

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE

24 NOVEMBER 1980

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The enormous rise in the cost of paper, production and distribution and the change in some other factors have forced us to raise by a small margin our subscription from 1980. We have kept the margin as small as possible because the cost of living is everywhere on the increase. In passing, we may state that the cost to us of each copy of *Mother India* is more than Rs 3/- It is only the donations and advertisements that help us out to a great extent.

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With a view to simplify our accounts for those whose subscriptions end in months other than December 1979, we shall adjust the period according to the new rate or ask them to pay the extra amount when it is due.

We count as ever on the goodwill of our subscribers.

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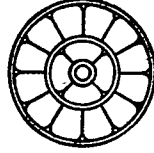
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.

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Vol. XXXII

No. II

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

Mother India is in need of donations of any amount that can be spared.

The scheme of Life-Membership is still in force. If attended to, it can also help.

Advertisements too can be a good contribution. Tariff cards can be had on application.

Increase in the number of subscribers is always welcome.

We shall be grateful for help in any form, and particularly in the form of donations.

The donations will be tax-free if sent ear-marked for us through the Ashram Trust.

AN EXPLANATION TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

The good number of our advertisements must not be taken as a sign of great gain.

We pay a very large commission on several of them, and after deducting press-charges our profit is small on the whole.

A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON 23 NOVEMBER 1968

I HAVE had an experience....Not last night, but the night before, someone whom I shall not name told me, "I am wholly down in the physical consciousness: no more meditation, and the Divine has become something up there, so far away." Then immediately, as he was speaking, the whole room got filled with the Divine Presence. I told him, "Not up there: *here* itself." And at that moment, *everything*, the whole atmosphere...it was as though the air had changed into the Divine Presence (*Mother touches her hands, her face, her body*), well, everything was touched, pervaded, but with...the thing that was particularly there was a dazzling Light, a Peace like this (*gesture of massiveness*), a Power, and then a Sweetness...something...one had the feeling that it could melt a rock.

And it did not go away, it stayed.

It came in that way, and then it stayed.

And so the whole night it was like that—everything. Even now, the two are there; a little of the ordinary consciousness, as if in a mechanical way, but I have only to be quiet or concentrated for a moment and it is there. And it is the experience of the *body*, you understand, physical, material, the experience of the body: everything, everything is full, full; there is only *That*, and we are like...everything is as though shrivelled, a dried-up rind, something like that, dried up. One has the feeling that things are (not entirely, but superficially) hardened, dried up, and that is why you do not feel *That*. That is why you do not feel Him; otherwise, all is *That*, *That*, there is *nothing* but *That*. You cannot breathe without breathing Him in; you move, it is within Him that you move; you are...everything, everything, the whole universe is within Him—but *materially*, physically, physically.

It is the cure for this "drying-up" that I am now looking for. I feel it is something fantastic, do you understand?

And then when I listen, He tells me things also. I said to Him, "But then, why do people always go up there?" And with the most extraordinarily unusual humour, the answer comes: "Because they want me to be very far from their consciousness!" Things like that, but not formulated in such a precise manner: impressions only. Many a time—many—I had heard: "Why do they go so far in search of what is?"—of course, there are tenets that said: "It is within you—what is everywhere."

I did not say it to this person, first because the experience was not as it is now, a continuous thing.

And then there was this particularly: *no new religions*, no dogmas, no fixed teachings. One must avoid—one must avoid at all cost the thing becoming a new religion, because as soon as it is formulated in a way that is elegant and imposing, and has a force, *it would be the end*.

You have the feeling that He is everywhere, everywhere, everywhere; there is nothing else. And we do not know how to say it, dried up. We have made great

efforts (*Mother laughs*) to separate ourselves—and succeeded. Succeeded, but succeeded only in our consciousness, not in fact. In fact, It is there. It is there. There is *nothing but* That. Whatever we know, whatever we see, whatever we touch, it is as though bathing, floating in That; but it is penetrable; it is penetrable, quite penetrable. That passes through it. The sense of separation comes from this (*Mother touches her forehead, indicating the mind*).

The experience came, perhaps, because for several days there was a very great concentration to find out, not exactly the why or the how, but the fact, the fact of the separation, everything appearing so stupid, so ugly.. I was assailed, assailed by various living memories of all kinds of experiences (all kinds: books, pictures, cinemas, and life, people, things), memories of this body, all the memories that might be called “anti-divine”, in which the body had the sensation of something that was repulsive or evil, like negations of Divine Presence. It began in that way. for two days I was like that, so much so that the body almost sank into despair. And then the experience came and after that it did not move. It did not budge. It came brrf, finished, and it did not budge. Well, the experiences come and then they withdraw. it did not move. At this moment it is there. And then the body tries to be fluid (*Mother makes a gesture of pouring herself out*), it tries to melt, it tries, it understands what it is. It tries—it does not succeed, evidently (*Mother looks at her hands*), but its consciousness knows.

•

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER ON THEIR WORK

KRISHNA AND THE SUPERMIND

WHAT I said was that Krishna in his incarnation brought down the Overmind into human possibility, because that was his business at the time and all that could be then done; he did not bring down the Supermind, because that was not possible, at least not intended at that stage of the human evolution. I did not mean that he could not have brought down the Supermind if that had been willed at the time.

10 December 1944

SRI AUROBINDO

THIS NEW MANIFESTATION

The serene and immobile consciousness watches at the boundaries of the world as a Sphinx of eternity and yet to some it gives out its secret. We have, therefore, the certitude that what has to be done will be done, and that our present individual being is really called upon to collaborate in this glorious victory, in this new manifestation.

11-12 November, 1954

THE MOTHER

IN THE MOTHER'S ARMS

Self-surrender to the divine and infinite Mother, however difficult, remains our only effective means and our sole abiding refuge,—self-surrender means that our nature must be an instrument in her hands, the soul a child in the arms of the Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO

Keep sheltered in my arms—they will protect you against everything. Open to my help, it will never fail you.

THE MOTHER

THREE CONDITIONS FOR THE DIVINE'S WORK

A work that has terrestrial progress as its goal cannot be started unless it has the sanction and help of the Divine.

It cannot endure unless there is a constant material growth which satisfies the will of Nature.

It cannot be destroyed prematurely except by human ill-will, which then serves as an instrument of forces hostile to the Divine, which are striving to delay as much as possible His manifestation and the transformation of the earth.

TRANSFORMATION

Transformation demands a total and integral consecration.

Total means vertically in all the states of being, from the most material to the most subtle.

Integral means horizontally in all the different and often contradictory parts which constitute the outer being, physical, vital, and mental.

*

Transformation is the change by which all the elements, and all the movements of the being become ready to manifest the supramental Truth

THE MOTHER

A BIRTHDAY MESSAGE

So Amal 25-11-89
with blessings



Poets make much of death and external afflictions, but the only tragedies are the soul's failures and the only epic man's triumphant ascent towards godhead.



THE DAY FOR THE DIVINE

SOME GUIDE-LINES BY THE MOTHER

WHEN coming out of sleep you must keep quiet for a few moments and consecrate the coming day to the Divine, praying to remember Him always and in all circumstances.

Before going to sleep you must concentrate for a few minutes, look into the day that has passed, remember when and where you have forgotten the Divine, and pray that such forgettings should not happen again.

31 August 1953

Morning Prayer

O my Lord, my Sweet Mother,
Let me be Yours, absolutely Yours, perfectly Yours.
Your force, Your light and Your love will protect me against all evils.

Midday Prayer

O my Lord, Sweet Mother,
I am Yours and pray to be more and more perfectly Yours.

Night Prayer

O my Lord, Sweet Mother,
Your force is with me, Your light and Your love,
and You will save me from all difficulties.

All-Day Reminder

Remember that the Mother is always with you.

Address Her as follows and She will pull you out of all difficulties:

“O Mother, Thou art the light of my intelligence, the purity of my soul, the quiet strength of my vital, the endurance of my body. I rely on Thee alone and want to be entirely Thine. Make me surmount all obstacles on the way.”

FEAR AND ILLNESS

TWO TALKS BY THE MOTHER

YOU must not fear. Most of your troubles come from fear. In fact, ninety per cent of illnesses are the result of the subconscious fear of the body. In the ordinary consciousness of the body, there is a more or less hidden anxiety about the consequences of the slightest physical disturbance. It can be translated by these words of doubt about the future: "And what will happen?" It is this anxiety that must be checked. Indeed this anxiety is a lack of confidence in the Divine's Grace, the unmistakable sign that the consecration is not complete and perfect.

As a practical means of overcoming this subconscious fear each time that something of it comes to the surface, the more enlightened part of the being must impress on the body the necessity of an entire trust in the Divine's Grace, the certitude that this Grace is always working for the best in our self as well as in all, and the determination to submit entirely and unreservedly to the Divine's Will.

The body must know and be convinced that its essence is divine and that if no obstacle is put in the way of the Divine's working, nothing can harm us. This process must be steadily repeated until all recurrence of fear is stopped. And then even if the illness succeeds in making its appearance, its strength and duration will be considerably diminished until it is definitely conquered.

14 October 1945

*

Wake up in yourself a will to conquer. Not a mere will in the mind, but a will in the very cells of your body. Without that you can't do anything; you may take a hundred medicines but they won't cure you unless you have a will to overcome the physical illness.

I may destroy the adverse force that has possessed you. I may repeat the action a thousand times. But each time that a vacuum is created it will be filled up by one of the many forces that try to rush in. That is why I say, wake up the will to conquer.

20 October 1957

*

Can one get ill through fear?

Yes. I knew someone who was so full of fear that he got cholera! There was cholera in the next house and he got so frightened that he caught the illness and without any other reason for his catching it: it was through sheer fright. And it is a very common thing in an epidemic, it is so in the majority of cases. It is through fear that the door is opened and you catch the illness. Those who have no fear can go about

freely and generally they catch nothing. But still as I have said, you may have no fear in the mind, you may have no fear even in the vital, but who has no fear in the body?...Very few.

A strict discipline is needed to cure the body of fear. The cells themselves tremble. It is only by a discipline, by yoga that one can overcome this fear. But it is a fact that one can catch anything through fear, even invite an accident. And, you see, from a certain point of view everything is contagious. I knew a person who got a wound through the kind of fear that he felt seeing someone else's wound. He really got it.

What is the difference between mental, vital and physical fear?

If you are conscious of the movement of your mind, the movement of your vital and the movement of your physical, you know it.

The mental is very simple: it is thoughts. You begin thinking, for example, there is this illness and this illness is very contagious, perhaps you are going to catch it, and if you catch it, it is going to be a terrible affair and what is to be done so as not to catch it?...So the mind begins to tremble. what is going to happen tomorrow? etc.

The vital, you feel it. You feel it in your sensations. All at once you feel hot, you feel cold, you perspire or all kinds of unpleasant things happen. And then you feel your heart beating fast and suddenly you have fever and then the circulation stops and you become cold.

Physically, well.. When you do not any longer have the other two fears, you become aware of the physical fear. Generally, the other two are much more conscious. They hide the physical fear from you. But when you have no longer any mental or vital fear, then you become aware of it. It is a curious little vibration that gets into your cells and they begin shivering that way. But the cells are not like a heart beating very fast. It is in the very cells: they tremble with just a slight quivering. And it is very difficult to control this. Yet it can be controlled.

I am sure that most of you have felt this as, for example, when one does an exercise which is not done often or does it for the first time: these are tiny little vibrations which seize you in all the cells. And then naturally, you lose your full control over the movement. The body does not answer to the Force any more. When you want to put your will to do something, that brings about a kind of resistance and incapacity in the body. Only, you are not aware of it usually because your attention is drawn more to the mental apprehension or to the kind of vital recoil which is very apparent in the consciousness, whereas you are not so very conscious of the resistance produced in the body. Generally in all sports (athletics and all competitions), a certain incident recurs: you must have noticed with your friends that some do much better than usual, while others who usually do well are almost incapacitated at that moment. They do much worse. Well, this depends on those small vibrations. Because you lose your full control. Your will has no longer the full control over the body, for it vibrates and answers to forces other than yours...Naturally I am not speaking of those whose head

is in a whirl or whose vital is altogether upset. Nothing can be done with these, it is better that they don't try. But I mean those who have some control over themselves, who undergo the training, to be sure, but at the time of the competition, cannot do as well as usual; it depends on a lack of receptivity in the body which gets this little tremor in the cells of which you are not conscious but which acts as an obstruction. That prevents it from receiving the Force fully.

Are illnesses tests in the Yoga?

Tests? Not at all

You are given an illness purposely to make you progress? Surely it is not like that. That is, you may turn the thing round and say that there are people whose aspiration is so constant, whose goodwill so total that whatever happens to them they take as a trial on the path to make progress. I knew people who, whenever they fell ill, took that as a proof of the Divine Grace to help them to progress. They told themselves: it is a good sign, I am going to find out the cause of my illness and I shall make the necessary progress. I knew a few of this kind and they moved on magnificently. There are others, on the contrary, who, far from making use of the thing, let themselves fall flat on the ground. So much the worse for them. But the true attitude when one is ill, is to say: "There is something that is not all right; I am going to see what it is." You must never think that the Divine has purposely sent an illness, for that would truly be a very undesirable Divine!

Even so, there are microbes in water?

These people are in such a physical, mental, and vital condition that they are liable to catch an illness, even without drinking water, I assure you! Their whole being is a constant disharmony, their whole physical being. I do not mean inwardly, they are perhaps all right there, but those who are all right resist everything.

And I have seen just the contrary. I have seen in this country, here, village people who had only such water as was no longer water to drink, it was mere mud, I have seen it with my own eyes. It was yellowish mud in which cows had bathed and done all the rest and people had waded through it after walking on the roads. They threw their rubbish and everything was in it. And then I saw these people. They entered it, it was, as I said, yellowish mud and there at the end there was a little bit of water—it was not water, it was yellowish, you know—they bent over, collected this water in their palms and drank it. And there were some who did not even allow it to settle. Some knew what to put in it, the herbs needed to make it settle, and if one leaves it sufficiently long it becomes a little clearer. But there were some who knew nothing at all and drank it as it was. And I came to learn that there was just then an epidemic of cholera all round and I said: "There are still people living in that village with that kind of water?" I was told: "We do not have a single case of cholera..." They had become im-

mune, they were habituated. But if there had been a single person who had caught it by chance, probably all would have been dead; for then fear would enter and with fear in them there would be no more resistance, for they were poor miserable things. But it is the moral conditions of these people that are terrible, more than the physical conditions—the moral conditions.

There are sadhus, you know, who accept the conditions of a dirty life through saintliness. They never wash themselves, they have nothing about them that hygiene demands. They live in a truly dirty condition—and they are free from all illness. Probably because they have faith and they do so purposely. Their morale is magnificent... I am speaking of sincere people and not those who pretend. They have faith. They do not think of their body, they think of the life of their soul. They have no illness. There are some who come to a state in which an arm or a leg or any part of the body has become completely stiff due to their ascetic posture. They cannot move any more; anybody else would die under such conditions; they continue to live because they have faith and they do it purposely, because it is a thing they have imposed on themselves.

