

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

OCTOBER 1981

Price : Rs. 2.50

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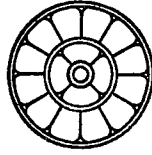
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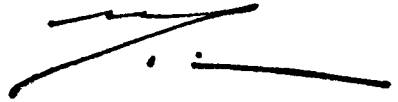
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Editor's Phone: 782

Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust

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Published by: P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM TRUST, PONDICHERRY - 605 002

Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry - 605 002

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No. R. N. 8667/63

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Vol. XXXIII

No. 10

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
SRI AUROBINDO'S FIRST FAIR COPY OF HIS EARLIEST VERSION OF <i>Savitri</i>	... 553
WHEN LOVE COMES... GUIDANCE BY THE MOTHER	... 561
THE PSYCHE A POINTER BY SRI AUROBINDO	... 562
I WISH... (Poem) <i>Robert Lender</i>	... 562
NIRODBARAN'S REJOINDER TO A FOOTNOTE OF SATPREM'S IN THE <i>Agenda</i> VOL. XI	... 563
AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO: RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA (Translated by Nirodbaran from the Bengali)	... 568
THE TREE OF ETERNAL TIME (Poem) <i>R. Y. Deshpande</i>	... 572
THE STORY OF A SOUL <i>Huta</i>	... 573
LETTERS ON POETRY: I. INSPIRATION AND EFFORT <i>K. D. Sethna</i>	... 584
SRI AUROBINDO ON EDUCATION <i>Ranjit Kumar Acharjee</i>	... 588
THE SECRET OF THE <i>Mahābhārata</i> : AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH <i>Pradip Bhattacharya</i>	... 593
A PERSONAL NOTE ON OLDEN DAYS <i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	... 597

CONTENTS

EUROPE 1974: A TRAVELOGUE	<i>Chaundona & Sanat K. Bauerji</i>	... 600
THE REWARD OF COWARDICE: A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY	<i>P. Raja</i>	... 603
THE LORD OF HORSES: A NOVELLA (Translated by Maurice from the French)	<i>Christine & Archaka</i>	... 605
SHAMU (Poem)	<i>Dinkar</i>	... 610
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE: FORWARD WITH NATURE by J. N. Mukherjee	<i>Review by A Disciple</i>	... 611
DANTE AND SRI AUROBINDO (A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF 'THE DIVINE COMEDY' AND 'SAVITRI') by Prema Nandakumar	<i>Review by P. Raja</i>	... 614

**SRI AUROBINDO'S FIRST FAIR COPY OF HIS
EARLIEST VERSION OF SAVITRI**

SÂVITHRÎ

BOOK I

(Continued)

In haste the father cried aloud, "O girl,
Around a fated head thy wings have flown.
Mount, mount thy car and travelling through the lands 605
Choose one more happy for thy fruitful couch.
Let not the obscure hand seal up too soon
The sweet perennial fountain of thy joys.
Not with this boy thy virgin life shall flower,
But the long glory of thy days lies dead 610
And vain the promise of the flaming gods."
But Sâvithrî replied with steadfast eyes
That saw the forest verge and Suthyavân;
"Once I have chosen, once the garland fell.
Whether for death or life, for joy or tears, 615
Two hearts have joined and shall not be divorced
By human wills or by the gods' strong hands."
So spoke she from her sweet and violent soul
Awakened to dangerous earth; but Uswapathy
Made answer to her from the father's heart: 620
"My daughter, who in this frail world belongs
To whom? Who is the husband? who the child?
Are they not shadows in thy dreaming mind?
The body thou hast loved, dissolved, is given,
Lost in the brute unchanging stuff of worlds,
To indifferent mighty Nature who shall make it 625
Crude matter for the joy of others' lives.
But for our souls, upon the wheel of God
For ever turning they arrive and go
Vain atoms in the whirling cycles vain, 630
Married and sundered in the magic round
Of the great Dancer of the boundless dance.
Thy emotions are but sweet and dying notes
In his wild music changed compellingly
From hour to hour. To cry to an unseized bliss 635
Is the music's meaning. Caught, the rhythm fades,
The sense has fled! only coarse-fibred joys
Are given us that abase with useless pain.

Sated the lax heart loathes its old desires;
 Love dies before the lover. None belongs 640
 Even to his nearest, but all to one far Self
 Constant, alone and hushed who cares for none.
 O child, obey not then thy clamorous heart's
 Insistence, thinking thy desires divine.
 Live by a calmer law. Strengthen thy life 645
 By work and thought, give succour to thy soul,
 With rich utilities help others' days,
 So shalt thou greaten to abiding peace."
 But Sāvithrī replied with steadfast eyes,—
 Calm now her heart and tender like the moon. 650
 "Now have I known my glad reality
 Beyond my body in another's being;
 I have perceived the changeless soul of Love.
 How then shall I desire a lonely good,
 Or slay, aspiring to white vacant peace, 655
 The hope divine with which my soul leaped forth
 From flame eternal, rapture of one vast Heart
 And tireless of the sweet abysms of Time
 Deep possibility always to love?
 This, this is first, last joy, against whose throb 660
 The riches of a thousand fortunate years
 Feel poverty. What to me are death and life
 And other men and children and my days,
 Since only for my soul in Suthyavân
 I treasure the rich occasion of my birth 665
 And sunlight and the emerald ways he treads,—
 If for a year, that year is all my life.
 Once only can the die for ever fall
 And, being thrown, no god can alter more
 Its endless moment. Once the word leaps forth 670
 And being spoken sounds immortally
 For ever in the memory of Time.
 Once only can my heart of woman choose.
 For what my heart has seen, my lips can speak
 That only and my servant body do. 675
 This is the yoke that God has laid on me
 And on the road He traced my life must run."
 She spoke and Nârād smiled and rising high

With the fullstop removed after line 675 the next has the variant
 And is the law to which my life is born.

Sprang like a fire into his roseate heavens
 Chanting the anthem of triumphant love. 680
 So was it as 'the heart of Sāvithrî
 Tender and adamant decreed. Her father
 Journeying with brilliant squadrons and a voice
 Immense of chariots bore her from her bowers
 Of golden beauty to the rude bare hut 685
 Of Dyumathsena in the dim-souled huge
 Inhuman forest far from cheerful sound
 Of man's blithe converse mid his crowded days.
 Leaving behind their glittering companies
 The king and his two queens with thorns assailed 690
 And stumbling feet on the faint gloomy path
 Reached the rough-hewn ascetic hut and gave
 Their cherished nurseling to the blind old king
 And that poor labour-worn and ageing queen
 To be their daughter and their servant there 695
 Through the hard strenuous days. With tearful eyes
 And a dull burden on their hearts they blessed
 The brief-lived husband of her fatal choice,
 Then went back to their life of vacant pomp
 Empty of her. There for one year she dwelt 700
 With Suthyavân and with his parents sole
 In the tremendous wood amid the cry
 Of crickets and the tiger's nightly roar,
 Defenceless to the forest's whisper vast
 And sunlight and the moonlight and the rain. 705
 For now the grief she had trod down seized on her;
 And though she served all diligently, nor spared
 Strict labour with the broom and jar and well
 And gentle personal tending and the piled fire
 Of altar and kitchen, no task to others allowed 710
 Her woman's strength might do, not with these things
 Her heart was, but with love and secret pain
 She dwelt like a dumb priest with hidden gods.
 Her spirit like a sea of living fire
 Possessed her lover, clinging—one vast embrace 715
 Around its threatened mate. Her quivering passion
 Intolerent of the poverty of Time
 Strove to expend whole centuries in a day.

Line 681: "soul" as variant for "heart".

Ever her mind remembered Nârad's date
 And, trembling sad accountant of its riches, 720
 Reckoned the insufficient dawns between.
 So feeding sorrow and terror with her heart
 She lived in dread expectancy: or else
 Fled from it vainly into abyssms of bliss
 To meet worse after-sorrow; for then she felt 725
 Each day a golden page torn cruelly out
 From her too slender account of joy. She uttered
 No moan, but by her natural silence helped
 Lived lonely in the secret clutch of tears.
 Often she yearned to cry, "O Suthyavân, 730
 O lover of my soul, give more, give more
 Of love while yet thou canst to her thou lovest;
 For soon we part and who shall know how long
 Before the great wheel in its monstrous round
 Restore us to ourselves?" For well she knew 735
 She must not clutch that happiness to die
 With him and follow seizing on his robe,
 Travelling our other countries, voyagers glad
 Into the sweet or terrible beyond,
 Since that poor king and queen would need her long 740
 To help the empty remnant of their life.
 Strong she pressed back the cry into her soul
 And dwelt within silent, unhelped, alone.
 And still she knew that only surface seas
 Were spume to these loud winds; a greater spirit 745
 Calm-winged and watching all to every pain
 Assented largely in its strength and joy.
 Nor would she once have given those tortured days
 Half hell, half heaven, of terror and delight
 For all the griefless bliss that Time could give 750
 Without him. Suthyavân with the dim answer
 Of our thought-blinded hearts perceived her clasp
 Of love and anguish round him, vaguely knew
 Some doom behind, and what his days could spare
 From labour in the forest hewing wood 755
 With his strong arm or gathering sacred grass
 Or hunting food in the far sylvan glades
 Or service to his father's sightless life
 He gave to her and strove to increase brief time
 With lavish softness of heart-seeking words 760

And all the inadequate signs that love must use.
 All was too little for her dreadful need.
 Yet grew they into each other ever more
 Until it seemed no power could rend apart
 Since even the body's walls might not divide. 765
 For when he wandered in the forest, still
 Her conscious spirit walked with his and knew
 His actions as if in herself he moved.
 He, less aware, thrilled with her from afar.
 Grief, fear became the food of mighty love. 770
 Tortured more fiercely, more her soul dilated
 Till measureless it grew in strength divine,
 An anvil for the blows of Fate and Time,
 Unslayable like the gods. Last grief became
 Calm, dull-eyed, resolute as if awaiting 775
 Some unknown issue of its fiery struggle,
 Some deed in which it might for ever cease
 Victorious over itself and death and tears.
 Fast the days fled. The rains rushed by; autumn
 Hastened his pace serene; winter and dew 780
 Their glories moist or cold ended too soon;
 Spring bounded by armed with the cuckoo's plaint,
 Piercing her heart with beauty of his flowers.
 Then summer like a stately king came in
 In opulent purple and in burning gold. 785
 She hated not his mornings and his eyes,
 But rather besought that they would linger out
 Their careless glories, though he seemed to her
 Indifferent doom in heartless splendour clad
 Who hid with his bright hands the death of joy. 790
 Swiftly the fated day came striding on.

Now it was here in this great golden dawn
 By her yet sleeping husband lain she gazed
 Into her past like one about to die
 Looks back upon the sunlit fields of life 795
 Where he too ran and sported with the rest,
 Lifting his head above the huge dark stream
 Before he plunges down. She lived again
 The whole year in a swift and eddying race
 Of memories. Then she arose and service done 800
 Bowed down to the great goddess simply carved

By Suthyavân upon a forest-stone.
 What prayer she breathed, her soul and Doorga knew.
 Perhaps she felt in the dim forest huge
 The infinite mother watching over her child, 805
 Perhaps the shrouded Voice spoke some still word.
 At last she came to the pale mother queen
 And spoke: "For one full year that I have served
 Thee and the aged king and my dear lord
 I have not gone into the silences 810
 Of this great forest that enringed my thoughts
 With mystery nor in its green miracles
 Wandered, but this small clearing was my world.
 Now has a strong desire seized all my heart
 To go with Suthyavân holding his hand 815
 Into the life that he has loved and touch
 Herbs he has trod and know the forest flowers
 And hear at ease the birds and scurrying life
 That starts and ceases, rich far rustle of boughs
 And all the mystic whispering of woods. 820
 Release me now and let my heart have rest."
 She answered, "Do as thy wise mind decrees,
 O calm child-sovereign with the eyes that rule.
 I hold thee a strong goddess who has come
 Pitying our barren days, so dost thou serve 825
 Even as a slave might, so art thou beyond
 All that thou doest, all our minds conceive
 Like the strong sun that serves earth from above."
 So the doomed husband and the wife who knew
 Went with linked hands into that solemn world 830
 Together. Suthyavân walked full of joy
 Because she moved beside him through the green.
 He showed her all the forest's riches, flowers
 Innumerable of every colour and hue
 And soft thick clinging creepers green and red 835
 And strange rich-plumaged birds, to every cry
 That haunted sweetly distant boughs, replied
 With the shrill singer's name more sweetly called.
 He spoke of all the things he loved: they were
 His boyhood's comrades and his playfellows, 840
 Coevals and companions of his life
 Here in this world whose every mood he knew.
 Their thoughts which for the common mind are blank,

He shared, to every wild emotion felt
 An answer. Deeply she listened, but to hear 845
 The voice that soon would cease from tender words
 And treasure its sweet cadences beloved
 For lonely memory. Little dwelt her mind
 Upon their sense; of death, not life she thought.
 Love in her bosom hurt with the jagged edges 850
 Of anguish moaned at every step with pain
 Crying, "Now, now perhaps his voice will hush
 For ever." Even by some vague touch oppressed
 Sometimes her eyes looked round as if their orbs
 Might see the dim and dreadful god approach. 855

But Suthyavân had paused. He meant to finish
 His labour here that happy, linked, uncaring
 They two might wander free in the green deep
 Primeval mystery of the forest's heart.
 Wordless but near she watched, no turn to lose 860
 Of the bright face and body which she loved.
 Her life was now in seconds, not in hours
 And every moment she economised
 Like a pale merchant leaned above his store,
 The miser of his poor remaining gold. 865
 But Suthyavân wielded a joyous axe.
 He sang high snatches of a sage's chant
 That pealed of conquered death and demons slain,
 And sometimes paused to cry to her sweet speech
 Of love or mockery tenderer than love. 870
 She like a pantheress leaped upon his words
 And carried them into her cavern heart.
 But as he worked, his doom upon him came.
 The violent and hungry hounds of pain
 Travelled through his body biting as they passed 875
 Silently and all his suffering breath besieged
 Strove to rend life's strong heart-cords and be free.
 Then helped, as if a beast had left its prey,
 A moment in a wave of rich relief
 Reborn to strength and happy ease he stood, 880
 Rejoicing, and resumed his confident toil
 But with less seeing strokes. Now the great woodsman
 Hewed at him, and his labour ceased. Lifting
 His arm he flung away the poignant axe

Far from him like an instrument of pain: 885
 She came to him in silent anguish and clasped,
 And he cried to her, "Sâvithrî, a pang
 Cleaves through my head and breast as if the axe
 Were piercing there and not the living branch.
 Such agony rends me as the tree must feel 890
 When it is sundered. Let me lay my head
 Upon thy lap and guard me with thy hands.
 Perhaps because thou touchest, death may pass."
 Then Sâvithrî sat under branches wide,
 Cool, green against the sun; not the hurt tree 895
 Which his keen axe had cloven, that she shunned,—
 But leaned beneath a fortunate kingly trunk
 She guarded him in her bosom and strove to soothe
 His anguished brow and body with her hands.
 All grief and fear were dead within her now 900
 And a great calm had fallen. The wish to lessen
 His suffering, the impulse that opposes pain
 Was the one mortal feeling left. It passed;
 Griefless and strong she waited like the gods.
 But now his sweet familiar hue was changed 905
 Into a tarnished greyness and his eyes
 Dimmed over, forsaken of the clear light she loved.
 Only the dull and physical mind was left,
 Vacant of the bright spirit's luminous gaze.
 But once before it faded wholly back 910
 He cried out in a clinging last despair,
 "Sâvithrî, Sâvithrî, O Sâvithrî,
 Lean down, my soul, and kiss me while I die."
 And even as her pallid lips pressed his,
 He failed, losing last sweetness of response; 915
 His cheek pressed down her golden arm. She sought
 His mouth still with her living mouth, as if
 She could persuade his soul back with her kiss;
 Then grew aware they were no more alone.
 Something had come there conscious, vast and dire. 920
 Near her she felt a silent shade immense
 Chilling the noon with darkness for its back.
 She knew that visible Death was standing there
 And Suthyavân had passed from her embrace.

