

# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JULY 1980

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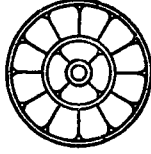
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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All correspondence to be addressed to:

MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry - 605 002, India

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Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR

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Vol. XXXII

No. 7

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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### AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

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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.

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## THE MOTHER ON QUIETNESS

THE more a person is quiet in front of all occurrences, equal in all circumstances, and keeps a perfect mastery of himself and remains peaceful in the presence of whatever happens, the more he has progressed towards the goal.

The only thing you have to do is to remain quiet, undisturbed, solely turned towards the Divine; the rest is in His hands.

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

It is only in quietness and peace that one can know what is the best thing to do.

The true Power is always quiet. Restlessness, agitation, impatience are the signs of weakness and imperfection.

## **THE MOTHER'S PLAN FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF THE ASHRAM**

ALL my effort is towards realising in the world as much truth as actual circumstances will allow; and with the increase of truth, the welfare and happiness of all will necessarily increase.

Differences of caste and class have no truth for me; all that counts is individual value. My aim is to create a big family in which it will be possible for each one to fully develop his capacities and express them. Each one will have his place and occupation in accordance with his capacities and in a relation of goodwill and brotherhood.

As a consequence of such a family organisation there will be no need of remuneration or wages. Work should not be a means of earning one's livelihood; its purpose should be twofold; first to discover one's nature and capacity for action, and, secondly, in proportion to one's physical means and moral and intellectual aptitude, to give service to the family to which one belongs and to whose welfare it is but proper to contribute, as it is proper for the family to provide for the real needs of each of its members.

To give concrete form to this ideal under the present circumstances of life, my idea is to build a kind of city accommodating at the outset about two thousand persons. It will be built according to the most modern plans, meeting all the most up-to-date requirements of hygiene and public health. It will have not only residential houses, but also gardens and sportsgrounds for physical culture. Each family will be lodged in a separate house; bachelors will be grouped according to their occupations and affinities.

Nothing necessary for life will be forgotten. Kitchens equipped in the most modern hygienic way will supply equally to all simple and healthy food, assuring the energy necessary for the proper maintenance of the body. They will function on a co-operative basis of work in common and of collaboration.

In the matter of education, what is necessary is to arrange for the moral and intellectual instruction and development of all, children and adults: various schools, technical instruction in different vocations, classes for music and dance, a cinema hall where educational films will be shown, a lecture hall, a library, a reading room, varied physical education, a sportsground and so on.

Each one can choose the kind of activity that is most suitable to his nature and will receive the required training. Even small gardens will be provided where those who like cultivation can grow flowers, fruits and vegetables.

In the matter of health, there will be regular medical visits, a hospital, a dispensary, a nursing home for the segregation of contagious cases. A department of hygiene will have the exclusive function of inspecting all public and private buildings to see that the most rigorous rules of cleanliness are observed everywhere and by all. As natural adjuncts to this department public baths and common laundries will be

put at the disposal of everyone.

Finally, big stores will be set up where one can find all the small "extras" which give life variety and pleasantness and which one will get against "coupons" that will be given in recompense for especially notable achievement in work or conduct.

I shall not give a long description of the organisation and the working of the institution, although everything in it to the smallest details has already been foreseen.

It goes without saying that for admission to live in this ideal place the essential conditions that need to be fulfilled are good character, good conduct, honest, regular and efficient work and a general goodwill.

10 July 1954

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## THY HANDS OF GLORY

THY hands of Grace have ever led me on;  
The storms and tempests have all come and gone.  
Happy like a god I sing Thy glorious name,  
Drunk with the wine of dream-begotten flame.

I seek no favour, never, and I fear not  
The angry frown and fret of fate distraught.  
When the dark clouds gather and loudly threaten,  
Shelter I find at Thy feet, my safe and splendid Haven.

Sweet Mother, in my heart's white joyous gleam  
I see Thee and know that because of Thee I am.  
I am Thy child and Thine alone, enfolded by Thy Power,  
Waiting on Thy Divine gesture each golden hour.

A. VENKATARANGA

# NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

## THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of June 1980)

May 10, 1935

*Mother, I have again the same chronic trouble. At Pranam I felt, that you were serious with me and the reason was, I thought, you did not like my comparing the sadhaks in the way I did yesterday. I have no intention of belittling anyone.*

Rubbish! Mother did not think anything about it at all. Why the hell or heaven or why on earth or why the unearthly should she be displeased? You all seem to think of the Mother as living in a sort of daylong and nightlong simmering cauldron of displeasure about nothing and anything and everything under the sun. Lord! what a queer idea!

*I had compared your behaviour, mentally, with others and said to myself: "If such and such a person goes on doing this and that almost all the time of the day (I have S particularly in mind), still Mother is Grace herself with her.*

And the same persons make comparisons of Mother's behaviour with others, and get into fits of revolt and *abhimāna*, and what not! What a mad Ashram!

*I feel these formations are not true but I can't throw them away.*

Why not, I should like to know?

*But this resistance must go.*

I quite agree with you.

*If I can't love you, give myself to you, of what use is the sadhana? For mukti? I have no appetite for such mukti. Ramakrishna used to say, "I have no objection to give liberation but I will not willingly give pure bhakti."*

Meaning? But what is *shuddha* bhakti then?

*But even if you are serious, I don't know why I can't take it calmly and in the right spirit.*



Quite so!

*You have no personal interest to be serious. It is for my good alone.*

Not at all. It is simply the vital's imagination that the Mother is serious because of its *tamas*. There is not the least truth in it.

*I understand all this but the emotion gets the upper hand. And you say I have a slow, deliberate mental strength!*

The "emotion" is not the mind.

*ƒ says that in many cases where you were not in the least serious and smiled and smiled he had the after-feeling that you were serious with him.*

That has happened at least a thousand times. Even the Mother has seen somebody come with a gloomy face and she has poured out smiles in a river and blessed him in a most emphatic manner only to get a letter "You are displeased with me; you did not smile. You blessed me with only one finger: what wrong have I done? How can I live if you behave with me like this?" And perhaps an intimation that the outraged sadhak or sadhika is going away or will drop herself (this is generally a feminine menace) into the sea.

I am not exaggerating in the least—it is literally true.

And supposing the Mother happens to be serious in reality? What then? Are there not a thousand reasons in this world for being serious,—why must it be displeasure with the sadhak? After all Yoga itself, life itself is a rather serious affair.

*But, Mother, I don't really understand this, because how can one be so blind as not to see the smile on your face, or seeing it mistake it for seriousness?*

I don't know how, but "one" does it and not only one, but many. It is the minority who have not done it.

*I want your sword, and not the pen only, to sever these impressions at their very root.*

The sword is at your service, but for heaven's sake use it.

May 11, 1935

*I thought that since homopsychics proceed from the heart, their knowledge aspect will be limited.*

But Ramakrishna was a homo-psychicus with no atom of intellectuality—yet he had plenty of knowledge.

*Mother says in the Prayers: "There is a knowledge which surpasses all other knowledge" which means knowledge of the Divine. In that case, psychics, or others who realise the Divine, will have the same width, the same vastness of knowledge.*

Certainly, there is nothing to prevent it.

*By the higher knowledge, I understand, you mean spiritual knowledge about Atman, Brahman, etc. But can one deal with the problems of ordinary life with mastery by this spiritual knowledge? For instance, if I am asked to criticise Shaw or other literary figures, how am I to do it with this knowledge alone?*

One can. What has all that to do with spiritual knowledge? Criticism of Shaw is not a part of Brahma-jnana. If one has to do it, one does it with the mind, so long as one does not get into intuitive Overmind or Supermind—then one does it with those. This is quite another matter—it has nothing to do with the main question which is about the spiritual realisation—through love or through knowledge.

*I have been concentrating on both the head- and the heart-centres. In meditation the being falls silent, but the head gets heavy and I feel some working going on there. I hope I am not going to get knowledge only, because this is the centre for knowledge; I want bhakti and love too.*

When things come in this order the head opens up first and the heart afterwards—finally all the centres. So what is there to be worried about? If you are satisfied only with peace, knowledge and mukti, then perhaps the heart-centre may open to that only. But if you want the love, then the descending Power and Light will work for that also. So cheer up and don't get into a state of pother with imaginary difficulties.

*Sitabala was taking Lithiné according to your suggestion. During the last few days the pain which subsides by Lithiné has come back. Shall I try my mental knowledge or leave her to the spiritual?*

At least use your mental k. to know what is the matter with her.

May 13, 1935

*Till the other day all patients with stomach ulcers were treated with soda bicarb, mag. carb, calcium carb and bismuth.*

Very dangerous. Suchi got his stomach curled [coiled?] with these things—had to be operated upon.

*I have found a patent drug Biomucine from Pavitra for ulcers, to be followed with a strict regime.*

What is inside the Bio or the mucine? With strict regime the patient would have to stop work, I suppose, at which she will kick.

*Amal's right eye is almost cured, but the left one refuses and has become worse again.*

The injection also was hopeless. Then it must be a purely local affair?

*We are really getting tired and hopeless.*

(Sri Aurobindo underlining the word *hopeless*:) That is a good word. To be hopeless means to have no hop left in you.

*May 14, 1935*

*I couldn't make out one word in your answer. Even Nolini failed. I thought you could fill up the gap from memory.*

It might have been just possible for me after some concentration and appeal to the supramental.

*It seems another victory has been won by you. Some people saw red-crimson lights around the Mother a few days back.*

??? Great Heavens? which? who? But there is nothing new in that.

It was coming down before November 1934. But afterwards all the damned mud arose and it stopped. But there are red-crimson lights. One is supramental Divine Love. The other is supramental physical Force.

*I am reading your "Intuitive Mind". Can you not release that manuscript in the meantime?*

Which blessed manuscript? I have a hundred! I don't recall anything about Intuitive Mind.

May 15, 1935

*I spoke of the manuscript (typed letter) on Avatar, on which you have written a lot, you said. But if it is among hundreds of manuscripts, there is hardly any chance of rescuing it.*

Good Lord, but the Avatar Correspondence belongs to the distant past, what is the use of resuscitating it now?

*What is this psychic fire you write about in The Synthesis of Yoga?*

The psychic fire is the fire of aspiration, purification and tapasya which comes from the psychic being. It is not the psychic being, but a power of the psychic being.

*Allow me to congratulate you on the perfect poetry of your revised chapter VI of The Synthesis. It is a veritable 'flowing river of gold'. Is it supramental language or can it be still more heightened or perfected?*

Supramental language it is not, because no such thing has manifested as yet. As I have no recollection of this chapter, I can't say what it is or whether it can be heightened or perfected.

May 17, 1935

Nirod,

I can't find your microscopic note, so I write separately.

How do you hope to get a better being next time if you don't improve what you have in this life? How can you expect a better being to crop up all of itself without rhyme or reason? So buck up and do what is necessary *Now*...

The Avatar letter was not finished, I think, so I would have still to write something and it is far from my mind now. Perhaps one day.