Therefore, the moral condition is much more important than the physical. If you were in surroundings where everyone was tidy and then you remained three days without taking a bath, you would fall ill. This is not to say that you should not take a bath! Because we do not want to be sadhus, we want to be yogis. It is not the same thing. And we want the body to take part in the yoga. So we must do whatever is necessary to keep it fit. However, this is only to tell you that the moral condition is much more important than the physical.

Besides, these people, by their asceticism, wilfully spoil their body, torture themselves, yet if it was someone else who did the same thing, people would shout, protest, declare he is a monster. But one does it by one's own choice. And one bears it very well because it is imposed on one's own self and one feels a kind of glory in having done something very "remarkable", through one's aspiration for the divine life!

22 July 1953

THE REVISED EDITION OF - THE FUTURE POETRY

NEWLY-WRITTEN OR CORRECTED MATTER

(Continued from the issue of October 1980)

The revision of Chapter XI consists chiefly of additions and alterations made to each paragraph during the early period. (We said in January that this period was "sometime during the 1930s", but it may possibly have been in the late 1920s.) During the later period (1950), besides making one or two stray changes, Sri Aurobindo added one passage of several lines ("not altogether . . . opposite forces") to the fourth paragraph.

CHAPTER XI

The Course of English Poetry—3

THE Elizabethan drama is an expression of the stir of the life-spirit; at its best it has a great or strong, buoyant or rich or beautiful, passionately excessive or gloomily tenebrous force of vital poetry. The rest of the utterance of the time is full of the lyric joy, sweetness or emotion or moved and coloured self-description of the same spirit. There is much in it of curious and delighted thinking, but little of a high and firm intellectual value. Culture is still in its imaginative childhood and the thinking mind rather works for the curiosity and beauty of thought and even more for the curiosity and beauty of the mere expression of thought than for its light and its vision. The poetry which comes out of this mood is likely to have great charm and imaginative, emotional or descriptive appeal, but may very well miss that depth of profounder substance and that self-possessing plenitude of form which are the other and indispensable elements of a rounded artistic creation. Beauty of poetical expression abounds in an unstinted measure, but for the music of a deeper spirit or higher significance we have to wait; the attempt at it we get, but not often all the success of its presence.

Spenser, the poet of second magnitude of the time, gives us in his work this beauty in its fullest abundance, but also the limited measure of that greater but not quite successful endeavour. The *Faerie Queene* is indeed a poem of unfailing imaginative charm and its two opening cantos are exquisite in execution; there is a stream of liquid harmony, of curiously opulent, yet finely tempered description, of fluid poetical phrase and minutely seen image. For these are Spenser's constant gifts, the native form of his genius which displays more of descriptive vision than of any larger creative power or narrative force. An inspired idea is worked out; a little too much lost in detail and in the diffusion of a wealthy prolixity, it still holds well together its rather difficult and entangling burden of symbols and forms and achieves in the end

some accomplished totality of fine poetic effect. But if we read on after this fine opening and look at the poem as a whole, the effect intended fails, (not because it happened to be left unfinished,) nor even because the power in it is not equally sustained and is too evidently running thinner and thinner as it proceeds, but because it could not have come to a successful completion. Kalidasa's *Birth of the War-God* was left unfinished, or finished by a very inferior hand, yet even in the fragment there is already a masterly totality of effect; there is the sense of a great and admirable design. Virgil's *Aeneid*, though in a way finished, did not receive those last touches which sometimes make all the difference between perfection and the approach to it; and we feel too, not a failure of art,—for that is a defect which could never be alleged against Virgil,—but a relative thinning of the supporting power and inspiration. Still the consummate artistic intelligence of the poet has been so steadily at work, so complete from the very inception, it has so thought out and harmonised its idea from the beginning that a fine and firm total effect is given. But here there is a defect of the artistic intellect, a vice or insufficiency in its original power of harmonising construction, characteristic of the Elizabethan, almost of the English mind.

Spenser's intention seems to have been to combine in his own way the success of Ariosto with the success of Dante. His work was to have been in its form a rich and beautiful romance, but it must be too at the same time a great interpretation by image and symbol, not here of the religious or spiritual, but of the ethical meaning of human life. A faery-tale and a vivid ethical symbol in one is his conception of his artistic task. That is a kind of combination difficult enough to execute, but capable of a great and beautiful effect in a master hand. But the Elizabethan intellectual direction runs always towards conceit and curious complication; it is unable to follow an idea for the sake of what is essential in it, but tangles it up in all sorts of turns and accessories: seizing on all manner of disparates, it tends to throw them together without any real fusion. Spenser in his idea and its execution fell a victim to all these defects of the intelligence. He has taken his intellectual scheme from his Hellenism, the virtues to be figured in typical human beings; but he has dressed it up with the obvious and trivial mediaeval ingenuity of the allegory. Nor is he satisfied with a simple form of this combination; he has an ambition of all-including representativeness which far exceeds his or perhaps any possible power of fusing creation. The turn of the allegory must be at once ethical, ecclesiastical and political in one fell complexity; his witch of Faery-land embodies Falsehood, the Roman Catholic Church and Mary Queen of Scots in an irritating and impossible jumble. The subject of a poem of this kind has to be the struggle of the powers of good and evil, but the human figures through whom it works out to its issues, cannot be merely the good or the evil, this or that virtue or vice; they should stand for them as their expressive opportunity of life, not merely as their allegorical body. Spenser, a great poet, is not blind to this elementary condition; but his tangled skein of allegory continually hampers the sounder conception, and the interpretative narration works itself out through the confused maze of its distracting elements which we are obliged to accept,

not for their own interest or living force and appeal, but for the beauty of the poetic expression and description to which they give occasion.

Besides this fault of the initial conception, there are defects in the execution. After a time at least the virtues and vices altogether lose their way in faery-land or they become mistily vague and negligible; and this, considering the idea of the poem, ought not to be, but certainly is a great relief to the reader. We are well contented to read the poem or, still better, each canto apart as a romance and leave the ulterior meaning to take care of itself; what was intended as a great ethical interpretative poem of the human soul, lives only as a beautiful series of romantic descriptions and incidents. We can see where the defect is if we make a comparison with the two greater poems of Greece and India which had an intention not altogether unsimilar, the Ramayana fusing something like a vast faery-tale with the story of an immense struggle between world-powers of good and evil, the Odyssey with its magic of romance and its story of the assertion of right and of domestic and personal virtue against unbridled licence and wrong in an epic encounter between these opposite forces. The Odyssey is a battle of human will and character supported by divine power against evil men and wrathful gods and adverse circumstance and the deaf opposition of the elements, and its scenes move with an easy inevitability between the lands of romance and the romance of actual human life; but nowhere does the poet lose in the wealth of incident and description either the harmonising aesthetic colour or the simple central idea. The Ramayana too is made up of first materials which belong to the world of faery romance; but, lifted into an epic greatness, they support easily a grandiose picture of the struggle of incarnate God and Titan, of a human culture expressing the highest order and range of ethical values with a giant empire of embattled anarchic force, egoistic violence and domination and lawless self-assertion. The whole is of a piece, and even in its enormous length and protracted detail there is a victorious simplicity, largeness and unity. The English poet loses himself in the outward, in romantic incident and description pursued by his imagination for their own sake. His idea is often too much and too visibly expressed, yet in the end finds no successful expression. Instead of relying upon the force of his deeper poetic idea to sustain him, he depends on intellectual device and parades his machinery. The thread of connection is wandering and confused. He achieves a diffuse and richly confused perplexity, not the unity of a living whole.

These are the natural limitations of the Elizabethan age, and we have to note them with what may seem at first a disproportionate emphasis, because they are the key to the immediately following reaction of English poetry with its turn in Milton towards a severe and serious intellectual effort and discipline and its fall in Dryden and Pope to a manner which got away from the most prominent defects of the Elizabethan mind at the price of a complete and disastrous loss of all its great powers. English poetry before Milton had not passed through any training of the poetic and artistic intelligence, it had abounding energy and power, but no self-discipline of the idea. Except in Shakespeare it fails to construct; it at once loses and finds itself

in a luxurious indulgence of its force, follows with a loose sweetness or a vehement buoyancy all its impulses good, bad or indifferent. Still what it does achieve, is unique and often superlative in its kind. It achieves an unsurpassed splendour of imaginative vitality and eager vision of the life spirit, and an unsurpassed intensity of poetical expression; life vents itself in speech, pours its lyric emotion, lavishes its intimate and intuitive description of itself in passionate detail, thinks aloud in a native utterance of poetry packed with expressive image or felicitous in directness. There is no other poetry which has in at all the same degree this achievement.

This poetry is then great in achievement within the limits of its method and substance. That substance and method belong to the second step of the psychological gradations by which poetry becomes a more and more profound and subtle instrument of the self-expression of the human spirit. English poetry, I have remarked, follows the grades of this ascension with a singular fidelity of sequence. At first it was satisfied with only a primary superficial response to the most external appearances of life, its visible figures and incidents, its primary feelings and characteristics. To mirror these things clearly, justly, with a certain harmony of selection and a just sufficient transmutation in the personality and aesthetic temperament is enough for this earlier type of poetry, all the more easily satisfied because everything seen by the eye is fresh, interesting, stimulating, and the liveliness of the poetic impression replaces the necessity of subtlety or depth. Great poetry can be written in early times with this as its substantial method, but not afterwards when the race mind has begun to make an intenser and more inward response to life. It then becomes the resort of a secondary inspiration which is unable to rise to the full heights of poetic possibility. Or else, if this external method still persists as part of the outward manner of a more subjective creation, it is with a demand for more heightened effects and a more penetrating expression. The last was the demand and method of the Elizabethan age.

In Elizabethan poetry the physical and external tendency still persists, but it is no longer sufficient to satisfy either the perceiving spirit or its creative force. Where it is most preserved, it still demands a more vehement response, strong colours, violent passions, exaggerated figures, out-of-the-way or crowding events. Life is still the Muse of this poetry, but it is a Life which demands to feel itself more and is already knocking or trying to knock at the gates of the deeper subjective being. And in all the best work of the time it has already got there, not very deep, but still enough to be initially subjective. Whatever Shakespeare may suggest,—a poet's critical theories are not always a just clue to his inspiration,—there is not here any true or exact holding up of a mirror to life and Nature, but instead a moved and excited reception and evocation. Life throws its impressions, but what seizes upon them is a greater and deeper life-power in the poet which is not satisfied with mirroring or just beautifully responding to what is cast upon it, but begins to throw up at once around them its own rich matter of receptive being and shaping force and so creates something new, something more personal, intimate, fuller of a first inner vision, emotion,

passion of self-expression. This is the source of the new intensity; it is this impulse towards an utterance of the creative life-power within which drives towards the dramatic form and acts with such unexampled power in Shakespeare. At another extremity of the Elizabethan mind, in Spenser, it gets much farther away from the actuality of life; it takes the impressions of the surrounding physical world as hints only for a purely imaginative creation which seems to be truly drawn not from the life of earth, but from a more beautiful and harmonious life-scene that exists either within our own unplumbed depths or on other subtler vital or physical planes. This creation has an aim in it at things symbolic, otherwise revelatory, deeper down in the soul itself, and it tries to shadow them out through the magic of romance, since it cannot yet intimately seize and express them. Still even there the method of the utterance, if not altogether its aim, is the voice of Life lifting itself out into waves of word and colour and image and sheer beauty of sound. Imagination, thought, vision work with the emotional life-mind as their instrument or rather work in it as a medium, accepted as the very form of their being and the very force of their nature.

Great poetry is the result, but there are other powers of the human consciousness which have not yet been mastered, and to get at these is the next immediate step of English poetry. The way it follows is to bring forward the intellect as its chief instrument; the thought-mind is no longer carried along in the wave of life, but detaches itself from it to observe and reflect upon it. At first there is an intermediate manner, that of Milton's early work and of the Carolean poets, in which something of the Elizabethan impulse, something of its intense imaginative sight or its charm of emotion, prolongs itself for a while, but is fast-fading away under the stress of an increasing intellectuality, a strong dryness of the light of the reason and a growing hardness of form and concentrated narrowness of the observing eye. This movement rises on one side into the ripened classical perfection of Milton, and falls away on the other through Waller into the reaction in Dryden and Pope.

TWILIGHT PRAYER

At the hour when the drowsy moments weave
 Their moonlit veil with starry beams
 And the rose-tinted misty eve
 Fades far beyond the horizon's verge,
 Fill my heart with Thy song of dreams!

Warm with the rays of Thy golden Sight
 This being, and brim it with delight.
 Raise me above Time's fretful surge,
 Let gleam on gleam draw my heart to Thee
 And charge each throb with Thy ecstasy!

LALITA (with AMAL)

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of October 1980)

A Note by Nirodbaran

Pursuing our old controversy on Avatarhood, I wrote to Sri Aurobindo on 6.3.1935: "I am sending with this chit a long MS. Please write an exhaustive reply—but in ink." He answered: "Nirod, on the back the rational and logical result of your arguments. I shall write certain irrational answers on your MS.—in ink." The "rational and logical result" was as follows:

You have won all along the line; who could resist such a lava-torrent of logic? Slightly mixed but still! You have convinced me (1) that there never was nor could be an Avatar, (2) that all the so-called Avatars were chimerical fools and failures, (3) that there is no Divinity or divine element in man, (4) that I have never had any true difficulties or struggles, and that if I had any it was all my fun (as K.S.¹ said of my new metres that they were only Mr. Ghose's fun), (5) that if ever there was or will be a real Avatar, I am not he—but that I knew before, (6) that all I have done or the Mother has done is mere sham—sufferings, struggles, conquests, defeats, the Way found, the Way followed, the call to others to follow, everything—it was all make-believe since I was the Divine and nothing could touch me and none follow me. That is truly a discovery, a downright knock-out which leaves me convinced, convicted, amazed, gasping. I won't go on, there is no space; but there are a score of other luminous convictions that your logic has forced on me. But what to do next? You have put me in a terrible fix and I see no way out of it. For if the Way, the Yoga is merely sham, fun and chimera—then?

On the 8th I wrote. "I await your irrational remarks on my MS. I hope you haven't thrown it into the waste-paper basket." Sri Aurobindo replied: "I had written a good deal the same day as I got your typescript—but I have a sanguinary eye, so I have to wait a day or two before pursuing my irrationalities." On hearing about his eye I did not press him for the letter. On the 15th I reminded him of it and expressed my fear that among hundreds of MSS mine might get lost and it would be a great pity if so much of his written answer met with this tragic fate. He wrote back, to my utter despair: "Good Lord, but the Avatar correspondence belongs to the distant past. What is the use of resuscitating it now?"

¹ Editor's Note K S stands for K Swaminathan who reviewed Sri Aurobindo's book, *Six Poems*, in the Madras daily, *The Hindu*.

Thus the curtain was dropped—for good, it seemed. But, thanks to our Archives Department, the precious letter has been recovered from among the huge mass of Sri Aurobindo's old writings. With great pleasure I present it to the readers as the last unpublished letter of the Avatar to his dogged human disciple.