(To be continued)

WHEN LOVE COMES..'

GUIDANCE BY THE MOTHER

THE best way when love comes, in whatever form it be, is to try and pierce through its outer appearance and find the divine principle which is behind and which gives it existence. Naturally, it is full of snares and difficulties, but it is more effective. That is to say, instead of ceasing from loving because one loves wrongly, one must cease loving wrongly and want to love well.

For instance, love between human beings, in all its forms, love of parents for their children, of children for parents, of brothers and sisters, of friends and lovers, is altogether tainted with ignorance, selfishness and all the other defects which are man's ordinary drawbacks; so instead of stopping completely from loving — which, besides, is very difficult as Sri Aurobindo says, which would simply dry up the heart and serve no end — one must learn how to love better: to love with devotion, with self-giving, self-abnegation, and struggle not against love itself but against its distorted forms; against all forms of grabbing for oneself, of attachment, possession, jealousy, and all the feelings which accompany these main things. Not to want to possess, dominate; and not to want to impose one's will, one's whims, one's desires; not to want to take, receive, but to give; not to insist on the response of the other, but be content with one's own love; not to seek one's personal interest and joy and the fulfilment of one's personal desire, but be satisfied with the giving of one's love and affection and not to ask for response. Simply to be happy to love, nothing more.

If one does that, one has made a great stride and can, through this attitude, gradually, advance farther in the feeling itself, and realise one day that love is not a personal thing; that love is a universal divine feeling which manifests through you more or less finely, but which in its essence is a divine thing.

The first step is to stop being selfish. For everyone it is the same thing, not only for those who want to do yoga but also in ordinary life: if one wants to know how to love, one must not first love oneself and above all selfishly; one must give oneself to the object of love without exacting anything in return. That discipline is elementary in order to rise above oneself and lead a life which is not altogether gross.

For Yoga one may add something more to it; it is as I said in the beginning, the will to pierce through this limited and human form of love and discover the principle of divine Love which is behind it. Then one is sure to get the result. That is better than drying up one's heart. It is perhaps a little more difficult but it is better in every way, for thus, instead of egoistically making others suffer, well, one may leave them quiet in their own movement and only make an effort to transform oneself without imposing one's will upon others, which even in ordinary life is a step towards something higher and a little more harmonious.

THE PSYCHE

A POINTER BY SRI AUROBINDO

At a certain stage in the Yoga when the mind is sufficiently quieted and no longer supports itself at every step on the sufficiency of its mental certitudes, when the vital has been steadied and subdued and is no longer constantly insistent on its own rash will, demand and desire, when the physical has been sufficiently altered not to bury altogether the inner flame under the mass of its outwardness, obscurity or inertia, an inmost being hidden within and felt only in its rare influences is able to come forward and illumine the rest and take up the lead of the sadhana. Its character is one-pointed orientation towards the Divine or the Highest, one-pointed and yet plastic in action and movement; it does not create a rigidity of direction like the one-pointed intellect or a bigotry of the regnant idea or impulse like the one-pointed vital force; it is at every moment and with a supple sureness that it points the way to the Truth, automatically distinguishes the right step from the false, extricates the Divine or Godward movement from the clinging mixture of the undivine.

From "The Yoga of Divine Works" in "The Synthesis of Yoga"

I WISH...

I wish I knew
How to know the wish
How to know the thing
That keeps my psyche
Wishing that it knew.

ROBERT LENDER

NIRODBARAN'S REJOINER TO A FOOTNOTE OF SATPREM'S IN THE *AGENDA* Vol. XI

My attention was drawn by a disciple to a talk of the Mother on 9 September 1970, in the *Agenda* (Vol. XI), about Sri Aurobindo's physical suffering during his last illness, and to the Editor Satprem's footnote apropos of that talk. I could make out the meaning of the Mother's talk: it was quite straightforward as was always the case with whatever she said or wrote. The footnote, on the other hand, was not so, and therefore threw me into a great confusion and caused much pain. It seemed to carry for me a double meaning. Here is the relevant portion (p. 334) of the Mother's talk and the footnote connected with it:

“J'ai eu (et ça, c'était effrayant) j'ai eu la conscience de tout ce qu'il a souffert physiquement. Et ça, ça a été l'une des choses les plus... (*Mère a la voix couverte de larmes*) les plus difficiles à supporter. Comme si... physiquement... Et nos inconsciences physiques à côté de ça et l'espèce de TORTURE physique qu'il a subie. Ça a été l'une des choses les plus difficiles, les plus difficiles.

“La torture qu'il a supportée et que nous traitions si légèrement comme si... s'il ne sentait rien. Ça, ça a été l'une des choses les plus effrayantes.”

Satprem's footnote to the phrase containing the word “TORTURE” runs thus:

“‘Nous insistions sur des remèdes dangereux...’ avoue l'un des médecins qui soignait Sri Aurobindo (Nirodbaran, *I am here*). Sri Aurobindo refusait—une fois. Mère refusait. Puis ils n'ont plus rien dit. ‘Il savait, note l'un des médecins, que [ces remèdes] ne seraient d'aucune utilité et il les rejetait catégoriquement, mais comme nous n'avions pas la compréhension et que nous n'étions pas capables de juger de la valeur des mots lorsqu'ils sont prononcés d'un ton habituel, nous insistions sur des remèdes dangereux en lesquels nous avons foi et confiance.’ *Ibid.*, p. 20. Notons que le même phénomène se reproduira avec Mère.”

The English translation of the Mother's talk:

“I was conscious (and it was frightful) of all that he physically suffered. And it was one of the most difficult things to bear. (*The Mother's voice was choked with pain*) ...As if... physically... And our physical unconsciousness beside it and the kind of physical TORTURE he went through. It was one of the most difficult things, most difficult.

“The torture which he bore and we took so lightly as if he felt nothing. It was one of the most frightful things.”

Satprem's footnote in English:

“‘We insisted on dangerous remedies...’ admits one of the doctors who attended upon Sri Aurobindo. (Nirodbaran, *I am here.*) Sri Aurobindo refused—once. Mother refused. Then they said nothing farther. ‘He knew,’ notes one of the doctors, ‘that

[these remedies] would be of no avail and he emphatically ruled them out, but as we had not the insight nor the proper appraisal of the value of words when they are clothed in the common language we are habituated to use, we insisted on the dangerous remedies in which we had faith and confidence.' Let us note that the same phenomenon will be repeated in the case of the Mother."

Satprem, quoting a passage from my booklet, "*I am here, I am here*", has linked it with the word "torture", which he has put in capital letters, in the Mother's talk. At the end he says that the Mother was dealt with exactly as Sri Aurobindo had been. My confusion and pain arise from the fact that he appears to imply that we gave dangerous remedies, thus causing torture to Sri Aurobindo's body against his consent. He mentions that Sri Aurobindo refused, the Mother did the same and then they said nothing farther. The last phrase would mean that without their permission or taking it for granted we applied the remedies. But in my booklet I have very clearly stated that only with their explicit consent we started the treatment. Why has Satprem left out this important part from the quotation? He has surely read my *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* and Dr. Sanyal's *A Call from Pondicherry* where both of us have given a precise detailed picture of the case and our agonising predicament. Satprem's final sentence, which drags the Mother's illness into the picture, leaves me in no doubt that there is a hostile insinuation throughout. I have been confirmed in my impression by more than one source. At any rate, I fear that many readers are likely to be misled. Therefore I feel called to write this article in order to remove whatever misunderstanding may be created by the statement.

I remember how a similar written allegation was made against the doctors by a sadhak soon after Sri Aurobindo's passing. When I referred it to the Mother, she said, "Why don't you write something?" And I wrote the booklet "*I am here, I am here*". It is true that I have used the word "torture" there, having been then in an emotional state of mind and strongly influenced by my knowledge of the great sensitivity of Sri Aurobindo's body where even a mosquito-bite would cause a red swelling. But all that was done had the Mother's and the Master's consent.

Another point: when the Mother speaks of the "physical torture" that Sri Aurobindo underwent, does she at all mean that it was the doctors who inflicted it? Satprem's linking his footnote with that word suggests this to us. But she cannot mean it. For it is not only we who saw the physical torture which Sri Aurobindo suffered and which had nothing to do with the doctors: the Mother herself saw it. On the other hand, Satprem never saw it. Sri Aurobindo's suffering was indeed intolerable. It surely forms part of the Mother's statement about him, his work and his achievement, which is engraved on the side of the Samadhi. The statement includes the words: "Thou who hast suffered all..."

Let me most reluctantly recall the painful episodes to which we were witness and give again a brief account of them. Sri Aurobindo had two periods of acute distress. One was when the urine stopped. It made me run at midnight to Dr. Satyavrata

Sen. The other time was when Sri Aurobindo was suffering from acute breathing difficulty so much so that he asked me twice, "Nirod, do something." In the first case, the obstruction of the urine was relieved by a catheter and, in the second, Sri Aurobindo withdrew himself into the inner consciousness and thereby obtained temporary relief from the suffocating respiration; but as soon as he would come to the surface it would show itself with all its acute symptoms. However, when he moved from the bed to the sofa, before he called for the commode, we were astonished to see that he was breathing in a normal way and it gave us no small measure of joy. For we thought that a miracle had happened, and hoped for further miracles. But alas, it was only a short respite and as soon as he came back to the bed the breathing distress renewed itself. He then plunged within and remained so most of the time till he passed away.

In the last days Dr. Sanyal arrived and saw that the condition was taking a serious turn. It was then that he proposed to use medical remedies with complete sanction from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. And what we did was the utter minimum that was necessary.

Even if the medical resort be considered torturous, could anyone, seeing the suffering before his very eyes, humanly remain passive and abstain from any action to give prolonged relief by temporary discomfort?

About the phrase, "the same phenomenon will be repeated in the case of the Mother", I take it to mean that the Mother was also subjected to torture by the doctors. I inquired from one of the closest attendants of the Mother how far she had been given painful treatment. Strongly refuting any allegation of torture, he said that there were two periods of gravity in her illness. In the first one, Dr. Sanyal was treating her with oral medicines, but when there was no improvement Dr. Bist was called in and a great change was the result of what he gave her by mouth. In the second period there was no question of the application of medicines at all.

This is my answer by way of exonerating ourselves from any charges implied in Satprem's statement.

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Incidentally, going through the *Agenda* volumes is like entering into a domain of sudden unpleasant surprises whenever the Editor intrudes. One cannot but be pained to notice many indiscretions and inaccuracies committed by his bringing in his own judgments and prejudices and dislikes which have no place in a book of the Mother's talks. I shall not give the full list. I shall confine myself to a few instances which appeared to me a flagrant breach of confidence and, above all, a deliberate disobedience which is an unpardonable action on the part of a disciple.

First of all, the Mother asked him not to publish some talks, but he has done it, giving at one place the reason, "we considered it right..." Can a disciple justify himself in this manner? Could it be alleged that, because the Mother was no longer in her body, matter forbidden by her can be published? Let me cite a personal

example to indicate the sanctity of the words of the Guru. Sri Aurobindo gave me a long reply on politics to refute some charges levelled against his political leadership. The reply was extremely illuminating, but he wrote: "*Subject Politics*. Taboo. Extremely confidential." After his passing I asked the Mother if the letter could come out. She replied, "How can it when Sri Aurobindo has said it is confidential?" There was the end of it.

Secondly, the Mother has talked freely to Satprem about people, countries, nations, institutions, politics, etc., which any sensible person would regard as said in confidence. To others also she has expressed certain views which were unmistakably meant to be kept private as well as to be understood only in a particular context.

Thirdly, the footnotes carry biased snap-judgments without any assessable evidence.

I cannot really understand what was the motive that impelled Satprem to make unwarranted disclosures. When in all her work the Mother's insistence all the while was on harmony among ourselves and among nations, will they not tarnish her image in the eyes of the public? Will they not produce more mutual bitterness, discord, misunderstanding and thereby hamper and delay the purpose her *Agenda* would be meant to serve? We must understand that between our criticism of persons and the Mother's there is a vast difference. Her consciousness is far higher than ours. Even when she criticises, she works for our well-being and subtly moves to make us less criticisable. "When Durga kills, she kills with compassion and for the soul's good," says the Shastra. Are not all of us her avowedly beloved children for the advancement of whose souls she worked?

Lastly, one most deplorable indiscretion is the publication of the Mother's talk about one C in her relation with Sri Aurobindo. The Mother pointedly told Satprem that it was private and to be kept aside. Yet he publishes it saying that it was a long talk and that he was giving just a summary of it! The summary is incriminating enough and does not exonerate him in the least from the gravity of his disobedience.

I am certain that the Mother would have strongly disapproved of the disclosures and the disciple's gratuitous remarks. Our long association with her and with Sri Aurobindo allows me to make this assertion.

From these and other instances not mentioned here, we can now see why the Trustees wanted Nolini (the Mother's secretary) and André (the Mother's son) to go through the talks before they would be printed, and I know on good authority that the Mother herself also wanted things to be done that way.

In one place in the *Agenda* the intention of the Trustees is grossly misconstrued. There is a reference to a good number of pages torn out of Pavitra's diary before its publication. The comment is to the effect that the *Agenda* would have been similarly treated in several places if it had been in the hands of the Trustees. If the Editors of Pavitra's diary have excluded certain portions it could be only because of two reasons. One is that they contained some matter too personal to Pavitra himself

to be laid before the public—matter which he, a reticent and sensitive soul, would certainly have liked to withhold. The other reason could be that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had expressly forbidden divulgement of the contents or else, without openly banning publication, had counted on Pavitra's knowledge of his Guru's standing wishes for non-disclosure of the material concerned.

The Trustees can surely be taken to have a sense of the preciousness of whatever Sri Aurobindo and the Mother meant for the spiritual and material good of the disciples. If they had not possessed this sense, the Mother would never have appointed them Trustees. To impute to them a conspiracy to censor or suppress their Guru's truth is to be completely carried away by personal animosity.

As things are, how does one know that nothing has been censored or suppressed in order to suit the present Editor?

One cannot help regretting that irresponsibility and private grudges have smirched so illuminating a document as the *Agenda* which the Mother had intended—as we know from more than one source—to be handled with reverence and obedience by those whom she considered her children.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

(Continued from the issue of September 1981)

WHEN I arrived here, we had three darshans of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in a year. Following on a severe accident to Sri Aurobindo, another 'darshan' was added from 24th April 1939 onwards. This was the date when the Mother had come permanently to the Ashram nineteen years earlier. So we had four darshans altogether.

Let me relate here the story of the shocking accident and what a terrible experience it was for all of us! It happened on the eve of the November Darshan. Since we could see Sri Aurobindo only on Darshan days, the Darshan to us was something ineffable and we waited for each Darshan with an ardour that went on increasing Darshan after Darshan. It was a thirst that remained ever unsatisfied and it was never a simple Darshan. Each occasion was for us a supreme moment of experience and realisation. It carried a golden opportunity to obtain what was unobtainable and Sri Aurobindo alone could give it, nobody else. Hence as the day approached, our being collected itself and became more and more concentrated on a single aim. How should we receive best what Sri Aurobindo had to give? This thought occupied our whole consciousness.

The Darshan began at 7 a.m. I lived alone in a small one-storeyed house just opposite the Mother's on the other side of the road. The darshan room was next to the Mother's room. I could see it clearly through my windows in front of me. On the eve of darshan the room was being decorated and I could hear the come-and-go of the people, their murmurings and could watch them carrying flowers, garlands and various outfits. I was also filled with an inner surge of joy—all because I would see the Great One very soon with dawn-break. To go to him to receive his touch—a wonderful moment of life. So when the wistful night ended and many got ready, I was on the way to the Darshan, somebody suddenly said, "There is no Darshan."

Startled, I at once exclaimed in an acerb tone, "What is this nonsense you are talking?"

The shock I received shot forth these words. His face turned pale and grieved. He said, "Well, you can find out", and departed with a bowed head.

