



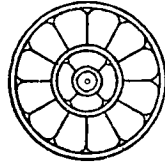
# MOTHER INDIA

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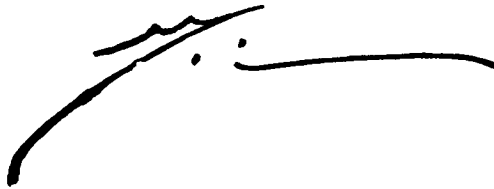
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled



# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XIV

No. 3

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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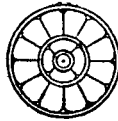
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March 29, 1962

To concentrate most on one's own spiritual growth and experience is the first necessity of the sadhak—to be eager to help others draws away from the inner work. To grow in the spirit is the greatest help one can give to others, for then something flows out naturally to those around that helps them.

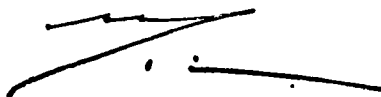
*Sri Anandadas*



April 4, 1962

Physically, materially, upon earth, it is in gratitude that one finds the purest source of delight.

Physiquement, matériellement, sur la terre, c'est dans la gratitude que se trouve la source de la joie la plus pure.



## UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

### ATTACKS OF THE HOSTILE FORCES AND THE YOGIC WAY TO DEAL WITH THEM

ABOUT the attacks and action of the cosmic forces—these attacks very ordinarily become violent when the progress is becoming rapid and on the way to be definite—especially if they find they cannot make an effective attack on the inner being they try to shake by outside assaults. One must take it as a trial of strength, a call for gathering all one's capacities of calm and openness to the Light and Power so as to make oneself an instrument for the victory of the Divine over the undivine, of the Light over the darkness in the world tangle.

It is in this spirit that you must face these things till the higher things are so confirmed in you that these forces can attack no longer. 24-12-1933

You know what is the right thing to do—to take and keep the necessary inner attitude—when there is the openness to the Force and the strength, courage and power in action coming from it, outward circumstances can be met and turned in the right direction. 15-3-1934

Whenever anything untoward happens, it is essential not to allow any vibrations of disturbance or unrest in either the physical mind or the nerves. One must remain calm, and open to the Light and Force, then one will be able to work in the right way. 19-8-1934

It is quite true that falsehood reigns in this world, that is the reason why these difficulties manifest. But you have not to allow yourself to be shaken. You must remain calm and strong and go straight, using the power of Truth and the Divine Force supporting you to overcome the difficulties and set straight what has been made crooked by the falsehood. 28-8-1934

Yes, the adverse forces take advantage of any perturbation of that kind, for it opens, as it were, a passage to their action. Fear is the one thing that one must never feel in face of them, for it makes them bold and aggressive.

Moreover, fear, as you justly say, calls the thing feared—it must therefore be thrown out altogether. 1-9-1934

From the point of view of sadhana—you must not allow yourself to be in the least disturbed by these things. What you have to do, what is right to be

done, should be done in perfect calmness with the support of the Divine Force. All that is necessary for a successful result, can be done—including the securing of the support of those who are able to help you. But if this outer support is not forthcoming, you have not to be disturbed but to proceed calmly on your way. If there is any difficulty or unsuccess anywhere not due to your own fault, you have not to be troubled. Strength, unmoved calm, quiet straight and right dealing with all things you have to deal with must be the rule of your action.

8-10-1934

To keep this equanimity and absence of reactions and from that calm ground to direct the Yoga-force on things and persons (not for egoistic aims but for the work to be done) is the position of the Yogi.

20-12-1934

Keep unmoved, unoffended, do your work without being discouraged, call on the Force to act for you. It is a field of trial for you—the inward result is more important than the outward.

27-12-1934

A double action is needed to destroy the ill-will of the inferiors and to change the mind of the superiors in an invisible action, for, in the visible they seem to be too much under the control of the Forces of the Ignorance.

31-12-1934

You have to make yourself an instrument of the invisible Force—to be able in a way to direct it to the required point for the required purpose. But for that Samata must be entire—for a calm and luminous use of the Force is necessary. Otherwise the use of the Force, if accompanied by ego-reactions, may raise corresponding ego-resistance and a struggle.

1-2-1935

The increase of Samata is only a first condition. It is when on the basis of Samata an understanding Force can be used to make their attacks nugatory that the attacks will become impossible.

5-2-1935

[“External assault by the adverse powers on persons who co-operate”—] that is always a part of their tactics in the physical sphere. They can be averted only by a superior force being used against them.

5-2-1935

The whole affair seems to have been a violent massed attack of which the P.M.G. and others were blind instruments. As I think I wrote to you such attacks are being freely delivered just now by the hostile forces because this is a decisive stage of conflict in the material and external consciousness which is still their, or has been up till now their, undisputed Kingdom in which they can easily manipulate the play of the Forces.



We have had a series of attacks to face ourselves and the struggle is not over. As soon as I got your telegram (and subsequently your letter) I reacted and brought as much Force as possible on the ground and the persons affected. I am glad to see there has been a favourable effect.

Your P.M.G. seems to be a hasty and impulsive man easily swayed by various influences without knowing it. As it turns out he has taken the right turn and I suppose the crisis is practically over. But we shall have to be careful and vigilant hereafter....You will have to use tact and diplomacy in future.

25-2-1935

This is the right inner attitude of equality—to remain unmoved whatever may outwardly happen. But what is needed for success in the outward field (if you do not use human means, diplomacy or tactics) is the power to transmit calmly a Force that can change men's attitude and the circumstances and make any outward action at once the right thing to do and effective. 15-3-1935

For the sadhak the outward struggles, troubles, calamities are only means of surmounting ego and rajasic desires and attaining to complete surrender. So long as one wants the success, one is doing the work partly at least for the ego; difficulties and outward failures come to warn one that it is so and to bring complete equality. This does not mean that the power of victory is not to be acquired, but it is not success in the immediate work that is all-important; it is the power to receive and transmit a greater and greater correct vision and inner Force that has to be developed and this must be done quite coolly and patiently without being elated or disturbed by immediate victory or failure. 20-3-1935

Of course, one must use these external means and there one must be careful so as to have as many factors as possible on one's side and give as little handle as possible to the adverse forces. But no outward action can be for us sure of success unless behind it is the growing Yogic vision and Yogic power.

We have had ourselves serious difficulties from the outside, petitions made against us to the Minister of Colonies in Paris and a report demanded from the Governor here which if acted on would have put the Ashram in serious jeopardy.

We used outward means of a very slight and simple character i.e. getting the Mother's brother (Governor in French Equatorial Africa) to intervene with the Ministry (and also an eminent writer in France, a disciple), but for the most part I used a strong inner Force to determine the action of the Colonial Office, to get a favourable report from the Governor here, to turn the minds of some here who were against us and to nullify the enmity of others. In all these respects I succeeded and our position here is made stronger than before; especially a new and favourable Governor has come. Nevertheless we have to remain

vigilant that the situation may not be again threatened. Also one disadvantage has resulted, that we have been asked not to buy or rent more houses but to build instead. This is difficult without land and much money; so we are for the moment unable to expand.

In certain respects, however, this is not a disadvantage, as I have been long wishing to put off further expansion and consolidate the inward life of the Ashram in a more completely spiritual sense.

I give this as an example of how things have to be dealt with from the Yogic point of view. 20-3-1935

That is the right thing to do. But in this action, until the power becomes more perfect, there is always a fluctuating, a turn in the right direction being often followed by a reaction of the contrary forces. One has to persevere until the outer forces become more and more accustomed to answer to the inner Force. 8-4-1935

*From* RAJANI PALIT

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

*(These talks are from the Note-books of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others, after the accident to his leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were : Dr. Mamilal, Dr. Becherlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshanker. As the Notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.*

*This is the fifteenth talk in the new Series which follows a chronological order and begins at the very beginning. The four earliest talks, after Sri Aurobindo's accident, appeared in Mother India in 1952. We are now picking up where we then stopped and shall continue systematically.)*

JANUARY 8, 1939

TONIGHT we were at a loss how to begin. But we saw that Sri Aurobindo was ready; he was as if inviting us by his look. But none could break forth; we seemed to have exhausted all our questions. In that puzzled mood N once looked up and Sri Aurobindo looked at him. Suddenly N burst into laughter and the rest joined in. Finding an opening or an inspiration, P began.

P : There is something interesting about snoring in the *Sunday Times* today. Someone says that snoring is the reaction of the subconscious against some pressure one does not like.

SRI AUROBINDO : Nonsense! Does it mean that a man snores because he is protesting against someone's presence he doesn't like? Or that one can't snore unless there is someone present whom one doesn't like?

N (to P) : Were you attracted by that question because of our snoring?

P : Yes, especially yours, I believe; whenever I come, I find you snoring.

S : That means N doesn't like your presence!

C : No, he snores even long before.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is perhaps in anticipation of P's arrival. (*Laughter*)

As the talk on snoring couldn't proceed further, P began quoting from the *Sunday Times* about Middleton Murry, where it was said he had come to

believe in Gandhi's Non-violence and that because of Hitler he had become a believer in God.

SRI AUROBINDO : How is that ?

P : I don't know; he says he finds Hitler an Anti-Christ, after that murder of 80 people in one night.

SRI AUROBINDO : Wasn't Murry a mystic long before Hitler's regime ? Does he mean that his faith has become stronger ?

P : Maybe. Gandhi writes that non-violence tried by some people in Germany has failed because it has not been so strong as to generate sufficient heat to melt Hitler's heart.

SRI AUROBINDO : It would have to be a furnace in that case. The only way to melt his heart is to bomb it out of existence. Then his sentimental being which cries at the tomb of his mother and expresses itself in painting—

N : Are you referring to his "London-cabman psychic," as you once put it ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, that would have then a chance in his next life. It is surprising how sentimental people can be extremely cruel.

The trouble with Gandhi is that he had to deal only with Englishmen. If he had been obliged to deal with Germans or Russians his non-violence would have had much less chance. The English people like to be at ease with their conscience. They have a certain self-esteem and they prize the esteem of the world also. Not that they are not sentimental; only they don't show it. The Russians and Germans are also sentimental but at the same time more cruel. Today a Russian may knock your head through the window-pane but tomorrow he may weep and embrace you. Englishmen also can be very cruel—for a time : they can't go on with a persistent brutality. Hitler has cruelty in his blood.

N : Englishmen seem also to appreciate a man standing up to their violence.

SRI AUROBINDO : The only way to teach an Englishman a lesson when he is making a nuisance of himself is to give him a blow in the face. Then he becomes all right. There have been numbers of such cases.

P : I know of a case where a Punjabi settled in Fiji gave a fierce beating to an Englishman. The latter used to harass him. One day when it became unbearable, he caught hold of him, knocked him down and began beating him. After some time the Englishman shouted "That will do, that will do." From that time on, he was all right.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is quite true. I remember once going to a station to see Deshpande off. In his carriage there were many Englishmen. We were a little anxious. He told us afterwards that as soon as he sat down, the Englishmen said, "We will beat you if you don't get out." He replied, "Come and try." And they didn't dare !

At one time, before the Swadeshi movement, our people were terribly afraid of these Europeans. But after that movement the fear has gone and it has

not come back. It was a sudden transformation. Once in Howrah station, a young man was being bullied by an Englishman. He suddenly shouted "Bandemataram" and all the people in the train began to shout and the Englishman took alarm.

You have heard of Shamakanta the tiger-tamer. He was travelling in a compartment with some English soldiers and a Bengali with his wife. The soldiers began to molest the Bengali's wife; he was so afraid that he did not know what to do. Shamakanta got up, caught hold of the soldiers and began to knock their heads against each other. At the next station they walked out.

I remember once when we were practising shooting, there was a middle-aged Bengali in the company. When he was asked to shoot, he became very nervous, said he didn't know how to fire, closed his eyes and then fired. After firing, he opened his eyes, smiled, and said, "I didn't know it was so easy!"

While my brother Barin and I were at Baidyanath, we used to go out with guns to shoot at birds obviously with the idea of practising. My auntie saw us and said, "These two boys will be hanged." The prophecy came almost true, for Barin got a death-sentence.

Before the Swadeshi movement started, D. Bose and myself went on a tour of Bengal to study the conditions of the people. We lived simply on bananas. D. Bose was very persuasive and could win anybody round. We found the country pessimistic, with a black weight of darkness over it. Only four or five of us stood for independence. We had great difficulty in convincing people. At Khulna we were given a royal reception, with plenty of dishes on the table. I was not known as a political leader but as the son of my father K.D.Ghose. My father had been the all-powerful man there. There was nobody that hadn't received some benefit from him and none had returned from his door empty-handed. He was said to have been a great friend of the poor. Previous to Khulna, my father was at Rangpur. There also he was like a king. The magistrate who was his friend did nothing without consulting him. It was with the friends of this magistrate—the Drewetts—that we stayed in England. This magistrate was transferred and a new magistrate came in his place. He found that he had no authority in the town, all power being in the hands of my father. He couldn't tolerate it. He asked the Government to transfer my father and so he came to Khulna. But he was hurt by this treatment and lost his previous respect for the English people and turned into a nationalist.

B : You must have lived a very short time with your father.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes; only the early years. When I was 7 we left for England and before we returned he had died. I was in a way the cause of his death. He was suffering from heart disease. Grindlays informed him that I was to start on a particular steamer. The steamer went down off the coast of Portugal and many lives were lost. Somehow I didn't sail by it. Grindlays didn't know it. They telegraphed the news to my father and he died on receiving the news.

He had great hopes of his sons, expected us to be civilians, and yet he could be quite reasonable. When Manmohan wrote to him that he wanted to be a poet, my father made no objection; he said there was nothing wrong in that. Only, he didn't send any more money.

N : We have heard that your father was irregular in sending your allowances.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes; we lived for one year on 5s. a week that my eldest brother was getting by helping the secretary of South Kensington Liberal Club, who was a brother of Sir Henry Cotton. We didn't have a winter coat. We used to take tea, bread and ham in the morning and some sausages in the evening. Manmohan could not undergo that hardship, so he went to a boarding house where he managed to get his food though there was no money to pay. Once when I was unable to pay the college dues, the principal called for me; I told him that my father had not sent my allowance. He sent a letter to my father, on receiving which he sent just the amount of the College dues and a lecture on my extravagance. It pained me to a certain extent, as we were living on such a meagre sum. Manmohan was extravagant, if you like.

When I went to Cambridge, I was introduced to a tailor who made suits for me on credit. When I returned to London, he traced me there and got introduced to Manmohan also. Manmohan got a red velvet suit made—not staring red, but aesthetic. He used to go to see Oscar Wilde in that suit. When we came back to India, that tailor wrote to India Government about the arrears that Manmohan had not paid and to the Baroda Maharaja for my arrears. I had paid almost all except £4.5s, which I thought I was justified in not paying as he had charged double the amount for our suits. The Baroda Maharaja said I had better pay.

Manmohan used to have at times poetic illness. Once we were walking through Cumberland. We found that he had fallen half a mile behind, walking at a leisurely pace and moaning out poetry in a deep tone. There was a dangerous place in front, so we shouted to him to come back. But he took no heed, went on muttering the lines and came to us with his usual leisurely steps. When he came to India, his playing the poet dropped off.

When Barin and I became politically famous, Manmohan used to say with arrogant pride, "There are only two and a half men in India. The two are my brothers and the half is Tilak."

Manmohan and I used to quarrel pretty often but I got on very well with my eldest brother. Once Manmohan told me, "I hear you have been living with M. J. Rao year after year." "Why not?" I said. "How could you do that?" he asked, "I could not live for six months without quarrelling with him."

We all forgot ourselves in the roll of our laughter and forgot all about time. In the midst of our hilarity Sri Aurobindo said, "The Mother is coming." We

all stopped laughing, stood up but couldn't check our outburst, seeing which the Mother also began to smile.

THE MOTHER (*to Sri Aurobindo*) : What are you laughing about so much ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Nothing of importance. I was speaking about my poet-brother.

When the Mother had left, there was not much further conversation.

N : What about your eldest brother ?

SRI AUROBINDO : He went up for medicine but couldn't go on. He returned to India, got a job in Coochbehar. Now I hear he has come back to Calcutta. He is a very practical man, the opposite of poetic, takes more after my father. He is a very nice man and one can easily get on with him.

## REMINISCENCES

### V

*(We have decided, in choosing this particular instalment for this special number of Mother India, to depart again from the chronological order, as the writer here takes us back to the days when the Ashram at Pondicherry was beginning to take shape with the arrival of the Mother. Apart from the great importance of the narrative in its bearing on the story of the Ashram, the incidental references it contains, like those relating to Sri Aurobindo's method of Vedic interpretation and his way of teaching foreign languages, including classical Greek and Latin, will be found to be of considerable interest to the general reader.)*

I HAVE said that this cemetery that was Pondicherry had been infested by ghosts and goblins. These had a special category known ordinarily as spies. The word "spy" carries with it, as you know, an association of all that is low and disgusting and unspeakable, things of dark import. But did you know that the word is pure Sanskrit ? It was *spaśa* in the old Vedic language. The Vedic Rishi describes Indra as sending out these *spaśa* to trace the movements of his enemies, the forces of evil that clustered round the god. So, the Vedic gods had their spies, just as the modern British government had theirs, though of course there was bound to be a certain difference. These government spies tried to collect information as to who came to our houses, who were the people who met us, what places we frequented and how our guests spent their time. That was why Motilal (Motilal Roy of the Pravartak group in Chandernagore) when he first came to Pondicherry had to come dressed as an Anglo-Indian, and he never entered our house, the Raghavan House of today, except by the backdoor and under cover of darkness after nightfall.

