

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

SPECIAL ISSUE

15 AUGUST 1980 : THE ANNIVERSARY OF
SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY

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TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

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

Among the other factors mentioned above, there is our decision of reverting to the use of envelopes instead of wrappers for posting in India. Complaints have come in that the edges of the copies got crumpled and that sometimes the wrappers got torn so that the copies were not delivered. But the cost of envelopes has shot up from the rate of Rs.55/- in 1976 to the present rate of Rs.200/- per thousand (a 300% increment).

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We count as ever on the goodwill of our subscribers.

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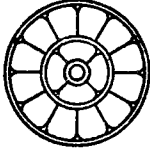
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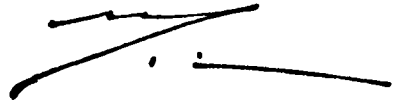


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

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

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

Advertisements too can be a good contribution. Tariff cards can be had on application.
Increase in the number of subscribers is always welcome.

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

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

AN EXPLANATION TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

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

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

SOME INSIGHTS OF AUGUST BY THE MOTHER

OUR courage and endurance must be as great as our hope and our hope has no limits. 2 August 1954

Don't foresee difficulties—it does not help to surmount them and helps them to come. 5 August 1932

Whatever is the difficulty, if we keep truly quiet the solution will come. 8 August 1971

Everything will come in its time; keep a confident patience and all will be all right. 9 August 1934

Tolerance is only the first step towards wisdom.
The need to tolerate indicates the presence of preferences.
He who lives in the Divine Consciousness regards all things with a perfect equanimity. 9 August 1969

All mischief comes from a lack of balance.
So let us keep our balance carefully, always, in all circumstances. 10 August 1954

When men will be disgusted with the falsehood in which they live, then the world will be ready for the reign of the Truth. 14 August 1971

Sri Aurobindo has come to bid the earth to prepare for its luminous future. 15 August 1964

It is the ego that gets depressed.
Do not mind it. Go on quietly with your work and the depression will disappear. 18 August 1971

In each human being there is a beast crouching ready to manifest at the slightest unwatchfulness. The only remedy is a constant vigilance. 18 August 1954

Exterior things must be of little importance when one does sadhana. The needed inner peace can be established in any surroundings. 19 August 1966

The loss of money is of small importance, but the loss of equipoise is a much more important thing. 20 August 1935

The things we cannot realise today we shall be able to realise tomorrow. The only necessity is to endure. 20 August 1954

Our hopes are never too great for manifestation.
We cannot conceive of anything that cannot be.

22 August 1954

If one is not master of one's desires, one cannot be master of one's thoughts. 22 August 1964

If you have a strong and conscious will and your will is centred around your psychic being then you can have a taste of liberty, otherwise you are the slave of all the outside influences. 24 August 1954

Each thought turned towards oneself veils the Divine.

25 August 1944

Blessed will be the day when the earth, awakened to the Truth, lives only for the Divine. 28 August 1954

For each problem there is a solution that can give satisfaction to everybody, but for finding this ideal solution each one must want it instead of meeting others with the will to enforce one's own preferences.

Enlarge your consciousness and aspire for the satisfaction of all.

28 August 1971

The Truth is in you—but you must want it, in order to realise it.

29 August 1954

To know beatitude is to know the Divine.

To know the Divine is to know beatitude.

They are intimately and eternally united in an indissoluble identity.

30 August 1967

Freedom does not come from outer circumstances but from inner liberation.

Find your soul, unite with it, let it govern your life and you will *be free*.

31 August 1966

(Birth-Centenary Ed., Vol. 14)

THE MOTHER ON SPEECH AND STYLE

WHEN speaking of physical things one should have a lively, pleasant, witty style.

When speaking of vital things the style should be eloquent.

When speaking of mental things the style should be clear, precise, exact.

When speaking of psychic things one must be inspired.

23 January 1953

Spiritual speech: all-powerful in its simplicity.

GOD'S WILL—GOD'S GRACE

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

It is quite wrong to go on brooding about the past. The true attitude is to remember that nothing happens but by God's will and to submit to that will quietly. If you have made mistakes in the past it is by lack of true surrender and the only way to repair the mistakes is to surrender truly.

A strong and effective resolution not to commit the same faults any more and a complete trust in the Divine's Grace are the only remedy.

28 February 1955

Most often the things which you took for accidents or misfortunes or even tragedies or even for the blows of fate, for attacks of the adverse forces, all this, almost all without any exception, was a marvellously perspicacious and admirably executed plan to lead you just where you had to go by the shortest road.

20 October 1954

Do not take the sorrows of life for what they seem to be; they are in truth a way to greater achievements.

THE MOTHER ON GOSSIP

EVERY word spoken uselessly is a dangerous gossiping.

Every malicious word, every slander is a degradation of the consciousness.

And when this slander is expressed in a vulgar language and gross form, then that is equivalent to a suicide—the suicide of one's soul.

9 August 1957

*

To gossip about what somebody is doing or not doing is wrong.

To listen to such gossip is wrong.

To retaliate in words against a false gossip is wrong.

The whole affair is a very bad way of wasting one's time and lowering one's consciousness.

Unless this very nasty habit is eradicated from the atmosphere, never will the Ashram reach its goal of Divine Life.

I wish all would repent like you and take the resolution of stopping this unhealthy activity.

12 October 1967

REVELATION AND ITS FORM

THE MOTHER'S COMMENT ON AN APHORISM OF SRI AUROBINDO

Revelation is the direct sight, the direct hearing or the inspired memory of Truth, dr̥ṣṭi, śr̥uti, sm̥ṛti; it is the highest experience and always accessible to renewed experience. Not because God spoke it, but because the soul saw it, is the word of the Scriptures our supreme authority.

I ASSUME that this is an answer to the Biblical belief in the "Commandments of God" received by Moses, supposedly uttered by the Lord Himself and heard by Moses—it is an indirect way of saying (*Mother laughs*) that this is not possible.

"Our supreme authority"... "because the soul saw it"—but it can only be a supreme authority for the soul that saw it, not for every soul. For the soul that had this experience and saw, it is the supreme authority, but not for others.

This was one of the things which used to make me think when I was a small child: these ten "Commandments", which are besides extraordinarily commonplace. Love thy father and thy mother.... Do not kill.... It is revoltingly commonplace. And Moses went up Mount Sinai to hear that!

Now, I do not know whether Sri Aurobindo was thinking of the Indian Scriptures.... There were also Chinese Scriptures....

More and more my experience is that revelation—it does come—revelation may be universally applicable, but it is always personal in form, always personal.

It is as if one had an *angle* of vision of the Truth. It is necessarily, necessarily an angle, from the very moment it is put into words.

You have a wordless, thoughtless experience of a kind of vibration which gives you a feeling of absolute truth and then, if you remain very still, without seeking to know anything, after some time it is as if the vibration were passing through a filter and it is translated as a kind of idea. Then this idea—it is still rather hazy, that is, very general—if you continue to keep very still, attentive and silent, this idea passes through another filter, and then a kind of condensation occurs, like drops, and it turns into words.

But then, when you have had the experience very sincerely—that is, when you are not fooling yourself—it is necessarily only one point, *one way* of saying the thing, that's all. And it cannot be more than that. Besides, it is very easy to observe that when you are in the habit of using a particular language, it comes in that language; for me it always comes either in English or in French, it does not come in Chinese or in Japanese! The words are inevitably English or French; and sometimes there is a Sanskrit word—but this is because, physically, I learnt Sanskrit. I have occasionally heard—not physically—Sanskrit pronounced by another being; but it does not crystallise, it remains nebulous; and when I come back to an entirely material conscious-

ness, I remember a vague sound, not a precise word. Therefore, it is *always* an individual angle from the very moment it is formulated.

You must have a kind of very *austere* sincerity. You are seized with enthusiasm, because the experience brings an extraordinary power: the Power is there—it is there, before the words, and it diminishes with the words—but the Power is there and with this Power you feel very universal, you have the feeling: “It is a universal revelation.” Yes, it is a universal revelation, but when you put it into words, it is no longer universal; then it is relevant only for minds that are built to understand this way of speaking. The Force is behind, but you have to go beyond the words.

Things of this sort come to me more and more often and I jot them down on a piece of paper. It is always the same process, always. First of all, a kind of explosion, an explosion of truth-power—it is like a great, white fireworks display (*Mother smiles*), much more than a fireworks display! And it spins round and round (*gesture above the head*), it churns and churns; then there is the impression of an idea—but the idea is lower, it is like a covering; the idea contains its own sensation, it also brings a sensation—the sensation was there before, but without the idea, and so the sensation could not be defined. There is only one thing, it is always an explosion of luminous Power. And then, afterwards, if you look at it and remain very quiet—the head, especially, should keep quiet—everything becomes silent (*motionless, upward gesture*), then suddenly someone speaks inside the head—someone speaks. It is this explosion speaking. Then I take a pencil and paper and I write. But between what speaks and what writes there is still a little space to be crossed, so that when it is written down something up there is not satisfied. So I remain quiet a little longer—“No, not that word, this one”—sometimes it takes two days to become quite final. But those who are satisfied with the power of the experience make short work of this, and send out into the world sensational revelations that are distortions of the Truth.

You must be very steady, very quiet, very critical—especially very quiet, silent, silent, silent, without trying to seize hold of the experience—“Oh! what is it, what is it?”—that spoils everything. But watch—watch very closely. In the words there is something left, something that remains of the original vibration—so little! But there is something, something that makes you smile, that is pleasant, like a sparkling wine, and here (*Mother indicates a word or a passage in an imaginary note*), here it is dull. Then you look with your knowledge of the language, or with your sense of word-rhythm: “Look, there’s a pebble.” You must remove the pebble; and then you wait and suddenly it comes, plop! it falls into place: the right word. If you are patient, after a day or two, it becomes absolutely accurate.

5 February 1964

(*Birth-Centenary Ed., Vol. 14*)

THE MOTHER ON INDIA

IN the whole creation the earth has a place of distinction, because unlike any other planet it is evolutionary with a psychic entity at its centre. In it, India, in particular, is a divinely chosen country.

*

It is only to those who can conquer the mind's preferences and the prejudices of race and education that India reveals the mystery of her treasures. Others depart disappointed, failing to find what they seek, for they have sought it in the wrong way and would not agree to pay the price.

*

True spirituality is not to renounce life, but to make life perfect with a Divine Perfection.

This is what India must show to the world now.

26 January 1963

HIS FACE

I SEE His face in the vastness of the mountains,
His image mingles with the loud wind-surges;
He is the spirit of the range upon range—
He is the Lord where the sky merges
With the purple pathways of the giant mountains
And the summits rise like silent praise—
Eternal, gigantic wind-worship
Vibrating prayer to that Kingly Grace!

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

AN APPEAL TO THE MOTHER AND HER RESPONSE

A LETTER FROM NARAYAN PRASAD WITH COMMENTS BY THE MOTHER

Kind Mother,

Pranams, I do not find words to express my gratitude for giving me an instant relief. Though I could not receive much in the mind, for more than an hour I remained merged in ecstatic mood followed by repeated illumination in the heart from the moment I touched The Mother's blessing card.

It will come again and remain longer.

In May last I saw Thee in a dream and heard Thee ~~saying~~ saying in a loving tone, "Your psychic will come in front." This was followed by a welling of peace from the heart. ^(2 a.m.) When Was this The Mother's voice? *Yes, it was.*

Since 1962, off and on, there has been arising a feeling that I have gone beyond struggle and in this year in particular I have been feeling a positive sense of freedom, a release, a relief hitherto unknown. Before 1962 there was a cry in me I have not yet got anything abiding. Now by Thy Grace it is replaced by a blissful feeling that I stand on the threshold of a new life. (I donot expect anything great. Only some happy change.) *This is quite true*

Is there anything genuine in it or only a mental ~~feeling~~ feeling? The present mental trouble seems to me imposed by some adverse force which ~~was~~ is still after me, whispering bad suggestions from time to time. Otherwise a calm reigns in my

Do not fear any adverse force - if you have a sincere faith, nothing can

harm you.

(2)

being. Mother, I feel all the three elements of my being ~~has~~ have now unified in me. I don't know how far I am right in my reading. So far ^{as} I am conscious I feel that there is only one prominent desire in me to see the psychic in front, and remain merged in its sweetness. These experiences makes me test the joy of reliance. No restlessness, no hankering for anything. *Keep your aspiration, be confident, the psychic will come in front.*

I have suffered much. Pray tell me if I am in a delusion. *there is no delusion there, have faith and confidence*

How much you have done for us Mother, The greatest miracle seems to me that keeping us in so much comfort you ~~are~~ giving such fine experiences. How eager is my heart-- if I had the capacity to express my feelings in words, but I lack the power of expression. *It is all right*

I pray an inner strength which can stand anything.