17-5-1935

SRI AUROBINDO

May 18, 1935

*What a hell of a time you left me in, Sir! The same emptiness, dryness and a negative pressure and one of the longest periods, too!*

It is the confounded vital that does that when it is asked to change itself. The vital is a disciple of Gandhi as far as passive resistance goes—a master of non-cooperation.

*It came after I took a strong resolution to do some serious sadhana. I wonder if the light of the sun is in view.*

It is perhaps the strong resolution that brought out the resistance in a mass. That often happens. If you stick to it, then the light of the sun comes through.

*May 21, 1935*

*It seems a great pressure is being brought down and many are disappearing, beginning with T and ending with K.*

K has not disappeared. He has gone over there to enable D to come here during the vacation, for T would be otherwise alone there. He intends to come back — provided of course T does not capture him and put him in her pocket — if she has one.

*May 22, 1935*

*To patient X shall we give Cascara or some salt for a few days? I hesitate to doctor on her without your approval.*

Cascara you can try. Salt is not good as it may turn to colique hepaticque.

---

## HARMONY

You are the harmony of all things!  
 In the blending of the flowers' beauteous shades,  
 In the subtle mingling tones of great sonatas,  
 In the gloss of butterfly-wings the delicate colour-grades.

Harmony in nature of birdsong and seasons—  
 Gradual change of colouring of leaves each year,  
 The voice of our heart and Your sweet reply—  
 The yearning and Your inward contact, so dear!

Then why the disharmony between human hearts?  
 Like green foliage stolen—bare trees left forlorn—  
 Hearts lonely and bitterness comes all too soon—  
 Oh Divine, grant us a little harmony, reborn!

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

# THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

## NEWLY-WRITTEN OR CORRECTED MATTER

*(Continued from the issue of June 1980)*

*(The revision of Chapter VII consists of changes and additions to every paragraph, which give more precision to the statements. The footnote is new. The revision is relatively light except in the final paragraph. All but one phrase is from the earlier period.)*

### CHAPTER VII

#### The Character of English Poetry—I

OF all the modern European tongues the English language—I think this may be said without any serious doubt, — has produced, not always the greatest or most perfect, but at least the most rich and naturally powerful poetry, the most lavish of energy and innate genius. The unfettered play of poetic energy and power has been here the most abundant and brought forth the most constantly brilliant fruits. And yet it is curious to note that English poetry and literature have been a far less effective force in the shaping of European culture than the poetry and literature of other tongues inferior actually in natural poetic and creative energy. At least they have had to wait till quite a recent date before they produced any potent effect and even then their direct influence was limited and not always durable.

A glance will show how considerable has been this limitation. The poetic mind of Greece and Rome has pervaded and largely shaped the whole artistic production of Europe; Italian poetry of the great age has thrown on some part of it at least a stamp only less profound; French prose and poetry—but the latter in a much less degree,—have helped more than any other literary influence to form the modern turn of the European mind and its mode of expression; the shortlived outbursts of creative power in the Spain of Calderon and the Germany of Goethe exercised an immediate, a strong, though not an enduring influence; the newly created Russian literature has been, though more subtly, among the most intense of recent cultural forces. But if we leave aside Richardson and Scott and, recently, Dickens in fiction and in poetry the very considerable effects of the belated continental discovery of Shakespeare and the vehement and sudden wave of the Byronic influence, which did much to enforce the note of revolt and of a half sentimental, half sensual pessimism which is even now one of the strongest shades in the literary tone of modern Europe,—to the present day Shakespeare and Byron are the only two great names of English poetry which are generally familiar on the continent and have had a real vogue,—we find the literature of the English tongue and especially its poetry flowing in a large side-stream, always re-

ceiving much from the central body of European culture but returning upon it in comparison very little. This insularity, not of reception but of reaction, is a marked phenomenon and calls for explanation.

If we look for the causes,—for such a paucity of influence cannot, certainly, be put down to any perversity or obtuseness in the general mind of Europe, but must be due to some insufficiency or serious defect in the literature,—we shall find, I think, if we look with other than English-trained eyes, that there is even in this rich and vigorous poetry abundant cause for the failure. English poetry is powerful but it is imperfect, strong in spirit, but uncertain and tentative in form; it is extraordinarily stimulating, but not often quite satisfying. It aims high, but its success is not as great as its effort. Especially, its imaginative force exceeds its thought-power; it has indeed been hardly at all a really great instrument of poetic thought-vision; it has not dealt fruitfully with life. Its history has been more a succession of individual poetic achievements than a constant national tradition; in the mass it has been a series of poetical revolutions without any strong inner continuity. That is to say that it has had no great self-recognising idea or view of life expressive of the spiritual attitude of the nation or powerful to determine from an early time its own sufficient artistic forms. But it is precisely the possession of such a self-recognising spiritual attitude and the attainment of a satisfying artistic form for it which make the poetry of a nation a power in the world's general culture. For that which recognises its self will most readily be recognised by others. And, again, that which attains the perfect form of its own innate character, will be most effective in forming others and leave its stamp in the building of the general mind of humanity.

One or two examples will be sufficient to show the vast difference. No poetry has had so powerful an influence as Greek poetry; no poetry is, I think, within its own limits so perfect and satisfying. The limits indeed are marked and even, judged by the undulating many-sidedness and wideness of the modern mind, narrow; but on its own lines this poetry works with a flawless power and sufficiency. From beginning to end it dealt with life from one large viewpoint; it worked always from the inspired reason, used a luminous intellectual observation and harmonised all it did by the rule of an enlightened and chastened aesthetic sense; whatever changes overtook it, it never departed from this motive and method which are the very essence of the Greek spirit. And of this motive it was very conscious and by its clear recognition of it and fidelity to it it was able to achieve an artistic beauty and sufficiency of expressive form which affect us like an easily accomplished miracle and which have been the admiration of after ages. Even the poetry of the Greek decadence preserved enough of this power to act as a shaping influence on Latin literature.

French poetry is much more limited than the Greek, much less powerful in inspiration. For it deals with life from the standpoint not of the inspired reason, but of the clear-thinking intellect, not of the enlightened aesthetic sense, but of emotional sentiment. These are its two constant powers; the one gives it its brain-stuff, the other its poetical fervour and grace and charm and appeal. Throughout all the changes of the

last century, in spite of apparent cultural revolutions, the French spirit has remained in its poetry faithful to these two motives which are of its very essence, and because of this fidelity it has always or almost always found for its work a satisfying and characteristic form. To that combination of a clear and strong motive and a satisfying form it owes the immense influence it has exercised from time to time on other European literatures. The cultural power of the poetry of other tongues may be traced to similar causes. But what has been the distinct spirit and distinguishing form of English poetry? Certainly, there is an English spirit which could not fail to be reflected in its poetry; but, not being clearly self-conscious, it is reflected obscurely and confusedly, and it has been at war within itself, followed a fluctuation of different motives and never succeeded in bringing about between them a conciliation and fusion. Therefore its form has suffered; it has had indeed no native and characteristic principle of form which would be, through all changes, the outward reflection of a clear self-recognising spirit.

The poetry of a nation is only one side of its self-expression and its characteristics may be best understood if we look at it in relation to the whole mental and dynamic effort of the people. If we so look at the general contribution of the English nation to human life and culture, the eye is arrested by some remarkable lacunae. These are especially profound in the arts: English music is a zero, English sculpture an unfilled void, English architecture only a little better;<sup>1</sup> English painting, illustrated by a few great names, has been neither a great artistic tradition nor a powerful cultural force and merits only a casual mention by the side of the rich achievement of Italy, Spain, France, Holland, Belgium. When we come to the field of thought we get a mixed impression like that of great mountain eminences towering out of a very low and flat plain. We find great individual philosophers, but no great philosophical tradition, two or three remarkable thinkers, but no high fame for thinking, a great multitude of the most famous names in science, but no national scientific culture. Still in these fields there has been remarkable accomplishment and the influence on European thought has been frequently considerable and sometimes capital. But when finally we turn to the business of practical life, there is an unqualified preeminence: in mechanical science and invention, in politics, in commerce and industry, in colonisation, travel, exploration, in the domination of earth and the exploitation of its riches England has been till late largely, sometimes entirely the world's leader, the creator of its forms and the shaper of its motives.

This peculiar distribution of the national capacities finds its root in certain racial characteristics. We have first the dominant Anglo-Saxon strain quickened, lightened and given force, power and initiative by the Scandinavian and Celtic elements. This mixture has made a national mind remarkably dynamic and practical, with all the Teutonic strength, patience, industry, but liberated from the Teutonic heaviness and crudity, yet retaining enough not to be too light of balance or too sensitive to the shocks of life; therefore, a nation easily first in practical intelligence and practical

<sup>1</sup> Outside the Gothic, and even there there is not the continental magnificence of the past's riches.



dealing with the facts and difficulties of life. Not, be it noted, by any power of clear intellectual thought or by force of imagination or mental intuition, but rather by a strong vital instinct, a sort of tentative dynamic intuition. No spirituality, but a robust ethical turn; no innate power of the thought and the word, but a strong turn for action; no fine play of emotion or quickness of sympathy, but an abundant energy and force of will. This is one element of the national mind; the other is the submerged, half-insistent Celtic spirit, gifted with precisely the opposite qualities, inherent spirituality, the gift of the word, the rapid and brilliant imagination, the quick and luminous intelligence, the strong emotional force and sympathy, the natural love of the things of the mind and still more of those beyond the mind, left to it from an ancient mystic tradition and an old forgotten culture, forgotten in its mind, but still flowing in its blood, still vibrant in its subtler nerve-channels. In life a subordinate element, modifying the cruder Anglo-Saxon characteristics, breaking across them or correcting their excess, sometimes refining and toning, sometimes exaggerating the energy of the Norman and the Scandinavian strength and drive, we may perhaps see it emerging at its best, least hampered, least discouraged, in English poetry, coming there repeatedly to the surface and then working with a certain force and vehement but still embarrassed power, like an imprisoned spirit let out for a holiday but within not quite congenial bounds and with an unadaptable companion. From the ferment of these two elements, from the vigorous but chaotic motion created by their fusion and their clash, arise both the greatness and the limitations of English poetry.

(*To be continued*)

SRI AUROBINDO

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by

**K. D. Sethna**

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## A LYRIC BY NIRODBARAN

### WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

IN the red-white garden of my vision  
A myriad flowers glow:  
Each is fired with thy heavenly mission  
Row on burning row.

Thou hast blown thy Spirit's miracle-breath  
On  
(O'er) their ivory seeds:  
in  
Now they blossom (on) the valley of death  
Dawn  
(Gloam)-winged dewy beads.

thy  
When (a) zephyr from some luminous deep  
Flows with rings of light,  
Their soft tresses in (a) dream-woven sleep  
Murmur in the night.

*One foot too much  
5½ = 6ft. Not very  
clear what this hangs  
on to, but it is too  
beautiful to change.*

And some cadenced foot-falls wandering they hear  
silver  
In the (mouldering) mist:  
Snow-foamed ripples of a moon-edged mere  
Gold and amethyst.