*

At last I reopen the controversy. I have read your Essays on the Gita, Synthesis of Yoga, letter on Rama and, though I am wiser, my original and fundamental difficulty remains as unsolved as ever. What is so simple to you, as everything is, appears mighty complex and abstruse to my dense intellect. So no alternative but to submit to a fresh beating.

What your view comes to, put in a syllogism, is this. Since I have done it and I am an Avatar, every other blessed creature can do it.

This is idiotic. I have said, "Follow my path, the way I have discovered for you through my own efforts and example. Transform your nature from the animal to the spiritual, grow into a higher divine consciousness. All this you can do by your own aspiration and by the force of the Divine Shakti." That, if you please, is not the utterance of a madman or an imbecile. I have said, "I have opened the Way; now you with the Divine help can follow it." I have not said, "Find the way for yourself as I did."

In the Essays on the Gita you say, man "is ignorant because there is upon the eyes of his soul and all its organs the seal of...Nature, Prakriti, Maya...she has minted him like a coin out of the precious metal of the divine substance, but overlaid with a strong coating of the alloy of her phenomenal qualities, stamped with her own stamp and mark of animal humanity, and although the secret sign of the Godhead is there, it is at first indistinguishable."¹

Does it follow that the coating cannot be dissolved nor the mark effaced? Then stamp the stamp of the chimera on all efforts at spirituality and catalogue as asses and fools all who have attempted to rise beyond the human animal—all who have tried to follow the path of the Christ, the Buddha; stigmatise as folly Vedanta, Tantra, Yoga, the way of the Jews, Christ himself and Buddha, Pythagoras, Plato, and any other pathfinder and seeker.

On the other hand you write that in the Avatar, "the divinely-born Man, the real substance shines through the coating; the mark of the seal is there only for form, the vision is that of the secret Godhead, the power of the life is that of the secret Godhead, and it breaks through the seals of the assumed human nature."²

¹ Centenary Edition, Vol 13, p. 149. ² *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

Does it follow that the breaking through had not to be done or was a mere trifling impediment? The power of the form can be exceedingly great as every thinker and observer of life can tell you.

After this you say that the Avatar's descent is "precisely to show that the human birth with all its limitations can be made such a means and instrument of the divine birth and divine works.... Even human sorrow and physical suffering he must assume and use so as to show...how that suffering may be a means of redemption."¹ Well, Sir, it will have no go with me, my heart won't leap up at such a divine possibility, such a dream of Paradise!

Your heart not leaping up does not make my statement a falsehood, a non-sequitur or a chimera.

My fellow-brothers may venture to reach there through such a thin hanging bridge but if they do, I am afraid, it will be into a fool's Paradise.

The fool being myself, eh? For it is my Paradise and it is I who call them to it.

The difficulties you face, the dangers you overcome, the struggles you embrace would seem to be mere shams.

Truly then what a humbug and charlatan I have been, making much of sham struggles and dangers—or, in the alternative, since I took them for realities, what a self-blinded imbecile!

Mother knew she was an Avatar at a very early age.

At what age? But I shall say nothing about the Mother—I cannot bring her into such arguments, only myself.

She was thus able to follow the path of travails through volcanoes and earthquakes. But if she says to me, "You can also do it," I will cry out, "Forbear, Mother, forbear."

Nobody asks you to go through volcanoes and earthquakes or to proceed unhelped. You are simply asked to follow the Leader and Guide with the Divine help and with courage, in the face of whatever difficulties come.

If I knew I were an Avatar (pardon my bold hypothesis) do you think I would cry or wail for fear of any amount of crashes and collisions or would it matter if I began

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 155-56.

with a nature with not a grain of spirituality in me? I would jump from peak to peak in somersaults, go down the abysses, rise up the steeps without fear of mortal consequences since I would know that I was the Divine.

Would you? I wish you had been in my place then! You would have been a hundred times more fit than myself, if you could really have done that. And how easily things would have been done! while I did them and am still doing them with enormous difficulty because I lead and have to make the path so that others may follow with less difficulty.

There could be no death or failure for me.

The Divine in the body is not subject to death or failure? Yet all those claimed to be Avatars have died—some by violence, some by cancer, some of indigestion etc. etc. You yourself say that they were all failures. How do you reconcile these self-contradictory arguments?

You say, "A physical and mental body is prepared fit for the divine incarnation by a pure or great heredity and the descending Godhead takes possession of it."¹

Like my heredity? It was "pure"? But of course I am not a divine incarnation. Only why put all that upon one whom it does not fit?

To his beloved children created in his own image the Divine says with gusto, "I send you through this hell of a cycle of rebirths. Don't lose heart, poor boys, if you groan under the weight of your sins and those of your ancestors to boot. I will come down and take hold of a pure heredity with no coating around me and say unto you—come and follow my example"

Who gave this message? It is your own invention. The Divine does not come down in that way. It is a silly imagination of yours that you are trying to foist on the truth of things. The Divine also comes down into the cycle of rebirths, makes the great holocaust, endures shame and obloquy, torture and crucifixion, the burden of human nature, sex and passion and sorrow and suffering, manifests many births before he reveals the Avatar. And when he does reveal it? Well, read the lives of the Avatars and try to understand and see.

Nobody ever said there was no coating—that is your invention.

Not a very inspiring message, Sir!

No, of course not—but it is yours, not any Avatar's.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

Jatakas tell us that in every life small or great, Buddha's frontal consciousness was always above the level of others.

Jatakas are legends.

Ramakrishna and Chaitanya began yoga in their cradle, it seems.

Did they? I know nothing about it; but if they told you that! Anyhow one died by drowning and the other of a cancer.

I don't know if Avatars ever play the part of the rogue or the eternal sinner.

Krishna was a rogue and a sinner even in his Avatar life, if tales are true! Don't you think so?

Now about your absence of urge towards spirituality. Even though that sounds like a story, pray tell us how you could free your mind from all thoughts in 7 days or be established in Brahmic consciousness in a few days.

3 if you please. You are terribly inaccurate in your statements. It was simply through the Divine Grace, because it had been done by thousands before me throughout the centuries and millenniums, and the Divine did not want me to waste time over that; other things in the Yoga were not so damned easy!

And even apart from spirituality, what of your waiting for the gallows for your country's sake.

Who told you that? I was perfectly sure of release. But even so plenty of ordinary men did it before me.

What of your profoundly bold assertion that you would free the country by a Force which was under your feet?

Never said that, surely. Under my feet?

What of your brilliant career?

My career was much less brilliant than many others'. They ought to have progressed then farther in Yoga than myself, e.g. Mussolini, Lenin, Tilak, Brajendranath Seal, the admirable Crichton, Gandhi, Tagore, Roosevelt, Lloyd George etc. etc. All Avatars or all full of the essential principle!

If one has the essential principle, what does it matter if one has no urge towards spirituality. The inner consciousness is there.

All that does not apply to me alone. There are hundreds of others. The inner consciousness is not so rare a phenomenon as all that.

There are some people, I hear, who are to all external appearance debauchees or moral insolvents but whose psychic is much developed or "can be touched".

That gives away the whole case. For mark that I have never asked the whole human race to follow me to the supramental—that is your invention, not mine.

Still you go on saying that what you have done is possible for me and not for Arjunas only to whom alone Krishna seems to have addressed the Gita.

What a waste of words and energy! Yet Krishna said "even Chandalas can follow my way."

I prophesy that your message will reverberate in the rarefied atmosphere evoking a loud rebellious echo from human hearts.

I admit that you have successfully proved that I am an imbecile.

But if you say, I come to raise you bodily by my divine Omnipotence, not by my example, I am all for it. If you insist that I follow your example, it would be as well to insist on my leaving you bag and baggage at once.

All this is a purely personal argument concerning yourself. Up to now you were making general assertions—so was I. I was concerned with the possibility of people following the Path I had opened, as Christ, Krishna, Buddha, Chaitanya etc. opened theirs. You were declaring that no human being could follow and that my life was perfectly useless as an example—like the lives of the Avatars. Path, life, example all useless—even Power useless because all have been failures. These are general questions. Whether X or Y is able or willing to follow the Path or depends on divine Omnipotence only is a personal question. Even if X or Y does so, he has no right to pass a general decree of impossibility against others.

There are some who claim that they are here and remain here by their soul's call. But I am not one of those fortunate ones. Where they hear the soul's call, I hear the calls of a thousand devils and if it were not for your love—well, no,—for your Power (which I firmly believe in), I would end up myself by being one of those devils. I hope you will believe that this is not a conceited statement.

It is very conceited. To be a devil needs a considerable personal capacity or else a great openness to the Beyond. If you had said, I can only be an ordinary human being, that might be modest.

We don't mean to give you a compliment when we say these things.

Of course not. It is the reverse of complimentary, since you prove me to be an ignorant and mistaken fellow of an Avatar, who merrily wastes his time doing things which are of no earthly use to any human being—except perhaps Arjuna who is not here.

No, we say that the Sun is a thing apart, not to be measured by any human standards.

The Sun's rays are of use to somebody—you say all my acts and life and laborious opening of the way I thought I had made for spiritual realisation, are of no use to anybody—since nobody is strong enough to follow the path, only the Avatar can do it. Poor lonely ineffective fellow of an Avatar!

We respect him, adore him, lay ourselves bare to his Light, but we do not follow him.

Who is this we? Editorial "we"?

Let me point out one or two facts, in a perfectly serious spirit.

(1) It has always been supposed by spiritual people that divine perfect[tion], similitude to the Divine, *sadrishya*, *sadharmya* is part of the Mukti. Christ said "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect"—the very Divine himself, mind you, not a mere Avatar or luminous projection from him. His followers strive to be Christlike. Thomas à Kempis, meditating and striving, wrote a book on the Imitation of Christ. Francis of Assisi and many others arrived at Christlikeness. [Krishna in] the Gita insists on *sadharmya*, gives himself as an example, and tells Arjuna that many before him from ancient times reached to it. Buddha in teaching *karuna*, the eightfold path, the rejection of *sanskaras*, gave it as an ideal to all true followers of his path, thus placing before them not only his own path but his own example. All this is trash and humbug? Christ and Buddha were fools? Myself even a bigger fool? It is not a question of greatness—it is a question of acquiring a certain consciousness to which the way is laid open. It is not a question of acquiring cosmic omniscience and omnipotence, but of reaching the essential divine consciousness with all its *spiritual* consequences, peace, light, equality, strength, Ananda etc. etc. If you say that that cannot be done, you deny all possibility of spiritual perfection, transformation or any true Yoga. All that anyone can do is to be helpless and wait for the divine Omnipotence to do something or other. The whole spiritual past of man becomes a fantastic insanity, with the Avatars as the chief lunatics. That is the materialist point of view, but I am unable to envisage it as a basis for *sadhana*. That example is not all, is true; I have not said it is; there is Influence, there is spiritual help—but

the truth of the Way and the Example cannot be belittled in this scornful fashion.

(2) You make nothing of the Divine in man. If there is no divinity in man, then there is no possibility of Avatarhood; also spirituality can just as well pass away into silence—it has no foundation here. If the divinity is there in man, it can break through its coatings. You admit that it can do it in debauchees and moral insolvents—that it can manifest in ignorant and uncultured men and women is a proved fact; the Gita itself declares that all *kinds* of men and women can follow its path. Whether X or Y does or does not [do] so does not depend then on these things and it is no use trying to bar the path to people because of either their ignorance or their immorality. To do so is to betray a bottomless ignorance of spiritual things. As to the possibility of awakening the psychic being, on what intellectual grounds or by what fixed ethical or rational rules are you going to fix that and declare “No entry here for you”? You cannot generalise in the way you try to do by an intellectual reasoning. The mystery of the Spirit is too great for such a puny endeavour.

EXPERIENCE—1976

You had the keys of the Garden—
Where the pathways were varied and many
Deep greens of relief and violet sleep
And peace relaxed, as vast as any

Ethereal world, ahead, far-waiting—
Complete sweet trust in that face!
Joy to be in those arms, ever eager
To hold and soothe me in embrace.

Wide did I travel through wondrous dreams,
Floating, as if for years, in ether blue,
Only to return a little time more—
Then pass through that Garden anew!

But the Question remained. On my part
Only quiet acceptance, with bowed head!
The Great Wheel pushed again a few turns—
My surrender, but it was your Will instead.

MINNIE N. CANTENWALLA

A SONNET BY NIRODBARAN

WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

BRIGHT mystery of earth, O foam-washed shore (,)
(knell) ' pale
On the *edge* of Time, you bring thoughts (mournful) and
sweet

all right ?
Not quite, past
twilight's, it's too
many st and ts sounds

Of happiness long lost, memories that bore
In its *veiled* bosom (past) twilight's starry heart-beat!

These tracts
(The) desert-(sweeps), as they lie, lifeless cold—
in their
Strange melancholies buried (on the) sand—

(designs)
Are like dry barren *moments* deeply scrolled
On (an) endless canvas by an inscrutable hand.

Whence like a cry of fire night and day
Your soul climbs to the topless distant peaks
In the heart of solemn vastness holding sway
with
Lined (by) immutable silence's golden streaks.

Your
(While your) body's faint murmur falls slowly heard,
A last
(Like a) dying warrior's half-spoken word.

22.5.1937

Quite awfully fine. Gaudeamus igitur.¹

Q: An alternative to the 3rd line:
With rushing hours, in deep abysmal core

A: Good Lord, no—there is no metre or else no rhythm here.

Q: Why foam-washed shore? It doesn't go with the desert.

¹ Let us rejoice

A: Why not? The shore of a sea can be a sandy desert as in Arabia.

Q: *Why knell of Time? Has it any relation to the shore or core?*

A: No knell, please, silence the knell.

No...relation, not even a cousin or can be the ten thousandth degree.

Q: *Desert's core preferred?*

A: No, sir, the desert's core is too old a friend to be preferred.

Q: *Barren designs (7th line) eternally scrolled any meaning?*

A: Leave well alone—what is there is just the right thing.

Q: *Now the funny couplet Last line a minor key again.*

A: Not at all minor key—very fine.

Q: *I have given plenty of alternatives and asked many questions. Hope, they don't annoy you.*

A: No, it doesn't annoy—but, sir, you have written a magnificent poem without knowing it and that is absurd. The foam-washed shore on the edge of Time is splendid, twilight's starry heart-beat; lines 7,8,9,12 are O.K., while couplet, sir, the couplet is a miracle. If these are not O.P., they ought to be

23.5.1937

Q: *About yesterday's poem—why do you call it absurd, Sir? Of course, if I knew it, I would have been all the more glad, but is there not a greater pleasure in surprises?*

A: Surprise of what? Surprise of not knowing till somebody tells you?

N.B. first line. The comma after shore must be abolished, otherwise the beauty of the shore on the edge of Time disappears.

Q: *Penultimate line: is it falls? where is the verb there?*

A: Falls, what do you mean? Falls is a verb, surely.

Q: *Your remarks are rather mysterious. If not O.P. they ought to be—means they are not? And 'these' means also lines 7,8,9,12?*

A: I mean just what I say. It is evidently the Overhead inspiration that is trying to come, that changes into something more mental in the transmission. Lines 7,8,9 are those that can be suspected of being actually O.P. in rhythm, movement, spirit and turn of the language. But the poetry of the rest is not the less fine for the mental intervention.