May I live to see Thy infinite forms with the physical eyes. *With trust all is possible -*

Love and blessings

*At Thy feet
Narayanprad*

9.9.63

Narayan Prasad, sincere child of the Master and the Mother, one of the early sadhaks of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and author of two popular books and the extremely appreciated recent series of articles, "Towards the Higher Life", expired at 10 minutes past midnight on 19 May, aged 78 years. Some time before the end he asked his son Hriday to pass on to the Editor of Mother India a letter he had greatly prized and kept safely through the years in his cupboard. It was precious because of the Mother's replies written after each paragraph. We have reproduced it in facsimile above, since within its particular relevance to Narayan Prasad it has a general bearing on Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and its process in an individual's life under the Mother's guiding power.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

A STATEMENT BY SRI AUROBINDO

WHAT we are doing, if and when we succeed, will be a beginning, not a completion. It is the foundation of a new consciousness on earth—a consciousness with infinite possibilities of manifestation. The eternal progression is in the manifestation and beyond it there is no progression.

If the redemption of the soul from the physical vesture be the object, then there is no need of supramentalisation. Spiritual Mukti and Nirvana are sufficient. If the object is to rise to supraphysical planes, then also there is no need of supramentalisation. One can enter into some heaven above by devotion to the Lord of that heaven. But that is no progression. The other worlds are typical worlds, each fixed in its own kind and type and law. Evolution takes place on the earth and therefore the earth is the proper field for progression. The beings of the other worlds do not progress from one world to another. They remain fixed to their own type.

The purely monistic Vedantists say, all is Brahman, life is a dream, an unreality, only Brahman exists. One has Nirvana or Mukti, then one lives only till the body falls—after that there is no such thing as life.

They do not believe in transformation, because mind, life and body are an ignorance, an illusion—the only reality is the featureless, relationless self of Brahman. Life is a thing of relations; in the pure self, all life and relations disappear. What would be the use or the possibility of transforming an illusion that can never be anything else (however transformed) than an illusion? There is no such thing for them as a Nirvanic Life.

It is only some Yogas that aim at a transformation of any kind except that of ignorance into knowledge. The idea varies,—sometimes a divine knowledge or power or else a divine purity or an ethical perfection or a divine love.

What has to be overcome is the opposition of the Ignorance that does not want the transformation of nature. If that can be overcome, then old spiritual ideas will not form an obstacle.

It is not intended to supramentalise humanity at large, but to establish the principle of the supramental consciousness in the earth-evolution. If that is done, all that is needed will be done by the supramental Power itself. It is not therefore important that the mission should be widespread. What is important is that the thing should be done at all in however small a number; that is the only difficulty.

If the transformation of the body is complete, that means no subjection to death—it does not mean that one will be bound to keep the same body for all time. One creates a new body for oneself when one wants to change, but how it will be done cannot be said now. The present method is by physical birth—some occultists suppose that a time will come when that will not be necessary but the question must be left for the supramental evolution to decide.

The questions about the supermind cannot be answered profitably now. Supermind cannot be described in terms that the mind will understand, because the terms will be mental and mind will understand them in a mental way and mental sense and miss their true import. It would therefore be a waste of time and energy which should be devoted to the preliminary work—psychicisation and spiritualisation of the being and nature without which no supramentalisation is possible. Let the whole dynamic nature led by the psychic make itself full of the dynamic spiritual light, peace, purity, knowledge, force, let it afterwards get experience of the intermediate spiritual planes and know, feel and act in their sense; then it will be possible to speak, at last of the supramental transformation.

SHIMMERINGS AND GLIMMERINGS

ONE face alone that stands nonpareil before the world,
One single Soul left bare to see and do all.
Is it not because of Him that we can dare to live,
To have hope and dream of unfading splendours?
O Wonder, that He lives and guides, unseen to mortal eyes,
O Blessed Day, when His untrammelled form surprises again earth's
panting heart!

PATTI

THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

NEWLY-WRITTEN OR CORRECTED MATTER

(Continued from the issue of July 1980)

(The revision of Chapter VIII is light to heavy, consisting of additions and alterations to every paragraph. Most of the revision was done during the earlier period, only a few phrases were added in the later.)

CHAPTER VIII

The Character of English Poetry — 2

WHAT kind or quality of poetry should we naturally expect from a national mind so constituted? The Anglo-Saxon strain is dominant and in that circumstance there lay just a hazardous possibility that there might have been no poetical literature at all. The Teutonic nations have in this field been conspicuous by their silence or the rarity of their speech. After the old rude epics, saga or Nibelungenlied, we have to wait till quite recent times for poetic utterance, nor, when it came, was it rich or abundant. In Germany, so rich in music, in philosophy, in science, the great poetic word has burst out rarely: one brief and strong morning time illumined by the calm, large and steady blaze of Goethe's genius and the wandering fire of Heine, afterwards a long unlighted stillness. In the North here or there a solitary genius, Ibsen, Strindberg. Holland, another Teutonic country which developed an art of a considerable but almost wholly objective power, is mute in poetry.¹ It would almost seem that there is still something too thick and heavy in the strength and depth of the Teutonic composition for the ethereal light and fire of the poetic word to make its way freely through the intellectual and vital envelope. What has saved the English mind from a like taciturnity? It must have been the mixture of other racial strains, sublimating this strong but heavy material temperament with a quicker and more impetuous element; the submerged Celtic genius must have pushed the rest from behind, intervening as a decisive force to liberate and uplift the poetic spirit. And as a necessary aid we have the fortunate accident of the reshaping of a Teutonic tongue by French and Latinistic influences which gave it clearer and more flowing forms and turned it into a fine though difficult linguistic material sufficiently malleable, sufficiently plastic for Poetry to produce in it both her larger and her subtler effects, but also sufficiently difficult to compel her to put forth her greatest energies. A stuff of speech which, without being harsh and inapt, does not tempt by too great a facility, but offers a certain resistance in the material, increases the strength of the artist by the measure of the difficulty

¹ I do not include here any consideration of contemporary names; it would be unsafe to go by the great reputations of today which may sink tomorrow to a much lower status.

conquered and can be thrown into shapes at once of beauty and of concentrated power. That is eminently the character of the English language.

At any rate we have this long continuity of poetic production. And once supposing a predominantly Anglo-Saxon or, more strictly an Anglo-Norman national mind moved to express itself in poetry, we should, ignoring for a moment the Celtic emergence, expect the groundwork to be a strong objective poetry, a powerful presentation of the forms of external life, a ready and energetic portrayal of action and character in action, the pleasant or the melancholy outsides of Nature, the robust play of the will and the passions, a vigorous flow of a strenuous vital and physical verse creation. Even we might look for a good deal of deviation into themes and motives for which prose will always be the more adequate and characteristic instrument; we should not be surprised to meet here a self-styled Augustan age which makes these things the greater part of its realm and indulges with a self-satisfied contentment in a confident and obvious "criticism" of external life, preferring to more truly poetic forms and subjects the poetry of political and ecclesiastical controversy, didactic verse, satire. There would be in this Anglo-Norman poetry a considerable power of narrative and a great energy in the drama of character and incident; but any profounder use of the narrative and dramatic forms we would not look for,—at most we might arrive in the end at some powerful dramatic analysis of character. The romantic element would be of an external Teutonic kind sensational and outward, appealing to the life and the senses; there would be no touch of the delicate and beautiful imaginative, mystic and almost spiritual Celtic romanticism. We should have perhaps much poetical thinking or even poetical philosophy of a rather obvious kind, sedate or vigorous, prompt and direct or robustly powerful, but not the finer and subtler poetic thought which comes easily to the clear Latin intellect. Form too of a kind we might hope for, though we could not be quite sure of it, but at best bright and plain or strongly balanced and not those greater forms in which a high and deep creative thought presides or those more exquisite of which a delicate sense of beauty or a subtle poetic intuition is the magic builder. Both the greater and more profound depths and magnitudes and the subtler intensities of style and rhythm would be absent; but there would be a boldly forcible or a well-beaten energy of speech and much of the more metallic vigours of verse. This side of the national mind would prepare us for English poetry as it was until Chaucer and beyond, for the ground-type of the Elizabethan drama, the work of Dryden and Pope, the whole mass of eighteenth-century verse, Cowper, Scott, Wordsworth in his more outward moments, Byron without his Titanism and unrest, much of the lesser Victorian verse, Tennyson without his surface aestheticism and elaborate finesse, the poetry of Browning. For this much we need not go outside the Anglo-Norman temperament.

That also would give, but subject to a potent alchemy of transformation, the basic form and substance of most English poetry. That alchemy we can fairly attribute to the submerged Celtic element which emerges, as time goes on, in bright upstreamings and sometimes in exceptional outbursts of power. It comes up in a blaze of colour,

light, emotion and imaginative magic; in a passionate hungering for beauty in its more subtle and delicately sensuous forms, for the ideal which escapes definition and yet has to be seized and cast into interpretative lines; in a lyrical intoxication; in a charm of subtle romance. It casts into the mould a higher urge of thought than the vital common sense of the Saxon can give, not the fine, calm and measured poetical thinking of the Greeks and the Latin races which deal sovereignly with life within the limits of the intellect and the inspired reason, but an excitement of thought seeking for something beyond itself and behind life through the intensities of creative sight. It brings in a look upon Nature which pierces beyond her outsides and her external spirit and lays its touch on the mysteries of her inner life and sometimes on that in her which is most intimately spiritual. It awakens rare outbreaks of mysticism, a vein of subtler sentiment, a more poignant pathos; it refines passion from a violence of the vital being into an intensity of the soul, modifies vital sensuousness into a thing of imaginative beauty by a warmer aesthetic perception. It carries with it a seeking for exquisite lyrical form, touches narrative poetry to finer issues, throws its romantic beauty and force and fire and its greater depth of passion across the drama and makes it something more than a tumultuous external action and heavily powerful character-drawing. At one period it strives to rise beyond the English mould, seems about to disengage itself and reveal through poetry the Spirit in things. In language and music it is always a quickening and refining force; where it can do nothing more, it breathes a more intimate energy; where it gets its free characteristic movement, it creates that intensity of style and rhythm, that sheer force of imaginative vision and that peculiar unseizable beauty of turn which are the highest qualities of English poetry.

The varied commingling and separating of these two elements mark the whole later course of the literature and present as their effect a side of failure and defect and a side of achievement. There are evidently two opposite powers at work in the same field, often compelled to labour in the same mind at a common production; and when two such opposites can coalesce, seize each other's motives and, fusing them, become one, the very greatest achievement becomes possible. For each fills in the other's deficiencies; they light each other up with a new light and bring in a fresh revelation which neither by itself could have accomplished. The greatest things in English poetry have come where this fusion was effected in the creative mind and soul of the poet. But that could not always be done and there results from the failure a frequent uncertainty of motive, a stumbling unsureness of touch, an oscillation, a habit of too often falling short of the mark. It does not prevent great triumphs of poetic power, but it does prevent a high equality and sustained perfection of self-expression and certainty of form. We must expect inequality in all human work, but not necessarily on this scale nor with so frequent and extensive a sinking below what should be the normal level.

To the same uncertainty may be attributed the rapid starts and turns of the course of English poetry, its want of conscious continuity,—for there is a secret, underground and inevitable continuity which we have to dig for and disengage. It

takes a very different course from the external life of the nation which has always been faithful to its inner motive and spirit and escaped from the shattering and suddenly creative changes that have at once afflicted and quickened the life of other peoples. The revolutions of the spirit of English poetry are extreme and violent, astonishing in their decisiveness and abruptness. We can mark off first the early English poetry which found its solitary greater expression in Chaucer; indeed it marks itself off by an absolute exhaustion and cessation, a dull and black Nirvana. The magnificent Elizabethan outburst has another motive, spirit and manner of expression which seem to have nothing to do with the past; it is a godhead self-born under the impulse of a new age and environment. As this fades away, we see standing high and apart the lonely figure of Milton with his strenuous effort at an intellectual poetry cast in the type of the ancients. The age which succeeds, hardly linked to it by a slender stream of Caroline lyrics, is that of a trivial intellectuality which does not follow the lead of Milton and is the exact contrary of the Elizabethan form and spirit, the thin and arid reign of Pope and Dryden. Another violent and impatient breaking away, a new outburst of wonderful freshness gives us the poetry of Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Blake with another spirit and another language of the spirit. The Victorian period did not deny their influences; it felt them in the first form of its work, and we might have expected it to have gone nobly forward and brought to some high or beautiful issue what had been only a great beginning that did not arrive at its full fruition. But it did nothing of the kind; it deviated into a new way which has nothing to do with the finer spirit of the preceding poets. Descending it fell away into an intellectual, half-artistic, carefully but not finely or sovereignly wrought and mostly superficial and external poetry. And afterwards we have this age which is still trying to find itself, but in its most characteristic tendencies seems to start from a summary rejection of the Victorian forms and motives. These reversals and revolutions of the spirit are not in themselves a defect or a disability; on the contrary, they open the door to large opportunities and unforeseen achievements. English poetical literature has been a series of bold experiments less shackled by the past than in countries which have a stronger sense of cultural tradition. Revolutions are distracting things, but they are often good for the human soul; for they bring a rapid unrolling of new horizons.