*Don't know what is a  
mouldering mist.*

*This won't do as a  
trochaic line.*

*Exceedingly beautiful.*

O (flowers,) symbols of His jewelled reverie  
ing  
Burn myriad-hued  
On  
(In) my diamond altar (like) a prophecy  
Of His solitude!

11.3.1938

Q : You must admit that I have hit this time, what ?

A : Bull's eye!

*Q* : In the last stanza, reverie and prophecy are dactyls?

*A* : If they are meant as dactyls, there is no rhyme. Otherwise, these two lines are one foot in excess. The first can be reduced to normal trochaic proportions by omitting 'flowers', the second by substituting a comma for 'like'. But what about l. 13? 'And some' could be omitted, but then it has no connection or perhaps 'Thy' instead of 'And some?'

14.3.1938

*Q* : I haven't got the metre in some of your corrections in the poem. I have done the regular one in this way:

*In the red-white garden of my vision—  
a full 5 feet.*

*A* : Of course. I presume that the scansion is five foot trochees + 3 foot with the option of a full foot or half foot in the last foot. This is the usual practice in trochaic metre.

I don't know how you intended to scan your poem, but that was the only possible scheme that any English prosodist would read into it. The occasional excess syllable in the beginning is also allowed in trochaic verse. Of course some trochaic poems are quite regular and reject this license, but it is still admissible and usual.

*Q* : Now, in these lines

*O symbols of His jewelled reverie*

*On my diamond altar, a prophesy—*

*if the scansion is like this, the 'cy' is half-short. In that case do you shift the accent in prophecy?*

*A* : No. I don't see how shifting the accent in prophecy (quite impossible) would make it better. There would be no rhyme. As *écy* can't rhyme with *rie*, but only with "greasy" or "fleecy" and the whole thing would read like an Italian talking English. I take "altar a" as a dactyl—a light dactyl can sometimes replace a trochee.

## NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

AWAKE us, Truth, to Thy great quest,  
Heaven and earth to unite—  
Upon our mother's soil to be blessed  
With a life of shadowless light!

Shake from us, Love, all petty drowse,  
Kindle Thy intensest fire!  
The mightiest soul-passion rouse,  
The crown of God-desire:

A Spirit-surge whose golden wings  
In Matter's depths are unfurled  
For the alchemic flight that brings  
On earth a deathless world.

Teach us the superhuman's art,  
To live transparently  
With a pure body, mind and heart  
Radiant Divinity.

A sun-eye make our mind, whose sight's  
All-round self-lucency  
Beholds each thing as a play of lights  
Mirroring infinity.

Attune our heart to eternity's  
Love-beats immense, sublime,  
Whose rapturous pulsation is  
God laughing space and time.

Focus our life-force flickerless  
To echo, hyaline,  
Vast rhythms of cosmic consciousness  
Dancing the Word Divine.

Perfect us with Thy magic rays  
Till even our body's sod  
Can bear the oriflamme-embrace  
And sun-fire kiss of God.

ALEXANDER BRODT

## “SEVEN DOUBTS”

HERE is my attempt to answer your “seven doubts”.

1. It is according to Sri Aurobindo that Sri Krishna is known to have revealed what you designate “the plane of Purushottama” in the Gita. I venture to suggest that he could disclose Sri Krishna’s ultimate status because he was himself Sri Krishna in a past birth: the status of an Uttama (supreme) Purusha beyond either the Kshara (mutable) or the Akshara (immutable) Purusha. The existence of Purushottama was part not only of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophical knowledge but also of his own experience. Both he and Sri Krishna were Purushottama incarnate, the latter using, in consonance with the need of the time, what Sri Aurobindo has called the Overmind, the highest Cosmic Consciousness, as his instrument of manifestation while the former used the Supermind, the transcendent creative Truth-Consciousness whose hour in spiritual history has struck now. The Supermind is directly an aspect of Purushottama, the Overmind is indirectly so. To divide Purushottama from the Supermind as something higher is a mistake.

2. Every Avatar has a special divine aspect to incarnate and a special plane to employ as his instrument of manifestation. It was Sri Krishna’s purpose, according to Sri Aurobindo, to manifest the Bliss-Self, the Anādamaya, through the Overmind. Other Avatars had other purposes. An intense expression of the Bliss-Self through their particular planes of manifestation was not a part of the purpose of any of them who came before Sri Krishna.

This is not in disagreement with Sri Aurobindo’s evolutionary vision that there is a progressive incarnation, each Avatar descending from a higher plane than his predecessor, even though all the Avatars may be regarded as coming ultimately from the Bliss-Self.

3. Chaitanya was, as you say, a case of possession, but in the highest sense of that word: he was possessed at intervals by Sri Krishna. Perhaps the more correct way of putting the matter would be to say: “Chaitanya was an emanation of Sri Krishna and manifested not only the Lord himself but also an extreme relationship of the psychic-emotional being in the human consciousness with the Lord.”

4. After the incarnation of the Supermind, the Bliss-Self has to be incarnated—but not necessarily in a new Avatar. The Supramental Avatar can serve in the future as the vehicle and tabernacle for the Bliss-Self because Supermind and Ananda are front and rear of the same Transcendence.

The Bliss-Self may be considered the final phase in the sense that it carries in itself the Self of Chit-Tapas and the Self of Sat, but these two Selves would not be in the fore from the beginning. They would emerge later in human history, but, again, not necessarily in another Avatar. If we like, we may count them to be further phases of the Bliss-Self.

5. The soul—Chaitya Purusha or Antaratman—in the body which is destined to hold the Avatar’s descent would feel itself essentially one with its own supreme

Jivatman counterpart but would not fuse with it in the sense of disappearing in it. Its existence as an entity is needed for the Divine's manifestation upon earth through the human individuality.

6. I don't follow your phraseology here. What is meant by "the involutory being" and by its "embodied state" or "disembodied state"? The Avataric being has a subtle form of its own and this form may be thought of as achieving its presence within the physical body in which the soul destined to receive the Avatar is itself housed.

7. I do not know Valmiki's *Ramayana* sufficiently to pronounce whether he pictures Rama as conscious of the Divine born in him from the beginning of his life. This phenomenon is not essential. The Avatar-being is, of course, present from birth, but there is no fixed rule as to when it would manifest in the outer personality. The Mother appears to have been more aware of her Avatarhood, or rather the essence of it, in her outer personality from childhood than was Sri Aurobindo in his. Still, even she went through the stages of a progressive awareness. And such stages were indispensable—along with certain human experiences—in order that there might be a manifestation of what we may term "evolutionary Avatarhood"—a type of incarnation peculiar to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother because they came to start a new race, the next step in earthly evolution, a job none of the other Avatars had come to carry out. The very idea of "evolution" as understood and expressed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in our present post-Darwinian age could not be there in the times of Rama or Krishna or any other Avataric descent.

K. D. SETHNA

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## ALL IN US...

ALL in us is like a breaking,  
A phantasm of prophetic sight  
Finding out its way to form.

Through us all the world becomes  
A glad outflowing of mystic Light,  
A crater-leap to transubstantial height.

There is this Power that no man knows,  
There is this Victory that retrospect shows  
To have cradled our world  
To possibility's haven—the manifest Unknown.

PATTI

# YOGA—LIFE—POETRY

## SOME LETTERS

YOUR letter has saddened me a great deal. But I don't feel that you have reached the rock-bottom of hopelessness. To lose your health—getting spells of giddiness and weakness, not feeling like eating, etc.—is not what the Mother expects of you. Our central joy is that we are deeply and inalienably related to her. Whether we always experience the relation or not is a secondary matter: the primary truth of our lives is that the Mother has accepted us and that, sooner or later, we shall know her living presence in us at all times. We have to learn to seek our *raison d'être* in this glorious act of grace. It is an irrevocable act and nothing should make us despair or enter a physico-psychological decline. Circumstances can occasionally be very drastic—but I remember the Mother saying that when all material props appear lost we have a clear sign that we are meant for self-dedication to the Lord. How much nearer we are to the Lord at every step—this is our principal concern. We may do our best to better our circumstances: the Mother never discouraged efforts in this direction. But failures and buffets are intended to push us more and more into the Lord's arms. They must have such a result while they last. And what you have to do to counteract your depression is to make an offering of the problems to the Mother and obtain an inner freedom from distressing preoccupation with them. Ask for guidance with intense faith and wait quietly for the answer. I am sure that you will not only gain inner peace—and, in consequence, better health—but also come into touch with the right parties. Keep an eye open for them and do whatever you can with those you already know—the people immediately involved in paving the way towards your pension and gratuity.

This is all I can say at present. In one word, my advice is: take yourself in hand like a true child of the Divine and let the deepest things come first and, from that starting-point, go all out in the external field to meet the challenges.

\*

You have sent me a quotation from Sri Aurobindo which most of us have forgotten:

For a sincere sadhaka it is necessary to be exceedingly careful about his company and environments. You can lose in a few minutes what has taken you months to gain. Contact with hostile and undesirable persons and even people of spiritual influence foreign to the integral yoga, holy places, temples and churches have an influence adverse to the working of this yoga and are a hindrance to progress.

The words were more apt when the Ashram had not expanded and variegated itself, so to speak, and started dealing more and more with the common world. But in essence they are still worth attending to and convey an important truth in all circum-

stances, especially for situations where we have an amount of choice.

You want me to tell you how best we can live up to this truth and what criteria we have to follow in deciding about persons and places. I shall touch on the problem as briefly and pointedly as I can.

People with ideas very different from ours and eager to change our outlook and mode of life—people who are immersed in the ordinary life of the senses and carry an atmosphere full of worldly desires—places that have marked old-world religious associations or are charged with the presence of a spiritual figure whose sadhana diverges very forcefully from the Aurobindonian Yoga—all these are to be avoided. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish such people and places. Then we have to use our own inner feeling. If you are left in peace after contact with people or places, you may be sure that your protective zone has not been pierced. If you become aware of subtle uncertainties about your usual attitudes and movements, it may be better to cut down the contact or strengthen your own powers of resistance.

A time may come when you have so strong a protective zone around you that nothing will affect you. You will be conscious of undesirable influences hovering at the periphery of your being—something outside you—but you will remain untouched and serene. However, it is not advisable to go on testing your own strength and safety. Keep away from whatever you clearly perceive to be out of tune with the Aurobindonian harmony of spirit and life, no matter how distantly.

When you can't avoid a certain environment, stay calm, invoke the Mother's Force and be confident of its action.

\*

Your information that "incarnadine" can be an adjective as well as a verb is welcome. It extends the possibilities of this splendid vocable. I have learnt something.

But your assertion that Sri Aurobindo has used "incarnadine" as an adjective is unacceptable. If he had done so, would I not have known and therefore refrained from criticising the phrase in your poem where the word occurs? Surely you may credit me with acquaintance with his usage. The lines of Sri Aurobindo you have alluded to, without quoting them, run:

The soul could feel into infinity cast  
Timeless God-bliss the heart incarnadine.

