epoch does not invalidate straightforward acceptance of Alberuni's testimony. For, this acceptance keeps the epoch intact : it changes merely the interpretation of it. An objection to the Puranic interpretation would be possible if in the records of any kings regarded at present as feudatory to the Guptas and as using their era we could find the mention of any Imperial Gupta as overlord. The Valabhi kings, the kings of Kamarupa and Orissa, the Maukharis—none of them have left us the name of any Imperial Gupta in connection with the Gupta Era used or with reference to overlordship.<sup>1</sup> Among the chiefs of Bengal, only one seems to have used the name of some Gupta. Majumdar<sup>2</sup> writes : "The name of a Gupta ruler is invoked as suzerain in a grant of N. Bengal in A.D. 543. Unfortunately the first part of the name is lost, but it might well have been 'Vishnu' and refer to the last Gupta ruler. We do not know how and when the Guptas lost this last stronghold. A land-grant found in the Gayā District in the very heart of Magadha was issued in A.D. 551-2 by Nandana who is called *Kumārāmātya Mahārāja*. As there is no reference to any Gupta ruler in this record we may conclude that by A.D. 550 the Guptas ceased to exercise effective authority over the greater part of Magadha. Nandana's title *Kumārāmātya*, however, shows that like the Viziers of Oudh in the eighteenth century he still dared not throw off nominal allegiance to the Guptas." Majumdar's inferences are legitimate in the context of his beliefs, but once we conceive of the Gupta Era à la Alberuni everything changes. Instead of thinking of Vishnugupta we may think of one of the Later Guptas and it is most interesting to see that their history satisfies all demands arising from the facts stated by Majumdar.

Majumdar<sup>3</sup> himself has told us this history. "An inscription found at Aphsad near Gaya<sup>4</sup> gives the following genealogy of the early kings of this dynasty :

<sup>1</sup> *The Classical Age*, pp 60-92

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 72-76; 126-28.

<sup>4</sup> *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III. 200.



## IS OUR CHRONOLOGY FOR ANCIENT INDIA CORRECT?

1. Krishna-gupta.
2. Harsha-gupta.
3. Jivita-gupta.
4. Kumāra-gupta.
5. Dāmodara-gupta.
6. Mahāsena-gupta.
7. Mādhava-gupta.
8. Āditya-sena.

Although no royal title is given to any of these, Krishna-gupta is called *nṛpa* (king) and similar epithets are applied to his successors. The Apsad inscription describes in very general and conventional terms the military achievements of the first three kings. The third king is said to have carried his arms to the Himalaya mountains as well as to the sea. But there is nothing to show whether these campaigns were undertaken by the Later Gupta rulers as feudatories on behalf of their suzerains or as independent chiefs....More details are available about the next king Kumāra-gupta. He defeated the Maukhari king Isāna-varman who is described as 'a very moon of kings'....That the success attained by Kumāra-gupta was both great and permanent is proved by the facts recorded in the Apsad inscription that he had advanced up to Prayāga where he died and that his son Dāmodara-gupta again defeated the Maukharis, though he was probably killed or was seriously wounded in the battle. There is no reason to discredit these claims, particularly as the Maukhari records do not claim any victory over their opponents....Mahāsena-gupta, the son of Dāmodara-gupta, carried his victorious arms as far as the Lauhitya or Brahmaputra, and defeated Susthita-varman, the king of Kāmarūpa or Assam.... Mahāsena-gupta...soon fell on evil days....His two sons Kumāra-gupta and Mādhava-gupta found shelter at the court of king Prabhākara-vardhana of Thāneswar, whose mother *Mahāsena-guptā*, as the name shows, was probably a sister of king Mahāsena-gupta. The two young princes became attendants of Rājya-vardhana and Harsha-vardhana, the two sons of Prabhākara-vardhana ....Shortly after the death of Harsha...either Mādhava-gupta or his brother seized the opportunity to make himself master of Māgadha....Mādhava-gupta must have been fairly advanced in age when he ascended the throne, and his reign was probably a short one. He was succeeded by his son Ādityasena.... Ādityasena assumed the imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja*. There is hardly any doubt that he ascended the throne in the third quarter of the seventh century A.D. We know the names of three successors of Ādityasena, *viz.* Deva-gupta, Vishṇu-gupta and Jivita-gupta. They all continued the imperial titles and were evidently rulers of some power....”