Here comes in the side of success and greatness in this poetry. There is a force which overrides its defects and compensates richly for its limitations; its lapses and failures are the price it pays for its gains. For nowhere else has individual genius found so free a field; nowhere has it been able to work so directly out of itself and follow so boldly its own line of poetic adventure. Form is a great power, but sureness of form is not everything. A strong tradition of form gives a firm ground upon which genius can work in safety, protected from its own wanderings; but it limits and stands in the way of daring individual adventure. The spirit of adventure, if its path is strewn with accidents, stumblings or fatal casualties, brings, when it does succeed, new revelations which are worth all the price paid for them. English poetry is full of

such new revelations. Its richness, its constant freshness, its lavish expenditure of genius exulting in chainless freedom, delivered from all meticulous caution, its fire and penetrating force of imagination, its lambent energy of poetic speech, its constant self-liberation into intensest beauty of self-expression are the rewards of its courage and its liberty. These things are of the greatest value in poetry. They lead besides to possibilities which are of the highest importance to the poetry of the future.

We may briefly anticipate and indicate in what manner. We have to accept one constant tendency of the spirit of English poetry, which loves to dwell with all its weight upon the presentation of life and action, feeling and passion and to give that its full force and make of it the basis and the source and, not only the point of reference, but the utility of all else. A strong hold upon this life, the earth-life, is the characteristic of the English mind, and it is natural that it should take possession of its poetry. The pure Celtic genius leans towards the opposite extreme: it seems to care little for the earth-life for its own sake and has little hold on it or only a light and ethereal hold; it accepts it as a starting-point for the expression of other-life, but is attracted by all that is hidden and secret. The Latin mind insists on the presentation of life, but for the purposes of thought; its eye is on the universal truths and realities of which life is the visible expression,—not the remoter, the spiritual or soul-truths, but those which present themselves to the clarities of the intelligence. But the English mind looks at life and loves it for its own sake, in all its externalities, its play of outer individualities, its immediate subjective idiosyncrasies. Even when it is strongly attracted by other motives, the intellectual, the aesthetic or the spiritual, it seldom follows these with a completely disinterested fidelity, but comes back with them on the external life and tries to subject them to its mould and use them for its purpose. This turn is not universal,—Blake escapes from it; nor is it the single dominant power,—Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth have their hearts elsewhere: but it is a constant power; it attracts even the poets who have not a real genius for it and vitiates their work by the immixture of an alien motive.

This objective and external turn might be strong enough in some other arts,—fiction, for instance, or painting or sculpture,—to create a clear national tradition and principle of form, but not easily in poetry. For here the mere representation of life cannot be enough, however vivid or however strongly subjected to the law of poetic beauty it may be. Poetry must strive at least towards a presentation from within and not at simple artistic reproduction; and the principle of presentation must be something more than that of the eye on the visible object. It is by a process from within, a passing of all one meets, thinks or feels through some kind of intimately subjective vision that life is turned into poetry. If this subjective medium is the inspired reason or the intuitive mind, the external presentation of life gives place inevitably to an interpretation, a presentation in which its actual lines are either neglected or subordinated in order that some inner truth of it may emerge. But in English poetry the attempt is to be or at least to appear true to the actual lines of life, to hold up a mirror to Nature. It is the mirror then which has to do the poetising of life; the vital,

the imaginative, the emotional temperament of the poet is the reflecting medium and it has to supply unaided the creative and poetical element. We have then a faithfully unfaithful reflection which always amounts to a transformation, because the temperament of the poet lends to life and Nature its own hues, its own lines, its own magnitudes. But the illusion of external reality, of an "imitation" of Nature is created,—the illusion which has been for so long a first canon of Western artistic conceptions,—and the English mind which carries this tendency to an extreme, feels then that it is building upon the safe foundation of the external and the real; it is satisfied of the earth even when it is singing in the heavens.

But this sole reliance on the temperament of the poet has certain strong results. It gives an immense importance to individuality, much greater than that which it must always have in poetical creation: the transformation of life and Nature in the individuality becomes almost the whole secret of this poetry. Therefore English poetry is much more powerfully and consciously personal and individual than that of any other language; it aims much less directly at the impersonal and universal. This individual subjective element creates enormous differences between the work of poets of the same age; they cannot escape from the common tendencies, but give to them a quite independent turn and expression and subordinate them to the assertion of the individuality; in other literatures, until recently, the reverse has oftener happened. Besides, the higher value given to the intensity of the imaginative, vital or emotional response favours and is perhaps a first cause of that greater intensity of speech and immediate vision which is the strength of English poetry. For since the heightening cannot come mainly from the power and elevation of the medium through which life is seen, as in Greek and ancient Indian poetry, it has to come almost entirely from the individual response in the poet, his force of personal utterance, his intensity of personal vision.

Three general characteristics emerge. The first is a constant reference and return of the higher poetical motives to the forms of external life, as if the enriching of that life were its principal artistic aim. The second is a great force of subjective individuality and personal temperament as a leading power of poetic creation. The third is a great intensity of speech and ordinarily of a certain kind of direct vision. But in the world's literature generally these are the tendencies that have been on the increase and two of them at least are likely to be persistent. There is everywhere a considerable stressing of the individual subjective element, a drift towards making the most of the poet's personality, an aim at a more vivid response and the lending of new powers of colour and line from within to the vision of life and Nature, a search for new intensities of word and rhythm which will translate into speech a deeper insight. In following out the possible lines of the future the defect of the English mind is its inability to follow the higher motives disinterestedly to their deepest and largest creative results, but this is being remedied by new influences. The entrance of the pure Celtic temperament into English poetry through the Irish revival is likely to do much; the contribution of the Indian mind in work like Tagore's may act in the same direction.

If this change is effected, the natural powers of the English spirit will be of the highest value to the future poetry. For that poetry is likely to move to the impersonal and universal, not through the toning down of personality and individuality, but by their heightening to a point where they are liberated into the impersonal and universal expression. Subjectivity is likely to be its greater power, the growth to the universal subjective enriched by all the forces of the personal soul-experience. The high intensity of speech which English poetry has brought to bear upon all its material, its power of giving the fullest and richest value to the word and the image, is needed for the expression of the values of the spiritual, which will be one of the aims of a supreme intuitive utterance. If the pursuit of the higher godheads into their own sphere will be one of its endeavours, their return upon the earth-life to transform our vision of it will be its other side. If certain initial movements we can even now see in English poetry outline and emphasise themselves in the future, this long stream of strong creation and utterance may arrive at a point where it will discover a supreme utility for all its past powers. It may go deeper within itself and find and live in the greater spirit which has till now only occasionally broken into its full native utterance. Arriving at a more comprehensive spiritual motive it may successfully interweave into it the conflicting lines of its past forces. It may achieve clear and powerful forms of a new intuitive utterance in which the Anglo-Celtic spirit will find its highest harmonised and perfect self-expression. The Elizabethan poet wrote in the spacious days of its first birth into greatness,

Or who can tell for what great work in hand
The greatness of our style is now ordained?
What powers it shall bring in, what spirits command?

It has since brought in many powers, commanded many spirits; but it may be that the richest powers, the highest and greatest spirit yet remain to be found, brought in, commanded, put into the service of the greatest work and achievement of which our evolving humanity is capable.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

THE COMPLETE SET

(Continued from the issue of July 1980)

May 23, 1935

I had a queer dream last night: I was bowing with love and devotion before a dark-complexioned gentleman, and he with equal affection raised me up and said, "You will require 18 years (Good Lord!!) to realise the Divine, out of which 12 years will pass away in just knocking about and playing." Heart-rending prophecy! But who is this old gentleman, and what does his prophecy amount to—please?

The old dark-complexioned gentleman must be Old Nick, I suppose, and his prophecy amounts to Old Nickery.

May 24, 1935

So I bowed down to the devil, and devotionally too! But is it not possible to develop some kind of discrimination in these things? Usually it is only after the ceremony that I begin to doubt the credentials of the persons. I clearly saw that this devil did not resemble you, but still I bowed. But when we often see Mother in various forms, looking quite different, you say that it is the Mother; how can one differentiate then?

Necessarily, Mother can manifest in many other forms besides her physical one, and though I am rather less multitudinous, I can also. But that does not mean that you can take any gentleman for me or any she for her. Your dream-self has to develop a certain discrimination. That discrimination cannot go by signs and forms, for the vital beggars can imitate almost anything—it must be intuitive.

My interest in poetry is growing again, but I could not complete a sonnet even after trying for three days. I don't mind the labour if only it is not spent in vain.

There have been instances where people have taken up music with your approval, and they have worked at it to find later on that it was not their line.

Approval or permission? People get it into their heads that they would like to do some music, because it is the fashion or because they like it so much and the Mother may tolerate it or say "All right try". That does not mean they are predestined or doomed to be musicians or poets or painters according to the case. Perhaps

one of those who try may bloom, others drop off. X starts painting and shows only a fanciful dash at first, after a time he brings out work, remarkable work. Y does clever facile things; one day he begins to deepen and a possible painter in the making enthuses¹. Others—well, they don't. But they can try—they will learn something about painting at least.

Labour at your sestets if the spirit pushes you. The Angel of Poetry may be delivered out of the labour, even if with a forceps.

Nishikanto has a furious boil on his face; and as you know boils on the face are dangerous.

Why?

May 25, 1935

Boils on the face are dangerous because its blood circulation has a direct connection with that of the brain, so that any suppurative process can go up and infect the brain.

!

Again, I have read many times the "Intuitive Mind". Though the theoretical process, is given very elaborately it is not of much use for practical purposes. So will you answer how to get Intuition? If no time tonight, let the book wait till Monday.

I fear the book would have to wait much longer. I am just now in a strenuous time when I can't even think about these things, much less write about them. I can only keep your question in mind and wait for an opportunity to answer.

May 27, 1935

S has profuse "whites".

What on earth is this word? Winter? Wintes? It may be profuse but it is not legible. For God's sake don't imitate me.

Today, I surprised myself by completing a poem of 18 lines in about 2 hours and 8 lines of another in 1 hour!

Glory to God!

¹ uncertain reading.

We hear you are tremendously busy; hot speculations are in the air about near descents.

No, thank you, sir! I have had enough of them—the only result of the last descent was an upsurging of the subconscious mud.

In the upshot many crashes and shipwrecks are apprehended.

What an appetite for crashes!

Please tell us something so that we may prepare ourselves in time to bear the pressure.

No pressure! I am simply busy trying to get out of the mud—in other words to see if the damned subconscious can be persuaded to subside into something less dangerous, less complexful and more manageable.

May 28, 1935

The word you tumbled against, is "whites".

Great Lord! What an h! I could not do worse myself.

When you said yesterday, "I am simply busy trying to get out of the mind" etc., etc... I sighed, "What a happy ignorance! Will it be folly to get wise?"

Not mind, sir. I have gone out of my mind long ago. I wrote "mud" mud, mud, mud of the subconscious.

Can you not give us a few words on this subconscious? Is it individual as well as universal? What are its effects? It seems to play a tremendous role in our lives.

Of course the subconscious is universal as well as individual like all the other main parts of the Nature. But there are different parts or planes of the subconscious. All upon earth is based on the Inconscient as it is called, though it is not really inconscient at all, but rather a complete subconsciousness in which there is everything but nothing formulated or expressed. The subconscious of which I speak lies between the Inconscient and conscious mind, life and body. It contains all the reactions to life which struggle out as a slowly evolving and self-formulating consciousness, but it contains them not as ideas, perceptions or conscious reactions but as the fluid substance of these things. Also all that is consciously experienced sinks down into the subconscious not as experience but as obscure, obstinate impressions of experience and can come up at any time as dreams, as mechanical repetitions of past thought,

feeling, action etc., as “complexes” exploding into action and event etc., etc. The subconscious is the main cause why all things repeat themselves and nothing ever gets changed except in appearances. It is the cause why people say, character cannot be changed, also of the constant return of things one hoped to have got rid of. All seeds are there and all the sanskaras of the mind, vital and body,—it is the main support of death and disease and the last fortress (seemingly impregnable) of the Ignorance. All that is suppressed without being wholly got rid of sinks down there and remains in seed ready to surge up or sprout up at any moment.