Merely the fact that "incarnadine" comes immediately associated with a noun does not render it adjectival. I have marked only two earlier employments of the word in English poetry and, according to me, Sri Aurobindo's is in accord with them.

The first occasion is in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather



The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
 Making the green one red. (II.2, lines 61-64)

Here also the word follows immediately a noun. But it actually goes with "will rather" and the object of "incarnadine" precedes the verb—a grammatical construction which is common to older poetry, where inversions are frequent, and which even now is legitimate for a special effect. The last half-line gives the certainty of the verb-form, proving the sense of the word to be "make red".

The next instance is in Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam. Quatrain VI ends:

'Red Wine!'—the Nightingale cries to the Rose  
 That yellow Cheek of hers t' incarnadine.

Here "to" with its "o" elided leaves us in no doubt of the verb-character of the word.

Now for Sri Aurobindo's sonnet "Evolution",<sup>1</sup> the two closing lines of which, as already quoted, are our bone of contention. The construction is difficult. The phrase "into infinity cast" is a passive past-participial one, going with "soul". The sentence can only be construed as follows if it is to have grammatical shape: "The soul, cast into infinity, could feel timeless God-bliss incarnadine the heart." In English, after "feel", as after words like "see" and "hear", one can use a present participle or simply the present-tense verb-form which is really the infinitive with "to" understood: that is, either "incarnadining" or "incarnadine" in the sentence concerned.

The line just preceding our two illustrates the present-participle use after "see":

I saw Matter illumining its parent Night.

The present-tense verb-form may be noted with "hear" in Wordsworth's "Immortality" Ode:

I hear the Echoes thro' the mountains throng...

AMAL KIRAN

<sup>1</sup> *Collected Poems* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1972), p 157.

# THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

## AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

*Those who do not know the inner sense are as men who seeing see not, hearing hear not, only to one here and there the Word desiring him like a beautifully robed wife to a husband lays open her body.*

*Rigveda X.71.4.<sup>1</sup>*

How is one to approach the *Mahābhārata* with its gigantic dimensions spreading over 100,000 slokas? Should we go along with Ludwig<sup>2</sup> to whom it is a Nature Myth, the Pandavas being the seasons and Draupadi the dark earth possessed by them in turn? Or shall we adopt the viewpoint of Lassen<sup>3</sup> according to which the epic symbolises the migration and conquests of a white race (*Pāṇḍu, Arjuna*) and its fortunate conjunction (*Subhadrā*) with the Yadavas, the names of people standing not for characters but for circumstances? We could elect to follow Dahlmann<sup>4</sup> who sees the epic as a treatise on jurisprudence (*dharmasāstra*) with Draupadi representing the perfect unity of the joint family which forms the foundation of a tribal confederacy's corporate unity. One could even go to the length of studying the *Mahābhārata* as Thadani<sup>5</sup> did: as a symbolical account of the conflicting systems of Hindu philosophy and religion. Amid this welter of conflicting views it is not surprising if many readers finally opt for R. C. Dutt's<sup>6</sup> description of the epic as "an unending morass of religious and didactic episodes, legends, tales and traditions" and, like Oldenburg,<sup>7</sup> give it up as "the most monstrous chaos".

None of these distinguished scholars have, however, bothered to study what the author of the epic, Vyāsa, has to say about his creation. Even here we come across not a single but a multiple point of view. To Brahmā, Vyāsa presents a multi-faceted view of his epic in the *Anukramanika*, slokas 63-69. It is a *Purāṇa*-compendium—

I have collected the *Purāṇas*, and composed their history,  
Listing the three divisions of time, past, present, and future;

also a sociological treatise—

Decay and death, fear and disease, I have included:  
Life and non-life, different creeds, various ways of living:  
Rules for the four castes...  
Rules for the religious novice...

and an astronomical manual—

...dimensions of earth, sun, and moon,

And of planets, stars, and constellations;

or a compilation of *śruti* and *smṛti*—

...Rig, Sama and Yajur Vedas; the Adhyātma,  
Nyāya, the sciences of orthoepy, pathology, charity, Pāsūpata;

or an encyclopaedic travelogue—

Descriptions of places of pilgrimage, and holy places,  
Rivers, mountains, forests and seas, are all in my poem:  
Descriptions of celestial cities...  
Different nations, peoples, languages, customs.

The most significant description, however, is one which elicits a response from Brahmā in the same terms: in śloka 61 Vyāsa describes his creation as a *kāvya*:

*kṛtaṁ mayedaṁ bhagavān kāvyam parampūjitaṁ*  
I have composed, Lord, a *kāvya* worthy of respect.

Brahmā's reply, significantly, is couched in similar language:-

*tvayā ca kāvyamītyuktaṁ tasmāt kāvyam bhaviṣyati* (śl. 72)  
You have called your work a *kāvya*. It shall be a *kāvya*.

The Creative Demiurge does not see the epic as a travelogue or an ethical treatise or an encyclopaedic history of the Bhārata ethos although Vyāsa successively put forward all these facets before his seeing eye. This selection of the point of view is, therefore, not to be lightly brushed aside.

Now, what does *kāvya* connote? It is not just "poem", but the inspired utterance of the *kavi*, the *vates*, the seer. It is not a creation, a new making, a *poesis* born of the poet's imagination, but a piercing-through of the veil of Appearance by the seer's intuitive vision to reveal the Reality hidden behind. It is, indeed, a Revelation, for Brahmā tells Vyāsa, in slokas 71-72:

I respect you highly for your insight into divine mysteries; You have revealed the Word of Brahmā, from its very inception, in the language of truth.

Thus, what Sāyana says of the Vedic rishis becomes equally true of Vyāsa:

*na hi vedasya kartāro draṣṭāraḥ sarva eva hi*  
They are no creators of the Veda but seers.<sup>8</sup>

Vyāsa, no less than the composers of the Riks, is a seer and a hearer of the Truth, *kavayaḥ saryaśrutāḥ*, and, at times, his slokas, like the utterances of the Vedic rishis, are *kāvyaṇi kavaye mvacanām niṇyaḥ vacāṃsi*, “secret words, seer-wisdoms that utter their inner meaning to the seer.”<sup>9</sup> The mysticism of these seer-sages is not the cloudy and confused one of romantic visionaries. They are, as Sri Aurobindo explains, “intuitional symbolists—men who regarded the world as a movement of consciousness and all material forms and energies as external symbols and shadows of deeper and deeper internal realities.”<sup>10</sup> To the rishis these “intuitions of immortality” came clothed in images and symbols which were not mere aesthetic fancies but living parables of profound spiritual experiences that were more real to the *kavi* than this apparent universe. It is these which found expression in the inspired rhythmic utterance of the mantric riks. The process is described quite clearly by Sri Aurobindo:<sup>11</sup> “they were men of vision who saw things in their meditation in images, often symbolic images which might precede or accompany an experience and put it in a concrete form, might predict or give an occult body to it: so it would be quite possible for him to see at once the inner experience and in image its symbolic happening, the flow of clarifying light and the priest god pouring this clarified butter on the inner self-offering which brought the experience... The mystics... even see all physical things and happenings as symbols of inner truths and realities... That would make their identification or else an association of the thing and its symbol easy, its habit possible.”

The question which arises from this is what, if any, is the difference between the epic and the Vedas? In sloka 62 of the Anukramanika, Vyāsa has clearly stated the core of his epic:

The mystery of the Vedas, and other mysteries,  
I have explained;  
The rituals of the Vedas and the Upanishads,  
I have included.

Brahmā, as we saw, has reaffirmed this revelatory aspect by saying:

I respect you highly for your insight into the divine mysteries.

The difference is hinted at in sloka 265 where Vyāsa says:

But the Veda fears men of small learning, for they distort it. Let learned men  
recite only the *Bhārata* and be benefitted.

The mystic's perception of spiritual verities in symbolic terms and his apprehension that it may be misused by the partially enlightened and the ignorant led to an extensive use of *double entendre* in the Vedas, as referred to by Yāska in his *Nirukta*:<sup>12</sup>

Formerly the rishis were those who had realised the essence of dharma; fearing that their successors would be unable to maintain the same height of spirituality, they gave the knowledge of the Veda by recital of mantras.

In rik after rik rishis explicitly refer to this element of secrecy, that their mantras carry an esoteric sense which the Divine Power being invoked comprehends (cf. Rigveda I.164.39 and IV.3.16). The commentator Durga tells us how the secret meaning is to be discovered:<sup>13</sup>

One should approach for the Vedic knowledge the man who has the knowledge, one who is either a genius or a great Yogin, for to him the Mantras reveal their inmost secret.

As a matter of fact, the word *mantra* itself indicates the transcendental nature of the riks whereby the aspirant can “cross over” into the spiritual world (*man* is “to think” and *tr* “to cross over”). This is the Creative Word, *Vāk*, the very movement, the rhythm of the Divine manifesting Himself as the Universe, the lowest level of this spiritual vibration being human speech. That is why Yāska states that by grammar alone none would be able to comprehend the Vedas, for there are many words of which the meaning is not known even to him. The path of understanding is one of an elaborate and intensive discipline of meditation and inner concentration. The Rigveda X.71.5<sup>14</sup> is quite explicit about this:

It is something that is hidden in secrecy and from there comes out and is manifested. It has entered into the truth-seers, the Rishis, and it is found by of following the track of their speech...the other man who merely repeats the words moves by the power of formation without cows (rays of light), listening only to words without fruit, without flowers.

The key to the inner meaning lay, as Yāska pointed out, in *dhātunām anekarthāni*, the multiple significances of Sanskrit word-roots. *Go*, for instance, means both “cow” and “light, ray” and becomes thus a symbol of spiritual knowledge. Similarly, where the ordinary devotee saw Agni as the fire-deity, the initiate understood it in a psychological sense because the word itself means “bright, strong” and easily came to symbolise the inner flame of aspiration which exalts the aspirant to the highest spiritual realms through the *yajña*, the sacrifice of the self. Danielou in his *Hindu Polytheism*<sup>15</sup> has very perceptively pointed out that the Vedic ritual aimed at duplicating the act of creation itself: “The housefold fire was the image of the cosmic fire. The Universe in turn was but a vast sacrifice in which Fire constantly devoured the gigantic oblation of all... Every form of creation has the character of this ritual. Any action bettering man has of necessity the nature of a ritual sacrifice.”