Some light is thrown on the chronology of the kings preceding Ādityasena by the fact noted by Majumdar<sup>1</sup> that Isāna-varman whom the fourth Later Gupta Kumāra-gupta defeated flourished in c. 550-576 A.D. With this fact before us we may interpret the title *Kumārāmātya Mahārāja* assumed by Nandana in the land-grant of 551-2 A.D. as a reference to Kumāragupta who must have lived round about 550 A.D., and the name of the unknown Gupta ruler in a grant of N. Bengal in 543 A.D. can very well have been that of Kumāragupta himself or his predecessor Jivita-gupta. The sole proviso for these possibilities is that the Later Guptas be proved to have dominated Magadha and other parts of Eastern India at the time. On this matter we may quote Majumdar<sup>2</sup> again. "Ādityasena, the grandson of Mahāsena-gupta, ruled in Magadha, and so did all his successors. The Apsad inscription of Ādityasena gives a continuous account of the whole dynasty from the very beginning up to his reign without indicating in any way that it had migrated from a different place. It may, therefore, be presumed that Magadha was the kingdom over which the dynasty ruled from the beginning." Then Majumdar considers some objections and the answers to them and remarks: "Thus although it is impossible to come to any definite conclusion it seems very reasonable to regard the Later Guptas as rulers of Gauḍa and Magadha with suzerainty over Mālava." This means that there is no evidence for the Imperial Guptas rather than the Later Guptas, in the two grants mentioned by Majumdar.

The only family that mentions Imperial Gupta names, the Vakatakas<sup>3</sup> do not employ the Gupta Era or, in fact, any Era and provide us with no clue to placing them side by side with the Valabhi kings, the kings of Bengal, of Kāmarūpa and Orissa, the Maukharis: they can be placed in the same centuries before Christ as the Imperial Guptas. An attempt is made at times to connect up the end of the Vakatakas with rulers who are known to have existed in the sixth century A.D., but no success attends it. We can only swim in conjectures. Sircar<sup>4</sup> admits: "The actual events leading to the fall of the Vākātakas are unknown. They are not mentioned amongst the powers that stood in the way of the Chālukya occupation of the Deccan in the latter half of the sixth century. The early Chālukya monarchs had to subdue the Nalas of the southern Madhya Pradesh and adjoining regions, the Mauryas of the Konkan and the Kalachuris of northern Mahārāshṭra and the adjacent countries. It is not improbable that the major part of the dominions of both the Vākāṭaka houses had passed to the Nalas before the middle of the sixth

<sup>1</sup> *The Classical Age*, p 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-88. also *The Age of Imperial Umy*, p 219.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

century....” On part of the same point Sircar<sup>1</sup> writes again: “Whether the Nalas were responsible for the fall of the Vākātakas of Vatsagulma...cannot be determined in the present state of insufficient knowledge. But the suggestion is not altogether improbable.” How can it be anything except “altogether improbable” when we are utterly in the dark, and the only source of light—the Chālukya records—has not even a hint about the Vākātakas ?

Here we may go on to remark that the idea of Gupta-feudatories using the Gupta Era of 320 A.D. is left unsupported by also the fact that certain monarchs’ clear independence of any overlord in the period under consideration is not linked organically with their use or disuse of this Era. Thus the Later Guptas, who are taken to be feudatories of the Imperial Line and whom we may expect because of their name to continue with the Gupta Era even after independence, have left no inscription dated in it. A dated inscription of one of them, Ādityasena, an independent monarch, gives the number 66 which has been referred by our historians to the supposed Harsha Era of 606 A.D.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Isanavarman the Maukhari whose three predecessors are said to have been Gupta-feudatories and who is considered the first Maukhari to set up an independent kingdom<sup>3</sup> is understood by our historians to be still using the Gupta Era on his coins and even his two successors Sarva-varman and Avanti-varman who are allotted the reign periods *c.* 576-580 A.D. and 580-600 A.D. are assumed to have used the same Era.<sup>4</sup> Much more pointed is Sasanka’s Gangem plate of the Gupta Era year 300 (620 A.D.) when no Imperial Gupta is even conceivable on Fleet’s epoch. Or, still better, take the rock inscription at Tezpur<sup>5</sup> of Harjavarman, the Kamarupa king, of the Gupta Era year 510, which would take us to 830 A.D. It seems that we do not really know why the Gupta Era was dropped or continued : the feudatory-hypothesis does not cover the situation adequately and hence we cannot affirm that the Imperial Guptas were in power after 320 A.D.