I had recovered by that time and realised that I had been rude for nothing. As I was going to Nolini for the news, everybody I met wore a dark sad face. The Darshan visitors were struck dumb on hearing the news. I heard that when after finishing all the correspondence at midnight Sri Aurobindo had been going to the bathroom he had stumbled against the tiger-skin lying spread out in his room and broken the bone of his right leg above the knee-joint. One can imagine the consternation and anxiety the Ashram inmates felt when they learnt the fact. A pall of darkness, extin-

guished, as it were, the light of day. The whole day passed in a daze. In the evening the Mother alone gave us the Darshan, in the hall before Amrita's room.

Her compassion flowing in a thousand streams washed away the worry and depression of our broken hearts. Her matchless bewitching smile filled the deep void with heavenly sweetness! Giving strength and inspiration, she lifted us up. Still, I must say that I could not bear for long the sight of her giving Darshan all alone in this manner. The next Darshan was to be on the 21st February 1939, but it was postponed till 24th April when we had Sri Aurobindo's Darshan once more. From then this April Darshan continued.

The Ashram turned a new page and began a new chapter. All correspondence stopped as well as interviews with the Mother. She had to give up using her sitting room and her interview-room and move to another chamber on the other side where, due to lack of sufficient space, private interviews were not possible. One had to speak to her about various matters in the presence of other people. A little area was spaced off for her to have some rest and a short sleep at night.

Here I shall quote in translation a small letter of Sri Aurobindo written in Bengali in the margin of a letter by me:

"Ego doesn't go all at once, but it can be gradually diminished and made weaker—especially as more and more the inner feeling increases, thinner and thinner becomes the small self."

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Now Dr. Manilal of Baroda, Becharlal, Nirodbaran, Purani, Satyendra and Mulshankar were kept in attendance on Sri Aurobindo. Champaklal had already been in his personal service. So he was automatically there. Later on, Dr. Prabhat Sanyal, when he used to pay occasional visits from Calcutta, had the opportunity to see Sri Aurobindo. Nirod, each time he came down from Sri Aurobindo's room, would present himself at Dilip's breakfast table and a number of people would crowd around him to hear of Sri Aurobindo's talks with his attendants. We would wait eagerly for his arrival. So many things they talked with Sri Aurobindo, so many questions they asked and Sri Aurobindo freely gave them answers which now form a very precious and illuminating body of knowledge. They have recorded these talks and published them in book-form. Purani has named them *Evening Talks*, and Nirodbaran *Talks with Sri Aurobindo*. There are Bengali translations of some of them. What we enjoyed most in these talks was Sri Aurobindo's exceptional sense of humour and wit. Stories, anecdotes, unknown incidents of his life with his brothers in England, etc.—a rich and delectable fund of conversation giving us a new experience of many aspects of the Master. Sri Aurobindo's attendants also helped us by bringing oral answers from Sri Aurobindo whenever we had some difficulties.

I do not recollect in which year the 'Balcony' Darshan started. Very probably, it began after Sri Aurobindo's accident. The Mother used to come out in the early mornings and, standing on Pavitra's balcony, look steadily at the sky or towards the

sea in a mood of concentration. A few sadhaks noticed her first and stood in the street watching her. Gradually others came to know about it, and a crowd began to gather which led to the regular Darshan. The Mother used to meditate for about ten minutes, and take in everybody with a sweeping glance. At the break of dawn we would mend our way to the balcony and wait for her Darshan and blessings. We had this gracious boon for years till it stopped on 16th March 1962 when she fell ill. She would also come down at night for collective meditation. Sitting in a straight posture in a chair near the staircase in the Meditation Hall in front of Amrita's room, she meditated for nearly half an hour. We never saw her leaning her back except when she was resting. However, making a line, one by one we went to receive her blessings after the meditation. Very often she was in a trance and people stood before her after their pranam, waiting for blessings, or else she kept her hand upon that of the disciple in front of her and went into a trance, the person standing still until she woke up. This meditation ended sometimes at midnight or even after. For some days she continued giving Darshan through the window-shutters, which was called "Window Darshan". There was also a "Terrace Darshan" when at about 10 a.m. she went to the terrace.

In this way at various times we had the Mother's Darshan in her different moods. I cannot now recollect when these darshans started or when they stopped. Very probably they ceased after Sri Aurobindo's accident. There was another interesting incident which I liked much. On the eve of the Darshan at 9.30 p.m. and on the morning of it at 5 a.m., the Mother used to come down to the meditation hall, where she took her seat on a low platform and gave us her blessings. It was a wonderful moment of the morning to come to her when everything was so quiet and soothing. What ecstatic days these were and how all of us lived wrapped in one consciousness—that of the Mother!

Dilip's book on music—*Gitashri* Part One—was getting published. He asked me to compose and prepare musical notations of some of the classical songs. I agreed. I knew little of the laws and methods that are the technique of classical music. I had heard much but had no training in them, though I might recognise perhaps the different tunes when I heard them. But which scale was needed, which tune was to be left out of different ones and what were their various technical terms—all this was unknown to me. I had heard many of these things but not to the extent of remembering them. I could even sing some of them but all through the sense of hearing without any knowledge of the technique.

I started the work. I approached Dilip in difficulties and the notations I had prepared got confirmed by him. He always encouraged me and said, "Go ahead. Everything is all right." Some common tunes like Bilawal and Alhaiya were unfamiliar. Dilip would sing them, and then I would sit down with books on classical music such as *Gitasutrasar* by K. D. Banerji and Pandit Bhatkhande's manual of notations. Of course I kept the Mother and Sri Aurobindo informed of my work. The result came gradually, the technique was getting to be less difficult and more and more confidence

followed.

The joy of creation and the help of the Mother gave the feeling that an inner work was going on. When the entire work was coming to an end, I saw that there was clear evidence of my ignorance of it. After some time, one day I began to sing some of my compositions to see how they had fared. I was astonished to find that these songs appeared very unfamiliar to me, as if they had been composed by another person. I felt very uneasy. It seemed like someone singing new songs following recorded notations and not quite sure of himself. What I knew was no longer a thing known. The composition I had started with was not there. What was very clear and distinct when I had started the notations ended not only in obscurity; there was no sign even of the original composition. I wondered how a known thing could become so strangely unknown. So I wrote about it to Sri Aurobindo and he replied:

“...As you have opened yourself to the Force and made yourself a channel for the energy of work, it is quite natural that when you wanted to do this musical work the Force should flow and act in the way that is wanted or the way that is needed and for the effect that is needed. When one has made oneself a channel, the Force is not necessarily bound by the limitations or disabilities of the instrument; it can disregard them and act in its own power. In doing so it may use the instrument simply as a medium and leave him as soon as the work is finished just what he was before, incapable in his own ordinary moments of doing such good work; but also it may by its action set the instrument right, accustom it to the necessary intuitive knowledge and movements so that it can at will command the action of the Force. As for the technique, there are two different things, the intellectual knowledge which one applies, the intuitive cognition which acts in its own right, even if it is not actually possessed by the worker. Many poets for instance have little knowledge of metrical or linguistic technique and cannot explain how they write or what are the qualities and elements of their success, but they write all the same things that are perfect in rhythm and language. Intellectual knowledge helps of course, provided one does not make of it a mere device or a rigid fetter. There are some arts that cannot be done well without some technical knowledge, e.g. painting and sculpture.

“What you write is your own in the sense that you have been the instrument of its manifestation—that is so with every artist or worker. You need have no scruple about putting your name, though of course for sadhana it is necessary to recognise that the real power was not yourself and you were simply the instrument on which it played its tune.

“The Ananda of creation is not the pleasure of the ego in having personally done well and being somebody; that is something extraneous which attaches itself to the joy of work and creation. The Ananda comes from the inrush of a greater Power, or the perfection that is being created. How far one feels it depends on the condition of the consciousness at that time, the thrill of being possessed and used by it, the avesh, the exultation of the uplifting of the consciousness, its illumination and its greatedened

heightened action and also the joy of the beauty, power or perfection that is being created.

“How far one feels it depends on the condition of the consciousness at that time, the temperature, the activity of the vital. The yogi of course (even certain strong and calm minds) is not carried away by the Ananda he holds and watches it and there is no more excitement mixed with the flow of it through the mind, vital or body. Naturally the Ananda of samarpan or spiritual realisation or divine love is something far greater, but the Ananda of creation has its place.”

(To be continued)

THE TREE OF ETERNAL TIME

UNDER the shade of thy Silence beats the clock of atomic Time,
 In the bosom of bright sunshine flows the hour of Eternity,—
 Then came Heraclitus and praised thee in hymns of Becoming.
 Now art thou divided in seven branches like a sun's ray,
 Now art thou abroad riding seven steeds in the vast Space:
 Thou hast thrown thyself in the flux of glistening streams,
 Thou flyest over rainbow-songs built by the birds of heaven,
 Thou knowest the day and the night and the splendid-forked Fire
 There is the immeasurable sweep of that fine specular glow,
 There is a certain graininess in the ecstasy of this sky,
 There is a rush of the Infinite in the myriad Innumerable.
 Then art thou tracked by the Eye of the three-fold mystery.
 O Marvel, thy speed is rooted in the density of darkness,
 Ever-moving, thine is the stillness of an omni-reaching wonder!
 Swift like a dream art thou asleep, steady like a lightning:
 Thou hast embraced the Ever-Now, thou hast become the Flood.
 These high mountains fixed long ago thou hast set in motion,
 These far drifting galaxies thou hast arrested in thy calm.
 Therefore thine is the fiery haste on four feet of the spirit,
 And thy waters conquer the rock of that tremendous Nothing,
 And hast thou by the force of Truth adventured into Death.
 Thy rhythms now run through seasons of this worldly earth,
 And speech breaks forth like the Spring on thy green boughs,
 And in the subtle-dense of thy rapture blossoms the Mind of Light.

R. Y. DESHPANDE

THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of September 1981)

This is the
interesting story of
how a being discovered
the Divine Life



3

THE MOTHER sent me incense sticks, which had a lovely rose perfume. She also sent me a beautiful brass plate along with an incense-holder.

I then sincerely started doing prayer, meditation and worship of my Beloveds according to the Mother's wish. I was not an expert in doing meditation, though!

The Mother sent me exquisite roses to put near Sri Aurobindo's photograph and hers. Now my room had the atmosphere of a temple.

The special Puja days had started already. On 31st October the Mother came to

the Meditation Room downstairs, clad in an attractive saree and crown. She distributed this message to people:

“Mother divine, thou art with us, each day thou givest me that assurance, and closely united in an identification that grows more and more integral, more and more constant, we turn to the Lord of the universe and to That which is beyond in a great aspiration towards the new Light.”

From the Messages which were given by the Mother on the Puja days I have picked out only two which have appealed to me the most.

On each Puja day the Mother wore a saree and a crown appropriate to the occasion. For instance, on the Durga Puja day she wore a red saree. On the Puja day of Lakshmi, Kali and Saraswati the dress answered to the particular quality and power of each goddess.

The atmosphere created at that time was ethereal.

The 1st November—it was my spiritual birthday. The weather had undergone a change. In place of severe heat, a less warm period had set in. Pondicherry, to my experience, never had a cool and pleasant interlude.

It was a fine morning. I entered the Meditation Hall upstairs where the Mother gave Messages on Darshan days. She was all smiles and greeted me affectionately. While giving me a bouquet of flowers she looked lovingly into my eyes and concentrated for a few minutes. Then with her eyes half-opened she pointed to a big seat in front of her and in moving words said:

“When Sri Aurobindo was in His body, he and I used to sit over there and give *darshan* to people. Come with me into Sri Aurobindo’s room and have his blessings, for he is always present among us.”

She held my right hand and led me to his room. I bowed before his bed with love and devotion. The Mother stood very close to me, inwardly absorbed. My mind fell silent and blank.

Then we came back to the Hall. Once again she meditated for a while and then kissed me on my forehead. She opened the door which led to the staircase and, while standing in it, she bade me *au revoir* with a warm smile. The very same day the Mother made a remark about me to Vasudha, her personal attendant. Vasudha reported it as:

“Huta has a childlike nature.”

I noted it down, but I was not quite sure of the last word. Could it have been “soul” instead of “nature”? I wrote to the Mother to clear my doubt. She decided the issue:

“...It could only have been a ‘childlike nature’ because the soul has always the

pure simplicity of a child but at the same time it has the patient endurance given by experience and eternity.”

Perhaps that is why the outer “me” was attacked so frequently by the adverse forces lest it should be swiftly taken over by the soul—the outer “me” which unhappily did not know how to control itself and thus could fall an easy prey to the dreadful forces opposing the Truth. Nonetheless, this “me” never stopped catching at its Mother and crying for her help.

The Mother gave me a new birth in spirit, and the being had to grow exactly according to her Vision and Will. Yet I felt strongly that I had still before me difficult and dangerous phases in my life until the conscious and concrete union with the Divine would be achieved.

Many a time something inside me welcomed the change of consciousness and often I turned my thoughts away from the easy path which the majority of human beings tread. Over and over again I told myself I must trust the Mother’s Force and believe in her final Victory.

Yet it was not always easy to steady my steps on the spiritual path. Repeatedly I seemed enveloped in a mist of inertia which misled me. I believed many suggestions that were in the air and that upset me. I felt that I was illiterate in spiritual matters, whereas others had the Truth. Once someone told me how useful in the Divine’s work were highly educated and intellectual people and how easily they could understand and follow the spiritual life and reach their goal and how the Mother loved these people very dearly. I was over-credulous and accepted every word. I thought to myself, “If only I could learn to unite with the Divine, I would gain everything. But how, when the hostile forces attack me incessantly?”

All these notions galloped through my brain and gave me nothing but a severe headache. At last I told my informant that when accepted by the Divine Mother no one could be a zero. I gave a full account of all this to the Mother and she wrote:

“My dear child,

“Your answer was quite good. No child of mine can be a zero; in fact each one of my children has his or her place and a special mission to fulfil. I love them all equally and do for each one what is truly needed for his or her welfare and progress, without any preference or partiality.

“The knowledge I promised you is not any superficial knowledge of philosophy, science or art, it is the knowledge of the Divine and of the way to unite with the Divine—this is the only knowledge worth having, and you are right in telling so.

“As for the attacks, it is a long-standing affair and it may not be easy to make them stop at once—but one day they will have to cease. And meanwhile they can be made shorter and less acute by keeping faith in my promise and calling for my help that is always available.

“My love and blessings are with you.”

I did not experience sufficient joy with this letter, however. I knew that I had no knowledge of the Divine Life—I could not even follow what the Mother said in her French classes, while others talked and discussed spirituality with great facility.

Wednesdays and Saturdays the Mother answered in French the questions of the Ashram children. Now the talks are published in book-form under the title *Entretiens*, and in English *Questions and Answers*. Of course I could not understand what was being said—but anyway I used to sit in the Playground to be near her.

Once, when one of her conversations was being discussed by some people, I asked what the Mother had said and they simply cut me off. Tears of humiliation rose in my eyes and I turned my face and walked away. I was over-sensitive and really had a colossal inferiority complex and was always imagining that everyone was against me. While in this frame of mind how could I possibly accept that whatever the Mother said was infallible? Added to everything else She had written:

“As for the attacks, it is a long-standing affair....”

Finished...no hope for me...once again I relapsed into despair. In the ordinary life I had tried my best to get a higher education, but within me I was fully conscious of the fact that I wanted something exceptional—quite different from what most people search for in the outside world. I always felt dissatisfied. The Mother revealed the truth when she wrote:

“From your childhood something in you was aspiring for a great realisation—and if you failed in the various worldly things you tried, it is because you were meant for a higher realisation, that of the Spirit. Now the Divine has brought you to the place where you can fulfil your highest aspiration—find the Divine and unite with the Divine consciously. This naturally takes time and needs perseverance, but it is worth all the efforts that have to be made for its realisation.

“My help, my strength, my power and my love will always be with you to take you to the goal.”

That was it! But I could not bring myself utterly to believe this fact because I knew of my innumerable shortcomings. And where was the patience? My patience was like that of the modern man who prayed: “Dear God, I pray for patience. And I want it this minute.”

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The Mother’s loving care, both materially and spiritually, never ceased. She wrote:

“My dear little child,

“When I said to send you a letter pad from Prosperity, it was not because I disapproved of your writing on a note book sheets to me—it was quite all right and I have no objection—it is because I was not sure you are receiving from Prosperity the things you need, and I wanted you to know that you can get from there whatever is necessary.”