May 29, 1935

The oculist says that R's eye-defect is slight and glasses may relieve the headache.

The objection to eye-glasses is that once you start the eyes get not better but worse and worse. So if it is only slight there is no use in spoiling the eye-sight in order to get rid of the headaches.

S took one pill and from the next morning she had burning in her eyes. I washed her eyes and that gave an uneasiness in the head! Now I realise that I should have left her to you.

All that is of course S's imagination. She decides in herself that the medicine is the cause of the burning and the uneasiness. Perhaps she decides it beforehand—or rather something in her decides it. If her imagination were equally effective for cure it would be a great thing.

M complains of pain in the heels. There is no tenderness in the bone; some tenderness in the pad of fat. Internally salicylates can be tried, but there is no rheumatic history.

No salicylates. It will spoil her stomach without curing the heel. It may be “policeman's disease” as the French call it, “maladie de sergent de ville”; I have forgotten the technical name for it, but it is supposed to come from too much standing. I had it myself for something like a year because of walking or standing all day—that was when I used to meditate while walking. The Fr. Medical Dictionary says there is no remedy but rest. I myself got rid of it by application of force without any rest or any other remedy. But M is not a policeman and she does not walk while she meditates—so how did she get it?

May 30, 1935

It is then quite possible for M to get this disease, for she is almost always on her

heels. Why not apply some Force and cure it?

She has got too much force herself, though the heel may be, as with Achilles, her vulnerable point; the Force may not be able to get into it.

*

May 31, 1935

Here is a little Bengali love poem, Sir, after long travail! Even then Nishikanta had to apply forceps at the end. I mark X against his lines.

The marks are to my eyes invisible.

I myself seem to like it.

This time you seem to have succeeded. That is poetry.

The process I follow in writing is like this: I go on chiselling and improving on what I have written and it takes a lot of time. Sometimes I write down, all the time trying to search for a better expression. It is said that both these processes are bad.

There can be no one rule for everybody. Many follow your process.

S's eye trouble is the same, there is a sign of strain in her eyes.

She writes to me that her eyes are a little better, but she is in dental anguish and as usual, all that is done by the doctors (dentist) makes her worse.

I hear from Rajangam that you are preparing to sacrifice someone including ourselves to the gallows of medical studies, for a French diploma. Is it really necessary?

It is not for study, but that one may be safe against the French law which forbids anyone except duly qualified medical practitioners (French-qualified, not foreign-qualified) to practise in French territory. What we are doing now is perfectly illegal, our only defence being that we take no money and do it only among ourselves—but whether that would be sufficient is doubtful. Mother has often wished for someone who could stand as a shield, having the necessary qualifications, but Dayashankar who was to have done it is no longer available. We have no idea of forcing anyone to do it.

June 1, 1935

If it is necessary and convenient why not send Pavitra to the Chief Medical Officer to discuss the matter with him?

It is not so pressing. If there were a general rule about the matter as in France, it would be all right; but a special favour is another matter. We will think twice before we ask—especially as they may look with disfavour on the idea of somebody coming from outside¹ into the closed medical field here.

June 3, 1935

Are there not periods or moments when we consciously bring back to memory certain things of the past, or are these impressions only due to the waves from the subconscious reaching up?

That is the conscious action of the mind.

I mean are our conscious or unconscious movements entirely influenced by the subconscious?

No, certainly not—the subconscious is the evolutionary basis in us, it is not the whole nature. But things can rise from the subconscious and take shape in the conscious parts.

I also understand that this subconscious is more directly concerned with what we may call the more obscure and darker movements of our being. What is then the origin of the higher movements?

There are three sources of our action—the superconscious, the subliminal, the subconscious of which we are not aware. What we are aware of is the surface being which is only an instrumental arrangement. The source of all is the general Nature, but the general Nature deposits certain habits of movement, personality, character, faculties, dispositions, tendencies in us. That is what we usually call ourselves. Part of this is in habitual movement and use in our conscious part, part is concealed in the other three.

But what we are on the surface is being constantly set in motion, changed, developed or repeated by the laws of the general Nature coming in on us either directly or else indirectly, through others, through circumstances etc. Some of this comes straight into the conscious part and acts there, our minds etc., appropriating it as our own; part comes into the subconscious or sinks into it and waits for an opportunity

¹ uncertain.

of rising up into the conscious, part goes into the subliminal and may at any time turn up or may not. Part passes through and is rejected. It is a constant activity of forces supplied to us out of which (or rather out of a small amount of it) we make what we will or can. But in reality it is all a play of forces, a flux, nothing fixed or stable; the appearance of stability is given by constant repetition and recurrence of the same vibrations and formations. That is why our nature can be changed in spite of Vivekananda and Horace and the subconscious, but it is a difficult job because the master mode of Nature is this obstinate repetition and recurrence.

As for the things thrown away from us that come back, it depends on where you throw them. Very often there is a sort of procedure about it. The mind rejects its mentalities, the vital its vitalities, the physical its physicalities—these usually go into the corresponding domain of general Nature. It all stays in the environmental consciousness which we carry about with us, by which we communicate with the outside Nature, and persistently rushes back from there—until it is so absolutely rejected that it can't return. But when what the mind rejects is strongly supported by the vital, it sinks down into the vital, rages there and tries to rush up again and reoccupy the mind. When the vital rejects it, it sinks from the higher to the lower vital. When the lower vital too rejects it, it sinks into the physical consciousness and tries to stick by inertia or mechanical repetition. Rejected from there it goes into the subconscious and comes up in dreams, in passivity, in extreme tamas. The Inconscient is the last resort of the Ignorance.

As for the general Nature it is of course the natural tendency of its inferior forces to try and perpetuate their action in the individual, so they return on him when they find their influence rejected. But they cannot last long once the environmental consciousness is cleared,—unless the Hostiles take a hand. Even then these can attack, but if the sadhak has established his position in the inner self, they can only attack and retire.

It is true that we bring most of ourselves from past lives. Heredity only affects the external being, and all the effects of heredity are not accepted, only those that are in consonance with what we are to be or not preventive of it at least. I may be the son of my father or mother in certain respects, but most of me is as foreign to them, as if I had been born in New York or Paraguay.

June 4, 1935

S's acidity has come back in full vigour, perhaps due to my fault. I added two more slices of bread on his repeated request and he informs me after two days.

His object in not informing you, Purushottam says, was that you might not stop his extra food!

Secondly he thought he has turned out to be Hercules overnight, went on scrubbing,

doing gate-duty and many other exercises without ever asking me.

Purushottam says the work is light, but S purposely turned it into a Sandow exercise making all sorts of motions to give work to his muscles. Motive—to get hungry so that he might conscientiously ask for an increase of food.

I noticed a very peculiar movement in me. I could no longer think of you—an absolute indifference, apathy was there. It seemed as if you were before me yet not there.

It looks like the subconscious—perhaps due to my writing about it? But also it may be that the subconscious has become my King Charles's head and I see it everywhere.

What are these things cropping up? How will they end?

Let us hope, in the illumination of the subconscious and a glorious transformation!

Today very suddenly J said, "The Mother is sending you to Paris." I thought the whole thing has somehow leaked out. When I asked him how he came to know about it, he replied, "It is absolutely my intuition." Do you believe it, Sir? Can intuition be so exact?

I am not disposed to accuse the intuition in this case. I suspect R or somebody else of indiscretion with this intuitive outbreak as the result. Not that intuition cannot be exact, but we must not put too much on its poor back.

HENRY NEVINSON ON SRI AUROBINDO IN THE SWADESHI DAYS

(Henry Nevinston, who landed in Bombay on 25 October 1907, was one of the most sympathetic visitors from England to India in the time of the Nationalist Movement in Bengal whose most significant leader was Sri Aurobindo, then known as Arabinda Ghose. After recalling Surendra Nath Banerji's magnificent Ciceronian oratory the previous evening in Calcutta's College Square where he too had made a short speech, and the visit next morning to Sir Andrew Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal with whom he had a pleasant breakfast, Nevinston recounts the not-so-pleasant sequel and mentions his interview with Sri Aurobindo, the news of which galled Sir Andrews.)

ALL went well, as again reports say, till the moment of collision—all went well between us till the morning papers appeared, the Indian papers praising my sympathetic words, the Anglo-Indian papers pouring out upon me the customary abuse, perhaps kept always in type for such occasions. The Lieutenant-Governor was not pleased, and he must have been still more annoyed when he heard from the Government spies that I had spent a great part of the previous night in converse with Arabinda Ghose, the wisest and most attractive of the Extremist leaders.

Arabinda had been brought up in England, and complained that he could not speak Bengali well enough to get to the hearts of his own people. After St. Paul's School and Cambridge, he had passed first for the Indian Civil, but was disqualified on riding. For a time he had served the progressive Gaekwar of Baroda, and now was undoubtedly the real editor of the Extremist paper, the *Bande Mataram*, but still remained at large, partly owing to the number of "prison editors" on his staff. He seemed under thirty. Intent eyes looked from his thin and clear-cut face, with a gravity that seemed immovable. Silence and gravity were his characteristics, and his deepest interest lay in religion or philosophy rather than in politics, as he afterwards showed by retiring to meditation in French Pondicherry, where he was visited by young Indians who listened to his words as to apostolic utterances almost divine. Even when I knew him I could describe him as possessed by that concentrated vision, the limited and absorbing devotion that mark the religious soul.

To him Nationalism was indeed a religion, surrounded by a mist of glory, like the halo that mediaeval saints beheld gleaming around the Holy Grail. He cared nothing whatever for political reforms or attempts to unite British and Indian in common prosperity. The worse the Government was, the better for the Nationalist cause. The Partition of Bengal was the greatest blessing that had ever happened for India. No other measure could have stirred Indian feeling so deeply, or helped so well to rouse the people from the lethargy of previous years, when, as he told me, "each generation had reduced Indians more and more to the condition of sheep and fatted calves." Such was the man to whom I was naturally most attracted—the man who inspired official circles with the greatest alarm, because his influence, though least spoken of, was most profound.¹

¹ *Fire of Life*, pp. 232-33.

S. K. RATCLIFFE ON SRI AUROBINDO

(This is the letter written, after the passing of Sri Aurobindo, to the Manchester Guardian Weekly by the English journalist who used to be the editor of the Calcutta daily, The Statesman, during Sri Aurobindo's political career in Bengal.)

WE knew Aurobindo Ghose only as revolutionary nationalist and editor of a flaming newspaper which struck a ringing new note in Indian daily journalism.

It was in 1906, shortly after Curzon's retirement, that Sri Aurobindo and his friends started 'Bande Mataram' (Hail to the Mother). It had a full-size sheet, was clearly printed on green paper, and was full of leading and special articles, written in English with brilliance and pungency not hitherto attained in the Indian press. It was the most effective voice of what we then called nationalist extremism.

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A LYRIC BY NIRODBARAN

WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

|| My body is now a flame
|| Of thy Spirit-fire;
||| Towards thy crystal Name
||| Its hues aspire.

||| Nothing shadows its deep
||| Moon-pearled breath
||| Falling like a still sleep
||| From the height of Death.

come there

|| Visions (there come) and go
|| *Leaving*
|| (And leave) their white
|| Silence like a hushed glow
|| Of thy wizard Light.

||| Slowly I have become
||| A mirrored dawn
||| Of earth's lone martyrdom
||| (Lustre-withdrawn)
||| or
||| To thy heaven withdrawn.

I.4.38

Exceedingly fine.

Q: I wrote this poem in a trice! But—but, I fear to utter anything. Do you find any inevitability, absoluteness or anything in that line?

Does it finish abruptly? Do these 2 feet and 3 feet sound monotonous?

A: The inspiration continues. In this as in the other poem something like the intuitive style from above is coming in, like (though different in colour) what Amal has often had when he writes in the lyrical form.

The metre is admirably suited to the substance and its feeling. There can be no question of monotony in a short piece like this. There is no abruptness in the close, if your emended last line is taken—on the contrary it gives an admirable close. You will note that I have not had to correct anything, only to adopt in three places your own emendations.