Sri Aurobindo has shown, at length, how the interpretation of the myth of the

Angirasa rishis recovering the herds of the Sun stolen by the Dasyus provides the key to the secret of the Vedas: the truths of the superconscient Dawn, and their companions, the forces of the Truth which animate life, are stolen and concealed by the lords of darkness in their subconscious cave. These illuminations of Divine Truth are recovered by the Angirasas with the help of Agni, growing by the *ghṛta* (clarity of solar light in the mind), of Indra strengthened by Soma (the immortal delight of existence) and Brihaspati voicing the illumined thought of the soul's truth.<sup>16</sup> This real meaning was shrouded in multi-significant words by the Ancients who formulated a Janus-faced religion, for they felt that this secret could be perverted and misused, perhaps, by the impure and unprepared spirits. The Vedic rituals, therefore, became, overtly, a Pantheistic Worship of Nature—and it is thus that the Western savants interpreted it in recent times—while covertly the mantras communicated to the initiated ones spiritual experience and knowledge of the highest type.<sup>17</sup>

It is this esoteric and "lost" knowledge of the Vedas which Vyāsa brings out in his epic in quite a different manner. It is no longer the mantric garb, but the form of stories—stories memorable because of their grotesquerie or incongruity—which contain the secret knowledge in the *Mahābhārata*. Undoubtedly, the overt intention of the epic seems to be the establishment of the truth that, in the eternal conflict between the powers of Light and Darkness, evil's seeming domination for a time is but an evanescent phenomenon, for evil carries within itself the seeds of its own annihilation. The seer-poet, however, transcends this antagonistic picture of the cosmos in his vision of Krishna, the Paramātman, in whom there is the ultimate synthesis of the dichotomy of good and evil, for he is the Cosmic Self. At that level, the epic becomes the story of the battle within the empirical ego and its passions on the one hand and the jivātman assisted by the paramātman on the other. To quote Sukthankar,<sup>18</sup> "The Bhārata-yuddha on the holy Kurukshetra is a projection, on the background of generalized history, of the psychological conflict within man himself."

There is no doubt, of course, that such a symbolism is not clearly framed and is quite sketchy at places. This, however, is only proper because the greatest poetry is never explicit but leaves details to be filled in by the reader's imaginative response. Sukthankar very perceptively writes, "It is like the *Dhvani*, tone, in the best Indian poetry, where the denotation (*abhidhā*) gives no sense or at best an imperfect sense, and we are obliged to find a transferred sense (*lakṣaṇā*). This transferred meaning is in the best samples of the art more striking and even more important than the expressed, but must be obtained by repeated study and deep cogitation. And that is exactly the case with the *Mahābhārata*."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, since Vyāsa declares that here he has set forth the four aims of life, dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa, it is not an unjustifiable attempt on our part to expect, in the epic, revelations—whether direct or indirect—on these eternal verities of existence.

In the course of his brilliant analysis, Sukthankar makes three observations which serve us as Ariadne's thread in finding our way through the uncharted labyrinth which is Mahābhāratian symbolism.

This projection on to a cosmic background raises our epic story at once to a much higher level of thought, giving it, for one thing, linguistic and ideological continuity with Vedic antiquity. It stamps the epic at the same time as the artistic expression of a primordial experience, which, as C.J. Jung puts it, “derives its existence from the hinterland of man’s mind—that suggests the abyss of time separating us from pre-human ages or evokes a superhuman world of contrasting light and darkness.”<sup>20</sup>

What is of importance is to realize that there is an inner significance behind the events so realistically narrated in the Great Epic of India, just as there is an inner significance behind all acts, conscious and unconscious, of man himself; and yet more generally there is an inner significance behind all the phenomena of life... great works of Indian art and literature... are all infused with the idea of penetrating behind the phenomena to the core of things, and they represent but so many pulsating reflexes of one and the same central impulse towards seeing unity in diversity, towards achieving one gigantic all-embracing synthesis... it is only from this one point of view that you will be able to understand and interpret the *Mahābhārata*, and that all attempts to explain it merely as an evolute of some hypothetical epic nucleus are merely examples of wasted ingenuity... They (the various elements) have been transformed, metamorphosed and wrought into deep symbols of lasting value and vital interest, combined into an intricate transcendental cameo, telling us how to relate our lives to the background of the reality in which they are cast, teaching us to live our lives, so to say, under the shadow of eternity.<sup>21</sup>

Here, again, the key lies in a chance remark of Sukthankar which tells us how this epic conveys these profound spiritual verities: “Many of the scenes of this drama which at first sight appear to us unintelligible or at least uncouth and grotesque acquire deep significance when they are treated symbolically and projected back on to the metaphysical or psychological plane of thought.”<sup>22</sup> And this, precisely, is our approach: to pinpoint some such “unintelligible or at least uncouth and grotesque” scenes; to treat them as symbolic structures; and see if, thereby, they reveal hidden significances.

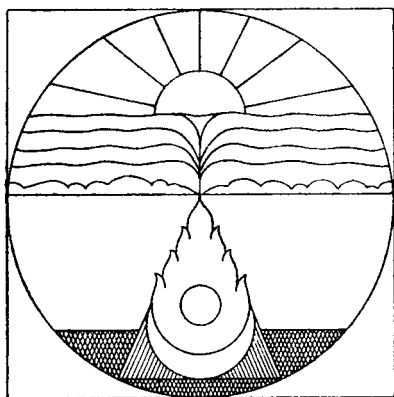
(*To be continued*)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

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## **SRI AUROBINDO AND PROFESSOR ALEXANDER: THEIR THEORIES OF EVOLUTION**

*(Continued from the issue of June 1980)*

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that Sri Aurobindo and Professor Alexander viewed the evolutionary process from two different standpoints, their theories exhibit certain areas of agreement which we cannot afford to ignore. In respect of the general character of evolution, both agree that in course of evolutionary change higher and higher qualities emerge, though Sri Aurobindo never uses the term 'emergent' to designate his doctrine. It will therefore be well to remember that the word 'emergence', when used in the context of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy, really means 'manifestation' or 'unfoldment' of what is already involved in the initial stage and not an absolutely new quality absent in the preceding stage. Nevertheless, both Sri Aurobindo and Alexander agree that man is not the culminating point of the evolutionary enterprise. Alexander's conception of angelic being has its parallel in Sri Aurobindo's notion of Gnostic being or Superman. He visualises that man is sure to evolve into Superman who will be the embodiment of a higher consciousness than man. The advent of supermen and gnostic beings ensure the perfect manifestation of the spirit in mundane conditions.

In another point we find some sort of similarity between the two, however superficial this agreement may seem to be. According to Alexander Nisus or the creative urge, remains insentient till the emergence of consciousness and becomes conscious and rational thereafter, so that as a result the subsequent movement of events under the guidance of the conscious Nisus becomes rational and teleological. As we shall see later on, Sri Aurobindo has also spoken of the subconscious evolution, or evolution through ignorance and conscious evolution or evolution through knowledge, the former before the advent of mind and the latter after the emergence of mind. Alexander seems to have vaguely anticipated Sri Aurobindo in this respect.

A brief survey of certain unique features of Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution will bring into focus some important issues of deep-seated disagreement with the characteristics of Alexander's. The most significant Aurobindonian feature is the spiritualistic nature of evolution. Sri Aurobindo emphatically declares the priority of spirit over matter. The Vedic and Upanisadic background of his thought-current and his own intuitive realisation certainly led him to arrive at such a conclusion. In addition to this, he has advanced some speculative justification in an important article wherein he tries to make out that brute matter cannot adequately account for the rise of consciousness even in its lowest stratum. "What Sri Aurobindo expressed as an Opinion in 'Materialism' is in fact the very core of metaphysics: matter depends on spirit as to its very reality. Matter is but an inverted form of spirit. However, if this is so, then surely spirit is not reduced to matter. Rather it is matter which is reduced to spirit. Instead of materialism we have the triumph of spiritu-

alism."<sup>13</sup> It is the materialistic metaphysics which is principally responsible for the unsatisfactory aspect of most of the evolutionary theories of the West including Alexander's Emergent Evolution. Space-Time which, according to Alexander, is the original, primordial and causal matrix, 'the nurse of all becoming'—this ultimate reality is no better than a physical principle and therefore Alexander could not satisfactorily account for the emergence of mind or consciousness out of it.

It is also obvious that his materialistic monism prevented Alexander from explaining adequately both the *raison d'être* and the goal which the evolutionary movement is going to achieve. Why does Space-Time evolve at all? What is the inner spring of this evolution? How does a physical or rather spiritually neutral Nisus move towards Deity? To all these questions Alexander has no answer to offer. Like most other Evolutionists of the West, Alexander fails miserably to explain the 'why-ness' of evolution within the framework of his so-called scientific and semi-naturalistic scheme. As a matter of fact, the 'how-ness' of evolution without its 'why-ness' is an incomplete and incoherent picture, the discussion of the former without a specific answer to the latter is simply an exercise in futility. Further, it appears perfectly unintelligible how Alexander's Nisus which was physical before the advent of consciousness becomes mysteriously conscious or sentient thereafter to direct the evolutionary change to higher levels. In view of its peculiar ontological status Dr. S. Radhakrishnan rightly remarks: "Unless we assume the Nisus to be a spiritual power ever drawing on its resources and ever expressing new forms, Alexander's whole account becomes unsatisfactory. The Nisus cannot be an unconscious drive coming by degrees to consciousness in man."<sup>14</sup> Alexander's notion of hyphenated Space-Time conceived as an all-encompassing system of motion, as against Sri Aurobindo's Infinite Supreme Spiritual Being, is essentially something blank. Hence how could matter, which is believed to be the first evolute qualitatively different from the antecedent, come into being? Alexander also cannot offer any sound logical justification as to how the unconscious principle of Time can act as an impetus to the higher evolutes like mind or Deity. Further, Alexander cannot give us any idea of Deity. The only thing which he can say is that it is not mind and that it differs from mind not in degree but in kind. "We cannot tell," he says, "what is the nature of deity, of our deity, but we can be certain that it is not mind or, if we use the term spirit as equivalent to mind, deity is not spirit, but something different from it in kind."<sup>15</sup> It becomes therefore evident that Alexander has introduced an element of miracle in his account of emergence and, needless to say, belief in miracles in any form "has no respectable place in philosophical thinking." Again, Space-Time may well be considered to be Alexander's term for ultimate reality. But many scientists of today do not regard it to be the basic stuff but rather a form of some more ultimate stuff whose exact nature our physical science has not yet been able to determine. The findings of modern physics regarding the nature and constitution of matter, particularly its electrical theory, has dematerialised matter in the old sense, and eminent interpreters like Max Plank, James Jeans, Eddington and Haldane regard matter as deriving from non-matter or consci-

ousness. "I regard matter as a derivative of consciousness," categorically asserted Max Plank. Eddington and Jeans believe that the New Physics is not antagonistic to a spiritualistic interpretation of the universe.

All this apart, we may point out that if every new quality or value emerges by a mechanical complexity in Space-Time, as Alexander inclines to suggest, then all the evolutes remain qualitatively identical and in such a case it becomes doubtful whether to call them really emergent or not; virtually these are mere resultants rather than emergents. As a matter of fact, a thing which is entirely reducible in terms of another is certainly not higher than it, however complex it may appear to be. We had occasion to mention earlier in our present discussion how Sri Aurobindo offers cogent solutions to all these vexing problems in his world-explanation.

In Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary scheme, man occupies a pivotal position, he must act as a medium of the advent of the spirit—the superman. Hitherto, in the sub-human species necessary progress took place automatically. But, with the emergence of conscious being, the entire picture underwent some significant changes. Instead of remaining a mere passive spectator, man has to participate in the process of cosmic evolution so as to hasten the emergence of divine men—the gnostic beings—upon earth, thus ushering in an era of peace, bliss and perfection. In this way subconscious evolution turns into conscious evolution. It is very interesting and significant to note in this connection how Sri Aurobindo has wonderfully blended the ethical and spiritual obligations of man with the evolutionary progression of the cosmos. Alexander's theory, being naturalistic, is neutral to all sorts of ethical values and spiritual progression. Huxley in his book, *Evolution and Ethics*, has denounced as impossible the claim of naturalistic evolution to be ethical. Obviously here is an inevitable predicament of naturalistic metaphysics.

Another very vital question which received Sri Aurobindo's close attention and which indeed distinguishes his theory from most of the evolutionary theories of the West is the 'why' of evolution. This he explains in terms of the delight of Sachchidananda who manifests in the figures of the relative and phenomenal consciousness for the sake of delight in self-manifestation. It is the Lila of the Lord Supreme—a sort of happy sportive activity through which the Supreme Divine Reality puts a limitation upon itself and takes a plunge into ignorance and assumes the "appearance of dense cosmic Inconscience." As Dr. S. K. Maitra puts it, "The spirit which out of its sheer joy of self-expression (Lila) projected itself out of itself, reaching the farthest limit of such self-projection in matter, has to come back to itself. This coming back to itself is what is called evolution."<sup>16</sup> In Sri Aurobindo's notion of Lila, we have an echo of the Vedic dictum *ekam, bahu syām*, "I am one, I shall be many." This very vital issue remained unanswered in the theories of Alexander, Bergson and other evolutionary doctrines of a materialistic and naturalistic brand. The Sāṃkhya also fares no better than these formulations. And herein lies the superiority of Sri Aurobindo's position.

Sri Aurobindo, the prophet of a new age and a life divine, painted in bright co-

lours the future transformation of man into the Gnostic being—the divine man, whose thinking, living and activity shall be guided by the Universal Spirit. As against this illuminating picture of the future spiritual destiny of man heralding the advent of the divine man, Prof. Alexander's description of the future course of evolution as a successive approximation to an ever-receding unattainable ideal, thus keeping the gates of further evolution open, is a case of "*progressus ad infinitum*". His picture is indefinite and incomplete inasmuch as any endeavour at a portrayal of a faint picture of the possible future evolutes is totally absent. His mind hovers round a wrong notion of infinity as endlessness which again means aimlessness—an infinite prolongation of the process to nowhere.

Another significant Aurobindonian feature is the idea of transformation of the lower by the higher. This means that when a higher principle emerges, it descends into the lower ones, causing transformation of them. Thus when mind emerges, it is not only a new principle in the drama of evolution but it has brought about some significant changes in the lower principles of life and matter and hence they become different from what they were before the emergence of mind. Dr. S. K. Maitra calls this 'the principle of solidarity'. As he says, "Evolution therefore does not mean the isolated raising of any principle to a higher level, but an uplift and transformation of all the principles."<sup>17</sup> According to Prof. Alexander, however, the emergence of Deity does not cause any transformation of the earlier products of evolution; for example, matter remains the same even after the emergence of life, and life after the emergence of mind, and so also Deity, the next emergent quality, will not bring about any transformation of man into something higher.

It is customary to characterise Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution as purposive. Dr. R. S. Srivastava calls teleology the distinctive mark of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of evolution. Since Sri Aurobindo affirms the conscious character of the creative energy of the evolutionary movement, it must be purposive in nature. The implication of the important principle of Involution-Evolution clearly suggests that the process moves towards a definite end, *i.e.* the progressive unveiling of the Supreme Spiritual Reality in myriad forms and unique varieties of conditions wherein it finds delight in self-discovery. In a sense, this is purposive spiritual determination. So when we try to have an intellectual formulation of spiritual evolution in intelligible terms and familiar concepts, we have no alternative but to characterise it as teleological. But from the cosmic point of view, the *raison d'être* of creation-evolution must be traced in the inscrutable Lila of Sachchidananda Brahman which we do not pretend to explain. Hence, when we consider from that point of view, we would do better to resist the temptation of making any categorical characterisation of the process. Alexander's scheme is often interpreted as teleological in the sense that the whole existing universe gradually but inevitably is moving forward to effect the emergence of higher qualities and since these qualities of a higher level cannot be predicted in advance of their emergence his point of view is indeterministic so far as the emergent evolution is concerned, although the categorical features of Space-

Time, common to all levels, are unquestionably determined. Though Alexander's theory is not stultified by repetition and predictability, though the process is unpredictable before its 'de facto epigenesis', yet it is debatable whether his view can really be designated teleological.

The spiritualistic theory of Evolution, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, is distinctly different from the Western 'scientific theory of form-evolution' and the 'biological theory of Life-evolution' advocated by a host of biological scientists and philosophers of the West. His is a theory which has perhaps very little in common with the Sāṃkhya doctrine of evolution. Sri Aurobindo tried to demonstrate that any reasonable account of evolution cannot but be spiritualistic and that elevation to the supra-mental level is the definite destiny which awaits the human race. Alexander's notion of angelic being also heralds the advent of a new species far superior to man in intellectual and moral qualities upon earth. To a modern man, who is never tired of taking pride in his so-called scientific and positivistic outlook, these formulations may sound utopian. But we must not forget the limitations of our sensibility and of our scientific investigations. Many modern scientists are candid and bold enough to confess that there still exists an untrodden horizon. Hence the limits of our present knowledge need not be taken as the limit of truth and reality. Non-perception of something with the help of the known organs and instruments of knowledge does not conclusively demonstrate its non-existence. That which is not amenable to sense-experience or rational analysis or scientific enquiry may be comprehended after ascending to a higher level of consciousness, as testified by many mystics and sane seekers after truth of different countries in different ages. Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution, we think, should be viewed in that perspective. Apart from the profound metaphysical significance of his Integral Vedanta, his theory of evolution along with his Integral Yoga points to the paramount need of supplying a spiritual foundation to our modern civilization. For mankind, evolution implies an onward movement towards a greater fulfilment and peace—it is an invitation to create a perfect society by re-orienting our basic notions of truth, reality and freedom.

(Concluded)

RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

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## THE CLOUD MESSENGER

### A NEW TRANSLATION OF KALIDASA'S MEGHADUTA

(Continued from the issue of June 1980)

*Lines surviving from Sri Aurobindo's lost translation and included here are in italics.*

No tears but those of joy the eye sustains  
In Alaka, there keen affection's rage  
Alone invokes division's fleeting pains

Soon turned to poignant bliss; for where no age  
But Youth is known and heavenly privilege frees  
From other pang, Love's torment to assuage

Needs merely Love's swift potent remedies.  
The Yakshas there, whom all sense-joys attend,  
The masters of exhaustless treasuries,

At evening with their peerless mates ascend  
To terraces whose crystal faces shine  
With inlaid flowers the stars reflected lend;

The Wishing Tree's miraculous love-wine  
They taste in that superb companionship  
While drums throb low with murmurous tones like thine.

At midnight in the chamber, when to strip  
Her robe's last barrier reckless hands conspire,  
The Yaksha lady—her plump scarlet lip

Trembling with shame—at the lamp's brazen fire  
Flings desperate fists of powder but in vain,  
For the jewel's blazing light cannot expire.

Worn with the violence of rapture's strain  
On weak limbs, women there from passion's hold  
Delivered for their languid bodies gain

Instant refreshment at the fall of cold

Clear drops the moonstones overhead discharge  
When nectarous beams cloud-loosed the world unfold.

There thy high kinsmen, to a wanton urge  
Yielding and by the lawless wind conveyed  
To frescoed upper halls, are known to surge

Forth through the lattices in guise arrayed  
Of votive incense, fleeing so the stain  
To virgin paintings with their droplets sprayed.

Seeing a radiant guest of that domain  
His arch-foe from whose forehead-eye once shot  
Destroying fire, Love's godhead fears constrain

To covert ways; his bow discarded taut  
With resonant string of bees, his archer craft  
Finds yet full scope: for there his works are wrought

Infallibly by each love-missioned shaft  
Loosed with a toss of brows from maiden eyes  
To pierce a chosen heart with flame flower-soft.

There, northward of our sovereign's palace lies  
My home and hers thou seekst: our fair estate  
Afar will greet thee with its gate that vies

With thy lord's dazzling bow; anticipate  
In those precincts a Coral tree that climbs  
Quickly toward Heaven though my beloved mate

Still tends it as a child and to its limbs  
With blossoms bowed her small hands yet extend.  
A pond—our favourite haunt in happier times—

Behold, into whose limpid depths descend  
Great emerald stairs: there between lotus buds  
Of gold on stalks of glistening beryl wend

Blithe swans their graceful way, nor now intrudes  
Thought of the lake toward which their brothers wing  
Though beckoning above thy figure broods.

Beside those waters, a resplendent ring  
 Of gold-leafed plantains circles a low hill  
 With sapphire slopes: in vision lingering

On thee with lightnings girt, my senses fill  
 With troubled joy as if that hill which knows  
 My wife's affection stood before me still.

Not far away, a Red Ashoka grows  
 Restless with unborn flowers; nearby aspires  
 An ardent Bakul where tall shrubs enclose

A lush Spring-creeper bower: one tree desires  
 The touch of my love's foot; to yield its all,  
 Its comrade liquor from her lips requires.

Between those two, on a rich pedestal  
 Of jade a column of pure gold supports  
 A crystal slab: a peacock, amical

To clouds like thee, that with its mistress sports  
 Dancing to clap of palms and bracelet-choir,  
 At day's departure to that perch resorts.

Known by these signs, discover and admire  
 My prosperous home, and near its door at last  
 Two painted emblems see, regarding nigher:

The Conch and Lotus; yet since I have passed—  
 Its sun—from Heaven the house cannot display,  
 A folded flower, the lustre it once cast.

For swift descent assume without delay  
 An elephant cub's bulk, then downward sweep  
 To that fair hill I told thee of today:

There settled, throw thine eye of lightning deep  
 Into the house—but gentle as might gleam  
*A flickering line of fireflies seen in sleep.*

A slender maid—the Maker's work supreme  
 Of womanhood—with tapered teeth and lips



Luscious like Bimba fruits, large eyes that seem

A timid doe's and fragile waist that dips  
 Deep at the navel, slightly stooped with load  
 Of breasts and hampered by her pride of hips,

Find silent in the heart of that abode,  
*Sole like a widowed bird when all the nests  
 Are making, her whose life on me bestowed*

Is as my own: but surely now attests  
 Her form the longing weight of mournful days,  
 A lotus where the blighting hoar-frost rests.