Q: *OK. in English means all right.*

A: In American English.

Q: *Can your remark, with the Latin put right, go into circulation? Amal says the Latin is Gaudumus igitur.*

A: No.

What's that—that's not Latin! There is no such word as Gaudumus. I wrote "Gaudeamus".

×

EDITOR'S NOTE

"Gaudumus" is Nirod's misconstruction of Amal's correct reading. It is like making "Amal" out to be "Amul" and converting him into a brand-name for butter or cheese!

AN UNPUBLISHED ASPECT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S CAREER

DURING THE SWARAJ MOVEMENT IN 1906-07

(The following story was narrated to the writer by his friend Nalinikanta Sarkar)

NALINIKANTA Sarkar once visited Calcutta, perhaps in 1972, and there one day he received a letter inviting him to join a meeting at one of the Sri Aurobindo centres. The chief guest was Sri Shankaracharya of Sarada Math, who would speak about Sri Aurobindo. Nalinikanta was keen to be present at the meeting, as Sri Shankaracharya is a *māyāvādin*, and Sri Aurobindo has vehemently refuted mayavada in His philosophy. Naturally, he was curious to hear Shankaracharya. He reached the meeting-place a few minutes earlier and saw the chief guest's car arriving there. The occupant alighted with the Sannyasin's staff in hand, and was escorted to the central hall. At one end of the hall, sitting arrangements had been made for the speakers, and for Shankaracharya a higher seat had been reserved. Now Shankaracharya got up to speak. Nalinikanta's heart-rate too started rising. But his mind was filled with astonishment, wonder and joy when Shankaracharya spoke as follows:

"We were followers of Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra. As Bengal rose with one voice against British rule in India under Sri Aurobindo's guidance and leadership, we too awoke in the same spirit in Maharashtra under Tilak Maharaj's leadership for Mother India's freedom—Swaraj. Tilak Maharaj now and then used to leave for Calcutta to meet and consult Sri Aurobindo. In those days a part of our daily routine of work was observing strict Brahmacharya and reading the Bhagavad Gita. But do you know what we used to do while reading the Gita? In all its chapters, where *Sri Bhagavan ubacha* was written, we used to strike off the word *Bhagavan* and instead write *Sri Aurobindo* as we had realised that Sri Aurobindo and Sri Krishna were the same."

Shankaracharya's belief and realisation in his youth were quite valid. Just as in the Dwapara Yuga, Sri Krishna gathered together the Pandavas and their allies by blowing His *Panchajanya* against Duryadhana, the arch wrong-doer and sinner of the age, so too Sri Aurobindo, the Avatar of Kali Yuga, first gathered all the patriots of Mother India together by loudly chanting the 'Vande Mataram' Mantra against the tyranny of British rule.

Shankaracharya went on with his speech

"When Sri Aurobindo was put in jail in Calcutta and an appeal was published by His Sister Sarojini Devi for monetary help to conduct his case, we collected some funds in Maharashtra, and two of us left for Calcutta to hand over the purse to the authority at their advertised address near Chowringhee Road. We then decided to stay in Calcutta to attend the proceeding of the case in the court under justice Beachcroft as well as to have a darshan of Sri Aurobindo and hear Barrister C. R. Das's

pleadings for the accused.

“One day at the address of Chowringhee Road, we received a covered communication. When we opened the cover, we found to our surprise no letter in it—there was nothing except two typed sheets. We could not understand what subject had been treated, we could only guess that there was something about law. But who could have sent it? There was no sender's name. We at once went to C. R. Das's residence and handed him the cover. After going through the typed sheets, Das exclaimed: ‘I could never dream that you would bring me such important matter. These typed sheets are full of law-points which are most cogent to plead on behalf of Sri Aurobindo. If I had not received these papers I would have had to labour at least for a week to work out these points of law in favour of Sri Aurobindo.’ All of us were lost in both surprise and happiness. Something from within told us that Justice Beachcroft himself might have helped his classmate “Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose” of the I.C.S. days to save him from his predicament.

“When the Alipore Bomb case drew to its end and Das finished reading out his final argument which stands today as historical and prophetic, and Sri Aurobindo was proved innocent and acquitted, we managed to approach Justice Beachcroft to congratulate him. By the by we dared to question him very privately: ‘We received an anonymous cover containing two typed sheets. May we guess that it had been sent by you?’ Mr. Beachcroft simply smiled.”

We know that Sri Aurobindo's true glory was visioned, perhaps for the first time, by Mr. A.B. Clark, the then Principal of Baroda College. In his conversation with Mr. C.R. Reddy, appointed Vice-Principal in place of Sri Aurobindo when He resigned from his post, Mr. Clark asked Mr. Reddy:

“So you met Aurobindo Ghosh? Did you mark his eyes? If Joan of Arc heard heavenly voices, Aurobindo sees heavenly visions ..”

Poet Rabindranath Tagore also realised, in 1907 itself, who Sri Aurobindo truly was and the poet expressed it in his famous *Namaskar* in Bengali. But to accept Aurobindo Ghosh as Sri Krishna himself during the Swadeshi movement in 1906 was not easy unless the devotees were convinced so by their Guru, who was Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Tilak had studied the Bhagavad Gita in a profound spirit and had written an interpretation of it which had inspired and awakened the youths of Maharashtra, even as Sri Aurobindo's words in his daily paper *Bandemataram*, by which the leaders themselves were inspired.

We now realise why the volunteers of Maharashtra combinedly obeyed the order of Sri Aurobindo without question at the Surat Congress in 1907 to break the Congress session and frustrate the motives of the Moderate leaders. The volunteers knew that the order of Sri Aurobindo was the order of Vasudeva Himself.

Sri Aurobindo wrote thus about the breaking of the Surat Congress:¹

“..The young Maharattas in a body charged up to the platform, the Moderate

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953), p. 80.

leaders fled; after a short fight on the platform with chairs, the session broke up not to be resumed.. The Moderate leaders decided to suspend the Congress and replace it by a national conference with a constitution and arrangement which would make it safe for their party..."

Sri Aurobindo did not allow the nationalist party to join the conference. This fact is little known to our people. Sri Aurobindo himself said as below:¹

"History very seldom records the things that were decisive but took place behind the veil; it records the show in front of the curtain. Very few people know that it was I (without consulting Tilak) who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the new-fangled Moderate convention which were the two decisive happenings at Surat. Even my action in giving the movement in Bengal its militant turn or founding the revolutionary movement is very little known."

The above statement of Sri Aurobindo is a vivid proof that the Indian Congress was freed from the clutches of the Moderates and was turned into a National body of India by the vehement effort mainly of Sri Aurobindo. But, alas! our country today is facing a number of problems and suffering irreparable loss by forgetting the words and advices of Sri Aurobindo.

How welcome would be the prospect of the country accepting Sri Aurobindo with the insight shown by the youths of Maharashtra who recognised him 26 years before He Himself declared His identity with Purushottama Sri Krishna on 24 November 1926

RAGHUNANDAN

¹ *Ibid*, pp 81-2

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FROM SOME LETTERS TO DILIP KUMAR ROY IN THE 1940'S

THE terms "saint" and "saintly" are used very loosely in English, just as "spiritual" and "mystical" are applied to anybody who believes in and thinks about supernormal and supernatural things and experiences. But we must take the English language in hand and chisel the meaning of its great words to represent precisely the inner life. I suppose French is worse still: *spirituel* means in it "mentally sparkling"—even an atheist and matérialist and sensualist can be *spirituel*!

The Protestant Reformation had much to do with befogging the English language in regard to the inner life. The Roman Catholics had more or less accurate notions about the difference between ethical goodness and saintly radiance—though I dare say that in some instances they reduced the difference to a crude presence of what were called miraculous phenomena. But the canonisation of a man came about after much scrutinising of his life and its sources of activity, a careful study of the subjective as well as objective quality of his being. That is why even the Pope who is the head of the Church is not by virtue of his mere moral and religious eminence called a saint. Among the Protestants, whoever lives a life of sexual abstinence and charity and service is a saint: often the sexual desideratum is dropped altogether and a "saintly" prelate or missionary can have his bellyful of wedded licence without the least tarnishing of his halo!

I don't know what exactly to say about the term "Rishi". Sri Aurobindo has explained its root-meaning and applied it to Bankim Chandra Chatterji for his discovery of the mantra of India's renaissance in "Bande Mataram" ("I bow to you, O Mother!") In its highest connotation, "rishi" means one who brings about the creative expression of the secret divine spirit of things, either in word or action, preferably in both, as the composers of the Veda did. You have asked about Tagore. If he attained, on the plane proper to him, a supreme creative pitch in his poetry of the inner life or of mystical and spiritual realities, he could be hailed as a rishi. In a general sense, the poet who gives sovereign expression from the inside, so to speak, to any plane becomes a rishi, no matter if he does not touch the mystical and spiritual aspect of things. Thus I suppose Shakespeare can be described as the rishi of the plane of the Life-Force. I myself, however, prefer to give a mystical and spiritual tinge to the term—so that the profound Mother-worshipping fervour of Bankim Chandra would make him a rishi in his vivid and visionary national anthem while the emotional patriotism of Iqbal in his richly imaginative "Hindustan Hamara" wouldn't. So too would I deem Tagore a rishi in his intensest ecstasy of utterance only where he reveals, in the light of his own word-plane, realities of the inner being or of Super-Nature. And here I should like to point out that in all true rishi-poems there is illumination as well as rapture, a seerhood no less than the soul's lyricism. Certain parts of *Gitanjali* have this double quality—so do others that are not devo-

tional at all. Devotionalism is not the *sine qua non*. I don't think one could designate Tagore's "Urvashi" devotional, but I am inclined to rank it among his finest rishi-creations.

It is necessary to say, however, that the poet in one could be on many occasions a rishi but as a man one might be very far from it. To be a rishi as a man one must be something much more than intellectually wise and culturally accomplished. One's judgments and actions must spring from some divine depth.

*

Few artists are on a par with the height and depth of consciousness opening up before us in their works. It would be crass folly for anyone to charge a spiritual poem with being pretentious, should the poet not be a practising saint twenty-four hours of the day. A good poem stands by itself: if it has inspiration it fulfils itself and is perfectly sincere. A poem's sincerity or "truth" lies in its being a faithful transcription of something fine in the heights and depths of our consciousness, regions that are mostly far away and hidden from our normal state—its truth or sincerity does not consist in whether its revelation agrees altogether with the poet's day-to-day outer life or even with the actual experience with which the poem began. That is the first thing to understand about art.

If people want to measure one's outer life entirely by one's poetry and *vice versa*, they are going the wrong way about a most delicate business. It is their fault and not the poet's or his poetry's. Great poetry does not pose: the simple reason is that it is truly inspired. In art, mere intellectual ingenuity, mere rhetoric, mere artifice of word and rhythm are the only poses. So true is this that if a man leading an unspiritual life were in a spell of inspiration to dash off some perfect pieces he would nowise stand condemned as hypocritical. It is not in the least beyond possibility that such a phenomenon should take place. As Whitman said, each of us contains multitudes, and a personality at once poetic and mystical can very well appear in brief flashes among the jostling crowd within us of egoist and altruist, fool and philosopher, solitary and society-hunter. The man and the artist do not always coincide; art is often, if not at all times, an outrush of hidden splendours of the subliminal and the supraliminal through one side of the man, the side that is afire with a sense of beauty and quick with creative genius. Provided this particular side serves as a transparent medium, a work of art can be held as authentic, with no stain of pose upon it.

*

Your letter reached me this morning, setting right the peccant line in *Hymn to Grace*, setting right also your rather exaggerated depreciation of X as well as of yourself. You are writing finely at present in English—some of your stuff being more than fine—excellent and splendid. Your Bengali work I am unfortunately unable

to savour, but I can guess that if you could write so well in English you must be superb in Bengali. Of course, I cannot say I like your English work everywhere. I am, I fear, much harder to please than your friend whose opinion on your Serpent-poem you quote. At the same time I hope I am more catholic in my tastes than most critics and more alert to detect shades of beauty. By the way, why do you talk of “leaving” some good work in Bengali? The word “leaving” suggests that you have made up your mind to kick the bucket sooner or later. Why this easy knuckling-under to *Pallada Mors*? Why this unwillingness to accept the beautiful burden of the Aurobindonian immortality?

As regards AE and Yeats, I don't see what makes you think I do not find the former splendid. I like him very well, only, I cannot say he is greater than Yeats. I surmise Sri Aurobindo will be much astonished if you told him that Yeats is not a great poet. AE was by far the more luminously greater man and there were some traits in Yeats which were repellent—arrogance, pontificality, acidity—but these traits were the defects of a certain type of rigid greatness and though repellent in themselves they formed part of a personal whole which was very impressive because they were all the time accompanied by the positives of which they were the negatives—proud unbreakable fighting will, occult or wizard sight, contempt of pretentious mediocrity and refusal to suffer fools. Even if they had been cheap or common instead of impressive, his poetry would not have become less great in our eyes any more than the few ugly traits in Beethoven's character make his music less grand for us or the best work of Wordsworth the poet less wonderfully seerlike because of the massive stupidity that in the man Wordsworth was the reverse of what in the obverse was a profound wisdom. Yeats's verse is most enchanting, most haunting—exquisite in suggestion, exquisite in rhythm. His suggestion is not always strictly formulable but has on our inner being an impact which thrills and illumines in an unforgettably subtle way.

I remember a chorus in one of his dramas. the refrain is—“God has not appeared to the birds”—and it seems to mean that all creatures except man have a sort of fullness and finality and contentment because they are fixed types, as it were, in their outer conscious being and do not have man's restless aspiration, an aspiration rendered unbearable to himself no less than disturbing to the world in general by his inking of the Divine Presence that turns all natural life unsatisfying for him. Two verses have stuck in my mind out of that chorus.

The gier-eagle has chosen his part
 In blue deeps of the upper air
 Where one-eyed day can meet his stare:
 He is content with his savage heart.

God has not appeared to the birds ..

And where are last year's cygnets gone?
 The lake is empty. Why do they fling
 White wing out beside white wing?
 What can a swan need but a swan?

God has not appeared to the birds...

In my opinion, this, though not Yeats at his most Celtic, is poetry of a marvellous beauty—extremely suggestive, moving and musical. To get into the spirit of its vision and word and vibration is to enter a rare world of revealing intensity and, if one is a poet, to subtilise and enrich one's expressive possibilities as one can scarcely do with the help of any other contemporary poet except Walter de la Mare in some of his finest lines.

AE at his highest is as great as Yeats but he hasn't Yeats's subtly rich incantation-effect. AE is a much greater poet than Walter de la Mare—yet there is at times a certain depth of magical sound in the latter which is usually absent from AE. This does not cast any slur on AE's inspiration or art, but it points to a special quality of incantation which, without being at all complex and purple in language, is packed with shade upon shade, tone behind tone, of beauty. Take this simple-worded stanza from de la Mare's *All that's past*:

Very old are the woods;
 And the buds that break
 Out of the brier's boughs,
 When March winds wake,
 So old with their beauty are—
 Oh, no man knows
 Through what wild centuries
 Roves back the rose.