LINGUISTIC FORMATIONS AND USAGES CONNECTED WITH THE NAME "SRI AUROBINDO"

A LETTER

I SEE that you have adopted the adjectival form "Aurobindian" rather than "Aurobindonian" which I employ. Both can be propped up from Sri Aurobindo himself. On p. 109 of Nirodbaran's *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* (Second Series) we have the Master writing: "I groan in an unAurobindian despair when I hear such things." On p. 154 of *Life-Literature-Yoga* (Revised and Enlarged Edition) we find: "But even if I had no justification from the dictionary and the noun 'empyrean' were only an Aurobindonian freak and a wilful shifting of the accent, I would refuse to change it; for the rhythm here is an essential part of whatever beauty there is in the line ['His heart a chaos and an empyrean']."

Perhaps the only thing in favour of "Aurobindonian" as against "Aurobindian" is that it is dated 4.8.1949 while the other is as old as 23.2.1935. I believe it was Dilip who first used it and we took it up. Possibly our frequent employment of it tilted Sri Aurobindo himself towards it.

Or we may say that the introduction of one or the other should depend for us on the context. "Aurobindonian freak" conveys much better the freakishness than "Aurobindian freak". But I wonder whether from this we should think of the form "Aurobindonian" itself as freakish. My view is that the accord comes of the gesture of sweeping boldness suggested by the longer epithet. "UnAurobindian despair" is also more apt-sounding than if the alternative adjective were there. But "Aurobindian hope" does not somehow have an equally appropriate ring. Although it may suit Sri Aurobindo's own modesty, it seems to cramp the meaning in our mouths, taking away something of the largeness and grandeur of the hope spoken of.

Of course, other possibilities exist: "Aurobindean, Aurobindoan, Aurobindoesque, Aurobindoic, Aurobindovian." But they are somewhat outlandish—and the Master himself never tried them out.

In passing we may note that he designates his own system not by a formation from any adjective but directly from the noun. Thus he writes to Dilip: "You can't expect me to argue about my own spiritual greatness in comparison with Krishna's. The question itself would be relevant only if there were two sectarian religions in opposition, Aurobindoism and Vaishnavism, each insisting on its own God's greatness. That is not the case..."¹

Then we have the question about the "Sri" in "Sri Aurobindo". I for one never omit the "Sri", but I have no particular attachment to it and I do not think there is anything reprehensible in the use simply of "Aurobindo" by European and

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 1953), pp 208-09.

American admirers and interpreters of his spiritual philosophy. Indeed, originally his name was just this and so there is no illogic in employing it even now. Moreover, the adjective formed by the Master from the name is without the "Sri". If he had taken the "Sri" to be sheer part and parcel of the appellation, perhaps he would not have detached it in the epithet.

What further leads Westerners to do without the "Sri" is that nowadays this vocable or its equivalent "Shri" has been made by our Government the Indian for "Mr." In India too there is the likelihood that in putting "Sri" before "Aurobindo" we may be assumed to give conventional respect to the Master as to any other Indian. But, against all this, both we and the Westerners must remember the ancient Indian practice of using that honorific as a special mark of spiritual status: we speak of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna but not of Sri Dasaratha (Rama's father) or Sri Arjuna (Krishna's close companion in the Battle of Kurukshetra)—or even, for that matter, of Sri Asoka though the Buddhist emperor happened to be a highly religious figure. And, most of all, we must remember that "Sri" was adopted by our Master himself at a certain point of time in the course of his spiritual career. He used to sign himself "Aurobindo Ghose" or "A.G." Even in the days of the *Arya* it was like that. I believe it was sometime in the middle twenties of the century that "Aurobindo Ghose" became "Sri Aurobindo". The change of signature denoted a change in the personality manifested. Maybe the change came after 24 November 1926, the day of the Overmind's descent into his very body-substance. It is a point worth researching. And it is deeply significant. The new name is of importance because it emerged out of spiritual realisation. It does not have its origin or ground merely in the veneration paid by disciples. As such, I feel that it should be kept up as far as possible—though we need not make a fetish of it.

Do we make a fetish of "Sri Krishna" or "Sri Rama"? Quite frequently we just say "Krishna" or "Rama". Sri Aurobindo himself does it. In the very explanation of the Victory Day, as 24 November 1926 is called, he writes:

"24th was the descent of Krishna into the physical.

"Krishna is not the Supramental Light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually, the descent of Supermind and Ananda. Krishna is the Anandamaya; he supports the evolution through the Overmind leading it towards the Ananda."¹

Elsewhere, in one and the same context Sri Aurobindo has "Krishna" and "Sri Krishna":

"Sri Krishna never set out to arrive at any physical transformation, so anything of the kind could not be expected in his case.

"Neither Buddha nor Shankara nor Ramakrishna had any idea of transforming the body. Their aim was spiritual Mukti and nothing else. Krishna taught Arjuna to be liberated in works, but he never spoke of any physical transformation..."²

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

² *Ibid.*, p. 207.

The same practice by Sri Aurobindo we find in relation to another spiritual figure who stood very high in his eyes:

“I would have been surprised to hear that I regard (in agreement with an ‘advanced’ sadhak) Ramakrishna as a spiritual pygmy if I had not become past astonishment in these matters... Is it necessary for me to say that I have never thought and cannot have said anything of the kind, since I have at least some faint sense of spiritual values? The passage you have quoted is my considered estimate of Sri Ramakrishna.”¹

Yes, we may thus cite Sri Aurobindo in support of our employing, if we like, merely “Aurobindo”. But here we may advert to what the Mother said apropos of the foreigners’ practice of omitting the “Sri”. She commented that they do so because they think the name “Auroville” which she had coined for the new model-city contains as its opening portion the sound “Auro” as short for “Aurobindo”. She made it plain that “Auro” was from the French “aurore” meaning “dawn”, so that “Auroville” stands for “Dawn-city”. She added that “Sri” is an integral part of the name by which we know our Master. This implies that she would like all of us—Westerners no less than Indians—always to use the form “Sri Aurobindo”.

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-06.

<p>Guidance from Sri Aurobindo Letters to a Young Disciple Nagin Doshi Part Two Price: Rs. 15.00 Available from Sri Aurobindo Books Distribution Agency and Publication Department Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry-605 002</p>	<p>EDUCATION FOR A NEW LIFE by NARAYAN PRASAD Price: Rs. 12.00 Publisher : MOTHER INDIA Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry-2 Available from : S A B D A</p>
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AN ALL-ROUND REVELATION

SRI Aurobindo's spiritual vision of the world can be considered an all-round revelation because it finds some essential truth in every world-view reached by mystical, philosophical or scientific research, and weaves it into its own comprehensive system. There is nothing it rejects or fails to explicate.

Take even the very denial of it, the most extreme Materialism of our day, basing itself on blind physical phenomena, random genetic mutation, mindless natural selection of mutated forms by the environment, extensively wasteful processes of evolutionary life, mechanical reactions and reflexes of organisms, dependence of psychological movements on bodily processes. This very world-view can obtain its rationale in the Aurobindonian *Weltanschauung* when the latter is taken in its coverage of the lowest rung of things, no less than of their highest.

What is, in outline, Sri Aurobindo's scheme of reality? The supreme aspect of reality for him is an infinite and eternal quaternary of Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind—the last-named a creative divinity bringing forth the truths inherent in the triple depth of Spirit behind it and holding in a perfect or archetypal cosmos a balanced interplay of the One and the Many.

The Supermind manifests below itself a hierarchy of "planes" disclosing the reality in various partial ways. At the lower end of the ladder there are the realms of Universal Mind, Life-Force and Subtle-Physical Substance, each organised into a set of interacting individual features. A realm of Soul-principle—a plane of World-Soul—exists at the back of them and is related to the universe we commonly know in our daily experience. The realms at the lower end of the hierarchy lie beyond this universe though they press upon it constantly for the expression of their powers and the evocation of its potencies.

Our commonly known universe emerges from a tremendous concealment not only of the supreme aspect but also of all its partial manifestations. That concealment constitutes an utter opposite of all we may regard as divine, a boundless "Inconscient" where the quaternary "Superconscient", along with everything below it, lies "involved", locked in. From this involution, which the ultimate reality achieves as an extreme challenging adventure of self-loss and self-discovery, all evolves, progressively releasing the higher in the lower and integrating the lower with the higher. But the evolution marches across the huge obstacles put up by the reality's initial negation of its own being. With the Soul-principle stirring from behind, Matter is evolved from the chaos of the Inconscient, then Life from Matter and Mind from Life. Veiled by Mind, as Mind is by Life and Life by Matter, Supermind and its accompaniments wait to be evolved. What is initially veiled will be of necessity laid bare in the terminal outcome.

Here is a basic spiritual monism that prevents reality from being a jostle of disparate. At the same time there is a diverse pluralism that does justice to all agencies obviously different from one another though closely associated.

Such a synthesising vision recognises, even while it exceeds, the grounds from which all one-sided views derive, including the most extreme Materialism, the ground for which would here be the multi-moded Inconscient taken as all in all. Logically, the Inconscient would give rise to whatever blindness, randomness, mindlessness, wastefulness, mechanicality and Matter-dependence that science notes as fundamental in its study of our universe.

Sri Aurobindo does not need to proceed, as science does, from these data in order to posit them. He starts the other way round and posits the Highest Spirit, yet provides a valid reason for their appearance.

Without denying them or explaining them away, he supplies also a valid reason for all that extreme Materialism faces as a paradox—the outburst of sentient vitality from brute Matter, the breaking forth of self-conscious mentality from instinctive organic process, the upsurge of idealistic soul-sense and luminous spirituality from the perceptual-conceptual half-knowledge of the labouring intelligence. That upsurge carries even the promise of a fulfilled Mind, an accomplished Life-Force and even a perfected body because of the divine archetypes of these principles already subsisting in the Supermind and pressing upon their counterparts in the evolutionary world studied by extreme Materialism.

Such a promise is eminently in accord—although in a key undreamt-of by science—with this Materialism's own finest hope and endeavour—the push towards an ever greater achievement of all human powers within an embodied existence on earth rather than in a postulated Hereafter to which "souls" may be called, leaving earth as a mere temporary passage of little importance in the final assessment.

Thus the Aurobindonian spiritual vision assimilates and consummates instead of contradicting even the apparent stark antithesis of it. In doing this it renders itself acceptable automatically by the Age of Science and provides to this Age not only a self-transcendence but also a self-justification which makes the self-transcendence a natural move forward rather than a defeat and an annulment.

K. D. SETHNA

THEIR GLORIOUS BODIES

SRI AUROBINDO

DEPTHS upon ocean-depths, Light filled Thy eyes;
A limitless Love's compassionate lucency
One with the grandeur of a sun's full rise—
The blessing pure gaze of Divinity.

Unparalleled Thy ears in listening's art:
In most intimate communion they heard,
As if one hears the beating of one's heart,
God's all-revealing, self-fulfilling Word.

A harp for the cosmic music of the spheres,
Vibrant with bliss that whirls the galaxies,
Thy lips move us to ecstatic smiles and tears
With rapt cadences on gold onenesses.

In mold of clay Thou camest, O Self of all,
Immortal answer to earth's mortal call.

THE MOTHER

In the miraculous prism of Thy eyes
Original Splendour's immaculate white
Revealed the spectrum of supernal dyes—
The radiant rainbow of Thy diamond Light.

The voice of the future knelt before Thy ears,
Praying to Thee for the inmost dream of earth
And secret root of all our hopes and fears—
Beyond man to move, to a god-race give birth.

Defiantly Thy lips smiled at death's doom
Whose spell binds life to play a mortal role,
O Golden Glory who can conquer the tomb
Kissing awake from clay-swoon the immortal Soul.

Thy body, widening to infinitude,
A marvel-shrine grew of Love's Absolute.

ALEXANDER BRODT

TWO INDEPENDENT REMEMBRANCES

(These remembrances are independent not only in the sense that both record individual impressions that arose spontaneously on the two occasions mentioned but also in the sense that neither author saw the writing of the other before putting down his own vision.)

I

SEHRA—LAST VIEW (25.4.1980)

by Ravindra Khanna

I ENTERED the room a little trepidant—expecting to see a face with all the mental agonies and physical afflictions engraved on it. But a most marvellous sight met my gaze. Such beauty of a blissful calm enveloped it that its ripples could be felt all over the room. She was no longer the Sehra I had been seeing over the years—as if all the ravages of long physical agonies had been effaced and given place to the radiance of a spiritual love and compassion for all. All through my stay in the room I could not take my eyes off this spiritual beauty suffusing a human body and it was impossible to believe that it was a corpse with all life extinct from it.

Surely her soul chose this blessed hour to depart obeying some gesture from Above. Even to recall her face in imagination opens up new heights for the soul. I could visualise what Sri Aurobindo had meant when he wrote:

Calm faces of the gods on backgrounds vast...