In fact, all of us on our first arrival here had to come under false names, the only exception being Moni (Suresh Chakravarti). He did not have to, for he had not been one of the marked men like the rest of us and his name had not been associated with any political trouble, as he was too young for that at the time. And in any case it would not have been wise to give him a false name to save him from the clutches of the law, for it was decided to rent our houses in his name and it was he again who was to act on our behalf in all official matters. Sri Aurobindo called himself Jatindranath Mitra, though only for a short while. It was under this pseudonym that he sailed from Calcutta as a passenger on



the “Dupleix” and had presented himself before the doctor for the medical examination. The fun of it was that the doctor had no suspicion as to whom he was going to examine, although he did exclaim on hearing Sri Aurobindo’s accent, “You seem to speak English very well !”, to which Sri Aurobindo replied, “Yes, I was in England for some time.” Some time indeed—fourteen years ! My name was Manindranath Roy, and eventually I came to be known as Monsieur Roy; some of my local friends of those days still know me as such and call me by that name. Roy and “Sacra” (that is, short for Chakravarti in French) became quite well-known figures both in town and elsewhere on account of their football. Bijoy was Bankim Basak—Basak for short—the noted half-back in our football team.

The British Indian police set up a regular station here, with a rented house and several permanent men. They were of course plain-clothes men, for they had no right to wear uniform within French territory. They kept watch, as I have said, both on our visitors and guests as well as ourselves. Soon they got into a habit of sitting on the pavement round the corner next to our house in groups of three or four. They chatted away the whole day and only now and again took down something in their note-books. What kind of notes they took we found out later on, when, after India had become independent and the French had left, some of these notes could be secured from the Police files and the confidential records of Government. Strange records, these : the police gave reports all based on pure fancy, they made up all sorts of stories at their sweet will. As they found it difficult to gather correct and precise information, they would just fabricate the news.

Nevertheless, something rather awesome did happen once. We had by then shifted to the present Guest House. There were two new arrivals. One was a relative of Bejoy’s, Nagen Nag, who had managed to get away from his family and had come to stay here on the pretext of a change of air for his illness. The other was a friend and acquaintance of his who had come with him as a companion and help; his name was Birendra Roy.

One day, this Birendra suddenly shaved his head. Moni said he too would have his head shaved, just because Birendra had done it. That very day, or it was perhaps the day after, there occurred a regular scene. We had as usual taken our seats around Sri Aurobindo in the afternoon. Suddenly, Biren stood up and shouted, “Do you know who I am ? You may not believe it, but I am a spy, a spy of the British police. I can’t keep it to myself any longer. I must speak out, I must make the confession before you.” With this he fell at Sri Aurobindo’s feet. We were stunned, almost dumbfounded. As we kept wondering if this could be true, or was all false, perhaps a hallucination or some other illusion—*māyā nu matibhramo nu*—Biren started again, “Oh, you do not believe me ? Then let me show you.” He entered the next room, opened his trunk, drew out a hundred rupee note and showed it to us. “See, here is the

proof. Where could I have got all this money ? This is the reward of my evil deed. Never, I shall never do this work again. I give my word to you, I ask your forgiveness....” No words came to our lips, all of us kept silent and still.

This is how it came about. Biren had shaved his head in order that the police spies might spot him out as their man from the rest of us by the sign of the shaven head. But they were nonplussed when they found Moni too with a shaven head. And Biren began to suspect that Moni, or perhaps the whole lot of us, had found out his secret and that Moni had shaved on purpose. So, partly out of fear and partly from true repentance, for the most part no doubt by the pressure of some other Force, he was compelled to make his confession.

After this incident, the whole atmosphere of the house got a little disturbed. We were serious and worried. How was it possible for such a thing to happen ? An enemy could find his entry into our apartments, an enemy who was one of ourselves ? What should be done ? Bejoy was furious, and it was a job to keep him from doing something drastic. However, within a few days, Biren left of his own accord and we were left in peace. I hear he afterwards joined the Great War and was sent to Mesopotamia with the Indian army.

During the Great War, Bejoy had his spell of bad luck. That makes another story. I have said the British Indian police had set up a post here. It was placed in charge of a senior official, no less a person than a Superintendent of Police. He was a Muslim, named Abdul Karim if I remember aright, a very efficient and clever man, like our old friend Shamsul Alam of the Calcutta Police. We used to go to a friend's house very often, particularly myself. This gentleman too, we found, was a visitor there and we used to meet him as if by accident. He was very nice and polite in his manners. He even expressed a desire once to have Sri Aurobindo's *darśan* so that he might pay his respects. Sri Aurobindo did not refuse, he was given the permission. The gentleman arrived with a huge bouquet by way of a present and had the *darśan*.

The three of us, namely, Moni, Saurin and myself, who had returned to Bengal after an interval of four years, had to hasten back here almost immediately owing to the outbreak of War, for there was a chance that old criminals like us would again be shut up in jail. As we had come back, Bejoy said he wished to go, for he too wanted to have a change. He would return after paying a short visit to his people. He said he had been away for so long. But the question was : would it be all right for him to go ? What did the French Government think ? What would they advise ? It was informally ascertained from the Governor that he did not consider it advisable to leave here, for the intentions of the British authorities were not above suspicion. Abdul Karim too was sounded as to their intentions. He said the British Government meant us no harm, for he was well aware that we were saintly people engaged in *sādhana* alone, and so on. But Sri Aurobindo had serious doubts. Bejoy however was a headstrong man. He got eager to go and set foot on British territory, that is,

offer his neck to the scaffold. And that is what happened. The moment he crossed the border and entered British Indian territory, he found the police waiting. They put him in handcuffs, and for the next five years, that is, till after the War was over, he was held in detention. Once he had managed to get away earlier with only a year's custody in jail; this time it was not so easy.

But why dwell on this dark tale of the lawless wilds and the demons and beasts. Their ranks are still powerful and I do not wish to add to their strength by talking about them. Now let me say a few nice things, about some good people, for such people too had their abode here. At the very outset I should speak of the Five Good Men. It is quite possible that there was a law in French India that applied to foreigners. But now the law was made stringently applicable to refugees from our own country. It was laid down that all foreigners, that is, anyone who was not a French citizen, wanting to come and stay here for some time must be in possession of a certificate from a high Government official of the place from where he came, such as a Magistrate in British India, to the effect that he was a well-known person and that there was nothing against him; in other words, he must be in possession of a "good-conduct" certificate. Or else he must produce a letter to the same effect signed by five gentlemen of standing belonging to Pondicherry. I need hardly say that the first alternative was for us quite impossible and wholly out of the question. We chose the second line, and the five noble men who affixed their signatures were these : (1) Rassendren (the father of our Jules Rassendren), (2) De Zir Naidu, (3) Le Beau, (4) Shanker Chettiar (in whose house Sri Aurobindo had put up on first arrival), (5) Muruges Chettiar. The names of these five should be engraved in letters of gold. They had shown on that occasion truly remarkable courage and magnanimity. It was on the strength of their signatures that we could continue to stay here without too much trouble.

The story of these local leaders reminds me of another incident. When I came here first, I had to adopt a subterfuge in order to ward off all suspicion. I posed as if I had come from Chandernagore, that is, from one part of French India to another, as a messenger carrying a letter from one political leader to another. I had a letter from the leader of a political party in Chandernagore to be delivered by hand to his opposite number in Pondicherry. The gentleman for whom I brought the message was called Shanmugabhelu; I forget the name of the Chandernagore gentleman. The letter suggested that he might help me find suitable accommodation for my stay here. I came and saw Mr. Shanmugabhelu at his residence with that letter. My pronunciation of the name as Shanmu-gabhelu must have shocked those of you who know Tamil ! I found the huge Mr. Gabhelu leaning on an easy-chair, surrounded by his henchmen and discoursing in tones of thunder—although the thunder must have been of the dry autumnal sort, for his party was Radical Socialist, something like our Moderate Nationalists who shouted but produced nothing. He spoke

in clear French. "Sommes-nous des citoyens français, ou non ?"—"Are we French citizens, or are we not ?"—he shouted. This was a plaint addressed to the French authorities, a petition and protest : "Where exactly do we stand here in the matter of rights ?"

Among our first acquaintances in Pondicherry were some of the young men here. The very first among them was Sada—you have known him, for he kept up with us till the end. Next came Benjamin, Rassendren and a few others. Rassendren has joined us again at the end of his career; in his early days he had been our playmate. Gradually, they formed a group of Sri Aurobindo's devotees. The strange thing about it was that they were all Christians. We did not have much of a response from the local Hindus; perhaps they were far too orthodox and old-fashioned. The Cercle Sportif was our rendezvous. There we had games, we arranged picnics, as you do today, we staged plays, and also held study circles. Only students took part.

Afterwards, when the Mother came in 1914, it was with a few men chosen from out of this group that she laid the first foundation of her work here; they formed the Society called "L'Idée Nouvelle".<sup>1</sup> Already, in her Paris days, a similar group had been formed around her, a group that came to be known as the Cosmique, a record of whose proceedings has appeared in part in the Mother's *Words of Long Ago* (*Paroles d'Autrefois*). Here, in Pondicherry, she started building up an intimate circle of initiates simultaneously with the publication of the *Arya*.

Let me speak now of a strange incident lest you should miss the element of variety in our life of those days. We stayed at the Guest House then. The Mother had finally arrived. The Great War was over, I mean the first one. And with the declaration of Peace, nearly all the political prisoners in India had had been released. Barin, Upen, Hrishikesh had all come back from the Andamans, although they were still hesitating as to whether they should join us here in the life of yoga or continue for some time longer their work in the outside world.

One day, something rather extraordinary happened. Into our compound there came a Sannyasin. He had a striking appearance, tall and fair, a huge turban wrapped round his head, a few locks of hair hanging down upon his shoulders. There were three or four disciples too. He begged for Sri Aurobindo's *darśan*. But the *darśan* turned out to be somewhat spectacular. There he disclosed his identity. Concealed behind the thick cloak of Sannyasa was our old comrade Amarendra, Amarendranath Chatterji, the noted terrorist leader for whose capture the British Government had been moving heaven and earth, that is, the worlds of the dead and the living, and also raising hell in the world of the

<sup>1</sup> We publish after this article a notice relating to the Society called "L'Idée Nouvelle", which originally appeared in the first number of the *Arya*, in August 1914. — Editor.

underground. Perhaps they had set a price on his head too. And here he was in person ! There was a wave of joy and excitement, mingled with some apprehension as well, for no one knew what the British or the French would do in case the news got abroad.

Amarendra had suddenly disappeared one day. He lived the life of a primitive savage in the jungles of Assam; he had been selling poultry and eggs at the steamship stations along the rivers of East Bengal, in the garb of a Muslim complete with Lungi and Fez. And so many other things he had done just in order to avoid the Government's vigilant eye. It was a long romantic tale. Finally, he made himself a Sannyasin, became a Guruji. Near Tanjore he set up his Ashram. Disciples gathered, his mantras and teachings brought him fame; he styled himself, if I remember aright, Swami Kaivalyananda. The British Government were completely fooled.

The Swamiji, our Amarendra, came here to obtain Sri Aurobindo's instructions as to what to do next. This, as I have said, was after the end of the War, when practically all the political prisoners had been set free and even those deported to the Andamans had been allowed to come back. He wished to know if he could now disclose himself and also what he was to do afterwards. He was advised to go back to Calcutta and await the turn of events for a while. The Swamiji now ordered his disciples back to the Ashram and said that he would like to live in solitude for some time.

That was the end of Swami Kaivalyananda. He had had his nirvana and his place was taken by Amarendra Chatterji. The disciples had in the meantime gone back to their Ashram. There they kept waiting, but the months passed without any news of Guruji. They came here at last to find out where their Guruji was. Where indeed ?

I met Amarendra for the last time just before I came away to Pondicherry for good. I had been to his shop. It was a drapery stores known as the Workers' Cooperative that served as a veil and a meeting ground for terrorist activities. He knew all about me and also that I was on my way to Pondicherry. As a parting gift, he handed me a shawl from his Stores, adding, "Payable when able." I distinctly remember the phrase. I came in touch with him again long after this. He became a devotee and disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and remained a faithful follower till his death.

It will not be out of place here to say something about the sort of education and training we received in those early days of our life in Pondicherry. One of the first needs we felt on coming here was for books, for at that time we had hardly anything we could call our own. We found that at the moment Sri Aurobindo was concentrating on the Rigveda alone and we managed to get for him two volumes of the original text. He had of course his own books and papers packed in two or three trunks. It was felt we might afford to spend ten rupees every month for the purchase of books. We began our purchases with the

main classics of English literature, especially the series published in the Home University Library and the World Classics editions. Today you see what a fine Library we have, not indeed one but many, for there is a Library of Physical Education, there is a Medical Library, there is a Library for the School, and there are so many private collections. All this had its origin in the small collections we began every month. At first, the books had to lie on the floor, for we had nothing like chairs or tables or shelves for our library. I may add that we had no such thing as a bedding either for our use. Each of us possessed a mat, and this mat had to serve as our bedstead, mattress, coverlet and pillow; this was all our furniture. And mosquito curtains ? That was a luxury we could not even dream of. If there were too many mosquitos, we would carry the mats out on to the terrace for a little air, assuming, that is, that there was any. Only for Sri Aurobindo we had somehow managed a chair and a table and a camp cot. We lived a real camp life. I should add that there were a few rickety chairs too, for the use of visitors and guests. And lights ? Today you see such a profusion of electric lighting in every room and courtyard; we have mercury lights and flash lights and spotlights and torch lights; we are even getting well into the limelight ! There is light everywhere, "all here is shining with light", *sarvam- idam vibhāti*. In those days, on the other hand, we did not even have a decent kerosene lamp or lantern. All I can recall is a single candle-stick, for the personal use of Sri Aurobindo. Whatever conversations or discussions we had after nightfall had to be in the dark; for the most part we practised silence. The first time there was an electric connection, what a joy it gave us ! It came like a revelation almost. We were in the Guest House at the time, had shifted there only a little while ago. We were out one afternoon for our games (that is, football), and it was already dark by the time we returned. As we opened the door and entered the compound, what a surprise it was ! The place was full of light, there were lights everywhere, a real illumination. The electricians had come and fitted the connections whilst we had been away. They had fitted as many as four points for the entire building, the Guest House that you see, two for the first floor and two downstairs !

We were able to purchase some French books at a very cheap rate, not more than two annas for each volume in a series. We had about a hundred of them, all classics of French literature. I find a few of them are still there in our Library. Afterwards, I also bought from the secondhand bookshops in the Gujli Kadai area several books in Greek, Latin and French. Once I chanced on a big Greek lexicon which I still use.

Gradually, a few books in Sanskrit and Bengali too were added to our stock, through purchase and gifts. As the number of books reached a few hundred, the problem was how to keep them. We used some bamboo strips to make a rack or book-stand along the walls of our rooms; the "almirahs" came later. I do not think there were any "almirahs" at all so long as we were

in the Guest House. They came after the Mother's arrival, when we shifted with our books to the Library House. That is why it came to be called the Library House.

This account would be incomplete without a few details as to our house-keeping. As to the furniture, I have already said the mat alone did duty for everything. Of servants we had only one; he did the shopping. But as we did not know his language, we had just memorised a few words connected with shopping and we somehow managed to make him understand with the help of these words and a good deal of gestures. Bejoy had his standing instructions: *meen moon anna* (fish three annas)—it was lucky *meen* in Tamil is the same as in Bengali—*ille*, then *nal anna* (if not, then four annas), the Tamil equivalent of “if” or “then” being beyond the range of our knowledge. Today we have practically one servant per head, thanks to the boundless grace of the Mother. Sri Aurobindo used to smile and make the comment, “We have as many servants as there are sadhaks here.”

We did the cooking ourselves and each of us developed a speciality. I did the rice, perhaps because that was the easiest. Moni took charge of *dāl* (pulses), and Bejoy being the expert had the vegetables and the curry. What fell to the lot of Saurin I do not now remember—Saurin was almost a brother-in-law of Sri Aurobindo, a cousin of Mrinalini's. Perhaps he was not in our Home Affairs at all; his was the Foreign Ministry, that is, he had to deal with outsiders. We had our first real cook only after the Mother's arrival, by which time our numbers had grown to ten or twelve. There was a cook who had something rather special about him : he had been to Paris and made quite a name there on account of certain powers of foreseeing the future and other forms of occult vision which he possessed. The Mother had these powers tested in the presence of some of us. He was asked to take a bath and put on clean clothes and then made to sit with us. The Mother took her seat in a chair. We did a little concentration in silence and then the Mother asked him, “What do you see? Do you see anything about anybody present here ?” and so on. He gave truly remarkable answers on several occasions. And yet he had had no sort of formal education, he was absolutely illiterate, had only picked up some French by ear. Another cook who came later has become, as you know, quite a celebrity thanks to his spiritist performance. The story has become well-known, it is now almost a classic. Sri Aurobindo has referred to it, the Mother has spoken and written about it, the well-known French poet and mystic Maurice Magre who had been here and lived in the Ashram for some time has recorded it in one of his books. You must have heard or read what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said on the subject. I do not wish to add anything of my own, for I was not an eye-witness; I had been away in Bengal for a while.

Now that we are on this topic of cooks and cooking, let me add a few words about myself in this connection. I had, as I said, some practice in the work of

the kitchen and I took it up again later on. For some time—we were about fifty in all by then—I did some serving in addition to cooking once a week. What kind of cooking was that? In those days, we used to have pudding for dinner three times a week, ordinary rice pudding, fried rice pudding, and tapioca pudding. I did the tapioca. It was rather in the fitness of things that the hands that had once been used to making bombs should now do some sweets.

At one time, one of our main subjects of study was the Veda. This went on for several months, for about an hour every evening, at the Guest House. Sri Aurobindo came and took his seat at the table and we sat around. Subramanya Bharati the Tamil poet and myself were the two who showed the keenest interest. Sri Aurobindo would take up a hymn from the Rigveda, read it aloud once, explain the meaning of every line and phrase and finally give a full translation. I used to take notes. There are many words in the Rigveda whose derivation is doubtful and open to differences of opinion. In such cases, Sri Aurobindo used to say that the particular meaning he gave was only provisional and that the matter could be finally decided only after considering it in all the contexts in which the word occurred. His own method of interpreting the Rigveda was this: on reading the text he found its true meaning by direct intuitive vision through an inner concentration in the first instance, and then he would give it an external verification in the light of reason, making the necessary changes accordingly.