I believe AE in his own way enters a neighbourhood of this depth of magical sound on a few isolated occasions—one is perhaps the poem *Germinal* which is different in theme-spirit but not quite different in tune-spirit. Does he ever break into the Yeatsian charmed circle? (Of course I have mostly the early Yeats in mind) His remaining outside it does not, I repeat, diminish his worth as a poet. He has his own music even as he has his own moods. But there is a spell-binding by words, which Yeats commands very often and AE very seldom. AE can be delicate and intuitive, colourful and revelatory: what he does not have as a rule is that verbal spell-binding—an art which to those who are sensitive to the soul of words is most precious.

It is X's not possessing this art in the large majority of his work that drew from Krishnaprem [Ronald Nixon] an unfavourable comparison of him with Yeats. Krishnaprem, like Arjava [J. Chadwick] and unlike you, is intoxicated with Yeats—and

rightly so. Yet to make Yeats the touchstone of poetry is misguiding; for the spell-binding art of subtly rich incantation is one of the rare modes of poetry and does not comprise all the poetic modes. We might as well judge poetry by Sri Aurobindo's "overhead" tones: these tones make a still rarer mode and if we set up the unfathomable responses they create in us as the criterion of art we shall entirely miss the value of the large bulk of the world's poetry. I recollect Sri Aurobindo's saying, when you showed him Krishnaprem's verdict on X, that to condemn the latter because he was not Yeatsian was unfair. Take Sri Aurobindo himself in his early vital-mental work like *Love and Death*. There is a passage in that blank-verse narrative, the speech of the Love God Kama or Madan, to which I had somewhat failed to respond, preferring the long haunting passage on Ruru's descent into the Underworld through the rush of the Ganges into ocean-depths. Our friend Arjava had considered it one of the peaks in that poem. I asked Sri Aurobindo what his own private opinion was. He wrote back:

"My own private opinion agrees with Arjava's estimate rather than with yours. These lines may not be astonishing in the sense of an unusual effort of constructive imagination and vision like the descent into Hell; but I do not think I have, elsewhere, surpassed this speech in power of language, passion and truth of feeling and nobility and felicity of rhythm all fused together into a perfect whole. And I think I have succeeded in expressing the truth of the godhead of Kama, the godhead of vital love (I am not using 'vital' in the strict Yogic sense; I mean the love that draws lives passionately together or throws them into or upon each other) with a certain completeness of poetic sight and perfection of poetic power, which puts it on one of the peaks—even if not the highest possible peak—of achievement. That is my private opinion—but, of course, all do not need to see alike in these matters." (10-2-1932)

AMAL KIRAN

THE PROBLEM OF ARYAN ORIGINS

by K. D. SETHNA

Many of our pet ideas are shown to be baseless and the current anti-nomy of "Aryan" and "Dravidian" which has caused a good deal of bad blood is resolved with the help of history, archaeology, literature and linguistics forming a comprehensive framework for the insights and researches of India's greatest seer and thinker: Sri Aurobindo.

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HYMN TO MOTHER INDIA

INDIA! Mother sublime of the human divine! Soul's augustest home!
Heavenly diadem, you crown with height earth's deeps,
O plumbless pool of the light-petalled Lotus which towers a sky-wide
gold dome
Beckoning man to his miraculous apocalypse.

India, loveliest land upon earth! The All-Beautiful is hid in your lair,
O garden where God's roses laugh and his orchids glow
And the breeze brings the All-Blissful's mellifluous music like a magic in
the air
And the stars the Cosmic Dancer's fire-footprints show.

India, where Spirit-Himalayas soar! Here the Great Self's invisible Gleam
Openly smiles in the calm vast eyes of peace-nimbused men—
Mirrors transparent of rapturous rays from the one, omnipresent, supreme
Light whose reflection the universe is, shadowy, wan.

India, your life is the holiest river! You are washing the human race
Pure of the darkness which weighs upon our souls like a shroud;
Mournful chill grottos of evil are gulfed by your alchemic stream's
crystalline grace,
Swallowing all poison like Shiva, to wipe hell out.

India, Guru of the world! How to freeze time's flow to motionless still
Stairs of silence that climb to the cosmos' dazzling roof
You showed; and how near is—in our heart! a lover and playmate to
kiss us and thrill—
That, on a million lightnings, throned alone and aloof.

India, Seer of the One for whose epic embrace the world-game was begun!
Lover seducing Himself in the myriad mold
And mien of the Many evolving from dominos to diverse diamond-facets
of the One,
Innumerably a single ecstasy of Love to unfold.

India, visionary voice! Amanuensis of fathomless Bliss and Truth:
Revelatory mantras echo the music of the spheres—
Word-woven lucent raiments undraping the beauty of eternal youth:
Rhythms through whose resonance in us the Ineffable appears.

India, pilgrim on the shimmering wings of the mystic, light-born Swan
 Along the aeons' ascending and widening helix-way.
 Follows your journey a waxing Sun from dawn to more resplendent dawn
 Towards its terrestrial epiphany's everlasting Day.

India, invoker of the Dancing Elephant, barrier-breaking Force of God!
 Living incandescent volcano of terrible blast—
 While by his bombarding feet our lurid beast-instincts to ashes are trod,
 Burn lava-tusks the jungle of our subconscious past.

India, humble worker spinning the silken thread of our destiny!
 Viewless a magical metamorphosis gets done:
 Opaque the pupa creates a stupendous marvel and mystery—
 From human larva the butterfly of superman.

India, scientist of Spirit and Soul! Wisdom-wizard! Hierophant of Love!
 Psychologist illuming the experience of the ultimate Light;
 Biologist tracing the deathless seed which grows in the womb of perishable
 stuff;
 Physicist unmasking the secret gold face of the Cosmic Might.

India, artist who models the future of man in a measureless norm!
 Sculptor whose chisel is the white original Fire,
 Sparking within life's soul-swoon stroke on mutating stroke of
 self-awakening, you form
 Immortal Godhead that even the gods in awe admire.

India, adventuress sailing eternity's seas, infinity's skies!
 Continents of consciousness, galaxies of splendour unknown
 You discovered; in beatitude's heavens your flaming banners rise;
 From the Sun of suns your trumpets of glory are blown.

India! A comet of joy, high surges from earth's occult depths your
 paeon-chant
 And the chorus of the stars rejoins in jubilant crescendo:
 "O Mother of Him who makes true the wonder divine for which life is
 meant!
 O India, where dawned man's Saviour-Sun—Sri Aurobindo!"

ALEXANDER BRODT

THE SEARCH

And what is Truth
but that which glows
triumphant in the rainbow;
and bears aloft the gloried wings
skimming the heights as yet unknown
to the glitter of man's eyes.

It is Beauty's bloom on sacred bough
whose fragrance breathes
the Eternal's promise,
it is the Veda's mantric call,
gold-weaving its way around the heart,
compelling surrender.

It is the song-bird's ecstasy
cascading on the breeze;
from the mire and slime of its rooted depths
it lifts Perfection's face
in the lotus, opening
to its divine fulfilment.

Within its marvel-harmony
all things exist as one;
in the Lila's face is its secret smile—
its calm eye sees
the Supreme unfolding
His visioned Delight.

Towards its New Horizon rise
the gloomy veils of Night,
as Shakti's burning breath impels
through blind endeavour's
stretching wastes
the soul-gleam to its Source.

“U”

THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of October 1980)

THE *Aśvamedhika* parva provides details about the horse which is merely described as “lovely” in the *Pausya* parva. Here the horse blazes with radiance of copper hue and has a black-and-white tail corresponding to the black-and-white threads being woven into a web by the two women of the *Pausya* parva version. This *Aśvamedhika* horse is all by itself, not accompanied by a man as in the *Pausya* parva. The copper hue is characteristic of that manifestation of *Agni* which is extant in the intermediate world, *bhuvar-antariksa*, while in the higher worlds of *svar* and *mahar* it is a flaming white steed. In the *Rigveda* IV.1, as elsewhere, it is stated that the Fire is triply born, on the planes of matter, life and mind but also that (rik 11) his native seat is the vast mid-world and his horses are red (rik 8). Initially, when hidden within the darkness of material nature *Agni* is churned out by the pressure of the mental being on this lower plane. VI.6 describes what happens thereafter:⁶⁵

“Man turns with a new sacrifice to the Son of Force when he desires the Way and the guard. He arrives in his journeyings to the heavenly Priest of the call, the Priest shining with light, but black is his march through the forests he tears.”

“He grows white and thunderous, he stands in a luminous world; he is most young with his imperishable clamouring fires. This is he that makes pure and is full of his multitudes and, even as he devours, goes after the things that are many, the things that are wide...”

“O Fire of the burning purities, pure and flaming-bright are these thy horses that loosed to the gallop raze the earth. .. Then wide is thy wandering and its light shines far as it drives them up to the dappled Mother’s heights.”

At this stage, *Agni* becomes a close associate of *Indra*:

“Then the tongue of the Bull leaps constantly like the thunderbolt loosed of the God who fights for the herds of the Light. The destruction of Fire is like the charge of a hero; he is terrible and irresistible, he hews the forests asunder.”

Sri Aurobindo explains this development thus: “He becomes, first, not a pure Will, though really he is always pure, but a vital Will, the desire of the Life in us, a smoke-obscured flame... a force of devouring desire that feeds upon earth’s growths, tears and ravages all upon which it feeds and leaves a black and charred line to mark its

path... But in all this there is a work of purification, which becomes conscious for the man of sacrifice. Agni destroys and purifies. His very hunger and desire, infinite in its scope, prepares the establishment of a higher universal order. The smoke of his passion is overcome and this vital Will, this burning desire in the Life becomes the Steed that carries us up to the highest levels,—the white Steed that gallops in the front of the dawns. Delivered from his smoke-enveloped activity he burns high in our skies, scales the ether of the pure mind and mounts upon the back of heaven. There on that rarer level .. This Seer-Will becomes the guardian of the illuminations of knowledge—herds of the Sun that graze in the pastures of life secure from the Sons of division and darkness, protected by the warrior force of the Will that knows. He attains the immortality and maintains unhurt its law of truth and joy in the human creature... Will and Knowledge become one. . The Immortal conquers in the mortal and by his sacrifice... Man, the thinker, fighter, toiler, becomes a seer, self-ruler and king over Nature.”⁶⁶

The same working of Agni we find in Uttanka’s case where he blows into the horse to produce billowing clouds of smoke and fire which terrify and stupefy the Nagas into returning the ear-rings, the wealth which they had stolen and concealed in the nether world which is riven open by Indra’s vajra for Uttanka’s descent. An interesting detail in sloka 150 is *etamaśvapāne dhamesvati*, “Blow into the anus of this horse”. *Apāna* refers to the five vital airs which move downwards and out of the anus, as opposed to the *prāṇa-vāyu*. Blowing into the *apāna* is to turn the downwards movement of the vital life-force upwards, which in the occult lore of the Tantra is linked with the *prāṇāyāma* and *kundalinī* concepts:

Out of the Inconscient’s soulless mindless Night
 A flaming serpent rose released from sleep.
 It rose billowing its coils and stood erect
 And climbing mightily stormily on its way
 It touched her centres with its flaming mouth:
 As if a fiery kiss had broken their sleep,
 They bloomed and laughed surcharged with light and bliss;
 Then at the crown it joined the Eternal’s space.
 In the flower of the head, in the flower of Matter’s base,
 In each divine stronghold and Nature-knot
 It held together the mystic stream which joins
 The viewless summits with the unseen depths...⁶⁷

The *Aśvamedhika* account adds the interesting information that the horse exhorts Uttanka not to hesitate or be disgusted by the thought of blowing into its anus because he has already done so previously in his preceptor’s hermitage. This parallels the Pausya episode of Uttanka being asked to eat the bull’s dung because his guru had done so before. In both cases something is sought to be repeated in the disciple

which has occurred in the past in connection with the guru. The name of the guru is itself a valuable key: *Veda* ("knowledge") and *Gotama* ("full of light"). Significantly, Veda tells Uttanka that he was assisted by Indra in his quest because the king of the gods was a good friend of his. The intimate link between Knowledge and the Lord of the Illumined Mind is self-evident. Naturally, it is to Veda/Gotama that the Uttanka-pilgrim turns for understanding the inner significance of his experiences, particularly as the guru has trod the path before and knows that:

An apocalypse of a world of images
Enters into the kingdom of the seer.⁶⁸

Always we bear in us a magic key
Concealed in life's hermetic envelope...
But all is screened, subliminal, mystical;
It needs the intuitive heart, the inward turn,
It needs the power of a spiritual gaze.⁶⁹

Veda explains that the gigantic man was Indra, the bull was elephant-king Airavata and his dung was amrita which saved Uttanka from being harmed in the nether-world; the two women were Dhāta and Vidhāta (the Creators) weaving white-threaded Day and black-threaded Night; the year-wheel with twelve month-spokes was being revolved by the six seasons; the horse was Agni and its rider Indra. Following the Aurobindonian approach of interpretation based on the Sanskrit roots of words used by Vyāsa, we have arrived at a rendering of the esoteric symbolism which tallies with the explanation provided by Vyāsa himself.

The *Aśvamedhika Parva* account differs from the *Pausya parva* in so far as Uttanka does not drink any amrita. However, this has been presented in a different form by having Krishna give him the boon of obtaining water in the desert whenever he desires it. This is again a Vedic image for the rishi frequently urges the seven divine rivers to flow down over the parched lands of his consciousness and infuse it with supernal bliss. Uttanka, in this episode, appears to be going through what St. John of the Cross called "the dark night of the soul", a period of total spiritual dryness and barrenness when the light from above has withdrawn and the aspirant feels empty as a shell, dry as husk. In such a situation he asks for "water", i.e. the descent of the divine ānanda. It appears before him in a typically enigmatic form: Indra takes the form of a filthy chandala leading a dog, and urinating profusely he invites the sage to slake his thirst. Uttanka indignantly refuses and loses the chance of attaining immortality, for the drink offered was actually amrita. Here, also, the key lies in the word *mātaṅga* which means both "elephant" (hence, like the bull-airavata, its excreta is really ambrosia) and "untouchable". The dog accompanying him is, of course, Saramā, the inseparable companion of Indra in the Veda who leads him to where the Panis have hidden the divine herds. In this case Uttanka fails to avail

of the opportunity because he is very full of himself, having recently threatened to curse Krishna, been blessed with a vision of the Viśvarūpa and finally this boon. Deeply involved in the ignorance of his separateness, he is unable to widen the self to include an untouchable and without this widening he cannot create the opening which will enable the heavenly waters to flow down.

However, in the Pausya Parva version there are still a few points which remain to be explained: *dakṣiṇā*, *kundala*. Uttanka's inability to see Pausya's queen in the first instance, the meeting with Saudāsa-turned-cannibal, the *kṣapanaka* he meets etc.

Dakṣiṇā let us take up first. The insistence on providing this to the guru, Veda or Gotama, is the cause of Uttanka's quest. This, once again, harks back to the Veda, for *dakṣiṇā* is a Rigvedic goddess as in III.39.6,7:⁷⁰

He, having Dakshina with him, held in his right hand the secret thing that is placed in the secret cave and concealed in the waters. May he, knowing perfectly, separate the light from the darkness, may we be far from the presence of the evil.