Yes, I took whatever things I required from Prosperity—but for only a short time. Always I felt rather embarrassed and uncomfortable taking things from there. However, I learnt how to use everything carefully and economically. For instance, I would preserve the small unusable remnants of the Lux bath-soaps and stick them together to make a bigger piece which could be used further. As a general rule I was not supposed to get anything before the first of every month.

Nevertheless, my long hair needed a lot more of soap. In the course of the month when I ran short, I requested one of the attendants of Golconde to spare me something. She had only washing soap. So I would use pieces of it—quite a contrast to the beauty-products to which I had been accustomed at my place in Africa.

I took my meals in the general Dining Room.

Here I may record an episode of the Mother's working on our habits and desires. In Africa I had a special liking for sweet corn—maize. I could eat it endlessly, and the supply of it was endless for our family since we had several kitchen-gardens where maize was cultivated throughout the year.

My craving for sweet corn was still there in Pondicherry.

The Mother used to distribute various eatables like potato-wafers, groundnuts and sweets in the Playground. One evening I saw to my delight that she was distributing sweet corn. My mouth simply watered. The nearer I moved to the Mother in the queue, the more my gaze was rivetted on the delicious stuff. When I reached the Mother, she looked at me intently, then held my hand and said:

“Child, you seem to have a slight fever. Your hand is rather warm. Take a blessing packet from me and you will be all right.”

My face can be imagined. Instead of the sweet corn I went away with a blessing packet. But, indeed, this was an immense Grace. Immediately my old craving was completely gone and has never returned. My friend Maniben—one of Golconde's chief attendants at that time—was behind me in the queue. Knowing my preference and seeing my present plight, she offered to share her portion with me, but I refused. I felt that the Mother had done something in order to help me surmount my petty desire. Not only was this desire removed, but all special taste in matters of food was taken away, so that I really began to eat merely to sustain the body. What a miracle was performed by one small packet of flower-petals charged with the Mother's Force! The Mother herself has stated in her books the power of the blessing packets.

I recalled various phases of my early years and the people to whom I had been attached. Our whole family was together in one place. Our houses were on mountainous ground and three miles away on a lower level there were thousands of acres of sugar plantations for the Sugar Mills owned by my father and four brothers.

At night we could see from our house the far-away lights of the Sugar Mills—I would have the impression of a vast dark sea with a large floating ship in the distance.

The whole estate was known as *Miwani*—in the African language it means “Sugar”. The climate was temperate and the place was a little paradise on earth with its bubbling and gurgling brooks, tall swaying trees, smiling flowers, chirping birds and charming animals.

I have two sisters, one older and one younger. All our brothers are elder to us and married. My elder and younger sisters are married too. My parents have been most lovable, simple and straightforward. My mother has been precise and meticulous about everything she does and has a very developed aesthetic sense. Even now at the age of 90 she is the same.

My father died in 1976. During his lifetime, he had a meeting with our Divine Mother who told me afterwards that she found him quite transparent—the outer just what the inner was.

The Divine Mother also told me about my mother that she was full of love and devotion and that her soul used to come to the Divine Mother every night.

Yes, we are a huge family. I left them for the Ashram. I experienced a feeling of acute homesickness and loneliness. Most people have families and friends here, whereas I was quite alone.

Eventually the Mother made me overcome all the attachments. She sometimes used a drastic method to break the attachments—drastic in the sense that misunderstandings happened to arise between me and people, friends and relatives. They came to show adverse reactions, and formed subtle prejudices and dislikes, and hence, when the response to me was cold, the attachments or warm feelings on my side vanished. However, a general attitude of goodwill towards all has always remained with me and will remain so forever.

This has repeatedly happened in my life—so I have come to the conclusion that futile worldly pursuits lead one nowhere. Therefore the lesson is that one should be attached only to the Divine. This brings not only everlasting peace, joy and happiness, but the concrete and conscious union with the Divine. And when the Divine is constantly present, what else is there needed? Then one does not care about the interchange with others. I would like to quote the Mother:

“In the vital world attraction and repulsion are the right and wrong sides of the same thing and always includes attachment. To love fully the Divine we must rise above attachments.”

The Mother had arranged for me to learn French. I wrote a few letters to her in French with some mistakes, which she corrected in red ink. I found the French grammar pretty tough.

The Mother used to give me interviews, but unhappily now I do not recall what she said.

The days passed like unsettled weather—one day I was in the sunshine, the next shrouded in dark clouds. There seemed to be no end to my changing moods.

After doing a little typing for Nolini Kanta Gupta—the Mother's Secretary—once again my inferiority complex took possession of me. I became restless. I stitched the Mother's dresses, but that was not enough. When would I reach the goal visioned by the Mother? Often in the afternoon I used to go to the tennis-court to watch the Mother play tennis.

Here I recall the photograph of the Mother which was taken in 1912 in France, while she was playing tennis. I quote her own words which were written underneath:

“I remember I learnt to play tennis when I was eight years old, it was a passion; but I never wished to play with my little comrades, because I learnt nothing (usually I used to defeat them), I always went to the best players; at times they looked surprised, but in the end they used to play with me—I never won, but I learnt much.”

I sat very close to the court and frequently captured her swift, brilliant smile and her powerful gaze. After she had left for the Playground I sometimes sat on the sands of the sea-shore and watched the numberless waves and forgot myself for awhile in that vastness. Still the lower forces would not give up their sway so easily.

The 14th November was the day of Kali Puja and the Mother came down from her room to distribute the message in the Meditation Hall downstairs. She looked beautiful in a lovely black sari painted in many hues with a touch of bright gold. I recognised the sari I had offered to her and I was happy. I raised my eyes to meet hers of a brilliant blue-grey which were smiling tenderly. While handing me the message she pressed my hands and her Love swept over me.

I was enchanted by the message. For it was very appealing. Originally it was in French but the translation appeared in the *Bulletin* of November 1955, p. 14:

An Ancient Chaldean Legend

A very long time ago, in the barren country that is now Arabia, a divine Being became incarnate to awaken the earth to the Supreme Love. Of course, he was persecuted by men, harried, suspected, misunderstood. Mortally wounded by his assailants, he wanted to die alone and quietly so that he might complete his task. Being pursued, he ran; all of a sudden in the vast bare plain, he came

across a small pomegranate bush. The Saviour crept in among the lower branches, so that he might leave his body in peace; and all at once the bush grew miraculously, became broad, thick and deep, and when the pursuers arrived there, they did not suspect that the man they were hunting for was hiding in it and they went along.

As the sacred blood fell drop by drop, fertilising the earth, the tree blossomed out with marvellous, large flowers, covering the ground with their petals, innumerable drops of blood.

These are the flowers that for us express and contain the Divine Love.

*

The Mother used to give balcony *darshan* every day at 6 a.m. On those occasions her Light and Force penetrated every dark corner of my being. All the same the adverse forces reared up and struck me as hard as they could by using their manifold tricks.

The process of the attacks in physical terms was peculiar. I felt that the forces entered from my toes, then gradually climbed up to my heart, then lastly reached my head, leaving me totally broken. During an attack it was as if something were creeping up my body and causing a shuddering unease and a sense of helplessness before some dreadful unknown. I kept trembling and perspiring with an increasing feeling of weakness. I could not even move from one place to another. So I would slump down into my arm-chair and shut my eyes instantly. But my mind was packed with invisible entities which jostled and fretted—worries, fears—some real, some false, a few recognised by me, others understood and the rest pure imagination. Often I tried to shake my thought free and be silent, but without avail. Everything seemed disorientated. My head would be spinning and I felt as though it was going to burst.

One morning I did not go to the balcony *darshan*. The Mother at once wrote to me and sent the letter along with roses.

“My dear little child,

I did not see you at ‘balcony’ this morning—and just I had put on the nice green veil you have given me, thinking that you would be glad to see it on my head.

I hope you are all right.

With my love and blessings.”

That evening surging waves of dejection and depression suddenly engulfed me. I felt utterly stifled and wept bitterly. I felt as though I was being compelled by the hostile forces to quit this life. I expressed all this to the Mother and asked for her forgiveness. She answered:

“There is nothing to forgive—you are the first victim. As I told you already, it is an adverse force that is harassing you and wants to hurt you and to take all peace and joy from you. This force must leave you and go far away so that you can become quiet and happy.

“Meanwhile, continue to call me for help, and surely one day we shall succeed in sending this nasty enemy away.”

I asked her: “What is the meaning of ‘victim’ here? Does it mean a ‘sacrifice’?”
Her reply was:

“I did not mean it in the sense of *sacrifice*, but as one says to somebody ‘he is the victim of such a malady’.

“These attacks fall upon you like an illness and you become their victim.”

The next morning to my amazement the Mother wore the same green veil on her head. Usually she never repeated an article of clothing except after some time. I felt very happy and grateful.

In the room just after the one next to mine, an American lady kept opening and shutting the sliding doors with a loud noise. It was awfully irritating and I used to wake up with a start. I would put my two fingers into my ears just waiting for a thunderclap! I could not sleep or read or do anything. I endured it for quite a long time. When everything got on my nerves too much I wrote to the Mother and she answered:

“You did quite well in informing me of your difficulty—you must always tell me everything, knowing that I can understand you.

“I heard, indeed, that Golconde is a rather noisy place, and that is why I had thought of removing you to another house. But I have not seen myself this new house of which I was thinking, and I sent Dyuman to see it. He tells me that he does not think it is a suitable house for you. Therefore, I am trying to lessen the noise in Golconde, and you can, perhaps, remain there for some time more, until I can make the proper arrangement for you.

“Hoping that things will become better.”

I was astonished because I had never given a thought or made any mention to the Mother about a house. However, I left the matter entirely to her.

In this connection I may add what the Mother told me orally from the occult point of view. I do not give her exact words, but the substance about her procedure is that she would go into a trance and directly become aware of the difficulties of which I had spoken. On several occasions she did this and got a direct inner perception of a situation and removed the obstacles.

Gradually the noise became less and less. Whatever the disturbances the American lady caused, she was indeed a nice person.

If this lady had not made the noise, the Mother might not have thought of giving me an independent apartment. So perhaps the American lady became an instrument towards the accomplishment of a plan of the Mother's.

Many casual-seeming occurrences lead at times to important conclusions. I may cite an instance here.

Dyuman told me many years after my arrival that at the beginning the Mother had thought to give me work in her own kitchen and to let me cook food for her. So she asked him whether I knew how to cook. He answered that seeing my face he did not think I had ever done cooking!

I had a good laugh. The Mother must have evoked this answer from Dyuman and cleared from the practical point of view my path towards the future.

If I had worked in the Mother's kitchen, the *Story of a Soul* would never have been written. The paintings of *Savitri* would not have come into the picture. And so many other things given by the Mother would not have come into existence.

The mystery of the Mother's working is unfathomable.

Often I was obsessed by an odd, strange, unhappy premonition of evil. Of course, I tried hard to cast it off, but it haunted me like a vague and terrifying spectre. In my helpless and shattered condition I wrote to the Mother. On not receiving an answer at once, I became miserable and wrote again to her. She replied:

"My dear little child,

"I *always* answer immediately even when I am too busy to *write* my answer. I answer by sending my Love and Force, my Courage to resist and my protection against the bad attack. You have only to keep quiet inside—to push away all fear, as much as you can, and to trust my force and protection so that they can work fully.

"We *must* and we *will* conquer, even if we have to fight it again and again. I am never discouraged and ask you also not to be—because the Divine's final Victory is certain."

*

My third brother was extremely eager to fly an aeroplane. He wrote to the Mother through me about taking up flying. The Mother wrote to me:

"Tell him to do according to his wish and my blessings are with him."

Later he learnt flying and had his own aeroplane.

The Mother may fulfil one's wish even when it is material.

One day I received a letter from my brother—Laljibhai—asking for a picture of the Mother's symbol, for he wanted to get the symbol made in brass in England. On the 2nd December the Mother wrote to me:

“I am sending you two copies of the symbol for Laljibhai and a third one for you.

“On one symbol I have explained the meaning, in case they do not know it. The other is to be sent to the goldsmith in England if he thinks it necessary.”

She followed this up with a card carrying her symbol and an explanation:

“Here is the correct design of the symbol.

The central circle represents the Supreme Mother, the Mahashakti.

The four central petals are the four aspects of the Mother—and twelve petals, her twelve attributes.”

I thought the Mother was angry with me, because I felt I was bothering her too much. She set my mind at rest by writing:

“I am never angry with you and always ready to help you with all my love and force.”

(To be continued)

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LETTERS ON POETRY

I

INSPIRATION AND EFFORT

You hold that genuine poetry is written always by inspiration—effortlessly—as if in a state of semi-trance. A correct view, this, as regards fundamentals. But you take my breath away by adding that, because in my letter I used words like “tried”, “attempted”, “sought” when I spoke of producing poetry of a mystic and spiritual order new in many respects to the English language, you drew the conclusion that I wrote my poems with a manufacturing mentality which turned out with intellectual labour all the phrases, linked up the different parts like a mechanic rivetting joints and constructed artificially an unfamiliar out-of-the-way model!

Inspiration is a fact and it does come from a region that is beyond the muscular mind and the tense sinews of thought: it comes from a hidden fountain of force which is more spontaneous, swift, suggestive, vision-bright and harmonious: its outflow brings a condition of consciousness cleansed of a too external and intellectual and deliberately constructive activity—hence the semi-trance, as it were, of poetic creation. But poetry does not always rush through the cerebrum in an unbroken and perfect river of light. The fact that sometimes it makes a godlike rush proves its source to be other than the wide-awake labourer brain, yet often the river is a series of spurts, jets, clogged clarities, fragmentary freshnesses—half-lines, scattered phrases, words that glow like separate drops unable to meet and move forward. The interrupted nature of inspiration is the lament of all poets. What they do when inspiration fails is at times to stop writing and let the mind rest, at other times to strain with the mind vaguely towards the missing music. This straining is not intellectual: it is an instinctive, intuitive groping, the response of some living iron in us to a mysterious magnet across unknown inner space. The poet feels hazily the direction in which he must go, he is drawn towards a point of whose presence he has an inkling, without any vision of its exact word-focus of meaning and suggestion. This intense yielding of the consciousness to the unknown fountain of inspiration must be distinguished from the brain's manufacturing labour. The poet lends all his powers of concentration to the yielding movement, he leaps into the unconceived with his thought, his imagination, his emotional being, his senses, and brings forth tentative words and lines, attempt on glimmering attempt to catch the final felicity of poetic speech. That is why there are so many versions before the right one is found, corrections and changes and recastings that frequently precede the full satisfying phrase.

No doubt, it is difficult not to use the manufacturing part of the mind in this groping for inspiration; and that is the reason why several versions are altogether defective, while in others a mixture takes place of the inspired and the manufactured—and, only after repeated trial, attempt and seeking, the winged beauty is captured

without the least stain on it of the pedestrianism of prose. So the fact of deliberate concentration reinforcing the vague unease of the "soul-search" does not prove the resultant poetry to be less poetic. Nor is the process of correction an intellectual labour: correction must be done, as every poet knows—chiselling and polishing are often necessary for even the most inspired singers, and this implies effort. The poet consciously and deliberately sits down to alter what his instinct tells him is insufficiently "quintessenced". He sets about transforming the imperfect parts, alembicating the impure stuff; only, it must be understood that he does not chop and change with just a logical acumen: he brings to bear upon his work a creative sense, and all that he does is to try again to contact the source of his inspiration. He withdraws into himself, collects his mind, becomes unaware of ordinary thought-movements, enters to that extent into a semi-trance—but you can't deny that his is an effort, no matter if it be an effort to catch what is effortless or spontaneous or inspired!