Sri Aurobindo has taught me a number of languages. Here again his method has often evoked surprise. I should therefore like to say something on this point. He never asked me to begin the study of a new language with primary readers or children's books. He started at once with one of the classics, that is, a standard work in the language. He used to say that the education of children must begin with books written for children, but for adults, for those, that is, who had already had some education the reading material must be adapted to their age and mental development. That is why, when I took up Greek, I began straightway with Euripides' *Medea*, and my second book was Sophocles' *Antigone*. I began a translation of *Antigone* into Bengali and Sri Aurobindo offered to write a preface if I completed the translation, a preface where, he said, he would take up the question of the individual *versus* the state. Whether I did complete the translation I cannot now recollect. I began my Latin with Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Italian with Dante. I have already told you about my French,<sup>1</sup> there I started with Molière.

I should tell you what one gains by this method, at least what has been my personal experience. One feels as if one took a plunge into the inmost core of the language, into that secret heart where it is vibrant with life, with the quint-essence of beauty, the fullness of strength. Perhaps it was this that has prompted me to write prose-poems and verse in French, for one feels as if identified with

<sup>1</sup> This talk has yet to be translated. — Editor.



the very genius of the language. This is the method which Western critics describe as being *in medias res*, getting right into the heart of things. One may begin a story in two ways. One way is to begin at the beginning, from the *ādikāṇḍa* and *Genesis*, and then develop the theme gradually, as is done in the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Bible*. The other method is to start suddenly, from the middle of the story, a method largely preferred by Western artists, like *Homer* and *Shakespeare* for instance.

But it was not found possible for *Sri Aurobindo* to continue with his own studies or even to help us in ours. For, as I have already hinted, our mode of living, our life itself took a different turn with the arrival of the *Mother*. How and in what direction ? It was like this. The *Mother* came and installed *Sri Aurobindo* on his high pedestal of *Master* and *Lord of Yoga*. We had hitherto known him as a dear friend and close companion, and although in our mind and heart he had the position of a *Guru*, in our outward relations we seemed to behave as if he were just like one of ourselves. He too had been averse to the use of the words “*Guru*” and “*Ashram*” in relation to himself, for there was hardly a place in his work of new creation for the old traditional associations these words conveyed. Nevertheless, the *Mother* taught by her manner and speech, and showed us in actual practice, what was the meaning of *disciple* and *master*; she has always practised what she preached. She showed us, by not taking her seat in front of or on the same level as *Sri Aurobindo*, but by sitting on the ground, what it meant to be respectful to one’s *Master*, what was real *courtesy*. *Sri Aurobindo* once said to us, perhaps with a tinge of regret, “I have tried to stoop as low as I can, and yet you do not reach me.”

It was the *Mother* who opened our eyes and gave us that vision which made us say, even as *Arjuna* had been made to say :

*sakheti matvā prasabham yaduktam*  
*he Kṛṣṇa he yādava he sakheti*  
*ajānatā mahimānam tavedam*  
*mayā pramādāt praṇayena vāpi.*

*yaccāvahāsārtham asatkṛtosi*  
*vihāra-śayyā-sana-bhojaneṣu*  
*eko-thavāpyacyuta tvat-samakṣam*  
*tat kṣāmāye tvām-aham-aprameyam*

“By whatever name I have called you, O *Krishna*, O *Yadava*, O *Friend*, thinking in my rashness that you were only a friend, and out of ignorance and from affection, not knowing this thy greatness; whatever disrespect I have shown you out of frivolity, whether sitting or lying down or eating, when I was alone or when you were present before me,—may I be pardoned for all that, O thou Infinite One.”

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by *Sanat K. Banerji* from the original *Bengali*)

## L'IDÉE NOUVELLE

*(We reprint here for the first time this short notice originally published in the Arya of the 15th August 1914, under the caption, "The News of the Month". A reference to it has been made in the 'Reminiscences' appearing just before it. It may legitimately be described as an early blue-print of the Ashram at Pondicherry.)*

IN close connection with the intellectual work of synthesis undertaken by this Review, a Society has been founded in French India under the name of the New Idea (L'Idée Nouvelle). Its object is to group in a common intellectual life and fraternity of sentiment those who accept the spiritual tendency and idea it represents and who aspire to realise it in their own individual and social action.

The Society has already made a beginning by grouping together young men of different castes and religions in a common ideal. All sectarian and political questions are necessarily foreign to its idea and its activities. It is on a higher plane of thought superior to external differences of race, caste, creed and opinion and in the solidarity of the Spirit that unity can be realised.

The Idée Nouvelle has two rules only for its members, first, to devote some time every day to meditation and self-culture, the second, to use or create daily at least one opportunity of being helpful to others. This is, naturally, only the minimum of initial self-training necessary for those who have yet to cast the whole trend of their thought and feeling into the mould of a higher life and to enlarge the egoistic into a collective consciousness.

The Society has its headquarters at Pondicherry with a reading-room and library. A section has been founded at Karikal and others are likely to be opened at Yanon and Mahe.

SRI AUROBINDO

# INDIA OF THE AGES

## V

### THE "ARYAN" QUESTION

OUR historians have recently acquired a habit of beginning the study of Indian history and culture with the drainage system of Mohenjodaro, on the assumption perhaps that this was evidence of high attainment long before the semi-barbarous "Aryan" invaders entered India and composed their first pastoral songs in the land of the Seven Rivers. This assumption however rests on a number of conjectures and may not stand an unbiassed scrutiny. We cannot enter here into a detailed discussion of all the points involved. But some of the salient features of the argument may be outlined.

The crucial question is whether the Vedas were the work of uncivilised foreigners who entered India about 1500 B.C. and met there a highly civilised "Dravidian" people who are presumed to have been the authors of the Indus Valley culture. In the first place, there is not the slightest hint in the Vedic hymns to show that they were composed by foreigners on Indian soil or even that there had been any invasion of India from outside within living memory when the hymns were composed. The references to the long uninterrupted dawns in the Rigveda may suggest an original Arctic home for the Vedic Aryans ; but there is nothing in the hymns to warrant the assumption that this migration had taken place anywhere near the time when the hymns were composed. It has been held that the Dasas or Dasyus who are described in the Veda as having a dark skin (*kṛṣṇatvacāḥ*) were "snub-nosed" Dravidians because the word *anāsa* occurs in the context. But *anāsa* may very well mean one without the breath of life (*an + āsā*), and in any case, as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, "...the southern nose can give as good an account of itself as any 'Aryan' proboscis in the North" (*On the Veda*, pp. 30-31, footnote).

The affinities of the Vedic language and, to a certain extent, of the Vedic pantheon and mythology with those of ancient Europe on which so much stress has been laid by modern scholarship do not prove that India had been the borrower. They might with equal logic be held to be the earliest gifts of India to the West, or else the common property of a common early civilisation. Much has been made of the supposed differences in the racial composition of the Indian people. But here too, recent researches seem to confirm (*vide* Chapter 2 in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Volume 1, 1958 edition) the view

expressed long ago by Sri Aurobindo (in his *Arya* in 1914) that "...whatever admixtures might have taken place, whatever regional differences might have been evolved, there remains, behind all variations, a unity of physical as well as of cultural type throughout India. For the rest, this is a conclusion to which ethnological speculation itself has an increasing tendency" (*On the Veda*, p. 44).

There remains the question of dates and also the problem of the Dasa or Dasyu and the Pani who are usually identified by Vedic scholars as Dravidian robbers and merchants who, it is surmised, gave battle to the invading Aryans. According to the current theory, first propounded with some confidence by Max Müller, the Rigveda was composed about the period 1500 to 1200 B.C. The only justification which Max Müller could give for this view was purely conjectural; he arrived at these dates by working back from the Buddhist records and assigning a purely arbitrary and wholly inadequate period for the composition of all the intervening literature of the Sutras, the Upanishads and the Brahmanas. Max Müller himself recognised later, as Winternitz points out in his *History of Indian Literature*, that all this was purely arbitrary. But several well-known scholars have thought fit to repeat religiously the formula thus arrived at and have tried to give additional arguments in support of their hypothesis.

Of these arguments, the most formidable in their view is the mention of some Vedic gods in a treaty signed about the fifteenth century B.C. between the kingdoms of Mitanni and Hitti or Khatti in distant Anatolia. But one might argue with equal plausibility that these gods instead of having been left there by the incoming "Aryans" on their way to India, from across the Sea of Marmora—there is no conclusive evidence that they did come that way—the gods might have found their way to Anatolia as a result of a migration from India itself. Indeed, there are some who would read in these ancient Khatti of Anatolia a distant echo of the Indian Kshatriya.

Another argument on which some stress has been put in recent years is the evidence of wholesale destruction noticed among the Indus Valley relics about the fifteenth century B.C., a destruction that is ascribed to invading "Aryans". But this proves nothing. For assuming that there was such a destruction, what prevents us from ascribing it to a civil war or a natural calamity? According to the latest theories as to the date of the Mahabharata War, this upheaval might have taken place about the same period. And Mohenjodaro might have shared in the general destruction that followed.

A more difficult question is the relative priority of the Vedic and the Indus Valley civilisations. *A priori* assumptions lead us nowhere. We have to see by a close comparative study if we can find any data that suggest the priority of the one over the other. There are many difficulties involved. In the first place, the origins of the Indus Valley culture go much farther back than the fourth millennium B.C. as the highly developed state of the existing finds

would normally suggest ; but to dig down deeper seems to be impossible as the underground water level has already been reached. To argue from the absence of iron or the horse among the Indus Valley finds is not quite safe ; indeed, traces of the horse are now known to exist, and one does not quite know whether the Vedic *ayas* was really iron or just a generic name for metal. On the positive side, a plausible case has already been made out by an eminent Indian scholar (Pusalkar in *The Vedic Age*) for taking our traditional (Puranic) genealogies back to about 3000 B.C. There is also a suggestion that the writing on the Indus Valley seals may be excerpts from Vedic *mantras* or, in any case, use the Sanskrit language. No finality can be reached in this matter so long as the Indus Valley script is not deciphered.

If, as seems quite probable, the authors of the Indus Valley civilisation turn out ultimately to have been native to the soil and had the closest affinities with the ancient Vedic civilisation—if, that is to say, no definite proofs were forthcoming of a distinct “Dravidian” culture as opposed to the “Aryan” Vedic, what, it may be asked, are we to make of the clear distinction made in the ancient Vedic hymns between the Arya and the Dasa or Dasyu on which modern scholarship has erected its superstructure of primitive Indian history ? This is hardly the place for a full discussion of the Arya-Dasyu question ; the interested reader may be referred to the two penultimate chapters of “Secret of the Veda” in Sri Aurobindo’s work *On the Veda* (pages 255-76). We can merely state here in outline the conclusion at which he arrives there by a close examination of the texts. A few passages will indicate the position.

“We have seen,” he says, “not once but repeatedly, that it is impossible to read into the story of the Angirasas, Indra and Sarama, the cave of the Panis and the conquest of the Dawn, the Sun and the Cows an account of a political and military struggle between Aryan invaders and Dravidian cave-dwellers. It is a struggle between the seekers of Light and powers of Darkness.... We may, if we like, suppose that there was a struggle between two different cults in India and that the Rishis took their images from the physical struggle between the human representatives of these cults and applied them to the spiritual conflict... But it is perfectly certain that in the Rigveda at least, it is the spiritual conflict and victory, not the physical battle and plunder of which they are speaking...”

“We may take as the master-clue to the general character of these Dasyus the *Rik* V.14-4, ‘Agni born shone out slaying the Dasyus, the darkness by the Light ; he found the Cows, the Waters, Swar,’ *agnir jāto arocata, ghnan dasyūn jyotiṣā tamaḥ, avindad gā apaḥ svaḥ*. There are two great divisions of the Dasyus, the Panis who intercept both the cows and the waters but are especially associated with the refusal of the cows, the Vritras who intercept the waters and the light, but are especially associated with the withholding of the waters ; all Dasyus without exception stand in the way of the ascent to Swar and oppose

the acquisition of the wealth by the Aryan seers... And it is by the birth and shining of Agni that the Light is created with which he slays the Dasyus and the Darkness. The historical interpretation will not do at all here...

"All the internal evidence of the Veda wherever this image of the Panis, the Cows, the Angirasas occur establishes invariably the same conclusion. The Panis are the withholders of the thoughts of the Truth, dwellers in the darkness without knowledge which Indra and the Angirasas by the Word, by the Sun replace with Light to manifest in its stead the wideness of the Truth.

...The word *paṇi* means dealer, trafficker, from *paṇ* (also *pan*, cf. Tamil *pan*, Greek *panos*, labour) and we may perhaps regard the Panis as the powers that preside over those ordinary unilluminated sense-activities of life whose immediate root is in the dark subconscious physical being and not in the divine mind. The whole struggle of man is to replace this action by the luminous working of mind and life which comes from above through the mental existence.

"Whoever thus aspires, labours, battles, travels, ascends the hill of being is the Aryan (*ārya*, *arya*, *ari*, with the various senses, to toil, to fight, to climb or rise, to travel, to prepare the sacrifice); for the work of the Aryan is a sacrifice which is at once a battle and an ascent and a journey, a battle against the powers of darkness, an ascent to the highest peaks of the mountain beyond earth and heaven into Swar, a journey to the other shore of the rivers and the ocean into the farthest Infinity of things. The Aryan has the will to the work, he is the doer of the work (*kāru*, *kiri*, etc.), the gods who put their force into his work are *sukratu*, perfect in power for the sacrifice; the Dasyu or Pani is the opposite of both, he is *akratu*. The Aryan is the sacrificer, *yajamāna*, *yajyu*; the gods who receive, uphold, impel his sacrifice are *yajata*, *yajatra*, powers of the sacrifice; the Dasyu is the opposite of both, he is *ayajyu*. The Aryan in the sacrifice finds the divine word, *gīh*, *mantra*, *brahma*, *uktha*, he is the *brahmā* or singer of the word; the gods delight in and uphold the word, *gīrvāhasah*, *gīrvāṇasah*, the Dasyus are haters and destroyers of the Word, *brahmadviṣah*, spoilers of speech, *mṛdhravacasah*. They have no force of the divine breath or no mouth to speak it, they are *anāsah*; and they have no power to think and mentalise the word and the truth it contains, they are *amanyamānāḥ*: but the Aryans are the thinkers of the word, *manyamānāḥ*, holders of the thought, the thought-mind and the seer-knowledge, *dhīra*, *manīṣī*, *kavi*.... The Aryans are desirers of the godheads, *devayuh*, *uśijah*; they seek to increase their own being and the godheads in them by the sacrifice, the word, the thought; the Dasyus are god-haters, *devadviṣah*, obstructors of the godhead, *devanidāḥ*, who desire no increase, *avṛdhah*...

"The Pani is the miser of existence. And in the struggle between the Aryan and the Dasyu he seeks always to plunder and destroy, to steal the luminous cows of the latter and hide them again in the darkness of the cave...

"It is evident that these descriptions could easily be applied to human

enemies who hate the cult and the gods of the Aryan, but we shall see that such an interpretation is entirely impossible because in the hymn I.33 (of the Rig-veda), in which these distinctions are most clearly drawn and the battle of Indra and his human allies with the Dasyus most elaborately described, these Dasyus, Panis and Vritras, cannot possibly be human fighters, tribes or robbers.

“The battle takes place not on earth but on the other shore of the Antariksha, the Dasyus are driven out of heaven by the flames of the thunderbolt, they circle round the earth and are cast out of both heaven and earth.... This can be no description of an earthly battle between Aryan and Dravidian tribes....”

SANAT K. BANERJI

*(To be continued)*

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE VEDAS

5

THE angle of vision from which the Europeans look at the Vedas has to be traced to its starting-point in the modern theory of evolution. Europe has been a victim to this theory. It has coloured the entire outlook of Europe. Evolution means gradual progression. Man and human society are undergoing a change for the better. In antiquity man was just a little remote from the animal. His intelligence gradually developed. His conduct has become polished. Thus he has grown into what he is to-day. The more we cast our glance into the past, the more shall we come across man's original, primitive and immature nature. As the Vedas owe their origin to a hoary past, it is axiomatic that there can be no solid philosophical truth and spiritual experience in them. It is vain to seek for something in the Vedas that can satisfy the modern scientific mind. Hence any such attempt will end in utter failure.

In modern times those very scientists are confronted with an anomalous phenomenon supported by irrefutable evidence. Many scientific theories are going to be upset by the new discoveries. Archaeological excavation has been furnishing more and more evidence of ancient culture and education. These discoveries go to prove that the ancients were not immature in the least in their mental faculties, education and culture. On the contrary, we find in them signs of superior qualities and endeavours. Strangely enough, these archaeological finds are found in the places which were so long considered by us to be inhabited by barbarians. The wonderful artistic works and remnants of scientific achievements that we meet with among the discoveries made in the dense forests of America, in the archipelago of the Pacific, beneath the desert of Central Asia have hardly any parallel in this much vaunted scientific age. The Egyptians and the Babylonians have created a tradition. But the hoary past of their source is just being revealed. Greece was considered to be the mainspring of European culture and civilisation. But that a still more civilised race had inhabited the neighbouring island of Crete can by no means be denied now. The olden civilisations of Atlantis, Sumeria, Akad, Aztec, Maya and Toltec no longer appear to be mere poetical imaginations. We are wonder-struck by such amazing prehistoric achievements. We can hardly assert that we possess a culture and civilisation superior to theirs. According to the Biblical statement the world came into existence only four thousand years ago. This statement had left its stamp unawares on the mind of the European



scientists. At present, not to speak of the age of the world or of the advent of man, the age of civilised man can itself be put at about a lakh of years.