*(To be continued)*

RICHARD HARTZ

NOTES

Arch-foe: Shiva. According to the Puranas, at one time the demon Taraka was oppressing the worlds on the strength of a boon his ascetic practices had procured from Brahma, the Creator, that he should be invulnerable to the attack of anyone but a child seven days old. Kama, the god of love, was therefore charged by the other gods to draw Lord Shiva out of his austere solitude and interest him in the goddess-maiden Parvati so that a son might be born capable of destroying Taraka. Kama made the perilous attempt and succeeded for a moment in troubling Shiva's mind in Parvati's presence but Shiva, detecting the source of the disturbance, instantly reduced Kama's body to ashes by a fiery ray directed at it from his occult third eye between his brows. Kama thus became for a time "the bodiless one", Ananga, while Parvati succeeded in winning Shiva by her own asceticism and Skanda, the War-God, came to birth in a miraculous manner for the annihilation of Taraka.

Restless with unborn flowers: In Sanskrit poetry, certain trees are considered to experience at budding time particular desires, "pregnancy longings", that have to be fulfilled by a beautiful woman before those trees will blossom.

The Conch and Lotus: images connected with the treasures of Kubera.

## POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER 1973

### OFFERING VI: YES!—FEBRUARY 1980

Yes, Mother. So many yesses! In Your passionately protecting Hand  
Let my yesses nestle, and I without demand  
Be Yours always. Like the unconscious stone I do not know who or what  
I am,  
But I know I am Yours only, *yes*, and in ways I cannot now understand.

I am only Yours, *yes*, only... though I do not know Who or What You are  
And I glimpse You only through the sometimes dissolving mists, and only  
from afar,  
Reaching out to touch You, my Loved Mother and Dearest Avatar,  
As a child, seeing the Light, reaches out to touch his Own and Personal  
Star.

I am drawn to You, *yes*, as the flower's fragrance draws the ecstatic bee;  
You are THAT which splitting the chrysalis will break this butterfly free.  
I am locked, *yes*, and can be opened only by Your Key into the magic  
Garden of Eternity.  
I am Your Riddle; who or what I am in Your Enigma, Your Conundrum  
inseparably  
Hidden. And though I am solved or dissolved, You will always be, *yes*,  
the ever-elusive, ineffable and recurring Mystery.

ELIZABETH STILLER

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## CARE AND PRESERVATION OF PAPERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

IN an article published last month, mention has been made of the work being done by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives with regard to manuscript preservation. To preserve its papers, books, photographs, etc. is the fundamental concern of any archives. The science of preservation is a complex field. Many of its aspects are quite technical and, in some, new developments are constantly taking place. It would not be possible in one short article or even in a series of articles to do justice to the subject. But many people who possess precious papers would like to do something to preserve them. This article is written for such people. It gives only the most basic information. Not everything it speaks of could be safely undertaken by an untrained individual lacking the proper equipment and materials. For special problems an expert should be consulted.

To provide proper storage conditions is the most essential part of preservation. "Good conservation is usually largely a matter of good storage," says one expert. In this area a person who has important papers in his home can do much to lengthen their lives. It is difficult and, in most parts of India, impossible to maintain in the home the optimal storage climate recommended by archival institutions (relative humidity 50-60 per cent, temperature 15-20°C). But there are factors over which an individual can exercise control. Papers should be kept in a cool, dry part of the house, out of direct sunlight. A good almirah makes an acceptable storage place. The choice of the containers with which the papers will actually be in contact is of the greatest importance. Because of the danger of transfer of acidity, which is discussed below, papers should *not* be kept in ordinary cardboard boxes or wrapped in brown paper or newspaper. Boxes or folders should be made of, or lined with, material with a low acid content, such as unsized handmade paper. Sizing, the substance that gives paper its hard writing surface, is usually acidic. Sheets of unsized handmade paper should also be used for separating papers and photographs within the box or folder. The papers should be placed flat within the box and the box should be kept horizontally. Vertical storage causes papers to sag and become crumpled. The storage place should be checked periodically for insects and mildew. In fact, any collection of books or papers should be checked regularly to see if there has been any incursion of insect pests such as bookworms or silverfish, or any growth of fungus. This is particularly important in the tropics. Checking should be done especially after periods of heavy rain.

In an archives, protection against insects and mildew is provided by fumigation. Books or papers are exposed to the fumes of certain chemicals in a specially constructed chamber. This process must be carried out by an expert. Some protection can be given in the home simply by putting small dishes of mothballs or net bags of dried neem leaves behind books in closed bookcases and in boxes in which papers are kept. Mothballs should not be kept with photographs.

Plastic sheets or folders should not be used as protective covers for important papers. They are acceptable only if the plastic is definitely known to be chemically inert and if the storage climate is properly stabilized to insure that there is no increase in moisture and no condensation within the plastic which would invite mildew and possibly cause other damage. Many clear plastics look fine when new and give no suggestion of their potential for doing harm. One cannot judge merely by appearances. Certain types of special polyester films are used in archives for the encapsulation of precious papers, but these materials are available only from archival supply houses. Clear plastic sheets bought in stores are likely to be made of chemically unstable materials such as polyvinyl chloride or cellulose nitrate.

The problem of acidity is one of the chief concerns of the professional conservator. Most modern wood-pulp paper is acidic in its composition. (Good handmade paper, which is composed of cotton rag, is less acidic.) The inherent acidity of wood-pulp paper eventually destroys it. One need only go into any library and look at a fifty-year-old book to see the truth of this. Archival technologists have devised several methods of "deacidification", by which the acid content of the paper is neutralised and an alkaline buffer is deposited. The most widely accepted method of deacidification involves the immersion of papers in a solution of calcium hydroxide and then in a solution of calcium bicarbonate. This process can only be carried out in a laboratory. What an ordinary person can do is to protect his papers against the transfer of acidity. A piece of highly acidic brown paper allowed to lie on a less acidic white sheet will soon stain it. Acid has migrated from the brown paper to the white. For this reason papers and photographs should be wrapped or interleaved only with sheets of low-acid paper such as unsized handmade paper.

Torn papers sometimes need to be repaired, especially in order to prevent further damage. But this should be done by an experienced person. Many rare and valuable documents have been seriously damaged by people with good intentions but insufficient knowledge and improper materials. In particular, pressure-sensitive tape should *never* be used for repair. With age it becomes brittle and discoloured and its adhesive stains and further damages the paper. There are several acceptable methods of repair, from the time-honoured use of wheat paste and handmade paper to the more recent lamination methods, which employ cellulose acetate film and tissue paper. Each method has its advantages, and a careful choice must be made, taking into account the fragility of the paper, its rarity and value, the kind of use to which it may be subjected, and storage and climatic factors.

A person who displays a precious paper or photograph should know that by doing so, unless exceptional and expensive precautions are taken, the life of the article displayed will be shortened. It will be subject to fading caused by sunlight, to damage produced by moisture in the air and in damp walls, and to transfer of acidity from framing materials. Many inks fade with exposure to sunlight, especially the spirit-based inks used in felt-tip pens. These are not actually inks, but only unstable dyes. If you have a letter written with such a pen or a photograph signed with one, and you want

the writing to last, put the article carefully away. A photocopy can be displayed in its place.

Most of the precautions mentioned above in connection with papers apply also to photographs. They should be stored horizontally in a cool place out of direct sunlight. Do not pile photographs one on top of the other; they may become stuck together and the emulsion may tear off when they are separated. Interleave the photographs with sheets of unsized handmade paper. (Low quality, acidic paper will stain them.) If rare photographs (or documents) must be displayed, the framing materials should be chosen with care. Newsprint or brown wrapping paper should never be placed behind the article. Handmade paper should be used for this purpose, and also for the framing mat. A mat provides a beneficial breathing space between the article and the glass. This is especially necessary in hot climates to prevent the emulsion from sticking to the glass.

Persons encountering special problems in the preservation of their papers or photographs may contact the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library. Materials connected with Sri Aurobindo, the Mother or the Ashram are welcome; in the Archives collection they will be preserved for posterity under the best possible conditions.

ARCHIVES AND RESEARCH STAFF

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## A CREED

My life is now a fragrance  
 Filled as a perfumed flower,  
 My being shines illumined  
 With crystalline selfless power.

What care I for opinion?  
 Or for the world's wealth?  
 God's Grace is bountiful,  
 Possessing soul is health.

The path lies stretched before me,  
 A glimpse of shining gold,  
 The worldly wise have never lived—  
 I never shall grow old...!

KAMALAKANTO

# THE STUPID GURU AND THE FOOLISH DISCIPLES

## A FREE TRANSLATION OF VEERAMA MUNIVAR'S TAMIL STORY OF GURU PARAMARTHA

*(Continued from the issue of June 1980)*

### 6. The Brahmin's Prophecy

EVER since they reached the hermitage, the guru had been grumbling and feeling sad over the amount lost on the old, lame, one-eyed horse. "You know how my heart jumped in joy when we received the horse free of cost. But I alone know how the same heart feels sad over the troubles caused by the animal," muttered Guru Paramartha.

Then he began lecturing on the joys and sorrows of this worldly life:

"My disciples! My long experience on this earth tells me that there is neither eternal joy nor eternal sorrow. Life is a mixture of both. We were all greatly pleased with the gift horse but, look, what a lot of trouble we have undergone to bring it home! It is not possible to lick a drop of honey unless we gulp a mouthful of bitter medicine. Can you tell me a fruit that is seedless? Haven't we to hull the husk of a paddy to see a grain of rice? These are laws of nature.

"But words cannot express my grief. I have experienced a lot in my long life. Of late I have found that I am not fortunate enough to travel on horseback. It is destined so. I, for one, am not keen on going against nature. So it is high time we sent the horse back to its master."

The disciples objected and consoled him:

"Do not be disheartened, our master. The horse we possess is an unexpected boon. We never went in search of a gift, though we had an idea of buying a horse. If we send back our horse, we are going against God's wish. A curse might fall on us if we did so. Above all, the necromancer and Matti have exorcised the evil spirit that possessed the animal."

They continued speaking of the significance of the horse and the guru calmed down. At last, the guru advised his disciples to take special care of the horse and not let it wander during the night. The disciples complied with his suggestion and as a first step to safeguard the horse they planned to construct a stable in the backyard of their abode.

Peithai took an axe and climbed up a roadside banyan tree and started cutting a long and slender branch. An aged Brahmin who happened to pass by the banyan tree saw Peithai cutting the very branch on which he was sitting.

"Stop, O man, stop! Lest you should fall down and fracture your limbs. Is it not foolish to sit on the same branch you are cutting? If you fall down you will at least crack your limbs if not die," censured the old Brahmin.

“Stop that nonsense. I am my own master and I will listen to none but my guru. By the bye, what right have you to advise me?” So shouting, Peithai threw a sickle at the Brahmin.

The sickle missed the target. The Brahmin cursing the fool on the tree went on his way.

A few minutes later the branch, on which Peithai had sat and axed, split, fell down and hit the ground along with its cutter.

With much difficulty Peithai got up and ran towards the Brahmin, saluted him and said, “O Brahmin! How prophetic your words turned out! I feel extremely sorry for humiliating you. I beg your pardon. You should prophesy one more thing. I am a faithful disciple of Guru Paramartha. He is very old and likely to die at any moment. I’ll be grateful to you if you are kind enough to prophesy the exact time of my guru’s death and the visible symptoms before it.”