I may here dwell a little on a point which is never properly seized by those who do not write poetry. The point is Spontaneity. The ordinary notion is that spontaneity is the first flow of words when one starts writing or the flood that overwhelms one all of a sudden. It is frequently these things, but the essence of spontaneity is not confined to them. The spontaneous word is that which comes from a certain source—the deep fountain of inspiration beyond the logical and ingenious brain: no more, no less. There is not the slightest implication that the initial flow of words is the most inspired: it may be so or it may not—everything depends on whether you are a clear medium or a partly clogged one. If you are not quite clear in the passage running between the creative source and the receptive self, the lines that come to you all of a sudden or at the first turning towards poetic composition are likely to be a mixed beauty and even a facile imitation of the beautiful. Consequently, you have to take a good deal of corrective pains or resort to a total rejection. It is of no moment how much you re-write; all that is important is whether at the first blush or at the "ump-teenth" trial you catch unsullied the shining spontaneity of the secret realms where inspiration has its throne. Shakespeare never "blotted" a word; Keats "blotted" a thousand, and yet Keats is looked upon as the most Shakespearean of modern poets in "natural magic". Even Shelley, to all appearance the most spontaneous of singers, was scrupulous in his revisions. What still kept him spontaneous was that each time it was not intellectual hacking and hewing, but re-vision, a re-opening of the inner sight on the hidden realms in order to behold as accurately as possible the lines and tones, the shapes and designs of those dream-worlds weaving their simple or complex dances.

If you have followed me so far with a nodding head—I mean nodding in agreement and not in dozing boredom—I should like to take you a little further into the business of "trial" and "attempt" and "seeking". Just as there may be various versions, some tinsel, others half-lit, before the aureoled authenticity is found, so also there are various kinds of the poetically authentic—not merely more inspired or less inspired but different types of perfect inspiration. Byron's famous lines—

She walks in beauty, like the night
 Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
 And all that's best of dark and bright
 Meet in her aspect and her eyes—

are flawless in their own manner, while Humbert Wolfe brings another mode of sight, speech and rhythm equally flawless:

Thus it began. On a cool and whispering eve
 when there was quiet in my heart she came,
 and there was an end of quiet. I believe
 that a star trembled when she breathed my name.

One may stress the difference in terms of attitude or terms of style, but I think a subtler classification is possible in terms of plane of consciousness. Each plane, like each attitude or style, is capable of an equal poetic excellence: still, the cast of vision, mould of utterance and movement of music are dissimilar. On one plane you may have a lot of attitudes—secular or sacred, sensual or spiritual: Swinburne's frenzy of the flesh in *Anactoria* and his part-Greek part-Norse part-Indian pantheism in *Hertha* function on an identical plane as regards essential qualities of sight, speech and rhythm. On one plane you may have also a host of styles: a colourful vitality whose impact is on what Sri Aurobindo calls the nerves of mental sensation prevails among the Elizabethans, ranging through styles that can be distinguished one from another—Marlowe's explosive energy, Chapman's violent impetuosity, Shakespeare's passionate sweep, Webster's quivering outbreak. Put beside Milton, however, they all seem kin and offer a contrast to the no less puissant yet more purely reflective or ideative voice heard in *Paradise Lost*. A contrast by plane can be drawn even between the several portions of one and the same writer's work: occasionally the lines of the very same passage belong to different planes. Thus when Wordsworth says:

And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
 And the round ocean and the living air
 And the blue sky and in the mind of man—

he begins with a fine poetic statement of a mystical perception on the mental level, then towards the close of the third line shifts to a level intermediate between this and some other that has a thrill of more than the mind acting the mystic—an intermediate zone which ends with the word "interfused" and leads to the completely ultra-mental

in the verse:

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.

Here the change is not merely in the coming forward of the visual faculty: such a faculty is clearly at work also in the two lines that follow—without altering their mental-mystic imagination to the sheer spiritual-mystic vision that is aglow and athrob in that single verse with a magnificent straining of sight towards secrecy and with an in-tone and overtone and undertone of intimate yet immeasurable suggestion of some deific grandeur.

Now, a mystic poet who is active on several planes may feel that one of them provides the most precious and profound embodiment to his divinations. Therefore, while not always discouraging the other planes, he may prefer to write more abundantly from that which affords him the greatest sense of fulfilment. To do this, he will have to turn his mind in a particular direction, concentrate on a special type of utterance, even reject other types just as excellent in poetic quality and aspire always to pluck his words from a certain depth or height of consciousness and give all his thought, emotion, sense-experience the value and figure and vibrancy that come from that selected centre behind the commonly conscious being, whence flows what he deems his most spiritual expression. So, guided by his pointing instinct, helped by his discriminating intelligence, carried by his exploring intuition, he dedicates himself more and more by a conscious aesthetic yoga, so to speak, to special mystic sources in the Parnassus of inspiration. By intensely seeking to lift all his powers to the revelatory rhythm of such sources as let out lines like that Wordsworthian rarity, he may create, *en masse*, types of word-vision and word-vibration found hitherto in stray lines and passages both in himself and in the poets who have gone before. There is effort here, and attempt, and choice between alternatives, but nothing that goes against the basic nature of the Muse, the spontaneous creativity of art. Because the poetry he writes is of an unusual order and derives from a psychological fountain difficult to tap with the normal human way of being, however poetic that normal way, he has to sift and select, revise and remould, fix himself in one sole ever-widening variety-disclosing direction. Yet, inasmuch as his goal is the mystic Divine, the Superconscious beyond man, all his effort and attempt are towards sinking himself much more into a state of semi-trance than is needed when composing the ordinary types of first-rate poetry. Hence, more than any other kind of poet, he fulfils the ideal posited by you.

K. D. SETHNA

(First published in the *Advent* about 35 years ago)

SRI AUROBINDO ON EDUCATION

In the glittering spectrum of the great educational philosophers of India such as Dayananda, Vivekananda, Tagore and Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo occupies a unique position. As a spiritual guide and teacher of mankind, he has presented to the world a comprehensive Philosophy of Education which, when rightly understood and sincerely applied, can illuminate the track of humanity in its divine destiny of self-fulfilment, perfection and universal brotherhood.

As a system of education presupposes a philosophy of life and a theory of psychology, Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of education should be studied in the light of his Integral Philosophy in which it is rooted. Sri Aurobindo believes, like all other serious thinkers, that education is a very important method of human development. His Integral Philosophy—a massive metaphysical system—speaks of the divine destiny of man upon earth through a process of evolutionary progression. Humanity is destined, according to Sri Aurobindo, to evolve into supermanhood which will herald the advent of a new era of human Unity and 'unfettered divine creation'. An indispensable pre-requisite of any philosophy of education is that it must be formulated on the basis of a definite conception of man and his ultimate destiny upon earth. According to Sri Aurobindo, the individual self is essentially a unique focus and a dynamic centre of celestial light; individual and society are not opposing entities since both are the manifestations of Absolute Truth-consciousness.

In view of the spiritual nature of man, the divine perfection of individual and society is the ultimate aim of education. Sri Aurobindo thus presents on the foundation of his integral metaphysics an integral view of education which synthesises the learning of the West with the wisdom of the East.

His philosophy of education deals with education in a wider sense, taking it as a method—a discipline—which begins at very childhood and continues till the end of life. The integral system of education expounded by Sri Aurobindo is discussed in his famous treatise *A System of National Education* which will be the principal source of information in our present discourse. On the human materials concerned he says, "They should be children of the past, the possessors of the present, the creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit."¹ This may be taken to be the key-note of Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy. At the outset he has expounded three fundamental principles which, he thinks, must be borne in mind in devising practical methods of education and their application, for without these principal guidelines the practice may be pointless and misdirected. We may initiate our discussion by stating them.

Explaining the essence of the first principle, Sri Aurobindo observes, "The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The Teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself."² The implication of this principle of capital importance is that each human

being has a definite temperament and Svabhāva (soul-nature) which must be allowed its normal perfection. And if any stumbling-block is put in the way of its natural development by way of imposition from outside, it will inevitably arrest the growth of the creativity of the children. In the knowledge-situation, consciousness with its wide range and subtle faculties is the only determining factor; there should not be any interference from the outside. The chief business of the teacher is therefore to indicate to the child the way to learn things and discover the basic truths by himself. In teaching the best thing that can be done is to direct the activity of the pupil's mind. But the crucial point is: directing and not dictating.

Sri Aurobindo likes to give this principle a wide applicability not only in the case of intellectual knowledge but also in that of ethical and aesthetic knowledge. Further, he disagrees with the contention that this principle is only applicable to the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and not to the teaching of children; for, in his opinion, there is only one principle of good teaching which holds good for all—irrespective of age or sex. As a matter of fact, “difference of age only serves to diminish or increase the amount of help and guidance necessary, it does not change its nature.”³

Sri Aurobindo's first principle of education should not be taken to be a duplication of Plato's well-known doctrine of reminiscence. Of course, there exists a superficial similarity between Sri Aurobindo's view on this point and Rousseau's plea for natural education as the free and unimpaired development of the child's natural impulses. But a close scrutiny reveals that the difference between these attitudes is basic and deep-rooted. Rousseau's system of Negative Education envisages a conflict between individual and society, which has been clearly denounced by Sri Aurobindo. It is highly interesting to note in this connection that the basic truth contained in the first principle has been recognised by most of the modern educationists and hence in the modern system of education attempt is being made not to burden the minds of the students with information, but to train and improve their inner faculties.

The second principle of integral education, Sri Aurobindo explains, “is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature.”⁴ The second principle is perfectly in conformity with the first which emphasises the necessity of formulating the programmes and methods of education in accordance with the particular qualities and capacities, needs and interests, ideas and virtues of the students so as to allow a spontaneous and harmonious growth of their latent powers and capacities. In the first principle Sri Aurobindo has expressed his clear opposition to any form of imposition at any level of education, and in the second principle he lays great stress on creating a congenial environment so that an all-round development may be possible. Hence Sri Aurobindo rightly observes, “The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.”⁵ Evidently he does not consider personal happiness, material prosperity, skill in any trade or craft or attainment of encyclopaedic knowledge in any

particular discipline to be the ultimate aim of education. Education in order to be meaningful must help the child to grow from within to fulfil his spiritual destiny. It is a matter of common experience how this cardinal principle of education is being wilfully ignored in most systems of education on the plea that it is all unrealistic and chimerical. As a result, the present picture all around in the world is not at all bright and pleasant.

The third principle of integral education suggests that no system of education can be formulated in a historical or cultural vacuum. The basis of man's nature, according to Sri Aurobindo, "is almost always linked up with his heredity, his surroundings, his nationality, his country, the soil from which he draws sustenance".⁶ Hence while formulating the scheme of education, these factors are to be taken into consideration, for the obvious reason that if a child is delinked from his historical or cultural environment, it will have a debasing effect on both his psychic and his mental life. This is why Sri Aurobindo advocates that the past must be the foundation of our National System of Education. Nevertheless, knowledge transmitted from the past is neither the only capital nor the culmination of human development through education. It is a progressive process—a forward-looking movement towards perfection by making appropriate use of all that had been found worthy and valuable in the present and thus he says the "present is our material". He rightly observes that past, present and future form a causal matrix and hence each of them must be given proper place in a wholesome scheme of education.

Sri Aurobindo's educational philosophy is supported by a theory of psychology which takes into account the entire complexity of man's nature. He gives a meta-psychological account of the nature of man having five chief activities—the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. And education in order to be complete must respond to these activities of human being. Generally, these phases of education succeed each other in a chronological order, but they may be both simultaneous and successive. Besides, he recognises different layers of mind like Chitta, Manas, Buddhi, Genius. These are the instruments with which thought functions. Following Sri Aurobindo's vision, let us restate in bare outline these five aspects of education corresponding to five principal activities of human nature.

Physical education, according to Sri Aurobindo, is an indispensable part of any comprehensive system of education and reasons for it are twofold. First, it is a well-established fact that normal and spontaneous development of the potentialities of a human being will be considerably retarded unless he possess a sound and healthy body. Secondly, the supramental transformation, which is for Sri Aurobindo the ultimate destiny of mankind upon earth, can be accomplished only in a strong and healthy body. To quote the words of Sri Aurobindo, "If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use."⁷

The Mother, following Sri Aurobindo's thought, has delineated three main aspects of the education of the body. These are:

- “(1) Control and discipline of functions,
 (2) a total, methodical and harmonious development of all the parts and movements of the body and,
 (3) rectification of defects and deformities if there are any.”⁸

This can be achieved to a considerable extent by regular and balanced participation in various games, sports, marches, drills and finally by observing brahmacharya. Hence in view of its great significance, a methodical programme of physical education must constitute a part of our educational scheme and planning. The results which are expected to follow from a systematic application of physical culture, besides attainment of a sound and healthy physique, are self-mastery and self-confidence, a sense of discipline, courage and the spirit of cooperation. Moreover, a sound physical culture has also favourable effects on the vital and mental levels of our being. In contemporary India, the necessity and utility of physical education has been recognised by the educational thinkers, and certain half-hearted steps have been taken here and there, but unfortunately no serious and tangible measures have been adopted to make physical education an inalienable part of our system of education. In this case also, improvement is mainly paper-improvement. The evil effect of our negligence of physical culture is being felt both in our individual and our national life and unless the position is reversed, we shall have to pay a more heavy price for this in not-too-distant a future.

The vital education is a very important and indispensable form of education. Though the different aspects of the vital nature of the human being are discussed in any serious psychological doctrine, its real significance and importance in a system of education had not been universally recognised. Sri Aurobindo in his outstanding treatise, *On Yoga* has described the vital as the Life-nature which is constituted by “desires, sensations, feelings, passions, energies of action, will of desire, reactions” and other related instincts such as anger, fear, greed, lust, etc. Evidently, the vital is the central store-house of “power, energy, enthusiasm and effective dynamism”, the very nexus of man’s life and the motive power of his good or evil actions. The vital energy of man normally impels him to seek the maximum amount of pleasure for himself even at the cost of others. Thus it moves him towards aggressive egoism or gross egoistic hedonism. But the profoundest wisdom of mankind accumulated through many centuries has taught him that life is not a vale of pleasure-seeking. Life on earth, in Sri Aurobindo’s vision, has a divine mission—that is, progressive realisation of the Truth-Consciousness, the Supermind. And here lies the supreme importance of vital education which should be directed towards building up an integrated character by organising and remoulding all the complex forces which go to build his vital life. It is a harmonious character which enables a human being to encounter courageously all the odd and antagonistic situations of life. Both at home and in the educational institutions, necessary conditions should be created so that the formation of the true integrated character may be possible. In the illuminating words of Sri Aurobindo, “The only way for him to train himself morally is to habituate himself to the right

emotions, the noblest associations, the best mental, emotional and physical habits and the following out in right action of the fundamental impulses of his essential nature.”⁹

Among the modern educational thinkers, Herbart and Bertrand Russell also consider the formation of ideal character to be the aim of education. According to Russell, ideal character includes the qualities of vitality, courage, sensitiveness and intelligence. The Herbartian conception of good character has a clear ethical implication. But many eminent educators have expressed their clear opposition in prescribing any moral and religious text-books in the curriculum. Admitting some marginal benefits which might accrue from the teaching of moral and religious text-books, Sri Aurobindo also warns us of the danger of teaching by moral text-books as it ultimately makes “thinking of high things mechanical and artificial and that which is mechanical and artificial goes contrary to the basic principles of education.” Sri Aurobindo therefore suggests that the teacher should try to put the child on the right track to his own perfection by giving him “practical opportunity as well as intellectual encouragement to develop all that is best in the nature.”¹⁰ Another aspect of vital education is the cultivation of the aesthetic sense and unless this sense is properly developed, no worthy artistic creations will be forthcoming. Generally the importance of vital education with its twin aspects—formation of integrated character and development of aesthetic culture—is not properly recognised in modern times. For this, certain factors arising out of the present day technological civilisation with its emphasis on large-scale industrialisation are principally responsible. This has radically changed the general outlook of the modern man and has left its corresponding effect on the philosophy of life and consequently on the philosophy of education. But the days are not far off, when circumstances will certainly compel us to refashion our outlook and restructure our system of education.

(To be continued)

RANJIT KUMAR ACHARJEE

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THE SECRET OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

AN AUROBINDONIAN APPROACH

(Continued from the issue of September 1981)

Kacha and the Sanjivani Mantra

FIRST the brahmachārī's single-minded devotion to his guru's commands; then the churning out of amṛita from the world-ocean by titans and gods; followed by the eagle soaring to immortality crashing through all barriers, subtle and material—so far these were Vyāsa's successive modes of conveying the secret lore of the Vedas to a later age when the era of seer-poets was no more. This schema reaches its end, as far as the Ādi Parva is concerned, with the story of yet another brahmachārī and his total commitment to a goal which is common to all the previous myths: the search for the secret of immortality.