As there is evolution in Nature, it is quite natural that there should be evolution in man as well. But the notion of the scientists that evolution proceeds in a straight line and is discernible within a short period has crumbled to dust. We have now begun to understand that evolution proceeds in a zigzag spiral movement, through rises and falls, in progressions and retrogressions. And the extent of that slow movement can hardly be conceived. We are going to recognise in effect the Indian conception of time, namely, ages, cycles presided over by some great creators (Manus). As a result, we have been discovering things not commensurate with the undeveloped, immature and ancient minds of our conception. So some scientists and philosophers are of the opinion that the ancients we know of were on the downward curve of a higher civilisation of the past unknown to us.

If we consider man to be one of the oldest creatures on earth and that his evolution runs in a spiral movement, then the statement that the Aryans of the Vedic age were not highly advanced cannot be regarded as an axiomatic truth. Of course, there is no hard and fast rule that the education, culture and realisation of the Vedic age should have been similar to those of modern times. But their widely differing outlook and activities need not be inferior to ours. True, Valmiki and Rabindranath are not peers of the same grain. On that account we cannot definitely assign a higher status to Rabindranath. To consider the Vedic seers inferior to the modern scientists simply because they do not resemble these is nothing but a stark superstition.

As a matter of fact, here lies the greatest folly of the moderns. We fail to arrive at the angle of vision of the ancients. We fail to comprehend that there was a time when this ancient culture was as living as that of to-day. As the Europeans used to take us for rustics because of our bare body and eating with hands and such other habits, even so we conclude from the words *go* (cow), *aśva* (horse), *soma rasa* (wine) and *devas* (gods) etc., that the Vedic seers were no better than primitives. For in our conception the men of knowledge speak of no such material subjects. They would rather deal with metaphysical discourses and scientific researches. We want to measure the ferment in the brain of the ancients by that of our own. We forget the very fact that they had a culture of their own which need not tally with ours. In fact, the truth attained by the ancients was not the outcome of an intellect given to mundane things. Rather the criticism may be applied to our present-day intellect.

The process of syllogistic reasoning with which we usually try to get to the truth was not their method. They had a direct perception of truth. They used to live the truth they realised. Besides this rational faculty, man has other faculties which are at once subtler, deeper and wider. To develop these superior faculties so that one may realise and live the ultimate Truth was the sole ideal of the Vedic

Rishis. The principal instrument of their knowledge was neither the senses nor even the mind or intellect but the subtle concentrated insight and perception of the inner Being. In its introspection for discovering this fundamental power of knowledge the Kena Upanishad says, "By whom missioned falls the mind shot to its mark?...That which is hearing behind the hearing, mind of the mind, the word behind the speech, that too is life of the life-breath, sight behind the sight."<sup>1</sup>

The faculty of knowledge of the Rishis was based on this subtle realisation. And this subtle realisation has its different levels, classifications and variations which the Vedic seers have termed Ila, Saraswati, Sarama and Dakshina. These four names have been plausibly interpreted as Shruti (Revelation), Smriti (Inspiration), Bodhi (Intuition) and Viveka (Discrimination). We are not going to probe further into that mystery. We just want to point out the difference between the outlook of the ancients and that of the moderns.

*(To be continued)*

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

*(Translated by Chinmoy from the original Bengali in "Madhuchhandar Mantramala".)*

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Sri Aurobindo.

# THE LIFE DIVINE OF SRI AUROBINDO : ITS LEADING PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

CLASSIFIED EXCERPTS

(Continued)

## XII. KNOWLEDGE AND INTEGRAL\* KNOWLEDGE

...EVERYWHERE we see Law founded in self-being and, when we penetrate within into the rationale of its process, we find that Law is the expression of an innate knowledge, a knowledge inherent in the existence which is expressing itself and implied in the force that expresses it; and Law developed by Knowledge so as to allow of progression implies a divinely seen goal towards which the motion is directed.<sup>1</sup>

Consciousness and Force are the twin essential aspects of the pure Power of existence; Knowledge and Will must therefore be the form which that Power takes in creating a world of relations in the extension of Time and Space. This Knowledge and this Will must be one, infinite, all-embracing, all-possessing, all-forming, holding eternally in itself that which it casts into movement and form.<sup>2</sup>

The Knowledge is that which tends towards unification and, attaining to the supramental faculty, seizes the oneness, the essence, the self-law of existence and views and deals with the multiplicity of things out of that light and plenitude, in some sort as does the Divine Himself from the highest height whence He embraces the world. It must be noted, however, that the Ignorance in this conception of it is still a kind of knowledge, but, because it is limited, it is open at any point to the intrusion of falsehood and error; it turns into a wrong conception of things which stands in opposition to the true Knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

If in the Upanishads it is declared that the man who lives and moves within the Ignorance, wanders about stumbling like a blind man led by the blind and returns ever to the net of Death which is spread wide for him, it is

\* *Compiler's Note* : *Integral* = untouched and not fragmented by mind,—that is, pure or perfect in the transcendent sense (not the mental sense of “wholeness”, as the word is commonly used).

also affirmed elsewhere in the Upanishads that he who follows after the Knowledge only, enters as if into a blinder darkness than he who follows after the Ignorance and that the man who knows Brahman as both the Ignorance and the Knowledge, as both the One and the Many, as both the Becoming and the Non-Becoming, crosses by the Ignorance, by the experience of the Multiplicity, beyond death and by the Knowledge takes possession of Immortality.<sup>4</sup>

Knowledge is no doubt the knowledge of the One, the realisation of the Being; Ignorance is a self-oblivion of Being, the experience of separateness in the multiplicity and a dwelling or circling in the ill-understood maze of becomings: but this is cured by the soul in the Becoming growing into knowledge, into awareness of the Being which becomes in the multiplicity, all these existences and can so become because their truth is already there in its timeless existence. The integral knowledge of Brahman is a consciousness in possession of both together, and the exclusive pursuit of either closes the vision to one side of the truth of the omnipresent Reality.<sup>5</sup>

An integral knowledge then must be a knowledge of the truth of all sides of existence both separately and in the relation of each to all and the relation of all to the truth of the Spirit. Our present state is an Ignorance and a many-sided seeking; it seeks for the truth of all things but,—as is evident from the insistence and the variety of the human mind's speculations as to the fundamental truth which explains all others, the Reality at the basis of all things,—the fundamental truth of things, their basic reality must be found in some at once fundamental and universal Real; it is that which, once discovered, must embrace and explain all,—for "That being known all will be known": the fundamental Real must necessarily be and contain the truth of all existence, the truth of the individual, the truth of the universe, the truth of all that is beyond the universe.<sup>6</sup>

Integral knowledge will then mean the cancelling of the sevenfold Ignorance by the discovery of what it misses and ignores, a sevenfold self-revelation within our consciousness :—it will mean the knowledge of the Absolute as the origin of all things; the knowledge of the Self, the Spirit, the Being and of the cosmos as the Self's becoming, the becoming of the Being, a manifestation of the Spirit; the knowledge of the world as one with us in the consciousness of our true self, thus cancelling our division from it by the separative idea and life of ego; the knowledge of our psychic entity and its immortal persistence in Time beyond death and earth-existence; the knowledge of our greater and inner existence behind the surface; the knowledge of our mind, life and body in its true relation to the self within and the superconscient spiritual and supramental being above them; the knowledge, finally, of the true harmony and true use of our thought, will and action and a change of all our nature into a conscious ex-

pression of the truth of the Spirit, the Self, the Divinity, the integral spiritual Reality.<sup>7</sup>

Man therefore has to enlarge his knowledge of himself, his knowledge of the world and his knowledge of God until in their totality he becomes aware of their mutual indwelling and oneness. For so long as he knows them only in part, there will be an incompleteness resulting in division, and so long as he has not realised them in a reconciling unity, he will not have found their total truth or the fundamental significances of existence.<sup>8</sup>

*Compiled by* NATHANIEL PEARSON

*(To be continued)*

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## ART-WORKS BY CHAMPAKLAL

IN modern times art has taken a turn into various unorthodox channels, breaking its accepted theories of means, methods and materials. We shall not go into the question of the validity in general of such a turn. But the Art-works by Champaklal, which we saw exhibited in the Ashram, were very striking in their difference from the old kind of painting. Many spectators wanted to understand them. We may try to see if they represented anything in particular. We had the occasion to hear the views of the artist himself who spoke about his experiments in art to some of the spectators. But the main clue to the significance of these works lay in the titles given by the Mother to some of them.

Champaklal was fond of painting flowers for his own enjoyment. He began presenting his pictures to friends with the Mother's signature and blessings. So we can understand that for him painting in itself was not so important; it became valuable with something added to it. If we regard the present works in this light we may be able to grasp their significance.

He started this type of work recently, about 4 or 5 months back. Once he saw an exhibition in the Ashram of pictures made of bright colours by a foreign visitor. They struck him as representing subtle realities behind the world we know. Then he thought, "This is the type of pictures I have always wanted to paint. I have been waiting for the opportunity to paint them." Champaklal had once tried with some brush-work to realise his dream, but he had not succeeded. A long time after the exhibition of those bright-coloured pictures he saw the technique of preparing marble-paper. At once he knew that here was the method he had been waiting for, the medium which he had not found so far. He set about trying the technique by himself. After some trials on small bits of paper he saw the possibility of expressing his feelings and intuitions in this fluid technique.

In this technique of preparing marble-paper, generally one uses 2 or 3 colours, either oil paints or varnish paints. The colours when poured on water float on the surface and, when a paper is put over this surface and then pulled out, the colours stick to it and one gets a pleasing pattern. One can understand that here there is very little control on the shape or structure of the design.

Champaklal has tried this fluid technique not with any fixed idea or superficial thinking but for expressing emotions and intimations which come from a deeper consciousness. He might not have been conscious all the time of what he was going to produce; though in some works he wanted something which

might correspond to his feelings or to his inner perceptions. In such cases he got results after many trials.

Choosing colours, mixing them and giving movement to the water-surface depended mainly on his consciousness.

As people went round in the exhibition they felt that they were exploring a strange realm of colours. They could see that something beautiful was expressed. Still the majority of spectators wanted to understand the meaning of these works. But as the works were not done with any fixed idea no meaning could be given to satisfy the surface mind. One could enjoy them from the aesthetic viewpoint as harmonious fantasies of hues, interminglings of different shades in movement, in combining or contrasting intensities.

Meanings were not given to these paintings, but they had occult significances. The Mother had given titles to some of them after looking into their depths, as it were—revelatory titles which focussed in a suggestive word or phrase what they represented. There were some spectators who visited the exhibition mainly because the Mother had given those titles. It is not possible to say how many of them caught the occult significances, to which the key was provided by the Mother.

But to all who were sensitive in their imagination and could feel the inner impact of the pictures the exhibition brought a strong sense of the glorious—an outburst of surprising inspiration—light and delight taking mystic and dynamic colour-shape through an artist who had striven to lose himself in the wondrous Unknown.

## HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

Reminiscences of Various People in Contact with the Mother

### “ONE STEP BACK”

“ONE step back,” said the enthusiastic and obstinate devotee to a newcomer who happened to stand on the spot where he usually stood and waited below the Mother's balcony, among other hundreds of aspiring sadhaks, for her gracious glimpse.

The newcomer could not understand this. He knew that street, like any other, for a public place and it was no more that particular devotee's than it was anybody else's. And why a sadhak's attachment to a place only because he happened to have stood there daily for a few minutes ?

“Surely you could go a step forward rather than break the silence of this place and disturb my meditation ?” the newcomer asked in a rather surprised note.

The person shook his head and gave no answer. Rather he stood so close in front of the newcomer that they both touched, one behind the other,—for he thought the place was his, and was determined to hold it.

The newcomer stepped back and, undisturbed, continued his meditation. Yet he had a deep feeling that the incident, in spite of its being unseemly to all appearances, must mean something more profound for him than a mere push.

The Mother's darshan was over. The sadhaks were going about their daily tasks for the Divine. The newcomer turned towards Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi to pay his usual respects to the Blessed One. While he stood still in prayer, suddenly his eyes fell on two flowers, “Protection” and “Divine Love”, inviting his attention by their isolated brightness.

“The same flowers which Mother gave me yesterday at the Blessings,” he thought, and picked them up from the field of flowers at the Samadhi. He felt Sri Aurobindo's blessings in them.

Instantaneously the mystery of the incident was unveiled to him.

“One step back and seek protection in the Divine Love,” a sentence formed itself in his mind. It was the answer to a problem which had gripped his consciousness for days and months and for whose solution he had been praying ever since he had come to Pondicherry. The Divine Grace had heard his prayers and responded to him.

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It reminds me of a passage of the Mother on "Stepping Back". How aptly and clearly does it explain the sadhak's attitude towards his outward difficulties arising out of his clash with others !

"Most of you live on the surface of your being, exposed to the touch of external influences. You live almost projected, as it were, outside your own body, and when you meet some unpleasant being similarly projected you get upset. The whole trouble arises out of your not being accustomed to stepping back. You must always step back into yourself—learn to go deep within—step back and you will be safe. Do not lend yourself to the superficial forces which move in the outside world. Even if you are in a hurry to do something, step back for a while and you will discover to your surprise how much sooner and with what greater success your work can be done. If someone is angry with you, do not be caught in his vibrations but simply step back and his anger, finding no support or response, will vanish. Always keep your peace, resist all temptation to lose it. Never decide anything without stepping back, never speak a word without stepping back, never throw yourself into action without stepping back. All that belongs to the ordinary world is impermanent and fugitive, so there is nothing in it worth getting upset about. What is lasting, eternal, important and infinite—that indeed is worth having, worth conquering, worth possessing. It is divine Light, divine Love, divine Life—it is also Supreme Peace, Perfect Joy and all Mastery upon earth with the Complete Manifestation as the crowning. When you get the sense of the relativity of things, then whatever happens you can step back and look; you can remain quiet and call on the Divine Force and wait for an answer. Then you will know exactly what to do. Remember, therefore, that you cannot receive the answer before you are very peaceful. Practise that inner peace, make at least a small beginning and go on in your practice until it becomes a habit with you."

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This reminds me of another incident which connects up well with the point in hand :

When there used to be heavy rain and the usual Playground programme in the evening was disturbed, the Mother, if it happened to be Wednesday, did not often hold the children's French class, where in her talk to them she answered their questions on various subjects. She would also cancel the meditation which she gave after the playground march-past and marching was over. Also she would return to her rooms in the main Ashram building earlier than usual. And, if the playground became too muddy, the car was brought inside near her Interview Room.

On one rainy evening, the car was brought to the door and the sadhak who used to drive the car went in to tell her that that day he would drive the

car only forward without having to gear it back even though he might have to take a curve to carry the vehicle towards the main gate and out.

Usually he backed the car so that it might straightaway be driven towards the gate.

“There will be so many people in front, why not move it back?” asked the Mother half-jokingly.

“We shall manage by going only forward,” he persisted hopefully.

The Mother shrugged her shoulders, smiled and got into the car.

The way in front was cleared off. The driver drove the car forward, took a snake-turn to the left, then to the right and there it stood facing the corner of a wall. He tried hard to press forward somehow and turn the vehicle in such a way as to avoid that inch of a hindrance without backing, but all to no avail.

He had to give in and he did move the car back, and lo it went speedily out and took the Divine Mother to her apartment.

*Reported by HAR KRISHAN SINGH*

## ASPIRATION

To my dull mortal ears,  
To the deep doubt of my soul,  
O formless Infinite ! thy universe  
Mournfully plays its role.

A narrow, sombre consciousness is my youth,  
Sealed is my spiritual eye,  
But still a far gleam of love and truth  
Falls on the stupendous Fates near-by.

And then a radiance hides the sea of agony,  
I taste the honey of paradise;  
All grows a channel of universal harmony  
Where my divine self's grandeur lies.

And the joy of this high spiritual goal,  
The throb of fullness and delight,  
Reveal : life's stronger than a trembling soul  
And vested in supernal light.

When I recollect thy might in my human heart,  
Thy enormous scene that Fate has built,  
My intolerant glooms invisibly depart;  
Ceases my unsubstantial secret guilt.

Thy one divine glance saves our life  
From hazards of wayside doom;  
Thy one luminous touch removes all strife,  
Frees from time's prisoning womb.

I seek for truth infinite, absolute power,  
And will reach Supernature's flood.  
I shall disclose my soul in a golden hour  
Like a rising sun in a crimson cloud.

In mysterious light, in life and death,  
In silver lightning and sunken sun,  
Inseparable I'll stay like sky and earth,  
Infinity's horizon where our souls are one.

SRIJIT

## THUS SANG MY SOUL

(44)

### VIII. THE HOUR OF GRACE AND SELF-FULFILMENT

#### 76. AND ONE BRIGHT MORN...

A TIME was when I knew not the shores of the sea,  
The borders of space were beyond the reach of my pigmy mind.  
The world appeared a play of effort and unvisionable consequence.  
I tossed in the midst of engulfing eddies;  
I rattled amidst the rounds of the whirlwind.  
When I first opened my eyes that did not see,  
The pomp of the world dazzled my defenceless innocence;  
My mind freely gave way to the floating charm.  
Unaware, my gaze was led to the masked show,  
The glazed surface danced before my blind sight.  
My hands played with filth and mire unfelt;  
My feet trod on the unmarged fluency of mud;  
My steps walked on the torrents of water and wind.  
A pseudo-god had gripped my life and soul,  
A snare unimpeded took me ever and ever within.  
I stood on the sharp edge of a quivering sword.  
But there lay a white magic of the unseen God;  
A hidden eye followed my visionless shade;  
A parallel strategy conspired unparalleled behind the scene,  
A patient manoeuvring watched for its hour.  
Secret hands were busy pulling the mystic strings.  
A master manipulator set himself on the miraculous job  
To unleash an all-out attack of his compassion-force  
And free the fallen, the earth-bound.  
Thus was turned a new page in the mystery of my life  
And one bright morn  
When the first rays of the arousing sun were not yet born  
A boat sailed on the calm waters of the sea,  
A plane crossed the bounded space,  
A lustrous figure waved its farewell hands....