There was no trace of any dissatisfaction or disgust with life but only a benign and compassionate goodwill for all from one who had left the unquiet lands far away.

12.5.1980

SEHRA—FIRST VIEW (24.4.1980)

by Amal Kiran

With the Far-away's call
Quickening your heart-beat,
You freed yourself from all
Earth's bitter-sweet.

Terrible at times the means
By which the soul
Drops out of mortal space
To its inmost goal.

A moment your whole life hung
'Twixt heaven and abyss;
Then the Great Mother caught you
In Her arms of bliss.

No shadow fell from the past.
A smiling future's light
Flowered through your face to answer
Our clamorous questioning sight.

26.4.1980

POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER 1973

OFFERING VII

LET THE HEART BREAK—1973

In the springtime of flowers,
Awash in a perfumed sea
Let the heart break with beauty
Into ecstasy.

In dreadful hours
Remember this,
The heart can break with pain
Into bliss.

As anger rages
Like coals blazing in a stove,
Make the heart break with fire
Into love.

When adamant walls encircle
And you are cut off, alone,
Remember, the heart can break with love
Stone.

Are there doubts and questions
And the mind demands proof?
Cannot the heart break through knowledge
Into truth?

If dark dreams and visions
Make a terror of night,
The heart must break through fear
Into light.

When death crushes a loved one
Like a fragile or useless toy,
Know that the heart can break from grief
Into sentient joy.

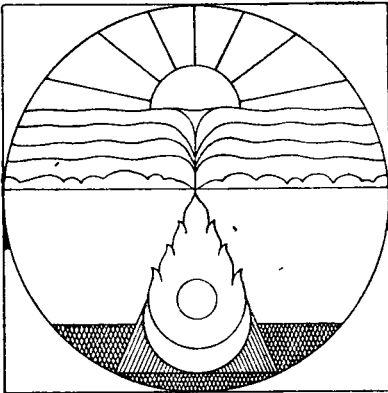
LET THE HEART BREAK—1979

To sounds of delicate sweetness
The thousand petals uncurl
And the heart breaks with music
Into another world.

Though man turns against man
In hatred, and violence storms,
Let *your* heart break all barriers
And take the world in its arms.

What are the chains that bind you?
Cannot you see
That the heart breaking all chains
Embraces Infinity.

ELIZABETH STILLER



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THE CLOUD MESSENGER

A NEW TRANSLATION OF KALIDASA'S *MEGHADUTA*

(Continued from the issue of July 1980)

EYES swollen and cheeks marked with the harsh trace
Of passionate tears, lips of their scarlet shorn
By heat of poignant sighs, my mistress' face

Sunk on one hand, obscured by tresses worn
Unkempt, like the moon's lucent orb by thee
Assailed must bear a loveliness forlorn.

Absorbed in rites of prayer and offering she
May meet thy gaze; or sketching from her heart
A pining shape, her image true of me;

Or asking the caged mynah, in the art
Of speech adept, 'Our lord, my clever one,
Recallest thou? For dear to him thou art.'

Or find her there, O friend, on her lap's dun
And crumpled garment as she lays the lute
To sing a plaintive song her mind has spun

Around my name: the tear-damp strings to put
In tune she manages but at each step
The air eludes her memory's faint pursuit.

Or numbering the bitter moons that keep
Us Sundered still, with brilliant flowers she strews
The threshold, each fierce month a fiery heap;

Or catch her tasting in her bosom's muse
The joys of my return: in every age
And clime do lonely wives such pastimes use.

By day are there diversions to assuage
Her solitude, but in the empty night
I fear how hot her sorrow's flames may rage:

To cheer her with my words therefore alight
At midnight, perching in the window's eye
Where sleepless on the floor she greets thy sight.

Her frame on one arm propped will testify
The ache within, worn meagre like the moon
Lighting the dim edge of the eastern sky

A last time; now the night which all too soon
Would pass in ardent sports is sighed away
In burning tears, of grief an ocean grown.

Her single braid which, bound the fateful day
We parted, at the dismal curse's end
Glad hands shall loose, that braid no flowers array

And whose stiff rugged strands the touch offend
She brushes often from her gentle face
With fingers beauty's arts no longer tend.

Breast-heaving sighs that parch her bud-lip chase
Across her cheek the locks that dangle there,
Rough with plain washing, as for my embrace

Yearning though but in dream she seeks the care
Of sleep, yet in the orbs where sleep should rule,
No seat her misery's thronging droplets spare.

(To be continued)

RICHARD HARTZ

THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of July 1980)

The Uttanka Episode

THE story of Uttanka and the ear-rings has been narrated twice in the epic; once by Sauti to Saunaka and the rishis in the Pausya Parva and again by Vaisampayana to Janmajeya in the Asvamedhika Parva, chapters 55-58. There are a number of differences in the two versions which are worth noting:

PAUSYA PARVA

Uttanka's guru is Veda whose pupils are also Janamejaya and Pausya.

Left in charge of Veda's household, Uttanka refuses to impregnate Veda's wife though solicited by the womenfolk.

Veda is pleased and gives Uttanka leave to depart.

Uttanka insists on giving dakshina to his guru and is referred to the guru's wife.

Veda's wife asks him to bring her the ear-rings of King Pausya's wife within four days on pain of ill-fortune.

ASVAMEDHIKA PARVA

Uttanka is the favourite pupil of Gautama.

No such incident.

Gautama is reluctant to release Uttanka who grows old and emaciated in his service. He collapses while carrying firewood and sheds tears for having remained ignorant of worldly pleasures. Gautama grants him leave to depart.

Uttanka wishes to give dakshina, whereupon Gautama desires to marry him to his daughter provided he can become a sixteen-year-old youth. Uttanka does so through the power of his askesis and then approaches Gautama's wife, presumably being referred to her on his insistence on giving dakshina.

Ahalya initially asks him to desist but when he insists she tells him to bring her the bejewelled ear-rings of King Saudasa's wife. No time-limit is specified, nor any threat.

En route Uttanka meets a gigantic man astride a huge bull who bids him eat the bull's dung. On his refusing, Uttanka is told that his guru had eaten it before. Thereupon he drinks its urine, eats the dung, performs ablutions while standing, being in haste, and reaches King Pausya. Pausya bids Uttanka ask for the ear-rings from the queen herself.

Pausya bids Uttanka ask for the ear-rings from the queen herself.

Uttanka proceeds to the inner apartments but cannot see the queen. He returns to Pausya who states that she does not appear to any meal-defiled person. Uttanka then performs the ablutions properly, is able to see the queen who gladly hands over the ear-rings on hearing why they are required. She warns him that he ought to watch over them carefully as Takshaka naga desires them.

Noticing impurity in the food served to him, Uttanka curses the king with blindness. Pausya curses him, in turn, with impotence. Uttanka recalls his curse at Pausya's request, but the king is unable to requite in kind. Uttanka is confident that a curse based on a false promise (that the food was clean) cannot take effect and leaves with the ornaments.

No such incident. Gautama asks Ahalya where she has sent Uttanka and on coming to know informs her of danger to his life, for King Saudasa has become a rakshasa. Ahalya begs him to protect Uttanka by his grace, and Gautama agrees. In a separate episode in ch. 55, Uttanka receives the boon of finding water in a desert from Krishna. When thirsty, he is met by a chandāla who bids him drink his urine. Uttanka refuses and the chandāla vanishes, along with his dog.

Saudasa considers Uttanka to be his meal for the day, and Uttanka promises to satisfy him after having performed his guru-dakshina. Saudasa agrees to part with the ear-rings after initial reluctance and tells Uttanka that his queen will be found near a waterfall in the forest.

Queen Madayanti demands that he display some sign from the King because these ear-rings are desired by Gods, yakshas and rishis who can steal them if the wearer is asleep, unclean, or if they fall on the ground. The ear-rings secrete gold, protect the wearer from hunger and thirst and adjust their size in proportion to the wearer's. Uttanka returns to Saudasa who passes on a code-sentence to him. Madayanti now hands over the ear-rings.

Uttanka asks the king whether, as a friend, he would advise him to return to a cannibal. Saudasa tells him not to return to a sure death. Uttanka leaves with the ornaments.

En route Uttanka notices a naked beggar who seems to appear and disappear intermittently. No such incident.

Keeping the ear-rings on the ground, Uttanka goes to urinate. The beggar steals the ornaments. Uttanka pursues him, whereupon the beggar turns to Takshaka and scuttles into a hole in the earth.

Tying up the ornaments in deer-skin, he hangs them upon a bough and climbs up on a tree to pluck fruit. Struck by the fruit he throws down, the skin falls to the ground and a naga belonging to Aravata's clan scuttles away with them into an ant-hill.

Uttanka digs away at the hole with his stick but fails. Indra thereupon sends vajra to widen the hole by penetrating the stick. Uttanka enters the realm of the nagas whose beauty is described.

Uttanka digs away at the ant-hill for 35 days and the very earth quivers in agony at his onslaughts. Indra appears before him disguised as a Brahman and seeks to dissuade him. Uttanka replies that in case he cannot recover the ear-rings, he will commit suicide. Indra, then, fuses his vajra into Uttanka's stick and rives open the path to the realm of the nagas. Uttanka reaches the place and sees its splendours.

Uttanka invokes the nagas flatteringly, but the ear-rings are not returned.

Uttanka is filled with despair seeing the magnitude of naga-loka.

Uttanka sees two women working a loom with black-and-white threads; six boys revolving a wheel; and a lovely horse with a handsome man. He invokes them and pleases the man who asks him to blow into the horse's anus for gaining control over the nagas.

A copper-hued horse, with black-and-white tail, appears and bids him blow into his anus, and not to be disgusted at this, for he had done so before at his guru's residence. Uttanka insists on details and the horse reveals that he is Agni and his guru's guru.

As Uttanka blows, smoke and flames issue from every aperture of the horse and engulf the nagas who return the ear-rings.

As Uttanka blows, smoke erupts from every hair of the horse and engulfs the naga-realm, whereupon the nagas return the ornaments.

Uttanka worries how he will reach his guru's residence in time since this was the due date. The man bids him mount the horse, and it reaches him to Veda's wife just as she was about to curse him. She blesses him with attainment of *siddhi*.

Uttanka proceeds to his guru's ashram and hands over the ear-rings to Ahalya.

Veda asks Uttanka what kept him away so long. Uttanka narrates everything and demands to know what these things stand for. Veda interprets: the bull was Airavata, the giant Indra, the dung amrita which saved him in the naga realm; the horse is Agni, the man Parjanya; the two women Dhata and Vidhata; the threads are night and day; the wheel is a year and the six bows the seasons.

Uttanka reports everything to his guru. There is no interpretation. Uttanka is said to have brought the ear-rings having covered all the three worlds.

In the chandāla-water episode, Krishna explains that the chandāla was Indra, the dog Airavata and the urine amrita, which Uttanka has lost because of his lack of faith in Krishna's boon.

This episode is undoubtedly one of those which Sukthankar has referred to as "unintelligible or at least uncouth and grotesque". Let us see what happens when it is "treated symbolically and projected back on to the metaphysical or psychological plane of thought." This particular episode has been chosen because here we have the unique advantage of Vyāsa himself providing the key to the symbolism at the end of the Pausya Parva version. If, therefore, through an independent line of enquiry we can arrive at the same or similar interpretation, it would provide us with an invaluable means for understanding other such apparently grotesque incidents.

The first clear clue is given in the gigantic *vr̥ṣabha* and the huge *puruṣa* Uttanka meets. *Vr̥ṣabha* is used in the Vedas to describe all the major deities, such as Agni Maruts, Mitra-Varuna, but most of all Indra. For instance, in the Rigveda VII. 101. 6, which is dedicated to Parjanya (Indra) we find:

He the Bull of eternities, the caster of the Seed, in him is placed the Self of all that moves and that which moves not; That, the Truth, may it protect me for a hundred winters and may you guard me ever with your happy states of being.²³

There are numerous such references to the Bull clearly bringing out his symbolic nature, e.g. III.56.3, IV.1.11, V.1.8, IV.5.3, V.40.1, II.16.4, II.21.4, II.33.15, VII. 55.7, VII.101.1, IX.72.7, IX.76.5 etc. Of these one of the most remarkable is IV.58.3:

With four horns, his three feet, two heads and his seven hands, the Bull, triply tied, roars aloud—a Great God has entered in the mortal.