When we look at these four episodes side by side, an interesting pattern emerges. Utaṅka's quest is for golden earrings; the gods seek nectar; so does Garuḍa; while Kacha is on a mission to bring to the gods the mantra which gives immortality. There is a distinct rarification of the goal, rising from the grossly material gold of the earrings to Soma-juice and then to the etheric vibration itself, that ultimate Creative Logos which is the secret of Immortality. Moreover, the last two myths are concerned with Garuḍa and Kacha as messengers of the gods (in the Brāhmaṇa versions of the former myth) sent forth to wrest the immortalising drink/incantation from the non-divine forces. In all the four myths the basic theme remains the same: an inner process of invoking the divine flame of aspiration and purification which churns out that Bliss which lies hidden even at the very base of materiality, and to rise with its help to empyrean heights of consciousness and being, an all-embracing beatitude which is Immortality. Indeed, it is as if Vyāsa were gradually taking his audience step by step to a more and more direct perception of the nature of that which gives the sense of eternity to the being, somewhat as Plato through successive stages of development towards the Ultimate IDEA which is the true essence of all being. A closer look reveals how carefully Vyāsa has woven into each of these four myths the unifying thread which is the crucial importance of the mantra: Utaṅka and Upamanyu achieve their salvation only through invocatory hymns to Agni and the Aśvins; the gods are saved by the Lord in his 'mantra form' from the all-annihilating *kālakūṭa*; they invoke Garuḍa-Agni to save them, and in the Kacha episode the mantra plays the most important role openly, as the means of the repeated resurrection of the initiate.

The bare bones of Kacha's story are as follows:

(1) The gods are losing in the conflict with the asuras because their guru Bṛihaspati cannot resurrect the slain gods as Śukra does with the dead asuras. Hence

Bṛihaspati's son Kacha is sent to obtain the secret of immortality from Śukra with the assurance that if he does so he will share the yajña offerings with the gods, i.e. become one of them.

(2) Kacha is slain thrice. The first time, as he tends his guru's cattle, he is hacked to pieces and fed to wolves and jackals by the anti-gods who hate Bṛihaspati. The second time, as he goes into the forest to collect flowers for Devayānī, he is ground into paste and mixed in the ocean. The third time he is burnt to ashes, mixed in wine and offered by the asuras to Śukra, who drinks it up. On each occasion he is resurrected by means of the mantra, and on the third occasion he uses it to bring his guru back to life, for as he says very significantly:

I was ignorant,
and you gave me knowledge,
like nectar in my ears. (76.62)

(3) Kacha rejects Devayānī's advances to marry her and stay in asura-dom, and returns to the gods with the sañjīvanī mantra.

The initial clue lies in the very parentage of Kacha. In the words of Devayānī: "His father is Bṛihaspati/His grandfather Aṅgiras" (76.48). Secondly, he is told by the gods that if he can please Devayānī (the path of the gods) by his generous, sweet and proper conduct, he will be able to obtain the treasure.

Let us see, first of all, what Bṛihaspati and the Aṅgirasas signify in the Ṛigveda.

The word *Aṅgirasa* is akin to *Agn* and in X.62.6 these ṛishis are described as the radiant lustres of the divine flame, Agni, which is the original and supreme Aṅgirasa (I.31.1). In the *Secret of the Veda*, Sri Aurobindo has analysed the Aṅgirasa myth at length to show that these ṛishis are visualised as the pathfinders seeking out the herds of illumination belonging to the Truth-Consciousness which have been secreted in the hill or the cave of inconscience by the subconscious forces. It is the Aṅgirasas who usher in the Dawn which opens the path of the Truth to the sacrificer and leads him to Immortality. The finding of the Sun of Truth hidden in the darkness of the subconscious condition* is repeatedly referred to as the supreme achievement of these founding fathers of the Vedic wisdom.

The Aṅgirasas are characterised by twin attributes. The first of these relates to Agni and is "the flaming force of the divine consciousness with its *two* twin qualities of Light and Power working in perfect harmony"¹. Secondly, they also carry the power of Bṛihaspati, possessing the Creative Word '*arka*', expressing the divine knowledge of the Sun-Truth in *satya mantra*. The voicing of this mystic word is associated with the release by the Sun of the ray-cows: "Let the Word come forward from the seat of the Truth; the Sun has released wide by its rays the cows," (VII.36.1)². The role of the Aṅgirasas is brought out clearly in I.71.2 and III.39.4-5:³

Our fathers by their words broke the strong and stubborn places, the Aṅgiras

* Very close to the concept of Yin & Yang symbolised as dark clouds overshadowing Sun, and unclouded Sun-disk emitting rays; or mountain-side (hill of being) in shadow and in sunshine respectively.

seers shattered the mountain rock (*the obscured consciousness of the mortal being*) with their cry (*a Brihaspatian function, vide IV.50.5*); they made in us a path to the Great Heaven (*an Agni function*), they discovered the Day and the sun-word and the intuitive ray and the shining herds.

No power of mortality (is there) that can confine or bind our ancient fathers, they who were fighters for the cows; Indra of the mightiness, Indra of the achievement released upward for them the fortified pens,—there where, a comrade with his comrades, the fighters, the Navagwas, following on his knees the cows, Indra with the ten Dashagwas found that Truth, *satyam tad*, even the sun dwelling in the darkness.

As for Brihaspati, he is master of the Word of Creation, *Vāk* of *Veda*, whose functions have been explicated in IV.50⁴:

He who established in his might the extremities of the earth, Brihaspati, in the triple world of our fulfilment, by his cry, on him the pristine sages meditated and, illumined, set him in their front with his tongue of ecstasy. (ṛik 1)

He with his cohort of the rhythm that affirms, of the chant that illumines, has broken Vala into pieces with his cry. Brihaspati drives upward the Bright Ones who speed our offerings; he shouts aloud as he leads them, lowing they reply. (ṛik 5)

Brihaspati's function is the establishment of the material consciousness, that is the trinity of mind, life and body, which constitute the triple field of Agni's working. This formation takes place by Brihaspati's cry, "for the Word is the cry of the soul as it awakens to ever-new perceptions and formations".⁵ With the help of the priests of the Word, he shatters Vala to liberate the hidden herds of light and drives them up "to the heights of our being whither with them and by them we climb".⁶ Indra is very closely associated with this, for "Brihaspati gives the Word of knowledge, the rhythm of expression of the superconscient, to the gods and especially to Indra the lord of Mind, when they work in man as 'Aryan' powers for the great consummation".⁷ This ultimate goal is "the manifestation of the different world-planes in the conscient human being (which) culminates in the manifestation of the superconscient, the Truth and the Bliss"⁷ which is the work of the Word.

When, therefore, Kacha is described as the son of Brihaspati we can take him to be one of the seven rays of this seven-rayed, seven-mouthed Aṅgirasa. These seven rays or mouths refer to the principles of seven planes of our conscious being ranging from the superconscient to the subconscious which the Purāṇas and the Vedas described as the seven worlds—Sat, Chit, Ānanda, Mahar, Svar, Bhuvar and Bhur. The mission he is engaged in indicates that this grandson of Aṅgirasa is treading in his

grandfather's footprints, for "the part of the Aṅgīrasa Ṛishis in the sacrifice is the human part, to find the word to sing the hymn of the soul to the gods, to sustain and increase the divine Powers by the praise, the sacred food and the Soma-wine, to bring to birth by their aid the divine Dawn, to win the luminous form of the all-radiating Truth and to ascend to its secret, far and high-seated home".⁸

The close association of Kacha with Devayānī is also part of this role. It is significant that the gods advise Kacha that for obtaining the sañjīvanī mantra he must please Devayānī. In other words, quite literally, she is the *path* (*yāna*) he must use to reach his goal. And this path to Immortality is naturally the path of the gods, *devayāna*, which Vyāsa turns into the beautiful *Devayānī* for the sake of his Purāṇic retelling of the Vedic myth. What is this path? "It is the path between the home of the gods and our earthly mortality down which the gods descend through the *antarikṣa*, the vital regions, to the earthly sacrifice and up which the sacrifice and man by the sacrifice ascend to the home of the gods".⁹ In I.72.9 we also find that this path of the Truth created or found by the Aṅgīrasa ṛishis is the path to immortality. Kacha's search for the sañjīvanī mantra is the seeking for this Vedic Immortality which takes place when "the physical being visited by the greatness of the infinite planes above and by the power of the great godheads who reign on those places breaks its limits, opens out to the Light and is upheld in its new wideness by the infinite Consciousness, mother Aditi, and her sons, the divine Powers of the supreme Deva—and this immortality is described as a beatitude, a state of infinite spiritual wealth and plenitude".¹⁰ In the Veda, Indra and Bṛihaspati lead the luminous herds of the Sun upwards to this very same goal.

(To be continued)

PRADIP BATTACHARYA

NOTES

¹ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 158

² *ibid.*, p. 160.

³ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 59 and *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 184, italics mine.

⁴ *The Secret of the Veda*, op. cit., p. 303, 304.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 307.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 311.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 307.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 179.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 192, 195.

A PERSONAL NOTE ON OLDEN DAYS

(This note was prepared by Samir Kanta Gupta on the basis of his conversations with Nolini Kanta Gupta between June 16th and 20th, 1981)

LONG long ago, when we were a few people here, we knew some local young men, some of whom were brilliant academicians, a few very liberal thinkers, and some good and enthusiastic sportsmen. David, Rassendren, Sada, Sinas, Petrous, Tetta, Alphonse, Du Tamby, Marie Savery, Appuswamy (who was at that time the chief of the French Consulate at Bombay), Le Voyant de Pajanore (whose son Bal Aravinda was later to be known as A. Balapjanore), and genial Adeceam who learnt his Latin from me and later on held important positions in the State Education Department, readily come to mind. When Moni (Shakra), Bijoy (Basak) and myself (Roy) played football for the town-team we were of course known to many more people. I still remember our picnics at Oushtieri (Lake) where we proceeded marching in a group and singing in a chorus.

Aux petits pas,
aux petits pas,
Nous irons là bas...

With little steps,
with little steps,
We shall arrive there....

David was our goal-keeper. He was the son of a poor middle-class school Inspector. He progressed well in his education. He married the eldest daughter of advocate Ballabhdas who helped his son-in-law to proceed to France for higher studies. He returned to Pondicherry and succeeded immensely in his profession of law. David's three daughters were Antoinette, Lourde Nambikai Marie and Josephine. Of Ballabhdas's sons, the eldest one, Arumaidas, was deaf and dumb. His second son, Mangaldas, was Sourin's friend. My friend happened to be Mangaldas's younger brother, Jagaidas, though he was much junior to me. Mangaldas also went to France and came back here as an eminent advocate. Their house was situated on Bussy Street, quite near the football-ground and also not far from Jardin Colonial. Sourin and myself visited now and then the house of David's father-in-law at about eight in the night. David's mother-in-law had considerable affection for me. She could speak only Tamil and used to address me as "Royee", making the last syllable the longest drawn. I may also mention that Sri Aurobindo had attended David's marriage which had been celebrated with noticeable fanfare at Ballabhdas's elegant and spacious house at the crossing of Bharati Street and Kandappa Mudaliar Street.

Some of these young men of forward thinking and liberal ideas came closer to

us. They used to meet the Mother and assemble from time to time in the Arya House downstairs. The Mother lived on the first floor. She gave this group the name of *L'Idée Nouvelle*.

These young men who were still at college or had just come out, with our Rassendren in the lead, brought out from February 1920 a monthly journal in French—a sort of a thin and plain brochure—*Collégien*. But its French was impeccable and widely acclaimed. I contributed some poems to it, which were found by readers in those days not very bad. Here are two specimens:

LUMEN

La clarté de la lune est tendre et toute molle:
Elle dort sur les monts, elle dort sur les mers.
Elle souffle à l'étoile un doux trouble de chair...
O les fines langueurs d'une âme frêle et folle!

La lueur du soleil dissipe le beau rêve;
Mais un autre s'éveille au sein du jour brûlant
De gloire véhémence et d'empire sanglant
Vaineté d'un moment, bruit du flot sur la grève!

Ni Lune ni Soleil ne brûlent dans mon âme;
Toute une autre lumière a su rêver mes cieux,
Puissante est la douceur, aussi douce la flamme
Que me verse un lointain regard mystérieux!¹

¹The Light

The light of the moon is tender and soft:
It sleeps on the hills, it sleeps on the seas,
It breathes into the stars a sweet tremor of the flesh...
O the fine languors of a frail and wanton soul!

The light of the sun scatters the beautiful dream;
But another wakes up in the lap of the burning day
Of vehement glory and blood-soiled empire
Vainety of a moment, noise of a surge upon the shore!

Neither Moon nor Sun shines in my soul;
Another light has learnt to ravish my skies,
Powerful is the sweetness, sweet too the flame
Which is poured on me by a far and mysterious look!

INCONSÉQUENCE

Quand je vois de sa tige alanguie une feuille
 Qui tombe frissonnant au caprice du vent,
 Quand je vois la paupière humide d'un enfant
 Qui n'a plus son jouet—je sens que là s'effeuille

Tout un rêve blêmi, que c'est la vanité
 Qu'y pleure assise au bord de nos mortalités!

Et cependant j'ai vu les débris qu'amoncelle
 L'ouragan en furie et toute une grandeur
 Me semblait une fois d'espaces supérieurs
 S'élancer et plonger dans les fanges charnelles.

Mais ces vastes douleurs, ces grandioses morts
 M'embrasaient je ne sais de quels secrets transports!²

²Inconsequence

When I see a leaf from its withered stem
 Fall quivering with the caprice of the wind,
 When I see the moist eyelid of a child
 Who has lost its toy—I feel that there sprout into leaves

All the pale dreams, that it is Vanity
 Who sits there on the shores of our mortalities and weeps!

And yet I have seen the debris piled up
 By the hurricane in fury and all a grandeur
 That once seemed to belong to higher planes
 Throw and drown me into the carnal mire.

But these vast sorrows, these grandiose deaths
 Enkindled me with I know not what secret ecstasies!

EUROPE 1974

A TRAVELOGUE

(Continued from the issue of September 1981)

47

WHEN Odoacer the barbarian dethroned the last of the Western Roman Emperors in 495 A.D. a veil descended over Europe, never to rise again till the late eleventh century. A description of Europe during this phase reminds one of the title of one of Arthur Koestler's books, *Darkness At Noon*.

In due course Odoacer was dethroned by yet another barbarian, the Goth Theodoric. The name Theodoric is very interesting to any tourist, specially those who are interested in studying ancient architecture. Theodoric had built for himself a tomb, a circular monument of unusual grace and beauty in Ravenna. This was taken up as a model by Rome when building the tomb of Emperor Hadrian. Once this monument was covered with marble; though the marble is gone, it is still one of the most splendid and stately buildings in Rome even today. Emperor Hadrian, like Emperor Marcus Aurelius, was a bit of a poet and philosopher. I would like to quote here a few lines of his, translated by Lord Byron.

Ah! gentle, fleeting wav'ring sprite,
Friend and associate of this clay!
To what unknown region borne,
Wilt thou now wing thy distant flight?
No more with wonted humour gay,
But pallid, cheerless, and forlorn.

The tomb of Hadrian gives the impression of a great and powerful Emperor, but his lines reveal a gentle spirit. On the opposite bank of the river Tiber is another circular monument known as the Mausoleum of Augustus Caesar. This too must not be missed by the sight-seers.