Again, in V.1.3:⁷¹

When so he has put forth the tongue (or, the long cord) of his multitude, Fire in his purity reveals all by the pure herds of his rays; then is the goddess of understanding (or, who discerns) yoked to her works, in a growing plenitude; she upward-straining, he high-uplifted, he feeds on her with his flaming activities (or, his tongues of flame, or his flames of the offering).

Dakṣiṇā usually accompanies Usha, the dawn, and sometimes is described as a power distributing the offerings in the *yajña*. Its function is that of discernment, acting as a guide to the Pure Intelligence (Indra) for discerning the right path to knowledge avoiding the pitfalls of ignorance. It is this function which is referred to in III.39.6,7, as Sri Aurobindo explains:

Usha is the divine illumination and Dakshina is the discerning knowledge that comes with the dawn and enables the Power in the mind, Indra, to know aright and separate the light from the darkness, the truth from the falsehood, the straight from the crooked... It is this discernment which presides over the right action of the sacrifice and the right distribution of the offerings and it is this which enables Indra to hold the herded wealth of the Panis securely, in his right hand.⁷²

The place of *dakṣiṇā* in the Uttanka myth becomes, now, quite clear. The novice desires to metamorphose the intellectual understanding he has acquired during his discipleship by drawing down the divine Knowledge from the realm of *svar*, Pure

Mind, of which Indra is the presiding deity. In this effort, his guide is the discriminative intellect, *dakṣiṇā*. However, in the attempt the basic prerequisite is the arousal of the divine flame, Agni, within. That is why the descent of Indra's *vajra* is followed by the invocation of Agni, the appearance of the *aśva*, which takes Uttanka back to Veda (Knowledge) with the heavenly treasures (*kunḍala*). In the R̥gveda V. 1.3 it is shown how Agni appears after the arrival of Indra, and his relationship with *dakṣiṇā* who "is described as straining and extending herself upwards to follow and reach Agni where are his topmost planes in the ideal being. From there he leans down and feeds on her through the flames of the divine activity burning in the purified and upward rising activities of the intellectual mind."⁷³ It is because of the descent of *vajra* and the working of *dakṣiṇā* that Uttanka is able, in the Nāga-realm, to identify the symbols in the vision he sees so clearly:

An inspired Knowledge sat enthroned within
Whose seconds illumined more than reason's years:
An ictus of revealing lustre fell
As if a pointing accent upon Truth,
And like a sky-flare showing all the ground
A swift intuitive discernment shone.
One glance could separate the true and false,
Or raise its rapid torch-fire in the dark
To check the claimants crowding through mind's gates
Covered by the forged signatures of the gods,
Detect the magic bride in her disguise
Or scan the apparent face of thought and life.⁷⁴

It is Uttanka's insistence on providing *dakṣiṇā* which leads to the quest for the *kunḍala*, which symbolise the "inner listening"⁷⁴, the communion between the individual consciousness and the cosmic consciousness⁷⁵ The R̥gveda I.6.6. also hints at the same experience: Once Indra has purged the Ignorance and Darkness, "there echoes in the occult hearing the concrete messages of the vast truth . They infuse the aspirant with a clear and pointed intellect which can discern the quintessence of truth."⁷⁶ Elsewhere in the R̥gveda (VIII.67.3) this is expressed symbolically thus: "And Indra brings in ample store of rich jewels to adorn the ear."

The *Aśvamedhika Parva* version, however, provides important additional information about the *kunḍala* which help us to comprehend its symbolic import. Madayanti warns Uttanka to be particularly careful in safeguarding them because of their unique value:⁷⁷

Gods, Yakshas and great sages, all are constantly searching for a loophole to steal my bejewelled divine earrings. Pannagas will steal it if it falls on the ground, yakshas if it is worn in an impure condition and gods if the wearer is asleep.

These are the loopholes wherefrom there is constant danger of the earrings being stolen. He who is vigilant against gods, yakshas and nagas, can possess them. Best of Brahmins! these ear-rings produce gold day and night, at night they can draw the light of the planets and the stars. Lord! The wearer is set free from fear of hunger and thirst and even poison, fire and ferocious beasts.

If a diminutive person wears them, they shrink in size and expand to suit a large wearer.

Having these virtues, these earrings of mine are treasured and famed throughout the three worlds. (57.22-28)

In the Pausya Parva, Veda's wife specifies that she desires the earrings of the *kṣatriya* queen of the king, and this lady is constantly referred to by both Uttanka and Pausya as *kṣatriyā*. The word signifies dominion, supremacy or sovereignty and power (both spiritual and human), and the association of the earrings with this concept provides a key to the symbolism. As in the Veda the hidden wealth sought by the Aryan pilgrim with the assistance of Indra and Agni, of Ūsā and Dakṣiṇā, is the cow-rays of the Sun of supernal Truth secreted by Ahi-Vṛtra, the serpent-coverer, and the Panis in the dark cave of the subconscious world of material nature, so here in the *Mahābhārata* the same golden treasure is figured forth by Vyāsa as the bejewelled ear-rings which confer fearlessness and protection from all levels of foes and the gold which is the illumination from the supreme world of Truth and Joy. These earrings emit radiance even in the darkness of nescience and their very function, like that of the herds of the Sun in the Veda, is to illumine the dark nether worlds of man's consciousness. Uttanka, in acquiring the precious earrings, is fulfilling an Indra-function in the Rīgveda III.34.9 Indra is described as winning the treasure of gold, which stands for the precious store of Ananda and Knowledge, which Vyāsa depicts as the divine earrings of Madayanti.

The anxiety of the powers of the nether worlds to steal these earrings is understandable, and fits in with the Vedic symbolism. Why, however, are the gods also eager for them? Sri Aurobindo offers an explanation in his *Savitri* (1-2):

Too high the fire spiritual dare not blaze.
 If once it met the intense original Flame,
 An answering touch might shatter all measures made
 And earth sink down with the weight of the Infinite ..
 A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,
 An Inquisition of the priests of Night
 In judgment sits on the adventurer soul,
 And the dual tables and the Karmic norm
 Restrain the Titan in us and the God:
 Pain with its lash, joy with its silver bribe
 Guard the Wheel's circling immobility,

A bond is put on the high climbing mind,
 A seal on the too large wide-open heart;
 Death stays the journeying discoverer, Life.
 Thus is the throne of the Inconscient safe...⁷⁸

In a splendid extravagance of the waste of God
 Dropped carelessly in creation's spendthrift work,
 Left in the chantiers of the bottomless world
 And stolen by the robbers of the Deep,
 The golden shekels of the Eternal lie,
 Hoarded from touch and view and thought's desire,
 Locked in blind antres of the ignorance flood
 Lest men should find them and be even as Gods.⁷⁹

For whom is Uttanka procuring this heavenly treasure? The recipient is *Ahalyā*, the unploughed or unfurrowed field⁸⁰, the consort of *Gotama* who is resplendent with supernal wisdom. *Ahalyā* is the *ksetra* which is the physical consciousness, requiring to be broken-up and opened by the lightning flashes of Truth from the world of *svar* so that it can absorb the divine waters of *Ānanda* when they flow down. The deity who breaks open the inertia of the rock-hard material consciousness (represented as a mountain or hill in the Veda and as a barren field here) is *pūṣaṇ*, Lord of the Truth. He uses "the goad that drives open the closed heart and makes the sacred word to arise from its depths, it is by this luminous-pointed goad which perfects the radiant cows, accomplishes the luminous thoughts, that the conversion of the Panis is effected; then the Truth-god in his darkened heart also desires that which the Aryan desires. Therefore by this penetrating action of the Light and the Truth the powers of the ordinary ignorant sense-activity becomes subject to the Aryan."⁸¹ Pausya is known as the son of *Pūṣaṇ*,⁸² which supports the interpretation of the ear-ring, as the wealth of Truth of which *Pūṣaṇ* is the master. This Truth gives power, dominance, sovereignty to the aspirant over the nether worlds and their lords, as also over the higher worlds of *bhuvar* and *svar*. That is why the earrings are said to belong to the *kṣatriyā*. The flow of this knowledge to the aspirant is also according to the needs and the capacity of the human vessel. That is why the earrings are said to have the power of adjusting their size to that of the wearer.

Madayanti mentions three loopholes whereby the obstructing powers can spirit away this precious treasure from the Aryan pilgrim: if the earrings fall to the ground, if worn in an impure condition; and if the wearer is asleep. Allied to these is the incident of Uttanka being unable to see Pausya's queen because he is in an impure state. All these states point to the same condition of being: the clouding over of the aspiring spirit by the fumes of ignorance, sloth, inertia and egotism. The key-word in Madayanti's warning is "vigilance". Repeatedly in the Puranas we come across stories of sages who fall from their pinnacle of purity because they allow their consciousness

to be clouded over, because of a momentary failure of vigilance, by lower vital desires (lust, anger, pride). Uttanka, we find, successfully resists the sexual overtures of his guru's wife, and that is why he succeeds in obtaining the earrings. However, he loses them when he succumbs to anger and pride, as we shall see. Indeed, his over-confidence, when he assures Madayanti that she need not fear for his losing the earrings, is characteristic of the flaw in every spiritual aspirant which results in loss of the hard won prize.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

NOTES

65. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire, op. cit* p 258-9
66. *The Secret of the Veda*, p 360-1.
67. *Savitri*, VII 5, p 528
68. *ibid*, I 3, p. 38
69. *ibid*, I 4 p 49
70. *The Secret of the Veda, op cit* p. 186
71. *ibid.*, p 364, & *Hymns to the Mystic Fire, op cit* pp 201, 490
72. *The Secret of the Veda*, p 186
73. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire, op cit* p 496
74. *Savitri*, I 3 pp 37-38
75. *Sri Aurobindo On Yoga* (II) p 373
76. N K Gupta *Mother India*, May 1963, p 22. Also compare Rigveda VIII 67 3, 'And Indra bring in ample store of rich jewels to adorn the ear' (Griffith's translation)
77. My translation, (Asvamedhika Parva, chapter 57, slokàs 22-23, Aryasastra recension). Also see Rigveda III 34 9 where Indra is said to win the treasure of gold which symbolises the precious store of Ananda (vide *The Secret of the Veda*, p 219), which is what *kundala* may stand for
78. *Savitri* I 2 p 18
79. *ibid*, p 42
80. *Mother India*, May 1958, p 29
81. *The Secret of the Veda, op cit*, p 230
82. Monier Williams *Sanskrit English Dictionary* (Clarendon, 1960) p 652

THE CLOUD MESSENGER

A NEW TRANSLATION OF KALIDASA'S *MEGHADUTA*

(Continued from the issue of October 1980)

“THE vines, O beauty, to my eyes suggest
Thy slender shape, as in the moon I see
Imaged thy cheek and through the waves expressed

Thy brows' play; peacocks with their pageantry
Hint thy rich hair, thy glance the shy doe's grace—
Alas! nowhere I seize the whole of thee.

When thee with rustic chalk on stone I trace
Feigning some jealous rage, then would proceed
My prostrate figure at thy feet to place,

Resistless wellings-up of tears impede
At once my plundered sight: not even such
A union will fate's cruelty concede.

And when I throw my arms in air to clutch
With passion my remote beloved caught
At last in dream, the spectacle must much

Move the sweet spirits of the sylvan spot
Who watch above, compelling them to pour
Large tears which pearl-like all the foliage dot.

Those winds that where the snow-clad summits soar
Spring up, then pungent with the resin's scent
Of pines whose moist shoots from their sheaths they tore

Issue forth, I embrace them, my torment
Assuaged, imagining that thy chaste sense
Refreshing first on southward ways they went.

O, that the night's slow watches would condense
To a mere moment's flight and that the day
Might mitigate its fiery violence!—

So, my gazelle-eyed girl, in vain I pray
 Banished from thee, from such pangs shelterless
 As every hour my mind and flesh dismay.

And yet my soul swoons not with this excess
 Of suffering, through all misery sustained
 By musings that should strengthen thee no less:

For think, to whom is utter joy ordained
 Or termless grief? but as a great wheel's rim
 Revolves, our fortunes fall and they ascend.

My curse ends with the serpent-sleep of him
 Who wields the Bow; close now thy lids and pass
 With fortitude the four months' interim.

In eves of autumn moonlight from the mass
 Of clouds released, delights we then shall reap
 That after sorrow those of old surpass."

He spoke again: "Upon our couch asleep,
 Arms clasped about my neck, a startling cry
 Thou once didst utter and an instant weep;

Then smiling furtively didst thou reply
 To my insistence, 'Wretch, thy dalliance
 With some strange damsel in a dream saw I.'

This token will assure thee no mischance
 Has come to me—now by the roots remove
 The weed distrust which idle gossip plants:

A distant spouse's ardour, some would prove,
 Dwindles; in truth, their object long denied,
 Affections kindle to intensest love."

I hope this service I to thee confide
 Thou hast resolved nor, brother, do I find
 Refusal in thy grave restraint implied:

Thou grantest, to the rain-lark's plea inclined,
 Silent thy drops—a supplicant's request
 Fulfilling so responds the great of mind.

A task which slights thy stature have I pressed
 Upon thee, yet thy friendship wilt thou show
 Or act in sympathy for one distressed;

This trust discharged, across the regions go
 As thou desir'st, thy season at its height
 Of grandeur—nor, O cloud, a moment know
 Of parting ever from thy lightning's sight."

(Concluded)

RICHARD HARTZ

NOTES

Rich hair The comparison with the peacocks' plumage suggests hair adorned with flowers
 The serpent-sleep of him who wields the Bow Vishnu, the all-pervading Deity, wields the archetypal bow Sharnga in his task of preserving the order of the universe during periods of cosmic manifestation At the end of a given creation, when the world is destroyed by fire followed by water, this supreme Godhead is said to recline in superconscious sleep (Yoganidra) on the coils of the serpent Ananta ("the Infinite") in an ocean of sweet milk (symbolically, pure eternal Existence that is Bliss) In the round of the terrestrial (Indian) year, the Hindu tradition has designated the annual arrival of the monsoon after the fierce summer heat as corresponding to the deluge phase of the recurrent universal destruction or Pralaya in the larger cycle Vishnu is then considered to "sleep" on his serpent-bed for a four-month period, specifically from the eleventh of Ashadha to the eleventh of Kartika.

Rain-lark the Chataka bird, which is supposed to subsist solely on raindrops.

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A LI'L SECRET

I'll tell you a li'l secret,
it's what God had to do,
to make his own self happy,
by making us all happy too.

He was playing with a toy,
it's about a little boy,
who said, when it was time to play:
"God, just a little more today",
and after five years or so
said he: "To a movie I have to go,
and the next day for a play;
after that, God, I'll really pray."

And then, as the case may be,
The young boy had to study,
and he said: "God, just one more line"
When it was his praying time,
And then he read another book
and then he said: "God, now look,
Now it's just too late to pray,
I'm going to call it a day."
And then he grew into a man.
"I've got to work more than I can,
I'll finish it and then I'll pray,"
We all heard the young man say.