There is even an epigraphic phrase not very clear yet suggestive of Alberuni’s Gupta Era. In the Gokak plates<sup>6</sup> of Dejjā Maharaja are seen the words : “*āguptāyikānām kālah*”. They mean an era which goes up to the Guptayikas. If such a turn of expression connoted, as it might, an era from the start of the Gupta dynasty, it would be highly artificial in a post-Gupta record, whereas if it connoted, as it certainly could, an era from the end of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Mookerji, *The Gupta Empire*, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. 21, p. 289.42.

this dynasty, one which goes up to the termination of the Guptas, it would be in that record a pointed manner of speaking.

There are only a few inscriptions which may seem in this context to give a ground for the belief that the Imperial Guptas reigned from 320 up to at least 569 A.D. One is the Sumandala copper-plate<sup>1</sup> from Orissa. Here a chief named *Dharmarāja* acknowledges the suzerainty of a monarch named *Prithvī-vigraha* who is stated to have been ruling the Kalinga *rāshṭra*, apparently as a viceroy of the Gupta emperors. The phrase in which the date is indicated runs : *varṭtamāna-Gupta-rājye varshaśata-dvaye Pañchāśad-uttare*. This has to be translated : "In the year 250 of the current sovereignty of the Guptas." If the inscription is dated according to the Gupta Era of 320 A.D., the Imperial Guptas were ruling in  $320 + 250 = 569$  A.D. (including the year 320 itself). But there is a detail that goes against 320 A.D., a detail based on three other inscriptions. The first is another copper-plate inscription, discovered in a locality in the Puri District, of the Vighraha dynasty<sup>2</sup> to which Dharmaraja's suzerain belonged. It mentions a monarch named Lokavighraha and gives the year 280 and shows this monarch to have been holding sway over both *Dakṣiṇa-Tosalī* and *Uttara-Tosalī* in evident independence of Gupta sovereignty. However, two copper-plate inscriptions<sup>3</sup> of a Maharaja named *Sambhuyāśas* belonging to the Mudgala *gotra* and the *Māna*-family show him to be master of not only Uttara-Tosali in 579 A.D. but also Dakshina-Tosali in 602 A.D. on the very likely assumption<sup>4</sup> that the year 260 and 283 are of the Gupta Era. If the copper-plate of Lokavighraha of the year 280 is also of the Gupta Era of 320 A.D., as it should be in consonance with the belief that the year 250 of Prithivighraha belongs to this Era, we have in him and Sambhuyasas two simultaneous sovereigns each in complete control of the two Tosalis. The paradox would be resolved on shifting either Lokavighraha or Sambhuyasas to an entirely different period. As the former joins up with Prithivivighraha and as the inscription mentioning this predecessor of his is the sole one in our possession to speak unequivocally of the era of a contemporary Gupta rajya, Lokavighraha may be disconnected from the Gupta Era of 320 A.D. This means that Prithivivighraha may be referred to another Gupta Era, one which counts the years of actual Imperial Gupta sovereignty and not the years from the end of that sovereignty. Thus Prithivivighraha may be considered as existing in the Orissa region in the year 250 after *c.* 324 B.C. Sircar's suggestion<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol XXVIII, pp 79-85

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 328ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 301f and Vol IX, pp. 287f.

<sup>4</sup> D. C. Sircar, "Facts of Early Orissan History" in the *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XXXIV, Part III, p. 271, Dec. 1956.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

that Lokavighraha was misstating things and that his claim has to be deemed "an echo of an earlier period when the Vighrahas were actually ruling over the Ganjam-Puri-Cuttack-Belasore region" appears to be an *ad hoc* device to get out of an unpromising position. The natural theory would be that the Sumandala inscription of Dharmaraja does not bring the Imperial Guptas into a period which would give the lie to the Puranic chronology.

Much less do the inscriptions of the *Parivrajaka Mahārājas* Hastin and his son *Samksobha*. Fleet argued for a Gupta Era in them, but, really speaking, what is implied by them is the existence of the Guptas at the time the inscriptions were made: the era is not definitely shown to be of the Guptas. Even Fleet,<sup>1</sup> though taking the Gupta Era to be most probably there, had to admit: "There is nothing in the expression tending to give the era the name of the Gupta era." The expression stands like the following: *Saṭpañchaśottare abdaśata Gupta nṛpa-rājya bhuktau*"—"In the year 156 while the Gupta kings were ruling." D. N. Mookerji<sup>2</sup> has remarked: "If the Gupta era was really intended, the expression could have been written as *Gupta-nṛpa rājya bhuktau śaṭpañchaśottare abdaśata*." All that we can say is that Hastin and his son were contemporaries of the Guptas and using some era which cannot be identified. If there is no conclusive evidence to place them in the A.D. period, they may be placed in the B.C. period where we have put the Imperial Guptas. If there is, we have to ask whether, while using some unidentified era, they cannot be minor contemporaries of the Later Guptas who were definitely in the A.D. period. Seen all round, their inscriptions do not bear out the non-Puranic chronology.