*

The Roman Empire was gone for ever. When again nature took up Europe for another cycle of progression, she shifted her weight towards the north. The Teutonic races and not the Latin ones she seemed to support most at this time. Great Empires she had built in the past, and enough was enough. Her greatest concern now was to build nations. So we see coming into being Italy, France, Spain, England and Germany and other European nations. The Latin language gradually disappeared giving place to Italian, French, Spanish, English and German, etc. The new civilisation that

grew up in Europe after the eleventh century had three distinctive elements blended together to create a very balanced whole. These elements were Classical, Teutonic and Hebrew. The Greek culture provided the classical learning with its stress on humanism, individualism, art with a fine sense of proportion, concept of progress, creative vitality, science and philosophy that encouraged a keen spirit of enquiry. Rome bequeathed to this period its own law and order and discipline, the idea of duty to the State, its genius for Empire-building. To this the Teutons added their unbounded energy and provided a fresh ground for a new creation. The Hebrew element acted as a leveller and softener. To whatever influence the East may have had over Europe before, Christianity added Eastern ideas to a tremendous degree. This Eastern element has been one of the most potent factors in moulding the new European civilisation. The Saviour rose from the East. The Old Testament is nothing but old Hebrew stories. The Roman Gods and Goddesses had been discredited, so Christianity borrowed heavily from the East. There had come a living being professing to be the son of God, who had promised eternal life and reward for the faithful. The idea of the unity of God was satisfying and soothing to all. God coming down to earth as a human being, that is, Avatarhood, was an Eastern conception. Monasticism was taken directly from Buddhism where the basis of all later theology was Buddham Saranam Gachchami, Dhammam Saranam Gachchami, and Sangham Saranam Gachchami. Christianity full of Eastern sentiments softened the rough Teutons and barbarians. This can very well be seen if we read the ancient epics of the Teutonic races. Their gods seemed to be fierce beings and demanded deeds and sacrifices as fierce. For two thousand years Europe had taken profusely from the East. When Pompey and other Roman Generals drove their legions Eastwards, the soldiers' imagination was captured by Mithraism, a smaller cult derived from Zoroastrianism. And Manichaeism, another cult of that kind, reached France, as Mithraism reached Rome.

*

The most eventful episodes of the Middle Ages were the Crusades. A detailed study of them would enable us to understand to a large extent European culture and the peoples of Europe. The apparent cause of the Crusades was the desire to free the Holy Land from the "infidels" into whose hands it had fallen. That was what was in the minds of the commoners. In reality it was another attempt to keep the East at bay. It was a fresh endeavour to draw a line and demarcate the East from the West. At the same time it was a wonderful opportunity to use up the raw barbarian strength of the rising Teutonic races in Europe. It was also nature's ingenious method of teaching by clashes, bumps, victories and defeats. With the Crusades came the ideals of knighthood and chivalry and the beautiful stories based on these ideals.

The Crusaders were amazed to see Constantinople, it was beyond anything they could have imagined. This city on the borderland of the East and the West amazes

us even today when we read descriptions of it. As the Crusaders went back home each time, they flooded Europe with things they had brought, and the stories of what they had seen. The very first thing that they brought was the skill of building castles and fortifications. In fact, to some historians the European Gothic style was nothing but a derivation from the Islamic style of architecture. They learnt from the East the use of flags and pennants. They learnt Cartography and a new method in shipbuilding and navigation. Even the domestic furniture of the East started to be copied in the West, the four-poster bed was one item, porcelain was another, then lacquer furniture. Besides, the games of Polo and Chess came to Europe from Persia. Even the style of putting wall-paper on bare white walls came from the East. Finally, the very artistic yet amusing cone-shaped hats the ladies of that period wore came from the East.

As little children we are all taught about the Wonders of the World. In the olden days it seems that most of the wonders came from the East.

(To be continued)

CHAUNDONA & SANAT K. BANERJI

THE REWARD OF COWARDICE

A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

ON a pleasant summer evening the king was celebrating his victory in the royal garden. Birds in the trees twittered and sang melodious songs and bees hummed around the flowers.

The garden was furnished with tables and chairs and the entire place was crowded with people. Ministers, officers, royal guests from various lands sat in their respective seats. The king and his queen mingled with the gathering, as it was customary to do so on such occasions.

The royal banquet began. The attendants of the palace were busy in serving dishes of varied tastes to the gathering and beautiful woman attendants were filling up the empty cups with old and tasty wine.

There was laughter and merriment and everyone in the gathering was found at the height of his spirits.

But that did not last long. They heard a cry piercing the sky and within seconds laughter and merriment came to a dead halt. Everyone looked up and saw an eagle fluttering and flapping its wings in an uncanny way. Doubtless the bird was fear-stricken and restless. A raven was chasing the eagle and pecking at its head now and then as it hovered over the eagle. The drama of torture continued.

Unable to tolerate further, the eagle came down sliding and perched on a branch of a bushy tree in the garden. The raven did not leave the eagle at that. It came from the opposite direction and attacked the shivering eagle.

The eagle could find no way to escape. It flew and perched on the lap of a man who was witnessing the drama and at the same time tasting his dish. He was well built and his eyes had fierceness enough to instil fear into the hearts of his enemies. He was none but the captain in the king's army. He looked at the trembling eagle taking refuge on his lap. With a sway of his hand he gently tried to push the eagle away.

But the perturbed eagle did not stir an inch; instead it moved closer and closer towards the captain's abdomen.

The captain's eyes grew red and his face fiercer than ever, as if he had come face to face with an enemy in the battlefield. He clutched the eagle by its legs and raised it to his arm's length above his head and with his giant force brought it down and dashed its almond-nut-like head at the edge of the dining table made of stone slabs.

There was no life in the eagle. The captain flung it aside and then resumed eating. There was no sign of disturbance on his face and everything with him went on as if nothing had happened.

The raven cawed and took to its wings.

The king grew angry at the barbarous act of the captain. He growled out, "Is this the way to do justice to the eagle that took refuge in you? Is your act not inhu-

man? Further, don't you know that we are revelling and celebrating our victory? What reason would you like to give for killing that innocent bird on this auspicious day?"

"His act is unpardonable. He killed the refugee instead of saving it," murmured the chief minister.

Everyone looked at the captain as if he was from the world of savages. Their eyes showed their anxiety to punish the captain for his merciless act.

The captain rose up from his seat. He made a survey of the onlookers with the rolling of his eye-balls. He then looked at the king. "Your majesty," he began and continued, "We are celebrating this day as our day of victory. We have killed hundreds and thousands of our own race from the enemy land. Victory can only be achieved by those who are not cowards at heart. I have killed this eagle, for I was unable to stomach its base act of taking refuge, for the purpose of saving itself from a raven. I would have saved a sparrow, a weakling, from the claws of an eagle, but not an eagle, king of birds, from a raven. What a shame it is for this eagle to run away from the raven, inferior to it in strength!"

The royal couple and the revellers calmed down by the captain's explanation and resumed their laughter and merriment.

P. RAJA

THE LORD OF HORSES

A NOVELLA

(Continued from the issue of September 1981)

9

I STARTED singing the song of Mohammed-bin-Moktar; I had last sung it while crossing Mongolia in search of the tarpans. But today as I sang I thought of the mustangs of Nevada:

Lo! these white horses, white like snowfall,
These black horses,
Green horses,
Red horses,
Brown horses,
And blue horses flying like pigeons in a squall.

Will the mustangs be white? Will they be green? Could they be red? Or blue like the pigeon in the skies? Or perhaps wood-coloured like the tarpans?

And I trotted and galloped across a landscape that was the colour of red pepper, like the mounds of red pepper-powder I had seen on foot-walks in the Arabian souks. I crossed then the pepper-coloured steppes and the pepper-coloured rocky corridors. And when I lay down to rest a moment I found my coat stained with stains that were pepper-coloured too.

So, I would look for water and it often took me a long time to find it. Sometimes I searched from daybreak till nightfall. All the river-beds were dry and the streams that led to the river were also dry.

Happily at nightfall, when the noise begins to rise in the peaceful air, I could hear the distant but gay and even mocking noise of a little torrent. And I would rush in its direction, plunge into it, bathe myself and wash off the pepper-coloured stains on my grey coat. And I would feel refreshed. But the thought of mustangs remained in my heart and I wished that I would find friendship among them and become one of their own.

One evening, while I was walking across a rocky pepper-coloured corridor, my ears alert in the hope of catching a mocking sound of a torrent, I heard a long and mad stampede. My heart began to pound in my chest. I knew that the mustangs were near, were very near, perhaps at the end of the rocky corridor. Softly I moved forward, as softly as I could, because I wanted to see the mustangs before they saw me.

And at the end of the rocky corridor, I saw the mustangs of Nevada.

They were less numerous than the tarpans of Mongolia. But they were incomparably more beautiful. Long-necked, svelt-flanked, the stomach indrawn, the rump

rounded, the legs fine, they had hair that was abundant and their manes were long and of all colours. Black manes, tawny manes, pale manes. And the pale manes were so pale that they almost seemed blond.

But if the manes were of different colours, the coats were all alike. They were not only similar to one another but also similar to the surrounding landscape. They seemed cut out from the steppe, from the desert, from the very rocks of Nevada. They had the overwhelming hot colour of red pepper which I liked and I started neighing.

While the sun sank on the brink of the horizon, the mustangs of Nevada turned their heads towards the rocky corridor from where I contemplated them. And I saw them run towards me. I admired their run and I admired the lovely wavy movement of their necks. What I admired most were the quivering manes: bay and brown, blue roan and iron gray, buckskin and black or blond in the ashen light of dusk.

Then I saw them from nearby. I saw them very, very near me, these mustangs of Nevada. I saw their beautiful, vivid eyes. I was certain that I would like the mustangs. And I said:

“Greetings to you, O free mustangs of Nevada. I have crossed so many countries to come to you. Even the oceans I have crossed. And I have flown on an iron-bird to be near you the sooner.”

“Hi,” neighed the mustangs of Nevada, the males among them.

And their voices were warm.

“Hello,” the fillies greeted in a chorus.

And their eyes shone.

“Where do you come from, winged horse?” asked a she-mustang with a blond mane.

“Where do you come from indeed?” repeated the other mustangs.

And I told them my story. I told them about my happy childhood, about Mohammed-bin-Moktar and Mehhi and Ourida-the-Rose. And I told them about Abouaf-the-Terrible’s crime. And I told them how I crossed the Great Desert with the help of a jerboa and an eagle named Farhaj. And I told them about Mitia Kuzmitch the Petty and Boubinoff the Gentle who had been my companion. And I told them how I had to act in a film in order to come to them.

When I reached the end of my story it was pitch dark all over the pepper-coloured landscape of Nevada. And when I finished speaking the mustangs cried out:

“Incredible. Stupendous. Fabulous.”

And they told me that they had borrowed these three words from the people of the region. And that I could translate these three words in the following way:

“Formidable. Formidable. Formidable.”

Then I told them also my name. And they did not say anything about my title, Lord of Horses. On the contrary they told me that it did not surprise them at all.

Themselves, they came from the stock of horses that the Spaniards had brought with them when they discovered America. And the Spaniards, they told me, were great lovers of lords and nobles.

Then they introduced themselves. They had names of precious metals of which I remember just three: Copper, Silver and Goldie.

Copper and Silver were the two most beautiful stallions among the mustangs of Nevada. The former had a tawny mane and the latter's was black. And Goldie was the most beautiful mare among the mustangs of Nevada. She had a sun-blond mane which she moved with such grace that I did not tire admiring.

Goldie was a coquette. Until then I had never met a mare who was a coquette. Daughter of the Wind was not a coquette. And the squatty tarpans were not coquettes either.

For several months, I lived very happily with the mustangs of Nevada. And they were all very amiable. Copper and Silver would go on all fours to make me laugh and Goldie too was wonderfully entertaining.

They taught me that the rocky corridors where we galloped were called canyons. And they took me promenading from canyon to canyon through the entire region.

Copper and Silver taught me also that the place where the men lived were called ranches. And these men called cow-boys wore large hats, chequered shirts and boots with spurs at the heels.

And in spite of the cow-boys being very near I lived very happily for several months in the company of the mustangs of Nevada. We travelled, we crossed the steppe and the desert which was again pepper-coloured. Every evening we stopped to graze. And the grass we ate was not very tasty. But I did not care. Goldie's presence gave savour to everything I did. I liked Goldie more and more. She would make me laugh so much and I would tell her that her mane was like a comet. And Goldie would snort and caracol. And she would move her mane in all directions. Goldie loved compliments and I loved Goldie.

And then one day there was a quarrel between Goldie and the two stallions, Copper and Silver. They were talking about cow-boys. And the conversation became more and more heated.

"The cow-boys are fake," declared Copper. "They just pretend to be brave."

"They are brutes," summed up Silver.

"They shoot for the mere pleasure of noise," took up Copper once again.

"And with their horses they are ruthless," Silver adjudged once again.

"They goad their horses' thighs with their spurs," charged Copper.

"And their spurs are deliberately kept sharp," Silver confirmed.

But Goldie shook her head violently:

"I don't agree with you. Oh, not a bit. Not one bit. I find the cow-boys very charming. And their boots so smart. I am sure I would love them."

"Cut it out, Goldie," Copper said indignantly.

"Cut it out," repeated Silver with as much indignation as Copper.

"You think you'll be happy with them, Goldie?" I asked. "You really believe you would be happy with a bit in your mouth, in that lovely mouth of yours. You believe you would be happy with reins over your lovely neck and a horrible cow-boy

sitting on your lovely back?"

"And why not?" said Goldie shaking her mane. "Why not if the bit is beautiful and the reins are elegant and if the cow-boy is delightful?"

"Goldie," Copper chided, "you know what you're talking about?"

"Oh, it's shameful, Goldie," Silver concluded.

And together they echoed: "Your blabber's unworthy of a free mustang of Nevada."

I kept still. Could I contradict Copper and Silver? Like them I too loved freedom. But before I became free I had belonged to a man. And I had loved the man, my Master Mohammed-bin-Moktar. I agreed therefore with Goldie too. Could I contradict her then?

Moreover, Goldie enthralled me more and more. Every day I fell more and more in love with her little sprightly forehead and her peanut-coloured eyes. At night when we slept at the end of the canyon, I dreamt of her. I dreamt that we were galloping together on the winds and that her mane traced a long dazzling trail in the sky.

Meanwhile the mood was changing among the mustangs. Goldie teased Copper and Silver. But they did not laugh. They had become sombre. The other stallions had become sombre too. The mares and the fillies thought that Goldie was not serious.

But Goldie would shake her blond mane and do what she pleased. She spoke what she pleased too. And Copper and Silver became more and more sombre. I remained quiet. During the day I followed Goldie. I listened to her, I obeyed the least of her caprices. And at night I dreamt of her.

One evening she announced that she wanted to become friends with men. And, in a tone more provocative than ever, she drawled:

"I am fed up with horses. I will go looking for men."

And indeed a few kilometres away from where we were there was a ranch. This ranch belonged to a very famous cow-boy of Nevada. His name was Fat Rock.

Fat Rock weighed 226 pounds. Which is a lot more than 100 kilos. He was very rich. His cows were fat and his lands vast and the gold in his coffer outweighed him. And to let people know he was rich, every Sunday he threw rodeo-parties at his ranch.

"I will go wandering in Fat Rock's ranch," said Goldie.

"No, you won't," Copper answered.

"No, you won't," Silver echoed.

Goldie was infuriated.

"I don't care a damn about your orders," she screamed.

"We will stop you, miss," Copper and Silver warned in one voice.

Goldie was adamant.

"Just try," she taunted. "Just try and stop me."

Silver and Copper came and stood in front of her. Their look was severe. And their nostrils quivered.

Mad with rage, Goldie retreated and her hoofs tapped the ground. Copper and Silver advanced and their hoofs tapped the ground too.

Goldie bounced to the side. And like two dancers Copper and Silver did the same.

Then Goldie turned around and tried to flee. At full speed she bolted. And as Copper and Silver gave her chase at full speed too, Goldie swerved. But the other mustangs barred her way. And Copper and Silver caught up with her.

"You ain't goin' to Fat Rock's ranch, Goldie," Copper and Silver reiterated.

But Goldie simply neighed. And she neighed with all the energy at her command.

"I'll go. I'll go. I'll go."

And Goldie whirled and, squealing like a cat, she fell upon Copper and bit him in the lower jaw. And Copper neighed in pain. Then Silver fell upon Goldie. And with a founce of the jaws wrenched a portion of her mane. And this time it was Goldie's turn to neigh in pain.

Shocked, I intervened.

"Aren't you ashamed, Silver, to strike a mare?"

Copper and Silver cried out together:

"Whose side are you on, Saïd?"