And so thus it went on and on
Till the time he was old from the day he was born,
And now when he was going to die,
Oh! we heard the old man cry.
"Now I die, oh! I decay,
Oh God! it's too late to pray "
And so, you see, it goes on and on,
From when we are born to when we are gone,
And because we can't spare a minute a day
To sit ourselves down and pray—
Since that much time we cannot give—
Another life we have to live.

PRAKETA VERMA (Age 16 years)

THE MAGIC WELL

A CHINESE TALE OF THE 15TH CENTURY

AN old helpless widow made her living by brewing and selling wine. Many people in the village came to her shop to drink wine. One among them was an old priest. Every day he drank his stomach-full but went away without paying her. The old lady did not mind it. When people asked about it, she replied, "O! He is after all an old priest. His blessings are more valuable than the money he gives."

One day the old priest decided to go on a pilgrimage. So he came to the wine-seller and said to her, "Old woman! You were very kind to me and I drank wine free of cost. Now that I have decided to go on a pilgrimage, I want to give you some help before I start."

Then the priest went into the old woman's house. There he dug a well with his heavenly powers and blessed it. The well proved to contain the mellowest of wine. "This is my payment." So saying the priest went on his pilgrimage.

The old lady was very happy. She stopped brewing her own wine, but sold that from the magic well. The customers, finding the wine tastier than that sold in all other shops, flocked to her. Day after day, her customers increased and in three years she became the richest woman in the village.

The priest returned to the village, completing his mission. The old woman welcomed him and gave him wine to drink.

"Is the wine good?" asked the priest, when he was about to taste it.

The old woman answered, "Excellent, Sir. Only there is no food for my pigs."

The priest was unable to suppress his laughter. Laughing, he wrote the following lines on the wall adjacent to the wine-well:

The sky is high,
but human desire is higher.
She sells well-water as wine.
Yet complains for lack of food for her pigs.

The priest went away without telling a word to the old lady. The moment he left the place, the magic well dried up and stopped giving wine.

P. RAJA

WHAT INDIA MEANS TO ME

A FRENCHWOMAN'S IMPRESSIONS

(Continued from the issue of October 1980)

ANOTHER most interesting discovery for me has been Indian art. A good friend of mine, C.L. Bharany, who is a well-known antiquarian, both in India and in the West, and who owns collections of paintings, bronzes, wood-carvings, statues, all of exquisite taste, was the first one to open for me the doors on the treasures of Indian art, and to help me understand the spirit which is behind.

One day a lady who plays the Vina with talent told me: "In this country art is sacred, and artists are instruments of the Gods." Indeed, in India, art is not supposed to have been given to men by the gods, and the great teachers of music, painting and dancing, considered as Gurus transmitting an initiation?

To the one who tries to understand Indian art, be it music, dance, or plastic arts, it appears as a communion of man with the cosmos. If each raga has its own character, colour and mood, and dance must be performed and music executed at certain hours of day or night and at certain seasons, is it not because among other things, it aims to create a harmony allowing the artist to be in contact with some cosmic vibrations, and through him the entire audience?

When the artists, musicians or dancers are of great talent, the impression of harmony, rhythm and beauty imparted to the audience is really unique; it awakens in you something very subtle and refined, and during the performance you find yourself on a higher level of consciousness. I remember listening to Ravi Shankar in a charming Museum of Asiatic Art in Zurich. I have heard Ravi Shankar many times when I was living in Paris, but I always felt a little bit disturbed by the audience, which in spite of being very appreciative was so numerous and so diverse and the performance was given in such enormous rooms, that it was difficult for us, even with a musician of Ravi Shankar's quality in our midst, to remain in the proper frame of mind to listen to Indian music. But on this occasion, the public was a small one, and mostly composed of people already acquainted with Indian culture. Ravi Shankar was sitting almost with the audience, and I do not think it is my imagination if I say he appeared particularly at home and relaxed. In the silence of the little Museum, surrounded by a garden, with a small group of attentive people, one could really appreciate the extraordinary complexities and subtleties of Indian music, and also the great skill and deep feeling displayed by the artist. This time the real contact was established at once between the musician and the public. The expression on Ravi Shankar's face became very absorbed and very beautiful, one of deep concentration. His execution was full at the same time of strength and exquisiteness. After a while, it was as if he was expressing through his sitar the harmony and perfection of other worlds, or with certain Ragas the birth, growth and dissolution of a Cosmos, a fan-

tastic dance of Shiva. "Indeed, art is sacred, and great artists the instruments of the gods," I was thinking while listening to Ravi Shankar during his performance.

Of course, all over the world, real artists reflect something divine in their production. But, in Eastern art, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, there is, as I have already stated, a cosmic dimension, which most of the time seems to be missing in the West except perhaps with some poets, and a few musicians, like a Handel or a Beethoven. At least this is my opinion; or maybe my own sensitivity is more in tune with an art which is more an expression of spiritual states and inner experiences than, let us say, of rajasic and vital moods, as in our countries.

I still have before my eyes a miniature I saw one day in a Museum of Calcutta, of a woman walking, followed by a deer, in the Indian countryside at sunset. In that small image, a peace was expressed which much surpassed the ordinary feeling of quietness one can sometimes have at that hour of the day. That simple scene was impregnated with a kind of serene grandeur that an artist not only of great talent and acute sensibility but also endowed with a deep spiritual insight could alone have rendered so well. The painter seemed to have captured an instant of ephemeral beauty in the ever-changing flux of life, when the sun is on the point of disappearing and through the golden mist diffused all over the country one can already fathom the shadows of the coming night, and in the infinite subtlety of the colours of the sky and fields there breathes out something of the cosmic essence which animates Nature.

That small painting gave you the same feeling of cosmic serenity which, though expressed in a different manner, one can have when looking at certain Chinese landscapes emerging from their mantle of cloud and fog. It was in itself a state of being.

Listening to a Ravi Shankar or looking at a Bharat-Natyam performance or at some old Indian paintings always invites me to an inner mood, to commune in a deep inner tranquility and silence of the mind with the strength, beauty and serenity conveyed by the various expressions of great and refined art. They remain for me not only an unforgettable experience of artistic joy but also moments of meditation when you are suddenly lifted above the daily humdrum life and your too-often petty preoccupations, and for a while feel your soul soaring towards the source of all beauty and delight.

It is true, the pull of attraction has always been for me the spiritual and cultural heritage of India. Nevertheless I am also deeply interested in her social aspect. It has been stated many times that India is a country of contrasts, and when you travel and meet people you cannot deny it is a fact wherever you go.

There are still some fabulous fortunes, but mendicants are everywhere. In big towns, you often see residential quarters with pleasant houses, big new buildings with air-conditioners, and all the comfort modern equipment can provide, and in the neighbourhood kilometres of slums with their dreadful poverty and dirt. People here can be both very emotional and very cruel, their religion is the most tolerant of all but themselves are often most intolerant towards their fellow-beings. They give you freedom of the soul, but it is out of the question to have the freedom to keep your own privacy.

They have the highest spiritual knowledge that humanity has ever attained but mixed up with all kinds of incredible superstitions. They lay stupendous emphasis on cleanliness, purity, and the danger of getting polluted, but sometimes very religious or wealthy people live in a filth which leaves you bewildered. All those contradictions can perhaps be explained on account of the great richness of the Indian temperament which can manifest at the same time the best as well as the worst.

During my thousands of kilometres of wandering all over the country, India also appeared to me again a contrast—as the oldest civilisation of the world and at the same time as a very young nation, which could be compared to a child opening his bewildered eyes upon a modern world of machines, computers and rockets for the moon. No wonder that those new ways of living require a tremendous adjustment, and if one thinks that India has the dimensions of a continent, and her population is of more than 500 million citizens, patience is required, and one cannot expect the country to have solved all her problems within 33 years after she acquired her freedom.

Maybe as a remembrance of my own youth, and the numerous problems I had to deal with, on account of our society-old customs and narrowness of mind, and our religious fanaticism and taboos, I got especially interested in India's young people, and it has been my good fortune to meet many of them here and abroad. The problems of the young generation here appeared to me as being as acute and probably more so than in Western countries.

I remember a young engineer I met in Switzerland; he had passed all his examinations in Europe, and he was on the point of returning to his country. He was an intelligent and brilliant young man, and I told him that he was just the kind of man India required to form her new cadres. But in spite of his sincere attachment to his country he was not at all enthusiastic at the idea of returning. First, his family had already selected a wife for him, but he did not want to get married yet, and after many years of freedom in the West he did not like the idea of having someone imposed upon him. Another reason was that he would not be able to have any initiative of his own, probably not even to choose the place where he wanted to live and the firm that would engage him, as for everything he would have to refer to his father who would himself refer to his own father. "It will be a continuous clash between my family and myself, I will lose my time in sterile fights and quarrels and in the end I won't be able to have the career I want and I won't be useful to my country either. He added, "As long as the old family-structures subsist, it is out of the question for young people like myself to have a chance in India." I knew he had some interesting offers from European firms and he was terribly hesitating. I wonder what has been his choice in the end. I was sorry to think that such an intelligent and capable young man could be lost to India, but I also understood very well his point of view, and he was not the only one I met who had to face the same dilemma.

I also remember, on the boat I took last time I came to India, an Indian girl both beautiful and charming. Her name was Dhira. She was returning home after she had

completed her study in Germany as a nurse. During the voyage, she was all the time very gay and relaxed, playing on the deck, swimming and dancing, and it was a pleasure to look at her.

The day we reached Bombay, she wore a big summer hat and a short skirt which showed a pair of beautiful legs, and she looked enchanting. But an hour later passengers were all busy opening their luggages at the Customs, and amongst them I saw Dhira with people who were, I suppose, members of her family, or close friends. Two men and three women, all looking at her with an air of disapproval and even disgust, and hardly talking to her, as if they were ashamed to have that beautiful creature as their relative. And I could hardly recognise the gay and charming girl of the boat in that woman, who suddenly looked older, clumsy, and with such an expression of sadness and melancholy in her eyes that my heart bled for her. Poor little Dhira, so sweet and attractive! To have to readapt herself to the strict code of life of an orthodox Indian family could not be but a severe ordeal for her, and I wonder how she has reacted to the situation.

What I am writing is no criticism, the entire world goes through total transformations, and in the East as well as in the West progress cannot be made without provoking dissensions and oppositions between the old and the new generation.

But here in India, young people will have to fight a very hard battle with ancient religious and social customs, prejudices and taboos, if they want to gain their right to freedom of life and expression. If I often think about young people with deep sympathy, it is not only because they make me remember myself when I was of the same age, with the same desire to have the right to think by myself and to give to my life the orientation I intended, but chiefly because to the new generation all over the world is given the task to build a free and better future for humanity, and this is a tremendous responsibility in our epoch of radical changes and transformations. The task which faces young Indian men and women is certainly a most difficult one, as they have to keep alive their spiritual heritage, whose destruction would mean an irreparable loss for their country and for the whole world, but at the same time they have to get rid of the old structures which are the biggest impediment to the march forward and to making India a modern nation.

I also remember the epoch in France, when as a young woman I had no right to have a bank-account without the signature of my husband, and I could not take any important decision without referring to him or my family. The idea to be an eternal minor enraged me no end. In India, women have acquired *legally* the same right and freedom we have now in the West, but *in fact* the family's and society's ties are still so strong that many of them appear like real prisoners compared to their American and European sisters. I met many remarkable women in India, but alas, too often their gifts and capacities were not recognised as they ought to have been by those surrounding them. They were still confined to household duties—cooking, looking after children etc.; and they had great difficulty in unfolding themselves. Or when they succeed they find sometimes a better recognition in other countries than in their native land. I am

thinking, for example, about Kamala Markandeya who, with books like *Nectar in a Sieve*, *A Handful of Rice*, *A Silence of Desire*, has reached the class of a Pearl Buck or a Han Suyin. Her novels are bestsellers in Europe, but I was surprised to see that they do not seem to be as well known as they deserve in the author's own country, even amongst cultured circles.

For women, habits of the past have also to be eradicated, to open the doors for a new order of things. Let us hope that with the example of such a personality as Indira Gandhi, Indian women will be given more and more posts of responsibility, and have new possibilities to follow liberal careers, thus becoming a precious gain and help for the whole nation.

All over the world, men become more and more conscious that we are on the eve of a fantastic mutation, as important as the one which occurred millions of years ago when humanity emerged from primitive life and acquired the new power of intellect. Some writers in the West give the name of "messianic" to our epoch, some others like André Malraux speak of "a metaphysical epoch", and in India the great yogi Sri Aurobindo calls it "the Hour of God", and predicts a total change of consciousness, and a spiritual revolution, compared to which scientific and material revolutions are only a shadow and a reflection. Since the 19th century, the Indian spiritual teachers have known that great changes are at hand, and they spread everywhere the ancient teachings which up to that time had been the monopoly of the East, or were known in the West by only a few scholars and philosophers, or in some rare intellectual circles

In the situation in which humanity finds itself at present, apparently there exists no way out of its numerous problems: wars, social tensions, conflicts of generations, decadence of religions, inefficiency of both the old and the new systems of philosophies. Politicians, scientists and thinkers confess they are at a loss to find a valuable and permanent solution, all the old tricks are worn out and prove of no avail. It is like trying to repair an old wall; as soon as it is repaired in one place, it crumbles down in another. The only remedy for individuals as well as for nations is to be found in a radical change of consciousness, as so often stated by Sri Aurobindo. To quote him again: "A new era, a new world, a new race, a new order, a new life must appear." The human soul is far from having unfolded all its possibilities, and the moment has come for a leap towards new states of consciousness, higher than the ones we have reached up to now through the help of intelligence and intellectual pursuits. We are now at a turning-point, and though there is no doubt that the impulse to reach a new and higher level of consciousness comes from the Divine Forces which are manifesting and unfolding themselves in the universe, and here on earth act through the cosmic laws of evolution, there is no doubt either that the agent to whom is given the task to enlighten and guide mankind is India if she remains faithful to her Dharma. And the help to us to go through the indispensable transformations will come from her too.

Though India is herself going through big changes, and for the moment the country is deeply perturbed by political and social problems, her destiny, her Dharma,

as the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram told Indira Gandhi, is to be the Guru of the world, and she added: "Let India work for the future, and take the lead. Thus she will recover her true place in the world."

In spite of many eddyings on the surface, in spite of the slow disappearance of her old religions and forms of worship, India still possesses the highest spiritual knowledge, which has ever remained far above the changing religions and creeds, the ultimate knowledge of man's True Nature, which has been expressed for millenniums through the life of great yogis and sages such as found even in our own epoch: Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi, Anandamayee Mā, and, above all, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Everywhere now people turn towards India's spiritual wisdom, to bring them Truth and Light, and help them out of the confusion and darkness in which they find themselves.

As far as I am concerned, I have now fulfilled a long cherished dream, I am living in India, and thanks to years of contact with many yogis and gurus, and through their patient help and guidance the glimpses I had of higher states of consciousness have convinced me that the "other dimension" of which I was dreaming so many years ago exists, and is no fancy or imagination, but a reality, much more real even than this world we can see at every moment with our physical eyes.