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

## WHAT REALLY MATTERS

AMONG all the stones, it is the *Paras Pathar*—the Philosopher's Stone—  
that matters.

It is not the passing colour but the distillable fragrance of the rose that matters.

It is not the spider's flimsy web but the patience and persistence behind it  
that matters.

It is not the outer expression of love but the inner sacrifice that matters.

It is not fear of the superior but respect for the Supreme that matters.

It is not others' criticism but the straining after self-perfection that matters.

It is not formal obedience to the Divine but the spontaneous surrender  
that matters.

It is not human effort so much as the Divine Grace, the Divine Will, that matters.

NARWANI

## THOUGHTS

If we could but learn two things our whole countenance would change. To be able in the first instance to say "Yes" with the same humility and loving kindness as Narsimha Mehta said in complying with the wishes of the scavengers when they entreated him to sing his devotional songs in their quarters.

Secondly, to be able to say, when necessary, "No", to the sovereigns of the world, with the same certitude with which the Pharaohs in the Egyptian pyramids declined to return to the dust. Whatever force visible or invisible appears before you, you should be able to say "Yes" with a conscious love and "No" with unbending firmness.

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O God, what if Thou hast marked down someone ?  
I heard Thy call but I was so much sunk in sloth that I did not pay heed to it.

Thy coach came right up to my threshold but I did not step into it.  
But Thy ways are peculiar. But Thou art shameless. If I stay on where I am, how does it affect Thee that Thou again comest to take me with Thee?  
Everybody says that God does not use force. Then why dost Thou forcibly shove me into Thy carriage and hustle me to Heaven ?

O God, this is unbearable. Why dost Thou pursue us ? If Thou pursuest us then we meet a sweet death which ensues upon a sweeter life.

O God, if I had pursued Thee, then my sadhana would not have borne such fruit. Thou pursuedst me and so this is the result.

GIRDHARLAL

*(Translated from the author's Gujarati book "Uparāma")*

## “GRACE” AND “SELF-EFFORT” IN THE UPANISHADS

A CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN DR. S.K. MAITRA AND A.B. PURANI

(Continued from the last issue)

Sri Aurobindo Ashram,  
23rd April 1944.

My Dear Friend,

I bring to your notice certain points about the conception of Grace being foreign to the earlier Upanishads with a desire for mutual exchange of view-points which may lead to greater clarity. You admit that Brihad and Chhandogya are old and therefore early Upanishads. You find “Grace” abundantly in the Svetashwatar (I quote your sentence: “But Katha and the earlier Upanishads know nothing of this doctrine. They rely exclusively on man’s effort for the improvement of his status.”)

(a) In my questions and answers (*The Advent*) please note that I do not maintain that Grace is the burden of the Upanishad, *i.e.* of Katha. What I maintained is that Grace was not unknown to the seers of the Upanishads and that Katha, 1.2.23, bears me out. I am glad you admit that Madhwa and others also interpret it in the sense of Grace. It also emerges from our correspondence that modern scholars—no less than ancient Acharyas—are divided over the interpretation of the same verse. Dr. R. D. Ranade and Dr. A.B. Druva agree with the interpretation I have given.

(b) I quoted Dr. Druva with a particular significance for he was neither a Dwaitist nor a Vishishtadwaitin but an avowed follower of Shankara. I thought that his interpretation supporting “Grace”—coming from such a well-known scholar and interpreter of Shankara—should carry greater weight.

II. You ask me to read the Katha Upanishad and read it as a whole and say whether the doctrine of Grace is advocated by it. This implies a total misconception, in my opinion, about the contents and the purpose of the Upanishads. The question is, what is the *prayojana* of the Upanishads? Is it to advocate a doctrine or a philosophy? or is it to furnish a practical guide to the seeker of (the mystical) realisation? Intellectual guidance by itself is *never* considered adequate *for realisation* unless given by a competent Guru.<sup>1</sup> My contention is

<sup>1</sup> Many passages could be cited to show that the Guru is indispensable for the knowledge—that is, the experience of the Brahman. The following are cited as indicative not exhaustive :-

that the Upanishads are meant for the seeker अनुभवार्थः and that their method is not rational or intellectual exposition but intuitive, inspired by revelatory speech leading the seeker from experience to experience with reconciling or integrating statements. (This contention has reference to your question: "taking Kathopanishad as a whole, is it possible to say that the doctrine of Grace is advocated by it? My view definitely is that it is not.") I grant it is true that there are metaphysical and doctrinal propositions *implied* and sometimes expressed, but I definitely believe that the Upanishads are meant to be neither complete philosophical treatises nor full-fledged doctrinal books. Therefore one need not attribute advocacy of a certain doctrine to the Upanishads. They stress one point at one place and another (sometimes the very opposite) at another—depending upon the need of the seeker and the inspiration of the seer. And so, even if the Upanishads did not mention Grace, we would not be right in concluding that they knew nothing about it.

III. You say: "In one verse the condition is stated to be complete suppression of the desires of the heart, and in another, the snapping of all the cords of the heart", implying therefore that personal effort is adequate for the attainment of salvation. Does it mean that if a man fulfils the conditions he can claim salvation as a matter of right? Grace *versus* personal effort—Grace can remain even though personal effort may be there.

My humble opinion is that snapping the cords and suppressing the desires are necessary preliminary preparations but that these by themselves cannot give the seeker a claim to salvation. The seeker has to fulfil the conditions but the results of sadhana are due to Grace. In no Upanishad is it said that by personal effort *alone* one can attain the Brahman. At least a Guru is always necessary over and above all personal effort. His guidance or grace or help, or that of a God or the Divine help is always mentioned.<sup>1</sup> One may have knowledge and chastity etc., but may not arrive at salvation or attain the Brahman. Even the Katha says, "You must hear this from another."

I. There is a very illuminating passage in the Chhandogya<sup>2</sup> which not only brings out the necessity of the Guru but at the same time clearly shows the insufficiency of breaking the cords of the heart as a means of attaining salva-

1. *Acāryavān puruso veda.*

2. *Srutam hyeva bhagavadṛṣebhyaḥ ācāryād dhava vidyā viditā sādhistam prāpati.* Chand. IV.9.3.

3. *Tam mām bhagavan śokasya pārām tārayatu.* Chand. XI.1.3.

4. *Na nareṇāvareṇa prokta esa suvṛṇeyo bahudhā cintyamānah.* Katha.

5. *Uttsthata jāgrata prāpya varāmbodhata.* Katha.

6. And even in the passage of the arrow it is said that the arrow is "*Upāsā nisitam*"—"sharpened by devotion."

<sup>2</sup> Translation by Hume :—"There is release from all the knots (of the heart). To such a one who has his stains wiped away the blessed Sanatkumar shows the further shores of darkness."



tion. Here Chhandogya, an admittedly earlier Upanishad, speaks in no uncertain terms. It shows clearly that “release from all knots of the heart” is only a preparation and the attainment comes by the help of Lord Sanat Kumar. (The seeker does not automatically attain salvation by the release of the knots.)

2. If it is still maintained that self-effort is the major or sole note of the earlier Upanishads what would one make of verses of the Isha—certainly an early Upanishad, I believe,—“The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Pushan.” Why does the aspirant ask Pushan to fling open the door hidden by the golden lid? Was he incapable of doing it himself? And what about “O God Agni; lead us by the good path to felicity” (Isha)? Could not the seeker lead himself to the Rayi? or perhaps he was afraid that the path of self-effort would not be सुपथ? It was Agni the Divine that would lead him by a happy path. Is not Divine help—guidance—if you don’t mind the later term, Grace—implied in these invocations? Even the later statement in the Gita उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं has to be read in relation to सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य. Besides, it is clear also that आत्मनात्मानम् does not mean only personal effort. It means to raise the “lower” ignorant self by the help of the “higher” self—for, there is no meaning in saying “Raise the self by the self”—for the true self is always free and requires no salvation. In the light of my studies I am persuaded to believe that Grace as an experience of spiritual life was known to the seers of all the Upanishads, earlier as well as later.

Again I maintain that it is a mistake to suppose that the Upanishads are unaware of and do not mention the active principle by which Atman, Brahman or Isha reveals his ever-wakeful responsiveness to the call or disciplined effort of the *sādhaka*, the *jijñāsu*, making it fruitful.

What I lay stress upon is the fact there is something outside the realm of the personal self, beyond the scope of its intensest effort, without which (however luminous one’s intuition may appear) one cannot reach the goal. That something is the final means, the supreme help, which is either plainly stated or hinted at or implicit in the instructions recorded in the Upanishads. Each Upanishad has its own way: the Isha may call for the help of the Gods Agni, Vayu, Surya; the Kena may point to the supreme guidance of “Uma”; the Katha and Mundaka may refer to the Self’s gracious revealing of “the body of Itself”; the Prashna may refer you to a teacher who would help you to realise by putting the necessary influence into you. The difference in the sources of help advised in the Upanishads is warranted by the difference in their themes, in their way of approach, in the outlook and attitude they advocate. Even when one becomes *śuddha sattwa* and all the knots (of ignorance) are cut asunder, the Skanda, Sanatkumar, has to come further to show you the shore of tamas to lead you beyond the shore of ignorance—so says the Chhandogya Upanishad which, you will admit, is among the earliest Upanishads.

Of course you may say that the help of the Guru or a God is not the same thing as "Grace". It may not always be the same, but still the various helps or means are devices of the Divine Grace of which the Acharya is the potent means, the living symbol, the immediate and practical guide. For, by Guru I mean one who can give the real initiation, which is not a mere word, but is usually a silent one, an influence from the being and consciousness of the Guru, who has the realisation sought for. That is why the Gita speaks of the jnanin as the Lord himself; elsewhere Sri Krishna says, the jnanis will give the upadesha. In whatever respect the Gita may have developed its philosophy of Grace as you rightly say, here it clearly expounds the Upanishads' teaching that the jnanin, the Guru, can give the necessary awakening to the jijnasu.

If this is not Grace, what else are we to understand by the term? There is another and important aspect—that is, the Will to choose implicit in it. But I do not dilate upon it here.

One word about *hr̥daya-granthi*. That *hr̥t* is not the emotional mind of the poet, nor are the *granthis* knots of poetic fancy. The *hr̥t* of the Upanishads is the centre of Self in the being which maintains the knots of ignorance as long as necessary, and cuts the radical knot (the original ignorance) in the Heart when the being is ripe. This result can be achieved only by the Lord seated in the centre through the Guru's influence, or by the "Self" choosing to reveal itself at the proper time.

The snapping of the knots is a fact—I may say a psycho-physical fact of spiritual experience—and can never be accomplished by any amount of personal effort, be it an exclusive seeking of the Ultimate Truth, Self or God, though these disciplines may prepare the being for the supreme consummation or themselves may often be—if I may say so—an indication that the choice has already been made.

IV (a). As regards your interpretation that the "verse of Katha 1.2.23 contrasts the method of attaining Brahman by reason and that of attaining by intuition." I am afraid it is not tenable because in the whole verse there is no word meaning "intuition". And nobody in the Upanishads ever maintains that by reason one could attain Brahman.

(b). Besides, the verse after saying *tena labhyaḥ* "by him is attainable"—explains how the Self is *labhya*—not by the act of the Seeker's choice merely, not even by an intuition, but by the revelation or exposition of "his own form" by the Self.

*Kaḥ vivṛṇute*?—the Self—*ātman*. This *vivarāṇa* of *sva tanū* is done by the Self. It does not say that the seeker attains it by intuition. Even taking Shankar's interpretation, it would mean that the seeker only chooses the Self and no more. The knowledge comes to him by the Self revealing its true form to him.

(c). Intuition, in the English language, does not express the Indian conception of *ātma-sākṣātkāra* or Self-realisation or *Brahma-bhāva* or any other

Sanskrit term by which an idea of the supreme consummation is conveyed. In Sri Aurobindo’s sense of the word, intuition is not always a direct perception of the Ultimate Truth. But I presume that in the context (Katha 1-2-23) you use it in the sense of Realisation by personal effort in its extreme form of an exclusive choice of the Self, without any favour from anyone—call this favour a help of some kind, the Grace of God or the influence of the Guru. In that case the *tanū-vivaraṇa* of the Atman, as I have shown already, becomes meaningless.

V. You also quote Swet. 4.18 & 4. 21. in support of the contention that “In this Upanishad we have the beginning of the later theistic system, such as Shaivism and Vaishnavism.” I am afraid this is the reading of our distinctions into the ancient texts which have nothing to do with rigid intellectual formulas. Intended mainly for the practical guidance of the seeker of Brahman, the Upanishads seem to care very little for intellectual consistency. In the light of their realisation their expression emphasises now one aspect and now another aspect of the Reality. For instance they do not fight shy of Theism. The Katha says : “He reaches the end of his road, even that supreme status of Vishnu,” 1.3.9. It should on your analogy show the existence of Vaishnavism or the seeds of it at any rate in the Katha.

Besides Vishnu, Katha speaks of *īśāna* in 2.4.5 and 2.4.12. 2.4.13. *īśāno bhūta-bhavyasya* and 2.5.12. It also mentions *Vashi* “the controller” implying the *īśvara*. Again Isha speaks of *īśa vāsyam idam sarvām*, “all this is for habitation by the Lord”, implying the immanence of the Divine of course, but there is no doubt about the theistic position.

I do not agree with the line of inference which many of our very best scholars seem to follow in the study of these ancient texts. I believe the more we free ourselves from European analogy the more fruitful our labours are likely to be. For instance, this idea that theism is a later growth is not warranted by the text of the Upanishads. The Upanishads speak, frequently and in different ways, of the essential unity of the Divine Consciousness. They speak of that essential Divine Consciousness as identical with the Absolute—unconnected with the world. They also speak of it as the Governing Power or Transcendent Personality of the Divine (which later on became known as Purushottama). Again they equate it with the Universal or Cosmic Consciousness or immanent Divine, and equally with the Self of the individual. I am not quoting all the references, because I believe they are too well-known. Thus we have Self=Cosmic Consciousness=Lord=Immanent Divine=Absolute. At different times the stress is laid on one or an other aspect. It is the later intellectual Vedantins who emphasised the aspect of the Absolute, unconnected with the world, as the most important one and tried to relegate the Ishwar-aspect to a comparatively secondary status. Some of them even put “Ishwar” into the great Illusion. But look into the texts, even the Katha,

and ask "Who is this Ishwar" ? and you have the clear answer that He is one with the Self,—in essence. The *aṅgustamātraḥ puruṣaḥ* is *iśāno bhūtabhavyasya sarvabhūtāntarātmā*. He is *Atmastha*. Here you get the identification of the Lord with the Cosmic Consciousness and also with the self of the individual. The point is that the Upanishads do not cut sharp intellectual concepts but express inspired revelations which transcend ordinary intellectual formulas and therefore seem to express with ease intellectually different and contradictory positions.

From the fact that some system or idea is not in an Upanishad we cannot always conclude safely that it did not exist at the time of the Upanishad. The Upanishads are not intended to enumerate all the schools of thought or disciplines current in their times.

About the later and earlier Upanishads :— I have already admitted that I cannot claim to be well informed about this subject. To be frank, to me the whole labour appears to be "pressing the sands for oil". Not that some kind of order of the Upanishads cannot be made out. The point is: it would be impossible to prove the order to be correct—there may be so many possible alternatives.

You are convinced that the Katha is prior to the Shweta. I am sorry I cannot share your conviction. I only put the following as a layman:

i) The Katha is prior to the Shweta, because Sankhya and Yoga are spoken of in the Shweta, and they are later systems.

But Sankhya and Yoga are also spoken of in the Katha. "Indriya", "Artha", "Mana", "Buddhi", "Mahat", "Avyakta", "Purusha", all find expression in the Katha 1.3.10; 1.3.11; 2.6.7; 2.6.8.

ii) (a) Yoga is also spoken of in the Katha in 1.2.12, "*adhyātma yoga*".

(b) in 2.6.12 *Tam yogamiti avyaya*,

(c) the last verse *Ṣatañcaikā* also refers to Yoga. It may not be Patanjali's Raja Yoga, but Yoga is throughout implied and explicitly mentioned twice.

Only one more point and I close this long letter, which hardly has remained a letter. You say, "In fact Grace is only another name for the descent of the Divine Light upon man." I agree that if the descent of the Truth will ever take place it will be due to the Divine Grace—but I believe all Grace cannot be equated to the descent of the Divine Light upon man. There are many forms of Grace and the descent of the Divine into man will be one of them.

I shall be thankful to you if you kindly send me the reprints of your article in the *Vedānta Kesari*. I am very glad that you so warmly welcome the idea of my coming there. I wish circumstances would so shape themselves that I shall have the great joy of being with you at your place.

Yours sincerely,

A.B.PURANI

NOTE

About the intuition as implied in the passage in the Katha (1.2.23) : I quote from Ranade, *Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, Vol. II.

What is the faculty by which one realises God ? he asks. “The Katha tells us that the form of God does not fall within the ken of our vision. Later writers have translated the above passage in a different way. But the verse from the Katha which comes almost immediately after it makes it quite clear that it is “not possible to realise God whether by word of mouth or by the mind or by the eye”.

It is also noteworthy from a later verse of the Katha that the experience of God—realisation—is like that of a “fact”.

Has man got the faculty by means of which he can realise God ? To that question, another verse from the Katha supplies an answer. “Thus Atman who is hidden in all beings is not patent to the eyes of all. It is only the subtle seers who can look with the one-pointed and piercing faculty of Buddhi (intuition) that are able to realise God”

*Opinions differ as to whether even this Buddhi can lead us to the vision of God* (pp. 339-40).