On the strength of all that we have studied so far we may go to the extent of asking whether the Imperial Guptas can even possibly be placed after 320 A.D. up to the middle of the sixth century. What most prompts the question is the information already got from Majumdar that the Later Guptas were ruling over Gauda, Magadha and Malava from the very beginning of their dynasty. Is it not incompatible with this information to posit the Imperial Guptas as rulers over the same provinces? If Adityasena, the eighth of the other Line, came to the throne, as said by Majumdar, in the last quarter of the seventh century A.D., and if the fourth ruler, Kumaragupta who defeated Isanavarman, was on the throne round about 550 A.D., we have about 125 years for four members of the dynasty. So we may with reason put the first of the Later Guptas, Krishnagupta, another 125 years earlier, in about 425 A.D. The Later Guptas may not have been uninterrupted masters of Magadha, Gauda

<sup>1</sup> *Gupta Inscriptions*, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> *Bhāratiya Vidyā*, Vol. V. Miscellany, p. 108.

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and Malava : they may have had ups and downs — some of which we know of<sup>1</sup> — but they are shown to have been masters in general of dominions which our historians give to the Imperial Guptas : 414 or 415 A.D. is the accession-date allotted to Chandragupta II's son Kumaragupta I who reigned for 40 years<sup>2</sup> and was followed by Skandagupta, Kumaragupta II, Purugupta, Budhagupta, Narsimhagupta, Kumaragupta III and Vishnugupta, the last two being allotted the years between 535 and 570 A.D.<sup>3</sup> We are told that the Later Guptas ruled only over a powerful principality within Magadha, but this is a supposition made in order to accomodate the modern version of history. We are quite free, on the facts in our possession, to discard it. The Imperial Guptas seem not only unnecessary but out of place in the period ascribed to them.

*(To be continued)*

K. D. SETHNA

*Ibid.*, 73-75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

# Students' Section

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## THE MOTHER'S TALKS TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN

(On Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, Book II, Part 2, Chapter XXIII,  
"Man and the Evolution", paragraph 4)

SRI Aurobindo presents here an argument. It is one of the ways of envisaging a problem and resolving it, but that is not to say that it is his point of view. And this is just what he does all the time in the course of the book, he presents the different arguments, the different viewpoints, the different conceptions, and once he has posed all the problems before you he comes and gives the solution. Hence our method of reading sets up an inconvenience because I read a paragraph each week and if one stops with it one may believe that Sri Aurobindo is going to demonstrate his own point of view. The next week, while I shall read to you another paragraph, you will see that Sri Aurobindo expounds another viewpoint, at times diametrically opposed, and you may believe also that it is his own manner of seeing, and you will thus find yourself before a series of contradictions of one paragraph by another. I say this to you because I have heard persons who had a rather superficial way of reading and perhaps did not read continuously enough, people who however believed themselves to be extremely intelligent and erudite and have told me : "But Sri Aurobindo repeats himself all the time in this book. He keeps saying approximately the same thing in each paragraph." That is because Sri Aurobindo presents all the points of view, he expounds all the problems and he finishes by giving us his own conclusion and by demonstrating the truth of what he wishes to teach.

Naturally, reading with a little attention suffices to save us from falling into this trap. So be careful not to conclude in the middle of a subject, not to tell yourself : "There, Sri Aurobindo says it is like that." He does not, he says to you that there are people who think it is like that. He shows you how the same problem has been presented by diverse persons, and it is only when he has

finished explaining to you all viewpoints that he gives his own conclusion, and what is exceedingly interesting is that his conclusion is always a synthesis : all the other points of view find their place on condition that one adjusts them suitably. Sri Aurobindo excludes nothing, he combines everything and synthesises all viewpoints.

I do not know whether you remember the problem posed : is there or is there not an individual evolution ?

There is a universal evolution, Sri Aurobindo has demonstrated it, but, in the midst of this universal evolution, is there an individual evolution or not ? In this paragraph Sri Aurobindo has presented to us a theory altogether logical, according to which it is not at all necessary to postulate an individual evolution. The whole universal combination is logical, can be explained logically, without our introducing the necessity of an individual evolution.