The poor Brahmin was in a fix. He employed many devices to dodge Peithai. But Peithai had no mind to leave him and so the Brahmin said, “Chilled haunches forecast death.” Peithai found it difficult to decipher the prophecy. He humbly requested the Brahmin to explicate it.

“That’s very simple. The day your guru’s haunches get wet, you can be sure of his death,” the Brahmin beguiled him.

Peithai thanked him for his prophecy and, dragging the axed branch of the banyan tree, reached the hermitage. He then narrated his encounter with the wise Brahmin and his prophecy *verbatim* to his guru.

Struck with awe, Paramartha said, “In your case the prophecy worked. I am sure the next prophecy will not prove false. ‘Chilled haunches forecast death’, is wisdom in words. Anyhow prevention is better than cure. Let us be very careful and try as far as possible to evade my haunches getting wet. That means never in this world should I take a bath. And let us leave the rest to God.”

(End of Chapter Six)

## 7. The Pathetic Fall

The guru and his party never stirred out. But when the hermitage ran short of money they set out for the nearby villages. The disciples warned one another that on no account should they do a thing without the bidding of their master.

One day, they were returning to their hermitage. The guru travelled on the famous horse and his disciples followed him. As the horse slouched its way, a low-grown branch of a tree hit at the guru’s turban. It slipped and fell on the ground. The guru kept moving on the assumption that his disciples would pick the turban up. They covered quite a considerable distance. The guru all of a sudden asked for his fallen turban.

“It must be lying in the place where it fell,” replied his disciples in a chorus.

The guru got wild and shouted at them, "What nonsense you people talk! Don't you know that whatever falls from us should be picked up? Have I to tell you everything?"

Madaiyan ran for the fallen turban and fetched it. As he was coming closer he saw the guru's horse defecating. Madaiyan rushed and caught the dung in the turban and gave it to his master.

The master fended off the turban and its contents with a frown.

"Master! Didn't you command us to pick up whatever falls from us? This is the droppings of our horse. It is ours. Why should you get angry now? I obeyed your commands."

Guru Paramartha had no other way than to cool down. He said, "Discretion teaches you what to pick up and what not to pick up."

The disciples replied, "We don't have that much intelligence. So it would be more convenient for us if you just jot down a list of things to be picked up if they fall down."

The guru immediately scribbled a list of things.

Then they proceeded. While crossing a patch of marshy land, the lame horse slipped and fell. The guru fell head down and feet up into a clay pit. He shrieked in agony and shouted to his disciples to lift him up.

The disciples were waiting for his command. One of them read out the list of things to be picked: 'Turban, dhoti, towel, shirt, underwear....' As he went on reading the list, the others in a great hurry picked up all those things from the guru and the guru was left in the clay pit stark naked.

He begged and cringed to be lifted up but none of his disciples listened. They said, "This is the list which you have given. There is no mention of the guru in the list. So how can we pick you up? Show us where your name is in this list. We will pick up only those things that are mentioned in the list. Our master's writing is more precious than his spoken words."

Finding no other alternative the guru asked for the list. In the same fallen position, he wrote, "Pick up Paramartha if he falls down. Help the horse if it slips and falls."

The disciples saw the guru's name included in the list of pickables. They joined hands and lifted him up. The guru was completely dirtied by the wet clay and they had him cleaned thoroughly. Then they dressed him up and resumed their journey to their hermitage.

*(End of Chapter Seven)*

*(To be continued)*

P. RAJA



# EUROPE 1974

## A TRAVELOGUE

(39)

THE Twentieth Century can be called the Golden Age of Tourism. Everyone is travelling these days. People travel for pleasure, for business, for education, to escape the boredom of everyday life and ennui, out of curiosity, to hunt for *objects d'art*, to see the famous historical places, to explore less known regions for vacation or vocation. In a get-together, the conversation invariably goes round to the topic 'travel'. Either one has just come back from a travel, or one is planning to go somewhere. And those who are not going ask for news.

The word 'travel' comes from the French word 'travail'; it means exertion, or toil, or work which implies some hardship. The English word 'travel' means journey, not necessarily for fun, rather the word always brings with it an underlying meaning of 'business'. The word 'Tour' is again French, and it is a very old word. Not so the word 'Tourist'. Today it is widely used but, in the past, just one or two writers may have used it. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, rich people, old and young, undertook 'Grand Tours'. A Grand Tour was part of the education of a young nobleman. Some people thought in those days that travelling abroad made a man conceited, while there were others who thought that it made a person more matured and open-minded. Perhaps it all depended on the person and the observer.

Hazlitt once wrote, "The rule for travelling abroad is to take our common sense with us and leave our prejudices behind." But very few in the olden days seem to have known this rule. Most books of travel written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are conspicuously devoid of any true sense of humour, fun and curiosity. To criticise, to pass hard judgements, to disparage, even to ridicule seem to have been the fashion. Even if one viewed something praiseworthy, it was laughed at. Sometimes while the true value of something worthwhile was sensed, the real feeling was hidden under sarcasm and satire and the value of it maliciously underrated. Someone once wrote "The French are barbarians, the Germans monsters, the Italians lazy, and the Swiss know nothing but yodelling and making cuckoo clocks."

But everything is almost completely changed at present. The travel books written recently are delightful, more interesting and gripping than any fiction can be. And none of the writers appears to want to divulge the unlovely things of the country they tour, rather they seem to be too happy to be able to say nice things about it. As for the reactions of the people residing in that country, there is a marked change—although I must add there are people still who look upon the tourists as a positive evil. Others are amused to see people of all nations, their varied mannerisms, dresses, looks and idiosyncrasies. There is yet another class, very thoughtful people who understand that Tourism is a source of wealth, a very good means to get foreign ex-

change. Tourism or tourist traffic was thought so important in Europe after the war that development of tourism was included in the Marshall Plan. Consequently, senseless restrictions have been removed. In a way one can say that Imperialism was the foster-child of Tourism. So more and more people are travelling and they do not have to bear the hardships of the travellers of the last few centuries.

About people who do not like tourists and foreigners there is a nice joke. One person said to another, "You people do not love the foreigners, yet had it not been for a foreigner you would have been damned." The enraged person questioned, "How?" "Well, Jesus Christ was a foreigner, wasn't he?" was the answer.

The railway, the automobile and finally the plane have all contributed to the speed with which we travel today. The boring of Mont Cenis tunnel in 1857 was another great innovation that accelerated travelling. Before the opening of the tunnel, people who wished to travel from Italy to the northern parts of Europe had to cross the Alps on Sedan chairs. We in nineteen seventy-four crossed the Alps on the way to Italy through the eight-mile long tunnel under Mont Blanc.

As more people are travelling, more Tourist Companies are coming into being. On our tour we passed by countless bus-loads of people going our way or the other way, laughing and waving to the buses passing by. At the hotels they arrive like a swarm of locusts, stay for a day or two and then disappear into the horizon never to be visible again. The Airlines are giving concessions to the tourists in a fantastic manner. In some parts of the world, we heard, there operates a system called 'travel now pay later'. France some time ago introduced "440 miles meal" service. It advocated that by the time you reached your pudding you have travelled four hundred and forty miles. So fast is travelling today that you are most of the time where you want to be, and not on the way as was the norm in the olden days.

The result of this onrush of tourists is that almost all the metropolises have doubled their hotels during the last fifteen or twenty years. The chain-system of hotels is something people have never heard of before. The Airlines themselves have become great hotel-builders. Hilton belongs to Trans-World, Inter-Continental belongs to Pan Am. Montparnesse, the biggest hotel in Paris, opened the year we were there and belongs to Abu Dhabi of Zurich which has hotels in thirty-three countries. Then there is the Sheraton chain of hotels. The architectures of these hotels are wonders of the world. Inside they are very different from the old-style luxury hotels. Today the emphasis is not on ornate décor but on modern conveniences; that is, escalators, auto-elevators, T.V., hot and cold water, and ice-cube machines. And you can book your room, engage a car and even a secretary long before you actually arrive at your destination.

Jules Verne's *Round the World in Eighty Days*, a fantasy in the nineteenth century, is a reality in the twentieth.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Sweet Mother: Harmonies of Light;** Part I and Part II. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Rs. 3.50 and Rs. 5.00.

WHILE we can write theses on philosophy and science, the most beautiful things in life have to be expressed through the simplest of similes. Thus, innocence is compared to a flower, purity to a flame, so on and so forth.

There are books which belong to the second category and they do not warrant any lengthy review. The two tiny volumes of *Sweet Mother* make an example of this category.

All the words of the Mother, whether they are elucidations of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and vision, or comments on topical issues, whether a message for a certain occasion or a personal guidance, are profound. So are they in these two volumes—made up of Mona Sarkar's recollections of her utterances. But these volumes have a special significance in our understanding the Mother (and is there a joy equal to our fumbling efforts at understanding her?), for, they reveal what the Mother meant to a child of the Ashram, how she was all that one's physical mother could mean and infinitely more.

The Mother used to see Mona Sarkar once a week. He went up to her not only with devotion, but also with a dynamic inquisitiveness. However, these qualities alone, though they would have been enough to help the young seeker to grow within, would not have brought us this bonanza under notice. Luckily for us, Mona Sarkar was endowed with a prodigious memory. Back from the Mother, he would note down her utterance. He could even reproduce from memory matter running into several pages.

From topics like Concentration, Devotion, Aspiration, Transformation, Faith, and Mental Silence, the weekly visitor had the privilege to hear the Mother pass on to observations on palmistry, numerology and football. All that concerned the seeker concerned the Mother too, in the sense that there was nothing in one's life which she could not turn into a significant channel for Sadhana. And, in her light, one would find insignificant any goal or ideal that was bereft of an urge to know the truth. "I wait patiently for the day when Truth will be the sole guide," she said while explaining the significance of one of her photographs.

The items recorded in these volumes are varied, but they make one realise that there is a plane from which everything looked different and charged with a new meaning. Some pet ideas crumble too. For example, this is how the Mother's exposition of the function of Grace goes: "You know, when the Grace acts, the result may be death or misfortune or something happy; it may even be a catastrophe but it is always what is best for the individual.... The Grace is that which makes you advance rapidly towards the realisation."

On reading these words one understands why the Divine takes a human form.

As Sri Aurobindo once wrote in a letter, "In her universal action the Mother acts according to the law of things—in her embodied physical action is the opportunity of a constant Grace—it is for that that the embodiment takes place."

MANOJ DAS

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## MY CLOTHINGS

My clothings, they say—  
Chequered, and flowered—  
Ill suit my age;  
That I must wear  
Impeccable white  
For dignity.

But I tried it once and failed.  
I have no grown-upness about me.  
I am still with the children  
In the dust of the street.

I climb the trees  
And smash into hedges.  
Plucking the berries  
I bite into them  
With the juice and all  
Running down my cheeks.

Picking up shells  
From the muddy river-bed  
I kneel beside a puddle  
To tease the snails.  
And all the stray dogs  
Are my friends.  
How can I wear  
Impeccable white?

M. L. THANGAPPA