When the equipment in moral virtues is thus being perfected, the next step in the path of self-realisation is initiation by a worthy spiritual Teacher (p. 329). When we are told in the Upanishad that above the Mind is Buddhi, above the Buddhi is Mahat Atman, above the Mahat Atman is the Avyakta, above the Avyakta is the Purusha, these are categories that have an important part in the later Sankhya philosophy.

I quote a relevant passage from Dr R. D Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Volume II :

“One very celebrated passage of the Mundakopanishad tells us that the Atman cannot be realised except by one whom the Atman himself chooses : before such a one does the Atman reveal his form (S.22 a). This is verily the doctrine of Grace. It implies that man’s endeavours after a full-fledged realisation of God may always fall short of the ideal, unless Grace comes from above. It is only when the Atman chooses the saint for the manifestation of his supreme glory that the mystic will be able to perceive Him. It is only then that the golden-coloured Being of the Chhandogya Upanishad who can be seen on the Sun, with golden moustaches and golden hair, and who shines like gold up to his very toes, can come to be identified, as by the sage of the Isopanishad, with the being within oneself (S.22 b). It is only then that the Individual Spirit can become one with the Universal Spirit.”

Again “*ācāryavān puruṣo veda*”—this Upanishadic text so often quoted by Shankara and other Bhashyakaras, clearly shows that he alone who has a Guru can realise. For it is not textual interpretation that the disciple seeks from the Guru; nor does “Veda” connote here intellectual knowledge. Vedana is a feeling, an experience, a realisation. Note also that the Upanishads always use the two terms “*ityupasita, ya evam veda*” in a syntactical unit. Upāsana is the discipline, vedana is the fruit which comes from the *Upāsya*.

(To be continued)

## VIDYASAGAR

“VIDYASAGAR, scholar, sage and intellectual dictator, laboured hugely like the Titan he was, to create a new Bengali society.” — Sri Aurobindo

A citadel of strength and a light-house of simplicity was Ishwar Chandra. To the poor he was Dayar Sagar (the ocean of kindness), to the learned he was Vidyasagar (the ocean of knowledge), to the humble he was the most humble-minded of men, though he never admitted the fact, and to the proud and the arbitrary he was the lion-hearted rival.

Ishwar was born when his parents were in the grip of poverty. His life clearly proves that one can win unbounded fame even after being born of the poorest parents.

It is quite interesting to observe that Napoleon and Vidyasagar, who were surcharged with an indomitable will, were deprived of an average height. Also, unbelievable was their love for their mothers. The Indian conquered the heart of his countrymen with a heroic spirit, boundless learning, kindness and charity, while by the strength of his volcanic will Bonaparte conquered the heart of France and left behind a name to blaze in the history of the world.

In his childhood and boyhood Ishwar was most notorious for playing pranks. He was also equally outstanding in the merit displayed in his studies. Not to listen to his father's instructions was his bold determination. He would always do the diametrically opposite to his father's wishes. The wise father at last discovered a plan. He would ask his son Ishwar to do the reverse of what he intended him to do, *viz.*, when he wanted that Ishwar should have his bath he would ask Ishwar not to have bath in such cold weather. In no time Ishwar would hurry to the pond and finish his bath. One day when the Inspector was to visit the school he wanted Ishwar to put on his best attire. So he said to Ishwar that as he was not the son of a rich man he was not expected to put on fine clothes. Soon the son put on his best clothes and hurried to his school.

Fear was unknown to him. According to him a man does not deserve to be called so unless and until he fights for his self-respect. “It is better,” said he, “to open a grocer's shop than to hold a high position wanting in prestige.”

Vidyasagar once visited Mr. Kar, the then Principal of Presidency College. During their conversation he found Kar's legs wide spread on his table. What an insult ! Now let us observe how Vidyasagar paid Kar back in his own coin.

One day Kar called on Vidyasagar for some work. Vidyasagar placed not only his legs but also his sandals on the table and thus enjoyed his talk with the Principal. The Englishman was more than angry with Vidyasagar.

He lodged a complaint with the higher authorities against him. The matchless Pundit was summoned. He justified his conduct by saying that he had learnt the self-same etiquette from Mr. Kar alone when he had visited him a few months before. He further added that our Indian etiquette could by no means be the same.

Vidyasagar had no other God save man. He had no other religion but to serve humanity. His parents were his living deities. His mother was a paragon of virtue. He was ever ready to fight with the impossible at his mother's behest. If he was at home he would bow to his parents first and then begin his daily activities. If he was away from home he would bow to their portraits first and then launch into his daily programme.

One day he said to his mother, "Mother, I have now become a stranger to poverty. I wish you to buy some jewels." At this the mother said, "Yes, my son, I too have been cherishing the same desire for few months. I wish to buy only three jewels : 1) The village boys are absolutely addle-headed, you are to open a free school for them. 2) See, my son, poor people are dying without any treatment, you must open a charitable dispensary for them. 3) My poor villagers have no houses to live in, you must make such an arrangement that they may properly live. In no time the son burst into tears and touched his mother's feet with his devoted head and promised that he would fulfil his mother's desires. And within a few years he did fulfil them—to the joy of his beloved mother.

It was Vidyasagar who introduced into Bengali society the re-marriage of the widows of tender age. At this a multitude of people let loose a flood of abuse upon him. He stoically braved all aspersions; nay, he, as it were, pounded his foes to atoms. Under his auspices no less than 60 re-marriages took place and it entailed a cost of eighty-two thousand rupees. A surprising anecdote :

We all know that Chief Justice Sir Gurudas Banerjee was one of the illustrious sons of Bengal. He was well known for his devotion to his mother who was an orthodox to the marrow. Every day Sir Gurudas himself used to bring the sacred water from the Ganga for his mother. Indeed, God's ways are always strange. This venerable lady on her deathbed enjoined on her son to invite Vidyasagar to her obseques. By this time Vidyasagar had become an object of contempt in the orthodox community of Bengal on account of his introducing widow re-marriage into Hindu society. Strangely enough, she further added that Vidyasagar should be the foremost guest in her obseques. By this time Vidyasagar had become an object of contempt in the orthodox community of Bengal on account of his introducing widow re-marriage into Hindu society. Strangely enough, she further added that Vidyasagar should be the foremost guest in her obseques. The son carried out the command of his dear mother, defying the bitter abuses of the orthodox Brahmins. This event clearly indicates how even a purely orthodox woman had heartily supported the just cause of widow re-marriage undertaken by Vidyasagar.

In his book *Bodhodaya* ("The Awakening of Knowledge") meant for children he has defined God thus :

"God is the formless self-form of Consciousness." It is interesting to note how he chose to impart the highest notion of God to the budding learners. Evidently he stood far above the anthropological conception of God and he was conversant with the Védantic idea of the Brahman.

Let us not forget Sri Ramakrishna's genuine admiration for Vidyasagar. The spiritual Giant once called on the Pundit and said : "At long last I have reached the ocean." Vidyasagar's immediate and humble reply too is equally worth remembering : "If it pleases you, you may take some quantity of saline water from the ocean." The Light-House of spirituality retorted : "Why should it be saline water ? Verily, you are the ocean of Vidya (Knowledge), and not of Avidya (Ignorance)."

"There is none in Bengal," says Vivekananda, "who has not in some way or other derived benefit from the multifarious activities of Vidyasagar."

The relation between Vidyasagar and the great poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt was that of a father and a son. It is well known how Vidyasagar, nay, Dayarsagar saved Madhusudan's life from an imminent peril at Versailles in France. After his return too from the foreign shore he would take money in season and out from Vidyasagar. It happened that Vidyasagar was once counting some currency notes at home. His Madhu hurried into the room and placed his hand forward. Vidyasagar fondly said : "Wait a bit, let me finish my counting." But Madhu was in a tearing hurry. He took some currency notes and sprinted off. The father's affectionate heart voiced forth : "Madhu, O Madhu, you are so impossible !" Madhusudan lived in the heart of Vidyasagar on such a footing of affection.

Rabindranath's unique love and admiration for Vidyasagar can be gauged from the glowing tribute paid to him through his remark : "Perhaps, it is by oversight that God has sent a real man among seventy million of so-called men inhabiting Bengal."

Vidyasagar was a man of supreme genius whose memory one likes to cherish as an invaluable treasure.

CHINMOY



# *Students' Section*

## SRI AUROBINDO

### A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE AND WORK

SRI AUROBINDO, seer, prophet, poet and philosopher of modern India, has, in his writings, given the completest synthesis of eastern and western thought, based on Indian foundations. He has formulated a plan for a new order of individual and social existence and taken the theory of evolution to its summit in the emergence of a race of supermen. He usually wrote in English and he is easily the most outstanding Indo-English writer for volume as well as variety. He had to evolve a new style—both in prose and in poetry—to express in English the complex pattern of Indian perceptions. This he has done by building on those styles in English prose and poetry which had the closest affinity to Indian thought. His poetic diction, for example, is built out of a manifold quarry—English poetry both Classical and Romantic. Critics, who have read this poetry superficially, think that it is a style full of “echoes”, based on the renaissance theory of borrowing. But they are sure to find on closer scrutiny that these echoes are a concession to the student of English literature,—links that make the transition to Indian thought easy for him to grasp. These echoes are assimilated and surpassed in a majestic sweep of diction and imagery which are full of constant surprises and which remain uniformly at a high level of inspiration.

Sri Aurobindo was born on 15th August 1872. He passed away on 5th December 1950. His was a crowded life. A child brought up on English, not his mother-tongue, he was sent to a convent school in Darjeeling at the age of five. He was taken by his parents to England in 1879 for his schooling in Manchester and later in St. Paul's School, London. The father of this great mystic was an absolute atheist and had told the Drewetts, in whose care he had left his children, not to allow them to mix with Indians. Sri Aurobindo studied Greek and Latin at Cambridge and passed his Tripos in the first division. He passed the I.C.S. Examination but did not care to be a civilian. By the time he joined Baroda Service after returning to India in 1893, he had absorbed the best culture that the West had to give to an Indian youth.

He taught English and French in Baroda College and the students admired and loved him. He studied Sanskrit and Bengali and translated some poetry into English from both the languages. He was gravitating towards politics

all along and also yoga. He joined the National College at Calcutta in 1906. He was mainly responsible for the Congress resolution on Independence, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education. Sri Aurobindo was imprisoned and tried for sedition, though he was acquitted later. He had great spiritual experiences while in Alipore Jail. He was to have been arrested again. But he left for Pondicherry in March 1910, in obedience to a divine voice. "I did not leave politics," says Sri Aurobindo, "because I felt I could do nothing more there—I came away because I did not want anything to interfere with my yoga and because I got a very distinct *ādes̄h* in the matter.... I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward, on lines I had foreseen, by others, and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure without my personal action or presence."

The remaining forty years of Sri Aurobindo's life were spent in a Yoga which would open up new horizons for humanity. He had his four great spiritual realisations that constitute the Integral Yoga, of which he is the founder. He had realised the Static Divine while at Baroda and the Dynamic Divine while in Alipore Jail. He had his realisation of the Supreme or Purushottama Consciousness while at Pondicherry and also of the higher planes of consciousness leading up to Supermind. He evolved, out of his study of the Vedas and the Upanishads and especially his own experience, a philosophy which harmonises the two ends of existence—Spirit and Matter. He mapped out a Yogic discipline of spiritual ascent and descent which promotes the emergence of the Godhead involved in matter and the bringing down of the supramental consciousness to transform mind, life and body. He spoke of the imperative need to shift the will from the instrumental self to the real inner person, the psyche, as the only cure for a war-stricken world.

The grand and creative synthesis that Sri Aurobindo achieved in his writings is the direct reflection of the living synthesis in his own personal life. He was steeped in European life, manners and thought till 1893. During his stay in Baroda he learnt Indian languages and became an ardent lover and student of Indian literature and thought. He had been a poet and writer all along. But he soon plunged into a crowded life of action as the apostle of liberty and nationalism and sowed the seeds of a movement which fructified into Independence some years later. Yoga, like poetry, had been to him a native gift. His concept of India as the torch-bearer of the human race made inevitable the transition from nationalism to yoga. He became the Columbus of Supermind and, with the Mother as his great collaborator, he built up at Pondicherry the Ashram which is a blueprint of the New Society to come and laid the foundations of the International Centre of Education which is attracting seekers of the New Life from all parts of the world.

His contribution to human thought has been far-reaching and manifold. He has given us a new cosmology and a new metaphysics in his *Life Divine*.

He revolutionised our very conception of psychology and gave it a new basis in *The Life Divine* and in his *Letters*. He formulated a profoundly new approach to sociology in *The Human Cycle* and showed through a searching analysis of past and current systems of social and political thought how the truly spiritual attitude was essential as the foundation of a new and lasting social order. He extended the application of this very approach to the sphere of international politics in *The Ideal of World Unity*. In his writings on education, he formulated a theory of education which would foster the growth of the integral consciousness in every pupil. He showed in *The Synthesis of Yoga* how all the systems of yoga combine and converge on the path to Supermind. In *The Secret of the Veda*, *Essays on the Gita* and his writings on the Upanishads, he opened up new and epoch-making ways of studying the ancient Indian texts, throwing new light on philology and reducing both anthropology and anthropomorphology to their proper place in a balanced scheme of knowledge. He offered an illuminating interpretation of Indian culture down the centuries in *The Foundations of Indian Culture*.

In *Savitri*, he gave us the epic of the new age, an epic which is more revealingly autobiographical than *Paradise Lost* or *Hyperion*, more radiantly inclusive than *The Divine Comedy* and more intimately and intensely cosmological than *The Iliad* or *The Odessey*. Not even Lucretius could recreate philosophy as poetry with the imaginative grandeur and intensity with which Sri Aurobindo did so when he threw *The Life Divine* into the crucible of *Savitri* and remoulded it in its very essence. He gave a full statement of the overhead aesthesis which made this possible in his *Savitri* as well as in many of his later lyrics, in a book called *The Future Poetry* and in his *Letters*. One can also read there his wise pronouncements on English and Indian poetry, on his own experiments with quantitative prosody in English—particularly his *Ithon*, a sequel to *The Iliad*—and a host of other interesting literary topics.

It is difficult to name another Prometheus who brought so much light to humanity. One can only think of Vyasa, compiler of the Vedas, creator of the *Mahabharata*, the ancient Indian epic. Sri Aurobindo did for the modern world what Vyasa did for the ancient world. There have been many purveyors and distributors of knowledge who took all knowledge for their province. Remarkable as this latter achievement is in its encyclopaedic range, it pales into insignificance in the presence, not of an intellectualised distribution of knowledge, but of an authentic and creative dispensation of wisdom and illumination darting in all directions. All these directions found their unifying fount in the springs of a world-wide vision, an Olympic calm and a heart as large as the universe itself.

I cannot do better than conclude this tribute with a few lines from a poem that I wrote on Sri Aurobindo :

Neither the sylph-like call of dreams,  
The siren lure of extremes,  
The visitations or the gleams  
Detained him.  
He plunged into the vast abyss,  
Climbed the steepest precipice  
And forged the spirit's path of bliss  
Time cannot dim.

And again :

A kindler of new, luminous constellations  
On the verge of human sight;  
A builder of light-pillars in the Ocean  
Of Time, impouring light.

The Marvellous Master, the seeker's Rock of Ages,  
The Force of deathless laughter,  
The Wonder-Worker, the new world's great Law-Giver,  
Seer of Before and After.

V.K.GOKAK

## TALKS ON POETRY

*(These Talks were given to a group of students starting their University life. They have been prepared for publication from notes and memory, except in the few places where they have been expanded a little. Here and there the material is slightly rearranged in the interests of unity of theme. As far as possible the actual turns of phrase used in the Class have been recovered and, at the request of the students, even digressions have been preserved. The Talks make, in this form, somewhat unconventional pieces but the aim has been to retain not only their touch of literature and serious thought but also their touch of life and laughter.)*

### TALK THIRTY-FIVE

EMPHASIS on the pictorial element seems to have marked many definitions of "pure poetry". This element can be overdone. And there are many modes of overdoing it. The Symbolist and the Imagist modes are rather specialised ones. A general mode is evident in George Moore's Introduction to an anthology compiled by himself of English verse. Moore defines "pure poetry" as "born of admiration of the only permanent world, the world of things": it is poetry containing no hint of subjectivity, poetry "unsicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought", as the greatest of the iconopoeists, Shakespeare, would have put it if he had had something to do not only with Othello, the Moor of Venice, but also with George, the Moore of London.

Typical instances would be Coleridge's lines on the "one red leaf" that could most easily be wind-stirred and that still hung motionless :

There is not wind enough to twirl  
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
That dances as often as dance it can  
Hanging so light and hanging so high  
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky—

or, in a more subtle mode, Keats's passage with its breathlessness deepened by a triple negative :

No stir of air was there,  
Not so much life as on a summer's day  
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,  
But where the dead leaf fell there did it rest.

Perhaps the whole of Keats's *Ode to Autumn* would be acceptable. But the two other Odes, the one to a Nightingale and that on a Grecian Urn, would be considered somewhat mixed stuff. I have not seen Moore's anthology, but strictly from his viewpoint lines like the following from the Nightingale-Ode would not be poetically pure :

Darkling I listen; and for many a time  
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
 Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
 To take into the air my quiet breath;  
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
 In such an ecstasy !  
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
 To thy high requiem become a sod.

And, of course, the close of the Grecian Urn Ode would be sacrilege against the pure-poetry ideal *à la* Moore :

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
 As doth eternity : Cold Pastoral !  
 When old age shall this generation waste,  
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all  
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

A less arbitrary definition than Moore's, so far as the content or substance is concerned, is A.E.Housman's. Housman does not insist that we should adopt one theme or another, nor does he put a ban on subjectivity. Rather, he inclines to believe that subjectivity is the essential content of poetry; but subjectivity does not mean for him any idea. There he is one with Moore and all the rest whose conception of pure poetry we have glanced at. Housman, however, does not condemn ideas as vitiators of the poetic. He even goes to the extent of saying that poetry cannot be great without ideas and that poetry with great ideas will always be cherished most by mankind. But he points out that such poetry is not poetry because of these ideas. On the contrary he holds that there are no particularly poetic ideas : every idea can meet with justice in prose. What, in Housman's view, poetry does is to associate its ideas with emotion. Says Housman : "To transfuse emotion—not to transmit thought but to set up in the reader's sense a vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer



and lead it astray like one blinded, how should the cheated person hope for deliverance ? The extreme loveliness of the cheat makes the victim's cry an impossible demand. It is this impossibility that is driven home by the puzzling fancy about the eyes. Somewhat akin to this fancy is the expression in *Romeo and Juliet* where Romeo, looking at Juliet at the night-dance in the hall of the Capulet family, exclaims :

O she doth teach the torches to burn bright !