Purani interprets this as representing the Infinite Purusha manifested as the Cosmos “with his four horns of the upper planes, the Parārdha of ‘Sat, Chit, Ānanda and Vijnāna’...its three feet are the basic principles of Matter, Life and Mind already manifested here and the triple cord with which it is tied is made of the ignorance which rules in these fields of Matter, Life and Mind, particularly as they manifest integrally in the human being. The Bull, the original Divine Purusha, roars aloud to be delivered. He is the great God that has entered the mortal being and makes his upward evolution possible. He wears the double face of Purusha and Prakriti and acts with seven powers of the consciousness manifested on earth.”²⁴

II. 16.5-6 make the symbolism more extensive and explicit:

The sheath of the raining Bull streams purifying with the sweet waves of Soma, for the drinking of the Bull of Annam (Matter) and this Bull (Indra): the Adhvaryu, the first of the pilgrim-sacrifice, is Bull, the Stones (used for pressing Soma) are (the forms of) the Bull and he presses out for the Bull Soma that is the raining Bull. O Bull (Indra), thy thunderbolt is the raining Bull, (the Bull that rains plenty). Bull is thy chariot, the two horses are Bulls, so are thy weapons; O Indra, thou rulest like the Lord, the Bull of intoxication of Soma who is Bull—be thou satisfied (drink thy fill.)

On the basis of such a study, it is possible to reach the conclusion that in the Veda *vr̥ṣabha* “indicates symbolically the Purusha, the consciousness that is creative by casting the Seed. It is an infinite resource of creative potentialities. These are developed and nourished by Nature (by the Cow or the herd), by Prakriti. The Bull renders possible the evolution of the universe. He is in the form of Agni, the Divine Will active in man, the God who has entered the mortal so that he may ascend to immortality.”²⁵

In the Uttanka story this identification of the Bull image with the supreme Divine is conveyed through the picture of the gigantic *purīṣa* astride the huge *vr̥ṣabha*.

Why is Uttanka asked to partake of the bull’s *purīṣa*? This word means “dung” only at one level, the crudest. Sāyana has explained it as meaning “that which fills or that which pleases”, and draws the derivative connotation of *udakam* (water) from it. Purani, examining the use of the word in the Yajurveda, Taittiriya and Sata-patha, finds that it means “someone that is clever in fulfilling man’s actions, or in bestowing all happiness...That which completes or fulfills”.²⁶ This sense of the word beautifully dovetails with the identification which Uttanka’s guru makes of the gigantic *purūṣa* as Parjanya, “giver of the rain of heaven”,²⁷ standing for the “descent of the superconscious into our life. It formed the seven celestial rivers that flow down upon the earth-consciousness.”²⁸ It is Indra who pours down the “waters” of Divine Illumination filling up this human vessel with supernal joy and fulfilling the aspirations of the sacrificer. This is what is sought to be represented in the eating of the *vr̥ṣabha*’s *purīṣa*.

For comprehending the symbolic import of the incidents which follow, it will be necessary to recapitulate briefly the concepts of the hierarchy of worlds and the functioning of various deities therein as envisaged in the Veda and the Puranas, since these form the matrix from which the Uttanka story emerges. The rishis posited seven levels or worlds through which the individual consciousness had to pass — they could be reduced to three general groups:²⁹

	<i>Vedas</i>	<i>Puranas</i>
The Triple Divine Worlds	Sat (Pure Existence) Chit (Pure Consciousness) Ānanda (Pure Bliss)	Satyaloka (highest truth) Tapoloka (infinite Will and conscious Force) Janaloka (creative of existence)
The Link-World	Maharloka (Truth, Right, Vast-consciousness)	Vijñāna (Knowledge/Truth)
The Triple Lower World	Svar-Dyaus (Heaven, World of Light) Bhūvar-Antariksa (World of various becoming, the Mid-region) Bhūr-Pr̥thvi (Material world).	Manas (Pure Mind) Prana (Life-force, the nervous being) Annam (Matter)

The role played by the Gods in these worlds is that of transformation of the material consciousness into the successively higher states:³⁰

<i>Vedic God</i>	<i>Esoteric Sense</i>
Agni	Spiritual Fire in Matter carrying our offerings to the higher powers and returning with their force (<i>aśva</i>) and light (<i>go</i>) and joy (<i>soma</i>) into man's humanity. Force instinct with knowledge.
Vāyu	Life-energy, the vital and nervous activities which are the support of the mental energies governed by Indra.
Indra	Illumined Mind, pure intelligence released from the limits and obstructions of the nervous consciousness. Light instinct with force descending into our world to uncover the Sun of Truth.
Sūrya	Revelatory knowledge of the supreme Truth; the father, fosterer, enlightener of our souls. Indra releases his herds <i>i.e.</i> illuminations of Truth.

Soma	Highest Beatitude concealed in existence; the Divine delight of being, Ānanda.
Varuṇa	Ethereal purity and oceanic wideness of infinite Truth; the purifier destroying crooked falsehood.
Mitra	Principle of harmony and love, all-embracing.
Bhaga	A happy spontaneity of the right enjoyment of all things dispelling the evil dream of sin and error and suffering. Lord of enjoyment.
Aryaman	Clear-discerning aspiration and endeavour. Varuna, Mitra, Bhaga and Aryaman are powers of Sūrya.
Aśvins	Lords of Bliss and Consciousness-Force, they prepare our mental, vital and physical being for an easy and victorious ascension.
Maruts, Rudra	Powers of the will and nervous or vital Force that impel all thought and speech, destroying lower physical and vital movements, driving our animal consciousness (<i>paśus</i>) towards Indra till they become the herds (<i>gāvah</i>) of the Sun.
Viṣṇu	The wide-moving One, the Seer, Thinker and Former in the super-conscious Bliss who makes a wide room for the action of Indra in our limited mortality.
Brahmā or Brahmanaspati	By the Vedic Word he brings out all existence and conscious knowledge and movement of life and eventual forms from the darkness of the Inconscient; the conscious Power of the soul.
Rudra	Wrathful and beneficent Power of God who lifts forcibly the creation upward, smites all that opposes, scourges all that errs and resists, heals all that is wounded and suffers and complains and submits.

The Vedic concept was that as man ascended each of these higher states of consciousness, "He lives in contact and union with their powers and godheads and remoulds himself in their image. Each ascent is thus a new birth of the soul, and the Veda calls the worlds 'births' as well as seats and dwelling-places. For as the Gods have built the series of the cosmic worlds, even so they labour to build up the same series of ordered states and ascending degrees in man's consciousness from the mortal condition to the crowning immortality... pure thought and feeling are man's sky, his heaven; this whole vitalistic existence of emotion, passions, affections of which

desire is the pivot, forms for him a mid-world; body and material living are his earth." This, however, is not the ultimate goal of human ascension: beyond it lies the realm of absolute Truth, where he becomes the Seer, a divine being dwelling in Sat-chit-ānanda. This evolutionary concept has been embodied in the idea of six Aryan types (*Ārya* is he who labours towards the heights): "The aspiring material creature becomes the straining vital man; he in turn transmutes himself into the subtle mental and psychical being; this subtle thinker grows into the wide, multiple and cosmic man open on all sides of him to all the multitudinous inflowings of the Truth; the cosmic soul rising in attainment strives as the spiritual man for a higher peace, joy and harmony... (finally) there is also the absolute Aryan who would conquer and pass beyond these states to the transcendental harmony of them all."³¹

The ascension proceeds through the act of sacrifice, *yajña*, which means the offering of all our works to the divine powers: "The whole world is a dumb and helpless sacrifice in which the soul is bound as a victim self-offered to unseen Gods. The liberating Word must be found, the illuminating hymn must be framed in the heart and mind of man and his life must be turned into a conscious and voluntary offering in which the soul is no longer the victim, but the master of the sacrifice. By right sacrifice and by the all-creative and all-expressive Word that shall arise out of his depths as a sublime hymn to the Gods man can achieve all things... He builds up his integral being and aids his gods to destroy the evil armies; the hosts of his spiritual enemies are slain who have divided, torn and afflicted his nature."³²

This sacrifice is simultaneously a journey and a battle. It is a voyage fraught with relentless struggle as Aryan man fights his own ignorance, weaknesses and limitations symbolised by the Danavas, Dasyus, Panis, etc. On the one hand the gods, various powers of the Divine, foster the Aryan's efforts at ascension by filling him with their light, force and beauty. On the other hand, man summons the gods to his sacrifice, "offers to them his swiftesses and his strengths, his clarities and his sweetnesses,—milk and butter of the shining Cow, distilled juices of the Plant of Joy, the Horse of the Sacrifice, the cake and the wine, the grain for the God-Mind's radiant coursers. He receives them into his being and their gifts into his life, increases them by the hymn and the wine and forms perfectly—as a smith forges iron, says the Veda, —their great and luminous godheads."³³ The important thing to realise is that all this is not mere aesthetic imagery created by a Vedic poet. To the Vedic seer the gods and the demons were absolutely real: "The vicissitudes of the human soul represent a cosmic struggle not merely of principles and tendencies but of the cosmic Powers which support and embody them. These are the Gods and the Demons. On the world-stage and in the individual soul the same real drama with the same personages is enacted."³³

Vision and dream were fables spoken by truth
Or symbols more veridical than fact,
Or were truths enforced by supernatural seals...

The gods of light and titans of the dark
 Battled for his soul as for a costly prize. (*Savitri*, I.3. p.30)

Very graphically Sri Aurobindo describes what happens to the individual as the divine light and force begin to descend, as the gods start fostering themselves, increasing themselves, in the Aryan:

Lightnings of glory after glory burned,...
 Splendours of insight filled the blank of thought,
 Knowledge spoke to the inconscient stillnesses,
 Rivers poured down of bliss and luminous force,
 Visits of beauty, storm-sweeps of delight
 Rained from the all-powerful Mystery above.
 Thence stooped the eagles of Omniscience...
 The voices that an inner listening hears
 Conveyed to him their prophet utterances...
 An apocalypse of a world of images
 Enters into the kingdom of the seer. (*Savitri*, I.3. pp.37, 38)

This is what takes place in the aspirant when Indra, the Aśvins and Brahmanaspati are brought into play. Here are Indra's vajra, Sūrya's knowledge, Parjanya's showers of ānanda and spiritual force, the Aśvins' gifts of beauty and delight and Brahmanaspati's voicing of the divine mantra.

(*To be continued*)

PRADIP BHATTACHARYA

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THE STUPID GURU AND THE FOOLISH DISCIPLES

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

(Continued from the issue of July 1980)

8. The Last Days

IN THE confusion caused by the guru's fall in the wet clay none remembered the words of the Brahmin: "Chilled haunches forecast death." When they reached the hermitage, the guru got down from his horse and realized that his haunches were wet. The Brahmin's prophecy came to his mind in a flash.

The very thought of death tormented him. He tossed restlessly in bed and had not a wink of sleep throughout the night. Now and then he sighed.

In the morning heaving a great sigh of relief he called in all his disciples. They entered his bedroom and blinked at the ghastly appearance of their guru. His sunken eyes were lustreless. Many a wrinkle had disfigured and discoloured his radiant face. He stared at his disciples as if they had been creatures from the underworld.

To everyone's surprise the guru in a dying tone said, "My time is over. Dig a grave to entomb me."

The disciples were shocked to hear the inauspicious words of their guru and they pried into the cause of his grief.

"Oh! Have you forgotten the prophecy? Yesterday because of the painful fall into the clay pit, my haunches got wet. It brought back to my memory the words of the Brahmin. The very thought of death almost killed me and I have spent a sleepless night. From this I conjecture that my death is fast approaching. These are my last days in this world. So I bid you prepare for my burial."

The faithful disciples felt very sad in their heart of hearts and yet they employed various means to cheer up Paramartha who was bereft of hope. But words are poor comforters when the heart knows its own sorrows. Hence their attempt to cheer up the guru was a fiasco.

They then approached a man named Asangathan and requested him to console and cheer up Paramartha. Asangathan who had a soft corner for the guru came to the hermitage. Seeing the panic-stricken face of the guru, he sobbed out, "What has happened to you, my guru? Why are you so lean and haggard-looking? What dangerous disease has attacked you, my Lord?"

The guru stared at Asangathan. Tears filled his eyes and flooded over. Minutes later he opened his mouth and said, "Chilled haunches forecast death." He then tightly shut his lips.

"Do not worry, my master," Asangathan declared. "Find the foolish Brahmin

who prophesied so. I will perform a 'Pestle Pooja' on his head. Waste no time, my father."

"Pestle Pooja! I never saw any one performing this pooja. I have not even heard of it. You should tell me how that pooja is performed," requested Guru Paramartha.