When human intelligence is confronted with a dead wall, and no philosopher is able to find a satisfying solution, then for the one endowed with enough perseverance to carry on the great quest, and reach in the depth and silence of his heart the Self, man's True Being, there can be no doubt that all problems will be solved, and all questions receive an answer. The big enigma which, amongst so many men and women since the beginning of time, puzzled also the surrealist poet André Breton: "Who are we, from where do we come, where are we going?" can be solved. The ancient Greeks used to say, "Know thyself, and thou shalt know the universe", and the Indian Scriptures have given us the message. "When That is known, all the rest is known."

When I think of all that India has given me and what, thanks to her unique spiritual heritage, the world already owes to her and more than ever is now expecting from her, my feeling is one of great respect and deep gratitude.

(Concluded)

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(43)

THE man, the mood, the means, the right moment — when all these four elements combine, something unprecedented occurs in a nation. The man was Louis XIV and he was in a mood to play the part the time-spirit assigned to him. The means were made ready by the two ingenious Cardinals, Richelieu and Mazarin. The moment had come for France to assert her greatness and claim her right to leadership among the nations of Europe.

It was at such a moment that the palace at Versailles was built, the costliest palace in Europe. We were determined to see the palace although time was short and it meant a train journey, a bus ride, and a short distance on foot. We left the hotel when there was no movement in the house and the receptionist's lamp was still burning. We handed him the key and slipped out to catch the first train to Versailles. Within half an hour we were at the terminus. Then we took a bus empty at that early hour. When we reached the gates of the palace, the sun was just peeping out to illuminate the golden gates of the Roi Soleil who built his wonderful palace out in the desert and created a world of his own where he was the resplendent sun. He chose the sun as his emblem.

Sanat and I stood outside the gates for a long time, apparently studying the architecture of the palace and the statues, but in reality thinking of the glorious reign of one who had said "I am the State." Was he boasting when he said so? One cannot but ponder. He was the very embodiment of the time-spirit that was bent upon raising France to the highest height. Democratisation of the nation's power and wealth could come later, the time was not yet ripe. It was not the time for dispersion and distribution. It was the time of growth and concentration, and the splendid outburst of the French genius. A nucleus was needed around which France could grow and rise to realise her highest destiny. It must be added that the King and France played their parts to perfection. What they achieved was something never seen before. All European courts imitated the court of France. French became the court language throughout Europe. The court of Louis XIV dazzled everyone. The other European courts even emulated its extravagances. France and French became two magic names synonymous with elegance, refinement and brilliance. A wonderful chapter of French history was played out in the Palace of Versailles.

The theory of Divine Rights of Kings rose to its acme in France. It was a hard necessity, Rousseau and Voltaire would have their say later. This was the time of Bossuet and Locke and Saint Simon. Great must France be even if for a while it meant the neglect of other interests of the nation. Kant and Hegel will soon come to clarify the conception of the word State, to give the picture of the Spirit's eternal

march towards its unfolding and its fulfilment. For the time being, in France, the King and the State were identical.

*

We had to buy two tickets to enter the palace. One gave us permission to wander about the palace in general and to see the Art Galleries. The second ticket was a permit to visit the private apartments of the Royal Family. So for the next three hours we roamed about from room to room, and hall to hall in sheer wonderment at what we actually saw and, half the time, absorbed in thought trying to imagine the life that had gone on in these halls and rooms three centuries ago. There were innumerable rooms decorated as they had been during the Bourbon Kings. And they say that the Committee in charge of the palace had left no stone unturned to bring back pieces of furniture, clocks, and other things that had been stolen during the time of disturbances. These rooms were exquisitely furnished, and made even more interesting by the comments of the men stationed there to guard the rooms. It should take a person at least fifteen minutes to see all that there is in a room. Alas, we could spare only two or three minutes. This splendid show-piece, this wonderful exhibition, which rulers and monarchs throughout Europe wanted to copy and were unable to do so exactly, and which made them bow down to its creator in awe and veneration, was there still to dazzle people even after three centuries.

Were the halls silent? Were the rooms empty? Was not the Grand Monarch there, surrounded by his lords and ladies, speaking exquisite French, displaying polished manners and remarkable wit. As in Mayfair in London, Louis XIV had gathered around him the famous beauties and the greatest intellects and hitherto unknown and brilliant raconteurs. Did you feel someone brush past you in glittering brocade, or airy tulle, or shimmering chiffon, with soft laughter, leaving behind a trail of some enchanting perfume? Did you not see someone bend down in magnificent gesture, picking up a handkerchief that had fallen from the King's hand? They were all there and I remember every detail with the "glory and the freshness of a dream".

Then we came to the world-famous Hall of Mirrors. It was an enormous rectangular hall so large that people standing on the other side looked small as if we were looking at them through the opposite side of a binocular. The inner wall of the hall was covered with mirrors, perhaps there were many joined together so finely that the joints were absolutely invisible. The Hall of Mirrors is something unique as everyone knows and it does not call for much description, I suppose. There are velvet seats near the windows and one can sit there and imagine how the very distinguished people who had gathered there by the invitation of the Roi Soleil conversed. France was giving a lesson to the world how to go through a really royal dinner party or a majestic banquet.

The garden was beautiful and anyone who has seen the Tuileries gardens can

easily guess that the Versailles gardens too were created by Monsieur Le Notre. The faraway woods looked luscious and the green tree-tops swayed gently in the soft breeze, inviting us to pay a visit. The countryside near the village of Versailles had been bare and devoid of woods or even trees. But the Grand Monarch wanted a wood of his own. Monsieur Le Notre chose a site for a private wood for the King. It would take twenty-five years for the saplings to grow into a proper wood. The King would have nothing of it, he wanted a wood in five years. Monsieur had no option but to go to the hills, uproot huge trees and bring them to Versailles. There you are!—in five years the King's private wood was ready. The line "She was a phantom of delight" was written for a person. But standing at the window in the Hall of Mirrors looking out towards the wood this line passed through my mind.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

TWO WORLDS

WHERE nothing is remembered,
 Everything being unimportant.
 On the beach
 Footprints are made—only to be lost.
 Smooth sea, short tides,
 No breakers nor a surf,
 Quiet waters, few waves
 The only sign of life.

There is an undercurrent in one world
 Of unease and despair,
 Gloom is in the air,
 Calm is a dark foreboding.
 In the other
 There is joy in the undercurrent,
 A soft calm joy
 Of low rhythm—soft beat.
 Drums of Ananda softly whisper
 And grow in strength—slowly, slowly.
 The calm is of tomorrow
 Unknown, sweet, filled with faith.

Is one the obverse of the other—
 The coin of 'Tamas' with a double face?
 Or is the second a release from the first world
 And a sign of Grace?

D. PALANDE

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle—Thirty-Sixth Number. (Sri Aurobindo Society Annual—1980) Pages: 96.

THE reader feels grateful to the Sri Aurobindo Society for the publication of Annuals such as the present one under review, wherein he finds a chance to have a better understanding of Sri Aurobindo and His works, for the Divine Mother remarked once, "Who can understand Sri Aurobindo? He is as vast as the universe and his teaching is infinite."

A message of Sri Aurobindo quoted here, an extract from one of his letters—"It is certainly a mistake to bring down the light by force—to pull it down. The supramental cannot be taken by storm, when the time is ready it will open of itself—but first there is a great deal to be done and that must be done patiently and without haste"—was distributed by the Mother for the Darshan on 24 November 1965. 'Humanity and the New Creation', the first of eleven solid and enlightening articles in this Annual, is the conversation the Mother had on 27 November 1965 apropos of the message.

'Letters on Yoga', 'Free-Will and Determinism', 'Yogic Psychology', and 'Art', all of them by Sri Aurobindo, follow. The Wheel of Maya, the Divine Will and the sense of Free-Will take a different and at the same time appropriate meaning in the words of Sri Aurobindo. The dreams and the visions of the Sadhaks are interestingly explained. The reader understands that "Nature and ego are not all we are; there is the free-soul, the Purusha" and that "5 is power. It is the full power of aspiration." What has modern psychology done? What can yogic psychology ("An examination of the nature and movements of consciousness as they are revealed to us by the processes and results of yoga") do? What is conscience and what is its relation to existence? Several such questions are answered. If you are of the opinion that "Art is creation", Sri Aurobindo on the contrary opines: "All art is interpretation. Creation is a misnomer; nothing in this world is created, all is manifested. All exists previously in the mind of the knower." He makes a distinction between the lower type of European art (reproducing what the eye sees) and the higher type (reproducing what the soul sees) and another type of European Art attained by imagination. Finally, the information given to the reader about how our Indian art is different from the European is noteworthy.

'Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo' and the fourth instalment of 'Conversations with Sri Aurobindo' by Nirodbaran and A.B. respectively acquaint us with varied topics of interest. Most of Nirodbaran's questions are personal and A.B.'s conversations make a delightful study of religion, culture, philosophy and castes.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar in his stimulating essay 'The Yogic Approach to Management' deals with his subject in a novel way by drawing references from Kafka, Sri Aurobindo and the Gita. Though the title might attract only those interested in eco-

nomics and management, one could always read for the sheer beauty of Iyengar's language.

Coming to the best literary piece in the Annual, one cannot but admire Sisirkumar Ghose's fascinating study of the great Seer's poetry. He discusses the eight basic characteristic qualities of 'Aurobindean' poetry and aptly illustrates them. Poetasters who call themselves 'eminent bards' by writing only 'prose cutlets' should read the essay 'Sri Aurobindo: Poet of Being', for here we find genuine answers in the light of Sri Aurobindo to questions like 'What is poetry? Who is a poet? How does one know that a man is a poet?' Undoubtedly this essay is a landmark in the study of 'Aurobindean' Poetry.

Prema Nandakumar shows us the treasures of Indian literature and admirably discusses the living two *utthasas* (Ramayana and Mahabharata) and the three major religious literatures (Hindu, Jain and Buddhist). Her essay "Sri Aurobindo's Interpretation of Indian Culture: The Veda" shows her proficiency in world-literature.

The last in the list 'Human Language and the Creative Word' by Peter Heehs is a study of how Sri Aurobindo probes and unravels the mystery of the origin and the true nature of language. The beliefs of people regarding the origin of language and the theories propounded by modern linguists are brought to light. The linguistic analysis of the word 'wolf' is thought-provoking. Indeed, the true relation of words and their meanings could have been established, had Sri Aurobindo been able to complete his linguistic research.

As the annual gives a good deal of new information, it is good enough to find a place in the very shelf which is graced by the works of Sri Aurobindo.

P. RAJA

Sri Aurobindo on Yoga—Edited by *Dr. Indra Sen*. Published by Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi. Pages: 135. Price: Rs. 8.

"MAN is born free. But everywhere he is in chains." These words of Rousseau are more applicable to men of modern times. Tension prevails everywhere and not one in a hundred is happy. Problems crop up every day and stress and strains are what we face hour-to-hour. To put an end to our mental and physical problems Sage Patanjali, more than two thousand years ago, advised that by understanding and practising the eight limbs of yoga, "man can conquer all the impediments which come in the way of health and happiness. And by seeing the light of knowledge through its practices, he gains intellectual stability and peace—within and without."

Of all modern Indian yogis, Sri Aurobindo—poet, critic, scholar, thinker, humanist and nationalist—is the most significant and the most interesting. While all other so-called yogis are not fatigued of serving stale bread in new plates, Sri Aurobindo, to borrow his own words, "a metaphysician doubled with a yogi", developed a new system of yoga called the 'INTEGRAL YOGA' and he outlines the

principles of his yoga in his monumental work, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, which “lays bare the inmost secret techniques of spiritual progression—of the way of action, way of knowledge and the way of love. No philosophical or academic synthesis of the different systems of yoga is aimed at but rather the discovery of a true synthetic key to integral self-fulfilment.”

The book under review is a work of compilation by a famous disciple and commentator Dr. Indra Sen. It can conveniently be divided into two parts. The first part talks about the various kinds of yogas and most of the passages are culled profusely from Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

If “All life is yoga”, what then is the real significance of yoga? What is its relation to life? “Yoga is the union of that which has become separated in the play of the universe with its own true self, origin and universality.” The excerpts found under the title ‘The Yoga in Man’ further enlightens us on the ‘Spirit’ which is “the image of the Lord of the Yoga; mind and body are the means” and on the spiritual life in India for the last thousand years and more. The chapters on ‘Hathayoga’, ‘Rajayoga’ and the Triple path of ‘Jnana, Bhakti and Karma’ examine the schools that are Vedantic in their principle. “All yoga proceeds in its method by three principles of practice. 1. Purification, 2. Concentration and 3. Liberation.” The aims of these schools, their seekings and their chief processes are all explained and the reader finds no difficulty in deciphering their meaning. While applying the same principles, in explaining the ‘Tantra’, he points out the difference between the other schools and the Tantric school. In all the lord of the yoga is the Purusha, while in Tantra it is rather Prakriti. The next chapter throws light on the Gita and its yoga and it is followed by ‘INTEGRAL YOGA’—“the system of yoga developed by Sri Aurobindo in his quest for Man's further evolution”.

“The passage from the lower to the higher is the aim of Yoga; and this passage may effect itself by the rejection of the lower and escape into the higher—the ordinary viewpoint—or by the transformation of the lower and its elevation to the higher nature.” This is the aim of an Integral Yoga. The three outstanding features of this action of the higher are explicated and the subtle differences between the other yogas and his Integral Yoga are drawn. Transformation of nature, The Triple Transformation and The Psychic Being are all elucidated. The aim of this Integral Yoga, its functions and performances are dealt with in the last chapter; ‘The Practice of Integral Yoga.’ Finally we understand that the yoga of love—if it is a love which is one with God-Knowledge—will give us the highest potential force for spiritual largeness and unity and freedom

‘The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo’, the first of the four essays that form the second part of this book, is an inviting study of yoga. The author analyses the various forms of yogas and later the integral yoga which stresses “the need of mobilising the normal resources of personality”. In short this essay is a nutshell commentary on Sri Aurobindo's thousand-page books, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Life Divine*. Since the paths of Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother have been the same from the beginning, the Mother's own writings: *Prayers and Meditations, On Education, Four*

Austerities and Four Liberations and *Flowers and their Messages*, constitute a powerful scheme of the Sadhana of the Integral Yoga. Dr Indra Sen in his second essay 'Special Emphasis of the Mother' surveys the works of the Mother and concludes saying, "The Mother's Integral Yoga and Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga are identical." Then there follows the very useful 'A Schematic Representation of the Integral Yoga'. The last essay 'The Ideal of Physical Education' stresses that knowledge about Yoga is not sufficient but daily persistent practice alone can help one face the turmoils of life with steadiness and stability. It enunciates the importance of Physical Education, the proper aim of which is the "growth and development of the body so as to make it a conscious participant in the full life of the integral personality".

The book is a tremendously important one in the field of yoga. Even those who have not even heard the word 'yoga' will find here ample scope to understand it clearly. Skilfully edited and enchantingly expository, this book will forever remain green in the reader's memory. Finally, it will encourage the readers to go deeper into the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

P. RAJA

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