The lyric we have quoted is indeed a kind of irrational fantasy, yet it is not too far from human experience : its nonsense shadows forth a general truth. Even more apt to Housman's thesis are some poems of Blake. Blake is to Housman the purest of poets because repeatedly he produces poetry that, without some esoteric key, are no more than exquisite or magnificent mysteries. A piece which also is spoken as if by a distressed lover is quoted from Blake by Housman:

My Spectre around me night and day  
Like a wild beast guards my way;  
My Emanation far within  
Weeps incessantly for my sin.

A fathomless and boundless deep,  
There we wander, there we weep;  
On the hungry craving wind  
My Spectre follows thee behind.

He scents thy footsteps in the snow  
Wheresoever thou dost go :  
Through the wintry hail and rain  
When wilt thou return again ?

Dost thou not in pride and scorn  
Fill with tempests all my morn,  
And with jealousies and fears  
Fill my pleasant nights with tears ?

Seven of my sweet loves thy knife  
Has bereaved of their life.  
Their marble tombs I built with tears  
And with cold and shuddering fears.



Seven more loves weep night and day  
 Round the tombs where my loves lay,  
 And seven more loves attend each night  
 Around my couch with torches bright.

And seven more loves in my bed  
 Crown with wine my mournful head,  
 Pitying and forgiving all  
 Thy transgressions great and small.

When wilt thou return and view  
 My loves and them to life renew ?  
 When wilt thou return and live ?  
 When wilt thou pity as I forgive ?

Housman's observation on this lyric is : "I am not equal to framing definite ideas which would match that magnificent versification and correspond to the strong tremor of unreasonable excitement which those words set up in some region deeper than the mind." Sri Aurobindo agrees here that no formulable meaning could be offered by way of justice to the intention running through these stanzas. Of course no formulable meaning is ever totally adequate to any poetry; but some satisfying *à peu pres* is mostly possible. Here the expression comes, without the outer mind's touch on it, from an occult dimension of our being. Housman speaks of "unreasonable excitement" and would dub the poem meaningless. Sri Aurobindo would not employ the exaggerating term "non-sense" : he would say that there is perfect sense but from a depth of our being where the thinking mind loses its grip. By an inner soul-perception, an intuitive consciousness, the passage is to be apprehended. To the outer consciousness it must appear to be what Housman calls it : "poetry with so little meaning that nothing except poetic emotion is perceived and matters." In relation to the outer consciousness he is also right when he remarks : "The verses probably possessed for Blake a meaning, and his students think that they have found it; but the meaning is a poor foolish disappointing thing in comparison with the verses themselves."

Poetry shot through and through with mystery by a movement of intense rhythmical feeling which weaves a word-pattern whose drift eludes the thinker in us : this is Housman's conception of "pure poetry". But he does not say that poets should aim at nothing except such a word-pattern. What he emphasises is that any poetic word-pattern is poetry by an element that, however mixed with thought, is really independent of it and can be best considered a stir of emotion. To touch us and move us is the function of poetry.

From this position a step is taken by some critics to a theory of "pure poetry" that cares only for word-texture—a fine music of language making suggestions that do not need to convey anything even emotionally important, leave aside anything intellectually significant. Thus they would relish the line from Racine which used to enchant Marcel Proust :

La fille de Minos et de Pasiphaë.  
(The daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë.)

(I think they would equally savour a line I might make about the sister of a Parsi student of mine :

The daughter of Minoo and Shirinbaï.)

Similarly they would turn on their tongues the phrases of Milton about all who

Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,  
Damasco, or Morocco, or Trebisond...

There is no intellectual content here, nor any emotional content to speak of. There is only a beauty of word-sound with just a touch upon our understanding. What does our understanding discover ? As Middleton Murry tells us, we get a sense of the exotic, the out-of-the-way, the rich and rare—an exoticism soft and languorous in the Racine-line, martial and clangorous in the Milton-verses. A distinguishable sensation or perception is almost all we have. But if we are after such an effect in "pure poetry" we should go beyond even the little touch our understanding receives from the phrases we have quoted. To say "The daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë" is surely to declare at least a fact with some directness, though we can make no judgment from it, much less draw any precept. Milton's joustings too convey a fact, however minimally and however drowned in the surge of golden-gonged geography. A more quintessential example of sheer sound would be Rossetti's fivefold symphony of names :

Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,  
Margaret, and Rosalys—

or Sri Aurobindo's recital at a yet longer liquidity of nomenclature :

Menaca, Misracayshie, Mullica,  
Rambha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie,  
Lolita, Lavonya and Tillottama...

Of course, Rossetti is speaking of the "five handmaidens" of "Lady Mary" in the heavenly groves and Sri Aurobindo is listing the apsara-companions

of the peerless Urvasie, dancer in the courts of Indra. But without their contexts, the lines only suggest lovely things. An Indian ignorant of European names and with no knowledge of Christian religious legend will hardly catch the hint that Rossetti is referring to lovely women. A European similarly placed with regard to matters Indian will equally be at a loss in front of Sri Aurobindo. Lovelinesses of some sort will be all that can come home to the mind from the word-texture and the succession of separate words. But perhaps even here some slight significant clue is supplied : each is shown to be like its associates, all of them representing similar things : it is indirectly imparted that a row of things sharing a quality of beauty is drawn up. "Pure poetry" on the principle implicit in these citations should really have even this oblique information wiped off. And that is possible if wonderful-sounding gibberish is composed. But I am afraid no genuine poet ever deliberately went in for gibberish. It is only the school in France of what is called Dadaism that made gibberish its ultimate aim. A number of writers felt that they must have absolute liberty of expression and should not be asked to produce in the reader anything else than a bewildered agitation of word-impression. When they looked about for a name for themselves, one of them had the brilliant idea : "Let's open the Dictionary at random." The French Dictionary was opened and the first word that jumped to the eye was *dada*. This is a child's word and means "horse, cock-horse". Its English equivalent would be "gee-gee". Colloquially it means "hobby, hobby-horse". You have the phrases : "aller à dada" ("to ride a cock-horse"), "être sur son dada" ("to indulge in one's hobby"). So *l'école dada* or *dadaïsme* is a negative rebellion of childish whimsicality. One of its masterpieces is by the famous Tristan Tzara :

In your inside there are smoking lamps  
 the swamp of blue honey  
 cat crouched in the gold of a flemish inn  
 boom boom  
 lots of sand yellow bicyclist  
 chateaubault des papes  
 manhattan there are tubs of excrement before you.  
 mbaze mbaze bazebaze mleganga garoo.

Very expressive stuff, this, no doubt, but expressive only of chaos. And chaos can hardly be the source of art. Besides, even the chaotic expression is far from pleasing to the ear. Further, the gibberish is not complete : some of the individual units carry some meaning within the *ensemble* which is perfect chaos. More or less the same may be said of such work as Gertrude Stein's or Hugo Blümner's. But truly to fulfil the principle of the word-music school we should have verbal snatches falling musically combined upon the ear in a foreign tongue.

It is then that we shall have total gibberish making pure poetry in its utmost essence.

To those who have no familiarity with Latin, the acme of pure poetry depending solely on artistically arranged word-texture would be lines like the one from Virgil which Arnold Bennett considered the most marvellously rhythmical in all poetic literature :

Infandum, regina, jubes renovare dolorem...

But can anyone rest satisfied with such music without knowing that it conveys :

Words cannot utter, O queen, the grief thou bid'st me  
remember...

If one at all does without the meaning, one would still automatically weave some meaning from the sounds by their associations with those already meaningful to one. As many Latin words have originated English ones, things like "renovare" and "dolorem" are likely to form a train of ideas in our minds. We may have also heard of "Victoria regina", Queen Victoria, and then we may think of some Queen and the renovation of dolour or sorrow. Perhaps German would provide more opaque lines of enchanting rhythm—say, Goethe's

Verweile doch, du bist so schön,

or else his

Das Ewig weibliche  
Zieht uns hinan.

Even here the "doch" of the first quotation may suggest the abbreviation of "doctor" : "doc." But how far from the truth we shall be ! The line means :

Linger a while, thou art so fair.

I doubt if any doctor could deserve such an appeal. A lady-doctor once sent a marriage-proposal to a friend of mine who is now in the Ashram. He simply shuddered because he felt she would try all sorts of medical and surgical experiments on him. I am sure he would fancy the first two words—"Verweile doch"—to be an echo of "Fair wily doc" or, still more satisfyingly, "Farewell, doc." As for the other quotation, we may imagine the opening words—"Das Ewig"—to stand for C.R.Das in a barrister's wig and we shall be surprised to learn that the lines signify :

The Eternal Feminine  
Leads onward for ever.

Well, no matter how mistakenly, how hazily, some connotation is bound to attach to words : words cannot be sheer sound. Nor can they be supposed to have intrinsic meanings of their own by the differences they exhibit in their textures. No doubt, vocables like the old Sanskrit *vṛka* which connoted “tearer” and hence “wolf” answered to a sensation of tearing and the English word “crick” also answers to the sensation of a twist or a tear, but no invariable suggestion can be associated with such sounds. The English “brick” which is very close to the Sanskrit “*vṛka*” has quite a different suggestion, if at all there is any answer in the sound to the sense. A skilful writer would match sound to sense in a variety of ways and weave the meaning-units of his verse effectively together by phonetic effects—as does Shakespeare in the lines we have often quoted—

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity a while  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain  
To tell my story.

After analysing the phonetic effects, M.L.Rosenthal and A.J.M.Smith remark in their *Exploring Poetry* (p.36) : “Sounds do not in themselves convey a meaning. Liquid sounds are lighter and more graceful than gutturals, and there are many other differences among sound-effects, but this does not mean that every *l* or *r* carries a definite idea or feeling with it, or every *k* a harsher idea or feeling. However, in a passage with an unusual number of *l*'s and *k*'s we may find an underlying pattern of pure sound effects balanced against one another—an actual music of sounds. If we want to know the connection between this pure sound-pattern and the feeling and thought of the poem, we must note where the most important words fall. In a good poem, there will be a definite relationship between the points of emphasized thought and emotion and the pattern of sound. Unless we are dealing with nonsense rhymes or pure sound-effects, it is the thought and the emotion that give the sounds their meaning. The words in the Hamlet passage which we must emphasize because of their meaning are also the words in which the most important sound-effects are found. The *h*'s, *l*'s, and so on become associated with these words and take their emotional effect from their meaning. Thus, since ‘hold’ and ‘heart’ are strongly stressed, the vowels and consonants in them, when repeated in later words, recall them again. Without these important words, the alliteration alone—the musical effect gained by the repetition of sounds, particularly in stressed syllables—could not ordinarily stir us deeply.”

Moreover, if words are taken as if they were nothing save a kind of music, how very poor their musical quality will prove side by side with actual music as heard in Bach or Mozart ! As music, they can have no special *raison d'être*. Valéry who spoke of constructing musical patterns of words did not subscribe to the word-music school. Expressive rhythm is one thing—enchanting rhythm without significance is quite another story. Like Mallarmé, Valéry meant by poetic music not only a play of sound but a play of elusive meaning as in musical compositions. As to the stress on sheer sound in poetry, he was quick to observe : “The richest and most resonant harmonies of Hugo fall as music far short of Berlioz or Wagner.”

This inferiority to real music is, of course, no argument against the value of harmonious utterance in the poetic art, provided there is no neglect of substance or matter. Verlaine, as we once said, is a great master of sound-effects and in a subtler fashion than the grandly orchestral Hugo. Also his sound-effects accompany a lyrical spontaneity of word-flow which is almost without a parallel in French poetry and which at times as good as rivals that in English. Apropos of him we could erect a much sounder theory of “pure poetry” on the basis of verse-music. Alan M. Boase writes : “It may or may not be vain to seek to distil ‘pure poetry’ by a process of patient poetical alchemy—such was Mallarmé’s method. But ‘pure poetry’ evokes for most of us some element of spontaneous *song*. It is this singing quality—perhaps the rarest of all in French poetry—which Verlaine possessed in a supreme degree.” Of course, Boase himself points out that the impression Verlaine created of singing with “the simplicity of the bird on the tree” had behind it a sufficient mastery of verbal art, even a conscious virtuosity, but his central power was intuitive spontaneity, and craftsmanship helped it only to carry off complex undertakings with the same smiling certainty as his simple outbursts : nowhere does it replace the birdlike *élan*, all that it does is to make the bird in him accomplish what the mere bird would not.

Verlainian pure poetry is given a manifesto by the poet himself in the piece entitled *Art Poétique*. This manifesto lays down the fundamental principle in its opening line :

De la musique avant toute chose...

which may be Englished a little freely,

Music above all, music first...

This initial maxim is elaborated through a series of primarily technical precepts for an art of suggestion. Boase takes several of the subsequent terms and well sums up Verlaine’s drift : “*L’Impair*, the source of subtle rhythmical effect; *la Méprise*, the choice of words in a derived or ‘ambiguous’ sense; *l’Imprécis*

*joint au Précis*, the art of half-tones; the *Nuance* which achieves a unity of key or mood—these are all aspects of such an art. An over-intellectual and an over-facile poetry are equally, in his eyes, its enemies : on the one hand, wit, satire, the conceit, the midnight lamp; on the other, eloquence and empty rhyme.” The first set of terms Verlaine employs here are : *la Pointe assassine*, the murderer Point or intellectual acuteness—*l’Esprit cruel*, the cruel cleverness or intellectual ironical artifice—*le Rire impur*, the low laugh or intellectual levity going against the high seriousness of the poet’s mission. The second set of terms are : *l’Eloquence*, resonant rhetoric which, says Verlaine, has to be twisted by the neck; *le Rime assagie*, vacuous jingle, the sound-swirl of a run-away fancy in love with words.

Everything so far in the poem is concerned with the positives and negatives of the poetic method, the music is of the poetic manner. But towards the end of the piece Verlaine returns to his opening phrase and then he moves to quite a different plane :

De la musique encore et toujours !  
 Que ton vers soit la chose envolée  
 Qu’on sent qui fuit d’une âme en allée  
 Vers d’autres cieux à d’autres amours...

We may render the lines with some freedom :

Music again and music ever !  
 O make your verse the upsurging thing  
 Felt by the soul when, wide of wing,  
 It spans new skies to a new love’s quiver...

Music now is a movement of feeling, an intense movement upward, part of the soul’s aspiration : a mystical emotion that cannot be held back is revealed as the true power behind the technical music that has been set forth up to now : the aspiration of the heart is made the basic inspiration of the art. The next stanza which is the final one of the poem further accentuates the idea and puts it in opposition to what poetry is not. This stanza reads :

Que ton vers soit la bonne aventure  
 Epars au vent crispé du matin  
 Qui va fleurant la menthe et le thym...  
 Et tout le reste est littérature.

Arthur Symons has a sensitive version of the lines, except for the second. There the epithet “crispé” is too prominent and unusual to be omitted. If the

French sense were kept, it would mean “shrivelled” or “irritated”. But that would be absurd. Evidently Verlaine who was fond of English has imported the English sense of “bracing”, and in doing so he has committed the “Méprise” advised by himself. Symons’s version of the stanza is :

Let your verse be the luck of the lure  
Afloat on the winds that at morning hint  
Of the odours of thyme and the savour of mint...  
And all the rest is literature.

(I would render the second line :

Afloat on the crisp dawn-airs that hint...)

In this stanza poetry and literature stand as contradictory terms for Verlaine just as poetry and reportage do for Mallarmé. And, since everything except the music defined here is classed as literature, Verlaine seems to put under that category even the musical method of suggestion which the poem advises at the beginning—but the real drift is only that even that method would be cancelled out if there was not the music of the ethereal adventure the two closing stanzas hold as their message. An additional implication is perhaps that this inner music can at times run against the very technique which is intended to support it : it is not restricted to set technical rules, it cannot be pinned down to any formula. But commonly the technique touched upon through most of the poem is the right one and Verlaine must be taken as merely negating self-sufficiency and unconditionality for it, not denying its extreme usefulness as a delicate mould in which the ethereal adventure can embody its floating soul. Haunting rhythm spontaneously subtle by being born of a mystical longing which achieves suggestive vision in an art-form delicately shaded : there you have the Verlainian pure poetry.

Already in these two stanzas we have an instance of this vaguely meaningful rhythm. But we may give a short piece in its entirety. It is called *La lune blanche* :

La lune blanche  
Luit dans les bois;  
De chaque branche  
Part une voix  
Sous la ramée...  
O bien aimée !

L'étang reflète,  
Profond miroir,



La silhouette  
 Du saul noir  
 OÙ le vent pleure...  
 Rêvons, c'est l'heure.

Un vaste et tendre  
 Apaisement  
 Semble descendre  
 Du firmament  
 Que l'astre irise...  
 C'est l'heure exquise.

A literal translation, line by line, has been made by one of my students, Bibhash :

The pale moon  
 Shines in the woods;  
 From every branch  
 A voice rises  
 Beneath the foliage...  
 O beloved one !

The pool reflects,  
 Mirror profound,  
 The silhouette  
 Of the dismal willow  
 Where weeps the wind...  
 'Tis the hour, let's dream.

A vast and tender  
 Tranquillity  
 Seems to descend  
 From the heavens  
 On which the star  
 Sheds iridescent lustre...  
 'Tis the exquisite hour.