"There is an interesting tale behind this pooja. The tale may be of great comfort to you. Now listen," began Asangathan. "There lived once a Chettiyar¹ who had no children. He was a philanthropist. As a devotee of Lord Shiva he was very considerate towards the sadhus who sang hymns in praise of Lord Shiva. So most of the money earned through trade he spent on the sadhus. He found delight in feeding them and no day passed without two or three sadhus eating in his house. But the Chettiyar's wife was not very co-operative. She always murmured against feeding the sadhus, who in her opinion were useless fellows. But she did not dare to speak out for fear of being misunderstood by her husband. So she thought of a plan to put an end to the free feedings.

"One day when the Chettiyar was in his shop, he saw a sadhu begging. He called the beggar and said, 'I shall be happy if you will dine with me today. Kindly go to my house, as I am busy, and inform my wife that I have sent you. Wait there and I'll come the moment I finish business.'

"The sadhu, overjoyed, ran to the house of the Chettiyar. He conveyed the news to the Chettiyar's wife. The wife saw the stranger and understood that the sadhu had never before dined at their residence. She invented a plan to drive the fellow away and teach a lesson to all other sadhus. She brought out a mat and spread it over the pyol and requested the sadhu to sit on it and take rest.

"She then went into the house, swept clean the pooja-room, garlanded the little statues of the Gods and then took a long pestle, smeared holy ash on it, placed it before the Gods, prostrated herself before the pestle and recited some mantras.

"The sadhu who was witnessing the scene from the pyol wondered at the performance and asked the lady, 'I have never seen this sort of pooja. What type of pooja is this?'

"This is a special pooja performed to our tribal Gods," shouted the lady from the room and then, just to make herself inaudible to the sadhu, she gabbled: 'You will soon know better about the significance of the pooja. It will ultimately end on your head.'

"But the sharp-eared sadhu heard her words, understood the meaning and took to his heels.

"The Chettiyar entered his house and asked his wife about the sadhu. She sneered, 'What a fellow he is! As soon as he entered the house, he asked for a pestle. I refused him, saying that nothing could be given to anyone without the permission of my husband. I requested him to wait for your arrival. But he left our house

¹ 'Chettiyar' is one of the many hundred castes in India and the people who belong to this caste are usually merchants.

dissatisfied.”

“Her displeased husband said, ‘What a foolish thing you have done! You should have fulfilled the sadhu’s wish. Remember! Hereafter give whatever the sadhus demand.’

“The Chettyar took the pestle and went in search of the sadhu. The sadhu who was till that time begging for alms in one corner of the street saw the Chettyar approaching him with a pestle. The sight reminded him of the lady and her words.

“‘O! This Chettyar is coming to finish the pooja on my head. Thank God, I am saved,’ so crying the fakir ran for his life.

“The Chettyar saw the sadhu running. With the good intention of bringing him back to feed him, he chased the sadhu, shouting, ‘Stop, O! Sadhu. Do not run. Come, let us eat.’

“But the frightened sadhu flew like a bird freed from its cage. The aged Chettyar, finding it difficult to run further with his paunch, returned home.

“So ‘Pestle Pooja’ is nothing but beating a man to pulp with a pestle. I hope you understand. If you show me the foolish Brahmin, I will perform this pooja on his head.”

Guru Paramartha for a moment forgot all his worries and split his sides with laughter.

Asangathan took advantage of the situation. He comforted him saying, “My Guru! Kindly probe into the Brahmin’s words to find their real significance. If your haunches get chilled internally, you have to be afraid of it. But because you fell down into the wet clay pit, your haunches got wet externally. So it is stupid to think of death at this stage. If you get your haunches wet without falling down, you can think of death.”

The guru felt convinced by the words of Asangathan. Encouraged by his disciples he began eating. He resumed his wanderings and had nights of peaceful rest.

One night it rained cats and dogs. The roof under which the guru slept had a leak in it. Unfortunately, the leaking rain-water fell drop by drop on his haunches and wetted them. The guru who enjoyed a sound sleep was unaware of the heavy rain and the leaking roof.

He rose up in the morning to find his haunches completely wet. Perturbed he thought, “What is the cause? I did not fall down. There is no external reason either. Yet my haunches are wet. So there should be some internal reason. That means Death the Leveller is planning to level me this time. The prophecy is going to be fulfilled.”

Not only great men but fools also think alike. His foolish disciples guessed like their guru. The guru sat gloomily, forgetting food and sleep. Days passed. He refused to eat. One day he swooned because of prolonged starvation. The disciples took him for dead, screamed, beat their chests, sobbed, shed tears and then started preparing the ‘corpse’ for burial.

They stripped their guru naked, filled a tub with water and placed the ‘corpse’

under water, and started giving it a thorough wash. As they were washing him clean, the guru came back to his senses. But he gasped for breath since the disciples held him firmly under water for a long time. He was so weak that he could not relieve himself from the clutches of his disciples. Within minutes Guru Paramartha breathed his last in the hands of his own disciples.

Then they carried the dead body in a palanquin decorated with fragrant flowers to the graveyard, all the time singing, "Chilled haunches forecast death", and interred him in the ground.

(The End)

P. RAJA

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A TRAVELOGUE

(40)

PARIS is a city where it is not enough to “do the city, and see the ‘must’”. You have to be mentally prepared to accept her, then only can the real Paris be seen and only then can you feel the pulsation of the most vital city in the world. You have to keep your eyes and ears open. Language is no bar when you come to love Paris. Other cities have moods and moments but in Paris a festival goes on eternally. The most unpredictable city, Paris is known as “The youngest among the Old Cities of the World”. The Parisians have caught hold of the life-force and turned it and moulded it into a handmaiden of theirs.

Don't bring a frown to Paris.
You have got to be in love with Paris.

Your troubles there are out of style
For Paris always wears a smile.

A million lights, they flicker there,
A million hearts beat quicker there,

No skies are grey on the great Champs Elysées,
That is Paris and her ways.

We were mentally prepared to love Paris; in fact that is an understatement. Sanat had lived in Paris, although for a short while, and he adored Paris. As for me I was all too eager to see the city the Mother had loved and been born in. There is a story that during the First World War when Kali appeared before the Mother and informed her that Paris was doomed, the Mother only said, “No”, and put out such a tremendous force that Paris was saved.

*

We checked in at the Modern Hotel just before lunch. It was situated on the Place de la République with the huge statue of the République just in front. Immediately after lunch we started on a ‘panorama tour’ of the city. It took us about four hours, for we were shown all the main thoroughfares, then we went through Champs Elysées and under the Arc de Triomphe, then the Tuileries and Louvre and Place de la Concorde, we passed by Les Invalides and Notre Dame, etc. We were advised to see these places after lighting up time. We did so and were simply charmed. In the day-time these places are monuments and churches, at night under the flood-lights they come to life like all things in Paris. We arrived at the Arc de Triomphe at dusk when the sun was just a golden ball in the middle of the arch and the whole

sky was redish-gold. It was breathtakingly beautiful. As for Champs Elysées its lights and gaiety are something hard to describe. I can only say that there is no parallel in all the world to such a thoroughfare.

Then we boarded the Bateaux Mouches and cruised on the river Seine for several hours. It was a wonderful experience. The Seine goes round the old city called Ile de Paris, almost cutting it off from the mainland. And you see Paris illumined like a fairy city. We had been on a night-cruise at many a place but this was Paris.

Next morning we went to see Notre Dame, the church of "Our Lady". We stood there for a while hypnotised, our emotions rising to supreme heights. So this was the Mother Church of France standing on the island of Paris as a sentinel for a thousand years, under whose shadow the whole history of France has been enacted. It has seen Charlemagne, it has seen Jeanne d'Arc. It has seen the Roi Soleil, it has seen the Revolution and the activities of Napoleon Bonaparte and the Occupation of Paris, and at the end of the Second World War, the return of De Gaulle. Unmoved and unscathed it has been a silent witness to man's glory and his follies. There was no human passion, or emotion, or desire, or terror that did not find its expression in Paris. Notre Dame has seen all that and also the growth of incomparable wit, intellect and genius, of gaiety, colour, fashion, culture that have made, and continue to make, Paris the centre of the civilised world, a city that lives in endless "joie de vivre".

An enormous edifice of pale brown sandstone, Notre Dame is a picture of strength petrified, of infinite motion arrested, of aeonic thought frozen. Its feet were rooted in the time of Charlemagne when Paris was just a small hamlet rising from the marshes; it does not follow a definite architectural style. As the ages passed, a new style was superimposed on the earlier one. The whole edifice is an amalgamation of the Saxon, Roman, and Gothic styles. Wrote Victor Hugo, "Vast symphony in stone—the colossal work of man and a nation." The immense Cathedral perhaps had to be so, as a symbol of the Great Mother who is above all style and all forms. It is not one of those Cathedrals, standing in front of which you say, "Oh how beautiful." One stands there subdued, silent before the stern forbidding edifice.

By the thirteenth century the roof and the two massive towers were completed and all the beautiful carving of the rows of Apostles forever absorbed in prayer, vespers rising like incense to the Great Mother, asking for benediction and fulfilment of hopes. Here one finds graceful sculpturing of stone warm and living and soft and beautiful. Side by side with this grandeur, a symbol of man's highest aspiration, there are gargoyles and hideous heads grimacing insolently, mocking at all things lovely, fearful heads leering from lofty galleries, solemn naves and ramparts. Why have these grotesque and sinister creatures been put there is a question that may have risen in horror and pain to many who beheld them. Were they put there consciously by a master-hand to remind people that there is the other side of the Divine?

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Selections from Matthew Arnold (Macmillan Annotated Classics) with an Introduction by V. S. Seturaman. pp: XXIV+140. Price: Rs. 9.75. Publishers: The Macmillan Company of India Limited.

THIS volume of Arnold's critical prose writings is mainly composed of three pieces that are much read, prescribed, and discussed. To satisfy the long cherished need of the teachers and the taught, Macmillan Publishing House is doing commendable service by bringing out 'Annotated Classics' like the one I have in my hand.

Prof. V.S. Seturaman in the first part of his introduction to this little volume provides the reader with a nutshell biography of the poet-critic. Then there follows a long, but by no means long-winded, introduction to the three major critical essays of Arnold. He not only gives the gist and publishing history of each essay, but also critically examines them. He ventures to explain certain terms in the light of the writings of the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram as he has understood them. And they in no way misrepresent or misinterpret. In his 'Note on Disinterestedness' Prof. Seturaman employs the words of the Mother from *Prayers and Meditations* to explicate the much expounded and debated critical term *Disinterestedness*, which made a good deal of noise in the Victorian literary circles. The usage adopted is very apt and meaningful.

The text begins with *Preface to Poems* (1853) in which Arnold furnishes reasons for omitting certain poems, especially the philosophical and hence obscure poem 'Empedocles on Etna'. He enters into a polemic against the so-called 'intelligent Critic' who wished the poet to 'leave the exhausted past and draw his subjects from matters of present import'. Arnold vehemently reacts by saying, "The writer's attention should be fixed upon excellent models; the subject must be human action—independent of time." And the *Preface* stresses action and form. The second essay *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* defines the nature and function of criticism, advocates *Disinterestedness* in criticism which Arnold called the *Indian Virtue of Detachment* and throws light on Arnold's attitude to literature, criticism and life. *The Study of Poetry*, a very familiar essay to students of literature, is the 'finest example of applied criticism'. The greatness and importance of poetry, the two fallacies (Historic and Personal) in our judgement of poetry, the difference between facts and ideas and why poetry should take the place of religion are a few of the many interesting topics taken up for discussion in this essay.

These three textual essays are followed by the *Notes*. Unlike many money-minded annotators, Prof. Seturaman does not fill up the pages by giving the dictionary meanings of the words. True to his conscience as a teacher, he explicates by furnishing references and makes the readers understand clearly what Arnold wrote. We owe thanks to his *Notes*—they are scholarly as well as informative and hence doubly useful.

Appendix A contains the extracts from Arnold's celebrated lectures *On Translating Homer* in which the poet-critic distinguishes the four Homeric qualities that are to be rendered by the English translator: rapidity of movement, simplicity of style, plainness of thought, and nobility. Here the extract illustrates Arnold's practice as a critic. *Appendix B* is an admirable selection from the letters that Arnold wrote to his dearest friend Arthur Hugh Clough. They are appended not without a purpose. They are essential to show the European background of Arnold's critical approach and help us understand his opinions about poets like Keats, Browning and Tennyson. The *Bibliography* compiled at the end has its use in spite of being short.

Carefully and perceptively annotated, this monetarily accessible volume will be particularly welcomed by students and teachers of English literature.

P. RAJA

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