I was ruffled badly but remained firm.

"I cannot allow you to assault a mare," I said.

"Bite them, hit them, Saïd," Goldie shrieked.

And I looked at her dishevelled mane, at her peanut-coloured eyes full with the tears of suffering. I found her more ravishing than ever. I decided to defend her till the very end.

"Leave her alone," I declared. "Let Goldie do what she pleases."

"No," Copper and Silver firmly rebutted.

And once again they came and stood in her way. Once again she hurled herself on them, her mouth frothing. And her hoofs seemed to fly. This time Silver was wounded from a kick against his thigh. He neighed with pain. And Copper took revenge by chopping off a part of her mane with violence.

I charged to avenge Goldie. And with a snap I clove Copper's left ear. And with a snap Silver clove my right ear. And with my hoof I ripped open Silver's right shoulder. And with his hoof Copper ripped open my left shoulder.

The two mustangs were set upon me. And I was set upon them. I snorted, I reared, I charged, I snapped. Silver and Copper snorted and reared and charged and snapped. I was stronger than Silver, I was stronger than Copper. But they were two. And very soon there were three, then four, then twelve, then there were twenty.

And they all tried to teach me a lesson, they tried to pommel me, some with a bite, some with a kick.

In the beginning I could hear the "attaboys" of Goldie:

"That's it, Saïd. Defend me. Bravo, Saïd. You'll get 'em. C'mon Saïd. Finish them, Super Saïd."

And these encouraging words boosted me up. I was fighting for Goldie against the mustangs of Nevada. And I fought madly matching blow for blow.

And then suddenly, I could no more hear Goldie's voice. Nor the neighs of Copper and Silver, nor the neighs of any other mustang. Everything was muffled up by an incredible rumbling that came from above.

(To be continued)

CHRISTINE & ARCHAKA

(Translated by Maurice from the original French)

SHAMU

His innocence tears in shreds
 All veils of security and comfort
 I collected with much effort
 Over the years.

As he hovers for the 'n'th time
 Over the record player, the disc rotates
 And takes in rounds of wonder his whole being
 In rhythm with music that rises from pin and machine.

His responses are pure and direct,
 When he smiles—which is often—
 It lights up his whole being, vacuity apart
 He radiates joy—fresh and benign.

I try my best to lessen his impact
 Stressing what he lacks—civility
 And selfishness, marks of modernity.
 I am jealous, he is what I want to be.

I stare in envy at his sense of wonder
 And ease of response that can unstable
 The Divine in everything—force it to manifest;
 He doesn't know. I do, and feel uncomfortable.

DINKAR

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Forward with Nature by J. N. Mukherjee. Popular Prakashan, Bombay. Rs. 60.

THIS book is really an outstanding piece of research work of great value. The eminent Indian Economist, Professor C. N. Vakil, who has written a Foreword, has said in it: "The work is in many respects an epoch-making contribution and will be welcomed by all thinking persons who have the future of the world and the human race at heart..." Also, in a personal letter to Mr. Nani Palkhiwala, he wrote: "If I had any authority I would recommend it for the Nobel Prize and other similar prizes which are awarded for outstanding contributions to thought, which may help mankind."

The book presents as its main features:

1. A New Economics.
2. A New Universal Ecology.
3. Renewable Energy at every doorstep in the countryside.
4. Positive Technology.
5. An effective method for removal of poverty and gross inequality.

1. *The New Economics*: The present economics is like a skyscraper built on sand. It has some serious *lacunae* and some lopsided cancerous outgrowths.

In production of goods, it eats up scarce non-renewable resources recklessly while it destroys ecology and disregards the necessity to generate renewable resources perennially to enable production to continue amply and for all times to come.

Secondly, distribution of goods is needlessly wasteful. Far too much emphasis is placed on transport and trade which themselves consume materials and energy. In fact, a substantial part of what is produced is consumed by these two distributive processes, leaving a reduced remnant for legitimate consumption. The cost of goods goes up unnecessarily.

Thirdly, consumption of goods is hopelessly unequal and chaotic. Vast masses do not get even the minimum basic necessities while a few use scarce irreplaceable resources as articles of consumption.

All in all, the present economics is uneconomic, inflationary, wasteful and structurally poverty-generating.

The main cause of these manifold ailments is identified and named in the book as "the Concession System". Land, water, non-renewable resources like minerals and fossil fuels, renewable raw materials, produced energy like electricity, transport and trade are subsidised or made available for various uses at concessionary rates. All ailments of the present economy originate from such concessionary availability of resources and services.

The new economics does away (gradually) with these concessions. In respect of land, minerals and fossil fuels, it calls for substantial revaluation by specifically suggested fiscal measures.¹

¹ pp. 54-66 and 151-161.

The considerable revenue in bulk which would accrue to the exchequer from these measures would enable every state to forgo other taxes of corresponding or greater values. These other taxes collected in small dribblets from numerous assessees incur usually high cost of collection or escape collection. Therefore more of such taxes can be exempted than the amounts of bulk taxes on minerals, fossil fuels and excess land-holdings. Thus on the whole the people at large would gain more from the measures than they would lose. The indirect benefits would be stupendous. All economic activities would become automatically decentralised and well-distributed throughout the land. Transport and trade would be cut to healthy proportions. Each activity would pay its way and every material acquire its true value. Scarce non-renewable resources would be expensive enough to promote their conservation and, all in all, ecological disruption would diminish drastically.

2. *The New Universal Ecology*: It seeks ecological rehabilitation, on a perennial basis, of all areas in all lands in the world. The main *modus operandi* consists in widely distributed tree-farming in proximity and rotation with agriculture, interspersed with crafts, industries and human domiciles.¹ One third to half of practically each landholding in the countryside may in this way be always covered by thickly planted woods, the remaining half to two-thirds under multiple crops made possible ordinarily by small irrigation from locally available groundwater with the help of locally produced energy from biomass (wood). Biomass on the one hand and groundwater on the other would be perennially available in almost all land areas and practically in all seasons thanks to widely distributed tree-farming. Barring some urban areas, the whole land-mass of the world, with few exceptions, would be practically an unending forest as much as an unending farm, the farm and the forest alternating and rotating with each other and studded with facilities for power-generation, industries, trade and human habitation. Each area will permanently become and remain optimally fertile, free of soil erosion, with maximum possible rainfall, underground water and clean atmosphere, maximally protected against winds, largely free from floods and drought and having steady and maximum possible yields of crops. Trees would provide biomass (wood) for production of energy (both heat and power for home, agriculture and industry) at every spot in the countryside. Each rural area will be self-sufficient in energy and in all essential domestic, agricultural and industrial requirements (inputs).

The benefits of the new economics would be augmented and completed by those of the new universal ecology. The two, integrated with each other, would no longer destroy but complement and sustain each other to ever greater benefit to mankind.

3. *A Renewable (Solar) Energy at every door*: Biomass (wood) would be at every door in the countryside as a byproduct of the new universal ecology to meet requirements of both heat and power in a pollution-free, decentralised manner with the least involvement of transport and transmission. Universal and widely distributed tree farming in proximity and rotation with agriculture is an imperative necessity not only

¹ pp. 62-112.

to ensure the best possible ecology and economy but as a practicable and effective remedy to poverty and inequality. The biomass energy may thus be considered a byproduct available at no additional cost in the course of a necessary benign ecological-economical exercise.

4. *Positive Technology*: Misdirected by the concession system, technology has become highly wasteful of materials and energy and highly destructive of ecology. The book introduces a new concept of technology, called 'positive technology'. It is defined as technology which avoids waste of materials and energy, makes maximum possible use of the four unlimitedly available elements, the sun, air, water (seawater) and earth, and does so without polluting the environment, *i.e.*, without affecting its regenerative and productive potential.

In this sense the new universal ecology is an ideal example of positive technology. In it the sun, air, water and earth combine to yield commodities and energy perennially and to create the best possible conditions for agriculture, industry and human living. There is no real waste anywhere, waste of one operation going as useful input to another, all the operations interlinked in an integrated symbiosis with one another. Micro-operative in nature, this process of tree-farming, in proximity and rotation with agriculture, is intended to be widely and universally spread over all types of land in all countries in an ideally decentralised manner.

Positive technology, in general, should follow the ideal of this universal ecology in all its characteristics. Chemical, power, civil and other engineering practices should be similarly widespread and similarly integrated with one another and with ecology, agriculture and human living, avoiding all wastes, that is, any waste of one process acting as an input for another. Some important suggestions of positive technology have been given in the book, particularly in appendices A and B. Many other possibilities of positive technology are sure to evolve, which have to be developed by research and development.

5. *An effective method for removal of poverty and inequality*: An inevitable fall-out of the present concessions-ridden, ecology-disrupting economy is enrichment of a few at the cost of many or generation of widespread poverty and inequality. The more there is growth under this economy in a poor, hitherto-exploited country, the more are there of subsidised exports, high-priced imports, depreciation of currency, servicing of foreign loans and collaboration and so forth, and consequently, the more of self-exploitation and the greater the transfer of wealth from the multitudinous poor of the country partly to the rich foreign countries who benefit from these transactions and partly to a minority of the country's own population taking active part in and drawing significant advantages from the economy. The poor masses become poorer, the richer minority in the country and outside richer. This result is inevitable in the prevalent concessions-based economy however much there may be genuine concern about it and however much bi-, multi- and international cooperation under U.N., North-South, Unido, Brandt Commission or other auspices. Sarvodaya or small or appropriate technologies cannot help either. In the concessions-ridden atmosphere,

they require heavy counter-concessions and lead to hopeless inefficiency and corruption.

The *new economy* together with the *new universal ecology* with *renewable energy available at the door-step* seems to be just the combination necessary to fight poverty and inequality effectively throughout the world. A self-generating economy would evolve to enable the poor to help themselves out of their ever increasing misery.

Finally, with the new ecology and economy, just the right conditions may evolve for harmonious development of freedom and social equality and unity.

The appendixes are important. Appendix-D is a typical outline for an economic plan for India.

A DISCIPLE

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Dante and Sri Aurobindo (A Comparative Study of 'The Divine Comedy' and 'Savitri') by *Prema Nandakumar*. Pages: 160. Bound. Price Rs. 54/- Published by Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., 8, East Spur Tank Road, Madras-600 031.

Ever since the great French critic Sainte-Beuve used the abbreviated but practical term "littérature comparée" and popularised it through his works in the later half of the 19th Century, scholars round the globe have widely begun to make such studies of diverse writers and their works. Joseph T. Shipley opines: "Whether with individual authors or with broad currents of thought and style, and the major literary schools, the comparative study of literature is one of the most fruitful methods of literary exploration."

Here is a book that explores the theological world of Dante Alighieri and compares it with that of Sri Aurobindo. Having incidentally compared Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* with Dante's *Divine Comedy* in her book *A Study of Savitri* that was published in the year 1962, Prema Nandakumar, a scholar and critic, has spent an impressive number of years doing a complete and detailed study on Dante and Sri Aurobindo. The result of these long years of research is a thorough and well-balanced book on the two great epics.

The comparatist, while justifying the choice of the epic poets, writes in her Foreword: "The great poems certainly help us in undersanding ourselves and the world we live in because these poets are also prophets. They know the sickness that afflicts mankind and they often prescribe the remedy as well. They watch the misery of man and project before him the happiness that can be... Dante was such a poet of hope and solace to mankind." And, again, when she speaks of Sri Aurobindo, she says: "It is the epic genius that visualises a great future extended from the great past and instils hope in the hearts of the downcast people... Such an epic poet is Sri Aurobindo..." Doubtless, Dante whose epic is a solace to mankind and Sri Aurobindo who instils hope in the hearts of the downcast through his epic are the need of the hour, when we, human beings, grope our way in the dark to the land of illumination.

A reading of this book is certainly rewarding, for it opens to us two different worlds. Though Dante and Sri Aurobindo are engaged in conveying certain visionary experiences, the world that Dante portrays is the world of the Middle Ages, with its own superstitions and beliefs, which is totally unlike the world of Sri Aurobindo, the modern world of science and technology. Prema Nandakumar makes us wander in these two different worlds and we jubilantly do so gathering a fund of knowledge, thereby enhancing our appreciation of the poems individually.

If Death is inevitable, is there no way of conquering it? Sure, there is one. It is Love. Only Love has the inimitable power to conquer Death. *The Divine Comedy* and *Savitri*, the epics of the Western and Eastern hemispheres respectively, make this point clear. Further, as for Death, man has no recorded experience of what happens after death and these epics talk of the worlds 'beyond'. Sri Aurobindo, when speaking of Dante's epic in general, points out "the journey of the seer through the three worlds beyond us". While in *The Divine Comedy* Dante makes himself comfortable to travel through the three worlds of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, Sri Aurobindo in his *Savitri* makes Aswapathy and Savitri travel through the worlds of Darkness, Twilight and Light.

Taking the worlds of Dante and Sri Aurobindo for her study, Prema Nandakumar probes into every nook and corner of the two epics and arrives at the conclusion: "These two epics seem to contain almost everything that man can think about... The poems are meant to *act* upon the reader and change and transform him. Very rarely do poetry and philosophy go together, rarer still do they blend into a harmony. But this has happened once 700 years ago, and the result was *The Divine Comedy*. Once again this has happened, and the astonishing result is *Savitri*, the great and unique spiritual testament of our times and of all time..."

Prema Nandakumar argues that after *The Divine Comedy* there is only *Savitri* as a spiritual epic. Readers of this book may ask as if struck by a flash of lightning: "How come! What about Milton's *Paradise Lost*?" She dismisses the work saying, "While Milton's verbal mastery is enchanting, the spiritual barrenness of the poem is deeply disappointing. Unless a spiritual epic is founded on a personal apocalyptic vision and experience, it cannot carry conviction to the reader... The literary tourist might enjoy his visit, but the spiritual seeker would go away disappointed." Further, the comparatist argues that *Savitri* is in a certain sense an extension of Dante's epic and says, "If *The Divine Comedy* is the synthesis of all medieval knowledge, *Savitri* does synthesis of all available knowledge today."

Delving deep, into the two epics, the author brings forward the similarities and differences between their structures; talks of time and action in them; explicates the wide variety of images and symbols and points out their functions and suggests their diverse uses. "Evil is a familiar character, but Grace is not; though we are surrounded by Grace, we are still not aware of it," writes Prema Nandakumar and proceeds to show to her readers how the two epic poets succeed in portraying Grace, a power difficult to characterize.

Why did Dante choose to write his epic in Italian—'a vulgar tongue spoken by the common man'—and Sri Aurobindo in English, which is not his mother tongue? What made Dante and Sri Aurobindo choose terza-rima and blank verse respectively for writing their epics? Why did Sri Aurobindo desire to write a 'Divine Comedy' going beyond the mythological symbolism of hell and heaven so colourfully presented in the *Mahabharata* itself? Where does Sri Aurobindo form a parallel to Dante and when does he outdo him? In what way do the heavenly sights of Aswapathy correspond to the Dantean journey through paradise? Why are Dante's Hell and Purgatory more excruciatingly recognised than Paradise? Wherein lie the basic differences between Sri Aurobindo and Dante in their approach? What sort of anthem do the epics sing out to us?... A host of several such questions are taken up for discussion and the conclusions arrived at are the samples of the author's erudition. As an unbiased and disinterested comparatist Prema Nandakumar shows us how Sri Aurobindo was capable of compressing the whole of the Dantean journey into a few lines and demonstrates elsewhere in the book that structurally *The Divine Comedy* is more compact than *Savitri*. Prema Nandakumar makes us watch the personalities, unfolds to us the actions imbedded in their works and imparts to us the meaning and message of the two classics.

The author's balanced views prove that the intention of comparison of the two philosophical-spiritual poems was not to debate and decide which is the greater epic, for she writes in the concluding part of the book, "Dante and Sri Aurobindo attained two different orders of experiences, but each is a laureate of the Divine and each in his own way... They are indispensable lighthouses in our quest for true beauty and eternal truth."

Written in a simple and charming style, the matter the book carries between its two boards will surely impress the readers who have gone through the two epics. And to those who have not yet done so, this book will make them acquire these great poems and go in search of a quiet place to read and travel in the worlds 'beyond'.

P. RAJA