Your professor has attempted—perhaps rather rashly—a free poetic equivalent of Verlaine's elusive magic :

The white of the moon  
 Glints in the wood;

Vaguely a tune  
Wafts from each bole  
That leaves overbrood...  
O love of my soul !

The pool has set  
A mirror deep  
For the silhouette  
Of willows that lour  
Where the winds weep...  
'Tis the dream-hour.

A tender and vast  
Quiet has come,  
Downward cast  
From the star-lit  
Opaline dome...  
Hour exquisite !

AMAL KIRAN (K.D.SETHNA)

## A NEW WORLD

*(A street. A few children have gathered around a girl who is weeping.)*

TRIPTI (*scolding a boy*): What mischief! Arun, Why did you trouble poor Lina?

ARUN: Oh! she is so foolish. She has put a few pieces of sweets on a plate and is calling God to come and eat them. (*He laughs loudly and a few more children also join him.*) As if God has time to come to you for your game!

TRIPTI: Oh stop it. She is only playing. Let her play and be happy.

ARUN: All these girls are alike. They play all sorts of stupid games. They weep when something goes wrong with the hero in a story-book and feel sorry for every insect that is killed.

ARUN: Yes, they just don't understand that life is like that. My sister wants everything that is nice and lovely and beautiful. She wants all the stories in the world to end happily. She is so stupid that she does not like the story of Sohrab and Rustum because Sohrab dies in it.

KIRTI: But aren't those happy stories better than those sad ones? Besides, how can a good father like Rustum kill his son? Isn't it wrong?...And why must things go wrong at all, I just don't understand.

NEELES: Yes...I too very often feel: why do things go wrong? Why should people weep? Why are some things so difficult? I want to grow up soon to find out all unhappy don'ts. I wish to have a mind which can answer all problems and solve all difficulties like a big encyclopaedia.

ARUN: There...we have another dreamer. And all of you must be believing in fairies, of course?

KIRTI: Oh yes! They are such lovely things. They always come in at the right time to help people. They have such a wonderful power to wipe away the harms done to a person.

TARUN: But they are only in books, you fool!

*(An old man, dressed in a long robe and with a long white beard, enters and slowly starts walking to the other side of the road.)*

TRIPTI: Yes but I too like to imagine that they are real, that they are always around us, that we can learn from them the power to make others happy.

ARUN: Even you! You too want to join in the procession of these idiots?

TRIPTI: Why not? Besides, I don't think they are idiots.

THE OLD MAN (*turning towards the children*): They are not idiots, my friend.

ARUN: They believe in all the things which are not true but are just nice to think about. You are big and sensible, do tell them that these fairies are like dreams which vanish when the eyes open.

TRIPTI: I feel strongly that these things are not dreams. They are real and if, as you say, they do not exist, how do such thoughts come to us at all?

TARUN: Imagination, of course, empty day-dreaming!

TRIPTI: That means somewhere there is a land where things are always sweet. Or else these ideas won't enter our heads and our hearts won't long to be there.

*(The two boys are quiet)*

THE OLD MAN: And if they are real?

*(Everyone looks at him in utter surprise)*

A SMALL BOY: Oh! then... Then I want to have a magic power with which I can do every difficult thing.

LINA: I would like all the stories to end happily.

KIRTI: I want everything to be sweet and beautiful. I don't like any ugly thing at all. How wonderful would it be if the whole world was just good and nothing else. I wish I could change these ugly things into things of beauty and joy!

NEELESH: I want all my dreams of magic power to come true. I would like to have such a power that I could do all the complicated problems in a flash and know what is going on in the world with this wonderful knowledge.

LINA: I want all the miracles to come true, all wickedness from people's hearts to vanish and instead their hearts to be filled up with kindness and happy thoughts.

A SMALL BOY: Yes...I...too wonder why older people are suddenly unkind to us. I wish something would pour down into their heads and hearts, from heaven so that they might understand us.

TRIPTI: I would like to know the secret of curing the sick people not by bitter medicine but by something else so that diseases may never come back once they are cured.

THE OLD MAN: Yes, my children, all these things are possible. The power you want, my boy, can be yours and everyone's. The sweetness and the truthfulness, the kindness and the real health, the beauty and the joy, everything is within your reach. *(He collects the children near him).*

With all of you as my clay, I will mould out a new and a wonderful world as it really has to be. Come with me, my sweet ones, you are my Dream.

*(He goes away with the children. Only Arun and Tarun remain.)*

ARUN : Oh ! what madness. This old man too is talking about things which don't exist. He will soon turn our friends into fools, I tell you.

TARUN : *(hesitatingly)* No...Arun...I am not sure...I too strongly feel like joining them.

SUNANDA

## THE INSATIABLE FIRE

YAYATI was a king. Once he went out hunting in a forest. Hard-pinched with thirst he drew near a well and looked into it. Lo ! someone was struggling to keep afloat on the water. He rescued the struggler who turned out to be a damsel in her teens. She sobbed bitterly as she put on her wet clothes, which she brought up with herself from the well. The king gave her consolation and she related her story.

Her name was Devayani. Her father, Sukracharya, was the priest and preceptor of the demon king Vrishaparva. The king's daughter, Sarmishtha, was her friend. They two had come into the forest on an excursion. Allured by the cool, limpid water of the lake they swam and dived to their hearts' content. On coming out of the water, through inadvertence she had put on the clothes of her friend, Sarmishtha. The latter got enraged, snatched away her clothes by force from the person of Devayani, pushed her into the well and threw her clothes also behind her. Before taking leave of the king the girl did not forget to convey her gratefulness to him.

On returning home Devayani related to her father the whole of her doleful story. The demon priest apprised the king of the event, threatening to leave his kingdom as a protest against the wrong done to his daughter, The just king devised an ingenious way to inflict condign punishment on his daughter, to the satisfaction of all concerned, including Sarmishtha who loved Devayani dearly. Sarmishtha was to be the life-long companion of Devayani as a maid in her service.

Meanwhile the gods sent Kacha, the son of their preceptor Vrihashpati, to Sukracharya for mastering the lore and art of reviving the dead (*mṛta-sañjivani-vidyā*). Kacha began to serve the demon priest and his daughter with devotion and fidelity. The demons came to know of his purpose and put him to death. At the request of Devayani, in whose heart had grown a liking for Kacha, the priest brought Kacha back to life by virtue of his occult power. The self-same nasty game was again played; and once more he was restored to life. But on a third occasion, when Kacha had gone out to pluck flowers for Devayani at her behest, the demons killed him and reduced his body to ashes.

Devayani awaited Kacha sufficiently long to suspect some foul play on the part of the demons; she was sure that Kacha had been slain by the demons. She went up to her loving father and implored him to revive Kacha. Devayani had, by this time, fallen desperately in love with Kacha and was consumed with the desire to unite her fate with his.

The sage priest withdrew his outer consciousness and by virtue of his occult power came to learn that Kacha had been killed and reduced to ashes; moreover, some of the demons were conspiring against his own life. So he revived Kacha for the third time and taught him the secret lore of reviving the dead. The demons mixed poison with wine and cleverly caused the death of Sukracharya. Now Kacha availed himself of this opportunity to try his newly acquired power and succeeded in reviving his revered preceptor. Then Devayani openly revealed her desire and sought the consent of Kacha to their nuptials. Kacha rejected the proposal outright; he considered it quite absurd. He argued that the preceptor, 'Guru', stands on the same footing with the father; his daughter is as good as a sister; to marry one's own sister is an outrage, a heinous sin in any civilised society. Thus disappointed Devayani pronounced a curse on Kacha : "You have wounded my long-cherished feelings and shattered all my rosy dreams; hence I curse you. The secret power that you have received from my father will prove futile." Kacha replied : "The Power of Truth is ever infallible. If your curse should act as an inhibition to my success, whomsoever I shall teach the secret will surely succeed. However, in return for your unjust curse let me bless you, my sister, that you may become a queen and enjoy royal luxuries."

Kacha bade adieu to his benefactors, returned to the gods and taught some of them the unique lore of reviving the dead.

One day Devayani accompanied by Sarmishtha went into the forest for an outing. It so happened that she met there that very king, Yayati, who had rescued her from the well. Devayani was no longer in her adolescence, but in the full bloom of her youth. The king made the proposal of marriage to her. She too was not in a mood to decline the offer, specially because of her sense of gratitude; and left the matter to the approval of her father.

At the instance of his daughter, who had a premonition of the future, the demon priest stipulated that he was prepared to give his daughter in marriage to the king, provided the latter did not covet Sarmishtha, the constant companion of his daughter. Should he violate this injunction the priest would be compelled to curse him. The king agreed. Devayani was wedded to Yayati. In due time Devayani successively gave birth to two sons. But her royal consort was unable to keep his word; he had three more sons by Sarmishtha. Devayani could no longer tolerate the lapses of her husband and lodged a complaint against him to her father. The sage cursed the king that he would soon incur decrepitude and dotage. The king entreated the priest for mercy. Thus propitiated the sage modified his curse, whereby he would be able to exchange his old age for another's youth.

The curse proved effective. The insatiable fire of desire tortured the king day and night. Year after year he went on persuading his youthful sons, one after another, to exchange their youth with his infirmities, but none would agree. When his youngest son Puru, born of Sarmishtha, attained

manhood, he was ready to suffer for the pleasure of his father. The king, quite unabashed, exchanged his old age with the youth of his youngest son and indulged in enjoyments for, it seemed, a thousand years, yet his desire remained unsatiated like a flame of ever-increasing fire fed with highly combustible fuel. At last wisdom dawned on him, he gave back to his son the remnant of his youth, took upon himself his old age before returning to seclusion and proclaimed to the world at large :

“Never, never can desire be pacified through the gratification of the senses; it goes on increasing ever more like a flame of fire constantly fed with clarified butter.

“All paddy, wheat, gold, games and women that belong to the entire world are not quite sufficient even for a single person. That is why it behoves one to restrain one’s inordinate desire.”<sup>1</sup>

BHUMANANDA

<sup>1</sup> *Na jātu kāma kāmānām upabhogena sāmyati...*



## THE ALL-BEAUTIFUL

O MORNING roses bathed in dew !  
Open your fragrant veils !  
All-Beauty's charms are born anew;  
They float on fairy sails.  
From heights She brings all splendours forth,  
Hewing a mystic way;  
We know not how to find her worth  
Or how our debt to pay.  
Our earth is a magic land of old,  
Where trees can speak aloud  
And stones a thousand stories hold  
Behind their silent shroud.  
To Matter throbbing with life and hues,  
She reveals the eternal Truth;  
From Heavens She brings the nectarous dew  
And Her all-saving Ruth.  
We, labouring children of Her own,  
Crossing a dolorous road  
Have come and found in Her alone  
Our Hopes' and Joys' abode.

SAILEN •

*(Written at the request of Prahlad Agarwala)*

### A PRAYER

MAY thousands of years be the life of our Mother,  
May her sweet reign last aeons together !  
Let her the whole earth's wideness own,  
All life be ruled by her alone !  
All "mine" in front of her I lay :  
Be hers still night and voiceful day !  
Her Perfect Lap my heart desires  
And to the Golden Guru aspires—  
Sri Aurobindo, bodied Divine !  
In them our hearts' love-streams combine.  
Search of them gathers up all my aims—  
My cell and cell salute their Names !

*(SAVITRI AGARWALA's Hindi Song freely adapted in English by HAR KRISHAN SINGH and K.D.S.)*

## SANSKRIT LANGUAGE

SANSKRIT, the most ancient of languages, claiming the Divine as its origin, and therefore known through the millenniums as the language of the gods (गीर्वाणभारती—*gīrvāṇabhārati*), was once a widely spoken language, the mother-tongue of our Aryan forefathers. The highly civilised and cultured Aryans of those times were a deeply spiritual people, in touch with mysteries that elude our physical sense. Theirs was a soul that easily communicated with the Super-Soul and received from Him truths bright like the sun, and intuitions that flashed like lightning, and revelations that made the invisible visible to the sight of blind mortality. They were untiring travellers on the long and difficult Path of Yoga, and the story of their journeyings has found spontaneous expression in the immortal speech that Sanskrit is, amid the flux of life on Earth.

It was through this unique medium of Sanskrit that their noblest thoughts, most intimate feelings, most sacred sentiments, most soul-stirring aspirations and the imperative call of their most ethereal ideals found an effective expression capable of conquering time. Sweet like nectar, superbly sonorous like a silver bell in the temple of God, immaculately perfect and elaborately accomplished in all its forms of beauty, there is no sentiment which it cannot express, no mood which it cannot reproduce, no rhythm which it cannot pour out, no height it cannot reach, no depth it cannot fathom, no vibration which it cannot set in victorious motion. Music is, as it were, its very nature, rhyme its delightful artistic activity. Grandeur follows in its trail, splendour crowns its gait.

Thus it was that this benignly beautiful language became a revered receptacle of the revelations known as Veda, the world's most ancient literary heritage; the Upanishads, the cream of the mysteries revealed to the great hoary Seers; the unique epic creation of Valmiki, the Ramayana, sweetly sublime and majestically full of pathos; the Mahabharata, a gigantic work of epic fame, embodying in living letters the whole life of the heroic age, so much so that the saying 'What is not in the Mahabharata is not in India' has come into vogue. Unsurpassed by any of the world's creations in their height and depth and all-embracing wideness, in their easy and crystal-pure poetic flow and appealing rhythm, in their sweep of splendour, carrying all that true India is on their crest, these are, indeed, the greatest gift of India not only to its own posterity but also to the world at large.

The Gita, the song sublime of God, the Over-Soul, the Avatar, Krishna, is the most priceless gem of spiritual value set in the Mahabharata's multi-fold tiara. Then come the eighteen Puranas, with as many minor ones, at the head of which stand Srimad Bhagavatam and Visnupuranam, all a mixture of myth and history and tradition and occult imagery, put together in a vivid colourful series of pictures for the layman to hear the story of spiritual truths, religion and ethics and all the best that Mother India has to bestow upon him.

Besides this there are those wonderful treatises on grammar, art, sculpture, architecture, painting, music and dancing, dramaturgy and poetics, medical and military science and so many others.

The classical literature both in prose and poetry that has come down to us, with a large part of it lost for ever, is still unique in the annals of world literature. Kalidasa, the leading genius of the classical age, next to (none save Valmiki and Vyasa and in some respects even superior to them, has, along with his predecessors and successors, worthily served this heavenly tongue, and the gracious goddess Sarasvatī has always blessed them with the marvellous music of her magic veena, bestowing upon her beloved language rhymes and rhythms of the worlds of heaven beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. This stream of Sarasvatī has continued to our day, sometimes on the surface and sometimes underground, proclaiming to the world that Sanskrit is not a dead language like many of her younger sisters, but is still a living reality, waiting for its fullest play a turning point in the nation's mind, at present preoccupied with the material fulfilment demanded by the pressing need of our hard and hazardous times.

It is, therefore, no exaggeration if we say that even today all Indian life is impregnated with the life-germs of Sanskritic culture which has ultimately to triumph over all other lesser influences. Religion with all its spiritual and ceremonial luxuriance, literature—prose and poetry, story and drama—the mind's thinkings and the heart's feelings and the secret seekings of the deeper soul, are all pervaded by the spirit of the Sanskrit speech and consciously or unconsciously receive her help and blessings for reaching to their hidden springs of life.

Over and above all this, it is an undeniable fact that Sanskrit is the ancient mother of all our Aryan tongues and as such deserves our devotion to her, no luke-warm devotion but a living and vibrant one. It is, indeed, for our own well-being that we should gratefully offer our love and allegiance to her and drink to our heart's content her milk of nourishment that shall give us the hero's strength to storm through the worlds to divine victory. We have to make her again a living force in the moulding and remoulding of our life and culture and civilization upon which rests the hope of a spiritually awakened humanity, unified in love and spirit universal.

It is for this reason that we consider it incumbent on all Indians to take to the study of Sanskrit and claim as heirs its inexhaustible treasures and, thus enriching their present with its hoards, build up with their help a yet richer and more resplendent future.

PUJALAL

#### NOTE

Short Sanskrit lessons will appear regularly from the next issue.

## FIRST OF THE MONTH

### PROLOGUE

“WHY, there’s nobody here,” cried ‘Unconscious’,  
Arriving at the sugar queue.  
So she/he elbowed and shoved ‘til she/he reached the front ;  
And of this we all took a poor view.  
Then remarks rang out good and plenty,  
Upon this most arrogant head,  
While someone said : “Keep to the line, *please!*”  
“Oh, that doesn’t mean *me*,” she/he said.

### THE NARRATIVE

We are two ladies standing in two queues waiting for sugar and tea  
it’s the first of the month you see.  
We can see the sugar and tea being weighed up  
and we weigh up our chances of ever reaching it  
for we cannot get to the front, we cannot get there.  
For over half-an-hour with a quiet outward calm,  
watching as this one and that one goes forward, we wait,  
Though we say nothing because we are trying to progress  
we are disturbed, our blood pressure rises and falls.  
Sometimes we join in the fun with a fiendish  
grin and go ‘Ha-Ha,’ another one has got there first.  
‘Honi soit, girls, Honi soit,’ come what may, lets be matey.  
(Would it be wrong to clout the man who just shoved me out ?)  
Looking over the next line I see that  
over the face of my friend has crept... A CERTAIN LOOK,—  
“Now dear ; remember our motto : *Toujours gai, toujours gai*”—  
Too late...can we blame her if she dashes forward  
and leaps the barrier, and can we blame her  
if she grabs the sack and shouts : —‘EUREKA’ ?  
Now I am one lady standing in one line waiting  
without my friend, to get my sugar and tea.

EPILOGUE

Behold her ! standing in the line.  
Yon innocent young Leena,  
Letting others push and shove,  
While she grows serener.  
She will not lose her calm and grace ;  
By joining in this morbid race,  
She will wait until the last,  
Let those who *must* go, push on past.

LEENA