But if we continue our reading with patience, you will see after a time that Sri Aurobindo goes on to prove to us why and how this notion of individual evolution must be introduced into the system of explaining the universe. But what I would like to know is whether the problem has a reality for us or not, whether it corresponds or not to something which you understand, whether you have understood that it is possible to conceive of a universe in progression, in evolution, without necessarily the individual himself evolving, individually.

I shall have first to put you questions to make you ask yourselves if you know the difference that is there between a universal evolution and an individual one and how the two can proceed.

How does Nature proceed in her universal evolution ? I am speaking of the external world, the physical world such as we see it.

*Q. One dies and is reborn...?*

No, that is another thing. What you are saying—death and rebirth, death and rebirth—is the process of individual evolution, on the condition that something of the individual does not die, because if the individual dies wholly, if he disintegrates totally, what is it that can be reborn ? Perforce something has to persist through the rebirths, else it will no longer be the same person. If nothing persists it is not the individual who progresses, it is simply Nature who makes use of Matter.

In a simplified fashion, one may say that Nature disposes a mass of matter, with this matter she makes a combination, produces forms which develop and then break up. The forms do not persist as individual elements. Why do they not persist ? Nature needs matter, substance to remake forms. Then she



undoes what she has done, then with that she remakes something else and so on and so forth. This could continue indefinitely without the individual's progressing, but the ensemble still progresses.

Suppose you had plasticine to do modelling. You make one form, then when you have finished it you perceive that it does not please you, so you unmake it and, starting again with a paste, attempt another form. You have progressed, you go on attempting, you keep arranging, you tell yourself, "This and this won't do, I wish to try like that", and your form is a little better, but it is not yet what you want, then once more you unmake things, put some water, make a pulp, then begin another form, and you may thus continue endlessly—well, is it not always the same substance but not the same being, because each of the forms has an existence of its own as a form and, the moment you unmake it, it is no longer anything?

You can try to perfect the same form or you can try other forms, a dog or a horse for example; then, if you are not successful, you can begin another horse or another dog, but you can also begin something else. If you build a house and if the house does not please you, you demolish it, you rebuild a new one, on a different model, but nothing remains of the first house except the memory, if you wish to keep it. Similarly, one can say by way of simplification that Nature commences with a matter altogether inconscient and formless, then tries form after form—only, instead of making one sole thing at a time as we do, she makes millions at a time. It is simply a question of proportions, because she employs greater means : that is all. But this does not necessarily mean that there is anything permanent, a principle of life or a principle of consciousness which enters into one form and, when the form is destroyed, persists in order to enter into another; Nature can proceed just like you with your plasticine, make, unmake, remake, again unmake, indefinitely, and nothing remains except the memory of what was made before. On the other hand, if one admits an individual evolution, it is something permanent that passes from form to form and which, at every new form, makes a new progress and becomes capable of entering into a form higher each time, until this something becomes a perfectly conscious being at the end of the evolution. There would then be a personal evolution which doubles with the universal evolution, an evolution which is not independent but simultaneous and completes the evolution of Nature, or rather makes use of it as a field for individual progress.

It is as if, at the centre of the form which you have made with your plasticine, you introduced a little precious stone and wished to reclothe it in successive forms. Then you carry the little precious stone from one form across to another—and yet the comparison is incomplete because the precious stone becomes more and more precious according as it passes from one form to

another, as if it grew more and more luminous and pure, with a form more and more precise.

In this paragraph Sri Aurobindo offers us the explanation of a world which functions in a fashion altogether logical and comprehensible without the need to postulate an individual being which passes from form to form without it being necessary to affirm something permanent which is free from all destruction, from all death, and persists through all forms and follows a personal individual progression parallel to the evolution of Nature.

There! Now, if you have understood, you may put me your question. To round off: Do you believe that there is an individual evolution or not? Have you any experience of it? And can one have the experience? How can one have the experience of the individual evolution, independent of the collective evolution of Nature?

*Q. Unless one gets conscious of the principle which is eternal in oneself, how can one have the experience...?*

That's right. But then this comes round to asking you: "Are you conscious of this eternal principle which is in your being?"

*Q. Why is it hidden?*

Perhaps simply because one has not sufficiently occupied oneself with it. If one took the pains to open the gates, one would perhaps find it. It is evidently a gentleman—or a lady or something—who does not like ostentation, who does not force himself on the surface attention, but perhaps waits for one to go in search of him. Perhaps it is seated very tranquilly, right at the centre of the house, and we should open the doors one after the other.

I for one do not find that it is hidden, I find it evident everywhere, all the time, at each minute, in all things.

November 27, 1957

(K. D. S.)